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LANGUAGE, POLITICS AND IDENTITY IN THE NOVELS OF AHMADOU KOUROUMA

Adewuni Salawu²⁶ and Ramonu Sanusi²⁷

ABSTRACT

Facts are vital parameters not only in the sciences, history and translation studies but also in literature. Facts are the back-bone of human discussions irrespective of the nature of things discussed. To avoid attacks for political reasons, some Francophone Postcolonial African writers, create imaginary spaces in their novels and embellish them with facts. This is for instance, the preoccupation of Ahmadou Kourouma in his debut novel, *Les soleils des indépendances* (1970), and others. The objective of this paper is to show Kourouma's commitment as a literary linguist, politician, historian, geographer, and indeed as an iconoclastic writer. The issue of identity is also addressed in the analysis of Kourouma's works. This study, therefore, adopts a narrative analysis of data collected from Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les soleils des indépendances* (1970), *Monnè, outrages et défis* (1990), *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* (1998), *Allah n'est pas obligé* (2000), and *Quand on refuse on dit non* (2004). Special attention is paid to critical works of linguists, political theorists, translators and literary scholars among others, to buttress our discourse. Kourouma is known for his language revolution, political discourse, translation skills and his quest for identity. In fact, Kourouma's coloration of French language with *Malinke*, his mother-tongue, stands like pillars to solidify his creative work and to promote African languages and identity. Needless to say that facts and spaces are parameters responsible for the gradual development of Kourouma's novels for they allow his protagonists to complete their journey in the process of actualizing their destiny.

Key words: Language, Politics, Space, Identity, Francophone Postcolonial African writers

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INTRODUCTION

Africa has produced a good number of writers of Francophone origin, especially after the birth of the literary and political movement called Negritude. While the era of Negritude was more dominated by the zeal to praise Africa and to demystify the myth of superiority of a particular race or culture over the other, the post negritude era is more of the demystification of African rulers who created

Kourouma (1970; 1998; 2000; 2004) is one of such African writers committed to true democratisation of the African continent and seeking a fair play in the administration and the management of the huge Africa's natural and human resources for the benefit of her population. This study reveals the style of writing and the political criticism adopted by Kourouma in his novels. *Les soleils des indépendances* (1970), *Monnè, outrages et défis* (1990), *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* (1998), *Allah n'est pas obligé* (2000), *Quand on refuse on dit non* (2004) are the central focus of this article.

KOUROUMA AS A POSTCOLONIAL WRITER

Post-colonialism x-rays the relationship between the "developed and developing countries. This is translated in literary productions by the study of these relations in the works of African writers, allowing them to freely express themselves. Post-colonial theories therefore provide « a ready solution to the understanding of literary works by the colonized, the oppressed (Nchu, 2012: 6-7).

The history of writing in Africa is undoubtedly linked to the innovation brought to Africa by the European and Arab missionaries and the colonial masters. The European link to writing is most pronounced and generally forcefully adopted and adapted to the continent. Negritude in sub-Sahara Africa is known to be the only literary movement which can account

more problems than they met after independence. Pretending to adopt an African way of governance, these rulers/leaders transposed the multi-party system of their respective countries into a single-party system, silencing the opposition by way of detention, imprisonment, exile, and killing. Before such situations, some African writers accepted to assume a position of protector of the people, risking their life and accepting the pains

for the several literary productions in the history, aiming to advertise Africa. The pioneers of Negritude were found among the Caribbean and the French speaking African poets and writers in Paris in the 1950s. Some of them are Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire and Léon Gontrant Damas. Negritude was a means of protest, a weapon in the struggle to attain equality and challenge the myth of superiority of the European culture (Davidson, 1971:74). Every student of African origin in Europe, especially in France then, wanted to identify with the negritude movement, which was set to culturally free the African. "Engagé" or not, converted to Christianity or not, militant or not, some African elites were at the same time writers and political elites, and all of them had the same focus: Africa.

It is interesting to note that these West African elites, writers and politicians, who were aware of the colonial masters' culture, spearheaded the struggle for independence. These elites had no choice other than to write and talk in the languages of the colonial masters, such as English and French, which constitute an important impact of the European influence in West Africa (Wauthier, 1964: 24-25). Even though, the first set of Francophone African literary productions were heavily criticized for having no method or theoretical framework by critics of the centre, Koutchoukalo Tchassim-Samboé (2010: 107) on the other hand takes a different

posture and affirms that Negritude was principled and methodical. « So every published work was evaluated based on clearly defined parameters: it had to go in the direction of the exaltation of Africa, or her unity, or her freedom »²⁸. Taking position from Yves-Emmanuel (1978) for whom every literature is a criticism; Tchassim-Samboé (2010: 108) concludes that African literature in the era of Negritude was methodical and to be judged as such, because there were points of reference. Paschal B. Kyiiripuo Kyoore (2004: 7) admits the above enumerated aims of the Negritude and notes that:

During the colonial era, African writers were mainly concerned with challenging the myths and Eurocentric perceptions often created about Africa by Westerners. They challenged the moral, political, and economic legitimacy of colonialism, and also sought to educate Westerners as well as Africans themselves on African traditions and customs.

