

London School of Economics and Political Science

Affective Borders:
The Emotional Politics of the German ‘Refugee Crisis’

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Abstract:

This thesis constitutes an original conceptualisation and analysis of *affective borders* that brings together feminist, queer and postcolonial theories of affect with critical border and migration studies. It examines what the public reaction to the so called “refugee crisis” in Germany can tell us about the role that affect plays in producing, legitimising and contesting the European border regime. To that end, it focuses on the mobilisation of three different affects in key scenes of the border spectacle that unfolded during the long summer of migration (the time period from early summer 2015 to the beginning of 2016) in Germany: the invocation of empathy in relation to the publication of the photo of Alan Kurdi; the eruption of anger after the sexual abuse cases during New Year’s Eve in Cologne; and the articulation of hope in Angela Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” speeches. Tracing affect through these scenes, this thesis uncovers dominant structures of feeling that sustain the deadly logics of the European border regime and suggests that affective borders need to be understood as social and historical forces that reinstall racial, national and sexual hierarchies. By further attending to alternative practices of migrant marches, refugee hunger strikes, acts of public mourning and activist interventions aimed at shaming the European Union, the thesis also highlights the potential for new forms of affective solidarity and resistance to emerge. This work should be of unique interest for scholars aiming to understand how the European border regime is produced, legitimised and contested as well as for those interested to understand how affect theory can be harnessed for more intricate social and political analyses.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1. Interventions: A Feminist Contribution

This thesis started with affect. Growing up in a leftist-liberal part of Hamburg, I was educated through the post-war precept of “coming to terms with the past”.¹ Further accompanied by the stories of my grandmother of Jewish descent who lived through the Holocaust, “never again” was a crucial part of my political socialisation. While it took me a long time to connect this nebulous sense of anti-fascism to questions of racism and coloniality, sexuality and gender and political economy, it was an affective orientation that shaped my political consciousness. It marked my intellectual trajectory from early flirts with the Frankfurt School and its intent to combine Marxism and psychoanalysis to make sense of how and why people attach to powers that come to oppress, to a deeper engagement with British cultural studies and feminist, queer and postcolonial theories of power and subjectivity, and ultimately to affect theory.² It also entailed an affective investment to anti-nationalist politics that would resurface during the intensification of border struggles in Germany during the so called “refugee crisis” of 2015 and that sparked the political motivation for this study. Witnessing the construction of temporary refugee camps in Berlin and Hamburg, I was filled with anger about the historical continuities and racial logics of detention and encampment and moved by a strange sense of guilt and responsibility for not repeating the horrors of the past. While racist ideology and right-wing politics

¹ I am referring here to what in German commonly is referred to as “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” — a term that loosely translates to “coming to terms with the past” and is mainly used to describe the practice of confronting and working through the horrors of the Holocaust and the Second World War (e.g. Adorno, 1996 [1959]). The concept was popularised by the generation of ‘68 in their efforts to confront the crimes of their parents’ generation. It has since also gained entry into more mainstream public and state discourse. I will come back to the complex politics of what it means to “come to terms with the past” throughout this thesis.

² I agree with Lauren Berlant (2011a) who defines affect theory as “another phase in the history of ideology theory” (p.53) and I think that we can trace a line from early Marxist-Freudian theories of the Frankfurt School over into British cultural studies and Foucauldian and Butlerian engagements with subjectivity and power to the current concern with affect in social and cultural theory. While tracing this intellectual heritage would yield enough material for another thesis, I will come back to some of these questions in my theory and methodology Chapters 2 and 3.

have never been absent from German social and political life, I watched with horror when PEGIDA members continued to march in cities all around Germany and the Alternative for Germany (AFD) grew in presence and political power.³ At the same time, when several hundred thousand people entered and settled in the country, I was swept up in cautious hope that through new solidarities and civil society engagements a different transnational politics could emerge.

And I was not the only one who would feel mobilised into action by their affective relation to what critical migration scholars have described as “the long summer of migration” — the time period from summer 2015 to early 2016, in which several hundred thousand people would come to and claim asylum in Germany (Hess et al., 2016).⁴ In the increasingly emotional discussion around migration, Angela Merkel declared that “we can do this” (Wir schaffen das)⁵ and evoked the hopeful vision of a country able to overcome the “crisis” through pragmatic action and compassionate hospitality. Only months after the German government had still imposed drastic austerity politics on the European South, national and international media talked of the emergence of a new “Willkommenskultur” (welcome culture) in Germany and marvelled at a nation determined to overcome the guilt and shame attached to its political past. Simultaneously, daily arson and other hate-driven attacks on asylum centres rose to an all-time high and nationalist resentment about migrant criminality filled media discussions well before the moral panics around mass sexual abuse by racialised men during New Year’s Eve in Cologne would put migrants under general suspicion of sexual abuse.⁶ Claiming their own voice within this overdetermined debate, migrants on their way to and across Europe likewise

³ PEGIDA stands for the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident and is the acronym for a German nationalist, anti-Islam, far-right political movement that was founded in Dresden in 2014. For a critical study of how this movement became so influential see Naime Çakir (2016). The AFD (Alternative for Germany) is a far-right party formed in 2013. It campaigns primarily on an anti-migration platform and has gained significant political power in the course of the “refugee crisis” entering 14 out of 15 German state parliaments and making it into the national parliament for the first time with 12,6 % in 2017.

⁴ For the year 2015, 476.649 formal asylum claims were made in Germany (BAMF, 2016).

⁵ My translation. From now on, I translate all German quotes to English. I only specify the German original in brackets behind the quote if it entails a term or phrase that has a specific connotation in German. In cases in which the translation of the term is unclear or the German word and its history matter for understanding the quote, I provide information in a footnote.

⁶ According to the Amadeu Antonio-Stiftung and Pro Asyl more than 526 attacks on asylum centres and refugee shelters were reported in 2015 out of which 126 were arson attacks. The Bundeskriminalamt (The Federal Criminal Office) even counts 924 attacks and reports a four-fold increase in attacks on asylum housing since the previous year (Pro Asyl, 2016b).

unleashed their hopes, grief and anger into the public sphere.⁷ Together with migrant solidarity initiatives, they organised marches, held vigils of public mourning and went on hunger strike to speak out against a European border regime that so often operated in direct opposition to the values of universal human rights and equality that it claims to be founded on.

In the increasingly emotional discussion and political contestations around migration, affect consequently played a crucial role in shaping and animating the border struggles of this moment. I thus start this thesis with my own location not to show my morally pure and politically heroic motivations (that I come to deconstruct more thoroughly in a moment) but rather to illustrate how affect matters and moves people in relation to migration and border politics. The aim of this thesis is to make sense of these emotional politics of the “refugee crisis”. Its central question is what the public reaction to the so called refugee crisis in Germany can tell us about the role that affect plays in producing, legitimising and contesting the European border regime. How can we make sense of the intensification of racist and anti-migrant anger and resentment during this period? How did migrants articulate their hopes, fears and frustrations on their way towards and across the European Union? And what can a deeper understanding of calls for compassion and the mobilisation of shame and historical guilt in Germany tell us about the ways in which the European border regime is produced, legitimised and resisted? Attending to these questions, I focus on the mobilisation of three different affects in key scenes of the “border spectacle” (De Genova, 2013, p.1181) that unfolded during the long summer of migration in Germany. More concretely, I attend to the invocation of empathy in relation to the publication of the photo of Alan Kurdi, a two-year-old Kurdish boy from Syria who was washed ashore dead on the coast of Turkey, the eruption of anger and resentment

⁷ To not reproduce moral, legal and political differentiations between (forced, political and therefore legal) “refugees” and (voluntary, economic and therefore illegal) “migrants”, I refer to people crossing international borders to settle in a different country simply as migrants (or people) throughout the thesis. This is not to say that all migration is the same or that such legal categories do not matter for people crossing borders. Rather, it is an attempt to circumvent the loaded terminology that makes subjects governable through distinctions of deservingness (see also, New Keyword Collective, 2015; Scheel and Ratfisch, 2014; Holzberg, Kolbe and Zaborowski, 2018). I use the term “refugees” or “asylum seekers” only when I refer to studies or official statistics that rely on these terms as well as when they are explicitly used as self-definitions.

after the sexual abuse cases during New Year's Eve in Cologne and the articulation of hope in Angela Merkel's "Wir schaffen das" speeches.

Tracing the invocation of three different affects in these scenes, I suggest that if we want to understand how borders operate and maintain themselves we need a more thorough understanding of their affective dimension. To this end, I craft an intricate conceptualisation and analysis of *affective borders* that examines how borders are produced and operate on the level affect. In doing so, this thesis makes a valuable contribution to the literature on borders and migration by highlighting how a focus on affect reveals aspects of the European border regime that escape common approaches to the study of migration and the border. I not only draw out the discourses but also the affective dynamics that fuel border struggles in the context of the "refugee crisis" and ask after the ways in which dominant structures of feeling that sustain the European border regime might be disrupted and contested. Working from an explicitly feminist, queer and postcolonial perspective, I understand this conceptualisation and examination of affective borders to be a feminist contribution to the study of migration and borders. This contribution entails three key interventions, which lie at the centre of this thesis.

Firstly, I take the feminist insight that the personal is political into the study of border politics by examining how borders operate on the intimate level of affect. I break with the private and public split that would confine politics to the realm of rational, public debate and relegate affect to the sphere of the personal and the domestic. In other words, this thesis contends that affect and politics are directly entangled and suggests that this entanglement is crucial for the analysis of the European border regime. This understanding of affect develops out of the work of queer and feminist affect theorists that have shown that affects should not be understood as personal states outside of the reach of the social but as intersubjective and circulatory forces that are historically constituted (e.g. Ahmed, 2014; Berlant, 2011a; Cvetkovich, 2003, 2012a). As I explain in more depth in Chapter 2, unlike some strands in contemporary social and cultural theory, I make little distinction between affect and emotion and instead develop a more thorough understanding of what affects do politically: how they come to produce, cement and disrupt the border politics of the long summer of migration. Here I join forces with scholars like Sara Ahmed (2014), Yasmin Gunaratnam (2013) and Imogen Tyler (2013) who have

likewise tried to harness queer and feminist conceptualisations of affect for the study of borders and migration.

Secondly, this thesis demonstrates how borders are gendered, racialised and sexualised. Given my understanding of affect as an intersubjective and historical force, I pay close attention to the ways in which affects are shaped and constituted through intersecting discourses of race, gender and sexuality. I, for instance, analyse the ways in which empathy towards migrants arriving at the shores of Europe is commonly invoked through gendered, racialised and sexualised discourses of innocence and deservingness (Chapter 4) and I show how nationalist anger and hope become legitimised through narratives of sexual exceptionalism and gender equality (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). In doing so, my thesis goes beyond feminist work on borders and migration that focuses on showing how borders affect gendered, sexualised, and raced bodies differently. It illustrates how gender, race and sexuality are constitutive for the ways in which borders are produced, legitimised and contested in the first place. Scholars such as Fatima El-Tayeb (2011, 2012, 2016), Éric Fassin (2010, 2012) and Sarah Farris (2017) have pointed out the ways in which racialised discourses of gender equality and sexual progress are central for how the borders of Europe are imagined and secured. My thesis develops in conversation with this vibrant body of scholarship and extends it by drawing out the affective dimension of these discourses.

Thirdly, this thesis on affective borders draws on and contributes to a feminist politics of paradox and ambivalence. Some of the key paradigms of queer and feminist thought have been developed around the insight that the forces that come to subject us simultaneously constitute the ground for agency and resistance (Berlant, 2011a; Butler, 1990; Hartman, 1997; Sedgwick, 1990). Engaging with this tension in more detail, in this thesis, I break with the common separation of positive and negative emotions, that would position affective states like empathy, hope and love as “good” affects to be fostered while dismissing anger, hatred and fear as “bad” affects to be resisted. Instead, I follow feminist scholarship that has shown how affect might best be understood as a complex and highly ambivalent force (Ahmed, 2014; Pedwell, 2014a; Bargetz, 2015). Extending this understanding of affect as ambivalent, I show how, on the one hand, hegemonic invocations of empathy, anger and hope are tied up with nationalist ideologies that secure European borders. On the other hand, I trace how affect is invoked in ways that challenge dominant

constructions of national borders and point out moments in which affect works as the fuel for new bonds of solidarity and alternative world-making practices. This thesis, consequently, builds upon the insights that feminist politics are often necessarily paradoxical (Brown, 2000; Scott, 1997) and ambivalent (Hemmings, 2011, 2018) and calls for border politics that while invested in the transformative potential of affect are simultaneously aware of the dangers and downfalls of that investment.

Over the next six chapters, I try to bring life into these overarching propositions. Before, I do so, however, let me say a bit more about the political and theoretical contexts that this thesis intervenes into as well as the case study, methodological approach and structure of the thesis.

2. Context: The Politics of Crisis

In the summer of 2015, the border regime of the European Union seemed to have collapsed for a moment. As a result of the relentless mobilisations of migrants from Northern Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Europe, the European border regime gave in and more than several hundred thousand people entered the EU over the course of the year. While the scale and dimension of these mobilisations had intensified over the last years, this moment, that came to be known as the “refugee crisis”, was not a new phenomenon. Migrants from across the world have entered Europe at various moments in its history and the EU has long reacted with a deadly mix of deterrence, dismissal and humanitarian exceptions to people’s arrival and presence on the continent. More than an unpredictable set of sudden events, the “crisis” was a moment in which the entrenched racialised violence of the European border regime was revealed and Europe saw itself confronted with the results of global inequality partly produced by the histories of its own colonial and imperial politics (Bhambra, 2017b; Sharpe, 2016). The wars in Syria and Afghanistan, armed conflicts in and the ongoing exploitation of Northern African states like Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan as well as the political and economic instability in the Balkans all contributed to a growing number of people making their way towards Western and Central Europe.⁸ As a result, the EU was less and less able to keep its violent border

⁸ Most asylum claims in the EU in 2015 came from people from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq followed by Kosovo, Albania, Pakistan, Eritrea, Nigeria and Somalia (Pew Research Centre, 2016).

securitisation practices hidden, that over the last decades it had increasingly outsourced to the borderlands and externalised buffer zones of Europe.

