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The Robbers by F. Schiller. Study of the Postcolonial in the Light of 18th Century German Romanticism

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"The old world is dying, the new world is slow to appear; now is the time of monsters."

Antonio Gramsci

There was corruption, favouritism and dissipation of all kinds, there was homosexuality and prostitution, there was even illicit alcohol obtained by distilling potatoes. Positions of trust were given only to common criminals, especially gangsters and murderers, who formed an aristocracy. All the unpleasant jobs were done by the criminals..."

George Orwell

ABSTRACT: This article is an attempt to understand the African postcolonial cultural situation from the German romanticism of the 18th century. Through a study of the Schillerian critique of the cynicism of modern western bourgeois society, the article concludes the African postcolonial moment characterized by violence and vulgarity corresponds to the cultural logic of postmodern capitalism in the periphery societies. Instead of neoliberal aesthetic obscenity, the article proposes a new romanticism more attached to human's aspirations for justice, equality and beauty.

Keywords: - Capitalism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, Robber, Romanticism

I. INTRODUCTION

German playwright and poet F. von Schiller (1759-1805) made his literary debut in 1782 with *The Robbers*. This historical drama explores the themes of cynicism, venality and villainy. As a counterpoint to the darkness of the human soul, the play highlights the sublime virtues of innocence, loyalty and candor, which are eternally self-sufficient. These virtues face little of the caprices of the objective world. The characters in the play are tormented and torn. Resolved from a pessimistic angle, the relationship to historical objectivity distances Schiller's drama from mere psychologism. This gives it the special tone of a revolt of wild nature against the civilization, society and classical culture of the *Aufklärung*. It is the revolt of feeling against reason, its laws, rules, institutions, and the corseted morality. With the cry of the heart that sounds the awakening of childhood, F. Schiller's *The Robbers*, in the wake of J.W. Goethe's *Sturm und Drang*¹, lays the foundations of German Romanticism in the 18th and 19th centuries. After the Hegelian winter of reason subsuming the self and the world under the law of the concept, passion claimed its rights. Nietzsche's Dionysism ([1994]), Artaud's aesthetics of cruelty ([1964]) and various forms of primitivist destruction of classical art (Gauthier, 2002)² led to the formation of a 'postmodern' aesthetic movement in the middle of the 20th century (Jameson, [1991]). In Africa and the rest of what was considered as the peripheral world, hostility to the Enlightenment was accompanied by the cult of vulgarity, marginality and commodity in art. Under the label of 'postcolonialism', African art now exalts the marginal figure of the robber (Bidima, [1993, 1995]). It is therefore a question of questioning the aesthetic springs and the cultural purpose of this new affection for crime in African art. Indeed, by what means does the postcolonial scoundrel relate to the robber of German Romanticism two centuries ago? In the background of this questioning lies definitely a reflection on the essence of our late modernity when it obeys the conditions of the new global economy.

II. THE SCHILLERIAN ROBBER AND THE REVOLT OF ROMANTICISM

¹ Literally "Storm and Envy", the *Sturm und Drang* is a literary movement created in Germany around 1770 as a reaction to classical rationalism. Goethe, Schiller, Lenz, Klinger, Herder are the main figures.

² Symbolism, Dadaism, Cubism and Surrealism are all part of this revolt against rationalism in the last century.

In Schiller's *The Robbers*, the plot follows three main lines: the satire of culture, the celebration of nature through the exaltation of crime, the fatalism of Fate. The notion of the emptiness of the will cuts across these main lines.

1.1. The satire of civilisation

Schillerian drama opens with the unsuspected betrayal of a man towards his brother. Franz succeeds in disinheriting his brother at the cost of a thousand betrayals, intimidations and lies. Karl embodies the perfect man, the consummate romantic ideal: sublimity of feeling, excellence of passion, impetuosity of love, frankness of heart. These virtues, cherished by the old Moor, the father, trigger Franz's fury on the contrary. He barely conceals his bitterness:

The ardent spirit which burns in this child, you said unceasingly, which makes him so sensitive to all the attractions of grandeur and beauty ; this frankness, which in his eyes shows his soul, this gentleness which draws tears of compassion from him at the sight of the slightest suffering, this virile courage which drives him to climb hundred-year-old oaks, to leap ditches, palisades and torrents, this childish pride, this invincible obstinacy, all these beautiful and brilliant virtues which germinated in this darling of his father's, will make of him a friend dear to the friend, a perfect citizen, a hero, a great, ah! a great man. (Schiller, [1998: 12]).

From the above, Franz's jealousy places him at the other end of the moral spectrum. He confesses to being the cold man, the man of wood, the man of calculation, the dry fruit of which Old Moor said with disdain that it would rot and fertile no earth, from which no flower would sprout. He embodies the misery of the abstract rationalism of the disembodied life. Quite the opposite of 'the glory of that universal spirit, [Karl], who will fly from one pole to the other' of the world (Schiller, [1998: 14]). Franz's deceit is apparent when he maliciously points out the risk of this nature-fuelled license of the heart turning to vice and corruption. The felon lays the foundation for his plot:

See now, Father! This ardent spirit has blossomed, it has grown, it has borne superb fruit. See this frankness, how nicely it has turned into insolence, see this gentleness, how tenderly it coos before the cocottes, how sensitive it shows itself to the attractions of the low-class Venus! (Schiller, [1998: 12-13])

Franz, the rational mind, denounces the perversion of Karl, the natural enthusiast. He arouses the father's anger against this other son who has become unworthy, since he is subject to the tyranny of the passions: 'Well, then ... what if you got rid of this son?' (Schiller, [1998: 14]). In order to force the decision, he draws on the register of biblical allusion by asserting that, 'If your eye is an occasion of sin for you, pluck it out' (Schiller, [1998: 15]). Finally, he uses cynicism by turning Karl into the father's executioner:

See with what childlike tenderness your beloved child treats you. Your fatherly favour pushes him to slit your throat, your love to murder you, he has corrupted your fatherly heart to better get rid of you. When you are no more, he will be master of your property and king of his impulses. The dam breaks: the torrent of his debaucheries will only overflow more freely (Schiller, [1998: 15]).

