Critical Histories of Subjectivity and Culture

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This series highlights the relationship between understandings of subjectivity, identity, culture and broader historical change. It seeks to foster historical studies which situate subjectivity in social, political and cultural contexts. Some of these studies interrogate and elucidate broad historical themes and periods, and cultural and social change, by analysing discourses about personal identity and subjectivity, others focus on lifestories and representations of the self.

The series has no chronological or geographical limitations, although preference will be given to comparative work and to studies which approach their questions in a broad transnational framework. As the emphasis on subjectivity suggests, questions about gender and sexuality, and national or ethnic identity are central issues in all volumes. Detailed studies also offer a sense of the broad context of historical change: for example, questions of national identity are discussed within transnational and imperial frameworks.

The emphasis on "critical" histories is indicative of our interest in studies with a theoretical and historiographical edge, especially those that open up new historical approaches and problematize standard ways of dealing with subjectivity and culture.

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Chapter 5

THE LAST IDENTIFICATION: WHY SOME OF US WOULD LIKE TO CALL OURSELVES EUROPEANS AND WHAT WE MEAN BY THIS

It was a naive Europe of hope
Never again, never again – it swore
...the belied Europe
where Koenigsberg was Kaliningrad.

Era un'Europa ingenua di speranza
Mai più, mai più – giurava
....l'Europa mentita
dove Koenigsberg fu Kaliningrad.

Giovanni Giudici, *Eresia della sera* (1999).

"Europe is absent," wrote W.H. Auden in a poem of 1936, at exactly *the same time as the civil war was starting in Spain – the prologue to* the European civil war of a few years later. Today, the absence of Europe is perceptible once more, although this time it is taking a different form. The void of its absence could be taken at that time to indicate a third way, towards a future open to new forms of human relationships and love, as the poets in the Spanish civil war expressed in their poems. It was thus possible for utopians to transform the absence of Europe into a dream of peace and justice. But this dream has been shattered by the Cold War and a division of the continent as extreme as ever, by which Europe came to be restricted to its West, experiencing a caesura more political than geographical, and more ideological than cultural (Matvejevic 1998). Following the European

wars of the last ten years, Europe's absence has come to mean impotence and a lack of initiative, with a sense of uncertainty about its own territory, and confusion and subordination in relation to the United States. These wars have shown that we still live under the repercussions of the checkmate of the European Defense Community in the 1950s (Frank 1998), which was the defeat of a project of an independent European military force. Europe, which after 1989 might have finally become such in a full sense, is still in fact elusive. After the "naive Europe of hope" and the "belied Europe" of ideology and oppression, as the poet says in his *Elegy of the Evening*, can there be any Europe at all for us? In particular, what is a Europe meaningful at the level of subjectivity and intersubjectivity?

Who Identifies with Whom? A First Meaning of "Last"

I agree with many interpreters that, in order to treat the absence of Europe, the task should not be one of a quest for identity (Niethammer 2000a; Perniola 2000). Certainly it should not be for an identity understood as harmony (Dumoulin 1998), and not even for an identity understood in its basic sense as a coincidence with itself, with ourselves (Fethi Benslama, in *Penser l'Europe* 1993). Europe is by definition supposed to be never identical with itself (Balibar, in *Penser l'Europe* 1993), and therefore the paradox of its identity is, in the best of cases, an allusion to the future: "European self-reflection is already the index of its non-self-identity. It constitutes a self-knowledge, yes, but also a sign of a Europe to come, a Europe which must be chosen" (Burgess 1997b).

If we want to call ourselves Europeans, for reasons I will try to explore, we should be aware that this cannot mean adopting any old form of identity. I have already indicated that a crucial step is to substitute "identity" with "identification" (Bhabha 1990). In fact, one of the biggest risks is that of reifying identity, in other words treating it as though it were a thing, as is implied in expressions such as "having/assuming/abandoning an identity." These expressions must be understood as possessive metaphors that make the identification processes rigid rather than flexible as they are in reality. Through such processes, individual subjects constitute themselves on the basis of common interests, ideologies and memories and recognize themselves as part of a group cause. The relationship between the individual and the collectivity is crucial in this matter: "l'identité pose la question de

la relation entre l'individu et la collectivité" (Pfetsch 1999); "une identité implique la reconnaissance d'une appartenance à une communauté" (Dumoulin 1998).

