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Rosi Braidotti

*Gender, Identity and
Multiculturalism in Europe*

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**First Ursula Hirschmann Annual Lecture on
'Gender and Europe'**

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Lecture by **Rosi Braidotti**
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Gender, Identity and Multiculturalism in Europe

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The Ursula Hirschmann Annual Lecture Series on Gender and Europe

The Gender Studies Programme, based in the RSCAS-EUI, has inaugurated a series of lectures on the specific connection between “gender” and “Europe”, named after the Europeanist Ursula Hirschmann, who in 1975 in Brussels formed the group “Femmes pour l’Europe”. Ursula Hirschmann was born in Berlin in 1913, to a Jewish family, and migrated with her brother Albert (now Hirschman), when the Nazis took power in Germany, first to France and then to Italy. She had an important role in the creation and the diffusion of the Ventotene Manifesto in 1941. During her life, she married two anti-Fascists and Europeanists, Eugenio Colorni and Altiero Spinelli. Some of her autobiographical writings have been published as *Noi senza patria* (Il Mulino, Bologna, 1993).

The Ursula Hirschmann Lectures aim to promote and develop an understanding of how gender is linked with European issues, as well as an idea of Europe which recognises differences, amongst which gender. The 2001 inaugural lecture was given by Professor Rosi Braidotti, Director of the Netherlands Research School of Women’s Studies at Utrecht University, and at the time a Jean Monnet Fellow at the EUI.

The lecture series is one of the activities of the Gender Studies Programme, established at the European University Institute in October 2000, which also comprises a seminar series, workshops/conferences, as well as an EC-funded research project on gender and migration. The programme’s general aims are to support and to help develop the scholarly work of research students, fellows, academic staff and visitors in the study of gender, across the departments of the EUI, and to stimulate interdisciplinary work.

The programme operates under the direction of Professor Luisa Passerini, and its co-ordinator is Dawn Lyon.

LECTURE

by

Rosi Braidotti

Professor of Women's Studies & Director,
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Gender, Identity and Multiculturalism in Europe

“Pour vous c'est facile
d'être européen :
vous êtes juif”.

Noi *déracinés* dell'Europa, che abbiamo cambiato più volte di frontiere che di scarpe, come diceva Brecht – questo re dei *déracinés* – anche noi non abbiamo altro da perdere che le nostre catene in un'Europa unita e perciò siamo federalisti.¹

Ursula Hirschmann: *Noi Senza Patria*,
Bologna, Il Mulino, 1993, p.22

INTRODUCTION*

My paper sums up some of my recent thoughts on the on-going research for the gender dimensions of European issues, which I am conducting here at the Institute with the help of a Jean Monnet Fellowship. It consists of three related sections. The first one states the terms of the problem; the second outlines possible models, on the contribution of gender methodology and of the critical philosophy tradition of French post-structuralism; and the third attempts to propose a framework of analysis for the inter-related issues of gender, multiculturalism and European identities.

* I would like to thank the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute for the great honour they paid me in inviting me to hold the inaugural Ursula Hirschmann lecture on Gender and Europe in 2001. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate the Institute and in particular Professor Yves Mény on having undertaken such a firm and positive programme of development of Gender Studies, under the enlightened direction of Professor Luisa Passerini. I wish you all the best and I am very happy to be part of this new adventure.

SECTION 1: STATING THE PROBLEM

THE ISSUE OF IDENTITY IN A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

My starting point is that the issue of European identity does not coincide completely with the question of the European Union, and how to connect the two is in itself an open and contested question. The scholarship reflects this double-track: in the area of identity, there is far more work on Europe as such, than on the European Union. The focus of my research is firmly set on the European Union.

A second relevant consideration is that the issue of European identity in relation to the project of the European Union was late in coming up onto the agenda, yet it is crucial, or maybe because it is so. That it actually took almost 50 years for the issues of culture and education to be officially put on the agenda of the European Union alongside the economic and political issues, tells you something about how complex and potentially divisive the issue of cultural identity actually is, especially in the context of a project that ultimately aims at redesigning the function of the European nation states.

Such a project raises potentially explosive issues of entitlement and diversity, and what makes them explosive is the history of European nationalism and of intolerance towards the very cultural differences that compose the European region. The two world wars, which were really European civil wars, are a good example of this inability to live with our own differences. I think consequently that it is of the utmost importance to rethink the question of European identity in close connection to the issue of diversity, i.e.: of issues of gender and multicultural identity from a European perspective

Thirdly, in most scholarship there is no consensus at all about European identity, but rather a full range of diverse positions. Luisa Passerini's work (1998) provides an excellent overview of these different positions. The divergences are such that one should not even attempt to find a consensus. The crucial discussion-point is rather that of the criteria by which we settle for one definition of Europe, or another. I am not saying this in a spirit of pedantry, or of concern for conceptual purity, but rather in a dialogical mode, to stress the need for a discussion about the very grounds on which we postulate European identity. My reasons for defending this position are the following:

Firstly, I do not see the grounds of identity as foundations of a fixed, God-given or essential kind—be it biological, psychic or historical essentialism. On the contrary, I see them as being constructed in the very gesture that posits them as the anchoring-point for certain kind of social and discursive practices.

Consequently, the question I would like to put on the table in terms of European cultural identity is not the essentialist one—i.e.: “What is it?”—but rather the critical genealogical one, namely: “How is it constructed? By whom? Under which conditions? For which aims?”.

Secondly, I believe that these criteria—whatever they may be—also influence the sort of strategies that one is likely to propose as a way of implementing the European dimension of the discussion over identity. The definition contains, folded within itself, its own solutions and strategic plans; as such, it is of the utmost importance. My concern, on both scores, is therefore highly pragmatic.

In addressing these complex questions, we are bound to come up with different accounts. And when we are confronted with the inevitable diversity of positions, as of our own political or other genealogies, instead of fearing relativism, we need to turn our differences into objects of discursive exchange. We need to talk about these differences and not homogenise them into a falsely unified and— at least to my mind— self-congratulatory understanding of European identity. I think we need to address the paradox of exclusion and affirmation, of power and truth, which lies at the heart of the quest for identity, especially in the European context.

This means that in order to defend a new identity linked to the project of the European Union, we need to move towards a post-nationalistic understanding of cultural identity. More on this later.

The historical dimension

In order to defend the post-nationalistic definition of European identity and the flexible forms of citizenship it may entail, I would like to return to the historical roots of that project of the European Union, in the aftermath of fascism and Nazism and after the disaster of World War II². The political and moral forces that gathered around the project of the European Union after World War II, ranging from the anti-fascist resisters like Hirschmann and Spinelli, to the post-war leaders were attempting to stop European fascism from happening ever again—and thus stop more intra-European civil wars by tackling the century old virus of European nationalism.

