

N°095

Issa

Sambo

Introduction / Einführung:  
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Issa Samb is a Senegalese sculptor, painter, actor, philosopher, performance artist, writer, and critic. For decades, he has been creating a galaxy of interconnected universes in which the signs of everyday life are transformed into altars to personal obsessions.

One of those obsessions is politics and politicians, in particular Senegalese politicians, whom he has frequently described as mindless people. In keeping with his readings of Marxist philosophy and aesthetics, many of his sculptural assemblages take the paradigm of revolutionaries—Che Guevara, Amílcar Cabral, Ahmed Sékou Touré, Lech Wałęsa, the Black Panthers—as their subject matter, suggesting the possibility of harnessing the energy of the visual arts to support the struggle of the weak and disadvantaged.

In 1974, along with filmmaker Djibril Diop Mambéty and an interdisciplinary group of artists, writers, musicians, actors, and filmmakers, Samb founded the Laboratoire Agit-Art. Its multidisciplinary actions were directed against the formalism of the *École de Dakar*, a style of art practice developed at the National Art School of Dakar and drenched in Léopold Sédar Senghor's philosophy of *Négritude*, which promotes the difference between African and European in the same way that it strictly respects the separation of forms and disciplines in the use of African symbolism. Aiming to transform the nature of artistic practice from a formalist, object-bound fixation to a process that is based on experimentation and agitation, ephemerality rather than permanence, political and social ideas rather than aesthetic notions, Agit-Art developed a distinct "aesthetic of the social." Audience participation was paramount to the group's work, which privileged communicative acts over the embodied object. Neither utopian nor self-referential, it grounded its actions in the immediate sociopolitical situation. Today, many of the founding members have passed away, but the group's spirit persists and continues to be materialized in all of Samb's work.

The following text by Samb is written in the cryptic, elliptical, elusive, evanescent, and erratic style that he has developed throughout his career. It begins with quotations in no particular order. The first one refers to an imaginary HE who is nevertheless a HE whom everyone is supposed to know: the African politician, and

precisely the Senegalese politician. The quotations continue with a story that took place in Dakar in the mid-1980s, when the mayor had all stray dogs slaughtered because one of them had bitten his daughter. Samb reads this event as a process of the manipulation and brutalization of society, juxtaposing it with the actions of Hitler. Far-fetched? Exaggerated? Perhaps not. One can see it as a perfect example of associative thinking and writing: the line of thought begins with the slaughter of dogs, goes on to the German shepherd, an animal that for Samb has the same value as a human being, and leads to Hitler, the personification of cruelty and manipulation.

The text ends with the death of Steve Jobs and the Internet's incapacity to solve emotional problems or to cure diseases, cancer in particular. Samb has neither an e-mail account, a bank account, nor a cell phone, does not watch TV or indulge in the modern frenzy of life and the constant pursuit of wealth and recognition. And yet one cannot fail to recognize the incisive character of his observations on the course of the world: how systems develop, how people develop, how they behave, how they relate, how they feel. *Le sentir* ("to feel," not the feeling itself), as he often states, is the most important human activity. Themes such as affection, commitment, faith and beliefs, sorrows and joys, failures and success, are continually revisited and treated as fields for investigating the complexity (and simplicity) of being.

ON THE ART OF RECORDING TRIVIAL IDEAS, IN THE FORM OF A PROJECT OF PLACING, DISPLACING, AND REPLACING THE CONCEPT IN ITS ENVIRONMENT WITH A VIEW TO PRECIPITATING ITS FALL is a piece of writing that reads like a long, unpunctuated song. The style is elliptical, dense, and compact, interspersed with pauses, reflections, references and quotations, reminiscences and fabulations; a style that reflects the absence of boundaries between poetry, pamphlet, novel, and diary. It is an accumulation of real events and the thoughts and emotions they trigger. These are seemingly unrelated, and yet they are spun with a recognizable, common yarn: the duty of an artist to his immediate environment.

March 13, 2012

Koyo Kouoh (b. 1967) lives and works in Dakar and is the Founding Artistic Director of RAW MATERIAL COMPANY, a center for art, knowledge, and society; she is Agent for DOCUMENTA (13).



# Koyo Kouoh

Issa Samb ist ein senegalesischer Bildhauer, Maler, Schauspieler, Philosoph, Performancekünstler, Schriftsteller und Kritiker. Über Jahrzehnte hinweg hat er eine ganze Galaxie vielfältiger, miteinander verknüpfter Welten geschaffen, in denen sich Zeichen des Alltagslebens in Altare für seine persönlichen Obsessionen transformiert finden.

Eine dieser Obsessionen bilden Politik und (insbesondere senegalesische) Politiker, die er immer wieder als geistlose Menschen beschrieben hat. In Fortführung seiner Lektüren marxistischer Philosophie und Ästhetik nehmen sich viele seiner skulpturalen Assemblagen thematisch jenes Paradigmas an, das von Revolutionären – Che Guevara, Amílcar Cabral, Ahmed Sékou Touré, Lech Wałęsa oder den Black Panthers – gesetzt wurde, wobei er die Möglichkeit andeutet, man könne die Energie der bildenden Kunst bündeln, um so den Kampf der Schwachen und der Entrechteten zu unterstützen.

Im Jahr 1974 gründete Samb gemeinsam mit dem Filmemacher Djibril Diop Mambéty und einer interdisziplinären Gruppe von Künstlern, Schriftstellern, Musikern, Schauspielern und Filmemachern die Initiative Laboratoire Agit-Art. Deren in verschiedenen Disziplinen gleichzeitig angesiedelte Aktionen richteten sich gegen den Formalismus der École de Dakar, einer an der National Art School of Dakar entwickelten Stilrichtung künstlerischer Praxis, die von Léopold Sédar Senghors Philosophie der Négritude durchtränkt war – einem Ansatz, der die Differenz zwischen afrikanischer und europäischer Kultur ebenso vertritt wie er die Trennung zwischen Formen und Disziplinen im Gebrauch afrikanischer Symboliken konsequent respektiert. Mit dem Ziel, das Wesen künstlerischer Praxis von einer formalistischen, objektgebundenen Fixierung in Richtung eines an Experiment und Agitation interessierten, eher an Flüchtigkeit denn an Dauerhaftigkeit, eher an politischen und sozialen denn an ästhetischen Begriffen orientierten Prozesses zu verändern, entwickelte Agit-Art eine eigene »Ästhetik des Sozialen«. Die Partizipation des Publikums stand bei der Arbeit der Gruppe im Vordergrund, bewertete sie doch kommunikative Akte höher als verkörperte Objekte. Ohne utopische oder selbstreferenzielle Züge verankerte sie ihre Aktionen in den je

unmittelbaren soziopolitischen Gegebenheiten. Inzwischen sind viele Gruppenmitglieder verstorben, der Geist der Gruppe ist jedoch weiterhin lebendig und findet in sämtlichen Werken Samb seine Materialisierung.

Der folgende Text von Samb ist in jenem kryptischen, elliptischen, schwer fassbaren, flüchtigen und erratischen Stil verfasst, den er im Verlauf seiner Karriere entwickelt hat. Er beginnt mit einer Reihe von Zitaten ohne bestimmte Reihenfolge. Das erste bezieht sich auf einen imaginären ER, der nichtsdestotrotz ein ER ist, den jedermann kennen sollte: der afrikanische Politiker, genauer gesagt der senegalesische Politiker. Weiter geht es bei den Zitaten mit einer Geschichte, die sich Mitte der 1980er Jahre in Dakar zugetragen hat – der Bürgermeister ließ damals alle streunenden Hunde abschlachten, da einer von ihnen seine Tochter gebissen hatte. Samb interpretiert dieses Ereignis als einen Prozess der Manipulation und der Brutalisierung der Gesellschaft und geht so weit, dies den Handlungen Hitlers gleichzustellen. Zu weit hergeholt? Übertrieben? Vielleicht nicht. Man kann das als perfektes Beispiel für ein assoziatives Denken und Schreiben verstehen: Der Gedankengang beginnt mit dem Abschlachten der Hunde, geht weiter zum Deutschen Schäferhund, einem Tier, das für Samb denselben Wert wie ein menschliches Wesen besitzt, und führt schließlich bis zu Hitler, der Personifizierung von Grausamkeit und Manipulation.

