

African Modes of Self-Writing*

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The only subjectivity is time...¹

L'auteur essaie de démontrer qu'il n'existe pas d'identité africaine que l'on peut désigner par un seul terme ou ranger sous une seule rubrique. L'identité africaine n'existe que comme substance. Elle se constitue, à travers une série de pratiques, notamment de pratiques de pouvoir et du soi, ce que Michel Foucault, appelle les jeux de vérité, Ni les formes de cette identité, ni ses idiomes ne sont toujours semblables à eux même. Ces formes sont mobiles, réversibles et instables. Par conséquent, elles ne peuvent être réduites à un ordre purement biologique basé sur le sang, la race, ou la géographie. Elles ne peuvent non plus être réduites à la tradition, dans la mesure ou celle-ci est constamment réinventée.

Over the past two centuries, intellectual trends have emerged whose goal was to confer authority on certain symbolic elements integrated into the African collective *imaginaire*. Some of these trends have gained a following, while others have remained mere outlines.² Very few are outstanding in richness and creativity, and fewer still are of exceptional power. There is nothing comparable, for example, to a German philosophy that from Luther to Heidegger has been based not only on religious mysticism but also on belief in a kind of necessity and predestination--and more fundamentally, on the will to transgress the boundary between the human and the divine. Nor is there anything comparable to Jewish Messianism, which, combining desire and dream, confronted almost without mediation the problem of the absolute and its promises, pursuing the latter to its most extreme consequences in tragedy and despair, while at the same time treating the uniqueness of Jewish suffering as sacred, at the risk of making it taboo. However, following the example of these two meta-narratives, African modes of writing the self are inseparably

connected with the problematics of self-constitution and the modern philosophy of the subject. However, there the similarities end.

Various factors have prevented the full development of conceptions that might have explained the meaning of the African past and present by reference to the future. The effort to determine the conditions under which the African subject could attain full selfhood, become self-conscious, and be answerable to no one else, soon encountered two forms of historicism that led it into a dead end: first, 'economicism' and its baggage of instrumentalism and political opportunism, and second, the burden of metaphysics of difference. Both these forms of historicism led to an irremediable confusion of imagination with reason and myth with utopia, and the orders of explanation, phantasm, and desire. From this opacity arose a dogmatic and inflexible discourse, a great, rigid machine that transforms chance into destiny every time an attempt is made interpret the fate of the *African sign* in modernity. This resulted, for example, in the old refrain about imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, dependency, and more recently, globalization. Another result was the saturation of the sign itself by the contingent factors of race (the blind spot of modern consciousness), tradition, and geography.³

Through constant repetition, a set of pious dogmas and empty dreams was ultimately imposed on common sense, to the point that it now passes for African discourse in general. The central object of this discourse is identity, in both its political and cultural dimensions. Modern African reflection on identity is essentially a matter of liturgical construction and incantation rather than historical criticism. It is a liturgical construction insofar as the discourse that is supposed to account for it can be reduced to three rituals so constantly repeated as to become inaudible. Year after year--a Sisyphean task if ever there was one--the first ritual contradicts and refutes Western definitions of Africa and Africans by pointing out the falsehoods and bad faith they presuppose.⁴ The second denounces what the West has done (and continues to do) to Africa in the name of these definitions.⁵ The third provides so-called proofs which, by

disqualifying the West's fictional representations of Africa and refuting its claim to have a monopoly on the expression of the human in general, are supposed to open up a space in which Africans can finally narrate their own fables (self-definition) in a voice that cannot be imitated because it is authentically their own. This is an interminable incantation to the extent that an age-old, extraordinary history is reduced, as if by waving a magic wand, to three tragic acts, ghostly experiences and phobic objects par excellence: slavery, colonization, and apartheid--to which an attempt is now being made to add globalization.

These three specters and their masks (race, geography, and tradition) have constantly haunted the African *doxa*. They constitute the prison within which the latter still struggles. A certain segment of the intelligentsia has tried to assign canonical meanings to them. Three of these meanings deserve mention. First, separation from oneself. This separation is supposed to result in a loss of familiarity with oneself, to the point that the subject, having become estranged from himself, has been relegated to an alienated, lifeless form of identity. Thus the 'being with oneself' (another name for tradition) the African should always have experienced has been replaced by an alterity in which the self no longer recognizes itself: the spectacle of dismemberment.⁶ Second, 'disappropriation',⁷ a process in which juridical and economic procedures have led to material expropriation and dispossession, followed by a unique experience of subjection characterized by the Other's falsification of the self, resulting in a state of maximal exteriority (estrangement) and deracination.⁸ These two phases (material expropriation and the violence of falsification) are said to be the main constituents of African uniqueness and of the tragedy that is its corollary. Finally, the idea of degradation: being enslaved is supposed not only to have plunged the African subject into humiliation, debasement, and nameless suffering but also a social death characterized by the denial of dignity, dispersion, and the torments of exile.⁹ In all three cases, the fundamental elements of slavery, colonization, and apartheid are said to have served as a

unifying center of Africans' desire to know themselves (the stage of sovereignty) and to belong to themselves in the world (the movement of autonomy).

By following the model of Jewish reflection on the phenomena of suffering, contingency, and finitude, these three meanings might have been used as a starting point for a philosophical and *critical* interpretation of the apparent long rise toward nothingness that Africa has experienced all through its history. Theology, literature, film, music, political philosophy and psychoanalysis would have had to be involved as well. But this did not occur.¹⁰ In reality, the production of the dominant meanings of these events was colonized by two ideological current of thoughts, one instrumentalist, the other reductive, which claim to speak 'in the name' of Africa as a whole. The first current of thought--which likes to present itself as radical and progressive, moreover--uses Marxist and nationalist categories to develop an *imaginaire* of culture and politics in which a manipulation of the rhetoric of autonomy, resistance, and emancipation serves as the sole criterion for determining the legitimacy of an authentic African discourse.¹¹ The second current of thought developed out of an emphasis on difference and the native condition. It promotes the idea of a unique African identity whose foundation is membership in the black race. In the following remarks, I shall examine these two currents of thought and bring out their weaknesses. Throughout this discussion, I shall propose ways out of the dead end into which they have led reflection on the African experience of self and the world. I shall show how current African identities are forged at the interface between cosmopolitanism and the values of autochthony.

The Politics of Africanity and the Politics of the Universal

The first current of thought (Marxist and nationalist) is permeated by the tension between voluntarism and victimization. It has four main characteristics. First of all, an instrumental conception of knowledge and science, in the sense

in which neither is recognized as autonomous. They are useful only insofar as they are put in the service of partisan struggle. This struggle is itself invested with moral significance, since it is alleged to oppose revolutionary forces to the forces of conservatism. The second characteristic is a metaphysical vision of history, in the name of which the idea that the future is open and cannot be foreseen is challenged from the outset. Causality is attributed to entities that are fictive and wholly invisible, but nevertheless said to always determine, ultimately, the subject's life, work and way of speaking. According to this point of view, the history of Africa can be reduced to a series of phenomena of subjection interconnected in a seamless continuity. The African subject's difficulty in representing himself as the subject of a free will and liberated from domination is supposed to result from this long history of subjugation. Whence a naïve and uncritical attitude with regard to so-called struggles for national liberation and to social movements, the emphasis on violence as the privileged avenue to self-determination, the fetishizing of state power, the disqualification of the model of liberal democracy, and the populist dream of a mass society.¹²

The third characteristic is a desire to destroy tradition and the belief that true identity is conferred by the division of labor that gives rise to social classes, the proletariat (or other subaltern levels of society) playing the role of the universal class par excellence. Finally, there is a certain irresponsibility consisting in an essentially polemical relationship to the world.¹³ But what might appear as the apotheosis of voluntarism is paradoxically accompanied by the cult of victimization. The quest for sovereignty and the desire for autonomy are almost never accompanied by self-criticism. According to this current of thought, in fact, African experience of the world is supposed to be determined, a priori, by a set of forces -- always the same ones, though appearing in differing guises--whose function is to prevent the blooming of African uniqueness, of that part of the African historical self that is irreducible to any other. As a result, Africa is said not to be responsible for the catastrophes that are befalling it. The present destiny of the continent is supposed to proceed, not

from free and autonomous choices, but from the legacy of a history imposed upon Africans, burned into their flesh by rape, crime, and all sorts of conditioning. According to this ideology, Africa is not responsible for the catastrophes it has suffered. The continent's present fate is supposed to result, not from free and autonomous choices, but from the legacy of a history imposed on it by rape, crime, and all sorts of special conditions.¹⁴

Self-affirmation, autonomy, and African emancipation --in the name of which the right to self-expression is claimed-- are real issues, even if they are not new ones. As the Atlantic slave trade came to an end, Africa was already assuming a particular symbolic status, notably when part of the African intelligentsia tried to conceive the continent's future in terms of Western political philosophy. Within the intellectual context of the time, the question was clear: could Africans govern themselves? This was a superfluous question, since Africans had always governed themselves, even while enslaving their own people. In reality, doubts regarding Africans' ability to govern themselves were connected with another, more fundamental doubt that was implicit in the way modern times had resolved the complex general problem of alterity and the status of the African sign within this economy of alterity.

