

THE METEORITE MEMOS

POEMS

: MWAMBA N. KAYEMBE Clovis-Alidor



translation and commentary by Timothy Mathieson



Poems from *La Cathédrale* (2009)
and *Le Sanctuaire* (2010)

Translation, text and book design
by Timothy Mathieson

Dépôt légal f 3e trimestre 2022
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Canada
ISBN:

Ma viatique, une exhortation paternelle :

“Mon fils, qu'on ne te trompe pas! On ne naît pas humain : on le devient sur cette terre.”

À la mémoire de feu Mukendi Mpaya, une incarnation de l'UBUNTU, la bravoure même du Combat de l'UDPS.

Un havre d'espoir au désert créé aux miens pendant mon calvaire. Un souvenir.

Pour mes amis: “H” Kombe Mulume Mpungwe, Rik Ceyssens et Alex Gysel.

Clovis Mwamba

d e d i c a t i o n

Timothy Mathieson

In memory of D.Fairservice who left too soon;
the solace of whose fraternity during all the wilderness years
tested the gamut of his name.

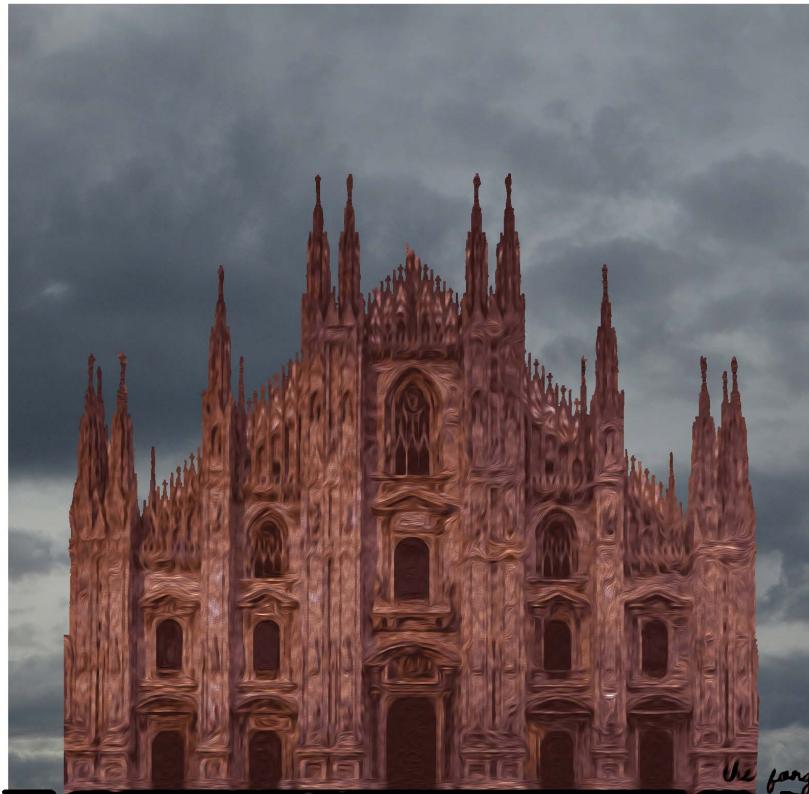
avant-propos

One of the founders of the democratic opposition in the DRC (formerly Zaïre), Clovis Mwamba was more than once offered the inducement of ministerial portfolios by the Mobutu kleptocracy and later recommended for various lucrative CEO chairmanships under Kabila’s regime, all of which he rebuffed in favour of a campaign of conscience pursued via newspaper articles critical of government policy penned under a lively cast of *noms de plume*.

In 1998, as political editor of the incendiary broadsheet *L’Alarme*, he was responsible for an editorial supplementing an analysis of Laurent Kabila as someone who had ‘put on Mobutu’s shoes’. The newspaper’s editor suggested they stay up that night drinking together in the company of their wives, anticipating his arrest as soon as his paper hit the streets.¹

Likewise, Mwamba’s persistent advocacy for democracy, human rights and the rule of law was (as he later conceded) a ‘passport to jail’. For many months he led a shadow existence, publishing critiques, pamphlets and exposés from hidden rooms in safe houses and clandestine hotels, until a trap sprung one night in October of that year led to his ‘preventative detention’, and to the infernal revelations documented in these pages...

¹ Gilbert Bonsange Yema Bofilinsole was indeed interred the following day together with his wife and children, and held for nearly two years, later fleeing across the river to Congo-Brazzaville where he was eventually poisoned by the security forces.



I



‘There are times when history is let off the leash.’ (Polish, anon.)

Mwamba

An anthill arose in the road...

Mwamba *kalundù kiimàñà hanjila*

Mwamba *ùdi nè mwèndè mùshaalàyi*

Kwamba

‘Papa’ Mwamba—African elder, refugee poet, intellectual and initiate, former parliamentarian and political detainee—advises and mediates midst the lives of others uprooted by war. Bantu linguistics and ethno-psychology are his aids. No doubt, to European ears, the latter compound carries a heteroclitic ring. Yet analysis in Africa does not begin on the couch with its stock enquiry: “Tell me about your mother?” Rather it opens with the (anthroponymic) query: “Tell me your name?”²

Sunset must answer sunrise to hold the arc of day. Noon is not omitted. But mostly it is in the toils of midnight, a name is sought. Hence, to appreciate *what* here is being said, and *how* it is being said, an auscultation of sorts will need firstly to

2 Individuation in African societies is commonly misinterpreted through the prism of neurotic (Oedipal) categories, when in fact the name codes the ‘supple segmentarity’ (Deleuze-Guattari) of social inscriptions. For this reason, it is not uncommon for individuals to fall ill if they have been accorded the wrong name, as the latter intervenes directly in the socio-spiritual potential of its bearer (a more appropriate name must then be sought).

carry an ‘auto-ethno-analysis’ back from this surdity:

“Clovis, what is your name?”³

Evidently, ‘Clovis’ is of no use. The name of a medieval monarch, this was a nickname acquired at school due to his fondness for exposition (a characteristic that, as will soon be divulged, relates to his true name). Similarly, ‘Alidor’ is an expedient, a colonial import, the name of the Flemish priest (Alidor Samain) who baptised his father. For convenience, Africans assume a ‘Christian’ name just as they adopt an Indo-European language, a passport, or the Julian calendar: as a makeshift mask. Neither of these are the names he was given “from his mother’s womb”. He had in fact already failed this test once, when questioned by an uncle: “Alidor? What sort of dumb-arse name is that? Whatever the Catholics have promised you in respect of an after-life, you can be sure none of our ancestors will recognise you with a name like that...” ‘Having’ a name thus blindly make its way. It veils and unveils itself, as it covers an absence that ‘exists’. Is it this toward which it makes its way, toward and away? It is not at all surprising then that it would be some time—as late as 1985 in fact—before Clovis finally entreated his father: “Father, whence my name?”

On the cover of the two volumes of poetry published in 2009 and 2010 by L’Harmattan in Paris, the poet’s name reads: Clovis-Alidor MWAMBA N. KAYEMBE. The use of upper case is a clue that sets us on the correct path. KAYEMBE is his father’s name, which in its full declension is formalised as KEMBE (for Ka-Embe), which is to say: MWAMBA-A-KEMBE or: MWAMBA-son-of-KEMBE (the connective: ‘A’

³ “auscultation of sorts...”: a technical substitute for an African expression specific to the ethic of orature. Its awkwardness and artificiality speaks to the incomprehension of its index ('to harken to the viscera') by hermeneutic registers. It should not be forgotten that a name may also be *masked by its holder* (inasmuch as it offers access to the latter's power).

being a contraction of the Bantu: ‘WA’). Correctly stated, his true name pursues this construction to five generations: MWAMBA-A-KEMBA-A-KAZADI-A-KEMBA-A-SWAKA. But here one notices a discreet permutation, deviating in fact from the names cited in Clovis’ official papers. He is KEMBA not KEMBE. The knowing interlocutor is thereby instructed that he is not only ethnically Lubà, but of the most prolific and influential of its five clans, the Bakwà Kalonji. The titular abbreviation ‘N’ (for: NTITE) contributes this further specification: ‘of the lineage (Bakwà Mukendi) in whose power it is to select the potentate’, one of the five lineages that trace their ancestry directly back to Queen Kabedi whose totem is the iguana.⁴ Daughter of the King of Kanyòòk (IRUNG-A-CIBANG), she is the acknowledged progenitor of a prolific branch of the Songye Empire established by Kongolo in the late 16th Century. The names that sprouted from this migration can be found today spread as far afield as Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Angola, and even South Africa.

From the above declension of generations one may infer that (consistent with the conventional filiative cycle) the poet’s father assumed the name of his own paternal grandfather. However, this is not the case for his son’s given name, which has been imported from his mother’s side.⁵ MWAMBA is the maternal grandfather’s name. An instructive discrepancy. Under the influence of their Kanyòòk heritage, the Bakwà Kalonji retain traits of matrilineal succession. This clan of the iguana (who count today for more than half of all Balubà) are said variously to be ‘Nsenda’, which is to say, smiths, i.e. those who work the matter-flux by cooking the

4 This iguana is heralded: *Citàndaay wa bâna milongolongo*, ie: ‘trailing many off-spring behind her’.

5 By patrilineal convention, the first four sons are accorded names from the paternal line.

earth, and are thus—in the greater cosmological scheme of things—linked to the power of women as agents of transformation (bearers of children and preparers of food). This greater scheme we call 'cosmological' invokes that profound political economy coding all generation (including the distribution of proper names). For instance, each of the five matrilineages of Kabedi hold a claim to executive power, a kinship system of succession (LWABA) acknowledged by other, otherwise patrilineal Lubà clans. Patrilinear societies in Africa have a triadic structure corresponding to the poles (East-North-West): child, adult, grandparent. Its genealogical correlation is complex. By way of example: if a gender transition occurs after the birth of three children consecutively of the same sex, the fourth child, representing the subterranean syncope occupied by the ancestors (which also situates the nocturnal, feminine principle perpendicular to the status 'adult' at the diurnal apex), will be called '*ngalula*' ('I turn'). This latter pole (South) is included in the diagrammatic determinants of matrilineal groups and the structure traces, instead of a triangle, a trapezoid. Features of this expanded diagram hold amongst those who count themselves Nsenda such that, for instance, any daughter born after a succession of *four* sons concludes the cycle and is thus 'free', i.e. not required to marry (she may enter of her own will into various liaisons, the offspring of which will be attached to her own filiative line⁶). Clovis however, was merely the third son, and the occasion for this apparently pre-emptive, transition transports us to the core of our inquiry, viz.: the identity of MWAMBA. Clovis' mother's father died at a venerable age

⁶ Her greatly esteemed name is INABANZA ('Mother of the Land'), a status (harking back to the matriarch Kabedi) sharing traits of the Egyptian Isis. When she travels she wears a diadem and is escorted by a retinue of men.

one year prior to his birth in 1947, subsequently appearing to his parents in dreams (that privileged channel of ancestors) while his mother was pregnant with him. An accolade (following African usage, if one does not lead a good life one's name falls into disuse and is not recycled), the name was passed on.⁷ It is told of this ancestor that he had entered the forest to discharge a bowel movement in peace and quiet when he was overtaken by the noise of slave trackers. He stood still 'as a termite mound' and listened, before rushing back to warn his people who hid and were thus saved from a fate even more terrible than that of their imagining. His name memorialises this deed of 'speaking out' via a moto.⁸ It heads our essay, and translated from Ciluba, reads: *an anthill arose in the road / Mwamba has a vital say that cannot be gainsaid.*

So this appellation was Clovis' birthright. Let it be understood as an honorific and a task.

Having arrived at this point of the analysis we would seem to have exhausted the question, and yet find ourselves on the contrary merely standing on its threshold. This preliminary orientation, given the broad semantic field covered by MWAMBA, immediately highlights certain special features. 'MBA' is an ideophone, deriving (in contrast to onomatopoeia) from a verb, the infinitive of which is: Ku-amb-a (to attack). 'To speak out' is one of its cognates, as is 'to bite', 'to provoke'. This radical may also be inflected in reference to, e.g. 'action' (*amb*); 'commencement' (*anz*); or 'light' (*bal*). In Swahili it refers to 'goal posts' that rise up out of the ground like a *rainbow*. We even hear it, in what must be

7 Thus, the child will be addressed by its mother as: 'my father'; by its father, as: 'my father-in-law'.

8 The name 'MWAMBA' is often found amongst those who choose a profession as teachers, of which Clovis indeed (having been at one time headmaster of a school) is no exception.

its most primary articulation, reverberating in the sound ascribed the bolide that, according to Luba myth, created the world. It translates the shock of impact at the limit of the firmament, as the cosmic interloper explodes in a shower of rainbow hue. Listen carefully, for this is the sound it makes: *mba mba mba mbambale...* This meteorite, the virtual progenitor of mankind, never given in its unitary state, breaks open to form two intertwined serpents (our mortality that psychically codes sexed reproduction as a function of the drives comes to mind, and inevitably, the double helix of DNA, but also, ‘assembled’ behind this: the incestuous incipience of a people...⁹). The first-born is male, its crawling hypostasis a

9 The imperial pretender will kill the emperor before committing incest with his mother (or sister), thus leaving the *extensive* ‘cycle of life’ for the *intensive* ‘cross’. Akin to Roman Saturnalia, it is in the period of anomie marking interregna that the fruit of this unnatural union, the ‘*Cyona*’ [destroyer], is given free reign – a destroyer of the ‘family’ [*Cyoonamakù*: hearth destroyer] and of the ‘womb’ [*Cyoonambalù*: calabash destroyer].

Concerning the threshold of these two (extensive/intensive) systems, we “are reminded how illegitimate it is to conclude from the (incest) prohibition anything regarding the nature of what is prohibited; for the prohibition proceeds by dishonoring the guilty, that is to say, by inducing a disfigured or displaced image of the thing that is really prohibited or desired. Indeed, this is how social repression prolongs itself by means of psychic repression without which it would have no grip on desire. What is desired is the intense germinal or germinative flow, where one would look in vain for persons or even functions discernible as father, mother, son, sister, etc., since these names only designate intensive variations on the full body of the earth determined as the *germen*. It is always possible to use the term incest, as well as indifference to incest, for this régime composed of one and the same being or flow, varying in intensity according to inclusive disjunctions. But that is precisely the problem; one cannot confound incest as it would be in this intensive nonpersonal régime that would institute it, with incest as represented in extension in the state that prohibits it, and that

curiously phlegmatic, rainbow coloured colubride (bothrophtalmus lineatus) called: *mwanzambala*; the second-born, female and, if not brilliantly hued, a sojourner of water and land, renowned throughout Africa for its aggression, the black mamba (dendroaspis): *nkangi*. Cosmologically, these also feature at the base of the aforementioned triangle as active and passive, agonistic 'twins'.¹⁰ And their name? MWAMBA (or MWANZA) NKONGOLO! Their mysterious, submarine breath combines to produce the rainbow. It is the bereft *Heart* as seat of the invisible (mind or spirit) once the Creator has withdrawn. It drenches the landscape in the fearsome colour of blood. Its chromatic simplex suggesting the dreadful sacrifices communities incur for the maintenance of political stability, exposed from the reserve of deterritorialisation under the imposition of a war machine, of a warrior hero who arrives by convention, from the *East* (ILUNGA MBIDI).¹¹

defines it as a transgression against persons." Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (trans.) Hurley, Seem & Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 162.

- 10 Thus one infers also the relation between child and grandparent on the solar wheel of time: the former, agents of the burgeoning, aggressive spur of heliotropic vitality (East); the latter, irenic mediators in their earthward-tending, sunset declination (West).
- 11 These further 'deleuzoguattarianisms' ('deterritorialisation'; 'war machine') reference these authors' reading of Luc de Heusch (*Le roi ivre ou l'origine de l'Etat*) in *A Thousand Plateaus* (trans.) Massumi (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 21. One might say that the myth celebrates an inaugural reterritorialisation, on this 'pure form of exteriority' (war machine), of that which the imperium indefinitely 'deterritorializes' (i.e. the aforementioned, 'supple, territorial segmentarity'): "Nkongolo, an indigenous emperor and administrator of public works, a man of the public and a man of the police, gives his half-sisters to the hunter Mbidi, who assists him and then leaves. Mbidi's son, a man of secrecy, joins up with his father, only to return from the outside with that inconceivable thing, an army. He kills Nkongolo and proceeds to build a new State. 'Between' the magical-despotic State and the

In addressing this logic of that which warps the horizon of the socio-economic code (incest), it behooves us to approach the name from another side. In Bantu languages, the common term for a person is: *muntu*.¹² The prefix (*mu-*) indicates ‘inclusion’ and the root (*ntu*), ‘universal principle’.¹³ However, the immanence upon which the community rests is supported by the previous cosmological structure from which the generations issue, lying, as we have seen, beyond the given social field. We recall from our somewhat over-hasty analysis that these are three in number. Borrowing from biblical anthropogenesis, one could say that this matrix constitutes in its primary form the Edenic condition of the four archetypal children: the antagonistic ‘twins’ termed *Mapàsà* (for Bakwa Kalonji: *Mahàsà*¹⁴) in a state of reciprocal presupposition (i.e.

juridical State containing a military institution, we see the flash of the war machine, arriving from without.” The title of our final chapter ('the Forgetting of Names') is shorthand for what this double movement represses (whose 'reterritorialisation', far from achieving a 'new State', remains indistinguishable from foreign occupation), where, down to the present, these mythic powers are given insistently to rehearse that inaugural drama.

12 ‘*Mtu*’, ‘*mutu*’ in Swahili; ‘*hutu*’ in Rwanda and Burundi; ‘*moto*’ in Lingala, ‘*muntu*’ (*pl. bantu*) in Ciluba and Kiluba, Kisanga, etc...

13 Conversely, ‘*cintu*’, ‘*kintu*’, ‘*kitu*’ in Swahili, means: ‘a thing’ (the prefix (*ki-*) functioning as a negation of the root form).

14 *Mapasa*: ‘that which has been divided’ (derived from the verb ‘*kupàsà*’ [*ku- pàs- a*]: to divide). By supplementing the morpheme [- *ul-*] to the radical [- *a* -] the verb becomes, *kupasula*: ‘to tear up’. Extrapolating from this pair—whose antagonism either takes the form of a limiting power of opposition and blockage, or an analogical power of displacement and linkage—the equivocal genealogy of ‘*Nsenda*’ is perhaps discernible beneath the mask of Cain: itinerant and hybrid, agents of a vital materialism, of a conductive, nonorganic life, smiths follow the matter-flow and (as Griaule stated of the Dogon) are “not ‘impure’ but ‘mixed’.

the base of the triangle); the pivot, or nadir of transition *Ngalula*, corresponding to the ancestors as natal zone or zoomorphic field; and the Adamic zenith or cosmic principle (the ‘one who came before’) as the present infinitive of the event. The last cited goes by the name *Ntùmbà*.¹⁵ The reader by now is equipped to hazard their own reading of this word. It expresses an expulsion from the universal (*ntù-mbà*). It is a meteorite child (KABEYA NKONGOLO). Traditionally, as threats to the social order, when children were born under the sign of any of these three gods of the ‘cross’ (viz. the vertical, non-affective axis of *Ntùmbà* and *Ngalula*: the voice of the sky and of the earth; and the voice of the horizon: the tensile, horizontal of oppositional *Mapàsà*) they were sacrificed.¹⁶ For

15 With a nod, once again, to the nomenclature of Deleuze-Guattari, this abstraction of the One in relation to the metamorphic field invests a ‘rhizomatic’ motor: “The rhizome is reducible to neither the One or the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five etc. It is not a multiple derived from the one, or to which one is added (n+1). It is comprised not of units but of dimensions; or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overspills. It constitutes linear multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the one is always subtracted (n-1). When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimension, it necessarily changes in nature as well, undergoes a metamorphosis...” ibid., 21.

Mythically, *Ntùmbà* was the first human being, and protested against the mortality of his/her progeny with the beating of a drum (the female drum called: *ditùmbà*; and the male drum called: *katùmbi*). It was in response to this plea that the Creator instituted the ‘cycle of life’. From the latter perspective (in contradistinction to ‘the cross of life’), the name simply indicates an individual who follows a path of honour and distinction (i.e. a so-called ‘high-achiever’).

16 Thrown into a river or left on an antheap (for preference: by menopausal women or impotent men) it will not be said of such a child that it has been ‘killed’ but rather that it has *disappeared* (i.e. being outside the

instance, when a mother is socially/psychologically unprepared to procreate, when the time of her pregnancy is ‘out-of-joint’, occurring prior to menarche or as the fruit of rape, or for any number of unhappy circumstances, it may be said of that child: it is *ntumba*. The -mba is an eruption that carries us outside the field of social inscription. It issues from NKONGOLO. For this reason such children pose a threat to the chief whose authority they (at a cosmic level) usurp. And if today they are not actually killed, should any such ‘primordial child’ die before he or she is married, it will be buried in the forest not in the village. Which is to say, it will be treated as outside of culture. These are no less though, doors of creation, gifts from the gods. For what is this singularity, *Ntumba*, but pure potentiality? In sublime counterpoint with the immanence of the earth where it awaits translation into incipient ancestral lines, this heavenly impact sows the seeds of innovation.

Be sure it is not Mwamba’s name that predestined him to the fate of being placed ‘under the ban of the law’; of acquiring that status Agamben has recently revived with his reading of: ‘*Homo Sacer*’ (for he too, under the shadow of death, found himself beyond community). His name should be understood as a resource. Condemned, he was a meteor passing through a disarticulated world adrift of its human dimension. For, being beyond the law, what need had he of fearing the guards? It is rather he who questioned *their* authority! In 1998, the present infinitive of the verb became his fate but also his mission. *Mwamba*. To live this death through. So this is *what* he witnessed, and *how* he witnessed. How he lived that death.

cycle of life such ‘spirit children’ cannot die).

More recently, the task faced by any such child will inevitably be the obverse of the chief’s: instead of leaving the ‘cycle of life’ for the ‘cross’, it must undergo (in the mother’s company and with her assistance) an initiation integrating it back in to the social order.

And why he—and the ancestors through his faculties, his voice—contrived a means to *speak out...*¹⁷

POSTSCRIPT

In the interview of '85 with his father, the latter mentioned when Clovis was a young boy people would add the sobriquet 'Kààdyosha', or even 'Kààcyò', to his given name Mwamba, and that this used to upset him. When asked about the meaning of this word his father laughed and said it derives from the common practice of brazing *hors-d-oeuvres* in the fire before the main meal that are eaten as appetizers (from the verb: *kwosha* [*ku – osh – a*] 'to burn'), but that its hidden meaning is: "a person who divulges or passes on primary information to someone or to a people". Not only is a covert genocide brought to light in these poems, more strikingly, the code that conveys it is the primary component of an initiate knowledge that finds its way into print here for the first time.

¹⁷ Familiar with the oral art of the Luba and especially the hymns of the Meteor, '*The Cathedral*' and '*The Sanctuary*' – a diptych – likewise follow a technique of allegorisation (a series of short stories with an apparent meaning and a hidden meaning, reflected in the form and the content), free verse composition, a declamatory style, the insistence of the present subjunctive, assonance and alliteration...

