

*For my nieces and nephews*

# Transpositions

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*On Nomadic Ethics*

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polity

Fourthly, the specific temporality of the subject needs to be rethought. The subject is an evolutionary engine, endowed with her or his own embodied temporality, in the sense of both the specific timing of the genetic code and the more genealogical time of individualized memories. If the embodied subject of bio-power is a complex molecular organism, a bio-chemical factory of steady and jumping genes, an evolutionary entity endowed with its own navigational tools and an inbuilt temporality, then we need a form of ethical values and political agency that reflects this high degree of complexity.

Fifthly, and last, this ethical approach cannot be dissociated from considerations of power. The *bios/zoe*-centered vision of the technologically mediated subject of postmodernity or advanced capitalism is fraught with internal contradictions. Accounting for them is the cartographic task of critical theory and an integral part of this project is to account for the implications they entail for the historically situated vision of the subject (Braidotti 2002). The *bios/zoe*-centred egalitarianism that is potentially conveyed by the current technological transformations has dire consequences for the humanistic vision of the subject. The potency of *bios/zoe*, in other words, displaces the humanistic vision of consciousness, which hinges on the sovereignty of the 'I'. It can no longer be safely assumed that consciousness coincides with subjectivity, nor that either of them is in charge of the course of historical events. Both liberal individualism and moral universalism are disrupted at their very foundations by the social and symbolic transformations induced by our historical condition. Far from being merely a crisis of values, this situation confronts us with a formidable set of new opportunities. Renewed conceptual creativity and a leap of the social imaginary are needed in order to meet the challenge. Classical humanism, with its rationalistic and anthropocentric assumptions, is of hindrance, rather than of assistance, in this process. Therefore, as one possible response to this challenge, I propose a post-humanistic brand of non-anthropocentric vitalism as an affirmative and productive force.

In the following two chapters I will outline my cartography of the emergence of *zoe*-power by following the ongoing transformations. These are occurring on the axes of classical 'difference', which are currently being transposed into lines of 'becoming'. Sexualization, racialization and naturalization transpose into becoming-woman/other/animal/earth, under the impact of emergence of 'Life' as a subject of political and ethical concern.

## 2

## Transactions: Transposing Difference

The human body itself is no longer part of 'the family of man', but a zoo of posthumanities.

Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, *Posthuman Bodies*

If bio-diversity is thought good for other species and for the global ecosystem, why not for the human species and its bio-cultural ecosystems?

Lucius Outlaw, *On Race and Philosophy*

There are more telephone lines in Manhattan than in all Sub-Saharan Africa.

Zillah Eisenstein, *Global Obscenities*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter fulfils both an illustrative and a normative function by focusing on the transpositions occurring on two modes of becoming: woman and other. In the next chapter I will pursue this analysis by looking at the rest of the sequence: becoming-animal and imperceptible. I will provide a cartography of current debates on the social transformations induced by our technologically mediated world. This cartography supports my thesis that a nomadic, non-unitary vision of the subject, far from preventing ethically relevant statements, is a necessary precondition for the expression of an ethics that reflects the complexities of our times. I want to argue further that this ethics renews the emphasis on embodiment and immanence and hence contributes to an enlarged sense of rooted and accountable universals.

The three modes of transformative becoming that structure my analysis map out the location of what used to be the 'constitutive others' of the unitary subject of classical humanism. They mark respectively the sexualized bodies of women, the racialized bodies of ethnic or native others, and

the naturalized bodies of animals and 'earth others'. They form the interconnected facets of structural otherness defined as a hierarchical scale of pejorative differences which takes its bearing from the centre or standard of Sameness. The interaction centre-periphery; same-other; particular-universal has shifted under the impact of globalized postmodernity. It no longer corresponds to a dialectical model of opposition, but rather follows a more dynamic, non-linear and hence less predictable pattern, which composes a zigzagging line of internally contradictory options. The 'others' are not merely the markers of exclusion or marginality, but also the sites of powerful and alternative subject-positions. Thus, the bodies of others become simultaneously disposable commodities and also decisive agents for political and ethical transformation (Braidotti 2002). To think the simultaneity of these opposite projects in a non-dialectical or nomadic mode of interaction requires a shift of perspective and adequate cartographies. To understand it as an ethical principle, we need creativity and trust in the future.

Post-industrial societies make 'differences' proliferate to ensure maximum profit. I want to explore how this logic of multiplying differences triggers a consumerist or vampiric consumption of 'others', meaning new forms of micro-, infra- and counter-subjectivities. The unity of the subject of humanism is exploded into a web of diverse discourses and practices. This phenomenon, however, seems to leave miraculously unscathed the centuries-old forms of sexism, racism and anthropocentric arrogance that have marked our culture. The transformation of the axes of sexualized, racialized and naturalized difference form intersecting patterns of becoming. They compose a new political economy of otherness and are therefore of great ethical and political relevance.

#### BECOMING-WOMAN: TRANSPOSING SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

##### Global gender politics

At the end of postmodernism, as I announced in the prologue, new master-narratives have arisen: the inevitability of 'free' market economies as the historically dominant form of human progress and biological essentialism, under the cover of genetics, new evolutionary biology and psychology. They help define the salient features in contemporary gender politics and they constitute a disjunction, not a synthesis. The mainstream master discourse of neo-liberal post-feminism rests on the new genetic social imaginary and it marks the return of the most classical forms of economic and social discrimination. As Franklin (2000: 188) put it:

We are currently witnessing the emergence of a new genomic governmentality – the regulation and surveillance of technologically assisted

genealogy. This is necessitated by the removal of the genomes of plants, animals and humans from the template of natural history that once secured their borders, and their re-animation as forms of corporate capital, in the context of a legal vacuum.

The 'post-feminist' wave has merged with neo-conservatism in gender relations, producing a mild effect of 'gender trouble' in the social division of labour between the sexes. Most men pay lip service to gender mainstreaming, while the new generations of corporate-minded business-women disavow any debt or allegiance to the collective struggles of women. 'Gender mainstreaming' turned out to be an anti-feminist mechanism that increased differences in status, access and entitlement among women. Post-feminist neo-liberalism is pro-capitalist and hence it considers financial success as the sole indicator of the status of women. Social failure is accordingly perceived as a lack of emancipation, which implies that social democratic principles of solidarity are misconstrued as old-fashioned welfare support and dismissed accordingly. The post-feminist master narrative reintroduces the syndrome of 'the exceptional woman', which was in place before the women's movement introduced more egalitarian principles of interconnection, solidarity and teamwork. The pernicious part of this syndrome is that it fosters a new sense of isolation among women and hence new forms of vulnerability.

Post-feminism also entails some formidable lapses of the historical memory: it engenders a revisionist approach that turns into feminist heroines women who had explicitly rejected or kept their distance from the women's movements. This includes strong individual personalities, mostly artists, such as Louise Bourgeois, Yoko Ono or Madonna. It can also empower public figures who happen to be women, like Madeleine Albright, Benazir Bhutto, Margaret Thatcher or Condoleezza Rice. This trend becomes more problematic, however, when it flattens out all other political considerations, as in the reappraisal of right-wing women. The most blatant case to date is that of the German Nazi supporter and filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl who, as shown in her autobiography (Riefenstahl 1992), suffered from the genius complex. A film director and artist of great talent, Riefenstahl rode the historical wave of Hitler's movement to her best advantage, filming masterful works such as *The Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia*. After the fall of the Nazis, she was singled out for the denazification programme and her work was banned for a long time. It may well be that – as a woman – she was made to pay for her mistakes far more than Martin Heidegger and other unrepentant Nazis. Nevertheless, I feel moral repulsion and strong political opposition to a single-minded reappraisal of this character solely on the ground of gender politics. Riefenstahl's fascist aesthetics perpetuates both the myth and the practice of white supremacy under the spurious guise of the emancipation of women (Gilroy 2000). It is unacceptable to disengage feminist politics and

genealogies from the issue of race, ethnicity, domination, exclusion or the fight for democracy. Individualism pushed to the extreme breeds horror.

Post-feminist liberal individualism is simultaneously multicultural and profoundly ethnocentric. It celebrates differences, even in the racialized sense of the term, so long as they confirm to and uphold the logic of Sameness. Condoleeza Rice, a right-wing woman of colour, or Pim Fortuyn, a conservative Dutch gay politician, are emblematic examples of the repositioning of former 'others' within the precinct of masculine authority. Gender politics in neo-liberal discourse is complicitous with a discourse about white supremacy, where the term 'white', like all racialized signifiers, has no biological grounding, but indexes access to power and entitlement. The dominant discourse nowadays is that 'our women' (Western, Christian, white or 'whitened' and raised in the tradition of secular Enlightenment) are already liberated and thus do not need any more social incentives or emancipatory policies. 'Their women', however (non-Western, non-Christian, mostly not white and not integrated into white society, as well as alien to the Enlightenment tradition), are still backwards and need to be targeted for special emancipatory social actions or even more belligerent forms of enforced 'liberation'. This simplistic position reinstates a world-view based on colonial lines of demarcation. It fails to see the great grey areas in between the doubly pretentious claim that feminism has already succeeded in the West and is non-existent outside this region. The in-between degrees of complexity are the only ones that matter and they should be put at the centre of the agenda. The key point, however, is that women's bodies function in this discourse as bearers of authentic ethnic identity, and as indicators of the stage of development of their respective civilizational fault-lines.

Because of the structural injustices built into the globalization process, the current geopolitical situation of women is more polarized than ever. The imaginary surrounding the alleged 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington 1996) is explicitly gendered. It features at centre stage the ruling couple of an allegedly emancipated, ageing and liberated Western world, the emblem of which is the 'soft' and 'feminized' European Union. The EU is opposed to the 'masculine' US partner supervising the war of civilizations through its military power and its supreme contempt of international law. In opposition to them is a more virile, youthful and masculine non-Western world, of which Islamic culture is the standard-bearer.

Such a caricature of global power relations is postulated and fought out on women's bodies: one of the recent emblems of this is the Burkaclothed bodies of the Afghan women in whose defence an anti-abortionist, arch-conservative and anti-feminist president, George W. Bush, cynically claimed to launch one of his many commercially driven wars of conquest. Sexual difference has returned to the world stage in a fundamentalist and reactionary version. In a context of global war, racism and xenophobia, this type of gender politics results in mutual and respective claims about

authentic and unitary female identity on the part of the 'liberated' West and its allegedly traditionalist opponents. This is a play of specular and belligerent fundamentalisms: one with a post-industrial and the other with a pre-industrial face. They compose a single phenomenon that is best understood in terms of the resurgence of imperial sovereignty (Hardt and Negri 2000). It fails to take into account the precious, patient and pragmatic work accomplished by the women's movements in the world over the last thirty years, and especially in the non-Western world, such as RAWA (Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan).

### The genetic social imaginary

The second dominant master narrative of today concerns the social genetic imaginary, in the framework of the bio-technological revolution. The work of Franklin, Lury and Stacey (2000) is especially relevant to this discussion, as it focuses on the process of globalization for a critique of Western science and technologies. They argue that the era of the global economy can best be described as the cannibalization of nature by a global market; they also argue that this process is being matched by an increased sense of reterritorialization and consequently a re-invention of nature. They speak of a 'transmagnification' of nature (2000: 19), which is being refigured and revitalized by being completely saturated with technological culture, while also resisting it. Nature is more than the sum of its marketable appropriations: it is also an agent that remains beyond the reach of domestication and commodification. I refer to this surplus vitality of living matter in terms of *zoe*, as opposed to the discursive production of meanings of life as *bios*. I will expand on this in the next chapter.

Franklin argues that contemporary genetic-driven societies euphorically associate the genetic code or DNA with marketable brand names. The genetic materials (like stem cells) become data banks of potentially profitable information and are commercialized as such. The very widespread practice of patenting and enforcing intellectual property rights as a standard way of doing scientific research demonstrates the point. What this means concretely is that scientific research, which is still reputed and funded as 'fundamental', results in applied technological innovations. The case of genetically modified organisms in food production is a glaring example of this practice.

In a very powerful twist to her argument, however, Franklin shows that the genetic social imaginary cuts two ways and if 'nature' has been transformed by technology, then the contamination also works in reverse. Thus, contemporary car engineering, for instance, is visually marketed in a genetic format, which stresses the industrial transmission of inherited traits through careful selection and manufacturing of strengths and weaknesses. This commercialized version of social Darwinism adds a touch of



irony to the widespread idea of the 'next generation' of electronic gadgets, computers, cars or whatever. The basic equation at work in the social genetic imaginary is that the DNA results in marketable brand names, so that your genes are, literally, your capital.

The new bio-technologies of 'Life' (as both *bios* and *zoe*) are expanding fast. They also structure the labour force and forms of production, mostly through enforced flexibility. Agriculture, grains and seeds; food-production and animal-breeding; the new frontiers of medicine, including genetic and foetal medical interventions; the widespread phenomenon of the traffic in organs and body-parts; and the growing industry of genetic engineering and farming of organic tissues and cells are part of this phenomenon. The new technologies consequently have a direct impact on the most intimate aspects of existence in the so-called 'advanced world', from technologically assisted reproduction to the unsustainable levels of consumerism and the commercial exploitation of genetic data for the purpose of health and other types of insurance. Last, but not least, are the implications for contemporary warfare and the military-industrial complex.

The convergence of bio-technologies with the new information and communication technologies, backed by the Internet, is a major factor in inducing a radical revision of body-politics. 'Bio-power' has become a mainstream form of management of genetic or molecular politics (Rose 2001). The work of Foucault on the discursive production of contemporary embodied subjects is the relevant background to this discussion. Foucault demonstrates not only the constructed structure of what we call 'human nature', but also its relatively recent appearance on the historical scene, which makes it coextensive with forms of social control and disciplining. Haraway's work also starts from the assumption that 'life as a system to be managed, a field of operations constituted by scientists, artists, cartoonists, community activists, mothers, anthropologists, fathers, publishers, engineers, legislators, ethicists, industrialists, bankers, doctors, genetic counsellors, judges, insurers, priests, and all their relatives – has a very recent pedigree' (Haraway 1997: 174). Haraway argues that contemporary science has moved beyond Foucault's bio-power and has already entered the age of 'the informatics of domination', which is a different regime of visualization and control.

Deleuze and Guattari analyse this notion of power over life in their seminal work on capitalism as schizophrenia. They provide the single most coherent analysis of materialist vitalism, or 'Life' in a post-anthropocentric vein. I will explore this notion in chapters 4 and 5. Deleuze argues that the representation of embodied subjects is no longer visual in the sense of being scopical, in the post-Platonic sense of the simulacrum. Nor is it specular, in the psychoanalytic mode of redefining vision within a dialectical scheme of oppositional recognition of self and/as other. It has rather become schizoid, or internally disjointed; contemporary societies are immersed in this logic of boundless circulation and thus are

suspended somewhere beyond the life and death cycle of the humanist vision of the self. It is consequently necessary to try to account for contemporary embodied subjects in terms of their surplus-value as visual commodities that circulate in a global circuit of cash flow known as the 'information society'. Much of this information is not knowledge-driven, but rather media-inflated and thus indistinguishable from sheer entertainment. Today's capital is spectral (Derrida 1994).

