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EULOGY FOR THE DIFFERENT AND FOR DIFFERENCE

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“Beauty is the sign of what, here, is going to change”. All this accumulation of the World and everywhere the rhythms and the hideous ugliness and the indifference, the streaking acts of violence, outrage, and even those who “make art”, who seem to be such liberators, who seem to promise a transition to something different, to something which in any case acknowledges beauty’s impossibility, the appeal to and the renunciation of beauty, all this, simply the terrifying weight of that which we know we can no longer attain through beauty, and we stammer out this impotence, and we shout it in all the various excesses of which we make art, don’t listen to the song of the world any more, the world is screaming around us, the path is lost and the connection withered, because we have failed, all of us, to put into practice that *magnetic connection*, not only with our immediate surroundings and the species which people them (that we can do, we have rediscovered the secret, where it is still possible), but also with the other humanities, static or wandering (instead of enveloping them in a cloth of morality, as we do), so that all this noise that we are letting loose serves only to express our regret at no longer having access to beauty, we pile up flash upon crash so as no longer to have the time to perceive the differences of the world, which could show us the way to beauty, we want to crush everything that exists under the indistinct thunder of this heavy exacerbation, that’s what it is and what it will be, *the cry opens up a noisy absence* and a giving up of all sorts of difficult searches for harmony, we make more and more noise so as not to have to listen to ourselves, we refuse the world’s differences, and the very idea that there could be differences, we reconstruct one enormous savage vague *Identical*, which means *Undifferentiated*, but meanwhile, and unintentionally, our bacchanalia and our din have disrupted ways of talking, less than ever do they *recite* and sustain their strategy from a beginning to an end, now they’re crushing together little islands of words that bob up undissolved in the huge flood that has brought them together, and the spoken-written languages become oral-sung languages and within these languages the ways of talking multiply, with the result that this enormous violent machine for producing the undifferentiated has also, simultaneously, conceived what will fissure it into so many fertile fragmentations, and it’s the ways of talking that will save the languages, at least those that have survived until then, and it will be the ways of talking that will cherish the memories of the languages that have vanished, will reawaken among us traces of murdered languages, and will weave the maze fertilised by the multiplicities of languages, and then the seas that are closed and concentrated in on themselves, Mediterranean or Black Sea or Marmara Sea, will immediately bring together the mouths of their long rivers and the frontiers of their fresh water and their salt water.

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No place in the world can condone the slightest forgetting of a crime, the slightest shadow cast. We ask that the ban on the unsaid of our histories should be lifted, in order that we may enter, all together and all freed, into the Whole-world. Together also,

we name the Transportation and slavery perpetrated in the America as a crime against humanity. Soyinka Chamoiseau Glissant March 1998. Against any sly, calculating determination to forget on the part of those who consider themselves the bearers of the colonial legacy, as against any tormented, angry desire to forget on the part of those who have long wavered between shame for the experience undergone and pride in a history reclaimed. May the memories of a shame suffered in the past not lead us to despise those who in their turn are reliving what was once our fate. And may the old desire to forget not mutate into the sickly rancour that went together with forgetting. The sense of this brutal reversal is once again so close, not to a final annihilation but to an unstoppable process of dereliction, the secret lake-like seas do not produce friendly frontiers, another immigrant turned away from the Spanish coast has calmly declared that even if the whole sea around him was planted with electrified wire netting barriers he would set off again on that cold sea, with anything he could find, a boat a palm tree a tyre, he's got to send money back to his family, any man in the world would understand that, and the camera happened to film him from below, he rears up like a statue, or a totem, valid for everyone.