Der Text endet mit dem Tod von Steve Jobs und der Unfähigkeit des Internets, emotionale Problemsituationen zu lösen oder Krankheiten, vor allem Krebs, zu heilen. Samb verfügt weder über einen E-Mail-Account noch über ein Bankkonto oder über ein Mobiltelefon, er schaut weder fern noch lässt er sich auf den Wahnsinn des modernen Lebens und die ständige Jagd nach Reichtum und Anerkennung ein. Und dennoch bleibt einem keinesfalls die Prägnanz seiner Beobachtungen zum Lauf der Welt verborgen: wie sich Systeme entwickeln, wie sich Menschen entwickeln, wie sie sich verhalten, wie sie fühlen. *Le sentir* (das Fühlen, nicht das Gefühl an sich) ist, wie er oft bemerkt, die wichtigste menschliche Aktivität. Themen wie Zuneigung, Engagement, Glaube und Überzeugungen, Leiden und Freuden, Scheitern und Erfolg werden immer wieder aufgegriffen und als Bereiche behandelt, in denen sich die Komplexität (und Einfachheit) des Daseins erforschen lassen.

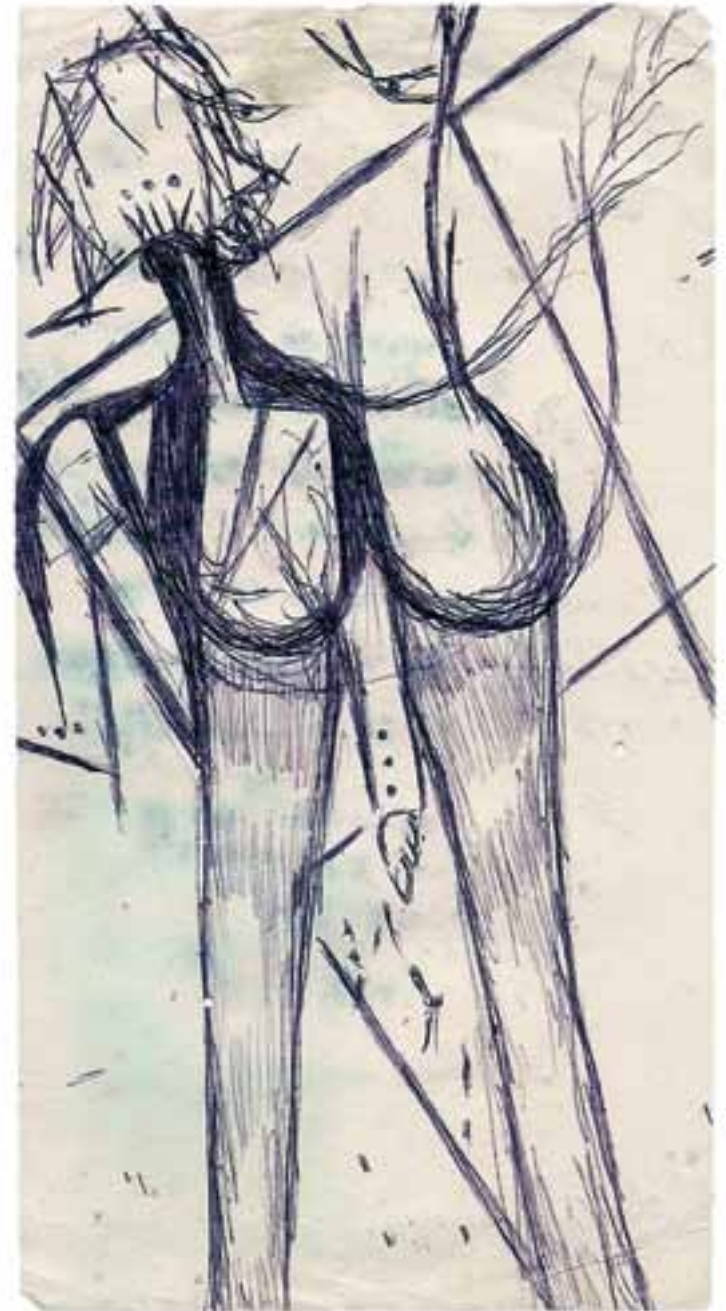
ON THE ART OF RECORDING TRIVIAL IDEAS, IN THE FORM OF A PROJECT OF PLACING, DISPLACING, AND REPLACING THE CONCEPT IN ITS ENVIRONMENT WITH A VIEW TO PRECIPITATING ITS FALL (Über die Kunst des Aufzeichnens trivialier Ideen in Form eines Projekts der Platzierung,

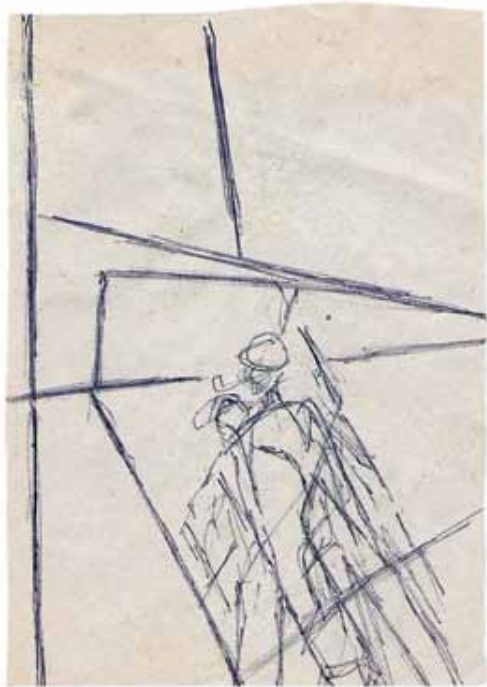


Deplatzierung und Neuplatzierung des Konzepts in seiner Umwelt im Hinblick auf die Herbeiführung ihres Falls) ist ein Text, der sich wie ein langes, ohne Punkt und Komma verfasstes Lied liest. Der Stil ist elliptisch, dicht und kompakt, von Pausen, Reflexionen, Referenzen und Zitaten, Erinnerungen und Erfindungen durchzogen – ein Stil, der die Abwesenheit eindeutiger Grenzen zwischen Dichtung, Pamphlet, Roman und Tagebuch widerspiegelt. Es ist eine Ansammlung realer Ereignisse und der Gedanken und Empfindungen, die diese auslösen. Diese sind scheinbar beziehungslos, und dennoch sind sie aus einem erkennbaren gemeinsamen Stoff gemacht: der Verpflichtung eines Künstlers gegenüber seiner unmittelbaren Umwelt.

13. März 2012

Koyo Kouoh (geb. 1967) lebt und arbeitet in Dakar und ist Künstlerische Leiterin der von ihr gegründeten RAW MATERIAL COMPANY, einem Zentrum für Kunst, Wissen und Gesellschaft; sie ist Agentin der dOCUMENTA (13).





# Issa Samb

ON THE ART OF RECORDING TRIVIAL IDEAS,  
IN THE FORM OF A PROJECT OF PLACING,  
DISPLACING, AND REPLACING THE CONCEPT  
IN ITS ENVIRONMENT WITH A VIEW TO  
PRECIPITATING ITS FALL

Quotations in no particular order

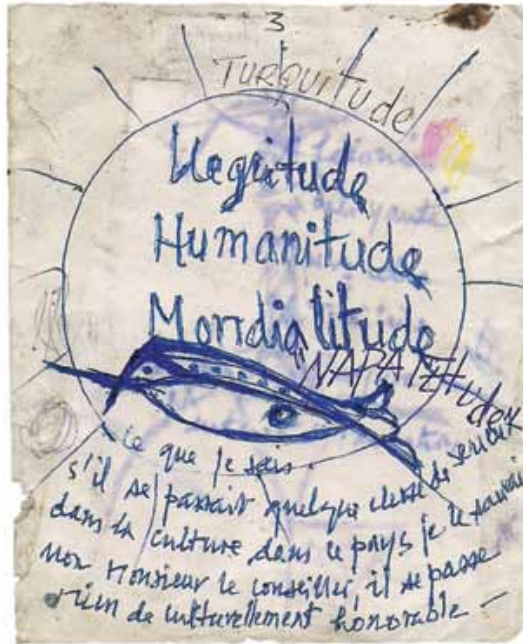
The limitless incompetence of politicians in Africa is such that a not inconsiderable number of artists (without preparation) are in place in the arena with borrowed ideas. What I myself think, he should know. He must also convince himself that his “exact” place is not the one promised. It is instead actually in the following question: How does he place himself today and definitively in the future with regard to the other?