In *Metamorphoses* I argued the gender politics of techno-bodies has undergone a paradoxical evolution. In modernity in fact, the machinic body-double was both genderized and eroticized – like the robot in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* or the virile locomotives in Eisenstein's cinema. In post-modernity, however, this ratio changes: electronic and digital machinery are figures of complexity, mixture, hybridity and interconnectivity. As such they are not associated with either gender, nor are they particularly sexualized: they mark instead a space of sexual indeterminacy, undecided-ability or transsexuality. I analysed these traits in terms of the fantasy of the flight from the body, which I see as one of the tendencies of advanced cultures. This is echoed by the fantasy of stepping 'beyond gender', which is conveyed both in the dominant molar mode by the social imaginary about cyborgs and in the more radical minoritarian mode by feminist, queer and other counter-cultures. This blurring of the boundaries of sexual difference, in the sense of a generalized androgynous drive, is characteristic of post-industrial societies. J. F. Lyotard (1988) singles it out as one of the defining features of the postmodern condition: queering identities is a dominant ideology under advanced capitalism. In keeping with the paradox outlined above, however, this sexually indeterminate or transsexual social discourse goes hand in hand with the return of sexual polarizations and stricter gender roles, both in the West and in the rest. The schizoid double-pull of simultaneous displacement and refixing of binary gender oppositions is one of the most problematic aspects of contemporary political culture. It is also the key to its vehement anti-feminism, in that it erodes the grounds for the affirmation and the empowerment of embodied and embedded feminist political subjects.

In this context, the maternal function and hence the reproduction of the human in its bio-cultural mode has become simultaneously disengaged from the female body – because of the bio-technological intervention, also known as 'the desire to be wired'. It has also, however, been re-naturalized in a number of paradoxical variations ranging from religious convictions to secular affirmations of the theme of 'proud to be flesh'. These paradoxical patterns reflect the schizophrenic double-pull I have analysed before. On the one hand the maternal feminine is reinscribed into a reinvented natural order that reaffirms the phallogocentric system. On the other hand, the maternal is successfully inscribed into the techno-industrial market of alternative modes of reproduction. The simultaneous occurrence of opposite effects defeats the logic of the excluded

middle and fits in with the manic-depressive alternation of euphoria and melancholia, which is the political economy of affectivity in advanced capitalism.

Feminist theory is not immune from this: the euphoric celebration of a brave new world of artificial reproduction is balanced by the attempts to reinvent a traditional feminine as holistic, healing and anti-technological. The distinction euphoria/nostalgia is internal to and hence it cuts across the feminist community, making its politics and values more complex. The pull towards traditional or reactive values (molar, sedentary, linear, static) is balanced by a more progressive and active drive towards more innovative solutions (molecular, nomadic, dynamic). The molar line of reterritorialization and the multiple lines of becoming trace altogether divergent patterns. Keeping these two lines well distinct qualitatively, while respecting the simultaneity of their occurrence, is an analytic necessity, albeit a challenging one. Where they differ, as we shall see in chapters 4 and 5, is on ethical grounds.

### The return of the body

One of the effects of bio-technologies and the genetic social imaginary is the return of discourses and practices about 'real bodies'. Techno-bodies are more than ever immersed in sites of power, and contemporary politics is prone to massive phenomena of exclusion in so far as cyborgs are inscribed in the cash-nexus, which is not immune to racism and traditional power-relations. Moreover, if it is the case that the human body, and hence also the maternal feminine (the matrix), are now inscribed in the techno-industrial and military apparatus, it follows that they are neither metal nor flesh, but rather a highly contested social space, traversed by capital flows and hence power relations. Complexity and paradoxes are the challenge facing political subjects today. The representation and interpretation of techno-bodies therefore express fully the paradox of the contemporary subject, namely of a body that is invaded by technology, is bombarded by visual bits and bytes of information but also feels horror, pain and despair at these fundamental invasions of what used to be called his or her bodily integrity. Methodologically, the return of 'real body' in its thick materiality spells the end of the linguistic turn in the sense of the postmodernist over-emphasis on textuality, representation, interpretation and the power of the signifier. More on this in the next chapter.

The renewed emphasis on the materiality of corporeal bodies is especially strong in three areas of contemporary feminist theory: the first is the wave of Deleuzian feminism that emphasizes immanence (Buchanan and Colebrook 2000; MacCormack 2000); becomings (Grosz 1999a; Gatens and Lloyd 1999; Gatens 1996; Braidotti 1994 and 2002); and a new political ontology (Olkowski 1999).

The second is feminist science studies, which is quite separate from the humanities and social sciences and argues for a new epistemological paradigm (Wilson 1998; Franklin et al. 2000; Barad 2003). They refer to a different feminist genealogical line, which bypasses high postmodernist feminist theory – and hence psychoanalytic and semiotic criticism – emphasizing instead the epistemological tradition. The key figures are Margulis and Sagan (1995) but also Keller (1992) and Harding (1991). In this tradition, as in many others, Haraway (1997) provides both a focal point and a measure of consensus and cohesion.

The third is the new 'micro-political' form of feminist theory that is emerging at present, combining science studies with references to Guattari's notion of transversal subjectivity as well as to Hardt and Negri's critique of globalization (Balsamo 1996; Parisi 2004a). This new generation constitutes a departure from earlier Deleuzian feminist emphasis on immanence and becomings, but displays strong affinity with the radicalism, the creativity and hands-on approach of the second feminist wave. The micro-political feminists emphasize the role techno-sciences can play as tools by which to attack advanced capitalism.

A striking example of this political climate is the analysis of the labour and economic politics of the globalized world, as exemplified by those who do not fit into the ruling neo-liberal minority and thus compose the new digital proletariat. A significant case is provided by the workers in call centres which cater for the information society by processing phone enquiries from selected locations miles away from the caller's home. Denounced strongly by Arundhati Roy (2001) these 'call centres' or data outsourcing agencies are a multi-billion-dollar industry which has attracted a great deal of critical attention both in mainstream (e.g. Luke Harding 2001) and in alternative media. Workers in these centres answer queries on a wide range of subjects ranging from car rentals, credit card enquiries to plane tickets and operating instructions of digital or other equipment. The heart of this business is never to let the caller as much as suspect that his or her call is being processed in Delhi. Thus the students have to learn to speak English with the appropriate and expected accents – mostly 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'. This kind of labour presents a number of features that are reminiscent of the old exploitative conditions of the working class, but also innovate on them.

The Rags Media Collective (2003) in a series of visual installations has commented on the specific form of simulation that is embodied in these call centres, namely the erasure of their remoteness from the caller's home. They cite the example of a woman known on the phone line as Sandra, but whose real name in her own home in Delhi is Sumita. In her work replying to phone enquiries, Sumita simulates Sandra, who is supposed to live in Minneapolis, USA and knows all about the product or



firm she is representing. This strategy is not mere impersonation, for 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 is more like a logistical issue: working in a call centre is about carefully orchestrated simulation. As such, it requires a radical 'Othering' of oneself, or a mild form of schizophrenia, which is not a masquerade, in the ironical sense of self-exploration, but reification of the worker's own life-world. Not unlike characters in a chat room, the call-centre worker performs her labour market persona in such a way as to emerge from the process neither wiser nor enriched (especially considering that workers in these call centres are paid one tenth the wage of their Western counterparts) but rather firmly located as 'the emerging digital proletariat that underpins the new world economy' (Raqs Media Collective 2003: 85). Another significant example of the same phenomenon is the extensive reliance of the computer games industry on test-players drawn from mostly male youths in former Eastern Europe. Playing computer games up to fifteen hours a day at a time – in an industry that operates continuously, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week – for wages of about 130 US dollars a month, these digital workers have invented the virtual sweatshop (see Thompson 2005: 17).

It is this kind of materially embodied and embedded performance that challenges the limits of the linguistic framework of interpretation of global gender politics. The cultural cross-dressing performed by call-centre digital proletarians is neither the creative mimesis of strategic repetitions (Irigaray 1977), nor is it the destabilizing effect of queer identity politics (Butler 1991). It is just today's variation on the theme of bodily exploitation, which fits into the global marketing of both material commodities and Western life-styles, cultures and accents. Hardt and Negri (2000) stress the immaterial and affective nature of this labour force which trades phonetic skills, linguistic ability and proper accents services, as well as requiring attention, concentration and great care. It is in this sense that I critique the exclusively linguistic reference to mimesis and not in the superficial mode that Butler wrongfully attributes to my work (Butler 2004a). 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 and yet it functions through border crossings, nomadic shifts and paths of deterritorialization. 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 that are thought to be peripheral. The collapse of the binary opposition of centre-periphery introduces, as I argued in chapter 1, a new fluctuating continuum between discrete spaces in the global economy. This space of fluctuation is racialized and sexualized to a very high degree and it is exploited accordingly.

In *Metamorphoses* I argued that the difference between the winners and the losers of the present economic world order is that the winners only put their money on the line, while the losers risk their bodies. In terms of bodily materialism, the perverse logic of advanced capitalism offers a number of significant power differentials as well. Let's take the dominant subject-position of the cyborg: it simultaneously evokes an abstract image or spectral commodification (think of Schwarzenegger's metallized body) and a very embodied, concrete and actualized one. The latter refers to the digital proletariat: mostly anonymous, underpaid exploited bodies of labourers, usually ethnic, natives or immigrant, which fuel the technological revolution. Their anonymity means they coincide with their exploited bodies, which paradoxically end up making them invisible in the perverse economy of media culture. The dominant subject position, however, consists in reaching high definitions of identity or singularity by over-exposure, that is to say in gaining access to visibility, albeit of the spectral kind. Gender and ethnicity play a central role in regulating access to visibility with high definitions of identity, as opposed to the invisible anonymity of those who are marginalized. In other words, power today is a matter of selection and control, entitlement and access: it is bio-power, centred on the body in its material and immaterial manifestations. It engenders a system of integrated and all-encompassing surveillance which postulates potential, virtual enemies everywhere, also and especially within the by now exploded boundaries of the subject.

Vandana Shiva's plea for biodiversity in global culture focuses on a different facet of the same problem and criticizes the practice of patenting bio-technological products, which she labels 'bio-piracy' (Shiva 1997). Shiva connects this practice to European empire-building over the last 500 years and sees a continuum between them and the policies of the WTO and the World Bank. Moreover, in a very interesting Foucauldian shift, Shiva links bio-piracy to the individualistic philosophies of Locke, Hume and other 'fathers' of liberalism. Shiva argues that their theoretical works both reflect and legitimate capitalist appropriation of the world's resources and the eviction of others. These theories are still operational in contemporary practices such as intellectual property rights and the policies of the World Trade Organization and the GATT apparatus. What specifically marks the present historical era, argues Shiva, is the fact that the target of capitalist looting has shifted from the former colonies to the 'new frontiers', or the 'natural resources' represented by human genetics in general, and women's reproductive powers in particular. Capital is the generative power of living matter and the resilient vitality of 'Life'. The self-generative power of living matter is both denied and enhanced by patenting and branding for the sake of corporate profit. *Bios/zoe*, as actualized in seeds and cells, is cash.

In Shiva's assessment, 'bio-piracy', as the ultimate colonization of the sector of living organisms, destroys biodiversity, endangering the many

species that used to live on this planet. Mary Midgley commented ironically on the immorality of this disregard for biodiversity:

If humans need wood, trees must be replanted, but they should always be the trees that will supply this need most quickly and economically. There is no reason to conserve existing species, and certainly none to aim at diversity as such. And after all there are a lot of kinds of trees about. So, what could possibly be wrong with universal monocultured eucalyptus? (Midgley 1996: 123)

It also threatens cultural diversity by depleting the capital of human knowledge through the devalorization of local knowledge systems and world-views. On top of legitimating theft, these practices also devalue indigenous forms of knowledge, cultural and legal systems. Eurocentric models of scientific rationality and technological development damage human diversity. The patent system legalizes bio-piracy, spreads monocultures and homogenization in both nature and social systems. The strategy of resistance proposed by Shiva is vintage eco-feminism, which I will analyse in more detail in the next chapter.

In a significant divergence of opinion with Vandana Shiva, Franklin, Lury and Stacey (2000) analyse the 'seed' not as the site of resistance, but rather as one of the agents of the global economy. As a privatized icon for commercialized biodiversity the seed connects the old universalist idea of 'nature' to the financial reality of global culture. Just as the humans have their Genome project, plants have their Heritage Seed catalogue, which patents a number of seeds. They are advertised as organic, home-grown, but also ancient and as such the repository of old lore and cultural authenticity. This holistic ethos guarantees both the perpetuation of the species and the preservation of culture. The female body as a whole is the seed which corporate capitalism wants to patent and eventually clone, according to the paradox of a new global compound of nature/culture that is naturalized and commercialized simultaneously. Practising the feminist politics of location, Franklin *et aliae* differentiate this financial and cultural mystique of seeds from their political usage in the work of Shiva as a form of resistance to the appropriation by industry. In both cases, however, the seed conveys the notion of purity of the lineage and of direct genetic inheritance. It is therefore the opposite of the discourse and the practice of hybridity and mixity in genetic engineering and more especially in transgenic species experiments.

Franklin, Lury and Stacey (2000) are on the side of postmodernism and hence of philosophical post-humanism when they point out the ambiguity of the notion of cultural diversity in the era of globalization. Diversity, even in the form of indigenous or local knowledge systems, has become a highly valuable and marketable commodity. In its commercialized form it has increased the uniformity of consumers' habits, while sponsoring the

proliferation of 'local' differences or micro-diversities. The global market is fuelled by 'differences' because the 'local' is a political space constructed by the global flows of capital (Hardt and Negri 2000). Because the proliferation of local differences for the sake of marketability is one of the features of the global economy, globalization functions through the incorporation of otherness. Therefore, one must beware of taking any claim to cultural identity and difference at face value. All identities are in process and consequently are inherently contradictory. They are best approached in an open-ended and contested manner, in keeping with the cognitive and figural 'style' of philosophical nomadism (Braidotti 2002).

The point of consensus between Franklin, Lury and Stacey and Shiva is the resistance against the celebration of 'bios' by a system that persists in its conventional bio-centrism and hierarchical thinking. The only aim of capital is to expand, to spread into new territories, such as the cells, women's reproductive body and the very generative forces of the earth. Both Franklin and Shiva agree that Life as *zoe* somewhat escapes total entrapment in this regime. They differ, however, on strategies. Shiva's analysis does not rest on poststructuralist philosophies of power as a non-dialectical web of relations. She assumes instead a dialectical opposition between centre and periphery and thus functions within a dualistic frame of reference. This is the shortcoming of Shiva's position: it is not correct to say that the process of capitalist expansion is moving into new and previously uncharted territories. It is rather the case that it actively creates potential new territories for the sake of profit.

