

REVIEW

Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), ISBN: 978-0-231-15389-8

The second edition of *Nomadic Subjects* by Rosi Braidotti rightly proves that this book's legacy is well and alive after 15 years of its first publication. This expanded edition is highly topical and remains an essential read for those who are seeking an academic work with an in-depth theoretical approach and a strong conceptual foundation that goes beyond the theoretical divisions and disagreements, which have come to characterise feminist theorising lately.

In her collection of essays, Rosi Braidotti engages in a broad, timely and multi-dimensional discussion of the constitution of subjectivity in European philosophy and political theory. By applying the Deleuzian idea of nomadism within a broader poststructural feminist understanding, she embraces a fascinating, interdisciplinary project of providing a basis for the "redefinition of female subjectivity" in contemporary scholarship. She builds her theoretical framework on Foucault's understanding of power as a positive force and generates a cartographic approach, which takes up large issues on feminist theory, illustrated by examples from contemporary forms of subject making such as technologies of biopower and biomedical ethics and through historical events. In face of the crisis of modern subjectivity and, in Braidotti's own words, "the undecidedness on the issue of poststructural nonunitary subject" (3), this book offers a new paradigm of subjectivity, which emphasises the concept of difference as a discursive site of problematisation. According to Braidotti this new complex of feminist subjectivity is the centre of the project of feminist nomadism. In fact this emphasises different forms of subjectivity on the basis of complex and multilayered power relations rather than being limited to a movement of critical opposition to the subject's false universality (150). From this perspective, Braidotti brings the idea of sexual difference into the core of her analysis, as a positive foundation for the redefinition of female subjectivity and as an alternative to essentialist categorisations.

Within this framework, as opposed to the dialectic and asymmetrical understanding of, for example, the difference between the sexes, she emphasises an exploration of the sexual difference embodied and experienced by women (154). She states that the attempt to activate a discursive ethics based on sexual difference as a site of empowerment of the feminine is both an epistemological and a political move. She calls this a nomadic political project because of its emphasis on the difference that women embody (140) and looks at the "interconnection between female identity, feminist subjectivity and the radical epistemology of nomadic transitions from a perspective of positive sexual difference" (141). With this conceptualisation,

Braidotti also creates an elaborate and invigorating intellectual discourse for studying the categories of identity such as race, gender or ethnicity as non-dialectical, transcendental, non-fixed categories. As she opposes a power matrix, which is understood to be dominated by heteronormativity, the shift to the nomadic vision of subjectivity informs her methodological framework that operates through the key notions of resistance and counter discourse. This framework allows for an understanding and an examination of the structures of sexual difference from the viewpoint of a broader picture of identity politics.

Braidotti's examples operationalise her theoretical foundation in the empirical field with an emphasis on the subject as a methodological issue and not only an epistemological concern. For example, the chapter "Mothers, Monsters and Machines" (213-245) is an interesting case study that shows how a nomadic style is adopted within a methodology from a *rhizomatic* standpoint. This is, in other words, a methodology that is "related to experience, which implies a strengthened connection between thought and life, a renewed proximity of the thinking process to existential reality" (213). Here, with a conscious attitude towards the implications of theoretical and discursive structures on nomadic subjectivity (213), Braidotti brings together three seemingly independent discourses: *mothers*, *monsters*, and *machines* under the same umbrella and links them to each other in the field of biotechnology. This constellation falls into place as she refers to the new reproductive technologies from the perspective of difference within the discursive field. This discursive field informs her methodological signposts in analysing and challenging the ways power operates over *the body* in contemporary social and political world (244) and inspires new ways of negotiating the boundaries for female identity.

Overall, Braidotti's multidisciplinary work is a powerful critique of the hegemonic forms of subjectivity within traditional scholarship and is an important contribution to feminist theorising and critical theory. From a theoretical perspective I think the most important contribution of her work can be seen in poststructural ethics. With her references to bioethics for example, Braidotti shows how a poststructural stance is more than mere relativism, but can actually reflect a morally charged view. In fact, Braidotti clarifies this ethical stance well in the introduction of the book by simply stating that the exploration of *nomadic subjectivity* has the potential to fill in the gap between "how we live – emancipated or postfeminist, multiethnic globalised societies with advanced technologies and high speed communication, allegedly free borders, and increased border controls and security measures – and how we represent ourselves to lived experience in theoretical terms and discourses" (4). Accordingly, this contradiction is what motivates her towards challenging the hegemonic understandings of the subject and brings her to draw attention to a perspective of embodied sexual difference. Within this framework, her methodology is a good example for showing how a poststructural terrain can be used to open a critical space for thinking about the social complexities of our times in various other contexts. For example, her specific take on Foucault's approach to power provides a background for critically analysing the forms of resistance and transformations in contemporary advanced capitalism in all their complexity and has the potential to give important insights about the reproduction of identities within other contexts of neoliberal practices of power.

Apart from its rich conceptual foundation, this book is also beautifully written. Despite the strong theoretical content, Braidotti manages to maintain a style of writing, which is a successful combination of poetic prose and academic language. She communicates complex concepts in a fresh and vivid manner and builds an easygoing relationship with her reader throughout her essays. In my opinion, her intimate and no-nonsense interaction with her reader is one of the features of this book, which makes it a unique, effortless and yet sophisticated reading experience. Braidotti states that “feminism is neither to do with feminine sexuality nor about desire – it has to do with change” (133). Last but not least, I think that her book in general is full of inspiration for change and a provocative call for feminism to move forward.

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