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“HANDS OFF OUR WOMEN!” ETHNICIZING SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IN RECENT REPRESENTATIONS OF REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

At least since the 1990s a large body of research concerning the role of white women in the colonial enterprise testified to the confluence between upholding racist narratives and women's rights discourses. Due to the extensive media coverage of multiple sexual harassment cases during the New Year's Eve in Cologne, Germany, anti-racist and feminist discourses clashed in Poland and all over Europe, underpinning far-right rhetoric. The following intersectional and postcolonial analysis of contemporary narratives of the Muslim sexual deviancy maps discourses underlying recent representations of immigrants and refugees. From dwelling into Western European colonial iconographies, via liberal feminist discourse, to investigating links between publishing houses, press organs and political parties in Poland, this study puts forward an argument that contemporary islamophobia is complex and widespread far beyond being an age-old argument in far-right rhetoric.

Keywords: New Year's Eve in Cologne, media representations, Islam in popular literature, racism and islamophobia, Polish Far Right, sexual violence, colonialism

COLOGNE AND BEYOND

In recent visual representations and public discourses regarding the populations undergoing massive resettlement into Europe, much attention has been paid to the sexual practices of migrant men. Dwelling on sexual deviance of incomers is currently a common element in the far-right rhetoric.¹ It has also become a source of struggle within feminism, and part of a broader inquiry into the European dominant culture (Villa and Hark 2016). Recent analyses of the media coverage of sexual assaults that occurred on New Year's Eve 2015 in Cologne, Germany, have revealed how quickly far-right rhetoric can resurge when public morality is

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¹ Apart from false news of Arabs raping European women in Karlstadt, Malmö, Frankfurt and Berlin after New Year's Eve in Cologne, a famous case was Donald Trump's phrasing “Mexican rapists” (EP).

disrupted (Abdelmonem 2016). See also: (Hall 2012). Meanwhile, whereas “Cologne”² has become a signifier for sexual violence against “our” (white, European) women, the actual events are still being debated.³ As unclear as it may be, “Cologne” has led to a moral panic, that is, “*dramatizing symbolic reassertion* of the values of the society and of its limits of tolerance” (Hall 2012: 66; *italic in text*). Along the way, it has generated significant outbursts of islamophobia, that is, stigmatizing Muslim populations as a new facet of the white European racism.⁴ Eventually, it has also contributed to raising awareness of the scale of sexual harassment (violence against women beyond cultural, ethnic, and religious differences) in Europe. Ever since, the German jurisdiction reacted to the outcry by punitive measures against molestation and hate speech.⁵ Moreover, the closely-following #metoo movement reoriented sexual harassment debates from ethnic to more generally patriarchal trajectories. Yet, in Poland the memory of “Cologne” is still used to political ends and continues to nourish anti-immigrant rhetoric and the public imagination.⁶ While the negative images of Muslims in the Polish media have already been analysed on several occasions by Polish, EU, and Turkish think tanks (Pędzwiatr in: Bayrakli and Hafez 2016; Wigura et al. 2017; Winiewski et al. 2017), little attention has been paid to the intersectional (race, class and gender) nature of the clichés, as well as to the European colonial legacy of these images.

Since the 1990s, we have been observing a simultaneous rise of an academic body of work that approaches patriarchal power structure intersectionally, pointing to the economic and cultural forces that regulate race and gender normativity (Crenshaw 1991; Ware 1992; Mercer 1994). The strategies of visually and textually narrating the events in Cologne are examined here following that theoretical framework. The studied examples are mostly Polish far-right press and internet news outlets, such as wpolityce.pl, niezalezna.pl, and fronda.pl. Large segments of those narratives are reprints from their German equivalents (e.g. “Politically Incorrect”; pi-news.net).⁷ However, exploiting the narrative of white women as a symbol of European civilization in reporting on “Cologne” did not exclusively appear in the far-right media.⁸ The present analysis of the images of immigrants and refugees in media reports on

² After Paula-Irene Villa and Sabine Hark, I use “Cologne” as an ambivalent signifier: a city with a famous symbol of Christianity (the cathedral), a symbol of naïve German multicultural politics, and a site of sexual crimes against white women (Villa and Hark 2016: 9–10).

³ Depending on various reports, there were 50 or 1,000 culprits, 2 or 46 were Germans, and 3 or else all of them were refugees. See: (Villa and Hark 2016); see also: (Mohammed et al. 2016).

⁴ On understanding Islamophobia as racism, see: (Sayyid and Vakil 2011). And as cultural racism: (Bobako 2012/2013).

⁵ Introduced respectively in 2016 and 2017. See: (Hoernle 2016; Leisegang 2017).

⁶ As Piotr Jendroszczyk, a journalist in the “Rzeczpospolita” daily recently argued, Germany has become much more dangerous since refugees arrived, which has resulted in greater popularity of the far-right AfD party. Moreover, the journalist suggests migrant men come to Europe with no women, which makes them more prone to sex crimes (Jendroszczyk 2018).

⁷ On a detailed analysis of “Politically Incorrect” see: (Shooman and Spielhaus 2009).

