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Women Migrants from East to West

Gender, Mobility and Belonging in Contemporary Europe

Edited by

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Chapter 1

On Becoming Europeans

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The notion of a 'new' European identity as a multicultural social space within the framework of the European Union (EU) is controversial to say the least, especially in the current political context of increasing Euroscepticism. The EU is positioned simultaneously as a major player within the global economy and as an alternative social space. In other words, the EU can be seen as perpetuating the theme of Europe, appointing itself as a centre which universalizes its own 'civilization'. However, it also constitutes a solid social democratic and hence progressive project, which not only counteracts the aggressive neo-liberalism of the U.S.A. on a number of key issues (privacy; telecommunication; genetically modified food and the environment), but also values human rights and world peace.

In this chapter I will emphasize the progressive potential of the EU. This project entails the re-definition not only of the interrelation of the member states, but also of the power-relations within them. This process of revision of identity triggers contradictory reactions. Not the least contradictory is the simultaneous celebration of trans-national spaces on the one hand, and the resurgence of hyper-nationalisms at the micro-level on the other. The global city and Fortress Europe stand both face-to-face and as two sides of the same coin (Sassen 1995). In relation to this, I want to defend a process of the 'becoming-minoritarian' of Europe (Deleuze and Guattari 1980) as a way of both bypassing the binary global-local and of destabilizing the established definitions of European identity. My position rests on the assumption of the decline of Eurocentrism as a historical event, and that this represents a qualitative shift of perspective in our collective sense of identity. Several political movements today, ranging from the Green Party to the European Social Forum, give top priority to a post-Eurocentric vision of the European Union. Some progressive thinkers, including the feminist scholars in this

book, are also critiquing nationalism as a necessary step towards the construction of a new European citizenship.

My aim in this chapter is to draw out a number of theoretical connections between different elements and themes which are discussed elsewhere in this book, such as the interrelation between identities, subject positions and affectivity or love relationships on the one hand, and issues of citizenship on the other. My orientation is philosophical and I practice philosophy as the art of connection making. I follow both Foucault's redefinition of the philosopher as a technician of practical knowledge, and the feminist commitment to produce relevant knowledge claims that reflect the lived experience of women and of other marginal subjects. This philosophical practice is enacted through cartographic analyses of specific problem areas. My contribution, both in this chapter and in this project as a whole, focuses on the cluster: gender/subjectivity/Europe. The approach is meta-methodological, rather than meta-discursive. As a materialist cartographic practice, post-structuralist philosophy is well suited to the task of mapping out complex interactions among many structures, subjects and relations. I see it fundamentally as a critique of power, understood both in the negative sense of constraints (*potestas*) and in the positive sense of empowerment and the production of discursive practice (*potentia*). By stressing these interrelated elements, I hope to take forward the discussion on the progressive and critical possibilities of the 'new' Europe.

It is also the case that continental philosophy – prior to and including poststructuralism – is historically connected to the issue of European identity and 'civilization'. Since the end of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century, the 'crisis' of European philosophy has both reflected and highlighted larger socio-political issues linked to the geopolitical status of Europe and to the growing sense of crisis about European identity. Nietzsche and Freud, then Husserl and Fanon, and later Adorno and the Frankfurt school are evidence of this trend. According to the post-structuralist generation – Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida and Irigaray – the crisis of philosophical humanism coincides historically with the decline of Europe as an imperial world-power, especially after the Second World War. Nowadays, wise old men like Habermas and Derrida and progressive spirits like Balibar have taken the lead in the public debate by stressing the advantages of a post-nationalist sense of the European Union.

In so far as Continental philosophy carries an in-built question about European identity, philosophical self-reflexivity – which in my case takes the form of a materialist cartography – has a unique contribution to make to the debate on Europe. It can help to de-segregate intellectual debates which tend to stay confined within set discursive communities. Philosophical reflection assesses and often resets theoretical lines of demarcation and thus it can produce discursive interconnections along areas or questions of common concern.

My argument is a post-nationalist one: one of opposition to nationalism and resistance against it, is a defensive European nationalist wave of post-European and (2002a) function fragmentation (one thing and 324–39). The resurgence of nation coexistence and citizenship and fragmentation coexists with (habib 1999). the triumph of ethnic wars of the nation and extreme

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My argument is about the 'becoming-minor' of Europe, in the sense of a post-nationalist European space. This project rests on two sets of arguments: one political, the other historical. Politically, on the Continent, the opposition to the European Union is led by the authoritarian Right, which is nationalist and xenophobic. As Stuart Hall (1987; 1990) put it, the great resistance against the European Union, as well as the American suspicion of it, is a defensive response to a process that aims at overcoming the idea of European nation-states. The short-range effect of this process is a nationalist wave of paranoia and xenophobic fears, which is simultaneously anti-European and racist. I have argued that late postmodernity (Braidotti 2002a) functions through the paradox of simultaneous globalization and fragmentation. It is as if the law of the 'excluded middle' did not hold, and one thing and its opposite can simultaneously be the case (Appadurai 1994: 324–39). Thus, the expansion of European boundaries coincides with the resurgence of micro-nationalist borders at all levels in Europe today. Unification coexists with the closing down of borders; the common European citizenship and the common currency co-exist with increasing internal fragmentation and regionalism; a new, allegedly post-nationalist, identity coexists with the return of xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism (Benhabib 1999). The disintegration of the Soviet empire marks simultaneously the triumph of the advanced market economy and the return of tribal ethnic wars of the most archaic kind. Globalization means both homogenization and extreme power differences (Eisenstein 1999).