La course effrénée
Sur l'autre rive
Frère
Voici la main
Parcours à rebours le
trajet
Certes
Semé d'embûches
Cheminons ensemble
Dressons le rempart
A l'Immonde
Le prochain cafard
Ne ris pas
C'est toi !

The unbridled path
On the other shore
Brother
This is the hand
That covers the distance
backwards
Indeed
By ambushes sown
On our way
The rampart we raise
To the unclean
The cockroach neighbour
Do not laugh
Is you !

Un linceul de silence blanc

*les allusions multiples
en sourdine
comme la poudre
sonore
éparpillée dans la
monotonie
circonspecte du bruit
blanc
au fond des chapitres
de la Cathédrale*

A shroud of white silence

multiple allusions
muted
like the sound of powder
scattered in the wary
monotony
of white noise
at the bottom of the
Cathedral's chapters

Chut!

*il est parti cette nuit
je parle de mon frère
jeté comme un chiffon
dans les sombres
abîmes
de l'oubli
sous de multiples
allusions
comme la craie sonore
écrasée à grandes
brassées
répandue aux quatre
coins
dissout dans les airs*

Hush!

he left that night
I'm talking about my
brother
thrown like a rag
into oblivion's
gloomy abyss
beneath multiple
allusions
like the sound of great
armfuls
of crushed chalk
dispersed to the four
quarters
dissolved in air

<i>dissout dans les flots</i>	dissolved in waves
<i>dissout dans le bruit</i>	dissolved in white noise
<i>blanc</i>	
<i>de bonne heure Céleste</i>	Celestial receives
<i>alimente la messe</i>	the low mass
<i>basse</i>	early
<i>évoqué seulement</i>	mentioned only
<i>comme la craie sonore</i>	like the chalk sound
<i>articulée</i>	articulated
<i>dans le bruit blanc</i>	in white noise
<i>psalmodiée la messe</i>	the mass is chanted
<i>on n'a pas le droit</i>	we do not have the right
<i>d'ameuter</i>	to stir
<i>la puce vissée dans</i>	ill at the eyelet
<i>l'œillet</i>	of a lock
<i>de la serrure</i>	one cannot ease
<i>je parle de mon frère</i>	I'm talking about my
<i>parti</i>	brother who leaves
<i>cette nuit</i>	tonight
<i>dans un râle de toucan</i>	in the rattle of a toucan
<i>comme la craie sonore</i>	like the sound of chalk
<i>échappée dans les</i>	escaped into the love-
<i>agapes</i>	feast
<i>de la messe noire</i>	of the black mass
<i>il est parti cette nuit</i>	he left tonight
<i>léger</i>	light
<i>dans son linceul</i>	in his shroud
<i>enveloppé de silence</i>	wrapped in white
<i>blanc</i>	silence

<i>sous les allusions multiples éparpillées de bonne heure aux quatre coins du Sanctuaire</i>	under multiple allusions scattered early to the Sanctuary's four quarters
<i>comme la craie sonore articulée dans la monotonie monocorde du bruit blanc</i>	like the sound of chalk articulated in white noise's monotonous monotony
<i>la messe noire o complice des abominations célèbre la messe basse les oreilles ballaient finement les murmures sur le plancher du 'kraal'</i>	the black mass lo abominations' accomplice celebrating low mass ears flap to a lulling susurration on the 'kraal' floor
<i>ce n'est pas une mince affaire comme la craie sonore écrasée dans la monotonie monocorde du bruit blanc</i>	no small matter this like the crushed chalk sound in the monotony monotonous white noise

<i>noir c'est noir blanc</i>	black is black white
<i>c'est blanc</i>	is white
<i>un homme engendre</i>	a man engenders
<i>un homme</i>	a man
<i>un lion engendre un lion</i>	a lion engenders a lion
<i>le croisement du cheval</i>	the crossing of a horse
<i>et de l'âne</i>	and a donkey
<i>engendre stérile le</i>	engenders the sterile
<i>baudet</i>	mule
<i>le salaire de la</i>	the wages of bastardy
<i>bâtardise</i>	bastardy
<i>la bâtardise mène à la</i>	leads to death
<i>mort</i>	a man is a lion
<i>un homme est un lion</i>	a lion is a man
<i>un lion est un homme</i>	His life depended on a
<i>Sa vie a dépendu à un</i>	thread
<i>fil</i>	the identifying
<i>la vérification identitaire</i>	verification
<i>de routine</i>	of routine
<i>la routine vérificatrice</i>	the routine verification
<i>d'identité</i>	of identity
Dépourvu de malléoles	<i>Lacking malleoli</i>
arbore le faciès N* et le	<i>facial features N* and</i>
prépuce altier !	<i>defiant foreskin</i>

* N = 'nilotique' ou 'hamite'. N signifie aussi «Nul», «Néant» dans le jargon de la DEMIAP, des détenus à «barrer» (= tuer) en faisant disparaître leur cadavre ; ennemis internes ou externes (faciès N, 'incircconcis', 'dépourvus de malléoles'...)

* N = 'Nilotic' or 'Hamitic'. N also means "No", "None" in the jargon of DEMIAP, to "block" (= kill) detainees by doing away with their corpse, internal or external enemies (facies N, 'uncircumcised', 'lacking malleoli'.....

*Ne regardez pas je
vous prie
ne regardez pas ma
face
c'est ma mère qui l'a
signée !
où diantre était le père
si ta mère a signé ta
face?
un homme n'engendre
pas
un lion
un lion n'engendre pas
un homme
le pays c'est le pays
la jungle c'est la jungle
le croisement du cheval
et
de l'âne
engendre stérile le
baudet
le salaire de la
bâtardise
la bâtardise mène à la
mort*

Do not look please
do not look at my face
it carries my mother's
stamp !
where the deuce was
the father
if your face carries your
mother's stamp ?
a man does not
engender
a lion
a lion does not
engender
a man
the country is the
country
the jungle is the jungle
the crossing of a horse
and
a donkey
engenders the sterile
mule
the wages of bastardy
bastardy leads to
death

*c'est noir c'est blanc
c'est blanc c'est noir
où diantre était passé le
père
si la mère a façonné
l'enfant?
Ce n'est pas une mince
affaire!
le pays c'est la jungle
la jungle c'est le pays
légère la craie sonore
portée aux quatre coins
dans la célébration
circonspecte
des messes basses
marmonnées
dans la monotonie du
bruit blanc
pour éviter
d'ameuter les ombres
sinistres
sur les murs du
Sanctuaire*

it's black it's white
what's white is black
where the deuce had
the father been
if the mother fashioned
the child ?
No small matter this !
the country is the jungle
the jungle is the country
chalk slightly sounding
reaches across the four
quarters
in circumspect
celebration
the low mass mumbled
in the monotony of white
noise
that the ominous
shadows
not stir
on these Sanctuary
walls

<i>un râle caverneux</i>	a cavernous rattle
<i>déchire</i>	tears
<i>la nuit opaque</i>	the opaque night
<i>un râle rocailleux</i>	a rocking rattle
<i>baigne</i>	bathing
<i>la Cathédrale de silence</i>	the Cathedral of silence
<i>la bâtardise a installé ce</i>	bastardy had set up the
<i>rejeton</i>	stunted offspring with
<i>rabougri porte-étendard</i>	colours 'N' nailed to the
<i>du faciès N</i>	mast
<i>c'est la vie ou la mort</i>	that's life or death
<i>le père le savait la mère</i>	the father knew the
<i>le savait</i>	mother knew
<i>accordé sans dièse ni</i>	granted without sharps
<i>bémol</i>	or flats
<i>au diapason de l'hymne</i>	in tune with the anthem
<i>entonné</i>	sung
<i>sur la partition</i>	on genetic partition
<i>génétique Front N</i>	Facies N
<i>Ce n'est pas une mince</i>	No small matter this !
<i>affaire !</i>	the father does not deny
<i>le père ne l'a pas nié la</i>	it
<i>mère</i>	nor the
<i>non plus</i>	mother

*le rejeton arbore
altier*
*le fanion en berne
n'est-ce pas la mort ?*
*le père le sut il laissa
faire*
*la mère le sut elle laissa
faire*
*Ne vous attardez pas
sur*
mon faciès
génotypé H je le jure
sur la tombe de mon
père*
*mon père mort de la
mâle
mort*
*la mâle mort
infligée par mes oncles
les frères de ma mère !*

the offspring defiantly
sports
the flag at half-mast
is this not death ?
the father knew he let it
be
the mother knew she let
it be
Do not dwell
on
my face
genotyped H* I swear
on my father's
grave
my father died of
inter-
necion
internecion
inflicted by my uncles
my mother's brothers !

* *Hutu*

* *Hutu*

*un clin d'œil par ci
un clin d'œil par là
un sourire entendu
où diantre passa le père
si la mère maintint altier
le fanion
en berne? Ah la filiation
épargnée de la mâle
mort
la mâle mort
infligée à notre frère
par tes oncles
les frères de ta mère
telle lionne tel lionceau !*

a wink of the eye here
a wink of the eye there
a knowing smile
how the deuce did the
father let it pass if the
mother maintained the
flag defiantly at half-
mast? Ah filiation
spared that inter-
necion
an internecion
visited on our brother
by his uncles
your mother's brothers
as a lion to lion cubs !

*Sa vie dépendit d'un fil
il eut suffi de restituer
sa double carte
d'identité**

** En mai 1999, séquestré avec moi, Célestin Bizimana avait des documents d'identité de réfugié onusien (UNHCR) et résident canadien, mais ils lui furent confisqués dans les bureaux de la police politique DEMIAP situés à l'étage de l'Etat Major du Camp Militaire 'Lt-Colonel Kokolo'. Déshumanisé au rez-de-chaussée, Célestin avait encore l'espoir de s'en sortir vivant en vertu des traités internationaux signés par la RD Congo... Mais le général Jean Yav Naweij en avait décidé autrement : saluant cyniquement la fraternité 'raciale' hutu-bantu, en pointant le doigt vers le plafond (vers l'étage ou vers le ciel ?), il décrêta la mort de l'infortuné Bizimana.*

His life depended on a thread
it was enough to restore his dual identity card*

* In May 1999, sequestered with me, Célestin Bizimana carried the identity documents of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and Canadian residency, but it was confiscated in the offices of the political police of DEMIAP on the second floor of the Staff of the Military Camp, 'Lt-Colonel Kokolo'. Dehumanized on the ground floor, Célestin was still hoping to get out alive under international treaties signed by the DR Congo... But General Jean Yav Naweij had decided otherwise : cynically welcoming 'racial' hutu-bantu fraternity, pointing toward the ceiling (upstairs or to heaven?), he decreed the death of the unfortunate Bizimana.

*confisquée poliment là-haut à l'étage
‘- Ce n'est pas un problème
dit Monseigneur le Recteur,
Ta Chapelle c'est la nôtre, bâtie par des Hommes créés à l'image de Dieu. Ainsi ta carte sera restituée au moment de partir Là-Haut !’
le père le sut la mère le sut
le général sait...*

*les sanglots de blues à verse
répandent des miasmes pleureurs
débauchent les abîmes des orgies de la messe noire
aux quatre coins du Sanctuaire*

politely confiscated upstairs
‘- No matter said the Monseigneur Rector,
Your Chapel is ours, built by men created in the image of God. And your card will be refunded on your departure On High !’
the father knew the mother knew
the general knows...

the moaning of the blues
sheds the weeping miasmas
the profligate abysses
the orgies' black mass
to all the Sanctuary's four quarters

*Les sanglots de blues
ruissellent dans le
déluge
des miasmes pleureurs
sans fin aux quatre
coins du Sanctuaire
calfeutrés dans le bruit
blanc
les soliloques
monotones
articulent les messes
basses
ponctuées de
gouttelettes
écrasées au coin des
yeux
comme un caillou jeté
dans l'onde
enfant de personne
Céleste est parti
léger dans son linceul
nimbé de silence blanc.*

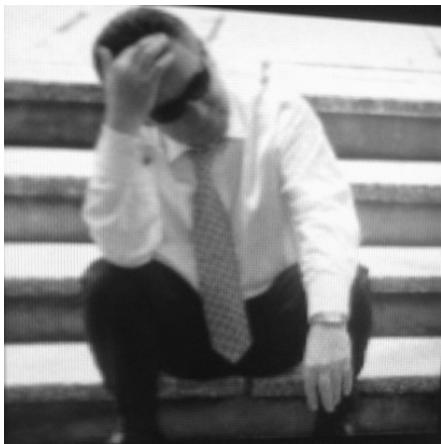
The moaning of the blues
trickles to the four quarters of the Sanctuary into the flood
of weeping miasmas without end
caulked in white noise
monotonous soliloquies articulate the low masses
appointed with droplets crushed at the corner of the eyes
like a pebble thrown in a wave
nobody's child
Celestial has left shrouded light in his shroud in white silence.

Le brasier

The blaze

<i>de nouveau l'oiseau bleu</i>	in my casement the bluebird points
<i>pointe son bec crochu dans mon soupirail</i>	his hooked beak anew the leaden sky
<i>le ciel obscurci</i>	at midnight tears
<i>à minuit pleure à verse</i>	torrential
<i>les miasmes deschairs</i>	miasmas of flesh
<i>crépissent mes doigts carnivores</i>	rough-cast my carnivore hands
<i>qui grattent la guitare sèche</i>	strumming the acoustic guitar
<i>aux sons desrafales</i>	to sound gusts
<i>je salue mon frère</i>	I hail my brother
<i>élégant dans l'habit de soirée</i>	elegant in evening apparel
<i>sous le noeud papillon vermeil</i>	beneath a bow-tie beaming
<i>la gorge éclatée !</i>	vermilion at the throat !

III



Célestin

Ne ris pas...

*Bipata nshimba mbala kuseki,
Lufù lwènù ndwà bukwà nnyama.*

An astral name: *Célestin*. But this heaven was rent. Was divided before. It was divided again. As the landmass that bore it. Just as the landmass that bore it, ‘ripped up’.

Dissolved in sulphuric acid, the people’s democratic choice, Patrice Lumumba was sacrificed along with the promised independence of his land, as the CIA selected its bulwark of dictators in the African setting of its global Cold War. These cynical alliances superimposed themselves on racial and class-based networks of rapine formerly engineered by colonial patronage, resonating hierarchies whose legacy will tally the spiritual cost of racial oppression in an expansive, blood-engorged internecion (*‘mâle mort’* is the precise expression the poet borrows from medieval French). Were not its colonies always an echo-chamber for the iron will of Europe? Thus, the supremacist cascade that declined from ‘White Man’, and amplified in the chamber of the former Belgian colonies the ‘racial conflict’ of Fleming and Walloon, will inflame, across this continent’s heart, the filial foment of ‘Tutsi Power’, and the war machine of its self-mutilating ascendancy.

One notices, a coetaneous liquidation of Bantu leaders.¹⁸

So, there are pogroms...to the accompaniment of the forced strains of 'nationhood'. In 1959, Tutsi, driven out of Rwanda, are displaced into neighbouring regions (including the eastern part of the Congo). In Burundi, in 1971 and '72, and again in '82, Hutu are massacred.

Traditionally patrilineal, despite common and widespread intermarriage, minority Tutsi enclaves across central Africa now assume endogenous traits. Hence,

18 Conventionally, the politically dominant Walloon faction favoured the notionally more 'Caucasian', i.e. tall, straight-nosed, reddish-hued, pastoralist (Hamitic or Nilotic) peoples, leaving the Flemish underdogs to throw their support behind the oppressed peasant majority (Bantu). The traditional Tutsi kingdom in Rwanda-Burundi harboured no imperial ambitions and co-existed amicably with its regional Bantu neighbours prior to Belgium's racial transference and the exile, by the colonial authorities, of its King.

In recent years, Uganda's dictator, Museveni, has publicly stated the undertaking of 'his people' to unite both oceans: 'we had to make our way through the Congo to reach the Atlantic'. The implicit correlation of this 'we' with 'Tutsi Power' (the triumvirate: Kagame, Buyoya, Museveni) is clarified by Madeleine Albright in her book, *Madam Secretary: A Memoir*, along with its author's admission: 'Tutsi are the apple of my eye' (hardly surprising, in light of the diamond concessions acquired by her partner, Jackie Onassis' last love, the magnate Maurice Templesman, who helped engineer Lumumba's overthrow and replacement by Mobutu).

It should not be forgotten that in the geographical context under discussion, 'Tutsi' (viz. the Hamitic people of Burundi and Rwanda) constitute small minorities (comparable, as a percentile, to 'Whites' in apartheid South Africa) around whom the garrulous fictions of race will begin to embroider a grab-bag of identifying traits: 'uncircumcised', 'lacking malleoli', 'whose gums are black', etc...

also covert traits, that bear a parallel progeny as a means of perpetuating their ‘type’. This incestuous reserve ominously potentialises the co-ordinates of the ‘cross’, feeding the myth of fissiparous twins with inauspicious blood. The active product of a unity that incessantly absconds, where all things divide into themselves, twins embody the continent’s base two counting system (and, from the perspective of the ‘cycle of life’, replenish, as we have seen, the solar and nocturnal rhythm across its poles [east>west]¹⁹): they are the unequal in person, whose fractal transfinite formulates the germinal intuitions of ancestrality.²⁰

Against this volatile patchwork of powers, let us now introduce the despot whose presidency coincides with the events documented in these pages. A Bantu leader, a muLuba from Katanga, was Laurent Kabila an exception? A bandit without distinction, let us say he was tolerated for a while. Displacing Larry Devlin’s puppet (Marshal Mobutu), obsolete since the break-up of the Socialist Republics, he was just another puppet left to

- 19 The mundane ‘cycle of life’ expresses, in extension, the vital cycle of ancestors beneath the ground. (Nor is the correlation of subterranean forces with the ‘nocturnal’, lacking in historical validation, if tensile metal, electrification, and the consequent, magnetic withdrawal of night, were to be made to answer the earth’s industrial evisceration.)
- 20 Not only does fractal geometry appear to have been invented in Africa, but also digital code. Ron Eglash (*African Fractals*) notes the importation of recursive number theory into Spain as alchemical geomancy from Islamic mystics by Hugo Santalia (1390), tracing its influence from Leibniz to George Boole and finally to the core of John von Neumann’s digital computing.

dance.²¹ He laughed, while others pulled the strings.²² One might say the genocide recorded in these pages dates the instant at which his laughter ceased; signaling the moment at which the wave of domination flows back, displacing the impurity of its agents. Naturally, in his complicity and impotence, his targets were blind. The die had long been cast. Swept into the vortex, they were only chaos' collateral 'till he at length proved the tired maxim with his life: 'He who lives by the sword...' There is however, in the traditions of his people, another proverb, of greater pertinence and scope. It heads this essay in Cilubà, and reads: '*When they are hunting the genet [shimbà], you the civet [mbala] shouldn't laugh,*

21 Larry Devlin was the first secretary to the American Embassy in Kinshasa until 1967 (after which he and his wife were directly involved in US mining interests in the Congo).

22 We will later see what this laughter shares with a disposition English linguistically imports from German, to signal the graceless reflex of those profiteers of others' misfortunes: '*Schadenfreude*'.

Considering Kabila's laughter however, I cannot forget an anecdote drawn from the poet's own family, dating back to '61, when his insurgency was limited to opposing Balubà from Kasai during the Katangan secession. On this occasion he had intercepted a train carrying one of Mwamba's cousins, Thadée TSHIMANGA, who, along with his classmates, was returning after their vacation in Kasaï to boarding school. Ordered off the train and placed in an old colonial prison at Manono (Kabila's home town), this cousin's imposing stature (typical of Bakwà Kalonji) recommended him for the task of capturing four of his classmates every day of their confinement. These were held upside down by their ankles, their throats cut, thrown into a petrol drum and boiled, that their genitals be served up daily to the rebel leader. One of four children to survive, Thadée never fully recovered from the ordeal.

for its fate speaks to your own animal condition'.²³

‘*Mbal...*’ The reader may recall the sound. The word refers to radiance, especially to the luminosity of the moon, and, in the added sense of ‘incipience’, to the *new moon* itself when all mothers of ‘primordial (spirit) children’ give them gifts and dance. *Mbala* is the ‘nandinie’, the two-spotted palm civet, solitary and nocturnal, and like ‘*NShimbà*’ its twin, an ‘animal of authority’.²⁴ Its ‘two spots’ are the insignia of ‘*mbidi*’ [two], the sacred number for the body and of the phenomenal world. A word we have also encountered before: MBIDI, the warrior hero who approaches from the east (ILUNGA, his other name, carries the sense of a conjunction, the hyphen that links ‘two’). This also is the fate that binds. This circuit of contestation, the share of that ‘animal condition’.²⁵

23 Or, to cite ‘*Maalu*’ [‘Problems’], a song made famous by a celebrated mistress of Kabila’s (the singer Tshala Mwana) after his death: “Don’t laugh at your partner’s problems, for you don’t know when they’ll be yours.” (A caution deriving no doubt from the semantic equivalence, in most Bantu languages, of: ‘yesterday-tomorrow’.)

24 Animals of authority are under the direct protection of the king (i.e. to harm them is to harm the king himself). Indeed, the word for this particular ‘genet’ is almost identical in Swahili to the ‘royal’ lion [*simba*]. The parallel is eloquent. For the lion is gregarious and lives on the plain, whereas its twin is solitary and nocturnal and, like the leopard, stays hidden in the forest canopy (i.e. it embodies the ‘warlike’, asocial characteristics of the second-born of twins).

25 Thus, one notices every time the oath of the President of the Republic is taken, the one who usurps his forebear, eats a part of his name, each one supposing, by this onomaphagy, to introject the former’s power: Mobutu, who replaces *Joseph KasaVubu*

Now, having garnered these few clues, let us reconsider the complicity of Kabila's 'laughter'. The matter is quite simple and quite complex. It was a Rwandan and Ugandan mercenary army (with additional troops from Liberia and Angola) that swept him to power, a power that did not extend to repatriating them and paying their dues. Tutsi, US trained Rwandans, James Kabarebe and Gen. Dan, the founder and architect of DEMIAP, were pulling the strings.²⁶ That is the first

(1965) and the one cited in CIA cables simply as '*Joseph*' (Lumumba), takes the oath as: *Joseph Désiré*; the 'chosen' adopted by Kabila, as *Laurent Désiré* (1997); before his assassination and replacement by Hypolite Kanambe, who takes the oath as: *Joseph Kabange Kabila* (2001). Kabange?

'Kabange' is the second born of twins...

This gives us occasion to examine a little more closely, the meaning of that 'shared animal condition'. It was Laurent Kabila's practice to murder potential political rivals and, the same night, sleep with their wives. A course whose precedence had been set, albeit with somewhat more patience and circumspection, by Mobutu (most brazenly with respect to the widows of his nascent sacrifices: KasaVubu and Lumumba). A signal victim of this *mâle mort* (that mimics so closely the territorial instincts of nature's large predators), was the father of Kanambe. Thus, his fate at the hands of this 'adopted son' would precisely follow its predatory course.