The terminology of the European “refugee crisis”, consequently, misnames and misframes the situation. As Fatima El-Tayeb (2017) points out, the term references “less the plight of millions trying to leave military and economic warzones than the inconvenience their arrival is causing the European Union” (para.2). What lurks underneath this rhetoric, she suggests, is a crisis of neoliberal racial capitalism, in which Europe sees itself confronted with the reality of escalating global inequalities that the EU not only has a hand in perpetuating but often actively benefits from. She suggests that European nation-states like Germany have not only been complicit in the “war on terror” spearheaded by the US and the UK, but continue to profit from a colonial division of capitalist production in which the exploitation of labour, environmental destruction and extraction of natural resources remains largely confined to the Global South (see also El-Tayeb, 2016). Given the longer genesis of the underlying causes for the contemporary “refugee crisis”, the current crisis is, therefore, best understood, not as sudden crisis or state of emergency, but as what Laurent Berlant (2011a) has described as a “‘crisis ordinariness’... a form of catastrophe a world is comfortable with or even interested in perpetuating” (p.761).

The long summer of migration was a moment in which this “crisis ordinariness” came to public attention and some of the historical injustices and inequalities responsible for its genesis became open to contestation. Migrants claimed their rights to mobility, safety and material well-being and the questions of what Europe should do, where its boundaries lay and how it ought to be defined were, at least momentarily, up for redefinition. In making sense of this political opening, I follow Seth Holmes and Heide Castañeda (2016) who, in their work on representations of the refugee crisis in Germany, have suggested that the crisis is best understood in the sense conceptualised by Antonio Gramsci: “that is, as a moment in the war of position and war of manoeuvre when hegemony and the architecture of a social world are at stake, with future structural and symbolic realities unknown” (p.13) — a moment in which the “‘the old is dying and the new cannot be born’” (Gramsci, 1971, as cited in Holmes and Castañeda, 2016, p.13). In other words, understand the “refugee crisis” to be a particularly useful moment for analysing how the social and political are produced — a moment when naturalised forces become visible and are contested. While (neo)liberal governments across the EU tried to

rescue and defend the status quo, many migrants and anti-racist and anti-imperial actors fought for a different, more open and less bordered Europe, and nationalist and neo-fascist groups tried to seize the moment to install evermore nationalist, protectionist and racist regimes of power.

In hindsight, we can see how many of the more hopeful initiatives during the long summer of migration were disappointed and, if anything, Europe became an even more hostile place. While some of the initiatives of the long summer of migration such as migrant squats in Greece, sea rescue operations in Italy and welcome initiatives in Germany remain active, anti-migration forces seem to have gained the upper hand. This can be observed most clearly in the rise of far-right movements across Europe and their entry into government in countries like Poland, Italy and Austria that normalise racist and anti-migrant sentiment and drive the further criminalisation of migration and civil society engagements. Yet, this trend can likewise be observed in the overall policies of the EU supported by liberal leaders like Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron who continue the externalisation of borders through deals with authoritarian regimes in Libya, Turkey or the Sudan⁹, further erode asylum protections and migrant rights and have made detention, deportation and deterrence policy priorities. Éric Fassin (2018) has described “this simultaneous rise of the far right and the authoritarian evolution of neoliberalism” as the “neofascist moment in neoliberalism”, in which neoliberal values of competition, self-responsibility and disdain for precaritised populations work hand in hand with intensified nationalism, patriarchal values and calls for authoritarian leaders (para.1).

The “refugee crisis” (which I will continue to place in inverted commas) might be said to have catalysed many of these changes. This can be seen, for instance, in the prominent role that racial panics about migration and fantasies of (threatened) nationalist sovereignty played in the Leave campaign for Brexit or in the cementing

⁹ The most (in)famous of those is the Turkey-EU deal that was implemented in March 2016. It entails a “type of population swap” in which Turkey “has agreed to admit returned irregular migrants and in exchange will send Syrian refugees in Turkey to Europe for resettlement” (Rygiel, Baban and Ilcan, 2016, p.316). The deal also included financial compensations for Turkey and the EU turning a blind eye to the rapid erosion of democracy in Turkey. The deal has been heavily critiqued for further intensifying the precarious situation of migrants at the border (Heck and Hess, 2017, Rygiel, Baban and Ilcan, 2016). While this agreement is a particularly prominent case, deals between the EU and countries like Libya have long been part of the externalisation strategies of the EU (Bialasiewicz, 2012; Lemberg-Pedersen, 2017)

of power of Victor Orbán’s regime in Hungary.¹⁰ The German government’s decision to grant several hundred thousand migrants from Syria asylum in Germany and the sprouting of “welcome initiatives” during the long summer of migration seem to have, at least partly, contradicted the rise of neo-fascist neoliberalism across the continent. Fassin and Aurélie Windels (2016) suggest that Merkel’s policies show how neoliberalism does not have to go hand in hand with anti-migrant positions — at least not in Germany, where the strong position of its economy was often highlighted as one of the reasons for why the country could afford to assist people and let a new work force into the country. Yet, over the last years, in Germany too laws have been passed that further eroded the remnants of the post-war asylum system, which saw relatively far-reaching refugee protections.¹¹ The government has made the reduction of migration to Germany a political priority and declared a variety of countries such as Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro as safe countries of origin (while pushing for the extension of this categorization to other states like Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) so that asylum applications from these countries would be futile and deportations to them were made legally possible. Simultaneously, far-right groups like the AFD have gained in prominence and political power and nativist nationalist rhetoric has increased not only on the political right but increasingly also on the left.¹² As Gramsci (1971) warned us, in the interregnum of crisis “a great variety of morbid symptoms appear” (p.276).

3. Theory: Affective Borders

¹⁰ Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), for instance, used posters of migrants walking towards Europe to claim that the “EU has failed us all” and to create panic over the continent being at a “breaking point” (see Stewart and Mason, 2016, 16 Jun). Similar representations of the “refugee crisis” were used by Orbán in Hungary.

¹¹ After the horrors of the Third Reich, the right to asylum was enshrined in the German constitution stating that the “politically persecuted enjoy the right to asylum”. This basic right to asylum was dismantled after racist attacks on refugee shelters in the early 90s when it was defined that asylum cannot be claimed by people from countries that the German state defines as “safe states of origin” (Bpb, 2016). It was further curtailed in 2015 and 2016 when the Asylpakte I and II were passed that, among others, saw harsher enforcement of deportations, cuts and changes to social provisions and stricter rules for family reunification (Pro Asyl, 2015, 2016a).

¹² A particular prominent example in this regard is the leftist initiative “Aufstehen” (stand up) that was started by Oscar Lafontaine and Sarah Wagenknecht, the former heads of the socialist party Die Linke, who aim to counter the surge of the political right by paying more attention to poverty and precarity in Germany (over transnational concerns with refugees and migration). I return to the dangers of leftist nationalist politics of resentment in Chapter 5.

Looking back at the long summer of migration of 2015 from the increasingly morbid moment of 2019, thus, begs the question: how did we get here? In this thesis, I tackle this question through the lens of affect. If the moment of crisis is one in which common sense and the architecture of the social world are at stake, I suggest that affect is crucial for understanding how different forms of common sense are produced, stabilised and disrupted. As Ann Stoler (2004) has suggested in her work on colonial governmentality, common sense is “grounded in ... affective states, in assessing appropriate sentiments and in fashioning techniques of affective control” (p.5). In other words, it is through affect that we come to invest in social norms and participate in the workings of power. This insight is increasingly acknowledged in a growing body of scholarship that tries to make sense of the current political moment, in particular in scholarship that focuses on understanding the emotional dynamics and appeal of right-wing populism in Germany (e.g. Koppetsch, 2019; Salmela and Van Scheve, 2017; Shoshan, 2016) and beyond (e.g. Cramer, 2016; Hochschild, 2016; Huvstedt, 2017).

Rather than focusing solely on affective states mobilised by the political right, however, in this thesis, I track a variety of different invocations of affect and examine how liberal, left and right-wing structures of feeling entangle and slip into each other. In turning to the politics of resentment, I examine how after New Year’s Eve in Cologne anger about racialised sexual abusers seems to have been a shared condition across the political spectrum and facilitated strange alliances between far-right, liberal as well as feminist and left-wing actors in the public sphere (Chapter 5). In analysing the politics of empathy, I similarly investigate how humanitarian calls for empathy vis-à-vis migrants arriving at the shores of Europe might go hand in hand with, rather than act as a necessary roadblock to, anti-migrant sentiments and nationalist politics (Chapter 4). And in the Conclusion of this thesis, I return to the question of guilt and shame that I started this thesis with. I think in more detail about how shame and guilt for the Holocaust can be mobilised to advocate against nativist nationalist forces, yet how their mobilisation can likewise feed into narratives of national exceptionalism and cultural superiority (Chapter 7). A focus on affect enables us to identify hidden facets of power that we would otherwise overlook and highlights the complex and interwoven ways in which liberal, leftist and right-wing politics are entangled through shared structures of feeling. The analysis of affective borders consequently provides a complex and rather sobering analysis of the political present. Yet, it also offers

glimpses into ways in which the nationalist entanglements of affect might be challenged and new affective alliances formed and imagined.

In developing this conceptualisation of affective borders as an entangled yet contested site, I draw on the rich theoretical archive that has been produced in the recent “turn to affect” in social and cultural theory. Out of the multitude of different theories of affect and emotions, I draw in particular on queer and feminist conceptualisation of affect. These build on a rich feminist history of deconstructing hierarchical binaries of mind and body, public and private and the rational and the emotional (in which women and particularly women of colour have traditionally been placed in the latter), as well as on queer theories that have long grappled with the entanglement of desire and power. I consequently do not understand affect as a radically new theoretical concept that will draw us to the hidden aspects of the social world that work beyond or outside of the reach of consciousness, discourse or the social as it has been positioned in some areas of social and cultural thought (e.g. Clough, 2009, 2010; Massumi, 2002, 2015; Sedgwick, 2003). Instead, I build on queer and feminist theorists who position their work on affect in a longer tradition of scholarship on emotion, sentiment and public feeling and who are primarily interested in understanding how affect comes to shape political communities (e.g. Ahmed, 2014; Berlant, 2011a; Cvetkovich, 2003; 2012; Pedwell, 2014a). These scholars focus on how affect works as a political force, examine how affect is activated and produced in public discourse and analyse how it is shaped by social norms and historical forces.

For my conceptualisation of affective borders, which I explain in more detail in Chapter 2, I bring these insights together with critical border and migration studies. It has become a shared assumption in critical migration studies that borders are not simple lines that demarcate the boundaries of the nation but productive structures that operate on a multiple levels. Scholars in the field of critical migration and border studies have predominantly focussed on the dimensions of labour, securitisation and coloniality. They have shown how borders might be best understood as biopolitical technologies that reach deep into labour markets, shape security systems and are sustained by colonial discourses of gender, race and sexuality. By developing a theoretical framework of *affective borders*, I extend this interdisciplinary understanding of borders and highlight their affective component. I argue that affect is essential for shaping national labour markets, naturalising militarised security

regimes and legitimising and disrupting colonial ideologies of race, gender and sexuality that secure, and are secured, through the border.

As such, the conceptualisation and study of affective borders crucially intervenes into critical border and migration studies. A focus on affective borders demonstrates how and why people come to attach so vehemently to particular constructions of the nation and how these attachments might be challenged, subverted and resisted. At the same time, my conceptualisation of affective borders also contributes to the study of affect and emotion. In the context of migration and border studies, in particular, more sustained efforts that go beyond the analysis of one particular affect and that stay with a specific context and empirical problem are rare. My focus on affective borders extends these efforts by providing a more thorough and elaborate engagement with the empirical problem of the European border regime during the long summer of migration. Therefore, this thesis should be of unique interest to scholars who are interested in how the European border regime is secured and might be contested as well as those who want a deeper insight into how affect theory might be harnessed for more intricate social and political analyses.

4. Case Study: Why Germany?

While my thesis develops a more general understanding of affective borders, it does so through attention to the particular case of Germany. Focussing on how the long summer of migration played out in Germany is particularly fruitful for an investigation of how affective borders operate in the context of the European border regime for several reasons. Firstly, as the largest economy within Europe, Germany has arguably also become the most dominant political power in the EU. Only months before Merkel's decision to defer the Dublin Regulations¹³, the German government

¹³ The Dublin Regulations, established in 1990, are an essential part of the European border policy. They prescribe that migrants have to seek asylum in the country of first arrival in the EU. This effectively means that the processing of most asylum cases in Europe has been outsourced to the border regions of the EU (e.g. Greece and Italy) and gives EU member states the right to deport migrants to the first country of entry. On the 25th of August the German government decided to defer these regulations and give Syrian refugees the chance to claim asylum in Germany. While this moment, that I return to in Chapter 4 and the Conclusion, was often celebrated as Germany "opening its borders", countries like Greece and Hungary had already given up enforcing the Dublin regulations months before (Kasperek, 2016).

had still imposed drastic austerity measures on the European South. In particular, the enforcement of privatisation and cuts to private spending in Greece by the Troika (International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and the European Central Bank) was dominated by German interests. The German state directly benefited from the interest rates on loans given to the Greek government and did everything to defend its attachment to ordoliberalism and keep the Eurozone as a dependent market for its export-driven industry.¹⁴ As a result, scholars like Ulrich Beck (2013) warned of a “German Europe” in which the German government and its penchant for austerity became the most powerful force within the EU (p.3).

This position would be further strengthened yet partly reversed in the course of the “refugee crisis”. In summer 2015, Germany became the most important destination for refugees and the centre of European migration politics. As a result, Merkel again emerged as the dominant figure in European politics, just that this time she would be critiqued by the political right and celebrated by the left. Insisting that “We can do this”, she was critiqued from national and international actors of the conservative and nationalist spectrum. At the same time, left and liberal actors who just before the long summer of migration had still critiqued her political stance as that of a fiscal tyrant who imposes austerity on the European South, now cautiously celebrated her as the benevolent protector of European values of human rights and humanitarianism (see Chapter 6). The border politics of Germany became formative for the EU at large and images of migrants being welcomed by cheering crowds at train stations in Germany, Merkel’s political speeches as well as events like the New Year’s Eve in Cologne were not only shared and discussed in national but also in international media and political discourse. A study of how affective borders operate in Germany at this moment is, therefore, not only insightful for people engaged in the German context but also for those interested in the politics of the EU and its border regime more generally.

¹⁴ Ordoliberalism is a form of neoliberalism that is based on the precept that economic freedom is best guaranteed through the creation of a constitutional order by the state (Foucault, 2003). The idea of German politics primarily being driven by economic rationales and ordoliberal doctrines seem to have partly been confirmed during the Euro-crisis, just to then be contradicted during the “refugee crisis” in which a variety of (often non-economic) political arguments were made in favour and against migration.