As Altiero Spinelli put it³(1979, 12):

Nous ne faisons que répéter des idées anciennes lorsque nous parlions de la fédération européenne, mais nous étions probablement parmi les premiers à penser que notre génération, ayant bu jusqu'à la lie la coupe de l'Europe des nationalismes, se devait d'assumer la tâche de conduire nos peuples hors de ce système infernal.

As a conservative project, the European Union was also aimed at streamlining the reconstruction of Europe's war-torn economy, in opposition to the Soviet-dominated countries of the East, and thus it was a major pawn in Cold War politics. This does not prevent it, however, from containing impressive progressive elements.

In my view, the project of the European Union- in both its progressive and conservative aspects- is a strong manifestation of the historical decline of European nation states: it is a post-nationalist project. I can demonstrate this by reminding you that on the Continent, the opposition to the European Union is led on the one hand by the authoritarian Right, especially Le Pen and his cronies; on the other hand, by the nostalgic Left, which seem to miss the topological foundations for international working class solidarity. Speaking as a Leftwing feminist intellectual, I must say that the Left has often been unable to react with energy and vision to the historical evidence that is the increasing irrelevance of Eurocentric, pseudo-universalistic modes of practice and thought to today's world. In such a context, more lucidity is needed and a renewed sense of political strategy. The feminist, pacifist and antiracist movements can be of great inspiration in this process.

The Jewish issue

The project of United Europe is linked to issues of ethnicity and diversity through another major historical dimension, namely the 'Jewish issue'. The defeat of Europe in World War II was moral as well as political. The moral bankruptcy of European identity is an effect of the holocaust perpetrated against the Jewish, the Roma and other itinerant populations, as well as the persecution of homosexuals and communists by the Nazi and fascist regimes of Europe during the Second World War. Altiero Spinelli states as much in his political and autobiographical writings, as well as in his celebration of the life and work of Ursula Hirschmann (Spinelli, 1979).

The project of the European Union is linked to Jewishness also in the sense of the diaspora and the subsequent notion of cosmopolitanism. I read this as an explicit critique of national identity and the emphasis it places on going beyond nationalism. The Jews embody a brand of cosmopolitanism which can lend itself to configuring a supra-national type of subjectivity. In this very specific perspective, the Jewish intellectual, like the European Federalist can function like an enlightened, anti-fascist subject-position, which does not define his/her country merely by topological or territorial concerns. It is a united, non-nationalistic sense of European-ness, which is at home in the diaspora.

Let me add that I am not metaphorizing the figure of the Jew, or erecting it into a ready-made icon of homelessness and rootlessness. In some ways that would be exploitative and almost immoral. I am perfectly aware of the huge human and historical prize that Jewish citizens/subjects had to pay for their home-less condition. Hannah Arendt's work on the pariahs, or the stateless people who do not have the right to have any rights is extremely significant here. I therefore am not speaking of Jewish identity metaphorically, but I rather want to take it as a situated perspective on issues of identity, i.e.: seeing its relevance not in essentialistic terms, but rather as a subject-position that can be of broader relevance. This is in keeping with the feminist methodology of the politics of location, to which I shall return. In this perspective, diasporic subject positions constitute an extremely significant historical precedent.

The EU as a response to globalisation and to its challenges

The figuration of the diasporic subject—historically linked to Jewishness—has undergone significant changes in the era of globalisation. In the framework of a world and an economic order organized around the allegedly 'free' circulation of consumers' goods, the diasporic mode has become far more widespread.

Nowadays, the post-colonial world-order and the process of the trans-national economy with the complex effects of globalisation have opened a new chapter in the history of the decline of European nation-states as principles of economic and political organisation. The coming of the electronic frontier and the information highways accelerates even further the process of dematerialisation of the nation state (Castells, 1996), although it also paradoxically re-asserts its sovereignty (Sassen, 1995).

This decline, far from being greeted everywhere as a step forward, has also generated not only very open resistance, through the anti-global movement, but also a wave of nostalgia, which is one of the key features of contemporary politics. The nostalgic political discourse can be clearly noted in discussions about European citizenship and immigration. The project of European unification has in fact triggered a wave of reactions which are simultaneously anti-European and racist. As The great resistance against European union, as well as the American suspicion of it, is a defensive response to a process of effective overcoming of the very idea and reality of European nation-states. The short-range effect of this is nationalistic paranoia and xenophobic fears. This is the form taken by contemporary 'European cultural racism' (Hall, 1992), as another effect of the trans-national economy is fragmentation of larger national identities into regional or localised sub-identities. I take this paradox of simultaneous globalisation and fragmentation as one of the defining features of

our era and I am especially concerned to analyse its effects on women and female citizenship- though I will not pursue this here today.

It is indeed the case, as Benhabib points out (1999) that the re-definition of European boundaries and a relative fluidity about European identity are a sign of the times. They coincide with the resurgence of micro-nationalisms at all levels in Europe today. According to the schizoid workings of globalisation or advanced capitalism, the unification of Europe coexists with the closing down of its borders; the coming of a common European citizenship and a common currency with increasing internal fragmentation and regionalism; a new, allegedly post-nationalist identity, has to coexist with the return of xenophobia, racism and anti-semitism. The law of excluded middle does not hold in postmodernity: one thing and its opposite can simultaneously be the case. The challenge, for the social philosopher, is consequently to find adequate ways of thinking about the simultaneity of opposite effects.

CONCLUSION TO SECTION 1

FOR POST-NATIONALISTIC EUROPEAN IDENTITY

The main notion, therefore, which I would like to take as a point of consensus, is that the redefinition of European identity starts from the acceptance of the decline of Eurocentrism. As Luisa Passerini puts it (1998, 13):

Deve essere pienamente assunta la perdita del ruolo che l'Europa vantava come 'centro', a vantaggio della ricerca delle sue specificità culturali, senza pretendere alla superiorità.⁴

In my perspective, 'Europe' today means a site of possible political resistance against nationalism, xenophobia and racism, which accompany the process of European integration. The European Union does imply the redefinition of the European nation-states in favour of a federated system, and this works towards a more integrated political union.

On flexible citizenship

I would relate this post-nationalistic sense of identity to the political notion of flexible citizenship. The focus of my research is on the area of citizenship and multi-cultural identity in the framework of the 'new' European Union.