Ahmadou Kourouma did not fall in the category of the Negritude writers because the publication of *Les soleils des indépendances* in 1970 stood as a revolutionary tendency in literary production in Africa. Mawuloé Koffi Kodah (2013: 9) points out that *Les soleils des indépendances*, is a clear departure by African writers of Francophone origin who were identifying with the classical style established by the centre for literary and artistic production, which respects grammatical and syntax rules of French language. He adds: «The story of Fama is an authentic African story told the African way in an “Africanized” French language». Similar remarks are attributed to his other literary productions such as *Monnè, outrages et défis* (1990), *En*

attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages (1998), *Allah n'est pas obligé* (2000), and *Quand on refuse on dit non* (2004).

There is no doubt that Kourouma (1970; 1990; 1998; 2000; 2004) is a committed writer always ready to denounce the abuses of corrupt and greedy African leaders, well positioned to impoverish their people. To achieve his aims and simply because he wants to enlighten his people and correct the abnormalities in Africa in general and especially in sub-Saharan Africa, he adopts a style of writing peculiar to him, a style heavily criticized by the centre at the beginning of the innovations. This accounts for the refusal of the publication in France of his first novel *Les soleils des indépendances*, which eventually was published in Canada.

All the writers of the periphery that publish in languages of the centre are translators, for they write in a language different from their mother tongue. Kourouma, being a *Malinke*, is not an exception. Denise Egéa-Kuehne (1999: 111) argues that « The politics of assimilation discouraged Africans from speaking anything but the language of the master. They now find themselves confined within their boundaries because it does not allow them “to express themselves in their totality”²⁹. Thus, they have one language only, and it is not theirs. ». Anthony (2010: 19) clearly speaks the mind of Kourouma, while he argues that « East versus West, irrational versus rational, subjective versus objective, marginal versus central, subordinate versus dominant, the list goes on, but it has fortunately become a catalyst for a yet subtle swing in a new literary direction, in which Kourouma, ... is a leading voice ». The Africanisation of French in African literature of Francophone origin is inevitable but the

²⁸ Ainsi chaque œuvre publiée était évaluée en fonction des paramètres clairement précisés: il fallait qu'elle aille dans le sens de l'exaltation de l'Afrique, ou son unité, ou sa libération.

²⁹ Ahmadou Kourouma, taped Communication at the Annual Conference of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Nashville, TN, November 1997.

problem lies in the flexible marriage of languages and cultures by the writer and his creative ability that gives birth to hybridization, which is Maninka-French in the case of Kourouma (Anthony, 2010: 1). Vincent Genot (2003: 1) aptly summarizes the interview he had with Kourouma as a unique writer, personal, that brought a shake-up within African literature. Genot also talks of the enthusiasm young ones have for his works and « His boldness in respect of a French language happily coupled with the Malinké rhythms »³⁰. Cary Keith Campbell (2010: 236-237) in the case of Kourouma argues that the narrator compels his reading public to go along with him in Malinké language with a Malinké content, yet French remains the medium of writing. It is worth reading the following lines of Campbell (2010: 239) to discover more about the stylistic “gymnastics” of Kourouma:

Koné and Miller both find wonderful examples of thoughts and concepts which are Malinké in nature, and yet which are clothed in a French which is twisted sufficiently from grammarian’s standard for it to register as foreign in the native French speaker’s mind. And while it is true that something is lost in the translation from Malinké thought to French script, it is not so much what is lost that is significant in *Les Soleils de Indépendances*, but rather the fact that whatever is lost, Kourouma is still succeeding in communicating it in some form of French.

In fact, hybridization has become an important terminology in literature of post-colonialism because of its description of putting together two or more than two cultures (Nchu, 2012: 9). Kourouma clearly carries along readers in his literary productions informing them of the Malinké language used. For example, he says:

³⁰ Ses audaces à l’égard d’une langue française joyeusement accouplée avec les rythmes malinkés.