Secondly, the long summer of migration in Germany constitutes a fruitful social and historical context for understanding the intensity and complexity of affective border politics. As El-Tayeb (2016) argues, German (neo)liberal democracy grew out of and sits at the intersection of colonial, fascist and socialist histories that have come to define and still linger in the European present at large. She suggests that, after the fall of the Berlin wall, in Germany post-fascist and post-socialist narratives have been combined into a Western capitalist success story, whereas colonial histories remain largely untouched and unspoken. If colonialism is attended to it is usually done so through narratives of dismissal or even loss, in which it is suggested (or lamented) that unlike France of the UK, Germany never really had a proper colonial Empire (see also Perraudin and Zimmerer, 2010). This particular invocation of history, El-Tayeb suggests, erases the fact of German colonisation and the legacies of European colonialism more generally, but also produces troubling constructions of citizenship and difference.¹⁵ It has contributed to a “colour-blind ideology” in which race is dismissed as an exception and aberration of the Third Reich that should not be spoken (p.16). As a result, discussions of the ongoing power of racism in German social and political life are often erased or pushed to the margins of public discourse, while migrants as well as racialised groups such as black Germans, Roma and Muslims continue to be produced as “Ausländer” (foreigners) that are framed as a threat to the national community (see also Castro Varela and Mecheril. 2016; Foroutan, 2016c; Tudor, 2014).

The long summer of migration was a crucial moment in which many of the historical constructions of what it means to be German were challenged and contested. These contestations are of particular interest given my understanding of affects as historical forces that as Ahmed (2004) has argued operate “through an erasure of the history of their production and circulation” (p.11). In other words, if affective borders sediment over time, the long summer of migration in Germany is an especially insightful context for understanding the processes of this sedimentation. Throughout my thesis, I thus not only draw on queer and feminist but crucially on

¹⁵ The German colonial empire lasted from 1884 to 1918 and included the colonies of German-East Africa (today Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania), Kamerun (today Cameroon and Togo), German South West Africa (today Namibia) and numerous islands in the Pacific alongside a province in China (Conrad, 2011). I discuss the importance of colonial histories for understanding border politics today in Chapter 5 where I trace conceptions and citizenship laws that partly reach back to this era.

postcolonial and critical race theory, or rather postcolonial and intersectional feminist and queer theories, to trace the ways in which structures of feeling that are productive of the European border regime gain their power from the past. In trying to make sense of the anger unleashed after New Year's Eve in Cologne, for instance, I study the ways in which this anger needs to be understood in a sequence of longer histories of sexual panics about racialised men in Germany. And in analysing the promise of empathy, I study how empathy for migrants is partly informed by colonial imaginaries that frame Europe as the sole locus of agency burdened with the task to help the “less developed”. A focus on Germany is, consequently, not only essential for understanding European border politics more broadly but also contributes to a broader understanding of how and why particular invocations of affect come to reverberate so powerfully in the border imaginaries of the historical present.

Thirdly, I focus on the German context as it is the one I am most familiar with. Feminist epistemologists have long pointed out that positionality is crucial for the production of knowledge. As I have outlined above, the motivation for this study partly results from my own affective investments in and against the politics of the border. The questions asked throughout this thesis are not purely theoretical or political but also personal questions that highlight that affect cannot be studied from a neutral position “from nowhere” (Haraway, 1988, p.581) but directly involves the researcher in the object of study. How could I make sense of and work against the anger and hatred, the joy and celebration of the political right? What were the downfalls of seductive liberal invocations of empathy and hope and their amenability to the European border regime? And how did my own sense of shame and guilt challenge yet potentially also reinstall narratives of national exceptionalism and superiority? This work on affective borders is consequently directly entangled with my own fears, desires and sense of subjectivity. Given this entanglement, the case study of Germany allows me to focus on a context that I am myself located in and produced by so that I have more access to the ways in which particular narratives, figures and tropes resonate within it affectively.

For the project of this thesis, however, my own positionality emerged not only as source but also a barrier. While I am intellectually and politically engaged in the context of European and German border politics, I have a privileged position vis-à-vis the borders of Europe. My fear of the current border regime is likely to be less pronounced, my shame more articulated, and my hope differently motivated than that

of subjects on the receiving end of its violence. My intellectual effort, thus, reflects a particular take on the European border regime in which the question of positionality needs to be questioned and interrogated throughout. As I explain in more detail in Chapter 3, I want to keep the question of positionality an open problem. Choosing Germany as a case study allows me to do so and forces me to produce a more refined and ambivalent form of critique that is reflexive about its own involvement in the scenes of analysis.

5. Methodology: Tracing Affect

To understand how affect circulates and is mobilised in this context, I focus on three key scenes that serve as useful sites for understanding the political work that different affects do in the context of the “refugee crisis”. Firstly, I attend to how empathy is invoked in relation to the publication of the image of Alan Kurdi, a Kurdish boy of two years who was photographed washed ashore dead on the coast of Turkey. The publication of his photograph gained international attention and was accompanied by calls for a more humanitarian approach towards migration in German public discourse. Secondly, I trace the explosion of anger and resentment after the New Year’s Eve in Cologne in which several hundreds of cases of sexual abuse by racialised men were reported to the police. This event is commonly seen as a turning point in the social climate and official policy of Germany — from a more humanitarian to a primarily securitising approach to migration. And thirdly, I attend to how hope was articulated in and around Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” speeches which mobilised the promise that Germany would not only make it through the long summer of migration but emerge as an economically stronger, more resilient and tolerant nation. Focussing on this triad allows me to attend to some of the most formative events during the long summer of migration and analyse different affects that played a crucial role in its mediation: empathy, anger and hope.

In making sense of how these affective states circulate within these scenes, I follow a *feminist cultural analysis of affect* whose key methodological features I distil from the work of some of the most prominent scholars in the field of feminist and queer affect studies (e.g. Ahmed, 2014; Berlant, 2011a; Cvetkovich, 2003, 2012; Pedwell, 2014a) and that I explain in more detail in Chapter 3. Rather than focussing on a particular genre or medium, I take different invocations of affect as my proper

object of study and trace how they are invoked, articulated and stabilised in public social and cultural artefacts such as political and media discourse, film, visual culture, social media debates and activist interventions. This interdisciplinary method does not inquire into how individual people actually feel or respond to particular representations of the “refugee crisis”. Instead, I focus on public discourse and cultural artefacts to trace the gendered, raced and sexualised norms that affect us more likely to accumulate along while also holding out sight for cracks and openings out of which affective attachments could be thought and forged differently. Ahmed (2004) has described this approach as tracing affects “sideways” and “backward” both into how they are constructed across different sites and representations as well as how they have come into circulation historically (p.102). In the chapter on empathy in relation to the image of Alan Kurdi, for example, I trace different invocations of empathy sideways and examine how the image was debated in different parts of media and political discourse, yet I also move backwards and locate its iconography in a longer representational history of innocence, childhood and victimhood that has long guided Western approaches vis-à-vis the Global South.

What is of particular importance in my methodological approach is not only studying the dominant responses to the “refugee crisis” but also involving the perspectives and representations put into the public sphere by the people most affected by the European border regime. Here I am inspired by scholars working in the tradition of the “autonomy of migration” who highlight the importance of studying “migratory movements and conflicts in terms that prioritize the practices, the desires, the expectations, and the behaviours of migrants themselves” (Mezzadra, 2011, p.121; see also De Genova, 2017; New Keyword Collective, 2015). In thinking through the politics of empathy, I contrast the public reactions to the image of Alan Kurdi in Germany with how affective solidarity is invoked and imagined in documentaries and travelogues shot by migrants with their smartphones during their flight as well as with hunger strikes that were held by migrants across different cities in Germany at the same time. In thinking through anger, I do not only focus on dominant media and political debates after New Year’s Eve in Cologne but I also engage with the efforts of intersectional feminist and anti-racist groups that tried to frame sexual abuse in German society as a general problem and try to understand why they had such a difficult time to be heard in public debate. And in the chapter on hope I juxtapose Merkel’s utterance of “Wir schaffen das” with migrant Marches of

Hope in which migrants took their fate into their own hands and walked from Budapest over the border to Austria and Germany.

Staying with the Gramscian (1971) spirit that animates this chapter and my thesis overall, my understanding of affective borders is, therefore, one of contestation and struggle for hegemony. My methodological focus lies on how particular structures of feeling become dominant and stabilised and what other forms of affective attachment become subsumed and buried as a result of this. Tracing affect through these different scenes, I develop an understanding of affective borders as inherently ambivalent and paradoxical. I show that while affects like empathy, anger and hope can reinstall hegemonic and mostly narrow definitions of citizenship and the nation, they likewise can act as the fuel from which different alternatives might be imagined and enacted. Throughout the chapters, we come across scenes of disgust and horror that might break open hierarchical subject-object relations of empathetic identification, scenes of mourning and haunting that do not evacuate the past into a hopeful vision of an equally violent future, and feminist rage that can break open new forms intersectional thought and action. The analysis of affective borders will not provide us with clear pathways or solutions of how we can get out the violence or overthrow the European border regime but will nevertheless provide glimpses into how structures of feeling could be evoked and arranged differently. By doing so, I develop a feminist politics that embraces the paradoxical logics of affective borders. I spell out the central tenants of this political and epistemological approach in my Conclusion in which I come back to the politics of guilt and shame that I opened this thesis with.

In attending to the three scenes, this thesis does not follow a strictly chronological order but traces the circulation and mobilisation of different affects across the time period of the long summer of migration. This approach follows from the theoretical understanding of affects as circulating forces which defy clear temporal and spatial boundaries and the conviction that they are best captured through the methodological practice of tracing (Chapter 2). In not providing a chronological order, the thesis highlights that empathy, anger and hope should not be understood as clearly demarcated temporal episodes or emotional periods that supersede each other. Instead, I conceptualise the articulations of empathy, anger and hope as expressions of latent structures of feelings that cluster and get articulated around particular events yet that exist and circulate simultaneously.

By moving from the politics of empathy to that of anger and then hope, this thesis builds its own narrative arc which is not driven by an impetus for chronological accuracy but by the search for alternative political grammars and affective solidarities. By moving from a critical analysis of empathy expressed around the image of Alan Kurdi to the analysis of how anger was unleashed after New Year's Eve in Cologne, I demonstrate that humanitarian and securitising affects like empathy and anger are not necessarily antithetical but are evoked and expressed through similar logics of deservingness and recognition. I, then, attend to the politics of hope expressed in and around Merkel's "Wir schaffen das" speeches to examine where, in the double-bind between humanitarian empathy and securitising anger, hope for engendering different futures might be found. The thesis, thus, follows my own intellectual journey through and political interests in the emotional politics of the long summer of migration rather than providing an account of its temporal development.

While this approach opens up a new perspective on the "refugee crisis" that tells the story of the long summer of migration from and through the perspective of affective politics, it also raises questions about the larger theoretical and methodological commitments of this thesis. First, it raises questions about the relationship between theory and empirical analysis. Aiming to show how affect theory can be used for the study of migration and border politics, the thesis starts with and is deeply grounded in contemporary debates in contemporary affect studies. In approaching the scenes through this lens, the social and historical context of the analysed scenes is elaborated with regard to the extent that it matters for understanding and explaining the political work that affect enacts in them. While this more theoretical approach has the value of opening up the scenes of analysis to other contexts and of putting them in dialogue with a range of more theoretical studies on anger, empathy and hope there is a danger of privileging the general over the particular and of losing some of the contextual detail that a less theory-driven approach might have yielded.

Secondly and relatedly, this approach raises questions regarding what is at stake in focussing on the historical moment of the "refugee crisis". While the thesis starts from the conviction that the "refugee crisis" needs to be understood as part of a larger "crisis of ordinariness" of racial capitalism, the focus on the "border spectacle" is of course in danger of reproducing the emergency logics of this moment and hiding less visible and more dispersed forms of border violence. My intent is to show how

the emergency logics of the “refugee crisis” work to hide and bury other political grammars that might be accessible by attending to alternative archives of migrant marches, colonial histories or hunger strikes. Yet, even in its careful analysis, affect can always mislead, hide and lie. The question as to what gets disappeared through the circulation of affect during the long summer of migration as well as what we might not see by following the trails it leaves behind in its circulation, consequently, remains troublesome. The question of what is present, absent or withdrawn at the time of analysis itself is critical not just for the scenes I attend to but for the thesis itself. I will attend to the (dis)appearing effects of affect at various points in the thesis and return to some of the questions it raises in the conclusion. There, I discuss the ambivalent and often paradoxical forms of bordering that affect generates and further examine the analytical and political sensibilities we need to develop in studying it. In doing so, I hope that this thesis will open up and contribute to an ongoing critical dialogue about the value and potential as well as the possible dangers that affect theory entails as a lens for understanding and contesting an ever more violent political present.

6. Structure of the Thesis

Before going into the analytical chapters, the following two chapters elaborate the theoretical, epistemological and methodological frameworks for the rest of this thesis. Chapter 2 provides a more thorough conceptualisation of affective borders by synthesising insights from critical migration and border studies with queer and feminist theories of affect. I start this chapter by reviewing the literature in critical migration and border studies and giving an overview of the key insights that scholars in this field have provided for understanding the contemporary European border regime, focussing in particular on the three dimensions of labour, securitisation and coloniality. I then explain how current efforts to think how the European border regime works on the level of discourse subjectivity can be extended through a focus on affect. More concretely, I suggest that if we want to understand in more depth how neoliberal labour regimes, securitisation efforts and colonial discourses of race, gender and sexuality are secured through the border, we need to attend to how emotions like compassion, anger and hope are produced and articulated in representations of the border spectacle. To do so, I integrate queer, feminist and

postcolonial understandings of affect that provide a circulatory and radically relational conceptualisation of affect. Incorporating such an understanding of affect, I suggest, enables a more intricate analysis of how borders operate as they turn our attention towards the raced, gendered and sexualised norms that sensually invest us in the borders of the nation.

Having developed my theoretical understanding of affective borders in the context of the European border regime, in Chapter 3, I spell out my methodological approach for the study of affective borders. To do so, I review key scholarship in queer and feminist affect studies to distil what I call a feminist cultural analysis of affect. I, then, illustrate how I harness and further develop this methodological approach for the study of affective borders. I focus in particular on discussing the scenes, archives and interpretative insights for my study and elaborate on questions of location and ethics. Throughout, I argue that the opaqueness of affect should be embraced as an epistemological enigma that pushes us to develop more careful analytical tools for tracing how power operates within the European border regime. More concretely, I suggest that affect provides a crucial methodological puzzle for finding more complex answers to the old feminist question of how we come to consent to and invest in the powers that govern and subjugate us. Trying to solve this puzzle provides us with a more refined and ambivalent form of critique that asks us to wrestle with the contested nature of power and to reflect on our own involvement in the scene of analysis.