⁸ The conservative, privately owned “Rzeczpospolita” with close links to the Law and Justice party released recently “Two years after Cologne, women are afraid” article by Piotr Jendroszczyk which reads: “Many Germans are unhappy with the presence of refugees [...]. It is beyond doubt that Germany isn’t as safe as it was before the migration crisis [...]. They [the incomers – EP] are not accompanied by their partners, mothers, sisters and daughters, which leads to violent behaviours” (Jendroszczyk 2018). Moreover, “Rzeczpospolita” and a news

“Cologne” in Poland aims at contextualizing those images. It does so both spatially – by comparing them to similar visual rhetoric in Germany – and historically, as reproducing Western colonialist narratives of disavowal and mimicry. Disavowal, inherently linked to the visual practices of fetishizing, is a simultaneous repulsion from and attraction towards a racialized Other.⁹

Underlying my research is an argument that an Arab/Muslim man¹⁰, as much as a white European woman, are both discursive constructs that inform national, racial, religious, economic and patriarchal identifications. Therefore, in retracing the central questions of ideology and power as constitutive to the construction of media narratives, all that is deemed as “normal” will be viewed as a function of stigmatizing the deviant. Likewise, the media are here understood, after Stuart Hall, as socially produced and far from simply and transparently reporting the “naturally newsworthy events” (Hall 2012: 53).

I start by analysing the front cover of an issue of “Sieci” entitled “Islamic Rape of Europe”. Then, I move on to the colonial iconography and the narratives of miscegenation. Finally, I draw critically on the “liberal” feminist discourse which, as Monika Bobako has recently argued, is the real intellectual challenge in the study of islamophobia.¹¹

FREEDOM FROM RACIAL DIVERSITY. THE RECEPTION OF “COLOGNE” IN POLAND

In Poland, since the early 2000s sexualized narratives featuring Arab and Muslim men have been emerging in a variety of forms. A 2004 Newsweek article entitled “Allah, give me a rich husband” inquired into a recent trend of young Polish women converting to Islam and looking for a rich Arab husband. The journalist described one of the “candidates” for Arab wives in the following way:

Although her looks fall short from the ideal promoted by models, that’s exactly what Arabs like, they like well-built women with large breasts and a bum. [...] They [women – E.P.] do not want to make a career, they want a warm home and a group of children. And being loved passionately. Like in the story told by Scheherazade. They do not think that this fairy tale is from another world

portal Dziennik.pl, privately owned by SPRINGER corporation and promoting CNN feed in Poland, often cite a far-right politician Mariusz Błaszczak, known for his islamophobic utterances (EP).

⁹ “Disavowal is the strategy by means of which a powerful fascination or desire is both indulged and at the same time denied. It is where what has been tabooed nevertheless manages to find a displaced form of representation. As Homi Bhabha observes, “It is a non-repressive form of knowledge that allows for the possibility of simultaneously embracing two contradictory beliefs, one official and one secret, one archaic and one progressive, one that allows the myth of origins, the other that articulates difference and division” (Bhabha 1986: 168).

¹⁰ The amalgamated individual “of Arabic look”, of “Arab nationality” (Fronda.pl), “a refugee” (pCh24.pl) and “a Muslim” (euroislam.pl). See: *Shock! A Polish woman reports on the hordes of refugees in Cologne*; <http://www.fronda.pl/a/szok-polka-relacjonuje-atak-hordy-uchodzcow-w-kolonii,63461.html>). *A plague of rapes in Germany. Refugees massively assault women*; <http://www.pch24.pl/plaga-gwaltow-w-niemczech--uchodzcy-masowo-napadaja-kobiety---policyjne-strategie-zawiodly,45889,i.html>; *The morbid world of Islamic sex*; <https://euroislam.pl/ponury-swiat-islamskiego-seksu/>.

¹¹ <http://krytykapolityczna.pl/swiat/bobako-muzulmanski-antysemityzm/>.

and can sometimes turn into a nightmare. [...] Oriental men find them attractive, even those who are judged by unattractive by their countrymen, if only because of excessive fat.¹²

Although the article will not mention the source of assumption of the women's unattractiveness, nor what sort of nightmares they experience, the clichés of violent Arabs and unattractive, unintelligent women who fall for them has become a recurrent theme in the popular culture.¹³

In the communist era Arab men were identified with wealthy sheiks from Gulf countries who had a wide-spread reputation of coming to Warsaw to use the services of Polish prostitutes. An immensely popular song by the pop band Budka Suflera, "Jolka, Jolka", written and released in 1982, contains the line "she cheated on him with a bus full of Arabs/he was never the same afterwards". The top-of-the-charts song, known to everyone, featured a cliché of lusty Arab men collectively assaulting a Polish woman. More recently, popular orientalist sagas by Tanya Valko, Laila Shukri and Nadia Hamid (Polish female authors living permanently in Arab countries), have been literary bestsellers (Valko 2010, 2018; Hamid 2016, 2017; Shukri 2014, 2016). Foreign novels featuring a young, naïve woman who falls in love with an Arab man (from an unspecified country but always Muslim as a default confession¹⁴) have also raised particular interest (Wermuth 2010; Monforte 2017). One book blogger, Marta Maćkiewicz, recommends those novels in the following words:

"Wives of Islam" share a common feature – they live in a world where they mean nothing. In the shadow of their husbands, who often turn out to be tyrants, they fight for each day. Helpless, tired, resigned. There are European women in love who do not know the world in which they live, but also Arab women brought up in Islam who, seeing a bit of the western world, want to live differently. Their determination is all the greater because they have little to lose.

