

INTRODUCTION

Aleksandra Ålund

Writing this introduction in a Croatian village anno 1994, from the perspective of wars in what once was Yugoslavia, the questions raised in the present collection of essays have gained an additional dimension to me. Most of the contributions, here presented, problematise — in the context of different times and within different spatial contexts — culturalist essentialism, primordialism, rigid socially and culturally constructed identities and enforced boundaries between human beings. They contest modern forms of roots radicalism and racism while focussing on the existence and potentials of transcendence of, to speak with Flemming Røgilds, 'ethnicity in the borderland'. This style of modern ethnicity, in the process of creation, appears, in fact, as Røgilds argues in his contribution to this volume, always to have been, let us say, in the making; that is being in a continuous process of creation and recreation. This represents a major peculiarity of ethnicity. The war in these wretched Balkan countries on the periphery of Europe brings, however, to the world outside and even more to people inside the territory of ex-Yugoslavia, the reverberations of another cast of ethnicity, politically constructed in the mould of essentialist, non-transcendable difference and loaded with all the familiar arguments of 'biologically' cum 'culturally' rationalised racism. Every day we are confronted with new variations concerning the inventiveness of this type of absolutist ethnicity; a militant reinvention of tradition, propelled by those same

modern geopolitical interests which — in the name of modernity — from the elevated moral heights of our part of the continent, ritually condemn the ongoing tribalist pollution of Europe's witless backyard as the product of an ingrained backwardness of culture.

While ethnicity of the borderland is nowadays treated as the most horrendous political crime in Croatia and elsewhere in its South Slavic brotherlands, ethnic mixtures like myself, are treated like outcasts; foul and dangerous racial bastards. Potential so-called 'Yugonostalgia' is treated as the worst of all crimes. Emphasising 'purity', biologically, culturally, and in a religious and national sense, represents not just a symbolic sign of sovereignty, but a way of purging oneself from suspicion in everyday conversation.

Ex-Yugoslavia, however, is a part of Europe (although but in brackets). Its particular brand of ethnisation exposes in a radical form contemporary Europe's ambivalence, tensions and contradictions. We live in an epoch marked by a parallelism between centrifugal and centripetal forces where processes of transnational compression are accompanied by processes of fragmentation. The latter are crucial in the construction of new and new-old individual, local, regional and ethnic identities. These often violent processes have become increasingly influenced by wars and crises, and by public discourses pregnant with intolerance and exclusivism in relation to the other. This is evident not only on the Balkans, but is also as connected with the current conflicts between different ethnic groups in the new Baltic States. Here, Russians no longer belong, just like all the different minorised population groups in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia. They are excluded in legal, cultural or religious terms, made strangers in the newly formed communities which are reserved for those defined as belonging to the dominant national groups. The fabrication of new national, often exclusive ethno-national identities is cast in regressive ideologies appealing to a 'lost grandeur' in terms of sacrifice. *Blut und Boden* frame a world of absolutism covered by the mythologies of 'imaginary communities'. The 'invention of tradition' in those constructed ethno-national histories are most often marked by selfish instrumentality in the service of unscrupulous power struggles and the brutality of a 'primitive accumulation' carried through by thin strata of conspicuously lavish nouveaux riches. The victims, the excluded, 'the other', who stand in the way for territorial, political or economic gains are usually forced to join the ranks of the new 'helots' in modernity's stream of refugees.

These diasporic helots join the eschelons of 'others' placed on the social and cultural periphery of the modern centres of capital accumulation. What is here at stake is the immigrants' second exile; excluded and in turn not seldom exclusivist ethnic urban communities. The uncertainties which here develop are 'organised' through modernity's multicultural discourses, masking intolerance and different types of rigidities and inequalities under the label of 'cultural conflicts'. Conflicts, with an essential social content, have been reduced to problems of 'cultural encounter', while 'culture' has become essentialised and stereotyped; a quest for pluralisation and ethnicisation tightly contingent on an implosive kind of 'roots' radicalism. A cultural panic has spread in the wake of a globalisation of uncertainties. The explosion of invented communities and 'reactive' identities takes place in a situation of hegemonic cultural homogenisation of 'the global world'. Doors close while occasional bridges seek to connect islands of scattered ethnic separateness. These overall processes, expressing new boundaries and exclusive ethnicities, but also more complex new identities and forms of solidarity, are points of departure for the discussions in this book.

