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Chapter 4

Refusal of Reproduction: Paradoxes of Becoming-Woman in Transnational Moroccan Filmmaking

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We are not going to refuse (...) the unsurpassed pleasures of pregnancy which have actually been always exaggerated or conjured away—or cursed—in the classic texts. For if there's one thing that's been repressed here's just the place to find it: in the taboo of the pregnant woman.

Hélène Cixous, 1976

[The myth of] the sleeping child consists of putting the fetus to sleep, by way of white magic, a child that the mother does not want to be born immediately. This can be because she has too many children and wants to postpone the arrival of the next one. Or because she is a widow or repudiated and not yet remarried. Or because her husband has immigrated to another country and she wants to wait for his return to deliver the child, like in the film. (...) Everybody believes in it.

Yasmine Kassari, 2005¹

Introduction

The female body has always had a double function with respect to reproduction. By becoming pregnant and giving birth the female body literally reproduces life. At the same time, metaphorically it is often seen as the safeguard of the nation, the reproduction of national values, tradition, and patriarchal history. However, both these reproductive functions have often worked at the cost of the body of the woman, who disappears in the shadow of her offspring and of history. Since the 1970s both French feminist theory and Anglo-American feminist film theory and practice have begun to reclaim the female body and rewrite history. A young generation of transnational women directors of Maghrebin descent, who live and work between the Maghreb and Europe, now seems to continue this feminist project in their films,

albeit with some new dimensions.² In this essay I argue that contemporary concerns with the female body in transnational Moroccan cinema are most productively understood in relation to the Deleuzian concepts of "becoming-woman" and "becoming-minoritarian." Although initially critically received by feminist philosophers, these concepts in fact relate very well to feminist concerns and provide new and paradoxical ways of understanding postcolonial transnational cinema in relation to the nation, minorities, and the body of women.

Writing the Body: Overflowing with Life and Creativity

In the 1970s and 1980s French feminists such as Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva developed a feminine discourse, a language that seemed to derive from the female body and female sexuality. In spite of significant differences among their various writings, the common project of these feminists was to develop a different language and tell different stories. As Irigaray argues, woman is enveloped in her own skin, but she does not own her body. And "if we continue to speak to each other as men have spoken for centuries, as they taught us to speak, we will fail each other. Again. Words will pass through our bodies, above our heads, disappear, make us disappear" (Irigaray 1980, 69). By writing, woman has to put herself not only into the text, but also into the world and into history, Cixous argues (1976, 875).

Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva all share a focus on the value of the pregnant body, maternity, and the pre-Oedipal phase in the constitution of subjectivity. As the quote at the beginning of this chapter indicates, Cixous rejects the taboo of the pregnant body, inviting women to choose this experience if they wish. Both her fiction and academic writing are saturated with maternal metaphors, referring to mother's milk as "white ink" and talking about overflowing "breasts with an urge to come to language" (Cixous 1976, 882). Irigaray writes about the suffocating symbiotic relationship between mother and daughter in her essay, "And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other" (Irigaray 1981). Here mother's milk is compared to ice that freezes the individuality of the daughter, where the daughter has to stand in for the lack of the mother's subjectivity. For Irigaray mothering, as long as it is the single function of woman, is a cage that she wants to open by writing the feminine body so that both mother and daughter can live. Kristeva has written extensively on the pre-Oedipal bond with the body of the

mother and the bodily drives as they are discharged in language, which she calls "the semiotic" (associated with rhythms, tones, and nonsignifying sounds). The maternal semiotic and the paternal symbolic together create signification, Kristeva argues (1984). In her essay "Stabat Mater," she writes about her own experience of giving birth, and calls for more reflection on maternity (Kristeva 1985).

Pregnancy and the reproductive function of women thus have several meanings in feminine discourse. On the one hand, it is something to demand and make visible and valuable, by giving the pregnant body visibility in society and by giving a place to the maternal in language. On the other hand, it is a trap, a cage that keeps the bodies of both the mother and the daughter imprisoned. But in any case, it is through writing that the feminine body could reclaim a voice and a place. The works mentioned here have been very influential, but have also met serious criticism. Most importantly, they have been criticized for their implied essentialism (see, e.g., Culler 1982). Although in the end the aim of feminine writing is to overcome binary oppositions and not to create new ones, it cannot be denied that women are addressed as (biological) women with the aim to oppose the male order of things: "A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written to bring about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way" (Cixous 1976, 888).