For several years, Polish Catholic publishing houses, such as Bernardinum, Aetos and AA, have been publishing best-selling books on Islam as a threat to Europe (Terlikowski 2016), conspiracy theories suggesting connections between George Soros and refugees (Krajski 2016), islamophobic books by foreign authors (Tass Saada's, *The Mind of a Terrorist*, Aetos, 2017; Ayaan Hirsi Ali, *The Heretic*, Świat Książki, 2016). Another topic on the rise has been the "jihadi wives", that is, white women who join the Islamic State fighters.¹⁵ A young Polish woman's unexplained death in Hurghada, Egypt (May 2017) and a rape of another Polish woman in Rimini, Italy, made news for weeks and were commented on by a number of prominent politicians.¹⁶ This extensive cultural production of deviant representations of

¹² <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/allahu--daj-bogatego-meza,18476,1,1.html>; last update: 09.08.2011, 13: 32.

¹³ Some of the examples are the (female Arab) "child kidnapper" urban legend (<https://plus.gazetawroclawska.pl/magazyn/a/arab-porwal-mu-zone-czyli-nowe-legendy-miejskie,12292432>) and the stories of older women's sex and matrimonial tourism in Egypt, exposed in a documentary film *Darling I love you* (Błaszczyk, HBO Polska, 2010).

¹⁴ On conflating and abusing the "Arab" and "Muslim" or "Arab/Muslim" labels see: (Said 1997: 165).

¹⁵ Anna Sundberg and Huor Jesper. 2017. *Żona terrorysty*, Warszawa: Czarna Owca; Matthiue Suc. 2016. *Femmes de djihadistes*, Paryż: Fayard.

¹⁶ For instance, the Minister of Justice Zbigniew Ziobro said in May 2017 that Magdalena Żuk's death could be a larger case of human trafficking and organised crime: "That sort of activity could not only affect Ms

Muslims in Poland underlies moral panic and reinforces the image of a Polish woman as the embodiment of “our” Christian civilization. Yet, as Monika Bobako noticed, since there are virtually no Muslims in Poland, the fear of islamisation is a sheer projection.¹⁷

On a front cover of the February 2016 issue of the weekly “Sieci” (wPolityce.pl, a news outlet owned by Fratria¹⁸), a sexy blonde clad in the EU flag is being groped by male hands. The hands are dark and hairy, and thus evoke simian representations of non-Europeans frequent in the colonial era. They wear golden watches, which indicates superfluous and expensive possessions, contrasted with hard work or struggle to find work of millions of frustrated Poles. The images of refugees’ obscene opulence common in the far-right press in the second half of 2015¹⁹ that added to the anti-immigrant rage, resembled the moral panic in the 1950s UK, analysed by Stuart Hall:

Their [the black immigrants’ – E.P.] imputed taste for big American cars – the direct expression of the over-development of under-development in their native land – caricatured the affluent life. Their Saturday night parties were a constant reminder of the sacrifices demanded by the regime of work and the taboo on pleasure enshrined in the Protestant ethic. Their presence in the job queue recalled a century of unemployment and summary dismissal – evidence that a few years of ‘full employment’ cannot liquidate a whole class experience of economic insecurity. [...] The symbolism of the race-immigrant theme was resonant, in its subliminal force, its capacity to set in motion the demons which haunt the collective subconscious of a ‘superior’ race; it triggered off images of sex, rape, primitivism, violence and excrement (Hall 2012: 244).

Apart from watches, the hands are in chains identifying them as belonging to slaves, thugs, or animals. The blatant symbol of oppression again amalgamates Western femininity and freedom, exposing the “Islamic” culprit as inherently violent towards women.

Magdalena. Other instances that were revealed on this occasion will also be examined – those related to female trafficking, sexual abuse of women when force was used or drugs induced”, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/zbigniew-ziobro-o-sprawie-smierci-magdaleny-zuk-6121157971736705a>.

Despite these declarations, the victim was in fact never raped and her death remains a mystery.

In August 2017, while commenting on the rape case in Rimini, a Deputy for Sejm Patryk Jaki tweeted: “See, these are your immigrants. [...] You want them in Poland? Over my dead body” *Macie swoich imigrantów – TVN-y, WP, GW, Natemat, PO i Nowoczesne. Chcecie ich w Polsce? Po moim trupie*, <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114883,22286830,szukujace-slowa-wiceministra-po-gwalcie-w-rimini-tymczasem.html>.

¹⁷ <http://krytykapolityczna.pl/swiat/bobako-muzulmansi-antysemityzm/>.

¹⁸ Presided by Romuald Orzeł and Jacek and Karnowski brothers, since 2015 *Fratria* has also been publishing ABC, a weekly bearing the same name as a historical Polish anti-Semitic and xenophobic title published between 1935 and 1939. In 2015 *Fratria* has taken over the title of another conservative publisher, *Fronda* (publisher and magazine of the same name, there and now), turned it into a monthly cultural magazine dedicated to promoting family and Christian values, edited by G. Górny (ex-Gazeta Wyborcza, ex-Fronda, since 2012 works for *Fratria* and, since 2016, for the Polish Radio).

