Not the Wild West: Femonationalism, gendered security regimes, and Brexit

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Introduction

On New Year's Eve of 2015 the streets of Cologne, Germany were flooded with revellers making the most of the celebrations. That night, in the main square, there unfolded a series of attacks on women in this public space. The men who were responsible for the attacks – which included groping, molestation, and pickpocketing - were, as was widely reported, migrant, black, men who were 'not German' (see Brenner and Ohlendorf, 2016, Weber, 2016a and 2016b, Kapur, 2018).

Later on that year, in the United Kingdom (UK), the British public would vote in a referendum which would ask them to respond to the question: 'should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?'. 52% of them would choose to leave.

Discourses surrounding the analysis of both these events position them as crisis points for both the political left and the political right in Europe. One discourse which symbolically ties these two seemingly distinct events together however, and which will be the focus of this chapter, is the spectre of the rape of the nation and the latent menace of the body of the black 'other'.

In their 1998 collection, Featherstone and Lash suggest that the traditional notions of the nation, and of national territory, have been troubled by the advances of globalisation, of which this refugee crisis, and the politics of Europe becomes one expression. Clashes, they suggest, of culture exceed national borders, and creates a new spatialised logic which calls into question a traditional notion of nation which relies, for its very existence, on the certainty of a border, or a territory, and a bounded population. The debates that we see play out in this chapter expose how this antagonism between what is with us and what is not, emerge. Across the political spectrum, rhetoric about the white female body[i] – violated by the black other – has been mobilised as the symbol and the crucible through which a vision of nationhood is forged.

Bringing these spatialised, sexualised understandings of the nation-as-territory to bear on debates about rape culture – or the normalisation of sexual violence against women – helps us to see how the anxieties expressed in response to this crisis become complicit with gendered security regimes, which then become state-sanctioned expressions of violence.

In this chapter I examine how this happens and what it means for a nationhood which emerges, in part, through this manifestation of rape culture.

The rape of the nation?

Before we do that, let us return to the main square in Cologne, and try to understand more about how attacks on these women became transliterated into the rape of a nation, and how the sexually molested white female body would play a part in the future of Europe.

At the time of the Cologne attacks, there was much confusion about the events that were taking place. As the investigative work of Brenner and Ohlendorf (2016) demonstrates, even several months after the incident, there remained considerable ambiguity about the unfolding events of the night. For some, the New Year's Eve festivities were raucous and bawdy, but otherwise not dangerous, for others, the volume of crime reported that night suggested it was an incidence of organised crime. For the police – who according to Brenner and Ohlendorf were overwhelmed, and unable to respond to all the criminal incidences that night – things got totally out of hand, for women who were robbed and sexually harassed at the train station and in the square that night, it was a living nightmare.

The level of ambiguity and uncertainty was reflected in policy, police, and public responses to the events. Weber (2016a and 2016b) and Boulila and Carri (2017) confirm the observations made by Brenner and Ohlendorf (2016) about racialized and gendered responses that emerged at all these levels in Germany. It is not my intention to rehearse those observations here. Instead, it is helpful to return to some of the initial misapprehensions that emerged in the aftermath of the events in the centre of Cologne 2015, and to bring them into a dialogue with contemporary and emerging anxieties of the nation, played out on the bodies of white women.

In the aftermath of the New Year's Eve attacks in Cologne, 1168 crimes were reported to police, of which 493 were incidences of sexual assault. The men accused were said to be of non-German origin, speaking Arabic, 'looking North African', and not 'of European appearance' (reported in Huggler, 5 Jan 2016). The refugees who had entered the country during 2015's 'long summer of migration' (during which thousands of people seeking asylum in Europe walked through Europe to settle in places like Germany, see Georgi, 2019: 88-89) were blamed. The attacks fuelled calls from the centre right, the far right and some left-wing parties to close the German borders to this influx of people - mostly black men – seeking asylum. As police investigations developed over the course of 2016-17, 52 men were identified and arrested. Three were convicted.

The dearth of convictions was due, in part, to elements of German law which required women to be able to identify their attackers, which in the circumstances was unrealistic. The police themselves found it hard to distinguish the identities of the attackers on security cameras in the square. Unidentifiable, indistinguishable bodies foster the impression that it was a swarm of undifferentiated black bodies who had entered Germanic lands and who had attacked 'their' women; an impression which would nurture a racist gendered security regime which would resonate around Europe.

