

THE LONG 1980s



**CONSTELLATIONS
OF ART, POLITICS
AND IDENTITIES**

A Collection of Microhistories

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'IT WILL HAVE BEEN THE BEST OF TIMES: THINKING BACK TO THE 1980s'

Rosi Braidotti

*I come home in the morning light
My mother says: 'When you gonna live your life?'
Oh mamma dear, we're not the fortunate ones
And girls—they wanna have fun,
Oh girls just wanna have fun!*

Cindy Lauper, *Girls Just Want to Have Fun*, 1983

NOT JUST ANY AGE OF TRANSITION

Looking back to the eighties from the context of 2017 is like staring at a golden era from the edge of the abyss. So much has happened since, not all of it positive, and although the eighties paved the way for the violent world we inhabit today, they felt very different. Consider the context of the eighties: the elections of Margaret Thatcher in the UK in 1979 and of Ronald Reagan in 1980 in the USA set the stage for a conservative ideological onslaught, which brought neo-liberal economics and the Christian-driven American Right to the core of Anglo-American politics. A massive reaction against Marxism as the platform for activism, theory and political organizing was set in motion. The long-term implications of the historical defeat of Communism, heralded by the conservative ideologue Fukuyama as nothing less than 'the end of history'⁰¹ were and still are momentous, both in Europe and elsewhere. For instance, the 1989 Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan enabled the build-up of Islamist opposition that consolidated both the Taliban and Bin Laden's power base in the region. 'Post-communism' bred neo-colonial relations, in a global era of perpetual warfare, both in the Balkans and in the Gulf area.

As I argued elsewhere,⁰² the eighties were an age of philosophical transition as well. In 1979, the high priest of the radical libertarians Herbert Marcuse died, followed in 1980 by the towering figure of Jean-Paul Sartre, and by the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in 1981. Other thinkers who were closer to us as teachers also died prematurely: Nicos Poulantzas committed suicide in 1979 and Roland Barthes died in an accident in 1980. Also in that year, Louis Althusser, who had been mentally ill for some time already, strangled his wife and was locked away in a criminal asylum. With the death of General Tito, also in 1980, the crisis of Western European Marxism became official, while a greater portion of the world's youth was far more upset about the assassination of John Lennon, in New York, which took place the same year. 'Lennon, not Lenin!' had been a rallying cry for the revolutionary youth throughout the previous decade and it became even more poignant as the effects of that radicalism came into sharper focus.

01

Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

02

Rosi Braidotti: 'Introduction', in *After Poststructuralism: Transitions and Transformations*, vol. 7, *The History of Continental Philosophy* (Durham: Acumen, 2010).

In this context, France, which will offer the framing of this text, continued to strike a different political and intellectual note, with the election of the socialist François Mitterrand to the presidency in 1981. Throughout the eighties, Paris provided the world forum for progressive and left-wing critiques of Soviet Communism and for the elaboration of alternative forms of political radicalism. France functioned as an avant-garde observatory that focused on the world-changing events taking shape all around. For instance, as early as 1980, the French writer Marguerite Duras, who, as a member of the communist anti-Nazi resistance in her youth was a close friend of Mitterrand's, foresaw the fall of the Berlin Wall. She wrote enthusiastically about the Polish trade-union Solidarity's strikes in the Gdansk shipyard, led by future Nobel Peace Prize winner Lech Walesa. In the period between 1973 and 1978, another future Nobel Peace Prize winner, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, published the *Gulag Archipelago*, which he had written in secrecy in the USSR, in three volumes in Paris. It provided the definitive account of Stalin's death camps and the final statement about the failure of Soviet Communism and became a point of reference for poststructuralist philosophers' critiques of Marxist philosophy. Last but not least: Ayatollah Khomeini, the political leader of the Iranian Islamist revolution of 1979, lived in exile in Paris in the years preceding the fall of the Shah. The progressive politics as well as intellectual life of the eighties were dominated by the multiple energies emanating from Paris.