The latter excises the surname from his correspondence, which he will sign henceforth (like Kafka's hero), simply: 'Joseph K.' (Whilst working on his country's constitution, the poet tabled the proposal that its emblematic animal be changed from the intractable leopard to the pacific okapi. His suggestion was suppressed by the speaker of the parliament (a mobutist).)

26 James Kabarebe (Joseph K.'s maternal uncle) was the Rwandan Military High Commander whose forces toppled Mobutu. Featured in these poems under the code name of 'the Cathedral', DEMIAP is the acronym of a clandestine prison for 'the Military

point. The second is more subtle. A true democrat, a leader of the people, was waiting in the wings. Nor were the CIA averse to his investiture. In 1998 Nelson Mandela invited this politician to his country for talks. The suggestion had come from the aforementioned General (whom we can be sure received it from his patrons abroad). During this visit it was intended for Kabila to be disposed of and upon his return, Tshisekedi, the invited guest and leader of UDPS (*Union pour la Démocratie et la Progrès Social*²⁷), installed as the legitimate representative of his people. However, in contrast to his countryman, for him the meaning of that proverb was plain. This ‘handshake’ he could not conscience: *he did not laugh* (viz. he did not go).²⁸ But word of this proposal leaked out and reached the ear of the feckless Kabila, triggering in rebuttal, the massacre of Tutsi recounted (amongst other atrocities) in these pages.²⁹ The following month this situation was

Detection of Enemies of the State’.

- 27 The poet ranks as one of this Party’s founding members. In democratic elections (later dissolved by Mobutu Sese) TSHISEKEDI WA MULUMBA was voted Prime Minister on Aug. 15, 1992.
- 28 Stating that enough blood had been spilt in his country already, Tshisekedi asked why Kabila could not be offered the sinecure of an ambassadorship in Zimbabwe, in the company of his dictator crony Mugabe? This of course was not the point. The transfer of power was a transaction that had to be signed in blood, implicating the legitimacy of his election.
- 29 The President returned a day early from a state visit to Cuba, crossing in secret into Kinshasa from Congo-Brazzaville in July of ’98. Once in the capital he announced on radio and state TV that Rwandans living in his country were now being asked to return home (by his own estimate, his country at this point was

compounded by the Rwandan army's re-invasion of the country. The beleaguered government escalated their diatribes against "cockroaches" on radio and national TV. On 12 August, 1998, the Council of Ministers instituted the Military Camp Lt-Colonel Kokolo as a "Centre for Tutsi protection" against the spurious threat of popular resentment. Trucks were boarded, with or without consent, and off-loaded at DEMIAP. Beneath this humanitarian ruse, the clandestine mission of the Urban Political Police was adopting the maxim: "No prison for enemies!"³⁰ A special jargon qualified Tutsi as "external enemies" or "long-nosed enemies"³¹ and opponents as "internal enemy rebels" or "short-nosed enemies."³² From 1998 to 1999, in excess of twenty-five thousand Tutsi and more than ten thousand Congolese, including child soldiers, perished in this 'Centre of protection'.³³

hosting something of the order of 250 000 Tutsi-Congolese).

30 No water, food, health care, lawyer, fair trial, etc..

31 Codenamed '*Romeo*' (for Rwandan, viz. 'to be exterminated').

32 Called '*Bikwatakwata*' in the Kiluba of Katanga ("those whom one stops without resistance"), i.e. the peaceful and democratic opposition. A key member of UDPS, this was Mwamba's fate. Detained from 21 October 1998 to 15 December 1999, for 99 interviews in 10 places of detention, lawful and secret, by police and the military. Also sequestered in 33 dungeons, particularly 12 of DEMIAP (*Détection Militaire des Ennemis-Anti-Patrie, Camp Militaire Lieutenant-Colonel Kokolo*: May 23-Sep. 15, 1999; *Direction Générale de la Détection Militaire des Ennemis-Anti-Patrie* DEMIAP/Kintambo: Sep. 15-Oct. 30, 1999; *Cour d'Ordre Militaire COM/Commune de la Gombe*: Oct. 30-Nov. 5, 1999; *Centre Pénitentiare de Rééducation de Kinshasa* (CPRK) *Ex Prison Centrale de Makala*: Nov. 5-De. 15, 1999).

33 Drawn into the confidences of 'Angel Michael'—*Ange Michel*—who would sweep the yard in front of the cells all the while

Under such constraints, impetuously the call, ‘categorically’ is raised: ‘who is my neighbour?’ This question, in Africa, were the old customs to prevail, its polyvocal rhythms would indefinitely refract, whose answer—after all—is plain: we are all brothers under the cycle of the sun (*ubuntu*). But history interjects (as if this even were its consummation: let us not forget the Jacobin Terror!); with a gesture of irresistible and unanimous impatience, it responds ‘one last time’...but a last time without end, for the imperative killing serves is an abstraction that never ceases evacuating its substance.³⁴ Damned in the crucible of this blaze, chaos’

exchanging information sotto voce with the inmates in Kinyarwanda, the poet gleaned an estimated eight to eleven thousand Tutsi to have been exterminated, the remainder (between fourteen and seventeen thousand) made up of Bantu and mixed Hutu-Tutsi foreign nationals (from Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda). The other ten thousand Congolese were composed both of child soldiers and the defeated, former *Forces Armées Zairoises* (the FAZ regime of Mobutu Sese that had plotted with the Rwandan Army to overthrow Laurent Kabila on Aug. 2, 1998).

Unfortunately, these are conservative estimates. Whilst sequestered with the poet from July-August, 1999, in cell 04, Cd MUTEBA KAHENGA (head of the bureau of execution at the relevant time) noted that over the course of a three month period, 04, 05 and 06 (each holding between 300-400 captives) as well as a large holding cell (‘the hole’, containing a minimum of 700), were emptied out every day. ‘You do the math’ he said...

³⁴ It has been said that ‘every true change in the experience of time is a ritual that demands human victims’ (Furio Jesi), yet the restitution of that ‘experience’—the untimeliness of revolt—now seeks its victims globally, where the interjection rots to expose the truth of time as the instantiation of a *death instinct* through which Reason is fated always to rebegin the staging of its own

unbridled path is given.³⁵ And its unforgiving, nocturnal logic, the poet must seek...backwards. He finds it in his people's 'cross'—

'The cockroach neighbour / do not laugh / is you !'

So we come finally, to speak of Célestin. '*The unbridled path...*' was composed as his epitaph, that marks no grave but only where this 'sky' was rent. Burundian born, he was a lawyer, economist, Canadian resident and UNHCR refugee. His father, a prosperous hutu, had enjoyed the prestige of having acquired a Tutsi wife. This cost overwhelmed him in the aforementioned pogrom of '82. By her brothers he was slain. And now the seed of this union is accused, of what? Swept up in the purge of Kinshasa's suburbs, his calumny was the straightness of his nose (his squat body type was his father's inheritance, but his facial features betrayed his mother's line)! The mirthless ironies of race...his fate, a celestial pole for history's rage of cross-purposes, would needs distill a veritable lake of blood that 'cries from out of the ground'.

Ne ris pas

'A Shroud of White Silence' records the subsequent interrogation of the unfortunate Bizimana in

conditions.

35 These constraints correspond to geopolitical forces unleashed by the invention of the PC, leading to the deterritorialisation of computer and telecommunications networks in the West whose reterritorialisation is engineered by western mining interests as a means of looting the world's richest source of coltan (sparking the 'War of Africa', that will be prosecuted along racial Bantu-Tutsi lines; the deadliest conflict since World War II, it will cost the lives of an estimated 6 million). [Editor's note: in the years subsequent to this text's composition that figure has doubled.]

the ‘kraals’, lightless dungeons piled high with the faecal material of one’s own fellows, predeceased.³⁶ Their first encounter had been in cell 04. Later, they would share the ominously clean quarters of dungeon no.06, where, one afternoon at the end of May, 1999, Célestin, hungry, binges on express beans cooked with bicarbonate.³⁷

Mwamba, the archivist of what follows, takes up the few

36 Imported from Afrikaans, this word is the poet’s code for the ‘faecalisation’ cells of DEMIAP/50th Brigade Commander: “the conditions under which detainees were held incommunicado were worse than those of cows in a slaughterhouse for whose consumable meat greater care is taken”. A component of the secret extermination camp whose layout, history and logic will be the subject of the following essay (‘Kokolo’). Relevant here, is a patched hole that had been forced into a plywood hoarding on one of the double iron doors of the dismal ‘mabosu’04 (‘jail cell’ or ‘dungeon’ in Swahili) from outside (for the insertion of a grenade, detonated to coax the egress of its compacted, Tutsi cargo). The cell’s current occupants had contrived to remove this patch, thus permitting visual access onto the prison yard: ‘*la puce vissée dans l’oeillet / de la serrure*’...—lines that anticipate the call of the ‘toucan’ later in the same verse. For we know that the brooding hornbill is walled up in a tree and fed by its mate through a small aperture. If the male bird meets with misadventure the female will starve, for it is unable alone to free itself from its confinement. The asymmetrical reciprocity of this sequestering resonates yet again with the cosmic fate that informs the inclusive disjunction of ‘twins’. (The ‘bluebird’ mentioned in ‘*The Blaze*’ was one of several confiscated utility vehicles that had been paid for in blood, and now, used to dispose of Célestin’s corpse, left blood-spattered, parked pointedly in full view of the cell’s spyhole.)

37 The duplicity of this whitened sepulchre, whose mute atmosphere infects *A Shroud of White Silence*, will be taken up in the following essay. Let it merely be noted here, whilst the poem builds its ‘white noise’ on images of the prodigal dispersal of

words that now remain:

“Mocked and jeered as a ‘worm’ he is exposed to the night. Beaten to the point of defecation. His misfortune was thus compounded! Asked to stop his shitty smell, he cannot. This further irritates ‘robot T’ and his acolytes, drugged on alcohol and hemp.³⁸ Ali slaps Célestin and requires him to clean with his hands the warm diarrhoea spread on the floor and rub it on his body. He becomes the ‘shit’ incarnate and goes to it. All night, Célestin has to shake his hands to fan the bad smell away in the confined *mabosu*, but to no avail. Collapsed from fatigue, thrown his length, kneeling, and despite entreaties, the captive is raised with kicks and slaps. He tries to smile at his torturers, he scoops up sputum. Ali opens a knife and implacably, plants the blade in his left ankle. Blood spurts. ‘Ah! The cockroach has an articulated foot, then?’ confirms the grinning robot T. The next morning, the doors of the cells open. Célestin, naked as Adam, is required by Ali to carry the large wheel hub of an impounded Mercedes, balanced with his hands aloft on his back. The shriveled sex of the

skeletal remains (‘armfuls of crushed chalk’), in Lubà culture, this very same calcium carbonate is gathered together in rituals of reconciliation. This trope’s latent inversion eventually breaks through in the breaking of the silence by the ‘blues’, the ‘shedding’ of tears that lead back to another laughter, incongruous laughter whose temperament was Africa’s direct inheritance in Mississippi; ‘ironic laughter mixed with tears’ under the influence of that felicitous formula of Langston Hughes’ – such that, in the end, rather than ‘*not laugh*’, one laughs anyhow ‘*to keep from crying*’...

³⁸ Cited variously in these pages, this ‘T’ of the ‘robot killer’ stands both for Ali’s name (TARESHI) and for ‘killer’ in French [*tueur*].

befouled ‘black Christ’, compounded the Burundian ‘Hutu-Tutsi’ (sic) stations of his Cross. He comes and goes, filing several times before women released from jail to watch the show and boo at the uncircumcised: ‘Stinking Rwandan! Beast!’ His parting words in *mabosu* 03 still echo in my head: ‘My shield is fallen!’ he cried when the Head of the Bureau of Execution, Cd INGILA, forcefully tore the embrace of his arms confining my body.

Célestin ended his days in the hallway, naked, bound and gagged on the 23 June, 1999, his throat slashed by the ‘Chinese knife’ (detachable bayonet) of the polished AK47 of a young PMF (Female Military Personnel) KAPI, this sadistic peccadillo a love offering to INGILA’s concubine.”

*Août. 3, 1999 DEMIAP/Camp
Kokolo*

Avertissement !

Warning!

*Le droit s'arrête devant
la porte du cachot. C'est
un pays
sans drapeau ni loi.*

Rights stop at the prison
door.
It is a land
with neither flag nor law.

Visa

*Devrais-je éternuer le
souffle coupé court ?
l'odeur de la came irrite
les narines
empeste et alourdit
l'atmosphère ambiante
en poste les archers
hilares
trébuchent sur les
bouteilles d'alcool vides
le compte à rebours a
commencé
bientôt les dards
siffleront aux oreilles
rompront les fines
brides
tenant ma tête en sursis
sur mes épaules.*

Visa

How to sneeze on
shortened breath ?
to the nostrils' irritation
hemp's heavy haze
infests
the ambient air
uproarious archers at
their station
stumble on empties
the countdown starts
now
soon past my ears darts
will whistle
cutting the fine bridle
holding my head on my
shoulders' borrowed
time.

Faut-il se souvenir ?

*la lumière blafarde
de la cire
accolée au mur
le temps passe
toute
la nuit
les cernes
creusés sous les yeux
les guetteurs rivés sur
un filet
mince dégagé des
battants
de fer
entrebâillés
scrutent
silencieusement
l'ultime instant à passer
encore dans
l'antichambre de la
Mort.*

**Is it necessary to
recall ?**

the livid light
of wax
affixed to the wall
all
night
time wastes
the hollows
ringing the eyes
the lookouts riveted on
a fine
thread detached from
folding
iron doors
ajar
dissect in silence
the final instant that
passes
on in
the antechamber of no
more.

Cellulite man

*comme une gifle
fatidique de l'impératif
catégorique
dans le procès du
dégradé naturel
les jours passent
la patine sénilisante
lamine et gangrène
mon corps précipité
dans l'enfer
du cancer
les cellules enflammées
et démultipliées
se dérèglent au fur et à
mesure
accélèrent ma plongée
dans la gradation
dégressive*

Homo cellulitis

*the fatidical categorical
imperative
like a slap
in the trial of the
degradation of what is
natured
days pass
laid low and gangrenous
the patina senesces
my body
thrown into cancer hell
cells inflamed and
pullulant
go awry in proportion to
my accelerated dive
in the decremental
gradation*

*je perçois déjà la colère
pernicieuse
des os
craquent et déboîtent
les articulations
comme on débracte
on égrène les épis de
maïs
dans un champ de
pétards expulsant
brusquement les
humeurs montantes
au nez
catapulté du haut
du clocher de la
Cathédrale
devrais-je en chute libre
arrêter mon glissement
à pic
au fond du cratère en
ébullition
dans la fosse
commune.*

I see already the
pernicious rage
of bones
the joints cracked and
dislodged
as ginned corn
percolates from the
cob
in a field of
expellant pops
inclinations mount
abruptly
to the nose
catapulted to the top
of the Cathedral bell
tower
should I free fall
a boiling crater
checks
my slide sheer
to the depths
in the common
grave.

La brosse

The brush

<i>faire le chemin de croix</i>	do the stations of the
<i>le calvaire recommencé</i>	cross
<i>dans les latrines</i>	again the calvary
<i>publiques</i>	in the public latrines
<i>qui ne désemplissent</i>	stanchless
<i>pas</i>	every day
<i>tous les jours</i>	that overbrim
<i>cependant débordent</i>	by hand redo
<i>user des mains</i>	the spilling
<i>refaire le plein des</i>	stool buckets
<i>bacs-à-selles</i>	the tanks
<i>récurer les cuves</i>	scour again
<i>encore</i>	with antiseptic
<i>astiquer le plancher de</i>	polish the toilet
<i>toilettes</i>	floor
<i>avec pour antiseptique</i>	the nagging bruise
<i>la meurtrissure</i>	of plaited cord
<i>lancinante des</i>	chattering
<i>cordelettes</i>	in the flesh !
<i>jacassant dans la chair !</i>	

Le Naufragé

*Les kraals sinistrement
craquent
les lambeaux de gris-
gris ceints
autour des pieds des
reins
du cou
balbutient le
bruissement lugubre
seuls les feuillets en
pleurs lamentent
sur le plancher des
corps
arroés de rafales
hilares des jours durant
exhalent virulente
la pourriture des
cadavres
la purulence
des plaies
infectées encore
dans la tourmente
combien
de temps aux aguets*

The Shipwrecked

The kraals ominously
crack
rags of gris-gris
bound
about the legs kidneys
neck
a stammer of
gloomy rustling
only the leaves cry
lament
over bodies on the floor
dowsed with bursts of
hilarity
days harden
expire in virulence
purulence of wounds
decomposing the dead
infect still
in this torment
of tenterhooked
time

<i>les rescapés décharnés</i>	shrunken survivors
<i>les lèvres gercées et les yeux rivés</i>	concentrate
<i>épient d'hypothétiques vomissures</i>	crack-lipped
<i>à laper goulûment aux pieds de nouveaux captifs étourdis</i>	stony-eyed
<i>bizarre ! la salutation perpétuelle</i>	on proleptic vomit
<i>la raison d'enquête renouvelle la saga des damnés</i>	to guzzle at the feet of a novel captive
<i>cacalisés dans les kraals</i>	stunned
<i>Surgie de nulle part hier démente la Bête en chaleur embrase un point névralgique</i>	strange ! the time-worn salutation
<i>du globe ma crucifixion recommande dans les kraals inconséquemment répétée</i>	assisting in the enquiry
<i>la douloureuse expérience de l'humanité ségrégée</i>	renews the saga of the damned
	faecalised in kraals
	Emerging from nowhere yesterday
	the maddened Beast in rut
	ignites a nerve centre
	of the globe
	in the kraals
	my crucifixion
	recommences
	inconsistently its iteration
	the bitter experience of segregated man

*Naufragé de la République
surfe sur les pics des vagues sur les rivages du monde débarquer les reliefs indécents la moelle cacardante ma coupe sacrée déborde la lie de bouse récurée avec la langue au fond des kraals un jour doigtés universellement les sanglots asséchés Je butine les sucs capiteux des Antilles du tintement des castagnettes déchiffrer l'alphabet bâtard des morceaux racolés de l'île éclatée au large de l'océan Indien*

The wreck of the Republic
surfs the wave crests
disembarks on the shores of the world
the indecent relief
holy shit
the marrow of my cup overflows
the dregs of dung
scrubbed with language at the bottom of the kraals
one day
fingering the dry sobs
worldwide
I pillage the heady juices
of the Antilles
the tinkling
of castanets
decipher the alphabet
of bastard pieces
crimping the exploded island
in the Indian Ocean's offing

*Zombie fait signe
outre tombe
l'acide arrive
franco domicile
arboré l'ample boubou
taillé sur mesure dans
l'habit
tissé patiemment à Joal
J'embouche la
trompette
l'île sinistre sombre
dans l'orage sulfureux
d'éclairs et de tonnerres
soufflée sans retour
dans la tempête océane
Fédéré
je formule la République
dans la certitude
incantée
déjà les doigts arborent
la clamour dans l'azur
"Victoire ! Victoire !"
et moi Capitaine
navigateur au long
cours
propre le fleuve Congo.*

beyond the grave
a Zombie beckons
acerbity arrives
postage paid
draping an ample
boubou
cut to measure in
clothes
woven patiently at Joal
I put the trumpet to my
mouth
the ominous Island dark
in the sulphur storm
lightning and thunder
blow no return
in the Federated
ocean tempest
I set out the Republic
in the incanted certainty
fingers already hailing
the clamour in the sky
"Victory ! Victory !"
and I the Captain
a seaman of the long
haul
claim the River Congo

III

Après le service religieux célébré au temple protestant de Gambela pour le repos des âmes du Lieutenant-Colonel NKOKOLO, la triste procession se dirige vers l'église Ste-Marie où le service religieux catholique sera célébré pour le repos des âmes des trois autres défunts.



La jeep sur laquelle repose le cercueil contenant les restes du Lieutenant-Colonel les membres du Collège des Commissaires Généraux et par la famille du défunt.



Une vue de l'assistance devant l'Eglise Ste Marie. On reconnaît à gauche, le Colonel Moberg.

Kokolo

Nàsali nini?

A lilting name, Ko-ko-lo...but it is a tune that jarred, even when first bestowed, long before it was sung in ‘the Cathedral’.³⁹

As much else recounted in these pages, adventitious appositions typical of fable here arrogate themselves to history: ‘Kokolo’ was the name bequeathed the former ‘Military Barracks Camp Leopold II’ after the aforementioned, its commander, was gunned down in the Ghanaian embassy in place of the poet’s future father-in-law (shadow Vice-President, Michel Kiembe) who had begged off the mission citing a ‘diplomatic illness’ (diarrhoea).⁴⁰

39 No sanctuary for the oppressed, nor place of refuge as in Europe’s Middle Ages, ‘Cathedral’ here has the rhetorical value of antiphrasis, where victims of ‘clandestine’ and ‘ghost operations’ (‘CO’ and ‘GO’) vanish into the steep vaults of its inverted chambers, built by the labours of ‘joint patrols’ for abduction, assassination squads, and ‘hyenas’ (*Fisi* in Swahili, a term for their ‘nocturnal work’ – a word curiously adopted in 2000 as an acronym for the reallocation of the 50th Brigade Commander and the Presidential Guard. The 50th BDE (or ‘Five Zero Brigade’ of Kinshasa, Bas-Congo and Bandundu, eventually renamed the 7th *Région Militaire*), was first consolidated into the FIK (*Forces d’Intervention de Kinshasa*) before finally becoming: ‘FIS’ (*Forces d’Intervention Spéciales*)). (‘Ko-ko-lo’ suggests a knocking or tapping noise: colloquially, on an empty bottle to invoke its replenishment; and perhaps, by analogy...the ‘knocking up’ of a vessel of generation?)

40 Thus, the daughter of the man whose life was saved by that subterfuge would, decades later, find herself visiting her husband

This is how it happened. In 1960, Lumumba, the Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, requests UN troops to help crush a secession in his country's mineral rich province of Katanga.⁴¹ The on-going destabilisation of national sovereignty leads him also to expel the Belgian secret service. The following month, the Belgian fifth column and CIA deliberate his liquidation as an obstacle to Western interests, and the month after that, Mobutu, his Chief of Staff, stages a *coup* placing him under house arrest. The latter then engineers a scandal to provoke the non-aligned (i.e. 'positively neutral') African nations (Tunisia, Morocco and Ghana...) whose forces had been deployed in the country under the mandate of the Security Council by cutting his nation's diplomatic relations with the USSR and Czechoslovakia, and on the 20th of November, entering the Ghanaian Embassy and demanding its Ambassador leave.⁴² The latter, outraged, declines. Mobutu threatens to return the following day with force. The Ambassador says he will be waiting for him. The person shot upon entry of the

at the site of 'faecalisation cells' the fall guy came to christen with his corpse. (On these clandestine prison visits, see the following essay: '*Lusanzu*').

