

TANSI'S RADIO PARENTHESIS

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Upon sending some poems to Léopold Sédar Senghor, Sony Labou Tansi consequently became the protégé of Henri Lopez, also a poet, and then first minister in Brazzaville. Tansi was thus moved out of his remote assignments in villages to the capital (Devésa, *Kongo* 17, 21). There he founded the Rocado Zulu theater with the sponsorship of the French Cultural Center, and he traveled with his troop to France, a trip financed by Elf Congo. His playwright's activities secured him an international network for his publications in poetry, novels, and theater. This, however, did not prevent him from attacking the oil companies, France, the "Guide of the People" at home, and Negritude probably because of his reservations about Existentialism, as well as Marxism—attacks that led to his submissions being declined by the *Présence Africaine* publishing house, while his novels were published by the *Seuil* press. Since 1967, Radio France Internationale had organized a competition with 20 countries in Africa and in the Indian Ocean, and after being selected for radio broadcasting, Tansi turned successfully to this new genre. He obtained prizes and gained considerable visibility. *La Parenthèse de sang* (The Parenthesis of Blood 1981) is characteristic of the plays he produced while gathering radio momentum. It is representative of what made him famous.

Envious detractors mocked his political stance, calling him "La voix de la France" ("The voice of France") while he was deemed ungrateful by his sponsors and supporters (Devésa, *Kongo* 22). Further examination shows that Tansi might have shared J.B. Tati-Loutard's "absence of dogmatism" (Makward, "Poetry" 220). Tati-Loutard was an established poet, also one of Tansi's mentors early on. Tansi's disloyalties might have been caused by another type of political priority, "revolt" (as stated on his business card), which does not agree with programmatic revolution or construction. Rather, it seems that Tansi was eager to affirm his independence of critical thought, his ability to answer, protest and expose, in his own effort to remain an ever

alert "consciousness."

Radio media is commented upon in *La vie et demie*: "mouches-radio qui pouvaient diffuser un rayon mortel à plusieurs millions de kilomètres de distance...." ("radio-flies that could kill by emitting lethal waves in a radius of several millions of kilometers" *Vie* 183). The radio and the presses are weapons. In *La Parenthèse*, Cavacha invites his soldiers to follow him in his attack against the "radio nationale" which used its medium to announce that "Libertashio is dead," the very sentence that was absolutely forbidden previously and the declaration that caused the death of all the previous sergeants up to Cavacha. Just as the previous guards were shot for having said that Libertashio was dead, Cavacha now proposes to go shoot the radio and the capital: "Nous allons fusiller la radio nationale. Nous allons fusiller la capitale" ("We will shoot the national radio. We will shoot the capital," *La Parenthèse* 71, translation mine). Apparently the political order has changed, and the public enemy has become the national hero. Cavachio uses an intriguing image to convey his disappointment with the new state of affairs that threatens his status as sergeant: "Ils nous ont pissé dans la peau" ("They pissed in our skin" *La Parenthèse* 71). The scatological image recalls the voting process according to sergeant Marc Fonsinacio. For Sergeant Pueblo, "les urines d'Europe" ("European urines" *Parenthèse* 25)¹

¹ Tansi writes in French, the language imposed on him in childhood with vexations that included the carrying of a necklace he calls "symbol" and he refers to it as "shit" (Devésa, Kongo 60). In this manner, the French Catholic school punished the students who spoke their national language instead of French. In "La coutûme d'être fou" ("The custom of being insane" 1979) published in Devésa's volume, Tansi explains his feeling of cultural alienation: "Nos enfants ne sont plus nos enfants. Nos propres entrailles nous trahissent. Ils mangent blanc, boivent blanc et pensent blanc" ("Our children are no longer ours. Our own entrails betray us. They eat white, drink white and think white," Devésa, Kongo 327, translation mine).

