Anas ATAKORA

**Figures and ballads**

*Figure I: Césaire, we are standing!*

And we are standing, Césaire  
Our other flesh conceived  
In a media-hymn  
Incorruptible flesh  
In constant dereliction

We stand up  
Against our chieftain rulers  
Our hurricane chiefs  
Incessant  
Tormentors  
Of dreams

We are standing, Césaire  
We the other condemned  
By a Machiavellian game  
Avalanches of outsiders  
Mad descents into power  
We won’t descend to our basest level  
Souls devastated by a disastrous disorder  
Feet harassed by a dogged dross  
We walk exhausted  
Toward less convoluted horizons  
And we are standing  
Traumatized but standing  
Against the pre-booked father-son democracies  
Against the fake back-and-forth dancing
Against the halleluiahs
Against the politics of amen amen

We will not go coasting with
The lame ducks of History
Hearts devastated by spirit's defeat
We bravely go it alone
Registered resisters
With obstinate voices
To make vomit the partying torturers

We stand up from go to the end
To not abandon the world to bile
Not to give in to our ridiculous fears
We are standing
We are the voices off-screen
Surprisingly on
We are standing
To freeze the musical comedies
in our beloved Tropics

Awaiting the poem
The pen pauses as it strolls
A stroll through the heart of a city, Lomé
Debauche of dust everywhere
A gale!
The walk is not good for health
But the stroll continues
Through the dusty Sun City
To the glassy forests of Bè
And the decaying casernes F
To peaceful suburbs
The stroll goes on
Awaiting the poem
The pen strolls again from place to place
The first destination : the Dove of Peace
That P-ride
where a thousand murdered dreams are resting!

**Figure II : tonight I will see Patrice**

Tonight when I see Patrice
I will tell him
That his name is a rosary
A monument bordered by fog
I will tell him
That the living have memory storms
Tonight I will tell Patrice
There are those who
Protect themselves
Against his name
By a camouflage of conscience
Or fairs of false words
Tonight when I will see Patrice
I will tell him
That there are those for whom
His name is the wind of freedom
Rage against outrage
For whom his voice
Is a talisman to keep
At the heart of the Congo watershed
I will tell Patrice
That some call him
Lumumba
Like a daily incantation
That they are wary of the ground
Which doesn’t seep blood
The sacrifice
I will tell him
That they are still standing
The furious pulse of all the wounds
They inhale his ideas
At humanity's cradle
I will tell him tonight
That their name is
Child
Woman
Man
Africa
The voices searching the path of liberty
Offering him a prayer
Lumumba
Let your negro gashes speak
So that history's erasures
Make us stronger in bleeding
To grow your dreams in all four corners of the planet!

Awaiting the poem
The pen strolls again from place to place
Second destination : Lomé II
The ex-presidential cathedral
Filled with devilish angels
Practicing gross rites of carnage

Whe we were children,
Adults scared us by saying
Behave or I'll bring you to Lomé II
A baobab tree in an office will spit fire at you
So be it!

**Figure III : One day dear Atsutsè**

One day together
We'll cook the shadows of silence
For the time being
I walk towards you
Dreams linked to feet.
Here
Since your departure
The autopsy hasn't changed
A political scientist's destiny
Reduced to a suicide
Laconic
I probe the labyrinths
Of your packed history
Whole sections
Declared trash
and dead memories
No flash-back to the dead!
We work to go forward
And the pen dipped
In your sap
Will break in the lagoon seven times
Like before
Your trap shut in the sea

So one day
I'll join you again
In the opaque drape of dramas
We will light our shared memories
From the interior of the earth
All the way to the wonderful clouds
To sign man’s sun as free

Awaiting the poem
The pen continues its walk
Digressing
from place to place
Third destination: the F blocks
Administrative blocks
Ass G of the whore republic
Yes
As of its historic wanderings
Togo is a whore that neglects herself
How beautiful is its arborescent mane
Offered to the hotels
Not far from the Coustère monument
Dragging his Olympian body
between forgetting and a fire revived

Awaiting the poem
The pen keeps walking
So very small
Amidst blocks F

And the museum?
In search of its national language
It dresses up as old
and somber and grey and dusty white
Next to the grand congress hall
Where the de-le-gators repeat
At each spectacular session
The musical comedy
The one-voice song
bringing the truth
In an unfair coat of party sentiment
that dances
To the nationally elected beat
Of langorous songs
Insane full-klore, intensely jollylous
Those of you beating the drum
At the beat of mozolam Yééé mozolam
Tcha mobutu mozalam
déla mobutu mozolam
Mozolam yééé mozolam
mobutu mozalam
Tcha mobutu mozalam
déla mobutu mozolam
Mozolam yééé mozo-lam lame lame lame
Cut!

**Figure IV : Togo, I salute you !**

Native cave, I greet you
I enter your silence
Like a poem’s solitude
I greet you, land of resigned insurrectionists
Shining sickly model star
Your silence is pregnant with rage
When will you give birth?
In the twilight of tolerated murmurs
Or at the dawn of discreet screams?
Your belly full of decades
Still can’t preserve its obesity

Land of burning entrails
Your muteness must deliver
But what?
A perfume or a spring
Or a perfume of spring
Perhaps a baby whirl
Maybe a beaten people
Capable of taming
The eternal deliriousness of our monarchs
Awaiting the poem
The pen makes waiting walk
Digress
from place to place
Fourth destination: a new fashion presidency
A new tyranny
Located a breath away
From the traffic on the boulevard
A foreshortened image of the country
The new presidential cathedral
Beams at the surrounding void

**Figure V : The raïs-vi**

The *raïs-vi* is the man
Ciseling humanity’s gold
As only he knows, we suspect
He fabricates Lomé
Wounds dressed with shoddy goods, the masses ignite
And the *raïs-vi* in a planetary-scale view
answered: go to a.p.g, apology, make the situation better
Certainly
Agrees the international delirium

And the greasing has begun
Lasting
Yielding
Floods of luxuries for the recruits
Who profess:
That he is working, the raïs-vi
Working
To unify the world, the political risks
He invents time and again
Where the gold of humanity will also shine
For our murdered dreams

Awaiting the poem
The pen strolls again from place to place
Digressing
from place to place
Fifth Destination: the Grand Market
Finally
Vast liberties like facing an ocean
All talking of commercial po-ethics
Of street merchants
Of brave mamas dada-wla-to
Of the patriotic Deckon
With his Chinese shops
Lebanon via Nigéria
All manufacturing loads of cash
Good mood guaranteed
Simple Symbol Samba
halo akpèssè agbadja
survival in trance
The pen moving
In an animated walk
The ballad of the pen goes on
Crossed voice energies bargainings
Divergences
Ultimately implicating themselves
swirling like a road in circles
Where the pen finally meets the henchman
At the C cafe
He tells of harmony,
Of opposites making for
A Great Market
that will make our nation Great.

Translated from the French by the author