

*(Start on a calm tone, focused and introverted.)*

Ac:

Dakar, Senegal mai-juin 2010.

Part I:

Me: My knowledge of French is so little,  
that I doubt, I question: Should I work  
here?

Essayez! So, the third sentence goes...

I am going to tell you...

Essayez encore une fois!

I am going to tell you about one of my  
favourite pieces of art. I am going to tell  
you about this piece because...

parce que...

Az:

The poet said: "Joal, I remember ..."  
Every time I hear this phrase, I want to  
say "St. Louis, I remember ..."

I remember the light of this town, so  
film like, which so many silver screen  
magicians came to pluck, whom I met  
too early, in my life.

I remember the surreal names which  
have lived so long within me: "El  
Hadj," "Rex," "Vox". Halls reserved for  
adults, perdition palaces of souls still so  
green, repository of our already extro-  
vert childhood realm.

Ar:

I woke up this morning, admittedly  
feeling down, but of very high freedom,  
I am looking for a territory within, a  
personal space to place my words to  
resolve all requests from outside.

Mu:

All this leads me to wonder for whom  
I speak and to whom I speak. Not that  
I'm becoming pessimistic or defeatist, or  
discouraged, but simply that I would like  
to (re) present social exclusion through  
its various strata.

You see, social exclusion acts at very  
different levels, in very different degrees  
and in very different forms.

Some are excluded economically, other  
geographically, and others still cultur-  
ally.

These people in the street are simply  
excluded, at all levels, to the highest  
degree, and in the most despicable way.

Ke:

We are in the meeting room, it's the  
afternoon, we're all tired and I'm bored.

It's a bit cold, but nobody is getting up  
to adjust the air conditioning.

Ac:

Parce que... it does exactly, exactly what we had talked about: mixing an absolutely human approach with an absolutely political one.

Az:

I frantically frequented these cinemas, the haunting grounds of an interlope crowd of small time schemers of all kinds. Magical places, where, inside and out and every night, the most unusual scenes and sights were to be seen.

Ac:

It's a scene from a movie...

de '77 ou peut-être '78.

Ar:

Yet I know that there is no contradiction in the sad display that I'm making of this agonising tension between outside and inside.

Ac:

The scene is directed by a famous director; a very famous one.

Mu:

We are called to vote in a referendum.

Ke:

Fuck, it's always the same people who talk! And without much conviction either, maybe they have gone to the beach, mentally.

Ac:

You might know his name, his movies, but the name does not matter for what I want to tell you.

Ar:

I know I must first deconstruct the way society looks upon itself to rid myself of the demons in the street which dance out my window and try day and night to capture the beauty of my dreams to feed it to their so-called activists...

Mu:

Therefore they become insignificant on the chessboard that is the world where, increasingly, relationships between individuals and groups are established only by force.

Ke:

We fill in boxes in a Word table. Key words, bits of career. There's something obscene in the way we spew out numbered objectives.

Ac:

Maintenat je suis sûr... c'était '78.

Ac:  
The director is asked to contribute to a collaborative movie.

Each participant contributes a scene or a short movie to comment on the current political situation in their home country.

It is the first time - since the devastating and self-inflicted war of 30 years ago - that there are violent political conflicts unfolding in his country.

Depending on their political position, some called it a rebellion.  
The democratic balance of the society is fragile and the situation touch and go.

Ar:

I am a dangerous parasite, a virus in their plan to build a concerted collective memory. My loneliness imminent, my oppressing silence does not suit them.

Az:  
Outside, there were always a group of onlookers.

Mu:  
All the philosophy, wisdom and outlook on life of the Wolof is contained in their proverbs.

Az:  
I have pictured myself at the Sorbonne, not in Paris, but in Abidjan. Or maybe it was the roundabout in Sandaga market, haranguing the people passing by, rushed, indifferent...

Ar:  
... whom they call popular masses, mob, commuters, *kaw kaw* (countrymen), scum, the people or simply the others. I am a palimpsest, a grey area, a memory gap in their social conscience hijacking strategy.

Ke:  
I don't want to think about it. I've stopped thinking about it.

Ac:  
32 ans avant...

I was seven when the scene was shot.

Mu:  
Of all the sayings that summarises the Wolof and best reflects their frame of mind, *Nit, Mooy garabam nit*, must be the best: "The only cure for humans are humans."

*(For all except Mu tones begin to differ from each other.)*

Ac: *(soft)*  
Metteur en scène...  
is the French word for director.

Me: Is he naked?  
Dans mes souvenirs...

I am not sure? I'd say: no! It must have been later...  
dans une autre scène.

Az: *(low)*  
International trade agreements: GATT, WTO, EPAs.

