

5 White Femininity and Trolling

Historicizing Some Visual Strategies of Today's Far Right

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Abstract

This section interrogates historical prefigurations of anti-immigrant online vitriol following sexual assaults that occurred during the 2015 New Year's Eve in Cologne. The study of the post-Cologne inventory of European far-right memes and internet portals draws on anti-miscegenation iconography and narratives that reach back to European imperialisms. Apart from cataloguing fairly well-documented dehumanizing representations of non-white men, it brings about an ambiguous figure of a white woman. While white women typically symbolize national dignity, they, too, have been perceived as unpatriotic traitors and stakes in biopolitical warfare on democratic institutions. After Cologne, online trolling closely resonated with some politicians' calls for more surveillance, arming citizens, expulsions of immigrants, and attempts at political recuperation of feminism on the far right.

Keywords: race and gender in colonial discourses, New Year's Eve in Cologne, Far Right memes, feminism and intersectionality, miscegenation

'Just as human productions cannot be divided into a desiring-production on the one hand and a 'material' production on the other, so also can men in power not be seen to have made that distinction in the process of establishing and consolidating their power. It was two aspects of a single conquest that set up white masters over the coloured nations of the world and placed the dominant male ego of the emergent bourgeoisie in a position of domination over women in his own society. He [white male – EP] would continue to employ those women as the colourful raw material for shaping the images and setting the boundaries that were so necessary to secure his domination'

– K. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*¹

¹ Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 1, p. 323.

Many of the current forms of vitriol follow a logic of biological and cultural supremacy. In the present-day European context, white supremacy discourses are informed by the colonial-era images of non-white populations' innate primitivism and deviancy.² The present analysis reaches to historical prefigurations that determine the affective force of online violence and trolling. Recent racist and sexist images, depicting white women sexually harassed by non-white men, reflect the centrality of intersecting narratives of race and gender in articulating otherness. One of the most charged events that led to dissemination of such images online is the wave of sexual aggressions committed mainly by men of Algerian and Moroccan descent during New Year's Eve 2015/2016 in Cologne, Germany.³ Starting from a sample of images disseminated on the internet in the wake of the Cologne events, I move back to historical discourses that set deviant sexual behaviours of non-white men in contrast with a figure of a white woman. Stereotyping practices involving non-white male sexuality can be investigated from myriad angles, such as fetishization (fantasy) or stigmatization (taboo).⁴ This critical study of juxtaposing white femininity with non-white sexual violence epitomizes the historical preponderance of representing miscegenation in Europe as a threat.⁵ I focus specifically on past and present images and discourses closely resonating with the prevalent visual rhetoric after the Cologne assaults.

New Year's Eve 2015/2016 in Cologne

The sexual assaults that took place in Cologne during the New Year's Eve celebration in 2015 led to massive reactions in various media, and in political, academic and intellectual discourses. These reactions came in several waves and with varying intensity. Most online images including memes, tweets, and political cartoons, reflected the following logic: a) they denounced

2 Colonialist and imperialist preeminence of today's racist discourses is one of the most explored topics in postcolonial scholarship. On non-white rapist's representations see: Ware, *Beyond the Pale*.

3 The exact report regarding the events was published by Zeit Magazine on 23 June 2016. <https://www.zeit.de/zeit-magazin/2016/27/silvesternacht-koeln-fluechtlingsdebatte-aufklaerung>.

4 Hall, *Representation*.

5 'Miscegenation – marriage, cohabitation, or sexual intercourse between a white person and a member of another race' (Merriam-Webster). The term replaced 'amalgamation' and first occurred in a 1863 pamphlet written by two then-anonymous authors as an apology of mixing races, in an attempt to breed controversy around Abraham Lincoln shortly before the presidential election of 1864. See: *Miscegenation*.

presumably deliberate disinformation by the police and media, and b) they identified the perpetrators as Arabs, North Africans, Muslims, and/or refugees. While the first narrative redirected the assaults to the matters of public security (immigrants as public threat, critique of diversity and multiculturalism), the second amounted to considerable visual racializing of the assaults. In the racially charged visual rhetoric perpetrators were framed as 'Arabs' and 'Muslims', both terms were used as synonymous with backwardness and violent behaviour, while 'rape culture' became a 'Muslim rape culture'. In mid-2015, an American anti-Muslim think-tank, Middle East Forum, published an article entitled 'Muslim rapists prefer blondes' containing claims of an 'ongoing epidemic' in Europe in which 'Muslim men sexually target white women'.⁶ Calls for more surveillance and collective punishment of both the Muslim population and the pro-immigration government were voiced to no-one's surprise: both are standard elements of far-right reaction to crimes committed by non-white perpetrators. However, post-Cologne trolling particularly capitalized on historical anti-miscegenation rhetoric and on the ongoing feminist ambivalence with regard to the interlocking categories of gender and race in dealing with representations of sexual violence.⁷