The Schillerian argumentative process is significant. It consists in producing an apparent satire of sentiment in order to better expose the misdeeds of reason, that supreme work of civilization capable of all kinds of twists. By exposing Franz's evil coldness, Schiller is in fact putting civilization and culture on trial. Occasioned by the logic reason, these institutions install in the mind of the most virtuous man vile morals. They turn him into a brute. Old Moor protests against the devious son's conspiracy against his jealous brother: "He is a child without tenderness! Ah, but it's my child, yes! it's my child!" (Schiller, [1998: 16]). He continues to make his noble father's heart speak: 'Write to him that the father's bosom [...], I repeat, do not despair, my son' (Schiller, [1998: 17]). The calm and thoughtful woodsman nevertheless continues his plan of usurpation and assassination. He congratulates himself: 'Bravo, Franz! The little favourite is out... the woods are thinning [...]. Soon grief will have finished off the old man...' (Schiller, [1998: 18]).

It is important to note that, weary of complaining about the defects of body and mind that nature has afflicted him with, compared to the beauties she adorns his brother with, Franz decides to take advantage of her. Strength alone, the enemy of nature and the asset of civilization, can correct this primordial injustice. He enunciates his motto: "Swim who can swim, and sink the clod! [...] Claims, instincts, forces clash and destroy each other. The right belongs to the strongest: the limits of our strength are our only laws' (Schiller, [1998: 18]). When he is asked about conscience, Franz unabashedly replies: 'Perfect scarecrow to chase the sparrows away from the cherry trees!' (Schiller, [1998: 19]). Force must triumph over natural innocence, it must be made straight. Consequently, it is a great misfortune to be a prey in a world of predators, one risks being devoured: 'Poor hare! It is a pitiful role to have to be a hare in this world - but the gracious lord needs hares!' (Schiller, [1998: 19]).

By making Franz dishonorable, Schiller in fact illuminates the deadly nature of social bonds based on reason and law. The perversity of the social order destroys the most sacred bonds of nature, in this case those of

consanguinity. These impose norms that must not be transgressed. Franz, 'the man who fears nothing', finds these norms as ridiculous as they are despicable. To the brother's natural right, the felon retorts: I have heard a lot of talk about a so-called "voice of the blood", a word that could warm the head of a good bourgeois - "He is your brother!" - translate: he was baked in the same oven as you - "he must be sacred to you!" "You will note the confusion of the reasoning, the grotesque logic that deduces from the kinship of bodies the harmony of minds; from a common homeland a common feeling; from the same food the same inclinations" (Schiller, [1998: 19-20]).

Against the sacred right of the father, he replies:

They say: "He is your father! He gave you life, you are his flesh, and his blood - it must be sacred to you. Another beautiful sophism! I will only allow myself one question: why did he make me? Surely not out of love for me, who was not yet an *I*? Where is the sacred in that? Perhaps in the very act that gave birth to me? As if it were anything other than a bestial process to satisfy bestial appetites? ...] It is nothing but a hard necessity, which one would gladly do without if it did not cost flesh and blood [and which does not oblige one to be gentle] (Schiller, [1998: 20]).

By transforming the filial bond into a mere "bestial process", Franz exposes his cynical vision of life based on force and domination. He exclaims:

So let's get going! Let's put our hearts into our work! I want to root out everything that stands in my way and prevents me from being the master. The master is what I must be - so that I may extort by force that for which I have lacked the simple gift of being loved (Schiller, [1998:20]).

Such is the brutal world of modernity. How can we ward off this nihilism? Through the ethical violence of passion, answers nihilism.

1.2. The society of robbers and the exaltation of crime

A reversed double of the dishonorable Franz, Karl the enthusiast, a concentrate of sublime virtues, a paragon of natural virtue and right conscience, nevertheless becomes a scoundrel. As the leader of a gang of murderers, looters and criminals, he justifies his passage to crime by the need to restore the rights of beautiful and virtuous nature. He violates social laws in order to recreate primitive innocence. He thus becomes a bloodthirsty outlaw, a sort of modern RobinHood³.

Karl locates the source of his murderous existence in his hatred of the superficiality of classical life. He laments: 'Disgust takes hold of me from our scribbling century when I read in my Plutarch the lives of illustrious men' (Schiller, [1998: 21]). Prisoners of conventions and rules, busy imitating the Ancients, the writers of his time express nothing luminous or noble. His disdain is obvious: 'Peuh! The plague be on this century, exhausted of castrati, just good at rehashing the exploits of past times, at flaying the ancient heroes with gloses, at smearing them with tragedies. The strength of his loins is exhausted' (Schiller, [1998: 22]). Distressed by so much baseness, Karl hardly conceals his despair: 'Today, it is the brewer's yeast that must help perpetuate the human race [...]. Look at them confining healthy nature to bland conventions...' (Schiller, [1998: 22]). Karl wants to break free from this bland conventionalism. He stands up against the rules: 'No, I don't want to think about it. I want to corset my body and make laws the corset of my will! [...]. The law has formed no great man, when freedom gives birth to colossi and prodigies' (Schiller, [1998: 22-23])⁴. In a revolt against classical culture, Karl dreams of a Republic of killers 'next to which Rome and Sparta will have been convents of nuns' (Schiller, [1998: 23]).

The passionate, sensitive and affectionate man becomes, in turn, a man of iron. Strength and confrontation now speak in him. One of the future bandits enthuses: "What a sun is rising in me! Great ideas arise in my soul! Giant plans are bubbling up in my creative skull" (Schiller, [1998: 27]). Breaking away from the institutions forged by classical culture, the rascals return to the bush and form a gang of brigands: 'Come! We're going to settle in the Bohemian forests and form a band of robbers' (Schiller, [1998: 31]). As scoundrels, they will be the most honourable of men and will win eternity. They set themselves the glorious task of 'relieving the shoulders of rich scoundrels of a third of their cares, [of] recreating the balance of goods, in a word bringing back the Golden Age...' (Schiller, [1998: 33]).

This is a Romanticist twist to J.-J. Rousseau as the return to the primitive goodness and natural equality is broken by the process of civilization. On the other hand, unlike Rousseau, who associates natural goodness

³ F. Schiller's genius shines again in his use of paradox. If Karl is a robber, his perversion is restorative, restoring the primordial unity of life. In contrast to Franz, for whom it introduces a deliberately iniquitous order. Thus, two types of violence confront each other.

