 Indeed, it seemed to me that haunting was precisely the domain of turmoil and trouble, that moment (of however long duration) when things are not in their assigned places, when the cracks and rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be put away, when something else, something different from before, seems like it must be done. It is this sociopolitical-psychological state to which haunting referred.

--Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*

If minor formations become method and theory, then new analytics will be brought to the foreground that creolize the universalisms we live with today from the bottom up and from the inside out.

--Shu-mei Shi / Françoise Lionnet, *The Creolization of Theory*

**Fawaka, Merhaba, Conta Bai, Hoe Gaat Het?**

In the summer of 2007, amidst continuing discussions of Islam, migration, “black schools”! and Dutch culture, media in the Netherlands presented their audience with what they deemed a brand new phenomenon: *straattaal*, or street slang, a new youth language spoken on the streets of cities across the country. Attempting an authoritative
definition, the liberal Christian newspaper Trouw declared: “Straattaal--the Dutch version of the American slang--originates in multicultural youth groups (particularly in Damsko, Amsterdam) nd includes words from among others English/American, Sranantongo [a Surinamese language] and Moroccan.” (Pronk 2007). Reporting from a community meeting devoted to straattaal, the Trouw journalist proceeded to give various examples of this “secret language” spoken primarily by allochton youths--including the multilingual greeting heading this section, using terms from Sranantongo, Arabic, Papiamento, and Dutch respectively, and roughly translating to “What’s up, welcome, how are you?”--before ending her piece speculating whether this new hybrid code hinders or facilitates the “integration” of those speaking it (for the most part Dutch citizens of color).

This book will pick up a number of the questions arising in the Dutch discussion, putting them in a larger and in some respects quite different context. Rather than as a new phenomenon or a sign of the “Americanization” of Dutch youngsters, I see straattaal and other local variations of these “multiethnolects” (Wiese 2009, 782) all across Europe as symptomatic of a process long in the making, namely the emergence of multicultural minority communities in continental European urban centers characterized by the ambiguous and precarious living conditions of its inhabitants. Migrants and their contested ability to adapt to European societies have been at the center of public and policy debates since their massive post-war arrival in the 1950s, but paradoxically, these debates have seen little change over the last five decades--their focus often is still on the moment of arrival and “what if” scenarios: namely, what happens to Europe if these people stay (see e.g. Schramma 2001)? Half a century later, it should seem fairly obvious that the vast majority of migrants did stay and that the face of Europe has changed accordingly. The logical conclusion however, that “they” are by
now as European as those worrying about them, is rarely drawn, prevented by an often unspoken but nonetheless seemingly very precise racialized understanding of proper Europeanness that continues to exclude certain migrants and their descendants.⁴

As a result, over the last twenty years, metropolises across the continent witnessed the emergence of new networks based on the experiences of an increasingly younger, ethnically diverse urban population confronted with contradictory projections, demands, and ascriptions with regard to national and ethnic identifications often in stark contrast to their complex lived realities. In response to the specific forms of exclusion and marginalization it faces, the second and third generation of migrants frequently draws on and transforms modes of resistance and analysis originating outside of Europe and circulated in transnational discourses of diaspora, ranging from Hip-Hop culture to women of color feminism.⁵ Queering Ethnicity explores the emergence of these minority cultures and the new kinds of political movements they generated by mirroring their creative creolization in using an innovative theoretical lens that draws on a variety of methodologies, critical race theory, queer of color critique, Caribbean créolité, usually not applied to Europe. It is a book thus that addresses issues of race, identity, and resistance, focusing on a group largely invisible in popular as well as academic discourses, namely Europeans of color.

The terms “of color” and “Europe” require some clarification and as both are central to my study, I will do my best to be exact in my use. However, my definition of “Europeans of color” does not claim any scientific precision: while racializations always pretend to name natural, unchanging, obvious facts, they are always ambiguous, shifting, and unstable. This is hidden by what Etienne Balibar calls the “fictive ethnicity” on which all nation states are built:
No nation possesses an ethnic basis naturally, but as social formations are nationalized, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized— that is, represented in the past or in the future as if they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture, and interests which transcends individual and social conditions. (Balibar 1994, 224)

According to Balibar, fictive ethnicity is constructed via two primary tools, language and race, both of which will be central throughout my study as I explore their role in creating as well as queering and destabilizing the exclusionary fictive European ethnicity.  

The history of racialization in Europe emphasizes race as a social rather than biological construct (see e.g. Mosse 1978, Gilroy 2000) and in its current configuration it is closely related to what Rey Chow in the U.S. context called “the ethnicization of labor” (Chow 2002), i.e. “a flexible social mechanism for producing an internal boundary between what is considered proper and valuable, on the one hand, and foreign and inferior, on the other” (Adelson 2005, 8). Chow goes on to claim that “the experience of migration . . . simply highlights and amplifies the connection between commodified labor and ethnicization that takes place in a society even when there are no migrants, even when migrants have become citizens.” (Chow 2002, 34). Thus, the “ethnic,” rather than replacing the loaded and ambiguous term “race” with a neutral, precise, and non-binary terminology of largely objectifiable regional difference as is often professed in neoliberal discourse (see Hong 2008), is the outcome of hierarchized labor structures that not merely use but produce “ethnic” difference. Thus, it is precisely the process of ethnicization that permanently defines ethnicized citizens as “migrants,” creating a Catch 22 inevitably reinforcing
As Leslie Adelson has shown for the German context (Adelson 2005), Chow’s definition can be extremely helpful in analyzing how post-World War II labor migration produced an ethnicized population that despite often having acquired citizenship is continued to be perceived as migrant, as “alien[s] from elsewhere.” In what follows, I propose that this argument can be extended to processes of ethnicization in post-war Europe that closely interact and overlap with longer-term, in part pre-capitalist processes of racialization (see Balibar 2004, Goldberg 2006, discussed in more detail below).

The geographical focus of this study, continental Europe, is commonly taken to include the nations west of the Ural. All parts of Europe are arguably invested in “whiteness” as the norm against which ethnicization is read as a tool of differentiation between insiders and outsiders, in fact, that this is so is one of the key claims of this book. What this notion of whiteness constitutes in the European context cannot be presupposed however and as an emerging European Whiteness Studies has shown, the continent’s racial paradigms differ from the U.S. context, in which Whiteness Studies originate, in a number of ways that still need to be fully explored. It is obvious nonetheless that both Eastern and Southern Europe’s claim to this whiteness is more ambiguous than that of the Northwest of the continent. Since the end of state socialism, migration patterns are increasingly structured by the disparity between rich West and poor East and Central and Eastern Europeans are by now the largest migrant group in
Western Europe (European Commission 2008). Eastern Europeans, in particular from nations not yet part of the European Union, certainly constitute ethnicized labor. Southern Europeans who migrated North in large numbers in the course of post-war guest worker programs, while having increasingly gained insider status as “Christian” through the current foregrounding of a cultural-religious framing of exclusions, are still often suffering the effects of racialization (See e.g. Klimt, in: Eder 2003). Thus, when I speak of “racialized minorities” in Western Europe, groups of Eastern and Southern European descent usually will be included, in order to point out that the Othering of these groups, while closely related to the ethnicization of labor, is part of a larger system of knowledge that goes beyond the context of capitalist labor production (see Gutiérrez Rodríguez/Steyerl 20002, Ha/Lauré al-Samarai/Mysorekar 2007).8

But popular discourses on migration, especially when framed in negative terms, largely target “visible minorities,” represented by people of non-European descent and Muslims (including those of Eastern European descent), whose situation in some ways is thus significantly different from that of “peripheral” European migrants and minorities. The term “Europeans of color” thus is meant to reference populations defined as inherently “non-European” because of a racialized cultural difference linked to a non-European origin (an origin that, as in the case of Roma and Sinti, might lie centuries in the past).9 As will be discussed in more detail in the next section, the means by which minority populations often originating in migrations from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East continue to be differentiated from “real” Europeans reference supposedly innate, visible, unchangeable differences from what the popular imagination considers to be European. This is a perception in other words that uses an essentialist understanding of culture that largely follows earlier ascriptions of similar qualities to the same groups under the heading of “race.”
To reference race as native to contemporary European thought however violates
the powerful narrative of Europe as a colorblind continent, largely untouched by the
devastating ideology it exported all over the world. This narrative, framing the
continent as as a space free of “race” (and by implication, racism), is not only central to
the way Europeans perceive themselves but has also gained near-global acceptance.
Despite the geographical and intellectual origin of the very concept of race in Europe,
not to mention the explicitly race-based policies that characterized both its fascist
regimes and its colonial empires, the continent often is marginal at best in discourses on
race or racism, in particular with regard to contemporary configurations which are
often closely identified with the U.S. as a center of both explicit race discourse and of
resistance to it.

This position has been forcefully expressed for example in Pierre Bourdieu’s and
Loïc Wacquant’s influential, and controversial, 1999 essay “On the Cunning of
Imperialist Reason,” which claims that the current U.S. dominance on every level of
international relations, including academic discourse, globally imposed concepts and
issues particular to this nation’s context, causing a “‘globalization’ of American
problems.” (Bourdieu/Wacquant 1999, 46). One of the authors’ central examples is the
harmful introduction of “race” as an analytical framework into contexts that it is alien
to, such as the European or Latin American one. In stark contrast to Chow’s theory of
the ethnicization of labor, Bourdieu and Wacquant present “race” and “class” as
alternatives, ending their piece by affirming class as a universally relevant category of
social analysis while relegating race to the lesser status of (U.S.) particularism (ibd.,
51).10

While the polemical nature of the essay sets it apart from more differentiated
assessments of the usefulness of categories of race for continental European scholarship
in particular on migration (discussed in more detail in Chapter 2), it nonetheless expresses a number of assumptions, attitudes and strategies common primarily in political discourse but also in continental European scholarship. Among them are the suspicion that race does little more than cloud the view of the more relevant category class; the idea that U.S. cultural imperialism destroys organic, authentic, and formally unmitigated analytical concepts inherent to the affected regions by superimposing “inorganic” categories like race; the discrediting of proponents of the usefulness of race as an analytical category outside of the United States as collaborators with imperialism, granting them a power by proxy they do not possess if one does not assume the full force of the world’s only superpower to be behind them; and an understanding of U.S. theorizations of race that is often superficial in its grasp of in particular scholarship by authors of color (ignoring for example well established concepts such as intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991) in favor of a simplified race/class binary. See e.g. Griffin/Braidotti 2002).

Bourdieu’s and Wacquant’s overall defensive tone--“From being an analytical tool, the concept of racism becomes a mere instrument of accusation: under the guise of science it is the logic of the trial which asserts itself” (ibd., 44)--furthermore produces a sense of besiegement, of an immensely uneven battle, in which intellectual honesty and science need to be defended against the onslaught of an American-based “political correctness” often expressed within a terminology of race that ends up silencing in particular any feminist and queer critique of migrant communities (ibd., 43). This tone and this image of Europe as threatened by on the one hand cultural and intellectual “Americanization” and political correctness and on the other by anti-Enlightenment migrant fundamentalism, places the continent in the position of victim, occupied with defending its values rather than imposing them on others. The imagery of a European
culture faced with possible extinction or at least dilution invites a binary rather than an interactive view of cultural exchange and has become a familiar feature in European discourse in particular on the continent’s Muslim population, as will be discussed in more detail in the book’s chapters.