Likewise, African nationals may feel that colonial invasion has rerouted the governing body of Africa. At the linguistic level, a French written heritage has taken over an oral tradition; a written French verb has taken possession of African languages, spirituality, and socio-political structures, dispossessing Africans of their "native tongue" and "mother-father land." Purloinment may structure the relation to language, whether African or French in this colonized context. French is cast as a ghost, present *in absentia*, and barring the Africans from their specific identity (a dispossessing possession of either French or African culture with one canceling the other). The simultaneous acceptance and rejection of French possibly represents an irremissibly breached schism, or a treacherous self-abjuring conversion for the "writer." For the African writer, the language of expression is also the language of the colonizer or ex-colonizer. Albert Memmi has represented the ambiguous relation to French culture in *Portrait du colonisé, précédé du portrait du colonisateur* (*The colonizer and the colonized*) 1957. So have Césaire and Senghor, among others, in four stages

designated wine, which is also a symbolical equivalent of blood in Christian terms. There may be continuity to the images leading to a synthesis between Christian and Lembe myths where blood is a symbol of rebirth, perhaps after death. Tansi also brings forth one of the five forms of traditional theater, the kingizila as “cure.” Perhaps all cure intends to free the mind and repair the body. However, liberty is the political theme associated with the radio, controlled by or controlling armies.

“La Radio nationale s’appelle maintenant ‘la voix de la démocratie’” (“The national radio is now called ‘the voice of democracy’” *La Parenthèse* 71). The republican label cannot be trusted. When Cavacha wants to shoot the capital and the radio voice “of democracy” it is not certain that he opposes state freedom. Certainly, as Jean-Pierre Karegeye Sadi concludes about *L’Etat honteux* 1981, for Cavacha and for all totalitarian governors, “la crainte du changement ou d’alternance politique crée un malaise psychique” (“the fear of change or of political alternation creates a psychic discomfort”) regulated by torture and murder (Sadi, “Pouvoir” 214). Yet the words of the “guide” or “friend of the people” guarantee very little in *L’Etat honteux* where “le Guide providentiel et le colonel Martillimi Lopez massacrent la population pour garder le pouvoir” (“the providential Guide and the colonel Martillimi Lopez massacre the people in order to maintain their control of power” Sadi, “Pouvoir” 216, translation mine). Likewise, Josias Semujanga notes Tansi’s ironical use of names in *La Vie et demie* (“Du stéréotype” 197).

In *La Parenthèse*, Martial admits to being cowardly. He feels that he crumbles under the military men’s iron gaze (perhaps their “canons” are the iron eyes since Aleyo feels “looked at” by the guns, *La Parenthèse* 69). Ironically, in French the word “martial” is supposed to stem from the root “fer” meaning “iron” (*Larousse*). In addition, Martial is also the name of the character opposing dictatorship in *La Vie et demie*: he is the one bold and strong enough to fight the “Providential Guide.” So Martial is not named properly. Words are double edged or related by oxymoron: when the “soldier of peace” (“soldat de la paix”) declares that “le temps de mourir est passé” (“the time of dying is obsolete”) it could reassure us, unless we consider that in the words of the death row characters, this sentence meant that they were already detached from life. Indeed, the “soldier of peace” proves unable to stay the execution of the eight civilians, nor can he

often mingled according to Edris Makward, the latest being the “determined involvement in the reconstruction of the national continent” (“Poetry” 220). Tansi certainly shares in this effort.

save his own life.

Sadi assesses that in the relation of “Sony Labou Tansi et la pathologie du pouvoir en Afrique” (“Sony Labou Tansi and the pathology of power in Africa”) it is possible to relate the country to a body metaphor: “un Etat dictatorial est habité et possédé par le destin et le drame d’un corps qui commande” (“a dictatorial state is inhabited and possessed by the destiny and drama of the body that governs it” Sadi, “Pouvoir” 205, translation mine). If we follow his investigation of pathologies revealed by power (Sadi, “Pouvoir” 212), the play contrasts a series of “chiefs” or “heads” among which are the “capita” of the “capital” and Libertashio’s “head.” At the beginning of the play, both are antagonistic, and at the end they merge, declaring the decapitated man the national hero and declaring that he lives: “Long live Libertashio” (“Vive Libertashio”). The leaders and heads are cut up: “La capitale n’a pas d’oreilles” (“The capital has no ears” *La Parenthèse* 21, translation mine). The capital with its radio voice seems to characterize power—a deadly verbal power. Yet its body is out of reach. Power has palpable effects on “bodies” such as the victims of the successive sergeants; it affects the sergeants themselves. Cavacha affirmed his destiny tied to his blood and race. Pueblo also seeks it in his flesh, as if his newly found function could help embody him: “J’ai une chair de sergent, j’ai un estomac de sergent” (“I have a sergeant’s flesh, I have a sergeant’s stomach” *La Parenthèse* 26, translation mine).