When two years ago, MERGE, the Migration and ethnicity research group at Umeå University, took the initiative for a workshop around the issues of culture, ethnicity and racism with participants from Great Britain, France, Germany, Sweden and Denmark, the background was growing racism in society and heated debates on the notion of culture among academics and the general public in Sweden. Dominant discourses have long been marked by essentialist notions of culture and primordialist conceptions have dominated the understanding of racism and ethnicity. Immigrants have continuously been conceived of as 'traditionalists', inevitably in conflict with a supposedly homogeneous and modern Swedish culture. This has become particularly problematic as the focus of empirical research and the academic and public debate has gradually shifted from the preoccupation with so called 'first generation immigrants' to later generations of still so called 'immigrant youth'. Questions concerning their Swedish identities, but even more their right to belong and represent Swedish culture in whatever way they may express its increasingly differentiated register, have never been posed in adequate ways. This problem of continuous strangeness bound into the dominant societal construction of the other and the self, the ways and forms in which it operates across time and space forging marginalised social categories, through various combinations of

racialised, genderised or ethnicised humanhood in cultural politics and through cultural production and representations, is a central theme for this collection of essays.

Examining the social and cultural production of race, ethnicity, femininity and masculinity through time and space provides insights into how they work and how they may be subverted. Vron Ware's essay, 'Race Gender and the Question of Political Agency', illuminates the construction of whiteness as a gendered male category deeply embedded within society's structures of power. She stresses a need for a scientific and political vocabulary that recognises the production of the 'ordered' normality and she argues for the rejection of an essentialism based on notions of biology or cultural purity.

Most of the Scandinavian contributors to the volume deal with these questions. In his essay, 'Black Music and White Adolescence', Ove Sernhede discusses the development of identity as a symbolic boundary transition and the impact of black music and culture on the development of white masculinity. He claims that 'becoming a white negro' and the idealisation of 'black culture' and 'black man', 'is psychologically anchored in the same race and cultural stereotypes as white racism, but in reverse'. Bolette Moldenhawer, in her article on schooling in Denmark, discusses the notion of 'cultural difference'. A similar problematic is raised by Magnus Berg and Tommy Lindholm in their essay on the Swedish television. While Moldenhawer points to the problematic of cultural stereotyping and production of ethnic boundaries between so called 'foreign' (Turkish, Kurdish) and Danish pupils in Danish schools, Berg and Lindholm critically discuss orientalist discourse in media representation of immigrants in Sweden. Yasemin, the daughter of Turkish immigrants in Sweden, becomes, in the mini-series 'Yasemin on the run', the mythical Other cast in the mould of Orientalism.

The ongoing culturalisation of modern Scandinavian society mirrors, or rather reflects, contemporary social crises; the crisis of the welfare state, a deep societal transformation, a deterioration of social conditions carrying in its wake anxiety concerning a future bound tightly into the increasingly complex tissue the European Union, fear for migration, the spread of racism and its relationship with contemporary nationalisms. All coalesce into a hot-bed for the growth of of populist movements and a plethora of localisms and boundary-making delineating particular cultures and social modules.

In this context, immigrants' ethnicity has become an expression

of a politicised hierarchy of cultures, popularly reduced to for example questions of right for Sikhs to wear turbans or not; a stigmatised space of folkloric traditionalisms and pre-/anti modern strangeness. In his contribution 'Does it Matter Why Walcott Received the Prize', Raoul Granqvist comments on the announcement of the Prize Winner by the secretary of Nobel Foundation. He argues that, while projecting Caribbean 'otherness', the announcement reflected the basic trajectory of Swedish multiculturalism, being biased by the union of premordalist purism and hegemonic Eurocentrism. Diverse cultures are reduced to a folkloric spectacle while 'culture' has become the depoliticised domain of multimedial events.