Metamorphoses.

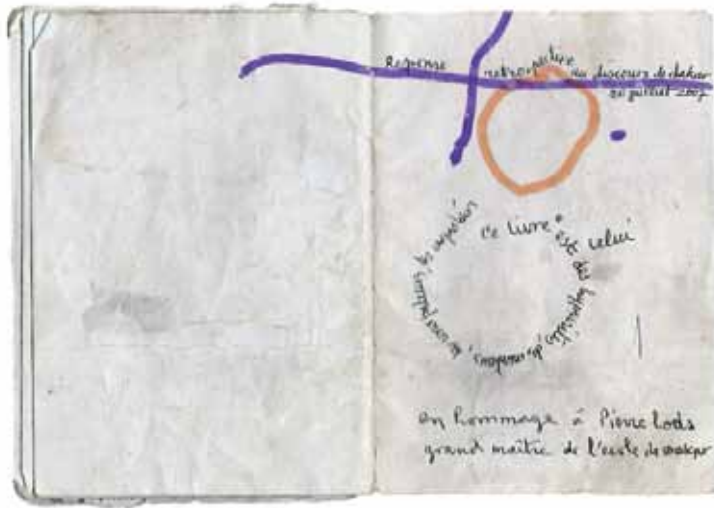
To remain alert so as to produce, with repercussions, 1963 words, and then . . . afterwards?

To slaughter a shepherd is an offense! To slaughter a man—not a German Shepherd—a dog, an animal, is a serious offense! And even more so when on the avenue of the Republic—Hitler was an accident. The time of a technical accident, the Republic took for a piece of information what was nothing but a manipulation, a technique for shaping consciences in fashion since Le Joola capsized in the depths. Since that event, this nation is possessed by a certain taste for catastrophe. I move about. I’ve now decided to devote, after writing “this book,” my thoughts to the “walking man” by N’dary Lô (50 years old).

To write an article on the pharmacopoeia of the Cape Verde peninsula. Dakar is a subject that conserves strength, men, talismans and amulets buried in sites that are known by only a few of us. Like each morning, like each evening, the other is there. The sculpture by N’dary Lô (he has just brought to life *Retournement*) is there, which plays hide-and-seek with my mind, the other’s mind.







The bear's mind was far away. I decided to move about, to set out on a quest, to turn myself around, to put myself at the centre of my conscience, to exit from my memory—to un-memorize and to see my mind enter inside the mirror, and to introduce doubt therein. To better capture in the X-ray of hands, ideas germinate and even bloom between the branches. I move about. Little by little I see Penda, her head, put herself back the right way round. Seize hold of my imagination. I change places and throw myself into the future. Between two ideas, I've invited fertile doubt. I didn't want to let myself get carried away. EVERYWHERE YOUNG PEOPLE DEMONSTRATE. WORDS, WORDS, WORDS, (MALAL, MAKTAR LE CAGOULARD, BILL DIAKHOU, THIAT). IT'S NOT GOING WELL IN AFRICA. WE KEEP OUR DISTANCE WITH THE CLEAR CONSCIENCE THAT WE ARE NOT ENTANGLED IN A NETWORK OF CONFLICT, OF RELATION, OF REVELATION, THAT WE AVOID APPROACHING FROM INSIDE.

I kept my mind to the side while waiting to be gripped by . . .

It was there, the effort to be made, the great difficulty of separating myself from "me" so that at each step I rediscover myself with thinking that acts without premeditation . . .

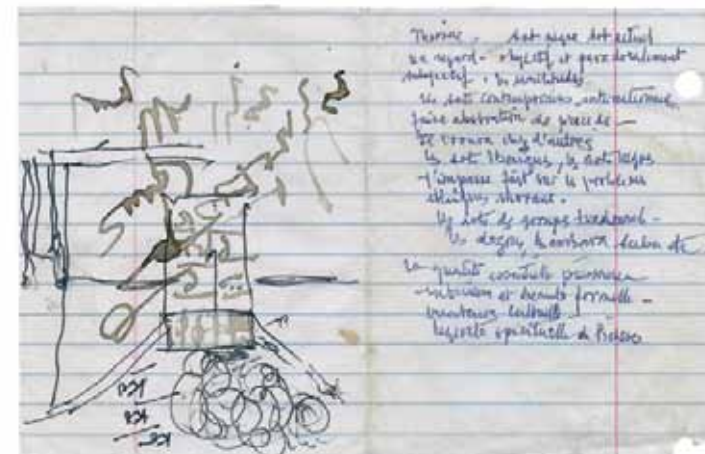
Just in case.

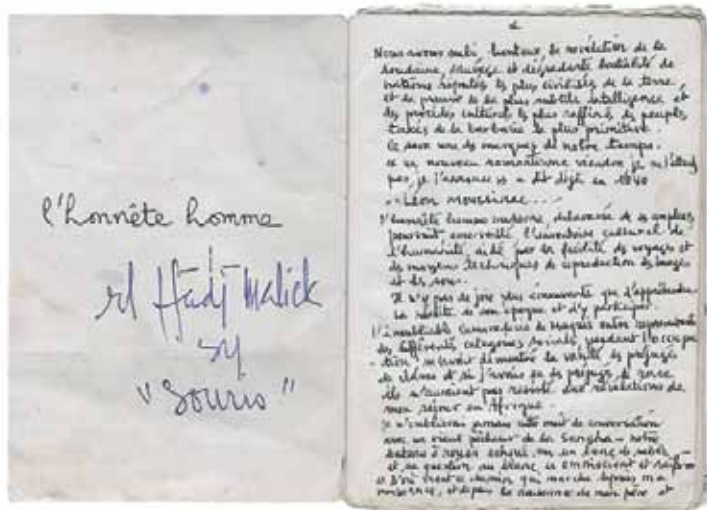
I took a stone, a thought that has its place, that relies on itself, that defends itself from all pointless gestures and words.

Africa isn't faring well. It's the world that is in a bad state. Things are going badly. They have lost their harmony and accord because we are in discord with ourselves. Now a notion I subscribe to is to overtake the industrial revolution of the twentieth century, which continues to develop without limits. We are in a realm of predators and speculators. We must master this "depressionist" movement. Eleven years later (the ideology of pleasure), it's what? And what is happening? Herein the problem truly lies. The genesis of a conflict which allows itself to be imagined, which lets itself be taken, which leads us to believe in it, which doesn't seem to repeat itself at all, but which persists in the place where it is found . . .

And which energetically offers a constant presence to the plant.

Which leads to synthesis and out beyond oppositions and confrontations, widens circles and unifies forms that constantly grow. In painting, we are not obliged to argue, to respond to questions, as is the case in philosophy. Here we don't have to decide anything. We draw lines and place colors on faces. We look at eyes; except when needing to know how to decipher a certainty reflected in them . . .





## A RELIEF

These faces are but inspirations on two axes when everything collapses or deteriorates—this ant column that I imagine coming out of eyes would be real only in movement . . .

In the African tradition. This tradition is in the middle of breaking down. We should plan for its collapse. “The African ethic draws on a fundamental notion: the knowledge of oneself and on its corollary, the control of oneself, mastery of oneself, to be master of oneself, conscious of one’s value. The African man (his double) has acquired the feeling of his power over nature by dint of having exercised it over himself. His sole desire, but also his duty, is to spread these powers by applying them and exercising them over the world. Education is completely turned toward and directed at this aim, at this ethical behavior.”

Religion, spiritualité  
et pensées africaines  
(Religion, spirituality,  
and African thoughts)  
Dominique Zahan  
(Paris, Payot, 1970)

That said, I have always drawn ever since I was very small. I’ve filled multiplication exercise books, addition exercise books, subtraction exercise books, and so where does the movement go in all of this, where

does it come from, where does it go? Something in this movement of thought is extraordinarily mysterious. The man walks, advances with his shadow, the shadow advances, the man stops, the man advances with a light step after a few short moments of rest that fate grants him before pushing him toward the East or toward the West. There is here in the composition a main invisible thread, a voice that says to him: “You must listen to your heart because one day it will question you about your relationship with water and the wind, it will question you about me. What will you say to it? Will you know to tell it this: ‘We were in the turtle marshland together. We went into the marshland up to our ears with our talismans. The sun set when they came looking for us—hurry up—it’s time for dinner. For whatever it’s worth, once I’d become an adult I was only capable of feeling emotions . . .’”

