

WAITING AND DISENCHANTMENT : KOUROUMA'S 'LES SOLEILS DES
INDEPENDANCES' AND OUPOH'S 'EN ATTENDANT LA LIBERTE'

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SUMMARY

Like Samuel Beckett's characters in En attendant Godot, the protagonists of Ahmadou Kourouma's Les Soleils des Indépendances and Gnaoulé Oupoh's En Attendant la Liberté wait for something to happen to change their lives. As they wait, they ascribe to the object of waiting an absolute certainty translated in terms of recognition, realization of the promises of independence, continuity of dynasty, freedom, and other good life-values. Ultimately, disenchantment displaces hope; the object of waiting eludes them and their general condition either worsens or, at best, remains static. Paradoxically, the characters continue to wait in anticipation of a turn-around in their destiny. Waiting thus becomes a type of imprisonment. To break the impasse, Oupoh seems to advocate continued struggle and a timely confrontation to effect change. Kourouma, on the other hand, appears to endorse existential revolt and self-abnegation; in his estimation, any change that does not liberate man from his Self merely perpetuates self-imprisonment. But for both the waiting game continues, and so does the paradox.

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But in this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us...Yes, in this immense confusion one thing is clear; We are waiting for Godot to come.(1)

In his En Attendant Godot, Samuel Beckett elevated the concept of waiting to the level of esthetics. As his characters wait for a Godot who does not come, they identify themselves with the rest of us. Although waiting is the only certainty that appears to define the direction of man's quest and the perception of his reality, man adds to the confusion of existence if and when he ascribes absolute certainty to the object of waiting. The protagonists of Les Soleils des Indépendances and En Attendant la Liberté wait for something to happen which will change their lives, but in the process, they ascribe to the object of waiting a certainty which does not match with the reality of their total situation. Ultimately, waiting translates into disenchantment as the object of waiting eludes them and their general condition either remains static or worsens. This article will attempt to analyse the paradox of waiting, the language of waiting, and the spatio-temporal dimension of waiting. It will conclude with a statement on the possible political visions of the two novelists.

It may seem farfetched to evoke the name Gnaoulé Oupoh in reference to Ahmadou Kourouma and to imply or suggest that a parallel reading of their texts might enlighten us about both. A priori, there are elements which seem to set these two writers apart- their place of birth (2), the time they wrote, their professions and training, their style, and even their literary reputation. While, for example, Kourouma has been acknowledged as an original and innovative writer of genius, Oupoh is still relatively unknown in the African literary scene. His work ,though interesting, contains nothing substantially new either in form or content. In fact, it can be argued that his book is a novel at all. His characters are vested with very little psychological life. These factors may well argue against a joint consideration of the two writers. Yet a careful look at the two works supports drawing a valid and even illuminating parallel.

Kourouma's novel is set in the fictitious 'République des

Ebènes'. His hero, Fama, is a disgraced, dispossessed prince who now lives like a beggar and somehow waits for things to improve both for him and for his people. He waits anxiously for his apparently barren wife, Salimata, to bear him an heir since he is the last legitimate prince of Doumbouya. He vaguely waits also for the bastards who usurped his power to be overthrown, or at least, to treat him with respect. He inherits his dead cousin's wife, Marian, and hopes that this prolific woman will give him an heir which Salimata cannot give him. In the meantime, there is an insurrection. Fama is arrested, imprisoned, and sentenced to 20 years in jail. Upon his eventual release through a Presidential pardon, he waits in vain for his two wives to come and receive him. He decides to return to his place of birth but accidentally meets his death on the way.

Oupoh's novel is set in another fictitious country - 'la République Loglaise'. As in Les Soleils des Indépendances', the types in Oupoh's En Attendant la Liberté wait for something to happen to improve their lives. They are waiting for the fruits of their independence granted 20 years back. Since independence, they have been waiting for a change of government, for social reform, for better schools and better instruction for their children, for better roads, and for fair market prices for their crops. There is an apparent insurrection and the people are arrested, jailed, manhandled, beaten, scorned, tortured, and sometimes killed and buried in a mass grave. As in 'La République des Ebènes', the prisoners are released through a Presidential pardon but they continue to wait for "la liberté".