The speed and intensity of these convulsive events could not fail to affect the idea and the place of Europe, the legacy of the colonial and fascist past, in a changing geo-political world order. As the former West developed a more acute awareness of its colonial and postcolonial legacy, the critiques of Eurocentrism became a central concern, which connected to the poststructuralist discussions about the legacy of Enlightenment humanism and new forms of cosmopolitanism. These developments also had an impact on the political project of the European Union (EU), which embarked on an expansion process⁰³ in the midst of the post-communist/postcolonial conjunction. I will return to this.

PARIS, JE T'ADORE

French philosophy, with its combination of theoretical exuberance and political passions, provided an embarrassment of intellectual riches that made it the key intellectual horizon for my generation. Paris at the time was, philosophically speaking, simply the most exciting place on Earth. While I enrolled for my postgraduate degree at the Sorbonne in what they called 'History of systems of



Demonstration in solidarity with American women after the election of Ronald Reagan, Paris, 30 June 1982. Front row, holding a drum, from left to right: Rosi Braidotti, Oristelle Bonis. A few rows behind them: Danielle Haase-Dubosc

03

The Maastricht Treaty was signed in 1992, the same year as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), while the World Trade Organization (WTO) is set up in 1995.

thought', which was related to Foucault's Chair at the Collège de France, I savoured everything the city had to offer intellectually. The radical university of Vincennes hosted some of the best minds of the day: Hélène Cixous, Jean-François Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze, to name but a few. The Collège de France starred Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, whose magisterial courses on bio-power are forever engraved in my mind. Luce Irigaray held seminars in makeshift locations after Lacan expelled her from his 'École freudienne' for excessive independence of mind. It was not until I started attending Deleuze's seminars at the marginal university of Vincennes, however, that I discovered the complexities of listening to a genius: that was what great philosophy in the making was all about.

Philosophically, I related mostly to the branch of poststructuralism known as the 'line of immanence', which runs through Spinoza, Nietzsche, Foucault and Deleuze, as opposed to the 'line of transcendence', which runs through Kant, Derrida, Levinas. This tradition of critical thought inspired my own attempts to rearticulate a radical sense of materialism, embodiment, and accountability. By bringing back the marginalized tradition of political Spinozism, moreover, the materialist branch of poststructuralist philosophy in the eighties also redefined the question of political praxis in terms of ethical agency.

Developments in feminist theory also played a formative role in my development, and that of the decade. The Lacanian psychoanalytic feminist movement was at the centre of the scene, notably the 'psychanalyse et politique' group of Antoinette Fouque — who set up the Éditions des femmes and edited the magazine *Des femmes hebdo* (1982). Luce Irigaray, being *persona non grata* to the Lacanians, ran her own independent seminars and collaborated with several feminist collectives of Paris, notably *Sorcières* and *Histoires d'Elles*. Simone de Beauvoir was still very active and her group gathered round the journal *Les Temps Modernes*, which from 1973 devoted a special section — 'Chroniques du sexisme ordinaire' — to feminist issues. Julia Kristeva, Michèle Montrelay and Marcelle Marini were teaching groundbreaking classes at Paris VII, as did historian Michelle Perrot. There was a strong group of feminist sociologists around Christine Delphy but they hardly taught. In 1981, they founded the interdisciplinary social sciences journal *Questions féministes* (later *Nouvelles questions féministes*), which included Monique Wittig for a while.

In Paris in 1981–1982, I also crossed paths with great American academic feminists like Kate Stimpson, Nancy Miller, Domna Stanton, Joan Scott and Naomi Schor, who came to Europe and were carefully following the new developments in France in that period and translating them into English. They were part of



National Pro-Abortion Women's March, 6 October 1979. From left to right: Martine Storti, Sophie Chauveau, Luce Irigaray; Simone Iff, Huguette Bouchardeau, Maya Surduts. Behind Maya, in the second row: Christine Buci-Glucksmann



Press Conference on the Iranian Revolution, La Mutualité Hall, Paris, 1979. Feminists petitioning the new regime for women's rights. From left to right: Delphine Seyrig, Kate Millett

a wave of American academics who were especially taken with the psychoanalytic and semiotic aspects of the new groups and translated and exported these to the USA. This was to produce the 'Franco-American disconnection' (Stanton 1980), which would make 'New French Feminism' (De Courtivron and Marks 1980) into a global phenomenon⁰⁴. It could not fail to affect French women themselves. Some were turned into stars, notably Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray, who, incidentally, are not at all native French, Cixous being a Jewish Algerian; Kristeva Bulgarian and Irigaray Belgian. Others however felt dispossessed and misrepresented; there was widespread concern about misleading interpretations of the concept and theories involved and the risk of depoliticizing them.