Filming the Body: Addressing the Spectator as Female

The same militancy against patriarchy and the male point of view is found in feminist film theory and women's film practice in the 1970s and 1980s. Most famously, Laura Mulvey proposed to destroy man-centered vision and traditional forms of visual pleasure in her 1975 essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (Mulvey 1975). In her article "Rethinking Woman's Cinema: Aesthetics and Feminist Theory," Teresa de Lauretis looks at the development of feminist film criticism and argues that the disruption of patriarchal norms of representation also asks for the construction of other objects and subjects of vision:

The project of women's cinema, therefore, is no longer that of destroying or disrupting a man-centered vision by representing its blind spots, its gaps, or its repressed. The effort and challenge are now to effect another vision. (...) The idea that a film may address the spectator as

female, rather than portray women positively or negatively, seems very important to me in the critical endeavor to characterize women's cinema as a cinema for, not only by, women. (...) [The re-vision] refers to the project of reclaiming vision, of "seeing difference differently," of displacing the critical emphasis of "images of" women "to the axis of vision itself—to the modes of organizing vision and hearing which result in the production of that "image." (de Lauretis 2000)

This shift from an attack on representations of women to "the axis of vision itself" implies a new film practice in which women start to make films that address the spectator differently. De Lauretis discusses Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman* (1975) as an example. In a style very different from that of classical cinema, the film shows the daily routines of a housewife in Brussels. Narrative suspense is created by tiny slips in these routines, such as forgetting the potatoes on the stove and small hesitations in daily gestures such as making coffee. "What the film constructs is a picture of female experience, of duration, perceptions, events, relationships, and silences, which feels immediately and unquestionable true. (...) Akerman's film addresses the spectator as female," de Lauretis argues (2000, 321). Regardless of the spectator's actual sex, the film invites one to enter into a world of feminine sensibility.

De Lauretis addresses another important development in feminism: In discussing another film, Lizzie Borden's *Born in Flames* (1983), she demonstrates a feminist understanding of the heterogeneity of the female social subject. She argues that *Born in Flames* also addresses the spectator as female but does so across multiple representations of class, race, language and social relations: "For there are, after all, different histories of women. There are women who masquerade and women who wear the veil; women invisible to men, in their society, but also women who are invisible to other women" (de Lauretis 2000, 325). Where the earlier feminists tended to talk about Woman as a universal category (similar to many of the French feminists), there is now an emphasis on the particular differences among and within women. This leads me to some of the questions that postcolonial theory and postcolonial feminism have brought up with respect to the cinema.

Political Cinema, Nation, Women

In the wake of independence struggles all over the third world, the importance of culture, especially cinema, for the building of the new nations has been emphasized by many. In the chapter "On National

Culture" in his *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon argued in the 1950s that the rediscovery or recreation of national culture goes hand in hand with the fight for freedom (Fanon 1963). In the 1960s, cinema played a significant role in the decolonization of culture and the recreation of national culture. In their "Manifesto for Third Cinema," Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino argued for a militant political cinema in which the camera is compared to a gun (Solanas and Getino 2000). In the documentaries *Camera d'Afrique* (1983) and *Camera Arabe* (1983), Ferid Boughdedir interviews filmmakers who emphasize the unifying role of cinema in the new African and Arab nations that before colonization and independence had not yet existed as nations.³ This so-called Third Cinema is a new type of political and postcolonial cinema, which emerged everywhere in the former colonies. It is political because its aim is to emancipate the people. As Gilles Deleuze argues, the first postcolonial films after the independence waves in the third world are "classical" in the sense that they refer to a unified idea of the people and the nation (Deleuze 1989).⁴

As already indicated, women have played an important role in the construction and safeguarding of the nation and its traditional values. Umm Kalthoum as "the Voice of Egypt" is a clear case in point. During the independence struggles women often played an active role in freeing and uniting their country. But very soon after Independence it became clear that women also became victims of nationalistic discourse. As Deniz Kandiyoti argues in her article "Identity and Its Discontents: Women and the Nation,"

On the one hand, nationalist movements invite women to participate more fully in collective life by interpellating them as "national" actors: mothers, educators, workers and even fighters. On the other hand, they reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse. Feminism is not autonomous but bound to the signifying network of the national context that produces it. (Kandiyoti 1991, 380)

Besides the disappointment for women who after Independence did not gain more rights, the disenchantments of the new regimes and political realities in the third world (corruption, dictatorships, poverty, and by consequence massive migration) undermined the belief in a unified people. "The people are missing," Deleuze declares in *The Time-Image* (Deleuze 1989, 216). This also changed the function of political cinema. Political cinema is no longer a representation of an

already existing reality (a people that exists and that the film can address). Political cinema becomes a speech act that *does* something in reality (create a people by story-telling). As Deleuze indicates, political cinema, the cinema of the "third world," or minority cinema (both in the third world or in the West), is no longer "the myth of a past people, but the story-telling of the people to come. The speech-act must create itself as a foreign language in a dominant language, precisely in order to express an impossibility of living under domination" (Deleuze 1989, 223).