Use of the idea of identification allows one to highlight the relationship between the individual and various collectivities – and therefore the relationship between and the nature of historical subjects – avoiding, or at least reducing, the risk of reification implicit in the term "identity." Furthermore, it can bring to light the differing degrees of investment placed in identity in different historical periods (for example, in the process of constituting a social movement in its earliest phases, *statu nascenti*, or during the period of decline of a collective identity). Decades ago, Freud already preferred to use the term "identification." I do not, however, wish to suggest any form of taboo regarding the term "identity," both because the heated debate that has been going on for years cannot be resolved in a nominalistic manner, and because this term represented a great deal, in a progressive sense, for the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s, in spite of the exaggerations and degenerations. At any rate, use of the term "identification" seems pertinent for the historian's work, since it emphasizes both the dynamic element and the factor of personal choice.

The processes of identification can be more or less intense, more or less partial, more or less dressed up with fanaticism. They are part of a broader process of subjectivation, by which one becomes the subject of one's own life in a given time and place, gaining the ability to formulate decisions, strategies, alliances and loyalties. The idea of property implicit in the reification cannot be overcome by simply excluding words such as "having" or "possessing" from the language; it reappears, in fact, in expressions like "to take part" or "to belong" in relation to the experience of a feeling of belonging. In these last cases, however, the direction is inverted: it is not the subject that possesses something defined as an identity, but rather it is the subject who is possessed in one way or another. The question of property has to do with deep feelings, and therefore it cannot be eliminated so easily, nor can it be ignored. Here too, though, it would seem more promising to try to configure these phenomena as processes of investing affection – or, as I prefer to say, of affective investment – where "possession" and "belonging" take on a more fluid and complex meaning, that is, as intersubjective relationships related to psychological dynamics rather than states which are defined once and for all in isolated subjects.

Processes of identification are historical processes, in the sense that they follow, overlap and modify one another. I have in mind my own experience, which is held in common with what is often referred to as the 1968 generation (see Chapter Three). In this experience, the identification processes that took place during the 1960s and 1970s included forms of self-consciousness and self-recognition that went beyond and against possible forms of European identification, at least on a conscious level. Beginning with local and regional identification and often refusing the idea of nationality, that generation's processes of identity investment arrived at subjective figures based on class and political orientation, but also – in a more innovative way – on gender and generation. That meant, for example, not feeling Italian, given the aversion to the nationalistic rhetoric first of the fascists and later of the Christian Democrats. It did mean, on the other hand, basing identification on belonging to sites much smaller than the nation, such as a city or a university – often elective places rather than places of birth. It also meant identifying oneself with anti-imperialist and internationalist movements, in whose eyes Europe appeared exclusively as a subject of colonialism, accomplice to the United States, which was in turn referred to as the *gendarme* of world imperialism. Calling oneself European would have been the same as identifying oneself with the neocolonialist project, and accepting the meaning of "European" as white. It also meant creating and identifying with those segments of the left and the new left that referred explicitly to the working classes as the privileged subject of social and political change (a more or less dilated proletariat depending on the various interpretations of the term). The identification processes eventually led many members of that generation to recognize themselves implicitly as young and explicitly as women or as gays, and to base alliances and primary collective identities on this self-recognition.

These processes implied a continual redrawing of the individual and collective subjects' self-representations. Europe was excluded, except for a few references – such as the discourse on the similarity between the revolt against the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe and that against the capitalism of Western Europe (Arendt 1972) – and a few particular moments, for example, when minorities of the 1968 student movement recognized the importance of the events of Prague in that year, even though in a contradictory and incomplete fashion. Edgar Morin has written of the slow process of his becoming aware of

the European dimension of politics: "longtemps, je fus 'anti-européen'" (Morin 1987: 9).

For workerism – a widespread attitude in the new left of the 1970s – relationships with the working classes of various countries, including the United States which were considered just as important if not more than Europe in this respect, were of primary importance. As for feminism, it only took on a full European dimension after 1989; previously the exchanges between French, Italian, British, German, Dutch, Scandinavian and Spanish women (to name a few of the international networks, which in the 1980s often shifted from feminist politics in its strict sense to academic, publishing and organizational activities) took place in an exclusively Western European theatre.

In this overlapping of turbulent itineraries of political and existential engagement, which tried to find a "meaning" capable of bringing the individual and various possible collectivities together, identifications mixed and hybrids emerged. A young woman struggling for the emancipation of the proletariat or of her own gender, for example, encompassed various possible identifications which manifested themselves at different times or in various constellations of values. These processes were neither suggested nor imposed by conditions inherited at birth, even though they were strongly conditioned by living in a certain place at a certain time. With the exception of the gender movements, such processes were influenced by a strong pan-politicism, traces of which can still be seen in the publications and the attitude of the remaining exponents of the new left. Those formations always gave pride of place to political motivations, even in the formation of individual subjectivity, including its artistic and existential manifestations. Even as strong a component as religiosity was seen primarily in a political light when taken as a founding element of identity, and only in a second instance was it seen as justification for social action. Feminism alone was able to avoid being weighed down by the pan-political bias.

