

(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 extrovert 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, others geographically, and others still culturally.

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.

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:

It's a scene from a movie...

de '77 ou peut-être '78.

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:

Maintenant 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.

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.

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.

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:

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.

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."

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,

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...

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,

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

(pointing at the others)
Under your fucking words!

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.

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

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.

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.

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?

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.

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.

(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 infinite itineraries of an invisible territory, anonymous and almost completely depersonalised.

(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 trafficking. 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 painfully: so, what do you think, mother?

... en scène:

Az:
Viewers who identified with the hard-nose characters 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 resume 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 belligerent attention to the wrinkled images on the screen,

would watch the cigarette peddlers.

Ar:

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

Otherwise this moment could have the same effect as the "J'accuse" by Emile Zola in the Dreyfus affair, or Germinal, among the French, 19th century proletariat.

At the beginning, in our country, the French language, like guns, like brutal methods, like the whip, like the slave raids, was an instrument of domination and oppression imported with the luggage of the settler. Today it is the barometer gauging our degree of alienation and trauma - us, the sons of former grandsons of the Gaul fatherland.

Ke:

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

Tell me!

(then he begins to imitate Ac) Tell me!

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

Part II:

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

(talking to the others) Tell me, tell me, tell me.

(jerky and quick)
But that is not enough to make it ours, a language 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 development dynamic which is above all a majority issue.

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

Tell me!

It all sounds today like an endless funeral oration.

Njaay Yaadikoon must be turning in his grave ...

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

Where are we meeting today?