Indeed, it is worth noting that the significance of the *place* of the attacks – around the Cathedral in the main square of the city – symbolically strikes at the heart of anxieties around the nation. As Puwar (2004) has observed, public squares tell stories of nationhood, of history, of politics, and of populations. In the context of Cologne, this cathedral is the heart of the Catholic administration of Cologne (Garraio, 2020: 6). It is a

UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most popular tourist attractions in Germany. It is an expression of religious fervour, of architectural prowess, and Imperial glory. It is the synecdoche of the nation.

More than this, as a site of national importance, in the time-space of New Year's Eve revelry, where young and old, male and female gathered to drink, socialise with friends, and to move freely it *also* becomes a synecdoche of Western liberalism: a Western liberalism that the attacks by non-German men symbolically come to menace.

As we know, space is gendered, racialized, and political. Whilst the nation is symbolically tied to the feminine, as we shall soon see, public space such as this square is discursively constructed as a masculinised space (Korac, 2020: 78). Historically, women have been excluded from having rights to the city and from occupying public space in ways that were unencumbered by burdens of harassment or the stigma of sex work (Wilson, 1991, Lefebvre, 1996, Mort, 2000). Indeed, much of the rhetoric around fear of crime turns on this imagination of public space as dangerous, laced with latent menace of male sexual violence against women (Fanghanel and Lim, 2017; Fanghanel, 2016). Yet, within a Western and liberal imagination of public space, women should, and do, have access to public space on the same terms as do men. So, when they are harassed in it, and that harassment is enacted by the body of the black foreigner – the other – that menace is figured as happening not just against women, and 'liberal' gender norms in Germany but against liberal imaginations of the nation (Korac, 2020).

Coding the crisis

The anxieties about the Cologne attacks reverberated throughout Germany. The government's local, national, and international responses are well document by Weber (2016a, 2016b), Kapur (2018) and Boulila and Carri (2017). They reverberated through responses across Europe (Sager and Milnari, 2018). For the remainder of this paper, I want to turn attention to how this crisis, and anxiety around security and the female body was put to work in the UK context in discourses around the Brexit vote, also of 2016.

To do this, I conducted an in-depth discourse analysis of newspaper stories published in British newspapers which mentioned the Cologne attacks in the year after the Cologne attacks. Using the LexisNexis database, and the key words 'Cologne attacks', I analysed every article that was returned with these search terms. A total of 349 newspaper articles were analysed in this way, with dates ranging from the 4th January 2016 to 15 January 2017, from 31 different media sources. I coded for reports which outlined the facts of the evening (or tried to), reports which rehearsed European nation-building discourses, reports which related the Cologne attacks to UK nation-building, reports which merged the Cologne attacks and the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe, and reports which linked discourses about the Brexit vote to the Cologne attacks. From this analysis, I was able to build a timeline of the evolution of discourses about the Cologne attacks and their significance in the UK.

The discourses that I focus on here are those which tied the events in Cologne to anxiety about the British nation, and to its future in Europe. I do this to demonstrate how the

female body is put to work, in a denigrated manner, in the services of the creation of the nation and how this gendering of the nation fuels a contemporary rape culture.

Using British media sources to examine the ways that the events in Germany are made to resonate with events in the UK helps us to see how racist discourses converge with anxiety about gendered violence to forge an emetic boundary of fearfulness around bodies which are like us, and those on the borderlands, those who are 'out there', haunting, spectral, ready to attack the female body, and through this, the nation.

Woman as nation

Ideologies of the nation which rest on the sexualisation of the female body are nothing new. We can see them engraved into the architecture of sites of power in the British capital. The 19th century Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in London, UK, is one such seat of racialized, colonial power. Situated at the heart of the city, adjacent to the Houses of Parliament, and attached to the Treasury Building, the FCO was described by its architect, George Gilbert Scott, as 'a kind of national palace or drawing room for the nation'. Embodying the colonial British nation into the very fabric of the building, these days passers-by can marvel at the allegorical figures of five continents of the world - Europe, Africa, Asia, America, Australasia – which are represented by the figures of bare-breasted women within the spandrels around the windows of the first floor of the building. Of the allegorical industries – Science, Art, Agriculture, Government, Education, Law, Manufacture, Commerce, Literature – only 'Government' and 'Education' are represented by masculine figures. The rest are principally bare-breasted women adorned in a classic style.