To understand the political implications of these debates, we should perhaps point out that for Enlightenment thought, humanity is defined by its possession of a generic identity that is universal in essence and from which derive rights and values that can be shared by all. A common nature unites all human beings. It is identical in each of them, because reason is at its center. The exercise of reason leads not only to liberty and autonomy, but also to the ability to conduct individual life in accord with moral principles and an idea of the good. Outside this circle, there is no place for a politics of the universal. The question is whether Africans are inside or outside the circle, that is, whether they are human beings like all others. In other words, do we find among Africans the same human person, only disguised by different designations and forms? Can we consider Africans' bodies, language, work, and life as products of a human activity, as manifesting a subjectivity --that is, a consciousness like our own-- that

would allow us to consider each of them, taken individually, as an alter ego (another self)?

To these questions, the Enlightenment offered three kinds of answers with relatively distinct political implications. An initial set of answers suggests that Africans should be kept within the limits of their presupposed difference. The darker side of the Enlightenment saw in the African sign something distinct, unique, and even indelible, which separated it from all other human signs. The best testimony to this specificity is the black body, which is supposed not to contain any sort of consciousness and to have none of the characteristics of reason or beauty.¹⁵ Consequently, it cannot be considered a body composed of flesh like my own, because it belongs solely to the order of material extension and of the object doomed to death and destruction. It is this centrality of the body in the calculus of political subjection that explains the importance assumed, in the course of the nineteenth century, by theories of the physical, moral, and political regeneration of blacks, and later on, of Jews. According to this dark side of Enlightenment, Africans developed unique conceptions of society, of the world, and of the good that they do not share with other peoples. It so happens that these conceptions in no way manifest the power of invention and universality peculiar to reason. Nor do African's representations, life, work, language, or acts, including death, obey any rule or law whose meaning they could on their own authority conceive or justify. Because of this radical difference, it is legitimate to exclude them, both *de facto* and *de jure*, from the sphere of full and complete human citizenship: they have nothing to contribute to the work of the universal.¹⁶

A significant shift took place after the end of the slave trade. While the principle of difference and the refusal of alterity persisted, the concern for self-determination was connected with the necessity of 'becoming civilized'. A slight slippage occurs within the old economy of alterity. The thesis of non-similarity is not repudiated, but it is no longer based solely on the emptiness of the sign as such. Henceforth, it is a question of giving the sign a content and

naming it. If Africans are a different kind of beings, that is because they have their own things. They have an identity, a customary identity. This identity is not to be abolished, nor is custom to be destroyed. On the contrary, difference is to be inscribed within a distinct institutional order while at the same time this order is forced to operate within a fundamentally inegalitarian and hierarchized framework. In other words, difference is recognized, but only insofar as it implies inequalities that are, moreover, considered natural. There is thus no equivalence in difference. Difference is recognized solely to the extent that it justifies inequality and discrimination.¹⁷ Later on, the colonial state used custom--that is, the principle of difference and the refusal of alterity--as a mode of government in itself. Specific forms of knowledge were produced for this purpose. Their objective was to document difference, to situate it firmly within a canon, and to eliminate plurality and ambivalence. The paradox of this process of reification is that on the one hand, it looks like recognition, while on the other, it constitutes a moral judgment, because ultimately custom is made specific only the better to indicate the extent to which the world of native, in his naturalness, coincides in no way with our own; in short, that it is not part of our world and thus cannot serve as the basis for an experience of living-together.

The third variant has to do with the *politics of assimilation*. In principle, the concept of assimilation is based on the possibility of an experience of the world common to all human beings, or rather, on the experience of a universal humanity based on an essential *similarity* among human beings. This world common to all human beings, this similarity, are not supposed to be given all at once, and particularly to the native. The latter has to be converted to it. This conversion is the condition for his being perceived and recognized as our *fellow* and for his humanity ceasing to be unrepresentable and indefinable. Given these conditions, assimilation consists in the recognition of an African individuality different from the uniqueness of the group as such. Thus the African subjects can have rights and exercise them, not by virtue of their appurtenance to the rule of custom, but by reason of their status as autonomous individuals capable of

thinking for themselves and exercising reason, the peculiarly human faculty. To recognize this individuality, that is, this ability to imagine goals different from those imposed by custom, is to do away with difference. The latter must in fact be absorbed, erased and annulled if Africans are to become like us and if they are henceforth to be considered as alter egos. Thus the essence of the politics of assimilation consists in de-substantializing difference, at least for a category of natives thus co-opted into the space of modernity because they have been 'converted' and 'cultivated', that is, made suitable for citizenship and the enjoyment of civil rights. This involves a passage from custom into civil society, but by way of the civilizing mill of the colonial state.¹⁸

When, after the end of the Atlantic slave trade, African criticism took up the question of self-government, it inherited these three moments, but did not subject them to a coherent criticism. On the contrary, it accepted, for the most part, the basic categories that Western discourse then used to account for universal history.¹⁹ The notion of 'civilization' is one of these categories. It authorizes the distinction between the human and the non-human or the not-yet-sufficiently-human that might become human if given appropriate training.²⁰ The three vectors of this training were thought to be conversion to Christianity, the introduction of a market economy by way of putting people to work, and the adoption of rational, enlightened forms of government.²¹ In reality, it was less a matter of understanding what led to servitude and what servitude meant than of postulating, in the abstract, the necessity of liberating oneself from it. For the first modern African thinkers, liberation from servitude was equivalent above all to acquiring formal power and making their own decisions autonomously. The basic question --that is, how to renegotiate a social bond corrupted by commercial relationships (the sale of human beings) and the violence of endless wars--was considered secondary. African criticism of the time did not assume as its primary task reflecting on the nature of the discords that led to the slave trade. Still less did it concern itself with the modalities of re-inventing a being-together in a situation in which, with regard

to the philosophy of reason that it claimed to espouse, all the outward appearances of a possible human life seem to be lacking, and what passes for politics has more to do with the power to destroy than with any kind of philosophy of life.

When during the colonial period an autochthonous discourse on the emancipation of the natives and their right to self-determination emerged, the relation between the end of barbarism and becoming civilized was not subjected to fundamental criticism.²² To be sure, postwar African nationalisms, following in this respect the tendencies of the time, replaced the concept of 'civilization' by that of 'progress'. But they did so the better to endorse the contemporary teleologies.²³ The possibility of an alternative modernity having been set aside, only the question of raw power remained: who possesses it and how its enjoyment is legitimated. In the justification of the right to sovereignty and self-determination and in the struggle to gain power, two central categories were mobilized: on the one hand, the figure of the African as a victimized subject, and on the other the assertion of the African's cultural uniqueness.²⁴ This way of defining oneself is based on a reading of the world later amplified by ideologies claiming to be progressive and radical.

As an example, let us examine the figure of the African as a victimized subject. Whether the brutality actually occurred over an extended period of time is not challenged—even though the strategy of blame and denunciation does not make it possible to grasp the multiple causalities, or to account for the phenomenology of violence or for the forms in which terror was inscribed on the subjectivity of the actors of the time. Worse yet, the primary effect of slavery, colonization, and apartheid was to divide African societies against themselves. This division opened the way for Africans to participate in victimizing their own people. That said, at the heart of the paradigm of victimization we find a reading of self and the world as a series of fatalities. In African history, it is thought, there is neither irony nor accident. Our history is essentially governed by forces beyond our control. The diversity and disorder of the world, as well as the open character of historical possibilities, are reduced—in an authoritarian manner—to a spasmodic, unchanging cycle,

infinitely repeated in accord with a conspiracy always fomented by forces beyond our reach. Existence itself is expressed, almost always, as a kind of stuttering. Ultimately, the African is supposed to be merely a castrated subject, the passive instrument of the Other's enjoyment. Under such conditions there can be no more radical utopian vision than the one suggesting that Africans disconnect themselves from the world. Under such conditions the imagination of identity is deployed in accord with a logic of suspicion, of denunciation of the Other and of everything that is different: the mad dream of a world without Others.