Nationalism in European history goes hand in hand with the self-appointed mission of the Europeans to act as the centre, i.e.: their universalistic pretension. Europe as a world- power has practiced this 'metaphysical

cannibalism' (Braidotti, 1991) or consumption of others, through a specular or dialectical model of definition of self, in opposition to devalued 'others'. These constitutive 'others' are the complement of the subject of modernity. They are: the woman; the ethnic or racialized other and the natural environment, including animals, plants or forests. They constitute respectively: the second sex or sexual complement of Man; the coloured, racialized or marked other that allows the Europeans to pass off their whiteness as the defining trait of humanity and the physical environment against which technology will be 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 it by negation. One cannot move without the other. This same oppositional logic is at work in the notion of Europe as the 'center' of civilization. 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 in that of ethnic diversity. I think such a de-centering of the identity/difference nexus occurs under the impact of the European Unification process. It puts on the social and political agenda issues related to access and entitlement to European citizenship. I want to suggest that a radical restructuring of European identity as post-nationalistic can concretely be 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'. Thus, as Saskia Sassen suggested, instead of continuing the highly biased discussions about 'the migrant issue' and the often racist side-steps into the threat of Islam, it may be more productive to redesign the terms of the debate altogether. I recommend dismantling the us/them binary in such a way as to account for the undoing of a strong and fixed notion of European citizenship. This could be replaced by a functionally differentiated network of affiliations and loyalties, which for the citizens of the Member States of the European Union leads to the de-linking of the three elements discussed above: nationality, citizenship and national identity (1995, 280).

I think this is a much more radical disruption of both the legal and social practice of citizenship than usually recognised. According to Ulrich Preuss, a European notion of citizenship so 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" (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 centralised and homogeneous sphere of political power (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 potential and highly contested. But it could be a way of both building upon 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, also known as creolization, hybridisation, or the making of a multicultural Europe, within which ‘new’ Europeans could take their place alongside others.

It is a challenge that progressive and critical-minded Europeans could take up and attempt to enact. Multicultural and flexible European citizenship is definitely one of the directions in which we could grow: it is one of the possible forms of subject we could become.

On the social imaginary

A post-nationalist sense of European identity and of flexible citizenship does not come easy and in some ways is even a counter-intuitive idea. It requires an extra effort in order to come into being and displace the weight of historically cumulated experience. This is not to underestimate the extent to which we are already living in post-nationalist ways and in a post-nationalistic social space. This is due partly to the obvious effects of globalisation, the conformism and homogenisation of cultures due to global 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 will do the rest.

In other words, most people in Europe already coexist with social practices of a post-nationalist or global kind, although they may not acknowledge them as such. I think that it is precisely the rather large role of post-nationalistic 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.

The problem with both the impact of post-nationalistic structures and social spaces on the one hand and the complex reactions they engender on the other is that we already live this way, but when it comes to thinking about it, our mental schemes rail-road us back towards traditional ways of thinking that do not do justice to the paradoxes and complexities of the day. What we are lacking is a social imaginary that adequately reflects the social realities which we are already experiencing, of a post-nationalistic 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. There is a shortage on the part of the

social imaginary, which both feeds upon and supports the political timidity and the resistances that are being moved against the European political project.

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 poverty of a European public sphere. This is reflected in the remarkable absence of what I would call a European social imaginary. Thinkers as varied as Passerini, 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. 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*” (1987, 23). Like a cherished, but intensely unsexy old aunt.

My question therefore becomes: how do you develop such a new European social imaginary? I think that such a notion is a project, not a given, nonetheless, this does not make it utopian in the sense of over-idealistic. It is 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 this may be utopian at all, it is only in the positive sense of utopia as Benhabib suggests: the necessary dose of dream-like vision without which no social project can take off and gather support.

In the next section I will develop these insights by adding a new dimension to them. I will argue that in the quest for ways and means of realizing this project, gender scholarship can offer some important insights and methodological contributions.

SECTION 2: LOOKING FOR RELEVANT METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

THE RELEVANCE OF GENDER THEORY

I want to emphasize the specific contribution of scholarship from gender and feminist studies on an anti-racist, post-nationalistic definition of the new European Union⁵. I will use gender as the main method, not so much as the thematic focus of my research: gender research is not so much ‘about’ women as an approach that starts from the historical capital and discursive wealth of the women’s movements the world over. The methodological relevance of gender lies in the following:

Firstly, gender is a tool that allows a focus on the inter-connections between self and other, culture and society, the social and the symbolic or representational dimension. More specifically, it stresses the crucial importance of dis-identification from dominant norms of identity as a step towards the redefinition of the role between but also within the sexes. I have often facetiously defined the feminists as ‘the post-Woman women’. In other words, the subject of feminism is not Woman as the complementary of Man and as his specular other, but rather a multi-layered and complex subject that has taken her distance from the institution of femininity. ‘She’ no longer coincides with the disempowered and oppressed second sex, which is the reflection cast by the masculine subject in his universalistic posture and imposture. She is the subject of quite an-other story, a subject-in-process, a post-Woman woman who may not even be a ‘she’ in any classical sense of the term. Some would say: a mutant, and proudly so. In any case, the feminist subject is one that has undergone some fundamental metamorphosis.

Secondly, gender theory stresses the importance of the politics of experience and everyday life, while it does stay loyal to the notion that the personal is political.

This has implications for a situated European feminist perspective. Given the legacy of colonialism, in fact, it is much easier for Europeans to address social questions related to faraway places, than to stare at the problems in our own backyard. The feminist movement is not an exception: how much of our time and energy is spent speculating about, for instance, the terrible status of women in other lands and other cultures, as if our *status quo* were so perfect? The ‘politics of feminist solidarity’, which a leading feminist figure such as Simone de Beauvoir personifies, is modelled on Marxist international cosmopolitanism. In a more contemporary feminist perspective, these ‘master narratives’ or grand rhetorical gestures appear strangely dis-embodied and dis-embedded, like views from nowhere or, as Donna Haraway put it, ‘God’s trick’ (Haraway, 1990b)

Yet, women of colour like Chandra Mohanty (1992; 1993) have warned us very strongly against the ethnocentric habit that consist in constructing the ‘third world woman’, or ‘the Eastern European or Balkan woman’ as an object of oppression that requires our support; Spivak has also equated this form of ‘solidarity’ to benevolent paternalism, which has a lot to do with colonialism. It is against this flight into abstraction, which merely perpetuates the construction and consumption of specular “others”⁶ that feminists have proposed situated perspectives and applied the politics of location: it is time to take a good, cold look at ourselves.