On the other hand, the radio has unidirectional power aimed at the listeners’ brains. Like a bullet, it reaches each target, but it has no obvious ears for replies. The audience is parenthetical: *La Parenthèse de sang* defines the “parenthesis” as the flesh wound created by the executioner’s bullet that opens the forehead while God closes it (*La Parenthèse* 39-40). Such diacritics time the breath, silences, and separations within language, its inner borders: the diacritical marks prevent linguistic ambiguities and indicate the tone, the voice, the pauses to be respected—they are the oral component of writing. Tansi’s parenthesis is drawn of “blood” as the functioning of leadership over populations is considered in relation to language.

The difficulties of embodiment expressed in those plays echo oddly with their diffusion as their original genres as radio plays. As such they are but voices. Such considerations add to the numerous references to disembodiment and mutilations experienced either by the “governing bodies” or by the characters in the radio play. Likewise *La Parenthèse* is evasive about Africa. It is but a soccer field of abstract location, always the same in any field, under any sky whether it be geographical or metaphysical. The realm of the play is situated

in “mathematics,” “language,” and “metaphysics,” before “Africa.” Furthermore, Existentialism, Christian gospel and Lembe theater, as well as other domains of references, are not pursued and cannot be because of the baroque literal mode of expression.

When there is an embodiment of power, it is a revealing attribute held by a series of different persons. Hence the psychosomatic dimension of power may also be analyzed in the psychologies of the successive sergeants in *La Parenthèse*. The first one accepts power as a mark of privilege that allows him to eat and drink before his soldiers and perhaps to compliment his hostess, while the troops tend to the details of work for him. He is a “good guy” (“brave garçon”) who is mainly tired, and he trusts his second in the smooth running of the operations. He wants an end to useless searches because he does not understand their political implications—which renders him vulnerable. The second sergeant, Marc Fonsinacio, is cynical and analytical. His criticism of civilians for their mindless votes makes him indifferent to the victims whom he holds responsible for the state of affairs. But sergeant Fonsinacio knows too much and speaks too much. In a moment of absentmindedness he speaks aloud, recognizing that Libertashio is dead, and that therefore he kills people under false pretexts. He is summarily executed. The third sergeant is too narrow-minded to be truly dangerous politically, nor to last very long. He spends his short-lived position of authority in satisfying immediate whims: a waltz and some local alcohol. His attitude demonstrates that he respects the army power too much to have an understanding of it. His idea of hierarchy is that a soldier should kill only people:

Mes soldats ne sont pas des tueurs de vaches. C'est dégradant. C'est même lâche. Tuer une vache pour un soldat, c'est le sommet de l'ignominie. L'opprobe! Vous comprenez? (*La Parenthèse* 26)

My soldiers are not cow killers. It is degrading. It is even cowardly. To kill a cow for a soldier, it is the summit of ignominy. Opprobrium! Do you understand? (translation mine)

Pueblo's thought definitely lacks nuances. The accelerated succession of sergeants seems to indicate that out of all of them, such a man as Cavacha is bound to appear.

Up to then, the obedient and hardly noticeable Cavacha was “nobody.” We never heard his name. He was created by the circumstances. His psychology is rigid. He likes decisive conclusions: he is the one who will carry out the death sentences. He feels predestined retroactively. He recognizes that he has the “forehead” (“front”) of a sergeant. He accumulates “spiritual” functions: he hoards spiritual powers when the priest refuses to carry out his orders. This capitalization on the forehead may come from his previous school-instruc-

tor carrier. He also seems to believe in military-colonial discipline. Sometimes poetical, he is sensual, remembering the smell of chalk, moved by women but yet he never had relations with them (*La Parenthèse* 53). His idea of order does not admit reversals. Not only does he intend to keep his recent promotion, based on the hunt of Libertashio, he cannot renounce the kinetic of the action. He seeks a unity of direction, action, meaning, and place that resembles classic theater.

Time is an issue of power according to sergeant Cavacha: “Ça dépend de nous. On peut même tout remettre à demain. Le temps! Oui, le temps. Vous êtes dans notre temps” (“It depends on us. We can even report everything for tomorrow. Time! yes, time. You are in our time,” *La Parenthèse* 69, translation mine). This control of time also belongs to the aesthetics of theater. Indeed, the unity of time is delayed here, distanced and subjected to the control of opposite factions. The aesthetics of representation are at the command of the one who determines the moment of death and its fashion.