'Immigrants'' ambivalent position in a grey zone, in a segregated residential space, within the ethnicised societal division of labour, as well as in the societal status hierarchy as a whole, emphasises the importance of the relationship between social structure and culture. New collective identities are firmly anchored in their social contexts and cannot be understood extraneous to their imbeddedness within particular social settings. Numerous communities have become isolated refuges, social havens, in the midst of a modern 'multicultural' world. These structurally isolated and exploited areas of ethnic and class segregated living have often become the basis for political mobilisation. Beyond new inclusive solidarities we can, however, in the constitution of the new often multi- and transethnic communities, find a number of exclusivist reactions, both historically and in present. They may express a social closure towards 'internal', even if usually 'external', ethnically estranged others. The immigrants, or rather the new ethnic minorities in Europe are the constructed 'others' who, in turn, construct their 'other'.

A 'structural pluralism' is organised in contingency with a vertical cultural mosaic and this basic character of modern multiculturalism generates new differences through internal group specific solidarities and external exclusivity. Ethnic absolutism can thus be understood as a modern reaction to contemporary forms of exclusion from the dominant culture and structure. Social inequalities create cultural differences, but without a reflexive connection of the two, 'multiness' may be understood as and subsequently turned into simple demands for the right to be different. Consequently, in the 'politics of recognition' (of cultural and legislative rights) inequalities in the economic domain are not usually recognised. The sensitive dialectical relationship between culture and social structure must, in my mind, be observed.

However, it is usually the cultural that is used to define and explain the uncertainty and ethnicisations of the new identities. Culture has become a universal ideological category in the political struggle, an indispensable tool for a techno-scientific administration's organisation of differences, a general commonsense popular cliché which celebrates separateness of 'cultural belonging' as a 'natural' right. The cultural has acquired an independent role. In their bare and distorted forms cultural explanations have colonised the social by way of culturisation. The social space has been reduced to a site for the production of identities or merely differentiated entities.

Immigrant ethnicity is not — if it ever was — solely the expression of pluralism in a cultural meaning. Whatever we mean by the 'cultural' connected with ethnicity, structural constraints and majority stigmatising have always acted as co-creators. Social petrification of a hierarchical ethnic division of labour and a social and political marginalisation of immigrant populations are cardinal factors for the development of ethnicity. The question of culture in ethnicity is obviously a battlefield, expressing contradictions in the political (multiculturalism) and in mainstream intellectual discourse. Rhetoric of liberal democratic politics of recognition tends to neglect hierarchical dissonance of social inequality, explaining structurally derived pluralism in terms of cultural stereotypes. In this way, politics of recognition are transformed into the recognition of differences, and multiculturalism is subsequently constructed as an organisation of differences in parallel worlds.

Contemporary research on immigration and ethnic relations supports separateness. A dynamic understanding of the individual, social and cultural processes in research on multicultural society, is relatively unusual in Scandinavia as well as in Europe as a whole. In Scandinavia immigrants are commonly treated in terms of 'problem' and 'negative fame'. Ethnicity is still described — even at the frontline of Swedish youth culture research — as those traditional roots that still survive in modernity. Polarising ethnicity against modernity, defining ethnicity among those still called 'immigrant youth' as 'traditional', 'pre-modern', representing otherness, status quo as something given, conservative and awkward, the dominant discourse (here summarised) tends to transform the challenge — in thought and action — of new cultural forms into dualised antagonisms. Modernity's discourses of inclusion/exclusion construct and reconstruct oppositions between insiders and outsiders, youth and ethnicity, ethnicity and modernity. Ethnicity's gearing of

alterity into modernity more often than not takes the character of a constructed Heimitisation. In this perspective, as Nora R  thzel writes in 'Images of Heimat and Images of Ausl  nder', the excluded, 'the other', the Ausl  nder are constructed as 'the counter-images of Heimat'. They represent the threat of exposing internal contradictions of the imagined harmony of Heimat.

Today's strangers, 'the immigrants', have widely been understood as geared into their own particular cultures and ethnicities, which are typically imagined as eternal and, to speak with Werner Sollors, 'seem to be always already in existence'. Disengaged from their historical contexts, from which they are generated, and the transethnic similarities which make it possible to understand the general, ethnicities are thus discursively designed as primordial cultures. This kind of separation of time and space, and the disconnection of different diasporic experiences and historical memories (e.g. Jews and Black diaspora) from each other, may, as argued by Paul Gilroy in 'Diaspora Crossings' (examining intercultural and trans-national identities in the Black Atlantic), inhibit a complex intellectual understanding of modernity, the development of comparative knowledge and political potentials of inter-cultural and transnational conversations.