¹⁹ *Niezalezna.pl* portal wrote on 05.09.2015: “The Polish unemployed have less money than refugees”, <http://niezalezna.pl/70572-bezrobotny-ma-w-polsce-gorzej-niz-uchodzaca-utrzymanie-tego-drugiego-kosztuje-duzo-wiecej>.

“All of them very well dressed, with smartphones” and “People are really scared, they fear for their daughters, son and their possessions” – *fronda.pl* published a report of a Polish visitor about a German refugee camp. <http://www.fronda.pl/a/hit-internetu-relacja-polaka-z-obozu-dla-imigrantow-w-niemczech,60389.html>, 15.11.2015.

The woman represented on the cover is screaming, and her fingers take shape of an eagle's claws, as if she were preparing to attack. Her rage, her beauty and her fairness are contrasted with the hands – multiple and anonymous, cowardly hiding the identities of the culprits. As it was quickly picked up by the critics, the far right traditionally attempts to curb women's rights by means of attributing them natural instincts such as child rearing, a love of domestic life, and as a result controlling her social and biological functions by market and birth control regulations. However, the accessory use of the “white female saviour” metaphor once again articulated how “uncivilized” Muslim refugees are, by depicting them in contrast with the triad of hard work, family and respectability – those self-serving values that Stuart Hall calls “traditionalist” (Hall 2012: 122). Eventually, “Sieci” was criticized as echoing German and Italian fascist representations of colonial and ally soldiers (African-Americans in the U.S., and *tirailleurs* in the French army) sexually assaulting European women (Figure 1). The “old” Europe, a white blonde, is enraged but at the same time frail and inevitably surrendering to the imposture of Muslims (“Europe’s hell” as in a Christian metaphoric lexicon the “Sieci” journalists describe the influx of refugees). A foreign affairs writer for “Washington Post”, Ishaan Tharoor noticed that, in referring to a civilization which is about to be bastardized, the far-right weekly echoes *Mein Kampf*.²⁰ Although it seems that the far-right press is an anomaly, the “Sieci” editors-in-chief, Michał and Jacek Karnowski have close ties to the ruling nationalist and anti-EU party, Law and Justice. Both the President of Poland, Andrzej Duda and the Party's president, Jarosław Kaczyński have been awarded a “Sieci” *Man of Freedom* award (in 2015 and 2016 respectively) and endorsed the values promoted by the weekly.²¹

The similarity between the politics of representing “Cologne” in Germany and in Poland is due to frequent reprints of photos. German newspapers such as “Süddeutsche Zeitung” and “Focus”, which usually publish moderate content, opted for symbolic representation that amalgamates feminine sexuality with an explicitly racist message.²² On the far-right spectrum of the news feed, the Polish media outlets were visibly inspired by “Politically Incorrect”, Alternative für Deutschland and PEGIDA's twitter feed.²³ In their visual comment to the events in Cologne, portals such as Fronda.pl and euroislam.pl used pictures from PEGIDA demonstrations in Germany. One of them featured Angela Merkel in a headscarf, a classical image in the islamophobic iconography.²⁴ Another one showed PEGIDA agitators

²⁰ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/02/18/the-so-called-islamic-rape-of-europe-is-part-of-a-long-and-racist-history/?utm_term=.66c75b3b4e1c.

²¹ <https://www.wsieciprawdy.pl/czlowiek-wolnosci-2015-pproject-11.html>; <https://www.wsieciprawdy.pl/jaroslaw-kaczynski-czlowikiem-wolnosci-2016-tygodnika-wsieci-pnews-3074.html>.

²² <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/focus-und-sueddeutsche-zeitung-eine-entschuldigung-eine-rechtfertigung-fuer-titel-a-1071334.html>.

²³ PEGIDA (acronym from Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West) – founded in 2014, PEGIDA is a nationalist, far-right movement operating in Germany and in other parts of Europe (EP).

²⁴ “Sieci” published a front cover featuring Ewa Kopacz, the opposition PM in a niqab, holding dynamite. The issue is entitled “Hell ordered from Berlin” referring to the quotas of refugees that Poland was supposed to accept, <http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/media/artykuly/500926,okladka-tygodnika-wsieci-ewa-kopacz-w-burce-i-z-dynamitem.html>.

holding a banner “Rapefugees Not Welcome.”²⁵ Most news portals used photos showing random scenes of dark-skinned men in large masses or in the vicinity of blond women, in threatening poses.²⁶



Figure 1. Italian researcher Alessio Fratticcioli compares the cover to an Italian fascist poster from 1944: *Potrebbe essere tua madre, tua moglie, tua sorella, tua figlia*: “She could be your mother, your wife, your sister, your daughter” (photo courtesy of Mr. Fratticcioli)

THE POLITICS OF DESIRE.

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE SEXUAL VIOLENCE NARRATIVE

In order to demonstrate a historical continuity of media narratives of a dark-skinned man (capable of or explicitly) raping white women, it is helpful to shortly dwell on the relationship between visual norms and the European colonial history. The miscegenation (racial mixing) iconography was established by the American history of slavery, British and French colonialism and the Third Reich, first adopted in the German colonies in Africa (Dietrich 2016). Nevertheless, the politics of representing white women sexually assaulted by dark-skinned (mainly Arab and African) men proved equally influential in the recent Polish public imagination.