The orchestrated import of French ideas into the USA, which made 'traveling theories' (Said 1978) into an established practice and turned the task of translation into a new discursive political economy, also opened up a new academic market, mostly in literary theory, comparative literature, cultural and gender studies and film theory. The impact of French thought on international feminist theory and practice was nothing short of an epistemological revolution.⁰⁵ In the mid-eighties, as the notion and the politics of difference moved centre stage,⁰⁶ American feminism plunged into the 'sex wars' that would divide its radical wing.⁰⁷

Philosophy departments however took a clear and explicit distance from these fashionable trends and closed ranks. From 1980 to 1995, the public debate around the critical legacy of the seventies grew more bitter and contested. The rise of Reaganomics and Thatcherite authoritarianism installed a climate of right-wing political backlash, which could not fail to attack the credibility of European and especially French poststructuralist theories. These were dismissed by the political Right as being both relativistic and a sign of wishy-washy liberalism. Their hostility continued to grow throughout the nineties as the 'theory wars'⁰⁸ (Sprinker 1995; Neilson 1995; Butler and Scott 1992) raged through American universities, fuelled also by the rise of the religious Christian Right. By 1995, the game was over and the counter-offensive against poststructuralism was well in place (Gallop 1997; Spivak 2003). Nonetheless, the inspirational power of French theories, feminist and other, remained high and affected the most critical and creative minds of that generation of academics.

Deleuze was one of the first to comment on this hasty and fallacious historical dismissal of critical radicalism in both politics and philosophy.⁰⁹ Targeting the fame-seeking narcissism of the *nouveaux philosophes*, Deleuze stressed the political conservatism of their practice, which reasserted the banality of individualistic self-interest, in keeping with the neoconservative political liberalism of that era. Deleuze stressed instead how his

04

Jane Weinstock and I published a critical review of this phenomenon in 1980.

05

See the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective (1990); Adriana Cavarero (1990); Herta Nagl-Docekal and Herlinde Pauer-Studer (1990), and Andrea Malhofer (1995); Celia Amorós (1985); Maria Isabel Santa Cruz et al. (1994) and Henrietta Moore (1994).

06

Eisenstein and Jardine 1980; and Frye 1996.

07

Vance 1984.

08

See Jeffrey Williams, ed., *PC Wars: Politics and Theory in the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

09

Gilles Deleuze, 'On the New Philosophers (Plus a More General Problem)' and 'May '68 Didn't Happen', in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006).

own critical philosophy laboured to avoid and critique the arrogance of that universalizing posture. Other leading philosophers such as Lyotard, Dominique Lecourt, and the gay activist Guy Hocquenghem, also took a clear stand against the trivialization and self-serving dismissal of the spirit of radical philosophy by a new generation of opportunistic intellectual entrepreneurs.¹⁰

The Trans-Atlantic disconnection that dominated our philosophical horizons also shaped the academic careers of my generation. We — the graduate students of a field of feminist research that formally did not yet exist — witnessed the genesis of a new system of import-export of ideas that gave us a foretaste of cultural globalization. We could also see glaring disparities not only in the selection of which French thinkers were being translated into English, but also in the speed of publication of these translations.¹¹ We watched the meteoric rise of Derrida and Foucault in the USA and wondered why Deleuze was left behind.¹² As a consequence, today we know that it is historically but also theoretically impossible to speak of French feminist theory without implying the Trans-Atlantic nexus and that these theories essentially belong to the English-speaking world (Oliver 2000; Cavallaro 2003).