⁴ F. Schiller speaks of classicism as that era in which "[artists] barricade themselves in the viscera of a tyrant, flatter the moods of his stomach and get stuck in his farts..." (Schiller, [1998: 23]).

with the general will, this return comes at a terrible price for Schiller: '[...] Every time you eat a roast, you have this flattering thought in your mind: this roast, you have earned it by your gun, your lion's courage, your sleepless nights...' (Schiller, [1998: 33]). Some of the Romantics see themselves primarily as vandals, bandits with the task of murdering classicism. Rational civilization is their target. They proclaim their bandit-like existence: 'New Orpheus, you have put to sleep this howling beast that is my conscience. Take me as I am' (Razmann). They see themselves as prostitutes: 'Without comma [my] head is a vast auction: pietists, charlatans, glosses and knaves. I belong to the highest bidder' (Grimm). They belong to the world of evil and hell: (Spiegelberg) (Schiller, [1998: 34-35]). This is their law: 'You, gentle lamb, become a wild tiger! Let every nerve of mine be strained for wrath and for ruin' (Schiller, [1998: 36]). Another is: 'It is better to live as a brigand than to rot on bread and water in a pit' (Schiller, [1998: 36]).

Karl Moor swears: '*Robbers and murderers...* On my soul, I am your captain! "⁵(Schiller, 1998: 38). (Schiller, 1998: 38). Unbound by all ties and attachments, he solemnly announces his terrible program of death: 'I have no father, I have no love, blood and death will teach me to forget that something once could be dear to me! ...] And blessed be the champion who among you will commit the most savage fires, the most atrocious murders...' (Schiller, [1998: 38]).

The ruin of nature's morality drove Franz to the worst plans, such as slandering his brother and murdering his father; he had to obtain by cunning and force what natural law denied him (Schiller, [1998: 64])⁶. Conversely, it is the ruin of classical morality infiltrating the very heart of modernity that determines Karl to become the leader of a sect of scoundrels. Conducted in the name of freedom, the bloody epic of this association of criminals speaks for itself: robbery, looting, burning of churches, rape of nuns, strangulation of bankers, disemboweling of women in childbirth and pregnant women, murder of babies thrown into the fire, attacks on hospitals with massacres of old and sick people, sacking of cities, etc. These are honourable crimes, because they are not the only ones. These are honourable crimes, because Karl sees himself as a vigilante. He is the purifier of this society sick of its "little officials" of the State and of Heaven⁷. A ruthless murderer, Karl is also a formidable purchaser, he knows how to recruit a scoundrel, how to turn an honest man into a scoundrel. The advice of this scoundrel is as follows: after having spotted an honest man, you must rot his body and soul. This means to make him dirty by covering him with mud and dung:

You go on, you take him to the gambling and the girls, you drag him into the fights and other tricks, until energy, strength, money, conscience and reputation are all bankrupted, for, by the way, I must tell you that you will get nowhere if you do not rot his body *and* soul [...] Once the honourable man falls out of the nest, the devil is master of the game. The man] comes to you of his own accord⁸ (Schiller, [1998: 69]).

Thus begins the glorious adventure of crime.

1.3. Nostalgia for lost innocence and the fatalism of Fate

The nostalgia for the lost golden age is intensely expressed by Karl, who assumed he belonged to the race of hyenas and vipers. Indeed, Karl feels surprising remorse at the horror of some of the crimes committed by his companions: 'Oh, shame, that this murder of a child! This murder of a woman! This murder of a sick man! This crime overwhelms me! It poisons my most beautiful works...' (Schiller, 1998: 79). (Schiller, 1998: 79). The honourability of the crime imposes limits on its perpetration. There is a glimmer of light in the bandit's conscience. Overcome by depression, he sees how the misery of his life contrasts with the beauty of the world. He sinks into self-hatred and guilt: 'And I am so hateful in this world... I am a monster in this beautiful land' (Schiller, 1998: 79). In the end, crime seems to him a painful prison, an unbearable bondage. Karl mourns his lost innocence:

My innocence! My innocence! [...] Why am I the only one who finds hell in the joys of heaven? Everything is so happy, so fraternally united by the spirit of peace! [...] I alone am hated, I alone am excluded from the race of the Pure [...]. Surrounded by murderers [...], surrounded by hissing serpents [...], chained to vice by iron chains [...], wavering on the edge of my perdition, supported only by the frail reed of vice. (Schiller, [1998: 97-98])

Karl misses the lost time of his childhood when life was full of tenderness, friendship, love and peace. Life was full of joy, harmony and happiness: 'Oh, days of peace! My father's castle... Green valleys of my

⁵ Underlined by the author.

⁶ Franz gives Amalia a clear warning: "Franz speaks, and if he is not answered, then... he will command! [...] I will drag you by the hair to the chapel, with a sword in my hand, I will wrest the marriage oath from you, I will force my way into your virgin bed, and I will overcome your proud modesty with an even greater pride' (Schiller, [1998: 93]).

⁷ The charge against the Church is particularly virulent: 'Curse you, Pharisees, forgers, apes of the godhead! [...] I am not a thief who makes a pact with sleep and the deep night, and shows himself to be a great man and a great lord from the scaffold' (Schiller, [1998: 85-86])

⁸ Underlined by the author.

dreams! O heavenly scenes of my childhood [...] It is over, it is over, it will not come back' (Schiller, [1998: 98]). On his way to his native land to take revenge on Franz, he is ecstatic about the sky, the sun, the hills, the rivers, the forests. He thinks he is reborn: 'The golden May of childhood lives again in my miserable soul' (Schiller, [1998: 107]). His mind fills with tenderness as he thinks of Amelia and Old Moor. For a brief moment, the brigand becomes a virtuous man again. Will he push the conversion to the end of its process? The implacable answer comes from the loving mouth of Amélia, that paragon of love and fidelity: 'Everything that lives is made to die in sorrow. All that interests us, all that we acquire, we lose in pain' (Schiller, [1998: 109]). Karl cannot give up his life as a robber. Nothing will save him from perdition, not even Amelia's infinite love. He cannot turn back. He recognizes himself in the words of the treacherous Franz: 'I am up to my neck in mortal sins: it would be madness to want to swim backwards, when the shore is so far away...' (Schiller, [1998: 111]). Karl resignedly assumes his fate as a villain: he orders the murder, then the capture of Franz, before killing Amalia with his own hand, whose intractable love threatened his renegade fate. This bad conscience had to be suppressed. Karl lacks the courage of freedom framed by good. He is damned for eternity.

A fatalism of fate thus concludes Schiller's *The Robbers*. The work attests to a historical pessimism that does little to dispose the tormented souls of the drama to break out of the 'muddy cycle of the human condition' (Schiller, [1998: 117]). They participate resignedly in the ineluctable course of fate. When Karl discovers Franz's deception, he oscillates between revenge and resignation. When Amalia shows him love despite his corruption, he responds by cowardly murdering the heroine: 'What good is this ideal of unattainable perfection?' (Schiller, [1998: 133]), he laments. He despairs of the meaning of the world and the meaning of his own murderous destiny: 'Yet there is such divine harmony in inanimate nature, why this dissonance in reasonable nature?' (Schiller, [1998: 133]). Karl is at the end of his line.