Pioneering research on racialized representations that raised the issues of fetishization and stigmatization was conducted by British cultural studies researchers, such as Richard Dyer, Kobena Mercer and Stuart Hall, who retraced racial and gendered clichés present in popular culture back to the colonial and imperial patterns of representation. Mercer noticed

²⁵ <http://www.fronda.pl/a/o-gwaltach-w-kolonii-mowia-juz-nawet-niemcy,63498.html>; <https://euroislam.pl/sylwest-er-w-kolonii-policji-kazano-tuszowac-sprawe-gwaltow/> (“Rapefugees” is a keyword used by the “Politically Incorrect” to denote refugees).

²⁶ <http://www.fronda.pl/a/szok-polka-relacjonuje-atak-hordy-uchodzcow-w-kolonii,63461.html>.

that the infantilization of Black men may symbolize castration, which was a reaction against “the fear and fantasy of the big black penis” – a threat not only to “white womanhood, but to civilization itself, as the anxiety of miscegenation, eugenic pollution and racial degeneration is acted out through white male rituals of racial aggression” (Mercer 1994: 185). A French researcher in cinema representations of “Arabs”, Julien Gaertner, retraced the clichés of powerful Arabs infatuated with blondes and violent clansmen abducting, raping and killing white women in French films.²⁷

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the European iconography was abundant in demeaning representations of dark-skinned men and women (Hall 2012: 225–277). In the United States as well as in Europe it was illegal or unthinkable for a white woman to have an open relationship with a non-white man. At the turn of the century, in order to stop colonial administrators from maintaining relationships with ‘native’ women, efforts were made to provide enough white women to the colonial territories, so that the sexual economy could remain racially segregated. Many British and French women in the colonies became human rights campaigners, anti-racist activists and influential writers. Their feminist ideals made them focus primarily on work with local female populations, although their attitude was often paternalistic and fairly ignorant of local cultures.²⁸ It was in this late colonial period that the politics of representing white women as educators, missionaries and ideal wives was established. Pictured as gentle-natured and understanding wives and mothers, they were expected to be the bearers and the guardians of civilization against unpredictable, dangerous nature.²⁹ Such positioning of European femininity has articulated the disavowal entrenched in the images of Muslims: projecting their desire to be “like the whites” (attraction to the morally superior) and a fear of bastardizing the white race (the “vengeance of the cradle”).

²⁷ (Gaertner 2017; 2008). The aforementioned clichés refer directly to two famous French films: *Angélique et le sultan* (Borderie 1967) and *L'Emir préfère les blondes* (Payet 1983). Recently the theme has been transferred to romantic comedies and serves as a tale of assimilation in films such as “Bacon on the Side” (Depetrini 2010) and „Serial Bad Marriages” (De Chauveron 2014).

²⁸ For instance, Vron Ware in her pioneering book on the subject entitled *Beyond the Pale. White Women, Racism and History*, focused on abolitionist and anti-lynching campaigns as well as women’s rights in the British Raj. Marie-Paule Ha, a French historian of female role in the French Indochina worked on French women, such as Clotilde Chivas-Baron or Aurelie Picard who significantly influenced the image of white women among the colonized peoples. See: (Ware 2015; Ha 2014).

²⁹ This strategic identification, as Vron Ware argued, that had secured women’s inferiority for centuries, lay primarily in the Christian narrative. Paradoxically, noticed Ware, for women were considered religiously as “feeling and suffering more than men”, Christianity as a “moral crusade”, “the true religion of emancipation”, was a site of women’s engagement in the anti-slavery movement. In this intricate manner, their complicity, albeit only metaphysical, with dark-skinned men was inscribed in the project of an imperial/colonial enterprise understood as conquering nature. According to Anne McClintock, the obsession with dark-man’s deviant sexuality and the natural state of the virgin land are at the origin of the colonial conquest, rooted in “an uneasy sense of male anxiety, infantilization and longing for the female body” (McClintock 1995: 22). In their own tales, the conquerors are narrated as (ravishing) adventurers who encounter in Africa, Asia and in the Americas the world of libidinal excess. They recounted “visions of the monstrous sexuality of far-off lands, where, as legend had it, men sported gigantic penises and women consorted with apes, feminized men’s breasts flowed with milk and militarized women lopped theirs off” (McClintock 1995: 22). The formidable projection that had shaped collective representations of the New World is thus founded on the notion of sexual deviance, both female and male.



Figure 2. “Le Rire” 1896, white woman (Europe) is being sexually assaulted by a black man who symbolizes Africa

LIBERAL FEMINISTS AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

In the article *After Cologne, feminism is dead* published on a liberal news portal “Quillette”, Philip Marc McGough wrote:

Some of us are old enough to remember when refugees consisted almost entirely (and by definition) of the most vulnerable members of any given country in crisis: Women, children, the elderly, and so forth. Today, on the other hand, most of the Muslims arriving in Europe from the Near East seem to be young men of fighting age: Young men whose views regarding Jews, gays, and of course women are completely at odds with Europe’s liberal tradition as it’s evolved these past few centuries; a liberal tradition which Germany, for obvious reasons, has sought to reify in its approach to domestic and international affairs ever since the end of the war. But thanks in no small measure to mass Muslim immigration, antisemitism in its most predatory incarnation is once again the norm on German streets, while misogyny is more or less accepted, even expected.³⁰

Not only does the article’s title establish a parallel between sexual assaults and terrorist acts (after Cologne, reminiscent of “after 9/11”).³¹ Above all, it weds the liberal feminist cause with islamophobic rhetoric.

