some uncertainty as to whether Rose, in her discussion of Oulton, was rounding up by bringing ideas together, or moving in a new direction. Perhaps my uncertainty mirrors the antinomies Rose sees in her own response to Oulton's work.

Rose is a well-established academic who always writes in a scholarly fashion, but in this book she is also polemical, and takes an exhortatory approach. I was struck by the number of times the imperative is used to demand that readers remember a previous comment or an event previously described. Men will and should read this book, but with the understanding that it is women whom Rose addresses. In her use and feminization of the collective first person plural – 'We as women' (p. 259) – she appropriates a form of address that historically has excluded women and strangers. A hostile review in a left-leaning newspaper criticized the book as obtuse. This cannot be right for, far from being unintelligent and insensitive, it is deeply felt, emotionally and intellectually. *Women in Dark Times* is not for the faint-hearted; nor, I think, is it for the uninitiated or unconverted. The implied reader is one who is already at least half familiar with the issues Rose discusses, and broadly in agreement with her. Rose's intention, therefore, is to persuade that reader to go further, to participate in the scandalous feminism which, she argues, causes the hidden to erupt and bring the private and the public together in a disorderly, messy way. The contribution of *Women in Dark Times* to the debate about how we create a better society for women and men lies in the way it convinces the reader that critical thinking is a necessary part of activism, and that the task before us is the urgent one of going beyond the limit, like Rosa Luxemburg, and finding ways of exposing and challenging darkness and of understanding the worst within ourselves.

The space between us

Nomadic theory: the portable Rosi Braidotti, by Rosi Braidotti, New York, Columbia University Press, 2011, 416 pp., £15.91 (paperback), ISBN 978-0231151917

Reviewed by Susan Brewer, writer

Engaging closely with Gilles Deleuze's departure from psychoanalysis, while at the same time acknowledging the important insights afforded by psychoanalytic theory in relation to the process of subject formation, Braidotti presents an interpretation of nomadic theory as a process of becoming, always with the potential for transformation. Within this flux, she argues for a politics of affirmation where positive energies become actualized and negative energies do not.

Braidotti's account of nomadic thought rejects the notion of a self, shaped and formed within a single, non-negotiable social constructivist grid, at the mercy of feelings of loss and melancholia. Her essays bring to life an affirmative social landscape that links self and other, the personal and political, within sets of relations or assemblages. Power, here, has the potential to be both productive and restrictive.

The process of subject formation, for Braidotti, takes place within this space between empowerment and entrapment.

The book itself seems to manifest a 'becoming' of its own, as the essays begin to take on a heightened urgency; a call to action, or praxis; a radically persuasive invitation to 'take the risk of creativity' (p. 165).

Echoing the Deleuzean link between commodification and schizophrenia, Braidotti seeks to resist the self-perpetuating neurosis of advanced capitalism (enforced as a way of maintaining normality), not by waging war on the bastions of power but by an engagement in a political practice that involves new experiments with self-styling; new modes of ethical interaction, originally posited by Deleuze as 'radically immanent practices'. Braidotti's call to action is in fact about putting the movement (praxis) back into *thought*. In presenting this challenge, Braidotti focuses on three central themes: affects, imagination and creativity. She discusses the importance of these themes both within the larger socio-political arena and at a more localized, intimate level of engagement.

Having established that nomadism is a philosophy of becoming rather than being, that it is dynamic rather than static, Braidotti picks up on Deleuze's interest in Virginia Woolf to illustrate how the process of becoming involves the actualization of hitherto unacknowledged potentials. She quotes Woolf's diary (a reference to her relationship with Vita Sackville-West): 'I had a tremendous sense of life beginning … I felt the spring beginning and Vita's life so full and flush; and all the doors opening; and this is, I believe, the moth shaking its wings in me' (p. 157).

In this section of the book, Braidotti presents the reader with two important aspects of nomadic thought: first, a revelatory example of affects in all their life-affirming potentiality; those apersonal forces in action around the players but not actually integral to either one of them. Secondly, there is the image of the moth as an awakening, a stirring, a symbol of activation for all sorts of possible becomings, both personal and political; an awakening of potential actualized by interconnection: self, other, and all the affects.