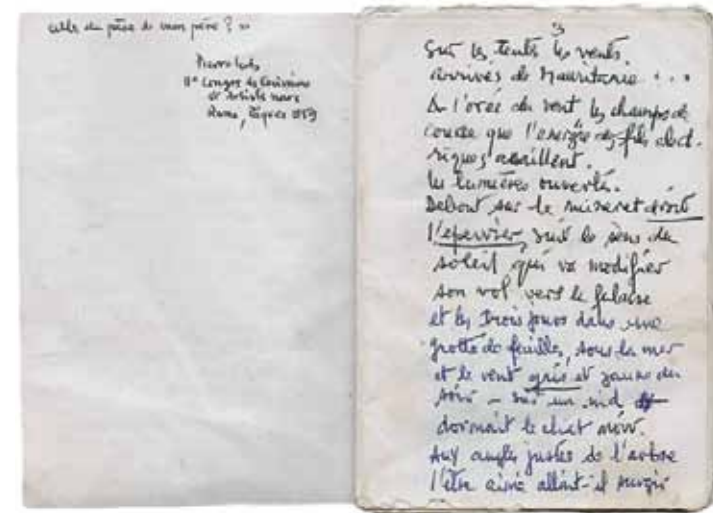
All these drawings, for a long time, I meticulously kept them thousands of miles away and, year after year, I separated them from own existence. Aesthetics for the other who, with no attachments, culture, or beliefs, is only capable of business. This other is a stranger who is also capable of emotions but he is culturally conceived in a different way. For him, everything that his brain conceives is merchandise—grotesque! However, for me, as long as the merchant needs to fool me . . .

Man is not a machine  
Bernard Baudoin  
100/100 Dakar

Wanting to make him understand that such an intention has something absurd about it, has no meaning for him. This stranger is an artist. His mind would be concerned only by movement that is always the same. He is not worried about prices and their fluctuations.

I would begin to tell him, without doubting a thing. I would rely on time. Indifference is the custom to give to our relationships (from shop owners to clients), the routine that will make them fall into neglect. I am naked. I find myself in the strange movement of my thought. I am a poet, an indefinable depth to let him believe that the trajectory of his idea, the traces of his conscience and I, we are as a matter of fact not there. Hence, displace a figure to the top end of the counter, and like that to the extremity of one’s conscience. Try to understand how with time my attitude will have an advantage over him—an exercise in form. Find again the scribbles by Dabajali’s students, perhaps in the casket on the rubble. No in the cloth bag with Mandani’s pirogue. Put them in the center of the painting. Redraw the skull. That Dabajali finds the way again, along with Penda and

whoever else is with her, to drink the writings dissolved in the jujube ink. It will be a question of listing objects to analyze. The large boat. A face eaten by the ocean which lets an ear appear. A completely black face. Worn out. Eaten away—the prow is colored red. The *Walking Man* by N'dary Lô, this sculpture, a third of whose face is lit up by the rising sun reflected off a blue pane of glass, represents a (double) man who walks. He is young. He is naked. He is young. His arms are raised. He is no longer a child. A man of about fifty years. An adult. His head straight. The left face (rising side). The right face (setting side). The left foot slightly behind. The right foot in front—vertically. This movement expresses both the ease of a man walking, and the other foot on the ground at rest, sure of itself, which gives the center image a kind of suspended flight, a particular elegance. The other no longer walks. He must be pushed to question, not his personal identity, but rather to move him about, help him to define his role, which is to resemble me (which is to be here and there). A fragment of me and the reflections of a few silhouettes. Other mirrors of displacement of another uncommon person. But this assumes that he is in my place to describe the character I am. I am not him. He doesn't know it. He doesn't know that I am a mentally exceptional man who knows the difference between two letters. I am very different and my thinking is very different. When the sun disappears between three landscapes—a total displacement, a rotation, and the tabby cat moves about and stops, listens to the bird who sings, watches the grasshoppers' and crickets' movements, perks up its ears, gets up, walks to the gate, stops, sniffs the lemon, looks at the sky, there go the birds passing by, ah, lies down, bites its tail in the middle of the path. A leaf falls. The cat miaows. It is not him, it's the other. He goes away, he goes away, he goes away. He goes out. A total displacement. A rotation. Those movements can never be explained. They are different from the semblance and the similarity of movement. Disaster. That which exists for you is the movement of ideas. For me the movement of everything that lives and the most interesting feelings. As for what energy remains to us, it is necessary to study what the rules are based upon—displace them. DISPLACE THE LINES. Then study, no find how, by what reason, what imperceptible placement, displacement, replacement, to be in the fall's axis. I believe that this would be our participation in the September rain. I would place seeds that like water on green leaves, which I would place in fertile areas between two roots. Count seven times the displacement of the warm-blooded animal before laying the knife down on the seeds. Beforehand charge with real power the knots. We begin the test. Take any object, the one you want. Put it yourself on the table and wait. Move it about. Don't open your mouth! Move about slowly and wait to be connected be-



yond words that are inaudible to impatient people. Observe these characters. They have spent months in the dust. All that holds me back, still attaches me passionately to poetry, is this brilliant means of correcting feelings and instants. When in their falling like stars, ideas break up on the horizon, is this not a sign that art still has, more or less vigorously, some necessity?

Beneath the rain, characters with their assegai and spears have rediscovered an amazing vitality. Like all the other pieces here, they serve as an instrument when we try to modify the flow of our thoughts or the improbable moments of our meditations. On this subject, what one would not know how to say, better to hush it up!

Word? Word! Word?

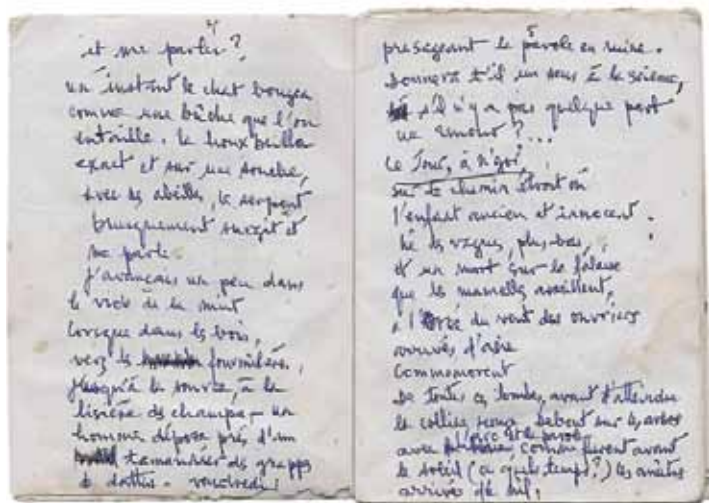
Let's be clear!

Facts change dramatically. We must follow them without prediction by waiting for each other's intentions to emerge. To proceed otherwise is to indoctrinate, manipulate, shape consciences. We must be reserved to observe, to measure without saying anything. Here there are no anonymous objects placed by chance during my placing, displacing, replacing. They are inhabited, but neither deaf nor silent. It is a matter of two parallel (not conflicting) energies. Let us exist with the means we have at our disposal, as the mayor of Dakar, Khalifa Sall, said on October 30, 2011.

**There you are! Africa is an esoteric heritage.** Its future depends on the transmission of this heritage, of this message, of these calls (but in a circle), of this affirmation. If the problem of transmission isn't resolved, it's the whole cultural structure that collapses. The existence of African unity itself is threatened in the short term. But, and this is deeply sad, a tree planted by an informed man, with a precise aim and in the strict respect of the axis, is not just any old tree.

It is a man who is found there!