Strong opposition to the EU is also voiced, however, by the nostalgic Left, which seems to miss the topological foundations for international working class solidarity. The cosmopolitan tradition of socialism militates against the European dimension: solidarity with the third world always carries a politically-correct consensus, whereas an interest in European matters is often dismissed as being vain and self-obsessive. Speaking as a left-wing feminist intellectual, I must say that the Left has often been unable to react with energy and vision to the historical evidence of the dislocation of European supremacy and the coming of the American empire (Hardt and Negri 2000). The Left has also been slow to understand the non-dialectical and schizophrenic nature of advanced capitalism (Deleuze and Guattari 1972; 1980). In this light, the feminist, pacifist and anti-racist movements can be of great inspiration in drawing more lucid and relevant political cartographies of contemporary power relations.

Historically, the project of the European Union originates in the defeat of fascism and Nazism after World War II. The moral and political bankruptcy of European 'civilization' was exemplified by the holocaust perpetrated against the Jewish, and Roma populations, as well as the persecution of homosexuals and communists by the Nazi and fascist regimes. The life and work of one of the initiators of the project of European federation – Altiero

Spinelli (Spinelli 1988; 1992) – testifies to this, as does his wife Ursula Hirschmann (Spinelli 1979; Hirschmann 1993), and Ursula's brother Albert Hirschman (Hirschman 1945; 1994). The project of the EU is consequently grounded in anti-fascism, anti-nationalism and anti-militarism (Spinelli and Rossi 1998). It was imposed on the European nation-states as a punishment for two Franco-German wars that spilled over into global wars. In the context of the Cold War, the new European community, as a showcase of Western superiority, also played the role of streamlining the reconstruction of Europe's war-torn economy.

The two branches of my argument – the political and the historical – converge upon a single conclusion: that the European Union as a progressive project means a site of possible political resistance against nationalism, xenophobia and racism, bad habits that are endemic to the old imperial Europe. It follows therefore that the question of the European Union no longer coincides with European identity, but rather constitutes a rupture from it and a transformation. The scholarship reflects this double-track: there is far more work on European identity, as such, than on the European Union. Feminists are especially notable for their absence from discussions on the post-nationalist project of the EU, and are prone to facile anti-Europeanism.

This view of Europe as a post-nationalist project is very attuned to feminist critiques of power. Europe as a world-power has practiced a form of universalism that has implied the exclusion or consumption of others. In a poststructuralist frame of reference, these constitutive 'others' are the specular complements of the subject of modernity. They are the woman; the ethnic or racialized other; and the natural environment, including animals, plants and forests. They constitute, respectively, the second sex or sexual complement of Man; the coloured, racialized or marked other that allows the Europeans to universalize their whiteness as the defining trait of humanity; and the naturalized environment against which technology is pitched and developed. These 'others' are of crucial importance to the constitution of the identity of the Same: they are structurally connected to it – albeit by negation. One cannot move without the other, therefore the redefinition of European identity intrinsically poses the question of the social and discursive status of 'difference', both in the sense of sexual difference and that of ethnic diversity.

The project of European unification involves a process of consciousness-raising, which in turn expresses a critique of the self-appointed missionary role of Europe as the alleged centre of the world. In an argument that runs parallel to feminist theory, this vision of Europe promotes a re-grounding of this pretentious and false universalism into a more situated, local perspective. As the work of feminist philosophers like Genevieve Lloyd (1985) has pointed out, universalistic claims are actually highly particular and partial. Feminist epistemologists, especially Sandra Harding (1991) and Donna Haraway (1990a), have produced some of the most significant critiques of the

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false universalism of the European subject of knowledge. They have also offered powerful alternative accounts of both subjectivity and of an enlarged sense of scientific objectivity. This process of epistemological revision runs parallel to new theorizations of the Subject. While it does not always result in such theorizations, it does however amount to a revision of the ethnocentrism implicit in a universalistic posture which positions Europe as the centre of the knowing subject: science as the white man's burden (Harding 1993). Such a dislocation of pseudo-scientific assertions of white superiority amounts to a re-grounding of Europe, no longer as the centre, but as one of the many peripheries in the world today. This process of consciousness-raising is a sober awakening to the concrete particularity of the European situation.

The Politics of Location as Method and as Strategy

The politics of location is the method and the strategy which was developed (Rich 1987) and later theorized by feminists to account for consciousness-raising. It is also a way of making sense of diversity among women, understood as the binary opposites of the phallogocentric subject. This practice is coupled with that of epistemological and political accountability which is understood as the practice that consists of unveiling the power locations which one inevitably inhabits as the site of one's identity. The practice of accountability (for one's embodied and embedded locations) as a relational, collective activity of undoing power differentials is linked to two crucial notions: memory and narratives. They activate the process of putting into words, that is to say bringing into symbolic representation, that which escapes consciousness. In relation to migrant women themselves, the emphasis on remembering and narrating is central to the methodology of this project. Through all the chapters we see how these stories provide evidence of the plurality, ambivalence and contradictions of the subject. And through these analyses, we can see the richness and the complexity of these processes.