David Roediger and others have pointed out that a more constructive response to too narrowly U.S. focused theories of racialization than their wholesale rejection would be a contextualized understanding of these processes (Roediger 2006, Patterson/Kelley 2000). In arguing for a concept of interrelated but specific “racial regionalizations,” replacing paradigmatic models of racism, David Theo Goldberg uses the European case as a prime example for the necessity of this shift in paradigms. Pointing to the absence of a discourse on race not as a sign of the absence of racism but as a severe impediment to the possibility of effectively addressing the latter, he claims that:

Europe begins to exemplify what happens when no category is available to name a set of experiences that are linked in their production or at least inflection, historically and symbolically, experientially and politically, to racial arrangements and engagements. The European experience is a case study in the frustrations, delimitations and injustices of political racelessness. (Goldberg 2006, 335)

The continental European case represents a form of racialization that receives relatively little academic attention both because it diverges from models traditionally dominating the discourse around race and because its strategy of denial is particularly hard to challenge: rather than explicit mechanisms by which race is implemented or referenced in political, social, and economic interactions within and between communities, the ideology of “racelessness” is the process by which racial thinking and its effects are
made invisible. Race, at times, seems to exist anywhere but in Europe, where racialized minorities have traditionally been placed outside of the national and by extension continental community. Europe can thus be situated within the larger context of ideologies of “colorblindness” that prohibit discourses around racialized oppression (see e.g. Marchant in Lionnet/Shih 2005, Langfur 2006 on Brazil, or Torres-Saillant 2000 on the Dominican Republic). In its European version this ideology is characterized by the convergence of race and religion as well as the externalization of racialized populations (rather than their relegation to second class citizen status). Recent panics around the incompatibility of Islam with modern societies, the French “riots” of 2005, or the terrorist threat posed by “second generation migrants,” indicate that there still is a substantial investment in what Stuart Hall called the “internalist” narrative of European identity, i.e. one in which Europe appears as a largely homogeneous entity, entirely self-sufficient, its development uninfluenced by outside forces or contact with other parts of the world (Hall 1991). Accordingly, within this narrative, European racial and religious diversity is less a reality than a threat to the continent’s very essence.

Building on Audre Lorde’s claim that the master’s tools cannot dismantle the master’s house (Lorde, in: Anzaldúa/Moraga 1981), throughout this book I take a stance that is directly opposed to Bordieu/Wacquant’s argument for the purity of regionally “authentic” theorizations, instead suggesting that the dominant internalist narrative of Europe cannot be deconstructed with methodologies internal to it alone, even if, like cosmopolitanism, critical theory, or poststructuralism, they are meant to represent a global rather than Eurocentric perspective. In their recent volume on The Creolization of Theory, Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shi offer an alternative approach, presenting a methodology developed in the Caribbean context by among
others Stuart Hall and Edouard Glissant and suggesting its careful application to other positionalities:

[All] life stories of theoretical concepts begin as regional concepts, and they are all once historically and contextually specific before they are widely disseminated, applied, or assumed to be universal. It is, on the one hand, as Palmié notes, a matter of “conceptual politics” that certain concepts can overcome their particularity while others are not able to or not given a chance to. On the other hand, what is at issue is also the degree of pretensions that we attribute to a given theory. (Shi/Lionnet, forthcoming)

Creolization thus works to rid theory of its pretensions by exploring the at times tense relationship between specific circumstances and universal conditions, local applications and global connections, without aiming to dissolve them through an all encompassing, unified model, instead allowing for the intersectional, sometimes contradictory workings of power structures and subject positions shaped though not determined by them.

In the following segments, I put into practice such a creolization of theory by using a number of approaches developed largely in U.S. and Caribbean discourses on race, nation, gender and/or sexuality, in order to grasp the workings of European racelessness. What this book attempts to do by creolizing, reappropriating, and extending theoretical concepts drawn from among others Women of Color Feminism, African Diaspora Studies and Queer of Color Critique is to capture what Avery Gordon in Ghostly Matters, by now a key text of American Studies on the aftershocks of chattel slavery, called “haunting,” i.e. the “way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are
supposedly over and done with” (Gordon 1997, xvi). In the European case that means
the invisible, unspeakable presence of race, the myriad ways in which it makes itself felt
from day-to-day interactions to transcontinental political structures, while
simultaneously being deemed non-existent within European thought. In tracing this
haunting, I build on the pioneering work on European racism by authors such as Essed,
Balibar and Goldberg, however, my approach diverges radically from earlier studies by
placing at its center racialized minorities themselves, their strategies of resistance, and
their growing impact on what it means to think “European."

In the circular logic of race as inherently un-European as expressed in the
Bourdieu/Wacquant polemic, the former can be considered something that is simply
not there unless brought in by non-European theories and bodies and the latter’s
presence in turn always seems both sudden and marginal to the continent’s core. It
were exactly these marginalized populations and their creolization of spaces, histories,
and languages from which discourses of authenticity and organic identities exclude
them, that introduced the new and exciting definitions of Europeanness that inspired
this study. The affinity of European racialized minorities with U.S. and in particular
African American discourse and black diasporic cultural forms could be classified as
another success of the “cultural imperialism” Bourdieu and Wacquant lamented. It
might make more sense however to read them as implying that mechanisms of racist
exclusions in the United States and in the rest of the world are not as completely
different as the two authors claim and that class is not enough to fully address these
exclusions within Europe. The works of scholars like Philomena Essed, Françoise
Lionnet, or Kien Nghi Ha as well as of the artists and activists discussed in this study
indicate that a fusion, a hybridization of these “American” models, building on
European migration studies’ work on class, is a more promising way out of an
unmitigated imposition of U.S. centric theories on the one hand, and the complete rejection of the relevance of race for the European context on the other.

It is one of my key assumptions that the transgressive approach to concepts of identity characteristic for the new minority activism I explore here is directly related to the specifics of the European situation: their common configuration as illegitimate and alien to the nation fosters co-operations between different racialized groups, making possible a “postethnic” understanding of identity that is not built around racial identification but nevertheless challenges the European dogma of colorblindness by deconstructing processes of racialization and the ways in which these processes are made invisible. “Haunting,” Gordon argues, “unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done” (Gordon 1997, xvi). Haunting thus implies an interaction of past and present, the visible and the invisible, the here and there—a connection that is hidden rather than uncovered by binary, linear models of time, space, and identity. As I will suggest in the book’s chapters, haunting makes visible historical memory as a constantly (re)constructed process, shaped by interventions into the present that always also contest visions of the past. In the current construction of a European identity and history, the haunting of Europe’s silent racializations and ethnicizations continues to place people of color outside the limits of the new, inclusive, “postnational” community. At the same time however, it is used by those excluded as an incentive for something-to-be-done. In a network that includes rappers, feminist collectives, queer groups and migration activists, Afro-Dutch, Swiss Roma, or Belgian Muslims appear not as separate, distinct groups, but as contributors to a whole that has never been merely the sum of its parts. Euro Hip-Hop, spoken word poetry, performance art, video, and graffiti represent a fusion that resonates with the attempt to “queer” ethnicity, since its most significant characteristic is the use of the performative
nature of popular culture to emphasize the performative, constructed nature of tacit social, racial, and cultural assignments. This strategy results in a situational, potentially inclusive identity, creating bonds between various ethnicized and marginalized groups.

Such bonds seem all the more important since there are few signs that the non-white European presence is becoming normalized in the majority’s perception. Instead, racialized populations, while numbers are substantial and rising fast, are still frequently presented as incompatible with the very nature of “Europeanness.” My focus on continental Europe rather than particular national configurations poses methodological challenges, but nonetheless seems crucial for a number of important reasons. The national often is the means by which exclusion takes place; minorities are positioned beyond the horizon of national politics, culture, and history, frozen in the state of migration through the permanent designation of another, “foreign” national identity that allows their definition as not Danish, Spanish, Hungarian etc. A look at various European countries indicates however that this in itself is a continent-wide pattern, based on beliefs and strategies that cannot fully be explained within the national context. While differences exist, the perception of minorities in European public discourse shows important commonalities. Works on among others the French, Dutch, German, Swedish, and Romanian national contexts show that across the continent, there is still little awareness of the actual ethnic diversity representing not only contemporary but also historical Europe--more sophisticated approaches notwithstanding when push comes to shove “white and Christian” seems to be the smallest common denominator to which debates on European identity are reduced, and anyone not fitting this description remains an eternal newcomer not entitled to the rights of those who truly belong.
As a result, both public and policy debates lack a concept of minority identity and by implication of European racial diversity. While the “migrant problem” so routinely invoked in recent debates on Europe’s future is usually addressed at native Europeans, i.e. the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} generation and their supposedly failed integration, these visible minorities remain invisible in the unambiguous discursive divide of “Europeans” and “migrants.” This omission can also be detected in current debates on post-national identities spurred by the growing importance of the European Union. Consequently, the various minority populations of Europe are increasingly subjected to the same conditions and confront an ever more homogeneous image of a continent that fails to include its residents of color. The “Europeanization” of exclusion also means however that patterns of identification among minorities do not necessarily follow national or ethnic borders.

Interactions between different racialized communities in continental Europe are shaped by the common experience of migration and often also that of European colonization, shared by populations originating in Africa, Asia, the Middle East (and even Eastern Europe if one includes the continental empires of Austria, Russia, and Turkey));\textsuperscript{14} and Islam for many creates an additional link to a transnational community that is ethnically diverse but largely non-white. Consequently, responses to continental patterns of exclusion often work outside the logic of ethnicity and nation that still define much of European migration studies, where migrants’ identities are defined along lines of ethnic classifications, and various generations of a particular ethnicity are grouped together, while similarities between populations of different backgrounds are neglected.\textsuperscript{15} In addition, the almost exclusive focus of European migration studies on the first generation of migrants has resulted in a lack of comprehensive studies of second and third generation migrants either on a national or a continental level.
(Crul/Vermeulen 2003). Their non-representation is supported by studies of ethnicity in Europe that focus on processes of migration rather than on the emergence of native minorities, implying an invincible divide between (white) Europeans and migrants (of color). As a growing body of critical literature points out, this is an omission that both reflects and reinforces the belief that there are only migrants, no minorities in Europe (Gutiérrez/Steyerl 2003, Crul 2003, Terkessidis 2000, Hargreaves/McKinney 1997).17

Racialized populations are thus externalized from contemporary Europe, and as a result, their long-standing presence within the continent is absent from most historical accounts. The contemporary native population of non-European descent, in its majority the product of increased labor and (post)colonial migrations since the 1950s, seems completely detached from developments preceding its arrival, excluded from Europe’s past and thus from any legitimate claim of belonging in its present. This is especially visible in the treatment of colonialism, discussed in Chapter 1, expressed in an official narrative of colonial rule as largely benevolent, marginal to Europe, and most importantly without negative repercussions for the present. This lack of contextualization and historicization leads to an inability to understand or even acknowledge existing power relations shaping interactions between majority Europeans and racialized minorities. Instead, terms like “third generation migrant”, “integration,” and “xenophobia” suggest that these populations permanently remain “aliens from elsewhere,” replacing the vocabulary and conceptual framework needed to adequately analyze processes of internal racialization - and the ways in which this racialization is an integral part of global economic policies inseparable from the after-effects of European colonialism. This perception is intensified by late 20th Century economic developments: the invisibility of minority communities in official narrations of a uniting Europe reflects their uselessness to a postindustrial economy increasingly outsourcing
the cheap labor that brought the first generation of post-war migrants to the continent. The lack of a vocabulary adequately addressing a growing minority population however is far from reflecting the implied indifference of Europeans to racialized difference, instead it references and reinforces a common racial archive while simultaneously rendering inexpressible its workings.