I wanted to say that between the smile of this girl and the coldness of this already mystical image offered to me, there are untranslatable feelings, overpowering cries of children, of friends all gone. The resources in the cemetery below, the ashes, and a fair in the village present an acceptable face. In the altar get the measure of my shame in the presence of my female cousins. Feel everything that I would have to suffer on the evening of my encounter on the hill with our ancestors. To get outdated images out of my mind, to explore these contrary movements in this town where a few brilliant points sparkle. To let my imagination carry out its journey like a fisherman among dangers and currents. To endlessly displace myself. To displace, to place myself, to replace myself. To little by little see that everything soon displaces itself following a new order, more correctly, a new world, with plans of neighborhoods and cities that are superimposed, each one having their movement and their law, their method of sequencing and their rhythm in the seasons. My bloody and rusty sacrificial knife.



Birds will no longer go and sing to bosoms. There is a monument over there that isn't beautiful, that frightens ancestors, children and bees, that frightens this little girl whose braids fall on the sea. She cries, a finger pierced. The deformed body of an Africa without future prospects. Go over there; go away from here! Over there you'll no longer be anybody!

The acacia will always be there and the goose will always come to assume that, after having spread its wings between two beacons (that of Ngor and the Almadies), it will exit free from the tree's branches and leaves on the way to breathe life into the victim, until further notice.

Unfortunately the power of domination, the thirst for profit are so anchored in their hearts that adventure for them is too often the occasion to satisfy a bad conscience. They are active in the hospices of ambition and curiosity. Their minds become confused, confused like those who carried out this ransacking. Many, whose names we could supply, once had the cruel experience long ago.

In this fertile place between the silk cotton tree, the pomegranate tree, the altar, or in the earthenware water jars where the goldfish swim. I say: he who cut it will never be satisfied. He will never be appeased.

**Monday, September 26, 2011. LE JOOLA DAY. DAY OF DEATH. DAY OF SCANDAL. DAY OF "WITHOUT DAY." DAY OF "WITHOUT NIGHT." DAY THAT MAKES ONE THINK. THAT MAKES ONE THINK. THAT MAKES ONE THINK. DAY THAT MAKES ONE REMEMBER.**

The children have smeared the faces of the sailors and the captain. Once upon a time long ago. It's been a long time since Thierno Seydou BARRY tried to follow "the other" in a crossing of the night, but at the end of two "without days," "without night," he fell into a deep sleep at Bay Sogui and gave Mame Less Dia, alias Less Coura the Warrior, the fright of his life. It was a long time ago when we went to "hunt" cockroaches on Senegal Avenue at Saint Michael's and afterwards . . . someone spoke to me. It is a June bug.

September 26, 2011. Le Joola Day

To be closer to reality by distancing oneself from the mind and registering this day. The dead speak like they have always spoken to the living. Hence no need whatsoever to interrogate them . . .



Spiritual data is obtained differently from the rest. You will understand nothing. The heads are not destined for museums. The tattoos are writings that science can't yet read. Hence, what is a dead body? The double is elsewhere. What we know from mummies, you will never be able to understand it, your tools being obsolete. To be in contact with the dead is already to no longer be—but how can we know this if we can't change our outlook?

I'm talking to you here under the holy gum tree. There are languages. You, Édouard Glissant! There are root languages. Creole identity is an aberration of the mind.

Question who decided the entry of Césaire in the tomb of the Panthéon on April 17, 2008?

Composition

Recapitulation

Césaire left a magnificent oeuvre to posterity. No pantheon. He is himself alone pantheons! Secular prayer doesn't exist.

“Take the Negro novel, take black poetry. Pointless to search here for the contributions or to point out the influences. Materials may be disparate, heterogeneous, but all of that is recast, all of that is transcended, all of it is dominated and restructured. For, in the end, what is structure?”

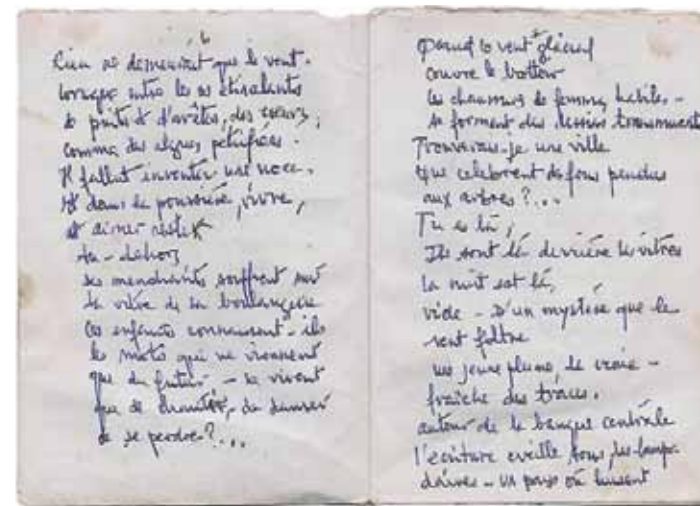
Aimé F. Césaire  
The man of culture and his responsibilities  
2nd Congress of Black Writers and Artists  
Rome, March 26–April 1, 1959

Césaire's pages in the heart of the nave. The fresco . . .

Does it atone? No.

He didn't wish for reality. We will soon see the possibility of getting out, of seeing the palace . . .

To see both the wrong side and the back; in other places the disintegration of light. Receding shadows on the pane. The red scarf



\* Translator's note: During this speech, President Nicolas Sarkozy stated that the “African man has not yet entered history.”

Constantly on the way in a desert war—the getting stuck, the disorder, the sick young rat that distances me from art and this art which distances me more and more from reality . . .

And the young rat, bringing me closer to it, whirled round. What is it looking for in this feather, in this circle? Tuesday, April 5, 2011. In Galsén this Thursday, April 7, 2011, does this disorder announce the end of a time that is necessary for the changing to and the fertility of a new era? But everywhere within the changing scene, young people suddenly rise up. Their bitter words indicate the desire to set fire to themselves or to leave. To leave on a journey in their bodies. Neither the South nor the North. Nor the East nor the West for them. None of the cardinal points. But where? Where to burn one's body because one's mind is so uneasy? Is he trying to burn the set of ancient values by replacing the latter with that of sensible values? Is he trying to overcome the taboos, the weight of ancestral defenses? Is he trying to stop associating music, works of art, with the profit that we can draw from the list of ill-gotten gains? Is he trying to free himself by some means or other and to remove the deliberate censorship of a bad conscience?

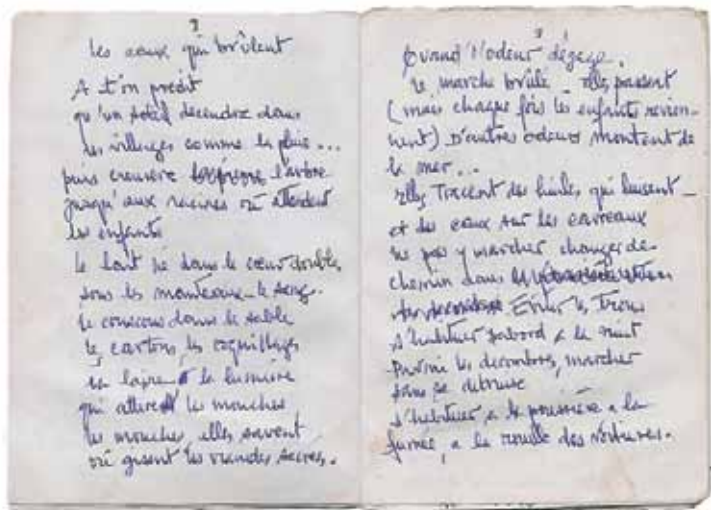
There is much to be done since the discourse in Dakar on July 26, 2007.\* The Africa of intellectuals and artists has a bone of contention with Nicolas Sarkozy, one of the means of settling this matter is without a doubt the distribution and diffusion of Césaire's thought and poetry through the education system. Explaining these ideas, his

political stance, the universal humanism that he advocated. Making amends for an injustice (that his message, that of a thinker of universal humanism, be known at the four cardinal points) is an homage?

No matter how important the homage, it is still too late. It is appropriate to honor Césaire for the great things that the political man achieved. We must transmit, above all, teach his poetry, his thought, in schools and universities. It is the most fitting homage for a poet who resisted with tangible and just words. For us, sacred normality is not to be celebrated as though it were a question of an exceptional event. Moreover, in this area other actions should follow. We'd therefore prefer all racial questions here be put aside to reflect upon the meaning of this homage as it is proposed to us. For we stakeholders in moral heritage, the question is the following: Is this recognition of the place he indeed holds in the Négritude movement merely justice?