Elsewhere, William-Adolphe Bouguereau's 1883 allegorical painting entitled 'The Motherland' (*Alma Parens* in the original) depicts the bare-breasted Marianne – symbol of the French nation – surrounded by nine naked, or nearly naked, children, several of whom are looking at her imploringly, climbing onto her, trying to suckle at her breast. The skin tone of the children is suggestive of their different ethnicities. And given the name of the painting, it is possible that body of the central figure – the mother – is the 'land' which nourishes otherwise poor, destitute dependencies: an idealist, colonialist, archaic imagination of colonial dynamics laid bare.

It is notable that in these two examples the body of the woman as nation is *allegorical.* The etymology of the word 'allegory' describes a 'figurative treatment of an unmentioned subject' or the 'description of one thing under the image of another'. That these are allegories means that the female body 'stands in' for expressions of nationhood. She is a symbol of a wider construction of the nation. Abundant, fertile, maternal, giving, able; in The Motherland, she is a nation that feeds, that supports and sustains more vulnerable dependencies. In nineteenth-century architecture, she represents the nation: she show-cases its talents. Apply this to equally allegorical imagery used during the Second World War to stoke up racist sentiments about the danger posed by the body of the ethnic, enemy Other. Allegories that we would now also call propaganda. Here, during WW2 Japanese propaganda figuring Japanese men as the 'yellow peril' abducting or torturing white women circulated to fuel racist, and ultimately dehumanising sentiments about the so-called 'Asian menace'.

Imagery using sexual violence as an allegory of the menace to the nation is repeated in different contexts, even into the present day and the case we are currently considering here. Nowhere is this more explicit than on the covers of magazines such as the Polish *wSeici* (Feb 2016), and the German *Focus* (8th Jan 2016) and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (8th Jan 2016) published in the aftermath of the Cologne attacks. On their front cover, *Focus* depicted the body of a naked white woman covered with black, sticky-looking handprints. The text 'are we tolerant or are we blind?' is written across her on what resembled the ticker tape that police might use to cordon off a crime scene. The conservative Polish *wSeici* magazine featured a woman dressed in the European flag, screaming as black men's hands try to rip her clothing off her, restrain her arms, and pull her hair; 'the Islamic rape of Europe' reads the headline. Once more, we find the naked and distressed female body becomes as allegorical and symbolic expression of anxiety about the nation (Jazmati and Studer, 2017).

Securitising gender: securitising nation

When the body of woman-as-nation is menaced by the sexualised encroachment of 'others' 'out there', we witness a number of discursive, political responses. As Kapur (2018: 86) notes, we see the rise of Orientalist discourses which cast the body of the other as an atavistic, barbaric outsider against whom we have to protect 'our' women (and in the context of international militarised action, sometimes 'their', women see Banwell, 2020). These narratives accompany femonationalistic imperatives which mobilise apparently pro-feminist stances to drive anti-immigrant – and Islamophobic – campaigns (see Farris, 2012: 187). For Farris (2012), femonationalistic discourses make nationalistic claims about protecting the values of the nation – notably the feminist values of the nation – from others who do not protect the rights of women. Femonationalism might be associated with the political practices of populist right-wing, but its premises – that 'we' are feminist and must guard against 'them' who are not – are also espoused by those on the political left, as we shall see below.

This sort of apparently benevolent feminist ideology can be used to nurture what Sager and Mulinari (2017: 151) describe as 'care racism'; the practice of enforcing racist ideologies and policies, or of iterating racist discourses in the name of care. Caring for our own – here of caring for 'our' women – becomes the guise behind which this sort of racism is able to thrive. We see this in the context of UK responses to the events in Cologne, and indeed, in the imperative to guard against the threat of this sexualised violence against women through stoking racist anti-immigration sentiment.

This imperative towards safety comes at a price, of course. I have already discussed the problem of securitising female bodies elsewhere (Fanghanel, 2019). Here, the function of mobilising a gendered security regime – that is, using the threat of gendered violence to justify exclusionary or aggressive spatialised security practices against 'others' – is to cast the body of the black male as a threat to the nation in the name of saving women.

The implications of gendered security regimes are that they discursively cast the female body as a problem to be solved. That is, it is women whose safety must be secured, and women whose bodies become the locus for actions against would-be perpetrators. They also iterate imperialist discourses against black men as invaders of the nation. We must

ask: who is safety for? What should the price of that safety be? And by whom should the safety be secured? How does weaponising safety in public space like this help to build the UK nation?