A 'location' in fact, is not a self-appointed and self-designed subject-position. It is a collectively shared and constructed, jointly occupied, spatio-temporal, territory. Because it is so familiar, it escapes self-scrutiny. The 'politics of location' consequently supports the process of consciousness-raising and results in a political awakening (Grewal and Kaplan 1994). 'Politics of locations' are cartographies of power which rest on a form of self-criticism, arrived at through a critical, genealogical self-narrative; they are relational and outside-directed. These 'embodied' accounts illuminate and transform our knowledge of ourselves and of the world. Thus, black women's texts and experiences make white women see the limitations of our locations, truths and discourses. Feminist knowledge is an inter-active and self-reflexive process that relies on networks of exchanges. It brings out

aspects of our existence, especially our own involvement with power that we had not noticed before (Mohanty 1992).

'Figurations' of alternative feminist subjectivity¹ differ from classical 'metaphors' precisely in calling into play a sense of accountability for one's locations. They express materially-embedded cartographies and as such are self-reflexive and not parasitic upon a process of metaphorization of 'others'. The figurations that emerge from this process act as the spot-light that illuminates aspects of one's practice which were blind spots before. By extension, a new figuration of the subject functions like conceptual *personae*. As such, it is no metaphor, but acts rather as a cognitive map, i.e., it is a materially embedded and embodied account of one's power-relations. On the creative level, it expresses the rate of change, transformation or affirmative deconstruction of the power one inhabits. 'Figuration' materially embodies the stages of a metamorphosis of a subject position, which veers towards all that the phallogocentric system does not want it to become (Braidotti 2002a).

A range of new, alternative subjectivities have indeed emerged in the shifting landscapes of postmodernity. They contribute to the creation of a new social imaginary to replace established representations of women. They are contested, multi-layered and internally contradictory subject-positions, all of which does not make them any less ridden with power-relations. They are hybrid and in-between social categories for whom traditional descriptions in terms of sociological categories such as 'marginals', 'migrants', or 'minorities' are, as Saskia Sassen (1995) suggests, grossly inadequate. From the angle of 'different constitutive others' this inflationary production of different differences simultaneously expresses the logic of capitalist proliferation and exploitation, but also the emerging subjectivities of positive and self-defined others. It all depends on one's locations or situated perspectives. Far from seeing this as a form of relativism, I see it as an embedded and embodied form of enfolded materialism. It is important to resist the uncritical reproduction of Sameness on a molecular, global or planetary scale by approaching differences in a non-dialectical and multi-layered framework which stresses their subversive potential.

The work on power, difference and the politics of location offered by postcolonial and anti-racist feminist thinkers² who are familiar with the European situation helps us to illuminate the paradoxes of the present. One of the most significant effects of late postmodernity in Europe is the phenomenon of trans-culturalism in a pluri-ethnic or multi-cultural European social space. World-migration – a huge movement of population from periphery to centre, working on a world-wide scale of 'scattered hegemonies' (Grewal and Kaplan 1994) – has challenged the claim to an alleged cultural homogeneity of European nation-states and of the incipient European Union. Present-day Europe is struggling with multi-culturalism at a time of increasing racism and xenophobia. The paradoxes, power-dissymetries and

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fragmentations of the present historical context require that we shift the political debates from the issue of differences between cultures, to differences within the same culture. These are the shifting grounds on which periphery and centre confront each other, with a new level of complexity that defies dualistic or oppositional thinking. In this book, our research on the internal European migrations show what this approach can mean for Europe and European women.

Feminist theory argues that if it is the case that a socio-cultural mutation is taking place in the direction of a multi-ethnic, multi-media society, then the transformation cannot affect only the pole of 'the others'; it must equally dislocate the position and the prerogative of 'the same', the former centre. In other words, what is changing is not merely the terminology or metaphorical representation of the subjects, but the very structure of subjectivity, the social relations, and the social imaginary that support it. Again, the research presented within this project gives some indications in this direction. It is the syntax of social relations, as well as their symbolic representation, that is in upheaval. The customary standard-bearers of Euro-centric phallocentrism no longer hold in a civil society that is, amongst others, sexed female and male, multi-cultural and not inevitably Christian. More than ever, the question of social transformation begs that of representation: what can the male, white, Christian monotheistic symbolic do for emerging subjects-in-process? The challenges, as well as the anxieties evoked by them, mark patterns of becoming that require new forms of expression and representation, that is to say socially mediated forms which need to be assessed critically. Feminist theory is a very relevant and useful navigational tool in these stormy times of locally enacted, global phenomena, i.e. 'G-local' changes.³

The point of the matter is that we live in a world which is organized along multiple axes of mobility, circulation, flows of people and commodities (Cresswell 1997). Displacement is a central feature of the postmodern era, as critics like Probyn (1990) have also pointed out. Moreover, as Ernesto Laclau (1995) has argued, the point is that processes of hybridization and nomadic identities are neither marginal, nor self-chosen phenomena. It is rather the case, as Dahrendorf (1990) has argued, that advanced capitalism itself functions by organizing constant flows and displacements, in such a way as to erode its own foundations. The crisis of the nation state in the age of transnational capital flow is a significant example of this (Mouffe 1994); and contemporary technologies are accelerating this trend (Castells 1996).