Those processes of political identification belong, for the most part, to the past, given the decline of the collective subjects that they referred to. Other identifications which had been either buried or denied (national belonging, for example) or which had been subterranean and semiconscious (such as an interest for the environment) have appeared. Another important example in this sense is that many members of that generation have discovered new forms of belonging, for instance to Jewish culture, only after the experience of identification

with the working class and/or with women. Words like "belonging," "loyalty" and "allegiance" have therefore taken on new meanings and new adjectives. Even what I defined in the title as "the last identification" has been able to appear. The adjective "last" in this expression has many possible meanings: the first is that of the most recent, the Latin *novissimus*, the last to be born. Indeed only recently have intellectuals, but also a general public with more or less cultural baggage, begun to talk again about Europeanness, after having – for decades – nearly completely forgotten the debates on the idea of Europe and its utopian potential.

What brought the 1968 generation to begin developing, slowly and unsteadily, a European identification? I feel that the following are at least a few of the reasons for this "last" identification: the discovery of the cultural dimension of public action, beyond or independently of strictly political engagement, and the discovery, through works of cultural history, of the utopian dimension of the idea of Europe, which had been strong in the period between the two world wars (Passerini 1999) with a potential which was then annihilated (though rediscoverable) by World War 2. One can add here the lasting desire for internationalism combined with an awareness of the need to proceed one step at a time, and to find intermediate forms between the kinds of belonging possible today and those of the future alluded to in the metaphor "citizens of the world"; add to this a feeling of reconciliation with the generation of the Resistance and in particular a re-evaluation of the liberal-socialist branch represented in Italy by Piero Gobetti and the Rosselli brothers, a branch with a very strong sense of European culture and Europeanness (Communism, with the exception of a few of Lenin's catch words and Trotskism in general, was never Europeanist).

This new, tentative identification could literally be the last for us, but not for future generations. One of the reasons for expressing and elaborating it is precisely the need for each generation to take a position on crucial issues and to hand over a position to later generations as a term for comparison. Other identifications with Europe are possible; new generations will have other ways of founding, understanding and giving meaning to their investments in identification, just as there have been others in the past that we no longer find valid. Our very identification with Europe remains to be defined.

An example may be useful to make this task more concrete. Surveys and studies show that a gender gap exists in public support for

the European Union and that it emerges particularly in countries where the European Union is perceived as depriving women of their social and political achievements, such as Denmark and Greece (Liebert 1997). This consideration, as well as that on the "other" democratic deficit, namely, the one concerning women in the EU (Mushaben 1994), indicate that there is a specific need to connect possible new identifications as Europeans with the type of social and political identities based on gender (but the argument could be extended, I believe, to age- or generation-based and ethnic identities) which have emerged, through many transformations, since the 1970s. There are reasons for believing that identity understood in the sense of the women's movement, that is, based on specificities that include the body and individuality together with the acceptance of differences, could provide a basis for an identity investment in favour of Europe.

We should not be in a hurry to propose materializations of this identity, images or representations that codify it. These could hardly escape being contrived, because we are at the end of a process, and possibly at the beginning of another. So far there has been too little time for the latter in a question such as symbolic order, which requires a great deal of time. We drag millennium-long conflicts along with us, these weigh on us, and the symbols connected with them are often simultaneously obsolete and compelling. Take, for example, the conflicts over the creation of a flag – symbol of identity – for the European Council at the beginning of the 1950s, officially adopted later by the Community in May 1986 (Lager 1994) and inherited by the European Union. In the negotiations, which lasted more than five years, several proposals were thrown out: the federalist movement's green E on a white field because it could be confused with the initial letter of "England," the setting sun as symbol of the West because it was deemed less than promising, and the Pan-European movement's cross because it was historically opposed to Turkey's crescent moon. If these reasons seem partially ridiculous, we could point out that in the bureaucratic or institutional creation of symbols, irrelevance and the ridiculous often lie in waiting. The choice of blue was justified in a similar manner (it was the only colour left after Africa had been given black, Asia yellow, America red and Australia green), as were the stars (after considering various other possibilities, the number twelve was chosen to represent both unity and difference). In spite of their irrelevance, the three reasons listed above for rejecting the various symbols reflect ancient and deep conflicts, and their reappearance

could impinge on a number of people's feelings (Hersant 2002). At the same time, we cannot expect objects produced in this manner to command immediate emotional value. That will depend on many factors, and it is quite possible that the symbols of new European identification are taking shape elsewhere, in places that are not immediately visible.

