ABSTRACT

WHAT EUROPEANS?
AFRICAN ARTISTS’ QUESTIONING OF POWER AND GENDER IN THE NEW EUROPE.
THE WEREWERE LIKING THEATRE

Sara Tagliacozzo, Università degli Studi di Siena (Italy) and Université de Paris VIII (France)

Presented at Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference
August 20-24, 2003 Lund University, Sweden

This paper deals with the contribution of non Western women artists, see African artists, to the debate on power and gender in the New Europe. The paper relates gender issues to the increasing cultural differentiation of European women, not only linked to the enlargement of Europe to Central and Eastern European countries, but also to the massive immigration of peoples from other Continents to Europe, leading to confrontation and negotiation between and among different cultural models. The struggle for identifications can not leave the New European women unaware of the deep differences existing within postcolonial Europe on gender issues. The cultural production by non Western women, such as African ones in literature and specifically theatre by African women, can help us re-think the different notions of power relationship between men and women, and the different ways in which the female body and its needs and desires are represented.

I consider these productions as discourses participating of political realities and debates even though they do not belong to the political arena strictu sensu.

In my presentation I shall analyse theatre plays written by the African writer and artist Werewere Liking, whose invention of the word misovire led critics to speak of a new African feminism, as her theatre production makes things look more complicated. The analysis of some of her plays, such as La queue du diable, Singuè Mura, and Sogolon will highlight the deep difference existing between European and African feminist interests, represented by artists such as Liking.

A re-thinking of gender focussed literature and art products can help women to construct a European feminist agenda without forgetting or ignoring issues coming from new European subjects such as immigrant African women.