Here we can see a first possible encounter between French and Anglophone feminism of the 1970s and Deleuzian conceptions of minority cinema. The explicit aim of French feminism was to *do* by writing, to introduce itself as a foreign language in dominant language, and change the world and history: "I shall speak about women's writing: about *what it will do*," Cixous announced (1976, 875). This feminist perspective on the performative nature of writing is very close to the minority perspective of modern postcolonial political cinema described by Deleuze. He argues, "Story-telling is not an impersonal myth but neither is it a personal fiction: it is a word in act, a speech-act through which the character continually crosses the boundary which would separate his private business from politics, and which itself produces collective utterances" (Deleuze 1989, 222). I will return to the ways in which Deleuzian concepts would be useful in understanding contemporary transnational feminist concerns in cinema. Let us now first look at the position of women in postcolonial cinema.

Moroccan National Cinema: Women and Berberity, or "Becoming-Minoritarian"

The difficult position of women, whose sexuality and freedom of movement are very often controlled by paternalistic nationalist discourses, is the topic of some postcolonial films from the 1970s onward, especially in the Maghreb countries. A film such as *A Wife for My Son* (Ali Ghalem, 1982) demonstrates how women are forced into strict and suffocating roles of mother and housekeeper (under the severe eyes of a mother-in-law), while the husband is far from home in Europe to earn money. But the films that show the condition of women in the new nations are rare. For a long time women directors were equally rare in the Maghreb countries.⁵ However, since the beginning of the new millennium, a new generation of female directors of

Maghreb descent has emerged. Clearly these women are not resenting "a (unified) nation" as was still the case in the classic Independence film *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1967), for instance. Their stories are too diverse to do so. If we consider the films of these female directors as modern political films, we need to ask how exactly these films function as speech acts that produce collective utterances "as the prefiguration of the people who are missing" (Deleuze 1989, 224).

In this respect, it has to be noted that at the same time that women directors gain importance in Morocco and its transnational communities, another minority group has gained access to audiovisual production modes, namely the large and diverse Berber population in various regions in Morocco.⁶ After Independence, Berbers were not recognized as part of the nation as a result of the Arabization of national culture. Until recently, the only official language in education, the media, and other institutions was Arabic.⁷ But in the 1990s, with the advent of cheap recording technology, VCR and DVD/VCD, Berber groups started to retell their stories in audiovisual form. These films are locally produced and both nationally and transnationally distributed, through diaspora communities.⁸

Strikingly, in many of the contemporary films made by transnational Moroccan female directors, there is a double focus of women and Berberity. I do not wish to say that all female-authored films also deal with Berber identity (although many do); nor do I want to imply that all Berber cinema is feminine. Instead, I see these two new aspects of Moroccan cinema as two phenomena of "becoming-minoritarian" of national cinema and perhaps of the Moroccan nation. More precisely, I would like to propose that in the new transnational Moroccan cinema, the becoming-minoritarian of national cinema takes place through a "becoming-woman" that can be read first and foremost in the body of the woman. This becoming-woman opens up national discourse from its traditional confinements and creates a possible future that is not yet fixed. Let me first discuss the concept of becoming-woman and the feminist critiques of the concept before looking at the ways in which it can be made operative in contemporary Moroccan cinema.

Feminism, Becoming-Woman, and the Body without Organs

With the concept of becomings Deleuze and Guattari refer to a dynamic conception of the human body. Instead of "being," they

argue that bodies are "becoming."⁹ Becomings are neither dreams nor fantasies, but have a reality of their own:

The becoming-animal of the human being is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not, and the becoming-other of the animal is real, even if that something other it becomes is not. (...) Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance. If evolution includes any veritable becomings, it is the domain of symbioses that brings into play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no possible filiation. There is a block of becoming that snaps up the wasp and the orchid, but from which no wasp-orchid can ever descend. (Deleuze and Guattari 1992, 238)

Becomings have to be understood on a micro level of perception, in terms of dynamic affects and kinetic movements: those mostly invisible levels of perception where affective and dynamic connections can be made.¹⁰ This attention to the micro level of perceptions is very important, but also hard to understand with respect to the "macro level" of perception where we distinguish categories of bodies of women, men, children, animals, plants, and so on. I return to these points later. First it is necessary to see that Deleuze and Guattari assign special introductory powers to becomings-woman:

On the near side, we encounter becomings-woman, becomings-child (becomings-woman, more than any other becoming, possesses a special introductory power; it is not so much that women are witches, but that sorcery proceeds by way of this becoming-woman). On the far side, we find becomings-elementary, -cellular, -molecular, and even becomings-imperceptible. (Deleuze and Guattari 1992, 248)

The concept of becoming-woman has stirred quite some debates among feminists. Some have been very critical and skeptical about it. In "A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics," Elizabeth Grosz summarizes the main objections of feminists to this concept. One major problem is the fear that becoming-woman is a male appropriation and the recuperation of women's positions and struggles, which risks the obliteration of the category of women ("being woman") altogether into a "becoming-imperceptible" (Grosz 1993, 1994, Braidotti 1991, 1993).