A Second Meaning of "Last." Discontinuity of History and *finis Europae*

The second meaning of "last" when applied to European identification is connected to the recent revival of the idea of Europe as the land of the West, of the evening, of the setting sun; the discourse on the *finis Europae*, which was already present during the years between the two world wars in the form of a debate on the crisis of civilization, is reinterpreted today with a new, cunning attitude towards nostalgia. I find that the discipline of philosophy has made some important contributions in this sense, providing critical re-readings of some philosophies of the past, in particular of Nietzsche and Husserl.

While philosophy is not my field of competence, I recognize in it procedures and intentions similar to those of my own research. Personally, I am trying to trace the elements determining identity in Europe in both the recent and remote past, whether coming from the "left" or the "right," reconstructing historically what people have believed that being European has meant through history. The intention is to pass through these determining elements and to abandon them, drawing awareness from them along the way, not as examples, but as terms of comparison. In this historical itinerary I am firmly intentioned to give up continuity. It is impossible to impose a direct derivation and linear path from the Greeks to Maastricht (Nemo 1997) without forcing the issue to the point of being counterproductive. It is better to think of Europe primarily as a space where certain processes can be perceived and which, therefore, extends itself to different places in different periods, since from one phenomenon to another and from one historical thought to another (to be understood as premises, even *ex negativo*, for the positions that we are seeking) there is an abyss and a leap, to use Kierkegaard's terms, both in the short and in the long term. Thus the points gathered through historical research – to be used in establishing at least a partial consonance or radical distances – are punctuated by rupture and by things "other" than themselves, that contradict them; they are not fixed points. They must, however, be

re-examined in order to distinguish what is to be accepted and what to be refused when constructing a future image.

Among the philosophical interpretations I found the rereadings of Nietzsche suggested by Faye (1996) and by Cacciari (1994) to be particularly useful. Faye reminds us that in the 1950s equivalence was established – even among historians of the European idea such as Bernard Voyenne (1964) – between the Europeanism of Hitler and that of Nietzsche, with its strong component of anti-semitism. Today, however, we can see that in the *Nachlass*, the posthumous fragments written by Nietzsche in June 1885, after he had finished writing the fourth part of *Zarathustra* (published independently at the author's expense), ideas which strongly contrast anti-semitism are expressed. In Faye's interpretation, the closer Nietzsche moves towards Europe, the more anti-nationalist and opposed to anti-semitism he becomes. For him the "good Europeans," the "dear Europeans," distinguish themselves from "les hommes de patrie" who are nationalist. The "wissen übereuropäisch" – which for Nietzsche characterizes the good European – is understood by Faye as meaning an extra-European knowledge, "un savoir extra-européen," and not, as others do, as "supra-européen" (Faye 1996: 203). However, Faye is not convinced of the equivalence between the good European and the Shadow, one of the figures which Zarathustra meets in the fourth section of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.

On the contrary, the critical edition of Nietzsche by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari establishes this equivalence beyond any doubt, and this enriches the notion of a good European. One of the figures that Zarathustra meets in his search for the superior man (*höheren Menschen, not* the *übermensch*), called *Schatten*, the Shadow, or *Nachfolger*, the follower (of Zarathustra), is defined in the text as "slight, dark, hollow and spent" (English quotations from Hollingdale [1969: 284, 314–19] and German ones from Nietzsche [1988b: 329, 337]). The Shadow suggests that Zarathustra call him "good European" and presents himself as forever travelling like the eternal Wandering Jew – "except that I am neither eternal nor a Jew" – "always going but without a goal and without a home." In the Colli-Montinari edition, footnotes identify the Shadow with the good European, with decisive quotations from annotations made in Nietzsche's own hand, where Zarathustra's double is described as "der Unstäte, Heimatlose, Wanderer – der sein Volk verlernt hat zu lieben, weil er viele Völker liebt, der gute Europäer," (unstable, without a fatherland, wanderer – who has

forgotten how to love his own people because he loves many people). In other notes he is defined as a disenchanted survivor, a weak pleasure seeker, clownish and without aim. Furthermore, when the Shadow sings his post-convivial song ("Among the Daughters of the Desert"), he refers several times to Europe and to his being European. Among other things he reminisces that in the desert he was "farthest away from cloudy, damp, melancholy Old Europe"; at the beginning of the song he notes the unusualness for him of a state of tranquility: "I/ for the first time,/ A European under palm-trees,/ Am permitted to sit," and reminds us, sarcastically, that his usual state is doubt and restlessness: "I call in question,/ – since I come from Europe,/ Which is more skeptical than/ Any little old wife." The final two verses of the song insist on the theme of his identity: "And here I stand now,/ As European,/ I cannot do otherwise, so help me God!/ Amen!".