- 41 A dispute that will also be paid for with Dag Hammarskjöld's life. Indeed, on only one other occasion will the UN deploy the intervention of an active military force (East Timor). Here one must pay very close attention. During this era of decolonisation the CIA cultivated a climate of 'Cold War' as a pretextual hysteria for anti-democratic insurgencies it trialed in Latin America and then exported throughout the global 'South'.
- 42 Nkrumah, the leader of non-aligned African nations, had motivated Lumumba's spiritual de-colonisation at a PAN African Conference in Ghana in 1959, and was a vigorous supporter of his policy of national unity.

Embassy the following morning (along with his two body guards) the Ghanaians assumed to have been Mobutu himself. It was of course, the hapless Lt-Colonel Kokolo.

The transformation of the military barracks that now acquire his name, into a ‘Cathedral’, dates to the month of August, 1998. Otherwise home to forty thousand soldiers and their families, Rwandan tutsi troops were massacred in its compound on the 2nd and 3rd. Military ambulances conveyed the carnage to the General Hospital.⁴³ This overwhelmed the morgue. On August 8th, the Congolese Red Cross evacuated the anonymous remains for burial in advanced states of decay, dispersed in the wooded savanna of Kin East. The Political Police realised the extent of the massacres after the fact and decide to bury the victims in the General Staff of the Urban DEMIAP.⁴⁴ There, a further eight

43 “Military ambulances driven by ADREKAMANI and his colleagues came to the rescue of the ‘overwhelmed morgue of the General Hospital (ex Yemo LAM)’.”

44 A few words on the convoluted nomenclature of the DRC’s proliferous security apparatus are in order: as Kinshasa enjoys the status of a principality with its own Governor, it deploys its own ‘Urban Police’. However, it is necessary to distinguish here between the ‘*police politique*’ (i.e. the secret service or ‘SS’) of the Police; the civilian ‘SS’ or ANR (*Agence National de Renseignement*); and the Military SS (i.e. DEMIAP), both internal and external (the latter, the province of military secret agents abroad and non-citizens of the state). (The first two agencies differentiate between the status (military or civilian) of their captives. The latter do not.) Furthermore, there is the General Staff in charge of police policy, the EMG (*État Major Général*) run by the Ministry of Defence (its chief none other than the son of the martyred Kokolo) and the EMP (*État Major Particulier*) under direct command of the President of the Republic, with its

thousand Tutsi were culled on the 4th. The overflow of graves in a limited space forced the killers to work in depth. Subsequently, recourse to fire provided an infinite possibility of spatial renewal, whilst also checking the spread of disease. Thus, the treatment to which the 'enemies' were subjected, radicalised... On the 12th, a Ministerial Commission for the Protection of Tutsi led by the Minister of Human Rights, Leonard She Okitundu, decides to host the aforementioned in Centres of Confinement under the cynical ruse of averting their lynching by the people. In this model centre, on the same night of the 12th to the 13th, at least eight hundred '*Banyamulenge*' are summarily executed.⁴⁵ It was also the eve of the "War of Kinshasa" that would last a fortnight (from the 14th to the 28th). During the period from August 13th to 25th, around four thousand six hundred Tutsi were massacred, the peak of the carnage

'Bureau 2': 'G2' (state), 'T2' (regional) and 'S2' (urban) Security/Intelligence Service (after the American classification of General Staff, viz.: S1: Personnel (admin.); S3: Operational; S4: Logistics; S5: Education, etc...); as well as the CSE (*Comité de Security de l'Etat*) that takes its name from the KGB; the paramilitary unit of the SN (*Service National*); the tribal militia of the GSSP and GSS: 'Special Guards' (i.e. security forces): the first ('Presidential') made up of Lunda, the second, of Luba; the FSIR (*Force Spéciale d'Intervention Rapide*) that amalgamated into the GSS in '99; whilst not overlooking the intelligence operations of the *General Directory of Immigration* (DGM). At this time, all of these organisations would report on a weekly basis to Joseph K. (Chief of Staff) who would verbally convey the names of those marked down for execution.

45 'Banya Mulenge' or: 'those who are from (the Congolese village of) Mulenge'. Chief Mulenge was the first to accept tutsi on his land (thus all rebel insurgents will claim to be *Banyamulenge* under the pretence of waging a civil war).

being reached on the night of the 16th, with the operation simply called: *Extermination*.⁴⁶

Officially, this military prison does not exist. “In 1999, the head of the political police chose to encamp his headquarters at the heart of this vast charnel field, his way of greeting a year’s accomplishment with the wages of his work. This macabre décor housed the galley, the

46 This is the poet’s reconstruction of events: “Set in motion in the evening between nineteen and twenty two hours, this nocturnal operation lasted all night, concluding at four in the morning. Five Chinese made military trucks (‘Jeffang’) were requisitioned to the DEMIAP Section, commissioned by the S2 DEMIAP [‘IO’] Cd Papy LUKOBEKA, assisted by the staff MULAJ Hilaire -a- Nawej (S2 Assistant) and officers Anzuluni, INGILA, JOSE, DJANGO, John Hamza and the fierce soldier LOLA, among others. Thousands of Tutsi who considered themselves Congolese and therefore loyal to the government were captured and brought to the Urban DEMIAP. Hands tied behind their backs, squatting on their haunches, bound by rope in groups of three or four, they are unloaded in a jumble, thrown like sacks of flour, skulls cracked, noses smashed, arms, legs, clavicles and spines broken against the concrete parking lot of the Staff of the 50th BDE. Landing in disarray off the 2m high chassis, the deportees were arranged in five columns about a hectometre each, with at least five captives per metre. This concentrated a minimum of 2500 individuals in proportion to the turn-over rate of the five trucks. These captives were put at the disposal of the cruel Section HQ Company led by Cyril SEMBA Cd. His Platoon Leader NGOYI records deportees before cramming them temporarily into *mabosu* 05 and 06. Incessantly to-and-fro, Tutsi board the patrol pickup Toyota HILUX 08 piloted by Paul (*kabende*) KITENGE that off-loads behind the building of the General Staff. Laborious executioners receive and then exterminate them: Cd SEMBA C., Kabaso (his bodyguard), LWEMBE Faustin (Duty Officer), Kikashi (S1 ICE HQ) KUNDA etc... That same night, to clear space, mass graves are renewed by repeated incineration with gasoline. Fire allowed the

strategic military site at a remove and protected against any intrusion by a criminal investigation, local or international. In its dark and deadly chambers, my pate on alert, outfitted its invisible office by resorting to the derisory means at its disposal. My memory armed with the techniques of oral art was rescued by cigarette packaging gleaned from the random filth on the floors...”

reduction of fetid and noxious odours that had attracted a constant cohort of rooting pigs, dogs and stray cats, all competing with fierce carrion birds. Given the economic crisis raging in the homes of their masters in this period, domestic carnivores, once ethical, rival each other in their corpulence in the garrison. Also, fans of game trophies or relics, as well as cannibals, carved a living from the bodies of naked victims as they liked, denuded of ears, long noses, genitals, etc... All this infernal carnage takes place under the impassive eye of General YAV. When he is temporarily absent from his post, one of his cruel bodyguards (called *kabende*), NGOYI, MULENDA, MORO or MUMBA KAKOBI, take his place.

At the end of the War of Lower-Congo, a co-ordinated Operation: ‘Unpacking the Wagons’ (UW) or ‘Unpacking the Containers’ (UC) was conducted on the threshold of the large, local 03: two AK47—*Afande* [Sw: ‘Commander’] Joseph K. and Cd Papy LUKOBEKA—took the lives of a minimum of 2000 Tutsi prisoners (see further, n. 91, below). The pile of excrement of about 1.80 m high, 2.5 m wide and 3.5 m long, provides a rough measure of the number of famished Tutsi culled in ‘technical unit’ 03, regularly slaughtered at a rate of about 700 a day from August-October.

On a floor behind the vast rectangular edifice in the presence of the full staff of DEMIAP more than 2000 Tutsi soldiers swept up by the death squads crossing the town of Kinshasa and its environs (picked up in raids in Maluku, N’Sele, Ngamanzo (port), Kinkole, Kibomango, Military Camp CETA, etc....) were assassinated. DIDO, the military driver of the ‘Special Presidential Security Forces’ (GSSP) recalled having transported at least 5000 Tutsi corpses, as many as each of his colleagues. At

This is the ‘*mabosu* city’ in which, from the 21st of May to the 15th of Sep., ’99, the poet takes up lodging.

Ground zero of his labours, this ‘island of no return’ he will compare to Gorée Island in Senegal at the time of slavery.⁴⁷ In its darkness he must fashion his ‘anthill’; in its darkness, must find the words...

The staff of DEMIAP are housed in four double storey, rough concrete block buildings arranged in a rectangle overlooking a courtyard of 25 x 35 m.⁴⁸ On the ground floor, parallelepipeds previously fitted as a magazine but now hastily transformed into secret jails are divided into four 4m high sections each measuring approximately 9x4m and trimmed with double metal

Kinsuka they threw them in the Congo River, with the uncounted bodies of former FAZ soldiers.”

47 At its deepest level, this association divulges the immanence of the name: *Mwamba kalundu kimana ha njila*....

It is embedded in the thematic imagery of ‘*Le Naufragé*’ as ‘the ominous Island’ the poem toposophically transfigures, transmuting the ‘excremental other’ of ‘non-White’ identity’s phobic repulsion into the pride of *Négritude*, over whose three great architects the final two verses cast a defiant net: Aimé Césaire (Martinique), Léopold Senghor (Joal) and the ‘acerbic’ Léon-Gontran Damas (French Guiana), to reclaim a nation that comprises more than one tenth of Africa’s land mass, hydrologically determined by the great, drainage basin of the arching Congo River.

48 Often referred to in the poems as the ‘parvis’ of the ‘Cathedral’. Due to the fraught circumstances in which these poems were both disseminated and composed, metaphor is adopted as a means of encryption and obfuscation sought in technical or antiquated French. (An adroit subterfuge, for when on one occasion a smuggled scrap of verse was discovered on the person of the poet’s wife, the guards took its wordplay as evidence that its author had, under the weight of his ordeals, simply taken leave of his wits.)

doors (2 x 2 m) opening onto the courtyard. The entranceway passes beneath the middle of the East wing, where one is flanked on the left by cells nos. 01 and 02, and on the right by a large hall: 'the hole' (where as many as eight hundred deportees might be culled at a time) adjacent an access corridor leading to cell 03.

Emerging into the yard, at one's left, cells 04, 05 and 06, holding four hundred prisoners each, comprise the North wing (the section between 05 and 06 subdivided by the executioner's cubicle, a small bureau⁴⁹ and a staircase leading to the staff offices above). Unrest in any of these dungeons fit to burst is met by tossing in a tear gas canister. "The '*mabosu*' walls are sprayed with the contents of exploded intestines, crushed skulls, the miasma of brains, stains of blood, urine, sweat and the dried tears of countless victims. They form the visible appearance of the characteristic elements of the terrible rape of man's physical integrity. The walls, at the height of an arm's reach of the stature of 'tall tutsi', are speckled by the patina of wax encrusted from oblong traces of the smoke and ash of lit candle wicks. They testify to the evening prayers cut short in these reduced quarters, jam-packed, the floor dowsed with urine and faeces, traversed by moans, by fainting fits and suffocation.

49 In the latter the King of the Kongo was sequestered for a while, for having seen in the toppling of Mobutu an opportunity to make a bid for the independence of his people. Upon arrival, one of his lieutenants was doused in kerosene and immolated, and a host of his subjects summarily shot. The bullets however, failed to penetrate him, and so he was transferred to the Makala jail where the poet made his acquaintance (describing him as 'a very humble man'), where he again proves impervious to bullets...and so eventually was released.

Thus, by the flame held aloft, these prayers committed the lives of at least 300 victims into the hands of the Lord, thanked each morning by the survivors of that fate as the death cell was replenished by yet others.”⁵⁰

‘*Mabosu*’ in the North wing were counted down in order of decreasing danger to 04.⁵¹ Following this regimen of ‘corporal punishment’ detainees had the opportunity one day of regaining their freedom in the last or, worse, of falling in the East block to the depths of cell 03. Indeed, the freshly white-washed walls of *mabosu* 06 were a lure, it being in fact the antechamber to the ‘farm’. Rather than a bucolic idyll to which the hostages were each time promised relocation, that secluded cellar was a disposal bin for ‘*binyama*-

50 “After saluting the flag each morning, the brutal executioner (LOLA) rid himself of the corpses of twenty suffocated Tutsi. The task, he confided to me, was made easier because the captives themselves pushed their bodies against the air grille of the dungeon’s double doors. Survivors are tied up, loaded on trucks and liquidated by robot T on the bank of the N’Sele River (approximately 80 km east of the city of Kinshasa).” The lack of air is compounded by lack of water, the freshly incarcerated poet noting the attentiveness of his companions pending his need to pee, whereupon the most deft urgently pressed a plastic bottle between his thighs, hastily downing its relieved offering (a transaction also acquitted in ‘the Sanctuary’ but without recourse to any receptacle – but one declension of that ‘*bizarre salutation*’ of ‘the shipwrecked’ novitiate by genuflecting gleaners of waste).

51 Here the poet even disposed over the luxury of an 8 litre plastic canister to serve as a urinal, the trophy of a bribe paid by a former inmate, Albert KISONGA MAZAKALA (editor of the journal « *Demain le Congo* » before his release and subsequent appointment as his country’s ambassador to Belgium).

nyama'.⁵²

This ‘forest hospice’⁵³ and cell 03 are the two ‘technical units’ the poet will come to designate: ‘the Sanctuary’ (so-called ‘*kraals*’, “dark and overheated...filled with a cocktail of excrement and urine accumulated over years, of decomposed corpses, of suppurating sores, of suffocating effluvia in the midst of an aggressive concert of necro- and copro-phagic rats, of roaches and maggots, bugs, mosquitoes, bacteria and fatal viruses, invisible and omnipresent...”⁵⁴).—

52 *Binyamanyama*: ‘live rot’ (the prefix ‘*bi*’ and repeated radical ‘*nyama-nyama*’ stress depreciation) to be thrown to the crocodiles and fish of the rivers and waterways. The poet will coin his own expression for the plight of his countrymen: ‘the rwandasation of Congolese’ (i.e. the emaciated corpses, whatever their original ethnicity, here eventually assume the attenuated appearance of Tutsi). The ‘farm’ was a euphemism for an old colonial homestead appropriated from General Baramoto (who, like his patron Mobutu, fled into exile in May 1997). Its cellar contained a dungeon (‘*la cave*’) dedicated to the experiment of this ‘rwandasation’. Toward the rear of the property a luxury nightclub was erected servicing security personnel (outfitted with bedrooms for the President’s assignations with his many mistresses).

53 “During the ‘War of Kinshasa’ (14 - 28 Aug., 1998) more than 200 mentally handicapped were swept into the communes east of the capital and perished. Eugenics is camouflaged under accusations against the ‘crazy’ of whom many qualified as spies in disguise! STIVIN and many other citizens of the Equatorial province sequestered with me in cell 06 were deported to die on the farm, their bodies thrown into the N’Sele River at night. Indeed, the Congolese government commemorated the International Day of the Mentally Ill in 2001, by decreeing the closure of neuropsychiatric centres in the country.”

54 Cf. Mwamba, *Le Sanctuaire, Poem(s)*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2010, p. 7. The dank obscurity of *mabosu* 03 the poet will share with formerly sentient human substance in the form, both of the fly-

The West wing housed the cells for women and children and a waterless latrine inundated with excrement (for the right of access to which the former would be made to ‘pay’⁵⁵). Behind this lay the incineration lots, four mounds of ash planted over with flowers, amaranth, sorrel, cassava, sweet potato...⁵⁶

The prisoner never had occasion to enter the South wing.

We have spoken of darkness. More than mere metaphor, this darkness is the locus of its literal source, shielding its *very* enactment; and was rigorously adhered to in the cells, even during roll call in the fussy monitoring of doors held minimally ajar: “Obscurity is here part of the deadly semiology. It was impossible to discover the nature of the shadows reflected by the glow of candles in the half-light...” It is a child who will initiate the poet into the fuscous cover-up of these shambles, these shameful goings-on, opening an enquiry he will pursue in the years following his release, from the slums of Congo-Brazzaville chased even into these

infested, aforementioned ‘pile of excrement (of about 1.80 m high, 2.5 m wide and 3.5 m long’) and of the bodies of the dead.

55 A euphemism for the forced procurement of sexual privileges. Mme. Emerite ran the notorious harem of her fellow Tutsi and their kids.

56 “60 tonnes, the minimum weight of 1200 ‘cockroaches’(average weight assigned arbitrarily at 50 kg each) thrown into four mass graves forming four mounds behind the Staff of the DEMIAP. These GO were led by Cd Papy LUKOBEKA who set up in the yard with all the lights off...” A zone also charged “with very painful memories of 375 tonnes or a minimum of 7500 Tutsi, at the entrance, compacted, conveyed and disposed of in the N’Sele River by robot T.”

very lines.⁵⁷ Now, just as light meets this page making these words legible, light also found its way into that dark; that the poet's memory might hold for those still living, the cudent extramission of *its* page: "My thought went directly to the memory of Pierre's replete prayer, worthy of extreme unction, and to the sententious words of Bosco, during the worst cruelty of the initial days, invoking the stubborn tropism of truth to out:

'long is the night, light eventually will emerge !'

Cell 03.

1. «*Nàsali nini?*» (Lingalà): 'what is it that I did deserve(this appalling fate) ?'

A collective interrogative no doubt, on behalf of the victims. Of all victims! This anonymous memory was written in letters of dried blood on the ceiling.⁵⁸

2.«*De Yumbi soldat ya Poto.*» literally: 'By Yumbi, soldier of Europe!'

Scribbled with charcoal on the ceiling. This trace was left by a mulatto Congolese, slaughtered at Kinsuka by Robot T, thrown into the Congo River on 28 March, along with 33 other compatriots from the District of Bolobo deported to Kinshasa at the end of the so-called 'war of Bolobo'.

The following lament figures on the right wall:

57 (In honour of his contribution, Part VI bears this young accomplice's name.)

58 We have partly decoded the '*salutation perpétuelle*' the 'shipwrecked' is met with by the 'shrunken survivors' from within 'the sanctuary', but this 'time-worn greeting' is no less the captors' rote response to the novice captive's query: '*Nàsali nini?*' (viz.: on what grounds am I being held for more than 48 hrs. without charge?) – *pour 'la raison d'enquête...*'

3. « *Réfugié fils de malheurs !??*

Il a beaucoup souffert ici. »

‘Refugee son of misfortunes !??

Much has been endured here.’

Cell 04.

This serene glyph, five lines in ochreous equilibrium, stretch across the right interior panel of the double door:

4. « *Mis aux arrêts de la 50th Bde*

depuis le 28/08/1998.

*La vie c'est une succession
de malheur et de bonheur.*

CMDR SENGI. »

‘Placed under arrest by the 50thBDE.

from 28/08/1998.

Life is a succession
of misfortune and happiness.’

The corpse of the author of this graffito, tied up and riddled with bullets, was found swollen and ejected by the surf of the Congo River on the outskirts of the Military Camp Colonel Tshatshi. Unique survivor of the second convoy of about 300 Tutsi slaughtered by Robot T. on the banks of the N'Sele, he was sequestered a long time in cell 04 before being relegated to cell 03. Robot T. finished him off at Kinsuka according to the specific account of the Station Chief, D. L. who had extracted him at night from his cell.

The Tutsi hostages abducted by the urban DEMIAP at the Bethany Centre under the protection of the Catholic Church contributed many tears. Prayer vigils were held.

5. « *Du 12/01/99 au 12/02/99*

*Ange Michel a été détenu
Dieu soit loué! »*

'from 12/01/99 to 12/02/99.

Angel Michael held

God be praised !'

In the year 2000, I discovered the 'clandestine prisoner' Ange M. Murangwa in flesh and blood in the office of the UNHCR in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo. By way of introduction I recited his invocation on the walls. He acknowledged me, gratified by the fidelity of my memory. We recognised each other. Swept up by the same unspeakable emotion of reunion, we embrace, and later often meet to discuss the criminal events at Lt Colonel Kokolo Camp. For instance he revealed to me the murder of Pierre, after I recited the optimistic invocation stamped in his brief farewell in block capitals on the right wall of cell 04:

6.« PRIE TON DIEU ET TU SERAS LIBERE
Ô MOI PIERRE SI ET LES AUTRES.»
'PRAY TO YOUR GOD AND YOU WILL BE
RELEASED.

O ME PETER YES AND THE OTHERS.'

Cell 05

With a broken clavicle Louis Cassien narrowly escaped certain death thanks to his fortune. He emigrated to Canada in 1999 in mid-July of that year, according to the version of my fellow inmate, 'child soldier' Kambale. This rich Tutsi trader was an eyewitness to the pogrom of his racial brothers. 'He did not understand why men brutalised, extorted, tortured and gratuitously killed other men' reported the young executioner. 'Hence his outraged words on the cell wall':

7.«*Louis Cassien Mayasi .*

Victime sans savoir pourquoi ? »

‘Louis Cassien Mayasi

Victim without knowing why ?’

However, my secret informant remained silent as to the identification of a certain Bosco. Without doubt, a Tutsi. My familiarity with the executioners taught me a lot. Absolute silence on an evoked name often meant the participation of my interlocutor in the vicious murder:

8.«*Arrêté le 3 août 1998. La vérité est têtue.*

Bosco »

‘Arrested on August 3, 1998. The truth is stubborn.

Bosco.’’’

KAWA*

*Je compte trois pas à rebours
J'avoisine le pays où coulent le lait et...le miel
Je vends trois sous le cèdre et le café
Un café aussi noir que le diable
un lambeau de terre au large de l'océan Indien
l'épiphanie de la négritude arborescente à l'Île Maurice
Un café très fort l'orgasme d'amazones en clair-obscur
succombées aux charmes du regard de lion et de lémuriens
croisés en route à minuit
Je compte deux cuillerées de sucre
trois cuillerées de lait Un café aussi doux que la caresse de miel
chatoyant dans le gosier !*

KAWA*

*I count three steps backwards
I abut the land where milk and...honey flow for three sous I sell coffee and cedar Coffee as black as the devil a strip of land off the Indian Ocean the epiphany of arborescent negritude in Mauritius A very strong coffee chiaroscuro orgasm of amazons who succumbed to the charms of the lion's gaze and lemurs crossing the road at midnight I count two teaspoons of sugar three tablespoons of milk Coffee as sweet as the caress of honey shimmering in the throat !*

* Coffee in Swahili and Arabic.

* *Café en swahili et en arabe.*

7/7

*Je rythme trois fois
la marche à reculons
sans arrêt me souvenir
s'il existe deux cieux
un seul ciel
qui parlent à la terre
de leurs positions célestes
deux gazelles tombent
étourdies sur la terre
soulèvent une nuée
de flèches qui figent
les sabots dans le destin
renouvelé sans cesse
frayer le chemin de croix
parmi les fauves
déchaînés
c'est vendredi
je remémore à rebours
ma lecture scabreuse
deux hosties noires livrées
à la voracité de l'ogre
avaleur
au rythme endiablé de
SABASABA* !*

** Général YAV fut un
excellent danseur du
'Sabasaba' depuis sa tendre
enfance.*

7/7

I pace backwards
in triple time
without ceasing to recall
if there are two skies
one sky speaks
only to earth
of their celestial positions
raising a cloud
of arrows that freeze the
hooves
two gazelles dizzy
earthward
fall
in the constantly
renewed design
midst unbound beasts
paving the way of the
cross
friday
time to think back to
my scabrous lesson
of two black wafers
fed the ogre's insatiety
gulped down in frenzied
pace
SABASABA* !

