

## What We Europeans Talk About When We Talk About Postcolonialism<sup>i</sup>

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Antes que os portugueses descobrissem o Brasil,  
 Os brasileiros tinham descoberto a felicidade.

[Before the Portuguese discovered Brazil,  
 Brazilians had discovered happiness]  
 Oswaldo de Andrade

### Sobre o que nós europeus falamos quando falamos de pós-colonialismo?

**Resumo:** Ensaio de Armando Gnisci sobre o pós-colonialismo.

**Abstract:** Armando Gnisci's essay about postcolonialism.

What with the “Great Migration,” at the turn of the two centuries we belong to, neocapitalist globalization and the 25-state European Union, I think we Europeans are in need of a *language of mental union* suited to the new age. Girolamo Arnaldi, at the end of his interesting book, *L'Italia e i suoi invasori* (“Italy and its invaders,” 2002), wrote: “Is it too much to hope that a new Western Civilization will form in the melting pot of the heretofore relatively pacific invasions of which we have been the disoriented spectators? For the moment, there is nowhere in sight a unifying force as effective as Christianity has been.” This is what I mean by “a language of mental union suited to the new age.” As for its

substance, I think we have to conceive it in terms of an intercultural spirit, the holy one being no longer a viable possibility. I also believe that we Western Europeans know nothing of this spirit. It should start from our mental decolonization, an actual flaying of our selves, as Sartre wrote in 1961, in the Preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. What does it mean? I see it as a great reeducation of our minds on the occasion of a second encounter with other worlds, after the one that occurred 500 years ago, a second encounter that takes place on our turf rather than theirs. I think this decolonization-reeducation must happen first and foremost through a common humanism, restarting from Herodotus and Montaigne, along with Sartre. These are the forefathers I have picked.

Remo Bodei's book *Una scintilla di fuoco. Invito alla filosofia, (A spark of fire. Invitation to philosophy, 2005)* is an outline of the history of philosophy, an activity born among the Greeks and still vital, though mortified in this age of the decline of education and vulgarity of mass-media. Bodei dedicates a chapter and frequent references to the culture of other civilizations, but does not escape Eurocentrism, conceived in a very bland fashion, as something that "denies or ignores the contribution of other civilizations." Let us consider one of Bodei's passages: after having referred to civilizations based on oral or "sapiential" culture, Bodei writes that "a different situation is that of societies subject to the violent acceleration of historical time, as, for example, in Europe, first with the great geographical discoveries and colonization, then with the Industrial Revolution, and, currently, with the immense development of mass-media..." (33). The argument is very "normal," almost obvious, but it seems to apply only to the exemplary, *but also unique*, case of *modern* Europe, on account of its being subject to the acceleration of historical time, with no reference being made to the propulsive force of this acceleration: capitalism. Furthermore: what happens to Europe, *seems to happen only to Europe, only on its side of history*, which is *the* History and still has only one side, even though Herodotus, 2500 years ago, had begun his *Histories* with the *incipit* "The learned Persians maintain...": he allowed his enemies to speak first.

"Let's screw up a little history and geography," then, as Daniel Pennac says. Geographical discoveries, colonization, industrial revolution, etc., in my vision, cannot be judged today to be *naturally* the monopoly of modern Europe, but must be explicitly viewed as *the first planetary relations*, that is, the first ones that were to be part of a *new and global history: the history of the entire world*. The European idea of "history of the world" is contradictory at the core: it was created by Europe and includes only Europe. The contradiction becomes devastating when we consider the fact that we Europeans have been *the first to falteringly utter this absolutely Eurocentric thought*. *Because up to now*

*the only sense of world history has been the Hegelian one: that is, the one in which the subject that makes and knows history is the Spirit who makes and knows history as its own; his name is Western, his last name Europe.* After Hegel, all we have done has been to move the West westward, towards the United States.

Let us rapidly survey modern history: European Atlantic nations, small or large, became centrifugal and imperial and, starting from the late 1400s, shaped the history of the planet. Precisely *dating from that moment*, that is, from modernity, *also and necessarily*, other things became part of that history: the “discovered” worlds, the violently colonized civilizations, their predatory exploitation and slavery. European “conquests” were “catastrophes” (which continue to occur, as Chinua Achebe tells us in his 1958 novel *Things Fall Apart*). Catastrophes for those who were discovered, colonized, enslaved, etc. In other words, *all this happened also to them*, on their side: the one that my Argentinean friend Walter Mignolo has called *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*.