Thus appears a figure who has ironically overturned his own Eurocentrism, transforming the expansionist colonial tendency in wandering aimlessly, becoming merely a shadow of himself, a carnival clown. His laughter has allowed him to erase the idea of hierarchical superiority, the claims to universalism. He has no nostalgia and mocks continuity. He constantly roams a territory which is a land of lack, of absence and doubt. Of course, it is impossible to propose a positive interpretation of the Shadow *tout court*, but it is precisely his ambivalence that makes him so precious as a referential image, a critique of the pompous versions that give a triumphalistic idea of the inheritance of European culture.

The vision of Europe proposed by Cacciari (1994) is in part inspired by Nietzsche's vision. Europe is the land of values in decline, of their uprooting, but there is more: it is the West in itself, that is, the setting sun of the same energy that imposed those values through its own will. At the end of its itinerary Europe does not appear to surpass those values, but rather to "simply" desecrate them, thus demystifying the claim that they are being surpassed. The West – in the sense of sunset – of those values coincides with that of the will to overcome, and gives rise to the hybrid European man in his farcical appearance, deriding the intellectual's restlessness. The West truly fulfills its history when it poses the problem of its own West. Europe must desire itself as the West of its own history. The European mind carries within itself its own decline, both as a promise and as the greatest danger (Cacciari 1994: 71, 157). Cacciari then moves on to a rereading of Heidegger, in order to insist on the idea of decline or sunset: to de-

cline is to interrogate all the representations of the West, to carry them to their conclusion, to fulfill them. Europe is free to not desire its decline – and this is the crucial difference in respect to Oswald Spengler – to not second it, to not participate in it, to struggle for its own values or for the desecration of all values as its own new value, but in this way its task, according to which "decline" means re-turning to the very foundations, is forgotten (Cacciari 1994: 166–67).

Similar tones could be heard at the meeting held in Strasbourg in 1992 (with the participation of various intellectuals, animated by Denis Guénoun, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy and Daniel Payot) on the question of the European frontier, taking a rereading of Husserl as starting point (*Penser l'Europe* 1993). The call for participation referred to Husserl's lecture, given in Vienna in 1935, where the philosopher proposed a surprisingly positive image of Europe in connection with philosophy, since both have a common origin in ancient Greece. In the course of the colloquium, Derrida replied that Europe today derives from Auschwitz as well as from Greece, Christianity, and the Revolutions of 1789 and 1917; therefore the question of what can be called Europe must be asked from the viewpoint of the experience of cancelling names and destroying memory represented by Auschwitz. For Derrida this implies "rompre avec l'idée d'une unité européenne comme unité d'une histoire comprise entre son commencement et sa fin," to break with the idea of a European unity understood as the unity of a history enclosed between its beginning and its end, thus indicating once more that the notion of the discontinuity of history must be introduced. In the same meeting, Etienne Balibar insisted on the need to "think" the limits of Europe, to "think" its frontiers and to proceed beyond the confines, also in the imaginary, of the myths of progress and civilization. An observation which has recently been suggested in connection with Husserl's idea of Europe is that, as well as the essentialism and positivity which it posits, it presents ethical priority as an ideal of renewal; viewed in this light the movement of freedom emerging from ancient Greece was not automatically realized by European culture, but has steadily become a task aiming at an ethic culture of all humanity (Sinigaglia 1999).

In these interpretations and revisitations, a residue of Eurocentric essentialism can still be found, but there is also a search for Europe's limits, in the form of an invitation to give up universal claims. A connecting thread of these philosophical undertakings, different as they are, is the idea that the finitude of Europe should at last be recognized

and stated firmly, dissolving its claim to universality. Europe should accept its own particularity, reaching the frontier, and its own finitude, giving up resolutely the claim to embody the universal. Cacciari insists that it is precisely that which is absolutely distinct which always needs an "other" or a distance from an other in order to be "safe." If Europe could "remember" its distinction in this way, its being apart, then perhaps it would succeed in expressing through its metamorphoses an idea of peace free from all fascination with conciliation or synthesis, and free from assimilating arbitrary pretensions (Cacciari 1994: 27).

The commitment foreshadowed in these philosophical considerations moves in the direction of an overturning of the idea of culture as colonization, which, according to the research by Richard Waswo, is the founding story of Western and European civilization (Waswo 1997): this civilization comes from elsewhere, being brought by exiles from the East to the West, as in the master narrative about Aeneas. Besides retracing the steps of that myth, a line of thought could be developed according to which the capacity to inherit, and to be born again, is linked with the acceptance of the other, of that from whom one inherits (Yves Duroux in *Penser l'Europe* 1993). One guiding line should be the intention to operate a constructive criticism, and avoid the too easy way of throwing away rather than reworking the historical forms of European identity.