In order to support my argument with specific claims, I will present a number of bordercrossing case studies focusing primarily on North, (South)West, and Central Europe. This uneven representation of the various regions of Europe, partly due to my areas of expertise and linguistic limitations, obviously is not ideal. What follows is thus less an exhaustive study of the European condition than a step in claiming that such a condition exists: In tracing an emerging postethnic and translocal discourse, I hope to highlight developments that I believe are European rather than national in nature, in important ways exceeding the limits of the nation state and as importantly that of ethnic identifications. Building on works addressing specific national contexts, I suggest that the complex interactions of race, religion, migration, and colonialism haunting the presence of minorities of color in Europe might best be explored through a shift away from a vertical look at one ethnic group, covering various generations and their move from “home” to “host” country, towards a horizontal perspective crossing various ethnic and national divides. Together, these perspectives can be used to map a rhizomatic network that exceeds the limits of the static grid still often used by mainstream migration studies. Such an exploration I believe will uncover identifications that are translocal rather than binational, producing forms of resistance countering the image of the 2nd generation as largely passive and isolated, “stuck in the middle” between origin and destiny (Soysal 2000). What gets lost in such a perception are processes that lie outside of traditional frameworks of identification, but are adequate to
the circumstances of this growing population that actively establishes networks that are not primarily shaped by national allegiances and borders. The invisibility of minorities within the nation in Europe, while bringing with it a host of obvious problems, paradoxically also offers a certain freedom from prescriptive identity models that allows eclectic and subversive appropriations of disparate traditions. The resulting fusion presents multilayered challenges to established norms and concepts and provides new means of resistance to dominant, seemingly natural forms of identity, minoritarian ones included. This is exactly what defines the emerging postethnic, translocal European identity I am tracing in this book and I argue that the challenges these activists pose to the system of racelessness are significant beyond the European context, offering insights into new “postethnic” configurations of identity that react to globally changing socioeconomic conditions.

Race and Europe

I was born and raised in Germany, speak the language natively, and am German by nationality. This reality has always been hard for the Germans to accept and growing up “Chinese” in Hamburg offered my own version of the “not-German-looking” episode. The incident happened in the 1970s when my brother and I took the subway home one day. We were chatting away in German and hardly noticed an older German male, sitting in a row behind us. He had obviously been eavesdropping for a while when he suddenly got up from his seat, walked over and interrupted our lively, if self-absorbed conversation. “Excuse me,” he asked, and his tone revealed a mix of curiosity and annoyance, “how do you speak German so
fluently?” I was totally unprepared for this interruption, but while I was still thinking of an appropriate reply, I heard my brother saying: “Well, that’s because we’ve learned it.” To which the man responded in a more hostile tone: “But how long have you been living here?” Before I could think of a reply, I heard my brother saying with a smile: “Oh, we’ve only been here about a year. You know, German is such an easy language!” Of all possible responses, this was certainly the last the man had expected, especially as Germans believe their language to be particularly difficult. The man’s face paled instantly and, without so much as another word, he turned around and retreated to the other end of the subway car. “ (Yue 2000, 175)

The above scene, taken from Ming-Bao Yue’s deliberations on the visual and the nation in her article “On not looking German,” likely needs no further explanation for either the European or the American reader. What prompted this interrogation of two German children by a German adult seems quite obvious: it were the children’s “wrong” looks, their racial designation as non-white, which to the white German passenger on a Hamburg subway train necessarily translated into their being “non-German.” There appeared to be in other words an inconsistency if not an invincible contradiction between an aural truth, the sound of native German, and a visual truth, the sight of “Chinese.” While the case seems clear, it might still warrant further inquiry: Why was the perfect German of the children not enough to make them readable as (minoritarian) Germans? Why did their answer, which seemingly confirmed the man’s assumption (that they could not be German), anger him? Why did the supposed visual reality take precedence over the aural one? And why did the children assume that simply affirming their Germanness would not satisfy the man’s curiosity and end the conversation? This
book aims at answering the above questions by putting them in the larger context of what I consider to be a particular European form of “invisible” racialization. With this I mean the peculiar coexistence of on the one hand a regime of continent-wide recognized visual markers that construct non-whiteness as non-Europeanness with on the other a discourse of colorblindness that claims not to “see” racialized difference.20

The ideology of colorblindness is not a passive attitude but an active process of suppression, i.e. the kind of interaction that according to Avery Gordon produces a “haunting”. Encounters with the repressed presence of non-white Europeans--be it through a chance meeting on the subway or TV images of burning cars in neighborhoods the average European has never visited--are not necessarily forgotten but rather decontextualized, denied any relevance for and interaction with one another by being defined as strictly singular. This active process of “forgetting” by rendering events meaningless, without reference and thus without place in a collective memory means that every acknowledgment of a non-white presence always seems to happen for the very first time, giving each incident a spectacular character, signifying a threatening state of exception, but at the same time voiding it of any lasting consequences--uprisings in the French banlieus ignite debates on the end of Europe (Baudrillard 2006) but no policy changes (instead the next incident is again met with utter incomprehension); a non-white native speaker of Danish, Polish, or Greek again and again appears as a curious contradiction, never quite becoming unspectacular and commonplace. Europeans possessing the (visual) markers of Otherness thus are eternal newcomers, forever suspended in time, forever “just arriving,” defined by a static foreignness overriding both individual experience and historical facts.21

The continued inability or rather unwillingness to confront, let alone overcome, the glaring whiteness underlying Europe’s self-image has rather drastic consequences
for migrants and minority communities routinely ignored, marginalized, and defined as a threat to the very Europe they are part of, their presence usually only acknowledged as a sign of crisis and forgotten again in the ongoing construction of a new European identity. This dialectic of memory and amnesia, in the shape of an easily activated archive of racial images whose presence is steadfastly denied, is fundamentally European I argue, in part constituting dominant notions of what “Europe” means: though rarely mentioned, race is present whenever Europe is thought, recalling a dynamic that Susan Suleiman identifies in the continent’s historical (non)memory of the Holocaust:

   To forget is human, but amnesia is an illness--or worse still, an alibi. The question can then be formulated as follows: If forgetting is salutary as well as inevitable, both individually and collectively, under what conditions does it become a reprehensible amnesia?  (Suleiman 2006, 217)

One could add a set of more specific questions: if this amnesia is an active rather than passive process, how is it implemented, what purposes does it serve, and what are the intended and unintended implications for present-day Europe? The following chapters will attempt to answer these questions, making the issue of historic memory, its construction and suppression, one of the book’s constant themes.

   It seems clear that contrary to common European wisdom, the repression of race discourse does not prevent it from being mobilized in various contexts, in unspectacular everyday interactions turned into identity policing (“How do you speak German so fluently?”), in the normalization of evocative terms such as “honor killings,” (see Chapter 3 for more details) or in the immediate readability of a Swiss People’s Party (SVP) poster successfully used during the 2007 Swiss elections (the poster showed a
In each case, race is not mentioned yet referenced implicitly as a marker of not-belonging, a strategy that relies on a shared iconography that remains unspoken. Postcolonial populations in Europe challenge the European narrative of racelessness by continuously bringing the forgotten history to the fore. To include their perspective, give them a voice in the debate about Europe’s identity and future would mean to contest the internalist position and to admit to the subjectivity of the dominant European position simply by providing a larger context for current inner-European developments. In order to understand the European investment in the internalist narrative, one has to consider the importance of constructions of the past for perceptions of the present. The refusal to acknowledge the continent’s “impure” racial history indicates another aspect of “the rise of fundamentalism” so often referenced in relation to Europe’s minority populations, as Stuart Hall noted two decades ago: “If what we mean by ‘fundamentalism’ is a defensive and exclusive retreat into a rigid and unchanging version of the past inhabited as Truth, then there is plenty of it about, not least in the so-called ‘modern West’” (Hall 1991, 19). It seems that Europe neither simply remains ignorant of nor merely forgets its longtime residents of color. Instead, the structures along which continental identity is formed work to constantly externalize and defamiliarize racialized populations.

There are numerous illustrations of this dynamic, some of which will be analyzed in detail in the following chapters. Among the most striking and symptomatic
certainly is the situation of the continent’s Roma and Sinti populations which, having been part of Europe for half a millennium, are the European minority par excellence. Nonetheless, they remain nearly invisible in discourses on “Europeanness.” As the pogroms in Italy in the summer of 2008 have drastically shown, neither long-term residency nor citizenship have anything to do with who is classified as a “foreigner” whose right to remain in Europe depends entirely on the majority’s goodwill. If Europe can afford to define itself as white and untouched by race matters despite the existence of this racialized native population numbering roughly ten million people, present in every single European nation’s reality and imagination (see e.g. Breger 1998); if a history of racial subjugation that includes slavery and genocide remains severely understudied while the racist exclusion itself continues nearly unmitigated; if Roma and Sinti living in Europe since the Middle Ages remain despised and marginalized “foreigners” in all of their native nations--and recent UN and EU reports indicate that this is the case--there seems to be little hope for Europe’s ability to come to an inclusive, non-racialized model of belonging without a drastic discursive shift (European Commission Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs 2004, Ivanov 2006, European Roma Rights Center 2007).

The current racialization and externalization of Muslim populations provides another incident of the potentially explosive European relationship between racial memory and amnesia: while this discourse follows familiar patterns, it is rarely framed in relation to the long history of racialization of religion in Europe. To do so would locate the source of current “clash of civilization” scenarios within an internal tradition rather than some inherent, fundamental Otherness of the continent’s Muslim communities. Instead, this supposed Otherness, expressed in religious intolerance, sexism, and homophobia, prevents Muslims from ever becoming part of the tolerant,
secular European “We.” Migration studies scholar such as Leo Lucassen increasingly challenge the contemporary discourse on “new”, i.e. non-European immigrants as “culturally” opposed to the European tradition of religious tolerance and gender equality by pointing out how Europeans conveniently seem to forget the continent’s long history of anti-Semitism (Lucassen 2005). And one could add that there is also a long history of racism and Islamophobia traditionally directed against exactly those groups that are at the center of contemporary migration discourses (while the numeric majority of contemporary migrants to the EU is provided by “white,” Christian, Southern and Eastern European nations). In addition, Europe’s history of anti-Semitism (and of gender inequality) might not be merely conveniently forgotten. Instead, the image of the fundamentalist Muslim immigrant is instrumentalized in order to work through or rather rewrite and transfer this history, i.e. the supposed contemporary Judeo-Christian affinity and alliance against the lethal threat of radical Islam is naturalized and implied to be traditionally present, despite all historical evidence to the contrary (and despite the fact that in contemporary Europe anti-Semitism is by no means a prerogative of Muslim minorities, on the contrary often co-exists with Islamophobic and racist positions). The Muslim presence in Europe thus is acknowledged in order to define a new, unified Europe characterized by a tolerant secularism—a tolerance, paradoxically, that is manifest not in the inclusion but the exclusion of the continent’s largest religious minority.