Reversing a hundred years of female liberation?

In the UK press, the events of the Cologne attacks started to be reported on 6th January 2016. Initial reports focussed on the facts as they emerged, and then swiftly rehearsed the international responses to the attacks, from Slovakia (8th Jan 2016) and other parts of central and eastern Europe (8th Jan 2016). Meanwhile, reports of so called 'copycat' attacks in Sweden, Austria, Finland, and Switzerland, and other parts of Germany started to be reported. Quickly, the spread of these attacks started to be represented as a swarming unknowable mass – like the hands that grab at the white skin of women – whose originary actions in Cologne appear to act as a crucible for an epidemic, or infestation by black, foreign, stateless men's acts of violence against women who belong to the nation; transforming the city of Cologne, in the words of a council official Judith Wolter, into a 'no-go area for women' (Charlton, 6 Jan 2016). International responses to the Cologne attacks also provoked far right anti-immigrant rhetoric and stoked the popularity of anti-Islamist groups such as *Legida/Pegida* and *Alternatif für Deutschland*. The emergence of these groups from the events of Cologne, and the subsequent crisis of Europe debates are analysed elsewhere (Weber, 2016a, Kapur, 2018). Here, my intention is to turn attention to the way that these events and their reporting reverberated into anti- and pro-Brexit discourses in the UK.

Though arguments in support of the UK leaving the European Union were based on an array of potential reasons, one dominant driver in popular rhetoric was anxiety about immigration and the erosion of the sovereignty of the nation. Just three weeks after the attacks, former defence secretary Liam Fox addressed a cross-party meeting for the campaign to leave the EU:

> Insecurity for our country comes from open borders and uncontrolled migration… Germany has discovered in Cologne and other places exactly what it can mean when you do not know who you have allowed into your country. That for me is the real security issue at risk in this referendum. (cited in Stanton, 23 January 2016)

The porousness of space and populations becomes what is at risk here (Featherstone and Lash, 1998). The risk of 'what it can mean' to have 'open borders' is always, and only, sexual violence. Fox euphemistically points to the latent menace of the 'black peril' (Jazmati and Studer, 2017). Nigel Farage goes further. Prolific amongst the commentators associated with the Brexit referendum was Farage: a political personality whose ability to drive forward a 'leave' decision on the Brexit referendum despite never having held an elected office speaks only to the hubris of politicians in power around him at this time.

Speaking at an anti-EU event in south Wales three months after the Cologne attacks, Farage reportedly states:

> We've been through a hundred years of female emancipation and liberation and now the mistakes of Mrs Merkel are threatening all of that.

> What we saw outside that train station in Cologne on New Year's Eve was truly and genuinely shocking. If you allow the unlimited access of huge numbers of young males into the European continent who come from countries where women are at best second-class citizens, don't be surprised if scenes that we saw in Cologne don't happen more often.
>
> Do we want those young men within five years to have EU passports and to be able to come to our country and to reverse a hundred years of female liberation and to change our entire way of life? No!
>
> It is the job of the British Government to make our own laws, to control our own borders and it's about time we started putting the interests of our own people first. (Farage reported in Hall, 31st March 2016)

A skilled orator, Farage deftly lays the menace towards 'hundreds of years of female emancipation and liberation' in the hands of 'huge numbers of young males'. Rehearsing the atavistic imaginary of the menacing 'other' whose women are 'at best second-class citizens', Farage makes 'our own borders' the terrain around which anti-European sentiment is played out.

The party that Farage created and whom he represented at this anti-European event is not a feminist party. Indeed, Farage himself has explicitly distanced himself from feminist politics (LBC, 29th Jan 2018), and in different contexts has been associated with archaic and hetero-patriarchal imaginings of gender and sexuality. Rather, this form of strategic feminism works to place Farage's 'own people' as the defenders of women's rights over the islands of the UK. Indeed, in a femonationalistic move that positions what is in 'our borders' as a safe haven for women, where women's rights are respected, Farage makes the emancipation and liberation of women a constituent element of what it is to be British, and what it is thus to reject the European Union.

The narrative about the importance of protecting 'our own' women by securing the borders of the nation also works to figure the nation as liberal, tolerant of the rights of women, and set against the illiberal – and thus dangerous – 'other'. Sexism and gender violence become figured as something that is 'out there' from which, if we can 'control our borders' we can protect ourselves.