«... I use Malinké words like fafaro ! (Fafaro! means sex of my father or of my father’s farther). As gnamokodé! (Gnamokodé! means bastard or illegitimacy). The Malinké ... is my race, for me » (Kourouma, 2000: 10)³¹. Besides, Kourouma differs from other African writers, for his ability to marry the historical with the fictional (Kyoore, 2004: 12), and the body of his work has « been more responsible than that of any other francophone West African author for the decolonization of language in the West African states (Anthony, 2010: 1). This is explained by numerous loanwords from the Malinkés and proverbs and incantations from African languages. Thinking and composing in the mother tongue and writing in an alien language is the taste of all Kourouma’s contemporaries. Ferdinand Oyono (1956: 27; 31) for example, is also known for using the stylistic gymnastics of African writers as translators. The following sentences are simply picked from African tradition and penciled down in French. « This is perhaps his heart told him that... The chief’s wife therefore began to do like a woman »³². Kourouma is also known for his use of Africanised French. Here is an example. « This is the moment that gushed from the assembly the injunction: sit down your ass and shut your mouth! Our ears are tired of hearing your words! »³³.

Having associated with the postcolonial theory, and having adopted the hybridization approach, Kourouma clearly identifies with the authorial intention theory which is « a

³¹ ... j’emploie les mots malinkés comme fafaro! (Fafaro ! signifie sexe de mon père ou du père de mon père). Comme gnamokodé ! (Gnamokodé ! signifie bâtard ou batardise). ... Les malinkés, c’est ma race à moi.

³² C’est peut-être son cœur qui lui a dit ça ... La femme du chef commença donc à faire la femme.

³³ C’est à l’instant que fusa de l’assemblée l’injonction : Assois tes fesses et ferme ta bouche ! Nos oreilles sont fatiguées d’entendre tes paroles ! (Kourouma, 1970 : 14)

useful tool in dealing with works of authors who are marginalized on the basis of their race, class or gender » and the signifying theory that extends « the relationship between texts, a form of intertextuality ». Furthermore, the power/knowledge theory is also well suited in Kourouma's style for it is « important in colonial and post-colonial studies because it gives an insight into the dynamics of hybridity and acculturation (Nchu, 2012: 8; 10-11). Zabus, quoted by Anthony (2010: 5), rather suggests the palimpsest approach, which suits the texts, such as those of Kourouma, where «indigenization of the exogenous language, not merely by introducing African words or translating African proverbs, but by calquing African syntax and idioms onto [a] European style». Anthony (2010: 5) further proposes that:

The methodologies of indigenization necessarily vary in accordance with the different elements of the particular *métissage* at hand, that is, "source" language, exogenous language(s), authorial intent, and inevitably, the differentiated use of these languages within the author's real and imagined contexts. ...The ethno-text, another term introduced by Zabus, represents what has become by today's standards a moderate level of indigenization through the incorporation of proverbs and songs in translation, and the use of techniques closely associated with orature, such as the repetition of words and phrases for emphasis and/or narrative framing. With *Allah n'est pas obligé*, Kourouma moves well beyond the ethno-text genre of his predecessors and his own previous work.

Amadou Kone (1995: 14-15) rather examines Kourouma's style of writing as if he imposes the Malinké language structures on French language in such a way that he presents the African elites in their biculturalism since

inception. The success of Kourouma's literary production is linked to his style of writing that puts accent on fact and reality, collecting his data from history. Kone (1995: 15) further explains:

Like other African novelists, Kourouma describes the African socio-historical context and the two historical stages which are crucial in the development of Africa and Africans: the colonial situation and the difficult management of independence. Kourouma stands for a realistic position, because he adheres to the historical development of Africa.³⁴

Kyooore (2004: 7) has demonstrated more than any other critic how Kourouma was able to manipulate historical facts to construct his literary productions. *Monnè, outrages et défis* and *Allah n'est pas obligé* are both more historical novels, because Kourouma uses historical raw materials for his fictional imagination. Very close to oral narrative techniques, he smartly manipulates the structures of Malinké and French languages to come up with hybridization, a *métissage* of cultures. Kyooore (2004: 7) comments about the style of writing of Kourouma who « evokes historical personalities in order to lampoon them and to criticise dictatorship and those responsible for the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone respectively ». Afin Laditan (2010: 82) underscores the facts in Kourouma's literary productions when he fingers some key personalities that make the history in Côte d'Ivoire and who should bring more light in the socio-political crisis in that country. He argues that the personalities in

³⁴ Comme les autres romanciers africains, Kourouma décrit le contexte socio-historique africain et les deux étapes historiques qui restent cruciales dans l'évolution de l'Afrique et les Africains : la situation coloniale et la difficile gestion des indépendances. Kourouma révèle un parti pris réaliste, car il adhère à l'évolution historique de l'Afrique.