This distinction is not merely academic: in my (post-Foucauldian) frame of reference, it cannot be assumed that an object of bio-political interest – for instance, seeds, cells or women's reproductive powers – is an externally constituted 'other' which gets invested or taken over by the powers-that-be. The residual humanism of Foucault's notion of 'bio-power' is displaced by the emergence of vital *bios* and *zoe* as major forces in shaping contemporary social spaces. They create an unexpected form of contiguity between material processes of constitution of areas or objects of interest, like the 'cell', or the 'seed' and processes of subjectivation. In other words, it is not that 'life' is being vampirized by bio-technology but rather that, as a result of bio-technological material and discursive practices, 'life as *bios/zoe*' produces ever-growing new areas of activity and intervention. 'Life' has emerged as the subject, and not as the object of political processes. A non-human, inhuman or post-human subject, but a subject nonetheless. Hence the importance of analysing the category of 'life' – as *bios* and *zoe* – to see who is constructing it and for what purpose, who has access to it and for what aim. If it is the case that the production of certain categories, such as seeds or cells, or human embryos, is coextensive with its commercial exploitation, the task of social critics is both to recognize and to contest the formation of these categories, so as to disrupt their social status.



### Post-humanism and the limits of liberal individualism

Vandana Shiva's critique of European humanism concerns its limitations, not its substance. A non-Western humanist herself, Shiva shrewdly points out the credibility gap between pretensions or aspirations and real accomplishments and calls for a less self-congratulatory assessment of the European humanist ideal. Pointing out the complicity between Western enlightened humanism on the one hand and colonial conquest and exploitation on the other, Shiva issues a strong word of warning. Shiva's call for a more inclusive sense of humanism is analogous to the position taken by the black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins. Collins (1991) proposes a very affirmative brand of standpoint theory, which she links directly to the tradition of *Ubuntu*, or African humanism. The Afrocentric context shifts the terms of reference and hence of definition of this notion, linking it to the Black theological tradition and to African-American spirituality. This tradition offers a political culture of resistance as well as creative alternatives for the formulation of the identity of oppressed groups. Supported by a dialogical system and informed by the notion of care as a collective responsibility for one's community, Afrocentric humanism is a resource for all that want to resist the attrition and devastation of technological abuses.

Vandana Shiva compares unfavourably the individualism of Western traditions to the more communitarian spirit of non-Western traditions of knowledge, where the free exchange of information is as widely practised as communally held properties. The argument against Eurocentrism consequently supports a non-profit approach. This supports a neo-humanist argument against the commercialization of living organisms as 'biotechnological products'. This is a double violence, which not only reifies living organisms into objects of commercial consumption, but also denies their self-organizing and self-reproducing capacities.

Shiva's neo-humanism is shared by a number of contemporary social critics working within race, post-colonial or non-Western perspectives. I would like to set this position, as a sort of travelling companion, alongside the anti- or post-humanism of cultural and social critics that address the same issues within a Western-situated perspective. The point of this cartographic move, which aligns theoretically diverse positions along the same axis, is to facilitate the transposition of the respective political affects that activate them. I do like putting the 'active' back into 'activism'.<sup>1</sup> This transposition is like a musical variation that leaps across scales and compositions to find a pitch or a sharable level of intensity. What matters to my thought is the synchronization of the different elements, their affective dimension, the affinity, not the political or theoretical correctness.

<sup>1</sup>With thanks to Judy Butler for this warm formulation of my work.

Thus, in her criticism of the exploitative logic of Western technologies from within, Donna Haraway – one of the figureheads of feminist post-humanism – stresses a number of crucial features. The first is power as a dynamic web of interconnections or hybrid contaminations, as a principle of radical non-purity. The second is the refusal to fall into the pitfall of the classical nature/culture divide: there is no natural *telos* or order, as distinct from technological mediation. In order to restructure our collective relationship to the new nature/culture compound of contemporary techno-sciences, Haraway calls for a renewed kinship system, radicalized by concretely affectionate ties to the non-human 'others'. Haraway argues that the subject-object, nature-culture divides are linked to patriarchal, Oedipal familial narratives. Against them, she mobilizes an enlarged sense of community, based on empathy, accountability and recognition. Moreover, she extends these prerogatives to non-human agents or subjects, such as animals, plants, cells, bacteria and the earth as a whole.

This position has important implications for gender politics and becoming-woman. In the era of techno-bodies, the maternal body not only reproduces the future, but also carries the burden of inscribing futurity within the regime of high-tech commodification which runs today's market economies. This means that the maternal feminine in the double mode of the reproductive machine integrated into the electronic circuitry on the one hand, and as an array of resisting bodies on the other, is a multi-layered site. To express this in Deleuzian terms, it translates simultaneously the despotic face of the majority and the pathetic face of the struggling minorities. In any case, it is in the contaminated, traumatized body of this kind of maternal feminine as key to the future that post-industrial culture fights the battle for its survival. The challenge is how to incorporate the maternal feminine, in order the better to metabolize her offspring. In reaction to this paradox of the simultaneous de- and re-territorialization of woman's body in relation to the institution of femininity, of nature in relation to the bio-technological apparatus and of 'life' with reference to the globalized cash nexus, the question of ethics arises. Which ethical criteria can we apply, in order to tell the difference between progressive and regressive forms of re-embodiment or territorialization? In chapters 4 and 5 I will propose an ethics of sustainable transformations as the answer. For now, I wish to proceed with the cartography.

Let me stress another crucial feature of this discussion. In the historical era of *bios* and *zoe* as political subjects, it is methodologically unsound and ethically impossible to separate categorically the different axes of difference. Genderization, racialization and naturalization are, in the grand philosophical tradition, the three structural axes of Otherness. They need to be connected transversally in a series of nomadic lines of interconnection in order to produce a valid cartography of contemporary power relations. Thus, the pathetic and despotic face of femininity, in the

historical era of advanced technologies, bears a privileged link to whiteness as a term that signifies Sameness and thus indexes access to power and to the structural advantages that being white entails (Braidotti 2002). The convergence between the new media and information technologies and bio-technologies propels a spectral economy that trades with equal nonchalance on corporate brands of gender, queer, multicultural, genetic and posthuman diversity. This results in a planetary circulation of global icons such as the white goddess princess Diana or the black athlete Michael Jordan, the ubiquitous panda bear, the cosmic dolphin or the blue icon of the planet earth (Bryld and Lykke 1999). They become commodities deprived of liberatory potential, and are all the more profitable for it (Gilroy 2000). The circulation of such iconic commodities, albeit non-human ones, within the spectral economy of global transmission supports the global market of Sameness. It is a case of quantitative pluralism, as opposed to qualitative multiplicity (Braidotti 2002), in an economy of the eternal return that saturates the social space with an overflow of images and representations.

A philosophical approach based on neo-materialist vitalism is the most effective way to address these contradictions and work towards a materialist culture of critical affirmation. Radical immanence and sustainable ethics are a strategy to free ourselves from the binary affective scheme of euphoria-melancholia and disintoxicate ourselves from the fumes of the prosthetic promises of perfectibility that neo-liberal technologies are selling us. I would like to face instead the specific complexities of our embodied subjectivity in the age of *zoe*-power. 'We' humans are definitely in *this* together, and we are not alone. Just how crowded the nomadic spaces of transposition actually are, will become apparent in the next section.

#### BECOMING-OTHER: TRANSPOSING RACIALIZED DIFFERENCE

In the previous section I have argued that the political economy of global capitalism consists in multiplying and distributing differences for the sake of profit. It produces ever-shifting waves of genderization and sexualization, racialization and naturalization of multiple 'others'. It has thus effectively disrupted the traditional dialectical relationship between the empirical referents of Otherness – women, natives and animal or earth others – and the processes of discursive formation of genderization/racialization/naturalization. Once this dialectical bond is unhealed, advanced capitalism looks like a system that promotes feminism without women, racism without races, natural laws without nature, reproduction without sex, sexuality without genders, multiculturalism without ending racism, economic growth without development, and cash flow without money. Late capitalism also produces fat-free ice creams and alcohol-free

beer next to genetically modified health food, companion species alongside computer viruses, new animal and human immunity breakdowns and deficiencies, and the increased longevity of these who inhabit the advanced world. Welcome to capitalism as schizophrenia!

#### Multiple diasporic spaces

This section concentrates on the cartography of the processes of racialization in this new world disorder. In the historical era of generalized nomadism, the figuration of the diaspora has gained the largest consensus in expressing the paradox of uprooting and regrounding which is at the heart of the global political economy of today. As Lorde points out: 'By the year 2000 the 20 largest cities in the world will have one thing in common: none of them will be in Europe, none in the United States.' (quoted in Mohanty et al. 1991: 1). The main frame of reference is a transnational cultural space of transitions and flows, which expresses 'the overlapping and non-linear contact zones between natures and cultures: border, travel, creolization, transculturation, hybridity and diaspora' (Clifford 1994: 303). In her seminal work on the cartographies of diasporic social spaces, Avtar Brah (1996) argues that they are sites of transition and change of people, information, cultures, commodities and capital. The diaspora affects as much the roots of indigenous people as the routes of itinerant subjects in the post-colonial world order.

Greek in origin, Jewish in connotations, the term 'diaspora' provides a re-normative description of the uprooting and dispersal of a great many populations: the Armenian, Turkish, Palestinian, Cuban, Greek, Chinese, Hungarian and Chilean, to name but a few. Clifford comments: 'In the twentieth century, all or most communities have diasporic dimensions (moments, tactics, practices, articulations). Some are more diasporic than others' (Clifford 1994: 310). Robin Cohen (1997) subjects Clifford's notion of 'travelling cultures' to detailed analysis. While resisting the categorization of diasporic subject positions as some icon of postmodernity, Cohen inscribes them at the heart of the historical condition of racialization. The diasporic subject position is not only negative, but also productive of two-way processes of cultural signification, especially in terms of anti-nationalism. Cohen comments: 'Diasporas are positioned where between nation-states and "travelling cultures"' (Cohen 1997: 2).

Avtar Brah confirms that diasporic space is made of relationality and it inscribes 'a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins' (Brah 1996: 193). The global diaspora has enormous implications for a world economy and is marked by a thick web of transnational flows of capital and labour. Such a system is marked by internal processes of migration implying mobility or precariousness of work conditions, transience and



impermanent settlements. Last but not least, globalization is about the deterritorialization of social identity that challenges the hegemony of nation-states and their claim to exclusive citizenship (Cohen 1997). This proliferation of ethnic and racialized differences produces the stratification of layers of multiple control in a political economy of 'scattered hegemonies' (Grewal and Kaplan 1994). This is a system of centreless but constant surveillance and manipulation, which pitches the centre against the many peripheries in a complex logic that operates not only between the geopolitical blocks, but also within them. It also makes for a rather fashionable market for 'diversity', which commodifies different ethnicities and races under the general cover of 'world music', 'fusion cuisine' and 'black looks' (hooks 1990). The political economy of the circulation of goods is visual, in the spectral sense of endlessly recycling logos and iconic images that clone themselves and seem to lead their own life, such as Che Guevara and Angela Davis T-shirts, United Colours of Benetton (Franklin, Lury and Stacey 2000) and the global swoosh of Nike (Klein 1999).

The 'disposable' bodies of women, youths and others who are racialized or marked off by age and marginality come to be inscribed with particularly ruthless violence in this regime of power. They experience dispossession of their embodied and embedded selves, in a political economy of repeated and structurally enforced eviction (Sassen 1996). This again brings out the schizophreic character of advanced capitalism, namely the paradox of high levels of mobility of capital flows in some sectors of the economic elites but also high levels of centralization and great immobility for most of the population. As Vandana Shiva (1993) points out, within globalization we must distinguish between different modes of mobility: 'One group is mobile on a world scale, with no country, no home, but the whole world as its property, the other has lost even the mobility within rootedness, lives in refugee camps, resettlement colonies and reserves' (Mies and Shiva 1993: 98).

Translated into the language of philosophical nomadism, global migration is a molar line of segmentation or reterritorialization that controls access to different forms of mobility and immobility. The global city and the refugee camps are not dialectical or moral opposites: they are two sides of the same global coin. They express the schizoid political economy of our times. The point of nomadic subjectivity is to identify a line of flight, that is to say a creative alternative space of becoming that would fall not between the mobile/immobile, the resident/the foreigner, but within these categories. The point is neither to dismiss nor to glorify the status of marginal, alien others, but to find a more accurate, complex location for a transformation of the terms of this political interaction.

Massive concentrations of infrastructures exist alongside complex worldwide dissemination of goods. The technologically driven advance-

culture that prides itself on being called the 'information society' is in reality a concrete, material infrastructure that is concentrated on the sedentary global city. Sassen defines global economies as: 'the location of transnational spaces within national territories' (Sassen 1994: xiii). Sassen quarrels with the state of current scholarship which tends to exclude from accounts of the global economies the heterogeneous aspects, especially the significant and highly effective presence of migrant cultures within the urban space of the global cities. The result is the exclusion 'from the account of the place-boundedness of significant components of the global information economy' (Sassen 1994: 7), namely the immigrant cultures of contemporary cities. Immigration and ethnicity, instead of being constituted as different areas of scholarship, should be studied as new forms of racialization of the labour market (Sassen 1996: 21). Sassen wants to integrate these racialized elements at the heart of the analysis of global economic culture, as localized instances 'of the internationalization of capital as a fundamental aspect of globalization' (1996: 21).

Given the fluid, internally contradictory and cannibalistic nature of advanced capitalism, the social and cultural critic needs to make innovations in the very tools of analysis. A trans-disciplinary approach that cuts across the established methods and conventions of many disciplines is best suited to the task of providing an adequate cartography of the shifting lines of racialization of the global labour market. This process cannot be kept separate from the genderization and sexualization of the same market. This is the line taken by Zillah Eisenstein (1998) in her critique of globalization. She argues that this is a system which contains structural inequalities that legitimate exploitative and brutal power-relations, especially for women and girls. Eisenstein explores ways of enlarging the practice of democracy in the global era, so as to respect diversity, while embracing issues such as community, responsibility and the principle of non-profit. The link between individualism and consumer culture is emphasized, and through her critical reading of the role of the media Eisenstein demolishes the myth of consumer society as open, free and democratic. Quoting Benjamin Barber, she describes such myths 'as a universalized culture of videology, infotainment and Holly-world' (Eisenstein 1998: 105).