** Gen. YAV was an
enthusiast of this popular
East African dance in 7/7
('sabasaba') time.*

Au-delà de la poisse

*Tel un ballon gonflé à l'hélium chaque jour plus léger que l'air
Je m'élève au-dessus du bruit des bottes et du déclic des fusils abrité dans les altitudes
Prince des nuées ! Ivre des envols nuptiaux de la Reine qui récidive au fil des jours ses rendez-vous risqués avec l'Amant indompté !
La palombe arrive de Gand, du Limbourg, du BENELUX, pourquoi pas ?
Messagère de la becquée qui déride au quotidien les lèvres du bagnard !
Elle mordille et souffle tendrement au creux de l'oreille la sympathie chaleureuse des Combattants et l'amitié des Chancelleries.*

Above Adversity

Like a balloon helium inflated each day lighter than air
I raise myself beyond the din of clubs and rifle clicks shelter in the heights
Prince of clouds ! Drunk on nuptial flights by the Queen backslding in the current of days risking rendezvous with her uncowed Lover !
Wherefore does the dove alight in Gent, Limbourg, BENELUX ?
Carrier of daily gobbets to cheer convict lips !
She nibbles and whispers tenderly at the hollow of the ear the amity of Parliaments, of Partisans' keen concerns.

Aussi les esquives des frères et sœurs, souvent désertent le chemin, désespérés d'exorciser un jour les démons chevaucheurs du Rebelle !
Elle répond d'un pied de nez comme elle a coutume de s'adresser aux geôliers !
Elle redit sa confiance dans les droits humains et la presse certes ont su figer les honneurs militaires d'adieu en un éloquent transfert du pouvoir !
A la prière vespérale de l'enfant, la mère allume la bougie d'espoir à l'aide du bâton de chocolat rapporté sûrement du bagne, au-delà de la poisse !

Also to the spurning of brothers and sisters the frequent cordial desertion from the path desperate one day to exorcise the demons riding the Rebel, she responds with her greeting to gaolers: a cocked snoot !
She iterates her confidence in human rights and the press certain of seeing the martial honours of valediction congeal in an eloquent transfer of power !
To the child's evening appeal, the mother illuminates a candle of hope aided by the chocolate bar on return from the dungeon plainly above adversity !

*Avec trois balafres
fraîches de bistouri sur
le pubis
'Archevêque' est
expédié à son tour
devant le P.E.*
pour désertion de
guerre payée !
En attendant, il médite
assis par terre dans la
cellule
en ponçant sa crosse.*

A trio of lancet scars
healing on his pubis,
despatched in turn, the
'Archbishop'
for AWOL faces the
F.S.* !
He meditates sitting on
the ground while waiting
in the cell scraping his
crook.

* *Pour Peloton d'Exécution.*

* Firing Squad

IV

EXP 1421
le 20/10/1942

Bonjour papa

papa, je me tien plus biembe m'wan
na Richi:
maman m'a dit que tu es un
puron. papa, le jour que tu vas
rester en prison tu vas nous
m'acheter de choses et si
je veux te dire que je te
prie

Au revoir, Pola

— Pola

Lusanzu

Au-delà de la poisse

*Washiyà pambèlù patòòkà,
Wabwèlà mwitu wèlà mmuònzo*

In this broken cycle, such suffering. And of providence? Of justice? What, in this death-dealing dark, will subsist? We approach these questions tentatively. At adversity's limit. Tentatively, we approach...

For those who seek out the AA under the apprehension their level of alcohol abuse may well have reached a degree of excess that threatens their very survival, the steps of the renowned 12 step plan—with the not inconsiderable caveat, the words: 'Power greater than ourselves', 'God' and 'Him' be replaced by the term: 'Ancestors'—offer functional equivalents of a *lusanzu*; are indeed recognizable, as one declension of a '*Lusanzu n'dukùlù*'.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ viz. "...

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we have harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

For the alcoholic, the implacable enemy is within. However, this verbal manifestation of a heart that confesses, and in confessing, cleanses and protects, is pertinent to *any* threat, whether chanted by warriors or hunters before they leave the village to confront the uncertainties of the wild or the fray, circling a certain tree [*Cinkunkù*] against which they scrape the soles of their feet [*kukunkula*] in a gesture of cleansing, or whilst holding a white chicken or a fragment of kaolin in one hand. This Cilubà word speaks the essence of poetry as ‘originary’ speech. Cognate with vomit [*kusanza*] and the earliest Congolese lay [*Esanzo*], it is uttered before the ancestors in the face of adversity as far even as the limit condition, the ‘*lusanzu n’dukùlù*’ above all else. Which is to say, above adversity [*au-delà de la poisse*] itself.

If a *lusanzu* predicates the purity of the tongue, it may invoke no less the speaker’s purity *tout court*, for its utterance does not always presuppose a prior infraction or sin.⁶⁰ Nor does this require transmission as speech. Only in this manner may one appreciate the choice of a compatriot of the poet grown old while campaigning for basic representation and human rights in his land, and likewise detained, who, instead of sleeping on the cot in his cell, lay down naked on the ground. Rather than

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out....”

60 As it states in the Cilubà proverb that heads this essay: ‘You are carefree upon entering the forest if you are clean (white) upon leaving the village.’

signifying his innocence before his Creator,⁶¹ this *lusanzu* manifests in the presence of his ancestors and his captors, the minatory incorruption of his heart...

Needless to say, the poet is an intimate of adversity.⁶² *Au-delà de la poisse* was inspired by a visitation ('des envols nuptiaux') in one of the death cells in which he was held.⁶³ This took the form of a

61 Indeed, a tactic much in evidence in the Congo (as elsewhere in Africa), finds those whose conscience unduly troubled by their misdeeds seeking recourse to the God of the Christians, much as a fugitive flees to a land with no extradition treaties with the patria of his crimes.

(As might be seen in the exemplary case of the 'Mau Mau uprising' in which an estimated ninety percent of Kikuyu had invoked a '*lusanzu n'dukulù*' linking them, on pain of death, with their land: the British sought, by whatever means, to break this oath and to fill the gap of their forced confessions with Christ, for Christianity henceforth to be the solace of their disinheritance.)

62 '*Above Adversity*' speaks also of that purified state, attained by the poet after a surfeit of suffering, of fearless and resolute indifference (a condition that opens onto the decisive, 'present infinitive' of the Meteor).

63 Given that this prison officially did not exist, the poet's wife risked her own life in seeking him there (her access abetted by bribes to the guards). A West African representative of the International Red Cross responsible for the protection of prisoners also came knocking at Camp Kokolo's door to inquire whether Tutsi were being held there against their will. Receiving an answer in the negative, he (being already well-informed), called out directly from the 'parvis': 'Tutsi are you here?' and was answered by a chorus of voices from the cells. So he too was summarily detained (where, from the community of the condemned in 06, he was of course made privy to the genocide) until it was pointed out to Gen. YAV that this despotic recourse was a case of over-reach (that his detention was diplomatically untenable), and so reluctantly sent packing.

dream in which he saw his mother give birth to him before handing him into the care of his wife ('*la Reine...la palombe*'⁶⁴). The following day the guards entered, telling him he was in the wrong place, that his name was not included on the execution roll, and escorted him away. This despite the fact that already days previous the '*honneurs militaires d'adieu*' had been performed, his capital penalty personally conveyed by the Chief of Staff of the President of the Republic, Colonel Eddy Kapend (who, in so doing, took three steps back before portentously saluting the mortal being from whom he was taking leave⁶⁵). Here, no doubt, the power

64 Analysed in the light of *lusanzu*, the child is vomited forth by the mother in its original purity, and the sanctity of this bond conferred on the wife who takes her place, mediated by the naked generosity of each heart. No doubt, if 'a sort of auscultation' is called for, it is in light of that absence that speaks strangely from that organ. This caesura shatters the totality of the work, interrupting the language of poetry (whose gift no longer passes over to the credit of sublimation). Beyond the page in and through which the earth stakes its nocturnal claim is this imperative of trans(de)cendence (that also, let it be noted, holds the last line against barbarism, *contra* Adorno's claim—'to write poetry after Auschwitz...').

65 His sentencing concluded the following exchange—
KAPEND: Is it true you wrote this book ('*Kabila or the Danger of Extremism in Africa*')?
MWAMBA (barefoot, in a blood spattered shirt, but refusing to recognize the other's rank.): It's only a draft of my book, monsieur.
KAPEND: Are you in accord with the content of this book, is it true?
MWAMBA: Yes, unless you can prove otherwise.
KAPEND: Neither the National nor International Human Rights Organizations, the Press, UDPS, nor the UN or USA will save you. You are a dead man. Mark my words! [*Vous êtes un homme*

of death intervenes. But it intervenes ambiguously. This ritual of demarcation drawn by capital punishment—those three steps—opens a space of ancestral intercession in a communion of the living and the dead. *Who* is being judged precisely? And from *which* shore?

Indeed, these ‘three steps’ resurface in ‘*KAWA*’ (‘abutting the land where milk and honey flow...’), and once again in ‘7/7’, where—whilst miming the dance steps of the killer (‘in triple time’⁶⁶) in this mnemonic catechism of his crime—the arc of the ‘cross’ is counted backward (from west to east) across its poles. Thus, the aggressor’s fate will come to replace the would-be fate of his victim. And we know this in fact to be the case. For the condemned found his way to freedom under the nationality of a new land (where he could publish this poem in honour of the campaign his wife ran for his release, praising her courage, her resourcefulness and defiance), whilst his accuser succumbed to the vengeance he had thought to wield. His accuser and

mort. A bon entendeur, salut!]

Does the detainee’s dream not answer the dreams of those who begat him? Is not the title of that manuscript (his stated crime) its direct expression, of ‘Mwamba’ recurring, thus forcing into dire currency its caution?

66 “At ten o’clock, on a day marking the Feast of the Assumption, the general’s Bemba Praetorian Guard (in actual fact a militia harking back to Leopold’s day, called ‘*kabende*’) perform warrior airs of JUFERI (a Katangese based faction of Mobutu’s MPR) Bibakole, Iyawele (in Kilubakat) Mwilabika and Efikafwa (in Cibemba). To the rhythm of hand claps, General YAV shows off on the improvised grounds of the General Staff, chanting and beating out his dance steps in honour of the beginning of the genocide of Kasai from Katanga.”

every one of his henchmen.⁶⁷

If its reference is displaced onto the matrilineal declension of his people's gods [*Mvidie*], 'to count backwards' is further confirmed by a sublime, ordinal specificity. The solvent of that *dark* semiology. Under its sign, the sign of Water (whose organless body—maternal heartbeat for the unborn—is the drum⁶⁸) we will speak of an hierophany even if it has no place in speech, for which there is no other name but 'initiation'. For the ones who cannot hear this may sound much like metaphysics, but for those a real encounter has humbled into silence it speaks of a world wherein the dead are living and even the unborn have things to say... Gathered beneath the frame of the engendering Word [*Nzambi mweena ngulù yónsò*] and matricial Earth [*Mikombo-a-Kalowo, nkàyendà mudifùke*], across the median axle of the Sky [Primordial Ancestor: *Mukulu, mukulu wa ba Mvidie*], these four poles are traversed as follows: the eastern

67 Kapend is currently sitting in the very place formerly occupied by the man he condemned, along with every other agent directly complicit in the poet's incarceration, including: Charles M. ALAMBA, Auditor General or Procurer General (condemned to death for assassinating a high functionary, Steve NYEMBO in 2005); General Jean YAV NAWEJ (condemned for life in relation to the murder of eleven Lebanese suspected of plotting the assassination of Laurent KABILA, dies in captivity, 30 April 2013); Commanders John HAMZA (Bureau of Detention) and INGILA (Head of Executions), with whom he found himself, in Camp Kokolo, subsequently sharing a cell; and likewise, in the Makala jail, ALI TARESHI, the 'robot killer' ...

68 The intelligence of Water (no less an intelligence of the blood) circles Africa's heart, where we discover also the westward arch of its great river course rhyming in its bed with the solar vector conditioning this continent's vital, ancestral 'cycle'.

wells of matter-potential [*Bendè wà Maweeja*] pass over into personal infinity in the north, the diversity of substance, duration and dimension [*Kalunga, Nsanga, Mulungu, Mungu*], from whence they re-appear southward, 'thousand-eyed', as providence, rectitude's subterrain [*Mutala maïsu, Zambi alalaka te*], before ebbing into nothing and passing, west, away [*Lufù lwàbò katèlè cishiki*].⁶⁹ This perpendicular passion, we suppose, imposed itself on the poet, who having abandoned city life for Kasaï was, at twenty-six, overcome by the cosmic plenitude of the firmament, the rainbow [*Sw.: mwamba*], the nocturnal radiance and shooting star. An egalitarian revolution in his values and social relations ensued; before, twenty-six years later, in the death camp, overcome again but with this dark

69 Cf. Aubert Kizito Ntite Mukendi, *Les mythes fondateurs de la culture Luba (ou les trois "Dialabala")* (L'Ecritoire, 2007). The 'reversal' applies to the vertical bar in respect of the *patrilineal* declension of these *Mvidie* (viz.: East→West→South→North) across the same triadic foundation—our 'tentative approach' asserts a cosmic (nocturnal) extension of *lusanzu* as a *Logos that lives* (to elicit, once again, the maternal root of 'Mwamba'). This not only absorbs language's symbolic function, it also integrates the sublunar 'cycle' and unconditioned 'cross' like a gear lever but at this point of absolute contingency, from elsewhere... (against the backdrop of nature's fathomless profusion that he sustained at twenty-six in his home province, it was the outstretched hand of a beggar he passed on a street that precipitated his conversion. He tussled inwardly with his father's axiom: to give only to those who have no hands (for the others can work), finally reaching into his pocket for change, only to hear the door of his hotel room close, alerting him to the fact that charity's occasion had long passed)—from II on the 'cross' to IV (the fate he encountered twenty-six years later) stretches the dream, or: *the law beyond the law*.

infinity transposed into an eye now transcending the law. So we speak of 'poetry' only in order not to speak of this: of what lies immeasurably beyond speech, where the flesh of the condemned is spoken by the world; that barely adequate vehicle, in-corrupted by its genius (*Ntumba*).⁷⁰

Now, this poem finds its end in the image of a quite different ambiguity. The man nicknamed 'the Archbishop' was a reservist who had accepted the wage of his conscription but instead of going to war admitted himself to hospital for the treatment of appendicitis. The ambiguity of a body healing as it awaits to die, this other predicament of the 'salutary' is of one visited by no dream, his 'crook' not an ancestral scepter prompted into divinatory speech but fallen mute as the very ground it scrapes. This abjection of the condemned conceals the fateful lesson of a broken word: by his AWOL his *lusanzu* was spent.

70 In the profane order of things, the inclusive disjunction of 'twins' gives way to an exclusive disjunction to ground the state form (the son kills the father he usurps), whereas conversely, this arcane (nocturnal) order integrates what is above and what is below: a fate illustrated in the dream of that oblation, the vertical relation bridging the poles of mother/wife (reminding one that, in Africa, a woman's cosmological status is twice that of man's who, unless born a mother's child (i.e. 'primordial'), is acquainted only with the diurnal realm).

Rien à signaler...

*Une grêle de balles
s'abat sur la place
centrale de la
Cathédrale.
Les romanichels
déchiquetés sont
emportés en
catastrophe au
fleuve,
Le bas de la tunique
empesé dans la gelée
fétide, impavide
Monseigneur le
Recteur plaint
seulement le souffre
perdu dans le
vitrail et les rosettes
imprimées sur les
murs :
« Shida*?
– R.A.S. ** mon
Général ! »*

Nothing to report ...

A hail of bullets fell on
the Cathedral's central
square.
In the cataclysm
gypsies cut to shreds
are carried to the
river,
The fearless
Monseigneur Rector,
his tunic hem starched
in foul jelly,
merely complained of
having suffered a loss
to the
stained glass and the
rosettes printed on the
walls:
" Shida *?
- R.A.S. ** Sir ! "

* Un motif d'inquiétude.
** 'Rien à signaler':
expression militaire française.

* An interrogative of concern.
** 'Rien à signaler' [nothing to report]: a French military expression.

Le rire pyromane

*Un rire délétère
désarticule la
grammaire
prosodique des Grands
Lacs
les mânes convulsés
trébuchent sur l'air
syncopé
d'oraisons funèbres
éparpillées en sanglots
de blues
infecte donc
ce rire gouailleur sous
l'empire
infernal du vallium et
du cannabis
distribue à profusion la
fatalité
des gâteaux de
grenades
explosés délicieux
dans les bouches
inutiles
récurrent le rire
récidive
la rafale goguenarde
ingrat ce rire de bâtard
moqueur
césarise le bistouri*

*The pyromaniac's
laugh*

A deleterious laughter
disarticulates the
prosodic
grammar of the Great
Lakes
the ancestors convulse
stumbling on the
syncopated airs
of funeral orations
scattered in the
moaning of the blues
infects
a mocking laughter in
the infernal empire of
valium and cannabis
distributing its fatal
profusion
of grenade 'gateaux'
exploding deliciously
in defunct mouths
recurring in derision's
stutter
a recidivist laughter
hollow this bastard's
laughter
in caesarean parody
the parturient

*absent
la baïonnette
anesthésie
la parturiente sous
l'arbre
pleureur le bébé
ce rire pianote gai
l'orgue de Staline
éclate rayonnant au
œur des missiles
embrase des villages
implosés
dans un déluge
de rires fous de
flammèches !*

anaesthetised without
bistoury
by bayonet under the
tree
wails of the newborn
on Stalin's gay organ a
tinkling laughter
bursting in the radiant
heart of missiles ignites
imploding villages
in showers cackling
mad
of sparks !

La nuit de lucioles

Fire-fly night

*un geyser de sang
un geyser de larmes
explosent dans le ciel
chamarré
d'étoiles
désespérément
éteintes
chauffent l'air et les
eaux frelatées
des Grands Lacs
tracent dans l'obscurité
méridienne
la douleur qui étreint
mon cœur
l'odeur acre de sang et
de larmes
comme une traînée
saline
diffuse dans le
firmament la détresse
vaporescente
d'invertébrés
cristallisée
la nuit en faisceaux
lumineux
explose dans la pluie
de météorites
le sillage multicolore du
bolide*

*a geyser of blood
a geyser of tears
explode in the sky
spangled
with stars desperately
slaked
warming adulterated
waters and air
of the Great Lakes
tracing in the dark
meridian
the pain that grips my
heart
the acrid odour of blood
and tears
like a saline trail
diffusing in the
firmament the aerosol
distress of crystallised
invertebrates
the night beams
phosphorescent
exploding in meteor
showers
the bolide's polychrome
trail darts
rends the sky's
constellate veil*

*file déchirer le voile du
ciel constellé
de faux-semblants et
des hypocrisies
un geyser de sang
un geyser de larmes
explosent dans le cri
déchirant le ciel
opaque
étend l'azur de mon
coeur luminescent de
cafard
sur l'air et les eaux
limpides des Grands
Lacs
déploie l'étendard
le drapeau blanc qui
flotte sur le fleuve
Congo !*

of false-pretences of
hypocrisies
a geyser of blood
a geyser of tears
detonate in
desperation's cry
the azure of my
cockroach illuminated
heart the opaque sky
dilates
over limpid waters and
air of the Great Lakes
unfurling the colours
of the white flag adrift
on the river Congo !

Crépuscule sur la Cathédrale.

*Je traîne la queue de pie
parmi les frères conviés
au banquet dans l'habit de gala
le noeud papillon vermeil
sur la pomme d'Adam éclatée*

*Je roule sur des kilomètres de vertèbres arrimées dans les champs des fosses communes
l'effroyable chapelet des damnés cacalés dans les kraals défile interminable entre mes doigts moites*

Cathedral Twilight.

I drag my dress tails among the invited brethren banqueting in gala apparel a vermillion bow-tie flashing on Adam's apple

I roll over miles of vertebrae stowed in fields of mass graves betwixt my clammy fingers interminably files the shocking chaplet of the damned faecalised in kraals

*Un rayon de miel brille
sur les sacs déversés
dans les eaux frelatées
des Grands Lacs
sur la berge
le regard embué garde
ineffable
le souvenir macabre
le plaidoyer au cœur
mon devoir de
mémoire*

*Ainsi mon amour
quantophrène
développe
l'aversion du chiffre
impuissant à dresser
turgescente la
montagne des
statistiques
du reste introuvables
ces nécropoles-là
les morts cent fois
complices reviennent
sur
les pas criminels
effacer derrière eux la
trace*

A honeycomb shines
on the spilled bags
in the Great Lakes'
adulterated deep
on the bank
my misty gaze ineffably
guards
the macabre souvenir
the heart's advocacy
memorybound

So my love
develops
ordinophrenically
helpless the quantifying
aversion is drawn into
the turgid
statistic
mountain
the undiscovered
remains of sundry
necropoles the
complicit dead
returning
a hundredfold in their
wake to erase
the trace

*engloutissent les corps
au fond des rivières
car traîtresse la nuit
consume les os
coriaces
dans le bain
phosphorescent des
feux follets !*

of the criminals' tread
bodies engulfed at the
bottom of rivers
as treacherous night
consumes the tough
bone
in the phosphor bath of
will-o'-the-wisp !

L'Arc solaire

Sur le flanc de la colline verdoyante mon regard fasciné contemple la lame brillante qui s'avance. Plus bas le tracé naturel de l'eau chemine dans son lit. Traversant d'est en ouest le pays le fleuve étale sur le parcours la majesté de l'Arc solaire décliné au fil du jour dans le firmament. Du lever au coucher la vie rayonnante explode en couleurs radieuses et gaies dans la nature.

The Sunbow

On the flank of the greening hill my gaze is arrested by the bright blade's advance. Far beneath the natural trace of water courses in its bed. The steady river ranges traversing the land east to west the majesty of the sunbow celestially ebbs coursing through the day. In nature beaming life from dawn to its going down explodes in hues radiant and gay.

*Autour de 'La Cathédrale'
cependant
les grognements se mêlent aux miaulements
dans un concert de hurlements ululés de râles.
Je me souviens seulement
des chats et chiens naguère étiques au bivouac
qui disputaient l'embonpoint aux cochons farfouilleurs
des champs des parterres et des fondrières.
Cent fois le bâton agité en l'air
la mégère comme étourdie dans la cour
vient chasser le malheur rapporté à sa porte.
La carotte blanche interminable*

About 'The Cathedral'
however
grunts mingle with
meows
a rattle ululates
in a concert of
screams.
I recall only
cats and dogs
lately in confraternal
encampment
disputing the stoutness
of pigs rooting
in fields
in flowerbeds and bogs.
A hundredfold the stick
stirs the air
the shrew in the
compound
dazed
chases evils
deposited
at her door.
Grazed by the
carnivore's
tooth
that ruminates
on death

*à brouter par les crocs
de carnivore
ruminant entre
ses mâchoires
la mort à l'ombre de
son toit.*

*Des hiboux démasqués
la nuit
se livrent
désormais
à l'activité macabre le
jour.
Certes
on ne jette plus comme
hier des
perles aux pourceaux.
La volaille attardée sur
la berge
arrache par-devers
les pagayeurs
un troc insolite.
Elle picore le ver
de terre
car dédaigne
la multitude
envahissante des
cafards
bons depuis au crochet
des hameçons
comme amorce.*

the interminable white
carrot shelters
in its jaw
under her roof.