Injustice, ostracism, which reigned here until now, are part of those things so totally absurd that we find it difficult to rejoice inordinately when seeing them quite simply effaced, forgotten once and for all.

The question: What does it mean for the Fifth French Republic that Césaire has thus been, as it is said, "raised to this dignity"? A real trap of interior politics. And silence, the poet, he sleeps in Martinique. Upon waking he'll walk straight toward his native land. Silence, he walks, he goes where his soul guides him: he goes to Africa. You will encounter him. You will encounter him in silence, silence and eternity



like a single instant. A poet, a political man alone. The future will tell if those who've read or heard his discourse on colonialism should have known, beyond his person, right from the first moments. Words that shred the colonial night in the original outpouring.

This plaque in tribute to the great artist—again too much.

France still backward a century. And dust (ashes). The questions the country asks today will find responses beyond . . .

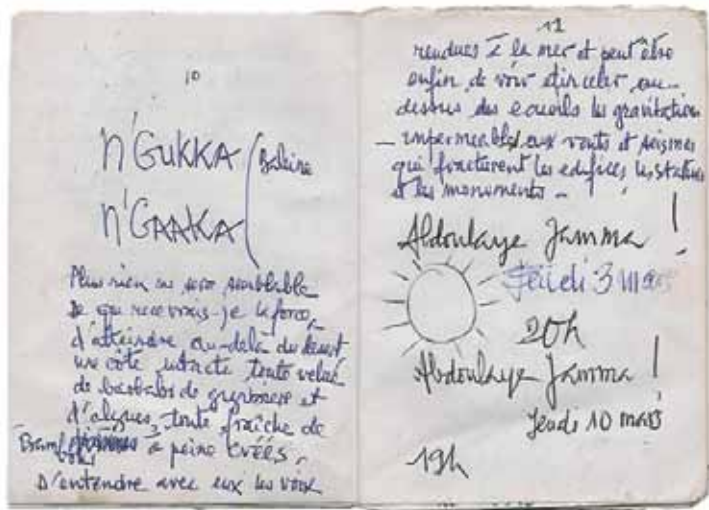
Confusion, more dispersion, and emotional problems that the Internet cannot resolve.

I get pleasure displacing these familiar objects, placing them, displacing them, replacing them. It gives me as much pleasure as painting. I've walked all night. The place where I found myself was unknown to him. The first glimmers of day allowed him to continue his steps by following the fish sellers who headed for town. And the wind that shook the tree. This wind that made green leaves and branches fall. This wind that broke the studio roof, knocked over my shelves, broke glasses, made rain fall on my books and my clothes, tore my paintings (walk). This wind could not shake from their place my relics, my matches, my tobacco, my amulets, my rocks, my fishing net. The merchant. I saw him come from the sea. I tie him to the tree and I read the premonitory signs on his face. The looks similar to Djibril's presence. The young get ready for upheaval, for struggle. The marabouts are in place. Look! The peasants wait . . .

The reddening vision.

You who are you? He replies . . .

I am an EAR. He had telephones with him and we took them from him. Thirty-three visions, a network, eyes wide open, twenty-nine to make an early image. Predict the signs, examine the flag, verify rope operations, eyes closed like a fisherman. The fisherman puts himself in the middle to observe the stormy night. Collapse, toppling, crumpling, sliding, the tally of the urns hears the cries for help. Those of the travelers on the ship Le Joola. They come to us still. No matter the period, the question remains. One must avoid making do. One must circumvent the question. Refloating the ship is not indispensable to be able to mourn. If it were necessary, yell loud and clear in order to bring back the bodies of the drowned to the place of memory. What museum could contain this mass of skulls? Let us leave the mind



alone. Then mourning will be accomplished with time . . .

I think of the skull by Jems Koko Bi in Gorée, beneath the stupefied gaze of Penda the historian. Men walk. Snakes slither. They turn their eyes a few times to put events back into their context. Walk without snags toward oneself by passing toward the other. His mind doesn't diminish you at all. It costs you nothing. Think of this guarantee of generosity and responsibility. It will one day be known that the founding fathers of the republic have stubbornly pursued the very policies of domination which they accuse the colonizers of imposing . . .

For we stakeholders in moral heritage, this homage paid to Césaire by the man who gave the Dakar speech is suspect! We inheritors of a struggle of which we are proud can accept that a man, be he a statesman, who has a contemptuous attitude toward Africans (the 2007 Dakar speech), would cunningly pay homage to Césaire on the eve of his death in 2008 so as to assure France's greatness and its cultural influence. For us, only the greatness of Césaire, the poet and political figure, defender of Africa and the Caribbean, matters. There is nothing in this state homage paid, in the Fifth French Republic, to the great poet of Négritude to allay our suspicions. To organize a devious homage to such a great poet without inviting the participation of the inheritors of Africa and those who have always adhered to these ideas is a betrayal. An imposture. A ruse to make so much suffering, so many unheard cries throughout the twentieth century go unnoticed. This homage is an astucious manipulation of a faultless, unbroken

memory. It is but an outmoded political game. Now at the hour of repentance, it may perhaps become possible to take our hats off, to seize hold of the master's knowledge and teaching and thus to face the real questions France has been stumbling over for so long.

Out of respect!

Make amends.

This injustice that makes of him a great twentieth-century poet who is still unrecognized.

I will soon be on my way. You will yourself be on the way to Paris . . .

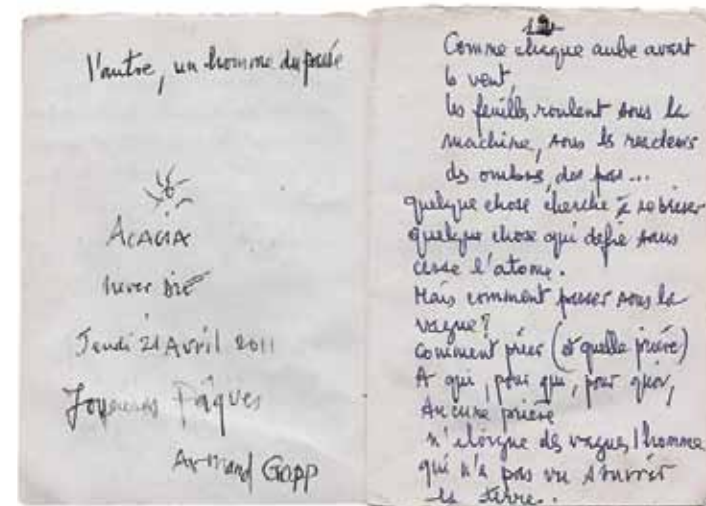
The grandfather of my grandfather's grandfather said to the grandfather of his grandfather's grandfather and my grandfather said to me: These breasts where they rest with their secrets which they keep to themselves.

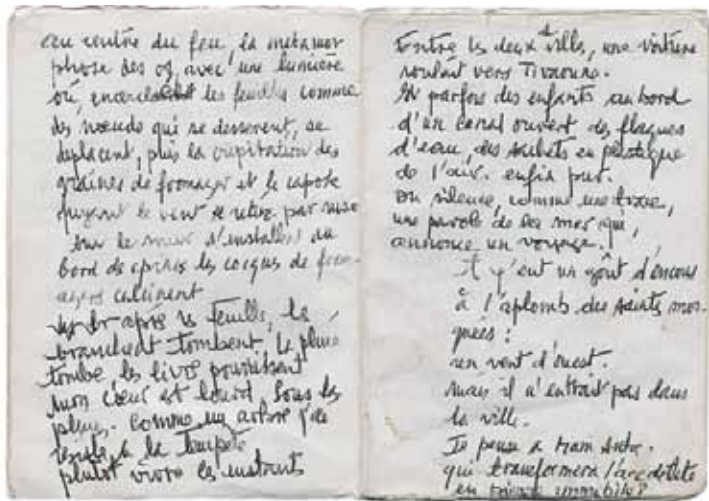
And the other does he remember what you said to me?

Your promises? Your duties?

Your responsibilities? And again . . .

And again . . .





And again . . .

And again your illness and that of your wife.