Two hundred years later, Karl's unresolved rift resounds with astonishing force in African postcolonial theory. This theory traces the space of an anthropological pessimism that consecrates crime as a cardinal fact of African culture.

III. POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND THE AESTHETICS OF MEANNESS

Meanness as a theme appeared in African literary fiction between 1960 and 1970. The conceptualisation of this theme by philosophy and the social sciences takes place in the decade following this aesthetic emergence. In both fiction and theory, Africa is seen in terms of expenditure, excess and predation. In the 'postcolonial' universe, the delinquent becomes the new subject of history.

1.4. Postcolonial brutality

The novelists Y. Ouologuem and A. Kourouma are the first to take up the question of postcolonial brutality presented as an African production *sui generis*.

Y. Ouologuem describes Africa as the shameful land of 'men of nothing' (Ouologuem, [1968: 9]). Violence structures its intimate being, which offers the appalling spectacle of death, rape, lies, lust and cannibalism. A theatre of horror, a procession of assassinations, rivalries and betrayals, Africa is home to 'the bloody adventure of the négraille' (Ouologuem [1968: 9]). Its own experience is that of forced labour, slaves walled up alive, children's throats slit, pregnant women disembowelled, 'raped in full view of everyone by their husbands, who then, crushed by shame, gave themselves up to death' (Ouologuem, [1968: 10]). Africa bears the metaphysical imprint of the nightmare. The Negro king himself is obscenely brutal. By delivering his subjects to the inferno, he takes pleasure in 'displaying his lower parts to the public as at the birth of Adam' (Ouologuem, [1968: 15]). As for the dismayed and fanatical African people, they testify with 'eloquence to their imbecile vocation' (Ouologuem, [1968: 11]).

A singular aspect of postcolonial Africa has to do with time. In the postcolonial regime, time is dislocated and responds to the principle of reversibility, if not disorder and incoherence. Linear time dissolves in favour of sometimes circular, sometimes spiral configurations. Very often, these configurations are entangled. The chaotic nature of postcolonial time is a sign of its instability. This instability gives rise to a reluctance, but also a confusion, by which the boundaries between the before, the now and the after⁹ are pulverized. In addition to being indicative of the African collapse, the confusion of postcolonial time acts as an equalizer of historical slices. Pre-colonial, colonial and independence times are mixed together and overlap to the point of levelling out. They obey the principle of the 'dissolute life, a life of turmoil, of crossbreeding in profusion, of concussions, of blatant vices' formed by the African society that emerged in Africa after colonization. (Ouologuem, [1968: 24]).

A distinctive feature of the African postcolonial regime is its lack of nostalgia for a golden age of Africa that would be situated in the precolonial period. In contrast, Y. Ouologuem praises the 'constructive sides of European colonization' (Ouologuem, [1968: 23]) of Africa. For him, this beneficial enterprise of civilization was interrupted by African independence, a real trial of misfortune and the assumption of bestiality. Full of

⁹ See A. Mbembe (2013)

remorse and regret, the postcolonial novelist castigates African modernity in its main modality, which is national independence. Through its bullying and cruelties, which are superior to those of colonialism, national independence consecrates the African disaster: 'That is why the night continues, whiter than the face of the day' (Ouologuem, [1968: 36]).

The belittling of national independence continues through the novelistic prose of A. Kourouma. This other figure of postcolonial writing doubles the theme of congenital Negro violence with the theme of the obscene and the grotesque as ontological marks of independent Africa. The idea of a cruel African modernity is rooted in the nostalgic narrative of an African nobility spared by colonization, but crushed by the new independent African power: 'Colonization banished and killed war but favoured trade, Independence broke trade and war did not come. Also, the Malinke species, the tribes, the land, civilization are dying...' (Kourouma, [1970: 21]). (Kourouma, [1970: 21]). Initially a radiant time of freedom and equality, African independence had turned into a disaster. This is why 'Fama would have chosen colonization, despite the fact that the French had robbed him...' (Kourouma, [1970: 21]). The end of colonialism - that is, independence - ushered in the era of disasters.

And since 'Independence [had] betrayed' (Kourouma, [1970: 25]), modern Negroes were nothing but 'degenerate bastards' (Kourouma, 1970: 18), 'dog bastards' (Kourouma, [1970: 26]). African unity, development, progress and socialism were slogans as sterile as Salimata, the 'woman without a hole' (Kourouma, [1970: 41]) who was unable to give birth, the embodiment of Africa's failure to produce beauty and happiness. Roads, electricity and telephones were living witnesses to the progress of colonialism, and had disappeared with national sovereignty. Modern, independent Africa resembled a cannibalistic beast that devours its own offspring. The suicide of Fama, the central character of the novel *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, symbolizes the death of this unfit, cruel and dirty Africa.

In *Waiting for the Wild Beasts to Vote*, Negro violence shines through in political tyrannies and their train of murder, theft, waste, megalomania, lust and mysticism. The African tyrant is 'cruel, without humanity or any concession' (Kourouma, [1998: 21]). Without mercy, he liquidates and emasculates his political rivals. His bloody hand spares no one, including his most loyal 'friends' and 'accomplices'. Unpredictable, manipulative and devious, he rules by slaughter. The African tyrant is convinced that 'in life, only treachery and trickery surely win and always pay' (Kourouma, [1998: 103]). His science of tyranny informs him about the baseness of man, the African in particular. The latter is 'a tree of lies and nonsense' (Kourouma, [1998: 145]). Africa itself is a mass of peoples wading in stupidity. A. Kourouma reveals 'liberticidal Africa' (Kourouma, [1998: 183]). On the one hand, it is the Africa of 'hilarious Negroes and Negresses' (Kourouma, [185]), of 'half-naked, hilarious, idiotic Negroes running out of breath in dangerous acrobatic monkey dances' (Kourouma, [1998: 207]). On the other hand, this is the Africa of brutes and cannibals. From his cadaverous body, 'the stench - a mixture of death, infection, urine, excrement - was unbearable' (Kourouma, [1998: 216])¹⁰.

1.5. The game, the mask and the virtuoso

In 1977, F. Eboussi Boulaga published *La Crise du Muntu*. The scoundrels who operated in literary fiction entered the philosophical field. The thinker ensures a dialogue between philosophy, aesthetics and brigandage.