Another Deleuzian concept that has caused suspicion by feminists is the "Body without Organs" (BwO). As Deleuze and Guattari have argued, the BwO is a body that refuses the traditional functions of the organization of the body. It is an intense body of becoming. It is a body that "constructs flow by flow and segment by segment lines of

experimentation, becoming-animal, becoming-molecular, etc." (Deleuze and Guattari 1992, 161). Irigaray in particular has rejected this notion: "For then isn't the [Body without Organs] a historical condition? And don't we run the risk once more of taking back from women those as yet unterritorialized spaces where her desire might come into being?" (Irigaray 1985, qtd. in Grosz 1993, 168). Feminist body discourse of the 1970s and 1980s did everything to get the female body more valued in society and culture. Therefore, it is quite understandable that ideas that could possibly make the female body yet again "evaporate" in literally molecular, atomist becomings, should be considered dangerous.

However, Grosz and other feminists subsequently have begun to evaluate becoming-woman and the BwO more positively. The discussions are too elaborate for me to do justice to them here (see Buchanan and Colebrook 2000). But in general it can be said that by now the concept of becoming-woman is understood as "a way of understanding transformative possibilities—the ways in which identity might escape from the codes which constitute the subject" (Driscoll 2000). In fact, Deleuzian feminism implies a thinking on several levels at the same time: on a "molar" or "macro level" of identity politics where concepts of man and woman are important to keep as categories (the level of laws, rights, and traditions), and, at the same time, on a "molecular" or "micro level," where fixed identities can be transgressed in becomings (the level of affects and intensities). These levels are not always compatible and often relate to each other in paradoxical ways. As Jerry Aline Flieger argues in "Becoming-Woman: Deleuze, Schreber and Molecular Identifications,"

Deleuze and feminism may seem to be at odds, from the perspective of the concern of real women. But like the orchid and the wasp, the relation between Deleuzian thought and feminist thought may be mapped and interwoven in a kind of productive disjunction. It is perhaps neither a matter of window-dressing, masquerade or cosmetic solutions, nor of conflict and irreconcilable differences, but a matter of paradox. (Flieger 2000, 62)

This shift toward a *paradoxical* understanding of women's issues in relation to their bodies, their differences, their stories, and history through the concepts of becoming-woman and the BwO is what could be called the Deleuzian dimension of developments in feminist theory.

Let me now move to some recent Moroccan films to see what kind of paradoxes are expressed in the bodies that are filmed by a young

generation of transnational women directors. How is a becoming-woman that escapes traditional codes presented in these films? What kind of bodies do they present? And how is the feminist project related to the "project of the postcolonial nation" and the calling for "a coming people"? I will focus on three films and three different types of female bodies: the aging body in *Fama*, *Heroism without Glory* by Dalila Ennadre, the waiting body in *The Sleeping Child* by Yasmine Kassari and the angry and destructive body in *Cry No More* by Najjiss Nejjar.

The Aging Body: History and the Future of the Nation

In her documentary *Fama, Heroism without Glory* (2005) Ennadre follows Fama, an old Berber woman who led a life of political activism and resistance.¹¹ "This is my land. The land of my father and mother," Fama says in the opening scene of the film while she walks in the Rif mountains, the land of Berber resistance against French occupation. She explains how her father was put in jail because of his resistance to the French. She also recalls how her family tried to marry her off and how she refused. Fama's last words of the opening scene are paradoxical, expressing an escape from and attachment to her home at the same time: "I left this land more than fifty years ago. Nothing is more important for me than the land." She now returns for the first time to tell her story to Ennadre's camera.

The film presents a sort of untraditional "road movie," where Fama visits all the places and spaces that have been important in her life. She has always been a fighter for justice. One could say her body contains a whole history of the minoritarian-becoming of contemporary Morocco. In the 1950s she joined the nationalist Independence Party (Istiqlal Party) to fight for the end of colonialism. After Independence, during the harsh dictatorial regime of King Hassan II in the 1970s, she helped the youth movement and visited every young rebel in prison. Around the same time she was a true inspiration for the women's movement in Morocco, of which she was a founding member and to which she is still related at the age of 68. Throughout these movements, the contexts of the struggle for justice changed but the desire for liberation did not.

I would like to emphasize another paradox that Fama embodies. On the one hand, it is striking how much she literally and figuratively blends in with the landscape, with the territory of her country. While

she walks through the landscape she expresses how happy she is: "This is our history, my daughter," she says to the filmmaker. Significantly, this remark not only refers literally to the places they visit and the stories she tells about them, but could also be seen as a reference to the fact that the land and the stories are now filmed and can start to function as a speech act. Other parts of the film also emphasize how Fama almost literally "dissolves" into the landscape, how her story blends with the history of the nation. Everybody calls her Mother Fama. So in this sense Fama seems to obey the traditional demands of safeguarding tradition and national values imposed on women by post-independence nations.