This liberal claim to equality and female emancipation as a feature of the UK nation is not limited to the polemical rhetoric of those on the far right. Indeed, in the aftermath of the Cologne attacks, and in the context of requiring the female spouses of migrants to the UK to learn English, the then Prime Minister David Cameron (cited in White, 18th Jan 2016) stated, that 'in Britain, men are not frightened of women's success, it is celebrated proudly'; men who celebrate women are figured as properly British, men who are 'afraid' of women's successes are neither properly British, nor are they – discursively at least – performing successful British masculinity. The gendered and nationalistic line is once more drawn around what does, and does not, make a good British national identity.

From a more assimilist perspective, the columnist David Aaronovitch suggests that if:

> any groups of young white men conducted a mass sexual assault...in a Western city, the outrage would have been immediate and thunderous...It is not absurd to worry about young men whose perception of women was formed in the relative backwardness of severely patriarchal societies. What, we would have been asked, is it about our society that permits such a thing to happen? That allows young men to believe that they can and should act in this way?...It is not absurd to worry about young men - often poor, often bored, often deprived of family life and family restraints - whose perception of women was formed in the relative backwardness of severely patriarchal societies. (14 Jan 2016)

Aaronovitch suggests that if it were 'our' men who were attacking 'our' women, we would react with horror, wondering how such a thing could have happened. Yet here, I argue that Aaronovitch's rhetorical plea of 'what is it about our society that permits such a thing to happen? That allows young men to believe that they can and should act in this way?' might well be asked precisely in the context of the Cologne attacks. If the perpetrators of the Cologne attacks herald from this 'backward' and 'patriarchal' society, what is it about what they encounter in 'our society' that leads them to think that they can and should act in this way 'here'?

It is not clear to me that the Cologne attacks have not been met by an 'outrage' that is both 'immediate and thunderous', nor is it clear that if 'young white men' attacked 'their own' women, that such an outrage would be forthcoming. Instead, the turning of the debate around the notion of archaic patriarchy, of a fixed cultural, indoctrinated misogyny, obscures consideration of the fact that it might be the structural sexism of the society in which the attacks took place that fostered the circumstances for the attacks to unfold.

Aaronvitch goes on to explain that there is gender parity in Europe, that women are considered to be 'as good as men' and not subordinate to them, they do not dress especially modestly, they are not considered to be inferior as they are in 'severely patriarchal societies'. Is it that this liberalism perhaps provoked these attacks? Or that the attacks were an expression of anger about the relative freedom of women in Europe? For Aaronovitch the solution is 'mandatory courses in citizenship and Western values'. An integrationist approach to be sure, and one that can be positioned *contra* Farage, above. Yet, it is one that continues to enshrine an imaginary of a gendered security regime in which Western cultures are the unproblematic answer to the problem of men 'out there'.

The Wild West

Against Aaronovitch's critique of liberal attitudes to racism, the Cologne attacks, and the way they express a racialized, nationalistic, gendered security regime, came the comments of Jess Phillips, a left-wing Labour Member of Parliament for Birmingham Yardley, who stated in response to an TV audience question about immigration and the Cologne attacks that:

> There is violence against women and girls that you are describing, a very similar situation to what happened in Cologne could be described on Broad Street in

> Birmingham every week where women are baited and heckled (cited in Doyle and Duell, 29th Jan 2016).

The notion that the events of Cologne were not exceptional, that they could happen – that they *did* happen – weekly on the streets of the UK's second city was met with outrage.

She continued:

> We have to attack what we perceive as being patriarchal culture coming into any culture that isn't patriarchal and making sure we tell people not to be like that. But we should be careful in this country before we rest on our laurels when two women are murdered every week (cited in Doyle and Duell, 29th Jan 2016).

Whilst Phillips leaves open the possibility that the reason why men attack women in public space is because they are coming from a patriarchal culture into a culture that is not patriarchal, the crux of her objection to making the link between the Cologne attacks and immigration is gender violence happens in the UK, too. Feminist emancipation and gender equality are not the universal given than discourses such as those of Farage, Cameron and Aaronovitch might suggest it is. Or rather that theirs is an idealist misreading of the status quo for women in the UK; that it is not true that the UK is a safe space for women.