And every time we speak of “modern history,” we must *know how to speak precisely* of this unfortunate rub. All this may seem obvious to postcolonial scholars, but I am convinced it is not; neither for them, nor for European historians or philosophers. A look at our history manuals or even our own essays suffices to substantiate this point. For my part, let me point out how being Italian means belonging to a culture that, even in its higher intellectual echelons, continues to maintain that *its colonial past was a short-lived and insignificant affair*, a past that left no traces, no *post* in other words, and needs no future. And that the Italian Renaissance was a purely universal, magical, eternal, etc., moment.

My discourse intends to shed some light on the continuing and active presence, even in the minds of the more acute European thinkers, of a dark side of the conventional approach to world and history. An approach, which we have been quite pleased to term universal. *Universal: one versus, one side.* In the passage I took from Bodei’s text and commented, and in the text as a whole, which I used as an example, one does not perceive a discourse by and on European modernity, but rather the normal, blissful indifference of *oblivion* – as the so-called “continental” philosophers of the twentieth century are fond of saying. Oblivion that does not know its “of what,” that does not even realize that something has been forgotten.

I am quite convinced that the decolonization of the European mind, a topic to which I obsessively return, can start from here: allowing oneself to be led to discover traces, points, holes, seams, leaks, in the paranoid Eurocentrism that automatically inhabits us, and to make an effort to *dismiss it*; trying to think it as on the brink of the border or beyond it; trying not think it as the natural, necessary, and, above all, only way to acknowledge

oneself as and to feel European. You could reply that this is a superficial and hypocritical philosophy, a rehashed sermon shrouded in obnoxious smoke. You might rightly demand practical and precise indications. I am here among you also for this: read the poem of one of those who fought for the liberty of Angola from the Portuguese, the first President of the Republic of Angola, Antonio Agostinho Neto. The poem is called “Western Civilization” and if you read it you shall see what this definition means for an African colonized by Europeans: immediately & naturally. You will understand that we Europeans do not think the same thing of an Angolan, and that the reverse of our thinking is a relationship: the colonization and massacre of Africa by the Portuguese, French, English, Spaniards, Dutch, Germans, Belgians, Italians, and the Soviet Russians. Keeping this colonial relationship in mind, remember how these horrible events occurred just a few years ago and eventually led to the “revolution of carnations” in Portugal.

While moving in a decolonizing and world-wide European direction, mindful and participative of the flow of migrations and translations, as Salman Rushdie says, more than of the cartographic and geopolitical stations and associated canons found in the manuals of scholars, I stumbled more and more on so-called “postcolonial studies,” and it sort of felt like up to now we had been living in the same part of town, without ever meeting. We were neighbors. But in what neighborhood?

I was not transfixed by postcolonial studies and did not become a specialist in them. I immediately began to wonder instead: what are they? What way of knowing is this? From what school, need or deception does do come from and where do they go and lead us, beyond writing books and organizing conferences? How can they help me on my journey? And, since I am so interested in them: what do I understand of them and what do I know? In what way do they encourage me to think beyond what I already know? How and to what extent have they changed my conscience?

I discovered, at the beginning of my postcolonial self-indoctrination, the book of the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *The Decolonization of Mind*, and I was fascinated by and appropriated the word-concept “mental decolonization,” feeling it was suited to us European partners; suited and necessary, as in a coin, the heads are necessary to the tails. And thus I began to travel across the magic territory of “postcolonial studies.” Most came from the North-West and spoke English. So I read Said, Bhabha and Spivak, Guha and Chakrabarty, Appadurai, Gilroy and Stuart Hall, and the three great Australians: Ashcroft-Griffiths and Tiffin, Glissant, whom I was the first to have published in Italy. To these Anglo-Americanized scholars and writers, I alternated Francophone ones, starting with Aimé Césaire, whose *Discours sur le colonialisme*, a little book *nécessaire* I was

instrumental in translating in 1998. After a trip to Cuba, I further explored Latin-American culture under excellent guides, Roberto Fernández Retamar and then Walter Mignolo. They made me discover Martí, Ortiz and Carpentier and post-Western Latin-American philosophy. I read and practiced, then, more and more, the Afro-Americans of the North, the Caribbean, Latinos and Africans, including white ones, such as Gordimer, Coetzee and Antjie Krog. At one point, I discovered Gloria Anzaldua. I brought with me, as a sort of viaticum, Sartre & Fanon: the two faces of the only announced European decolonization, the Francophone path.