Quand on refuse on dit non are Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Henri Konan Bédié, Robert Gueï, Alasane Ouattara, and l'Almany Samory Touré. Anthony (2010: 21-22), commenting on *Allah n'est the pas obligé*, says that Kourouma exposes the identities of the leaders involved in the crisis in Liberia and Sierra Leone. They are Samuël Doe, Charles Taylor, Lansana Conté, Houphouët-Boigny, Compaoré, Tejan Kabbah, and Kadhafi and are major political players in the crisis. By so doing, Kourouma was responding to the theory of Bakhtine (1984: 102): « There is no literary prose speech... which can fail to go along the existing materials or data, the known, public opinion »³⁵, which is not different from the theory of Julia Kristeva (1980: 66): « Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotation; any text is the absorption and transformation of another ». To the intertextuality theory is added the Marxism theory, because Kourouma stands as the defending lawyer of the oppressed, the voice of the voiceless (Abiodun-Eniayekan, 2013: 43). Even though the method of using historical facts is well known to Kourouma, Théophile Munyangayo (2000: 96; 97) argues that, it is a style spread in literary productions of the new generation of committed African writers of francophone origin. Munyangayo further remarks:

It should be noted, however, that in examining the evolution of African novels, one realizes that a number of writers can hardly do without their real environmental data, that is to say their historical landmarks, [...] the future of literature of combat equips itself with testimonial speech to denounce the evil raging in Africa in general and in the country of the novelist in particular. ... The fictional narration ... adopts an analytical approach that talks about places and

³⁵ ... aucun discours de la prose littéraire ... ne peut manquer de s'orienter dans le déjà dit, le connu, l'opinion publique

known facts, names what was not named, points accusing fingers. This is a critical orientation [that] draws from history to educate contemporary [society].³⁶

All the strategies employed by Kourouma and other African writers of Francophone origin, are made possible by the abilities of those writers to translate, transpose, borrow, and transliterate data collected from the African traditions. Kourouma could not deny his status as a translator, going by Bandia (2009) who says that African writers are translating in an attempt to write in alien languages. Although, Kourouma (1987: 12) opines that calling him a translator is too harsh on him because, according to him: « I think sometimes in French... Any language, any society, is primarily of a number of myths or realities. Translating is to find the corresponding myths or realities »³⁷. It is therefore obvious for Bandia (1993; 2009) to attribute the name of translator to the African writer. This view is supported by Adebayo (2000: 76) who says: « Since writing in another language, other than one's own, is basically an exercise in translation ». Dijk (2011: 34) also confirms the findings of Adebayo (2000). Bandia (1993; 2009) is of the view that any book written in a

³⁶ Il est à remarquer cependant qu'en auscultant l'évolution de l'œuvre romanesque africaine, l'on se rend compte qu'un certain nombre d'écrivains se détachent difficilement des données de leur environnement réel, c'est-à-dire des repères historiques, [...] les perspectives d'avenir de la littérature de combat se dotent d'un discours de témoignage pour dénoncer le mal qui sévit en Afrique en général et dans le pays du romancier en particulier. ... La narration romanesque adopte une démarche analytique qui parle des lieux et faits connus, nomme ce qui était l'innommable, point du doigt pour accuser. C'est une orientation critique [qui] puise à l'histoire pour éduquer les contemporains...

³⁷ ...je conçois certaines choses en français... Toute langue, toute société, c'est d'abord un certain nombre de mythes ou de réalités. Traduire, c'est trouver les mythes ou réalités correspondants

colonial language is at glance a translation without the original.

AHMADOU KOUROUMA AS A POLITICIAN

Politics is like hunting, we enter politics as one enters the hunters' association. The thick bush where the hunter operates is vast, inhuman and merciless as space, the political world. The novice hunter before frequenting the bush goes to the school of master hunters to listen, admire and get initiated. You must not Koyaga, take a step as Head of State without a journey of initiation, without acquiring the art of science of dangerous dictatorship with the masters of autocracy. You must first travel. Meet and listen to the masters of absolutism and the single party, the most prestigious of Heads of State of the four cardinal points of the draconian Africa.³⁸

All human beings are politicians irrespective of one's social status or religious inclination. Kourouma cannot be an exception. He is known to be a committed writer, a concerned African elite and a novelist. His style of passing across his message to his reading public has attracted the love and appreciation of people and which earn him awards and medals. For example, Kourouma has received