Oh how dishonest you are. Me, I'm going to the dental center. That little spot down there in the distance over there do you see it? That's me!

**This text is an excerpt of a book by hypocrites, liars, usurpers, imposters.** But it is still a way of representing the future. The world is in bad shape. It is sick. We know all about its illness, but we can do nothing—there you are! For the moment, it's a matter of waiting for it, for something that emerges . . .

Life is difficult in Africa. The march will soon begin. Woe to he whose foot gives way. Woe to those who think of the logic of the majority. It is . . .

Woe to those who do not think of the rights of each and everyone on this date, the 26th of the month of September. This day, Monday. This night from Thursday to Friday. This hour between 11 pm and 8 am . . .

Nothing knows how to pass. Nothing to report (N.T.R.). Woe to the deaf, the hard of hearing.

“Boro, be a man. Don't just carry away the name, realize it in yourself.”

BOUBOUHAMA

In tribute again to Pierre Lods, the great master of the Dakar school . . .

Ashamed, we have suffered the revelation of the sudden, brutal and degrading bestiality of the nation reputed among the most civilized on the planet and the proof of the most subtle intelligence and the most refined cultural practices of people accused of the most primitive barbarism. This will be one of the marks of our time. “A new romanticism will come. I don't wait for it. I announce it,” Léon Moussinac already said in 1940.

“The honest modern man, freed from his complexes and filled with wonder, pursues the cultural inventory of humanity, assisted by the ease of travel and the technical means of reproduction of images and sounds. There is no joy more moving than to learn of the realities of one's period and to participate in them. During the Occupation, the unforgettable Resistance movement camaraderie between representatives of different social categories revealed to me the vanity of class prejudices. And, if I had had racial prejudices, they would not have resisted the revelations of my journey in Africa. I would never forget this night of conversation with an old fisherman of the Sangha—our paddle steamer had run aground on a sandbank—and his question to the ‘omniscient and naïve’ white man: ‘Where does this path come from that walks since my birth, and since my father's birth and the birth of my father's father?’”

Pierre Lods

11th Congress of Black Writers and Artists  
Rome, Easter 1959

Retrospective response to the Dakar discourse of July 26, 2007, by the president of the Fifth French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, at Cheikh Anta Diop University in the presence of the president of the Republic of Senegal.

Then we come back to the void between 1959 and 2007. “Contemporary man must try to put himself at the meeting point of great forms of human thought and, at the same time, discover the relativ-



ity of the mode of thinking favored by the West and the vanity of pretensions to superiority always underlying the dialogue that the West maintains with other cultures. Western philosophy has most often been an ontology of totality, a reduction of the other to the same; the neutralization of the other becoming theme or subject and precisely his reduction to same. Real dialogue presupposes the recognition of the other both in his identity and in his otherness. It is not the rejecting of the 'barbarian' outside civilization."

Alassane Ndao  
African thinking  
(NEA Dakar 1983)

**Beneath the tents, the winds that arrive from Mauritania.** At the wind's edge, racetracks, which the energy of electric wires attacks. Uncovered lights. Standing on the straight minaret, the sparrowhawk follows the direction of the sun, which could modify its flight toward the cliff, which is soon . . .

And the three days in a leaf grotto beneath the sea and the gray and yellow wind of evening. On a nest, a black cat slept at the correct angle of the tree. Was the beloved going to appear and speak to me? An instant, the cat moved like a log that we saw into. The holly glistened precisely and, on a stump, with bees, the snake that had suddenly appeared speaks to me. I moved about. I advanced a little in the emptiness of the night, while in the woods toward the ant-hills, up to the spring on the edge of the field, a man put down a bunch of dates near the tamarind tree. Friday predicted speech in ruins. Will he give a meaning to science if there is not love somewhere? A presence?

This day in Ngor, on the narrow path where the old and innocent child sits, incorruptible. Three times are born the waves further down. And a death on the cliff (a mentally ill person?). That the breasts assail and show them to the workers from Asia, who have arrived here to commemorate. Of all these tombs before reaching the red hill, standing on the trees with the bow and the word . . .

As they were before the sun, these ancestors who arrived from the Nile. Nothing resided but the wind, when entered the sparkling waters of the wells and the tiny awns of the heart. Like petrified seaweed.

It was necessary to invent a bone from dust and to live, love, remain.

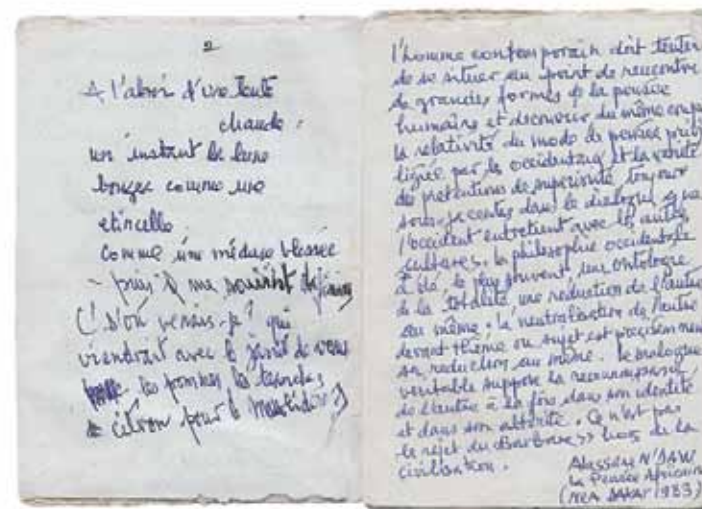
Outside the beggars suffer on the bakery window. Do these children know the humor that comes to us only from the future? They live only to sing, to dance, to get lost. When the one-eyed man monopolizes the land in the marabout's name.

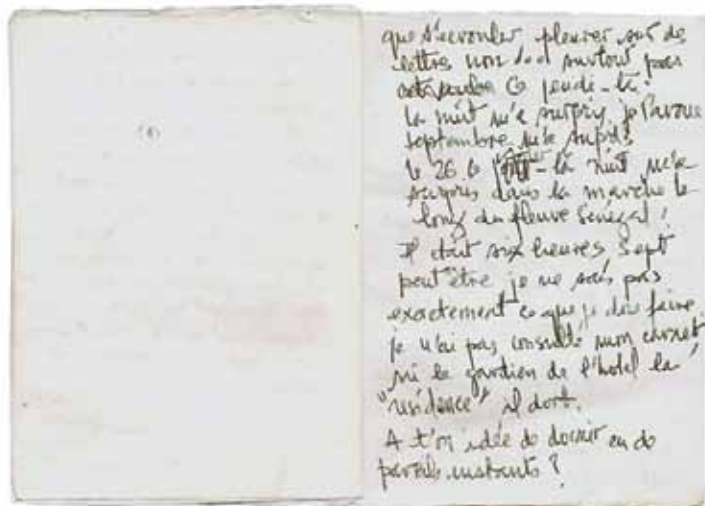
Between the two towns, a car headed for Tivaouane. And sometimes children at the edge of an open canal, pools of water, plastic bags, air. Pure at last. Silence, like a trace, a word of the sea that announces a journey. There was a drop of incense and of blood in the call from holy mosques. A wind from the West. But it didn't enter the city. I think of Mame Anta. Who will transform the head arch into immobile stone?

In the shelter of a warm tent, Djibri. Alongside, the moon shifted for a moment. The moon moved like a spark, like a wounded jellyfish. Then he smiled at me. (Where did I come from? Who would come with the veal shank?)

The apples, the slices of lemon for the golden meal . . .