The critique of this social imaginary which amalgamates citizenship and consumerism and sells cheap promises of human liberation through mass consumption is central to Eisenstein's politics. In opposition to it, she stresses the continuing patterns of both racial and sexist oppression and the important role they play in structuring the global economy. The advantaged position of girls and women from developed countries, as well as from ethnic minorities within the developed countries, is especially crucial. It allows Eisenstein to proclaim that: 'global capital thrives on a racial-patriarchal division of labour . . . that disproportionately locates women and girls, especially those of colour, in low-wage

assembly and information jobs and in sexual ghettos elsewhere in the market. Meanwhile, women are still expected to continue rearing children and performing familial labour' (Eisenstein 1998: 134). Developing forms of resistance against such a universal pattern of domination is a top political priority. Poststructuralist feminism has met this challenge by analysing the complex inextricable links and interrelations between gender, ethnicity and processes of racialization within the shifting horizons of global capital flow (Alexander and Mohanty 1997).

The critical legal studies scholar Kim Crenshaw has coined the term 'intersectionality' to describe the methodological approach that defines difference as a bundle of simultaneous but distinct axes of subjectivation and analyses them interactively. This is an attempt to encompass the multiple grounds of identity in a discussion about power-relations. It is also in keeping with the poststructuralist insights about the multi-layered structure of identity within each singular subject. Crenshaw stresses that since Foucault, the non-unitary structure of the subject, far from eroding the grounds for possible political alliances, constitutes an opportunity to create more coalitions with multiple forces. Crenshaw is also very careful to point out that intersectionality is not a new theory, but rather 'a provisional concept linking contemporary politics with postmodern theory' (Crenshaw 1989: 180). This means that all axes of differentiation – racialization, sexualization and naturalization – are internally differentiated in a complex manner. They also zigzag in and out of one another, triggering all kinds of combinations. The point is that the process, the movement and the trajectories of these lines of becoming deserve more attention than any of the specific identity formations they give rise to. The flows matter more than steady roots. Let me explore this further in the next section.

## RELOCATING BLACKNESS

### Bios-diversity

Transpositions induced by the convergence of bio- and information technologies have been especially strong in the area of anti-racism and gender. The new politics of *bios/zoe* and the acknowledgement of the methodological limitations of social constructivism have affected the scholarship in these areas. Historically, the emancipatory struggles against slavery and colonialism rebuked biological determinism through the analysis of the social construction of racialized and ethnicized 'others'. All this is shifting under the impact of the current technological revolution. For instance, Wilson (1998) has rejected the historical ties that bind feminism to a sort of compulsory anti-essentialism. The assumption that biological discourse is intrinsically regressive and politically reactionary is one of

the least useful aspects of the Marxist legacy. Contemporary developments in genetics, molecular biology, neurology and artificial intelligence force us to reconsider the material foundations of the embodied subject. This cannot fail to influence social and political activism. In chapter 1 I showed how conservative thinkers like Fukuyama take this opportunity to attack the entire tradition of social constructionism in order to reintroduce hierarchical differences supported by his own definition of the genetic code. DNA-based social discrimination differs only in name from other historical forms of naturalized exclusion. In opposition to this, let us see how progressive anti-racist thinkers react to the challenges induced by the new *bios/zoe*-power.

In a clean sweep from the social constructivist past, the philosopher Lucius Outlaw makes a powerful case for racialized biodiversity (1996). This provocative move is intended as a criticism of the essentialized uses to which notions of ethnicity and race are currently put in debates on social philosophy. Outlaw is fully aware of the strategic uses of essentialist claims of a 'black' experience or a 'black history', but does not state a counter-claim to an essential radical difference. Arguing that the grounds for such radical claims cannot be sustained, and loath to reinvent a tradition out of the suffering of the black community, Outlaw looks elsewhere for alternative foundations for black subjectivity.

He starts by rejecting identity politics altogether and then recommends that we turn instead to the classical principles of Enlightenment democracy and belief in reason, argument and public discussions. Quoting Appiah, he suggests that we replace dangerous notions such as 'race' and 'ethnicity' with more useful terms of reference, such as 'communities of meaning'. However, in a move that goes beyond these stated beliefs in liberal individualism, Outlaw strikes a blow for an enlightened notion of human biodiversity as the basis for anti-racist politics and thinking. He argues that 'for important reasons we should understand races and ethnicities as natural: that is, as particular types of bio-social collectivities that develop or evolve, as do all things in the natural world, but in ways that are characteristically human' (Outlaw 1996: 12). What is characteristically human, of course, are the social, ethical and political capacities for dialogue, exchange and peaceful settlement of differences. The human is a political animal, as Aristotle argued millennia ago. *Politikon Zoon* is the actual term he uses and if we process this idea with the neo-materialist vitalist approach I associate with nomadic subjectivity, the following happens – 'Life', as the flow of transformations and becoming, takes a specific form in the case of humans. Claire Colebrook (2000a) puts it admirably in stating that the human becoming – or actualization of life forces – is sexually embodied, historically located and politically related. Sexualization, time-and-space locations and webs of interrelations are constitutive of the human subjects and not external to them. Outlaw's thought moves in the same direction and sides resolutely with *bios/zoe*.



Instead of relinquishing these coordinates within a diffuse network of socially constructed and historically implemented effects of subjectification, as Foucault suggests, Outlaw recommends the opposite road. Racialization and ethnicization are crucial mechanisms by which humans are constituted and construct their social realities. Outlaw argues that the issue of 'Life' needs to be addressed in its specificity and, with it, questions of genetic differences. To prevent the new forms of stratification recommended by the right-wing proponents of a genetic hierarchy, Outlaw takes great care to steer the discussion in the direction of respect for human rights.

The respect for biodiversity, which has been accepted as a ruling principle for the management of the environment and of other species, should also be applied to human beings. Echoing Shiva, Outlaw argues that racism depletes the pool of human diversity, denies its variety and wealth and is therefore conducive to a global impoverishment of the human species. The respect for biodiversity is put in the service of anti-racist activism. This is a treacherous path to tread and it is one which Outlaw finds very well suited to philosophy defined as the activity of 'figuring out the means and rules for surviving, stabilizing living and perpetuating the biological and cultural reproduction of the society through successive generations, in certain spaces (both natural and built), in and through time' (1996: 13). An ethical concern for the future is combined with a strong sense of accountability to provide a radical shift of perspective that points beyond the canon of social constructivist thinking.

Outlaw's call for human biodiversity reasserts the positivity of a notion of race that is deprived of essentialist attributes and recognized in its singularity. This approach breaks from some of the dogmas of social constructivism and helps us focus on the singularity of biodiversity as a social concept. This is a radical political strategy that unveils the privileges of the majority, the hegemonic dominant subject position. Notions like whiteness, masculinity and health are implied in the everyday understanding of what constitutes the norm, in the sense of 'normative' and 'normal'. The political economy of invisibility means that the only notion of 'race' that our culture has produced, is in the mode of a minority. Race is synonymous with inferiority, or pejorative difference. Outlaw's strategy is to introduce a dose of pure positivity into the notion of 'race', so as to disengage it from this pernicious and murderous logic.

Rethinking the positivity of race means delinking the practice of racialization from its dialectical dependence on dualistic thinking. Outlaw argues a similar case, in human biodiversity. I see this as a powerful form of becoming-minoritarian of racial privilege, according to the affirmative ethics of nomadic subjectivity, and an attempt to set the former minorities into an affirmative process of becoming, or self-affirmation. It is an empowering, albeit risky, strategy.

### Global hybridity

A similar approach is proposed by Paul Gilroy in his recent work on the current bio-technological revolution. In a Deleuzian mode of nomadic or transversal lines of becoming, Gilroy enquires to what extent the trans-species commerce, which is central to contemporary genetic engineering, will affect the understanding of racial differences and the social practice of race relations. Again, it is clear that 'we' are in *this* together, but the point is to agree on who 'we' actually are. Gilroy provides a balancing act in tracking the shifting boundaries between the 'genomic orthodoxy' (Gilroy 2000: 21) of the centre and the relocation of pejorative racialized categories from the margins. Stressing the schizoid, non-linear and irrational nature of these shifts, Gilroy focuses on the cultural anxieties and hence the social discrimination which are created 'not by the ruthless enforcement of stable racial categories but from a disturbing inability to maintain them' (Gilroy 2000: 22).

Gilroy's cartography of the reconfigurations of racialized identities in the age when *bios/zoe*-power is saturated by technological relations bears strong affinity to my own project of relocating sexual difference, embodiment and accountability in contemporary culture. He argues that, in an analogy with 'feminism without women', contemporary racialization processes do not imply a notion of race and hence have become estranged from 'the scales respectively associated with political economy and epidermalization' (Gilroy 2000: 47). Gilroy's analysis of the racialized political economy of *bios* and *zoe* focuses on the global repackaging and commercial consumption of black physicality in the global marketing campaigns of Nike and other corporations, with Michael Jordan as the global icon. Gilroy singles out the explosion of black youth culture in the MTV-mode, represented by the streetwise black rappers from the ghetto. African-American people have effectively become the hyper-racialized hybrids that express both the 'ultramodern and the ultraprimitive aspects of global culture' (Gilroy 2000: 347).

This process of consumption of black masculine looks in 'corporate multiculturalism' is compounded by the emergence of a new class of black entrepreneurs and leaders, represented by Spike Lee and Colin Powell. They are the emblems of a black middle class that has become integral to the working of the global economy. The black, middle-class bodies of women like Condoleezza Rice or Naomi Campbell enjoy the same privilege of high profiles combined with extreme visibility. Next to them, the planetary images of AIDS-afflicted African people, yet again, embody the anonymous marginalization of human frailty at its most intense, i.e. most mortal, level.

Gilroy's work places combined emphasis on colonialism and fascism, racism and anti-Semitism, showing their continuity without falling into

facile analogies, but rather fully respecting their historical specificity. The continuity between these aspects of European history lies at the heart of Gilroy's case for the coextensivity of European discourses of modernization and racialized discourses and practices. Gilroy stresses the murder-ous charge that 'difference' has assumed in European history, and hence also the coextensivity of terror, murder and violence with lofty ideals of scientific rationality, national identity and Europe's self-appointed role as 'civilizing influence' in the world. The critique of the power of institutionalized discourses in the human and social sciences owes a lot to feminist epistemologies and critiques of science as frameworks, which analyse the complicity of rationality with domination and terror.

On this point, in spite of his Deleuzian undertones, Gilroy strikes a neo-humanist note. He considers colonialism and fascism as a betrayal of the European ideal of the Enlightenment, which he is determined to defend, holding Europeans accountable for their ethical and political failings. Racism splits common humanity and disengages whites from any ethical sensibility, reducing them to an infra-human moral status. It also reduces non-whites to a subhuman ontological status that exposes them to murderous violence. Taking a strong stand against the return of fundamentalist appeals to ethnic differences by a variety of white, black, Serbian, Rwandan, Texan and other nationalists, Gilroy denounces these 'micro-fascisms' as the epidemics of our globalized times. He locates the site of the ethical transformation in the critique of each nationalistic category, not in the assertion of any dominant one. He sets diasporic mobility and transcultural interconnections up against the forces of nationalism. This is a theory of mixture, hybridity and cosmopolitanism that is resolutely non-racial. Against the enduring power of nation-states, Gilroy posits instead the affirmative politics of transversal movements, such as anti-slavery, feminism, Médecins sans Frontières and the like. Gilroy refers to this ideal as 'planetary humanism', defined as a 'postracial and postanthropological version of what it means to be human' (Gilroy 2000: 15) in the age of bio-politics and genetic power.

Gilroy's cosmopolitan neo-humanism is a strategic post-racial and inclusive neo-universalism, similar to that proposed by Vandana Shiva. It suggests the possibility of a 'distinctive ecology of belonging' (Gilroy 2000: 55) which would recompose the relationship between self, territory, individuality and society through multiple connections. Planetary humanism marks a social and also symbolic recomposition of one's relationship to space, time and community. It turns hybridity into an eco-philosophical notion. The challenge is not to return to fixed identities, clear boundaries and an allegedly pure past but rather to grab the opportunities offered by the cultural intermixture already available within our own post-industrial ethno/gender landscapes, so as to create yet unknown possibilities for bonding and community-building. I will return to this in

Avtar Brah (1996) stresses the importance of understanding and accounting for the intimate web of interconnections between race, gender, class and ethnicity, in order to refine our understanding of the insidious workings of racism in the age of global hybridity. The latter refers to the workings and the cultural logic of advanced capitalism as a difference engine, which both multiplies and capitalizes on the quantitative pluralities it produces. Differences proliferate for the sake of commodification and, ultimately, profit. This cannot fail to affect identities as well as commodities. Brah defines diasporic identities as 'processes of multi-locality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries' (Brah 1996: 194). These are multiplied by the new information technologies, which complicate the relationship between the local and the global.

This complex articulation of multiple differences between and within diasporic subjects marked by multiple locality creates both methodological and ethical problems. Methodologically, Brah adopts the feminist politics of location as a strategic mapping of the multiple layers of identity and newly emerging ethnicities. This approach includes border-crossings and non-unitary identities, the latter sustaining the former. Accounting for these non-linear and complex differences is a challenge for the social critic. Ethically, this vision establishes the relation to multiple others at the core of subjectivity. A non-dialectical and hence not mutually exclusive relationship is established between self and other. Subjects constituted in and by multiplicity, however, are marked by contradictions. This makes them especially open and opposed to fixed, essential identities and to the power of dominant categories, even that of race itself. This emphasis on complexity and relationality, which facilitates cross-border connections and alliances among differently located constituencies, is a political position. Brah, like Gilroy, de-essentializes blackness and connects it to other social variables, but only for the purpose of re-grounding anti-racist politics on the more effective principle of hybrid multi-locations.

### Rhizomic politics

A multiply located, non-unitary subject position and a rhizomic politics of relations is also recommended by the Deleuzian philosopher Edouard Glissant. He develops an effective rhizomatic poetics and politics, taking his point of reference the historical experience and the specific location of Africans and West Indians caught in the transatlantic slave trade. Glissant foregrounds the importance of memory and the productivity of poetry as the centrepieces of his theory of Relation. He argues that even experience as devastating as slavery produces specific forms of knowledge and subjectivation that transcend the burden of the negative. There are several important features at stake in Glissant's remarkable position; the first is the primacy of the Relation over any of its terms,



including the negative ones. A relation functions through the middle, the 'milieu' (more on this in the next chapter). People who are culturally and ethnically positioned in the middle – like the Caribbeans or West Indians – have a head start in understanding the crucial importance of the relation. They also have, however, a historical legacy of destruction and violence, which is hard to transcend in that it includes both the erasure of the original culture and the forceful absorption of the colonizing culture. In response to this ethical and political challenge, Glissant actively theorizes the becoming-minoritarian or becoming-rhizomatic of blacks, creoles, descendants of slaves and colonized peoples. This is described as a spiritual but also logistical shift in the structure of the subject in the direction of openness towards both self and other.