Owls unmask the night
given over
henceforth
to the day's macabre
doing.
No doubt
pearls are not thrown
as before before swine.
Chickens loiter on the
shore
amidst dugouts
snatching a strange
trade.
Disdaining
the invasive multitude
of cockroaches good as
bait for crochet hooks
they pick the larval
worm.

*Jeté en pâture aux
poissons
mon cadavre
puant vaut un
versement d'or liquide
dans la nasse.*

Tossed to fishy
pastures
my putrid cadaver
worth a payment of
liquid gold
in the trap.

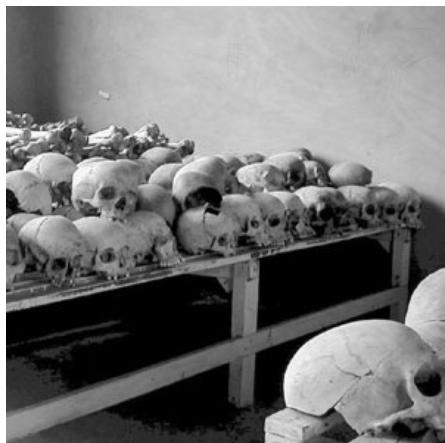
*Cent fois des pêcheurs
recommencent
sans vergogne à porter
mon corps
décomposé au fond
du filet.
Cent fois, ô miracle,
j'agglutine à travers
les mailles entières
des poissons
anthropophagisés.
Mon amour cannibale
m'installe déjà
sous la dent gloutonne
du frère
dévoreur
du poisson charognard
à table
le couteau et la
fourchette en mains
sans pourtant réclamer
en préambule
mon sépulcre.*

A hundredfold the
fishermen shamelessly
resume bearing my
body decomposed at
the bottom
of the line.
A hundredfold, oh
miracle, I agglutinate
through
the entire mesh
of anthropophagic fish.
Already
my cannibal love
installs me under the
gluttonous tooth of my
brother devourer
of scavenging fish at
the table
knife and fork in hand
still without apostrophe
to restitute
my tomb.

*Sur le flanc de la
colline verdoyante
mon regard embué
pleure
à verse
sur la lame brillante qui
s'estompe.
L'eau monte et culmine
dans la marrée haute
déferlant sur la
capitale.
D'est en ouest
sous l'orage diluvien
les tumultes du fleuve
roulent la colère
funeste de l'Arc
solaire en sanglots.*

On the flank of the
greening hill
tears mist my gaze
in torrents
on the bright blade that
fades.
The rising tide peaks
breaking on the capital.
From east to west
in the storm flood
the river tumult
sobbing unravels that
sunbow's cataclysmic
rage.

V



The Rules of Digestion

*L'Arc solaire*⁷¹

Kubulaba kakwèna nshiyà

In Africa one says of one who dies, ‘the earth has eaten him’.

This ardent ground, a vibrating chord, is nourished by those it nourishes. New growth buds from its digestion following the arc of the sun, provided the ‘food’ has been correctly prepared, meaning interment, for preference facing east; that one’s name be recycled as ancestrality’s negentropic gift tracing the itinerary of the dawn. It is an infraction against this cosmic cycle by genocide of which the framing verses (one and five) of *L'Arc solaire* [The Sunbow] speak.

The precedent for disposing of victims of state crime in the rivers of the Congo was set by King

71 *L'Arc solaire* was composed after its author had been released from a concrete cell the size of a small cupboard (not big enough for him to lie down in) where he had been held for a week in complete darkness, into the communal wards of the *Centre Pénitentiaire de Rééducation de Kinshasa* (CPRK). There he caught a glimpse of the Congo River from the window, and the colours that met his eyes, for so long deprived of light, shimmered with holographic intensity. From here he learnt of the waves of extermination that had unfolded from August through to October in the urban/DEMIAP, and began to assemble the evidence based on eyewitness accounts (of the survivors and the killers).

The attendant proverb reads: ‘Under the earth (i.e. in the house of the ancestors) there are no orphans’.

Leopold II. Anthropophagy is its converse, indigenous stratagem, a means of warding off capture by the state by consuming the body, whereby one consumes the name. Prior to the deterritorialisation of filiative lines (to the name's privation, made 'proper' within the sign's redundant closed-circuitry), everything perseveres in its place. Here only context speaks. It is thus the necroeconomies of earth and water—a realm of ancestors and a realm of spirits—are contrasted in the poem's concentric, thematic coupling of verses two and four, with to each, its emblematic creature: dog and fish. Should the deceased be otherwise excluded from the 'cycle of life', the corpse (if lacking progeny) will be buried face down or with a piece of charcoal or with a short spear trans-piercing its lumbar spine; or, if having sunk in the immanence of its rotation (to the 'cross'), following various customs and protocols, at a crossroads, beyond the village (in the forest), or, in the case of a Luba Emperor ['Mulopwe'], in a riverbank, that his remains simply be washed away. In this last case the uprooting of the body realizes the transcendence of the name; it's detachment signaled by the thing that escapes consumption. The poet, as an initiate, knows these things.

Knows also that for his people the dog is an avatar of the ancestors and is consumed to encourage the latter's incorporation at a primary level of (male) initiation. Certainly, pigs, cats, dogs and birds of prey all fed on the corpses piled in the courtyard of the Military Camp Kokolo barracks, but it is 'man's best friend' who brings bones back to chew at its owner, the killer's home. We may appreciate the frantic gesture of its

mistress, the soldier's wife, who would shoo these 'evils deposited at her door' as the corpse is 'returned to sender' like a letter without address, emblematically and in fact.

This brings us to the central stanza, a pivot imaged by the worm as carnal metaphor passing through both realms of water and earth in a transposition the 'chickens' and 'cockroaches' parry. The opening lines tell of owls that 'unmask the night'. The owl too has its place. Its reference is sorcery. In this wordplay that articulates the scene of mass crime the poem describes the *literal* cost of metaphor (as the prodigious effort of swine to fathom the efforts of those who fish for pearl). Chickens are, in the normal order of things, avid of cockroaches. However, these insects are symbolic. Inaugurally so, for they carry with them still the thing they have erased—in 'a strange trade'. Chickens spurn 'cockroaches' piled at the river's edge in favour of the worms they breed (as the ancestors would otherwise have been bred by the worm's digestion of them). Fish are lacking in this discretion. Failing to distinguish between the worm and its host as agent and object (human bait) of the earth's digestion, it *meta-phorises* from food for chickens to food for fish, betraying the scandalous intervention of forces that oppose the natural order.⁷² Let us recall the function of this digestion. The

⁷² "Incineration of the corpses was a technique that proved impractical over time due to the cost of fuel and the curiosity aroused by residents of Kinshasa alerted by acrid smoke in the sky caused by the relentless fires spreading the stench of burning flesh. Papy LUKOBEKA, the S2 at urban DEMIAP, is promoted by Joseph K. (who assigns the 'execution officers' of death squads, protecting them from their superiors because they report

term ‘ancestor’ is inseparable from a promise integrating the ones who came before with those yet to come.

Ancestors are ‘the living dead’ who fuel the rotating wheel, the cycle of life that ensures the future in insuring the past.⁷³ ‘Anthropophagic fish’ dissolve these bonds. They pose this problem as an infraction against the rules of digestion. This metaphorisation also, is real. It was posed for the citizens of Kinshasa who, analogous with the chickens’ distaste for ‘cockroaches’, spurned local fish once it became known on what they had likely fed (i.e. once information leaked out that tons of bodies had been dumped in the Congo River and that fishermen

directly to him) to the rank of Director of Bureau 2 at the Directorate General of DEMIAP Kintambo. The head of the political police decided to alter the method. The executioner of Battalion 501, Commander Ali TARESHI, appointed Chief of Ghost Operations at Camp Kokolo, resorted to the notorious expedient (pioneered by King Leopold II) of dumping bodies in the river. The 'firing range' flanked the bank of the Congo River in the municipality of MALUKU in the extreme east of the capital Kinshasa at the N'Sele pier, the Little Bridge of the quarry of Kinsuka verging on the labyrinthine textile factory CPA at the western end. From the bridges of the N'Sele and N'Djili Rivers, every night thousands of bodies were dispatched into the water.”

73 Hair and fingernails, buried at a remove, typically incorporate the ritual identity of the deceased. In modern parlance one speaks, no doubt equivocally, of ‘genetic inheritance’. The African ecology of ancestor worship might be better appreciated in this light, as an ‘epigenetics of nomination’ through which only the life affirming attributes of the lived are ‘re-lived’. (This turbine (‘cycle of life’) runs across the grain of history in sympathy with Nietzsche’s *aperçu* that the ‘dead’ and the ‘living’ not be misconstrued as antonyms, the latter being ‘only a species of the dead, and a very rare species’.)

were using these as bait).⁷⁴ The problem posed by the dog ('a hundredfold the stick stirs the air') thus differs radically from its complement, posed by the fish ('a hundredfold...I agglutinate through the entire mesh'). Bodies that have been deprived of even so much as a mass grave are denied access to ancestral intercession. They are 'denatured', ritually displaced, made available for spirit manipulation. The ancestors are on the side of increase and sustainability, and constantly seek our growth and well-being. But spirits, like technology, are indifferent powers (benevolent or malefic), here indexing a scandal that explicitly pollutes the economy of the rootless, the undigested.

Any mention in these poems of a 'cross',

⁷⁴ The poet further notes, "in the exercise of their profession fishermen are daily affected. Often they collect bloody or putrefying corpses rotting at the bottom of their snares. This repetitive horror carried by the polluted waters of the rivers sometimes interrupts or even breaks the careers of some. Doe for example, found the remains of his nephew Tshanda wedged between the Kinsuka reefs, wrapped in blue trousers, swollen, shirtless, bound, and bullet-ridden. Not being able to fish (a sacrilege in the eyes of the political police) to ensure him a burial, the maternal uncle facilitated his exequies in the waves accompanied by funeral prayers and rites, watered with tears. The dispatch of bodies in the Congo River and its many tributaries became an open secret passed on by word of mouth. In towns and markets along the river, fishermen and fish sellers at roadside auctions saw declining prices. It became necessary to overcome the mistrust, to circumvent the public's lack of enthusiasm and reluctance to consume locally produced fish. Crooked fishmongers sought recourse in diversions. The dried or salted fish, piled in baskets, were liquidated under the subterfuge of very expensive stock 'imported from the interior' or the neighbouring 'Republic of Congo'."

however wrapped about in Christian imagery, is always a reference to the African ‘cross of life’. ‘Cathedral’ itself, a deliberate irony. And this affront by ‘fishermen’, is this not also an aside to ‘fishers of men’? The existential iconoclasm of *L’Arc solaire* brings brutally to light what the figure shades. Dismembered no less by demetaphoric paths is the sorrowful body of Christ. Despite its ‘putrid’ transubstantiation into a ‘miracle worth payment’, the symbol falls back outside, doubly displaced by the diasporic dead. In this morass of the twice-killed language is shed of connotation, sense flayed of depth in the demonic fold of this earthly desecration. The poem speaks from this cleft, of this failure to redeem the repressing representation (terror) in which flowers both designation’s fickleness and retroaction’s vengeance. This reaches very far. For do we not share its heaven? Share also this fishing in obscure currents by profiteers of death, ‘of liquid gold...’, who, for a neighbour’s love, feed rumours of ‘pollution’. For, from our ecopsychosis in an environment made mute, do we not too speculate on the ‘sunbow’s rage’?

This voice that indicts the unsustainable in its witness to a crime against humanity is a description of hell in broad daylight. But do not think it speaks only for the dead. It speaks for them. But it speaks in their company made insatiable by those who walk the earth feeding on what they deprive it—in the manner of its speaking—also otherwise, to those who neglect to nourish their dead. Clearly, it speaks to those who nourish themselves insatiably on death.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Other specifics of this indictment are tallied in ‘*The Pyromaniac’s laugh*’, “of gratuitous murders perpetrated for

pleasure under the influence of a cocktail of alcohol, valium and cannabis (the Office of General Jean YAV NAWEJ provided dozens of quarts of whiskey distributed to death squads before an operation of the CO, GO and other 'night work' – cf. *'Visa'*). The 'distribution of cake' game consisted of grenades detonated in the mouths of frightened captives: 'Close your eyes and open wide!' A Tutsi doctor abducted in the town of Kinshasa attended the extirpation by knife of the 'child' of his wife's belly. A self-proclaimed 'RAMBO of Tutsi vaginas', MWANSA DEOGRATIAS, showed how, by manipulating two Chinese knives, he could disembowel his victims and, later, violated widows, sisters, mothers and daughters. Carelessly locked in cell 06 at a time [11 o'clock] when more than two hundred Tutsi were being extracted for execution, tossed coke bottles just missed the bureau chief of the GO [JOSE MOPIA] and his cronies. Before the outward rush of the captives, the metal door was immediately rebarred and the air grille perforated by the barrels of AK47s levelled in series ['Stalin's organ'] that rained fire in the dark cell. Like stalks of corn, the bodies of prisoners collapsed pell-mell into the pool of blood. 'We won't do it again!' they shouted in Swahili. Bleeding to death, abandoned without care for the rest of the day and night, many fell into a coma. The next morning the dead and wounded were evacuated, with all Tutsi survivors lined up on the interior parking lot. Afresh, they were mowed down by a battery of AK up to the very last. Walls riddled with bullet holes still bear witness to the Staff of DEMIAP."

<i>Les diablotins bottés</i>	Imps in boots
<i>Ils n'ont ni père</i>	Unfathered
<i>Ils n'ont ni mère</i>	Unmothered
<i>les miasmes de chair et de sang</i>	miasmas of flesh and fetid
<i>fétides</i>	blood
<i>les sanglots de jazz futiles</i>	the futile wailing of jazz faded ragamuffins that cling
<i>ces haillons délavés à raccrocher aux branches</i>	to polled branches of uprooted
<i>craquelées d'arbres déracinés</i>	trees
<i>des guenilles à remonter par</i>	tatters upraised
<i>les mâts de Cocagne sur les crochets cassés des porte-manteaux</i>	again
<i>sociologiquement</i>	on
<i>AMNESIQUES</i>	broken clothes pegs by poles of Cocaigne sociologically AMNESIAC
<i>Ils n'ont ni frères</i>	Unbrothered
<i>Ils n'ont ni sœurs</i>	Unsistered

*Arlequins pouilleux et
boulimiques
ces menus fretins
intrépides
ahanent trempés sous
le nez pointé haut
la kalachnikov en
bandoulière
à la cadence de mille-
pattes
de faméliques diablotins
précipités
dans les bottes avolent
sans
éructer des kilomètres-
relais
de pythons
déroulés routes
mériadiennes
pavoisées de
grimaçantes
carcasses de panthères
agencées
à la queue leu leu
jusqu'à KIN
jusqu'à KINSHASA*

Lousy harlequins and
bulimics
intrepid small fry
drenched and straining
under the pointed nose
of a shouldered
kalashnikov
starving imps
in centipede cadence
precipitated
into boots
gobbling without reflux
kilometre relays of
pythons
radiating on meridional
roads
with grimacing
carcasses
of panthers paved
arrayed one by one
as far as KIN
as far as KINSHASA

Gamins de rue
pouilleux et amnésiques
baignent dans le roulis
la boue de miasmes
des chairs
et du sang des crânes
écrabouillés des pères
et des mères précipités
au fond des marres
sylvestres
dessous-dessus
taquinient
les monceaux de
ligaments
des frères et des sœurs
éclatés
enjôlent les crocs
d'alligators
de guerre lasse
languissent
la langue besogneuse
agacée
calme
insipide leur appétit
glouton

Street urchins
lousy and amnesic
bathe in the yaw
of miasmic mud the
flesh
and blood of flattened
skulls
precipitates of fathers
and mothers
at the bottom of sylvan
ponds
ligament dumps
of exploded
brothers and sisters
teased topsy-turvy
wheedling crocodile
jaws
languishing
tired of war
maws staunched to
stillness
their rapacity
to insipidity

<i>douces petites chairs à canons</i>	sweet little cannon fodder
<i>ingénues et rebuts d'écoles</i>	artless rejects of schools
<i>s'échinent dans le buisson</i>	toil in the bush
<i>à déchiffrer l'alphabet scabreux</i>	to decipher the scabrous alphabet of heroic glory
<i>de la gloire héroïque à décliner dans le ciel macabre</i>	declining in Liberation's macabre sky
<i>de la Libération</i>	the impudent Court
<i>sèche sans pudeur la Cour</i>	pronounces
<i>avant dire droit</i>	priding itself on reason's success
<i>se targue le succès la raison</i>	its standing
<i>bon gré malgré la crasse ignorance</i>	notwithstanding this crass ignorance
<i>de diablotins bottés</i>	of imps in boots
<i>pourtant elle est passée où?</i>	but whereto?
<i>la canne bananière génère le règne</i>	the titular cane of bananadom
<i>spontané de la vermine bâtarde</i>	disseminates a spontaneous
<i>sans vergogne souffle la bourrasque dépêche la toque</i>	reign
<i>tirer sa révérence à la MAISON BLANCHE</i>	of by-blow vermin shamelessly blowing a squall to dispatch the toque tipped with condolence in CASA BLANCA

*et il en meurt de
sauvageons
par temps de paix
de l'éjaculation
incontinent
de la mâle mort
de l'illumination
indécente
des pétards
pour voir bien dans le
cul
rebondi d'allumeuses
étudiantes et
travailleuses folles
de justaucorps
d'occasion bon marché
pas si chère la vie le
jeans
la MORT chez l'Oncle
Sam
quand serait-ce charité
due
la fulgurance du feu
d'artifice
seulement à dériter
la face du marchand
des jouets farouche
à l'applaudissement du
vol des Anges
du Seigneur de la
Libération
de passage*

and he died of little
savages
in peacetime
of incontinent
ejaculation
of war to the knife
of immodest illumination
of petards
hoisted
arsy-versy the better to
see
students and workers
crazy
for leotards
bargains second-hand
jeans cheap life
at Uncle Sam's DEATH
when this charity's due
the fulgence of fireworks
just brightening
the toy merchant's face
indignant
to the applause of Angel
flights
of the Lord of the
Liberation
of transit

*tant que broute la vache
folle
dans la mémoire
ces trublions-maîtres
des bas
étages égrènent des
cents*
des sous
o combien de temps en
l'air
ces démonstrations
lugubres d'arabesques
dansantes de volutes
de kaya
de senteurs
pestilentielles d'alcool
profanent
les lieux-dits cabarets
et tavernes
la gâchette à l'index
arrêtez
arrêtez donc ces
mineurs
tirent à la lie des
gorgées
pleines des peurs
étouffées*

as the mad cow grazes
in memory
these master
troublemakers of the
lower
floors scatter dimes
o how many times in the
air
these gloomy
demonstrations
of arabesques
swirls of kaya dancing
the pestilential reek
of profaning alcohol
the signboarded
cabarets
and taverns
stop
these trigger fingers
stop these minors
drawing draughts to the
dregs
choked full of fears

[*Centimes en anglais.]

*de perverses
coulpes des bourreaux
complices
par devers eux de
l'impudique
vagissement des
laissés-pour-compte*

*la volte-face
quoi?
le pays fraie à rebours
le chemin
emporte
à contre-poil les
barboteuses
des conscrits
marmottent dans les
rangs
INCIRCONSCIS
diablotins pas comme
les autres
des arlequins roulent à
terre
le suaire
de la République
bananière
scrutent le déluge du
ciel en colère
la pluie des météorites
dans les rues !*

of dire
culpability of
executioners' complicity
warding the indecent
puling of liquidated
stock

the tergiversation
what?
the country spawns
backward down the
road
blowing bare
rompers
conscripts muttering in
the ranks
UNCIRCUMCISED
imps like no others
harlequins roll
on the ground
the shroud
of the Banana Republic
scrutinises the flood in
angry skies
and in the streets:
meteor showers !

La marche au pas

*sur le parvis tapissé
de crânes
mes lèvres effleurent
le doux crucifix
serti dans les phalanges
des bébés
que la Révolution
enragée
porte sur la croix et
je me signe
à genoux
mes doigts égrènent
un chapelet ciselé
dans l'émail
des marmots égarés
dans le tourbillon
du Changement
quarante ans de
marathons
abortés chaque fois en
sanglots
sur la ligne du départ
le seul record battu sur
place*

Walking pace

on the parvis
upholstered with
skulls
my lips graze
the sweet crucifix
set in the phalanxes
of babies
the Revolution enraged
carried on the cross
whose sign I make
on my knees
my fingers tell
a rosary carved
in enamel
of puppets that strayed
into the vortex
of Alteration
forty years of marathons
aborted every time in
tears
on the starting line
the only record broken
on site

*en marchant au pas
douze stations
je compte et
recommence
sans fin le chemin de
croix
dans la Cathédrale
exhumée
de la montagne de
reliques
des frères égorgés sur
l'autel
immonde de
l'EXCLUSION !*

at a walking pace
twelve stations
I count and begin again
the endless way of the
cross
exhumed in the
Cathedral
heap of relics
of brethren slain on the
rubbish
altar of EXCLUSION !

Les écervelés ont dévoré trois fois cent soixante kilomètres de sylve équatoriale en trois jours de marche. Beaucoup ont succombé naturellement victimes de l'indigestion. Les gloutons quand même sont arrivés au bout esquintés et en lambeaux: les godillots troqués contre les sandales taillées à la baïonnette dans les pneus usagés. Nageant à contre-courant, ils ont ainsi remonté le fleuve, tirer la révérence au peloton d'exécution en amont.

The brain dead have thrice devoured one hundred and sixty kilometres of equatorial woods in a three day march. Many naturally succumbed victims of indigestion. The gluttons still reached the end knackered in rags: boots bartered against sandals carved by bayonet from old tires. Swimming against the current, they ascended the river thus, pulling reverence for the firing squad upstream.

La Cathédrale (bis)

*derrière le soupirail
dévêtu enfin
des oripeaux de
vampire
fils susurre à l'oreille la
clé
des hiéroglyphes qui
tapissent
les murs blancs de la
Cathédrale
les glaives de suie
dressés au ciel
posent pour la postérité
les souvenirs amers
des cierges consumés
sur les espoirs éventrés
sous les lettres de
cendre
et de charbon
la détresse sereine des
frères
sculptés dans l'habit de
gala
sous la patine de
sueurs
et du sang des libations*

The Cathedral (coda)

vampire tinsel
behind the air grille
at length exposed
murmured shreds at the
ear key
to the hieroglyphs
hanging
the Cathedral's
blanched walls
wide to the sky
swords of soot
posthumously pose
acrid memories
under ciphers of ash
and coal
of tapers consumed
by gutted hopes
the patina of sisters
and blood libations
the serene distress of
brothers
sculpted in gala clothes

*la clamour
imprescriptible
des reliques :
« GENOCIDE !»*

the imprescriptible
clamour
of these relics:
“GENOCIDE !”

