

»It's not a question of worrying or of hoping for the best,  
but of finding new weapons«

*Negotiations - Gilles Deleuze*



## **SPECTRE EUROPE**

With contributions by Hannah Arendt, Rosi Braidotti,  
Srećko Horvat, Jean-Luc Nancy, Yanis Varoufakis



Edited by Lukas Franke and Hannah Wallenfels

This book was published on the occasion of the presentation of  
DIEM25: Europe's Duty to the Refugees - Europe's Duty to Itself,  
on 5 May 2016 at WERK X in Vienna.

## Spectre Europe

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Printed and bound by Dressler, Berlin

Cover design by Sabine Lehm

Interview translated by Moritz Gansen

Edited by Lukas Franke  
and Hannah Wallenfels

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ferent manner, according to their births-and-deaths, their ca-  
dences, allures – yes, such a thinking or rather such a transfigura-  
tion of thinking must come and will come.

*HW: And finally, where do you see the relation between the univer-  
salist claim of European ideas such as human rights, enlightenment  
and cosmopolitanism in terms of utopia as a non-place and utopia?*

*JLN: All these terms – and first and foremost “man”, yes, that  
“man” who always allows us to speak of “humanism” and to  
thus avoid understanding that “man infinitely surpasses man” –  
all these terms have almost completely lost their meaning. To  
remake meaning, to open up possible senses and directions, this  
is the task. If you want to speak of the non-place or the archito-  
pia, fine, but then one must begin by thinking this underneath of  
every position, place, location. One must say: We aren’t there,  
neither “here” nor “over there” – whether these places are real  
or fictional, whether they are factual findings or regulative ideas.  
“WE” are nowhere, we do not yet exist. But maybe we begin to  
exist in an original, extraordinary manner; the extraordinary isn’t  
utopian, it is not yet heard, or not yet audible. And yet it reso-  
nates.*

*It is as when there sounds, rather silently, a new kind of music...  
One doesn’t hear anything, one guesses... Utopia cannot be  
guessed: it is an image, a plan, a figuration. But we enter into a  
time and sound without figures. Let us learn to unmake the fig-  
ures, the maps (like those of More’s Utopia). And to lie waiting  
for those extraordinary sounds. Because they’re starting to re-  
sound.*

*You will ask me to let you hear some of them...  
And I will answer: “Listen!”*

ROSI BRAIDOTTI

## THE BECOMING-MINORITARIAN OF EUROPE<sup>1</sup>

No notion is more contested in European politics and social theory, especially in these days of Brexit and populist referenda, than the socio-political project of the European Union (EU). As a dominant project, the EU is a molar political entity that has become an internationally significant economic and political player, which also embodies its own concept of ‘civilisation’ as a universal value based on the principles of the European Enlightenment. As a progressive project, on the other hand, the EU constitutes the promise of an alternative to the aggressive neo-liberalism of the USA on a number of key issues (privacy; telecommunication; genetically modified food and the environment) and as an advocate of human rights and world peace. The EU is a political project that is faced with a diverse set of contradictions.

On the one hand, Europe celebrates its own cultural diversity and the importance of transnational exchanges, but on the other hand it is witness to the resurgence of hyper-nationalisms occurring at the micro-level: regional, provincial and even civic. The cosmopolitan global city and the paranoid Fortress Europe stand face-to-face as opposite but interconnected sides of the same coin. In an attempt to bypass the binary of global versus local, and so as to destabilise the established universalist definitions of European identity, I will narrate an alternative vision of Europe’s ‘becoming-minoritarian’. The decline of Europe’s world role and hence the demise of Eurocentrism will be taken as a generative

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this essay was published in: *Deleuze and the Contemporary World*, ed. by Ian Buchanan and Adrian Parr, Edinburgh 2006 and has been updated by the author. All copyrights courtesy of the author.

premise that points to the possibility of a qualitative shift in our collective sense of identity. Contained within the progressive project of the EU are the seeds for a post-nationalist socio-political space, that is to say, in more Deleuzian terms, the challenge of a radical 'becoming-minoritarian' is immanent to the socio-political space of the EU.