It is this hatred of the world (which also masks a profound desire for recognition and vengeance) and this conspiratorial reading of history that are presented as the radical discourse of emancipation and autonomy, as the foundation for a so-called politics of Africanity. But behind the neurosis of victimization and the impulse to difference, a xenophobic, negative, and circular mode of thought is developing. In order to function, it needs superstitions. It has to create figures that later pass for real things. It has to fabricate masks that are retained by remodeling them to suit the needs of each period. This is the case for the diabolical couple that is the true actor in history beyond appearances: a tormentor (the enemy) and his (innocent) victim. The course of African history is said to be determined by the combined action of this couple. The enemy -- or the tormentor- - is supposed to incarnate absolute wickedness. The victim, full of virtue, is supposed to be incapable of violence, terror, or corruption.²⁵ In this closed universe, in which 'making history' consists in annihilating one's enemies, any dissension is seen as an extreme situation. There is no African subject except in the violent struggle for power-- and first of all for the power to shed blood. This is the power sought. And it is in its name that people are killed. This is the power that is seized and exercised. Ultimately, the African is supposed to be a castrated subject, the passive instrument of the Other's enjoyment. History, in the end, is seen as participating in a great economy of sorcery.²⁶

Parallel to this current of thought that seeks to found a politics of Africanity by using the categories of Marxist political economy and by viewing

history in accord with the ternary sequence of slavery, colonization, and apartheid, a rhetorical configuration has developed whose central thematics is *cultural identity*. The latter supports itself, as we have said, on three crutches: race, geography, and tradition. Let us briefly survey the history of its problematization in African thought over the past two centuries. At the outset, there is the notion of 'race' and its status in the procedures of recognizing human attributes. In actuality, most nineteenth-century theories establish a close relationship between the human subject and the racial subject. They generally begin by reading the human subject through the prism of race. Race itself is understood as a set of visible physiological properties and discernible moral characteristics. These properties and characteristics are supposed to distinguish human species from each other.²⁷ Moreover, these physiological properties and moral characteristics make it possible to classify these species within a hierarchy whose violent effects are both political and cultural in nature.²⁸ As we have already indicated, the classification dominant in the nineteenth century excluded Africans from the circle of humanity, or in any case assigned to them an inferior status in the hierarchy of races. From the outset, this denial of humanity (or this status of inferiority) forced their discourse to be expressed in a tautology: 'we are human beings like any others'.²⁹ Or: 'we have a glorious past that testifies to our humanity'. This is also why discourse on African identity has always been caught in a dilemma from which it is still struggling to free itself: does African identity participate in the generic human identity?³⁰ Or should one insist, in the name of difference and uniqueness, on the possibility of diverse cultural forms within a single humanity--cultural forms whose purpose is not to be self-sufficient, and whose ultimate goal is universal?³¹

Let us consider the first case: to be African is to participate in the human condition. The apologetic density of this assertion can be gauged only with respect to the violence of the denial that precedes it and makes it not only possible but necessary.³² The reaffirmation of a human identity that has been

denied by the Other belongs, in this case, to the discourse of rehabilitation. But while the discourse of rehabilitation tries to confirm Africans also belong to humanity in general, it does not, however, challenge the fiction of race.³³ This is just as true of negritude as of the differing variants of Pan-Africanism. In actuality, in these propositions -- all of which bear with them an *imaginaire* of culture and an *imaginaire* of politics-- it is race that makes it possible to found not only difference in general, but also the very idea of a nation, since racial determinants are supposed to serve as the moral basis for political solidarity. To a large degree, race serves as the proof (and sometimes the justification) of the existence of a nation. In the history of being African, race is the moral subject and at the same time an immanent fact of consciousness. The basic underpinnings of nineteenth-century anthropology, namely the evolutionist prejudice and the belief in the idea of progress, remain intact; racialization of the nation and the nationalization of the race go hand in hand.

Thus the latent tension that has always marked reflection on African cultural identity in general disappears down the hole represented by race. This tension opposes the universalizing move that claims co-appurtenance to the human condition, to another, particularist move, which emphasizes difference by accenting, not originality as such, but on the principle of repetition (custom) and the values of autochthony. In the history of African thought over the past two centuries, the point where these two political-cultural moves converge is race. The defense of the humanity of Africans is almost always accompanied by the claim that their race, traditions, customs, and history have a specific character. The whole representation is deployed along the boundary from which every representation of anything 'African' is derived. The revolt is not against Africans' belonging to a distinct race, but against the prejudice that assigns this race an inferior status. The specificity of 'African' culture is no longer in doubt; what is proclaimed is the relativity of cultures in general. The idea of a universality different from Western rationality is never considered. In other words, there is no alternative to modernity. The only possibility that can be

envisaged, 'working toward the universal', consists in enriching Western rationality by adding to it the 'values of black civilization', the genius peculiar to the black race. This is what Senghor calls 'the meeting point of giving and receiving', one of whose results is supposed to be the mixture of cultures.³⁴

These common beliefs are supposed to provide the basis for developing contemporary discourses about cultural identity. Since the nineteenth century, those who maintain that Africans have their own cultural identity, that there is a specific African autochthony, have sought to find a general denomination and a place to which they could anchor their prose. The geographical place turns out to be tropical Africa, defined by a thoroughly fictional boundary. Then the goal is to abolish the phantasmatic anatomy invented by Europeans and echoed by Hegel and others.³⁵ Somehow the disjointed members must be glued back together. The 'dismembered body' will be reconstituted at the imaginary zenith of race, and if necessary, in the light of myth.³⁶ Then an attempt will be made to locate Africanity in a set of specific cultural characteristics that ethnological research is expected to provide. Finally, nationalist historiography sets out in quest of the missing remainder in ancient African empires, and even in pharaonic Egypt.³⁷

When we examine it closely, this move--repeated by ideologies claiming to be progressive and radical--is profoundly reactionary. It consists first in establishing a quasi-equivalence between race and geography, and then in deriving cultural identity from the relationship between the two terms, geography becoming the preferred site at which the race's institutions and power are supposed to be embodied.³⁸ Pan-Africanism defines the native and the citizen by identifying them with black people. Blacks do not become citizens because they are human beings, but because of both their color and the privileged accorded to autochthony. Racial and territorial authenticity are conflated, and Africa becomes the country of black people. At the same time, everything that is not black is out of place, and thus cannot claim any sort of Africanity. The spatial body and the civic body are henceforth one, the former

testifying to an autochthonous communal origin by virtue of which everyone born on this land or sharing the same color and the same ancestors is a brother or sister. The racial interpretation is thus at the foundation of a restricted civic relatedness. In determining what is African and what is not, without racial consciousness the *imaginaire* of identity has hardly any value. The African will henceforth be not someone who shares in the human condition itself, but a person who was born in Africa, lives in Africa, and is black. The idea of an Africanity that is not black is simply unthinkable. In the logic of this assignment of identities, non-blacks are relegated to a place that does not exist. In every case, they are not from here (autochthonous) because they come from somewhere else (settlers). Whence the impossibility of conceiving, for example, the existence of Africans of European, Arabic, or Asiatic origin—or that Africans might have *multiple ancestries*.

One result of the slave trade is that blacks live in faraway places. How should we account for their inscription within a nation defined racially, when geography has cut them off from the place where they were born and from the place where they live and work? In order to establish their Africanity, they are simply invited to return to Africa. Since the African geographical space constitutes the natural focus for black people, those whom slavery has taken away from it live in a condition of exile.³⁹ To a large extent, the myth of return (the back-to-Africa movement) is fundamental to the Pan-Africanist movement. For a long time, the persistence of this myth and of the idea that one can be an African only in Africa made it impossible to deal with the reality of diaspora on any terms other than those of excision and guilt. More fundamentally, Pan-Africanism developed within a racist paradigm of which nineteenth-century Europe is the culminating phase.⁴⁰ A discourse of inversion, it draws its fundamental categories from the myths it claims to oppose and reproduces their dichotomies (the racial difference between black and white, the cultural confrontation between civilized peoples and savages, the religious opposition between Christians and pagans, the conviction that race is at the foundation of

nations and vice versa). It is inscribed within an intellectual genealogy based on a territorialized identity and a racialized geography, the myth of a racial city (*polis*) obscuring the fact that while the rapacity of capitalism is at the origin of exile, murders within the family also occur. Fratricides occur.⁴¹

The Meaning of the Sign

We have just seen that behind the empty dream of political emancipation and the rhetoric of cultural autonomy has taken place a perverse operation of selection from a memory completely organized around the double fiction of sovereignty and self-determination. This operation has only strengthened Africans' resentment and their neurosis of victimization. How can we break with this empty dream and with this outmoded and exhausted mode of thought? How can we resume, at new cost, African questioning concerning the world? Of all the attempts that have been made in the course of the twentieth century, two are of particular interest for our discussion. First of all, there are the efforts to deconstruct tradition (and thereby Africa itself) by showing the latter to be have been invented. From this point of view, Africa as such exists only on the basis of the text that constructs it as the Other's fiction. This text is then accorded a structuring power, to the point that a self that claims to speak with its own, authentic voice always runs the risk of being condemned to express itself in a pre-established discourse that masks its own, censures it, or forces it to imitate.⁴² In other words, Africa exists only on the basis of a colonial library that intervenes and insinuates itself everywhere, even in the discourse that claims to refute it, to the point that with regard to African identity and tradition, it is now impossible to distinguish the original from a copy, or even from a simulacrum.