Un cartable

*Me tenant par la main
l'enfant indique la vanité
de la sagesse tirée de
l'expérience. Il a plus
beaucoup agi dans le
monde que nul adulte ne
l'a fait à
son âge.*

*Maintes fois, l'arme à la
main, il a risqué sa vie.
Un plumeau de
perroquet lui échoit en
couronne sur la tête,
singularise
sa bravoure guerrière et
l'impressionne dans le
miroir.*

*Les yeux humectés,
l'enfant ému troque le
superbe panache contre
la
demande d'un cartable :
« J'ai trouvé un père ! »*

A Satchel

Vanity of wisdom drawn
from experience: I hold
a child by
the hand. He has lived
through more
than any adult.

Arms at hand,
repeatedly, he takes his
life in his hands.

Crowning his head, a
parrot's plume was his
due, embellishing
the image of his
boldness in the glass.

Moved, with misted eye,
the child barters the
superb panache against
the
request for a satchel:
« I have found
a father ! »

VI



ritable mesure de ce qu
-Kinshasa, le 19, le 20 e
janvier 2015

Cibalonza

*Lungènyi mpondà wa pàcisakà,
mukùlù wàpanga mwakunyi wàmuleeja.*

Held in the numb albescence of 06, one day the poet encounters Cibalonza. More than a month already he'd resided in 'mabosu city'. The boy was just being admitted, accompanied by a torrent of blows he counters with spirited abuse. This, naturally, worsens his predicament. The poet intervenes with the guards on his behalf and by this consideration, acquires a confident and friend.

A child soldier with a Bashi name, who then is this 'Cibalonza'?⁷⁶ We cannot be sure if this name was the one given at birth. And anyhow, he had already acquired another: *cadavre-debout* [Corpse-

76 To gain a foothold in the Eastern Congo after having fled the Rwandan pogrom of '59, many Tutsi fell back on the resource of their women, offered in marriage to Bashi men in the forests of Bukavu. Masasu, the Vice-President of the AFDL (*Armée Force Démocratique pour la Libération* that toppled Mobutu's regime), before being jailed by Laurent Kabilà (then killed by Joseph K.), was the fruit of one such union. His influence in his home province secured the mobilisation of an infant army ('*MaïMaï*') recruited by a combination of kidnap and lies. A crime committed against one's community also offered special eligibility into this *Force*. For those without fire or law, sacking the home village and fleeing into the bush became a rite of passage, thus cutting off the umbilical cord, forcing one to 'move on' without 'looking back', swelling the ranks of street kids who were the first recruits.

Standing].⁷⁷ One of the so-called *wakombozi* [liberators⁷⁸] at the end of whose convulsive road lay the city of Kinshasa: “Shod with huge boots, they trudged heavily, bending under the AK47 whose size exceeded them. In the course of this 2500 km walk to the capital, the little imps were doing the dirty work, finishing off the famous captive ‘leopards’ with the ‘Chinese knife’—the ‘*singe*’ they quickly learnt to cherish, polishing its barrel and singing its praise as pre-eminent in their arsenal of liberty.”⁷⁹ Having fetched up at Camp Kokolo,

77 A homegrown variant of the Prussian: ‘*kadavergehorsam*’. “At Kalemie, the actual selection by Daniel LUKUKE took place in the bush, in the race to the top of a tall tree. During the ascent seven climbers fell, each one felled by a bullet. This was the lesson of the field in ruthless combat, illustrated by 8 winners from 15 recruited: ‘It is formally forbidden to turn (i.e. look down) when his companion falls.’ ‘*Songa Mbele*’: ‘you need to move!’ Thus, in the conquest of the city of Kisangani for example, child soldiers perished in their thousands prior to the deployment of scout troops by paving the way over minefields planted by mercenaries hired by the then government.

Troops who dropped back from the front and were charged with ‘fleeing the enemy’ involved mostly child soldiers. They filled 12 different cells of DEMIAP where I lived, and when crossing the threshold in the opposite direction, asked me to hold them in my prayers.”

78 This label was a diversion masking the true, international investment in the war. The real ‘liberators’ (the politico-military movement of the Rwandan-Ugandan AFDL that overthrew Mobutu, May 17, 1997) were the East African mercenaries trained and equipped by Western military advisers. In conquered cities, they hid (in the bush or in military camps), while ‘imps in boots’ embellished the military parades.

79 This war crime was practiced systematically on commandos of the Special Presidential Division of deposed Marshal MOBUTU, (whose leopard insignia, ‘*Imps in Boots*’ codes as: ‘panthers’).

Corpse-Standing had been put, likewise, to work. Such tasks as he now detailed to the consternated poet who, since his own deportation, had been doing the nightmare rounds (from 02 to 04, then from 04 to 03, to this treacherously ‘clean’ 06, then down again, to 05....). It was from him for instance, he first learnt of the ‘forest-hospice’(in whose cellars the boy had been kept busy extracting the ‘rot’). Of those sequestered, he even volunteered some names.⁸⁰ At Camp Kokolo he had been

Hymns celebrate war and the ‘*singe*’ (Swahili for the ‘Chinese knife’, here a synecdoche for the Chinese made AK47) that must serve as a substitute for parents, providing for their basic needs, protection, food, clothing, women, pocket-money... Some children, while stoned, blew their parents’ brains out, and then were forced to throw the corpses to crocodiles in the rivers. In the conquered capital, warlords used them to steal villas and luxury vehicles of former dignitaries, who often were murdered and likewise dispatched into the Congo River. (The guard at the residence of General J. YAV camouflaged the ‘night work’ of death squads led by Cd NYUNDO WA NYUNDO and head of the ‘hospice forest’. In December 1999, the child soldiers MUMBA KABEMBA and KAS KADOGO held up a car in the IPN Quarter at 1900 hours, shot the owner, loaded his body into the trunk and aimed to dump him in the river. They are condemned to death and executed, while *Afande* Joseph promoted the plot’s mastermind (Cd NYUNDO) to Colonel of the Presidential *Camp Militaire Tshasthi* (2000), a subsidiary of the 50th BDE.

80 Colonel J-R. Lumumba Onangando; Major Rene OTSHUDI; Captain KANENE; Lieutenant Moïse ASANGE. The poet also heard of other ‘kraals’ in and around Kinshasa. For instance, a child soldier whose acquaintance he makes in the suffocating cell 05 thought his current circumstances ‘first class’ compared with his former quarters (at the aforementioned *Camp Militaire Tshasthi*). Initially impertinent, he is at length reduced to tears describing weeks without food spent amidst an ever

enjoined with the execution of four ‘GOs’. Once, sent into 04 at 10pm, part of a commando lit by miner’s headlamps and with Chinese knives in hand to perform a carnage on some 250-300 dazed tutsi, emaciated and enfeebled by hunger and thirst, the squad, upon exiting, turned their bloodied bayonets on him: ‘Do we not have a traitor in our midst? You are tutsi!’ Although until that point he had spoken only Swahili and Lingala, and these fluently, without accent, he now fell on his knees, pulled down his shorts to show he was circumcised and started crying out in Ngbandi. Other Ngbandi at the camp acknowledged he was speaking his mother tongue, which sufficed to explain his height.⁸¹ So spared. Ngbandi though are also Mobutu’s people. And indeed, he confided further, whilst serving in another execution squad the previous year (*Camp Tshatshi*) he’d discovered his older brother among the captive FAZ. Immediately, he threw his weapon then himself, in tears, on the

mounting accumulation of rotting corpses, leaving so little room he eventually could not lie down at all but only kneel. His ordeal, the poet commemorated in these few lines:

The pilgrim

*Chiaroscuro twilight
on the Cathedral’s central square.
The incomparable mask of vitality
and cheek burst to tears
at the pilgrim’s feet.
The Passion never ceases to unroll
the chaplet of its stations
strewn with miasmas
sanies dowse purulent knees
on a shifting carpet of relics
that replenish, replenish !*

81 Ngbandi are semi-Hamitic (i.e. ‘Sudanese’).

ground. A capital offence. A ‘Corpse’ refusing to ‘Stand’. His brother’s life would not be spared, but the little orphan owed his pardon to the emotion of pity roused in his officers at arms. And once again, he evaded death.

Many forces gather here (“...the country spawns backward down the road...”). The cycle of life stalls as the cross is traversed against the sun. ‘Corpses’ that ‘stand’, now stand in for the ‘living dead’; ‘imps blown bare’ where the ancestors should have been.⁸² *Cyôna* spawn with no place on earth. Far from any order, they spend their lives, and are spent. ‘Not knowing what to do with their wage of one hundred US dollars, these minors would consume excessive quantifies of alcohol and marijuana, propped up in taverns and bars, fingers on the trigger of an AK47, ready to open fire on whoever interjects or objectifies them with a look. Left to their own devices they clearly took pleasure in terrorizing adults, culpable for having neglected or abandoned them. At the end of the ‘war of liberation’ these misfits become irascible. Intoxicated by the carrying of arms, they were not easily acclimatised to life in peacetime.⁸³ Thus, more

82 Consequently, other avenues likewise, open onto other forces. In Liberia, kids who had sublated their terrestrial, sexual identity would at times go to war in blonde wigs and women’s frocks, just as *MaiMai* would often enter the fray naked. In fact, across the continent, many initiations draw on the elevated powers of the pre-adolescent (e.g. for Lubà, certain children identified as ‘*Nkwembe*’ enjoy a prestige above both ancestor and king).

83 “Without cause, they blew off the heads of peaceful people, undressed girls in public, injuring the recalcitrant with the Chinese knife, often students and workers wearing second hand tights (dresses, skirts and jeans). These ‘liberators’ pillaged road stalls, extorting toys off shelves, occasionally disposing of any merchant who requested payment. DR Congo resulted in an

than 2000 km from their place of origin, in 1999 a thousand children silently suffered physical elimination in DEMIAP (dubbed the ‘political purge’).”⁸⁴

So we learn a little about his road, the one that eventually washed him up at the poet’s door. This N’gbandi boy with the Bashi name. This ‘Corpse’, still so very much alive.⁸⁵ As for his delivery to that door, sent to guard the entrance to Camp Kokolo, he’d availed himself of the opportunity to extort money from passing cars. Unfortunately for him, in one of these the head of S2 was seated. Bundled into the boot, he was taken directly to cell 06 with the complementary inducement of brutal kicks and blows. Thus began the poet’s acquaintance, an acquaintance that culminates in the youngster’s revelation, applying the French word (for there is no equivalent in any African tongue), of

inversion of the values of these kids so easily recruited into the army. Severed from family ties, kitted out and armed, they remained children. Constantly confronted with crime and death, the ‘Corpse-Standing’ evolved as an extraterrestrial in the streets of the capital.”

84 Cf. ‘Walking Pace’

“For example, my young Rwandan companions DEGI and Mamale (sic) aged respectively 13 and 12 years, were murdered in June 1999.

In August 1999, the new S2 [Cd MUTONKOLE] knelt among these ‘detainees’ and apologized in advance, in these words: ‘Your case is very serious and you know this as well as I do. I must appear like a dog. You understand what I’m saying. There’s nothing I can do about it. It is the EMG who will decide your fate!’”

85 In any event, he did not cease to live his name, for ‘Cibalonza’ throws out a challenge to the expectations or conduct of others, as in: ‘what’s your issue with me?’ (which is to say: what is your cause amongst us?)

‘Génocide’.⁸⁶

‘*A Satchel*’ paints an allegory of him.⁸⁷ In this alien landscape he is the poet’s father. A meteorite among many, this knowing child would illumine for that unknowing parent its environing dark. For one instant. During roll-call in *mabuso* 05, where they had been relocated, he pretends to trip and fall, pushing open the double-doors then coolly apologising to the guard. The ‘child’ he has adopted as father glimpses for the first time the gruesome décor of his home. Immediately, kalashnikovs are levelled in firing position through the doors. The two dawdle together inside, casually folding their blankets until forced to abandon them on the floor and join their companions on toilet break.⁸⁸

This ‘Corpse’ fails here too, to ‘Stand’. For, falling against the light, it will somehow patch this scattered, this torn horizon of a world. If only to discriminate among the dead. ‘Joseph K.’, ‘Robot T.’,

86 Cf. ‘*The Cathedral (coda)*’. Accordingly, this essay’s lead proverb reads: ‘Intelligence is like the millet on the top shelf: if an adult misplaces it a child may point it out.’

87 The parrot’s plume is a reference to the regalia of a warrior chief, where each feather represents a person he has killed. Tears the boy did not shed whilst being beaten by the guards, he shed in recollecting the brutal course his life had taken (‘...baignent dans le roulis / la boue de miasmes des chairs...’: during GOs he would sometimes simply use his teeth, tearing at his victims’ throats and drinking their blood), whilst confessing his desire to trade this malign ‘soldiering’ for school.

88 “Unlike cell 03, here the detainees are given 5 minutes each day at dawn to relieve themselves on the floor of clogged latrines, time to breathe in the sunny morning air between two buildings. The canon of pointed kalashnikovs in firing position line the route: ‘hurry! The BDE CDT is about to arrive to salute the flag! He will punish us if he sees you out!’”

and the great enduring assembly of those dead that walk.
And the other dead, celestial, riverine, and through the
bloodied earth... A critical part in this mortiferous
pantomime, played by a minor. An ambiguous minor.
Ambiguously played. Only to distract the audience. If
only for a little light. For light enough: that the dark be
known by that admission.

Gouvernail.

*Un parchemin tombe
sur le bureau du
commandant :*

*Les rejetons ne
devraient pas survivre à
leurs géniteurs*

*trempés dans un crime
de sang contre le
« Pou... »*

Chut !

*La vérité vrillée en S ne
s'ouvre pas en arC.*

*Le soldat ne vole pas. Il
éveille. Attrapé : le
soldat est voleur*

Gubernate.

A parchment falls on the
commander's desk :

Offspring should not
survive their parents

soaked in a blood feud
against a
« mait »

Shh!

The twisted truth in S
does not open into an
arC .

The soldier's fingers are
not light. He wakes.
Caught: the soldier is
light-fingered!

A la Cathédrale

*Le robot T
adore faire sauter
la cervelle des
chiens
à visage découvert
les hosties
expédiées ainsi
débarquent sans
concurrent
son image fraîche
comme
bagage spirituel
accompagné dans
l'Au-Delà
Auprès de Dieu ou
du Diable le laisse
INDIFFERENT.*

At the Cathedral

Robot T
loves making the
brains
of dogs leap
to the barefaced
host
thus dispatched
without competition
his fresh portrait
carried into the
Hereafter
disembarks as spirit
luggage
closer to God or
the Devil it leaves
INDIFFERENT.

*La sarabande
descroix de bois*

*Un pan d'humanité
perclus
en amont s'étoile en l'air
autour de la Cathédrale
sous le tapis des
fondrières
du gazon
des champs d'amarantes
d'oseilles
de tubercules de manioc
et
de patates douces, dans
l'aval
la chaîne cassée a égaré
ses maillons
les plus précieux.
Quelle gageure ?
devoir encore maintenir
entre les âges
des jalons rapinés dans
l'avaricieuse
gibecière ô combien
ingrate de l'Histoire !
J'ai enfourché une
alezane
qui a remonté
jusqu'à l'extase le péché
originel au-delà du
déluge très ancien.*

*The saraband of
wooden crosses*

A segment of humanity
crippled
upstream withers in the
air
about the Cathedral
under the quagmire
carpet
of turf
fields of amaranth
of sorrel
cassava tubers and
sweet potatoes, the
broken chain
downstream has lost its
links
the most precious.
What is wagered?
stock must still be taken
of milestones of rapine in
the avaricious
game bag between the
ages
oh History, so disabused !
I bestride a sorrel mare
wound back
to the spasm of original
sin
beyond the primordial
flood.

*Le siècle marche. Il a
gommé
sur le parvis
mes bonds feutrés de
griffon
pollueur ah! les semaines
les jours
les heures défilent à
perpétuité
déposent
à la cadence du
métronome
le marc naturel - la patine
le dégradé indélébile
apprécié
à l'aune du carbone
quatorze.
Sur les murs en lézarde
crépis des miasmes
pleureurs
sur les sentes tortueuses
laminées du pas
chagriné
du Supplicié
sous le tapis de
crevasses
sous le gazon et les
champs
autour de la Cathédrale
la sarabande
des croix grimaçantes*

A century passes. It has
erased
from the parvis
the pollution of my
padded Griffin
leaps ah! weeks
days
hours march into
perpetuity
depositing
to a metronome beat
nature's score - the
patina
of an indelible
degradation whose
accounts carbon
fourteen will keep.
On fissured walls
rendered by weeping
miasmas
on tortuous paths
steps of the grieved
the martyred
beat the creviced carpet
of turf and field
about the Cathedral
the grimacing crosses'
saraband

*dans la tourmente le
marmot
court-circuité
promène un regard
satisfait
qui rumine la vengeance
dans
le virtuel décor du
rétrouveur
que tend le prisme
oblitéré de
la haine non repentie du
minable !*

*De quel os naguère ce
chenapan
s'est-il chauffé au
bivouac ?*

*dans l'ivresse du pouvoir
mâchonne sans renifler
des
desseins lugubres à
rabâcher*

*dans un réflexe
moutonnier
dangereusement
contagieux*

*le coquin a fait le plein de
kérosène*

*dans la panse d'un
invertébré
à faire exploser tel un
pétard dans un brasier*

in the turmoil
the brat
casts a satisfied
glance
ruminating vengeance
in
the feedback
the virtual decor's rear
vision
holding in its obliterated
prism
the wretch's unforgiving
hate !

At camp of late
what bone does this
scamp
pick ?

drunk on domination
guzzling without a whiff
of the
dismal designs laced in
the contagion
of a sheep-like
reflex

the villain fills the rumen
of an invertebrate
full of
kerosene
to explode
like a firecracker in a
furnace

*mais il a déjà été piqué
à la petite broche
découpé
en rondelles arrimées
dans
le brouhaha et
rôti illico presto dans un
barbecue-party.
Sur les murs en lézarde
mouchetés
des miasmes pleureurs
sur les sentes battues
du pas
chagriné du Supplicié
sous le tapis de
crevasses
de parterres en
lambeaux
de champs improvisés
autour de la Cathédrale
d'innombrables croix de
bois
dansent invisibles la
sarabande
sinistre.*

but in no time
in the brouhaha
rotisserie and
trimmed to rondelles
presto
there's a barbecue party
roast.
On the fissured walls
mottled by
weeping miasmas
on the paths beaten
by the grieving
step of
the tortured
under the creviced
carpet
flower beds in tatters
fields improvised
about the Cathedral
countless wooden
crosses
invisibly dance an
ominous saraband.

*L'enfant piégé trébuche,
ingénu,
les quatre fers en l'air
glisse sur les préjugés
funestes
comme sur un rouleau
de peaux de bananes
à défaut d'un chanfrein
à river net sa langue
dans le bois
autour de la Cathédrale.*

Trapped, the artless
child
stumbles, slips akimbo
on fatal prejudice
as on a banana peel
for want of a cleancut
chamfer
his tongue
by the Cathedral
enthorned.

*Cou-de-Chèvre
enfile sa corde
sans
se lasser...
la complainte de victime
de préférence;
un nom-devise
revendiqué par un
commando attaché
au Sanctuaire;
un bouc-émissaire
rompu au rôle ingrat de
bourreau.*

A scapegoat inured
to the executioner's
thankless task
Goat-neck,
a cognomen coined by
a commando attached
to the Sanctuary,
threads his rope
without permitting...
lament of the victim of
choice.

La girouette

*Les décibels de
la racaille
retentissent
au creux des oreilles
font
vibrer à rompre les
murs
le plafond et le plancher
l'onde de choc vibre
à faire
éclater les tympans*

*La tête tourne
au gré
de la résonance
des décibels crachés
dans la caisse de béton
comme des girouettes
les oreilles moissonnent
aux bombardements
intenses
la tête inondée
tourne
comme une girouette
les oreilles récoltent
les rafales
de décibels crachés
à verse dans le kraal*

The Weathervane

Resounding
in the hollow of the ear
the decibels of
the rabble vibrate to
break the walls
the ceiling and the floor
to burst in shock waves
the drums
of the ear

The head rotates
at the discretion
of the resonance
of spitting decibels
in the concrete box
as weathervanes
the ears harvest
the intense
bombardment
the head
in the kraal
like a weathervane
inundated turns
the ears collect
torrential gusts
of spitting decibels

*Au cœur de la sylve
équatoriale
le soudard écume les
villages
des primates juchés
dans les hauteurs des
branches
à coups de rafales
satisfait a descendu des
hominidés
attardés encore dans
les arbres
s'étonne cependant
qu'ils ne baissent pas
universellement le sol
comme des hommes à
l'instar du Pape
mordent simplement la
poussière*

At the heart of the
equatorial wood
the veteran scours the
villages
of primates perched
high in the branches
a gust
satisfies him they have
descended from
hominids
hanging on in the trees
surprised however they
do not universally kiss
the ground
as those who imitate the
Pope
but simply bite the dust

*Où diantre court
dame kangourou
à Basoko
ou à Shabunda ?
Sa poche marsupiale
ostensiblement enflée
future maman a tort
de cacher l'ennemi
interne
Sacré patriote
extirpe illico l'infiltré*

Where the deuce
in Basoko or Shabunda
is the lady 'roo
court?
Her marsupial pouch
conspicuously swollen
the expectant mother
is wrong to conceal the
internal enemy
God-damned patriot
he deals with the
infiltrator in a flash

*Jacques pose
fièrement sur les
icônes*
son héroïsme
flamboyant
aux étapes de combats
hardiment décrochés
bébé-soldat
étale pour la postérité
sa collection de têtes
de victimes
soigneusement
égorgées
en tirant des bouffées
glorieuses sur sa
cigarette*

Jacques proudly poses
in the icons*
his flamboyant heroism
in the stages of combat
his bold decampments
baby soldier
he displays for posterity
his collection of trophy
heads
slaughtered with care
puffing grandly the while
on his cigarette

* *Les photos.*

* *Photos*

<i>Se faire aux décibels décuplés</i>	It amplifies the decibels tenfold
<i>ma tête tourneboulée mille fois bombardée</i>	my head is turned around bombarded a thousand times
<i>rumine la furie contenue pourtant elle tourne comme une girouette</i>	brooding a contained fury yet it turns like a weather vane
<i>aux bombardements des décibels crachés sans fin</i>	to the bombardments the unending spitting decibels
<i>les oreilles moissonnent aux crimes</i>	the ears harvesting crimes
<i>égrenés sans état d'âme</i>	discharged without a qualm
<i>A l'instant ultime de l'échafaud désinvolte le malfrat ne désespère point de s'échapper</i>	On the scaffold in the final hour
<i>et de recommencer surtout découvrir la hiérarchie galonnée</i>	the casual thug does not despair on the point of escape
<i>a payé au prix le plus fort</i>	of starting afresh especially of uncovering the hierarchical web of payments of the highest price
<i>la mort...</i>	life ...
<i>des bébés-soudards</i>	the baby-troopers
<i>disent: 'Adieu papa</i>	say 'Bye-bye Daddy
<i>l'heure de partir arrive !'</i>	the time to leave has come !