The welcome and maybe even the integration of immigrants can be 'successful' only on the basis of a *politics of Relation*, which has still to be invented. But we also know that most poor countries have no means of protecting their borders from a different but equally uncontrolled kind of immigration, that of investors who exploit the country's resources for profits which are immediately diverted somewhere else, nor any means of removing from their land any of these undesirables whom they no longer want. The situation seems unresolvable, short of considering that a gradual but definitive extermination of all immigrant workers, or the containing of all these dispossessed countries behind the barbed wire of concentration camps, and the mutual extinction of all known racial and cultural antagonists, would be a solution. But alongside the political and social efforts that must be put into practice, and that we must not stop putting into practice, today's peoples are nevertheless patient enough to invent, and will have the foresight to pursue, the overall collective poetics that govern our general policies. The economic rebalancing of the world is an absolute necessity, and we must not give up working for it, even if we can see that usually it is an unrealised wish. In particular, the reform owed to the African continent, whose under-development has been savagely mined and then kept in place by Transportations and colonisations, should not be a matter of charity or compassion, but an urgent measure of international public benefit. Our world needs a liberated Africa which would at last be able to devote its resources first of all to its own communities. Africas will defend themselves, just like all other peoples kept in enclaves of oppression, but they need the unanimous protests of all our humanities. In the same way, identitarian mutual slaughters will not end until these same humanities have agreed to consider the identity of everyone, individual or group, as both inalienable and changeable in its relation to the other. *I can change by exchanging with the other, without losing or distorting myself.* To drum in these repetitions is an act of faith that frontiers will be reanimated, becoming places of agreement and exchange. The world is inextricably interconnected, but we are learning more and more how to live with this and conceptualise it.

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The tension of art has been an originary impulse towards the reality (the realisation) of this quantity (or totality) of differences in the world, rather than constituting, as has been maintained up until now, the search for the unknown quality *within* each of these

differences, wrongly thought of as an identity protected from otherness. Let us retain this point, in connection with the cultures that have circulated, and that have geographically invaded the world. Let us say that Art has progressed, in the unfolding of the histories of these humanities, as an impulse towards Being [l'Être] – which is not however an absolute of unknown quality, but *the absolute knowledge and the recognition of this quantity (or realised totality) of differences*, a quantity which is still to come in so far as it would be a totality. Art therefore seemed at first to be one of the manifest variables of the being [l'étant], and the being, whereby this finite quantity of the world's differences realises and recognises itself, has gradually come to know, project and then perfect itself as a quantity, in spite of all the forces that pull it *absolutely* back towards being the unknown quality. But the being knows no qualities, only infinite variables. In works of art, as in the real, beauty is not the splendour of truth, it is and it reveals in a work or a fact *the power of the differences that simultaneously fulfil themselves and already predict their relationship to other differences*. Such a fulfilment comes from this, just from its own play, it is exactly that *something else as well* of which we have spoken. What the truly inspired in the West took to be the absolute of unknown quality, in which they recognised beauty but on the basis of which they also preached artistic perfection (which has its changing laws that no-one can really master) was in reality a sign of the intensity of this power. For we have an intuition of beauty every time we sense in an object or an idea or a work of art or a passion, not simply the encounter of same and other (that would be a cliché), nor the alleged perfection of forms (that would be a tautology), but the tension of something that is a difference in itself and also opens itself to other differences to be known and encountered. And this tension therefore intervenes, in the object or the work, between differences which are aware of themselves and differences *which will come to cluster around these*, so that the tension indicates the possibility of their meeting. Beauty is thus at once the reflection, the sign in the work, and the intuition, the premonition in us, of this negotiation of a difference which confirms itself by opening onto a probability, and of this attraction of a difference which transcends itself by offering itself in the same fashion, negotiation and attraction turning around each other, it's the great circus of the world, and Being, as we have guessed and repeated, is the immediate absolute knowledge and recognition of their encounter? Yes, Beauty is to be found at this meeting point. We are to meet where the oceans, matrices of beauty, are also already meeting. Spare us your storms, boatmen of the great wind, even though we love them so much! And the beauty of beauty has come from its offering to our intuition one of the dimensions of the unlikely, and not from its having allegedly already ratified every truth by providing a closed piece of evidence for it. The unexpectedness of the differences, through their mutual consecrations, means accepting the beauty of this very open field of the possible. Itself consecrated, or soothsayer, beauty is committed for ever to not being known or recognised, that is its grace. Prescience and consciousness and the poetics of Relation are nevertheless established in it.

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The first works of humanity, carved or painted on stone or rock, that are called prehistoric despite our not really knowing where the trace of history begins, are usually interpreted as utilitarian behaviour, techniques, albeit instinctive ones, to ensure the survival of the community in a hostile environment; which has led to the opinion that art was at first a means of operating, a *modus operandi*, of for example prefiguring animals which will [line missing] bringing together opposites (the animal and the group, the place and the group) will combine in the unexplorable beauty of these works. Half seen and half sensed in the density of caves (we were privileged to visit the Lascaux caves before