Thus, “political racelessness” does not equate experiential or social racelessness, i.e. the absence of racial thinking, rather, it creates a form of racialization that can be defined as specifically European both in its enforced silence and in its explicit categorization as not European of all those who violate Europe’s implicit but normative whiteness, allowing to forever consider the “race question” as externally (and by
implication temporarily) imposed. The result is an image of a self-contained and homogeneous Europe in which racialized minorities remain outsiders permanently. Their presence is continuously delegitimized through the workings of political racelessness, which in part manifests itself through what Suleiman called a “reprehensible amnesia:” this amnesia is reprehensible exactly because it depends on strategies of repression aimed at minimizing the incidents in which “the cracks and rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving” (Gordon 1997, XVI). These incidents and their structural embeddedness in Europe’s past and present are exactly what interests me here, particularly in so far as they result in what Lisa Yoneyama calls “counter-amnes(t)ic” practices, i.e. “a critical remembering in which past memories are recalled to become urgently relevant to present efforts that seek social and cultural transformations” (Yoneyama 2003, 61).

In order to grasp this particular configuration, I follow Hall, Balibar, Goldberg, and others in arguing that paradigmatic models of race are inadequate in analyzing the European case, on the contrary help to support its colorblind status by showing how Europe is different from “normative” racialized nations such as the United States, while leaving unexplored the specific mobilizations of race in European processes of exclusion and hierarchization (Hall 1991, Balibar 2004, Goldberg 2006). The key problem in addressing and potentially deconstructing Europe’s ideology of racelessness might indeed be that while the implicit though not at all subtle racialization of Europeanness as white and Christian and thus of racialized minorities as non-European seems indisputable, public--and too often academic--discourse nonetheless rejects this observation as meaningless within an intellectual framework shaped by an
Enlightenment universalism that for centuries has managed to claim race as irrelevant while simultaneously treating it as all important (see Goldberg 1993).

How then can this system be effectively challenged? To name it, verbalizing the unspoken mechanisms of exclusion, seems like an obvious first step but in itself is not necessarily sufficient. Too easily are these attempts at dismantling the system integrated into it, by defining the identification of racist structures as an act of racism itself (you are racist if you “see” race and therefore cannot be racist if you are “colorblind”), through the claim that discourses on race are fundamentally tied to the U.S. experience and thus without meaningful context in Europe, or by exclusively associating debates around race with a right-wing fringe unconnected to the European mainstream. Thus, I am interested here in contextualizing “political racelessness” and in making the case for an intensified analytical interest in this configuration by presenting the challenges it poses to our understanding of racialization as well as the challenges posed to it by those representing the unrepresentable in the European model.

Queering Ethnicity

Until the 1980s, discourses on labor migration were shaped by the belief that the vast majority of migrants would simply “return home.” This same rhetoric rings increasingly hollow however, when referencing a population whose only home is Europe. The fact that the 2nd and 3rd generations were born into their countries of residence, their experiences if not passports defining them as European, makes their continued categorization as external to the continent increasingly questionable and it seems less than arbitrary that in recent years, their difference is frequently framed as one of fundamental cultural opposition to everything Europe stands for--implicit in this
assumption is of course the idea that there are distinct and immutable cultures separating Europeans and the eternal newcomers as which racialized migrant populations are perceived). As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Islam increasingly becomes the shorthand for this implied permanent difference of minorities: while migrants have been in a precarious position in continental Europe since massive immigration began in the late 1950s, over the last decade, “Muslim” has replaced “Southerner” as the generic term allowing to police and permanently contain Europe’s internal Others—and at the same time providing an outside threat helping to create the coveted European identity. Islam at times appears as a signifier almost as empty as race, ascribing a combination of naturalized cultural attributes to “Muslims” that has little to do with religious beliefs or even with being a believer. Instead the trope of the Muslim as Other offers an apparently easy and unambiguous means to divide “Europeans” and “migrants.” However, this discursive centrality of the (second generation) Muslim as cultural Other can be read as being caused by and at the same time covering a paradigm-shifting change, namely the continent-wide demographic move to a “migrant” population that is predominantly minoritarian, i.e. consisting of so-called immigrants who were born and raised in their countries of residence.

Due to the silencing effect of racelessness, the grounding of these minority populations in Europe is neither part of dominant narratives nor is it confirmed in coherent counterdiscourses. A memory of their century-long history is thus not something that comes “organically” with being a European of color (see Campt 2005). It would be wrong nonetheless to consider this group as a people without history, but the creation of narratives of identity, both for communities and individuals, is not a linear, affirmative process of authentication, is rather rhizomatic and preliminary instead. The fractured nature of European minority communities results in complex, at times circular
processes in which knowledge is produced and oppressed, recovered and appropriated, its creation a continuing work-in-progress conducted by a growing number of artists, activists, and academics, connected by border-crossing structures visible in the Swiss Urban Skillz Hip-Hop festival as much as the Black Women’s Summer School or the Frassanito network of European migration activists. Circumventing the structures that exclude them, these preliminary collectives use new media and popular culture in order to radically rewrite European history through a queer practice, a revised definition of political agency as well as national identification, and a reassessment of the relationship between community, space, and identity in a postethnic and translocal context.

This process of alternative community building might best be defined as the queering of ethnicity, i.e. as a movement in which “[i]dentify, too, becomes a noun of process” (Gilroy 2000, 252). The constant mixing of genres and styles in this process reflects a resistance to notions of purity and uncomplicated belonging based on the positionality of racialized Europeans, but resonating with larger questions facing minority communities and activists worldwide. At the same time, these notions of belonging are the source of the dominant perception of the second generation as “lost between cultures,” eternally homeless and without claim to the kind of stable identity, both national and ethnic, naturalized by dominant society as well as the first generation of migrants. This static, unambiguous identity that frequently is uncritically posited as normative and desirable in discourse on integration in turn is not merely a reflection of reality but a narrative in whose production considerable energy is invested and on whose internalization by those it targets the system of political racelessness fundamentally depends: it remains stable as long as the structure as a whole is left unquestioned and the “failure” is instead located within those who exceed the boundaries of normative identifications.
The framing of the inability to belong as an individual/cultural failure rather than as the outcome of structural exclusions works to disempower and alienate groups who threaten the binary identifications on which Europeanness continues to be built. From this perspective, spectacular incidents like the French “riots” of 2005, which seemed to confirm the self-fulfilling prophecy of migrant youths’ threatening and invincible difference, can also be read as part of a complicated and tense process of negotiating degrees of belonging: the supposedly lacking integration of the second generation of migrants of color might be traced to a situation that can neither be approached effectively through conventional methods of outreach nor through the traditional methodology of migration studies, namely to the co-existence of restrictive, essentialist models of Europeanness and of multi-ethnic minority communities defying the limits of these models. The teenagers interviewed in Trica Keaton’s insightful study of Muslim girls in contemporary France, while not necessarily able to directly challenge this projection, seem well aware of the process. As one of them states:

To say that we are French means a lot of different things; it’s almost like saying that we are Christian, almost, because most of the time, French people are Christian. Maybe on the outside we’re French and on the inside we’re Arab. But really, our problem is that our parents are immigrants, and when we go to Algeria, we’re still immigrants. So, we’re somewhere in the middle. (Keaton 2006, 32)

In this book, I argue that the seeming consensus on the “failure of multiculturalism,” targeting the so-called second and third generation and equating being “somewhere in the middle” with not properly belonging, with being outside of society, coincided with a rise in the native “migrant” populations whose very presence defies the existing
categories, producing a queering of ethnicity that is increasingly transformed into an active process of cultural resistance primarily located in the continent’s urban centers.

While the delegitimizing difference of visible minorities is still most obvious in rural areas, their presence is most contested in urban spaces, which they are frequently accused of polluting or taking over (Buruma 2005, Bruckner 2007). Discourses of racelessness construct the homogeneous whiteness of Europe on the national and the continental level, leaving the city as a repository of that which cannot be named, that is the visible presence of racialized populations whose concentrated presence necessarily implies a threatening violation of the “normal.” This perception is used to justify a variety of control mechanisms, while negating economic and social policies forcing migrant populations into segregated neighborhoods in metropolitan areas. One could include these urban populations among the groups that Etienne Balibar defines as qualitatively “deterritorialized . . . in an intensive rather than extensive sense; they “live” on the edge of the city, under permanent threat of elimination; but also, conversely, they live and are perceived as “nomads,” even when they are fixed in their homelands, that is, their mere existence, their quantity, their movements, their virtual claims of rights and citizenship are perceived as a threat for “civilization.” (Balibar 2004, 129)

The undeniable presence of minoritarian Europeans is thus reframed as a threat to the continent’s foundations that needs to be contained through new forms of spatial governance. While borders within Europe are becoming increasingly diffuse with the progressing unification, the divide between “Europeans” and “non-Europeans” is reinforced along lines of race and religion: the current focus on a common continental identity emphasizes a cultural difference of marginalized communities that is both
threatening to Europe’s identity and inherent to these communities across generations—a difference in other words that is racialized in the most unambiguous terms, while never quite being defined as such. In this context, the postnational theme of the united Europe works as a way to circumvent the consequences of the increasing native national presence of Europeans of color.

The process of reconfiguration of external as well as internal differentiations plays out in familiar ways and while the continental union means greater mobility for some, for others the border now is everywhere. In effect, those perceived as non-European constantly have to prove that their presence is legitimate, there is no space within the limits of Europe that they can claim as their own, in which their status of belonging is undisputed. From the perspective of the descendants of the labor and postcolonial migrants arriving since the 1950s, the unifying Europe thus seems less open and pluralist than shaped by ethno-nationalist structures excluding racial and religious minorities by assigning them a permanently transitory migrant status. With the shift to the numeric dominance of the 2nd and 3rd generation of “migrants,” events like the London bombings and signifiers such as the headscarf confirm this continued dangerous difference from the European mainstream and symbolize a “migration crisis” that in truth might instead be a crisis caused by the ideology of political racelessness, incapable of addressing racialized inequality.

In order to develop methodological approaches that can successfully address these complicated processes, I believe one needs to reexamine and creatively combine existing frameworks of theories of migration, race, and, nation. In its fusionist approach, my analysis could be placed within the fledgling field of queer of color critique, pioneered by among others, José Esteban Muñoz (see also Eng 2001, Ferguson 2004) and defined by Roderick Ferguson as such:
Queer of color analysis . . . interrogates social formations as the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, with particular interest in how those formations correspond with and diverge from nationalist ideals and practices. Queer of color analysis is a heterogeneous enterprise made up of women of color feminism, materialist analysis, poststructuralist theory, and queer critique. (Ferguson 2004, 149n)

The return to black feminist intersectional analytics, a focus on class as a central category in the production of queer subjects, and an understanding of queerness that is not restricted to sexual identities, makes queer of color critique immensely applicable in the context of European racializations and cultures of resistance. The process of disidentification in particular, as described by Muñoz in his study of “queers of color and the performance of politics” seems easily applicable to this minoritarian strategy of queering ethnicity as “[d]isidentification is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship” (Muñoz 1999, 4). Building on Judith Butler’s notion of disidentification not as counteridentification or rejection of a dominant narrative, but instead as a destabilizing “slippage,” a “failure of identification” that potentially opens a moment of disruption and re-orientation, Muñoz frames disidentification as a political strategy aimed at creating a discursive network of marginalized positionalities.31 By returning to key authors of women of color feminism such as Audre Lorde and Cherrie Moraga, he claims queer theory as part of this network not (only) because minority subjects can learn from it, but because it has learnt from minority theorizing: no queer theory without Barthes and Foucault but also not without Lorde or Anzaldua. This interconnectedness--also expressed in works like Paul
Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic*, reminding us that there would be no Western modernity without the contributions of people of color--is what is missing from Europe’s internalist narrative.