³⁸ La politique est comme la chasse, on entre en politique comme on entre dans l'association des chasseurs. La grande brousse où opère le chasseur est vaste, inhumaine et impitoyable comme l'espace, le monde politique. Le chasseur novice avant de fréquenter la brousse va à l'école des maîtres chasseurs pour les écouter, les admirer et se faire initier. Vous ne devez, Koyaga, poser aucun acte de chef d'état sans un voyage initiatique, sans vous acquérir de l'art de la périlleuse science de la dictature auprès des maîtres de l'autocratie. Il vous faut au préalable voyager. Rencontrer et écouter les maîtres de l'absolutisme et du parti unique, les plus prestigieux des chefs d'Etats des quatre points cardinaux de l'Afrique liberticide (Kourouma, 1998 : 183).

the prestigious *Le Prix de la Francophonie du Québec*. (Florianopolis, 2011 : 14) and *Le Prix renaudot*.

Kourouma not only denounces the political behaviour of political leaders of his country of origin, which is Côte d'Ivoire, but he stands as a vanguard in combating political, financial and social crimes often displayed by African leaders at independence and after. Kourouma, the author of *Les soleils des indépendances* (1970), tackles African countries at independence as well as the issue of one-party system. In fact, the one-party system adopted by some presidents in Africa at independence is heavily criticised by Kourouma and some other African writers. The one-party system was known in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Guinée Conakry, and Togo among others. It was the only party in such countries and every citizen was to be a member willingly or forcefully. Kourouma (1970 : 23), angrily describes the one-party system as: «The single party, do you know? looks like an association of witches, where the old members eat other people's children »³⁹. He continues by reminding us of the pains afflicted to Diakité for belonging to the opposition party.

Diakité's father who was of the opposition, was summoned, he was informed that his party was dead, that he had to adhere to the unique party L.D.N. He joined the party, paid his contributions, for his family, his oxen and his three trucks. ... The next day, he was summoned again; he had to pay the dues of the party since its establishment⁴⁰

³⁹ ... le parti unique, le savez-vous ? ressemble à une société de sorcières, les grandes initiées dévorent les enfants des autres.

⁴⁰ Le père de Diakité qui était de l'opposition, fut convoqué, on lui signala que son parti était mort, qu'il avait à adhérer au parti unique L.D.N. Il adhéra, paya les cotisations pour lui, sa famille, ses boeufs et ses trois camions... Le lendemain on le manda encore; il devait

Fantouré (1972: 146) explains how the one-party system became compulsory for all the citizenry in *Le Cercle des tropiques*. « Do not waste your time, it is no! The camp is dissolved. You are wrong for wanting to instigate the public opinion against the party. This is not smart. There is only one party in this country, everyone adheres voluntarily or by force, if you are not happy, it is kif-kif » (Our translation)⁴¹. Kwamé Anno argues that the opposition should be sent packing to favour the party in government and to make it the only party in the country, thus killing the opposition considered as pollution. Through Kwamé Anno, Francis Bebey (1973 : 168) says: « Il faudra donc s'entendre: ou bien nous restons d'accord avec nous-mêmes et continuons notre lutte contre l'opposition, ou bien nous abandonnons cette lutte, et la pollution de la nation n'ira qu'empirant ». The African leaders that adopted the one-party system behaved as if it was an African way of democracy that discourages opposition and encourages consensus and unity (Nyang'oro, 1994:133). Rather, it was purely a military way of governance that leads to dictatorship.

In fact, Fama is the last prince the Doumbouya clan who lost his traditional right to kingship to the colonial system. Unfortunately, Fama has no offspring to continue the lineage, and he is politically and socially ruined, having been accused of plotting to remove the president. He is furious about the Suns of independence and the new social order. Fama's wife, Salimata, escaped several attempts of rape. This informs the condition of

payer les cotisations du parti des années courues depuis la création de la L.D.N (Kourouma, 1970: 86).