Historically, the European common market was created as part of both the denazification and the economic reconstruction of Europe following World War II, but this move was never immune from resistance at the national level. Decades later, the insurgent nationalism of European nation-states creates deep fractures within the EU. Common European citizenship and a shared currency coexist with increasing internal fragmentation, regionalism and xenophobia. The disintegration of the former Soviet empire simultaneously marks the triumph of the capitalist market economy and the return of ethnic wars of an only apparently archaic kind. The war on terror has inscribed states of emergency as the normal form of governance in a social order framed by surveillance and increasing militarisation. The 'new' Europe is trying to steer its course in the midst of these complex and contradictory co-ordinates.

### **De-centring Europe**

Historically, continental philosophy – prior to and including the poststructuralist generation – is intimately connected to the issue of European identity and 'civilisation'. Since the end of the nineteenth and the start of the twentieth century, the explicitly named 'crisis' of the humanistic roots of European philosophy has both reflected and highlighted larger socio-political issues. These were related to the geopolitical status of Europe in a changing world, the legacy of colonialism and a growing sense of uncertainty around the core tenets of European identity. According to an entire generation of poststructuralist philosophers – Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Serres and Irigaray – especially af-

ter World War II the crisis of philosophical humanism has historically coincided with the decline of Europe as an imperial world power. In past years, wise old men like Habermas and Derrida along with progressive spirits like Balibar have taken the lead in public debates, stressing the advantages of de-centring Europe as a socio-political laboratory so as to develop a post-nationalist sense of citizenship. Europe needs to become the place that is capable of elaborating a critical reflexion on its own history so as not to repeat it.

This critical self-reflexion is timely and necessary, because as a world power, Europe practised a form of self-aggrandising universalism that asserted its own subject position while concomitantly excluding difference. This hierarchical mechanism produced negatively connoted 'others', turning difference into a mark of pejoration. According to a feminist and post-colonial poststructuralist frame of reference these constitutive 'others' are the specular complement of the subject of modernity. They are the woman and the LGBTQ+, the ethnic or racialised others, and the natural environment. Respectively, they constitute the second sex – as the alleged sexual complement of heterosexual Man – but also the third and infinite other sexes as sites of deviation. They also produce the coloured, racialised or marked 'others' that allow the Europeans to universalise their whiteness as the defining trait of humanity. Last but not least, the dialectics of negative difference produce an instrumental understanding of the environment as that against which technology is pitched and developed. These 'others' are of crucial importance to the constitution of the identity of the universal called Europe. 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, of ethnic diversity and the status of non-human actors.

In my perspective, the political project of European unification involves a qualitative shift in consciousness that in turn expresses the critique of the entrenched ethnocentrism of claims to European exceptionalism. This move includes the critique of the self-appointed missionary role of Europe as the alleged centre of the world. A post-nationalist vision of Europe entails the critique of xenophobic exclusions, in a process of becoming-minoritarian that works to promote the deterritorialisation of the false universalism underpinning European identity. This project proposes a nomadic, that is to say multi-lingual, multi-faceted and hybrid vision of Europe as a place where different cultures can meet. As a post-nationalist project, the EU will, ideally, undergo a change in consciousness away from nationalism, moving towards an ecology of European multiple belongings. The opposite of the grandiose and aggressive universalism of the past, being both a situated and accountable perspective, this image of a post-nationalist Europe turns our collective memory and our social imaginary to the service of a new political and ethical project based on diversity. It looks to the future confidently and to the past without nostalgia. As such it is a creative gesture, producing horizons of hope and, simultaneously, constructing the possibility of a future that is alive to the positivity of difference, the wealth of diversity and the need for qualitative transformations.

One concrete example of this process is the rethinking of 'whiteness'. For people who inhabit the European region, the present is marked to an unprecedented degree by transcultural migration and flows of people. The endless talk of yet another 'refugee crisis' is the symptom of the sea-bed change that is taking place in the very structure of European self-perception. We are perhaps witnessing the end of European cultural homogeneity, as well as Europeans' anxiety about how to cope with this change. As Michael Walzer (1992) has argued, cultural ho-

mogeneity is the foundational political European myth in much the same way as multiculturalism is a prevailing American myth.