'Silence hides violence'

Since 2014, the opposition to the immigration policies introduced by the liberal German government has become part of a struggle for white supremacy. The events in Cologne sparked off numerous vitriolic reactions suggesting that the mainstream media and politicians are hiding the truth from the population. The provocative and polarizing female representations in the images and narratives after Cologne helped to redirect the question of sexism and racism to a debate on European security and cultural identity, two pillars of the far-right political programme. Postulates to save 'our' women were pronounced by organizations such as PEGIDA⁸ and Alternative

6 Ibrahim, *Muslim Rapists Prefer Blondes*.

7 Hark and Villa, *Unterscheiden und Herrschen*.

8 Founded in Dresden in 2014, PEGIDA, or Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes) is an international political movement promoting nationalism, Christianity and denouncing Islam as a threat to 'the European values'.

für Deutschland (AfD).⁹ The European Far Right – in Hungary the supporters of Victor Orban, in Poland the ruling extreme-right Law and Justice party, in France Front National, etc. – unilaterally politicized the Cologne aggressions as part of their securitization campaigns. They argued that the threat represented by the incomers was far greater than the mainstream media and politicians were willing to admit. During anti-Muslim protests following the aggressions in Cologne, PEGIDA demonstrators held a banner that read: 'silence hides violence'. The slogan targeted careful reactions uttered by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Henriette Reker, the mayor of Cologne, following the news of the assaults. The #einearmlänge hashtag referring to the advice given by Reker to German women to stay one arm's length away from foreigners resulted in memes accusing the female politician of betraying German women. Trending images featured white women armed against Muslim men (#einearmlänge, #stopIslam, #taharrush). One of the memes depicted a fierce-looking blonde figure – adopted by the Far Right on various occasions.¹⁰ The caption reads: 'To avoid sexual assaults against women during the next Carnival of Cultures, this time I will vote AfD. That *one-arm's-length distance* simply does not hold'. (Figure 3). As a number of journalists and researchers acknowledged afterwards, the media's unwillingness to disclose the fact that many of the perpetrators were of North African origin legitimized the anti-immigrant far-right online outburst to a large degree.¹¹ Much of the far-right trolling after Cologne focused on legitimizing neo-Nazi racial slurs arguing that silencing immigrant crimes and appraising the merits of multiculturalism should be interpreted as violent acts against the population. According to that rationale, the biological preservation of the white race could no longer be entrusted upon the existing power structures who fail to protect 'our' women. And inversely, white female representatives of the German society were depicted in the memes and slogans as renouncing their traditional

9 Since its foundation in 2014 out of disgruntled members and supporters of the centre-right CDU, Alternative für Deutschland has changed its anti-EU rhetoric and focused on criticising the pro-immigration policies of Angela Merkel. In 2014 AfD entered the European Parliament with 7.1 percent of votes (Vorländer et al., 2016, p. 52-53).

10 For instance, in the US Lana Lokteff and Tomi Lahren are among the white female faces of the Alt-Right. In the European politics some examples are Marion Marechal Le Pen and Marine Le Pen in France (Front National), and Corinna Miazga and Alice Weidel in Germany (AfD).

11 F. Klask, 'Die Stille nach der lauten Nacht', *Zeit Online*, 29 December 2017, <https://www.zeit.de/2018/01/silvesternacht-koeln-sexuelle-belaestigung-schweigen-medien>; Hans-Peter Friedrich labelled the lack of news 'the Silence Kartell', <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/gesellschaft/medien/kritik-an-den-medien-wegen-koeln-berichterstattung-schweigekartell-und-nachrichtensperren/12797422.html>.

Figure 3 Twitter handle titled: Safety in Berlin sent from AfD twitter account

3:53 AM - 30 Jul 2016

Posted on 30 July 2016 at 03:53

role of protecting the white population. This population, embodied in an every-day regular white woman, is presented with a far-right alternative, where the government has allegedly left a void to fill.