Disidentification thus allows for the construction of a narrative that is less rigid and exclusive than both the dominant one and than those constructed in direct opposition to it. It does not imply a clear break with the majority culture, but acknowledges the necessity of a continuous engagement with and negotiation of an often hostile larger culture at the same time that it allows to explore tensions and differences within minority communities that also provide the means to survive the hostility of the dominant society.\(^{32}\) While it so far largely focuses on the U.S. situation, though from a transnational perspective, I suggest that queer of color critique can offer important insights into the European situation, especially when one includes the closely related field of queer diaspora studies (Shah 2001, Manalansan 2003, Luibhéid/Cantú 2005, Gopinath 2006). The latter has not yet been applied to the continental European situation nor has queer of color critique focused much on intercommunity activism (Hong 2005). Nonetheless, using the important work done in these fields allows me to combine elements of performance studies with queer theory’s challenges to identity politics, diaspora studies’ attention to shifting configurations of communities of color, and transnational feminism’s awareness of intersecting forms of oppression.

It is important to include “diaspora” here, I believe, despite its potential overuse in recent academic discourse, since contrary to the concept of migration, diaspora transcends the binary of citizen and foreigner, the linear model of movements from origin to destination. The strategy of claiming a space within the nation by moving beyond it as practiced in the queering of ethnicity can be called fundamentally diasporic in drawing on identifications and models of identity that exist, according to Paul Gilroy,
“outside of and sometimes in opposition to the political forms and codes of modern citizenship” (Gilroy 2000, 252). Since their exclusion is framed in exactly these forms and codes of modern citizenship, circumventing them appears as a necessity for European minorities. While “migration” does not grasp the experience of a population that is born into one nation but never becomes fully part of it and “minority” does not quite encompass the transnational ties of that same population, “diaspora” can bring both aspects together, functioning like disidentification as a “third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it . . . a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology.” (Muñoz, 11).

In this study, I extend the notion of diaspora to describe a population that does not share a common origin--however imaginary it might be--but a contemporary condition. Within this broadened understanding of diaspora, the concept is transformed from a term of temporal and spatial displacement focused on the past towards one of permanent productive dislocation directed at the future--mirroring the potential of queering ethnicity as a non-essentialist, and often non-linear, political strategy:

Suturing “queer” to “diaspora” . . . recuperates those desires, practices, and subjectivities that are rendered impossible and unimaginable within conventional diasporic and nationalist imaginaries. A consideration of queerness, in other words, becomes a way to challenge nationalist ideologies by restoring the impure, inauthentic, nonreproductive potential of the notion of diaspora. (Gopinath 2006, 11)

Gayatri Gopinath’s use of queerness in her study of the Indian diaspora would not necessarily include the minority identity I am concerned with here, since its queer elements can but do not necessarily include sexuality, but her connection of queer and
diaspora is relevant in this context nonetheless. One of the most intriguing aspects of queer of color critique after all is its resurrection of “queer” as a term that is not merely synonymous with “homosexual” but references processes of constructing normative and non-normative behaviors and populations. The interaction of race, class, and gender in constructions of deviant sexualities creates more complicated groupings and hierarchies than the simple homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy suggests, queer thus might also stand in opposition to homonormative formations (see Chapter 4). From this perspective it seems not only possible but useful to argue that Europeans of color are produced as “queer”, “impossible” subjects in heteronormative discourses of nation as well as migration. In response, without necessarily reflecting it theoretically, minority subjects use queer performance strategies in continuously rearranging the components of the supposedly stable but incompatible identities assigned to them by exploring their “impure, inauthentic, nonreproductive potential,” creating cracks in the circular logic of normative European identities.

I use “queer” here as a verb rather than an adjective, describing a practice of identity (de)construction that results in a new type of diasporic consciousness neither grounded in ethnic identifications nor referencing a however mythical homeland, instead using the tension of living supposedly exclusive identities and transforming it into a creative potential, building a community based on the shared experience of multiple, contradictory positionalities. The new European minority activism demonstrates a queer practice by insisting that identity is unstable, strategic, shifting, and always performative. Its practice is grounded less in theory than in the everyday experiences of the nominal second and third generation of migrants who fall between the neat European division of Insiders and Foreigners. Their survival strategies--largely invisible in dominant discourses--are forms of resistance that destabilize the ascribed
essentialist identities not only by rejecting them, but through a strategic and creative (mis)use, rearranging a variety of concepts and their interrelations, among them time, space, memory, as well as race, class, nation, gender, and sexuality. And while it is important to note that this subversive approach does not necessarily always translate into progressive politics, it does represent a concerted attack on the myth of colorblindness that is long overdue in a Europe moving between unification, globalization and ethnicization and in which competing discourses around national and continental identities are more often than not centered on the trope of the threatening migrant.

The crisis caused by the clash of the internalist European narrative of racelessness with a growing population of color could be said to produce Muñoz’ “identities-in-difference [that] emerge from a failed interpellation within the dominant public sphere. Their emergence is predicated on their ability to disidentify with the mass public and instead, through this disidentification, contribute to the function of a counterpublic sphere” (Muñoz 1999, 7). These identities reflect a move towards reacting to the process of Othering directed at European migrant and minority communities by speaking from the position of ethnicized and racialized subjects, emphasizing exactly this Othering rather than accepting it as reflecting an essential truth. Practiced as an individual as well as communal strategy, this resulted in the emergence of a loose Europe-wide postethnic activist network, creating such a counterpublic sphere.

The appearance of minority youths as agents in the European public space, resisting their silencing with often innovate tactics (which however do not necessarily undermine or even question all forms of oppression, at times instead reinforcing them), is among the most important changes in the European landscape since the fall of the Soviet Empire. This is a new development that requires new modes of analysis,
working on the intersections of concepts and disciplines. Such a creolization of theory has the potential of expressing exactly the positionalities deemed impossible in dominant discourses, namely that of Europeans of color, while foregrounding economic analyses often downplayed in the culturalist discourse around Europe’s “migration problem.” In my analysis, I thus draw on a variety of theories not necessarily usually thought together. Their adaptation to the configurations I summarize as the queering of ethnicity requires the introduction of a vocabulary adequately expressing identities long silenced. In order to capture the complex interplay of art and activism at play in European minorities’ queering of ethnicity rather than to domesticate it by privileging particular topics, suppressing the simultaneity of issues and forms that is one of its defining characteristics, it is not only necessary to combine various theoretical approaches and methodologies but also to use a structure approximating that of the topic itself.

My discussion is built around a couple of central concepts, the first of which is the idea of a “postethnic” minoritarian identity. In a time of renewed essentialism and clash of civilizations scenarios, it seems important to point to a tradition of radical, postnational and postethnic cultural activism around issues of sexual, ethnic, gender, and national identity that originated in exactly those groups that in current European discourses around cultural identities appear as “naturally” balkanized, unable to transcend a limited and backwards ethnic perspective. Contrary to this narrative, minority youths--misfits within the strict identity ascriptions characterizing contemporary Europe, not meeting the criteria of “authentic Europeanness” nor being “authentic migrants” since they never in fact migrated--circumvent the complicated question of national belonging by producing a localized, multi-centered, horizontal community, in which a strong identification with cities or neighborhoods, perceived as
spaces both created by and transcending national and ethnic limits, combines with a larger diasporic perspective.

The term that I use in my discussion of the interaction of the urban and diasporic space is “translocality.” Saskia Sassen, Etienne Balibar, Achille Mbembe, and others have pointed to the important role of urban spaces both in providing border-crossing transnational network points for global economies and in containing populations denied movement even on the national level, creating increasingly localized borderzones (Sassen 2001, 2006, Mbembe 2003, Balibar 2004). And while the claim that current neoliberal globalization processes weaken if not doom the nation state has been rightfully questioned (e.g. McNevin 2006), it seems undeniable that modes of citizenship, sovereignty, movement, and belonging cannot be grasped through a primary focus on the nation anymore (to the extent that they ever could). At the same time, rapidly growing urban populations create “mega-cities” on every continent, and with them new forms of spatial control. The “urban splintering” characterizing late modernity according to Mbembe (2003) takes different forms for different groups, groups that less and less can be classified through national and ethnic markers alone.

For the population I am concerned with, the city is the primary source of spatial identification, marking the origin as well as the limit of sovereignty. Movement--of people, information, cultural symbols--takes place between a network of cities that is accessible because of translocal structures that circumvent modes of control ever-present for European minorities largely perceived in the context of “illegitimate” presence and movement. Translocal mobility thus happens in a context that is rather different both from the legal privileges associated with cosmopolitanism (Benhabib 2006) and the formal networks of transnational movements as described by Sidney Tarrow (2005).
In addition to these two key terms, the book uses a number of concepts which intersect in all four chapters, each of which foregrounds different aspects of the relationship of (public) space and (national and diasporic) time, memory and identity, community and agency, and relates them to various forms of popular culture, namely music, literature, performance, and video art. Attention to cultural productions of minorities in the European context so far has largely focused on mainstream art forms; there is a sizable body of studies on “migrant literature,” recently rivaled by a growing interest in film (see e.g. Adelson 2005, Göktürk 2001, Hargreaves/McKinney 1997). A lot of the most exciting and innovative work by minority artists however takes place in the less well defined, less respected fields of vernacular culture or “public art” in a variety of forms from safer sex performances in gay clubs to illegal billboards or event flyers. These minoritarian interventions create a new type of cultural archive, (re)inscribing the presence of racialized communities onto the European landscape. The artists and activists’ use of vernacular, often ephemeral forms is what allows them to escape the institutionalized mechanisms of racelessness designed to silence positionalities beyond the white/Christian European vs. migrant dichotomy, but its very ability to subvert binary models of identity also poses challenges for the theorization of this situational queering of ethnicity. In order to trace the alternative archives currently created across Europe, I provide close readings of a variety of non-traditional cultural “texts” ranging from spoken word poetry to drag performances to the hijab worn by some European Muslimas.

Using an understanding of culture that consciously or unconsciously relates back to 1970s U.S. women of color feminism’s multidirectional resistance against the exclusion of female and queer subjects from liberal, nationalist as well as anti-imperialist movements (Ferguson 2003), the Hip-Hop artists, feminist organizers, queer
performers, and migration activists that are at the center of this study represent the first concerted efforts of racialized minorities to enter and define as Europeans the debate on what it means to be European. One central aim of these groups was and is to uncover a different history of race in Europe, one in which people of color appear as insiders and agents. This book sees itself as part of this attempt by mapping the conditions under which this activism emerged and by theorizing its varied but connected agendas.
Together they represent an approach to central questions of our postnational age that offers different answers to pressing questions around identity, locality, agency, and memory, if nothing else shaking the certainty of clear-cut identities, offering some hope that alternative worldviews are possible and livable.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1, Stranger in My Own Country. European Identities, Migration, and Diasporic Soundscapes, explores the notion of a European public sphere and its dependence on the successful creation of a common continental history. In order to deconstruct the particular forms of racialization shaping contemporary Europe, in their continental commonalities and national differences, it is necessary to be aware of the historical formations leading up to the present point; a point at which, after the major steps of economic and political unification have been implemented, the need to define what makes a European, to create common symbols and a shared sense of history in order to gain broad support for the new continental order, has increasingly moved to the center of policy debates. Thus, I start this chapter with the current quest for a postnational European identity, reflecting the complex economic, political, cultural and social processes that have moved Europe beyond the nation-state over the last two decades,
exploring its relation to the overarching discourse of racelessness and its role in shaping narratives of the continent’s future and past as well as in conceptualizing transnational spaces.