In the last few years, I have had a growing awareness of a constellation of thoughts and meanings: the feeling that the Italian intellectual conscience of Italy's colonial past had been definitely silenced and that this argument was really of interest only to English, French, or US scholars of Italian culture; that the Italian intellectual production of Postcolonial Studies was dominated by Italian scholars of English literature and culture who rehashed theories dominant in North-American and Australian universities. This mostly career-oriented imitation was followed by a publishing and translating activity monologically centered on Anglophone texts, which is creating, in Italy, a postcolonial intellectual fashion resembling the obnoxious postmodern fashion begun in the 1980s. A more modest fashion, however, more disarrayed, divided and provincial, dominated by Anglo-American cultural hegemony, reinforced by scholars and writers that have emigrated to the US from all sorts of worlds, to be welcomed and honored. This, how to say, academic-editorial patronage has engendered a new multicultural "anthropological and philosophical" apparatus, in the narrow sense of the term – supported by emigrated Africans, Caribbean, Latinos, Indians and Pakistani, etc. – which has elaborated the *hegemonic global postcolonial discourse*, that is, the discourse that can and must be practiced everywhere, including Europe. In the US and Canada, postcolonial discourse appears perfectly multicultural at the source but does not show its other side, the dark side: the systematic principle of knowing and controlling all areas and cultures of the world. I think it is a strategic academic policy aimed at controlling the world in terms of areas: it is significant that, only in the US, there exists a multidisciplinary sector labeled "area studies"; and it is no chance that in US universities there is a greater number of scholars of Italian literature of migration than in Italy. Back to Europe. Sartre was fully aware, through his work with the poets of the *Négritude* and even more with Fanon, of the necessity for a European decolonization, a change from being colonizers and dominant. This path, however, remained unexplored in European culture, during those very decades in which the colonized (who many term ex-) wrote *with a vengeance*, as Salman Rushdie says, to

imperial colonizers, hidden in the North-Western tale of the Euro-Asiatic continent. Thus, today, we are confronted by this insane paradox: European imperial nations have generated modernity, the colonization of all worlds, the hungry and inexorable dominion of colonialism, enlisting, in this “universal” enterprise, technological progress and Christ, sails, cannons, Aristotle, and the heart of darkness that still throbs at the center of London and Brussels, cities of the dead, like Lisbon, Madrid, Amsterdam, Berlin, Rome and Moscow.

It is my belief that either postcolonial studies follow this path to decolonization or they follow no path at all. They shall simply rehash exotic-Yankee multicultural discourses. I also know that if European philosophy does not seize this *dark alien* and place it at the center of its future, it will become more and more an archeological–conference hopping sort of knowledge. A comforting worldliness, a TV format for soul and gossip.

We must revert the formula of the three Australians. It is us imperialists who must respond to the imperialized, starting with modernity. Yankee postcolonial studies are not enough.

As already mentioned, we Europeans have been for centuries surrounded by a circle of questions we have been deaf to. We do not answer, precisely because we are not even capable of hearing them. Now and then, a Pope apologizes for violent evangelization, or some local tribunal recognizes the rights of pre-American or pre-Australian native peoples. The fact is discussed for one day on a page buried deep inside some European newspaper. Amen. The secular and planetary wheel of the questions of fire – I borrow this image from the title of Eduardo Galeano’s formidable trilogy *Memory of Fire* – demands, even more than justice, to be heard and responded to. It demands our *responsibility* in reflecting on the history that is common to us: the ancient Mediterranean wisdom that already knew the law of the bond between *all* humans: *inter se mortales mutua vivunt* (Lucretius, II, 76 – found in Montaigne, I, XX; this line by Lucretius could be the motto of intercultural European discourse) – and in the revision of that common history, a *mutual* revision, if possible. It demands, as the father of African studies, my friend Joseph Ki-Zerbo, demanded at the “World Conference against Racism” in Durban 2001, at least a “reparation” (“la Réparation”), a elevated critical rethinking of our autistic but arrogant and domineering way of conceiving ourselves at the center of the world, which ensured that the encounter of modern Europeans with the new worlds of mortals be marked by the non reciprocal and disgraceful *trauma*, inflicted by us on them. A trauma we could call with the title of Coetzee’s novel, *Disgrace*. In Italian the cognate word “*disgrazia*” means “misfortune.” Therefore, a *disgrazia*, a misfortune, for the new worlds and for all

human and mortal continents; a *disgrace* for us Europeans, on which a philosophical sentence is still to be passed.