The politics of locations

The notion of the politics of locations, formalized by A Rich (1987), is both analytic and normative: it helps define the structures of identity in terms of specific locations of class, race, nationality, age and sexual preference. It also provides a framework by which a political analysis of the differences among women can be developed, along those same lines of individualisation. Thus, “the politics of location” is a method by which power differences among women can be inserted in a larger perspective, which defines power as a web of interconnected effects. I have also re-read this with Michel Foucault’s theory of “microphysics of power”(1977b). More recently, this notion has been re-elaborated by Donna Haraway in terms of “situated knowledges”.

The methodological implications of the politics of location are significant:

- i) Gender is defined as a politically invested approach that stresses the importance of differences between sexes, races, cultures, ages and other important social variables. Moreover, gender analysis connects differences to issues of power, entitlement and the construction of individual identity.
- ii) Gender research intersects with issues of multi-culturalism, post-colonial and black identities. Gender and ethnicity are multi-layered yet deeply inter-linked variables, especially in the specific historical context of postmodernity. One of the main structural social changes introduced in postmodernity is that, because of the coming of multi-cultural societies, we need to shift the political debates from the differences between cultures, to differences within the same culture. Feminist social critics are especially conscious of this necessity. One of the central paradoxes of our historical condition is therefore the shifting grounds on which “periphery” and “centre”, “difference” and “identity” relate to one another, so as to defy dualistic or oppositional ways of thinking and to require instead more subtle and dynamic articulation.
- iii) As such, the field of gender research offers significant instruments for thinking about the “new” European social space. This implies a vision of the EU as an anti-racist fully European space, as opposed to the old hegemonic dream, or the vision of fortress Europe. We must be aware of the danger constituted by the effort at recreating a sovereign centre through the new European federation. This is also known as the “Fortress Europe” syndrome, which has been extensively criticised by feminists and anti-racists.

FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Gender research built up an alternative different type of theoretical and methodological capacity. In her important work of recapitulation of the schools of thought within feminist epistemology, Sandra Harding⁷ proposes a threefold distinction: feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism and feminist postmodernism.

Feminist empiricism

As a political strategy, feminist empiricism produces the politics of gender equality or equity, also known as ‘emancipationism’. This is often translated into equal opportunities for women in the public sphere, to ensure an effective participation by and recognition of the significance and contribution that women are likely to make to the cause of European unification. This requires effective policy-making in favour of gender equality at each and every level of the social scale, paying special attention to the more under-privileged sections of the female population, especially migrant or socially marginal and economically disadvantaged women.

What is striking for me about the politics of feminist empiricism is its implicit conservatism: the status quo is not challenged, but merely criticized for its male separatist habits. But empirical feminists side unequivocally and at times in my opinion uncritically on the side of institutional representation, as if ‘putting women in’ were enough. This means that any broader critique of the power generated by gender inequalities is not fully aired. Moreover, in its determination to redress the balance of power for women, it often ends up neglecting the enormous differences that exist among the different women themselves. Paradoxically, diversity is not a big issue for empirical feminists.

Feminist standpoint theory

As a strategy, this approach consists in questioning the diverse yet gender-specific forms of power that are at work at the different levels of institutional life, including the making of science and knowledge. By critiquing the epistemic structure of the scientific disciplines, or the very rules of the game of political representation, this methodology calls upon the specific contributions that women are likely to make. Concretely, this means devising specific policies aimed at women, targeting them in a variety of ways for action. What constitutes the strength of this position, however, can easily turn into its main weakness. Many scientists, including women, have expressed scepticism at the assertion of the difference that women can make.

Feminist standpoint theory, on the other hand, is confident about difference. It relies on two inter-connected notions: the importance of women's 'experience', as a reservoir of scientific and social energy, and the idea that this energy alone is not sufficiently taken into account in the practice of science. On the issue of difference, this school of thought sees it as the effect of the historical cumulation of differential or discriminatory social patterns of dealing with women. In time, this has resulted in the social construction and institutionalisation of female difference, which is neither just biological, nor fully genetic, but it is intermingled with social, cultural and historical patterning.

Moreover, standpoint feminists see this difference as a resource, not just as a pejorative sign or the mark of oppression. Being different from a system one is critical from is not only a disadvantage, it is also an epistemological and a moral position. Like the other oppressed groups, women 'know better'. This epistemological wealth of insights and knowledge needs to be turned back and re-invested into the making of scientific knowledge or of social practices. It is the cumulated stock of women's alternative experience that can provide material and insight, which cleanse science or social practices and politics of its masculinist bias. This is the 'successor science project'. In its post-colonial and black feminist theory versions⁸, feminist standpoint epistemology emphasizes the importance of locations of ethnicity and race in the production of knowledge. They forcefully argue for an enlarged and more inclusive practice of science.

Being a 'strategic essentialist' myself, I do think that if we posit 'difference' as a project, and not as a give, this approach can open up perspectives that can be beneficial to more than just empirical females.

Postmodernist feminism

Postmodernist feminism, resting on poststructuralist, psychoanalytic and deconstructive theories, however, goes a step further in the political analysis of 'difference'. The 'others', as both empirical and symbolic referents of socially constructed negative difference and hence disqualification, function as shapers of meanings in so far as they help define the subject by negation. In other words, the mark of difference fulfils the important function of defining and dividing the subjects, but this means that the different others are structurally necessary to the dominant system of meaning. It is consequently important to disengage the notion and the social practices of difference from the web of relations of power and domination in which they have been functioning for so long.

In my reading of European feminism, I have singled out the critique of difference as one of the crucial knots that ties together power and violence and which has exercised an enormous influence upon the European world view, also in dark episodes of our history, such as colonialism and fascism. Difference is far too important to be left to issues of relativism and fragmentation: it needs to be approached as a hegemonic notion and be turned into the basis for different practices of difference. This is especially important considering the return of deterministic definitions of 'difference' nowadays, under the impact of genetics and the new bio-technological advances.

Politically, this approach is very critical of 'identity politics' or of any affirmation of counter-identities, because of the fear of a dialectical reversal and to the reassertion of the very dualistic opposition which gender theory is supposed to be criticizing.

Deconstructive feminism offers instead a platform for a politics of diversity, because it makes a point of undermining any attempt at re-essentializing 'gender', 'race', 'ethnicity', 'age' or any other allegedly natural given. It is committed to a radical politics of resistance, which would be mercifully free of claims to purity, but also of the luxury of guilt. This position is committed to thinking the simultaneity of potentially contradictory social and textual effects, which cut across established ways of thinking and essentialized or dualistic oppositions. This simultaneity, however, is not to be confused with easy parallels or arguments by analogy. That gender/race/ethnicity/ age etc. be powerful axes or variables does not amount to flattening out the differences between each and everyone of them. The key-term here is: complexity. Any argument for multiplicity, which does not respect the complexity, which means the internal dissonances, is merely a quantitative variation of one-directional thinking.