The characters of Kourouma and Oupoh recognize total congruency as an absolute in itself and regard themselves as beings who must function in a congruent universe. But according to Hegel, the self is not an Absolute but contains within itself its own Nothing : "Being as Being is nothing fixed or ultimate, it yields to dialectics and sinks into its opposite, which also taken immediately, is Nothing."(3) The self's yearning therefore cannot, in a way, be considered an absolute. The characters of both novels are looking for the general truth which unfortunately, does not exist. Blaise Pascal puts it this way :

We desire truth, and find within ourselves only uncertainty....When we think to attach ourselves to any point and fasten to it, it wavers and leaves us; and if we follow it, it eludes our grasp, slips past us, and vanishes for ever. Nothing stays for us. This is our natural condition, and yet most contrary to our inclination, we burn with desire to find solid ground and an ultimate sure foundation whereon to build a tower...(4)

These characters "burn with desire to find solid ground" because, in the words of Heidegger, they are expecting something. "Expecting is not just an occasional looking-away from the possible to its possible actualization, but is essentially a waiting for that actualization."(5) In the universe of Kourouma and Oupoh where daily existence is governed by deprivation, famine, chaos, injustice, arrests, forced imprisonment, torture, and other negatives, the people wait for the actualization of the opposites of their present situation. They long for liberty, freedom, independence, restoration of a dying dynasty, fair play. Since, in Hegel's model, nothing is independent or immune to negation, since nothing is steady or fixed, these characters hope (as they wait) that their situation will be reversed. But the dialectics of waiting make the exercise of waiting rather futile. As David Hesla has said, in this universe of uncertainty,

author cancels character, circle cancels line,
ending cancels beginning, question cancels
answers, no cancels yes, tragedy cancels
comedy, pessimism cancels optimism,...despair
cancels hope and the dark cancels light.(6)

In Kourouma's novel for example, "les indépendances, contrary to expectations, have cancelled "les soleils". Whereas the sun is normally a positive symbol of light, the sun in Les Soleils des Indépendances is linked not to light, but rather to "l'ombre", "nuit", darkness. The image of "les soleils" therefore evokes decline, drought, harmattan, dust, destruction, extinction :

...une vie qui se mourrait, se consumait dans la
pauvreté, la stérilité, l'indépendance, et le parti
unique. Cette vie-là n'était-elle pas un soleil

éteint et assombri dans la haut de sa course? La nuit, avec des fines pluies continua à ronronner(7)

"Les Indépendances" mean no more than:

la colonisation, les commandants, les réquisitions, les épidémies, les sécheresses,...des sortes de malédiction inventées par les diables (Kourouma, 1970, p.137).

In Oupoh's novel, the anticipated liberty appears oxymoronic. As in Les Soleils des Indépendances, "la liberté" translates into deceit, torture, imprisonment, and even death. Teti, the leader of the revolt explains one aspect of this deceit:

Le gouvernement ne veut pas construire de nouveaux collèges pour nos enfants...ils ont vidé les caisses de l'Etat pour se construire des maisons personnelles et des collèges privés où les enfants des pauvres doivent encore aller payer. C'est la vérité.(8)

"La vérité", as Teti maintains, is that things are not going to improve. Mobio, one of the characters of En Attendant la Liberté, reinforces Teti's account by narrating the painful experience of his own family and how his father perished in prison following a plot that shook the government at the wake of independence:

Je suis convaincu que les promesses qui sont faites aujourd'hui ne seront pas tenues... Personnellement je n'attends rien du gouvernement. Je veux seulement être libéré, c'est tout.(Oupoh,1983,p.87).

Mobio and his fellow prisoners are released from jail, it is true, but, at the same time, a number of military officers responsible for their forced imprisonment and torture are promoted. The list includes le Capitaine Quashie, the Nazi-type torturer who gleefully terrorized his prisoners and supervised the mass grave of many of his countrymen. The announcement of these men's promotion draws the resigned and melancholic shrug of Teti who tells Mobio:

Allons-y Mobio, comme tu vois, au lieu de se pencher sur le problème que nous avons soulevé, ils consolident plutôt leur camp pour mieux frapper (Oupoh, 1983,p.103).

