

REPRESENTATIONS OF ALTERITY

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Résumé : *La connaissance du Soi se perfectionne à travers la connaissance de l'Autre. Le Soi se reflète et se reconnaît dans l'Autre, soit par identification, soit par différenciation. Dans l'espace de l'altérité, le drame de l'identité se joue à chaque fois. Nous ne nous connaissons vraiment que lorsque notre propre identité rencontre l'identité de l'Autre. C'est là que nous trouvons la véritable mesure des valeurs que nous revendiquons et que nous trouvons aussi les juges les plus fiables des illusions que nous nous faisons sur nous-mêmes. Et la rencontre avec l'Autre ne devient possible que par la communication et la relation, en dehors de la communication il n'y a tout simplement pas de découverte du Prochain, car la rencontre ne peut se métamorphoser en histoire, en mythe, en événement et finalement en mouvement de réalités, sociales et mentales. Une représentation nucléaire de l'Européen comme altérité est le Robinson Crusoe de Daniel Defoe, une synthèse des (auto)représentations mythiques que les Européens ont réfléchies sur les Autres et sur eux-mêmes. Le fantôme de l'étranger hante l'imaginaire européen, du Moyen-Âge à nos jours, comme une forme de déshumanisation de l'Autre, par le rejet et l'envoi de son existence culturelle dans une zone de non-soi. Dans toutes les représentations psychosociales de l'étranger, on lit la peur du métissage et la tendance à l'empêcher par la ségrégation, l'exclusion et la discrimination. De telles pratiques d'intolérance n'appartiennent plus aux politiques et aux normes sociales de l'Union européenne. Cependant, la peur de l'Autre ne quitte pas l'Européen actuel. Aujourd'hui, elle prend forme dans les connotations culturelles offensives du terme Outsider, celui qui désigne agressivement le statut de l'individu ou du groupe (ethnique, religieux, etc.) non intégré au système social. La propre barbarie intérieure peut ainsi facilement se métamorphoser du langage en attitude politique : xénophobie, racisme, nationalisme. En témoigne l'existence de mouvements extrémistes dans l'Europe unie, mais soumis au contrôle pressant exercé par la santé générale des sociétés européennes, qui se définissent avant tout par la tolérance et les stratégies d'intégration des minorités ethniques et religieuses. Les formes d'intégration elles-mêmes peuvent cependant être destructrices-agressives pour l'altérité, fondées uniquement sur l'aspiration d'identités culturelles vulnérables dans un espace identitaire suffisamment fort pour les digérer jusqu'à leur disparition rapide.*

Mots-clés : *représentation, altérité, Robinson, savoir, européen.*

The knowledge of the Self is perfected through the knowledge of the Other. The Self is reflected and recognized in the *Alter*, either through identification or through differentiation. In the space of otherness, the drama of identity is played every time. We

get to truly know ourselves only when our own identity meets the identity of the Other. There we find the real measure of the values we claim and there are also the most reliable judges of the illusions we make about ourselves. And the encounter with the Other becomes possible only through communication and relationship, outside of communication there is simply no discovery of the Neighbour, because the encounter cannot metamorphose into history, into myth, into event and finally into a movement of realities, social and mental. The great problem of discovering otherness lies in the moral disposition and inner preparation of the knowing ego: will he have the wisdom and pragmatism necessary to wait to know the Other first and only then formulate value judgments about him or will he or she do the opposite, seeking only the confirmation at any cost of previously formulated value judgments, in contempt of knowledge and communication? Who is the Other? How do I enter his territory and how do I receive him or her in my representational space? When meeting with the Other, the ego goes prepared with value judgments related to the religion in which it was raised or the moral codes to which it adheres. Depending on these, we consider the Other good or bad, worthy to be our equal, to be called even superior or to be sent among those inferiors to us. Value judgments decide if we love or not love the Other, if we assimilate him or her to the Neighbour or the Stranger - the two faces of alterity, often inseparable.