I would sum up deconstructive politics by saying that all deconstructions are equal, but some are more equal than others. Whereas the deconstruction of dominant categories, like masculinity, whiteness, or Eurocentrism, is an end in itself, the reconstruction of minority categories, be it feminist redefinitions of femininity, anti-racist redefinitions of whiteness and post-nationalist redefinitions of Europe, are affirmative political projects. They need to be sustained by a robust kind of objectivity. Some notions need to be deconstructed to be laid to rest once and for all; others need to be opened up to their inner complexities so as to generate positive and strong counter-proposals and effective ways of asserting social alternatives. The paradox here is that one needs to assert the positivity of these alternative projects, while avoiding essential re-definitions.

CONCLUSION TO SECTION 2

Gender/sexual difference is crucial to identity-formation, in that it provides a theoretical framework to both explain and support processes of disidentification from dominant identities.

It is a process that relates to multiple differences: those between men and women, but also the many differences among women themselves, including differences of nationality, ethnicity, religion or “race”. An important role is played in my work by the psychoanalytic definition of identity as being split and internally differentiated. This implies that the “subject of feminism” is not a Cartesian entity, but rather a non-rationalistic subject, for whom desire - mediated through language and culture- plays a constitutive role. The emphasis on the role that desire and fantasy play in the constitution of identity has the advantage of not separating affectivity or emotions from reason and moral judgement. For me this is an advantage because issues related to identity, especially to gender, national or ethnic identity, tend to be loaded with emotional implication and strong affectivity. The positive aspect of this affectivity is that it mobilises people’s desire and imagination, thus offering great opportunities for a process of transformation of identities which would run parallel to the larger processes of change that are taking place in Europe today.

Re-introducing the classical notion of “passions” into the political debate may consequently be a progressive move at a time when racism and xenophobia make the discussion of European identity into a potentially explosive and divisive one. It both politicizes and gives conceptual charge to the notion of the social imaginary.

Feminist theory, starting from the assumption of the priority of experience, or the politics of everyday life, has the unquestionable advantage of emphasizing the role of affectivity, desire, sexuality and the many, complex and potentially contradictory ways in which they intersect with power, issues of entitlement, inclusion and exclusion, domination, seduction, consent and resistance. Feminist scholarship has made, in my opinion, a lasting contribution to the study of identity and subjectivity, precisely by providing cogent and innovative frameworks by which the processes of ‘transformation of intimacy’ as Tony Giddens (1994) calls them, become the stuff that social theory is made of. Feminism has developed a new political economy of human desires and affectivity. The work on the social, political and erotic imaginary accomplished by gender and feminist theorists is of great relevance and would deserve a fuller discussion than I can give it here.

SECTION 3: PROPOSING A MODEL

THE RELEVANCE OF THE QUESTION OF EUROPE IN/AS PHILOSOPHY

Another relevant set of theoretical methodological models comes from within the philosophical tradition that has made the notion of Europe into a key theoretical debate.

It is difficult to underestimate the extent to which ‘Europe’ is a philosophical notion and, conversely, how far philosophy had gone into constructing European identity. It is the case that, in the area which Anglo-Saxon practitioners summarily call: “Continental philosophy”, the question of the crisis of philosophy, of its function, purpose and social relevance, has never been off the agenda. This means that issues of identity, entitlement and power are intrinsic to the philosophical exercise of critical thought. The whole period following World War II and the moral bankruptcy of Europe under fascism and Nazism has seen different and often conflicting practices of critical theory, emerging mostly from the German and French schools. Not much love lost between them, of course – as often has been the case in the history of Western philosophy –, but a great deal of cross-fires, little cross-reference and much polemic.

That mutual hostility damaged an already impoverished European philosophical landscape. It may be worth remembering here that historically the USA became the main beneficiary of the forced exodus, also known as the great intellectual migration of European Jewish communist, gay and other dissident intellectuals who opposed fascism and Nazism. The USA thus emerged from the war with a respectable human capital of radical thinkers, some of whom—like Adorno and Brecht—returned to Europe, whereas others—Arendt, Marcuse, Hirschmann—stayed on. It is no understatement to say that Continental Europe, on the other hand, emerged from the war as a philosophical wasteland. Only the return of the previously exiled dissident – mostly Marxist, Jewish, or communist intellectuals – attempted to ensure the continuity of a tradition of critical thought which had been violently and forcefully truncated by fascism. This is too complex an issue for me to deal with adequately here, let me just say then that in the post-1989 era after the end of the Cold War it has finally become possible, as well as necessary, to think the geo-politics of European philosophy with more freedom and lucidity than had been the case before.

We would need a far more detailed study of the effects of the Cold War and the division of Europe at the end of World War II, upon the institutional practice of philosophy. I think that this genealogical account would be extremely useful in order to historicize, contextualize and thus assess the changes that are coming over

philosophical thought since 1989 and the end of the Cold War. These coincide with as well as in the project of European integration in the European Union. Although I cannot expand on this here, I wish to emphasise my central concern, namely that critical philosophy in Europe after fascism could only be on and of the Left, inspired by anti-fascism and Marxism. In so far as the women's movements of Europe partake of this tradition, they are historically situated to the left of the political spectrum. There is no such a thing in Europe as a right-wing feminist: the two terms are mutually exclusive in a way that is unheard of in American politics.

It also follows then that European critical theory could not avoid issues of European identity and the crisis of European humanism, in so far as it attempted to face up to Europe's role in developing fascism and triggering the second world war. The first generation of post-war critical philosophers started the analysis and critique of the role of European philosophy in the demise of European identity and values with and after fascism. Sartre and de Beauvoir set a significant agenda in terms of ethics of responsibility and commitment to freedom, but left a great deal of issues related to the fabric of philosophical reason conceptually unquestioned. The post-existentialist generations had to pick up the philosophical discussion from there.

It is significant that, in the years following the end of World War II, the bulk of left-wing intellectuals were mistrustful of the very idea of Europe. According to Edgar Morin, this mistrust was firstly a legacy of anti-fascism and more specifically a refusal of the Romanticized pan-Europeanism of the nazi and fascist eras. Morin also relates this to the left-wing rejection of European imperialism and the colonial power, more specifically the self-imposed role of Europe as the civilizing agency in the world. This anti-colonialist spirit was instrumental to developing in the European left a healthy dose of suspicion against Euro-centric assumptions of superiority.