We European planetary colonizers – alone at first, and then joined and replaced by our distant Anglo-American progeny to whom we have passed on the white man's burden & torch of civilization (a rather forceful transition, begun in 1898, when the young Anglo-American democracy used the probably self-inflicted sinking of the “Maine” as an excuse to seize the remnants of the Spanish colonial empire and affirm its dominion over the Caribbean and the Philippines and on “its” two oceans): *yankee & wasp*, precisely – are *generally* responsible, that is, we are responsible of all humankind and *erga omnes*, to everyone, of our *disgraceful colonization* of the planet that set in motion “modern world history.” We have not answered for and to this for five centuries: *though it is the land of love for wisdom and love for the most human of gods, of true science, of technology and forgiveness. Of beauty and the pleasure of living. The land of all the questions and all the answers.*

At this point let us more vigorously interrogate *postcolonial studies*. As far as I know, they do not appear to develop out of the vision I have tried to articulate and they are not interested in it. Even the more philosophized of those thinkers do not dwell within this intellectual horizon. I have discovered instead a mutual consonance between me and Latin-American “philosophers” and writers.

While my vision suggests a path of European decolonization, humbly trailing at the margins of the North-American and Anglophone mainstream, it also requires us to raise from the start the following question: what does it mean to identify as “postcolonial” an *entirely new* study of contemporary world culture, which necessarily manifests itself through Anglo-American forms and people.

In the twentieth century, one of the main roles of humanist intellectuals in countries colonized by Europeans – starting from the *Harlem Renaissance* and *Negritude* – was to proclaim and recuperate a lost identity, starting from the *resentment for the trauma and the loss*, rather than the nostalgic recuperation of an identity conceived as an original and irredeemably orphan condition. Herodotus, in a passage in Book III (1229), which seems almost an aside in the main discourse, writes: “Polycrates was the first among the Greeks, as far as we know, who sought control over the seas, aside from Minos of Knossos and those before him, if any of them dominated the seas; in any case, in the so-called human age, Polycrates was the first, and he had many hopes of dominating Ionia and the islands.” Thus, in telling about Polycrates, lord of the island of Samos and of his contrast with the Persian Oroetes, satrap of Sardis, he links his thought to a crucial specification: “the so-

called human age” =”*tes dè anthropéies legoménes genes*,” that is, the time when the human species, the human race, lost its cohabitation with the gods, and the promiscuous median age, where everything had always a meaning and an answer, ended. Herodotus cites, marks, and narrates the advent of this schism that originated the Mediterranean world and the neighboring areas. It is the gesture that, remembered, guarantees the legitimacy of the discourse *among ourselves*: humans, Persians, Greeks, Indians, Ethiopians, and since then everyone else, too.

Writers – poets, novelists, philosophers, historians, musicians and other artists – of worlds traumatized by Europeans began to write in the twentieth century *as Herodotus knew he had to do*, starting with Césaire and his *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, starting from the moment of this schism. What passed before that moment became entirely, though not suddenly, a *ruined myth* and the traumatic severing of time brought about a fall into the darkness of the white shades, of the transcendent evilness of the invader, the belly of the slave ship, the chains of forced labor, and, finally, into *their own history*.

Writers of the worlds and of migrations began to write *this history*, their history, after the catastrophe that followed the trauma, starting from, as the title of Glissant's novel says, the *Quatrième siècle*, the fourth century after the arrival of the slave ship from Africa to the Caribbean. Postcolonial writing therefore occurs on a worldwide level in the twentieth century. *Which does not mean: starting from the so-called age of independence of African nations after World War II* – as we know Caribbean and South-American nations became independent republics much earlier on; *but starting from when it became possible for them (the writers) to respond to the trauma and to its opaque century-old catastrophe, to the severed and irrecoverable trunk of their history. A response voiced in the worst possible conditions, using the language and the global system of the whites, and with that trunk stuck through their throats all the way to their entrails.*

I think that this *postcolonial index* does not correspond to the historical dimension of *postcolonial studies*. I believe that until we white people of Europe, writers of histories, do not agree to call colonial modernity – inaugurated in 1492 and re-negotiated at the end of 1885 at the Congress of Berlin another “internal” affair – with its real name: *First World War*, issues and ideas will continue to be *white*.