If value judgments decide the meaning of the social representation that circumscribes the Other, the representation itself is the source of action and relationships: distance or approach, rejection or embrace of the Other. We decide to deny the values of the Other or to recognize them. We decide to subdue the Other or make him or her our equal. We decide to assimilate its identity, integrate it into our cultural codes or simply suppress it. We decide, in the end, to ignore it and be indifferent to its existence or to assume the experience of knowing it. Knowledge, however, is not the same as loving the Neighbour, just as identification with the Other does not automatically translate into real understanding and communication with the Other's way of being. For Europeans, discovering the Other means leaving one's own world and meeting the rest of the world. In the 15th century, the Western elite knew that Europe was only a part of the world. There was a clear consciousness of a whole, assumed, but not known in its totality. Christopher Columbus knew about the existence of Asia from the writings of Marco Polo and crosses the ocean to discover a shorter way to it. It could be said that the Spaniards of Columbus did not discover America, but found it, because they set out on the expedition with the certainty given by Columbus that beyond the sea lies the land of another civilization. After the discovery of America, the world reaches its limits, civilizations collide, and the meeting between cultures is inevitable. In this new finite world, even if open to the cosmic infinity, Europeans engage with enormous energy and with an impressive capital of confidence in themselves.

Europeans discover America at a very favorable historical moment. Their cultural identity is clearly formulated in 1500 and they have both effective self-representational mechanisms and a pragmatic philosophy—all fit to face the crucial encounter with a totally unknown world. Europeans have for a very long time been clearly aware of belonging to a way of organizing the world and to a lifestyle that, from their own perspective, not only distinguishes them from other civilizations, but also places them in a position of authoritative mediator legitimized historically starting with the Renaissance, this belief began to work in the minds of the European intellectual elite, philosophers, poets and artists, corroborating with the ideal of power of the monarchs and the Church, for which, during geographical expansion, supremacy by force becomes an absolute objective. Having its origin in the Greek

city and the Hellenistic civilization, in republican Rome and in imperial Rome, but also in messianic Jerusalem, the European cultural model was built in long and complicated historical developments. Its combustion, never linear or homogeneous, took place over time along multiple cultural paths. Being either in convergence or in competition, they produced the meeting after the fall of the Roman Empire, of several civilizations: from the Celtic civilization, to the Byzantine world and to the cultures of the Germanic peoples; from the Arab and North African civilization to the Slavic one. All of them participated differently in successive reformulations of the Greek-Latin memory, which acted as a common mental territory for the future Europeans and in the fabric of which the Christian binder was placed. In 1490, the birth of Europe had occurred. Between the fall of Rome and the discovery of America, a thousand years passed in which a new civilization was born from great convulsions, by no means compact, fragmented into innumerable peoples and ethnic groups, already divided between East and West by the separation of the Churches, and yet reconciled by the Christian ideal and similar answers and solutions that individuals and communities give to life. Medieval Christianity and Renaissance humanism collaborated to build value systems and ways of life shared by a large part of Europeans and which began to define the irreducible nerves of a common mentality.

Expressed in the specifics of the representations given to social relations, time and work, the divine and the human, history and nature, the European cultural model becomes, after 1500, the dynamic synthesis of the religious, socio-political and economic mentalities to which the peoples of Europe adhere. The essentialization and strengthening of social representations in their European character is then visible starting from the 16th, 17th, 18th centuries, not only as an intellectual product in the area of the European elite, but also in the behavior fueled by common sense.

After 1490, Europeans cross the seas and oceans, discover the maritime routes to the Far East, to South Africa, discover the “New World” of the Americas, then Australia, Oceania and New Zealand. The known world gradually meets the world unknown to the Europeans until then. Such a world is born, amplified by new and immense spaces, multiplied by countless other civilizations. But in all this new world, the European, be he Portuguese, Spanish, English, Dutch or French, Danish or Italian, Irish or German, enters from the very beginning as a conqueror. The primary interest of Europeans is not to know the other cultural models, but to dominate them, even to eliminate them, when possible, in order to impose their own - economic, religious, political model. When we research the evolution of encounters between Europeans and Asian, African or Amerindian cultures, we find a real European disillusionment and inhibition in the face of the unsettling diversity of forms and religions, deities and lifestyles, with which nature and history have endowed the planet. The reaction of the European in front of such a vivid and moving picture quickly passes from amazement and revelation and turns into severe and self-sufficient pragmatism. In order to gain control over the new world in which the European must swim after 1500, the only sure weapon is precisely the tempering or even the drastic reduction of its diversity. The process of Europeanization of the world has been going on for five hundred years and is by no means limited to an export of cultural influences or to economic colonialism. Progressively, the world is changing according to and through the European cultural model. There are successive reformulations of the global space, of the power relations between Europeans and other civilizations, of non-European socio-cultural identities, forced to accept European supremacy, and after 1950 the American supremacy, in a historical race of adapting and reshaping the world after the face and similarity of European-type cultures.