'Rapefugees not welcome'

The far-right rhetoric aimed principally at identifying the perpetrators from Cologne as (predominantly Muslim) refugees who had been coming to Europe since July 2015. To that effect another slogan seen during PEGIDA demonstrations, 'rapefugees not welcome', went viral. One particular meme established the 'rapefugee' cliché: it is composed of two photos set together – one with three smiling girls holding a 'refugees welcome' banner and marked 'Cologne October 2015' and the second, marked 'Cologne January 2016', showing a white woman being raped by a black man. The rhetoric

Figure 4 Meme identifying refugees/immigrants with Nazis (#einearmlänge)



It states on top: 'Time-tested'; and underneath: 'Always stay at arm's length from evil men'. Meme inspired by #einearmlänge, reposted on German far-right websites

of security and solidarity with women who are no longer protected by the existing power structures gained in Islamophobic tones.¹² In his comment on Cologne events a Dutch far-right politician Geert Wilders named refugees 'Islamic testosterone bombs' and called for a legalization of pepper spray.¹³

From non-white foreigners to refugees and Muslims, the enemies of white women have been swiftly identified as beasts who would lead the population to decline. They are aided by the enemy within figure, represented by a white female 'refugee helper'. A prominent example of the ambivalent villain

12 Angela Merkel, as a symbol of 'Willkommenskultur', has been on numerous occasions – not least on air (ARD news on 8 October 2015) – portrayed wearing an Islamic veil. A meme issued by a Zionist 'Jihad Watch Deutschland' blog run by a journalist Fred Alan Medforth shows Angela Merkel in sexy underwear and veiled, the article holding her responsible for sexual aggressions and death of German women at the hands of Muslim men. See: <https://fredalanmedforth.blogspot.com/2018/06/susanna-14-ermordet-kanzlerin-merkel.html>.

13 The call for civil armament is another common narrative occurring in the aftermath of violent events involving immigrants. For instance, Donald Trump tweeted shortly after the Charlie Hebdo attacks on 7 January 2015: 'Isn't it interesting that the tragedy in Paris took place in one of the toughest gun control countries in the world?' suggesting that violence occurs because the population is not armed. See: <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/552955167533174785?lang=en>.

Figure 5 Polish magazine *W Sieci*

The title reads: The Islamic Rape of Europe. In his tweet, an Italian researcher Alessio Fratticcioli, likens the cover to a 1941 Italian fascist propaganda poster: "Defend her! She could be your mother, your wife, your sister, your daughter".

figure after Cologne is the use of a 1934 postcard depicting German girls saluting to Hitler in another #einearmlänge meme (Figure 4).

The image amalgamates Hitler, an 'evil man' with a 'North African or Arab', 'Muslim' rapist.¹⁴ Women depicted in the meme are framed as supporting the powers that be, unaware (hence in need for protection) but also easily subjected (hence not trustworthy, the figures of enemy within). The #einearmlänge memes are particularly telling, precisely due to the paradoxical message they carry. Although the Nazi postcard meme carries a warning, it simultaneously dissociates the anti-immigration propaganda from the Nazi ideology, even though both the present-day far-right parties

14 On the preponderance of labelling New Year's Eve perpetrators as 'Muslim', 'refugee', 'immigrant' and 'Arab', see: Abdelmonem et al., *The Taharrush Connection*.

such as Alternative für Deutschland and the Nazis in the 1930s advocated blood purity and promoted xenophobia.¹⁵ Far-right representations of the Cologne victims drew directly on the Nazi propaganda posters in their use of an iconic image of a white woman: She is sexy, blond, slim, and helpless (Figure 5).

Feminists and trolls

Thirdly, trolling the Cologne sexual offenders as backward and violent due to their skin pigmentation and religion points to an ambiguous relationship between the feminist and the far-right rationale. While trolling after Cologne focused on the migrants, feminists had also been accused of deliberate silence.¹⁶ Alt-Right internet news outlets such as Breitbart, Euroislam, Riposte Laïque, and Politically Incorrect used ambivalent feminist reactions to the events as an opportunity to further their racist rhetoric. Although traditionally anti-feminist, these outlets seconded the feminist outcry against sexual harassment in order to gain legitimacy. Some statements made by prominent feminists enabled the articulation of racial and sexual difference. For instance, a German feminist Alice Schwarzer writes that the Cologne culprits were 'North Africans or Arabs, hence Muslims. And it is on that basis that they got in touch. Yet, they weren't just any Muslims. These were the kind of young men with no jobs or perspectives, standing on street corners and listening to pied pipers telling them for years and decades: you are not guilty of your misery – the 'infidels' are.'¹⁷