A second avenue has attempted to problematize African identity as an identity in formation. From this point of view, the world itself no longer constitutes a threat. On the contrary, it becomes a vast network of affinities. There is no ultimate African identity. There is an identity that is in process and

that, in contrast to unanimist mythologies, draws its sustenance from Africans' ethnic and linguistic differences, as well as from traditions inherited from colonial history. Once unanimist mythologies have been set aside, what Africans have in common appears more clearly than in the past: fundamentally, European racism has refused to take Africans seriously. From this refusal--which is at the same time a way of seeing--derives in large measure the presupposition that there is an African identity. But the time is long past when black racism could be seen as an intelligent response to white racism. Hence Africa cannot be, ultimately, only an empirical and geographical concept. Neither can it be a metaphysical concept. If African identity used to be constructed on the basis of European fictions, other narrative systems might construct it differently, the essential point being that in the future everyone can imagine and choose what makes him or her an African.⁴³

In large measure, these two criticisms are driven by methodological considerations. They do not go to the heart of the matter: how should we deal with the specters invoked by the nativists and radicals in order to hypostatize African identity at the very time when the imagination and social practices of these same identities show that other orders of reality are being established? In other words, how should we conceive, creatively and in their heteronomy, the all-purpose signifiers constituted by slavery, colonialism, and apartheid? How should we move from resentment and lamentation over the loss of the proper name to becoming conscious of a temporality that is always simultaneously bifurcating toward several different futures, and in so doing opens the way to the possibility of multiple ancestries? First of all, by shunning the sirens of a pseudo-radicalism whose sole function is--as we have seen-- to manipulate false appearances in the hope of producing effects of guilt and repentance in the Other while carefully avoiding self-criticism. At the same time, we must break with the nativist impulse whose only goal is the enjoyment of the feeling of difference. These two approaches belong to the slave's mentality. Priority must be given to that which, in African experience of the world, escapes

determination and the idea of a world that is already shaped, and that one can only undergo or repeat. To the obsession with uniqueness, we must oppose the thematics of similarity, that is the process through which, under current conditions, Africans are coming to feel themselves similar to others, or not; the everyday practices through which they manage to recognize the world, or not, and to maintain with the world an unprecedented familiarity, at the same time inventing something that is both their own and beckons to the world in its generality.⁴⁴

Once this is acknowledged, it is clear that there can be no imposed order that sets limits to the meaning that can be given to the archives constituted by slavery, colonization, and apartheid. How could it be otherwise? There is, in fact, no assigned attribute for either the thing or any event in itself. These events can only be subject to several simultaneous interpretations. That is why once their factual character is admitted (the recognition of the fact that they did take place and that they have structured, for Africans, a certain experience of the world and of themselves), the work of reference, of giving meaning, and of transforming into a sign begins. Concerning reference, Heidegger said, not without justification, that it was a matter of *relating*. And that the sign consists, above all, in *showing* or *indicating*. In fact the sign takes the place of what it indicates: 'Not only can the sign represent...in the sense of serving as a substitute for what it indicates, but it can do so in such a way that the sign itself always *is* what it indicates'.⁴⁵ And, one might add, *repeats*. It is necessary, then, to repeat the genuinely philosophical inquiries demanded by slavery, colonization, and apartheid. At least three of these have been neglected by African criticism.

The first concerns the question of the status of suffering in history. It is here that a comparison with other historical experiences is appropriate. The Jewish Holocaust, slavery, and apartheid all represent forms of *originary suffering*. They are all characterized by an expropriation of the self by unnameable forces. These forces appear to assume various forms. However, in

each case, the central sequence is the same: to the orgiastic intoxication represented by the administration of mass murder corresponds, like an echo, the placing of life between two chasms, so that the subject no longer knows if he is dead or alive. A destructive impulse and a dislocation of the self and all individuality constitute the Dionysian backdrop to these events separated in time, but connected by a common thread: the extreme devaluation of life. On the pretext that origin or race are the criteria of any kind of value, powers that are simultaneously nightmarish and drunken try to appropriate beings to themselves, to exploit them, to express themselves in them, in a mixture of pleasure and cruelty, even in the ways of killing them. That is one of the reasons why, at their very foundation, these events bear witness against life. They indict life and the forms it takes. Lives that can be killed and sacrificed, on the orders of sovereignties difficult to name, and that are all of external origin; lives unworthy of being desired for their own sake, in fact. Whence the question: how can they be redeemed, that is, rescued from the incessant operation of the negative?⁴⁶

The second question has to do with the work of memory, with the function of forgetting, and with the modalities of reparation. Is it possible to lump together slavery, colonization, and apartheid as a memory, not in a sort of distinction between before and after, or between past and future, but in their genetic power: the impossibility of a world without Others that they reveal; the possibility of multiple ancestries that they indicate; and the weight of the peculiar responsibility incumbent upon Africans themselves in the element of tragedy--which is not the only element--in their history? Here, the comparison between African and Jewish experiences reveals profound differences. For example, contrary to the Jewish memory of the Holocaust, there is, properly speaking, no African memory of slavery.⁴⁷ Or if there is a memory, it is characterized by diffraction. More than one *imaginaire* governs, in fact, a set of fragments of metaphors used in all the battles whose goal is to arouse feelings of culpability while at the same time avoiding any responsibility for the past at

the very time that one is pretending to talk about it. At best, slavery is experienced as a wound whose meaning belongs to the domain of the psychic unconscious.⁴⁸ When efforts at conscious recollection have been made, they have scarcely escaped the ambivalence that characterizes similar gestures in other historical contexts.⁴⁹

There are two reasons for this. First, between the African-Americans' memory of slavery and that of continental Africans, there is a shadowy zone that conceals a deep silence: the silence of guilt and the refusal of Africans to face up to the troubling aspect of the crime that directly engages their own responsibility. For the fate of black slaves in modernity is not the solely result of the tyrannical will and cruelty of the Other--even though the latter is well-established. The other primitive signifier is the murder of brother by brother, 'the elision of the first syllable of the family name' (Lacan), in short, the divided city. Along the line of the events that led to slavery, that is the trail that people try to erase. This is a significant ablation, in fact, because it enables the functioning of the illusion that the temporalities of servitude and misery were the same on both sides of the Atlantic. This is not true. And it is this *distance* that prevents the trauma, the absence, and the loss from ever being the same on the two sides of the Atlantic.⁵⁰ As a result, the appeal to race as the moral and political basis of solidarity will always depend, to some extent, on a mirage of consciousness so long as continental Africans have not rethought the slave trade and the other forms of slavery, not merely as a catastrophe that befell them, but also as the product of a history they have played an active part in shaping through the way in which they have treated each other.

The second reason is of another order. In certain parts of the New World, the memory of slavery is consciously repressed by the descendents of African slaves. The tragedy at the origin of the drama that constitutes their existence in the present is constantly denied. Because it is denied, this tragedy can never produce, by itself, any law or foundation. To be sure, this denial is not equivalent to forgetting as such. It is simultaneously a refusal to

acknowledge one's ancestry and a refusal to remember an act that arouses feelings of shame. Under such conditions, the priority is not really to re-establish contact with oneself and with one's origins. Neither is it a question of restoring a full and positive relationship to oneself, since this self has been humiliated beyond any limit. The narrative of slavery having been condemned to be elliptical, a sort of ghost persecutes and haunts the subject and inscribes on his unconscious the dead body of a way of speaking that must be constantly be repressed. For in order to exist in the present, it is considered necessary to forget the name of the father in the very act by which one claims to ask the question of the origin and of filiation.⁵¹ This is, notably, the case in the Antilles.

The third reference, the symbolism of exile, and indeed the metaphor of the concentration camp, which is used to compare the condition of slavery with the Jewish condition as well as the relationships between race and culture in modern consciousness.⁵² There is something hasty and superficial about this comparison. In fact, the Jewish imagination constantly oscillates between a plurality of contrasted myths and unresolved, but productive tensions: the myth of autochthony on the one hand, and the reality of forced displacement, of nomadism and wandering on the other; the empirical fact of dislocation on the one hand and the expectation that the promise will be fulfilled and the hope of the return on the other; in short, a temporality in suspense, in which resides the twofold visage of the diaspora and Israel, the absence of territory in no way signifying the interruption of Jewish continuity. And finally, beyond contingency, fragmentation, and terror, there is a Book, the Torah, a text constantly being written and always to be re-written and reinterpreted. The experience of African slaves in the New World reflects a more or less comparable plenitude of identity, even if the forms of its expression differ, and even though there is no Book as such.⁵³ Like Jews in the European world, they have to "narrate" themselves and 'narrate' a world, and approach this world from a position in which their lives, their work, and their way of speaking are scarcely legible, enveloped as they are in ghostly contours. They have to invent

a 'art of existing' in the midst of despoliation, even though it is now almost impossible to re-enchant the past and cast a spell upon the present, except perhaps in the syncopated terms of a body that is constantly made to pass from being to appearance, from song to music.⁵⁴ That said, the black people's experience of slavery in the New World and in other parts of the world has not been interpreted in a way that brings out the possibility of founding a universal law.