⁴¹ Ne perdez pas de temps, c'est non! Le camp est dissous. Vous avez tort de vouloir exciter l'opinion publique contre le Parti. Ce n'est pas malin. Il n'y a qu'un seul parti dans ce pays, tout le monde y adhère de gré ou de force, si vous n'êtes pas contents, c'est kif-kif » (Fantouré, 1972: 146).

women in such a society. Fama's death is a tragedy and it looks like a suicide. *Monnè, outrages et défis* (1990) is all about the issue of discovery of Africa by Europeans, the colonization and the imperialism. *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* (1998) exposes the life style of a dictator known as Gnassingbé Eyadema while *Allah n'est pas obligé* narrates the violence and wars in West Africa, especially in Sierra Leone and Liberia (Floriano, 2011). *Quand on refuse on dit non* was published in 2004, a year after the death of Ahmadou Kourouma. The novel describes wars and the political scenarios in Côte d'Ivoire and exposes the tribal differences between the North and South of the country. The novelist blames most of the woes faced by Côte d'Ivoire on Houphouët-Boigny, having left some critical problems unresolved and which led, one after the other, to the presidency of Henri Konan Bédié, Robert Gueï, Laurent Gbagbo, and the current President Alassane Ouattara, putting more accent on the reign of Gbagbo, which was bloody. Greed, corruption, and absolutism were common denominators of these sit-tight presidents and dictators (Floriano, 2011; Abiodun-Eniayekan, 2013; Bakayoko Kamalan, 2013; Akrobou Agba Ezechiel, 2013).

In some of Kourouma's novels, African dictators are clearly mentioned through nicknames and their geographical links. For example, *Allah n'est pas obligé*, is all about the political conflicts that ruined Sierra Leone and Liberia (Ducourneau, 2006). Sissao (2007) argues that the main focus of Kourouma's novels is political and that the political crisis in the sub-region of West Africa in particular and Africa in general is borne out of the greed of African leaders, who want to perpetuate themselves in government houses. Sissao (2007: 6) comments on *Allah n'est pas obligé*:

In short, *Allah n'est pas obligé* reflects the political conflict that has

drained a procession of calamities in the region. Kourouma has the merit of reminding us, as he has done from *The suns of independence*, that Africans are mainly responsible for their misfortunes and it would be too easy to attribute to Allah or even to the other.⁴²

Abiodun-Eniayekan (2013: 35) suggests that Kourouma is well positioned to be called the best African writer to have exposed the corrupt and malicious African leaders who became dictators, misappropriating natural and human resources of their respective countries for private uses. Such leaders metamorphosed into oppressors and allies of the colonial masters, becoming neo-colonialists. Generalizing his comment on the position of African writers, Munyangayo (2012) says that they talk on behalf of the voiceless people, risking being pursued by corrupt leaders, denouncing the greed, despair, agony and violence perpetuated on the helpless citizenry. As such, African writers have assumed social and political responsibilities and commitment to the betterment of their respective countries. In this way, African writers have demonstrated the relevance of literary texts in combating crimes and social injustice, encouraging democratic principles.

Ngong (2008: 146-147) locates *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* within the context of postcolonial Africa where Etienne Gnassingbe Eyadema is well caricatured through Koyaga, Houphouët-Boigny by Tiékoroni; Sékou Touré is represented by Nkoutigui Fondio, while Bossouma in the

fiction is Bokassa in reality. Kourouma did deny these assertions because, after all, he confirms them during an interview he granted the duo of Thibault Le Renard and Comi M. Toulabor (1998: 178): « I wanted to write this novel with names, but my editor has deterred me. I wanted therefore to keep some such as Houphouët-Boigny, ... I kept anyway their totems: leopard, crocodile, hyena, etc. » (Our translation)⁴³. Kourouma denounces how violent the presidents mentioned in his novels are, whether in fiction or in reality. Their cruelties were extended to killings of opponents, for those who refused to go into exile were pursued by the oppressors of their respective countries. Kipré (2003) agrees with the above, accusing the African leaders at independence of using violence to scare their political opponents out of politics so as to appropriate public property. Kipré cited military coups d'états as examples and he is also of the view that the greed of corrupt African leaders is still dragging African states backward and endangering the future of the youth who are the hope of the country. Some of those youths are recruited as child-soldiers, others become armed robbers or are found in drugs and crimes. Kipré (2003: 138) joins Kourouma in concluding that: « Africa is a continent of war and violence »⁴⁴. He is supported by Brou (2013), who summarises the works of Kourouma as an Africa of failure, deception and disillusionment. It is according to Brou (2013: 130): « Africa of the weak, lost, fallen, the disappointed are found one after the other, in Koyaga, Djigui, Birahima, Fama, Macledio »⁴⁵.

⁴² Bref, *Allah n'est pas obligé* traduit le conflit politique qui a drainé un cortège des malheurs dans la sous région. Kourouma a le mérite de nous rappeler, comme il a su le faire depuis *Les soleils des indépendances*, que les Africains, sont pour l'essentiel responsables de leurs malheurs et qu'il serait trop facile de les attribuer à Allah ou même à l'Autre.