Glissant's position includes a sharp critique of the West, which is based on the ontology of Sameness or the rule of One. This includes a dualistic relationship to the rest of the human race. There exists a dominant mode of nomadism in Western culture – in the form of epic journeys of discovery, which find their historical apogee in colonialism. The power of Sameness in the west is best described in terms of monolingualism, or the illusion of a single cultural and linguistic root. Glissant, in a very Deleuzian mode, plays the rhizome against the root and advocates global poly-linguism. This includes the deconstruction of the hubris of European master cultures and the arrogance with which they consider their languages as the voice of humanity. This universalistic pretence is one of the mechanisms supporting colonialism. It also entails the reappraisal of minor languages, dialects and hybrids, in a phenomenon that Glissant describes as creolization: 'Poets from the Caribbean, the Maghreb and other parts of Africa are not moving toward that elsewhere that is the aim of projectile movement, nor are they returning toward a Centre. They create their works in metropolitan regions, where their peoples have made a sudden appearance' (Glissant 1997: 31). Glissant offers a striking example of the poetics of relation in his analysis of how, in the Caribbean colonized territories, the French *colons* spoke their own homegrown dialects – Norman or Breton – rather than the high and noble language of the French nation. It is this bastardized language that mingles with that of the local population, creating a crossover between two distinct but analogous forms of linguistic non-purity. Creolization, therefore, cuts both ways and it differs from the master *langue* in its very structures. The thought of relation as a form of philosophical nomadism stresses the importance of the middle, in this mode of non-origin, non-purity and not-Oneness. Glissant defines this productive multiplicity as 'echoes of the world' – modes of resonance of the great vitality of human biodiversity at both the biological and the cultural level. They reconnect us to the living chaos of the world as living matter in transformation, a hybrid, dynamic resilient *bios/zoe* force of global creolization. Glissant captures this vitality and honours it as a poetics or an ethics of rhizomatic interconnections.

Contrary to what some ungenerous critics suggested (Gedalof 1996, 2000; Boer 1996; Felski 1997; Pels 1999), my nomadic subject pursues the same critique of power as black and post-colonial theories, not in spite but because of the fact that it is located somewhere else. Philosophical nomadism addresses in both a critical and creative manner the role of the former 'centre' in redefining power relations. Margins and centre shift and destabilize each other in parallel, albeit dissymmetrical, movements. My position is equally resistant to the identification of the centre as inertia and self-perpetuation and to the aporetic repetition of Sameness. The challenge is to destabilize dogmatic, hegemonic, exclusionary power structures at the very heart of the identity structures of the dominant subject through rhizomic interventions. If we are to move beyond the sociology of travel and the breast-beating of critical thinkers crushed by white guilt, we need to enact a vision of the subject that encompasses changes in the deep structures. The point is not just mere deconstruction, but the relocation of identities on new grounds that account for multiple belongings, i.e. a non-unitary vision of a subject. This subject actively yearns for and constructs itself in complex and internally contradictory social relations. To account for these we need to look at the internal forms of movement that privilege processes rather than essences and transformations, rather than counter-claims to identity. The sociological variables (gender, class, race and ethnicity, age, health) need to be supplemented by a theory of the subject that calls into question the inner fibres of the self. These include the desire, the ability and the courage to sustain multiple belongings in a context which celebrates and rewards Sameness and one-way thinking. In chapters 4 and 5 I will address this challenge further, which is an ethical as well as a political enterprise. It is my contribution, as a European nomadic subject moving across the variegated landscape of whiteness, to a debate which black, anti-racist, post-colonial and other critical thinkers have put on the map.

### RELOCATING WHITENESS

#### For a post-nationalist European Union

The shift in the structural position of the 'others' cannot leave unaltered the position of the 'same'. I consequently want to look at the changing position of Europe in a globalized world. My argument proceeds in two phases: firstly, I will argue that the new context of the European Union, defined as a post-nationalist project, provides the ground for a significant relocation of whiteness by introducing a disjunction between traditional European cultural identities and the notion of a new European citizenship (Balibar 2001). Secondly, in so far as it unsettles molar European identity, I will argue that the European

Union marks a process of becoming-minor of the masterful European subject.

The 'new' European Union is a multi-layered and contested social space. As a major player within the global economy, the EU is positioned simultaneously as the main ally and the main alternative to American hegemony. It can consequently be seen as the contemporary variation on the theme of a self-appointed centre which universalizes its own reading of 'civilization'. It also constitutes, however, a solid social democratic and hence relatively progressive project that not only counteracts the United States on a number of key issues (privacy laws, genetically modified food, women's and gay rights), but also makes a deliberate attempt to distance itself from Europe's former role as imperial centre. The post-nationalist or 'becoming-minoritarian' idea of Europe raises potentially explosive issues of entitlement and cultural diversity. The renewed emphasis on the unification process has made 'difference' more divisive and contested than ever, according to the paradox of simultaneous globalization and fragmentation, which is characteristic of late postmodernity. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the ethnic wars that followed have resurrected the ghost of pejorative differences and show once again Europeans' inability to live with their own diversity. In such a context, post-nationalism is a political project and an open challenge.

Yet, the founding fathers of the European Union, in the aftermath of fascism, after the Second World War, defended the post-nationalistic definition of European identity and the flexible forms of citizenship it may entail. Albert Hirschman's autobiographical accounts (Hirschman 1995; 1994) are very illuminating on this score, as is the history of his own sister, Ursula Hirschmann (1993), a pioneer of the European Union, married to Altiero Spinelli, the first European commissioner (Spinelli 1992, 1988).

The European Union 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. Fundamentally, however, the European unification process was the price that member states were made to pay for their belligerence and for the Holocaust. In this respect, the project of the European Union is negatively linked to Jewishness. The positive link to Jewish tradition is through the notion of trans-European cosmopolitanism and the idea of the diaspora. Diasporic Jewish subjects embody a brand of cosmopolitanism which configures a supra-national type of subjectivity. Ursula Hirschmann argued that the Jewish citizen, like the European Federalist, represents an enlightened, anti-nationalist subject-position, which does not define his or her country merely by topological or territorial concerns. This expressed a non-nationalistic sense of Europeanness, which is at home in the diaspora.

Neither Hirschmann nor I are intent on metaphorizing the figure of the Jew, or erecting it into a ready-made icon of homelessness and rootless-

ness. We are perfectly aware of the huge human and historical price that Jewish citizens had to pay for their homeless condition. This is not about metaphors, but rather about alternative genealogies and locations. 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. Arendt's account of the genesis of an enlightened European polity alongside the perpetual barbarism of xenophobia, anti-Semitism and racism attributes to the diasporic Jew a positive role by introducing from the eighteenth century a much-needed dose of cosmopolitanism in the provincial European mindset (Arendt 1968). By necessity and by his or her own inspiration, the Jewish citizen becomes the signifier of cross-national mobility and multiple allegiances. In Arendt's philosophy the cosmopolitan Jew is the mark of emancipated and highly evolved moral and political behaviour and an antidote to the rampant nationalism that she witnessed during her life. After the Eichmann trial, Arendt (1963) extended this criticism to the state of Israel itself. Arendt's political model of flexible citizenship is one of the reasons for the reappraisal of her work by feminist political theorists like Benhabib (1996), in an attempt to avoid the universalizing tendency of cosmopolitanism, exemplified by Nussbaum. The Jewish diasporic cosmopolitan subject stands for a flexible model of accountable and responsible citizenship that allows for multiple modes of belonging. This is of great inspiration for a new European civil and political space.

### Critiquing Eurocentrism from within

The post-nationalist process of European unification involves the critique of the self-appointed missionary role of Europe as the alleged centre of the world. It promotes a re-grounding of this false universalism into a more situated, local perspective. Feminist epistemologists and post-colonial critics have produced some of the most significant critiques of the false universalism of the European subject of knowledge: science as white man's burden. As a project of becoming-minoritarian, the European Union has to do with the rejection of the 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-European Europeans', much as gender theory has had to deal with the fragments, the deconstruction and reconstruction of the 'post-Woman women' in the feminist process of transformation from dominant Woman to nomadic women-in-becoming (Braidotti 2002).

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 is about turning our collective memory to the service of a new political and ethical



project, which is forward-looking and not nostalgic. Daniel Cohn-Bendit recently stated that if we want to make this European business work, we really must start from the assumption that Europe is the specific periphery where we live and that we must take responsibility for it (1995). 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. 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; the other side, simultaneously true and yet absolutely contradictory, is the danger of recreating a sovereign centre through the new European Union. That the two be simultaneously the case again demonstrates the schizoid logic of the global world, marked by the simultaneous occurrence of opposite effects. It also makes European identity into one of the most contested areas of political and social philosophy 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 anti-racists such as Helma Lutz, Nira Yuval-Davis and Anne Phoenix (Lutz et al. 1996), Avtar Brah (1993), Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (Yuval-Davis 1997; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989), and Philomena Essed (1991). They warn us against the danger of replacing the former Eurocentrism with a new 'Europ-ism', i.e. the belief in an ethnically pure and self-defining Europe. The question of ethnic purity is, of course, the germ of Eurofascism. It entails not only a forcibly instilled form of amnesia – the omission of colonialism as the structural 'other' that defines European identity. It also supports a solipsistic fantasy of immunity from contamination that denies the importance of all kinds of others.

In response to this danger, the post-nationalist project of the European Union offers new perspectives for the strategic relocation of whiteness. Whiteness is a contaminated colour and progressive European social theory has historically not engaged with it. Centuries of explicit white supremacist discourses in colonialism, fascism and now the 'clash of civilizations' make it difficult to approach this issue because in Europe's culture explicit theories of white supremacy have been formulated in the language of science, along biologically and culturally deterministic lines (Griffin and Braidotti 2002). Critical studies of whiteness proliferate however, in the aftermath of post-colonial and black studies in the United States, Canada and Australia.

Feminist critics like Frankenberg (1994a; 1994b) and Brodtkin Sacks (1994), for instance, have analysed extensively the phenomenon known as the 'whitening' of Euro-immigrants, especially Jews and Italians, and their English-speaking host countries. Cultural identity being related

external and retrospective, this whitening process takes place in the confrontation with other, native and usually black, peoples. Cornel West also analyses the interdependence of the categories of Blackness and Whiteness and their link to the diaspora of European colonists, immigrants and exiles, which runs throughout the last two centuries. European immigrants to the United States tended to conceive of themselves in regional or linguistic terms, as 'Sicilians', 'Lithuanians', 'Slavs', etc. West comments: 'They had to learn that they were "White", principally by adopting American discourse of positively-valued Whiteness and negatively-charged Blackness' (West 1990: 29). The extent to which this kind of 'whitened' identity is as illusory as it is racist can be seen by how divided the diasporic Euro-immigrant communities actually are, all in their respective ghettos, and locked in mutual suspicion of each other. But all are equally 'whitened' by the gaze of the colonizer.

Michael Walzer (1992) has argued that multiculturalism is the foundational political myth in the United States, whereas cultural homogeneity is central to the tales of European nationalism. Historical evidence argues against such an idea: waves of migrations from the East and the South make a mockery of any claim to ethnic or cultural homogeneity in Europe, while the centuries-old presence of Jewish and Muslim citizens challenges the identification of Europe with Christianity. Historical accuracy, however, can hardly be taken as the primary function of political myths. Thus, the idea of a fundamental cultural homogeneity as the binding factor of the different European countries, across their great linguistic diversity, is central to the recent European Constitutional Charter. It outlines the defining traits of European culture in: humanism, or the respect for human rights; rationalism and the faith in scientific progress and secularism; or the separation of church from state. These are all Enlightenment-based ideals that fail to account for the less glorious, and considerably more tedious, aspects of European history.

This appeal to a largely invented notion of cultural homogeneity is at the heart of contemporary ethnocentrism and racism. It results in reterritorializing the European subject on culturally essentialist foundations. It creates new challenges for anti-racist politics, which is caught between the return of this master narrative of identity on the one hand and the return of global hybridization on the other. Anti-racist oppositional forces are very active within Europe: black activists raise issues of entitlement to access to multicultural citizenship and challenge any assumption of culturalism: can one be European and black or Muslim (Gilroy 2000)? What is the legal status of the multiple forms of cultural belonging in second- and third-generation Muslim migrants born and raised in temporary Europe? Avtar Brah stresses the perpetuation of colonialism of framing the 'others' within Europe and wonders: 'what is the impact of the Single European Market upon women and other discursively represented as minorities?' (Brah 1996).

I would situate European anti-racist relocations of whiteness in this perspective and grab the opportunity offered by the process of the European Union to develop specific racialized locations, and hence historically embedded memories and accountability, for anti-racist whites. Any fantasy of cultural homogeneity and lily-white European ethnic purity is shattered by a process that aims at grounding identities, deflating their universal imposture and holding them to account for their history. This strategy of making identities immanent, instead of upholding transcendental universals, marks the 'becoming-minoritarian' of Europe. Specific strategies are needed to critique whiteness within Europe, because this category creates serious methodological, as well as political, problems. In his analysis of the representation of whiteness as an ethnic category in mainstream films, Richard Dyer (1997) defines it as 'an emptiness, absence, denial or even a kind of death'. Being the norm, it is invisible, as if natural, inevitable or the ordinary way to do things (Ware 1992). The source of the representational power of white is 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.

The vacuous nature of dominant power formations has been analysed by Foucault as the Panopticon; the void that lies at the heart of the system and which defines the contour of both social and symbolic visibility. Deleuze and Guattari also comment on the fact that any dominant notion such as masculinity or race has no positive definition. The prerogative of being dominant means that a concept gets defined oppositionally, by casting outwards upon others the mark of oppression or marginalization. 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. Virginia Woolf had already commented on this aspect of the logic of domination when she asserted that what matters is not so much that He, the male, should be superior, so long as She, the Other, be clearly defined as inferior. There is no dominant concept other than as a term to index and police access and participation to entitlements and powers. Thus, the invisibility of the dominant concepts is also the expression of their insubstantiality, which makes them all the more effective in their murderous intentions against the many others on whose structural exclusion they rest their powers.

The immediate consequence of this process of naturalization or invisibility is not only political, but also methodological, namely that whiteness is very difficult to analyse critically. 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 non-whites have a much clearer perception of whiteness than whites. Just think of bell hooks's important work on whiteness as terror

and as death-giving force (1992) and Toni Morrison's pioneer work on the structural function of blackness in literature (1992).

The lesson I want to draw from this is that whiteness needs to be de-linked from its dialectics of power and forced to confront itself. Its location needs to shift from the logic of opposition and domination, to a higher level of self-reflexivity. By learning to view their subject position as racialized white people, we can work towards anti-racist forms of whiteness, or at least anti-racist strategies to rework whiteness. This is the idea of a post-nationalist Europe as the site of becoming-minoritarian, which Étienne Balibar (2001) expresses in terms of Europe as borderland. The common anti-racist 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, which can be turned into a space of critical resistance. To rework whiteness in the era of postmodernity we need firstly to situate it in the geo-historical space of Europe and within the political project of the European Union. This amounts to de-essentializing it, historicizing it and de-mystifying its allegedly 'natural' locations. The next step, following the method of the feminist politics of location, is to analyse it critically, to revisit it by successive deconstructive repetitions that aim at emptying out the different layers of this complex identity, excavating it till it opens out.