Secondly, it was also due to the anti-capitalist politics of the European Left in those days. So much of the European community had to do with the reconstruction of our Continent after the destruction of the war, more particularly our industrial infra-structure, that the Marxist intellectuals could not be expected to get excited about it. A common market is still a market-place.

Thirdly, in the context of the Cold war, the European Left—and feminists were no exception—was looking rather to Eastern Europe, especially to the USSR, as the counter-model of the ideal society. The workers' international perspective appears as a cosmopolitan brand of humanism, in relation of which the specifically European dimension looks like a slightly narcissistic peripheral concern. All this will change with the poststructuralist generation, when the question of Europe emerges with a vengeance.

The importance of the poststructuralist approach

The reaction against these silences and omissions did come in the form of the far more self-reflexive social movements and philosophies of the younger generation, that of May '68. This generation introduced a radical critique of the by now canonical systems of thought which had founded and guided critical theory before, during (albeit in exile) and after European fascism—namely Marxism and psychoanalysis. Their respective reliance on Hegel also comes into critical forms. This re-appraisal of the founding texts of the critical theory tradition within Europe coincided with the explosion of the new social movements of the 1960's and 70's, especially the women's movement, in a historical context of de-colonization and progressive dislocation of Europe's hegemonic hold over world affairs.

The scholarship on the 'returns to Marx' proposed by Louis Althusser and the 'returns to Freud' promoted by Jaques Lacan is quite large, suffice it to say therefore that what is at stake in these 'returns' is anything but a flat repetition or a gesture of loyal obedience. The radical philosophies, which later will become labelled as 'poststructuralism' represent a moment of great theoretical creativity. They repossess the Marxist and psychoanalytic texts, promoting the importance of open-ended re-interpretation of the actual theories.

The issue of European consciousness is therefore built into critical philosophy. The most prominent figure of May '68, for instance, now very active in the European Parliament, Dany Cohn-Bendit, is almost the embodiment of a whole—till then frozen—slab of European history: he is boyh German and French; comes from an anti-fascist family-background; is Jewish and intellectual. The shadow of the holocaust and the events of the second World War was noticeable in the May 68 events: "*Nous sommes tous des juifs allemands*" ("We are all German Jews") chanted the students in Paris, while those in Prague put flowers into the mouths of the guns of the Soviet Red Army, which had just invaded and squashed their Spring of hope and liberation. This is Europe's equivalent to the Californian flower-power; this is Europe's continuing saga of structural privilege and unmentionable misery, internal divisions and endless production of pejorative differences. This is also, however a whole new story that is waiting to be told and dying to break open.

The issue of the social imaginary is central to the political project of this philosophical generation. How it can be analyzed and be made to change in the direction of a radical critique of power emerges as a central concern for the philosophies and the practices of the 68 generation. The same generation that chanted: "Power to the imagination!" and elected John Lennon's 'Imagine' to the status of an anthem. Profoundly Nietzschean in inspiration, the post-structuralists are politically to the far Left of the spectrum. They deconstruct, build genealogical

approaches that clash with the dogma of historical materialism. They take the instance of the unconscious not as the black box or the obscure god of some guilt-ridden subject of lack, but as the activator of internal acts of gratuitous disobedience, and external acts of joyful insurrection.

In the *Abécédaire*, Deleuze (1996) speaks of the European Left of the 60's and 70's in very pragmatic, but also passionate terms. He distances himself from the Utopian elements of the Leftist creed, especially the nefarious universalistic illusion of a revolution that will lead to a 'new humanity'. Aware that all revolutions are doomed to fail, Deleuze emphasizes instead the process of 'becoming', that is to say the social, political and personal pursuit of radical change and transformation, as constitutive of what I would call the political sensibility of the Left. Deleuze defines the Left in terms of a creative imaginary: it is a desire for becoming-minoritarian that constitutionally clashes with the guardians of the *status quo*; the judges and managers of truths and the clarity fetishists⁹. Politics is ultimately more a matter of managing the social imaginary, i.e.: being able to decode the existential temperature, the passions and yearning. It is about 'becoming' – a concept that I would situate at the heart of the project of philosophical radicalism.

A feminist poststructuralist approach to European post-nationalist identity

In this section I will attempt to cross over the points made in the rest of the paper and attempt a transversal model of approaching the question of gender in the framework of the European Union. My central argument is that in order to work towards the creation of post-nationalist European identities, we need new methodological and theoretical frameworks.

This project receives new impetus in the work of the poststructuralist generation, Deleuze, Derrida and Foucault especially read this epistemic and ethical 'crisis' in terms of geo-political power-relations. Many contemporary thinkers have read postmodernity as the historical moment of decline of European hegemony, through the catastrophe of the Second World War and the undoing of colonialism. Anthony Appiah (1991) reminded us of the need not to confuse the 'post' of postcoloniality with the 'post' of postmodernism, but to respect instead the specific historical locations of each. I would argue that the parallels between the two are not a sufficient, but rather a necessary condition for a theoretical overlap between them.

Cornell West argues that the historical condition of postmodernity can be best described in terms of the shift of geo-political power away from the North-Atlantic in favour of the Pacific and especially South-Pacific area. This shift becomes theorized in philosophy in terms of the decline of the Euro-centred

logocentric system and the consequent crisis of the values of European humanism. The work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gianni Vattimo and Massimo Cacciari, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Gilles Deleuze, to name but a few contemporary European philosophers, points strongly in this direction. The work of the opposition to these philosophers, be it Ernst Gellner or, for that matter, Martha Nussbaum, on the other hand, takes the form of the rejection of the very idea of a crisis of European humanism.

To sum up the ‘added value’ of a gender-based poststructuralist approach I would say that, firstly it allows us to take seriously the insight of psychoanalytic politics, namely that the subject can only change if his/her desire is activated. Both Foucault, Deleuze and Irigaray have emphasized the crucial importance of sexuality, of the ‘libidinal economy’ to an understanding of contemporary subjects. This is an ethics of respect for affectivity, desire and memories which invests on the politics of the social imaginary. Historical memory is especially important to him, in so far as it keeps alive the historical consciousness of both struggle and resistance, following Gramsci, the intellectual is the ‘resisting reader’, the one who cuts against the grain. In my work I call this type of politically activating/activated memory, the desire to “forget to forget”.