My exploration begins with two recent incidents that could be considered exemplary for the emergence of a transnational European public: the widespread protests against the Iraq war in the spring of 2003 and the “riots” in the French banlieus in late 2005. These events and their reception allow me to map the parameters of European discourses on self and other as they pertain to the position of racialized minorities. I approach them in the first segments of Chapter 1 through the lens of two of Europe’s most important public intellectuals, Jürgen Habermas and Jean Baudrillard. In their responses to the protests, both authors explicitly reject and criticize Eurocentrism in favor of a more universalist, cosmopolitan perspective, but nonetheless remain within Eurocentric parameters, limited in their ability to go beyond them, I argue, by the invisible continental “grammar of race” (Hall, in: Dines/Humez 1994): different as their positions are, in their assessment of Europe’s internal as well as external relationships, both philosophers seem caught in a perspective that continues to place racialized migrant and minority populations outside the limits of “Europe.”

The second part of Chapter 1 is devoted to conceptualizations of Europeanness to be found within excluded populations. I look closer at the material consequences of this exclusion and in particular its effect on spatial relations. In addressing the severe limits posed on minority youths’ mobility, and the role that local spaces play in processes of identification for these groups, I provide a different context for the urban uprisings that neither began nor ended with the “riots” of 2005. Continuing the earlier sections’ exploration of cosmopolitanism’s (in)ability to address issues of race and migration, I apply its focus on stateless migrants as the paradigmatic population in
need of Kantian hospitality and Arendt’s “right to have rights” (Arendt 1951) to minority youths living in European cities as largely rightless civil war refugees. In doing so, I turn around dominant discourses on legal and cultural belonging, placing the most marginalized and externalized group at the center of my inquiry into Europeanness by taking up legal theorist Bonnie Honig’s question: “What if refugees, rather than (or in addition to) being the exceptions of the juridical state (or continental) system, are metaphorically its norm, the exemplary objects of the sort of power that the state system and its sovereign legalism represent but hide – Bio-power and its rule over all as bare life?” (Honig, in: Benhabib 2006, 115)

The chapter ends with what arguably is Europe’s most important transborder counterpublic site, i.e. Hip-Hop culture. When it arrived in Europe, in the mid-1980s, the metropolitan experience of a disintegration of (spatial) ethnic unity combined with an increasing ethnicization by the majority had already fostered cross-ethnic identifications among urban youths, and Hip-Hop immediately appealed to European minority and migrant teenagers in search of a language in which to represent themselves as distinct subjects: “We went to Switzerland and met the same people we knew here . . . those were Afro-Swiss, Swiss Turks, Portuguese Swiss or Vietnamese – exactly the same scene as here. We got together and communicated in the common language of a shared culture” (Advanced Chemistry’s Linguist, in: Loh/Güngor 2002, 132). This discovery of a “common language” across communities and borders often amounted to an epiphany for young artists who began to use Hip-Hop as a tool to analyze and name their positionality as minoritarian Europeans within a continental system that continued to define them as foreigners. It was the appropriation of this U.S. born afro-diasporic artform that first allowed Europeans of color to create a language in which to define themselves as belonging to Europe. My interest in early Euro-Hip-Hop
culture thus lies primarily in the way in which this “shared culture” helped to articulate and create a new type of postethnic, translocal identity able to counter the continental discourse of exclusion targeting racialized populations, in particular young men of color such as those at the center of the French unrest of 2005 (for which press and politicians were fast to blame “rappers”).

While I do not intend to overemphasize Hip-Hop’s subversive, liberating, or anti-essentialist potential, it is significant and worth exploring that it was this culture, inseparable from the African diaspora in the Americas, that for the first time created a forum of exchange for a multi-ethnic, economically marginalized native population that had been effectively silenced by being inscribed with the signs of essential ethnic and cultural Otherness. In concluding Chapter 1, I illustrate how Hip-Hop’s role in creating a translocal counterpublic inclusive of minority populations relates to the deconstruction of internalist notions of European time and space—in particular the question whether colonialism should be included in a European memory discourse—by turning to an ongoing legal battle between the French government and an underground rapper of Algerian descent around the question of (post)colonial state violence against urban minority communities.

Chapter 2, Dimensions of Diaspora. Women of Color Feminism, Black Europe and Queer Memory Discourses addresses the scarcity of theorizations of race in European migration studies and the potential of a reassessment of “diaspora” as used in transnational black discourses for an analysis of the continent’s minority communities as well as the impact of women of color feminism on black diasporic identities, in particular those in Europe. Inseparable from such an exploration is the question why Black Europe has long been marginal within the African diaspora and what its fuller inclusion might contribute to an internationalization and complication of “blackness.”
Continental Europe’s negligence is largely due to its supposedly secondary role for the central source of the African diaspora in the West, the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The focus on the latter lets diasporic populations who have entered the West through different trajectories necessarily appear as less representative of the black condition. Accordingly, African Diaspora Studies have so far overwhelmingly focused on the black experience in the Americas and the methodological framework developed to grasp the particulars of that situation cannot necessarily be applied to other parts of the world. It can offer however an important foundation for further explorations of black communities, including those in continental Europe who so far play little role in transnational diaspora studies precisely because of their divergence from the U.S. norm.

In Chapter 2, I explore how the non-normative elements of the black European experience can be used to complicate and challenge existing binaries and blind spots by decentering the U.S. diaspora experience exactly through applying its theorizations to the European context. Building on the critical examination of black diaspora identity pushed by women of color feminism and queer of color critique, I address the potentially productive complications that the European case with its particular configurations of racial, ethnic, and religious ascriptions presents. Among them are the intersections of Muslim and African diasporas, raising the question how race is negotiated in a transnational community that is largely non-white and non-Western, the relationship between “Africanness” and blackness, for example in regard to Europe’s population of North African descent and to the (self)definition of Eastern European Roma as black—all reminding us that the latter is not a term filled with absolute and essential meaning but the result of a complicated and continuous process of, often asymmetrical, interactions and negotiations.
A new stage in these negotiations was reached in the 1980s as a direct result of transnational feminist networks, introducing U.S. discourses on race to the European feminist movement: U.S. women of color feminism offered a theorization of interrelated oppressions, creating links to “Third World women” across the globe and thus laying the foundation for postethnic coalitions among women of color in Europe within both feminist and migrant organizations. Audre Lorde in particular, who spent much time in Europe, had a tremendous impact on the continent’s black feminists and by extension on the Afro-European movements that gained momentum in the 1980s, especially in Germany and the Netherlands, giving these fledgling communities rather unique gender-dynamics.

The invisibility if not impossibility of black European communities, their lack of spatial and temporal anchoring in national or diasporic narratives, facilitated a further questioning of heteronormative, linear narratives of black identity that had been initiated by feminist discourses, replacing them with a fractured, dialogic subjectivity that found its primary artistic expression in (spoken word) poetry—just as Hip-Hop provided a form adequate for expressing a postindustrial urban experience representing what is the unnamable in the linear narrative of a constantly progressing modernity. Using two landmark feminist anthologies, Farbe bekennen (Showing Our Colors), published in Berlin in 1986, and Talking Home, Amsterdam 1999, I argue that the combination of poetry, both spoken and written, and autobiography within the early black feminist movements in Germany and the Netherlands allowed for a larger critique of (patri)linear (nation)time that resulted in an alternative genealogy of both diasporic and national belonging. This genealogy allowed for the negotiation of shifting positions in the complex field framed by race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation and was fundamentally shaped by Europe’s encounter with women of color feminism. The
resulting model of black European identity was one that reacted to the process of racialization itself rather than aiming at producing a “legitimate” racial or national identity, challenging the very idea of normative, exclusive identity formations and thus opening up a space for postethnic identifications among communities of color in Europe (and beyond).

Chapter 3, Secular Submissions. Muslim Europeans, Female Bodies and Performative Politics, like the preceding chapters explores concepts of time and space in their relation to European minority communities and their queering of ethnicity. Here, the aim is to deconstruct the dichotomy through which European Muslims are produced as queer, as a contradiction in terms, both spatially and temporally displaced within a heteronormative discourse of nation and religion; a discourse that interacts and intersects with supranational liberal cosmopolitanisms in assigning Muslims a position both outside of Europe and outside of modernity--in particular through a focus on the European Muslima and her un/covered body. The third chapter links discourses around (non)normative sexualities and gender performances to the role of the female body within the (post)nation by focusing on the intersections of two tropes that have been established as necessarily and symptomatically incompatible in Western secular discourses: a European Muslim identity and progressive activism around gender and sexuality. This allows me to further explore what has no doubt become the context in which issues of migration and assimilation are debated across Europe: Islam, or more specifically the increasingly rhetorical question whether being Muslim is compatible with being European.

I will thus revisit from a different angle the quest for a “European identity” and its grounding in a problematic universalist tradition addressed in Chapter 1. I begin with a discussion of the historical links between Europe, cosmopolitanism, secularism,
and Christianity, effectively constructing “European” and “Muslim” as oxymoronic. I then turn to the continent’s explicitly secular North West, where I argue the discursive identification of minorities with migrants, migrants with Muslims and Muslims with violent, fundamentalist young men and disenfranchised, oppressed women and girls has been firmly established in the wake of the Danish “cartoon crisis” and the assassination of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands.

The discourses on Europeanness explored in Chapter 1 constructed the male Muslim “2nd generation migrant” as embodying essentialist positions on gender, sexuality, national and ethnic identity, as presenting a threat both to minority women and to enlightened European masculinity. This configuration is still present in recent debates on headscarf bans and “honor killings,” but the focus shifts to Muslim girls and women as passive and silent victims of their culture, the only possible affirmation of independence available to them the escape into dominant society.37 While Spivak’s trope of white men saving brown women from brown men is certainly recognizable here (Spivak 1988, 296), in its European liberal, secular version it appears in two slightly different variations, emphasizing the role of white feminists as mediators and saviors and, more importantly, granting (some) Muslimas the ability to escape on their own (though only after an intellectual awaking initiated by the encounter with Western secularism).

In Chapter 3, I trace this discourse from its affirmation in both liberal feminism, exemplified by Dutch playwright Adelheid Roosen’s work, and in the “escape narratives” of ex-Muslims such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali, to its deconstruction by Muslim feminist activists like Danish Asmaa Abdol-Hamid. My focus throughout is on the uses of performative strategies in constructing as well as destabilizing binary notions of movement and immobility, progress and stagnation in relation to West and Global
South, Orient and Occident, Islam and (secular) Christianity, Muslim men and women. That is, I am following Diana Taylor in using performance as a “methodological lens that enables [me] to analyze events as performances” (Taylor 2003, 3). Common to these very different types of performative politics is the centrality of the image of the (veiled) Muslim woman, signifying much larger assumptions around cultural (im)mobilities and (im)possibilities. My notion of performance in this context begins with Frantz Fanon’s assessment of nationalism as a scopic politics often symbolized by the clothing of female bodies. I move from traditional forms of performance illustrating this view, such as Roosen’s plays, to the performative interventions of political activists like Hirsi Ali, both of which retain a hierarchy in which the authors “speak for” Muslimas, literally inscribing their perspective on generic, deindividualized female bodies. I end with feminist socialist Abdol-Hamid, who takes a radically different approach by using her own body to insist on the compatibility of supposedly exclusive positionalities, such as wearing the hijab and being a radical feminist, and most importantly on the right and ability of European Muslimas to speak for themselves.