The persuasive force of the current European model consists in a set of values and norms, in the congruence between political and economic: the free market economy, the rule of law, the supremacy of the law, the democratic system of the balance of the three powers: legislative, executive and legal; free competition. To these is added the more delicate set of social norms: individual freedom, free movement, freedom of speech and opinion, equality of rights and equality before the law of all citizens, child security, protection of minorities. The first important consequence was the destructuring of the myth of the wild good and the compromising of the mythification of Africa, in particular, but also of other “virgin” territories, seen as reprints of the lost Paradise by European intellectuals and artists. In fact, the myth of the good savage and the nostalgia of the lost paradise, projected on the colonies, represent another kind of taking possession of the non-European world by the Europeans, one more subtle, dissimulating and by no means aggressive. To see in the native the mythical embodiment of Edenic innocence means mainly the manipulation of his real identity in order to satisfy a mental projection from the imaginary of the European colonist, even if a philosopher or an artist. The myth of the wild good only further legitimized the insoluble cultural distance between Europeans and indigenous people, without proving a real desire for communication and knowledge. The deconstruction of the myth of the “good savage” was easily produced when the image of the native unable to assimilate the idea of European time, the conception of work in the European sense, unable to adapt to the progress imposed by the colonists, presented as a saving path, was put face to face only possible salvation from ignorance, savagery, primitivism, etc. The African or Amerindian Edens thus quickly degrade in the European perception, because the colonist imaginary sends them severely and exclusively into a paradigm of the negative. Thus, both civilization and Christianity belong to a utopian mental project, that of recreating the discovered “New World”, Amerindian, African or Asian, in the image and likeness of the European world.

Most commentators see in this phenomenon a premeditated hypocritical strategy for the transparent camouflage of the fundamental purpose in which any colonialist action was carried out: economic expansion and the maximum exploitation of its benefits. Obviously, economic motivation and European financial interests are the turning point of the relations between the colonists and the indigenous populations. Especially in the second phase of colonization, after 1800, the rush for raw materials and food products supported the development of industrial capitalism in Western Europe. But even in the first three centuries, the systematic looting of South America, the gold and silver easily obtained there, became the luxury of the Portuguese and Spanish aristocracy, who, paradoxically or not, spent a large part of their fortunes buying products manufactured especially by their rivals them, the English and the French. A very dynamic economic circuit was created. The increase in prices was likely to greatly stimulate the European economy, especially that of England, France and the Netherlands. Marx saw in this embezzlement the very origin of what he calls “primitive capital accumulation”. The European projects in the figure of the native the foreign and strange Otherness at the same time, which conveys anxiety, fear, and major mistrust. The approach of such alterity is excluded. An abrupt separation of worlds occurs. The world of the colonized Europeans and the world of the colonized indigenous people have been evolving in parallel for centuries, even if they intersect and communicate minimally. The absolute paradox is that the Europeans alienate themselves from the non-European worlds where they enter as masters, but, at the same time, demand their change according to principles, beliefs, norms and practices, all European, which they introduce authoritatively in

the colonies. It is an aggressive policy, either of assimilation and acculturation, or of manipulation and exploitation, depending on the various colonized or dominated territories.

A nuclear representation of the European as otherness is Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, a synthesis of the mythical (self)representations that Europeans reflected on the Others and on themselves. Defoe's text masterfully expresses the Europeans' utopian project of transforming the world according to their own imagination. Written after two centuries of European colonialism still dominated by the Iberians, in 1719, the novel *Robinson Crusoe*, inspired, it seems, by a real experience of the Scottish Alexander Selkirk, ends up seducing, since then, generations of Europeans, without exception. Every European consciousness tends to recognize itself in Robinson and every reader enters into a cathartic relationship of identification with Robinson. There is in the minds of many Europeans a stronger or a paler Robinson. It is activated every time when the adult being is challenged to manage his own world, bigger or smaller, and especially when he is forced to organize "virgin" spaces and situations, in which no one has intervened before, or when he faces unforeseen but subconsciously desired encounters: the appearance in the vital territory of the stranger, of the Other, of another race, of another religion, of another culture. Robinson is, therefore, the European par excellence, essentialized to the heroic dimension of the civilization he represents. The Europeans' irrepressible desire for mythologizing expresses its legitimacy in Robinson's will and actions. Building his own legend, Robinson perfectly reflects the myth of the European civilizer.