These three references suffice to show that by resorting to expedients and failing to address these central questions about life, its forms, its possibilities and what denies it (the power of killing), African criticism, dominated by political economy and by the nativist impulse, has from the outset inscribed the quest for political identity within a purely instrumental and short-term temporality. The different theories of Pan-Africanism, as well as the forms of nationalism that negate it in practice, have their origins in this shortcut. When it was asked, during the heyday of colonialism, whether self-government was possible, it was never to arrive at the general question of being and the struggle for life. From the beginning, the central preoccupation has been, not the struggle for life, but native peoples' struggle to seize political power and take over the apparatus of the State. In reality, everything comes down to one perverse structure: autochthony. The power to risk one's life, that is, as Hegel suggested, the ability to put an end to a servile condition and to be born as the subject of a world, peters out in the prose of autochthony.

So where are we today? Beyond the current rhetoric about the 'African Renaissance', what ways of imagining identity are at work and what social practices do they produce? First, we must note that the thematics of anti-imperialism is exhausted. That does not mean, however, that the pathos of victimization has been transcended. One reason for this is that at the very time when its hegemony was greatest, this thematics conceived imperialism in its economic as well as in its political aspect. A certain kind of political economy sought to determine the structural factors that were thought to block, from a material point of view, the Africa's affirmation in the world. Africa was perceived as the victim of external forces from which it had to cut itself off in order to begin a process of development centered on its own concerns. It was

largely this debate that was revived during the 1980s and 1990s, in the form of criticism of the programs of structural adjustment and neo-liberal conceptions of the relationships between the state and the market. In the interim, Pan-Africanism was confronted by the reality of national states that, contrary to received wisdom, turned out to be less artificial than had been thought. But at the end of this century, the most significant movement is the one outlining a junction between the old *imaginaire* of 'revolution', the old anti-imperialist thematics, and 'struggles for national liberation', that is, between the old anti-imperialist thematics and nativist theses. Under the banner of the international lexicon (democracy, social movements, civil society), these *imaginaires* are now combining to oppose globalization, to relaunch the metaphysics of difference, to re-enchant tradition and to revive the utopia of an Africa de-Westernized and cut off from the world.

The thematics of race has also undergone major shifts. The extreme case of South Africa has long led people to think that the polar opposition between blacks and whites summed up by itself the whole racial question in Africa. However, the repertoires on the basis of which the *imaginaires* of race and the symbolism of blood are constituted have always been characterized by their extreme variety. At a level below that of the black/white opposition, other racial cleavages has always set Africans against each other, not only the most visible (black Africans vs. Africans of Arab, Asian, Jewish, or Chinese ancestry) but also all the others referring to the panoply of colors and to their annexation to projects of domination (black Africans vs. Creoles, Lebano-Syrians, *metis*, Berbers, Tuaregs, Afro-Brazilians, Peuls, Moors, Tutsis, etc.). In fact--no matter what definition one gives of the notion--Africa's racial unity has always been a myth. This myth is currently imploding under the impact of internal and other factors connected with the ways in which African societies are linked to global trade flows. On the one hand--even if inequalities of power and access to property, and even stereotypes remain--the category of 'whiteness' no longer refers to the same meanings as it did under colonization or apartheid. Although

the 'white condition' has not reached a point of absolute fluidity that would detach it once and for all from any reference to power, privilege, and oppression, it is clear that the experience of Africans of European origin has continued to pluralize itself throughout the continent, and that the forms in which this experience is imagined, not only by 'whites' themselves but also by others, are no longer the same.⁵⁵ The diversity of this experience now makes the identity of Africans of European origin a contingent and situated identity.

The same might be said about Africans of Asian or Lebanese-Syrian origin, even if the historical conditions of the becoming citizens and their positions on the social map differ from those of whites and blacks.⁵⁶ The case of Africans of Arab origin suggests transformations of another kind. On the one hand, the memory of historical relationships and influences linking the Mediterranean Maghreb with sub-Saharan Africa is continually both repressed and turned into folklore. Officially, Maghrebine identity is Arabo-Islamic. In reality, it proceeds from a syncretic mixture of Saharan, Berber, Arab (from the Peninsula), and even Turkish contributions, as is clearly shown by the Kabylia protests in Algeria, the Jewish presence in Morocco and Tunisia, and the rites involving trance and therapeutic music associated with popular Sufism in most of the countries in this region.⁵⁷ On the other hand, Islam has served as the idiom of a socio-cultural matrix within which adherence to the same faith and belonging to a single religious community does not do away with the link between master and slave, as we see in Mauritania or, farther to the east, in the Arabo-Nilotic area (Sudan in particular).

The symbolism of blood and colors proceeds by degrees. As in other parts of the world, race and class intersect and produce, despite all the ambivalence inherent in such operations, effects of inferiority. In general, the forms of racial consciousness themselves are changing all over the continent. The production of racial identities beyond the binary black/white opposition increasingly operates in accord with distinct logics as the old demarcations lose their mechanical aspect and opportunities for transgression multiply. Racial

categories are highly unstable. In many ways, this instability shows that there are several kinds of whiteness as well as blackness, as is in the case of *metis*, who are conscious of being black and yet not only black, and find themselves in situations where they are never either white enough or black enough.⁵⁸ But this instability also affects the classic images of the black, which are being profoundly modified under the impact of the transnational circulation of persons, images, sounds, and objects.⁵⁹

The Re-enchantment of Tradition and the Hazards of Cosmopolitanism

Let us focus for a moment on the project of re-enchanting tradition. This project is based on a hypostatized notion of custom, which specific agents re-imagine and try to invest with new powers, while at the same time multiplying its meanings. The starting point of this project is the claim that Africans have something authentically unique that confers on them a peculiar self irreducible to that of any other group or any other culture. The negation of this self and this authenticity would thus constitute, in itself, a mutilation. On the basis of this absolute difference, constructed in custom (which is itself constituted by specific ways of thinking, judging, speaking, acting, and representing the world and being organized into a community), Africa is supposed to be able to reconstruct its relationship to itself, to own itself, and to escape from the obscure regions and the opaque world to which history has consigned it. Because of the vicissitudes of history, custom is supposed to be behind us. Whence the importance, in order to recuperate it, of moving backward and of being reborn, which are necessary conditions for overcoming the phase of humiliation and existential anguish caused by the historical decline of the continent.

The emphasis on establishing an 'African interpretation' of things, on creating one's own schemas of self-mastery, of understanding oneself and the universe, of producing endogenous knowledge all led to demands for an African science, an African democracy, an African language, and endogenous

technologies.⁶⁰ This need to make Africa unique is presented as a moral and political problem, the reconquest of the power to define one's own identity seeming to be constitutive of any subjectivity. Ultimately, it is no longer a matter of claiming the status of alter ego for Africans in the world, but rather of asserting loudly and forcefully their alterity. It is this alterity that must be preserved at all costs. Difference is thus praised, not as the bearer of any kind of universality, but rather as the inspiration for determining principles and norms governing Africans' lives in full autonomy, and if necessary, in opposition to the world. Whence, for example, the prevalence of hierarchies based on the law of primogeniture, the subordination of young people and women to patriarchal authority, the development of the symbolism of the chief, a phallic conception of power, and even the belief in the ontological inequality of individuals.

The project of re-enchanting tradition is also based on a set of fragmentary ideas and social practices, that is, on an *imaginaire* that draws its referents from both local and global sources. The most powerful vectors of this new *imaginaire* are the communitarian movements. These movements are created at the intersection of two elements: on the one hand, they draw their power from the rehabilitation of origins and membership, whereas a universalist, cosmopolitan view would tend to emphasize as its essential characteristic the ability to detach itself from any kind of essence. The idea is that there is no identity that does not in some way lead to questions about origins and attachment to them, no matter what definition of them is given and how much fiction is inherent in that definition. The dispute concerning origins is supposed to be the starting point for becoming conscious of identity. On the other hand, every identity should be translated into territorial terms. On this view, there is no identity without territoriality, that is the vivid consciousness of having a place and being master of it, whether by birth, because one has conquered it, or because one has settled there and it is now part of self-representations. The territoriality par excellence is locality, that is, *home*, the small space and inherited estate where direct, proximate relationships are

reinforced by membership in a common genealogy, in the same matrix, real or supposed, which serves as the foundation for the civic space. Funerals and burials are one of the chief ways of ritualizing membership in the civic space represented by *home*.

From the combination of the ideological categories of membership and origins, on the one hand, and the spatial categories of territory and locality on the other, emerges *citizenship*, that is, the ability to enjoy a home, the ability to exclude foreigners from this enjoyment, the right to protection and access to a range of collective goods and resources situated in the space thus delimited. As a result, the expression of condolences and complaints, as well as the demand for rights and the legitimation of battles for resources, become part of the idiom of filiation, genealogy, or heritage. Moreover, these three idioms can, as such, be converted into recyclable resources in the process of globalization. One of the vehicles of this conversion is the international lexicon of rights. Whether it is a matter of lines of argument based on the protection of the environment or the rights of minorities, or even of ways of speaking founded on a heritage, in each case the point is to assert a wounded identity. The wound is supposed to have led to a deprivation of specific rights that people are attempting to recover by using the international lexicon of rights. The other vehicle for recycling local identities is the market. The market intervenes not only in the manner in which identities are imagined and exhibited, but also structures the ways in which identities are consumed and reproduced. This happens in particular through tourism and the politics of heritage.⁶¹

But if, as everywhere else, the connection with the flux of globalization passes through (among other things) the commodification of identities (politics of heritage, tourism) or migration, one of the chief mediations between global time and the local ways of re-enchanting tradition turns out to be war, or more precisely, the *state of war*. Beyond its purely empirical aspects (the logic of the formation of armed militias, the relationships between war and profits, the privatization of violence, smuggling and trading in arms),⁶² the state of war in

contemporary Africa should be conceived as an *instituting imagination*. We must, in fact, consider the state of war as a general cultural experience that shapes identities, just as do the family, the school, and other social institutions. In a still more determining manner, the state of war refers to systems of subjectivity that must be briefly explored here.