Today these socio-political 'myths' – and their role in constituting the social imaginary – are being exposed and exploded as structural questions concerning entitlement and agency seep to the surface. Thus the EU is faced with the following issue: Can one be European, Black and Muslim? How can one put up with being a Europe-born non-European, confined to the status of a second-class citizen within the dominant polity, as is often the case with generations of migrants and post-colonial citizens?

One of the radical implications of the project of the EU is the possibility of giving a specific critical location, and consequently historical specificity to anti-racist whites. Questioning the status of whiteness can help to expose and hence critique that particular social and symbolic location, by racialising what was till now the colour of the universal. Turning discourses about whiteness into a critical tool to embody, embed, historicize and hence criticize colonial histories, fascisms and other forms of white domination is both necessary and risky. Until recently only white supremacists, Nazi skin-heads and other neo-fascist groups actually put forward a theory of whiteness based on bio-logical and cultural essentialism that glorify the inherently superior qualities of white people. This racist delirium aside, whiteness was quite simply invisible, an unseen factor ignored also by whites, as it was taken as coinciding with the universal standards of being human. It took the work of black writers and thinkers to expose whiteness as a political issue. Located in the lily-white purity of our universalist fantasy, disembodied and disembedded, 'we' actually thought we had no colour.

In his analysis of the representation of whiteness as an ethnic category in mainstream films, Richard Dyer (1997) argues that, being the norm, whiteness is invisible, as if this was natural, inevitable or the ordinary of doing things. The source of the repre-

sentational power of white lies in the propensity to be everything and nothing at the same time, whereas black, of course, is always marked off as a colour, different from – and worth less than – the universal standard. The effect of this structural invisibility and the process of naturalising whiteness is that it masks itself as a 'colourless multicolouredness'. White contains all other colours. White marks the void that lies at the heart of a system, defining the contours of both social and symbolic visibility in regimes of colonial domination.

For Deleuze and Guattari (1977 and 1987), no dominant notion – such as masculinity or Eurocentrism – can engender *per se* a positive process of becoming. That is to say, the prerogative of being dominant is a sort of stasis, the tendency to self-replicate and hence resist change. This passive-aggressive approach functions by defining other categories oppositionally and organizing them through the marks of oppression and/or marginalisation. The superiority of the dominant subject position, in other words, is registered in its ability to position the other as inferior without seeming to do so. The dominant concept is always an 'invisible hand', which can easily be perceived merely as a comparatively benign point of reference. In fact, dominant positions appear to be nothing other than terms to index and patrol access and participation in entitlements and powers. Thus the invisibility of dominant concepts is also the expression of their insubstantiality. As Foucault teaches us, the panopticon is the empty location of all-seeing power that is never seen, which makes it all the more effective against the countless 'others' on whose structural exclusion its power rests.

The immediate consequence of this specific configuration of panoptical power, with its combination of invisibility and hierarchical othering, is not just political, but also methodological. Whiteness, like all molar categories, is hard to grasp critically. When confronted, it tends to break down into ethnic and na-

tionalist subcategories: Irishness, Italianness, Jewishness, and so on. It follows therefore that non-whites have a much clearer perception of whiteness than whites. The reverse, however, is not the case: Blacks and other ethnic minorities do not need this specular logic in order to have a sharp understanding of their own marginalized location. Cultural identity, as external and retrospective, tends to be defined by Europeans in the confrontation with other – usually black – peoples.

Critical consciousness-raising about whiteness is a way of subverting this logic of domination and the structural ignorance of others as well as the self-delusion it entails for whites. By learning to view their subject position as racialised in its own way, white people can work towards anti-racist forms of whiteness, or at least anti-racist strategies that deterritorialise whiteness.

This strategy can also be applied to provide critical cartographies of different degrees of contemporary 'whiteness', for instance those regarding people migrating from the former Eastern Europe. The East-West migratory practices today are establishing new dynamics within the EU, which result in a new racialised hierarchy that polices access to full EU citizenship. Thus peoples from the Balkans, the Baltic states or the south-western regions of Europe are considered to be not quite as 'white' as the rest of Europe. The whitening process expands with the new frontiers of the EU pushing outwards the 'illegal others': refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced people. This process both requires and constructs an 'other', a people whose pigmentation or racial profile is less 'white', than the newly anointed. An orientalist an Eastern ethnic divide is in operation, which *de facto* equates EU citizenship with whiteness and Christianity, casting shadows of suspicion on all 'others'.