The following three chapters constitute the analytical chapters of this thesis. Each traces the circulation of a particular affect in a different scene of the border spectacle of the long summer of migration in Germany. In Chapter 4, I think through the promise of empathy. I do so by juxtaposing the public reaction to the image of Alan Kurdi with travelogues shot by migrants on their way to Europe and protest actions and hunger strikes held by migrants in Germany during the same time-span. Thinking through these different articulations of affective solidarity, I trouble conceptual differentiations between “good” and “bad” empathy as they are often made in feminist theory. Whereas the dominant public reaction to the image of Alan Kurdi seems to correspond to what in feminist theory has often been referred to as “bad” empathy — empathy that reinscribes power hierarchies through a victimising subject-object relation — travelogues seems to invoke forms of “good” empathy —

that engage in a subject to subject dialogue opening up spaces for a more complex engagement with power, difference and agency. Both, however, rely on the same sentimental tropes of national harmony and liberal recognition that the European border regime relies on. I, consequently, turn to the abject that necessarily needs to be cut out from these scenes of empathetic identification — expressed in protest actions such as hunger strikes — to suggest a different form of affective solidarity that rather than emerging through feeling for or with the other arises out of a shared concern for racialised violence and global inequality.

In Chapter 5, I trace how anger and resentment were unleashed after the New Year's Eve in Cologne. Reviewing key theories of anger, I suggest that anger is not an innocent or an inherently evil state but argue that to understand anger we need to follow closely how it is socially and historically scripted. Based on this understanding, I trace anger sideways into how it was debated across the political spectrum as well as backwards into the longer histories of sexual panics about racialised men. Contextualising Cologne in a longer series of sexualised panics around racially marked Others, I show how anger aligns itself along the “deep stories” (Hochschild, 2016, p.16) that secure German conceptions of nationality and citizenship through heteronormative constructions of whiteness. Based on this understanding, I suggest that while anger about New Year's Eve in Cologne operated as a catalyst for an already boiling resentment against the recent refugee migration and worked as an affective adhesive sticking together feminist, liberal and right-wing nationalist positions, it might best be understood as a “resonant echo” (Campt, 2005, p.53) of the colonial past that reverberates powerfully in a time of growing precariousness and challenges to enshrined entitlements in the nation. As long as we do not highlight and confront this echo, I suggest, little will or can be done in trying to challenge anger as a force for growing nativist nationalism in the historical present.

In the last analytical chapter, Chapter 6, I analyse the activation and redistribution of hope in and across Angela Merkel's slogan of “Wir schaffen das” and the March of Hope held by migrants on their way to Germany. Through a close reading of her political speeches and rhetoric, I first turn to Merkel's famous utterance that has been heralded and critiqued as the principle of hope for overcoming the “refugee crisis”. While seemingly opening the horizon for an open, more humane Europe, I suggest that Merkel's rhetorical use of this statement and her accompanying

policies of humanitarian securitisation redistribute hope away from migrants and towards a nation imagined to be in the need of protection. In a second step, I turn to the March of Hope, in which migrants contested the restrictive border policies of the EU by simply walking from Hungary over the border to Austria and Germany, to see how the spark of hope embedded in Merkel's "Wir schaffen das" is reinterpreted, resisted and reclaimed by migrants on their way to and across Europe. Based on this analysis, I suggest that cross-border marches reveal and open up practices of care, solidarity and the commons that gesture and extend beyond the humanitarian border envisioned by Merkel's politics. They provide us not only with the political demand for no or, at least, more open borders, but with the utopian horizon of a world in which the relationality of social life is not framed through threat and biopolitical control but in which collective infrastructures are valued as enabling life to flourish and persist.

In the Conclusion, Chapter 7, I tie together the loose ends of this thesis and return to the key insights and questions provided by this thesis. I do so by turning to an analysis of how shame and guilt have been mobilised to hold Germany and the EU accountable for their murderous border policies. I focus on the List of Death that documents the people who have been killed as a result of European border policies and trace the paradoxical ways in which it has been used to shame Europe. In doing so, I delineate a feminist politics that, rather than trying to resolve, embraces the paradoxical logic of affective borders that we encounter throughout the different analyses of this thesis.

Chapter Two

Affective Borders: A Conceptual Framework

1. Introduction

Whereas in his reflections on “A Border Theory”, Anssi Paasi (2011) suggests that borders operate as “emotional landscapes of control” (p.24), Sara Ahmed (2004) in her defining work “Affective Economies” argues that affective states like anxiety and fear “create the very effect of borders” (p.132). These quotes call attention to a promising conceptual convergence between critical border studies and the study of affect and emotions: borders produce affect and affect produces borders. Despite the mutual recognition of each other’s value in the work of key representatives of these fields, however, border and affect studies have remained largely separate scholarly domains and are yet to be put in more fruitful contact with each other. In this chapter, I aim to address this gap by developing a conceptual framework for the study of *affective borders*. In developing this framework, my argument is bidirectional. I argue that integrating affect theory into the study of borders and migration helps us to examine how border regimes operate on the level of subjectivity and the body. It enables us to draw out the hidden dynamics through which attachments to the nation are produced, sustained and challenged in the context of the European border regime. At the same time, I argue that bringing an attention to borders and migration into the field of affect studies helps us to sharpen our conceptual approach to the study of affect. Studying how affective borders operate in the “refugee crisis” provides a rich empirical case for grasping how affects such as hope, empathy and anger both cement and disrupt power relations and shows how affect theory can be harnessed for more intricate social and political analyses.

Given the vast, contested and highly dynamic fields of both critical border studies and affect theory, providing a conceptual framework for the study of affective borders is challenging. My objective in this chapter is not to provide an exhaustive overview of the literature. Instead, I aim to chart a conceptual path through the key debates within these two fields. To that end, in my discussion of critical border and migration studies, I mostly hone in on scholarship produced on Europe with a

particular emphasis on Germany. I further exclude more classical migration literature that bases its assumptions on rational-choice models and pull-push factors and that instead of a critical analysis of border regimes is often more concerned with ways to manage migration most efficiently. In my analysis of the literature on affect and emotion, I similarly do not map the entire history of social thought that has been produced on affect and emotions but primarily focus on the key debates that are taking place in the current “turn to affect” in contemporary social and cultural theory. In other words, I harness and synthesise insights from key debates in both fields to build a conceptual frame that helps capture the stubborn tenacity and potential weaknesses of the current European border regime from the perspective of affect.

To do so, I first review the key theoretical strands that scholars in critical migration and border studies have provided for conceptualising the European border regime. Here I focus on the three dimensions of labour, securitisation and coloniality that have emerged as the key concepts through which the European border regime has been theorised in this field. In second step, I introduce current scholarship that tries to understand how borders are produced and reified on the level of discourse and subjectivity and suggest that these efforts can be significantly strengthened through a focus on affect. In a third and last step, I, then, explain my conceptualisation of affect. I illustrate that rather than relying on more ontological affect theories that affirm a sharp distinction between affect and emotion, I work with queer, feminist and postcolonial conceptualisations of affect that collapse any such distinction and provide a circulatory and radically relational theory of affect. Incorporating such a theory of affect into the study of the European border regime, I argue enables a more intricate analysis of how borders operate as it turns our attention towards the raced, gendered and sexualised discourses and norms that affectively invest us in the borders of the nation.

2. Conceptualising the European Border Regime

a. Labour

Over the last decade, we can see a growing interest in the study of borders — stretching from sociology, geography, anthropology and political science to history, literature, media and cultural studies. This cross-disciplinary “renaissance of border studies” (Kolossov and Scott, 2013, para.3) might be understood as a counter-reaction

to the globalisation theses of the 1990s. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the alleged “end of history” (Fukuyama, 1989, p.1), a range of scholars declared the birth of a “borderless world” in which the financialisation of capital, new transport and digital technologies, supranational forms of governance and the ideological victory of liberal capitalist democracy would result in political borders becoming increasingly porous and obsolete. The crumbling of the Westphalian world-order was mostly seen as the result of neoliberal globalisation. Ironically, however, the global dominance of neoliberalism seems to not have led to the end but rather the multiplication and intensification of political borders. Wendy Brown (2010) has documented how only two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the construction of physical border walls has escalated worldwide from high-profile examples like the US-Mexico wall and Israel’s separation barrier along the West Bank to less well-known projects like Morocco’s fence against the Western Sahara or the double-wall being built between China and North Korea.

Europe occupies a particularly telling node in this global arrangement that, since the establishment of Schengen and the construction of the EU, has taken down barriers within its territory while increasingly fencing itself off from the rest of the world — among others through the construction of more than 1000 km of border fences that cover different stretches from Spain to Latvia (Benedicto and Brunet, 2018, p.5). While Brown primarily explains the physical manifestations of political borders as the demonstration of state power in times of waning sovereignty under neoliberal capitalism, a range of scholars have also pondered this paradox. In the European context, the most sustained efforts in this regard have been developed in the interdisciplinary and vast field of critical migration and border studies. While defining the exact contours of this field is impossible, the most sustained efforts in the critical study of migration and borders can be found in the work of the early European borderland groups, the “autonomy of migration” school that studies borders and border-crossing from the perspective of migrants themselves, as well as a range of interdisciplinary literatures that conceptualise borders in relation to national security, race and coloniality and the intersectional dimensions of gender and sexuality. Rather than discussing border studies in terms of the disciplines or schools of thought that the field is made out of, I suggest it is most useful to understand it in relation to the three key dimensions through which borders have been conceptualised

within these literatures and that help us make sense of how the current European border regime operates: labour, securitisation and coloniality.¹⁶

Pondering on how globalisation has not ushered in the disintegration of borders but its multiplication and intensification, most scholars in critical border and migration studies have highlighted the importance of labour regimes and the complex workings of neoliberalism. One can open any newspaper to see how borders, at least in Europe, are primarily framed and governed in relation to national economies, labour markets and the welfare state. While in public discourse national borders are often presented as an effort to keep cheap migrant labour out and jobs and capital inside the country, critical migration and border scholars have turned this narrative on its head.¹⁷ Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson (2013) position that it would be short-sighted to think of borders as purely negative structures of exclusion and argue that they are instead productive entities. Borders, they point out, are essential for the regulation of capital, goods, labour and services inside and across markets, and as such are key for “managing the creative destruction and constant recombining of spaces and times that lie at the heart of contemporary capitalist globalization” (p.6). The centrality of borders for the articulation of contemporary capitalism can be seen in trade policies, tariffs and immigration policies that guide the circulation of capital and often implement different immigration regimes for high-skilled and low-skilled migrants — sometimes like in the UK even including minimum income thresholds as essential for the granting of settlement rights and family reunifications (Sirriyeh, 2015).

Borders, then, are key sites for the regulation of an increasingly bifurcated global labour market marked by escalating inequalities. Some scholars have focussed on the top levels of this distribution and looked at how the circulation of services, capital and goods as well as high-skilled labour has been eased under neoliberal

¹⁶ These three aspects should not be understood as mutually exclusive. Whereas some scholars focus exclusively on one of the dimensions of labour, securitisation and coloniality, most scholars think of them as interrelated. This also explains why I occasionally cite and discuss the same authors in different sections.

¹⁷ These discourses are currently growing in dominance as seen in the political argumentations of Trump in the US or that of Brexit supporters in the UK who frame borders as a defence against migrants coming to “steal” jobs as well as a mechanism to keep jobs and capital inside the country through populist gestures such as protectionist trade policies. What makes this discourse so dangerous is that it often is also, at least, partly shared by the political left as seen in the hesitance of Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour party in the UK to take a more outspoken stance against Brexit and anti-migrant politics.

globalisation (e.g. Beaverstock, 1994, 2002; Iredale, 2001). Most of them, however, have focussed on the precarious bottom layer of contemporary labour migration. Studying the transformation from Fordist to post-Fordist modes of production, scholars point out how over the last decades labour in Europe has been casualised and made precarious so as to ease capital gains for an increasingly transnational elite. The post-war welfare state model that enabled stable income — at least for the white male breadwinner — has been taken apart not only through economic changes and technological advances but crucially through privatisation, weakening of trade unions and the deconstruction of social securities (Hardt and Negri, 2001, 2005; Neilson and Rositter, 2008; Federici, 2008).¹⁸ Labour migration has played a crucial role in funding and legitimising these changes. Migrant workers in Europe have long operated as a reserve army of cheap, mobile and exploitable labour while simultaneously serving as useful scapegoats for the economic demise and increasing uncertainty brought about by the neoliberalisation of society (Casas-Cortés, 2014; De Genova, 2016a; Mezzadra, 2011).¹⁹

Different to the representation in public discourse of migrants taking jobs, scholars like Bridget Anderson (2010) consequently argue that the “the construction of institutionalised uncertainty, together with less formalised migratory processes, help produce ‘precarious workers’ over whom employers and labour users have particular mechanisms of control” (p.300). Forms of illegalised status, residence permits without full citizen rights and the constant threat of deportation work as modes of neoliberal governmentality that keep large parts of the work force in exploitable conditions of hyper-precarity (Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson and Waite, 2015). Here they are an easy target for value extraction as seen in the over-representations of migrant workers in the often invisibilised work sectors of farming

¹⁸ This scholarship is often inspired by autonomous Marxist frameworks of the Post-Operaismo school that also crucially informs the literature on the autonomy of migration.

¹⁹ In Germany, the concept of migrant labour is shaped by the history of guest-workers. During the economic boom of the 1950s and 60s Germany made arrangements with countries like Turkey, Italy and Greece to bring in temporary migrant labourers. Most agreements ended in the 1970s when the economy slowed down again and the German state expected most migrants to return “home”. The fact that the majority of guest workers would stay in Germany and settle with their families forced a major rethinking of German identity, culture, and nation (Mandel, 2008; Chin, 2007). East Germany had similar contract labour (“Vertragsarbeiter”) agreements with other socialist countries like Vietnam and Mozambique (Zwengel, 2011). While there are no guest work agreements, the idea of migrants as “temporary labour supplements” arguably extends into the present.

(e.g. Kasimis, 2005), construction work (e.g. Meardi, Martin and Riera, 2012) and the service industries (e.g. Dyer, McDowell and Batnitzky, 2011). Women take on a particularly central role within this precarious economy in which care and reproductive labour remains gendered and is increasingly outsourced to migrant domestic workers from the Global South (Lutz, 2016: Gutiérrez-Rodriguez, 2014; Yeates, 2009). Similarly, women as well as gay men, trans and non-binary migrants are more likely to work in the grey economies, in particular the sex work industry that is heavily policed and regulated through the border (Mai, 2013, 2018). It is this process that Isabell Lorey (2015) has described as the biopolitical logic of the government of the precarious in which borders keep people in conditions of exploitability so as to secure the existence and reproduction of some parts of society over and through the labour of others.