A useful suggestion in this direction is given by those who have criticized the cultural constructs of the continents, and particularly the geographical framework which used to lead up to a cartographic celebration of European power. A new and critical meta-geography will combat residual Eurocentrism (as well as new forms of centrism, such as Afro-centrism), without completely abandoning the notion of continent, and aiming instead at a spatial imaginary with no special primacies, thus engaging in a thorough critique but avoiding nominalistic deconstruction: Europe, for example, may not be a continent, but it does effectively label an area that can be defined as a cultural region (Lewis and Wigen 1997).

The Third Meaning of "Last" (At Last, Emotions – and Imagination)

The dimension of emotion, which includes desire and love, can be considered "last" not in the sense of its genesis, given that it originates and gives birth, but in referring to the order in which it is accepted

and studied by the socio-historical disciplines in comparison with other dimensions. In my view, it is particularly relevant for the questions we have been considering. Paying attention to emotional aspects does not in any way contradict the intellectual and political construction necessary for a European identity. In this way, I recognize the validity of the analysis that establishes a tension between a normative and a socio-psychological type of identity (Cerutti 1996); although different from mine, it is a converging way of approaching the same question.

Recently, the emotional impact that the name of Europe can have, became clear as I was listening to a colleague from Sofia, Ivaylo Znepolski (1999), giving a talk about what he called "le désir d'identité européenne" on the part of Eastern Europeans. I interpret this expression not as meaning their desire to be or become European, since they already are European, but as a desire to be fully recognized as such – that is to say, an aspiration to be called Europeans in a full sense, and not to be considered as second-rate Europeans, as Slavenka Drakulic (1997) has expressed so powerfully in her writing.

This desire was shared in the past by people of different countries, especially those countries which were often treated as peripheries of Europe in one way or other, from Greece to Britain. At the beginning of World War 2, in September 1939, the Greek intellectual Georgios Theotokas expressed this desire in an eloquent way:

> Nobody should ask me for opinions or theories. I know nothing, I am nothing, just a grain of sand in the storm. I feel only one thing, that I love Europe, as much as anyone can love Europe as a whole, like a big homeland, intact, indivisible and torn apart right to the flesh. I believe in Europe, her unity, her endless capacities for regeneration and renaissance... I believe in the end of the nightmare, in the salvation of the big continental organism, which for years now has lost the capacity to breath freely. I believe and I am waiting at the threshold of this new and painful age which has just begun and has already enveloped us entirely into its dark veils (Passerini 1999: 312).

In this he referred to a European space of memory and narration: "Oxford, the castles along the Loire, Florence, Venice, Dalmatia, Istanbul." Five years later, in 1944, he wrote again about a "new Europe" as a "broad horizon of human amalgamations" (Thetokas 1996).

In the same period, more precisely in 1943, Frank Thompson, a British intellectual who was to die fighting with the partisans in Bulgaria, wrote the following words:

> How wonderful it would be to call Europe one's fatherland, and think of Krakow, Munich, Rome, Arles, Madrid as one's own cities! I am not yet educated to a broader nationalism, but for a United States of Europe I could feel a patriotism far transcending my love for England. Differences between European peoples, though great, are not fundamental. What differences there are serve only to make the people mutually attractive. Not only is this Union the only alternative to disaster. It is immeasurably more agreeable than any way of life we have known to date (Passerini 1999: 312 quoting from F. Thompson 1947).

These words are historically dated: the authors use the language of nationalism (with their reference to a fatherland, though larger than the nation), the stereotyped metaphors of organicism for lands, the images of cities and landscapes treated with nostalgia as places for intellectual and existential pleasure. We cannot identify with these projections unless they are transformed and reformulated, and I do not believe that we are ready yet to find adequate words. While the old words for expressing love for Europe and the desire to be European are no longer usable, we have not yet found any new ones, because the process of detachment and re-attachment has to be taken much further. The root of this difficulty is that Europe's identity crisis reflects a discursive crisis (Burgess 1997a), which affects language deeply, and language is crucial in the expression of sentiments.

However, something that I would like to reinterpret or reformulate resonates in these declarations of love and desire – acknowledging the break which has taken place between them and us. I am not claiming a direct continuity from that time to ours. However, I do recognize through their words, which I could not utter myself, a feeling, an emotion, and a desire, in a situation in which Europe was torn apart and its name used in unrecognizable and unacceptable ways. Moreover, the distance is increased by the fact that part of the European space has been devastated by recent wars, and some of its regions are severely degraded by various types of pollution, including wild touristic consumption.