Breitbart's article from 16 January features a photo of Angela Merkel and Alice Schwarzer sitting next to each other but looking away. According to Breitbart, Schwarzer 'claimed Cologne police have been covering up Muslim rape for 20 years, and said that sexual violence was now being used as a weapon of war in Germany.'¹⁸ In her interview for a Polish anti-Muslim outlet *Euroislam*, another German feminist and activist Rebekka Sommer blamed Muslim culture for practicing 'sexual terrorism':

15 The AfD campaign billboards before the 2017 parliamentary election featured pregnant white women and read: 'New Germans? We will make them ourselves', <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article165297337/Was-setzt-die-AfD-gegen-Burkas-Alkohol-oder-Frauenrechte.html>.

16 Prendergast, 'Why are feminists refusing'.

17 Schwarzer, *Der Schock*, pp. 17–18.

18 <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2016/01/16/old-school-feminist-slams-establishment-calls-for-debate-on-islam-without-political-correctness/>.

For the first few years I thought that the people coming here were real refugees and that they were happy to be in a safe place. So I thought they would be willing to adapt to their new surroundings here and become integrated. But as time went by, step by step I awoke to an unpleasant truth. There were so many different clues that pointed to this conclusion that I just could not go on ignoring them any longer. Certainly one of the decisive turning points was what happened on New Year's Eve 2015 in Cologne. That's when I finally had to admit to myself that that sort of behaviour is characteristic for the overwhelming majority of the Muslims I was seeing on a day-to-day basis. That's when I said to myself: 'Rebecca, now is the time to pull the emergency brake, simply because as a women's rights advocate you bear collective responsibility as a woman.'¹⁹

Other feminist activists denounced the racializing of sexual violence as part of the feminist discourse. The #ausnahmslos movement led by a German feminist Anne Wizorek stated on its website: 'Sexualised violence must not only be addressed if the perpetrators are supposedly the "others": Muslim, Arab, black or North African men – in short, all those considered "non-German" by right-wing populists.²⁰ As a result, the German Alt-Right portal Politically Incorrect attacked them as traitors, relativists, and blamed them for the assaults. Apart from feminists who denounce both sexual violence and racism, female refugee helpers were particularly subject to trolling. Contrary to the image of an innocent, helpless victim used to vilify the dark-skinned men, female refugee helpers were accused of treachery and simulating charity to mask their sexual fantasies about 'an oriental prince charming'.²¹

On Reddit, they were mocked as unattractive and desperate:

Is Ahmed, 20, with no job or skills, an afghan face and genetics and a quest for European welfare money a high value male? Yeah right.

And the females in these stories, I can only speak personally for Sweden, but those women I wouldn't wanna touch with a 10 foot pole. Fat, old,

19 Rebekka Sommer's interview for Euroislam was later translated into German and English. <https://arbeitsgruppefluchtundmensenrechte.wordpress.com/2018/02/11/interview-with-rebecca-sommer-english/>.

20 <http://www.ausnahmslos.org/>

21 The expression comes from an article on refugee assistants published on the Islamophobic far-right German blog run by a controversial Turkish-German author Akif Pirinçci. https://nixgut.wordpress.com/2016/12/19/studie-die-irren-flchtlingshelfer_innen/.

ugly, left-wing, horrible scum. Let the ahmeds have them. They are using this opportunity to extort sex from young males when they can't get any other man on the planet. **They are sex-offenders, pedophiles.**²²

Historical prefigurations of anti-miscegenation campaign after Cologne

In the visual rhetoric and narratives exploited by trolls after Cologne, the racialized sexual threat was framed as an act of terror that would eventually lead to a decline of the white population. This was not the first time such a response to the presence of non-white men on the European soil occurred. A similar outcry took place in the early 1920s when 30,000 to 40,000 non-white soldiers from several French colonies were stationed in Rhineland.²³ Xenophobic reactions to the foreign presence on the European soil had been entrenched in European mentalities even earlier, throughout nineteenth-century anti-miscegenation campaigns.