In Robinson, the pragmatic wisdom of English puritanism, the immorality of the slave trader, is reconciled with the candor of the self-discovery of one's own morality, after which life is organized in strict rules for ordering time in the rhythm of work. Work is the ultimate value. Work humanizes, while laziness and abandonment push the being towards the animal and vegetative states. Between work and idleness, Robinson's European morality cannot imagine other ways of being in the world. Robinsonade, therefore, comes to represent self-sufficient and victorious Europeanism. Robinson leaves England from a fierce and mad longing to explore the world. Robinson's curiosity, folded into an inner voice that dictates his decisions, translates the belief of Europeans in their providential destiny to defy the comfortable limits of the space in which they are born, to go beyond what is sufficient for the Self, towards what is can be complementary. They would thus restore the unity of the world and participate in its reunification as the original cosmos. It is a fantasy that certainly animated the souls of many of those who went to discover America and then other "virgin" territories.

But Robinson's myth is born from the unique story of his life on the uninhabited island in the Caribbean, where he happens to be shipwrecked as the only survivor. For more than twenty years, Robinson builds a European micro-world by himself on his island. It reproduces on a scale accessible to the systematic effort of a single individual the civilization in which he was born and which shaped him through education as a social being. Not for a moment is Robinson animated by any state of contemplation or admiration of the nature of the island. All he cares about is discovering and exploiting its "products". One can speak of an opacity of vision in Robinson, which translates the mental closure of the colonizing European in front of the "New World" in which he settles without seeing it, thus without receiving it in his own imagination.

The island becomes Robinson's property and his strategy is to adapt its possibilities, however hostile, to his personal needs. Robinson does not adapt to the island, but the island is a territory forced to adapt to the order administered by the new master.

There is no magic of the island, no fascination with its identity, an identity different from any European land. The island is only the theater of a long-term test of Robinson's abilities and convictions. Robinson's relationship with the island typifies the relationship between Europeans and the new, non-European worlds they encounter after 1500. The first Robinsonian sentiment that defines this relationship is that of "virgin space". The European colonizers, like Robinson on his island, entered the Amerindian or African territories as if they had never been touched by humans. Knowingly ignoring that they are known and inhabited, but in a different way than the European, the colonist Robinsons engage in a self-protective mental exercise, meant to absolve them of guilt and responsibility. The phrase "New World" is deeply symbolic and is synonymous with virgin world. The virginity of the space would be given by the absence of civilization and man. The presence of indigenous people is ambiguous and even bracketed by the manipulation of the notion of "man". Humanity is conditioned by civilization, and civilization is measured according to the waves of the European cultural model. The island he is shipwrecked on quickly becomes "my island". The feeling of ownership structures with a red thread the relationship between the European colonist and the non-European worlds. When Robinson first meets the indigenous cannibal, he will name Friday, his spontaneous attitude is to automatically take possession of him. Friday becomes "my savage".

The island that became property is subject to a civilizing process in which Robinson invests a precious capital: all his European science and education, associated with continuous work and organization. The tools he uses, and which he finds on the wrecked ship, are the tools of a Europe on the way to industrialization, but above all they are the signs of the authoritarian cultural projection in which his own consciousness recognizes and identifies with. There is in Robinson a great restlessness and an equally great determination to make, to build, to change the foreign island in the image and likeness of the imaginary projection in Robinson's mind, the one in which the image of the home world, of the world, is preserved undisturbed European. Daniel Defoe, without ever having travelled far from England, intuited without fail that Robinson can be the prototype of European colonist behaviour.

The determination to do as much and as quickly as possible is associated with the need for maximum security, which anthropologists and historians say is typically European and which, not coincidentally, takes the form of an obsession with weapons and ammunition in Robinson. Personal safety, the metamorphosis of the environment through work and technology, the individualization and protection of the body through specific brands, the rejection of integration into nature and the creation of one's own area are all European needs from which the European human condition develops. These fundamental needs do not include communication or openness to the Other. The "New Worlds" are taken over and adapted to Europeanization. Possession can be followed by knowledge and communication between the settler and the colonized space, although it is not mandatory. However, the stages of the relationship will never follow each other in the reverse order. An additional argument can also be taken from Daniel Defoe's novel, as a fairly realistic picture of Europeanism. Robinson writes a diary and the enterprise is more than symbolic. It shows the European man's relationship with time and events. Placing the memory of each day in the text transforms time into history, controls it and gives it an evolutionary meaning. European thinking does not admit existence outside of history, existence in an absolute time, not rigorously disciplined in the past, present and future.