On the other hand, this is certainly not as one dimensional a case as is desired by the patriarchal unified story of the nation.¹² After all, the founding act of Fama's fight for justice (the refusal of colonialism) is based on another refusal: the refusal to marry and have children. This is why she fled from her native Berber land and family when she was eighteen years old. With respect to this refusal of the traditional role of women as safeguards of the (reproduction of) the nation, it is useful to refer briefly to two other documentaries by Ennadre: *Women of the Medina* (2000) and *What I would Like to Tell You* (2004). In *Women of the Medina*, when asked about her wishes for her daughter's future, one of the women whom Ennadre films in their daily routines of housework in Casablanca, answers that she wishes that "the two inevitable things of life, marriage and death, will be postponed for her as long as possible." In *What I would Like to Tell You*, poor rural Berber women similarly envision a future for their daughters that is different from their own. By contrast, asked about his daughter's future, one of the husbands expresses *his* wish for an exact reproduction of the life of the mother (namely, learning how to weave carpets that he can sell, marry and have children).

With respect to the stories of these women, who have no rights, no education, no resources, and no possibility to improve the life of their children, Fama's initial refusal to marry and have children is a literal creation of a BwO as a body that refuses the designated functions of the female body: the reproduction of life. This refusal of the normal functions of the feminine body is, paradoxically enough, the initial act of becoming-woman. At the same time as the reproduction of the body is refused, the reproduction of dominant and patriarchal history is refused. The paradox is that reproduction is refused not in order to extinguish the nation, but precisely to open it up to the future, creating new possibilities for a less constrained life.

Fama's becoming-woman also dissolves into a becoming-nature when she walks in the woods and recalls how she slept in nature having no house or shelter; into a becoming-animal when she talks about her connection to the animals and makes "wolf-sounds" in the final scene of the film; and a becoming-Morocco without the traditional confinements of the unified idea of the nation. Fama's aging body "contains the before and after" that Deleuze sees as characteristic of the cinematographic body:

"Give me a body" then is first to mount the camera on an everyday body. The body is never in the present, it contains the before and the after, tiredness and waiting. Tiredness and waiting, even despair are the attitudes of the body. (Deleuze 1989, 189)

Fama's body, even now that she lives in a small apartment and Ennadre films her doing everyday routines, contains the history of her nation and the hopes for a future different from the past. When at the end of the film Fama dissolves into the woods and the image fades to black we read that a few months after the film was made Fama passed away. On the level of address, the film is a speech act in which Ennadre's camera and Fama's story and the image of her body engage in a "double becoming." Ennadre follows Fama. She spent several months with her making the film. And conversely, Fama trusts her words to Ennadre. She was asked several times to tell her story for national television but always refused.¹³ This is interesting because in this way Fama actually also refuses to be taken up into the official history of the nation. By filming her story, however, Ennadre-Fama produce a speech act that contributes to a "coming people." It addresses the spectator as female in the sense that it issues an invitation to a "becoming-woman" that moves from the past to the future through the aging body of Fama.

The Waiting Body: Neither Impersonal Myth Nor Personal Story

In *The Sleeping Child* (2004) Kassari presents the waiting bodies of women in a Berber hamlet in the North of Morocco¹⁴ (see figure 4.1). The film is based on a popular myth in the Maghreb related to a ritual that pregnant women perform when they want to postpone the birth of a child. The film begins with a wedding. Unlike in *Fama*, the women in this film initially accept their traditional role.

But very soon the men leave for Europe and the women stay behind. The bride, Zeineb, finds herself pregnant but decides to have the unborn child put to sleep in her womb until the moment the father returns. She travels to town to a marabout (a traditional magician), who puts a spell on the unborn child and gives her an amulet with a prescribed ritual to wake it up. This is a little magic touch in



Figure 4.1 *L'Enfant endormi/The Sleeping Child*: Three women

the otherwise very harsh and realistic mise-en-scene of the film, in which the bodies of the women can only express the traditional passivity of feminine waiting (known as "sabr" in Islamic traditions). For a spectator the terrible longing of these waiting bodies is perceptible through the sober and precise mise-en-scene of the bodies in the landscapes. Zeineb silently and patiently performs her tasks while waiting for her husband. Her friend Halima is more restless. Although these women are part of the land, they do not blend with the landscape harmoniously. Their longing bodies conflict with the land. In one scene Halima, like Fama in the previous film, makes a wolf sound. But here the effect of "becoming-wolf" is not one of blending with nature but one of howling for a sexual partner.