Instrumentalising the feminist struggle for islamophobic ends, a triad of anti-Semitism, homophobia, and misogyny is here attributed to the immigrant (amalgamated both with refugee

³⁰ <http://quillette.com/2016/01/18/after-cologne-feminism-is-dead/>.

³¹ The “after Cologne” rhetoric as also used by Geert Wilders in his article *After Cologne Women have the Right to Defend Themselves*, <https://geertwilders.nl/index.php/94-english/1975-op-ed-gw-13012016>.

and Muslim) population and can be decoded as anti-civilizational. Not only are these young men coming to Europe alone, which makes a reader immediately pose a question about the sexual economy and the regulation (policing) of desire. The author argues that they also bring with them opinions dangerous to European liberal values.

A few days after “Cologne” Alice Schwarzer, a German feminist known for her anti-Muslim opinions, launched an attack on the North-African male community. According to Schwarzer, “Cologne” represented “sexual terror” and “war strategy”.³² Four months after the events, the feminist published a book in which she blames an ethnic group of “North-Africans or Arabs/Muslims”, on another occasion identified as “Sharia-Muslims” or “Islamists” for a cultural propensity to gang-rape white women.³³ Schwarzer was the first person to compare sexual assaults in Cologne to a rape of an American journalist during the demonstrations at Cairo’s Tahrir Square in 2011, arguing that collective sexual assault is a cultural characteristic of Arab/Muslim societies.³⁴ The multiple sexual assaults that took place in Cologne were reported as *taharrush gamea* (*taharrush jama’i* means “sexual harassment” in Arabic), which has led to ascribing harassment to the “Muslim culture.”³⁵ In the Polish media it was called “an Arabic game”³⁶ “a Muslim play with a woman”³⁷, “Arabic game taharrush”³⁸ “Islamic rape game”³⁹, pointing to both mistranslation (gamea-game) and manipulation. The amalgamation of terrorism and sexual assault promoted by Schwarzer and other liberal feminists who contributed to her project, was immediately appropriated in far-right discourses all over Europe, serving various purposes, such as denouncing pro-EU politics, legalisation of weapons, and closing the European borders.⁴⁰

In Poland, a swift response to instrumentalising feminism followed. Agata Komosa made an attempt to redirect a discussion on the actual violence against women, which was in her opinion downplayed by the far-right due to a moral panic.⁴¹ Kinga Dunin ironically responded to the islamophobic hysteria in the Polish media by denouncing Polish masculinity, while at the same time idealizing Arab men:

³² <https://www.aliceschwarzer.de/artikel/war-die-silvester-terrornacht-organisiert-331391>.

³³ Accused of xenophobia by third-wave feminists, Alice Schwarzer strikes back arguing, that they are double traitors, for “they betray not only their *own* women, but also Muslim women: those who *fled Islam-ruled* countries and came here to find asylum” (italics mine) (Schwarzer 2016: 24).

³⁴ The inaccurate amalgamation between Arabs and Muslims is a common stereotyping strategy in media.

³⁵ Although I agree with Rogers Brubaker and Monika Bobako that the customary term „Muslim culture“ is an insufficient category of analysis. See: (Brubaker 2012; Sutowski 2016).

³⁶ <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-ze-swiata,2/sylwestrowe-napasci-na-kobiety-arabska-gra-dotarla-do-niemiec,610038.html>.

³⁷ <http://niezalezna.pl/75021-taharrush-czyli-muzulmanska-zabawa-kobieta-dotarla-do-euro-py-razem-z-imigrantami>.

³⁸ <http://natemat.pl/168019,zbiorowe-molestowanie-w-niemczech-to-najprawdopodobniej-arabska-zabawa-taharrush>.

³⁹ <https://www.wykop.pl/link/3058355/taharrush-islamska-zabawa-w-zbiorowe-gwalcenie-kobiet-kolejna-ofiara-w-ue/>.

⁴⁰ See: Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders’ reaction to „Cologne“, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/wilders-and-le-pen-plan-right-wing-populist-faction-in-eu-parliament-a-933340.html>.

⁴¹ <http://natemat.pl/167681,mezczyzni-o-slowianskim-typie-urody-bronia-kobiet-przed-meczczyznami-o-polnocnoafrykanskim-typie-urody>.

An Oriental prince will bestow compliments on her, he will want to have many children, plus he does not drink. He is brave and self-sustainable, or else he wouldn't make it here. And he's so gorgeous! The Oriental beauty makes a nice change from potato noses and pig-heads on a stick. So no wonder Poles will defend their women tooth and nail. They will scare us with the hordes of rapists, as if it were obvious that every Polish woman would rather have sex with Jaroslaw Kaczynski than with a handsome Arab.⁴²

While Komosa's article represented a struggle for third-wave feminism in Poland, Dunin's sarcastic proposition to mix races in order to destroy racism reiterated a disavowal criticized in the writings of the aforementioned second-wave feminists. Komosa suggested that the media were reluctant to denounce "Cologne" precisely not to play into the ethnicized sexual violence narrative that has become fundamental to the far right. On the other hand, she denounced instrumentalising violence against women in the name of protecting them from the invaders.