THE TIME-BOMB OF RADICAL PEDAGOGICS

The generation of feminists situated between 1980 and 1995 was the first to enjoy the institutional presence of supportive and talented women teachers and supervisors, many of whom were feminists themselves, such as Genevieve Lloyd, Seyla Benhabib, and Luce Irigaray. The effects of the actual, physical presence of women lecturers in philosophy departments beginning in the seventies throughout the eighties cannot be stressed enough. The influence of these progressive teachers on my generation of radicalized younger women philosophers engaged in feminism was to be everlasting. But, much as we enjoyed thinking back through our mothers, we were far from dutiful daughters.

The eighties generation sought to challenge the false universalism of philosophical thought as being a form of particularism: it protected male, white privileges and inflated them to transcendental proportions. I and my peer groups focused on highlighting the difference that feminist philosophers can make to the actual practice of the discipline. In the longer term, many of us actually left philosophy as an institutional site and contributed to the creation of new interdisciplinary fields.¹³ Being pioneers in women's studies, we were given the chance to develop institutional, pedagogical, and methodological structures that operationalized the full potential of non-dialectical and anti-hierarchical

10

See Jean-François Lyotard and Jacob Rogozinski, 'La Police de la pensée', *L'Autre Journal* 10 (1985); Dominique Lecourt, *Les Piètres penseurs* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999); published in English as *Mediocracy: French Philosophy Since the Mid-1970s*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2001); Guy Hocquenghem, *Lettre ouverte à ceux qui sont passés du col Mao au Rotary* (Marseille: Agone, 1986). *The nouveaux philosophes* will later strike a political alliance with the French right-wing politicians, like Sarkozy.

11

For instance, Julia Kristeva's work appeared fast in English: *About Chinese Women* (originally published in 1974) came out in 1977, *Desire in Language* (originally published in 1969) in 1980, the *Kristeva Reader* in 1986. Hélène Cixous was slightly behind, with the 1976 translation of 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (originally published in 1975) and the 1986 translation of *The Newly Born Woman* (co-written with Catherine Clément and originally published in 1975); *The Book of Promethea* (originally published in 1983) in 1991, and the *The Hélène Cixous Reader* in 1994. Luce Irigaray, however, lagged behind, with the double translation of both *Speculum of the Other Woman* (originally published in 1974) and *This Sex Which is Not One* (originally published in 1977) in 1985, *The Ethics of Sexual Difference* (originally published in 1984) in 1993, after which the speed picked up somehow.

12

The linguistically oriented movement, inspired by Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes, was centred at the Yale school of literary theory; see

difference. In so doing we ended up altering the very theoretical premises of emancipatory feminism from which we had started, innovating on content and concepts. We also started canonizing a firm corpus of feminist scholarship that institutionalized the idea of collective teamwork as a key collaborative method. As Joan Kelly argued,¹⁴ feminism carried a double-edged vision that combined oppositional consciousness with deep empowering creativity. The affirmative element within the feminist recomposition of knowledge is one of my generation's lasting theoretical legacies.

The core of my philosophical interest, like for so many in my generation, coalesced around questions of identity, responsibility, becoming a subject of both knowledge and transformative politics or praxis. The main issues I engaged with were: how can we think with and on behalf of the excluded, the marginalized, the 'missing people'? What concepts and methods can help us do justice to the social and intellectual experiences and knowledge of those that have received no recognition in the language and institutional practice of conventional wisdom? What is the appropriate language in which to express silences and regenerate missing voices? The politics of discourse and the limits of representation became crucial concerns. So much of our collective embodied experience — as women, gays, pacifists, leftists — seemed somehow pitched against what was discursively acceptable or even sayable.

In 1988, I accepted an experimental new academic position at the university of Utrecht. So I left Paris to set up an interdisciplinary women's studies department and devise a new curriculum. Working in a feminist academic environment, in an interdisciplinary, intellectually cutting-edge and politically progressive — if not downright transgressive — context had its advantages. Radical pedagogics now became the basis for my institutional practice. The price to pay for such daring experiments, however, was to accept my distance from the institutional practice of philosophy. This new focus, though not without some pain, allowed me to liberate my own philosophical thought from a number of institutional habits. I became nomadic as a deep conceptual level as well as an existential condition.