F. Eboussi Boulaga underlines the emptiness of African philosophical discourses that speak of the colonised and neo-colonised African from the master's terrain, i.e. his language, his tools, his institutions, his culture, his religion, his science and his technique. Ignorance of the spatio-temporal circumstances of the emergence of the discourses is a sign of radical inauthenticity. These discourses are either pure rhetoric (ethnophilosophy and negritude locked in their myth of paradise lost) or slavish, distorting and dehumanising mimicry (dialectical philosophies of African emancipation through the industrial mastery of the world). Because he speaks, acts and feels from places of thought other than his own, the Muntu wears a mask, he plays a role: he is the virtuoso of submission to the world of the master with its cold techno-economic rationality, its state and its ideas of progress, development, revolution, classless society, etc.

The Muntu must overcome this 'crisis' between the self and the other. This implies breaking out of the alienation that condemns it to a tearing between nostalgia for the past (tradition) and slavery to the present (modernity). In order to find himself, to be, speak and do by and for himself, the Muntu must first conduct 'the autopsy of decolonisation' (Eboussi, [1977: 167]). This autopsy presupposes a 'displacement', in other words the establishment of new rules of the 'game', a change of 'position' in the order of discourse and doing¹¹. From now on, the Muntu must speak from his own *place*, that is to say, from his concrete experience, from his daily historical experience, on which his vision of the world and his relationship to things depend. The Muntu

¹⁰ Novelists such as A. Mbanckou (2006) continue this 'postcolonial' tradition of obscene and grotesque writing in the service of a pestilential and repulsive Africa.

¹¹ *The Crisis of Muntu* can easily be read as a (first?) African poststructuralist treatise.

expresses himself as a topological subject. The return to the self is a call to particularity, to individuality. It integrates the multiple reality of affectivity and emotion, hitherto stifled by the monolithic order of reason.

As we can see, Eboussi Boulaga's point of departure is aesthetic. His aesthetic vision of the world excludes any transcendent and finalist logic that would be guided by 'universal reason' or 'spirit'. This aestheticism privileges the sensitive, affective and corporeal dimensions of knowledge. It is in this very fact that the act of philosophizing is in essence an act of banditry. The return to the self, the being to the self, the being-self of the Muntu implies a 'transfunctionalisation' of culture and even of philosophy which is stripped of its abstract and methodical attributes. It is brought back, a tribute from the contemporary to the ancient, to a *way of life*.

Transfunctionalising philosophy consists in taking the philosophical struggle to playing fields or battlegrounds other than those defined by the concept. This amounts, for example, to making philosophy play roles other than those assigned to it by the tradition of the 'School' with its grammar of coherence, its stylistics of harmony, its utopia of geometric clarity, its mysticism of revolution, its greedy civil servants of knowledge, in reality specialists of manducation and chrematistics (Eboussi, [1977]). This is clearly an operation of diverting philosophy towards existence. Through this transfunctional and existential diversion, philosophy reconnects with the dimensions of dreams and the imaginary, of poetry and mythology, of fable and metonymy. It rediscovers what G. Deleuze ([1991]) held to be the affective dimension of concepts.

The Muntu is a virtuoso thanks to this operation of misappropriation of meaning, fraud on place, robbery of discourse, illegal poaching of the concept. He is a virtuoso of authenticity and freedom who ironizes the claim of abstraction to signify reality. Muntu explores other sites, notably those of the sensible that were once forbidden, condemned and excluded from the territory of thought. In so doing, it acts as a rebel by leaving the city of ideas to enter the forest of affects. In these maquis places, which are those of the body, of desire, of sex, of interest, he brigands, vandalises and ransacks the edifice of knowledge. In the end, the Muntu imposes 'suspension' (Eboussi, [1977: 231-237]) on miserable, abstract and disembodied metaphysical thought. His little band of brigands triumphs over the civilizing order.

Also, the Muntu enters real life where words are attached to positions and are only meaningful in a particular context. The relativistic Muntu enters the ephemeral life that ignores the solidity of being. He rivets himself to the evanescent life that is stamped with the seal of limitation, finitude and mortality. He enters into the futile life. By *playing* with life in this way, by playing with it, the Muntu becomes an artist. By *laughing* at life, by finding his doubles, by trickery, by transforming and bending its rules, the Muntu, the robber subject par excellence, becomes an artist. This is because he plunges into bodily life, laughter, tears, parties and colours, he dances with life, thereby revealing its shadows and embracing its specters. He is therefore an aesthete of life. His existence is the simulacrum of existence, the parody of life¹².

In this flaccid and playful life tied to a fleeting truth, the consistency of speech depends on the effectiveness of its effects. Being, truth and speech are constantly migrating. As an ironist, the Muntu is constantly migrating. A volatile subject, he is constantly changing geography, location and dwelling. He is an aesthete of space and places. As a fugitive subject, his art is *geo-aesthetic* by analogy with G. Deleuze's "geophilosophy" ([1991])¹³. He evolves in the complex, unstable and reversible space of social relations, which are *ultimately* reduced to games of discourse, to simple verbal performances (Foucault, [1969]). The Muntu is therefore a rhetorician. An ironist and rhetorician, he is ultimately a sophist. A strategist and tactician, he tricks with words and disguises things. He is a magician and pragmatist subject, who always seeks the best position and the best effects of discourse according to the opportunities and gains he makes. The Muntu aestheticizes crime.

1.6. Aesthetics of crime

A disciple of F. Eboussi Boulaga, J.-G. Bidima also places crime at the basis of his aesthetic reflection. He thinks of contemporary African aesthetics according to the marginal categories of postmodernity and develops an interstitial vision of African art that mixes scatology, mobilism and truanderie.

Indeed, J.-G. Bidima rejects 'substantialist' and 'essentialist' approaches to African art. His thesis is that 'any society with several strata also produces *subcultures*'¹⁴ (Bidima, [1997: 19]). However, taking subcultures into account requires '*thinking about the fringe and the interstice*'¹⁵ (Bidima, [1997: 23]). This thinking obeys the 'paradigm of the *complex* [which] pays attention to *mediations, gaps, thresholds and uncertainties*'¹⁶ (Bidima,

¹² The Nietzschean sources of Eboussi Boulaga's philosophy and aesthetics shine through.

¹³ From a less radical perspective, H. Meschonnic develops the concept of 'geopoetics' (2009: 43) to translate the 'radical historicisation of thought' ([2009: 68]), to think of thought as an adventure, a novel and a poem, thought made unbearable to necessarily conformist knowledge, thought reconciled with laughter and comedy ([2009: 70]).

¹⁴ Underlined by J.-G. Bidima.