But what is more important, is that in Robinson's history written by himself, the Island as a presence in itself does not exist. Just as there is no Friday, the savage, except by reference to Robinson, as an expression and reflection of Robinson's action on his being. In the diary, Robinson talks practically only about himself. He communicates without communicating with the Otherness, imagined by the Island or Friday. The other is only an attribute of the expansion of one's own identity. The encounter with non-European nature or non-European man has, therefore, as an effect, the enhancement of self-knowledge and the return to oneself of the European man. In this way, the awareness to the point of obsession of one's own cultural model is produced. The European tends to become the voluntary captive of his civilization, without any temptation of denial or real openness. And yet there is a kind of openness of the European settler to the very different Otherness of the indigenous. This is manifested when the wild man becomes the equivalent of the Adamic man, the man from the beginning of the world, and his world becomes synonymous with the terrestrial Paradise, the original Eden. Mircea Eliade talks about the European man's utopia projected onto the wild man: "the wild good described by navigators and preached by ideologues belongs in many cases to a society of cannibals." (Eliade, 1991: 142) This is also the case of Friday, Robinson's savage. Even when he is a cannibal, the native can represent in the eyes of the European the "natural man", coming from beyond history and civilization and living in a state of purity, freedom and complete bliss in the bosom of mother and generous nature. As historians of religions, such as Mircea Eliade, and contemporary anthropologists show, such an image is the product of the mythologies of utopians and Western ideologues. A transfer is executed: the nostalgia of the Edenic condition is taken from the European imaginary and is placed over the reality of the "new worlds". So, a myth is created, of the "wild good". It is a kind of identity invented and attached to indigenous otherness. Ignoring that the "savage" had surpassed the mythical age, the opening created by the exaltation of the "good savage" finally blocks the communication between the European and the native even more. The history of the discovery of the "New World" by the Europeans, by the way, begins like this:

“...Christopher Columbus also suffered from nostalgia for the origins, that is, for the earthly Paradise: he looked for it everywhere and thought he found it during the third voyage. The mythical geography still obsessed him who opened the way to so many real discoveries in his capacity as a good Christian, Columbus felt essentially constituted by the history of the Ancestors. ...if he believed until the end of his days that Haiti was the biblical Ophir, it is because for him the world could not be anything other than the exemplary world. whose history is written in the Bible.” (Eliade, 1991: 152-153)

Mythification degrades into mystification. Robinson—and let's not forget that in the subconscious of every European there may be a Robinson—imagines himself loved beyond measure by Friday. Moreover, Robinson tells how Friday has the revelation of the good that the master did to him by subjecting him to learning, therefore education and knowledge. In fact, Robinson only naively but accurately summarizes the golden dream of European man. He does not imagine himself loving the Other—the "good" savage and so different, but dreams himself loved by the Other. The representation of the wild—submissive and loving, enlightened and removed from the state of wildness—turns into a vehicle for the self-representation of the European man. The Love of the Neighbour turns upside down and takes the form of self-love. Robinson thus illustrates the mechanism of narcissistic heroization, typical of the European mentality during almost half a millennium of

colonialism. Without ever completely abandoning himself to despair, Daniel Defoe's Robinson relies on reason and trust in destiny. The administration and exploitation of the island brings him prosperity and the status of king of the conquered territory.

Robinson embodies the heroic self-image of the European and the warrior optimism of the colonial era, together with the optimism of progressive Christian capitalism, not yet fractured by doubt, critical spirit or inner weakness. It is interesting that the change of the European mentality, after 1950, in relation to the former colonies, the change of the self-representations of the European and the change of their idea of otherness are the core of another book about the same and yet another Robinson. Michel Tournier resumes, not by chance, the story and the myth of Robinson. In 1972, he published another version of the imaginary history, aiming at the philosophical-symbolic description of a subtle metamorphosis of European consciousness, perhaps not yet effective, but at least possible and especially dreamed of. Basically, Michel Tournier rewrites the Robinsonade from the perspective of the current European man, the one who, remembering his colonialist past, begins to admit that he could make history in a different way and that his heroic idea of himself can be challenged, resized, prepared for a different kind of heroism, that of responsibility through knowledge towards the Other.