But their husbands are far away and the rare messages they receive are on a video tape that the women watch together on the only television set in the hamlet. Zeineb's and Halima's husbands do not speak to them in these images (see figure 4.2). Yet, it becomes clear that, even in their absence, the men completely control the austere lives of these women. For instance, a picture of Zeineb and her mother-in-law taken in the city and sent to her husband is returned with a warning that she should never leave the house again without his permission. After months and months of waiting without any sign except this warning, Zeineb decides to break the spell of the sleeping child. Without performing the prescribed ritual she opens the amulet, which means that the unborn child will die. While Halima chooses to leave



Figure 4.2 *L'Enfant endormi*: Watching the screen

the mountains with her baby son and leave her daughter behind, Zeineb will stay. Nevertheless, she has begun her trajectory of liberation, of becoming-woman, with this literal refusal to reproduce her own life in another without the opportunity for change.

Although Deleuze specifically argues that the modern political film does not reproduce "impersonal myths," the myth in *The Sleeping Child* is presented so deeply in and through the yearning of the waiting bodies of the women that it becomes a more personalized and embodied story. And yet it is not a "personal fiction" either. Kassari speaks about a region in Morocco that she knows very well, since as a child she spent long summers in the region where the film is shot when her family went back from Europe to visit relatives. By relating her own observations to a more collective experience in the body of the actresses, Kassari too creates a speech act. By now the film has won about forty prizes. It presents a story of refusing reproduction that, paradoxically again, helps to put "a people" on the map or at least to change the conception of the postcolonial Moroccan nation.

The Destructive Body: How to Get Out of the Black Hole of History

In *Cry No More* (2003) by Nejjar reality is even harsher.¹⁵ Here the story is situated in the Berber village Tizi in the Atlas region of Morocco. This village is inhabited entirely by women who are prostitutes. Once a month they are visited by men, but the rest of the time they live in complete isolation on their own. Again the female body is central here. The main character is Hala, the leader of the community, who is so angry and hardened by the conditions of life that she can think of no solution other than self-imposed extinction. This is why all babies are immediately killed at birth and no desire, let alone love, is allowed to enter. The arrival of an older woman, Mina, who returns to the village and appears to be Hala's mother, and a man from the city, Fahd, who only speaks Arabic, will change this situation.

Again we see first of all a literal refusal of reproduction (and even killing of babies), which in this case is also the most dangerous form of a refusing the BwO. Deleuze and Guattari call this self-destructive type of BwO the "empty form of the BwO," comparable to the body of a drug addict: "Instead of making a body without organs sufficiently rich or full for the passage of intensities, drug addicts erect a

vitrified or emptied body, or a cancerous one: the causal line, creative line, or line of flight immediately turns into a line of death and abolition" (Deleuze and Guattari 1992, 285). This form of becoming-woman is destructive and carries the danger of disappearing completely into the black hole of the history of the traditional nation.

However, another form of becoming-woman comes to the rescue here. Paradoxically, it is the becoming-woman of the man who arrives in the village that provides a possible way out. In a traditional feminist reading it could be argued that it is rather a classic patriarchal scenario for a man to rescue the women from their own destruction.¹⁶ However, Fahd does not "rescue" Hala in a heroic action scene. Rather, Fahd loses his traditional masculinity by affectively connecting to the emotions of the women. In particular, his "becoming-woman" takes place through his relationship with the only child in the village, a young girl. He does not understand her Berber language, but tries to communicate by making her laugh, for instance, by dressing up as Charlie Chaplin. In this way he introduces different affects into the village. But he cannot reach Hala. At the very end of the film, he runs up into the mountains in despair, completely undresses, and covers his body in snow and ice, crying out loud. This is the moment where Hala finally decides to leave the village with the other women and to walk into a very open future, where no feminine or masculine identity, no national or minoritarian identity is fixed yet.

Since the theme of Berber identity is made explicit by the arrival of the Arabic-speaking Fahd who cannot communicate with the women, the film can clearly be read allegorically as well. Fahd's becoming-woman also implies a becoming-minoritarian of the Arab part of Morocco. In order to help the country move into the future, this film asks for a becoming-woman of both man and woman (the female characters also have to free themselves from the road to extinction by accepting life and love again) and a becoming-minoritarian of Arabization.

Similar to the two other films, *Cry No More* blends the stories of the filmmaker and the women filmed. The film was initially planned as a documentary. The actual women of the village act as the characters in the fiction film, which is strongly colored by the filmmaker's camera eye and aesthetic vision. The film has caused many debates and controversies in Morocco, both about the position of Berber groups and the position of women. In this way, even if some strongly disagree with the film's portrayal of these women, the film is a speech act that operates in the real discussions about identities in contemporary Morocco and thus helps in the creation of a people.

