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## **Mobility and/as European Identity in Migrant Fiction**

In his essay “The Other Heading: Memories, Responses and Responsibilities” (1991; 1992) Jacques Derrida asked a fundamental question of what it means for Europe to unify, in what sense it’s a repetition of the previous moments of unification and in what sense it’s a new event. Identifying the post-Cold War moment as the beacon of a future unification (which needed over a decade to start), Derrida observed in his essay that the possibility of a unified Europe prompts a profound interrogation of European identity and self: “Indeed, to what concept, to what real individual, to what singular entity should this name be assigned today? Who will draw up its borders?” (5) Situating his inquiry into Europe as identity (event and example) between the imminence of the new and the repetition of the old, Derrida drew a prescient landscape of Europe as identity on the go, negotiating between temporalities, geographies and histories.

This landscape powerfully questions the very premises of our thinking about identity – first of all, that it requires a strong rooting. Instead, it invites rethinking identity away from the metaphor of rooting (tradition, distinctiveness of e.g. national units, ethnic communities etc.) I want to discuss in my presentation a range of authors from Central and Eastern Europe whose works often respond to Europe as norm, value, or, indeed, colonizer. They do so by drawing a European identity in the making from a less settled, more migratory, nomadic, transnational Eastern and Central European experience of exile, resettlement and migration. The new migrant writing from Central and Eastern Europe will be read comparatively with postcolonial authors focusing on the experience of migration.

Prose by Polish authors Olga Tokarczuk (2018 International Man Booker Prize winner) and Andrzej Stasiuk, Ukrainian author Yuri Andrukhovych, Croatian author Dubravka Ugresić, to name but a few, contributes to the imaginary and discursive landscape of Europe by negotiating Europeanness, long denied in the course of history, through the following questions:

- How many times has Europe been (dis)unified?
- How does the self become the other in the process of disunification and how can the other be returned to the self on the way (back) to unification? Is the “new” Europe a newness or a repetition?
- How does the “old” Europe present a normative claim on Europe as such and how does fiction (especially fiction of migrations to Europe) negotiate, challenge, reject or adjust these norms?
- What are the cartographies of belonging within Europe and trajectories of traveling towards it?
- How do urgent events enforce the shift from identity (law, norm, ownership) to commonality (sharing, hospitality, exchange)?

In these fictions, Europe is both a migration towards the new (as it is in much postcolonial fiction) and a return home, so to say. These fictions propose to move beyond the (old)



metaphor of identity as rooting and develop a new metaphoric premises on topographies of transcended borders (mountain trails and ridges, rivers running across countries, aerial transience and so on). Instead of patterns to follow (in line with what Derrida examines as the law, Europe as the law), these fictions dwell, rather, on commonalities and mutualities of being within the shared space of Europe. In fact, what links these very different authors is a project of going beyond identity – they all draw a politics of negotiating one's presence in the European space that by definition becomes a vision of a Europe beyond the confines of national borders and national identities. I want to examine in my presentation how a certain cosmopolitical drive of these authors, linking them with much postcolonial writing, premises European identity precisely on mobility and as mobility, and, importantly, what social politics it requires to emerge in the Europe of today.



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