Let me, however, make one point perfectly clear: I would never want to argue that rootlessness and homelessness, or constant mobility and displacement are universal features, although they have taken place, to different extents, in all periods of history. On the contrary, I do take shifts, mutations and processes of change as key features of the particular historical period we are going through. Precisely because of this, social critics need

to be very situated in their approach to any analysis of the new subject-positions which have become available in post-industrial times – as we have sought to do here in the analyses of the subjectivities of the migrant women interviewed. The differences in degrees, types, kinds and modes of mobility and – even more significantly – of non-mobility need to be mapped out with precision and sensitivity. This cartographic accuracy is made necessary by the fact that non-unitary subject positions, hybrids, nomads and cyborgs are key elements of our historicity. They function as generic terms for the indexation of different degrees of access and entitlement to subject positions in the historical era of postmodernity. They situate subjects in one of the many poly-located centres which weave together the global economy. Power is the key-issue, and mobility is a term that indexes access to it. As such, power relations are internally contradictory and they require suitable politically-invested cartographies that account for them.

James Clifford (1994), who is more sympathetic to metaphors of travel and displacement than to nomadism, makes careful distinctions between different kinds of travel from the colonial exploration or bourgeois 'tour', to the itineraries of immigrant or indentured labourers. These differences need to be accounted for in such a way as to make the power differences explicit. These accounts are narratives of the diaspora, which, at the end of this millennium concern most communities, though in different degrees. The different narratives, however, have to be embedded in specific histories and geographies, thus preventing hasty metaphorizations. This goal echoes the aims of the feminist cartographic and materialist philosophies of the subject which I am defending. It is a way of avoiding universalistic generalizations and grounding critical practice so as to make it accountable. At both the micro and the macro-levels of the constitution of subjectivity, we need more complexities both in terms of genders and across ethnicities, class and age. This is the social agenda that needs to be addressed in the framework of the new European Union.

I want to propose therefore an alliance between two parallel but distinct projects and lines of argumentation, which also correspond to different forms of consciousness. They are, on the one hand, the deconstruction of the unitary idea of Europe as the 'cradle' of civilization – with its corollary implications of liberal individualism and universalism; on the other, the deconstruction of the unitary idea of gendered identities, fixed in the essentialist opposition masculine/feminine. In the same way that feminist theories after poststructuralism promote a split, multiple, hybrid, diasporic and nomadic vision of the subject-in-process, I see the new European Union as a framework for the transformation of Europe in the sense of our becoming-minoritarian.

This dual deconstructive strategy keeps the two axes of gendered and European subjectivities parallel but quite distinct and perhaps even a-symmetrical to each other. I think such distinctions are important because fem-

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inism and European consciousness are grounded in different political movements: the former in the many world-historical women's movements, the latter in the progressive potential of the project of European unification. Distinctions between these two parallel lines are important also on another score: these two discourses – gender and Europe – are separate at the institutional level and they suffer from an excessive segregation of discursive competences. European discussions on citizenship and feminist debates do not intersect easily and they seldom cross-reference each other. As a result, EU discussions on the social role of women hardly draw on the rather impressive amount of research compiled by feminists over the last twenty years on the question of alternative forms of political subjectivity. A new alliance is therefore needed between, on the one hand, a post-nationalist vision of European subjectivity based on the critique of Eurocentrism and, on the other, the multiple visions of the subject-as-process which stem from the rejection of feminine essentialism within feminism. This is an attempt to come to terms with the paradoxes and internal contradictions of our own historical predicament as 'post-Europe Europeans', just as gender theory has had to deal with the fragments, the deconstruction and re-construction of the 'post-Woman women' in the feminist processes of transformation (Braidotti 1994; 2002a).

Re-grounding Europe

The European Union project has to do with the sobering experience of taking stock of our specific location and, following the feminist politics of location, adopting embedded and embodied perspectives. This is the opposite of the grandiose and aggressive universalism of the past: it is a situated and accountable perspective. It is about turning our collective memory to the service of a new political and ethical project, which is forward-looking and not nostalgic. Daniel Cohn-Bendit recently stated that if we want to make this European business work, we really must start from the assumption that Europe is the specific periphery where we live and that we must take responsibility for it. Imagining anything else would be a repetition of that flight into abstraction for which our culture is (in)famous: at best, it may procure us the benefits of escapism; at worst, the luxury of guilt. We have to start from where we are. This is a plea for lucidity and for accountability. We need both political strategies and imaginary figurations that are adequate to our historicity.

This is, however, only one side of the paradoxical coin of European deconstruction in the age of the European Union. The other side, simultaneously true and yet absolutely contradictory, is the danger of recreating a sovereign centre through the new European federation. That the two are

simultaneously the case makes European identity into one of the most contested areas of political and social philosophy in our world at the moment. This reactive tendency towards a sovereign sense of the Union is also known as the 'Fortress Europe' syndrome, and has been extensively criticized by feminists and antiracists. They warn us against the danger of replacing the former Eurocentrism with a new 'Europism' (Essed 1991), i.e. the belief in an ethnically pure Europe. The question of ethnic purity is crucial and it is, of course, the germ of Eurofascism.