Conclusion: The Logic of Paradoxical Disjunctions

Teresa de Lauretis already remarked that the construction of a feminine aesthetics in cinema includes a "de-aesthetics" and a deconstruction of dominant norms (de Lauretis 2000, 334). Now we can see how this project is continued in contemporary postcolonial cinema, where films made by women are also implicated in postcolonial concerns of the future of the people. In all the films discussed here the issue of reproduction is a recurring theme. Both the reproduction of history and social norms and the reproduction of life are at stake. All the bodies presented in these films create in their own ways a BwO that demonstrates the full paradox of the becoming-woman and becoming-minoritarian of a people to come: *Self-construction* through the performative speech acts of cinema based on a *destructive* decision to refuse reproduction. It is important to see that there is not just one "recipe" for becoming-woman and becoming-minoritarian in transnational Moroccan cinema, even though the films share the production of a refusing BwO; and it is around the body of the woman and its reproductive capacities that choices have to be made.

Furthermore, it is striking that these films are made by women and explicitly deal with Berberity, which implies a molar fight on the level of macro identity politics and fixed categories. At the same time, however, becoming-woman and becoming-minoritarian undermine any molar category of woman or minority group, addressing a much more imperceptible, molecular level of affects and intensities that run through all categories. So another paradox that these films present is best described as the paradoxical understanding of thinking the disjunction between the *molar* and *molecular*.

All the filmmakers that I discussed have been marked in some way or another by transnational movements, either because their parents immigrated to Europe, or because they studied in Europe. In the films discussed here the issues related to transnational movements are not as explicitly addressed as they are in films that deal with migration such as *Inch Allah Dimanche* (Yamina Benguigui, 2001) and *Napoli Central* (Bouchra Khalili, 2002). And yet, the fact that the filmmakers can move transnationally is related to a final paradox, namely the disjunction between the *national* and the *transnational*. It is precisely because these filmmakers can leave (or have left) their country that they can help reconstructing the nation.

Here we can also return to the legacies of the French feminism of the 1970s, which we now might read through a Deleuzian lens. In her

article "Becoming-Woman Now," Verena Conley relates Deleuze's becoming-woman and the BwO to the work of H el ene Cixous and her concept of the Newly Born Woman (NBW): "Both undo the self-identical subject, open the self to metamorphoses and becomings. They write out a set of historical conditions in which terms are caught. (...) In French NBW reads as la-je-une-nais, 'here I give myself birth as one'" (Conley 2000, 22). This "giving birth to oneself as one" should not be seen as an essentialist claim of the female body. Rather it should be seen as the creation of a BwO through the double refusal of reproduction of both history and offspring, in all the variations in which it can impose itself as a choice (including refusing not to reproduce). This refusing BwO paradoxically aims at renewal, change, new possibilities, new life, ultimately a new people that should not fix itself forever in a new majoritarian identity.

If the official narration of the nation aims at fixing in repetition, the time that is preserved in the bodies of the women opens up to becoming and change, both of the past and the future. There is no simple return to the unified nation, which never existed in the first place. It is only through a becoming-minoritarian related to the bodies of women and other minority groups like the Berbers that the nation can invent itself through the transnational speech acts of modern political cinema. As Cixous argues about the NBW: "Not the origin: she does not go back there. A boy's journey is the return to the native land. The Heimweg Freud speaks of, the nostalgia that makes man a being who tends to come back to the point of departure to appropriate it for himself and to die there. A girl's journey is farther—to the unknown, to invent" (Cixous qtd. in Conley 2000, 25).

With the arrival of women filmmakers in Moroccan transnational cinema a new phase in modern political cinema has reached the stage of the invention of the people through the paradoxical act of refusing to reproduce. But as *Cry No More* demonstrates, this should not lead to an act of self-destruction but to a becoming-woman and becoming-minoritarian of man and women alike and the openness of perpetual becomings in times to come.

Notes

1. Yasmine Kassari in an interview about her film *L'Enfant endormi* in *Cinergie*, no. 89 (2004). See also the website <http://www.enfantendormi.be> (accessed October 15, 2006). My translation.
2. Other Moroccan transnational filmmakers are Leila Kilani (*Tanger, The Burners Dream*, 2003), Bouchra Khalili (*Napoli Central*, 2002), Fatma