Critical whiteness is a form of situated and accountable subjectivity. In my materialist and monistic political ontology (Braidotti, 2002; 2006), locations are historicised and situated foundations

that structure one's being-in-the-world and one's social modes of belonging and not belonging. Locations differ in quantitative and qualitative degrees; in other words, being diasporic, nomadic, hybrid, post-colonial, post-communist or in-between are never equivalent. Sociologically these translate into different figurations of migration, mobility and nomadism, indexed on structural locations in respect to language, culture, class, labour, access and participation in power (in the broadest sense of the term).

The task of the social critic and critical thinker is to make relevant distinctions among these different locations and map points of intersection in order to create a politically invested cartography. Such a cartography needs to do justice to the power differentials involved in the different locations, while identifying a common European political project that can be shared by multi-located subjects committed to constructing new post-national subjectivities. We need constructive alternatives and not merely critique or deconstruction for their own sake. I call this approach the affirmative neo-materialism of post-humanist accountable subjects. It rests on the idea of subjects who are embedded, embodied and accountable, but not territorialised, molarised and unified. It also implies a nomadic politics: a politics of affirmative or creative modality.

As the project for a post-nationalist European Union demonstrates, the challenge is to invoke qualitative transformations - rhizomatic interventions that destabilise dogmatic, hegemonic, exclusionary power structures lying at the heart of dominant subjectivities and identity formations underpinning these. If we are to move beyond the sociology of labour mobility and the beating of critical thinkers squashed by white guilt, we need to enact a vision of the political subject that encompasses change in the way relations are territorialised along the cultural, linguistic, economic, political and social coordinates. The point is not

merely to deconstruct identities or loudly proclaim dialectical counter-identities, but rather to open up identity to different connections able to produce multiple belongings that in turn precipitate a non-unitary vision of a subject. Such a subject actively constructs itself in a complex and internally contradictory set of social relations that involve power negotiations with a multiplicity of human and non-human others. To achieve this qualitative shift of perspective, first we need to embrace intensive movements that activate processes of change rather than fixating on essences. This means sociological variables (gender, class, race and ethnicity, age, health) need to be supplemented with a nomadic theory of the subject that calls into question the inner fibres of self-production. This requires the desire, ability and courage to sustain multiple belongings in a context that predominantly celebrates and rewards unified identities.

So how does the socio-political space of becoming-minoritarian work? This question anticipates a notion of a European space of mediation that is an open, multi-layered project, one that has no fixed essence. My own choice to rework whiteness critically in the era of globalized and technologically mediated advanced capitalism is firstly to situate it in the geohistorical space of Europe and more specifically within the political project of the EU. This amounts to historicising whiteness and demystifying its allegedly 'natural' location. The next step is to analyse and revisit it critically so as to enable it to open onto a new practice of flexible and multi-layered post-nationalist European subjectivity. The third step consists in trying to relocate European identity with the aim of undoing its hegemonic tendencies. I refer to this alternative conception of identity as 'nomadic'. Being a nomadic European subject means to be in transit within different identity-formations, but also to be sufficiently anchored to a historical position so that one can also accept responsibility for the location one occupies. The key words



here are: 'accountability' and the 'strategic relocation of whiteness'. The privilege that came with the white invisibility that was conferred on Europeans and also positioned them at the alleged centre of the world is also dispelled by the 'becoming-minoritarian of Europe'. By assuming full responsibility for the partial perspective of its own location, the concept of a minoritarian European space allows for an alternative political vision on a surface, one that acknowledges the scattered hegemonies of a globalised world no longer dominated by European power alone.

### **Complex Shifting Locations, Not Multitudes**

The issue of Europe as an alternative political model has also become central to Antonio Negri. Although in many senses Negri's position differs from that of Deleuze, there are significant points of comparison between the two. Negri combines a monistic Spinozist political economy with a post-Marxian brand of materialist analysis of labour conditions under advanced capitalism. Like Deleuze, Negri searches for a productive space of becoming-revolutionary, yet he goes on to locate the motor of world resistance in his concept of the 'multitude'. He also singles out the new EU as the political arena where the – allegedly rhizomatic – politics of the multitude confront the gravitational pull of a globalised empire.