Tournier entitles his novel *Vendredi ou les limbes de Pacifique* (*Friday, or the Other Island*). The title is provocative and enigmatic, announcing either that Robinson gives up his identity and turns into the Other, the wild Friday, or that every European Robinson contains in his mysterious nature a wild Friday. The story reinvented by M. Tournier no longer celebrates Europeanism, but problematizes it. In this different Robinson speaks a self-critical European conscience towards the values and morals of a long civilization, unsure of itself and at the same time open to accepting its otherness. The critical philosophy of Tournier's character is transparent and it was not possible a hundred years ago. The European mentality imposed itself on non-European civilizations through the will to continuously organize the world only according to its own rules, in order to obtain a European-type global order. Precisely this huge human effort is put under the sign of doubt. The analytical irony of a new European mentality, in full process of internal reformulation after the Second World War, accuses its own order of improvisation. He begins to see in the organization according to his own law of the non-European worlds an illegitimate enterprise. It is natural to ask which Europe this voice belongs to. Is it an exclusive, minority point of view and visible only in the narrow environment of an intellectual elite or is it more than that? The post-colonial period explosively produced in the former colonies, from the recent ones to the oldest, lost since the 19th century, a current of self-knowledge and affirmation. From India or Pakistan, from African and Central American countries, books, ideas, strong personalities were born in waves.

Postcolonialism came over Europe like a beneficent storm. The fact that it coincided with the rise of Latin American energies after 1960 only increased its effect and strength. Postcolonial literature and the ideological programs of the new leaders from the former colonies began to circulate and become known in Europe. The African man, the Indian man, the Asian man and the Latin American man managed to penetrate the European public space and make themselves heard, even listened to. For the first time in history, the European mentality admits and encourages the presence of the Other, the non-European, in the network of European public debates. Poverty, hunger, devastating diseases and insecurity in the former colonies are becoming integrated themes of the European social environment that both the political class and civil society are progressively

assuming. A collective responsibility is produced. For the first time, the heirs of yesterday's colonists agree to recognize a historical fault in the economic-social situation of poor countries, even if they do it implicitly and extremely rarely openly, officially.

Postcolonialism fuels the self-critical discourse of European modernism after the end of the Second World War. The European learns to look at his history with scepticism, he understands that his demiurgic powers over nature and life are illusory, as Michel Tournier says. Moreover, the new Robinson invented by Tournier is an expression and an effect of the tectonic movements in the European mentality. The same captain warns the new Robinson:

“You are pious, miserly and pure. The kingdom over which you will be sovereign would resemble the large domestic closets in which our women put stacks of immaculate sheets and tablecloths and scented with lavender sachets. [...] Crusoe, ...listen to what I tell you: beware of purity. It's the vitriol of the soul.” (Tournier, 1997: 6-10)

Cultural purity, faithful to its own norms, Christian piety and avarice of glorious liberalism are the signs of the European colonial morality that threatened to transform the world into a domestic place, ready to mortify any alternative energies. European postmodern philosophies, together with the wave of postcolonialism, demand, as in Tournier's symbolic novel, a new European morality, based on cultural plurality and the right to a different identity. The idea of social good and the idea of social and cultural norms are changing. Like Tournier's Robinson, the postmodern European is reflexive and analytical. Very attentive to the evolution of his mental rifle, pushing the extreme limits of individualism, the new Robinson allows himself to be seduced by the Island, becoming the conquering colonist, to be inhabited by its generous magic. It's a way of talking about the contemporary European's desire to rediscover nature, which he domesticated with far too much violence, definitively robbing it of its "virginity", the vital richness of the beginning of the world. Tournier's Robinson tries to subdue Friday. But, this time, Friday revolts and overturns the master-slave relationship, managing to shape in Robinson a “comrade”, a new spirit, surprising precisely because of his non-Europeanism, because he is voluntarily tailored according to Friday's cultural norms:

“What distinguished one from the other [the old Robinson from the new Robinson] transcended and encompassed at the same time—the antagonism, often described, between the methodical, avaricious, and melancholy Englishman, and the spontaneous, giving, and cheerful “native.” Friday naturally resented this terrestrial order that, peasant and administrator, Robinson had established on the island... Araucan seemed to belong to another kingdom, in opposition to the telluric one of the masters...Friday's freedom - in which Robinson began to initiate himself in the following days - it was not only the denial of the order erased by the explosion from the face of the island. Robinson knew too well [to see] ...in his companion's behavior a hidden unity, an implicit principle.” (Tournier, 1997: 135-136)