The challenge consists in trying to relocate white European identity, so as to undo its hegemonic tendencies. I refer to this kind of identity as 'nomadic'. Being a nomadic European subject means to be in transit within different identity-formations, but sufficiently anchored to a historical position to accept responsibility for it. Dispelling the privilege of invisibility that was conferred on Europe as an alleged centre of the world and assuming full responsibility for the partial perspective of its own location can open up a minoritarian European space. This conscious retreat from the imperialist fantasy can also be described as the effort to 'provincialize Europe' (Chakrabarty 2000). Nietzsche (1994) argued in the nineteenth century that many Europeans no longer feel at home in Europe. Many would want to argue that those who do not identify with Europe as a centre today are ideally suited to the task of reframing Europe as a post-nationalist space.

The non-unitary vision of the subject represented in the figuration of nomadic subjectivity has proved at best controversial, at times polemical and always provocative. The most sophisticated theoretical attack against philosophical nomadism is provided by Spivak's criticism of poststructuralist (1988, revised in Spivak 1999) philosophy's concern for the crisis of the subject as one of its tools of domination and control. European philosophy perpetuates its hegemony – paradoxically – in and through the discourse of its alleged 'crisis' (see chapter 1). Spivak takes Foucault and Deleuze to task over what she describes as their contradictory relationship to heterogeneity and alterity. Spivak accuses them of conflating



two meanings of the term 'representation': 'speaking for', as in politics, and 're-presenting', as in art or philosophy. This confusion allows Foucault and Deleuze conveniently to dismiss the question of their own power. This results in reinstating an implicit, all-knowing subject, who is allegedly transparent by refusing to speak 'on behalf' of the oppressed. This universalistic stance is for Spivak typical of the Eurocentric subject and instrumental to his or her power. Foucault and Deleuze perpetuate this model of subjectivity by failing to situate their own discursive stance. They consequently perpetuate the invisibility of the oppressed and occupy the white privileged position of the hegemonic radicals.

I beg to differ from Spivak's assessment. The charge of vampiristic or consumerist consumption of others is an ill-informed way of approaching the issue, in that it ignores the rigorous anti-humanistic, cartographic and materialistic roots of poststructuralism. It specifically rests on a misunderstanding of what is involved in the poststructuralist critique of representation and on what is at stake in the task of redefining alternative subject-positions. Spivak attempts to rescue Derrida, whom she credits with far more self-reflexivity and political integrity than she is prepared to grant to Foucault and Deleuze. The grounds for this preferential treatment are highly debatable. Nomadic thinking challenges the semiotic approach that is crucial to the 'linguistic turn' and also to deconstruction. Both Deleuze and Foucault engage in a critical dialogue with it and work towards an alternative model of political and ethical practice. It seems paradoxical that thinkers who are committed to an analytics of contemporary subject-positions get accused of actually having caused the events which they account for; as if they were single-handedly responsible for, or even profiting from, the accounts they offer as cartographies. Naming the networks of power-relations in late postmodernity, however, is not as simple as metaphorizing and therefore consuming them. In my view there is no vampiristic approach towards 'otherness' on the part of the poststructuralists. Moreover, I find that approach compatible with the emerging subjectivities of the former 'others' of Western reason. Late postmodernity has seen the proliferation of many and potentially contradictory discourses and practices of difference, which have dislocated the classical axis of distinction between Self or Same/Other or Different. The point of coalition between different critical voices and the poststructuralists is the process of elaborating the spaces in-between self and other, which means the practice of the Relation. They stress the need to elaborate forms of social and political implementation of non-pejorative and non-dualistic notions of 'others'.

This is what I referred to (Braidotti 2002) as the process of becoming-minoritarian of both the Majority – the Same, or the dominant subject position – and of His (the gender is no coincidence) Minorities, or Others. The process of becoming-minoritarian/woman/animal/insect/imperceptible can be contiguous, but in so far as there is a structural dissym-

metry in the starting positions of the Same and of His Others, their lines or paths of becoming are discontinuous. Some becomings operate a much-needed dislodgement of dominant subject-positions (masculinity, heterosexuality, whiteness, Eurocentrism in the imperialist mode). Others mark instead the conditions for the affirmation of new subject-positions and thus lay the foundations for possible futures. The difference between the two lines is not a matter of relativism, but of major power dissymmetry and thus of structural differences. Philosophical nomadism allows us to think of these differences in embodied and embedded terms and to index them on an ethical scale based on empowerment. The relationship between these two sequences is not progressive, or successive, but is rather a matter of ethical and political forces. Becoming-minoritarian traces lines of evolution that actualize the ethical substance of a subject which, as we shall see in chapter 4, is defined with Spinoza as a complex dynamic entity bent upon the expression of his or her *conatus*.

A similar line is run by Robert Young (1990) in his analysis of the anti-imperialist politics of the poststructuralist philosophers. Stressing their explicit involvement with French anticolonial politics and especially the Algerian war of independence, Young traces a direct equivalence between the critique of humanism proposed by Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida and others, and their critique of European imperialism down to and including fascism and the events of the Second World War. The poststructuralist rejection of logocentrism implies the in-depth critique of Eurocentrism and, with it, the Hegelian dialectical vision of the Subject and of his role in History. The rejection of this totalizing way of conceiving the role of the unitary subject is the defining feature of poststructuralist philosophy. The 'ontological imperialism' (Young 1990: 13) of European thought and its connection with world-domination is the main target of the poststructuralists. It establishes a conceptual line of continuity with post-colonial theories. This does not mean that the two 'post's' are the same, but rather that their respective differences can be highlighted against a common historical and theoretical background' (Appiah 1991).

On this point, both bell hooks and Stuart Hall have in fact warned of the cheap trick that consists in 'saving' the marginal others from the destabilizing impact of postmodernism in general and poststructuralist philosophies in particular. In 'Postmodern blackness' bell hooks strongly objects to the way in which blacks and other 'others' are not entitled to deconstructive approaches to identity. It is as if they should be stuck with the burden of 'authentic' experience, empirical 'reality' and real-life socio-economic 'conditions', thus leaving the task of theorizing to others. hooks (1990: 23) argues that 'Racism is perpetuated when blackness is associated solely with concrete, gut-level experience, conceived as either opposing or having no connection to abstract thinking and the production of critical theory'. It is rather the case that postmodern blackness is infinitely more dangerous to racism, in so far as it exposes the white arrogance which

consists in automatically assimilating the marginal 'others' to 'the view from below'.

The task of bringing into adequate representation the sort of new mixtures that contemporary subjects have become is at the heart of poststructuralist philosophies and hence of philosophical nomadism. The aim here is to provide a materially based practice of conceptual representation of the subjects in-becoming within the fast-shifting social landscape of post-industrial societies. The process of drawing cartographies of the present is central to social theory and cultural studies, in both feminist and mainstream theories. The great advantage of a poststructuralist approach is that it allows for a radical critique of 'representational' thinking and the kind of metaphorization processes it implies. Priority is given to the quest for new figurations that account for processes of changes and transformation, that is to say in-between-ness and flows. The aim is not to validate or sacralize the authenticity of experience, but rather to develop politically empowering methods of deconstructing identities, so as to enable a radical shift of perspective within the subject and to lay the foundations for new interconnections and alliances. bell hooks put it succinctly (hooks 1990: 27): 'Radical postmodernism calls attention to those shared sensibilities which cross the boundaries of class, gender, race, etc. that could be fertile ground for the construction of empathy – ties that would promote recognition of common commitments, and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition.'

The point of the matter for poststructuralist thought is that, whether we like it or not, displacement is a central feature of the postmodern era (Probyn 1990). Contemporary post-industrial societies function by flows of cash and data (Dahrendorf 1990) and are organized along multiple axes of mobility of people and commodities (Cresswell 1997). Mouffe (1994) and Laclau (1995) analyse the political economy of contemporary post-industrial societies in terms of vast and collectively renegotiated processes of hybridization. The loss of unitary subjectivity, be it in post-communist, post-industrial or post-colonial societies, is such as to require a return of the political in the sense of resistance and democratic confrontations.

Theoretically, my position on philosophical nomadism is quite the opposite of the metaphorization processes that Clifford rightly criticizes as 'pseudouniversal cosmopolitan bravado' (1994: 312). It is rather a situated and highly politicized attempt to rethink the subject in terms of his or her embodied singularity, which addresses specifically, but not exclusively, those who choose to make themselves accountable for their 'centre', in a world structured by multiple and dynamic centres of power. Shifts, mutations and processes of change are a key feature of our particular historical period. Social critics therefore need to be situated in their approach to the analysis of the new subject positions which have become available in post-industrial times. The differences in degrees, types, kinds and modes of mobility and – even more significantly – of non-mobility

need to be mapped out with precision and sensitivity. The aim of this affirmative and non-aporetic deconstruction is to undo the structures of phallo-logocentric power, as Ingaray would phrase it, or the voice of the Majority, as Deleuze would put it, and to subvert it. The becoming-minoritarian, or becoming-nomadic is the pattern of subversion that is open to both the empirical members of the majority (the 'same') and to those of the minority (the 'others'). Both need to relinquish their ties, but they do so in dissymmetrical ways. Cartographic accuracy is made necessary by the fact that nomadism is precisely not a universal metaphor, but rather a generic term of indexation for qualitatively different degrees of access and entitlement to power. Grounded, historicized accounts for the multiply positioned subjects of postmodernity are needed for people who are situated in one of the many poly-located centres that weave together the global economy. Power is the key issue, and mobility is a term that indexes access to it. As such, power-relations are internally contradictory. The politics of location and the politically invested cartographies they produce are the main tools – in a conceptual as well as political sense of the term. Producing a cartography is a way of embedding critical practice in a specific situated perspective, avoiding universalistic generalizations and grounding it so as to make it accountable.

### On flexible citizenship and multiple belongings<sup>2</sup>

This post-nationalistic sense of diasporic, hybrid and nomadic identity can be translated into the political notion of flexible citizenship, in the network of the 'new' European Union. 'Flexible forms of citizenship' would allow for all 'others', all kinds of hybrid citizens, to acquire legal status in what would otherwise deserve the label of 'Fortress Europe'. A flexible de-linking could be implemented so as to disengage citizenship from nationality and national identity (i.e. not space-bound) and from permanence, so that it could be extended to temporary residence (i.e. not time-bound). This allows for complex allegiances and multiple forms of plural belongings. Dismantling the us/them binary, it replaces a fixed notion of European citizenship with a functionally differentiated network of affiliations and loyalties. For the citizens of the member states of the European Union this leads to the disconnection of the three elements of citizenship, nationality and national identity. These effects boil down to a central idea: the end of pure and steady identities, or in other words, de-linkation and hybridization producing a multicultural minoritarian Europe, within which 'new' Europeans can take their place alongside

<sup>2</sup> This term has gained widespread acceptance; I first read it in Aihwa Ong's work *Citizenship and Immigrants* (Ong 1993).



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' (Preuss 1996: 551) would become an integral part of citizenship in the European Union, Preuss argues that all European citizens would end up being 'privileged foreigners'. In other words, they would function together without reference to a centralized and homogeneous sphere of political power (Preuss 1996: 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. It is one of the possible forms of subjects we could become.

This possibility has also generated a reaction of panic at the potential loss of a 'strong' European identity by conservative forces that uphold the power of nation-states. The project of European unification has in fact triggered a wave of nostalgic political reactions on the issue of migration and citizenship, which are simultaneously anti-European and racist. The short term effect of this wave is nationalistic paranoia and xenophobic fears, which also enact a fragmentation of larger national identities into regional or localized sub-identities. It is indeed the case, as Benhabib points out (1999), that the redefinition of European boundaries and a relative fluidity about European identity coincide with the resurgence of micro-nationalisms at all levels in Europe today. According to the schizoid workings of globalization 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.

A clear sign of this power-ridden reaction in defence of a hard-core European identity is the crisis of the universal value attributed to secularism in European culture. Recent measures taken by EU member states such as France to outlaw the public display of religious allegiances, especially wearing the headscarf by Muslim women, are clear indications of the fear. This reaction is myopic in forgetting, not only that secularism is not yet a consensual factor in Europe, it is also no longer a reliable ground for European identity. Given the extent to which second-generation Muslim migrants and post-colonial subjects embrace religion as a defence of an ethnic identity which is under attack, it follows that an automatic and unreflective brand of normative secularism runs the risk of becoming complicitous with xenophobia and racism (Connolly 1999). The crisis of secularism is especially poignant for feminists – in that the separation of church from state and the universality of human rights are foundational values for the European women's movements. Elisabeth Badinter (2003) has provided a contemporary example of how normative this position can

become by castigating any attempt to question the secular tradition of French feminism. This is a problematic political position in so far as it fails to acknowledge the historical specificity of the situation. The decline of secularism is a reaction against and hence it is historically situated within the horizon of globalization, not outside it. Even a conservative social thinker like Samuel Huntington (1996) acknowledges that the crisis of secularism is related to the specific conditions of post-colonial migration and global mobility of the workforce. It is a contemporary problem, which unfortunately reactivates some bad memories for Western feminists: it is as if we relived our own struggle against the powers of the Christian church, through the contemporary situation of Muslim women in Europe. This is understandable, but it is not, however, an accurate cartography. We need to position the practices of secularism, in both the West and the East, in their respective historical and geopolitical locations. A failure to recognize this historical specificity runs the risk of bringing European feminism close to that 'cultural racism' that Stuart Hall and black migrant women so eloquently denounce. Identities are problematic at all times, but especially when they are under threat.

In her recent work on European citizenship, Benhabib (2002) interrogates critically the disjunction between the concepts of nation, the state and cultural identity. A self-professed Kantian cosmopolitan, Benhabib argues forcefully that 'democratic citizenship can be exercised across national boundaries and in transnational contexts' (Benhabib 2002: 183). Solidly grounded in her theory of communicative ethics, Benhabib stipulates 'norms of universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity as guiding principles of human interaction' (Benhabib 2002: 11). She is especially keen to demonstrate that the distinction between national minority and ethnic group does very little 'to determine whether an identity/difference-driven movement is democratic, liberal, inclusive and universalist' (Benhabib 2002: 65). For Benhabib the European Union is a good example of the new modes of non-nationalist citizenship which have become available in the new world order. She praises, for instance, the medieval European tradition of city-based asylum rights as partial forms of alternative citizenship and as a way of elaborating new rules of 'global' democracy within a multicultural horizon.