⁴³ J'ai voulu écrire ce roman avec des noms, mais mon éditeur m'en a dissuadé. J'ai voulu alors en conserver quelques-uns, tels Houphouët-Boigny, ... J'ai gardé toutefois certains de leurs totems : le léopard, le caïman, l'hyène, etc.

⁴⁴ L'Afrique est ainsi un des continents de la guerre et de la violence.

⁴⁵ L'Afrique des faibles, des perdus, des déçus, des déçus se trouvent en effet, tour à tour, en Koyaga, Djigui, Birahima, Fama, Macledio...

However, Akrobou Agba Ezechiél (2013: 40), admitting the use of facts in Ahmadou Kourouma's works, admires the love, advice and concern Kourouma displays for a dying Africa. According to him: « Through the literary scenery, he [Kourouma] draws the attention of his continent to the principles that underpin all community life: the dialogue to absorb any type of conflict »⁴⁶. Fellah (2013: 208) remarks: « Francophone African literature becomes a powerful place where facts and the imaginary compete to tell the story of disappointed countries whose independence has been diverted »⁴⁷. This is further given credence by Kourouma himself as reported by Lefort and Rosi (1999: 1):

For us African writers, writing is also a matter of survival. When I wrote *The suns of independence*, I aimed to expose abuses of power, economic and social abuses. There was therefore a vital and absolute necessity! All contemporary French writers, as well as authors from other European countries, have devoted part of their production to reflect on the four years of occupation and oppression that their country has suffered during the Second World War. But in Africa, we have had 100 years of occupation, and you understand that it is vital for us to talk, to analyse the consequences and effects. We have had as many massacres as the European during the last war and under the authoritarian Stalinist regimes. In my second novel *Monnè, outrages et défis*, published in 1990, I just wanted to make it clear that we too have suffered greatly. And this suffering is also the subject

⁴⁶ A travers la scénographie littéraire, il [Kourouma] attire l'attention de son continent sur les principes qui fondent toute existence communautaire : le dialogue pour résorber tout type de conflits.

⁴⁷ Aussi, la littérature francophone devient un lieu de pouvoir infaillible où s'affronte vaillamment le réel et l'imaginaire pour relater l'histoire au quotidien de pays dépités et dont les indépendances ont été détournées.

of the novel I just finished, *Waiting for the vote of wild beasts*, which focuses on the tragedy of the Cold War in Africa (Our translation).⁴⁸

POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITY

Ahadou Kourouma is a native of Côte d'Ivoire and a Malinké. Despite his exposure, Kourouma could not hide his feelings to his traditional identity, spell out and well spread in all his novels, that is, the Malinké connection. The issue of identity is relative as the conception of life differs from one region to the other. In Africa, for example, there is nothing called an individual. He can only be defined in relation to others, because 'I am' does not exist in traditional African dictionary. The individual is rather known within the context of 'We are'. In Africa, one exists in relation to the other or to the community (Ojaide, 1992: 45). This way of thinking is well represented by Kourouma (1970: 9) in *Les Soleils des indépendances*, with Fama having a link to the Doumbouya lineage. He writes: « Fama Doumbouya! True Doumbouya, father Doumbouya, mother Doumbouya, last descendant and legitimate

⁴⁸ Pour nous, écrivains africains, l'écriture est aussi une question de survie. Quand j'ai écrit *Les soleils des indépendances*, j'avais pour objectif de dénoncer des abus de pouvoir, des abus économiques et sociaux. Il y avait donc une nécessité vitale et absolue ! Tous les écrivains français contemporains, comme les auteurs d'autres pays d'Europe, ont consacré une partie de leur production à la réflexion sur les quatre ans d'occupation et d'oppression que leur pays ont subi pendant la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale. Or en Afrique, nous avons eu 100 ans d'occupation, et vous comprenez bien qu'il est vital pour nous d'en parler, d'en analyser les suites et les effets. Nous avons eu autant de massacres que les Européens pendant cette dernière guerre et sous les régimes autoritaires staliniens. Dans mon deuxième roman *Monnè, outrages et défis*, publié en 1990, j'ai voulu justement faire comprendre que nous aussi nous avons beaucoup souffert. Et cette souffrance fait aussi l'objet du roman que je viens d'achever, *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages*, axé sur la tragédie de la guerre froide en Afrique.

prince of Doumbouya of Horodougou, panther as totem, was a 'vulture' »⁴⁹. Seydou Badian (1972: 118) in *Sous l'orage* also mentions the collectivism known to Africans. « To a girl, children say 'me'. They speak only of them... Man is like a great tree; any traveler is entitled to his shadow »⁵⁰. Hall (1990: 223) agrees with the collectivism status of cultural identity when he defines cultural identity:

in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective one true self, hiding inside the many others, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history.