The imprisonment, torture, and release of these nationalists is reminiscent of the forced imprisonment and subsequent release of Fama, the hero of Les Soleils des Indépendances. The motive of the arrests is the same in both cases. As Mobio says:

"Eh bien, c'est pour nous faire oublier définitivement toutes idées de révolte en sortant d'ici" (Oupoh, 1983, p.87).

If the oppressed people cannot express their grievance through action, they are condemned to wait without result. But, if they act to change their condition, they are ruthlessly punished. This situation reminds us of what Hegel calls the absolute absence of the Absolute. An anticipated result constitutes for the people an absolute, but all possible roads leading to the attainment of that absolute are closed.

Waiting, and the object of waiting, in the present equation, are two incongruous and incompatible elements. Although the paradox of waiting brings the two elements together, it creates a split between them whereby one negates the other. Waiting for liberty brings about internment; waiting for an heir brings about sterility. In fact, in the case of Salimata, Fama's wife, her own waiting touches on a personal tragedy. For example, words go around the community that she is at last pregnant. But as it turns out, the joy and anxiety of waiting for a baby conclude in a distressing hoax, for Salimata is not pregnant after all despite marked visible signs to that effect. As in the whole drama of waiting, the appearance of pregnancy and false pregnancy coalesce, and in the end, one cancels the other. In like manner, while the nationalists of 'la République Loglaise' are serving time in jail, the President of the Republic, his Excellence le Président Ange Gougnon, lavishes gifts and conciliatory words on them. Their subsequent release does not even ensure their freedom as the cloud of further arrest and torture hangs over their heads. An analogous situation

exists in 'La République des Ebènes' when Fama's release from jail compounds his difficulty and inexorably precipitates his death.

At the personal level, the characters on their own try to minimize their existential anguish. Fama, for example, longs for those days when men were men, when "cette terre vivait un homme viril et d'honneur"(Kourouma, 1970,p.18), before the sons of slaves, "les dégénérés de bâtards"(Kourouma, 1970,p.18),polluted the land. He ruminates over "la nostalgie de la terre natale; son ciel profond et lointain; ...tout ce qui avait permis de vivre une enfance heureuse"(Kourouma, 1970,p.19). Nostalgic remembrance of the good old days helps to fight the painful present and its ennui, and more so when the subject is helpless and unable to effect any meaningful change in his life.

Recourse to nostalgia is a form of fiction, an illusion, a mental construct to shield the pain of the moment. Fama tries to concretize his fiction by reminiscing on the grandeur of his past glory as the descendant of Souleymane Doumbouya. His constant visits to Bidia symptomatize his desire to counteract the harsh waiting with a salutary nostalgia. As Mohamadou Kane has said:

Toute la journée, Fama a voyagé de la capitale vers Togobala. Le spectacle de la nature lui a permis de vivre son passé, d'évoquer avec nostalgie la grandeur de ses ancêtres (9).

Ironically, this same nostalgic device tends to encourage the subject (in this case Fama) to keep on waiting, sometimes, if not most of the time, waiting against hope.

In the case of Oupoh's characters, there is no "good old days" to hang onto. If they had memories at all, it would be those of an exuberant hope at the dawn of independence, a hope that self-rule would solve their problems. But in the light of costly confrontations with the insensitive leaders of government, the characters resign themselves to a paradoxical life of waiting without result. Like the dispirited humans of Samuel Beckett, Oupoh's characters strive to find something to do as they wait, something to do to kill the time and minimize their suffering. Teti, for example, tells one of his comrades :

(Si) tu veux, tu peux rester avec nous, nous bavardions pour tuer le temps et surtout pour tromper tromper la faim parce que moi j'ai sincèrement le ventre creux (Oupoh,1983,p.66).

The reference to "faim" and "ventre creux" is symptomatic of the pain, suffering, and anguish of the present existence. In 'Les Soleils', the picture is rather more brutal. Not only is Fama "né dans l'or, le manger, l'honneur" now living the life of a beggar, he has become "un vaurien, un charognard, un margouillat, un vautour, un vidé" Waiting as an experience is both an anticipation and a resignation. As an anticipation, it envisages a better tomorrow albeit elusive; as a resignation, it provides an occasion to do something to wile away the time. But, when the present pain includes hunger, resigned fictionalisation and old memories prove inadequate to provide relief.