EXTRA-MURAL PHILOSOPHY

In the same period, the French were also experimenting with new institutional structures. With the privilege of hindsight, it is clear that throughout the eighties, in response to both external prompts and internal dynamics, the practice of philosophy in Paris expanded towards activities that were outside the established institutions of the discipline. If the interdisciplinary university

Barbara Johnson (1980, 1998), Shoshana Felman (1993), Marjorie Garber (1997). The pioneers of French feminist theory in the US were Donna Stanton (1987); Nancy Miller (1986); Alice Jardine (1985); Naomi Schor (1987); Catharine Stimpson (1989) and Joan Scott (1999). Gayatri Spivak expanded it to postcolonial theory. Interest in Deleuze did not take off till the early two-thousands.

13

See my chapter with Judith Butler: 'Out of Bounds: Philosophy in an Age of Transition', in Braidotti, ed., *After Poststructuralism*, pp. 307–335.

14

See Joan Kelly: 'The Double-edged Vision of Feminist Theory', *Feminist Studies* 5, no. 1 (1979), pp. 216–227.



The official badge of the National Women's Strike, 8 March 1980



National Women's Strike, 8 March 1980. Holding the 'Histoires d'Elles' banner from left to right: Wendy Spinks, Katy Hamilton-Baillie

of Vincennes had provided the politicized model for the radical knowledge and training institution of the seventies, the Collège international de philosophie, founded in 1983 by Châtelet, Derida, Faye and Lecourt, with the support of President Mitterand, embodied the vision and inspiration of the eighties. These extramural trajectories brought philosophy closer to real life. This approach continued the activist dispositions of the sixties and seventies, but also reflected a new culture that was becoming more informed by the arts, media and popular culture.

Intellectual, even theoretical meetings took place in cafes, at conferences, in feminist collectives, at gay and lesbian political meetings, anti-war rallies and demonstrations, in editorial boards, bars, community radio stations, in music and film festivals. Often framed by transnational contexts, philosophical thinking moved beyond the specific 'sites' of legitimate institutionalization to produce the possibility of thinking critically and creatively, bringing philosophy in the world. Although it was formatted and framed by reason, thinking was an outward-bound, external, and often reactive activity, driven by forces and affects that acted independently of the rational will. This was important to us, both as philosophers and as feminists and gay and lesbian activists.

The collective character of philosophical thoughts in general and the trans-individual character of so many knowledge claims that I shared with others became central to my work. All the more so as I belong to an 'intermediary generation' that witnessed some key moments in the history of feminism: respectively the rise of the 'feminism of difference' in Paris, its re-implantation in the USA and the 'sex wars' in the USA. Having been the first generation of philosophers who studied with great feminist teachers, we also gained some first-hand experience of institutional gender politics. This also taught us bitter lessons from the start: feminist philosophers were not always well received in philosophy departments and were only occasionally supported by institutional means and funds. They often had to find other venues for seminar activity and collective discussions. And even today, academic philosophers tend to practice mono-disciplinary purity and to withdraw support from interdisciplinary approaches that would situate the task of thinking philosophically anywhere outside academic departments of philosophy. The objections to women's, feminist, queer, cultural and media studies are upheld. As these interdisciplinary programmes are more developed in the USA than in Europe, this leaves many European radical philosophers even more homeless.¹⁵

French philosophers have a long established tradition of intervention in social, cultural, and political life, as public intellectuals, social critics, and activists. The likes of Jean-Paul Sartre



National Women's Strike, 8 March 1980. The 'Histoires d'Elles' van at the Bastille. From left to right: Wendy Spinks, Jane Weinstock (with her back to camera), Rosi Braidotti

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The positive side of this situation, however, is that it contributes to the diaspora of philosophical ideas, which is generative, spreading them across the spectrum of society. As a result, philosophical reflection is no longer confined to academic settings, but has a broader reach [into the world and hybrid cross-pollinations occur whether the institutions like them or not. Think, for instance, of the role that philosophical thinking plays in human rights struggles, in non-governmental organizations such as Médecins sans Frontières, in Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Greenpeace. Consider also how many philosophical thinkers have made significant contributions to critical legal theory in recent years.

and Simone de Beauvoir stand high in this tradition, lending their support to a variety of crucial causes such as decolonization, socialism, antiracism, feminism and pacifism. They also founded alternative journals and publication venues, such as *Les Temps modernes*, *Questions feminists* and the daily newspaper *Libération*. There was, however, a difference in the scale and mode of engagements of the philosophers who came after the existentialist generation. They intervened on questions of justice, human suffering, responsibility, economic and social sustainability, and global belonging, making use of visual culture and media and reflecting on its meaning, but they did so less in the name of an engagement with Marxist or any other ideology than as an end in itself. They prioritized the critical analysis of power relations at both the macro and the micro levels as the main task for philosophers and brought into focus issues of sexuality, identity and cultural subjectivity.

Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze¹⁶ both captured the post-Marxist spirit of the times when they posited the emergence of a new function for the philosopher as public intellectual. If the contrast with the received Hegelian model of the universalistic philosopher as rational guardian of the moral development of mankind (the gender is not a coincidence) is easily drawn, the difference from the engaged or 'organic' intellectual of the previous generation of Gramscian and existential thinkers requires more cautious phrasing. As Foucault and Deleuze put it:

At one time, practice was considered an application of theory, a consequence; at other times, it had an opposite sense and it was thought to inspire theory ... In any event, their relationship was understood in terms of a process of totalization. For us, however, the question is seen in a different light. The relationships between theory and practice are far more partial and fragmentary. ... the relationship which holds in the application of a theory is never one of resemblance. ... Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another and theory is a relay from one practice to another. ... A theorizing intellectual, for us, is no longer a subject, a representing or representative consciousness. ... Representation no longer exists; there's only action—theoretical action and practical action which serve as relays and form networks.

Coherent in their practice, the poststructuralists predicate philosophy in the plural and move it toward social, political, and ethical concerns. They see themselves as 'specific' intellectuals, providers of critical services, analysts of the conditions of possibility of discourse, working with ideas that are also programmes



Simone de Beauvoir's Funeral, 19 April 1986. In the centre, waving (at her brother): Rosi Braidotti. Next to her: Marie-Jo Bonnet

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See Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, 'Intellectuals and Power', in *Language, Counter-Memory and Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 205–207.

for action rather than dogmatic stockpiles of beliefs. This style is 'problematizing' in its radical empiricism, or anti-universalism, and in the awareness of the partiality of all philosophical statements. As a result, the kind of philosophy that emerged in the late eighties was on the edge of institutionalization, embodying what Foucault called 'permanent critique'. Because of this radical commitment to philosophy and its outsides, training as philosophers while being activists at that point in time actually meant having to ask fundamental questions such as: Why think? How can we connect the practice of thinking to larger social and ethical concerns? How can we resist the negative and oppressive aspects of the present? What is philosophy all about and how can it help us lead politically useful, socially productive, and morally adequate lives? These questions resonated loudly with my feminist concerns and passions.

What attracted me to poststructuralism is that it was also one of the most effective answers to the decline of modernist utopias, mostly Marxism and various master narratives of politics. This kind of thinking made it not only possible but also necessary to connect the task of philosophy to the challenges coming from contemporary social movements—mostly those associated with feminists, gay and lesbian rights, environmentalists and peace activists, racial and ethnic minorities in the context of postcoloniality. I went on to develop the nomadic ethics of affirmation into a collective political practice that challenges the dominant representation of the subject of knowledge and develops the yet unrealized potential of multiple possible becoming.

WHAT IS EUROPEAN ABOUT CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY?

As I indicated earlier, the landmark date of 1989 also brought the question of Europe further onto the foreground. For one thing, it challenged the discursive equation of 'Europe' with 'French theory', which had been forged in the USA and caused a violent backlash in both countries. Secondly, it fostered the emergence of more Europe-wide perspectives. This changing historical context also played a part in rendering feminist philosophy especially complex in this period. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the expansion of the European Union, as well as the new wave of wars that emerge in the period (the first Gulf War, the Falklands War, and the Yugoslav and Balkans War), had a major impact on the development of continental and transnational feminism. The most immediate effect however, was the expansion of feminism both east and west of the former border, granting more visibility to feminist philosophers from former Eastern Europe. In the former East,



Simone de Beauvoir's Funeral,
19 April 1986

mainstream and feminist philosophical voices could finally get a wider audience, generating a philosophical renewal. I cannot stress enough the importance of original political thinkers, such as Belgrade-based Žarana Papić, whose work on nationalism and subjectivity remains fundamental. Daša Duhaček provides important analytical insights into Eastern European radical feminism as a critique of the patriarchal aspects of the Yugoslav communist state. The Croatian Rada Iveković, now based in Paris, challenges narratives that assume the centrality of a Western philosophical perspective by adopting a broadened, antinationalist and postcolonial perspective. But the phenomenon is so vast and rich that it deserves a fuller treatment than I can grant it here.