Secondly, a poststructuralist approach focuses on the critique of power, especially in terms of the deconstruction of binary opposites and dualisms. If we take, for instance, the idea of ‘national identity’, a postmodernist critical perspective, inspired by Homi Bhaba or Edward Said can make us aware of 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 nation-state. Moreover, a feminist knows to what an extent the legitimating tales of nationhood in the west has been constructed over the body of women, as well as on the crucible of imperial and colonial masculinity.

The fact that these allegedly universal or all-encompassing ideas of ‘nation’ or ‘national identity’ are in fact flawed and internally incoherent, does not make them any less effective, nor does it prevent them from exercising hegemonic power. But the awareness of the instability, the lack of coherence, consistency and inner rationality of the fundamental categories of political and philosophical analysis (Lyotard’s ‘master-narratives’), far from giving way to a suspension of belief in the permanence of power results in a renewed need to elaborate forms of political resistance that are suited to the specific paradoxes of our historical condition. More specifically, a postmodernist political priority consists in dislodging the belief in the natural foundations and consequently the

fixed nature of any system of values, meanings or belief. The social imaginary, in this perspective, is both very concrete and very political.

Philosophers such as Derrida and the Italian Cacciari (1994) have pointed out, however, one interesting fact about this crisis of European humanism and the shift of geo-political power relations, which makes their discourse about the end of Western European hegemony radically different from the fascist and right-wing nostalgic discourse about the ‘decline of the west’ in the earlier part of the 20th century.

The more radical line of deconstruction of Euro-centrism from within Europe runs as follows: what makes the western philosophical culture so perniciously effective is that it has been announcing its own death for over one hundred years. Since the apocalyptic trinity of modernity: Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, the west has been thinking through the historical inevitability and the logical possibility of its own decline. So much so, that the state of ‘crisis’ has become the *modus vivendi* of western philosophers: we thrive on it, we write endlessly about it; if the crisis did not exist, we would have to invent it, to justify our existence. I think nobody, let alone critical thinkers, should take the notion of the ‘crisis’ of the west naively or at face value. This state of prolonged and self-agonizing crisis may simply be the form western postmodernity has chosen to perpetuate itself.

Gayatri Spivak (1992):

Given the international division of labor of the imperialist countries, it is quite appropriate that the best critique of the European ethico-politico-social universals, those regulative concepts, should come from the North Atlantic. But what is ironically appropriate in postcoloniality is that this critique finds its best staging outside of the North Atlantic in the undoing of imperialism.

I think this highlights one of the central paradoxes of the postmodern historical condition—one which pitches centre versus periphery in a manner so complex and so perverse as to require that we think the simultaneity of potentially contradictory social effects.

The European Union: relocating and accounting for whiteness

I want to argue therefore that as a project, the European Union has to do with the rejection of false universalism that historically has made Europe into the home of nationalism, colonialism and fascism. This is an attempt to come to terms with the paradoxes and internal contradictions of our own historical predicament as ‘post-Europe Europeans’, much as gender theory has had to deal with the fragments, the

deconstruction and re-construction of the ‘post-Woman women’ in the feminist process of transformation.

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. It’s 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 (1995) 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 at. This is a plea for lucidity and for embedded and embodied perspectives. 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 be simultaneously the case makes European identity into one of the most contested areas of political and social philosophy in our world at the moment. The reactive tendency towards a sovereign sense of the Union is also known as the ‘Fortress Europe’ syndrome, which has been extensively criticized by feminists and antiracists such as Helma Lutz, Nira Yuval-Davis, Avtar Brah, Floya Anthias, and Philomena Essed. They warn us against the danger of replacing the former Eurocentrism with a new ‘Europ-ism’, 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. That it would result in the balkanization of the entire region leaves little doubt, especially after the events in former Yugoslavia.

I also want to emphasize another crucial issue: the historical correlation between the crisis of postmodernity, exemplified in the crisis of European identity, the decline of European nation states and the critical deconstruction of whiteness. Let me explain.

I said earlier that, 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 the foundational political myth in Europe, 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 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 subject (1987) is indicative of the problem of European citizenship and blackness emerging 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 qualities that are inherent to white people. Like all fascists, they 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 (1989; 1991; 1994a; 1994b; 1995) came along and painted us in.

In his analysis of the representation of whiteness as an ethnic category in mainstream films, Richard Dyer (1993) defines it as “an emptiness, absence, denial or even a kind of death”. Being the norm, it is invisible, as if natural, inevitable or the ordinary way to do things. The source of the representational power of white is the 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 naturalization of whiteness is that it masks itself off into a “colourless multicolouredness”. White contains all other colours.

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 analyze critically. Dyer states that: “whiteness falls apart in your hands as soon as you begin”. It tends to break down into subcategories of whiteness: 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 deathgiving force and feminist critiques of whiteness in mythology and fairy tales like Snow White (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. As Deleuze argued, the centre is dead and void; there is no becoming

there. The action is at the city gates, where nomadic tribes of world-travelled polyglots are taking a short break.

The experience of white European immigrants tends to confirm the insubstantial quality of whiteness. Cultural identity being external and retrospective, it gets defined for Europeans in the confrontation with others—usually black—peoples. This was the experience of Irish, Italian and Jewish immigrants in countries like the USA, Canada and Australia. Their ‘whiteness’ emerged oppositionally, as a distancing factor from natives and blacks. Feminist critics like Brodwin Sacks (1994) have analyzed this phenomenon of a ‘whitening’ process by which Euroimmigrants-especially Jews and Italians- were constructed as ‘whitened’ citizens in the USA.

The extent to which this kind of ‘whitened’ identity is illusory as it is racist, can be seen by how divided the diasporic Euroimmigrant communities actually are, all in their respective ghettos, antagonistic to 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.

I want to argue against such essentialised notions. By learning to view their subject position as racialized white people, we can work towards antiracist forms of whiteness, or at least antiracist strategies to rework whiteness. All other historical and demographic differences notwithstanding, I would want to argue that this is one of the key issues at stake in the European integration project. It is also the most likely to go wrong.

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 is firstly to situate 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 till it opens out to the new.

The third step consists in trying to re-locate European identity, so as to undo its hegemonies tendencies. I refer to this kind of identity as “nomadic”¹⁰. Being a nomadic European subject means to be in transit within different

identity-formations, but sufficiently anchored to a historical position to accept responsibility for it. The key words in this project are: “accountability” and the “strategic re-location of whiteness”.

CONCLUSION

I want to defend the project of developing a post-nationalist understanding of European identity and of its flexible citizenship as a great historical chance for Europeans to become more intelligent of our own history and more self-critical in a productive sense. Nietzsche argued earlier on this century that many Europeans no longer feel at home in Europe. At the closing of that same century many would 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 played a central role.