Unity is orchestrated by Cavacha as well. He wants a unified order in synchrony with his new promotion. The nation unified insures his permanence. Consequently, conflicting orders, delays, and indeterminacies do not agree with him unless he initiates them. Marc Fonsinacio's interpretation of the army as an “executive” force is somewhat literal. The army is thus described as a corpus impermeable to ideologies. Fonsinacio applied the orders delivered by superiors as his primal duty. Such an order is not only impersonal, relayed by the radio, or obedient messengers, it is anti-personal, best served in a void.

Sergeant Cavacha is not satisfied with obeying the “guide du peuple.” This time the metaphoric substitutive word order is no longer enough to convey the idea of language. Now that Cavacha became sergeant, he wants to impact on language's referential power to serve his ego as in his fantasy etymology. Otherwise, he is fully aware that metaphors can obfuscate reality: “Quel guide?” (“What guide?”), he asks, ready to seize in the backdrop the machinist who engineers a change of set by issuing counter commands without his approval, thereby threatening Cavacha's authority and the play's unity of action. Thus, Cavacha maintains the three unities and the gravity of tragedy. Yet he tampers with the definition of words and controls theology. Tansi shares some of Cavacha's tempering with language, yet unlike his character, he seems to favor multiple connections over a unified message. However rather than psychoanalysis (Devésá, *Kongo* 353), Tansi insists on restituting Africa to itself by means of a kingizila cure—not an Africa of the past, not an Africa of the future,

but a present self-evaluation necessary to determine the next pass:

Et ce type qui demande une passe, c'est déjà "l'autre-vous." Et la place où nous gardons les "autres-nous" s'appelle la parenthèse. L'inférieure parenthèse, qui nous laisse aux mains de l'écoeurement, et qui se ferme, qui se ferme....la passe de peur... la passe de honte... la passe de lâcheté. (*La Parenthèse* 44)

And this guy who asks for the ball, it is already "the other-you." And the place where we keep the "other-us" is called the parenthesis. The infernal parenthesis, that leave nausea to your hands, and that closes and closes....the passing of fear... the passing of shame... the passing of cowardice. (translation mine)

Tansi may be reluctant to determine a "content" to be passed on through descendants, inheritance, perhaps caused by a distrust of humanity—his own included? According to Devésa, Tansi did resent his birth from a second bed, which he considered disadvantageous and humiliating. The particular form of his invention may bear traces of this psychological pain, as his theater contains autobiographical elements, carrying with them a will to redeem a damaged lineage. Oddly enough, this project resounds with French eighteenth-century concerns to leave something behind for humanity to inherit and to construct upon. The "no exit" or "huis clos" is evoked but also countered. As for the game metaphor, Tansi's soccer is perhaps close to Arthur Adamov's ping-pong, although it may be less punctually relational as a team play that does not exclude individual face offs, nor fluid pairings when all the players feel covered.

The game metaphor reappears in Michael G. Schatzberg's book on Zaire, when he tries describing the state as an arena:

....but a special kind of arena....It is without fixed or constant shape, exists in flux, and may be transformed according to the context of the moment. Perhaps it would be best to envisage the state as an ice hockey arena. Normally the ice is level, the goals are equidistant from the center-ice line, and both goals have the same width. But the state in Africa, unlike this normal hockey arena, does not maintain its size and shape. (*Oppression* 17)

It is rather troubling that in a book describing the socio-political structure of Zaire in the 1970s, Schatzberg resorts to a playing field with unstable rules and protean configuration. Tansi would indeed be very close to the depiction of Zairian realities in his seeming "theater of the absurd." In his conclusion to his study of Zairian state under Mobutu, Schatzberg alludes to Goran Hyden's depiction of African states as an abstract structure that cannot claim any roots in society: "many African states seem suspended in midair without firm roots in society" (Hyden, *Shortcuts* 19, 195; qtd. *Oppression* 141).