In the nineteenth century, in the attempt to assert modern states' control over colonial subjects, an emerging concept of population became interwoven with various othering strategies. The notions of a rational individual and a rational society that used to fall under all-encompassing jurisdiction were superseded by a new 'character': a population.²⁴ According to Michel Foucault, population is 'a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while they might not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted'.²⁵ Populations, states Foucault,

become pertinent only at the mass level. They are phenomena that are aleatory and unpredictable when taken in themselves and individually, but which, at the collective level, display constants that are easy, or at least possible to establish.²⁶

Therefore, populations, albeit randomly manifested, are representative of their time when studied in a historical context. In addition to that, they

22 <https://old.reddit.com/user/samenrofringslikeLBJ> (Reddit Account is removed by user. Post no longer available); https://www.reddit.com/r/TheRedPill/comments/7dmiiu/women_and_refugees_a_compilation/.

23 Wigger, *The Black Horror*.

24 Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 245.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., p. 246.

generate outbursts of normative functions, such as racial purity, narrated as essential for survival. The threat of miscegenation (allegedly resulting in sterility) has been one of the most prominent discourses sustaining white supremacy. The preservation of the white race has become a vital part of the far-right propaganda. These functions, due to a growing complexity of social realities (in the nineteenth century these were industrialization and centralization, today digitalization and globalization), make the 'human masses' particularly predisposed to self-regulate.²⁷ Hence, racial regulation, embodied in anti-miscegenation rules, became imperative for the population.²⁸

Not unlike in the past, multiculturalism embodied in the influx of refugees in 2015 was a turning point that authorized the far-right all over Europe to openly call for regulation. Backed by considerable civil movement, the European far right effectively echoed the racist undertones established in colonial-era narratives. That these narratives did not resonate with mainstream politics is not new either. Foucault argued that the specificity of the population lies also in being beyond a society. While society relies on institutions, populations will only survive through regulatory mechanisms. The more personalized character of populations makes them easier to believe in and identify with. Contrary to a population, as it is implicitly argued, a society would inevitably turn against tyrannical tendencies of the biopower. Because the population is responsible for 'the biological continuum of the [...] distinction between races'²⁹, it is determined by its biological functions rather than its individualistic capacities. By instigating racism as a norm, the population will be divided and thus easier to control, and additionally it will be made to believe that in order to live it must destroy its enemies. Destroying a degenerate race will make life healthier and purer, and by destruction Foucault does not only mean a biological annihilation of a race considered 'degenerate' – he also means 'political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on'.³⁰ This logic reveals the power of a discourse of biological preservation: dying out represents weakness and racial mixing represents degeneracy. After Cologne, older images of white women, traditionally in charge of ensuring the preservation of the white race, being sexually assaulted resurfaced in order to generate a threatening symbol of a civil society in crisis. Now as then, biopolitical narratives ceaselessly rely on symbolic

27 Ibid., p. 250.

28 Ibid., p. 253.

29 Ibid., p. 255.

30 Ibid., p. 256.

Figure 6 This political cartoon went viral in far-right digital media following the New Year's Eve in Cologne.



THE MOST OFFENSIVE THING ABOUT THIS CARTOON IS THAT IT IS ALL TRUE.

representations of decline blamed on abstract politics, political correctness, widespread diversity, and a too-generous welfare state. For instance, the political cartoon that went viral in Alt-Right online circles links the spread of multiculturalism and diversity to the decline of 'straight white men'. One of the Reddit users commented underneath: 'Isn't multiculturalism great! You can have sex with just about anything and you get to suppress straight white guys.' (Figure 6).

Colonial discourses of racialized sexual deviancy

How did the verbalization and shaping of sexual norms come to the fore? In order to retrace recent representations of miscegenation, researchers turned to texts and images from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that reveal the construction of atemporal, oversexed, and violent non-white men.³¹ While in the nineteenth century scientific and intellectual discourses were the dominant spaces of conceptualizing otherness, at the turn of the centuries journalism took over that role. As mass printing increased the volume of popular press, the representations of miscegenation became not only more commonplace, but also more explicitly racist.

In the nineteenth-century scientific discourse, especially in the realms of phrenology and sociology, efforts were made to identify the 'general

31 Hund, 'Racist King Kong Fantasies'; Wigger, *The Black Horror*.

characteristics of savages':³² narrow-mindedness, intensity of desire, unnatural physical strength, and brutality with women,³³ followed by a general idiocy, unattractiveness and animal-like features:

If it is admitted that the European cannot hope to civilize the negro, and manages to transmit to the mulatto only a very few of his own characteristics; if the children of a mulatto and a white woman cannot really understand anything better than a hybrid culture, a little nearer than their father's to the ideas of the white race, – in that case, I am right in saying that the different races are unequal in intelligence.³⁴

