

Fragment of “Can a mestizo asshole speak?” (1):

It would be possible to find a wide range of political dimensions unregistered by hegemonic historiographic speeches around the world. It is a fact that such silencing of voices and gestures of the subaltern has been, to a great extent, responsible for the construction of transparent versions of historical facts associated to geographically, racially, and sexually non-hegemonic subjects. Which does not mean that these subjects did not want to mark their difference by their own means in the wefts of history. What actually happens seems to be rather what Spivak formulated: the subaltern cannot be heard or read.

As a coordinator of the Decoloniality Europe network, Julia Suarez-Krabbe wrote an article ironically titled “Can Europeans Be Rational?,”¹ starting from a few questions that have been crucial in numerous philosophical debates back in the 16th century, helping to set the grounds for international law and the contemporary thought on human rights, such as: “Are the indigenous populations human?” and “Can non-Europeans think?”. In this text, the author emphasizes that these questions cannot be formulated outside of a system of thought that considers the European subjects as superior beings; moreover, she states that, despite of the answer, the fact of merely being formulated already configures these sentences an act of violence.

While the inversion game present in the title of Krabbe’s essay might seem like a revenge act and unfitting to the “scientific spirit” for some, when taken from a decolonial regard it denotes an act of epistemological disobedience, relocating the target of such a critical interpellation. Instead of positively responding to the ethnocentric question about the ability of thought of non-European peoples, the author redirects the question, thus making noticeable for the subjects of this hegemonically-constituted knowledge the very epistemological violence underpinning their system of thought.

In what concerns the *subaltern silence*, I would like to propose a movement inspired by Krabbe. Instead of asking whether the subaltern can or cannot speak, I invoke another one: what happens when a subaltern speaks? This way, I intend to relocate a longstanding crisis that de-potentiates

¹Julia Suarez-Krabbe, “Can Europeans be rational?” in *Decolonial Thinking*, available at <<http://decolonialthinking.blogspot.com.br//03/can-europeans-be-rational-julia-suarez.html>>, accessed on December 14, 2016.

us, the subjects not comprised in knowledge-making grammars. Rather than questioning our ability of forging speeches and knowledges from our subaltern standpoint, I choose to interrogate the capacity these hegemonically consolidated landmarks have to acknowledge our differences. In such a manner that in the borders of my own question, another one hints: can a domineering knowledge listen to a subaltern speech when it comes up?