The first part of Chapter 4, ‘Because it is Our Stepfatherland.’ Queering European Public Spaces continues to explore discourses around (non)normative sexualities in relation to performance and body, in particular the performance of black and Muslim queerness. Chapter 3’s exploration of the implicit link between universalist humanism and Christianity in the construction of a postnational Europe is based on the assumption that while in its current version, this discourse necessarily and explicitly externalized Muslim Europeans, it is part of a larger heteronormative system that excludes all racialized minorities from the sphere of proper Europeanness. Adding sexuality to the previous chapter’s analysis of the role of gender in Othering Muslims brings into focus how the positioning of both hetero- and homosexual Muslims as
“queer” in relation to a heteronormative model of Europeanness is complimented by a homonormative neoliberal model of sexual identity. This model, expressed in spatialized hierarchies of the postindustrial “creative city,” is explicitly racialized, again employing the culture trope in order to mainstream and depoliticize a white, middle-class gay and lesbian positionality while at the same time silencing communities of color and their alternative models of (queer) identity.

Returning the focus to urban spaces and their neoliberal reordering, Chapter 4 addresses exactly these alternative models. I begin with an analysis of the impact of the Dutch queer of color collective Strange Fruit, founded in Amsterdam in 1989, whose activism combined feminist and queer politics with a grounding in Muslim and African diasporic cultures. Rejecting the normativity of a white western model of homosexual identity, Strange Fruit constantly juggled questions of race, class, gender, and sexuality, refusing to prioritize one over the other. Active for more than a decade, the group created a network that stretched across Europe and into Africa, Asia, and North America. One of these connections could be traced to Salon Oriental, a Turkish-German performance/activist collective that through its radical drag shows engaged in a queering of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and nation that challenged, like Strange Fruit’s activism, the move among white LGBT organizations towards a homonormative assimilation into a neoliberal mainstream marginalizing queers of color on multiple levels. Located in the center of Berlin’s largely minoritarian Kreuzberg neighborhood, the group, like the Hip-Hop artists working with it, was directly affected by the restructuring of deindustrialized urban neighborhoods, justified through “creative city” discourses celebrating the marginalization and objectification of communities of color as a sign of integration. Salon Oriental’s use of cultural forms of resistance ignored in radical Marxist critiques of postindustrial urban spaces became part of a national
discourse through Kanak Attak, an explicitly anti-essentialist, translocally structured migration activism group. Since its inception following the 1997 Urban Skillz Hip-Hop festival, Kanak Attak, consisting for the largest part of members of the 2nd generation, spread its message of “the end of the culture of dialogue,” drawing on sources as diverse as the Black Panther Party, operaismo, Giorgio Agamben, Hip-Hop, and queer theory.

The latter parts of Chapter 4, focusing on the role of visuality in the queering of ethnicity and in particular in creating alternative public archives, uses the activism of Kanak Attak, as expressed in its performances and video work, to tie together tropes addressed in earlier chapters: local and translocal public spaces, migration and memory, performance and body politics all were central to the group’s assault on dominant perceptions of the second generation and its place in European society. While Kanak Attak’s anti-essentialist strategy ultimately reached its limits in failing to account for the tensions emerging from the different positionalities of minorities and migrants on which it was built in the first place, it was useful, in fact necessary, in creating a minoritarian voice crossing ethnic, cultural, and religious markers used by liberal multiculturalism as well as identity politics to prevent exactly such cross-identifications. Kanak Attak can be considered the first group that explicitly built its activism around the label of “inauthenticity” that Europeans of color are invariably faced with in continental discourses of identity, i.e. while aggressively claiming a space in public discourses, the activists did not aim at creating a legitimate positionality from which to speak, but instead continuously attacked and undermined the notion of authentic belonging itself.

The conclusion’s three sections reflect the three levels of analysis present throughout the book and frame the preceding chapters by juxtaposing dominant
notions of European identity built around an internalist, exclusive notion of Europeanness based on the ideology of racelessness, as exemplified in the EU-sponsored Museum of Europe in Brussels, with the “inauthentic,” inclusive identity generated by the queering of ethnicity, ending with presenting a tentative theorization of European minority identity from a queer of color perspective.
Notes to Introduction

1 The Dutch term “zwarte scholen,” black schools, referring to high numbers of non-white students, is striking in its unusually explicit racial reference--more so since the term “black” is not generally used to reference black citizens (or Dutch of color in general), for the former instead the majority still favors the term neger, similar in meaning to the English term “Negro” but supposed to be without negative connotations in the liberal Dutch context. “Black schools” signify, in official as well as popular discourse, schools with more than 40% of “allochton” students. “Allochton” in turn is a Dutch administrative term that includes migrants as well as Dutch citizens with at least one parent born in a non-Western nation (not including Japan). In its popular use, “allochton” differentiates people of color, regardless of citizenship, and white, “autochtonous” Dutch. Schools with a large number of allochton students invariably are located in poor neighborhoods, but rather than focusing on class, the racialilized use of “black schools” emphasizes the link between underachievement and overrepresentation of minorities (Arts/Nabha 2001, Hoving 2005).

2 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

3 This book focuses on continental Europe since the British discourse, while sharing some general European tropes, addresses race in different, more explicit ways than the debates on the continent and does so as part of an Anglophone discourse to which the rest of Europe only opened up recently. This is not meant to imply however that both can be sharply separated. On the British discourse see e.g. Baker/Diawara/Lindeborg 1996.

4 It seems important at this point to explicitly address the connotations of the term “migrant” in the continental European context, even though or rather because my
analysis focuses on racialized minorities rather than migrants (and on the formers’ persistent exclusion from the community of Europeans). It is impossible however to discuss one issue without the other, particularly in this context. Key to the ability to define minority populations as non-members of the nation is the racialized European understanding of the concept of “(im)migrant,” which contrary to the U.S. use of the term implies a strictly temporary presence--expressed most clearly in the concept of “guest worker”--but at the same time indicating a permanent state across generations. That is, whoever is identified as racial or religious Other is necessarily conceptualized as a migrant, i.e. as originating outside of Europe, even if this origin is two, three, or more generations removed. The term thus is less related to legal status or place of birth, but to a perceived immutable diversion from “Europeanness.” Assimilation of the second and succeeding generations into the nation still largely depends on the ability to “pass for” a member of the national majority in a quite literal sense (notwithstanding that this ideal member of the national community against which assimilation is measured is him/herself an artificial construct, based on the national imaginary rather than its reality), creating irresolvable tensions for those possessing signs of difference considered inassimilable. Apart from the obvious racialization at play in this construct, it neglects the significant differences that exist between a first generation that physically migrates and its descendants who are in effect minority citizens but in continental Europe remain defined through the paradigm of migration: the children (and grandchildren) of migrants of color, rather than becoming 1st (or 2nd) generation citizens, are considered 2nd (or 3rd etc.) generation migrants.

5 The terms “2nd and 3rd generation migrant” are used for minority citizens across Europe, from Sweden to Italy, Romania to Spain. In addition, there are specific concepts
such as the Dutch “allochton,” mentioned above, referencing those who are Dutch citizens by birth but not entirely of “autochthonous” Dutch parentage, in practice applied to Dutch citizens of color. The recent German category “Bürger mit migrantischem Hintergrund” (citizen with migrant background) has a similar function in being applied exclusively to “racially different” Germans and not for example to “ethnic German” white immigrants (the latter, descendents of Germans who migrated to Eastern Europe and Russia in the 18th Century, have privileged access to German citizenship due to the nation’s ethnic understanding of belonging. See Brubaker 1992).

6 Language, through universal education, creates ethnicity as linguistic community, but the latter’s potential openness needs to be countered in varying degrees by race as creating ethnicity as a closed, biological community (Balibar 1994).

7 While the origins of Whiteness Studies can be traced to early 20th Century African American discourse and W.E.B. DuBois’ 1910 essay “The Souls of White Folk” (see Rabaka 2007), its origins are more commonly associated with 1990s publications such as Toni Morrison’s Playing in the Dark, Ruth Frankenberg’s White Women, Race Matters or, in the British context, Richard Dryer’s White. The reception of Whiteness Studies in continental Europe is a more recent phenomenon, exactly because of a widespread skepticism towards the usefulness of racial categories within the continental context, see e.g. Gabriele Griffin’s and Rosi Braidotti’s 2002 essay “Whiteness and European Situatedness.” Making the case for a European Whiteness Studies by proposing that “[t]he culturally constructed and biologically seemingly validated racism which has informed, at least intermittently, the politics of most, if not all, European countries over the past two hundred years is an issue which we as Europeans have not even begun to address adequately.” (226), they go on however to point out that the “racialization of
culture” (229) in the European context led to the violent exclusion of groups falling within the category “white” (exemplified in the Holocaust as well as the Balkan wars). While this is an important observation--and one that my own studies aims to incorporate through its focus on the interaction of ethnicization and racialization as well as the racialization of religion--it is unfortunately contrasted with a simplified model of a “black-white binary” seen as symptomatic for U.S. racial relations. This falsely assumes that a complicated, culture-based rather than biological notion of “race” is somehow specific to Europe as opposed to the U.S., neglecting both the important contributions of e.g. Asian American/Asian Diaspora Studies to a more differentiated image and the work of Whiteness Studies itself in breaking up the homogenizing function of the category white (see e.g. Lowe 1996 or Eng 2000). It is this simple “black-and-white” model of U.S. racial relations that is often evoked in arguments against the necessity of European Whiteness Studies, rather than a thorough exploration of Anglophone theorizations of “race”--which in fact often come to the very same conclusions used by its critics to reject it (see e.g. Kerner 2007).

8 In particular since the rise of scientific racism in the late 19th Century, this system of racialization included the explicit division of Europeans in three “subraces,” of which only the “Nordic” was assumed to be fully white, while Eastern Europeans were believed to be “tainted” with “Asiatic”, Southern Europeans with “Semitic” and “black blood” (see El-Tayeb 2001).

9 Both “ethnicization” and “racialization” put the analytical focus on the process of Othering rather than on supposed qualities innate to the objects of ascription. While these terms reflect as closely as possible categorizations employed within European societies as a means to create seemingly clear boundaries between insiders and
outsiders, they are not meant to imply that the ethnicized/racialized groups are stable or all face similar conditions. It is exactly the simultaneous claim to the obviousness and staticness of these categories and their constant rearrangement and reconstruction that defines processes of racialization and ethnicization. (see e.g. Gualtieri 2001, Koshy 2001, Bayoumi 2006)

10 For a critique of this position and its own inherent ethno-imperialism, e.g. in its wholly inadequate understanding of the Brazilian situation, in particular the long history of internal, rather than U.S. imposed, debates on race see e.g. Merchant, in: Lionnet/Shi 2005.

11 Too often, continental European academic writing on race and migration fails to recognize what Stuart Hall calls “inferential racism,” i.e. structural patterns that allow if not enforce the repetition of racist assumptions and behaviors without necessary intent. Frequently, while explicitly racist positions are rejected and purposeful discrimination is explicitly defined as undesirable, the basic assumption that racist attitudes and policies in European societies are caused by the presence of racialized populations is left unquestioned (Hall 2003, see e.g. Weigl 2009 for an example).