A French academic authority of that period and Arthur de Gobineau's friend, Ernest Renan, writes of the Semites as 'an incomplete, simplistic, and undifferentiated race'.³⁵ In the sixth volume of his works published in 1847, Condorcet endeavoured to scientifically prove that Islam 'seems to condemn people to eternal slavery and incurable stupidity'.³⁶ In the period of the Third Republic, the demonization of Arabs, hitherto objects of orientalist fascination, served the purpose of reinforcing discourses of white supremacy and imperial politics. Jules Ferry, a key political figure in the French Third Republic, claimed in his speech on 28 July 1885 that 'the superior races have the right to rule over the inferior ones' and a duty to civilize them. Ferry points to the German colonial expansion and urges the French to catch up, giving as an example their successful colonization of Algeria, where 'piracy has been replaced by a controlled free exchange'.³⁷ The press narratives in the nineteenth-century British Empire were particularly keen on reproducing reports of non-white men sexually assaulting women. In the aftermath of the Mutiny, as the American historian of the Victorian era Bernard Semmel noted, 'day after day, the newspapers told stories of massacres of British women and children, of gruesome oriental tortures and mutilations, of assaults on the virtue and honour of English women'.³⁸ According to a researcher on mass literacy, 'no episode in British imperial

32 Pickering, *Stereotyping*, p. 49.

33 'They are proud and revengeful, and make war and kill each other; and among the names of honour given to them are 'the adulterer', 'the woman-stealer', 'the brain-eater', Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, p. 294.

34 De Gobineau, *The Inequality*, p. 179.

35 Said, *Orientalism*, p. 149.

36 Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un tableau historique*, p. 124.

37 Ferry, 'Discours'.

38 Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 39.

history raised public excitement to a higher pitch'.³⁹ In the French humoristic press some of those representations emphasized the exoticism of non-white men: their love of music, dance, anything referring to their accrued sensuality. Popular magazines, such as *Le Sourire* (1899-1940), *La Vie Parisienne* (1863-1970), and *Fantasio* (1906-1937), featured miscegenation drawings by famous draftsmen (Paul Colin, René Giffey, George Leonnec, etc.). In these aesthetically exquisite illustrations, French women were portrayed mostly as libertarians, lying down or relaxing, enjoying housework or light outdoor activities, dressed either fashionably, or as vaudeville dancers, but most often simply undressed. As a contrast, their non-white counterparts were predominantly represented with explicitly simian traits, displaying lustful looks, or else portrayed as playthings of excited and flirtatious Parisian women.⁴⁰ In one of these drawings for *Rire* (another French humourist magazine) published in 1896, a black tribesman is squatting on a severed body of a white woman. In the background, we can see five men representing European colonial enterprises. Ironically, colonialism is here portrayed as potentially dangerous for European populations, in case colonial transfer of human subjects changes its course. The change eventually ensued, due to shortages in the European armies.

Owing to the mass recruitment of colonial subjects during World War I, non-white presence in Europe led to a shift in visual representations. Colonial soldiers or *tirailleurs* (largely recruited from Sub-Saharan and Northern Africa) were now represented in the French, American, British and German press as either romantically involved with or sexually assaulting white women. For the sake of the post-Versailles Treaty status quo, some of these images strove to normalize a mixed-race couple. While the benign clichés, mimetically situated in the 'white mother' and *enfant nègre* register, are mostly drawn on non-sexual supremacist undertones, the 'Black Shame' iconography is dominated by sexualisation and simianization of non-Europeans. In 1921, Guido Kreutzer published 'Black Shame', a novel defaming Black and Arab soldiers from the French troops who stationed in Rheinland for fifteen years following the Versailles Treaty in 1918. Kreutzer's novel contains the 'Black Horror's' standard images: cynicism and immorality of black soldiers, rape, stigmatizing mixed-race individuals, a mulatto running a brothel for non-white troops filled with

39 Ibid., pp. 199-224.

40 It is striking to what extent these representations differ from those of unattractive, old, and bossy suffragettes in the Anglo-Saxon press of that period. See Lysack, *Come Buy Come Buy*, p. 142.