¹⁵ Underlined by J.-G. Bidima.

¹⁶ Underlined by J.-G. Bidima.

[1997: 23]). African art 'must not only expose meaning, but stutter its uncertainties' (Bidima, [1997: 25]). It must embrace its double '*undecidability*', that of its origin and that of its destination, by interrogating 'the zones of whirl and contact between the various regions and styles' (Bidima, [1997: 37]). From this current comes its deeply hybrid and fringed character.

In sculpture, architecture or painting, this African art denounces its confinement to the official circles of power and its capture by institutional power, for example the normative order of the states. Indeed, what has been called "African art" up to now was the art of the official society, the art of the powerful, of lords, chiefs, kings, nobles and the rich. It was the art of the dominant, the art of the dominant aristocratic society. But this art only spoke the calm language of the victors. It converted its victorious language into the language of the single, universal "reason": the language of balance, harmony and linearity.

On the other hand, an art of complexity and of the fringe would make it imperative to tear away this unitary veil; it would presuppose looking at the side of the defeated in African society. This art would address those in that society who have been crushed, suffocated, expelled from the centre and left out of its triumphal march. Contemporary African art would address the margins and the marginalized of African societies. These sufferers, who have long remained in the minority condition, are the only ones capable of writing and embodying the new itineraries of African art. J.-G. Bidima thus accomplishes in aesthetics the brigand gesture that Eboussi Boulaga initiated in philosophy. He *transfunctionalizes*, sotospeak, African art by making it play games other than those of beauty traced by the well-meaning society. He states:

A society in gestation secretes leaks. It is in the margins that the repressed and the expelled persist and consist. Now, in African art towards a "normal" African society. What has been presented as *African art is the official art of the tribal dignitaries of the self-righteous society*. A society always produces a culture of the fringe, and in these margins the excluded develop strategies of overflow. What was forgotten in the presentation of African art was the art of the marginalized in these African societies. It is the marginal bricolage which, in its poetics, often reformulates and subverts both art and the society it supports¹⁷. (Bidima, [1997])

It is possible to say that, African art from the margins is the art of the excluded. It is the art of those whom normal African society had relegated to the status of waste. The aesthetics of the margins implies a particular attention to both the art created by these social wastes and the art in which these rebuses are represented and play the main role. From this point of view, the aesthetics of the margins is necessarily offbeat, as it reconnects with the counterpoint and the gap, the minority and residual currents of African art, in this case those that articulate creativity, madness, transgressive sexuality and filth. These represent the residue in society and in art. Yet the "*aesthetics of the residual*"¹⁸ is necessarily de-centered, ex-centric, a-normal. Its activity takes place outside the authorized, centralized and sanitized speech of empires and nations. This aesthetic plunges into obscenity and horror and thus reveals the '*excremental dimension*'¹⁹ of African societies.

The postcolonial aesthetic question thus arises: what is the role of excrement in African societies? Who represents and how is this excrement represented? More clearly, this contemporary African aesthetic issue revolves around the irruption of *slaves, foreigners, bandits, criminals, madmen and barbarians* into the aesthetic domain. These social categories represent the brigands of post-colonial African society, alongside homosexuals, children and women. People from below par excellence, they operate by insult, derision and cunning, thus producing a "culture of the margin" made of "bric et broc" which hijacks, bypasses and overflows the official culture²⁰. This marginal culture bears witness to an 'art of resourcefulness' (Bidima, [1997: 104]) whose fleeting underpinnings are a sign of a precarious existence in which the 'suspension of meaning' prevails (Bidima, [1997: 108]). In this respect, the art of the margins is an art of "crossing" that lacks a fixed root and a stable anchor point. It is the art of the wanderers of the present global age.

IV. BEYOND THE AESTHETICS OF CRIME

The postcolonial hagiography of crime is problematic. Its many aesthetic and cultural, philosophical, political and moral impasses make it necessary to reinvent romanticism.

4.1. An avatar of postmodernity

The heroisation of crime is an essential feature of post-modernity conceived from the point of view of the closure of a sequence marked by the great 'discoveries' and the expansion of geography towards territories

¹⁷ Underlined by J.-G. Bidima.

¹⁸ Underlined by J.-G. Bidima.

¹⁹ Underlined by J.-G. Bidima.

²⁰ The influence of the work of J.-F. Bayart ([1983, 1989]), as well as that of Comi Toulabor ([2008]), on the aesthetic analysis of J.-G. Bidima is clearly perceptible, particularly the stakes represented by the revenge of the African 'dominated' by means of the subversion of the official order of the states. His trajectory of analysis is also similar to that of A. Mbembe ([2000, 2008]) on the question of the obscene, the grotesque, abuse and crime in African spaces of production of life, politics, history and art. Finally, the impact of *cultural studies* and *subaltern studies* (Spivak, [2009]) is also evident.

unknown to Europe and humanities situated outside the Western course of history. With the symbolic date of 1492 as its starting point, modernity seems to have come to an end with the globalization of time and space brought about by the plurality of worlds and the diversity of human trajectories. On the philosophical and epistemological levels, postmodernity announces the rejection of a unique conception of knowledge based on the omnipotence of human reason, faith in the continuous progress of science and the infinite perfection of technology. At the ethical and political level, it marks the weakening of the idea of the autonomy of moral conscience, the proclamation that the political subject can no longer be realized in the great mobilizing ideologies of progress, law, freedom or the state.

These 'metanarratives' based on absolutes are declared irrelevant by postmodernity, which substitutes them with the instability, the fragmentary and the chaos of discourses and practices (Lyotard, [1979: 9]). Postmodernity is seen as the 'age of emptiness', understood as a time in which being or thinking is 'weak' (Lipovetsky, [1983]; Vattimo, [1987]). The dissolution of substance in a civilization governed by the image and exchange value removes all density from reality. Since it no longer rests on any stable foundation of reason, subject or matter, it leaves room only for polyvalent interpretations, play and simulacra (Vattimo, [1987]). In this way, an aesthetic conception of truth is developed that is sometimes not devoid of mythology and magic. In the artistic field, the collapse of the avant-garde, the rejection of academicism and the rejection of personal style and novelty in favor of pastiche coincide with the increased control of artistic creation by various networks, channels and authorities (museums, governments, patrons, industrialists, the media, stock exchanges) that tend to obey the blind forces of the market. From an aesthetic point of view, *postmodernism* presents itself as the 'cultural dominant' of an era that subjects art entirely to exchange value and turns culture into a commodity (Jameson, [1991]). Hence a certain cultural tendency towards frivolity, superficiality and repetition. In architecture, for example, the eclecticism and hybridism of the buildings are combined with a high degree of populism, which blurs the old border between elite and mass culture, art and non-art, poetry and prose. Despite the claim of a certain frivolity (Baudelaire, [1999])²¹, modernity fully assumed the serious character of art as a tool for the education of peoples and the civilisation of nations (Schiller, [1992]). Postmodernism breaks this creative tension in art between play and seriousness. It embodies the moment of the irresistible rise of the derisory and the waste in art. This rise becomes the smashing of art, reminiscent of A. Finkelkraut's words, taken up by H. Meschonnic on postmodernism: it is the age of the "demolitionists" (Meschonnic, [2009]). It is to this universe of aesthetic demolition that postcolonialism belongs with its notion of the aesthetics of marginality.