The multitude is, in fact, the appointed alternative to global capitalism. I share Negri's normative injunction and political hope, but I cannot fully share his zealous conviction that this is the only, or necessarily the most revolutionary option sanctioned by history and the will of the multitude. Negri's analysis of the contemporary political situation relies on the becoming-woman of labour and the capitalisation of the materiality of corporeal bodies. This constitutes a 'micro-political' form of activism, one that resonates with Guattari's notion of transversal subjectivity. This notion is crucial to Negri's work with Michael Hardt and

their critique of globalisation. Together they argue that in advanced capitalism, the priority of material labour over immaterial labour is steadily being eroded. And though they recognise that material forms of labour are statistically still in the majority, they argue that immaterial labour is rapidly assuming the position of cultural dominance. The 'information society' is based on immaterial labour, that is labour which prioritises the 'content' of our heads rather than the muscle-strength of our bodies or tactile skill of our hands. This position also gives weight to the production and reproduction of affects, like caring and the creation once more of fading community connections. Although historically the latter has been the province of women's work, now it constitutes a central piece of capitalist production. Caring and affective labour are both material and immaterial; they simultaneously produce communities and the regulatory effects of biopolitical control of the population.

Hardt and Negri stress the immaterial and affective nature of contemporary labour, which trades in phonetic skills, linguistic ability and proper accents services, as well as requiring attention, concentration and great care. However, in my perspective they neglect to consider the gendered and racialised political structures of advanced capitalism or the contradictions inherent to the process of the becoming-woman of labour. To illustrate this shortcoming in their argument let us consider a new category in the contemporary political economy: the new digital proletariat. The most striking example of this is provided by the workers in call centres that process phone enquiries from locations miles away from the callers' homes. Denounced strongly by Arundhati Roy (2001), these 'call centres' or data outsourcing agencies are a multi-billion dollar industry that has attracted a great deal of critical attention both in mainstream and in alternative media.

Roy (2001) describes in detail the 'call centre College' on the outskirts of Delhi, in a suburb called Gurgaon. Here, hundreds of Indian graduates are trained to perform the backroom operations of transnational companies. They answer queries on a wide range of subjects ranging from car rentals and credit card inquiries to plane tickets. The key is never to let the caller suspect that their call is being processed in Delhi. Thus, the students have to learn to speak English with the appropriate and expected accents – generally Australian, British or American – they need to read the local newspapers to be up to date on small items of news and, of course, they need to erase their own identity and change names in order to 'pass'. Whilst certainly reminiscent of those age-old problems of working-class exploitation, this kind of labour presents a whole new kind of labour exploitation.

In a series of visual installations, the Raqs Media Collective (Biemann 2003) presented an incisive critique of the specific forms of simulation embodied in these call centres, namely the erasure of their remoteness from the callers' homes. They cite the example of a woman called Sunita who is known on the phone as Sandra. Replying to phone enquiries, Sunita simulates Sandra who is supposed to live in Minneapolis, USA. This strategy of simulation is not mere impersonation, since there is no visual or physical contact between the parties involved. Nor can it be seen as a form of identification, as the worker need not feel or experience herself as being from a different culture/nation in order to fulfil her contractual obligations. It requires a radical 'othering' of oneself, or a form of schizophrenia that entails the reification of the worker's own life-world.

The kind of cultural cross-dressing performed by call-centre digital proletarians is neither the creative mimesis of strategic repetitions nor the destabilising effect of queer identity politics. It is simply today's variation on the theme of what Deleuze and Guattari have identified as capitalism's demand that the worker

be pre-mutilated so as to fit into the global marketing of both material commodities and of Western life-styles, cultures and accents. This *tour de force* by the digital workers of the new global economy rests on an acute and explicit awareness of one's location in space and time. It is a territorial issue and as such it raises serious questions about border-crossings, nomadic shifts and paths of deterritorialisation. It is quite clear that the allegedly ethereal nature of cyberspace and the flow of mobility it sustains are fashioned by the material labour of women and men from areas of the world thought to be peripheral in relation to the North. This space of fluctuation is highly racialised and sexualised. A new 'feminisation' and 'racialisation' of the virtual workforce has taken place, which amounts to the deterioration of rights and conditions.