Phillips's comments were widely reported in the press, and the condemnation of them from people who lived and worked in Birmingham was robust. Whether or not Phillips is correct in this assessment of gender-violence and the streets of Birmingham – the constituency she represents – is not the focus of this argument, here. Rather, what these comments and the responses to them illustrate, is the way that gender-violence, public space, and security forge a sense of nationhood which is played out on women's bodies.

Police, business-owners, and journalists rejected Phillips's comments. Calls were made for her to resign. An entrepreneur stated that Birmingham was 'not like the Wild West' and that sexual harassment was 'not an institutionalised part of what goes on there' (cited in Turner 30 Jan 2016). West Midlands Police said that the events of Cologne were 'a million miles' from what happens in Birmingham (cited in Turner 30 Jan 2016).

What would it mean for the events of Cologne to be figuratively or politically 'a million miles' away from a Saturday night in Birmingham? It would mean that they happen 'out there', that they are beyond the borders of the nation – both physically and psychically.

The West which is wild is clearly not the sort of West that commentators such as Aaronovitch suggest that immigrants should be assimilated to. This West describes a frontier-like ambience. Historically rooted in the 19th century and describing the westward settlement of white people across north America, the wild West is associated with lawlessness, ruthlessness, and disorder. This is what critics of Phillip's statement have in mind when they reject her claim that what happened in Cologne is not exceptional to Cologne, that it could be perpetrated by British men. A place that was 'not the wild West' would be one that was orderly, law-abiding, and settled. That which is wild is untamed and unruly: savage. These rejections are ones which delimit, once more, who is

with us, and who is against us, using the threat of gendered violence as the point through which this distinction can be made.

Beyond Brexit

The interweaving of these political and media discourses as they respond to the attacks in Cologne and interact with the crisis of nationhood that accompanied discourses about Brexit in the UK helps us to see how ethno-nationalism and contemporary rape culture is nurtured in the service of a certain form of nation-building. Acting as a crucible for racialised anxiety about Europe-in-crisis which positions the law-abiding and pro-feminist 'West' against the backwards and patriarchal lands and cultures the perpetrators of the attacks are figured to have come from, these acts of violence also cast the female body – under perpetual, latent menace of sexual violence from the black other - as a symbol of the nation.

The female body comes to stand in for the values of the British nation: liberated, unveiled, equal. The sullying of the female body at the hands of the Other becomes transliterated onto fear of the soiling of the nation. The gendered security regime which casts woman as always-already to-be-protected from the hands of these Others, mobilises the types of emetic nationalistic discourses which fuelled, in part, pro-Brexit discourses.

An ideology of nationhood which relies on a thriving rape culture in order to mobilise itself does not protect women, or men, in the way that it pretends to. Rather, it normalises that female bodies would fear sexualised attacks by male strangers, and that to protect against this given, a pro-nationalist, masculinist, racist and exclusionary project is the only way out. Benevolent, femonationalistic sexism becomes the tool which drives this agenda.

As I observed above, the coalescing of the female body and the body of the nation is nothing new. And that fear of gendered violence should be used to stoked isolationist sentiment as nation-building should perhaps not surprise us, even if it should still trouble us. The dehumanisation of the Other – cast as swarm, as dirt, as invader – and of women whose bodies stand in for the nation – as white, as vulnerable, as needing defence – enshrines, rather than dismantles racism and gender violence within the fabric of the nation. Mobilising a gendered security regime as an alibi for this practice becomes simply one more way to nurture a rape culture which normalises violence and the threat of violence against women.

Here, I have focussed on the specific case of discourses from across the political spectrum which deal with Brexit. But it should be clear that there are manifestations well beyond this that are a cause for concern. We see them across the UK, Europe and beyond. Rather like Featherstone and Lash (1998) with whom we started, Chantal Mouffe (2012:638) makes a plea for Europe to be figured as a pluriverse – as a series of plural universes and democracies which enable differences to be recognised and to be reached across in order to create a world worth living in, rather than one which seeks to erase or demonise difference as a source of fear, as something against which to protect our borders. Whilst we continue to see the rise of populist discourses in the UK, the USA, Brazil and other

democracies around the world, striving across difference, refusing the emetic, uncoupling the body of the woman from the nation is not a concern we can do away with.

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[i] Certainly not all the women who were attacked in Cologne that night would be white, or even German women, and not all attackers were foreign or Black. However, the framing of the events along these lines dominated discourses about them. Thus, it is the discourses which position this dualism and which then fuels anti-immigration and benevolent sexism in the building of the nation.