12 This is not meant to deny the important differences between the concepts of performance and performativity, in particular with regard to agency--(almost) necessarily present in the former and absent in the latter. It is however exactly the intersectionality between the two that has led to some of the most productive explorations of multiple identity formations--see e.g. Postcolonial Studies arguing against a celebratory understanding of performance, mimicry, enactments of someone else’s identity as empowering or liberating for marginalized groups (Fanon 1965, Fuss 1994, Babbha 1996) and queer of color critique’s pushing queer studies to reflect on the
link between collective performance and (individualized) performativity (Munoz 1999, Johnson 2005).

13 In recent years, a growing number of younger authors joins pioneers like Stuart Hall and Philomena Essed in challenging the notion that race has no place in the ideological framework shaping Europe and it seems far from coincidental that this literature, often authored by members of racialized groups, draws on postcolonial and diaspora theories still largely ignored in mainstream European scholarship on “migrants” (Essed 1991). While this new scholarship is slowly gaining ground, the consensus that Europe’s Others come from Outside (where they will ideally return to) makes it especially hard for minority voices to enter public debates, including those of academia, leaving continental European migration studies a largely white field. See e.g. Ha 1999, Gelbin/Konuk/Piesche 1999, Guitiérez/Steyerl 2002 for Germany; King 2001, Amiraux 2004, and Keaton 2006 for France; Arts/Nabha 2001, Hoving 2005, Ghorashi 2007 for the Netherlands, Gheorghe/Acton 1999, Grigore 2003, Mudure 2005 on Romania and Rooth/Ekberg 2003, Sawyer 2000 for Sweden, or Card/Schmidt 2003, Crul/Vermeulen 2003 for a European focus.

14 I am not suggesting that these empires can be equated with colonial overseas possessions. I do believe however that they constituted a form of spatial and ideological governance much closer to the colonialism practiced by other European nations than to the inner-European contestation and shifting of borders taking place at the same time. Another important issue relating to inner-European divisions deserving further exploration is the central but complicated role of the former “Second World” of Eastern Europe, on the verge of becoming a first-class member of the West, and the stakes of whiteness involved in this process. There is a growing body of literature exploring
Eastern Europe from a postcolonial perspective, for a theorization of this development see e.g. Kania 2009, Korek 2009.

15 This is partly due to the sociological approach dominating Migration Studies, requiring classifications and divisions of populations into clear-cut groups that do not necessarily reflect their reality. This perception is being challenged within sociolinguistics however, which has been tracing the growth of multiethnolects, reflecting the increasingly creolized character of urban European neighborhoods (Quist 2000, Wiese 2009).

16 The point here is not to drive a wedge between migrant and minority populations, there are obvious intersections and common stakes shared by both groups. The definition however of people as migrants whose grandparents already where born in the nation they supposedly “migrated” to is not only methodologically questionable but politically dangerous.

17 The European definition of “national” minorities largely refers to populations originating in another, often neighboring, European nation, populations thus who have often been minoritized through the redrawing of borders.

18 For an example see the European Union funded “Museum of European History,” discussed in detail in the Conclusion.

19 Many thanks to Lisa Yoneyama for bringing this article to my attention. For other national variants of the “not looking European” experience see e.g. Ahmed 2006, Keaton 2006, Khemiri 2006, Kantara 2000.

20 While this regime is moderated by significant national and regional differences, comparative studies of minorities, i.e. “2nd and 3rd generation migrants,” in Europe indicate similarities despite different national rhetoric and policies (Crul 2003,
Rooth/Ekberg 2003). This presence of underlying common attitudes shaping the
treatment of racialized groups makes it possible, in fact necessary, to talk about a
European ideology.

21 While the claim that migrants of color are a recent European phenomenon is rather
standard, there are of course numerous counterexamples: Jews, Muslims, and Roma
have lived on the continent in sizeable numbers since the Middle Ages and the presence
of Asian and black populations is not a 21st or even 20th Century phenomenon either.

22 The billboard campaign was accompanied by an online game on the party’s website
where visitors could personally “kick out” black sheep (Haegler 2007). The SVP also
was behind the successful 2009 campaign to ban minarets in Switzerland, a campaign
accompanied by similarly incentive billboards, showing minarets rising like missiles
from a Swiss flag (again) behind a dark skinned woman wearing a burkha (Jakobs
2009).

23 Apart from the more obvious contestations of colonialism’s effects on the colonized,
this history also includes episodes of inter-European policies such as the massive forced
resettlement of several million people in South-East Europe after World War I, repeated
on an even larger scale after the next war (Aly 2003). These structural interventions
could be seen as signs of “the persistence of administrative methods and habits
acquired during contact with ‘indigenous’ populations, which, after having been
‘projected’ into colonial space during the decisive period of the formation of the
republican state apparatus, were reintroduced and ‘naturalized’ in the metropole.”
(Balibar 2004, 39)
Instead, Roma tend to only appear in the context of the dangers of “migration” or as victims of an Eastern European “democracy deficit” due to 40 years of communist rule (European Commission Directorate 2004, Ivanov 2006).

Italy has seen a surge of racist violence against Roma—both recent migrants, mostly from Romania, and Italian citizens—drawing heavily on century-old stereotypes. In May 2008, a Roma camp near Naples was torched for example after a Roma woman had been accused of stealing an Italian baby—the “Gypsy baby stealer” trope is as common and as exploitable for the instigation of pogroms in Europe as that of the Jews’ ritualistic slaughter of Christian virgins was at least until the end of the Second World war and that of the black rapist is to this day. The popular right coalition of Prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, rather than doing anything to curb the violence, engaged in a policy of blaming the victims by ordering the mandatory fingerprinting of Roma, (including children). See: Popham 2008, Povoledo 2008, Owen 2008.

The history of Jews in Europe is of course inseparable from the racing of religion characterizing Europe’s perception of marginalized minorities. Despite the central place of the Holocaust in European rituals of remembrance (Suleiman 2006, Huyssen 2005, Judt 2008), its lasting effects on European societies remain understudied: in an astonishing act of suppression the “ethnic homogeneity” of post-war Europe upset by the beginning of large-scale labor migration often remains unrelated to the unprocessed “disappearance” of the Jewish minority population. See e.g. Amira Hass:

I found my answer years later, during the eighties, while studying in Amsterdam. Living there, I felt the true force of the void left after 1945, of how Europe, home to millions of Jews for hundreds of years, had simply spewed them out; how most people had collaborated with Nazi
Germany’s antipluralistic psychosis and accepted the gradual and final removal of the Jews with indifference. But more, I felt tormented by the ease with which Europe had accepted the emptiness that followed, had filled the void, and moved on. (Hass 2000, 8)

27 British novelist Martin Amis in a recent interview gave a bizarre but at the same time representative example of this revisionism when talking about the Lebanon war: “For Nasrallah [the head of Hezbollah], it’s a power play; for Israel it’s survival. And they always have this hanging over them. It’s our fault because we put them in it. There couldn’t have been a worse place on earth than where they are. They should have been in Bavaria and then they would have had a couple of leather-shorted scoutmasters from the BLO throwing Molotov cocktails at them, from time to time . . . at least they wouldn’t have been surrounded by millions of people who thirst for their death. So I think you’ve got to bear that in mind” (Amis 2006). A number of scholars has argued that within the U.S. context, Jews have successfully moved towards whiteness throughout the 20th Century (Brodkin 1998, Jacobson 1998, Novik 1999). To a certain extend this is true for Europe as well, in particular in relation to the increasing racialization of Muslims (as shown in the above quote, which manages to erase and reverse the fact that Bavarians, and other Germans, in fact have murdered millions of Jews, while Middle Easterners have not), but the European situation is shaped by significantly different historical and contemporary parameters as well.

28 According to a widely quoted 2006 poll for example, 63% of the Dutch believe Islam to be “incompatible” with Europe – this despite a European Muslim population numbering at least 15 million (Angus Reid Global Monitor June 7, 2006).
This is by no means meant to downplay the disturbing rise in right-wing violence since the 1990s or the constant successes and mainstreaming of extreme right organizations and parties (see Thalhammer 2001). It is exactly the inability to address racialization, its consequences, and its material effects that creates the discursive vacuum that these groups are attempting to fill with an explicitly racist discourse.

The extended jurisdiction of border police now includes the right to check papers anywhere, independent of “suspicious circumstances,” if they suspect a violation of immigration laws. Numerous complaints indicate that this translates into the profiling of people of color and Muslims--while in fact the majority of illegal immigrants in the Union are white, Christian Eastern Europeans, as well as Ukrainians and Russians. See Becker 1998, Thalhammer 2001.

See Butler 1993, 219:

What are the possibilities of politicizing disidentification, this experience of misrecognition, this uneasy sense of standing under a sign to which one does and does not belong? . . . [I]t may be that the affirmation of that slippage, that the failure of identification, is itself the point of departure for a more democratizing affirmation of internal difference.

Disidentification does not necessarily reject separatism as a political strategy, but recognizes that it often requires race and class privilege.

This means that my analysis focuses on urban communities, where the vast majority of minority populations is concentrated (see UCEU 2004).

This identity and the new vocabulary it produced begins to enter the mainstream, for example in the Dutch discourse around straattaal, and with this mainstreaming comes increasing commercialization and appropriation. A relationship between Hip-Hop and
“queer ethnicities” might seem a stretch in light of the routine association of Hip-Hop with misogyny and homophobia in U.S. as well as European media. But while certainly not without foundation, this discourse works to hide a far more complicated and sophisticated exploration of identity and community at the roots of Hip-Hop culture, placing it in a long tradition of cultural anti-essentialism and posthumanism that reaches from Afrofuturism to the feminist cyborg (see e.g. Rose 1994).

35 In light of the continued marginalization and silencing of black populations by European mainstream discourses, academic as well as political and popular, it is important to note that the black Other is a key trope in the European migration discourse—a discourse that in truth often is much more one of an internal racial policing. This role has very real consequences, among them the disproportionately high number of black victims of institutional as well as “informal” racism, something that disturbingly is still routinely denied in European public discourse. The degree of this denial became obvious for example in a 2006 incident in which a middle-aged black German man was almost beaten to death in Potsdam in the East of Germany by two white attackers whom he had never met before. His cell phone’s mail box recorded part of the attack, documenting that among other things he was called a “dirty nigger.” Nonetheless Germany’s Secretary of Interior, Wolfgang Schäuble, publicly criticized the Federal General Attorney for treating the case as the German equivalent of a hate crime (in itself an extremely unusual charge and one that was later dropped by the GA). In his attempt to prove that the motives of the attack were entirely unclear, Schäuble added insult to injury by stating that “blond and blue-eyed people get attacked as well, sometimes by foreigners.” In addition to providing an example of the persistent equation of people of color with “foreigners,” the reaction illustrates a structural

36 There is however a growing body of work on the black experience in Europe, see e.g. Essed 1991, El-Tayeb 2001, Lemke Muniz de Faria 2002, Campt 2003, Edwards 2003.

37 Western European guest worker programs from the 1950s onwards were in part a result of internal struggles around gender roles, resulting in the favoring of immigrant labor over a massive entry of Western European women into the labor force. This issue and others around female migration, including their complicated effects on gender perceptions in and of minority communities, growing female migration from Eastern Europe, sex work, “mail-order brides,” and domestic work, are usually invisible in these debates (see e.g. Brussa, in: Domenig et al. 2007, 1 - 13).