When this glacial wind covers the sidewalk. These shoes of clever women form a transmuting drawing. Would I find a city that madmen hanged from trees celebrate? They are there behind the windows. The night is there, empty of mystery, that the wind filters. A young



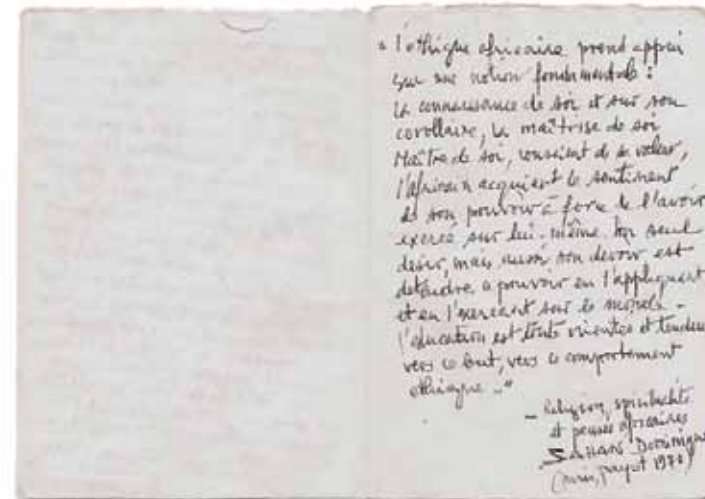


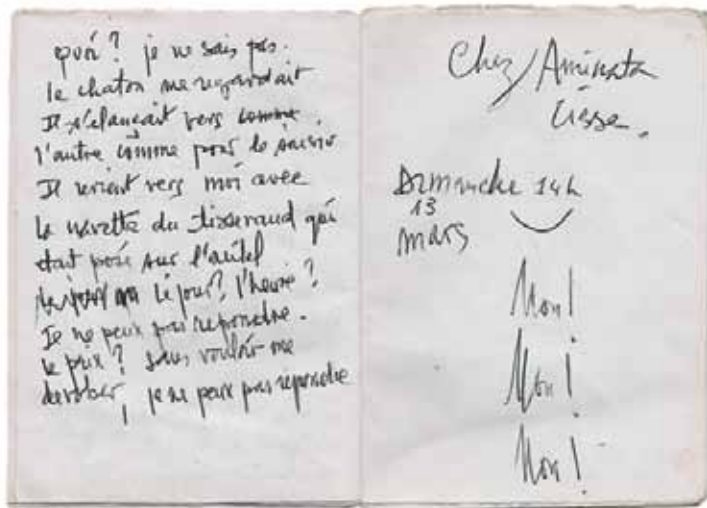
feather. The fresh chalk. The traces around the central bank. The writing awakens, beneath the lampposts, a country where glimmer waters that burn. Was it predicted that a sun would descend into the villages like rain, to then drill into the stone, the tree, right to the roots where children wait? Milk is born in the double heart beneath the coats—blood appears. Couscous in the sand, boxes, shells, wool, linen, light that attracts flies. The flies, they know where the holy meat lies. When the odor clears the burnt market, the flies pass (but each time the children come back). Other odors rise from the sea . . .

The sea maps out oils that shimmer and waters on the tiles. Don't walk there. Change direction. Avoid the holes. Get used to the night. Among the ruins, walk without destroying yourself. Get used to the dust of building sites and to floods, to smoke, to the rust of cars. But nothing will be similar. From whom I would receive the strength to reach beyond the desert? An intact code all villous with baobab, jujube, silk cotton fibers and totally fresh seaweed, barely created bamboos. To hear with them the voices given back to the sea and perhaps to at last see sparkle above the reefs gravitations impervious to the winds and seisms that fracture edifices, statues and monuments. The other man. A man from the past beneath the acacia. Like each dawn before the wind, the leaves roll on the machine, beneath the reactors, the generators, the shadows, the footsteps . . .

Something tries to break apart. Something in this city which constantly defies the atom. But how to pass beneath the wave? How to

pray (and what prayer), to whom, for whom, for what? No prayer distances from the waves the man who knew not how to open himself up to the world once again. The Earth. In the middle of the fire, the metamorphosis of waters with a light where, in a circle, leaves like loosened knots displace and replace themselves. Then the crackling of silk cotton tree seeds and the kapok fleeing the wind withdraws by ruse on the wall, settles at the edge of the thorn bushes. The cocks in the silk cotton bark burn to a cinder. After the leaves, the branches fall and break the roof, the shelves and books. The rain falls. The books rot. My heart is heavy. Beneath the rain, like a tree I resisted the storm, death, its cost, creation. In garages, attics, bric-à-brac traders, museums, stores, roads, forests, oceans, wrecks, in birds' nests we always find some things. The open sky, the rain—and I standing, by dint of practical exercise. We believe to have invented it. The image. That is what invention is; it is a thing, something that appears to you and makes you believe that you invented it. It lies. It's a lie that you foresee. Rather live one's moments than collapse, weeping on letters. No, above all not this particular Thursday! The night surprised me, I admit it. September surprised me. The 26th, that particular evening, that particular night surprised me in the walk alongside Sénégal River. It was 6 o'clock, 7 o'clock. Perhaps. I don't know what I must do. I hadn't checked my notebook or the hotel, "the residence" attendant. He sleeps. Who'd dream of sleeping in such circumstances? I thought a lot during this period (September 27, 2002, is a Friday), about the other, about the walk. I let a few minutes pass by. It wasn't so that I could move about and think. Nor was it to tear out a few plants





in this language of barbarity. Here the stone has begun to put down roots in the stone. It was as though I were forced to be interested in the kitten vaguely caught in the net (in the Guet Ndar fishermen's cemetery), as though it wanted to attract my attention to a point of balance. I moved, like I felt I saw it do, toward the silk cotton tree, but I found no meaning to this. The kitten looked at me. Even though, at the end of a certain amount of time, I had to face the facts . . . The other was found there, well and truly in the field of my attention. There was something there—the other. I didn't find it immediately. I moved to the back of the studio and there I had a kind of foreboding. Of what? I don't know. The kitten looked at me. It rushed forward toward the other as though to grab him. It came back to me with the weaver's shuttlecock, which had been put on the altar. The day? The hour? I can't respond. The cost? Without wanting to conceal myself, I cannot respond. The time was real and I wasn't dreaming. To be pursued. I believe that we could probably be enriched . . .

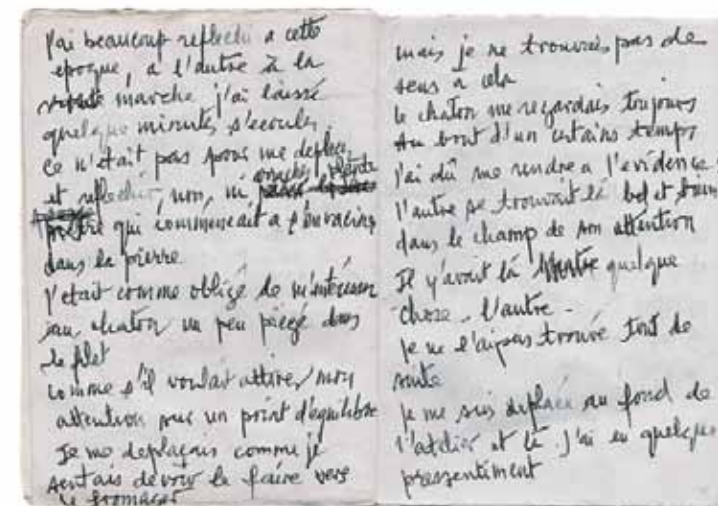
The sanctuary is not damaged, seems like stone. It strikes whoever comes near the altar where love lies and which holds the reins of your heart. He who holds the reins of your heart must decipher the truth in the fertile details of the acacia's white flowers.

Words, words, words.

This globalization via the Internet is not the only response possible. It is imposed by circumstances. Several responses are possible. We

must search for them with our specific and own means. Cyberactivism (blogosphere): vote by SMS next year, 2012. I think I would stop playing at scaring myself in this particular research.

The Internet then—makes one lazy and, be careful, the Internet cannot sort out emotional problems. Collapse, toppling, medical immune system (Nobel). The third is dead of pancreatic cancer and yet he'd applied his results to his own personal case. Which goes to say that these results were imposed upon him by circumstances, the circumstances of his illness. Dead, he was no longer there to admit his failure. He has been dead now a little more than three days—now for him Apple is also dead for him. He died of pancreatic cancer. Now the other remains. We don't know where he is. He is ill, theirs say. Therefore let him leave, because as long as he remains in their hands there will be consequences which are lethal in the short term. To finish, it's going badly. We keep our distance with the clear conscience that we are not caught up in a network of relations, even less in conflicts, and we give conference participants the simple order to avoid overflowing indoors. In the days ahead, I must organize a conference in camera. I know the names of my guests. They will have no need of invitations, among us there is another means of communication.



**100 Notes – 100 Thoughts / 100 Notizen – 100 Gedanken**

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