In Theotokas's and Thompson's words a central element of emotion is given by mentioning the name of Europe, and the names in Europe – of places, cities, territories – as recognizable bases for imagi-

nation and emotion, as signs of identification which go beyond the affective investment for the places where we are born or live or go through. I would like to share Frank Thompson's directness and simplicity in saying that he chose to identify with Europe because it was "the only continent I really know quite well" (quoted in Passerini 1999: 313), with no need to find a justification in a supposed superiority of Europe in relationship to other continents. His attitude was the result of an emotional elaboration which went beyond his national or regional origin, and which could inspire others to accept – without any hubris of omnipotence – a geographical and cultural territory: I choose Europe because I came here or I found myself here and I have learnt to know it. Such a choice is in part inherited from the circumstances and in part made voluntarily.

This is an immense subject and I will mention here only two of the connected aspects: the question of European space and that of the possible social subjects of the desire to be European. With regard to the first, I have in mind both a discursive space and a material one. It should be clear by now that I am not interested in fixing any borders, just the opposite: I am interested in widening this space. In quoting intellectuals and writers who felt European from the 1940s we have swept the continent from Krakow to Arles, from Dalmatia to Istanbul and, if we were to take the space referred to by Nietzsche as a reference, we would take in from Andalusia to Poland, from Strindberg's Sweden to Byron's England and Dostoevsky's Russia (Faye 1996: 192). Therefore, it is primarily a literary space, a space of words, of communication, that unites different times and places, the "Europe of novel" of Milan Kundera (1993), but it is also a territorial space where it is possible to intervene concretely, an urban and rural landscape.

Architects and urban planners have recently made contributions to the imagery of a European space, once again not in terms of defining borders, but as a potential for the realization of an architecture which should be no longer based on power, as it was in the past. Their words echo those of the philosophers. Their effort is to imagine an architecture that does not represent nations and empires or the dynastic aspirations of individual rulers or bureaucratic institutions, and which, on the contrary, is capable of outlining the specific inner characteristics of each small unit – this is clear in considerations based on recent works by several major architects practicing in the South and East of Europe (Kultermann 1994: 294).

Another expert in architecture, Vittorio Gregotti, reminds us that Eurocentrism is partly induced or supported by ignorance and that what has been often taken as eminently European – the city – originated in Mesopotamia during the fourth millennium BCE; this reflects the multiple origins of European culture – not only from the Greek-Mycenaean civilization but also the Egyptian, Phoenician, Hittite and Mesopotamian ones. If Europe has in the past had a colonizing relationship with the world, it can now abandon that attitude and define itself within its own limits, starting from its own internal conditions. Gregotti's vision of a European space is based on a criticism of the old type of utopia, namely, that "utopian will to control on the basis of egalitarianism which can have authoritarian degenerations," and on the pre-figuration of a new utopia as a political program to reduce violence and "make use of diversity" (Gregotti 1999: 172). The new utopia "can establish a critical resistance to market relationships, a resistance which is necessary for the creation of spaces where specific inventions can take place and professional skill take forms leading to interrogation and dialogue," thereby accepting the responsibility of sites and their history (Gregotti 1999: 177).

I believe that this level of imagination does not project a utopia into the far future, but, rather, that it concerns the present, in as far as it has to do with various types of language and linguistic relationships. Once again, philosophy comes to our aid. Useful suggestions in order to envisage the question of space have been advanced by Ricoeur (1992), with his reflections on the ethics of "linguistic hospitality," inspired by the art of transference implicit in the ethos of translation, and of "narrative hospitality," which means taking responsibility for the story of the other in exchanging memories at the narrative level. These two suggestions can help us in reformulating the question of identity and identification, and in taking into account the dimension of discursive spaces. Our goal is to make Europe a discursive space in a true sense, where we can call ourselves Europeans and express forms of love which are not exclusive in spite of being specific towards lands and people. The role of emotions, through the mediation of language, thus becomes crucial – although not immediately, but as a horizon of self-recognition and intersubjective exchange. This way of moral and intellectual thinking, which includes sentiment, has much to do with imagination. Ricoeur's proposal is an explicit way of exercising the political imagination, and is especially interesting because it conjugates the aspect of narrativity and discursiveness with an ethical approach.