they were closed, a dark journey, taking one's breath away), *beauty, on the brutal rocks, is the effect of an unmanifest ed tension and the sign of an unobvious complicity*, realised. From the beginning, art was not an exorcism, but (in each of these works which are not self-consciously works) the combined effort and tension of the differences, in so far as they all hold to the same, and yet they are all linked to the other, where the same and the other were not seen as given separately. But let us note that here the other was the animal, it was the environment, represented by selected species, it was not specimens of the same sort as oneself, similar to oneself, natural rivals, unrepresentable. The tension (of differences) in these works is never directed straight from clan to clan (one will never draw on the blackened walls of the cave the outline of an *other* who might in fact be oneself), but always, and independently for each of the clans, in very close relation to these distinct fraternities with only their allies around them. The connection to the environment went together with a total lack of connection to the various surrounding communities, human or parahuman, all of which were ignored or fought or rejected in *their* lack of existence. From then on, the appearance of such potential rivals, their wanderings coming from over there having unfortunately crossed the anxious wandering going on here, had made it necessary for the community to give up this act of appropriation via fusion which had constituted the first artistic impulse, a divinatory act in that it was performed by one person but recognised as such by all, which no longer sufficed to sustain the harmonious complicity with the environment, and made it urgent to substitute a different, very pragmatic act of taking possession. Possession takes over here not as a result of the nature of the thing possessed, but simply because of the menacing presence of a possible other possessor. This will be the basis of all utilitarian art. Human beings found themselves from then on exhorted to dominate the world, and those who travelled overtook those who stayed in the same place, while they had such a painful need to meet each other, and first to set up mortally opposed moral rules, none of which recognised difference, and which could therefore in no way generate or balance relationships. But equally, we cannot believe that the first paintings, in those caves, not specific, and with no ornament or framing, were decorative representations or techniques or instructions for use or attempts to possess the land and the animals born from the surroundings. These first paintings were *magnetic connections*. The mystery is how they have come down to us, while so many utilitarian works have been obliterated. Their authors knew the differences, not in order to deny them but truly to join them up together by these works which in this way became aware of themselves as works. And so we realise that the works of art, however much the infinity of their detail had varied in the infinities of the situations in which art found itself, have indeed remained true to the achievement of the quantities of the differences, even where the works seemed to be moving away from this. And everyone can sense there a discreet course of the apparition of the works and the judgement of the given of the world, along which art does not arrange its works in a unilateral series, because what we call the being is the fragmented field of their resolution, and Being their real denial as well as their recognition. On the basis of which we will have to find new names and new meanings for Being and being. They have perhaps borrowed hidden or secret personalities, in unfrequented parts of the world, that is to say in places where the inhabitants would at first have considered any other place to be a non-place. Or else they would be a kind of zombi endlessly crossing the spaces, at least we would like to summon them in this guise. Or else the Spirits, for instance, would be the energy of Being and the matter of being, an energetic spirit and a material spirit, just as people used to say that there were animal spirits. The lesson of these accumulations and these alchemies, very noticeable in the history of these humanities, is that beauty is the secret receptacle of all differences, and that it proclaims them to those who seek to know. It

bestows on them the tension that in every work, or every object in the world, chosen by us, manifests it. Therefore he who has conceived the work of differences will immediately conceive works of art, or at least a part of their uncertain finalities.