Understanding borders through attention to the labour market, of course, easily lends itself to a top-down understanding of migration in which migrants are framed as mere cogs in the workings of capital. However, scholars, particularly those working in the tradition of the autonomy of migration are careful to point out that processes of value extraction are flexible, contested and alterable. In his Marxist theorisation of borders, Nicholas De Genova (2016a) has described borders as “reaction formations” (p.42), in which migration, as a constitutive element of human mobility, comes first. Rather than understanding migration as being defined by push and pull factors, he suggests that borders work through capitalism’s constant efforts to capture an increasingly mobile labour force that often defies and disrupts the logics of capital. This means not only that capitalist accumulation needs to be understood as dynamic, unpredictable and contested but also that migrant workers are granted an essential location in the subversion and disruption of contemporary regimes of precarity. Challenging discourses that pitch native against migrant labour, scholars like De Genova point out that migrant workers are key to overcoming the divisions of neoliberal capitalism and argue that there can be no viable leftist politics “that does not take migrant labour as a premier subject of any radical working class politic” (p.32). The focus on labour in critical approaches to the European border regime, consequently, highlights that the border needs to be understood not as a defence against the encroachment of neoliberal capitalism but rather as a crucial entity through which capitalist interests are secured and extended.

b. Securitisation

While the focus on labour in critical border studies has shown how borders operate not as barriers of protection against but as crucial tools for neoliberal capitalism, most scholars in critical and migration studies agree that the (re)production of borders must also be thought in relation to the logics of securitisation. As early scholars of neoliberalism (Brown, 2015; Harvey, 2007; Wacquant, 2009) point out, neoliberalism was not launched against the state but a government-supported policy that commonly went hand in hand with increasing budgets for security forces, police and the military. Social insurances provided by the welfare state were turned into the privatised and individualised government of risk in which failure to comply to the neoliberal rule was punished through evermore punitive and carceral measures. Jonathan Xavier Inda (2011) points out how over the last decades this form of neoliberal governmentality has been extended to and through the border. As inequality and public discontent increased through the state's alliance with global capital, border control and securitisation became important arenas for showcasing spectacular forms of state-sovereignty and for extending carceral forms of governmentality in foreign and domestic affairs.

Scholars examining this dynamic in Europe have primarily focused on the construction of “Fortress Europe”. In his seminal work on the securitisation of migration, Jef Huysmans (2000) points out that migration is increasingly targeted as a concern of public order, domestic stability and national safety as seen in the continuing political and social obsession with differentiating “legal” from “illegal” migrants — “real” from “bogus” asylum seekers, “trafficked” from “traffickers”, “political refugees” from “economic migrants”. This process intensified after 9/11 and a series of terror attacks in Europe after which migration was increasingly governed in relation to terrorism (Squire, 2011, Lazaridis and Wadia, 2015). Migrants have since not only been framed and targeted as “criminals” or “bogus welfare cheats” but increasingly as potential “terrorists”. This has resulted in the paradoxical situation that victims of the “war on terror” in the Middle-East and Northern Africa seeking asylum in the countries partly responsible for this war come to be treated as potential perpetrators and enemies — as such building a cruel continuum from the “war on terror” to the “war on migration” (Palidda, 2005; Webber, 2006). As part of this logic of war, we can see the construction of an extended border military

apparatus most clearly represented in the construction of Frontex, the EU's Border and Coast Guard Agency in 2004. In the context of the current "refugee crisis", this border apparatus has been significantly expanded through a variety of new military technologies and devices such as security fences, e-gates, finger print scanners, drones and satellites (Bigo, 2014; Tazzioli and Walters, 2016; Marin, 2017; Madörin, 2019) as well as the extension of a vast detention and deportation apparatus with more than 400 closed camps active in and around Europe (Migreurop, 2016).

In this context, a range of scholars have drawn on the work of Giorgio Agamben to argue that the threat of illegal migration is used to justify states of emergency in which migrants are confined to conditions of "bare life" (Dines, Montanga and Ruggiero, 2015; Buckel and Wissel, 2010; Schindel, 2016).²⁰ Other scholars have turned to more dynamic Foucauldian frameworks to trace how despite the overwhelming violence of the EU's expanded regimes of surveillance and confinement, migrants subvert border controls through acts of escape, refusal and horizontal solidarities (Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos, 2008; Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2013; Pfeifer, 2018). In trying to make sense how border securitisation might be resisted, however, most scholars have turned their critical gaze to humanitarianism as the dominant liberal response to the securitisation of borders. They have questioned whether humanitarian efforts work against logics of border control or actually collapse into the same mode of governmentality (Ticktin, 2011, 2016; D. Fassin, 2011; Pallister-Willkins, 2015). In this regard, William Walters (2010) has talked of the emergence of a "humanitarian border" in Europe in which the efforts of NGOs, intergovernmental organisations and humanitarian agencies do not necessarily resist but often go hand in hand with the securitisation of borders (p.146). Both play into the same logic of separating deserving from undeserving migrants and naturalise the border as a geopolitical necessity rather than a historical formation that could be organised differently.

The militarisation of the European border regime also had a detrimental effect on the borderlands of Europe. EU-agreements like the Dublin Regulations, which prescribe that migrants have to seek asylum in the country of first arrival, have turned

²⁰ Agamben's theory and its use in critical border and migration studies has been both generative and contested. See, for instance, the critique by Imogen Tyler (2006) for a discussion of how concepts like "bare life" can give rise to rather romantic and disempowering constructions of the refugee.

the physical boundaries of Europe into increasingly militarised borderlands that offload the responsibility of granting political asylum defined in the Geneva Convention onto the European periphery. In countries like Greece and Italy, these policies have led to the further precaritisation and political stabilisation of already austerity-ridden regions (Kasimis, 2005; Triandafyllidou and Dimitriadi, 2013). However, the impact of Europe's border regime is no longer confined to the territory of the EU. Over the last decades, the EU has increasingly worked on the externalisation of its borders that now increasingly reach into the neighbouring regions of Northern Africa and the Middle East. Through official agreements like the Turkey-EU pact as well as more clandestine deals that tie development aid and trade deals to the enforcement of border control, the EU is increasingly outsourcing the dirty work of border control (Bialasiewicz, 2012; Collinson, 1996; Del Sarto, 2010). Ruben Andersson (2014) has traced this militarised "illegality industry" from the buffer zones of Morocco all the way into Mali, Mauritania and the Senegal and showed how the production of migrant illegality not only destroys the lives and hopes and migrants but also destabilises local communities, fosters corruption and fuels human rights abuses (p.15).

Despite the externalisation of borders, efforts to secure the border also affect domestic politics and create expanding zones of insecurity within the nation-states of Europe. Tracing how surveillance technologies are increasingly used in the heartlands of Europe, Didier Bigo (2000, 2014) uses the metaphor of the Möbius strip to argue that the inside and outside of contemporary border control are difficult to distinguish as such creating surveillance and governmental control for growing parts of European societies. Many of the extra-legal frameworks deployed at the border are also used to discipline and govern citizens, threatening the rule of law itself. This process could be observed in the current case of the Stansted Fifteen, a group of no-border activists that took direct action to stop a deportation charter flight in London. The activists were accused on terrorist charges and threatened with life-long imprisonment. While the jail sentence was ultimately dropped, the case, nevertheless, set a precedent for slapping terrorism charges for other acts of civil disobedience and direct action (Gayle, 2019, Feb 6). What most studies on border securitisation agree on, then, is the argument that securitisation is "not an answer to insecutisation, but a capacity to manage (and create) insecurity" (Bigo, 2000, p.174). They demonstrate that the securitisation of European borders makes migrants' lives evermore precarious, turns

border territories into highly militarised buffer zones and increasingly also extends control and surveillance into domestic politics.

b. Coloniality

While both labour regimes and securitisation are key to understanding how the border operates in Europe, scholars located in postcolonial studies, world-systems theory and critical race theory help in further contextualising the European border regime in global power relations. Gurminder Bhambra (2017b) suggests that the European “refugee crisis” cannot be understood without attending closely to global inequalities and their protracted colonial and imperial histories. She argues that both the reasons for increasing migration as well as Europe’s reaction need to be understood in a transnational perspective — outside of what Stuart Hall (1991) has referred to as the “internalist” story of Europe that frames the relative economic wealth and political stability of the continent as a strictly European achievement (p.18). Fatima El-Tayeb (2016) similarly points out that the relative wealth of Europe continues to be funded through the exploitation and destruction of mostly formerly colonised territories. From the outsourcing of disposable labour to protective trade policies implemented by the EU that keep countries from equal access to the world market, the relative affluence of Europe cannot be understood without acknowledging the demise of the Global South. While global initiatives such as the Structural Adjustment Policies of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have continued to keep formerly colonised countries as easy targets for resource extraction and exploitation of labour, they have also contributed to economic demise, environmental collapse and political conflict. Borders work to keep this increasing destruction and misery from spilling over into Europe.

The postcolonial character of such containment can be seen most clearly in the EU’s travel and visa restrictions that produce migrant illegality and force migrants from the Global South to risk their lives in dangerous irregular border crossings. Henk von Houtum (2010) has documented the “global apartheid” system cemented by policies like the EU’s Schengen visa system (p.957). While it offers freedom of movement for citizens of member countries, travel and residence rights for non-member states are based on a “black” and “white” list that divides political power between the countries of the Global North and the often formerly colonised countries

of the Global South (p.962). In his analysis of the construction of European citizenship, Étienne Balibar (2003) has similarly discussed the construction of a new “apartheid” system between nationals of member countries and those located outside of it — migrants denied at the border as well as ethnic minorities, immigrés, extracomunitari, and Ausländer within the nation (p.31). These divides in citizenship are clearly racialised and create gradient lines between those who are seen to belong and those who are seen not to belong to Western civilisation.

Given this logic, the current border regime cannot be understood without attention to race — a category that as David Theo Goldberg (2008) argues, has been “buried alive” in Europe (p.1). While in most of Europe it has been dismissed from public discourse and is often represented as belonging to a different historical or geographical episteme, it is active in all areas of social, economic and political life (see also El-Tayeb, 2016; Fassin and Fassin, 2006; Wekker, 2016).²¹ Its power can most clearly be observed in the violent treatment of migrants at the borders of Europe. As Achille Mbembe (2003) has shown, the biopolitical regimes of Europe cannot be understood without their necropolitical underside. Challenging Foucault’s side-lining of coloniality and race in his account of biopolitics, Mbembe (2003) points out how the shift from sovereign power as the power to kill to a biopolitical regimes of allowing and disallowing life did not apply to the colony where European powers continued to kill, torture and enslave without impunity. We can see the continuation of such necropolitical logics in the European border regime. In this context, scholars like Paul Khalil Saucier and Tyron Woods (2014), Christina Sharpe (2016) and Ida Danewid (2017) have referred to the Mediterranean as the “Black Mediterranean” to stress how the mass killings at the shorelines of Europe need to be understood in relation to histories of colonisation, the transatlantic slave trade and anti-black racism. In this context, scholars such as Imogen Tyler (2018) and Nicholas De Genova (2016b, 2018) have conceptualised the current “migrant crisis” as an unresolved “racial crisis” in which the underside of European modernity — nationalism, racism and white supremacy — is raising its ugly head again.

²¹ In Germany, for instance, race is commonly framed as a relic of the Nazi past that should not be voiced so as not to repeat the horrors of the past or is dismissed as a particularly American problem with little valence in Europe (El-Tayeb, 2016). In both instances not only the articulation of “race” but also discussions of racism and its effects are foreclosed.

However, as feminist and queer scholars have shown, the effect and potency of race cannot be understood without its intersection with gender and sexuality. As Éric Fassin (2010) has argued, in contemporary Europe, discourses of gender equality and sexual freedom have become key markers for securing borders between the “enlightened, progressive West” and the “barbaric, backwards rest”. This dynamic can be seen in the orientalist discourses around women’s rights (Farris, 2017) sexual violence (Ticktin, 2008; Hark and Villa, 2017) and the veil (Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2014) as well as gay rights and sexual freedom (Sabsay, 2012; El-Tayeb, 2012) that have dominated the public sphere in Europe for the last decades and are commonly framed through a “clash of civilisation” discourse. The force of gender and sexuality can also be observed in the enforcement of border controls. As Eithne Luibhéid (2002) has convincingly shown in the American context: while “respectable” wives and daughters are commonly admitted, women suspected to be sex workers, lesbians or HIV-positive are denied entry at the border. Similar logics can be observed in the EU where asylum and family reunification laws run along heteronormative lines (Luibhéid, 2013) and debates around sex trafficking continue to be a key tool for the criminalisation of migration (Andrijasevic and Mai, 2016; Mai and King, 2009; Pajnik, 2010).

Over the last years, we can see some changes to these patterns as a range of European countries like the UK, France and the Netherlands have instituted special protections for gay and lesbian asylum seekers persecuted in their countries of origin. In order to be recognised under those protections, however, asylum seekers have to prove their sexuality alongside highly normative lines in which they do not only have to conform to stereotypical assumptions of gay identity but affirm spectacularised, orientalist depictions of homophobia in their countries of origin (Spruce, 2014, Fassin and Salcedo, 2015). The border, then, not only remakes racial but also gendered and sexual boundaries that reproduce the nation as largely white and heteronormative (or at least homonormative). As Bridget Anderson, Nandita Sharma, and Cynthia Wright (2009) argue, it is not only “‘hard workers’ who are produced at the border” but also “‘good wives’ who do not challenge patriarchal families, ‘straight guys and gals’ who adhere to correct sexual scripts [and] ‘good parents’ whose parenting accords with the requirements to produce ‘good children’” (p.7). Therefore, it is no surprise that current calls for harsher border control and the intensification of nativist nationalism are increasingly going hand in hand with attacks on gender studies and feminist,

queer and trans politics across Europe (Kuhar and Patternotte, 2017, Hark and Villa, 2015, Engenderings Collective, 2019).

2. Cultural and Discursive Approaches to the Border

a. The Border Spectacle

Taken together, then, we can derive three key insights from current theorisations of the European border regime. Firstly, the dynamics of the border cannot be reduced to a single logic but need to be understood in relation to labour, securitisation *and* coloniality. The border might best be understood as a complex assemblage that distributes life and labour through racialised, gendered and sexualised hierarchies of wealth and political power. Secondly, borders are not necessary, universal or natural features but are, like nation-states, historically constructed social and political entities. They cannot be conceptualised as top-down entities but need to be understood as contested and shifting structures that develop in the complex interplay between mobility and its management, containment and its subversion. Thirdly, borders should not be understood as mere lines, walls or demarcations at the boundaries of Europe that work merely through processes of exclusion. Instead, they constitute productive biopolitical structures that reach deep into labour markets, security systems and racial, gendered and sexual ideologies. Therefore, they govern not only the lives of migrants attempting to cross the border but also that of citizens inside the nation-state.