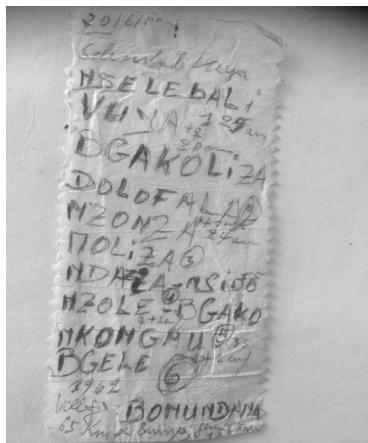
Arrêtez la danse !

*Ces bonds feutrés de félin
Ces pas carnassiers dans la ronde
Tous les jours à l'escrime
J'écope la nuit des insomnies
Arrêtez donc la musique
Arrêtez cette danse orientale
Sur la chaleureuse piste des Grands Lacs
En effet le tigre gratte la guitare
Sèche aux sons de rafales
Le cigare au bec le crâne tondu
Mon peuple encore envoûté
Danse le rythme de l'insouciance
Il a troqué l'abacos ensanglanté
Contre le gilet pare-sang...
Arrêtez-moi cette danse macabre !*

Stop the Dance !

*These padded feline leaps
These carnivore steps in the round
Fencing every day
I bale the insomniac night
So stop the music
Stop this oriental dance
On the fierce track of the Great Lakes
The tiger thrumming the acoustic guitar in sound bursts
The clamped cigar the tonsured skull
My people spellbound still
Dancing the rhythm of recklessness
His blood-drenched abacos traded
For a bloodcoat vest... Save me from entering this dance of death !*

VII



The Forgetting of Names

*Mukùpa kawùtu ûmana mpùku*⁸⁹

We return to the indigenous trinity of motive powers writhing at the blocks of the territorial wheel, where the code stalled. We return to the voices, the smothered ones.

The surface of the earth fertilised by ancestors would broaden immemorially following the division of ‘twins’, were not the self-replication of that binary frozen into an abstraction of ‘identities’ in opposition (i.e. biunivocalised). Terror unified the material bifurcation on the ground, reflected back in the distorting mirror of empire where colonial ghosts demand nourishment with blood (‘...*forty years of marathons / aborted every time in tears / on the starting line...*’). Whereas the code’s fecundity, territorially estranged, exported to Europe, breeds—contemporary with the dissemblance of African ‘independence’—binary logic, the blocked horizon withdraws from the metamorphic forces of the decoded land otherwise watered by cosmic haecceities (‘meteors’). The traditional, socio-economy hemmed, now resurfaces as a political unconscious in the nationalist struggle. So, the passion played out on the body of Lumumba will be articulated anew on the body of Célestin. This also is a story of our time. So...So, we return—

We return to the body of the earth. To the boundless sky. To this recursive matrix in disarray.

89 ‘Rabies does not exterminate all dogs’ (Ciluba proverb).

Certain events have been cited. Dates are given. Places too. Resisting the foreign control of holes that perforate the earth he imagined a nation, the meteor of Lumumba was extinguished in his country's East. And the other date, the one of the poet's internment, coincides with that same country's re-invasion also from that quarter. A cosmic detour manages the transposition of conflicting terms (U.S./USSR...Tutsi/Hutu). Indeed, the far side of the parenthesis that was 'Mobutu' has ushered in something new. What has changed? Whilst the colonial seeds of racial supremacy were sown in African soil, the exported binary of *its* disinvested social field 'the developed world' transformed into a digital economy. Left to breed as a mathematical abstraction overseas, the political-economic fractal at home was replaced by the incubus of a death drive (there where the turning wheel was blocked), and this incubus fed from the material needs of the formerly expropriated form. The re-invasion by Rwandan and Ugandan forces in a self-financing war coincides precisely with soaring coltan prices triggered by the exponential growth of the global telecommunications web.⁹⁰ Thus, forty years after Congo's farce of independence, the diagram of life's cross is pitched on end, turned awry—the swelling chatter of voices worldwide paid for in the plunder of

90 The eastern DRC holds 64% of the world's columbite-tantalite ('coltan') reserves (from which tantalum is extracted). Might one speak here of a cosmic, 'memory coefficient'? Has not this technological expansion of RAM materially incurred an expropriation of embedded, social memory?...the dense receptacle of that earth—and not only that!—massively unsettled ('*the ancestors convulse...*'), sacrificed to silicon gods of the 'cloud'.

this earth whose holes break the life-giving cycle of lineage voices by ‘meteor showers’ of genocide and rape. The ‘cycle of life’ aborts an immobilised land. Turned in on itself, the sky is torn and rains blood.

The ‘Democratic Republic of the Congo’ today is a fiction that has long since ceased fulfilling the requirements of a state. Presiding over this fiction is a mass murderer bearing a misappropriated name.⁹¹ The

91 A country whose budget is calculated in foreign (US) currency, the DRC enjoys no territorial integrity (hosting, in lieu of an army, the world’s largest deployment of UN forces).

And as for the name, this is the message of its ‘fiction’: *bila* is one who rescues, the prefix indicating here a heightening of the root (in contrast to other Bantu constructions, where it would imply a negation), as in the Cilubà idiom: *Cilobò wà kubila dyà mvità* [the one we cheer for (vb.) when war breaks out]. It is no doubt a depressing platitude that a great many of the world’s politicians have blood on their hands, however the outstanding trait of this blood, in this case, lies in the demetaphorisation of these ‘hands’. In typical allegorical code, the poet has not failed to commemorate Joseph K.’s machine-gunning of Tutsi prisoners at the DEMIAP/urban (50th BDE): a ‘tiger’ strums a machine-gun ‘guitar’...

*At the heart of the island of the journey of no return
an expansive cyst – the Cathedral.*

*In the opaque night of the unclean sanctuary
plaintive cries accompany the
bursts of acoustic guitar in the swell of flattened skulls
beneath the tread of the tiger’s carnivore dance.
Last gasps by his inflamed tongue that accelerates
the rhythmic cadence of the saraband of paws
dispatching such debris as worn and
broken bells to the Great Lakes’ incarnadine
deep.*

A component in the logic of his heritage’s ‘self-sacrificing ascendancy’, this carnage offered cover for his purge, over the same period, of the Bantu officer corps of his own armed forces.

compound wealth of its people stolen, and this desecration paid for millionfold with their lives. In this turbulence these 'Memos' from the death camp of the urban DEMIAP seek their way to earth. To restore the disappeared the poet cites their names whilst challenging the perpetrators for forgetting their own that so much suffering be grafted, provisionally at best, to the root of memory.

This dual power of 'forgetting' (anthroponymic and historical) lends itself, not surprisingly, to the mimed gesture of a number of paradoxical acts. For instance: at midnight on May 17, 1999, drugged and grinning, Robot T. celebrated the 2nd anniversary of the revolution by blowing off the heads of Tutsi, exhorting each victim: 'Take a good look at me. My name is Commander ALI. You will take my face with you to heaven or hell', etc...⁹²

Suspected of foreign sympathies from the start (the poet elsewhere argues the case that Joseph K. is in fact a grandchild of the deposed Tutsi King), even his blundering 'father' had animadverted on the Tutsi composition of his personal guard. That slight he answered forthrightly on a public street prior to alighting into his limousine, abruptly shooting his faithful bodyguard in the head with his signature, golden revolver (presently, in the rear-view mirror, his chauffeur will note his passenger's cheeks bathed in tears).

Clearly, mythic powers place Joseph K. in his rightful place (a 'warrior hero' who came from the East: the self-proclaimed, avenging 'second-born' who, in killing his 'father', is unnamed); no less an opportunistic tyrant, he is also the paranoid divinity of his people who must each day apprehensively attend the dawning of his own 'disappearance' (ritual murder).

92 As a Muslim, Robot T. here taunts his traditional brothers who would choose rather to hide their faces from the gaze of their victims (for fear of subsequent persecution by the latter's spirit). Cf. *At the Cathedral*.

He who seeks the memorisation of his name on the other side of life obliterates it by his very deeds. His name is ground down into a matter of INDIFFERENCE (and recorded accordingly).⁹³

Terror itself in-differentiates, flattens out into this apathy. Six peasants returning from their fields to the village of Bomundana in the northern Equatorial Province are apprehended by a joint patrol of Chad-FAC (*Forces Armées Congolaises*) who can find no better use to which to put their time that afternoon (Jan. 7th, 1999) than accuse these poor illiterates of 'tutsiness', torturing them with casual brutality in the Gemana jail (Jan. 9th) before delivering them at length in rags to the poet's cell (on June 18th). Foreseeing their fate, Mwamba arranges for the details of each to be recorded on a scrap of paper then smuggled out (reproduced on the facing page of this essay in facsimile).⁹⁴ Throughout this region entire

93 Similarly, the following poem (*The saraband of wooden crosses*) takes stock, in a register dense with crime, of a child eaten up with 'blind prejudice': a 'scamp' who forces a Tutsi to drink a quantity of gasoline, chased down with a lit match, whereby the man explodes and is eaten, 'pre-cooked'. (Ironically, the child soldier who thinks to invest himself with his victim's power by feasting on his body, obliviously consumes, via the vengeful logic of this very act, the nourishing inheritance of his own.)

94 NSELEMBALI VUYA (aged 25), BGAKOLIZA DOLOFALA (aged 20), NZONZA MOLIZA (aged 24), NDANZIA NSIDO (aged 15), NZOLE BGAKO (about 40 years old), NKONGBAU BGELE (aged 37). These innocents were cynically promised relocation and employment on a farm owned by the 'Gubernator', i.e. the Military Governor of Kinshasa (at the time of *Gubernate*'s composition, this was Gen. YAV. His 'farm' of course, the deadly 'forest hospice'. On the night of August 29, 1999, the poet recalls hearing the departure of the patrol vehicle that carried them to their deaths.)

villages were forced to flee into the woods. Guilty of no crime on earth, they led an aerial existence, sheltering in limbo in the trees. A few are found out by a child, who jocularly relates to the poet the exploits of his soldiering (cf. verse three of '*The Weathervane*'): he simply strafed the canopy with shot until it began to rain a crop of people ('hominids'). 'Blues' are 'sobbed'; a sky, torn. These words. This sky. They conceal nothing. By saying what they do they fail, as this flattening of the world fails them. For what else have they now to do in saying but to indicate the equivalence of God and time as the 'nothing' they conceal, stalling the code, bleaching that flag '*qui flotte sur le fleuve Congo*'—of muted voices across a white page? Zombie history. It will always have eaten the future. In its mouth time turns opaque as dirt, confused as the labour of commemoration itself. Thus this apology by one of the poet's former parliamentary colleagues (lifted from Henri de Montelant), avowedly cynical, for the living conditions of his ruined land: 'If you have clean hands it means you haven't been working'. So, when all is said and done: also a washing of hands.

Words fail yet every gesture holds.

So let us counter-pose—to this washing of hands, the washing of feet (*kukunkula*) in the heart's retrieval of names; the dislocation of feet and hands where the horizon of earth and sky collapse, maiming their intersection, being that heart condition we have termed 'the forgetting of names' as the in-experience of time (if more familiar to European ears as *Thanatos*—'*Todestrieb*'). '*The Cathedral*' is its work.

And here our previous reference to a death drive

is not, as it happens, without an authenticating provenance. This segment's final poem contains a caricature (the 'tiger's' companion). Let us now tell of whom. The husband of Jacques Lacan's secretary and her employer's occasional chauffeur, whom the fellow passengers of his Freudian School hail most fraternally, this Marxist psycho-analyst (identifiable by his tonsure, waistcoat and cigar) was the one who, on public radio (as Kabila's Parliamentary President), first broadcast the viral word: 'cockroach'. An object lesson in cleanliness. A name for the extirpation of names. His name is YERODIA NDOMBASI. An urbane dandy, he ushers us into Darkness' Heart.⁹⁵ Excelling in hate speech, nor was he ill-disposed to pillage. The poet came by this information one day from a chastened constable (a PIR employee⁹⁶), a certain *Bosch Ndala UMBA* he encountered in Congo-Brazzaville after his escape. Evicted from the luxury apartment ('Wagenia') of a renowned Tutsi lawyer (Me MUGABO) expropriated by the OBMA (*Office des Biens Mal Acquis*) who systematised the practice, although 'expropriate' is rather too genteel a word. On Aug. 4th 1998, Bosch had shot the celebrated occupant, dispassionately recalling his final pleas ("I don't practice politics! The Revolution found

95 An eloquent disseminator of racial tirades on radio and television (in Lingala, Kikongo and French), Yerodia was accused by Belgium—together with Sharon and Kissinger—of crimes against humanity, and referred to the ICC. However, the US (provoked by inclusion of the last mentioned) threatened to withdraw a NATO base in that country in retaliation and the case was dropped. (Yerodia remains today a member of the DRC Senate.)

96 *Police d'Intervention Rapide*

me in this apartment! Save my life! Spare my dependants! Take anything you like!”) before killing, then violating his wife, shooting his kids and dispatching the bloodied remains with a kick of his boot into the Congo River at the Kinshasa beach that night. Back at the apartment, commanders from the military and civilian SS, after tossing Tutsi from the windows and balconies of their lower, 5th and 6th floor apartments, remained to dispute the emoluments of fridge and freezer, automobile, PC and television... After-hours, ten months later (on the 18th of June), this Bosch was forcefully turned out of his mal-acquired nest at the irregular behest of superiors, for YERODIA’s mistress to take his place. Unceremonious rituals, of all this saying and doing...all is ground down.

POSTSCRIPT

Now, as I write this in Melbourne in the Winter of 2015, the poet’s grand-nephew and three of his sons, including his eldest, the Australian head of the Congolese opposition in exile, are killing time in this city’s jail. The struggle against despotism is relentless. There is no haven.⁹⁷ This epilogue draws this testament to its end. The name of the killer who framed them, a secretary to the despised head of the Secret Police—sowing this ambush on their way—we consign here and now to this compendium of atrocity. It will be its concluding irony. Of clashing destinies that fatally

⁹⁷ Pending his rigging of the next election, Joseph K. (fearing for his life if ousted from supremacy) is currently seeking to amend his country’s constitution to allow himself a third term in office. His advisor in this rort is an Australian constitutional lawyer.

shroud each re-generation. For we name, in this name, the contra-diction that mutes it, renders it void: ‘MWAMBA’.⁹⁸

98 “Eric Mwamba Jibikilayi, initiator and signatory of a petition against the four accused Combatants of UDPS that bears all the hallmarks of the PPRD (acronym of Kabila’s Party), is a sinister SS (Special Service) Officer of ‘death squads’ in Kinshasa. Working at night, between 1998 and 2000, he has thrown thousands of corpses into the Congo River. Detected as a spy and criminal disguised as a refugee, he escaped while his fellow SS executioner, *Bosch Ndala UMBA*, was neutralised in Brazzaville by the Directorate General of territorial security. It is therefore, with a very sad heart that we learn that this criminal is a valid interlocutor in Australia, even though his proper place is the International Criminal Court of Justice at Lahey.” Excerpt from a letter by Jean Baptiste Muampata of UDPS in support of the four accused: Pierre Blaise Kazadi Mwamba, Francis Mbuyi Mutombo Mwamba, Tshiswaka Kayembe Mwamba and Trésor Mwalaba Madjaga. Most fitting as a last word appending this tragic document dedicated to the laying bare of evidence by a man recognised as ‘*Kààdyosha*’ by his people (from the transitive verb: *-ooya*: “the one who adds the finishing touches, who is clever, who concludes” *Kacyooya*), ‘JIBIKILAYI’ is to say: ‘that which should be kept hidden’.

*Un point fixe dans le
ciel illumine d'un trait
la Cathédrale à minuit
décrochée dans la
fulgurance
l'étoile filante avale
précipitamment son
flux lumineux et
disparaît !*

The sidereal lights up
a feature of the
midnight Cathedral
and in its dazzle is
discomposed—
shooting, that star
swiftly swallows its
phosphor flux and is
gone !



Key to Illustrations

Front cover – sketch of the secret, military death camp at the heart of the Lt-Colonel Kokolo Barracks, drawn for the poet by the child soldier Kaloba, whom the former encountered in Congo-Brazzaville where its author died while in hiding after deserting his post during his second, month-long secondment as Chief of Station to ‘*la cave*’. Accused by Gen. YAV (succeeding his first secondment), of feeding, watering and praying with the enemy, he retorted, he had not been trained as a soldier simply to watch over a dungeon in which compatriots of his were left to perish, eventually fleeing with Daniel LUKUKE (carrying the injured body of one of ‘the farm’s’ survivors, Col. Lumumba Onangando, on his back). Fearing subsequent international exposure of this extermination camp, Joseph K. sent in a battalion to destroy all remaining prisoners prior to shutting it down (consoling himself with the arrest and assault of the two deserters’ wives), and returning the property to the hands of its previous owner (Baramoto).

I – a meteorite **II** – Belgium's (Flemish) Foreign Minister, Karel De Gucht, collecting himself after the cold shoulder he received from Kabila upon arrival in Kinshasa on Feb. 18, 2005, having en route by plane, ‘inadvertently’ exposed a classified document, issued by the Belgian secret service, to the media, identifying Tutsi power-brokers in the DRC (including the true racial identity of Joseph K.). **III** – funeral cortège of Justin Kokolo showing Mobutu standing next to the poet’s father-in-law, Michel Kiembe. A joyous day for Mobutu, as that same night (bribed by the US and pressured by NATO) the UN will declare KasaVubu sole representative of the Congo, thus side-lining its (less tractable) elected leader, Patrice Lumumba. (To cite an historian of the US Dept. of Foreign Affairs: “the Special Group/303 Committee-approved aggregate budget for covert action in the Congo for the years 1960-68 totalled approximately \$11, 702, 000”. For its part, the Belgian government bribed Congolese politicians to the tune of \$7 000 000. Both parties bitterly complained that Lumumba was incorruptible.)**IV** – a note written by the poet’s youngest son to his father. Wondering why he never got to see his dad, he was told by his mother that his father was very busy working late at his (sic) office(‘prison’), but that, if he wanted to, he could write him a note and she would pass it on to him. Written in a child’s French, it is a request for a chocolate bar, which his mother purchased for him upon return from the prison, saying his much preoccupied father had given it to her in response to his plea.**V** – relics on display at the Murambi genocide memorial, Rwanda. The myth that Tutsi were the sole victims of the massacres of 1994 is not only perpetuated by the Kagame regime but sustained as an indictment of the Hutu population by holding skeletal remains above ground at various, publicised cenotaphs. Real reconciliation awaits their interment, for—in line with African belief—only then will their spirits be afforded fellowship with the chain of ancestors. **VI** – a civil protester slain on the streets of Kinshasa in Jan., 2015, clutching his most valuable possession to his chest, lest even the plastic thongs he walks on be taken from him. Despite the unparalleled abundance of its resources, its people rank among the world’s most destitute. (Expanding on the theme of Congo’s immense diamond deposits, David Van Reybrouck (Congo: the Epic History of a People) will note: ‘There is no other country in the world as fortunate as Congo in terms of its natural wealth. During the last century and a half, whenever acute demand has arisen on the international market for a given raw material—ivory in the Victorian era; rubber after the invention of the inflatable tire; copper during full-out industrial and military expansion; uranium during the Cold War; alternative electrical energy during the oil crisis of the 1970s; coltan in the age of portable telephonics—Congo has turned out to contain huge supplies of the coveted commodity.

It has easily been able to meet demand. The economic history of Congo is one of improbably lucky breaks. But also of improbably great misery. As a rule, not a drop of the fabulous profits trickled down to the larger part of the population. That dichotomy, that is what we call tragedy.”**VII** – the names of a few unwitting peasants from the village of Bomundana recorded by the poet in anticipation of their gratuitous extermination.

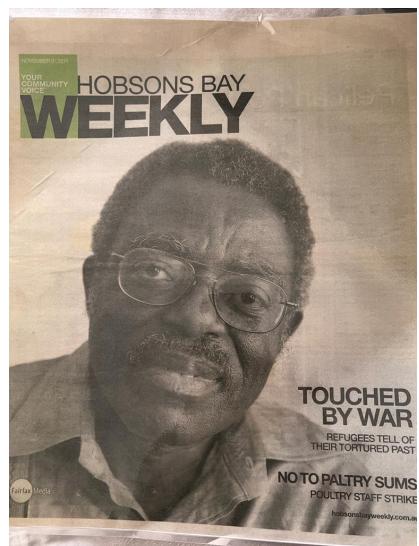
Acknowledgements:

The author would like to thank Mona Yahia for proof-reading my translations from the French; Aman Pariyar for his technical expertise with the book layout and design; and photo credits go to Nicole Marie (back cover image), Eiichi Tosaki (photos of original poems) and Aguila Cor.

As co-author, Mwamba wishes to thank the former Speaker of the Australian Federal Parliament, Anna Burke; the former minister for Foreign Affairs under Premier minister Julia Gillard, Bob Carr; the Catholic Bishop, Hilton Deakin, Mark Clark and Mwamba Kazadi Pierre-Blaise from the Catholic Office of Social Justice of Melbourne.

A victim of torture and unjust imprisonment, left with a crippled left knee and elbows, as a “political refugee” in Congo/Brazzaville (UNHCR, 2000) I was resettled in Melbourne (2007). My on-going human rights advocacy in collaboration with the Social Justice of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne led to a Private Motion over the “devastating humanitarian situation” taking place back home, voted into Federal Parliament (“Security in the Democratic Republic of Congo” 23 February 2011) and amongst others initiatives with Caritas Australia and “Austra- Congo” INC: \$5000 000 from the Federal Government was awarded to assist the victims of M 23 terrorism, rape and internal displacement, as well as improving the safety of those at risk (especially women and children) by supporting protective initiatives that combat sexual and gender based violence in the Eastern and Northwest Congo (“Australia supports vulnerable people in the Republic Democratic of Congo” 29 November 2012).

Last but not least, the Congolese Community highly appreciate their collaboration with the Darebin Ethnic Community Council resulting in the unprecedented erection, in Preston, of a world monument: “In Honour of All the Victims of Genocide and Other Mass Atrocity Crimes’ (17 July 2016).





What would you do if you were ambushed one day and sent to a secret extermination camp? Mwamba wrote poetry. This book presents a selection of these poems as well as the key to unlock their meaning. It is a record of one man's intransigence in the face of terror, from the heart of that Darkness that came to be known as the 'War of Africa'. There are two locks. The first opens onto an archive of atrocity, making this a human rights document; the second, onto a profoundly influential pan-African initiate knowledge system. At a first reading this may strike one as Anthropology. A different 'listening' however takes one deeper, to the root of what in lieu of other names we call Spirit, camouflaged beneath the cipher known—and unknown—as 'humanity' (ubuntu).