I would like to add that here too historical work can make its own contribution. This is why over the last few years I have embarked on research which attempts to historically criticize forms of Eurocentrism in the field of sentiments, and particularly the equation between Europeanness and the capacity for courtly/romantic love, which used to be considered as indicator of the highest level of love relationships which any civilization could reach. More specifically, I have tried to explore the relationships between political forms of identity and cultural attitudes in the field of emotions in Europe. Therefore I have been engaged in understanding the relationship between the formation of identity in the European context, on the one hand, and the idea of courtly and romantic love, on the other. This type of love was understood as a sentiment which included distance even in the case of physical closeness, and a feeling of impossibility even when it was shared. Very often, in the last two and a half centuries, the claim has been put forward that the sense of belonging to Europe was characterized by this type of love, considered as unique of the relationships between the genders in this continent and of the type of civilization developed in Europe in the modern era. This love, stemming from the private and personal sphere, was therefore given a public function and used as a distinctive characteristic of one civilization over the others (Passerini 1999). Here I would reiterate my position on the usefulness of retracing past forms of European identity within the methodological context of historical discontinuity.

The second question has to do with the social position of the subject who can articulate these considerations: is it only composed of some members of one or two generations, a few intellectuals scattered here and there? And what about the masses? An autobiographical reflection suggests that this term and notion – which were used as a positive point of reference in the 1960s and 1970s – has again taken on a negative and ambivalent meaning, very much along the lines of what Ortega y Gasset wrote in his *Revolt of the Masses*: the formation of the mass-man was seen by him as a direct threat to Europeanness, although also as a stimulus to the creation of a united Europe.

Now we are told that a defensive European identity is in the course of formation, not always explicitly, against migrants, multiculturalism, and the loss of prestige that recent transformations led to for Europe. This defensive identity assumes violence both in a metaphorical and in a practical sense, and especially a cultural sense: the violence of assimilation. There could be violence implicit in calling oneself European when Europe dominated the world – but at the same time people and philosophies which suggested a critical meaning of Europe and European existed even then and we can find inspiration in them in order to counteract the new defensive identity formations. The connections between Europe and violence can be – through a painful and long travail of memory and history referring to these antecedents – dismantled and uprooted.

It is quite likely that a minority of people will take refuge in that defensive identity, but not that the public at large will do the same; we are informed by socio-political analysts that the mood and emotional attitude which prevails among the general public is neither Euro-enthusiastic nor Euro-sceptic, but shows a tepid and steady support for the process of European unity (Perez-Diaz 1998, using Euro-barometer 1995). The results of the Euro-barometer point out that only five to nine per cent of those asked feel a sense of belonging to Europe (Pfetsch 1999: 264). In this situation, the mass media and the intellectuals have a part to play in the formation of a reference community for what Perez-Diaz calls "the critical mass," a public made up of citizens with a relatively high level of civic competence and willingness necessary to intervene directly in public debates (Perez-Diaz 1999b). He too talks about Europe as an imaginary space which offers horizons for the life projects of its younger generations, and he sees the European Union as tending more towards "an order of liberty" or a civil association than towards a political association such as a state with an assertive leadership and robust foreign policy. In this perspective, the outstanding objective should be the establishment of a common legal framework and internal security arrangements and the defence of European economic interests. In other terms, Perez-Diaz proposes to switch the emphasis from strictly political and bureaucratic aspects to civil, economic and legal ones. Perhaps we can extend this suggestion, and hypothesize that in order to meet the "masses," or more modestly, other possible Europeans of different social and professional strata than intellectuals, the political terrain is not the best; other areas look more promising, including the daily cultural, that is, emotional and existential, dimensions.

In conclusion, the sense of this investigation into the "last" identification is not simply to begin with myself, following a procedure suggested by the women's movement, searching for the continuity and discontinuity between past and present positions and between the individual and the collectivity through a critique of one's own experi-

ence. The idea, though, is also contributing to create a common ground for exchange with all of those who want neither to be assimilated nor remain alien to European culture. It will be up to them to decide to what extent and in what way to call themselves European, after an encounter on this common ground. On this ground progress has been made and remains to be made toward the abandonment of the European identity's internal and external hierarchies, such as the long-standing distinctions between centre and periphery, between East and West, between the Mediterranean and the North (all examples of internal hierarchies), or the contrast between Europe and Asia or between Europe and America. The new investment in Europeanness does not claim the immediate right to self-recognition, but rather proposes and from exchange with others awaits recognition of that which is specific and that which is shared. It does not begin, therefore, with an opposition to others, as in the old models of identity, but with a desire to call oneself European, charging the term with meanings based on one's own needs and experiences, turning to others in order to develop and enrich it.

The considerations that I have tried to develop are not contradicted by economic and demographic forecasts. If these foresee that in the next century the best Europeans can hope for is to constitute a nice, decent periphery of the world, with little power but some good ideas (Therborn 1997), we can be perfectly satisfied with this perspective, which suits and encourages the type of identification with Europe I am looking and hoping for.

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