In his article 'Communication and Culture', Roger Hewitt also stresses the importance of intercultural conversations. Addressing the problematic of growing cultural purification Hewitt points to the contradictory dimensions of global flows and their complex effects on global social hierarchies, political struggles and cultural practices in diasporic and transnational communicative processes. Relating, thus, to transcultural experience as an expression of complex communication between state, cultures and the self, Hewitt, like Michel Wieviorka, interconnects the dimension of subjectivity with social action and social power conceived at different societal levels.

We can, consequently, observe an 'invention of ethnicity' tightly bound into modernity's ambivalences. Pointing, like most other authors of this volume, to the fragile and instable character of ethnicity and its place in the structure of power, Wieviorka presents the conceptualisation of ethnicity as a triangle. Ethnicity, he claims, is a social space organised around communalism, individualism and subjectivity; interrelated as well as conflictual societal poles, between which individuals move relying on a subjectivity which society hesitates or refuses to recognise.

Amongst all of us who are more or less exposed to the expansion

of 'alterity', alienation and the search for identity, the different effects of uncertainty caused by the demise of the welfare state, weakened collective identities, economic crises and universalism's broken promises, are strongly present. In the face of transnational capital accumulation and political processes, anonymous forms of control, legitimacy crises of the nation state and its political system of representation, the terms are set for uncertainty of identity and new ethnicisations.

In the backwater of the erosion of an overall societal integration the turn to history has, given the context of these types of crises of the modern world and modern consciousness, shown itself to be both reflexive and reactive. Beyond the marginalisation, discrimination and different forms of racism embedded in the political and economic structure as well as in everyday life lies a more profound feeling of social and cultural erosion. This is particularly present in diasporic settings. In urban multiethnic contexts complex individual and social identities are formed. Les Back's contribution, 'Apache Indian, Reggae Music and Intermezzo Culture', is an illuminating example of what is in the making. These new life forms embrace cognitive transcendence of time and space, a connection with the past and present through the cultural production and consciousness-raising recognition of the past in the present, of the old in new antagonisms and a translation of the meaning of tradition in the modern. A construction of translocal communities and 'overnational' symbolic space seems to be loaded with increasingly politicised flows of messages against racism and discrimination while, simultaneously, opening up for new inclusive solidarities across ethnic, racial and social boundaries. Among the youth living in Stockholm's multiethnic suburbs I have observed similar processes. Also here, invisible bridges are built while the city's new rhythms are being rapped out, criss-crossing modern 'tribes'. Local and distant places and times are united in the recognition of the messages.

Thus, to sum up, the conditions are developed for the emergence of different individual and collective identities which are ethnicised in a flora of variation, from local to supernational, from roots radicalism to (using Les Back's, fanciful notion of alliance) 'rhizome-ism'; from exclusive ethnic absolutism to inclusive transethnic syncretism. This ethnicisation is new in that it acquires its forms in relation to the social and cultural boundary-making in modern societies; that is through inventive processes rather than through repetitive, ritual or tradition-steered practices — even if the latter can appear as old symbols (actual

or invented) injected with new meanings for purpose other than traditional. The symbols of tradition assume their place, often in service of modern solidarities. Emerging mixtures of cultures, cultural innovations, but also new boundaries and transcendence of boundaries, as well as a variety of new identities illustrate the diversity of a contemporary multiethnic society, its potential for change but also its inner tensions.

Although I am writing this from a country tied down by the heavy plight of ethnic wars, roots radicalism and kicked back into a stage of primitive accumulation run by armory smugglers, drug dealers and other breeds of war-profiteering first generation capitalists and political charlatans, I still find it in place to conclude with an indication of hope for positive change. Recent research on youth in Croatia can tell us that young people are not, in general, loaded with that brand of populist ethno-nationalism that generates wars, exclusivism and hate. Squeezed between continuous inter-ethnic animosity, reoccurring warfare and an impossible economic future, a majority of them wish to escape abroad. The latest expression of youth culture in the schoolyards of Zagreb is the red star as graffiti. On our side of the watershed, in a seemingly disconnected Europe, in Denmark, Flemming Røgilds writes in his 'Late Night Reflections', Danes and immigrants have started kissing...'.

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