Within the specific location of Europe, important work has been done to analyse the ongoing process of the European Union both as a player in the global economy and as an attempt to move beyond the traditional grounds on which European nationalism has prospered, namely essentialized identities. One interesting cluster of work on the new European citizenship has emerged specifically in Southern Europe as part of the critique of globalization. It is organized around journals such as *Multitudes* in France, *Posse* in Italy and *Archipelago* in Spain. Some of it refers back to the philosophy of non-unitary subjectivity and the notion of politics as mediation, which Balibar (2002) has been developing, as well as work on

migration and citizenship (Moulier Boutang 1986). A sizeable part of it, however, is generated as an extension of Hardt and Negri's best-selling *Empire*. This school of thought combines a monistic Spinozist political economy with a post-Marxian brand of materialist analysis of labour conditions under advanced capitalism (Virno 1994; 2001). It views Europe as a potential space of becoming and thus has profound affinity with my project. Negri's work, however, especially his theory of the revolutionary multitude as the motor of world resistance, remains, even after all these years, over-enthusiastic. Although Hardt and Negri theorize capitalism as schizophrenia, they fail, in my eyes, to practice 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. The process of becoming-revolutionary, as Deleuze teaches in a more ascetic tone, is just that: a process, a practice, an art, an experiment. There is no overarching meta-narrative of one global multitude in Deleuze's philosophy of radical immanence, as there is in Hardt and Negri's totalizing neo-Marxist narrative.

This meta-narrative of labour also has problematic consequences for their vision of Europe, which is taken *de facto* as the space of the alternative to globalization and global capitalism. This normative injunction expresses a wish I share, namely that of steering the incipient and struggling European Union in the direction of more political power, self-determination and opposition to American belligerence. Hardt and Negri's zealous belief that this is the revolutionary option sanctioned by history and the will of the multitude is, however, unconvincing. This belief assumes that someone – the multitude – is actually in charge of the course of history and that its collective voice merges with the prophetic desire of the intellectuals. I find a deep-seated Marxian hard core in Hardt and Negri's philosophy of power, which flatly contradicts their poststructuralist allegiance, making a mockery of their claim to honour multiplicity and complexity. On key issues they openly disagree with Deleuze's philosophical nomadology; for instance, on the concept of the virtual, which they assimilate to the material process of labour and hence to the endeavors of the multitude. There is also a clear divergence on politics, which they reinscribe in a world-historical mass movement of insurrection. They differ also on the subject of philosophy, which they subject to an instrumental use in terms of classical Marxist praxis, thus losing the emphasis on technologies of the self, or the humble and patient creation of new concepts. Ultimately, they share less with poststructuralism than with Marxism, less with Deleuze than with Laclau and Mouffe. Such clear-cut certainties beg too many questions and are thus ultimately unsatisfactory.

The idea of 'national identity', a subtler theoretical perspective, inspired by Homi Bhabha (1990; 1994) or Edward Said (1978), reveals that common ideas of 'nation' are to a large extent imaginary tales. They uphold

Eurocentric power and project a reassuring but nonetheless illusory unity over the fragmented and often incoherent regional and linguistic differences that make up the European nation-states. Moreover, a feminist perspective enriches this insight by showing to what extent the legitimating tales of nationhood in the West have been constructed over the bodies of women, as well as in the crucible of imperial and colonial masculinity.

The fact that these allegedly universal or all-encompassing ideas of 'nation' or 'national identity' are 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 and lack of coherence of fundamental categories, such as national identity, far from resulting in passive resignation to sovereign power, leads to renewed efforts to ground political resistance in the specific paradoxes of our historical condition. Considering the complex structure of the globalized world, political activism must also be multi-layered and as internally differentiated as the world it moves in. One-way revolutionary roads will not help in the maze of the globally mediated world. Equally untenable is the opposite political position: the belief in the natural foundations and consequently the fixed nature of any system of values, meanings or beliefs. What sustains political engagement is a qualitative shift of perspective, a yearning for resistance and empowerment. This is primarily an ethical affect.

#### THE QUEST FOR A NEW GLOBAL ETHICS

What can be the ethical import of the process of multiple belongings and becoming nomadic or minoritarian, in which affects take centre stage? Becoming-political is part of this same process, which involves a radical repositioning or internal transformation on the part of subjects who want to become-minoritarian in a productive and affirmative manner. In chapters 4 and 5 I shall outline this internal landscape in detail; for the moment, let me just illustrate the case, for instance the move towards a post-nationalist European identity. It is clear that this shift requires changes that are neither simple nor self-evident. They mobilize the affectivity of the subjects involved and can be seen as a process of transformation of negative into positive passions. Fear, anxiety and nostalgia are clear examples of the negative emotions involved in the project of detaching ourselves from familiar and cherished forms of identity. To achieve a post-nationalist sense of European identity requires the disidentification from established, nation-bound references. Such an enterprise involves a sense of loss of cherished habits of thought and representation, and thus it is not free of pain. No process of consciousness-raising ever is.

The beneficial side-effects of this process are unquestionable and in some way they compensate for the pain of loss. Thus, the critical



relocation of whiteness can produce an affirmative, situated form of anti-racist European subject-position. In a more Spinozist vein, it also produces a more adequate cartography of our real-life condition, free of delusions of grandeur. This mature and sobering experience is similar to the cathartic eye-opening or moral awakening of Greek tragedies. It is an enriching and positive experience; nonetheless, pain is an integral part of it. Migrants, exiles, refugees have first-hand experience of the extent to which the process of disidentification from familiar identities is linked to the pain of loss and uprooting. Diasporic subjects of all kinds express the same sense of wound, as we saw in the earlier sections of this chapter. Multilocality is the affirmative translation of this negative sense of loss. Following Glissant, the becoming-nomadic marks the process of positive transformation of the pain of loss into the active production of multiple forms of belonging and complex allegiances. What is lost, in the sense of fixed origins, is gained in an increased desire to belong, in a multiple rhizomic manner which transcends the classical bilateralism of binary identity formations.

The qualitative leap through pain, across the mournful landscapes of nostalgic yearning, is the gesture of active creation of affirmative ways of belonging. It is a fundamental reconfiguration of our way of being in the world, which acknowledges the pain of loss, but moves further. Ultimately, it is a practice of freedom. That is the defining moment for the process of becoming-ethical: the move across and beyond pain, loss and negative passions. Taking suffering into account is the starting point, the real aim of the process, however, is the quest for ways of overcoming the stultifying effects of passivity, brought about by pain. The internal disarray, fracture and pain are the conditions of possibility for ethical transformation. 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 not about the avoidance of pain, but rather about 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 affirmative power of Life as the vitalism of *'bios/zoé'*, which is the opposite of morality as a form of life insurance. I will develop this further in chapters 4 and 5.

The awakening of ethical and political consciousness through the pain of loss has been acknowledged by Edgar Morin (1987). He describes his 'becoming-European' as a double affect: the first concerns the disappointment with the unfulfilled promises of Marxism, which has been Morin's first political engagement and passion. The second is compassion for the uneasy, struggling and marginal position of post-war Europe, squashed between the United States and the Soviet Union. The pain of this awareness that Europe was unloved and a castaway, 'une pauvre vieille petite chose' 'a poor old thing', (Morin 1987: 23), results in a new kind of bonding, and a renewed sense of care and accountability. The sobering

experience – the humble and productive recognition of loss, limitations and shortcomings – has to do with self-representations. Established mental habits, images and terminology railroad us back towards established ways of thinking about ourselves. Traditional modes of representation are legal forms of addiction. To change them is not unlike undertaking a disintoxication cure. A great deal of courage and creativity is needed to develop forms of representation that do justice to the complexities of the kind of subjects we have already become. We already live and inhabit social reality in ways that surpass tradition: we move about, in the flow of current social transformations, in hybrid, multi-cultural, polyglot, post-identity spaces of becoming (Braidotti 2002). We fail, however, to bring them into adequate representation. There is a shortage on the part of our social imaginary, a deficit of representational power, which underscores the political timidity of the European unification process. Some of this difficulty is contingent and may be linked to the lack of a European public space, as Habermas suggests (1992); or the lack of visionary leadership among politicians, as Meny put it (2000). In any case, European issues fail to trigger our imagination and make us dream (Passerini 1998).

The real issue, however, is conceptual: how do we develop a new post-nationalist European social imaginary, through 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, but more like shedding an old skin. It actually, happens often enough at the molecular level, but at the social level, it is a painful experience. Part of the answer lies in the formulation of the question: 'we' are in *this* together. This is a collective activity, a group project that connects active conscious and desiring citizens. It points towards a virtual destination, post-nationalist Europe, but it is not utopian. As a project it is historically grounded, socially embedded and already partly actualized in the joint endeavour, i.e. the community, of those who are actively working towards it. If this is at all utopian, it is only in the sense of the positive affects that are mobilized in the process: the necessary dose of imagination, dreamlike vision and bonding, without which no social project can take off.

Feminism is a great example of this kind of transformative political project: feminists are those subjects who have taken their critical distance from the dominant social institutions of femininity and masculinity, relating them to other crucial variables, such as ethnicity, race and class. Feminist theory has addressed the issue of the imaginary, through the emphasis it had placed both on identification as a factor in identity formation, and on disidentification as a strategic support of consciousness-raising. It has done so, however, mostly within a psychoanalytic frame of reference, with emphasis on the imaginary as the process of linguistic mediation. This refers to a system of representation by which a subject gets captured or captivated by a ruling social and cultural formation: legal addictions to



certain identities, images and terminologies, as I said in the prologue. These are governed and 'beamed down', both for Althusser and for Lacan, by a symbolic system represented by the Phallic Law. 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, in the sense of lack, mourning and melancholia. This Hegelian legacy reduces the subject to a process of being-subjected-to, i.e. the negative sense of power as *potestas*.

The poststructuralist generation, starting with Foucault, challenges 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 to society is too narrow to account for the complex workings of power in our culture. A thick and highly dynamic web of power effects is the factor through which self and society are mutually shaped by one another. The choreography of constraints and entitlements, controls and desire is the hard core of power. This core is void of any substantial essence and is a force, or an activity – a verb, not a noun. Power as positive or *potentia* is crucial in forming the subject as an entity enmeshed in a network of interrelated social and discursive effects. Bio-power, or power over living matter, is a good example of it. For Foucault, the system of mediation is not merely linguistic, but also material.

The 'imaginary' refers to a set of socially mediated practices which function as the anchoring point, albeit unstable and contingent, for identifications and therefore for identity-formation. These practices act like interactive structures where desire as a subjective yearning and agency in a broader socio-political sense are mutually shaped by one another. Neither 'pure' imagination – locked in its classical opposition to reason – nor fantasy in the Freudian sense, the imaginary marks a space of transitions and transactions. Nomadic, it flows like symbolic glue between the social and the self, the outside and the subject; the material and the etherial. It flows, but it is sticky; it catches on as it goes. It possesses fluidity, but it distinctly lacks transparency. The term 'desire' connotes the subject's own investment – or enmeshment – in this sticky network of interrelated social and discursive effects, which constitutes the social field as a libidinal – or affective – landscape, as well as a normative – or disciplinary – framework.

The material embedding of imaginary formations, through embodiment and changing historical conditions, became a point of discussion among feminists and other critical theorists. Towards the 1990s the consensus of opinion shifted away from the Lacanian vision of the unconscious as a linguistic structure ruled by the laws of metaphor and metonymy. The concept of memory that Lacan renders through his vision of the unconscious is that of an essential 'black-box' that allegedly records the central data flow of psychic life. That is a very one-directional and

rather despotic notion of how unconscious memories work, which testifies to Lacan's psychic essentialism and to a static vision of psychic life. The notion that the unconscious is historical and social and hence contingent emerges as the bone of contention between Lacan and Irigaray. Irigaray's concept of strategic mimesis and the sensible transcendental subject provides the tools for implementing changes at the in-depth level of the self. The idea that the symbolic is porous to historical transformations and hence mutable is compatible with Deleuze's emphasis on creative collective evolution and on the subject as empirical transcendental. I shall return to this question in chapter 4. The imaginary continues to be of relevance, providing the leverage we need to implement changes in the social realm, as well as in the depths of the subject. Irigaray's specular regime of visualization of the imaginary, as a double-looking concave mirror, is significant as a strategic tool that helps the female feminist subjects to navigate out of the murky waters of the Phallic symbolic. Nomadic subjectivity, however, needs to go further.

Deleuze's imaginary is not postulated along linguistic lines at all – it is 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 this crucial idea: that the imaginary is ultimately an image of thought. That is to say, it is a habit that captures and blocks the many potential alternative ways we may be able to think about our environment and ourselves. Collectively, we can empower some of these alternative becomings. This process is collective and affective: it is driven by a desire for change that is sustained by some, if not many. The European post-nationalist identity is such a project: political at heart, it has a strong ethical pull made of convictions, vision and desire. It does require labour-intensive efforts on the part of all and thus is risky. As a project, it also requires active participation and enjoyment: a new virtual love that targets less what we are, more what we are capable of becoming. This liberatory potential is directly proportional to the desire and collective affects it mobilizes. The recognition of Europe as a post-nationalist entity is the premise for the creation of a sense of accountability for the specific margin of the planet that Europeans occupy. The becoming-minoritarian of Europe enacts this reconfiguration as an active experiment with different ways of inhabiting this social space.

Far from being the prelude to a neo-universalistic stance, or its dialectical pluralistic counterpart, 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 changes. Through the pain of loss and disenchantment, just as '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 to be able to seize

this historical chance to become, at last, just what we can be: Europeans, à peine, et de justesse ('just Europeans and not without difficulty').

### Nomadic activism

Nomadic political subjects are already enacting, in a multicultural European social space, specific forms of activism and of social participation which are innovative and distinctly post-nationalist. A significant case is that of cross-border activism by women in former Yugoslavia. The project is called 'Trans-Europeanness' and in 2002 it assembled a caravan of itinerant militant feminists who travelled in a sort of pilgrimage through the sites and the territories of the Yugoslav war atrocities. The written and visual documents that followed this itinerant project are very telling (Deschaumes and Slapsak 2002), as they mark the persistent presence of the IDP's (internally displaced people) throughout the territory of that ancient multicultural and intra-religious culture which was Yugoslavia. The insanity of extremist nationalism and the atrocities it entailed are exposed by the proliferation of internal borders among the different portions of that once unified country.

As the spokeswoman for the caravan writes as they cross the border between Macedonia and Kosovo: 'We move off without knowing what we have just passed through: a checkpoint in a country at war? A border in a country at peace? A non-border between two non-countries? An emerging border between two emerging countries? (...) We've just passed through... we don't know what' (Deschaumes 2002: 236). This kind of contemporary nomadic activism combines two features that are crucial to my project of nomadic subjectivity: the sharpened sense of territoriality under the impact of the European Union and hence the notion of border-crossings. It also actualizes a productive form of activism, as an embodied political practice. The account of this pilgrimage, across the sites of massive killings, rapes and looting, makes for an instructive read. The subjects involved are in mourning, yet determined to work through their grief, their own sense of bereavement and pain. In confronting one another, they also evoke the spectre of their own nationalistic emotions, the resentment and xenophobic gut-feelings. The ethical process of transmutation of negative into positive passions could not find a better illustration: working through the suffering, these subjects enact gratuitous forms of joyful affirmation of more productive affects. Bearing witness, receiving and containing the pain of others, just being there – are the basic gestures of life-affirming bonding, not *in spite of*, but *across* the wounds and pain.