One concrete way to apply the feminist politics of location to the political analysis of gender relations in the new Europe is by singling out the issue of whiteness. Let me explain. For people who inherit the European region, 'the post'-condition translates concretely into the end of the myth of cultural homogeneity. As Michael Walzer (1992) has argued, this is the foundational political myth in Europe, as much as multiculturalism is the central myth in the United States. Of course, European history at any point in time provides ample evidence to the contrary: waves of migrations from the East and the South make a mockery of any claim to ethnic or cultural homogeneity in Europe, while the persistent presence of Jewish and Muslim citizens challenges the identification of Europe with Christianity. Nonetheless, the myth of cultural homogeneity is crucial to the tale of European nationalism.

In our era, these myths are being exposed and exploded into questions related to entitlement and agency. Thus, the European Union is faced with the issue: can one be European and Black or Muslim? Paul Gilroy's work on being a Black British subjectivity (1987) is indicative of the problem of how European citizenship and blackness emerge as contested issues. However, I want to argue that whiteness is also called into play. One of the radical implications of the project of the European Union is the possibility of giving a specific location, and consequently historical embeddedness or memory, to anti-racist whites. It can, finally, racialize our location, which is quite a feat because until recently in Europe, only white supremacists, naziskins and other fascists actually had a theory about the qualities that are inherent to white people. Like all fascists, all these groups are biological and cultural essentialists. Apart from this, whiteness was, quite simply, invisible, just not seen, at least, not by whites. It took the work of black writers and thinkers to expose whiteness as a political issue. Located in the lily-white purity of *our universalistic fantasy, disembodied and disembedded, we actually thought we had no colour*. Then Toni Morrison (1992) and bell hooks (1994) came along and painted us in, and forced white feminists to take race into account. But whiteness as such was already a political issue, as it had been criticized for providing the corner stone of European and Anglo-American political, cultural and economic hegemony.

In his analysis of the representation of whiteness as an ethnic category in mainstream films, Richard Dyer (1997) defines it as 'an emptiness, absence,

denial or even inevitable or representation, whereas this structure, is that it contains all the work of Michel Foucault lies at the heart of the visibility of the subject on the page. It has no positive concept gets marked of oppression commented on what matters is as She – the concept other than participation to the concepts is also all the more effective whose structure

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The experience of lethal insubstantiality, in a perspective, it is actually black – people immigrants in a process' emerged a blacks. Feminists (1994) have an Euro-immigrant 'whitened' citizen identity is illusory

denial or even a kind of death'. Being the norm, it is invisible, as if natural, inevitable or the ordinary way to do things (Ware 1992). The source of the representational power of white is its propensity to be everything and nothing, whereas black, of course, is always marked off as a colour. The effect of this structured invisibility, and of the process of the naturalization of whiteness, is that it masks itself off into a 'colourless multicolouredness'. White contains all other colours. This insight is strengthened philosophically by the work of Michel Foucault on the Panopticon (Foucault 1977) – the void that lies at the heart of the system and defines the contour of both social and symbolic visibility (Young 1990). Deleuze and Guattari (1972; 1980) also comment on the fact that any dominant notion – such as masculinity or race – has no positive definition: the prerogative of being dominant means that a concept gets defined oppositionally, by casting outwards upon others the marks of oppression or marginalization. Virginia Woolf (1943) had already commented on this aspect of the logic of domination when she asserted that what matters is not so much that He – the male – should be superior, so long as She – the Other – be clearly defined as inferior. There is no dominant concept other than that which acts as a term to index and patrol access and participation to entitlements and powers. Thus, the invisibility of the dominant concepts is also the expression of their insubstantiality – which makes them all the more effective in their murderous intents towards the many others on whose structural exclusion they rest their vampiristic powers.

Now, the immediate consequence of this process of naturalization or invisibility is not only political, but also methodological, namely that whiteness is very difficult to analyse critically. It tends to break down into subcategories of white-ness: Irishness, Italianness, Jewishness, etc. It follows therefore that nonwhites have a much clearer perception of whiteness than whites. Just think of bell hook's important work on whiteness as terror and as a death-giving force, and of feminist critiques of whiteness in mythology and fairy tales like *Snow White* (hooks 1995). The reverse, however, is not the case: black and other ethnic minorities do not need this specular logic in order to have a location of their own.

The experience of white European immigrants tends to confirm the lethal insubstantiality of whiteness. As cultural identity is external and retrospective, it is defined for Europeans in the confrontation with other – usually black – peoples. This was the experience of Irish, Italian and Jewish immigrants in countries like the U.S.A., Canada and Australia. Their 'whiteness' emerged oppositionally, as a distancing factor from the natives and blacks. Feminist critics like Frankberg (1994a; 1994b) and Brodtkin Sacks (1994) have analyzed this phenomenon of a 'whitening' process by which Euro-immigrants – especially Jews and Italians – were constructed as 'whitened' citizens in the U.S.A. The extent to which this kind of 'whitened' identity is illusory as it is racist, can be seen by how divided the diasporic

Euro-immigrant communities actually are: they are all in their respective ghettos, antagonistic towards each other and locked in mutual suspicion. But all are equally 'whitened' by the gaze of the colonizer, bent on pitching them against the black population. By learning to view their subject positions as racialized white people, we can work towards antiracist forms of whiteness, or at least antiracist strategies to rework whiteness. This strategy has interesting new potential with respect to women from the East of Europe today. Comparable dynamics are also operating within the EU, which result in a new racialized hierarchy that polices access to full EU citizenship. Thus, for peoples from the Balkans, or the South-Western regions of Europe, in so far as they are not yet 'good Europeans', they are also not quite as 'white' as others. The whitening process expands with the new frontiers of the EU pushing outwards the 'illegal others'. An oriental or Eastern ethnic divide is operating which equates EU citizenship with whiteness and Christianity, casting shadows of suspicion on all 'others'. Joanna Regulska (1998) is one of the feminist scholars who has adopted the methodology of postcolonial theory to the study of Eastern European women. The research presented in this book also maps new forms of 'othering' that are made operational as a result of EU enlargement.