The paradox of the present moment implies that waiting and the anticipated result are two incongruous and incompatible objects which although lumped together cannot, in the present circumstance, be reconciled. Fama can wait for the restoration of the status quo ante but, the more he waits, the more he slips deeper and deeper into oblivion, penury, neglect, desperation, and, finally, into an ill-conceived confrontation with his adversaries that eventually spells his doom. Salimata can wait for a child of her own, but what she receives is a trick, a hoax, never a child. The nationalists can wait for their release from jail to regain their freedom but when they are released, what they receive is apathy, threat, non-cooperation, and a perpetuation and intensification of the scourges of the status quo, in short, an utter disenchantment.

Disenchantment appears to derive from a hopeless lack of "la vérité" in the fictitious republics of Ebènes and Loglaise. Nationalism has brought disenchantment precisely because the long-awaited truth and justice have not come with independence. Instead, the independence has prepared the ground for a pack of rascals: "ces politiciens, tous ces voleurs et menteurs, ces déhontés." (Kourouma,1970,p.99) The immediate result of this sacrilege is that sacrifices made to the ancestors are not received hence, "tous les morts...été tous mal accueillis par leurs dévanciers." (Kourouma, 1970,p.143) Consequently misfortunes that could have been foreseen and

prevented can no longer be predicted. Chaos reigns in Les Soleils des Indépendances.

The atmosphere of chaos and uncertainty in the fictitious republics of Ebènes and Loglaise is reflected in the styles of the two writers. Whereas Oupoh chooses to present events almost chronologically in a bare matter-of-fact journalistic style, dispensing of as much imagery and symbolism as possible, Kourouma creates a subtle and curious language of debilitation and sterility which serves to convey and reinforce an atmosphere of "l'attente sans issue". The frustrated expectation of a baby heir, for example, is expressed through the images of drought, immobility, and sterility. The marabout Abdoulaye informs Salimata that her husband "est stérile comme le roc, la poussière, et l'harmattan." (Kourouma, 1970, p.77) The image of Harmattan is evoked several times in the novel. In chapter four of the second part for example, "harmattan" is used over fifteen times. It is paradoxical that "les soleils des indépendances" provoke the dry and dusty harmattan. Harmattan has the paradoxical role of ushering in "l'hivernage" and at the same time negating all hopes of production and fecundity: "Les journées d'harmattan comme les oeufs de la même pintade pointaient et tombaient les unes semblables aux autres" (Kourouma, 1970, p.124) This image of a hidden life and hope (les oeufs) is negated by the allusion of "le matin d'harmattan comme toute mère commençait d'accoucher très péniblement l'énorme soleil d'harmattan". (Kourouma, 1970, p.125) When he was young, Fama had "Des bons harmattans." (Kourouma, 1970, p.126) "Crepuscule d'harmattan", "Plein harmattan, assoiffé, affamé." (Kourouma, 1970, p.131) The image of harmattan underlines the oxymoron of waiting and hoping.

The debilitating effect of Fama's illiteracy is likened to "la queue d'une âne." Yet, to perform any activity in the government, party officials do not even need to be literate since literacy for them is "aussi futile que des bagues pour un lépreux. (Kourouma, 1970, p.23) Thus Kourouma uses these rather bizarre images to emphasize the confusion and uncertainty of a world gone awry where time and space have lost their original value.

Time, for example, has reduced Prince Fama, "Né dans l'or" (Kourouma, 1970, p.10) into "... chose usée et fatiguée comme une vieille calebasse ébrechée." (Kourouma, 1970, p.55).

Time has destroyed "memories of an idyllic childhood and made it an 'unfree' period or mythologized it"(10). In the internment camp where Fama was detained, time has stopped moving, or is "out of joints." Days, weeks, and years merge:

... on ignorait quand venait le matin et quand commençait le soir... on y perdait la notion de la durée... on y passait des jours plus longs que des mois, et des saisons plus courtes que des semaines.(Kourouma, 1970, p.165-66).