By definitely going past Hercules's columns in the wake of Columbus and Vasco de Gama, Cabral and Vespucci, Cabot and Magellan, all the way to the Russians, who call Russia all of northern Asia up to Alaska on the other continent, all the way up to James Cook and beyond, Europe waged against other worlds a savage war that yet *seemed*



*natural in its own eyes*, and called this long dark and shameful period discovery, conquest, civilization, the white man's burden and duty.

After having definitely portioned the planet in Berlin, the colonial nations of Europe ended the first period of their modernity with an infernal twentieth-century delirium, marked by three global wars, *all starting from Europe*: from Sarajevo to Hitler, Hiroshima & Nagasaki and Kolyma, the last Tule of horror and Pig's Bay, Viet Nam, Afghanistan and Irak.

After this century of unruly and excessive war, a new age has dawned, which has been stupidly defined by North-Western philosophers and their army of accolades, "postmodern." I think instead it is a terrorist age, in which dominion over the planet and the species is granted by *terrorist capital*: the one that *after* Auschwitz – that is, *after the end* of the horror, the horror that was still alive on the lips of the dying Kurtz – after that moment began a new world history, which we have experienced for a short time, sixty years. The two United States bombs, one based on uranium, the other on plutonium, dropped in 1945 on two cities populated by mortal Japanese – *civilians* who were working, going to school, minding their own business, just like the Arawak and the Aztecs, the Hurons and the Mapuche, indeed, just like New Yorkers on September 11, 2001, *when suddenly and rudely the aliens landed*, -- these two bombs, I was saying, represent the *first global terrorist act against our entire species, against the planet, against our common history*. A new folly has replaced the agreement between worlds, the League of Nations. The terrorist determination of Truman and his gang is visible in the decision to bomb Nagasaki *after* Hiroshima in order to test the second type of bomb, based on plutonium.

The official declarations of the criminal president of the US and of the Japanese government were clear-cut and peremptory: "This is the greatest thing in history," said Truman; "The use of such a destructive bomb is an unprecedented crime in the history of human-kind," said the Japanese.

It is from *there* that what we call postcolonial writers start. I maintain and propose that postcolonial writers must be conceived and called using the Latin term *novissimi*, the extremely new, in the sense of the Christian New Testament, an expression meant to rally the writers of the twentieth and twenty-first century who express *our* new World and its history, finally told, conceived, said for the first time as the history of the world *of all its inhabitants*, including animals, plants, and people. A contemporary history different from non-history written, imagined and vomited by the sleepless North-Western matrix, told and sold by Hollywood to the entire world.

In rethinking this knowledge from this literary perspective, we may state that the *novissimi* are the writers of the present “literature of the worlds,” that *succeeds* the exclusively European dream, the European system, a “planetary” culture, a *Weltliteratur* or *World Literature*, largely limited to the global spectacle-market of the imagination of California.

While it is true that, for many years, the Empire of the ex-colonized has *responded* to ancient metropolises, it is also true that the old central Empire reads without understanding, or intuits but remains indifferent; in any case, *it does not respond*. Or are we to think that its response is *Western postcolonial studies*, as we European know them, published in the University Presses of the Yankees.

From where should we begin unraveling this knot of our common history? A different history could resemble the one that Anglophone historiographers have baptized *World History*, but the resemblance would be superficial; a different history should decenter and alter this model of history in the direction of Benjamin’s “against the grain,” which is also Brecht’s and of many others, in order to transform it into a *contemporary* history: contemporary to all of us, and certainly located within modernity, but also in the sense that, in trying to listen and understand the history that colonized people have been writing starting from the trauma, we European can also re-write our own history at the same time, and reach the point of being able to write it at the same time and *together*. A hope that we owe to *us all*.

For now, this is what I know as far as the final meaning of my journey is concerned, my *destiny*, as the Iberians say. Let us return, however, to what exists today in the worlds. I believe, and am obviously not alone in this, that the most interesting aspect of postcolonial thought is the affirmation and the effort to write and / or re-write the history of one’s people and continents. From this perspective, the Anglo-Indian-North-American school of *Subaltern Studies* – Guha, Spivak, etc. – has certainly major merits, but it is not the only one.