Although Hardt and Negri theorise the schizophrenic dimension of capitalism, they fail to practise what they preach. Their vision of the allegedly ongoing revolutionary process, which they express in a euphoric and at times hyperbolic language, contradicts the conceptual premises of their thought. Theirs remains a highly abstract project, one that fails to ground itself in the embedded and embodied brands of materialism that feminist theory has developed. The process of becoming-revolutionary is a rather ascetic and humble process: an art, a praxis or a practice. There is no overarching meta-narrative of one global multitude in either feminist notions of situated knowledges (Haraway 1988) or in Deleuze's philosophy of radical immanence. What we have instead is the qualitative processes of becoming.

### **Becoming Ethical**

What is the ethical import of the process of multiple belongings and a becoming-nomadic whereby affects take centre stage? Let us begin by moving this question away from Negri's metaphysics of labour towards Deleuze's philosophy of radical immanence. Becoming-political involves a radical repositioning or intensive

transformation on the part of subjects who want to become minoritarian in a productive and affirmative manner. It is clear that this shift requires changes that are neither simple nor self-evident. These changes mobilise the affect of the subjects involved and can be seen as a process of transforming negative passions into affirmative ones. Fear, anxiety and nostalgia are clear examples of the negative emotions involved in the project of detaching ourselves from familiar forms of identity. Thus the project of achieving a post-nationalist sense of European identity requires as a preliminary qualitative requirement the disidentification from established, nation-bound parameters of identity-formation. Such an enterprise inevitably entails a sense of loss as cherished habits of thought and representation are relinquished.

The beneficial side effects of this process are unquestionable in that they sustain the political process I have explained above. In some way they compensate for the pain induced by disidentification. Thus the critical relocation of whiteness can produce an affirmative and situated anti-racist European subject position. In a more Spinozist vein, it also produces a more adequate cartography of our real-life conditions, free from delusions of grandeur. This mature and sobering experience is, moreover also an enriching and positive one. Migrants, exiles and refugees all have first-hand experience of the pain and loss felt as a result of being uprooted and forced into disidentifying with familiar identities. Diasporic subjects of all kinds express the same sense of wounding. Multi-locality is the affirmative translation of this negative sense of loss. Following Glissant (1997), becoming-nomadic points to a process of positive transformation of pain of loss, turning it into the active production of multiple forms of belonging and complex allegiances. What is lost with the sense of fixed origins is gained in an increased desire to belong, in a multiple rhizomatic manner that overcomes the bilateralism of binary identity formations.

The qualitative leap through pain, across mourning landscapes of nostalgia, is a gesture of active creation, one that affirms new ways of belonging. It is a fundamental reconfiguration of our way of being in the world that acknowledges the pain of loss whilst moving beyond this pain. This is the defining moment of becoming-ethical: the movement across and beyond pain, loss and negative passions. The real aim of the process is to overcome the stultifying effects of passivity that pain can produce. In this way, the internal disarray, fracture and pain provide the ethical conditions for transformative. Clearly, this is an antithesis of the Kantian moral imperative to avoid pain, or to view pain as the obstacle to moral behaviour. Nomadic ethics is in contrast concerned with transcending the resignation and passivity that ensue from being hurt, lost and dispossessed. One has to become ethical as opposed to just applying moral rules and protocols as a form of self-protection. Transformations express the ethics of the affirmative power of life as the human and non-human vitality of *bios-zoe*, which is the very opposite of morality.