My political strategy in this regard is to support the claim of European identity as an open and multi-layered project, not as a fixed or given essence. A cultural identity of this kind is a space of historical contradictions which can be turned into spaces of critical resistance to hegemonic identities of all kinds. My own choice to rework whiteness in the era of postmodernity involves, firstly, situating it, in the geo-historical space of Europe and within the political project of the European Union. This amounts to historicizing it and de-mystifying its allegedly 'natural' locations. The next step, following the method of feminist politics of location, is to analyse it critically, to re-visit it by successive deconstructive repetitions that aim at emptying out the different layers of this complex identity, excavating it until it opens out to the new.

The third step consists in trying to re-locate European identity, so as to undo its hegemonic tendencies. I refer to this kind of identity as 'nomadic'. Being a nomadic European subject means to be in transit within different identity-formations, but, at the same time, being sufficiently anchored to a historical position to accept responsibility for it. The key words are: 'accountability' and the 'strategic re-location of whiteness'. It is also a way of positing the 'becoming-minoritarian of Europe' by dispelling the privilege of invisibility that was conferred on Europe as an alleged centre of the world. By assuming full responsibility for the partial perspective of its own location, a minoritarian European space opens up a possible political strategy for those who inhabit this particular centre of power in a globalized world marked by scattered hegemonies, and hence no longer dominated by European power alone.

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The emphasis I place on situated politics of location echoes and supports the non-unitary structure of the subject. Locations are historicized and grounded contingent foundations that structure one's being-in-the-world, one's social modes of belonging and not belonging. In other words, being diasporic, nomadic, hybrid, in-between are not the same. They translate sociologically into different structural locations in relation to language, culture, class and labour, access to and participation in power in the broadest sense of the term. The 'post' in 'post-industrialism' is not the same as the post in post-colonialism or post-communism. Historically, however, these 'post' conditions resonate with each other and, politically, they are quite often mixed together and coincide on a number of targets and goals. The task of the social critic – and of this project – is to make relevant distinctions among these different locations, but also to map the points of intersection so as to contribute to a politically-invested cartography of the common grounds and moments that can be shared by multiply-located subjects who are committed to reconstructing subjectivities and not merely to deconstruction for its own sake. I call this the new materialism of post-humanistic subjects who are embedded, embodied, accountable but not unitary.

I want to describe the project of a post-nationalist understanding of European identity as a great historical chance for Europeans to become more knowledgeable of our own history and more self-critical in a productive sense. Nietzsche argued in the early on twentieth century that many Europeans no longer feel at home in Europe (Nietzsche 1966). At the closing of that same century many want to argue that those who do not identify with Europe in the sense of the centre – the dominant and heroic reading of Europe – are ideally suited to the task of re-framing Europe, by making it accountable for a history in which fascism, imperialism and domination has played a central role.

In nomadic European subjects lie the post-nationalist foundations for a multi-layered and flexible practice of European citizenship in the frame of the new European Union.

On Flexible Citizenship

I would relate this post-nationalistic sense of identity to the political notion of flexible citizenship.⁴ The focus is on the area of citizenship and multicultural identity in the framework of the 'new' European Union (Ferreira *et al.* 1998).

Avtar Brah's analysis (1996) foregrounds the emerging new diasporic and hybrid identities which challenge any assumption of monoculturalism in the new Europe. Diaspora is a space of transition and exchange which defines the indigenous peoples as much as the nomadic subjects of the post/colonial

world order. Cross-referring to Gilroy, Brah defines diasporic identities as being both about roots and routes; that is to say, they are 'processes of multi-locality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries' (Brah 1996: 194). These are accentuated under the impact of the new information technologies, which dislocate the relationship between the local and the global and thus complicate the idea of multi-locality. Brah adopts the feminist politics of location as the kind of cognitive mapping that can best do justice to the new web of diasporic identities and other new forms of ethnicities emerging in the new world order.

A radical restructuring of European identity as post-nationalistic can be concretely translated into a set of 'flexible forms of citizenship' that would allow for all 'others' – all kinds of hybrid citizens – to acquire legal status in what would otherwise deserve the label of 'Fortress Europe'. This would involve dismantling the us/them binary in such a way as to account for the undoing of a strong and fixed notion of European citizenship in favour of a functionally-differentiated network of affiliations and loyalties, which finally, for the citizens of the Member States of the European Union, leads to the disconnection of the three elements discussed above: nationality, citizenship, national identity. According to Ulrich Preuss, such a European notion of citizenship, disengaged from national foundations, lays the ground for a new kind of civil society, beyond the boundaries of any single nation-state. Because such a notion of 'alienage' (Preuss 1996: 551) would become an integral part of citizenship in the European Union, Preuss argues that all European citizens would end up being 'privileged foreigners'. In other words, they would function together without reference to a centralized and homogeneous sphere of political power (Preuss 1995: 280). Potentially, this notion of citizenship could therefore lead to a new concept of politics, which would no longer be bound to the nation-state. Of course, this notion of European citizenship is only a potential one and is highly contested at the national level, by both reactionary nostalgic forces and third-world-obsessed leftist political groups. I, however, see it as the most honest and pragmatic way to develop the progressive potential of the European Union, and also of accounting for the effects of globalisation upon us all. These effects boil down to one central idea: the end of pure and steady identities, and a consequent emphasis on creolization, hybridization, a multicultural Europe, within which 'new' Europeans can take their place alongside others (Bhavnani 1992).