If borders are multiple, dynamic and productive — reaching deep into the life-worlds of migrants and citizens — the question emerges as to how we make sense of this dynamic. What are the forces through which the governmentality of the border is motivated and justified? In other words, how are borders produced, legitimised and resisted on the level of discourse and subjectivity? More recently, a range of scholars have likewise pondered on these questions. They have argued that borders need to be understood not merely as economic, political or legal structures but also as cultural and discursive landscapes. Border scholars working within the tradition of cultural and media studies, in particular, point out how the reproduction of borders can only be understood in its full force if we pay close attention to how borders are mediated and represented in public discourse (Chouliaraki, 2017; Hedge, 2016; Keyword Collective, 2015; Holmes and Castañeda, 2016). Key among these efforts in the

current “refugee crisis” is Nicholas De Genova’s work on the border spectacle. De Genova (2013, 2018) suggests that the intensification of borders needs to be understood in relation to the spectacle that is enacted around the border. Accounts of migrant deaths, images of border crossings and news reports about crowded boats and humanitarian rescue actions turn the border into a highly mediated spectacle. He suggests that through such representations, the border spectacle renders borders and migration visible as a target of social and political control. By framing certain bodies and forms of migration as legitimate while casting others as illegitimate, it produces the concept of migrant illegality and the threat of deportation as a constant possibility. The mediated border spectacle works as a crucial device in making migration governable and mediates all three of the dimensions discussed above: it helps to regulate the demands of labour markets, it legitimises politics of securitisation and reifies racialised, gendered and sexualised construction that position certain bodies as antidotes to “Western civilisation”.

However, the spectacle of the border should not be understood as a top-down representational regime engineered by “the state” or “the media”. Instead drawing on the work of Guy Debord, De Genova suggests that “[t]he spectacle … is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (p.1187). This social relationship is not only mediated through mainstream media representations and political rhetoric but also through artistic interventions, cinematic representations, scholarly research, and images produced through migrant mobilisations and other forms of protest. In contrast to Debord’s (2012 [1967]) more pessimistic and totalising understanding of the society of spectacle, this means that the border spectacle as a “social relationship mediated by images is a key site … in which the contestation and struggle among a diverse range of actors produce particular forms of representational drift” (New Keyword Collective, 2015, p.67). In other words, the border spectacle is a key site where border struggles take place, which Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) have defined as social contestations that “open a new continent of political possibilities, a space within which new kinds of political subjects… can trace their movements and multiply their powers” (p.281). Given the logic of border struggles, the border spectacle, thus, also includes discourses and representations that challenge the neoliberal, securitising and racialised logics of the border.

A range of studies have built upon this insight and examined the more specific articulations of the border spectacle in the context of the recent “refugee crisis”. Here

scholars have analysed how divisions between deserving and undeserving migrants are discursively produced and reified in different national contexts (Holmes and Castañeda, 2016, Holzberg, Kolbe and Zaborowski, 2018; Gray and Franck, 2018). They have pointed out that migrants voices are relatively absent from most of the mainstream representations (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski, 2017), yet have likewise shown how migrants use digital technologies and other representational means to create counter publics in which they contest hostile representations of migration (Chouliaraki, 2017; Leurs, 2018; Ponzanesi and Leurs, 2014; Risam, 2018). Nira Yuval-Davis, Georgie Wemyss and Kathryn Cassidy (2019) have further shown how based on such cultural representations processes of bordering increasingly extend into the everyday, in which citizens are implicated in carrying out acts of border control and surveillance. Within this body of work, borders are less understood as a noun than a verb. They are understood as performative as they work through the constant reiteration of distinctions between the self and other, citizen and foreigner, host and guest in discourse and everyday practice.

b. Affect and the Border Spectacle

What, however, remains relatively unexplored in the discussions of the border spectacle is that these processes of bordering are not only discursive or representational but crucially affective. As Denise Riley (2005) has argued, discourses work through affect as it is through affect that words, narratives and representations come to resonate and move us on the more immediate level of the body. In a similar vein, in her work on how UK austerity regimes are reified through cultural representations, Imogen Tyler (2008) points out that figures like the “chav mum” but also that of the “bogus asylum seeker” are highly emotionally charged (p.18). She argues that it is “through the repetition of a figure across different media that specific figures acquire accreted form and accrue affective value in ways that have significant social and political impact” (p.19). In other words, affects like fear or disgust become associated with certain populations through the repetition of already established assumptions about particular groups of people in public discourse. Similarly, in her work on affective citizenship, Anne-Marie Fortier (2008) has shown that citizenship is secured through affect. Migrants are not only associated with particular, often negative, emotions but they also need to demonstrate particular

affective disposition — such as gratefulness and pride for the nation — to gain entry into the membership of the nation. Migrants who do not conform to such emotional regimes disturb the assumed harmony of the nation and are punished by being framed as the renewed source of even more negative affect.

Based on these insights, I want to suggest that the border spectacle is not merely a discursive space of political control and contestation but an arena loaded with affect in which border struggles are fought through competing affects of hatred, fear, resentment and empathy. The analysis of the border spectacle, thus, can be strengthened through a more intricate understanding of affect as the intersubjective glue that attaches us to (or repels us from) particular representations of the border. This insight is increasingly acknowledged in critical border and migration studies, as seen in the publication of the *New Entry to Cultural Studies* by the New Keyword Collective (2015). In the last paragraph of the collective's highly insightful intent to bring borders into the spotlight of social and cultural analysis, they suggest that “affective and emotional dimensions of processes of subjectivation play a key role in both the attempts to govern migration and migratory practices seeking to subvert these” (p.84). While this insight is acknowledged its full significance is not further unpacked — neither in the article of the Keyword Collective nor in most other work in critical border and migration studies — and the conceptual paths charted by scholars like Tyler and Fortier are not picked up and further developed. Instead, most discussions of affect and emotion in critical migration studies remain largely cursory and are based on a positive/negative binary in which fear, hatred and anger are blamed for the rise of nationalist protectionism while compassion, love and hope are celebrated as forces that challenge borders without a closer interrogation of what these emotions mean, do or enable in particular contexts. Thus, it is often taken for granted that we know what hatred, fear or hope actually are, or even how, where and to what effect affect operates in border and migration politics.

More recently, we can see more scholarship emerging that is trying to complicate such assumptions and aims to close the gap between critical migration and border studies and the study of affect and emotion. Most of this literature has focussed on the emotional experience of migration. These primarily ethnographic accounts have offered crucial insights into the hopes, desires and wishes that shape the motivation and expectations of migrants as well as the emotional difficulties and

pleasures that life in the diaspora entails.²² However, these studies have relatively little to say about how affect works not only in motivating and shaping migration but as a force of governmentality that produces, secures and contests the European border regime. A smaller but growing body of literature has more recently started to work on this task and has made the question of how border regimes are secured and resisted through the circulation of different affects in the public sphere its explicit focus of study. Ala Sirriyeh (2018), for instance, has examined how compassion circulates and is invoked in migration discourse and policies in the UK, US and Australia, Anne-Marie D'Aoust (2013, 2017) has focussed on how technologies of love are deployed in migration management in Canada and Hannah Jones et al. (2017) have explored how anxiety and fear are produced in contemporary immigration controversies in the UK. These studies are a crucial inspiration for this thesis yet remain largely confined to the study of one particular affect or emotion. Building upon their efforts, I want to take a step back and spell out a more encompassing conceptualisation of affective borders, which provides a more thorough explication of how affects and/or emotions should best be theorised and how they intersect with the European border regime. To that end, let me turn to the rich theorisations of affect and emotion that have been produced, debated and rediscovered in the current “turn to affect” in social and cultural theory.

4. Affective Borders

b. The Political Grammars of Affect Theory

Over the last decade, we can see a growing interest in the study of emotion and affect. This turn to affect, feeling and emotions in social and cultural theory has generally been understood as a break from the dominant assumption of a “rational subject” in many social science paradigms. It has been celebrated as a renewed intent to

²² There are different strands within this literature. Many studies focus on the emotional experience of migration and have examined love, longing and desire as crucial drivers for contemporary migration (Chamberlain, 2006; Lyons and Ford, 2008; Mai and King, 2009; Wise and Velayutham, 2017). Other scholars focus on the emotional experience of people in diaspora (Brown, 2011; Christou, 2011) and have studied feelings of guilt that accompany life in transnational families (Baldassar, 2015; Vermot, 2015) as well as new relations of care and assistance (Gunaratnam, 2013; Svašek, 2008). For a more encompassing mapping of the burgeoning yet still understudied topic of emotion in migration research see the special issues by Paolo Boccagni and Loretta Baldassar (2015) and Maruška Svašek (2010).

deconstruct hierarchical binaries between rationality and emotion, body and mind and public and private that have long troubled Western thought and social and cultural inquiry (Blackman and Venn, 2010). The turn to affect, however, remains a rather elusive and partly troublesome project as it has come to stand in for a range of and often even contradictory epistemological endeavours. As Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (2010) point out, affect theory might best be understood as an “inventory of shimmers” (p.1) that ranges from classical sociological, psychoanalytic and Marxist to more cultural, new materialist and non-representational conceptions. Several theorists have tried to bring order into the shimmering mess that is current affect theory. In her highly insightful review of the field, Margaret Wetherell (2012) has clustered different approaches to affect by theoretical strands and objects of analysis. Jan Slaby and Christian von Scheve (2019) have further ordered the sprouting of different affect theories by key concepts and themes.

As I have argued in an earlier piece (Holzberg, 2018), however, I think it is most useful to think of different strands of affect theory in relation to their political grammar.²³ Borrowing from Clare Hemmings (2011), the term “political grammar” describes that the analytical value of particular theories cannot be separated from the larger political and epistemological project that they emerge out of (p.20). A focus on political grammars highlights that the ontological convictions that underlie specific theorisations of affect need to be understood in relation to the epistemological and political promises that scholars have attached to them. Based on this understanding, I suggest that affect theories differ not only in their ontological claims but also in the hopes and worries that scholars associate with what affect can and should do in current social and cultural analysis. With this in mind, let me delineate some of the dominant political grammars of current affect theory to convey which I find the most useful for the study of affective borders and why.

The term affect originates in psychoanalysis where it has been theorised in relation to drives and psychic defence mechanisms that, for instance, activate anger as a shield against feelings of shame or sadness. One strand of current affect theory has

²³ Parts of the discussion of affect theory that follows have appeared in the article “The multiple lives of affect: A case study of commercial surrogacy” published in *Body and Society*. Whereas in that piece I argue for a more holistic understanding of affect that combines and synthesises different strands of affect theory, I have since become more convinced of and attached to relational feminist, queer and postcolonial theories of affect that I introduce in a moment.

gone back to this original formulation of affect in psychoanalysis and tried to update a psychoanalytic vocabulary for psychosocial analyses of power, trauma and mourning (Frosh, 2011; Walkerdine, 2010; Eng and Han, 2000; Eng and Kazanjian, 2002).²⁴ Another strand of affect theory harks back to earlier sociological theorisations of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1979, 2012) to account for the changing patterns of labour in post-Fordist societies. Within this literature on emotional and affective labour, a focus on affect emerges with the hope of fostering a new conceptual vocabulary for labour and alienation that helps to think labour away from the industrial factories of blue-collar work to the diverse spaces of post-Fordist production (e.g. Gregg, 2009; Hardt, 1999; Weeks, 2007). Both these invocations of affect build upon more established literatures of affect and emotion and have provided crucial insights into the role that affect plays in relation to labour regimes and psychic economies. Both however, are arguably peripheral to the current “affective turn” and have been side-lined by theories invested in a more hopeful political grammar that frames affect as a radically new object of inquiry.

Arguably the most dominant conceptualisation of affect in the affective turn is the more ontological understanding of affect that is supposed to bring us beyond the limits of both cultural Marxist and psychoanalytic theories — and their entanglement in poststructuralist critique (Anderson, 2014; Thrift, 2008; Clough, 2009; Sedgwick, 2003, Massumi, 1995, 2002, 2015). As a pioneering scholar of such a more ontological understanding of affect, Eve Sedgwick (2003) has lamented that the dominant paradigms of deconstruction and textual analysis in critical theory have exhausted themselves. She argues that poststructuralist critique, in particular, has become a knee-jerk reaction, in which social phenomena are mapped against a grid of power that is mostly already known or assumed (if you start with a theory of gender oppression you will find it). Turning against her own earlier scholarship on discourses of homosexuality (e.g. Sedgwick, 1990), she invites us to consider affect as the path into a less deterministic understanding of the social that draws us towards

²⁴ The engagement with affect from a psychoanalytic perspective is spread across different disciplinary traditions. Most approaches seem to be located either in psychosocial studies (e.g. Frosh, 2011, Walkerdine, 2010) or in literary and cultural studies (Eng and Han, 2000; Eng and Kanzanjin). Even though her work is not directly focussed on the theorisation of affect, the work of Judith Butler (1997, 2006, 2009) often operates as a powerful bridge between these fields as it combines different disciplinary approaches for understanding the “psychic life of power”.

the messy and often unexpected ways of the body. Drawing on cognitive psychology and Buddhist thought, she highlights the hidden aspects of the social and stresses that bodies never exist as singular but are implicated with each other through affect that works at the a-linguistic, cellular level of the organism.

A similar account of affect can be found in the work of Brian Massumi (1995) who likewise launches the turn to affect as an attack on earlier psychoanalytic, Marxist and poststructuralist forms of cultural critique. For him, what gets lost in most forms of such critique is “the event — in favor of structure” (p.87). While, for Massumi, structure is “the place where nothing ever happens, that explanatory heaven in which all eventual permutations are prefigured in a self-consistent set of invariant generative rules”, he argues that “nothing is prefigured in the event. It is the collapse of structured distinction into intensity, of rules into paradox” (p.87). Similar to scholars like Patricia Clough (2009) or Nigel Thrift (2008), Massumi consequently makes a clear distinction between affect, which he defines as intensity, and emotions, the concepts through which these intensities become socially and culturally legible. While emotions are socially coded and available to consciousness, affects are pre-discursive. As such “emotion and affect — if affect is intensity — follow different logics and pertain to different orders” (1995, p.27). Building upon a range of neuroscientific and media-response studies, Massumi claims that human organisms operate on two parallel yet autonomous systems: one of quality and one of intensity. Whereas emotion works on the system of quality that is consciously available and mediated through processes of signification and representation, affect works on the “unassimilable” level of intensity (p.88). This level of intensity “is not semantically or semiotically ordered” and is embodied in mostly automatic reactions (p.85). According to Massumi, cultural theory has nearly exclusively focused on the level of quality and thereby neglected the more ephemeral, unpredictable level of intensity.