white German women. The French in the 'Black Horror' narratives represent the treacherous governance and humiliation – an equivalent of the Cologne narratives' 'Wilkommenskultur'. Kreutzer's novel depicts German women as a symbol of moral integrity, honour and racial purity of the German people. Their tortured bodies, attacked by the 'savages', symbolically marked the boundaries of the German nation and the white race, injured and violated by France's 'Black Shame'.⁴¹ The non-white soldiers in Rheinland, often forcefully recruited from the colonies, were accused of 'countless' rapes and other crimes. The visual representations of Black soldiers raping white women multiplied in the German press in between wars. In her analysis of the 'Black Shame' discourse, Iris Wigger points out the flexibility with which the white female figure was instrumentalized to racist, sexist and nationalist ends.⁴² A typical example of the animal-like rapist cliché is an illustration entitled 'the Black Shame' in the 1927 album *The French in the Ruhr* (Französen im Ruhrgebiet). The motive, common in the Black Shame era, depicts a simianized French soldier groping a German blonde (Figure 7). The caption reads: 'the lust of the coloured man towards a white-skinned girl, the horror of the poor creature in the deepest distress [...]. The German girl, a lamentable example of more than two hundred similar cases, symbolizes a fate threatening every white woman. Apparently, the French promised white women to black soldiers in exchange for their military service and victory'.

Another influential document of that era, a pamphlet written by Edmund D. Morel, a Labour MP and specialist on Africa, depicted colonial soldiers as beasts and rapists.⁴³ While criticizing the militarism of the French, Morel denounced Europe's lethargy (prefigurative of 'silence hides violence') that preordained a white female's doom:

From the plains and forests, from the valleys and the swamps of Africa they brought tens of thousands of savage men, and thrust them upon us. Boys, these men raped our mothers and sisters! This, neither you, nor we, nor they, must ever be allowed to forget.⁴⁴

'They' are the imperial powers that be, the enemies of the people in interbellum Europe. Not only did these and many other voices gain ground in the

41 Wigger, *The Black Horror*, p. 85.

42 According to the Rheinland 'Black Horror' narrative, the white German woman 'became a coherence-generating symbol for a nation and white racial community threatened by a desecration'. See: Wigger, *The Black Horror*, p. 128.

43 Ibid., pp. 46–52.

44 Morel, *Horror of the Rhine*, p. 22.

Figure 7 “Die Schwarze Schmach!” (The Black Shame!)



Französen im Ruhrgebiet, 10 illustrations by A.M. Cay (Alexander M. Kaizer). Reimar Hobbing Verlag Berlin, 1927. Copied from Scientific Public Library Mainz

course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century because of the technology of power in place, they also emerged and thrived due to the popular demand to denounce miscegenation as dangerous and alien to white Europe and the United States.⁴⁵

During the Second World War, fascist propaganda posters established representations of Jewish and African sex offenders depicted as spiders or monkeys reducing them, as women themselves and lower classes are often ‘being reduced to the very margins of humanity’.⁴⁶ These images have been increasingly reused to spread racist and sexist memes, and they continue to fuel trolling rhetoric.

45 The prominent anti-miscegenation voices in the American discourse were, for instance, Francis Galton and Madison Grant. The latter stated in his 1916 *The Passing of the Great Race* that ‘the laws against miscegenation must be greatly extended if the higher races are to be maintained’. See. Grant, *The passing of the great race*, p. 31.

46 Hund, *Racist King Kong Fantasies*, p. 45.

Civilizing mission, miscegenation and the feminist struggle

The emancipatory virtue of Christianity, brought by white female educators and missionaries, was another facet of nineteenth-century normative practices in the colonies. Because women were the bearers of moral goodness, their presence and active role was considered indispensable for the bettering of the ruled populations. In the French iconography of the first decades of the twentieth century, the 'white women's burden' consists in dissuading men in the colonies from having sexual relations with native women, which had earlier been widely accepted. Visual representations deprecating *métissage* ('miscegenation') were part of *the politics of prestige* – the idea according to which to better govern subalterns Frenchmen must keep 'a good distance'.⁴⁷

Another aspect concerns the attitude to native men among white women in the colonies, and their own racism. A conflict between Isabella Mayo and Catherine Impey, two prominent figures in the Anglo-American feminist anti-racist movement, reveals the scale of the problem. On the pages of the anti-racist journal 'Fraternity'⁴⁸ Mayo expressed her indignity at the news of Catherine Impey's desire to marry a non-white man:

There are women who will 'fancy' anything which will give them a sensation and a little passing notoriety. [...] the morbid egotists may only imagine that men fall in love with them'. Be it remembered that even this imagination, if indulged in by a 'white woman', regarding a 'nigger' in some of the States, would mean the death of the man, perhaps even more ignominious death, if he ventured to say in self-defence that the 'imagination' was wholly baseless [...]. For it must be noted that female sufferers from this diseased egotism are not necessarily young and flighty. They are often elderly, dowdy and disappointed.⁴⁹