This above perception of Africans has been the object of frustration with the infiltration of alien culture into African life, where Africans, especially of Francophone origin, were forced to adopt the French way of life. The first generation of African writers, such as Kourouma, wrote intensively to educate their counterpart Africans of the need to blend and accommodate the revolutionary tendency in vogue in the continent that is, changing along with modern times. Change is a must and Africa must also move in line with the world. The globalization is in progress and the process cannot be stopped. Africa is not strong enough to stand apart and must follow suit. Badian (1972: 56) has said it: « Everything

⁴⁹ Fama Doumbouya! Vrai Doumbouya, père Doumbouya, mère Doumbouya, dernier et légitime descendant des princes Doumbouya du Horodougou, totem panthère, était un 'vautour'

⁵⁰ A la fille, les enfants disent 'moi'. Ils ne parlent que d'eux... L'homme est un peu comme un grand arbre; tout voyageur a droit à son ombre.

changes and we must move with the times »⁵¹. What Badian (1972) and fore-runners of African literature of Francophone origin have noted earlier, is developed by Stuart Hall (1990: 225) in his paper 'Cultural identity and diaspora' acknowledging a complex definition where more factors are considered, including the continuous changing of people. For Hall, cultural identities change. It is a:

matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narrative of the past.

Supporting Stuart Hall (1990), Maalouf (1998: 7) argues that having left his country of origin and adopted French nationality, if asked his identity, he could not really say if he is from Liban or France, but both. « I invariably answer: 'the one or the other'... I am so on the edge of two countries, two or three languages, and several cultural traditions. It is precisely this that defines my identity »⁵². Following the steps of Hall (1990) on cultural identity, Florianopolis (2011: 32) observes that there is no longer a fixed identity in the modern world and Fama had no longer a fixed status. He is a powerless prince who has no access to the kingship during the colonial era and he is not colonialist, nor anti-colonialist, but made a political prisoner, having done nothing.

⁵¹ Tout change et nous devons vivre avec notre temps.

⁵² Je réponds invariablement: 'L'un et l'autre!'... C'est que je suis ainsi à la lisière de deux pays, de deux ou trois langues, de plusieurs traditions culturelles. C'est précisément cela qui définit mon identité.

According to Ducourneau (2006: 36), even though Kourouma agrees to the continuous transformation of an individual identity which is a combination of African, Asian, and western in the African or Côte d'Ivoire context, Africans cannot forget their origin. Responding to questions from Le Renard and Toulabor (1999), Kourouma agrees to his dual identity of Malinké and French. Coulibaly (2013: 193) rather thinks that with the new status of the individual in his movements, the acquisition of a new cultural set-up is inevitable, influencing the historical and cultural build up of such an individual. This is obvious in the reactions displayed by Kourouma's protagonists. The vision of Kourouma is well expressed by Myriam Louviot (2010: 7): « the identity is now seen as a complex narrative, constantly changing and not as a data base. This does not mean that the barriers have been abolished, but have become increasingly complex and changing and their respective value seems more relative »⁵³.

CONCLUSION

Ahmadou Kourouma, before his demise in 2003, became the most valuable and acknowledged writer of francophone African origin. He was loved, respected and honoured near and far from his fatherland, Côte d'Ivoire. He made history by behaving like an historian and a geographer; after all, he was making use of historical facts and real geographical places. He received several awards and granted several interviews. He has criticized African leaders of being corrupt, dictators and oppressors. He did not only blame the external forces' intrusion into African affairs, he called on Africans to accept part of the share in the

woes of the continent which they mismanaged, violated, corrupted, and raped. Yet, despite all his attacks directed at African leaders, he was optimistic of a prosperous Africa if well managed. Kourouma did not mince words in exposing the political leaders in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo, for being responsible for wars and conflicts in those regions that engulfed thousands of dead people, including children and women. He blamed such leaders for their greed and undemocratic tendencies. The issue of identity was well spelt out in his works, supporting a continuous changing of cultural identity in a world which no longer favours a collective cultural identity.

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⁵³ l'identité est désormais conçue comme un récit complexe, en perpétuelle évolution et non plus comme une donnée de base. Cela ne signifie pas que les barrières aient abolies, mais quelles soient devenues plus complexes et mouvantes et que leur valeur respective parait plus relative

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