The late eighties in Europe were a period of political hope and of great expectations about the future of the European Union. As I stated explicitly in *Nomadic Subjects*, my awareness of what it means to be European — as opposed to holding an intellectual position on the issue — emerged from the experience of becoming a migrant in Australia. I was a European with Europe in exile, Europe in migration — the category 'European' became thinkable just as it lost its self-evidence. I think I became aware of my Europeanness in this moment of distance, of dis-identification, of loss, of taking my departure from that location. I carried that back with me when I returned to Europe via Paris.

And this was a very formative moment, when I became aware not only of the contingent nature of identity, but also of the extreme complexity of something that we could call European subject positions. Philosophically, as my work focused more on the project of decentring the subject and the practice of critical theory, race and postcolonial philosophical studies became more and more important. The critique of Eurocentrism evolved as the counterpart of the rejection of the universalizing powers of self-reflexive transcendental reason. The self-aggrandizing gesture that positions 'Europe' as a concept that mobilizes and enhances the higher human mental faculties has to be defeated, regrounded and held accountable.

More specifically it has to be read alongside the devastating historical phenomena that have been central to the alleged civilizing mission of the European 'mind': colonialism, racism, fascism. It was clear to me that recognizing this complex historical legacy meant to hold Eurocentric 'reason' accountable for its real-life effects in the world, while also acknowledging the great achievements of our culture. This was the beginning of wisdom and also of historical lucidity. As Glissant and Balibar argue, it is also the end of a self-replicating sense of ignorance about those 'others' who constitute such an integral part of European culture, including philosophy.

The early awareness that so many of my favourite philosophers were foreigners, migrants, exiles, grew into the project of returning European critical theory to its nomadic spirit. Another Europe is possible, one that rejects the imperial posture and its arrogant pretensions and accepts its new historical role as a significant peripheral. So, becoming accountable for my European-ness coincided with my becoming aware of the impossibility of being one, in the unitary sense of the term. Becoming nomadic seemed the most appropriate option for an antinationalist, anti-racist, non-Eurocentric and Europe-based feminist philosopher.

BEYOND

So hold me, Mom, in your long arms.

...

In your automatic arms. Your electronic arms.

In your arms.

So hold me, Mom, in your long arms.

Your petrochemical arms. Your military arms.

In your electronic arms.

Laurie Anderson, *Oh Superman*, 1981

Laurie Anderson was basking in the streets of the Latin Quarter when I was studying there — she is one of my intellectual heroines — both musically and politically. Her work proves that the posthuman sensibility was always already in the picture for my generation. As Donna Haraway published her paradigm-shifting text 'A Cyborg Manifesto' in 1985, a more creative but equally critical gaze fell upon the ongoing cybernetic revolution and its consequences for economic globalization in the era of the Anthropocene. The process of biogenetical recoding of reproduction, which began in 1978 with the birth of the first test-tube baby, Louise Brown, culminated with the cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1996, while the Human Genome Project was officially launched at the end of the eighties.

These scientific and technological advances accelerated the theoretical process of questioning the very status of what counts as human. Reflections on humanism — Western and non-Western — on posthumanism and post-anthropocentrism increased not only within philosophy, contributing to the so-called 'ethical turn', but also in trans-disciplinary areas, or studies, like gender, queer, transnational, postcolonial and environmental studies. The convergence of these powerful reflections on humanism and anthropocentrism (Braidotti 2013) encouraged many to acknowledge that thinking is not the prerogative of humans only,

but that it actually takes place in the world. The relational ontology of the neo-materialist branch of poststructuralism, notably the creative neo-Spinozism of Deleuze, triggers and sustains the posthuman elements of our contemporary condition. Retrospectively, I would say that dealing critically with multiple 'supermen' of all kinds and denomination, in order to cut them down to size, has been one of the contributions of my generation. Because I know that Anderson is right when she sings: 'when love is gone, there's always justice. And when justice is gone, there's always force.'