Since time and place have fused into a mass of uncertainty, no one knows for sure the location of the internment camp. The narrator merely says:

Comment s'appellait ce camp? Il ne possédait pas de nom,...Les choses qui ne peuvent pas être dites ne méritent pas de noms et ce camp ne saura jamais jamais être dit (Kourouma, 1970, p.165).

A more or less parallel situation appears in En Attendant la Liberté where what is destroyed is not only "l'aspect spatio-temporel" but the moral essence of the prisoners :

...chaque jour..on les avait fait entrer l'un après l'autre, dans une salle ronde où deux hommes solide-ment batis et munis de fouets les frappaient sans sans relâche jusqu'à évanouissement. Cette opération avait pour but de meurtrir au maximum le corps du prisonnier, rendant ses propos incohérents (Oupoh, 1983, p.63).

As the prisoners lose their human essence and dignity, they lose their idea of time as well :

Ensuite on leur avait fait passer la nuit debout ...Peu après ils s'endormirent tous exténués par le nombreuses tortures et le manque de sommeil. Combien d'heures avaient-ils dormi? Ils ne le sauront jamais eux-mêmes...ils avaient perdu la notion de temps (Oupoh, 1983, p.63-64).(emphasis mine)

Presenting their characters and their narration in a timeless setting enables the two novelists to paint a more authentic picture of waiting, waiting in the dark -a picture of unknowability which accentuates the poignancy of the drama of

waiting.

The timelessness that characterizes the waiting exercise is reflected in and reinforced by Presidential pardons. Although these pardons are orchestrated to make the Presidents look statesmanlike, the real effect is to blur further any notion of time. In Les soleils for example, "Le Président demandait aux détenus d'oublier le passé... et de ne penser qu'à l'avenir." (Kourouma, 1970, p.181) In En Attendant la Liberté, the President accepts to pardon the prisoners on the condition that "(on) lui promettait de ne plus recommencer ce qu'ils on fait" (Kourouma, 1970, p.93) The two presidents are in effect saying: "Forget the past" According to Ireland, "the caesar ex machina of the President's pardon (is) couched in terms of temporal erasure"(11) accelerating the process of disenchantment. The future the people are invited to think of is a future without hope, a future not different from the past they are urged to forget. Thematically, the slogan of "forget the past" simply implies the following: Forget your yearnings for freedom, for progress, and for the good things of life.

The thematic implication of the technique of temporal erasure is the merger of the notion of sterility and immobility. In the first instance, Fama's dynasty cannot be revived despite waiting; his own personal lot cannot improve despite his release from prison. So, even with the plea to think of the future, the absence of any future tense "suggests an inability to reproduce the past and project it into the future."(12) In the case of Teti, Mobio, and others, the past they are urged to forget is as relevant to them as the future they are asked to think of, and in fact, both the past and the future fuse because, judging from past and present happenings, the prognosis is a sterile future which "deprives the present of value."(13) The net result of this situation is what Jean-Cleo Godin calls "l'univers confus...Un monde où les hyènes et les panthères, les reptiles ou les oiseaux sauvages, comme la lune, le soleil et les rêves ne se dissocient pas de la vie humaine"(14)

Although both Kourouma and Oupoh present a picture of "l'univers confus," they do not seem to agree on how best to improve "la vie humaine" They are both products of the Malinké heritage, it is true, but the extent to which they share the same political vision is unclear. Oupoh seems

committed to a continued struggle based on organized revolts against oppressive governments. Kourouma, on the other hand, bemoans a life that has suffered series of "mutation" and "degradation", a life that is now irreversible and fixed in time and space.

Kourouma maintains that Fama's tragedy lies in his failure to hold firmly to the traditional lores during the waiting. Instead, he turned his back to the native society and went to reside in the city. There, he is ill-prepared to play the game of intrigue that "les soleils des indépendances" has institutionalized. The destiny of Fama and perhaps that of Africa are epitomized by the imagery which alludes to a stream running dry in sand and desert far from river and sea. Reflecting on his past and destiny, Fama wonders :

Ces soleils sur les têtes, ces politiciens, tous ces voleurs et menteurs, tous ces déhontés, ne sont-ils pas le désert bâtard, ou doit mourir le fleuve Doumbouya? (Kourouma,1970,p.99)

