

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

When 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 thepatriotic 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*