Mayo's attack on Catherine Impey demonstrates to what extent the feminist struggle was not to be confused with calling for racial mixing. On the question of race, the feminist position was thus originally in unison with the white patriarchy.⁵⁰ Beyond civilizing mission and feminist activism, the function of white women overseas was to police and distract white

47 Edwards, 'Womanizing', pp. 121-123.

48 The anti-racist journal published between 1888 and 1895 in Britain, later as *Anti-Caste*, established by Catherine Impey (EP).

49 Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 195.

50 See: Newman, *White Women's Rights*.

men.⁵¹ Despite their merits in the service of the empire, the British colonial narratives often represented white women as passively waiting for a final decline of the colonial status quo. At times they even jeopardize the practices of the colonial enterprise (although not the Empire itself) through their emancipatory activities. As transpires from Richard Dyer's reading of a British series, *The Jewel in the Crown* (Granada Television 1984), white women in the Raj ultimately do nothing, even if some support civilizing mission while others strive to change things: 'The serial's focus is women, to whom it allots three narrative possibilities: doing that fails; boredom and bitchiness; or [...] transfixed listening and observing', thus condoning the ongoing violence.⁵² In the end, as Dyer demonstrates through a tragic story of one of the characters who crossed the line and fell in love with the native man,⁵³ white women take the blame and provide the spectacle of moral suffering, for the loss of empire'.⁵⁴ These two short portrays of white women in British colonialism were cited to explore the challenges white feminists face, now and then, as agents of the imperial patriarchy implicated in the question of race, positing the notion of their own sexuality as part and parcel of their struggle.

Conclusion

The racialization of sexual practices that was established in the nineteenth century is historically specific and ought to be historicized in its own right. However, re-enacting the seemingly redundant clichés has been a dominant

51 Dyer divides the activities of white women in British colonies into two categories: imperialist and feminist. The first category generated a positive figure of white women doing missionary work and giving example of moral refinement (civilising mission) and a negative image of them being even more snobbish, more cruel to the natives than men, and while morally repressive, often adulterous (presumably due to boredom and heat). The second, feminist, is characterized by both the critique of racism and encouraging female independence. See: Dyer, *White*, pp. 184-187.

52 Ibid., p. 196.

53 Among the series' many characters who represent either the imperialist or the feminist type, is Daphne who questions the enterprise itself by opposing to anti-miscegenation laws, for which both she and her Indian lover are severely punished. The 'pandora's box' of racial transgression opened by Daphne according to another character (Lady Chatterjee), is used as an overarching metaphor for the fall of the British rule. Dyer concludes: 'The British withdraw because they have failed; and they have failed because of their women, who have weakened the fabric of empire with both their sexuality and their questioning of the enterprise'. Ibid., p. 199.

54 Ibid., p. 206.

strategy in the recent instances of online racist and sexist violence. Today's Far Right sustains the decline narrative in that it denounces the media and political establishment for concealing the truth of an ongoing 'epidemic' of 'Islamization' and 'bastardization' of Europe from its population. The struggle of Alt-Right trolls to uphold white supremacy relies on the instrumentalization of the image of white women as endangered by violent multiculturalism embodied in the invasion of lecherous non-white men. Trolls after New Year's Eve in Cologne acted as protectors of white women and simultaneously accused the 'traitors' among them of facilitating violence by their permissive approach to the influx of refugees in 2015. On the one hand their discourse resonates with the pseudo-scientific claims made in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Yet, it has also been endorsed by public figures who usually identify as anti-racist (certain intellectuals and feminists). It is arguable that the politics of representation – practised in the pre-digitalization era, as well as the one emerging from online conflicts described above – has a factual social impact (see Chapter 5). Yet, the articulation of racist and sexist memes after Cologne and some feminist reactions to the events definitely bring forth 'some uncomfortable questions about feminism'.⁵⁵ The above analyses of some particularly popular images and narratives that pointed to racial origins of sexual deviancy in the past, reveal the reiterative quality of today's far-right argumentation. Moreover, the ties between established scientific discourses, intellectual debates and racist trolling – now and back then – signal the possibility for racializing gaze to flourish far beyond the political scope of the Far Right.

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⁵⁵ Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 148.

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