Although the reactions of Polish feminists on "Cologne" were mainly anti-racist, a persistent amalgamation between oppressed women and Muslim women is still present in parts of the Polish feminist discourse.⁴³ The basic discord on civilizational and sexual difference exposes the weakness of both institutional and intellectual responses to racial and sexual violence. On the other hand, one of the most mediatized Polish anti-Muslim voices is that of Miriam Shaded, the founder of the *Estera Foundation*, an aid organization for Syrian Christians. Self-proclaimed as a feminist, Shaded has often referred to "Muslim rapes" as a particular religious propensity, and has publicly framed pro-immigration feminists as anti-feminists. Shaded's critique of Islam on numerous occasions reposed on the argument of protecting women from the Islamic rapists. On her blog, she writes:

Unfortunately, Magdalena Żuk [unexplained death in Hurghada, Egypt – E.P.] is not the only victim of violence, rapes, tortures or murders committed on Polish women in the Arab countries. These things happen to them every day. We don't hear about it, because most women would not admit it in public.⁴⁴

["Cologne"] was an element of punishment on women that the Qur'an advocates. One of the imams said openly that the women are to blame for their indecent dress. So, on the one hand it is an element of conquest, and on the other – pleasuring the sexually starved men [...] Every woman in Europe should feel threatened.⁴⁵

⁴² "To księżę z Orientu obsypie komplementami, będzie pragnął mieć wiele dzieci i jeszcze do tego nie pije. Jest dzielny i zaradny – inaczej by go tu nie było. I jak pięknie wygląda! Orientalna uroda to jednak coś innego niż karki z kartoflanymi nosami i ze świńskimi głowami na kiju. Trudno zatem się dziwić, że Polacy zajadłe będą bronili swoich kobiet. Straszili hordami gwałcicieli, tak jakby to było oczywiste, że każda prawdziwa Polka woli oddać się Jarosławowi Kaczyńskiemu niż pięknemu Arabowi" (transl. E.P.), <http://krytykapolityczna.pl/felietony/kinga-dunin/polskie-kobiety-witaja-uchodzcow/>.

⁴³ M. Bobako cites here a happening organized by Manuela Gretkowska during the Congress of Women, during which feminists put paper bags on their heads to symbolize the veil oppression. Another example would be picturing a veiled woman to symbolize the Polish government's hardline abortion laws in one of the videos promoting the Black Protest.

⁴⁴ www.miriamshaded.pl.

⁴⁵ www.miriamshaded.pl.

Ironically, Miriam Shaded's critique of Islam as an "ideology" that is hostile towards women reveals her ambivalent position towards feminism, an inherently democratic movement, traditionally devoted to securing the rights of minorities to exist. While Shaded declares providing protection to female victims of Muslim men, she has voiced support towards politicians such as Donald Trump and Janusz Korwin-Mikke, known for their fervent sexism.

Concluding, there are a number of considerations to be made on the occasion of this confrontation between the opposing visions of feminism. Firstly, dissociating gender struggles from racial inequality has been denounced by third-wave feminists such as Christine Delphy, Bell Hooks and Judith Butler, and in Poland by Kazimiera Szczuka. Secondly, ignoring the status of whiteness as a non-colour by "liberal" feminists downplays the historical privilege that the white female has enjoyed since the colonial era. Meanwhile, the will to preserve the heritage of women's struggles without lending it a thoroughly critical outlook thwarts urgent discussions on issues such as economic inequalities, and overcoming the social aporias of integration, institutional racism and sexual abuse.

Third-wave feminists in Poland and elsewhere denounced the racist images of refugees and reclaimed feminism from far-right groups accusing them of being traditionally insensitive to women's struggles. For instance, German feminists involved in the #ausnahmslos (*no excuses*) movement stated online:

Instead of focusing on unfair gender structures, structural power and problematic masculine images, even with the associated cultural and ideological backgrounds, the problem since Cologne is all too often combined with certain religions or countries of origin by perpetrators.⁴⁶

Anne Wizorek, who championed *Ausnahmslos*, contends elsewhere:

Sexual assaults happen every day and not just on New Year's Eve in Cologne. Numbers of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs show: Almost 60 percent of all women in Germany have already been sexually harassed, every seventh has experienced criminally relevant forms of sexual violence. These numbers have been known for a long time, but they barely occur in the debate (Decker 2016).

In response, both German and Polish far-right blogs perpetuated the "ugly feminist narrative" (*Mowa nienawiści, mowa pogardy* 2017: 105), according to which the feminists' solidarity with refugees or immigrants is sexually motivated. From this recurrent argument emerges a consistent pattern of sexually deviant behaviour, that characterizes not only dark-skinned migrant men, but also "slutty" and unattractive (ugly, fat and old) refugee helpers (*Mowa nienawiści, mowa pogardy* 2017: 105).

One example of verbal abuse of a female campaigner for the rights of refugees resulted in considerable public outrage. Several weeks after Cologne, Mariusz Pudzianowski⁴⁷ posted on his Facebook page: "No mercy for this human garbage. Send me there and I won't hesitate to use my baseball bat. Zero tolerance." Joanna Grabarczyk from HejtStop, a non-profit organization that monitors hate speech on the internet, denounced Pudzianowski's comment.