Rather than trying to understand how affect is harnessed through contemporary labour practices or tied to the psychic life of power, Sedgwick and Massumi, thus, aim to open new pathways for thinking about different encounters with intensity. Such an ontology of affect can emerge as a useful perspective as it pushes us to grapple with the unassimilable, messy features of the body (see also Holzberg, 2018). At the same time, however, it has been heavily critiqued by a range of scholars within contemporary social and cultural theory. Most commonly these scholars have questioned to what extent such ontological theorisations of affect make

sense and suggest that such a stark division of affect and emotion is untenable from the perspective of neuroscience and biology (Papoulias and Callard, 2010) as well as social psychology (Wheterell, 2015), and is based on reductionist and instrumental understandings of natural sciences (Leys, 2011). Ironically, such a theorisation of affect is, therefore, in danger of reinstalling the Cartesian body-mind the split that it originally aimed to overcome (Blackman, 2012).

The most entrenched critique of the more ontological understanding of affect however, might have been articulated by Hemmings (2005). Taking on the work of Massumi and Sedgwick in particular, she argues that their theory of affect “may be an interesting and valuable critical focus in context, [but] often emerges as a rhetorical device whose ultimate goal is to persuade ‘paranoid theorists’ into a more productive frame of mind” (p.551). She argues that invoking affect as the way into a more creative paradigm of cultural theory relies upon the homogenisation of poststructuralist theory as socially deterministic and ignorant of the materiality of the body. This dismissal of earlier paradigms obscures not only the normative dimension of affect that can likewise work as the glue that binds us but most importantly, the work of queer, postcolonial and feminist critiques that have long theorised the ambivalent aspects of feeling and embodiment. What falls out of the dominant work in the affective turn then are not only the psychoanalytic and more Marxist strands, but the nuanced and highly sophisticated engagements with affect, feeling and emotion developed by earlier feminist, queer and critical race scholars (e.g. Lorde, 1984; Spelman, 1997; Jaggar, 1989; hooks, 1989).

As a counterreaction to their erasure in the current turn to affect, we can see a variety of scholars who continue to work in this tradition. They refuse to let go of the insights provided by feminist scholars who aimed to contest how the devaluation of emotions went hand in hand with that of the female body — in particular the black female body stigmatised as the locus of irrationality and excessive affect — as well as the insights of queer scholars that have long pondered on how states of desire are infused with power. Scholars as diverse as Sara Ahmed, Laurent Berlant, Imogen Tyler, Carolyn Pedwell, Tina Campt and Ann Cvetkovich have provided nuanced accounts of what role emotions play in the subjugation as well as potential liberation of marginalised subjects. Most of these approaches start from the premise that splitting off affect from emotion, the molecular from the social or the virtual from the real, is not only unattainable but also analytically unhelpful as affects and semiotics

are inextricably intertwined (Gorton, 2007; Pedwell and Whitehead, 2012). Within these accounts, then, no clear split is made between affect and emotion so that affect is "mostly understood as human emotion" and circles around an analysis of "embodied meaning-making" (Wetherell, 2012, p.4). This approach not only facilitates more complex analyses that foreground the workings of power but also enables constructive dialogues with other, more established paradigms in the study of affect and emotions such as the anthropology of moral sentiments (Stoler, 2004, 2016; Hage, 2003; Fassin, 2013) the philosophy of passions (Nussbaum, 2013, 2016a) and the sociology of emotions (Hochschild, 2012, 2016; Holmes, 2004; Illouz, 2007, 2008).

a. Queer, Feminist and Postcolonial Theories of Affect

While the distinction between affect and emotion is collapsed, this body of work has developed radically relational and interactive conceptualisation of affect. The most useful and influential theory of affect in this regard has probably been developed by Sara Ahmed (2014). In her conceptualisation of "affective economies", Ahmed breaks with dominant psychological and sociological models of emotion that correspond to more common-sense understandings of affect. While a psychological model primarily rests on an "inside out" model in which emotions are seen as deeply personal, intimate and individual experiences that are then expressed and shared with the outside world, she suggests that sociological models tend to affirm an "outside in" model in which emotions are created through larger social structures and conditions that then come to penetrate into the individual (p.9).²⁵ Ahmed argues that both these models rest on the misguided notion that emotions are something that a subject has or possesses. Instead, she suggests a radically relational model of emotions in which feeling creates the "very effect of an inside and outside" through the way in which emotions circulate between different bodies and signs (p.10).

²⁵ As Ahmed (2014) herself acknowledges in the afterword to the latest edition of the *Cultural Politics of Emotions*, these are ideal types used for the dialectical advancement of her own theorization. They should not be understood as definite judgements on the fields of sociology and psychology in which many of these notions are likewise contested and debated. For a more complex engagement with how sociological and psychological theories emotions relate to the current turn to affect see Margaret Wheterell (2012).

Writing in the context of the “war on terror”, Ahmed (2004) exemplifies her model through an analysis of how discourses of asylum and terrorism are conflated. She suggests that the construction of the “bogus asylum seeker” intent on destabilising the nation from within, in the political discourse of the Tory government of the UK, “sticks” affects of fear to the body of the migrant. While such rhetoric creates distance between the self and the migrant Other, the origin of affect comes to be located in the body of the migrant rather than the discourses that led to the production of fear and hatred in the first place. Through this example she troubles the Darwinian tropes of emotions as evolutionary adaptive, natural reactions to inherently fearful objects and shows how emotions do not reside in certain objects, bodies or signs, but only come into being as an effect of their circulation. What makes Sara Ahmed’s model of affective economies so useful is not only that she already thinks of affect alongside and through the nation, race and the border but how she condenses three key insights of a relational model of affect in succinct and elegant ways: (1) affect works in, through and against wider societal norms, (2) affect is historically constituted even though its phenomenological experience tends to erase the history of its own production, and (3) affect has political effects in that it moves us closer towards or away from other bodies, ideas, or institutions. While her work emerges as the most dominant influence for my own understanding of affect, let me draw out these three key dimensions for my own theory of affect — the normative, historical and political — through the insights of other queer, feminist and postcolonial scholars who likewise work with relational and interactive conceptualisations of affect.

The normative level of affect describes that affects are shaped through societal norms and discursive formations. Lauren Berlant (2011a) has positioned affect theory as the latest “stage in the history of ideology theory” (p.53) and drawn out how affect can attach us to conditions that enable our own subordination. In her work on *Cruel Optimism*, she argues that in neoliberal times of economic precarity, political disillusionment and environmental collapse, it is the sentimental attachments to normative formations of the family, middle-class achievements of domesticity and the nation that provide a last resort from the cold embrace of contemporary capitalism. She, thus, shows that in contemporary US culture it is outlived yet familiar fantasies of the good life that re-emerge as the objects of hopeful reattachment in the times of precarity. Carolyn Pedwell (2014a) has similarly shown that empathy, commonly understood as a universal force of good, cannot be detached from the normative.

While she suggests that empathy can emerge as a force of solidarity, she argues that it likewise works to further entrench neoliberal discourses of emotional intelligence in business culture or entrench moral hierarchies between the subject and object of pity in development discourse. Rather than understanding affects like compassion or optimism as simply positive, Berlant and Pedwell show how they need to be understood as highly ambivalent forces that work through, within and against social norms and values.

The historical dimension of affect describes that emotions do not only circulate in particular contexts but that they are historically constituted. Ann Cvetkovich has developed insightful historical accounts of negative affects of trauma and despair by working with what she calls an alternative “archive of feeling” (2003, p.1). Among others, she aims to make sense of depression outside of the clinical terminology of psychology and psychiatry and instead tries to understand it as a public feeling. Engaging with the work of Saidyia Hartman (2008), she asks “what if depression, in the Americas at least, could be traced to histories of colonialism, genocide, slavery and exclusion, and everyday segregation and isolation that haunt all of our lives, rather than to biochemical imbalances?” (Cvetkovich, 2012b, p.132). In doing so, she suggests that the traumas of the past continue to live in the present where they reinscribe an “emotional colour-line” between people located on different sides of contemporary racisms (*ibid*). Ann Stoler (2016) has similarly shown how colonial emotions extend into the historical present. Focussing on the rise of the Front National in France, she highlights the duress of imperial sentiments by analysing how current forms of resentment cannot be separated from attachments to France’s lost imperial glory. Feelings of loss and anxiety in an increasingly precarious neoliberal present, she suggests, are displaced onto migrant communities and racialised subjects that were never expected to gain a place in the nation in the first place. Both scholars point out how affects can reinforce the histories of violence and injustice that they emerged out of.

The political dimension of affect further describes that affects should not be understood as private but as public feelings that are politically productive. In her analysis of Act Up’s activism during the AIDS crisis in the US, Deborah Gould (2009) has shown how affect works as a form of governmentality as well as a resource for social mobilisation. While it was fear, shame and disgust that kept queer people in the closet, it was likewise their anger, grief and desperation that pushed

them out of it and into the streets. She suggests that what made them so successful was finding forms for augmenting and sharing their rage through performative actions like die-ins and public burials. Imogen Tyler (2013), whose ideas I introduced earlier, has similarly shown how in austerity Britain disgust plays a crucial role for legitimising austerity cuts for already marginalised subjects. She examines the formation of "waste population" in contemporary Britain through the emergence of figures such as the "chav", the "benefit-scrounger" and the "bogus asylum seeker" in public culture. Through these gendered, racialised and sexualised figurations she argues, vulnerable populations are rendered "revolting" and are felt to be responsible for the social-political demise brought about through late capitalism. At the same time, turning to social protests like strikes and naked protests staged by these "revolting" subjects she explores how the logics of neoliberalism might be reversed — how the disgust that is mobilised against the people at the bottom of the class order might be turned back against the state and its brutal mechanisms of condemnation and exclusion.

c. Integrating Affect Theory into the Study of Borders

Within such a relational and circulatory understanding of affect, then, affects are framed not as autonomous or personal dispositions but describe historically constituted forces that circulate between us and are easily shaped and mobilised within public discourse. Once activated, they do important political work in attaching us to as well as disrupting attachments to particular conceptions of the world. Based on this model, I use the terms affect and emotion largely interchangeably. While I sometimes use the term emotions when I refer to concrete affects such as hatred, hope or anger, my insistence on primarily using the term affect derives from my aim to highlight that I am working with a relational and circulatory understanding of public feeling, outlined above, that is most commonly developed and discussed under the vocabulary of affect. Using a circulatory and relational conceptualisation for the study of affective borders is the most useful as it helps us to examine not only how borders are emotionally experienced but also how affect legitimises and cements the unequal distribution of life, labour and security in contemporary Europe.

While current efforts in critical migration and border scholarship offer us a powerful framework for thinking about the overarching dimensions that borders

operate through, a focus on affect helps us to further understand how and why people are so invested in particular border politics. Birgit Sauer (2015) and Anne-Marie D'Aoust (2014) have used queer and feminist theories of affect to show how modes of neoliberal governmentality crucially work their power through affect. They argue that subjectivation is not only a discursive but crucially an affective process in which subjects come to identify with particular labour regimes through emotional attachments.²⁶ The shift to post-Fordism, for instance, was partly secured and legitimised through people's fears, insecurity and anxiety in the face of potential recession and the outsourcing of jobs as well as through pride, love and positive attachment to new forms of service work and self-employment. Extending such insights into the study of the border, I want to suggest that all three logics of the border that I have discussed above can only work and be sustained through affective dynamics. The reproduction of a bifurcated labour market that pitches migrants against native workers is crucially legitimised through emotions of resentment and envy (Hochschild, 2016). Securitisation efforts could not work without the production of fear that legitimises the increasing surveillance and policing of large parts of society (Massumi, 2010). And necropolitical regimes can only be sustained by framing some lives as more grievable than others (Butler, 2006, 2009) or by even positioning racialised subjects as disgusting (Tyler, 2013) or hateful (Ahmed, 2014).

Carrying this insight into the study of the European border regime brings the body into theorisations of the border. A focus on affective borders shows how economic domination and biopolitical marginalisation work through circulations, figurations and structures of feeling that are not only rationally registered but also come to resonate on a more immediate level of the body. While theories of the political continue to rely on a public-private split that understands politics as the realm of rational action while confining affect to the realm of the private, Berlant (2011b) has long pointed out how public spheres are not rational but rhetorical. She argues that they might best be understood as "affect worlds" where emotional forces lead ahead of rational and deliberative thought (p.87). This is not to reaffirm a split

²⁶ An insight that is largely missing from Foucault's theories of power and subjectivation. In her more recent work Butler (2003, 2009) has increasingly acknowledged the role of affect in processes of subject formation, yet even she has rarely done so with an explicit focus on affect. I come back to Butler's formative influence for this work at later points in this thesis, in particular in the next Chapter 3 on methodology as well as Chapter 4 on empathy and Chapter 7 on hope.

between the mind and the body but to see how rhetorical gestures gain their power through affect. It extends understandings of discourse and subjectivity by highlighting their affective dimension. Bringing such an understanding of affect into the study of the border helps us conceptualise the border spectacle not only as an discursive but also an affective arena in which borders are cemented through the ways in which emotions move some bodies closer to others while creating distance between that of others (Ahmed, 2014).

Incorporating feminist and queer theorisations of affect further makes us attentive to the historical and normative dimensions of the border spectacle. Rather than understanding affect as a direct and natural reaction to an event in the present, I have shown how affect must be understood as historically constituted. In Ahmed's (2004) words, emotions like hatred work both "sideways" and "backwards": "they move sideways (through 'sticky' associations between signs, figures, and objects) as well as backward ... by reopening past associations that allow some bodies to be read as the cause of 'our hate', or as 'being' hateful" (p.120). As I explain in more depth in the next chapter, Chapter 3, tracing how affects circulate within contemporary border struggles, hence, pushes us to draw out the wider discourses as well as the longer histories that have made their circulation possible in the first place. As such, a focus on affective borders provides a contextually rich understanding of contemporary European migration politics. It unveils normative discourses and historical norms that help us understand why, in the context of the refugee crisis, affect is more likely to circulate in some ways and not others while also providing insights into the cracks and excesses that enable us to grasp how attachments could be forged differently.