The importance of Braidotti's book becomes evident here. This space between us, this web of potentials, becomes the platform, the springboard for the construction of fields of becoming; on and on, one becoming leading to another, web-like not linear, setting a pattern of constant de-territorialization – and within this nomadic framework of becoming, Braidotti posits an ethics of affirmation that takes the idea of praxis beyond thought, or rather *through* thought, out into the socio-political arena where power dynamics favour sameness over difference, and hierarchical structures of reality over flat ontology. In reminding us that we are composed by a complex matrix of *impersonal* forces, she is not so much interested in criticism as in creativity – a creativity made possible when we open our perception to unexpected possibilities. Taking the nomadic stance that we are both embodied and embedded in our singularity, yet collectively defined and inter-relational, Braidotti paints a picture of the subject (or identity) as essentially fluctuating, constituted by the temporary 'gluing together' of fragments of the social imaginary; a subject coerced into negative modes of repetition and sameness by advanced capitalism. Understanding this is important if we are to awaken from the patterns of subjugation implicit here.

Within the space between us, then, both positive and negative passions will come into play as energies. Actualized ethical becomings can only ensue from positive energies. Negative energies may only serve to perpetuate the status quo or intensify

the divide. This is not a simplistic recommendation to 'turn the other cheek' or to be kind rather than callous. Braidotti is concerned with finding ways to enact difference affirmatively, positively. She makes the case for a nomadic approach to overcome the hierarchical systems of binary exclusion that see difference as inferiority. The book is a (positively) impassioned *cri de coeur* for feminism, but its reach extends to all 'others'.

Braidotti is mindful of the current wave of post-secular paradoxes (p. 175), particularly those around the commodification of difference. She gives us 'new generations of corporate minded business women', pursuing an individualism that 'considers financial success … as the sole indicator of the status of women' (p. 176); post-feminism as neo-conservatism. She describes a feminine 'caught in the double bind of late post-modernity; simultaneously "other" *and* fully mainstream and integrated in the majority' (p. 45), citing Princess Diana as a classic example of this; the creation of an icon, a mixture of the pathetic and the magnificent. Diana was, suggests Braidotti, 'a multiplicity at odds with itself … as she simultaneously inhabited and challenged or disrupted the many facets of her social identity' (p. 47).

So how does Braidotti seek to break free from the traps of advanced capitalism? Here, her ethical and political thesis of desire makes an interesting departure from the neo-universalist, pro-Kantian stance advocated by feminist thinkers such as Martha Nussbaum (p. 174). While both women see the problems of the ethical void created by the collapse of Marxism (God already having been dispensed with by Freud, and Marx himself), Braidotti steps back from the 'ethnocentrism' of a universal ethics that may not take account of the 'difference' lived out by many non-Western women.

Although the author rejects psychoanalysis's emphasis on a master code, along with its baggage of loss and melancholia, she is nevertheless clear that we owe to psychoanalysis our ability to challenge received ideas that repudiate political subjectivity. Psychoanalysis, she suggests, is a 'sober reminder of our historically cumulated contradictions … We are confronting today a post-secular realization that all beliefs are acts of faith' (p. 197). As Braidotti reminds us in one of the earlier essays, the face is a high-profile component in the dynamics of post-secular power play. Elaborating on Deleuze's notion of faciality, she discusses the role of the face as a conveyor of the norm, a visual object of commodification that can both 'capture desire and suspend it' (Braidotti, 2014). The process of becoming consists in freeing the face from the power of dominant signification. Here, Braidotti picks up on the implications for feminism and runs with them. In a recent lecture, she talked about the power of nomadism to make our identities uncertain, to keep them moving 'not to conceal and disguise, but to reveal and unveil' (Braidotti, 2014). She went on to acknowledge the radical social challenge of Pussy Riot, whose style of activism pays homage to nomadic theory, expressing as it does an other, a different political subjectivity; an activism set on 'unveiling and debunking the workings of power and despotism … a system that will tear off your mask, give you back your face … your social location, and throw you in jail… subjectification as subjection' (Braidotti, 2014).

In this analysis, nomadism is not so much a concept as a kind of navigational tool; the means to embark on a critical cartography of the here and now as lived by the subject. From these analytical beginnings, Braidotti takes the reader on to an ethics based on endurance and transformation. Here, notions of good and evil are replaced by the idea of affirmation and negation, of positive and negative affects.

The latter are seen as arresting or blocking the self's capacity to relate to others (human and non-human). Ethics in this arena is about the subject's potential freedom to depersonalize events and transform their negative charge. Drawing on her interpretation of Deleuzean vitalism, Braidotti asserts that negative passions negate the power of life itself; of the potential of life as a dynamic force of becoming. She employs the term '*Zoë*' to refer to this idea of life as a non-human force, an important reminder that 'the life I inhabit is not mine' (p. 288), but rather an apersonal, generative force of becoming.