Just how novel and creative this kind of nomadic activism is, can be assessed by comparing it to the political paradigm of 'exit', proposed by Albert Hirschman (1993) as a political practice opposed to 'voice'. 'Voice' stands for the activity of actively denouncing a situation with the intent

of achieving some improvement. 'Exit', on the other hand, indicates the act of leaving altogether, of walking away from a given situation and thus giving up on it. When practised on a massive scale, 'exit' can lead to the deterioration of the state of an organization; when practised more selectively, however, it can improve its performance. The two activities differ: exit is solitary and silent, voice is collective and loud, but they can reinforce each other, as evidenced by the events that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall. The mass emigration of citizens from the former German Democratic Republic is a political gesture of 'exit' and the million citizens who stayed and voiced their dissent contributed to the same process through a diametrically opposed tactic.

However effective the exit-voice scheme may be, it begs the fundamental question of what political affect or desire motivates the subject of such deep transformations. By contrast, the 'Trans-European' women's caravan as a significant case of nomadic activism provides a more embedded and embodied form of ethical accountability.

Another obvious point of comparison is Zygmunt Bauman's notion of the pilgrim as the postmodern ethical subject. This project, as I argued in chapter 1, aims to reconstitute ethical agency on the ruins of the modernist hope of combining the autonomy of rational individuals with the heteronomy of choices, i.e. how to make people choose what is best for them. Bauman proposes a hierarchy of subject-positions, with the pilgrim or vagabond at the top, as free movers across the social space, without fixed routes, itinerary or schedule. As a figuration of gratuitous being-there, the pilgrim has a saintly dimension: he or she just passes through, moving in an episodic manner, inhabiting the planet as a temporary visitor, treading gently as she goes. The nomad is discarded by Bauman because he is not free from teleological design but follows set routes and familiar paths. The bottom of the ethical scale is occupied by the tourist, who cruises along like a bad shopper, looking for bargains and taking no responsibility for his or her actions. As the prototypical post-industrial hyper-consumer, the tourist collects sensations and souvenirs.

The problem with Bauman's ethical project is that it disregards the multiple differences that constitute any categories and thus fails to situate them. The tourist, for instance, has been taken by John Urry (1990) as the prototypical 'flâneur', free from the constraints of paid labour, devoted to the gratuitous exercise of leisure. Far from being exploitative and rapacious, the tourist gazes upon the world with admiration and joy. MacCannell's (1992) study of tourism also stresses the quest for authenticity of this subject-position, which brings it closer to the pilgrim. Bauman's pilgrim lacks a politics of location and thus constitutes a weak proposition. In their critique, Jokinen and Veijola (1997) point out the flaws in Bauman's thought by injecting sexual difference and ethnicity into this rather abstract picture. Thus, the vagabond doubles up as the homeless drunk and the tourist as the sex-tourist. A wave of counter-figurations



emerges: the *flâneur* turns into the obnoxious paparazzo, whereas on the horizon of postmodernity more telling figurations of mobility emerge: the au pair girl; the mail-order bride; the illegal immigrant; the cross-border prostitute; and even the babysitter. These are figures of displacement, which retain as anchoring points spatio-temporal coordinates in terms of gender, sexual identity, race, class, and age. Bauman does not pay enough attention to situated perspectives and thus ends up over-generalizing his important case.

Figurations are not mere metaphors, but rather markers of more concretely situated historical positions. A figuration is the expression of one's specific positioning in both space and time. It marks certain territorial or geopolitical coordinates, but it also points out one's sense of genealogy or of historical inscription. Figurations deterritorialize and destabilize the certainties of the subject and allow for a proliferation of situated or 'micro' narratives of self and others. As often is the case, artists and activists respond more promptly to the call for more creativity than professional academics do. Thus, Ursula Biemann investigates 'the logic of particular human economic circuits in a changed world order: the female teleservice industries in India, illegal refugee boats entering the Mediterranean Sea, the European industrial prison complex, the smuggling paths across the Spanish-Moroccan border. These sites and non-sites speak of a re-articulation of the relations between social and territorial conditions' (Biemann 2003: 22). This results in a spatialized reading of history which traces the routes of new mobile forms of subjectivity amidst the politics of global mobility. It produces an alternative relational geography which assumes as its starting position the diasporic identity of a multi-located subject and attempts to articulate it across the many variables that compose it. Technologies such as satellite surveillance (Parks 2003) and reconnaissance and border-patrolling video and electronic devices play a central role in Biemann's embodied and embedded new geography of power-relations.

Two concrete projects illustrate this strategy of multiple border-crossings: one is an art project called 'Frontera Sur RRUT - Europe's Southern border in real remote and virtual time'. It concerns the implications created by the enlargement of the European Union in the Spanish-Moroccan enclave of Ceuta and Melilla, which happens to be physically located on the African continent. The project explores both the continuation of a colonial legacy of the European occupation of North Africa, and the transformation of the southern borders in order to uphold the new European identity. Again, concludes Biemann, 'Europe defines itself by its outermost edge', which in this case is signified by large shopping malls, symbols of both the wealth and the value system of the European Union (Biemann 2003: 90).

The real function of such a border is to ensure control over the mobility of population and goods, and thus it acquires its function by being crossed.

This art project provides a very detailed logbook of the various types of border-crossings that occur in such a liminal but central space. This in turn depicts a geography of embodied crossings which includes the routes of container ships, the night boat rides taken by aspiring migrants, the itinerant paths of workers who pick vegetables for the EU markets, without forgetting the domestic workers, the smugglers, the sex workers and 'the Moroccans who peel imported shrimps for Dutch companies in Tangiers' (Biemann 2003: 90). This cartography draws a micro-geography of power-relations that are simultaneously local and global. They rely for their transnational effects on very advanced technologies for the control of human mobility, which encompass radar and satellite technologies, video and infrared cameras in order to ensure the safe flow of mobility of the population. Intrinsic to this world-view is the concomitance of the legal and illegal aspects of the economic world order: transiting, entering, smuggling go hand in hand for local inhabitants, tourists, military personnel, traders and others. To reduce some of these hastily to an 'illegal economy' is a failure to see the deep complicity and mutual implication of many of these lucrative activities. They all practice the cartography of a struggle, by different means. On the side of the legal economies, these transit areas are used mostly to process components and products meant for the European markets.

The second significant art project that Ursula Biemann draws our attention to is the 'Solid sea project' by the art collective Multiplicity. This addresses the Mediterranean sea as an impenetrable block of neo-colonial economic relations, a non-transparent surface inhabited by tourists, immigrants, refugees, military staff. It is an insurmountable stretch of water, hypercontrolled by both advanced technology and the official navies of the EU member states. A solid space, strictly regulated into the forms of crossings it allows. Oil rig technicians, cruise-ship tourists, sailors, clandestine immigrants, fishermen, smugglers, military personnel all define their own paths across this solid surface. The art project traces the different routes of the various modes of crossings of this solid space, through a rationalized accounts of ports, military patrol routes, the itineraries of tobacco and other smugglers and also the complexities of the intricate system of cables and telecommunication networks that allows for this system to function. Translated into my language, this materially embedded geography is a politically invested cartography of *bios/zoe* power relations in a technologically linked global world.

## CONCLUSION

Advanced capitalism and its globalized economy is a machine that spins and multiplies differences for the sake of their commodification and profit. As such, it engenders, propels and contains simultaneously oppo-



site effects: degrees of gender equality with growing segregation of the sexes; gender trouble on the one hand and polarized sexual difference on the other. Similarly, a global multiculturalism does not guarantee the end of racist class stratification, nor does cultural diversity protect us from growing racism. The post-nationalist project of the European Union does not put an end to nationalistic feelings and in some way even accelerates them. Gilroy sums this situation up in terms of: 'the untidy workings of creolised, syncretised, hybridised and impure cultural forms that were once rooted in the complicity of rationalised terror and racialised reason' (Gilroy 1996: 23).

This proliferation of multiple identities also challenges the equation of culture with the idea of belonging to a common identity. It relocates culture instead in multiple locations, routes and movements. To disengage 'culture' from 'identity' so as to render it as a process that has its own specific workings amounts to emphasizing the processes of transition and border-crossings, embodied genealogies and imaginary homelands, which are definitional of the non-unitary subject.

The transpositions also result in the deconstruction of the key concepts of European theoretical and political discourse and the Enlightenment-based rule of reason, such as subjectivity, individualism, equality. Their deconstruction, however, does not result in their disappearance but rather, as Foucault teaches us, in their discursive proliferation, under the guise of 'multiculturalism', 'post-coloniality' and other claims to counter-subjectivity.

Furthermore, identities are commodified and exchanged globally, in a world that is no longer organized along the dialectical axis of centre-periphery. Given that diasporic identities and transnational flows of people, goods and ideas are constitutive of globalization, the question is how to account for this proliferating multiplicity of hybrid subject positions. Comparing diasporas raises ethical questions about the methods of laying alongside each other different forms of traumatic dispersal.

Faced with a proliferation of such discourses and social practices of nomadism, how can we tell the proactive from the regressive ones? The counter-method starts from the politics of locations. This is both a strategy and a method based on politically informed cartographies of one's position, starting not from gender alone, but from a bundle of interrelated social relations. The practice of the politics of location rests on notions like experience, situatedness, accountability and transversal alliances (Braidotti 2002). This politics of locations is best served by a non-unitary vision of the subject that stresses nomadic complexity and openness-endedness. As Haraway puts it:

Location is not a listing of adjectives or assigning of labels such as race, sex and class. Location is not the concrete to the abstract of decontextualization. Location is the always partial, always finite, always fraught

play of foreground and background, text and context, that constitutes critical enquiry. Above all, location is not self-evident or transparent. Location is also partial in the sense of being for some worlds and not others. (Haraway 1997: 37)

The politics of location is both materialist and immanent and it provides the grounding for political accountability. As a method, it combines issues of self-reflexivity and accountability with ways of enlarging scientific objectivity. It involves dialogical confrontations with others, in a mixture of affectivity/involvement and objectivity/distance, which needs to be balanced in a critical manner. Such a methodology can only be transdisciplinary and thus scientifically impure.

The cartographies presented in this chapter argue forcefully for a new vision of the subject to sustain the critical work of accounting for the present and also to provide the moral barometer to steer an ethical course. This is a non-unitary subject position that yearns for becoming-minoritarian. The times and modes of this becoming are contingent on the specific locations of the subjects involved. The politics of location establish ethical boundaries. A new brand of non-Western neo-humanism is emerging from the debris of Western Enlightenment's unfulfilled promises and broken hopes. Simultaneously, different brands of post-humanism are at work within advanced Western societies, under the impact of technological and social forces that target Life (as *bios* and *zoe*) as their subject. Faced with these proliferating discourses, it is not a question of establishing new methodological or political hierarchies of values, so as to apportion respective merits and deficits. It is not a matter of mutually incompatible systems and options, but rather of grounding the different ethical values concretely, historically and geopolitically, so as to be able to account for them. These situated cartographies provide the material dialogical exchanges within the horizon of diversity and not under the empire of Sameness.

The material presented in this chapter shows that in a globally linked world, 'we' are indeed in *this* together. But this pan-human factor need not result in new universalizing master-narratives, or the eternal return of Kantian moral universalism. The polylingual voices of the multi-located subjects of the global nomadic, diasporic, hybrid diversity are producing concretely grounded micro-narratives that call for a joyful kind of dissonance. For ethical discourse to sing the same tune some extra effort is needed.

The intersecting cartographies demonstrate my two main arguments. Firstly, that a non-unitary vision of the subject is the necessary precondition for the creation of more adequate accounts of our location. Secondly, that far from resulting in moral relativism, non-unitary subject positions engender alternative systems of values and specific forms of accountability. The key to understanding both these arguments lies in the definition

of 'non-unitary'. Nomadic subjects are not quantitative pluralities, but rather qualitative multiplicities. The former is merely a multiple of One – multiplied across an extended space. This is the political economy of global capitalism as a system that generates differences for the purpose of commodifying them. Qualitative multiplicities, however, pertain to an altogether different logic. They express changes not of scale, but of intensity, force, or *potentia* (positive power of expression), which trace patterns of becoming.

This complicates the picture: non-unitary subject defined as a qualitative multiplicity is not only extended in space, but also in time. Let us take an example from the anti-racist question: 'can one be Black, or Muslim, and European?'; or the feminist one: 'can one be black, or lesbian and a feminist?' These questions rest on the assumption that political discourse implies a vision of the subject as a unified identity. Thus, to be 'European' is postulated on an implicit identity that excludes blacks and Muslims. To be a feminist assumes an identity that excludes blacks and lesbians, and so on. If we approach this political problem within the nomadic subject as a qualitative or intensive, not quantitative or extensive, entity, however, steady identities are rejected as the implicit or explicit assumption for any subject position. Difference emerges accordingly in all its positivity, having abandoned the dialectical frame. Internal differentiations in *potentia*, or the productive power to act, become a crucial factor. Intensities or forces are best expressed in degrees or variations and accounted for in terms of time, not only of space.

The point of these multiple intensive variables is that they constitute what the material consciousness is made of. This is a temporal, not a spatial phenomenon. It is absolutely the case that one is not a muslim on Tuesday and a european on Wednesday, or a woman on Monday, black on Sunday and Lesbian on Thursday afternoons. These variables coexist in time. They also intersect, coincide or clash; they are seldom synchronized. The point is that one's consciousness of oneself does not always coincide with all these variables *all* the time. One may, for a period of time, coincide with some categories, but seldom with them all. Consciousness is a rather narrow exercise, which brings entities into focus by selecting and hence excluding. Synchronization is the key to consciousness-raising in so far as consciousness is the ability to self-represent and narrate one's relationship to the variables that structure one's location in the social space: woman/adult/white/human/lesbian/healthy/urbanized/English-speaking.

Synchronization frames the experience of constituting a subject position. This synchronization occurs in relation to the requirements and expectations of society (*potestas*) as well as one's own intensity (*potentia*). By definition, such synchronizing exercises can only be temporary and occur in random patterns. To track the different modes of synchronization so as to bring them into adequate conceptual representation is the task of

philosophy, on which I elaborate in chapter 4. This is not about the confirmation of steady identities, or the claim to counter-identities, but about the creation of alternative thinkable and shareable subject positions. These entail accountability for ethical values and collective bonding, so that the internal complexities can be sustained and expressed. Consciousness is about co-synchronicity: shared time zones, shared memories and shareable time-lines of projects. That is the subject of the next chapter.