The moment of the traumatic invasion by non-migrant European invaders, akin to the people who invaded and brought war to Latin Europe after the decadence of the Western Roman Empire, is the starting point for the *novissimi* historians and writers. The traumatic turn, the fall of African empires – who had a history of their own, albeit ruined, up to the so-called twentieth-century decolonization, as in the case of the Ethiopian kingdom of Haile Selassie – as well as the immediate fall of pre-Colombian kingdoms and the expropriation of their destiny, represent, as I noted above, the scalped front of modern history, shared with the Europeans. And it is worth remembering that the Chinese and

Japanese empires too have suffered, if not traumatically, what their descendants call “modernization,” following contact with the Europeans. All the way to the Arab and Arabicized people, repeatedly conquered, but fighting within the hostility of present conflicts against North-American “globalization” and the *ensuing* European one for which the term “globalized colonization” might be more appropriate. Let us return to the *novissimi*: the history of the worlds colonized by Europeans had been written as “European history in the colonies,” in Cambridge and Paris, by Euro-American ethnographers of “primitive mentality” and by writers attracted to the exotic context of colonialism. Only Conrad in 1899 was able to publish a tragically European history, written, that is, from the European side of a horror that *re-gards* us and begins to cry out, like a person calling “from the heart of his darkness,” petrified by the metropolises of the dead and of obscurity: London and Brussels.

The rewriting of history by the *novissimi* means not only rewriting their history resuming from that point in time in which they had been prevented from doing so – as in different ways are doing the Indian Guha or the Uruguayan Edoardo Galeano – but also writing it with a firm awareness that this writing takes place in the context of regaining, *revanche*, and of a sharing once again donated, of remorse for forgetting, without any hope of returning to a moment before the past. In other words, *translating*, as Rushdie says.

I am saying that what I know is that we European must pursue the same work of liberation, *precisely the same*. If this is how it must be, we have to, first of all, take our eyes off them, begging them not to leave us alone and promising we never will, and that we will no longer make them uncomfortable. As you see, it is a question of *tact*, as Adorno wrote in *Minima Moralia*, yet as hard as a rock made up of thousands of years of war and suffering.

In practice, this means: not rewriting our history in a “critical” and “politically correct” fashion, as done by those who in the last few years have converted and become defenders of the oppressed – though even this would be a major achievement, considering how little has actually changed in the history manuals used in schools and universities. Rather it means, *rewriting modern European history as a general history of the species and world history as history of planetary colonialism: as a disgraceful history*. This is what I think and what I say. Even though all this, in the thought and language of Western *savants*, is academically anti-historic and crazy. Only in this way, can we hope to begin working in the manner of Erasmus from Rotterdam. In Europe we know how this is done.

I know that all this is necessary in order to be able to write a world history from the perspective of Europeans, as Herodotus did in the 5th century B.C., when he realized that the time had come to write history from the perspective of humans and no longer from that of myth, and that history had to deal with the conflict between Persians and Greeks, which involved the entire Mediterranean world. Writing as Paul and Augustine did when they posited Christ as a turning point in the *new* history of human-kind; as Montaigne did, after a century, having read and reflected on what he knew of the New World, west of the Atlantic European coast where he lived. Which, following his primary source Lopez de Gòmara, he viewed as the only epochal novelty after the coming of the Savior, a thought echoed by many other Europeans, then and in the following centuries.

We must learn to acknowledge the modernity of Montaigne, who hails us in his advertisement “To the Reader” with these words: “For I assure you that if I had lived among those nations, which (they say) yet dwell under the sweet liberty of nature's primitive laws, I assure thee I would most willingly have painted myself quite fully and quite naked.... Therefore, farewell. From Montaigne, June 12, 1580” (trans. Charles Cotton).

The “self” that Montaigne had been so pleased to imagine and evoke for himself, had no descendants. It remained tied to hypotheses and dreams. Or, if it ever was turned into history, it was only within the dispensable history of exoticism or the disgraceful one of the nightmare that Europeans exported to the Americas and other worlds of the world, disturbing, *since then forever* the life of those places, where people minded their own business and were, according to some of their posthumous poets, happy.

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<sup>i</sup> My title echoes the title of a famous short story by Raymond Carter: “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love”.