In her recent work on European citizenship, Benhabib (2002) interrogates critically the disjunction between the concepts of nation, the state and cultural identity. Solidly grounded in her theory of communicative ethics, Benhabib works towards the elaboration of new rules of global democracy within a multicultural horizon. A self-professed Kantian cosmopolitan, Benhabib argues forcefully that 'democratic citizenship can be exercised across

national boundaries. She is especially concerned with minority and identity/difference. She is a 'universalist' (Benhabib 2002).

Within the context of her work on analyzing transnationality in the global context, she grounds her work on identities. Of course, she (2001; 2002) is concerned with exchange. This is a non-unitary approach that is a shifted perspective on shifting frontiers of human rights. She is concerned with the relevance of situating the subject in the present geo-political order, feminist politics, and taking full account of Becoming-Europeanizing citizenship and its social rights.

As indicated in her work, she uses images and re-imagines new imaginaries for understanding European migrations, in a primary institution. Bhabha (1994) 'nation' are, to be nonethless ill-informed and incoherent rather than a national identity developed a social identity. She also becomes a post-nationalist as well as in the

national boundaries and in transnational contexts' (Benhabib 2002: 183). She is especially keen to demonstrate that the distinction between national minority and ethnic group does very little to determine whether an identity/difference-driven movement is 'democratic, liberal, inclusive and universalist' (Benhabib 2002: 65).

Within the specific location of Europe, important work has been done on analyzing the on-going process of the European Union, both as a player in the global economy and as an attempt to move beyond the traditional grounds on which European nationalism has prospered, namely essentialist identities. Of great importance in this respect is the work of Etienne Balibar (2001; 2002) on Europe as a transnational space of mediation and exchange. This new European identity is internally differentiated and hence non-unitary and committed to trans-cultural hybrid exchanges. It is a situated perspective based on multiple border crossings, on confrontations with shifting frontiers and borders, and on a deep commitment to pacifism and human rights. I have stressed elsewhere (Braidotti 2002b; 2003a; 2003b), the relevance of this vision of the European Union for the feminist project of situating the critique of gender and power in the lived reality of our present geo-political locations. We need situated European perspectives on gender, feminist politics and social theory. This is a way of thinking locally and taking full accountability for the new trans-national European space. Becoming-Europeans in this critical mode is a process of actively re-grounding citizenship according to a more flexible model, which is related to claiming social rights on the European level.

A New Social Imaginary

As indicated in the accounts provided by the interviews in this book, new images and representations of Europe do not readily appear. To produce a new imaginary requires the means of revisiting it, acknowledging it and understanding the complicity between 'difference' and 'exclusion' in the European mind-set. Repetitions are the road to creating positive re-definitions, in a progress of creative deconstruction. Communities are also imaginary institutions made of affects and desires (Anderson 1983). Homi Bhabha (1990; 1994), for instance, stresses the fact that common ideas of 'nation' are, to a large extent, imaginary tales, which project a re-assuring but nonetheless illusory sense of unity over the disjointed, fragmented and often incoherent range of internal regional and cultural differences that make up a national identity. Poststructuralist and anti-racist feminists have, moreover, developed a sceptical attitude towards the idea of unitary identity. We have also become painfully aware of the extent to which the legitimating tales of nationhood in the west have been constructed over the body of women, as well as in the crucible of imperial and colonial masculinity.

The project of developing a new kind of post-nationalist identity is related to the process of dis-identification from established, nation-bound identities. This dis-location can lead to a positive and affirmative re-location of European identities following the feminist politics of locations. I have stressed both the need for an adequate European social imaginary for this kind of subject-position, and the difficulties involved in developing this. There is no denying that such an enterprise involves a large sense of loss and is not without pain. No process of consciousness-raising can ever be painless. Migrants know this very well. In the research presented in this book, for instance in the analysis of border-crossing and home, we find multiple expressions of belonging. Home is lived both at the material and at the imaginary level, where it might be a destination, or something which is repeatedly deferred. It is not necessarily a place of 'origin', but can also mean belonging in multiple locations. In addition, my own experience in Australia has taught me to what an extent the process of dis-identification is linked to the pain of loss. This is not, however, the pathetic expression of a nostalgic yearning for a return to the past, but rather a mature, sobering experience, similar to the loss of illusions and of self-delusions of classical Greek tragedies.