To become accountable for such a history requires 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. The focus must consequently fall on the dialectics of self and other and the violent, appropriative manner in which the One has historically be brought into relation with his (the gender is not coincidental) others. Difference must be dislodged it from this disastrous history, and made to sever its links with power and domination. This task is made all the more urgent and necessary in the historical moment known as postmodernity which, read in terms of the crisis of European humanism, coincides with the shift of geo-political power away from the North-Atlantic, bringing about the de-centring of Europe and its universalistic pretences.

The concrete implications of this new kind of post-nationalist identity are related to the dis-identification from established, nation-bound identities. This dislocation can lead to a positive and affirmative re-location of European identities following the feminist politics of locations. Throughout this process I have stressed both the need for and the difficulties involved in developing an adequate European social imaginary for this kind of subject-position. There is no denying that such an enterprise includes a large sense of loss and is not without pain. No process of consciousness-raising can ever be painless. Migrants know this very well and my own experience in Australia has taught me to what an extent the process of dis-identification is linked to the pain of loss. I believe that the same sort of pain is expressed with magnificent candour in Ursula Hirschmann’s writings. This is not, however, the pathetic expression of a nostalgic yearning, but rather a mature, sobering experience, similar to the loss of illusions and of self-delusions of classical Greek tragedies.

As Ursula Hirschman suggests, it is probably easier for cosmopolitan Jewish Europeans to feel comfortable with the idea of a European federation, than for more nation-bound European nationals. What Jewishness stands for here is the diasporic sense of non-coincidence with any national identity. As I argued earlier on the level of subject-positions, the project of the European Union is linked to Jewishness precisely by the emphasis on going beyond nationalism. The diasporic Jews embody a brand of cosmopolitanism which can lend itself to con-figuring a supra-national type of subjectivity.

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 world war II era, after 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 1970's, when, like most of his generation, he took 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/USA had dramatically dislocated the sources of planetary power away from Europe (Morin 1987, 23):

Alors, je pris conscience, et cela me bouleversa, que l'Europe était devenue une pauvre chère vieille chose. Je suis devenu un néo-Européen parce que j'ai vu l'Europe malade et la répétition générale de son agonie.

How the mighty have fallen!

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 specificity, both culturally and politically. 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. *Il faut repenser l'Europe à partir de sa chute, de la fin de son destin héroïque.* There is a strong affective angle here, which I think worth stressing. Morin makes it quite clear (Morin 1987, 199):

Il faut être mutilé d'Europe pour ressentir fortement l'identité européenne comme ces intellectuels tchèques réfugiés à New York après 1968, qui au moment de partir en vacances, les uns en France, les autres en Italie, disaient : « on rentre chez nous ». Mais nous ne sommes, heureusement, pas tous émigrés et il nous faut, de l'intérieur, décroquer l'Europe et l'ouvrir à elle-même.

In this respect, I agree with Luisa Passerini that a certain idea of love is invested in our definitions and practices of European identity and in the quest for a suitable social imaginary for it.

I am not thinking, however, of either the classical Greek myth of Europa's rape and abduction by a bovine deity. Nor am I particularly convinced by Denis de Rougemont's historically-based interpretation of what de Rougemont would like to identify as a specific European Eros. What I have in mind is rather a post-romantic involvement, something after the fall of illusions and delusions. A new virtual love that targets less what we have been than what we are, at last, capable of becoming. The liberatory potential of this is equally proportional to the imaginary and political efforts it requires of us all. The recognition of the new marginality of Europe in this case would only be the premise to 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 who may apply to some of the people who situate themselves—in terms of genealogical consciousness and the related forms of accountability—for 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. Far from being the prelude to a relativistic acceptance of all and any locations—in the pluralistic mode that too often expresses very conventional forms of hegemony—I want to present this kind of embodied genealogical accountability as my prelude to critical political and theoretical practice today. It is also my contribution from the field of gender to a dialogical exchange with other disciplines and discourses on this theme.

As European social thinkers, we are historically condemned to our history, that is to say to the return of the fundamental crisis of European humanism, which has haunted continental philosophy at least since the end of the last century. Nietzsche had also significantly argued that people who ignore their history are condemned to repeat it. Being a nomadic European subject means to be in transit but sufficiently anchored to a historical position to accept responsibility for it. As Nietzsche put it:¹¹

We who are homeless – among Europeans today there is no lack of those who are entitled to call themselves homeless in a distinctive and honorable sense. (...) We feel disfavor for all ideals that might lead one to feel at home even in this fragile, broken time of transition. (...) We ourselves who are homeless constitute a force that breaks open ice and other all too thin ‘realities’.

Through the pain of loss and dis-enchantment, just like ‘post-Woman Women’ have moved towards a redefinition of their ‘being-gendered-in-the-world’, ‘post-Europe Europeans’ may be able to find enough self-respect and grown-up love for themselves as to be able to grab this historical chance to become, at least, just what we want to be: just Europeans, *à peine, et de justesse*.¹²

Endnotes

¹ Translation: “We, the uprooted people of Europe, who have crossed more often frontiers than we ever changed shoes, as Brecht—the king of the uprooted—put it, we have nothing to lose other than our chains in a united Europe, therefore we are in favour of the European federation.”

² As an aside, it would be interesting to explore the historical link between feminism and anti-fascism in European culture, with special emphasis on countries where fascism originated, like Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal and Greece. This is one of the aims of the SOCRATES Thematic Network ATHENA, co-ordinated by Utrecht University and funded by the European Commission.

³ I am grateful to Ugo Berti for providing this reference.

⁴ Translation: “We have to acknowledge fully the end of Europe’s position as the ‘centre’. This has the advantage of highlighting its cultural specificity, without any claim to superiority.”

⁵ See for instance the work of Essed (1991), Yuval Davis (1989; 1997); Brah (1993); Lutz (1996); Slapsak.

⁶ For a more in-depth explanation of this concept, let me refer to my *Patterns of Dissonance*. Cambridge: Polity Press: New York: Routledge, 1991.

⁷ Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986; also: *Feminism & Methodology*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1987; and: *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

⁸ See for instance Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Theory*, New York and London: Routledge, 1994.

⁹ Thanks to Gayatri Spivak for this witty formulation.

¹⁰ See R. Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994: and also: *Metamorphoses. Towards a Materialistic Theory of Becoming*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002.

¹¹ Quoted in Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993.

¹² Translation: “Only just so”.

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