And when there is force, there's always the collective pursuit of affirmative becoming.

Badovinac's first exhibition to address these issues was 'Body and the East: From the 1960s to the Present', 1998. She also initiated the first Eastern European art collection: Arteast 2000+. One of her most important recent projects is 'NSK from Kapital to Capital: Neue Slowenische Kunst: The Event of the Final Decade of Yugoslavia', Moderna galerija, 2015. Badovinac was Slovenian Commissioner at the Venice Biennale from 1993 to 1997, 2005 and 2017, and Austrian Commissioner at the São Paulo Biennial in 2002 and the President of CIMAM, 2010–2013.

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HAKIM BEY (born 1945) is an American political writer, essayist, and poet, known for first proposing the concept of the Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ), based in part on a historical review of pirate utopias. He has worked with the not-for-profit publishing project Autonomedia in Brooklyn, New York, and has written essays on such diverse topics as Tong traditions, the utopian Charles Fourier, the Fascist Gabriele D'Annunzio, alleged connections between Sufism and ancient Celtic culture, technology and Luddism, and Amanita muscaria use in ancient Ireland. He writes regularly in publications such as *Fifth Estate* and the NYC-based *First of the Month*.

MANUEL BORJA-VILLEL (born 1957) has been the director of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (MNCARS) in Madrid since 2008.

Previously, he was the director of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies and the MACBA / Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona. Together with searching for new forms of institutionality, an important part of his programme in the MNCARS is centred on the development and reorganization of the collection, changing the method of presentation of works. Recent exhibitions he has programmed include: 'Pity and Terror in Picasso's Path to Guernica' (2017), 'Marcel Broodthaers: A Retrospective' (2016), 'Territories and Fictions, Thinking a New Way of the World' (2016), 'Not Yet, On the Reinvention of Documentary and the Critique of Modernism' (2015), 'Really Useful Knowledge' (2014), and 'Playgrounds, Reinventing the Square' (2014).

ROSI BRAIDOTTI (born 1954) is a philosopher and Distinguished University Professor at Utrecht University. She holds a BA from the Australian National University; a PhD from the Université Panthéon-Sorbonne in Paris and Honorary Degrees from Helsinki and Linköping. She is a Member of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the Academia Europaea. In 2005 she was awarded a Knighthood in the Order of the Netherlands Lion. Her books include *Nomadic Subjects* (2011), *Nomadic Theory* (2012) and *The Posthuman* (2013). In 2016 she co-edited with Paul Gilroy: *Conflicting Humanities*.
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CRISTINA CÁMARA (born 1975) is an art historian and cultural manager. Since 2006, she is the curator of Film and Video Collection at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía where she has been part of the curatorial team of exhibitions such as 'Territories and

The Long 1980s considers the significance of the 1980s for culture and society today. It revisits this pivotal decade via a collection of microhistories from across Europe that span the fields of art, culture, and politics. Central to the stories in this book is the changing relationship between ideologies, governments, and their publics, the effects of which have come to shape the contemporary condition of Europe and beyond. Artists, writers, and activists were responding to and articulating these changes in myriad ways: in the streets, through words, images, objects, and actions. At the same time, new subjectivities were emerging at the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality, all voices that were demanding to be heard.

The publication is divided into four thematic chapters: 1. No Alternative? (on countercultures, alternative forms of self-organization and art as activism); 2. Know Your Rights (on civil liberties, the rising planetary consciousness and new ecologies); 3. Processes of Identification (on anti-colonial positions and the drive for sexual and gender equality through culture); 4. New Order (on the far-reaching effects of the neoliberal regime and, finally, the significance of the year 1989). Comprising newly commissioned essays by leading thinkers alongside seventy case studies, including images and archival material published for the first time, this reader offers an invaluable and alternative reading of the recent past.

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