Other imageries of life and nature are invoked to accentuate total disillusionment with independence: on the imagery of "le fromager" (the big kapok tree), Kourouma compares Fama to

la petite herbe qui a grogné parce que le fromager absorbait le soleil; le fromager abattu, elle a reçu tout son soleil mais aussi le grand vent qui l'a cassée. (Kourouma, 1970, p.20-21)

The symbolism of "the fromager" is a veiled political statement which on the surface could imply a rejection of the nationalist movement. But Kourouma denounces colonialism because it enslaved and subjugated the people. If "le grand fromager" symbolizes colonial power, it at least collapsed. The problem is the dilemma of the nationalists who are either ill-prepared for freedom or unsure how to preserve it.

The common adversary used to be "le fromager" (colonization) which was robbing the grass of its share of the warmth from the sun. But now that the kapok tree is felled, no one seems to know how to ensure protection from the strong wind. This feeling of helplessness is accentuated by the imagery of "une nuée de sauterelles" (the destructive grasshoppers that come in swarms), which descends on an unprepared Africa and

destroys everything. What is destroyed in real terms is the people's past heritage which should have served as a buffer against the strong wind of misgovernment and corruption. Fama who symbolizes the oppressed and disenfranchized people of "les soleils des indépendances", avait comme le petit rat de marigot creusé le trou pour le serpent avaleur de rats, ses efforts étaient devenus la cause de sa perte".(Kourouma,1970,p.24) Through their toils, sweat, and tears, the people of Africa have struggled for independence, but, when it eventually came, the rapacious politicians, like snakes, swallowed up the people.

For Kourouma, freedom in our lifetime and under the new dispensation is not achievable. He instead advocates existential freedom which liberates the individual after an internal revolt. Although he later modified his view a little, (15) Kourouma has not disguised his disgust with independence and what it did to Africa. He once said in an interview : "Fama était un peu mon porte-parole...Il y a beaucoup de pensées que j'ai attribué à Fama qui sont évidemment mes pensées. J'ai été très déçu par les débuts des indépendances.(16)" In yet another interview, he said :

Mon héros, Fama, est un prince malinké, victime des indépendances qui sont "tombées" sur l'Afrique, mais à travers lui, c'est une mise à nu de la déchéance ; l'indépendance profite à certains, pas à tous.(17)

Kourouma's Fama remained for a long time in what Heidegger calls "domains of forfeiture", that is, tied to the distractions of everyday life which has, in any case, disinherited him. But the moment Kourouma thoroughly strips him of all his associations (domain of forfeiture) -the capital, his wives, his friends, political rights and political favours-Fama, the symbol of the anguished African, is left face to face with himself. Existentially, and in fact, in Heidegger's model, such a stripped person has the power to become man, to achieve some measure of purity which an otherwise "en situation" status cannot give. Fama is "en situation" in as much as he is humiliated by it, deprived by it, and destroyed by it. But at least, now, he can make a resolution to face death, to make his destiny that will allow him to transcend the realm of forfeiture, and to rise to his proper stature, that is, the realm of authentic being.

Fama's decision to undertake the fatal journey to the capital despite warning and advice, his decision to abandon all he has in the capital, his decision to defy the authorities on the border -all these are internal propellings designed to liberate him from himself and enable him to confront the void that has become his inseparable companion but which attachment to illusions has not allowed him to recognize and face. Although he fails in all the goals he is waiting to achieve, he does not fail to face death, squarely to redeem himself, from himself since life as it is structured under "les soleils des indépendances" has no place for him. Whether intentionally or not Kourouma seems to embrace Heidegger's philosophy which implies that authentic self can only be achieved by confronting the void. Although Kourouma appears to give no consolation to Fama, paradoxically the tragic end of a tragic existence provides a transcendence which negates the tragedy and spells positive affirmation. Despite himself, Kourouma's esthetics gives Fama a redeeming feature which "les soleils des indépendances" denied him.