- Zohra Zamoum (*The Ball of Wool*, 2006), Rhama El Madani (*Where Home is*, 2003), Dalila Ennadre (*Fama*, 2004), Yasmine Kassari (*The Sleeping Child*, 2004), Narjiss Nejjar (*Cry No More*, 2003), and Laïla Marrakchi (*Marock*, 2006). Born in France of Algerian descent, Yamina Benguigui (*Memoires d'Immigr es*, 1998 and *Inch Allah Dimanche*, 2001) lives and works in France, while Yamina Bachir-Chouikh (*Rachida*, 2002) and Damila Sahaoui (*Barakat*, 2006) make their films in Algeria. Nadia El Fani (*Bedouin Hacker*, 2002) and Raja Amari (*Satin Rouge*, 2002) move between France and Tunisia.
3. Very often these new nations were composed out of several clans with different languages and customs. *Camera Arabe/ Camera d'Afrique* is distributed on VHS by the British Film Institute.
 4. See for an elaborate discussion of this concept of Third cinema, and its contemporary manifestations in relation to Deleuze, Pisters (2006).
 5. Some early exceptions are Assia Djebbar in Algeria, Moufida Tlatli, and Nejia Ben Mabrouk in Tunisia, and Farida Ben Lyziad in Morocco.
 6. One of the French colonial films that speaks in a relatively nuanced way of the Berber population is the film *Itto*, made in 1934 by Jean Benoit-Levy and his partner Marie Epstein, an early and influential woman filmmaker. See Slavin (1998).
 7. One of the reasons for this is related to the French colonial policy of divide and rule. See Burke (1973).
 8. See Carrer (2001) for an early overview of Berber cinema. Many websites in many different countries in the world are dedicated to Berber culture. See, e.g., <http://www.agraw.com>. Some Berber activists and Berber groups prefer the term "Amazigh" but since there is no consensus about this, I use the term Berber.
 9. For the Bergsonian and Spinozian influences of this concept see, e.g., Hardt (1993). For other useful introductions see Goodchild (1996) and Parnet (2002). For an analysis of the concepts of becoming-woman, becoming-animal, and becoming-music in relation to cinema, see Pisters (2003).
 10. It should be remarked that Deleuze is very much influenced by Spinoza for his conception of the body, which Spinoza defines by the affects of which it is capable (both passively and actively) and the speeds and slowness that makes it move.
 11. Dalila Ennadre was born in Casablanca and grew up in France. See <http://www.bladi.net/7099-dalila-ennadre.html> for more information.
 12. In "Dissemination, Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation" Homi Bhabha calls this desire for a unified nation the "nationalist pedagogy" of the nation, which is undermined by a recursive strategy of the performative, which allows different (minority) stories to emerge. See Bhabha (1994).
 13. Information given by the filmmaker after the screening of her film at the Africa in the Picture Film Festival, Amsterdam, 2005.

14. Yasmine Kassari is of Moroccan origin and lives and works in Belgium. See also: <http://www.bladi.net/7108-yasmine-kassari.html>. For images and information about the film see the official website <http://www.lenfantendormi.be/>.
15. Narjiss Nejjar was born in Tanger, went to film school in Paris, and now lives in Morocco. See also: <http://www.bladi.net/7040-narjiss-nejjar.html>. A synopsis and background information of the film can be found on the website http://www.voices-unabridged.org/format/creat_format.php?id_article=95.
16. The "damsel in distress" phenomenon, the heroine in danger rescued by the hero in classical horror film, is a case in point. In his book *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality* (London and New York: Verso, 1994), Slavoj Žižek gives this rescue scenario a perverse twist: He argues that the violence against Dorothy in *Blue Velvet* is therapeutic because it rescues her from her depression and self-destruction. So she is not depressed because she is treated badly, but she is treated badly because she is depressed: "Frank's terrorizing of Dorothy, far from being the cause of her malaise, is, rather, a desperate 'therapeutic' attempt to prevent the woman from sliding into the abyss of absolute depression, a kind of 'electroshock' therapy that endeavours to focus her attention" 121.

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Chapter 5

"Enter Freely, and of Your Own Will": Cinematic Representations of Post-Socialist Transnational Journeys

Alice Mihaela Bardan

The current literature on what is now called "transnational feminist studies" has recently been taken to task by some critics who point out how its "politics of location" operate primarily within the first/third world axis. Indeed, as Katarzyna Marciniak comments, this literature has little to say about the postcommunist second world, "as if the Second World, as a conceptual category and an actual geopolitical region, did not exist, despite the fact that the second world has changed the most thoroughly and the most rapidly in association with neoliberal globalization" (2006, xv). In light of this concern, my essay seeks to respond to Marciniak's invitation to expand the scope of transnational feminist studies, so that "the voices and perspectives from the Second World may find their way into the field that many consider a radical and indispensable direction for feminist studies" (2005, 4). To do this, I propose an examination of contemporary cinematic representations of three post-socialist journeys. My focus here is primarily on Paweł Pawlikowski's *Last Resort* (United Kingdom, 2000). In analyzing the critical reception and spectatorial investments of this film, I compare it to Lukas Moodysson's *Lilya 4-Ever* (Sweden, 2002) and align its representational practices with those of Michael Haneke's *Code Unknown* (France, 2000).

I situate the films in a larger debate regarding contemporary European cinema and cinematic politics of representation, arguing that *Last Resort* unsettles the homogeneity of established images of national identity which imagine a "we" that is fixed and unchanged by other cultures. Ultimately, by encouraging a rethinking of national space, *Last Resort* can be taken as an example of what Ien Ang calls "post-Utopian" European films. What emerges from this rethinking is a troubling of the concepts of center and margin, whereby England