The real issue, however, is both conceptual and methodological: How do we develop a new post-nationalist European social imaginary through the re-working of the pain of disidentification and loss? Given that identifications constitute an inner scaffolding that supports one's sense of identity, how do changes of this magnitude take place? Shifting an imaginary is not like casting away a used garment; it is more akin to shedding an old skin. Whilst it may happen more frequently at a molecular level, when it occurs in the social arena it tends to be a painful experience. This is a collective activity, a group project that connects active conscious and desiring citizens. It points towards a virtual, but no less real, destination – a post-nationalist Europe – without being utopian. As a project it is historically grounded, socially embedded and already partly actualised in the joint endeavours of those who are currently working towards it. If this is in any way

utopian, it is only in the sense of the positive affects that are mobilised in the process: the necessary dose of imagination, dreamlike vision and bonding that a social project needs in order to advance.

Feminism is a significant example of this kind of transformative political project: Feminists take a critical distance from the dominant social institutions of femininity and masculinity, and choose instead to relate these to other variables, such as multiple sexes and genders ethnicity, race and class. Feminist theory has addressed the issue of the reconstruction of the social imaginary through the emphasis it has placed both on identification (as a factor in identity formation) and disidentification (strategically using this to raise consciousness). However, feminist theory since the 1970s has mostly achieved this change within a psychoanalytic framework, choosing to emphasise the imaginary as the process of linguistic mediation that structures identity formation. The linguistic turn refers to language as a material as well as symbolic structure that embodies the political economy of a culture. As such, syntax and grammar contain a system of representation by which a subject gets formatted and captured by ruling social and cultural formations: legal attachments to particular identities – human, humanist, European, etc. –, images and terminologies. For Althusser and Lacan, these are governed by a symbolic system as it is represented in the Law of the Phallus. The interaction or mediation between the self and these imaginary institutions provides the motor for the process of becoming-subject. Needless to say, for Lacan this process labours under the burden of negativity, as lack, mourning and melancholia. This is also a legacy from Hegel, reducing the subject to a process of being-subjected-to, for instance in the negative sense of power as *potestas*.

The poststructuralist generation, starting with Foucault, challenged both the negativity and the static nature of the Lacanian

master code on which all forms of mediation are supposed to hinge. The binary opposition of self versus a symbolic system that structures society is too narrow to account for the complex workings of powering our culture. It is rather the case that a thick and highly dynamic web of power effects is the factor through which self and society are mutually shaped by one another. Power is not a centralized matrix but a complex web of strategic locations that we inhabit. The choreography of constraints and entitlements, controls and desire is the hard core of power. Although these power locations sound like binaries, they are not dialectically opposed, but rather rhizomically situated on a non-linear spectrum. The panoptical core of power is devoid of any substantial essence; it is a force, or activity – a verb that is, not a noun. Power as positive or *potentia* is crucial in forming the subject as an entity enmeshed in a network of inter-related social and discursive effects, as evidenced for instance by the practice of biopower, or the power over living matter. For Deleuze and Guattari, as for Foucault, the system of mediation is not merely linguistic, but primarily material. Desire is conceptualised not as a negative lack but as over-flowing plenitude or affirmation.

What might be termed Deleuze's 'social imaginary' would not be postulated along linguistic lines at all – it would be like a prism, or a fractal that disintegrates the unity of vision into bundles of multi-directional perceptive tools. Deleuze relies on Spinoza's idea of 'collective imaginings' (Gatens and Lloyd 1999) to elucidate the following important idea: A 'social imaginary' is ultimately an image of thought. That is to say, it is a habit that captures and blocks alternative ways of thinking about ourselves and the environment. Collectively, we can empower some of these alternative becomings. This being is a collective and affective process. European post-nationalist identity is such a project: political at heart, it has a strong ethical pull made up of conviction, vision and desire. As a project it requires active participa-

tion and a striving toward what we are capable of becoming more than defining who we are. This liberatory potential is directly proportional to the desire and collective affects it mobilises. The becoming-minoritarian of Europe actively experiments with different ways of inhabiting social space.

Far from being the prelude to a neo-universal stance, or its dialectical pluralist counterpart, or even the relativistic acceptance of all and any locations, the project of the becoming-minoritarian of Europe is an ethical transformation by a former centre that chooses the path of immanent change. Through the pain of loss and disenchantment, just like 'post-Woman women' have moved towards a redefinition of their multiple ways of 'being-gendered-in-the-world', 'post-nationalist Europeans' may be able to find enough self-respect to shed nationalism and become the subjects of multiple ecologies of belonging.

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