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We imagine the exacerbation and excess and tumult and unboundedness pulsating in the world, they are not sufficient to themselves as forms or modes of this research or this tension towards the realisation of differences. The main coloration of these arts which have not been around in the world, rubbing up against it, arts which are difficult to classify, indigenous and primitive arts, distant arts, different arts and primordial arts, remains that they have exerted no secular influence in the world, nor reproduced the world in a literal way, as though right from their start they had reserved their energies for the true meeting in the future and for the entrance into the so-called *new region of this world*. Safeguarding the principle of the tension of art, which is central to the force of differences and alerts us to beauty, is the dimension of the poetic intention, which animates all artistic practices, whether we have to recompose it from fragments or it gives itself to some of us, in pure science or in innocence, like a commanding thunderbolt. The poetic intention has always brought us to the absolute prescience of the Whole-world. Every poetic intention leads straight to a narrative of the world, for which this narrative is not a narrative but a state of relatedness of the differences within a delimited space, confined or expanding, it depends, and in a given period of time. The same goes for the presence of landscapes when, recognising ourselves in the positioning of our open but uncompromising places, we hear the world sing. The landscapes' colours enter into our words and gestures, and then suddenly these landscapes are linked together in mutual awareness. They can be characterised by tumult and unboundedness, or timidity, softness or lightness. There is no idealism in arguing that the voice of the deserts confronts and continues the song of the rains, which are lacking over there and overwhelming us here. What is declared to be idealism is in fact the revelation of the currents of energy joining our differences up together. But this could just as well be the poetic approach of any kind of materialism, from the dogmatic Leucippe to the very subtle Cheik Anta Diop. The world's landscapes give off an energy, not even latent, above all the energy of all these differences, manifested in them. And the peoples without a voice, that used to be called peoples without writing, it's the same thing and the same peoples, have shown this to us. But it is not true to say that these voiceless peoples benefit from a kind of power, for instance a power of truth, as a result of the depths from which their voice has to rise. Hardship, you must understand, has never been a source of privilege. Those who do profit from such a power – but they do not partake of truth either – do so above all because they possess the scarce forces of technology, but at the same time they suffer from a certain weakness in that their very privilege conceals from them the world as it is. This world, that they examine and control and are so keen to dominate. Technical powers, at least at the moment, have ceased to generate large-scale ideas, or generous ideas, or those amazing live general theories concerning knowledge and imagination; these technologies are now exhausting themselves in the pleasurable microscopies of their established, fully functioning systems [line missing] The world is the whole and the Whole-world the part, but the opposite is just as meaningful. We will always have the unknown world in front of us, and we will always be able to dream (of) it, alone or together, and also, we will always have the Whole-world inside and beside us, and we will share it with everyone. And the differences in their turn will arise from other differences, each one of them based not only on a variable or an identity but also on the gap which, like a bridge, leaps from this

variety to all the others, and these generated differences together produce, beyond their diversities, the unpredictable continuity of the world. Relation recognises no frontier, in either space or time, and yet we need frontiers. But Relation is the fundamental frontier, which is open passage. It seems as though the peoples who for so long had no audible voice have filled this space and this gap between all the varieties, but not by blocking it with their own fixities, and that they have preserved the idea of quantity, dreamed or realised. This did not mean promoting themselves. If there were human communities moving from one strand of Relation to another, they were producing the explorers, the conquerors, and the exploiters, through the total sacking of towns and the bloody labour of slaves and the intense slave ports and the plantations locked up tight and the immense latifundia and the floods of the big cities and races around the world and pogroms and the pleasures of technology and the aristocracies of discovery and the wars of religion and the weapons of mass destruction. Relation links diversities and perceives and names differences and works persistently on our consciousnesses and revives our intuitions. Throughout this time which is ours and which passes for us, Relation points to and realises this quantity(of differences) which comes into existence and provides movement and gives life to the endless and the unexpected.

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Most conceptions of difference have seen it just as that which separates, the gap, and which invites, rapport or alliance, and perhaps that which also links and relays and relates, i.e., Relation. This is the case with Segalen, one of the most generous founders of difference, and with Deleuze, the unobtrusive disseminator. Difference acts passively or promotes itself, but in any case it is seen as an intervention between two substances, or two or more varieties, or an infinite number of identities, or as the sole driving force behind a central process, separate from it, and these conceptions hardly ever envisage it as itself a substance, or as a constituent of being, or as what in technical language we would call a *basic given*. Yet it is this, because a purely passive function, or a neutral gap, to which it is reduced if considered a simple intervention, could not have influenced elements as infinite as varieties or identities, either to distance them or to immobilise or bring them together. Neither life itself nor its hidden or overt forms are mere processes of mechanical engagement. The differences, the beating heart of beauty, work of art or object, could not have fulfilled the desire for completion of this work or that object, river or mountain or bronze cast or idea or passion or song, they could not have played this game of negotiation-attraction, if they were not themselves first of all living, changing realities, safe from the dismal grinding of machines. The techniques and performances, manual and intellectual, like the actions of Nature, that enable the form of a work of art or the appearance of an object to be defined, are neutral, move only because they are moved, yet it is the collective mass of the said form or the said appearance which gradually creates, beneath the form and the appearance, in it and through it, a place in which the circus of the world plays out, in which all tragedies play out, and where old differences are outlined and future differences already stir, this place of nascent beauty, and we recognise that these are not mechanisms, and that from their association, their coming together, in the work or the object, through fusion and outpouring, there emerges beauty. Beauty is that force which announces itself and itself protects its own fragility.