First of all, the state of war emerges at the intersection between two processes well described by Nietzsche in his book on Greek tragedy: the coupling of dream with intoxication. This coupling takes place through the interlacing, and then the rapid rise of discriminatory categories such as difference, the victim, the tormentor, the enemy, and the guilty--categories that played, as we have seen, a central role in the Marxist and nationalist as well as in the nativist currents of thought. However, to the apology for difference and the condition of being a victim, we must add the idea of history as a sacrificial process.⁶³ Here, the word 'sacrifice' has two senses: self-sacrifice (putting one's life at someone else's disposal, getting killed for a cause), and mass murder (the physical annihilation of countless human lives). On the one hand, self-sacrifice implies that one will put to death other human beings who are identified with the enemy. One accepts that one may be killed during this process. One believes that in such a death is found the essence of life. On the other hand, massacre constitutes the most grandiose sign of both sovereignty and expense. More than anything else, it marks the limit of the principle of the utility--and thus of the idea of the preservation--of human lives. A sovereignty of loss, then, through the spectacular destruction and bloody waste of human beings. The goal of this Dionysian violence is not to stun or even to dazzle. Neither is this violence part of a simple process of *manducation* and *dejection*.⁶⁴ To be sure, it is no longer a matter of forced labor, of appropriating the Other or turning him into a chattel or merchandise. It is a question of abolishing, once and for all, the very idea of a debt owed to life. This death is not only that of the enemy and those one has judged to be guilty. It is also that of one's neighbor and fellow creature.⁶⁵ But in the act that consists in putting to death innumerable sacrificial

victims, the agent of the massacre also seeks to transcend himself and to invent a new self. Trembling with drunkenness and violence, he becomes a sort of work of art shaped and sculpted by cruelty. It is in this sense that war becomes part of the *new African practices of the self*. Through war, the African subject transforms his own subjectivity and produces something that does not belong to the domain of a lost identity that must at all costs be found again, but instead something radically different, something that may change, and whose theory and vocabulary remain to be invented.

Secondly, the state of war is related to two other central determinants that were already present in the experience of slavery: life and property. And first of all, life, to the extent that the state of war authorizes power, and even naked force, to be exercised in the extreme, in an absolute manner, that is, in the very act through which not only individuals but groups are put to death. What is unprecedented is that this plunge into extremes (and the division of society against itself that it entails) is no longer exceptional. It belongs to the ordinary course of things and public life. As a result, the calculus governing cultural and political practices no longer has as its goal the subjection of individuals so much as the seizure of power over life itself. Its function is to abolish any idea of ancestry, and thus of a debt with regard to a past. There thus emerges an original *imaginaire* of sovereignty whose field of exercise is life in its generality. The latter can be subject to an empirical, that is, biological, death. But it can also be mortgaged, in the same way as things.⁶⁶ The power to put to death, the function of murder and the will to mutilate the enemy if not to destroy him, make more difficult to answer than it used to be the question of the value of life and how it is to be measured, especially when massacres and carnage are now related in the same way that, according to Marxist dogma, capital, labor, and surplus value used to be related. But the function of murder and the production of death are also connected with procedures of appropriation. Between the mortgaging of natural resources, the sacking of a town, financing levies, the capture of booty, the resale of the objects stolen and goods seized, the

possession of prizes (men, women, children, and livestock), and the distribution of the spoils, it is the status itself of property and debt that has changed.⁶⁷

The other form of instituting imagination--through which the junction between the local and the cosmopolitan is effected--is the *state of religion*. For most people, the relationship to divine sovereignty now serves as the main provider of meanings, even though the discursive formations that draw their main symbolism from religion are far from being homogeneous.⁶⁸ Almost everywhere, the practices in the course of which divine power is mimed or staged are linked with the process of reinventing the self and the *polis* in its twofold sense of earthly city and heavenly city. This categorization does not reflect solely a division between this world and the beyond. It also indicates how the self arises from the interaction between the world of the existent and what cannot be reduced to it. Through specific festivals, rituals, and celebrations of various kinds, religious life is becoming the place where the networks of a new, non-biological relationship among members of a family are formed, at the same time as the notions of divine sovereignty and patronage are being transformed and new dogmas are emerging.

More fundamentally, the development of new religions is based on the exploitation of four ideo-symbolic formations whose hold on contemporary conceptions of the self is evident: the notion of charisma (which authorizes the practice of oracular pronouncement and prophecy, of possession and cure);⁶⁹ the registers of sacrifice, of death and funeral ceremonies;⁷⁰ and finally the domains of the miracle (that is, the belief that anything is possible).

Charisma refers to the holding of a distinct, autonomous power and authority benevolently exercised in the service of the needs of a community. The exercise of this power places the thaumaturge in a hierarchical relationship with those who are not endowed with the same magic, the same know-how. An attempt is made to manage the real world on the basis of the conviction that all symbolization refers primarily to a system of the invisible and of a magical

universe, the present belonging above all to a sequence that always opens onto something different. Whence the influence of these forms of prophecy and messianism. The principal archives of these transformations are no longer to be sought in the past (slavery, colonization, apartheid), but in everyday life: disease, war, and politics. They increasingly find expression in individual song, prayer, chorales, music, and preaching. In order to conceive a lack of division, discord, and sedition, and indeed even death, one resorts to these linguistic figures. Such systems of the *imaginaire* are contradictory and not necessarily connected with a continental project. But they constitute the mental frameworks within which the memory of the recent past is re-interpreted, and the trials of the present made meaningful.

The last important cultural shift has to do with the forms of imagination in the modern world. Both the vectors and the sites of this imagination are multiple. The systems of exchange that nourish these ways of imagining are to a large extent the same as those found elsewhere.⁷¹ Two in particular require our attention. Beyond practices of dress, music, cinematography, and even migration, there is first of all everything that affects the economy of goods that are known, that may sometimes be seen, that one wants to enjoy, but to which one will never have access. In this situation, what is decisive in the formation of subjectivities is perhaps not that the flow of exchange take place. Everything depends on the ability of the agents involved to capture and annex this trade and to annex it to the production of identities. Where the capture and domestication of exchange is problematic, lack of access to it may lead to a specific economy: *the economy of unsatisfied desires*. This is the case in contexts where because of the burden of scarcity and shortages, the appropriation of trade can take place only through pillage, violent, criminal appropriation, or in a phantasmatic manner. In the latter case, the object of desire can only be an imaginary object. In contemporary reality, it is this lack that burdens the phallic image the African subject was accustomed to have of himself.⁷² Moreover, it is primarily this lack that constitutes the same subject as subject to death. The

existence of this hole authorizes us to interpret the current crisis in terms of a crisis of the phallus, or, to use Lacan's terminology, the obscuring and reduction of the phallus to the status of a 'part-object'.⁷³

The second system of exchange that fertilizes this imagination is constituted by a set of concrete practices whose combination outlines a specific aesthetic figure: *the aesthetics of predation and hoarding*. The concrete practices of plundering, exactions, the various forms of mercenary activity, and the differing registers of falsification are based on an economy that mobilizes passions such as greed, envy, jealousy, egoism, and the thirst for conquest. It is useless to qualify these passions as vices or to examine them solely from the legal-moral point of view. They constitute the lower depths of an unprecedented culture of freedom as a mode of domination. To be free is to be able to dominate others.⁷⁴ This domination consists in taking, in appropriating, and profiting from, in a logic in which the course of life is assimilated to a game of chance, and in which the temporal horizon is dominated by the present.⁷⁵ The freedom to infringe on others and on what belongs to them is not solely a matter of the constitution of a certain relationship of force. It also has to do with an art of living and an aesthetics.⁷⁶ Finally, there is everything that concerns the *rituals of extraversion*.⁷⁷ These rituals are rooted in a series of institutional, financial, and even symbolic apparatuses whose function is to propagate, within local societies, the main signifiers of international society.⁷⁸ As apparatuses of subjection, their goal is to discipline the natives and to socialize them in a new art of living in relation to the world. Thus, for example, the notion of "development" made it possible, until recently, to guarantee the regulation of unsatisfied desires. Others have appeared on the scene: democracy, good governance, the reduction of poverty, conflict resolution, etc... In the general mechanics of capturing the flows of global exchange, rituals of extraversion consist in *miming* these signifiers, in distorting them, in depriving them of force, to the point that they lose their initial meaning.