⁴⁶ <http://ausnahmslos.org/>

⁴⁷ A former Strongman, currently MMA fighter and the owner of a truck company recently fined for hiding refugees in one of his trucks (EP).

As a result, it was suggested that she is too unattractive to be raped, and she was likened to women collaborating with Nazis (in a call to shave her hair).⁴⁸ Paweł Kukiz, a presidential candidate 2015 and a prominent politician, commented from his Facebook account: “I understand Ms Joanna... if I were her, I would also dream about immigrants in the context of the New Year’s Eve.”⁴⁹ While Pudzianowski retracted his statement, claiming he has many refugee friends and is not hostile towards refugees but towards those who destroy his private property, Kukiz has been involved in a campaign to deny refugees entry into Poland. In a clumsy attempt to apologize to Joanna Grabarczyk, Kukiz stated: “I thought her openness and tolerance are beyond racial limits.” He added that he was surprised that his words caused an outrage in the “modern milieu.”⁵⁰

Concluding, the anti-immigrant and anti-refugee argument frames female agency as both vulnerable and undesirable. While appropriating the feminist struggle to racist ends meets critique, it is informed by the limiting perceptions (on the far-right) and conceptions (within liberal discourse) of femininity. Thus, “white female” tends to become a signifier in the xenophobic argument in the context of moral panic.

CONCLUSION

Not only do the Polish images of immigrants and refugees reiterate far-right rhetoric present in other European countries, they also encounter significant criticism in the press and on the internet both in and outside of Poland.

Although spatially remote, the historical context of vilifying non-European sexuality and fetishizing the white female body has been strongly pronounced in the Polish images of refugees and immigrants. Some researchers link it to appropriating the European identity after 1989; others see larger economic and ideological forces at play (Bobako 2017).

After “Cologne” visual narratives have undergone two forces: racist discourses have strengthened a Europe/Islam binarism, while they have also exposed essential aporias in the liberal discourse, unable to offer satisfactory space for a possibility of solidarity that would overcome the violent political disputes. As an immediate reaction, it would be desirable to strengthen the Polish legislation regarding violent, hateful racist and sexist media content, as well as to introduce punitive measures against public officials who resort to hate speech.

Apart from the stereotypical representation of sexually undesirable women as attracted to immigrant/refugee men, this conflict reveals deeper economic and social ties with racism. As Monika Bobako noticed on another occasion (Bobako 2011), it would be necessary to conduct a more detailed analysis of the relationship between the role of private property in Polish society and xenophobic feelings. For some authors, the rise of a neoliberal economy

⁴⁸ <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75398,19599735,strongman-linczuje-w-sieci-joanna-grabarczyk-na-celowniku.html>.

⁴⁹ „Nie dziwię się pani Joannie... Gdybym był na jej miejscu, to też marzyłbym (marzyłabym) o imigrantach w kontekście sylwestrowej nocy”, <http://wyborcza.pl/1,95891,19641436,wiemy-jak-cienka-granica-dzieli-nienawistne-slowa-od-nienawistnych.html>.

⁵⁰ <http://natemat.pl/170921,kukiz-przeprasza-joanne-grabarczyk-z-hejtstop-zakladalem-ze-jej-otwartosc-i-tolerancja-nie-znaja-granic-rasowych>.

that demands culturally motivated explanations for societies to accept unequal structures in work- and market forces coalesced with a re-emergence of racism in the most logical way (Deleuze and Guattari 1984; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Hardt and Negri 2005). With respect to the problem of racism, particularly noteworthy is the ambivalence of notions such as modernity, property and tolerance in the struggle for and against a Polish multicultural society.

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„ŁAPY PRECZ OD NASZYCH KOBIET!”

ETNICYZACJA RÓŻNICY SEKSUALNEJ WE WSPÓŁCZESNYCH WIZERUNKACH
IMIGRANTÓW I UCHODźCÓW

Przynajmniej od lat 90. ubiegłego stulecia obszerne badania dotyczące roli białych kobiet w europejskich koloniach świadczą o zbieżności między powielaniem rasistowskich narracji a dyskursami na temat praw kobiet. W związku z nagłośnionymi w mediach przypadkami molestowania seksualnego w czasie sylwestra w niemieckiej Kolonii, w Polsce i w całej Europie doszło do polemiki między przedstawicielami środowisk antyrasistowskich i feministycznych, co wykorzystała skrajna prawica do umocnienia własnej retoryki. Opierając się na intersekcyjnej i postkolonialnej analizie współczesnych narracji dotyczących odmiennej od europejskiej seksualności muzułmanów, niniejszy tekst stanowi próbę usystematyzowania dyskursów leżących u podstaw współczesnych wizerunków imigrantów i uchodźców. Od zachodnioeuropejskiej ikonografii kolonialnej, poprzez liberalny dyskurs feministyczny, aż po badanie powiązań pomiędzy wydawnictwami, organami prasowymi i partiami politycznymi w Polsce, artykuł stanowi próbę dowiedzenia, iż współczesna islamofobia istnieje nie tylko jako odwieczny argument w retoryce skrajnej prawicy, lecz jest o wiele bardziej złożona i powszechna.

Słowa kluczowe: sylwester w Kolonii, medialne wizerunki, islam w literaturze popularnej, rasizm i islamofobia, polska skrajna prawica, przemoc seksualna, kolonializm.