Ke:  
It feels bad. My body has no reason to be here.

Az:  
The relationship between elitism and Pop Culture, national diversity and cultural Chernobyl.

Ar:  
From the window of my room rises the clamour of urban crowds, I hear footsteps on the asphalt and cobblestones.

Mu:  
Have we become obsolete remedies, therefore poisonous, especially to those people in the street?

Ke:  
I go to the bathroom to recall my face. Nothing. No reaction at all.

Ac: (*strong*)

Me: The scene is a semi-documentary, filmed in the director's own flat with himself, his lover and his real mother.

Az: (*very low*)

Antagonisms: Merchandise versus work of art...

Ke:

Whether it's me or not, what difference does it make?

Mu:

There would then be nothing left for us to do but build a society firmly focused on development, happiness and the fulfilment of each and all.

Az: (*low*)

...industry versus culture, iron pot versus clay pot...

Ar: (*strong*)

A city is a city. A city is not a village where everyone knows each other,

Ke:

I admit: I'm getting older. My God, I'm getting older!

I can't stand the idea that I age from one meeting to another,

But my speech is blurred by the song of the muezzin broadcast by satellite dishes and MMDS sitting on the terrace of the city houses.

a city is both a public and a private space where everyone loses themselves in the anonymous crowd.

And this city must be transformed, it must be cleansed, cleaned, rebuilt and modernised, or rather post-modernised...

that I'm aging under the words of these old madmen.

(*pointing at the others*)

Under your fucking words!

Ac:

These two are starring as what they really are: his most intimate...

personnes de références.

And both... are lacking any political awareness or involvement whatsoever.

Which speaks out...

- comme je me souviens -

by not speaking out.

Comme je me souviens...

just as you were not speaking out!

Az:

I learned that this industry of the intangible that shapes our emotions, not only determines our cultural and spiritual values, but also generates tremendous profits.

Mu:

When I say us, I mean the great mass that forms the backbone of all life forces of the nation, but have no access to official language that can only be spoken in French. The French agreed upon, approved and authorised by the immortal peers of the French Academy.

Az:  
I learned that this industry of the intangible reduces our culture to the lowest common denominator. Education and thought are not the objective, but entertainment and consumption are: The American Way of Life.

Ar: (*burst of laugh*)  
Post-modernise a city, to them, is to speed it up, light it up, make it transparent.

Ac:  
Part II

Ar:  
Exactly, I'm anonymous, someone you wouldn't know but would notice easily.  
I am an urban icon...

Ke:  
I wash my hands. The wall opposite irritates me with its cheap décor. I think I am in shock.

La scène du film :

Evening. The director sits at a table with his mother. The camera pictures both in one...

cadrage .

Interior. Subdued colours. No camera movements. A slight wide angle distorts the parallel lines of the table. Beer bottles on the table are enlarged by the perspective. Is the director smoking? Probably.

Az:  
As long as we exist, as long as we have the resources and energy for it, we will continue to fight this avalanche of images that formats our thought patterns and alienates our reason for being from the world and from ourselves.

Ar:  
... an image of the city that leaves no trace for their certainty needs. I'm an unidentified urban object obstructing all view and injuring the perspective of dirty avenues.

Mu:  
None may claim any positive outcome on any scale, if our roads and streets are still populated by people with no home, no future, no life, whose numbers swell day by day.

Az:  
Beyond our selfish creative desire we assert the claim to be the voice of our society in cyberspace...

Ac:  
Et sa mère?

Me: I am not sure? I'd say: no. It must have been later.

Ke:  
Damn, all these details which I know intimately! I can feel that I am totally inside!  
Yes, we are all inside, we are all in it! We live with all this shit until we end up looking like it.

Ac:  
Dans le cadrage...  
he occupies the left part  
with his massive body. His  
body forms the scene's  
out of balance centre. The  
scene starts from here and  
loops back to his staged  
naked ego.

Me: Are they having dinner together?

Ke:  
I leave the bathroom, almost feeling refreshed. I watch the others, who are not there, except for those subtle acts of submission.  
I am suddenly in a mood for happy rebellion.

Az:  
... to carry mirrors to project back to it, memorise it, recall and enhance its own image, in an age in which the world speaks of nothing but diversity yet where our identities have never been so vague, so threatened.

Ar:  
Some call the gaze I cast on urban reality subversive, manipulated or dematerialized; and my dream of dismantling their urbanistic project they would call borderline utopic.

Mu:  
I wonder, above all, where is the intelligence common to us all, where is the wealth of the world that can feed everyone.  
Where is this space that may shelter everyone.

*(Short silence)*

Ar:  
My shelter is a non-place that exists only in my devolved, immaterial, deterritorialized memory.