Let us conclude. There is no African identity that could be designated by a single term, or that could be named by a single word; or that could be subsumed under a single category. African identity exists only as a substance. It is constituted, in varying forms, through a series of practices, notably practices of power and practices of the self, what Michel Foucault called the games of truth. Neither the forms of this identity nor its idioms are always self-identical. And these forms and idioms are mobile, reversible, and unstable. Given this, they cannot be reduced to a purely biological order based on blood, race, or geography. Nor can they be reduced to custom, to the extent that the latter is constantly being reinvented.

As for the project of re-enchanting tradition, it raises eminently philosophical questions. What link is there between nativist, communitarian movements and the democratic ideal? What role is there for individuals and their autonomy? What relationship between law and violence is implicit here? Finally, if the desire for authenticity, far from disappearing, is currently gaining in strength, it is nonetheless true that new spheres have emerged, most of them connected with globalization. On the one hand, the real boundaries no longer coincide with either official configurations or the cartography inherited from colonization. On the other hand, the disjunction of economic territorialities and political, cultural, and symbolic territorialities is accelerating. The discrepancy and interlacing of a multiplicity of principles and norms are henceforth the rule. As a result, most of the historical action now takes place at the interstices. However, the interstices cannot be occupied without violence.⁷⁹ Thus the old quarrels regarding African identity have become more acute than ever before. But as we have emphasized throughout this study, the meanings assigned to Africa are anything but limpid.

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** *This article is an expanded version of A Mbembe, 'A propos des écritures africaines de soi', Politique africaine, 77, mars 2000, pp. 16-43.*

Endnotes

- ¹ G. Deleuze, *Cinéma 2. L'image-temps*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1985:110.
- ² For an overview, cf. E. Chukwudi Eze, ed., *Postcolonial African Philosophy. A Critical Reader*, London, Blackwell, 1997.
- ³ Here we should note, from the outset, the gap between this rigid discourse on the relationships between culture, politics, and identity, on the one hand, and the actual practices of actors on the ground, as well as the results of research over the past ten years, whether in the domain of anthropology, history, cultural studies, or political philosophy. Basically, this research proceeded to deconstruct these categories and to show how, in the last analysis, their productivity results not only from the contexts and actors that made use of them, but also from their constitutively paradoxical nature. Concerning these various debates, see, among others, B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983); J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994); H.L. Gates, ed., «Race», *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); J.F. Bayart, *L'illusion identitaire* (Paris: Fayard, 1996).
- ⁴ See, for example, P.T. Zeleza, *A Modern Economic History of Africa. Volume I: The Nineteenth Century*, (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1993). Also, the same author's *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1997).
- ⁵ See Mongo Beti, *La France contre l'Afrique* (Paris: La Découverte, 1992).
- ⁶ Whether discussing it under the term «alienation» or that of «deracination», francophone criticism has no doubt best conceptualized this process of «getting out of oneself.» See in particular A. Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1950); C. Hamidou Kane, *L'aventure ambiguë* (Paris: Juilliard, 1961); F. Eboussi Boulaga, *La crise du Muntu* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1977); *id.*, *Christianisme sans fétiche. Révélation et domination* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1981).
- ⁷ This is particularly applicable to English-language studies on Marxist political economy. Sometimes these also rely on nationalist and dependentist theses. For example, see W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981) and the works of authors such as S. Amin, *Le développement inégal. Essai sur les formations sociales du capitalisme périphérique* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1973).
- ⁸ Regarding this falsification and the necessity of «re-establishing the historical truth», see for example the works of the nationalist historians: J. Ki-Zerbo, *Histoire de l'Afrique d'hier à demain* (Paris: Hatier, 1972); C.A. Diop, *Antériorité des civilisations nègres* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1967).
- ⁹ On the problematics of slavery as a «social death», cf. O. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). On «dispersion» seen from the other side of the Atlantic, cf. P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

- ¹⁰ To be sure, attempts have occasionally been made. See, for example, the special issue "Routes et traces des esclaves", *Diogenes*, no. 179 (1997). It remains that in Africa, slavery has hardly been mentioned by theology. On the other hand, apartheid has been the subject of a constant biblical interpretation. See, among others, A. Boesak, *Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation and the Calvinist Tradition* (New York: Orbis, 1984); D. Tutu, *Hope and Suffering* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1984). Colonization has also been the subject of such interpretations: see, for example, O. Bimwenyi, *Discours théologique négro-africain. Problèmes de fondements* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1981); J.M. Éla, *Le cri de l'homme africain* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1980). On the psychiatric aspects of the question, see F. Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: Maspero, 1961) and *Pour la révolution africaine* (Paris: Maspero, 1969), as well as the critique by F. Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).
- ¹¹ This tendency took form in during the last quarter of the century, in a large number of ideological productions issuing from national institutions such as the University of Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania) in the 1960s, and other continental institutions such as the Council for the Development of Research on the Social Sciences in Africa (CODESRIA) and the Third World Forum in Dakar (Senegal), as well as from sub-regional organizations such as the Southern African Political Economy Series (SAPES) in Harare (Zimbabwe).
- ¹² Cf. the remarks on social movements in M. Mamdani and E. Wamba-dia-Wamba, eds., *African Studies in Social Movements and Democracy* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995), and M. Mamdani, ed., *Ugandan Studies in Labour* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1997). See also C. Aké, *The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2000).
- ¹³ One recent example of this production is M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject. Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- ¹⁴ See the criticisms of structural adjustment in T. Mkandawire and A. Olukoshi, eds., *Between Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1995.
- ¹⁵ On the centrality of the body as the ideal unity of the subject, the site of the recognition of his unity, his identity, and his truth, cf. U. Galimberti, *Les raisons du corps*, Paris, Grasset-Mollat, 1998.
- ¹⁶ On this point and everything preceding it, cf. O. Le Cour Grandmaison, *Les citoyennetés en révolution (1789-1794)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992); P. Pluchon, *Nègres et Juifs au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Taillandier, 1984); Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1979), vol. 1; Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations et sur les principaux faits de l'histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à Louis XIV*, in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Imprimerie de la Société littéraire et typographique, 1784-1789), vol. 16; I. Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965).
- ¹⁷ The most fully realized institutional form of this economy of alterity is the system of apartheid, in which the hierarchies are biological in nature. Its minor version is *indirect rule*: a not very onerous form of domination which, in the British colonies, made it possible to exercise authority over natives in a regular way, with few soldiers, but by making use of the natives' passions and customs and by setting them against each other. Cf. L. Mair, *Native Policies in*

- Africa* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1936); Sir F.D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1980).
- ¹⁸ Even when the postulate of equality among human beings is admitted, colonization is sometimes justified in the name of the principle of the expansion of «civilization.» See, among others, A. de Tocqueville, *De la colonie en Algérie* (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 1988). The Romantic counter-offensive achieved no fundamental change in this state of mind.
- ¹⁹ Cf. the essays collected in H.S. Wilson, ed., *Origins of West African Nationalism* (London: Macmillan-St Martin's Press, 1969).
- ²⁰ Cf., for example, Condorcet, "Réflexions sur l'esclavage des nègres" (1778), in *Oeuvres* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1847-1849), 7: 79.
- ²¹ See E.W. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967). Also see the same author's *Liberia's Offering* (New York, 1962).
- ²² Cf., for example, J. Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1938).
- ²³ See, for instance, the texts collected in A. de Bragança, I. Wallerstein, *The African Liberation Reader* (London: Zed Press, 1982), 3 vols.
- ²⁴ N. Azikiwe, *Renascent Africa* (Accra, 1937; new ed., London: Cass, 1969); K. Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom* (London: Heinemann, 1961).
- ²⁵ This has been constantly denied by the postcolonial African novel. See A. Kourouma's recent, *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1998).
- ²⁶ This is something that the vernacular language fully recognizes, but that the Marxist lexicon nevertheless prevents one from naming as such. See, for an example, E. Wamba-dia-Wamba, "Mobutisme après Mobutu: Réflexions sur la situation actuelle en République Démocratique du Congo", *Bulletin du CODESRIA*, nos. 3-4 (1998): 27-34.
- ²⁷ Cf. I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. V. Lyle Dowdell (Chicago: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1978).
- ²⁸ See P. Guiral, E. Temime, ed., *L'idée de race dans la pensée politique française contemporaine* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1977).
- ²⁹ Cf. the importance of this theme in F. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1952). See also A. Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1950); and, more generally, L. S. Senghor's poetry.
- ³⁰ On this, see the last pages of F. Fanon, *Peau noire, masque blancs* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1952).
- ³¹ This is L.S. Senghor's thesis in "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century", in P. Williams and L. Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory. A Reader* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), pp. 27-35.
- ³² This should be compared with the problematics of race in the United States, as discussed in C. W. Mills, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), and L. R. Gordon, ed., *Existence in Black. An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