The soldiers are made for killing people, the people to feed them,

provide them with feasts, money, dowries, marriages or rape, and just as Mobutu made sure to never maintain anyone in a post of power for long, the sergeants of Tansi keep rotating at great speed. Speaking of men in position of authority in Zaire, Schatzberg comments: "Their positions [of authority] are so insecure, and Mobutu's favor so fickle, that even the president's closest collaborators must assume that a similar opportunity to convert power into wealth might not reappear. Power is quickly gained, and rapidly lost" (*Oppression* 3). In terms of action, Tansi's play demonstrates precisely this race to convert the newly acquired rank into meals and even dowry. The successive sergeants all demand foods and alcohol. Also, as the military group in the play, the armed forces of Zaire (FAZ) and the national police (GDN) "regularly kill and torture their fellow citizens" (*Oppression* 59). To legitimate exploitative domination, the state offers an ideological discourse depicting the state as a family and Mobutu as a father (*Oppression* 72). Favor and disfavor are reversible under this paternalistic rule. Schatzberg quotes Sakombi Inongo, defending Mobutu's politics in a letter addressed to "the once-exiled opposition leader, former prime minister, and now Zaire's ambassador to the United States, Nguza Karl-i-Bond...: 'It is you, Nguza, who were accused, judged, condemned, then pardoned—thank God!—according to the logic of the social Order to which you belonged'" (*Oppression* 3). Certainly the reversal of Libertashio's favor—pursued killed, hunted down in all the people that could resemble him, and in the end declared national hero—is representative of Zairian political realities. The case of the thirteen members of parliament from the Kasai region (Tansi's) also shows the same balance of imprisonment and promotion (*Oppression* 95-97). As such, it appears that Tansi's play concerns a common occurrence, a segment of daily life in a corner of Zairian Africa, during one of the folds or shape-shifting events of the ever varying state, but with a permanent cast of characters. *La Parenthèse* has the power of current event newsbriefs. However, its open ideology may augment its philosophical aspect and hinder its politics—enough to evade censorship in Zaire, and approval in a Republic.

Semujaña estimates that in *La Vie et demie*, Tansi charms the reader "en déplaçant les certitudes de la Négritude....car au lieu d'affirmer une idéologie, il est une interrogation sur le monde" ("by displacing the certainties of Negritude.... because instead of affirming an ideology, it is an interrogation of the world" I translate "Stéréotype" 199). This charm is akin to Greek oracles: it is an inspired sacred verb confided to the audience, now free to apply words to individual destinies. It is also a characteristic of the folktale as didactic or evasive comment. Ideological certainties are swept before relativ-

isms, and narrative configurations with impersonal origins are given as one would extend a currency of uncertain value, to be confirmed by a vote of some kind.

Yet voting does not warrant legitimacy in the case of Sergeant Marc Fonsinacio, who will apply the law, whatever it is, depending on the civilians' ballot. He will not shirk his duty as a soldier and he will defend the power in place, the power democratically elected by the citizens, who must have done their civic duty, and, therefore, must have chosen their leader whom the army now serves. In his logic it is too bad for the people if the elected "boss, chief, president" is murderous because the army does not vote (*La Parenthèse* 22). In fact, Fonsinacio is so foreign to the voting process that he cannot pronounce the word "urnes" ("urns" or polling booth) which he mixes up with the word "urinoirs," or urinals.

The polling booth equated with the urinal is an example of the scatological jokes with which Tansi infuses his play. Bodily waste and votes are disrespectfully mistaken for one another. It is difficult to discern the extent of criticism involved: the wordplay casts doubt on the voting process as a French practice, either because the French export that does not graft properly to the new country, as the "urines" or wines from Europe, or because such votes carried out according to French custom do not benefit African politics. Meanwhile, democracy is criticized as a voting process that lets the constituents make aberrant choices:

Comme le... général... comme mon copain-là qui n'est jamais arrivé à dire gendarmerie. Il dit toujours "gendadmairie"....Vous nommez des patrons qui... qui ne savent pas dire le mot gendarmerie. (*La Parenthèse* 23)

Like the... the general... like my friend there that could never say the police force. He always says "peopleadcityhall"You name bosses who... who do not know how to say the word police force. (translation mine)

Marc's criticism is multifaceted. In order to have a true democracy, educated voters who know what and for whom they are voting are needed. And they have to vote for people who are aware, informed and knowledgeable. Included in the qualities of political leadership would be the ability to designate properly the institutions that one governs. It is odd nevertheless that the police force would be designated by a French word, or that he would call a public leader "boss," like a mafia leader, or like an industrial or administrative manager. "Patron" is an unexpected word in the mouth of a sergeant. The name of an army leader would have been less striking. Instead of choosing the word "general" for instance, he evokes the economic world, pointing

out to a potential improper collusion of the police and city hall with the world of finances.