This new Robinson accuses European morality of falsity and, accepting Friday's morality, enters a time of renaissance. The notion of “tongues” in the title evokes precisely the final message of the novel, the sojourn of the soul in an uncertain territory of total purification before the great Renaissance. Of course, if Defoe's Robinson is a realist-triumphalist image of Europeanism, Tournier's Robinson is the utopian scenario of the liberation of the European from his own nature and his historical “guilt”, by entering a solar—a historical identity. Tournier's utopia, however, is a form of representation of the real

attempt made by contemporary Europeans to know humanities incongruent with their cultural model: the worlds of the Other, the non-European worlds. The division of the world between Us and the Others is an old legacy, left by Greek thought. The Greeks called all those whose language was not Greek, barbarians. They thus manufacture a mental stereotype of the representation of otherness almost immune to historical processes. If we take into account its Greek origin, the term *barbaros* is an imitative word and refers to the undifferentiated noise produced by speech in the ears of those who do not know the language they are listening to. Therefore, the barbarian belongs to an axiomatically negative paradigm; the term does not give identity to otherness, it eliminates differences and specificity. Barbarians are all together, Persians, Egyptians, Thracians, Etruscans, Phoenicians. Transferred into European thinking, the concept of barbarian has placed itself with authority over everything that is non-Christian, non-European or profoundly different from the European cultural model. The use of the term barbarian debunks the hostility of otherness before any kind of knowledge is produced. Symbolically, the principled barbarian does not communicate, because his speech is lost in a meaningless stammer. The Romanians amplify the abrupt distinction between identity and otherness, materializing it in a bipolar political system, Romania versus Barbaricum, with which medieval and classical European societies operate to distinguish between civilization and non-civilization.

The evolution of the Latin term *barbarus* from an ethnic-political meaning in Antiquity, to an obviously political one in the Middle Ages, when it meant non-Romanus, makes the transition to a Europe that cyclically represents itself as a "Besieged Fortress". The European Union, itself, partially maintains this state of mind, of territory ready to be besieged, through a legislative system of firm self-protection. The right to citizenship or the right to work, the right to movement in the countries of the Union are strictly regulated and not at all permissive for citizens from outside the Union. But who is the barbarian outside the city today? The Muslim, the African, the Eastern? And who could be the barbarian in the city? Communities (ethnic, religious, etc.) not integrated and isolationist? This type of approach to the issue of otherness creates insurmountable distances between Us and the Others and can only lead to conflict and expressions of hatred. History proves that in a globalized world, "besieged cities" and barbarians disappear, because political-economic realities are based on relationship and interdependence.

However, there is always an inner barbarian, who regards otherness as a foreign and dangerous nature, although the entire European civilization starts from the evangelization of St. Paul who calls for a different philosophy of otherness: "There was no more Greek or Jew, circumcision or foreskin, nor barbarian, Scythian or free man, but Christ who is all and in all" (Epistle to the Colossians, 3, 11). And elsewhere: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free man: there is no longer male or female, but you are all one in Jesus Christ." (Epistle to the Galatians, 3.28).

However, the European practices of affirmation and self-protection identified in the figure of the subversive and threatening Foreigner—the Jew, sometimes the Gypsy or simply the non-Aryan, during fascism. The negative mythology developed around the figure of the foreigner is primarily born from the irrational fear of everything that is different and apparently impossible to assimilate. The ghost of the stranger haunts the European imaginary, from the Middle Ages until today, as a form of dehumanization of the Other, by rejecting and sending his cultural existence to a zone of non-self. In all the psychosocial representations of the foreigner we read the fear of miscegenation and the tendency to prevent it through segregation, exclusion and discrimination. Such practices of

intolerance no longer belong to the politics and social norms of European Union. However, the fear of the Other does not leave the current European. Today it takes shape in the offensive cultural connotations of the term Outsider, the one that aggressively designates the status of the individual or group (ethnic, religious, etc.) not integrated into the social system. One's own inner barbarism can thus easily metamorphose from language into political attitude: xenophobia, racism, nationalism. It is proven by the existence of extremist movements in united Europe, but subject to the pressing control exercised by the general health of European societies, which are primarily defined by tolerance and strategies for the integration of ethnic and religious minorities. The forms of integration themselves, however, can be destructive-aggressive for otherness, based only on the aspiration of vulnerable cultural identities in an identity space strong enough to digest them until their rapid disappearance.

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