- ³³ Cf. K. A. Appiah's criticism of texts by Alexander Crummel and W.E. Dubois in *In My Father's House. Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, London: Methuen, 1992, chaps. 1-2. See also Appiah's 'Racism and Moral Pollution', *Philosophical Forum* 18 (1986-87): 185-202.
- ³⁴ L.S. Senghor, *Liberté I: négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964); also the same author's *Liberté III: négritude et civilisation de l'universel* (Paris: Seuil, 1977).
- ³⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *Reason in History: A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Robert S. Hartman (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953).
- ³⁶ See in particular, in the francophone world, the works of C.A. Diop, and in the anglophone world, the theses on Afro-centricity put forward in Molefi Asante, *Afrocentricity* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1988).
- ³⁷ See, among others, T.Obenga, *L'Afrique dans l'antiquité*, Paris: Présence africaine, 1973.
- ³⁸ Paradoxically, we find the same impulse and the same desire to conflate race with geography in the racist writings of white colonists in South Africa. For details, see J. M. Coetzee, *White Writing. On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), especially the chapters on S. G. Millin, P. Smith, and C. M. van den Heever.
- ³⁹ They must "return to the land of [their] fathers ... and be at peace", as Blyden puts it in his *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, p. 124.
- ⁴⁰ Africa as a racial mythology is also found in the works of W.E.B. Dubois as well as in those of C. A. Diop and even Wole Soyinka. See the latter's *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
- ⁴¹ J. Miller, *Way of Death. Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade (1730-1830)* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).
- ⁴² V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988); and the same author's *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).
- ⁴³ K. A. Appiah, *In My Father's House. Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (London: Methuen, 1992), pp. 284 ff. In a later study, Appiah denounces the narrowness of nationalist positions, emphasizes the possibility of double ancestry, and affiliates himself with a liberal cosmopolitanism. See K. A. Appiah, «Cosmopolitan Patriots», *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 617-639.
- ⁴⁴ See K. Barber, ed., *Readings in African Popular Culture* (London: James Currey, 1997).
- ⁴⁵ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 108, 113.
- ⁴⁶ See A. Krog, *Country of MySkull* (Johannesburg: Random House, 1998).
- ⁴⁷ On Jewish memory, see, among other studies, D. LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); J. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982); as well as J. Boyarin, ed., *Remapping Memory. The Politics of TimeSpace* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 137-160.
- ⁴⁸ Cf. R. Shaw, «The Production of Witchcraft / Witchcraft as Production: Memory, Modernity, and the Slave Trade in Sierra Leone», *American Ethnologist* 24, 1997:856-876.

- ⁴⁹ See T. A. Singleton, «The Slave Trade Remembered on the Former Gold and Slave Coasts», *Slavery and Abolition* 20, 1999:150-169; E. Bruner, Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora», *American Anthropologist* 98, 1996:290-304.
- ⁵⁰ On the status of these categories in general and their role in Jewish consciousness in particular, cf. D. LaCapra, 1999, «Trauma, Absence, Loss», *Critical Inquiry* 25, pp.696-727.
- ⁵¹ On these questions, cf. D. Maragnes, «L'identité et le désastre. Origine et fondation», *Portulan* no. 98 (n. d.), a special issue devoted to «Mémoire juive, mémoire nègre. Deux figures du destin».
- ⁵² P. Gilroy, «Between Camps: Race and Culture in Postmodernity. An Inaugural Lecture», *Economy and Society* 28, 1999:183-197.
- ⁵³ See T. Morrison, *Beloved*, London, Picador, 1988.
- ⁵⁴ On these questions, see the works of P. Gilroy, S. Hall, and C. West. See Hall, «What is this 'black' in black popular culture?», in G. Dent, ed., *Black Popular Culture*, Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1992.
- ⁵⁵ Cf., for example, I. Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, London, Blake, 1997; E. de Kock, *A Long Night's Damage: Working for the Apartheid State*, Saxonwold, Contra, 1998; A. Krog, *Country of My Skull*, Johannesburg, Random House, 1998; also, on the experience of blacks in Kenya described in F. Marciano's novel *Rules of the Wild*, New York, Pantheon, 1998.
- ⁵⁶ See R. G. Gregory, *South Asians in East Africa. An Economic and Social History, 1890-1980*, Boulder, CO., Westview Press, 1993. See also M. Yap and D.L. Mang, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions. The History of the Chinese in South Africa, Hong Kong*, Hong Kong University Press, 1996.
- ⁵⁷ See «Africanité du Maghreb», *Africultures*, no 13, 1998.
- ⁵⁸ See P.J. Williams, *The Rooster's Egg*, Cambridge, MA, 1995.
- ⁵⁹ Cf. L. Sansone, «The New Blacks From Bahia: Local and Global in Afro-Bahia», *Identities*, 3-4, 1997:457-493.
- ⁶⁰ On these debates, see the studies by K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*, Gainesville, FL, University of Florida Press, 1997; P. Hountondji, ed., *Les savoirs endogènes*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1994; K. Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*, Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996; The Studies by C.A. Diop and T. Obenga on ancient Egypt and black Africa; and those by Molefi K. Asante on Afrocentricity.
- ⁶¹ On the politics of heritage, cf. K. Ward and N. Worden, «Commemorating, Suppressing, and Invoking Slavery», in S. Nuttal and C. Coetzee, eds., *Negotiating the Past. The Making of Memory in South Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998:201-220.
- ⁶² See L. Martinez, *La guerre civile en Algérie*, Paris: Karthala, 1998; P. Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest. War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone*, Oxford, James Currey, 1996; R. Bazenguissa-Ganga, «Milices politiques et bandes armées à Brazzaville», *Les Cahiers du CERI*, no. 13, 1996.
- ⁶³ A dimension that we also encounter in autochthonous practices, and that monotheistic religions have only accentuated. On autochthonous practices, see R. Law, «Human Sacrifice in Pre-Colonial West Africa», *African Affairs*, no. 34, 1985:53-87; H. Memel-Foté, «La fête de l'homme riche dans le Golfe de Guinée au temps de l'esclavage, XVIIe-XIXe siècles», *Cahiers*

- d'études africaines*, no. 131, 1993:363-379. More generally, see J. Milbank, «Stories of Sacrifice: From Wellhausen to Girard», *Theory, Culture, and Society*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1995:15-46.
- ⁶⁴ G. Bataille, *La part maudite, précédé de La notion de dépense*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1967.
- ⁶⁵ The condition of being a victim and the sacrificial ideology occupy a central place in both nativist trends of thought and those that claim to be radical. To a large extent, the Rwandan genocide and the wars in Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Sudan, Uganda, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have their intellectual cultural sources in both these trends of thought. These conflicts mobilize the three forms taken by all historical action, which we also find in nativist narratives as well as in the «radical» *imaginaire*: the enemy, the tormentor, and the victim.
- ⁶⁶ On these aspects, see A. Testart, «La mise en gage des personnes. Sociologie comparative d'une institution», *Archives européennes de sociologie* 38, 1997:38-67.
- ⁶⁷ Cf. O. Vallée, «La dette publique est-elle privée?» *Politique africaine*, no. 73, 1999:50-67; B. Hibou, ed., *La privatisation des États*, Paris, Karthala, 1999.
- ⁶⁸ See, for example, M. Zeghal, «L'État et marché des biens religieux. Les voies égyptienne et tunisienne», *Critique internationale*, no. 5, 1999: 75-95.
- ⁶⁹ Cf. R. Devisch, «'Pillaging Jesus': Healing Churches and the Villagisation of Kinshasha», *Africa* 66, 1996: 555-629.
- ⁷⁰ See J. L. Gootaers, ed., «Mort et maladie au Zaïre», *Cahiers africains*, nos. 31-32, 1998.
- ⁷¹ Cf. A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- ⁷² Cf. A. Mbembe, *Provisional Notes on the Postcolony*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000.
- ⁷³ On the forms of subjectivity arising from the resulting castration complex, see A. Ashforth, «Weighing Manhood in Soweto», *CODESRIA Bulletin*, nos. 3-4 (1999). Also, the same author's «Masculinities in Southern Africa», *Journal of Southern Africa Studies* 24 (1999): 17-28.
- ⁷⁴ Cf. the examples reported by E. de Latour, «Les ghettomen: les gangs de rue à Abidjan et San Pedro», *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, no. 129, 1999: 68-84.
- ⁷⁵ See J. and J. Comaroff, «Alien-Nation: Zombies, Immigrants, and Millennial Capitalism», *CODESRIA Bulletin*, nos. 3-4, 1999:17-28.
- ⁷⁶ Cf. L. Wacquant on the North American ghetto, «The Social Art of the Hustler in the Black American Ghetto», *Theory, Culture, and Society* 15, 2, 1998:1-36.
- ⁷⁷ On the concept, see J. F. Bayart, «L'Afrique dans le monde: une histoire d'extraversion», *Critique internationale*, no. 5, 1999:97-120.
- ⁷⁸ Cf. B. Hibou, «Économie politique du discours de la Banque mondiale en Afrique: du catéchisme économique au fait (et méfait) missionnaire», *Les Études du CERI* 39, 1998.
- ⁷⁹ A. Mbembe, «At the Edge of the World: Boundaries, Territoriality, and Sovereignty in Africa», *Public Culture* 12, no. 1, 2000.