A post-nationalist sense of European identity and of flexible citizenship does not come easily, and in some ways is even a counter-intuitive idea. It requires an extra effort in order to come into being, as it raises the question of how to change deeply-embedded habits of our imagination. How can such in-depth transformation be enacted? This question is made all the more urgent by the extent to which we are already living in post-nationalist ways and in a post-nationalist social space. This is partly due to the obvious effects of globalisation, and the conformism and homogenization of cultures brought about by telecommunication. It is also related, however, to the impact of the European Union on the legal, economic and cultural structures in which most dwellers in Europe function nowadays. The impact of educational, scientific and cultural exchanges is very significant in this respect, and the implementation of the common currency has done the rest. I think that it is precisely the rather large role played by these post-nationalist instances in our social life that has generated the reaction against them in the form of various types of nostalgic identity-claims that are proliferating across Europe today.

What we are lacking is a social imaginary that adequately reflects the social realities which we are already experiencing, of a post-nationalist sense of European identity. We have failed to develop adequate, positive representations of the new trans-European condition that we are inhabiting in this Continent. This lack of the social imaginary both feeds upon and supports the political timidity and the resistances that are being moved against the European political project. More work is needed on the role of contemporary global media in both colonizing and stimulating the social imaginary of global cultures (Hall 1992; Shohat and Stam 1994; Gilroy 2000; Braidotti 2002b).

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At least some of the difficulty involved is due to the lack of a specifically European – in the sense of European Union – public debate, as Habermas (1992) put it in his critique of the absence of a European public sphere. This is reflected in the rather staggering absence of what I would call a European social imaginary. Thinkers as varied as Passerini (1998), Mény (2000) and Morin (1987) all signal this problem, in different ways. Passerini laments the lack of an emotional attachment to the European dimension on the part of the citizens of the social space that is Europe. Elsewhere she has developed hypotheses on a possible critical innovation of what a 'love for Europe' could mean (Passerini 2003). For Mény the problem is rather the lack of imagination and of visionary force on the part of those who are in charge of propelling politically the European Union. For Edgar Morin, Europe is ill-loved and somewhat unwanted, 'une pauvre vieille petite chose' (Morin 1987: 23).

My question therefore becomes: how do you develop such a new European social imaginary? I think that such a notion is a project and not a given. Nonetheless, this does not make it utopian in the sense of being over-idealistic. Even the contrary: it is a virtual social reality which can be actualized by a joint endeavour on the part of active, conscious and desiring citizens. If it is utopian at all, it is only in the positive sense of utopia: the necessary dose of dream-like vision without which no social project can take off and gather support.

Something along these lines is expressed with great passion by Edgar Morin, when he describes his becoming-European as the awakening of his consciousness about the new peripheral role of Europe in the post-Second World War era, after his years of indifference to Europe, in the tradition of Marxist cosmopolitanism and international proletarian solidarity. By his own admission, Edgar Morin overcame his own mistrust for the European dimension of both thinking and political activity in the late 1970s, when, like most of his generation, he took his distance from the unfulfilled promises of the Marxist utopia. This sobering experience made him see to what an extent the new world-wide binary opposition USSR/U.S.A. had dramatically dislocated the sources of planetary power away from Europe (Morin 1987).

The concrete result of this new consciousness-raising was that Morin started taking seriously the scholarly work connected to the research of European roots as both a cultural and political specificity. This is the paradox that lies at the heart of the quest for a new, post-nationalist redefinition of European identity: it becomes thinkable as an entity at the exact historical time when it has ceased to be operational as a social or symbolic reality. The process of becoming-Europeans entails the end of fixed Eurocentric identities and it thus parallels the becoming-nomadic of subjectivity.

The liberatory potential of this process is equally proportional to the imaginary and political efforts it requires of us all. The recognition of the new multi-layered, trans-cultural and post-nationalist idea of Europe in this case would only be the premise for the collective development of a new sense of accountability for the specific slice of world periphery that we happen to inhabit.

Let me make it perfectly clear, however, that this very definition of nomadic subjects is spoken from and speaks of the specific location I have chosen to make myself accountable for. It is an embedded European account of my own traditions or genealogies. In other words, it is only one of many possible locations which may apply to some of the people who situate themselves – in terms of genealogical consciousness and the related forms of accountability – with respect to the kind of power-relations that go with the continent of Europe. This is neither the only, nor is it the best of all possible locations. It merely happens to be the cartography that I acquired and chose to be accountable for. I want to present this kind of embodied genealogical accountability as my contribution to our discussions on gender and power. Through the pain of loss and dis-enchantment, just as 'post-Woman women' have moved away from compulsory gender dichotomies towards a redefinition of being-gendered-in-the-world, 'post-Eurocentric Europeans' may be able to find enough creativity and moral stamina to grab this historical chance to become just Europeans in the post-nationalist sense of the term.

Notes

1. Instances of alternative feminist figurations are the womanist (Walker 1984); the lesbian (Wittig 1992); the cyborg (Haraway 1990b); the inappropriate (d) other (Trinh Minh-Ha 1989); the 'eccentric subject' (De Lauretis 1990); the mestiza (Anzaldúa 1987); the nomadic feminist subject (Braidotti 1994).
2. Among them see in particular Gayatri Spivak (1987), Stuart Hall (1992), Paul Gilroy (1987), Avra Brah (1993), Helma Lutz et al. (1996), Philomena Essed (1991), Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (1989).
3. I owe this witty formulation to the discussions with my colleagues in the European Socrates Thematic Network ATHENA. See the website: www.athena2.org.
4. This term has gained widespread acceptance; I first read it in Aihwa Ong's work on Chinese migrants (Ong 1993).

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