While Kourouma looks back for possible redemption for his hero, Oupoh looks ahead and still hopes for some form of consolation. The past for Oupoh typifies "les promesses ...faites aujourd'hui (qui) ne seront pas tenues" (Oupoh,1983,p.88) Teti who must be speaking for Oupoh sees the professionals and the middle class as the main obstacle to successful revolt. Vakou, who typifies this class and whose actions of non-cooperation undermines the struggle, is described as "professeur certifié de lettres, logé dans une villa climatisé, avec deux employés de maison à son service,(et)...son boy-cuisinier."(Oupoh,1983,p.46) Oupoh realizes that disparity in social class accounts for the divergence of convictions on how to achieve real liberty. He therefore shares the frustration of his characters, but insists that, in order to overthrow the oppressive regime, proper planning and organisation would be necessary. The nationalists, he seems to say, can borrow a leaf from the dictators who close their ranks and organize effectively in order to strike with maximum result. Teti again seems to be speaking for the author when he remarks :

Il nous faut en tirer les leçons. C'est a cette condition que l'espoir est permis. Sinon nous continuerons toujours à rêver (Oupoh, 1983, p.104)

Kourouma and Oupoh both realize that the struggle is neither the issue nor the answer. Africans know how to struggle. Yet despite their struggles or because of it, the rapacious snake still menaces their lives. The question at issue appears to be whether struggle is still necessary. Have Africans come to terms with the paradox and dialectics of struggle? For what and for whom is the struggle fought? Does struggle guarantee a result? Does the result negate itself or is it an absolute? One thing seems clear: the political road to freedom is uncharted, and freedom as a concept is fuzzy.

But both authors seem to agree that the waiting game must continue. Disenchantment appears to be an inseparable part of the game. Kourouma seems to take his model from modern philosophers of existence and advocate existential revolt and self-abnegation. Oupoh appears to opt for the Camusian model of continued waiting and hoping. The African may continue to wait, but the extent of the anguish of waiting is something no one can as yet determine. Maybe waiting is, after all, its own reward; so Professor Ella Robinson says in her poem :

Used to the stings of naked bushes
And the wind-blown
Bleats
Of ribald laughter
She waits.(18)

NOTES

- 1- Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot. New York : Grove Press Inc; 1956, pp. 51-52.
- 2- Although both Kourouma and Oupoh are citizens of Ivory Coast, Kourouma was actually born in Guinea in the Region of Odienne in 1927. At the age of seven, he was entrusted to the care of his maternal uncle who was then living in Boundiali, in Ivory Coast.

- 3- The Logic of Hegel, Trans. William Wallace, Oxford : O.U.P. 1892. This line is quoted by David Hesla, The Shape of Chaos : An interpretation of the art of Samuel Beckett: Minneapolis : The University of Minnesota Press, 1971, p.209.
- 4- Blaise Pascal quoted by Hesla, The Shape of Chaos, p.131.
- 5- Quoted by Hesla, p.129.
- 6- Hesla, pp.226-27.
- 7- Ahmadou Kourouma, Les Soleils des Indépendances. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970, p.29
- 8- Gnaoule Oupoh, En Attendant la Liberté. Paris : Editions Silex, 1983. pp. 85-86.
- 9- Mohamadou Kane, Roman Africain et tradition : Dakar : Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1982. p.171
- 10-K.R. Ireland."End of the line : Time in Kourouma's Les Soleils des Indépendances, in Présence Francophone, no.23, Automne 1981, p.82.
- 11-Ireland, p. 84.
- 12-Ibid ; p.88.
- 13-Ibid ; p.88.
- 14-Jean-Cleo Godin, "Les Soleils des Indépendances", In : Etudes Françaises. Montréal : Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1968, p. 213.
- 15-According to Jacques Chevrier, Kourouma now concedes that his disillusionment resulted from "un excès d'idéalisme et d'un manque de lucidité dans l'appréhension des réalités africaines." See Amadou Kourouma, a booklet by Jacques Chevrier for Club des lecteurs d'expression française (CLEF), Paris, p.8. The same remark is also recorded in a taped conversation by Kourouma.
- 16-Ibid.
- 17-Mocef S. Badday, " Interview d'Ahmadou Kourouma, " in L'Afrique Littéraire et Artistique, vol. 10 (Avril 1970), p.8.
- 18-Ella Robinson, "She Waits", in Flame : African Poets in Nebraska, in The Black Scholar, May, June 1987, p.2