This position, then, becomes ethical, since the harm I may do to others comes back as harm done to myself through the loss of potential, the blocking of positivity, and the ability to relate, and so ultimately through the loss of freedom. It's not about avoiding pain; it's about transcendence – emerging from the inertia engendered by pain, loss and dispossession. This is where Spinoza's notion of endurance comes in. If I am to become ethical, rather than being a follower of moral rules for self-protection, I must endure. I must sustain the pain without being destroyed by it. Braidotti reminds us of the eternal return (to a trauma, a betrayal, a hurt that cannot be endured). And here is the split with psychoanalysis: on the one hand, Lacanian incomprehensibility, and on the other, the Deleuzean virtual (stemming from Spinoza and Bergson), the capacity to move beyond the pain without disregarding it or dismissing it. The author rejects the charges of passivity aimed at nomadic ethics by thinkers such as Žižek. This is *not* defeatism in Braidotti's book. Rather, it is working from within, opening up space for alternatives. It is about re-territorializing; engaging with the present in order to create conditions that enhance our scope to act ethically and sustainably.

We can still fight capitalism, but we need the right techniques if we are to navigate and ultimately manipulate a system that won't break, but may bend. We may not be able to overthrow the system completely, but by replacing the dialectical subject with the multiple, processual one, Braidotti suggests that we can nevertheless create an affective shift to pervert it. The emphasis here is on extracting and re-territorializing from 'the misery of the present' by desiring a different world from that of advanced capitalism where everything is being commodified, even animals and plants.

The author calls for a suspension of teleological, linear interpretations of history and the future, in favour of a vitalist holism. This championing of Spinozist monism over the Hegelian dialectic places her at odds with Žižek as well as with the traditional left. It is important to realize, though, that Braidotti is positing something radically different from both the trap of capitalist commodification *and* the no-longer-relevant adherence to the dialectic.

For Braidotti, the entire body thinks. And this is where she sets herself apart from the speculative realists. Her concerns are with re-theorizing the human subject rather than abandoning it. We cannot, she reminds us, step outside of the slab of matter that we inhabit. We always imagine from our own bodies. This point returns us to her politics of subject location. Her criticism of the speculative realists rests on their disregard for the embedded and embodied self. In contrast, she builds a life-affirming picture of the lived body as machinic yet vibrant, capable of creative leaps of the imagination that can enable the subject to break away from the paralysing trap of hate/envy. For Spinoza, desire is driven by self-affirmation, and from this Braidotti forms the underlying premise of her ethics of transformation; *affirming* the

transformative flows that destabilize all identities, *desiring* the self as a process of transformation.

Braidotti's style is itself persuasively affirmative. Her narrative sweeps the reader along at a pace that energizes and demands engagement. There is an intensity that leaves no room for doubt about her belief in the positivity of becoming nomadic; she is not simply playing with ideas.

Although Braidotti writes extensively on the distortions and irrelevance of the ethnocentric worldview, her book could appear, at first reading, to be presenting a politics for the free world. She talks about the post-secular reinvention of god, the return of aggressively polarized sexual difference in fundamentalist and reactionary guises. In place of, or in addition to, the Western model of emancipation, she calls for a plurality of other models, not as cultural relativism but as localized subjectivity. So she certainly sets the scene for non-ethnocentrism. But it does beg the question: how would this manifest in the most repressive of regimes? How are people to constantly reinvent their identity within systems that deny them an identity to start with?

That said, this is a book of far-reaching positivity and clarity. Braidotti's language is breathtaking; her scope all-encompassing. Her final 'secular prayer' can stand alone in its compassionate call for us not to forget that we are 'enfleshed entities … immersed in the full intensity and luminosity of becoming' (p. 364).

Reference

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Mindful and existential

Mindful counselling and psychotherapy: practising mindfully across approaches and issues, by Meg John Barker, London, Sage, 2013, 216 pp., £18.62 (paperback), ISBN 978-1446211113

Reviewed by Nadia Perez, counsellor and Zen practitioner

Mindfulness has become a new buzzword not only in therapeutic circles but in Twitter feeds, corporate coaching strap lines, meditation courses, self-help sections in book shops. I've seen it described as the new corporate buzzword for yoga, a way to find peace in a frantic world, the key to awareness. As a trainee integrative psychotherapist I have to ask myself, what does it mean to me and how can I use it as a tool in my own practice?

With so many courses and so much literature jumping on the mindfulness bandwagon, it is difficult to know which books to choose that can answer some of the questions about mindfulness that a trainee like me might have. So when I was