4.2. Postcolonial scoundrels and the neoliberal *ethos*

The postmodern and postcolonial demolition of art remains unintelligible if it is not related to the regime of multinational capitalism itself. Extending F. Jameson's thesis on postmodernism as the 'cultural logic of late capitalism', Nkolo Foé links this logic to the global revival of pragmatism as the official philosophy of globalist elites intent on acquiring a 'global thought of empire' (Nkolo Foé, [2008: 45]). By ruining the stable foundations of knowledge through the primacy of act over thought, by defining truth according to the consequences of discourse, by positing description, belief and justification as the only criteria of truth, postmodern neo-pragmatism is active in rehabilitating the old guiding forms of thought (myth, magic, sorcery). Above all, it maintains that knowledge is a social construction, a language game. After having structurally petrified history, whose stochastic dimension he emphasizes, he deduces the naturalness of the market and posits capitalism as the unsurpassable stage of human progress (Nkolo Foé, [2008: 107]). Now digitalized and governed by luck and chance, globalised capitalism is taken in hand by tricksters, a new breed of 'manipulators of symbols' (Nkolo Foé, [2008: 122-148]). Magicians of discourse and signs, these alchemists of the new imperial order shine through spontaneous and illicit enrichment.

In reality, they belong to the power of 'mediocracy' described by A. Deneault as the system of 'governance'²² and 'management'. Its singularity is the 'craftiness' as a characteristic of average people (Deneault, [2018: 10]). Mediocracy is based on fraud and is the domination of the most cunning individuals and a social system in which 'deception has become a value in itself' (Deneault, [2018: 11]). Its principle is that '*one must play the game*'²³ (Deneault, [2018: 12]). Playing the game' means 'not submitting to anything alien to the law of greed' (Deneault, [2018: 14]). As 'the reign of duplicity and cheating set up as a tacit game in the mind of those who believe themselves to be clever, to the detriment of those whom they relegate to the rank of imbeciles' (2018: 13-14), governance, still called mediocracy, requires the training of perverse individualities acquired to the principle of money-king. The artist himself is subject to the law of finance and commerce. He too is dependent on the anonymous power of the rich, which subjects art to capital. The *mediocratic* artist of the

²¹ C. Baudelaire himself defined modernity as the constantly recreated union of the eternal and the transitory.

²² A. Deneault (2013) refers to 'governance' as the extension of the principles of private business management (transparency, competitiveness, performance, profitability, flexibility) to the whole of society and the state. Governance has another name: 'totalitarian management'.

²³ Underlined by A. Deneault.

postmodern era is only worthwhile as a *manager*, *administrator* and *capitalist* (Deneault, [2018: 160-174]). Concealed under the finery of moderation, mediocracy, A. Deneault warns, mediocracy turns out to be a violent system: 'This regime is in fact harsh and deadly' (Deneault, [2018: 15-16]).

In Africa, south of the Sahara, this violence of the new capitalism of governance takes the form of the generalization of greed and the spirit of lucre. As the neo-liberalization of African societies proceeds, petty and grand fraud, financial banditry and economic crimes are becoming the norm in terms of social organization, production and distribution of wealth. The almost messianic virtue of competition is strongly emphasized. A discourse on the primacy of individual rights and private property over community, social, national and ecological rights develops.

While some people wonder whether Africa might not ultimately refuse development (A. Kabou) and whether a 'cultural adjustment' should not be imposed on it (E. Manguélé), J.-F. Bayart affirms the urgency for Africa to break its ancestral solidarity in order to successfully negotiate its entry into economic modernity (Bayart, [1983]). The rejection of traditional egalitarianism, which is a vector of useless expenditure and even economic waste, calls for a profound change that involves the intensification of the internal exploitation of African populations and the overexploitation of dominated groups by the new administrative and political elites who have embraced liberalism (Bayart, [1989]). A. Mbembe, for his part, declares war on delirious African hedonism and argues for an increase in the mechanisms of productive servitude. This, he stresses, necessarily involves the institutionalization, codification and legalization of social inequalities on the African continent (Mbembe, [2000]). He believes that the existential African question is about the 'moralization of inequalities' (Mbembe, [2013]). In other words, this question lies in the ability of Africans to say who is to be exploited and how to subjugate this group of sacrificed people with sufficiently massive and binding violence. His conviction is that in Africa, as in the West in the past, 'democracy and progress can perhaps be crime' (A. Mbembe, [2000]).

By reviving the themes of exclusion, transgression, exile, vulgarity, waste and refuse, the marginal and the derisory in art, it is probably this crime in the African capitalist regime that is accredited by the African postcolonial aesthetic. The "aesthetics of vulgarity" (Bayart, Mbembe, Toulabor) and the "aesthetics of the margins" (Bidima) thus culturally consecrate the irruption of brigands in the African²⁴ social domain. The shattered nature of postcolonial artworks certainly testifies to the vulgarity of the scoundrels who have attacked institutions, states, morality, reason, tradition and even art to satisfy their insatiable appetite for illegal gain. In the African postcolonial aesthetic, these intemperate and immoderate beings, willingly corrupt and perverse, shine through their irrepressible taste for gold. Genuine pleonexes and perfect timocrats, they embody a contemporary African society plagued by the 'disease of money' (Deneault, [2018: 100]) and governed by the 'greedy economy' (Deneault, [2018: 109]).

4.3. Reinventing romance

The unconditional romanticism of crime is questionable. The brigand is not always a Robin Hood, his acts are sometimes, if not very often, far from the purifying and liberating virtue that postmodern and postcolonial romanticism spontaneously confers on him. It is on the strength of this doubt that F. Hegel and K. Marx based their critique of romanticism in the 19th century on this doubt.