Ke:  
I make faces. No reaction. Nothing at all.

Ac:  
Part III

Mise en scène.

Me: The director forces his mother to speak out, to formulate an opinion about the violence taking place... durant ces années.

*(Az and Ar read line after line, responding to each other.)*

Az:  
Within, always, on the screen, old B movies would play,  
  
Hollywood or Bollywood,  
  
reels of films worn from having passed through  
countless other cinemas elsewhere.

Their marathon route peters out in these tropical rooms.

Ar:  
  
I follow the paths of the metropolis in the abstraction of light  
  
in my isolated neighbourhood,  
  
excluded from wealth redistributions that are always diverted from the Ministries of towns and cities.

Ac:  
Me: She tergiversates.

Elle tergiverse...

... tergiversates because she argues that  
any time you utter anything in public...  
people... les autres...

Mu:  
When I ask where are their eyes, I am  
not talking about the two balls of flesh  
and fluid housed in their facial orbits,  
I mean the eyes of their hearts, of their  
conscience, of their humanism, of their  
intelligence, of their moral sense.

Ke:  
I say out loud "We are suffering!". Then  
I feel a little ashamed of my words.  
Surely, I must have been joking.

*(Az and Ar read line after line, responding to each other.)*

Az:  
When, unable to go on, the old projector

began to sputter bits of images or sound, or  
simply

choked on a piece of film and finally broke  
down,

catching the breath it had lost decades ago.

Ar:

Yet, I love to lose myself in this city, I like to  
walk aimlessly, without fixed destination,

meander, wander like a madman along the in-  
finite itineraries of an invisible territory,

anonymous and almost completely deperson-  
alised.

*(Mu vigorously shakes right hand as the flow of his speech accelerates.)*

Ac:  
... les autres...  
  
... would use your utterance turned against you  
and this is exactly what you had told me.  
  
Excactly that!

Mu:  
Election campaigns become moments of traf-  
ficking. It becomes the number one language  
for soliciting the votes of my countrymen. So,  
like our politicians, it becomes a language that  
speaks not for the next generations, but only  
for the next elections.

*(All are becoming more and more relaxed.)*

Ac:  
Mise...

The director insists pain-  
fully: so, what do you  
think, mother?

... en scène:

Az:  
Viewers who identified  
with the hard-nose char-  
acters embodied by the  
hero of their favourite  
film would heckle the  
projectionist and call  
him all sorts of names,  
until he finally managed  
to cajole the projector  
back into service and re-  
sume the séance,

Ar: *(without text)*  
Oh, what a shame, hum...

Ke: *(indifferent)*  
I believe the boss replied  
instantly to my coup. He  
might even have said that  
he suffers, too.

*(Ar becomes more and more funny, leading the others.)*

Ac:  
Tell me, tell me!

Az:  
they would then  
transfer their belli-  
cose attention to the  
wrinkled images on  
the screen,

would watch the  
cigarette peddlers.

Part II:

Since then, so much  
water has flowed  
under so many  
bridges ...

The flow of cinemas  
has not stopped  
shrinking down to a  
trickle.

Tell me!

Ar:

*(then he begins to  
imitate Ac)* Tell me!

*(talking to the oth-  
ers)* Tell me, tell me,  
tell me.

*(pleading, but still  
laughing)*  
Sylvie, my love,  
tell me!

Mu: *(accelerates  
again the flow of his  
speech)*

Otherwise this mo-  
ment could have the  
same effect as the  
“J’accuse” by Emile  
Zola in the Dreyfus  
affair, or *Germinal*,  
among the French,  
19th century prole-  
tariat.

At the beginning,  
in our country, the  
French language,  
like guns, like bru-  
tal methods, like the  
whip, like the slave  
raids, was an instru-  
ment of domination  
and oppression im-  
ported with the lug-  
gage of the settler.  
Today it is the ba-  
rometer gauging our  
degree of alienation  
and trauma - us, the  
sons of former grand-  
sons of the Gaul fa-  
therland.

*(jerky and quick)*

But that is not enough  
to make it ours, a lan-  
guage in which we  
might dream, laugh,  
dance, cook, rock our  
children to sleep, nor  
touch the heart of our  
problems, a language  
with which we might  
engage in a timely  
manner in a develop-  
ment dynamic which  
is above all a major-  
ity issue.

Ke:  
In any case it did  
not last and we  
quietly continued  
the meeting.

*(without text)*  
And I? Me?  
Tell me about it!

Where are we  
meeting today?

Tell me!

It all sounds today  
like an endless fu-  
neral oration.

Njaay Yaadikoon  
must be turning in  
his grave ...