Perhaps we should act strictly within the boundaries of truism, such as Yavilla's declaration: "Tant qu'on n'est pas mort, il faut rester vivant" ("As long as one is not dead, one must remain alive" *La Parenthèse* 41, translation mine). The silliness of the declaration does not overshadow its deeper meaning that one is not to wait for death, that as long as one is not dead one must live it up. Torture and executions lend themselves to metaphysics and to literal puns: thus "Il faut mourir comme un i" ("one is to die like an i") is derived from the French expression "straight like an i" (*La Parenthèse* 69)—hence, Doctor Portès' refusal to die lying down in the last scene. This absurd refusal eventually spares his life, since the sergeant orders that he be laid flat on the ground which saves him from the line of fire of the firing squad. The slapstick comedy derives from the colloquial French expression that stands out in a text insisting on linguistics and literal effects. Thus the literal order motivates the action. The parenthesis becomes a symbol for the border between live breath and dead script, the breath of the written—a ghost effect. The tautological and literal poetics of the play allude to several codes at once in a "dévoyure" that Devésa finds essential to Tansi (*Kongo* 147). The term "dévoyure" evokes banditries, deviance from moral behavior, and illegal or unintended rerouting.

From its opening, *La Parenthèse de sang* is relatively cryptic at the level of message. The reception of the radio-play is destined to various francophone countries relayed by French programming outside of France. The "locus" of the stage is intensely personal (the radio being an electronic device that belongs to private space). The play also depends on the variable context of the listeners: it is definitely less controlled than that of a staged play. It is not exactly the context of reading, since the radio may accompany the activities of some people otherwise occupied. Yet the private sphere—the home or the nation—does not quite define the targeted audience, which is decisively transnational within and yet outside of "Africa." The national radio is the instrument of power as we know it internationally under the form of "news."

Nevertheless, the disembodiment of the radio could operate the "mathematics of the soul" ("la mathématique de l'âme") to the Cartesian gesture emptying the world in order to conclude on the inner conviction "I think therefore I am": "Tu voulais vider le vide. (*Silence.*) Ces quelques heures qui te restent, il faut les dépenser à regarder dans ta peau" ("You wanted to empty emptiness. [*Silence.*] These few hours you have left, you have to spend them looking inside your

skin" *Soussigné* 79-80, translation mine). The *tabula rasa* associated with this inner inspection evokes the opening to the *Discourse on Method*. In *La Parenthèse*, the priest "knows" that he is alive as an "act of faith" or so he is told by his companions of misfortune who doubt that they are alive (*La Parenthèse* 64). Thinking or speaking do not guarantee that one is alive according to the prisoners on death row.

Tansi's *Je soussigné cardiaque* also comments on Existentialism. Mallot has been condemned to death after pursuing an existential rebellion. His last speech before death juxtaposes a verbal self-affirmation which may evoke Sartre. Self-affirmation in absolute "existential" terms led him to a premature death, to *metaphysics* rather than to physical life. Mallot ends with an expansion of his inner life described in terms of vital organs, not metaphysics:

En sortant volontairement de la merde, je casse le néant; je refuse d'exister sur commande. J'ai voulu, je veux. L'homme n'a jamais eu lieu, je l'invente. J'exige une viande métaphysique. Je suis, je reste, je meurs debout....La mort a capitulé devant ma délicieuse hantise de respirer. (Silence.)....Tu n'as pas existé. Tu meurs grossesse. Tu fêtes le néant. Tu te fais des phrases....j'ai accouché de ce moi métaphysique qui bouscule ma viande et mes os....J'électrise ma chair de cette fougue de respirer. J'aggrave tous les bruits de ma viande indocile, j'élargis mon sang, j'élargis mes os....(*Soussigné* 80-81)

Coming out voluntarily from shit, I break nothingness; I refuse to exist upon request. I wanted, I want. Man never existed, I invent him. I demand metaphysical meat. I am, I remain, I die standing....Death capitulated before my delicious hatred of breathing. (*Silence.*)....You never existed. You die pregnant. You celebrate nothingness. You fib yourself....I gave birth to this metaphysical me which shoves my meat and bones....I electrify my flesh with this eagerness to breathe. I aggravate all the noises of my indocile meat, I enlarge my blood, I enlarge my bones.... (translation mine)

The metaphysics of Existentialism negate the body in *Je soussigné cardiaque*. To exist becomes synonymous with nothingness in a birth villifying the body as scatological. Birth is severance from oneself. Tansi might indict an idealism more philosophical than political, which creates dead heroes whose children will be spared the truth about their "papa casse-monde" ("daddy break-world" *Soussigné* 80), and whose victory is embracing self-annihilation. It may or may not concur with the idea of Lembe drama as authorial sacrifice.

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