If Hegel saw in Romanticism the extreme point of the modern spirit, he was also concerned with the overflow of the soul which sinks deeply into subjectivity that it frees itself from all objectivity. The soul, madly in search of itself, forgets the world. This contempt for matter makes it an absolute power that generates its own law: the Law of the Heart. As the true content and sole determination, the Law of the Heart is the necessary course of the world. It subdues all positivity, crushing all singularity different from it. The crushing of otherness as objectivity does not therefore respond to any universal determination. The law of the heart appears both as absolute determination and as the absolute absence of determination. It is at the same time empty determination and the emptiness of determination. The infinitely individualized self obeys only its own absolutized interiority. It is ultimately nothing but fanaticism, outpouring and brutality. As the supreme form of art, Romanticism also

²⁴ By invoking the category of 'marginality' to include the madman, the vagrant, the rogue, the slave, the woman, the child and the criminal as new figures of African suffering, J.-G. Bidima extends the Foucauldian gesture of the revenge of subjugated knowledge and social strata crushed by the process of modernisation (Foucault, 1976). In India in particular, the *subaltern studies* movement has taken up this gesture in favour of the 'subaltern' (Mamadou Diouf, 1999). Nevertheless, this approach, which originated on the left and was influenced by A. Gramsci, suffers from three pitfalls. One is that it sets up cultural and gender dynamics as determining dynamics that evolve autonomously from the material conditions and economic infrastructure that, in principle, structure them. The other pitfall of this "cultural materialism" is that it blurs the exact nature of the *fundamental contradiction* operating in the capitalist regime by transforming social struggles over the interests of opposing classes into primarily cultural struggles over lifestyles. A third pitfall is that one is not necessarily a revolutionary just because one is a brigand, a thug, a criminal or a pervert. It is perfectly possible to be a 'subaltern', but to think and act as an agent of the dominant system.

represents the moment of its dislocation, of its death. If art is dead, it is because, detached from any substantial content, it dissolves into frivolity, humour, irony or pure caprice. Society itself threatens to descend into chaos. The Law of the Heart means terror and violence (Hegel, [1964]).

Following Hegel, K. Marx noted that the idealisation of banditry could be an indication of the greatest slavery, in which he saw the supreme form of the victory of bourgeois society. More precisely, K. Marx had the acuity to observe that an industrial sub-proletariat, a "ragged proletariat" made up of downgraded elements, ruffians, beggars, thieves, murderers and perverts of all kinds, had formed on the margins of capitalist society. This Lumpenproletariat formed a residue of rogue individuals of all classes who had established their headquarters in the big cities. K. Marx explained that of all possible allies in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, the lumpenproletariat is the worst. He considered this scum to be absolutely venal and unwelcome. Deprived of an ideological compass, this sub-proletariat sold itself to the highest bidder. This made it possible to understand why it was instrumentalized by the capitalists to break the unity of workers' struggles and to discredit the revolutionary project through its blind exercise of violence. As an underclass composed of mercenaries and opportunists, the lumpenproletariat was absolutely harmful, and constituted the greatest danger for the proletarian project.

Is it not ultimately such a danger that the 'subalterns' and "marginals" of our neoliberal age represent? Are these brigands not the global sub-proletariat of our post-industrial society? These lumpenproletarians of the digital age of finance capitalism advocate itinerancy, vagrancy, uprooting and exile. Following the transnational curve of finance capital, they advocate the abolition of borders and proclaim that they belong to no social class or nation. They lead a fluid and labile existence that leads them to sacrifice to the opportunism of thieves. In fact, they steal from everyone, rich and poor alike, in the name of the ideology of 'resourcefulness' and 'risk'. They claim to speak for the 'subaltern', those whom the capitalist world-system has relegated to the margins, to the periphery. In reality, they urge the dominated, the 'subalterns', to join the new hierarchies. They enjoin them to learn to take advantage of the plundering niches offered by the capitalist system. Here, the apology of crime accompanies the social and economic violence carried by narcissistic individualities who have only themselves as a measure and limit and who are convinced of their destiny as masters and commanders. Ultimately, the postmodern and postcolonial lumpenproletariat is itself an active segment of the global exploitation system. Would it not be legitimate, then, to consider the art produced by these venal, opportunistic, unwelcome and harmful strata, these rogue individuals from all classes of the consumer age, as the most vivid manifestation of triumphant capitalism in Africa and the world?

No doubt we must react to the surge of nihilism. First of all, by redefining romanticism in the sense of a *poetisation of everyday life* according to a different, alternative and radical politics of beauty (Lefebvre, [1962]). This project of a complete aestheticisation of existence cannot succeed without a total transformation of the forms of work and the modes of economic production. K. Marx was convinced of this necessity, which he linked to the suppression of the root of all alienations, private property (Marx, [1996]). Romantising the world means giving back to man the inner powers that industrial labour and the law of profit have deprived him of. These powers include the right to dream, to dance, to sing, to love, to paint, to create works of art, to have leisure time, to play. We find the *taste* saved from the barbarism of profit, the ability to appreciate the world from the perspective of the infinite beauty of objects freed from the injunction of profitability.

Man reconnects with nature; in this return to nature, the very essence of Romanticism, there is a naturalization of man and a humanization of nature. Diamonds are no longer seen merely as precious stones that serve as raw materials for expensive jewelry; they are objects that excite human taste, stir the emotions and fascinate the imagination with their brilliance and strength. We find the ability to *live* freely and fully. This is the ability to create not only works of art, but to *transform human life itself into a work of art*, that is, into something beautiful, excellent, harmonious, noble and majestic.

V. CONCLUSION

F. Von Schiller described the robber in the 18th century as an attack on modern civilization, whose moral cynicism, vice and corruption he decried. He contrasted it with the law of force and nature. The robber ransacked modern works, trampled on its law, destroyed its morals, broke the cold and oppressive balance that flowed under its reason and humanism. Instead, he was erecting the power of feeling and romantic individuality. Like the Schillerian thug, the African postcolonial aesthetic hero is a marginal, he is a rogue and a criminal. The indomitable postcolonial aesthete violently overturns the aesthetic order by exploding the realm of art under the law of the multiple, the fragment, indecency and perversity. On the social level, the postcolonial bully takes on the task of starting African history anew on a basis dictated by crime. The postcolonial aesthetics of the margins appear as the manifestation of the cultural logic of late capitalism in peripheral societies. This logic must be broken by overcoming capitalism, a condition for the rebirth of a romanticism that is no longer at one with vice, that is no longer content with the creation of beautiful works of art, but makes human life itself beautiful and pleasant.

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