Moreover, integrating queer-feminist theorisations of affect into the study of borders brings the dimensions of race, gender, class and sexuality to the forefront of study. As I have shown most of the work in critical border and migration studies is primarily concerned with class and (increasingly so) with race. While a number of scholars have called for a more thorough engagement with the dimension of gender and sexuality in border studies (Neuhauser, Hess and Schwenken, 2016), most scholarship in this regard has done so through an identity framework and has examined the emotional problems that female and/or queer refugees face in their travel across borders. A focus on affective borders extends this effort and shows how discourses of gender and sexuality produce and secure borders in the first place. Affect works through already dominant assumptions about particular objects and

groups of people so that dimensions of race, gender and race play crucial roles in who and what is felt to be abject or not (Ahmed, 2014; Pedwell, 2014a; Tyler, 2013). As I show throughout my analytical chapters, an understanding of these dimension as well as how gender and sexuality interlink with normative constructions of the nation (Bracke, 2012; Farris, 2017; Fassin, 2010; Sabsay, 2012) are essential in explaining some of the dynamics of affective borders. In other words, a focus on affective borders provides an intricate examination of the intersecting and multifarious ways in which gender, sexuality, race and class matter for our understanding of the European border regime beyond the paradigm of identity.

5. Conclusion:

In this chapter, I have developed an intricate conceptual frame for the study of affective borders. I have drawn on the rich theoretical archive that has been produced in the recent “turn to affect” in social and cultural theory to show that I do not understand affect as a radically new theoretical concept that points us to the ephemeral aspects of the social world that work beyond or outside of the reach of consciousness, discourse or the social as it has been positioned in some areas of social and cultural thought. Rather, I have argued that we should draw on queer and feminist theorists who position their work on affect in a longer tradition of scholarship on emotion, sentiment and public feeling and who are primarily interested in understanding how affect comes to shape political communities. These scholars focus on how affect works as a political force, examine how affect is activated and produced in public discourse and analyse how it is shaped by social norms and historical forces. I have brought these insights together with critical border and migration studies to argue and demonstrate that affect is crucial for shaping national labour markets, for naturalising militarised security regimes and for legitimising and disrupting colonial ideologies of race, gender and sexuality that secure and are secured through the border.

By developing a theoretical framework of *affective borders*, I have consequently extended the interdisciplinary study of borders and highlighted the affective life of the European border regime. A focus on affective borders, I have suggested, demonstrates how borders operate on the more immediate level of the body, highlights how borders are historically constituted and how they work through

gendered, raced and sexualised norms and discourses. As such, the conceptualisation and study of affective borders crucially intervenes into critical border and migration studies. A focus on affective borders allows us to examine how and why people come to attach so vehemently to particular construction of the nation and how these attachments might be challenged, subverted and resisted. At the same time, my conceptualisation of affective borders also contributes to the growing field of affect and emotion studies. Particularly in the context of migration and border, more sustained efforts that go beyond the analysis of one particular affect and that stay with a particular context and empirical problem are still rare. My focus on affective borders extends these efforts by providing a more thorough and elaborate engagement with the empirical problem of the European border regime during the “refugee crisis” in Germany. In the following chapter, Chapter 3 on methodology, I want to turn to this insight in more detail and tackle the question as to how and where we best examine the powerful yet rather opaque force of affect in the context of the European border regime and spell out in more detail what kind of analysis and critique a focus on affective borders makes possible.

Chapter Three

Affect as Method: Studying Affective Borders

1. Introduction:

In the last chapter, I have shown how the framework of affective borders provides a powerful conceptual frame for understanding how borders are contested, legitimatised and resisted. Trying to study affective borders, however, brings into sharp relief a range of methodological questions. How do we capture something so powerful yet obscure as affect? Where does it appear in the social and cultural realm? And how do we identify and interpret it? In what follows, I try to address these questions and identify the archives and scenes in which affect can be best examined in, as well as the most useful analytical tools for tracing its power in the context of the European border regime. While affect theory has variably been positioned as a crucial perspective for the renewal of critique in social and cultural analysis (e.g. Ahmed, 2014; Berlant, 2011a; Staiger, Raynolds and Cvetkovich, 2010) or even as way to go beyond it (e.g. Clough, 2009; Massumi, 2002, 2009; Sedgwick, 2003) — a question I return to at the end of this chapter — relatively little has been written on affect and methodology. There has been a growing volume of scholarship published on different methodological approaches to affect over the last years (Åhäll, 2018; Hickey-Moodey, 2013; Knudsen and Stage, 2015). Most of the time, however, affect analysis is simply done rather than explicated or reflected on. This can easily be explained by affect's expansive and ephemeral character that resists most established methodological approaches as well as the fact that most affect analyses come out of cultural studies where as Michael Pickering (2008) has argued "methods are undoubtedly a missing dimension" (p.2).

As feminist epistemologists like Donna Haraway (1988, 2016) have argued, however, the question of, and critical reflection on, how we arrive at particular knowledges is central for any form of feminist analysis. Indebted to this tradition of thought, in this chapter, I aim to spell out and reflect in more depth on my methodological approach. I do so in three steps. First, I distil key insights for what I call a *feminist cultural analysis of affect* from the work of some of the most prominent queer and feminist scholars in the study of affect and emotion. Second, I

show how I apply and further develop these methodological insights for the study of *affective borders* and discuss my scenes, archives and interpretative strategies. I then reflect on the kind of *critique* that my form of affect analysis advances and elaborate in more depth on questions of location and ethics. In doing so, I argue that the opaqueness of affect should not be understood as an impasse to be lamented or a problem to be resolved but that it should be embraced as an epistemological enigma that pushes us to develop more careful analytical tools for tracing the social and cultural life of power within and beyond the European border regime. In other words, I suggest that affect provides a crucial methodological puzzle for finding more complex answers to the old feminist question of how we come to consent to and invest in the mechanisms that govern and subjugate us. Engaging with this puzzle provides us with a more refined and ambivalent form of social and cultural critique that asks us to wrestle with the contested nature of power and to reflect on our own involvement in the scene of analysis.

2. Feminist Cultural Analyses of Affect

a. Tracing Breadcrumbs

Methodological approaches (should) follow from the theoretical and political questions and convictions that scholars are concerned with. Given the divergent hopes and interests attached to the study of affect that I have explicated in the last chapter, scholars in the field of affect studies have developed and experimented with a range of different methodological approaches. Theorists who affirm a split between affect and emotion and who primarily aim to identify traces of bodily force and contagion that operate below, outside or beside regimes of representation have developed a range of powerful experimental methodologies.²⁷ Yet, as I have outlined in the last chapter, in trying to understand how affect works to cement the European border regime, I am less interested in the below, outside or beyond of affect but rather in how affect and the body are entangled with discourse and processes of representation. Therefore, my methodological approach is inspired and guided by

²⁷ These include but are not limited to Deleuzian approaches to the study of affect and the virtual (Coleman and Ringrose 2013, Coleman 2013; Clough 2009), immersive ethnographies of rhythms, dance and vibration (Henriques, 2010; Henriques, Tiainen and Väliaho, 2014) and inventive experiments and pop-up laboratories (Blackman, 2007; Staunæs and Kofoed, 2007).

queer and feminist scholars who understand affect as a historical and radically relational force and have provided a complex yet powerful methodological archive for tracing the political work of public feeling. I consequently want to begin my methodological reflections by discussing what I understand a *feminist cultural analysis of affect* to be and distil some key methodological insights from some of the most influential scholars in the field before then showing how I adapt this model for the study of *affective borders*.

Based on their understanding of affect as relational and circulatory, many feminist and queer scholars of affect have tried to break with psychological and sociological approaches that aim to locate affect within a particular subject or body and have instead tried to decipher the workings of affect in the interactions and discourses that emerge between different subjects, objects and signs. The most influential methodology in this regard is probably Sara Ahmed's (2004, 2010, 2014) elaborate approach for tracing how affects are mobilised within and across a range of different cultural texts, and whose theory of affect I have already introduced in the last chapter. In the *Promise of Happiness*, Ahmed (2010) examines the construction and circulation of "happy objects" such as the white heteronormative family across different instances of media and political discourse, novels and films to show how a particular imperative to be happy has come to saturate Western public culture (p.21). By tracing happy objects across a range of different cultural artefacts, she uncovers the "sociality of happiness" (p.58) and illustrates how formations like the nuclear family accrue affective value through their repetition across a variety of different texts and cultural scenes. In doing so, she reveals how the social imperative to be happy is so saturated with the promise and imperative of white, heteronormative family life that figures like the "unhappy queers" (p.88) or the "melancholic migrants" (p.121) are not only positioned outside of the promise of happiness but become positioned as threats not only to the family but the fantasy of happiness itself.

Ahmed's (2014) highly incisive and influential analytical model for the study of affect works primarily with what she calls the "emotionality of texts" (p.12) and focusses on tracing different invocations of affect through a range of social and cultural artefacts. Reading through political speeches, novels, films and media representations, she identifies a general cultural logic of happiness and reveals how affect accumulates around gendered, racialised and sexualised norms and discourses. While she is also interested in showing how figures like the "feminist killjoys,

unhappy queers, and melancholic migrants” (2010, p.49) might break and disturb normative fantasies of the good life embedded in the figure of the happy family, her methodology mainly focusses on the ties that bind. Ann Cvetkovich (2003, 2012a) has deployed a similar methodology that generates a slightly more reparative analysis of affect. In her work on *An Archive of Feelings*, Cvetkovich (2003) tracks alternative forms of public feeling in minoritarian cultural spheres such as lesbian subcultures. Like Ahmed, she is concerned with the work of tracing and describes the study of affect as “follow[ing] the trail of breadcrumbs” that affect leaves behind in its circulation (p.116). She examines how trauma and loss have been understood and navigated in lesbian public cultures and builds a rich “archive of feeling” out of oral histories from lesbian activists involved in Act Up during the AIDS crisis in New York, literature by lesbian feminist authors, videos, performance pieces, and queer music lyrics. Reading across these texts, she identifies structures of feeling within lesbian cultures that reformulate the relations between trauma, sexuality and politics.

Cvetkovich’s (2003, 2012a) methodology is driven by the feminist credo of the “personal is political”. As a member of one of the “Feel Tanks”²⁸ that formed in the US in the early 2000s, she tries to highlight how forms of depression, malaise and hopelessness among the American left are not individual but socially shared phenomena that need to be understood as public not private matters. Focussing on the navigations of public feeling in lesbian subcultures, her aim is not only to show how personal affects are social and social affects are personal but to reveal how a focus on public feeling can help us to repoliticise and reconceptualise concepts like trauma and depression so as to find ways to feel and attach differently. Both Ahmed and Cvetkovich’s formative approaches, thus, trace the circulation of affect through diverse archives of public culture. They locate affect in the “affective-discursive” (Wetherell, 2013, p.351) and trace their power through an analysis of different

²⁸ The Feel Tanks emerged as part of the Public Feeling project, that begun in 2001 and included different groups across the US in which feminist and queer scholars came together to think about the role of feeling in public life. Cvetkovich’s concept of political depression is inspired by her engagement with the Feel Tank group in Chicago that also organised activist interventions such as the “International Day of the Politically Depressed in which participants were invited to show up in their bathrobes to indicate their fatigue with traditional forms of protest” (p.2). A range of other influential US affect scholars that I engage with in this chapter and across the thesis more generally were also part of the Feel Tanks such as Laurent Berlant, Janet Staiger, Deborah Gould, Ann Reynolds and José Esteban Muñoz.

cultural texts. Such an approach helps us to examine how affect works through, yet also challenges, larger gendered, racialised and sexualised social norms and cultural ideologies. It highlights the often-hidden forces that help to explain people's attachment to norms and the status quo yet also opens up perspectives into affective dynamics that might challenge these.

The approaches developed by Ahmed and Cvetkovich, however, beg the question as to where we start our analysis. If we accept that affects have histories and that they cannot be held stable in one particular space or medium where do we begin (and end) our investigation? In other words, how do we trace the trail of breadcrumbs without getting lost in the forest? The most promising approach for doing so seems to lie in focussing on what Janet Staiger, Cvetkovich and Ann Reynolds (2010) have described as "affective scenes" — "clusters of action ... that open up for political analysis" (p.3). They define these scenes as objects, genres or fantasies that fascinate us and break open an entry point into a larger problematic of social and political relevance. The concept of affective scenes describes that, like a camera, we can zoom into a cultural moment that mediates social and political life to understand how larger structures of feeling operate within it. First developed by Raymond Williams, I take the term public of feeling from the work of Laurent Berlant (2011a) who uses it to describe the more general logic or grammar of how affect is structured in particular social and historical contexts.²⁹ Ahmed's (2010) analysis of happiness in a film like *Bend it like Beckham*, for instance, gives us an insight into how happiness works as a more general structure of feeling in multicultural Britain. The focus on affective scenes allows us to uncover and extrapolate such a more general structure of feeling from a particular invocation of affect.

The focus on scenes, then, only works if we focus on a scene of affective charge in order uncover the larger context and histories that have made this particular invocation of affect possible. It involves a temporal as well as spatial dimension and centres around trying to understand how certain affects have become, and continue to

²⁹ The concept of structures of feeling was originally developed by Raymond Williams (1988) who uses it to describe emergent cultural ways of life and frames of thought among the working classes in the UK. The concept is purposefully vague and changes throughout Williams' own writing as it tries to get at dynamics that are not yet articulated. The concept has been used, developed and further refined by a range of scholars, most notably by Lauren Berlant who uses it to identify the broader affective dynamics that mark life under neoliberalism in the US. I come back to her work later in the chapter.

be, central to particular scenes. In Ahmed's (2004) terminology, this means that we need to trace emotions "backward" and sideways" (p.120) — both historically into how they have come into circulation as well as sideways into how they are constructed in a range of different sites. Starting with a scene as mundane as the happy family sat around the kitchen table, Ahmed traces the figure of the "happy family" sideward across different discourses and genres to show how it operates as a more general mode of governmentality and backwards into the longer histories of neoliberalism, racism and patriarchy that have come to imbue this figure with the promise of happiness while casting others outside of its affective pull. In doing so, she deconstructs the idea of the happy family as an ontologically "happy object" and instead points us to the discourses and larger histories that have come to imbue this object with the promise of happiness in the first place. As Ahmed suggests, affect comes "to reside in objects, only through an erasure of the history of their production in circulation" (2014, p. 11). The role of the critic is to retrace the histories of this production to deconstruct the idea of affect as natural or self-evident emotions of the individual.

a. Selecting Affective Scenes

The tensions of finding, tracing and extrapolating from affective scenes brings into focus the relationship between the particular and the general. The most advanced reflections on this relationship can be found in the work of Laurent Berlant (1997, 2008, 2011a) who across her work on sentimentality in US public culture has continuously wrestled with the "becoming general of singular things" (2011a, p.12). As she frankly acknowledges in the introduction to *Cruel Optimism*: "I am extremely interested in generalisation: how the singular becomes delaminated from its location in someone's story or some locale's irreducibly local history and circulated as something shared" (p.12). This extrapolation from the specific to the general can be understood as a particularly queer method and partially be traced back to work of Eve Sedgwick (1990) who suggests that by attending to the particular of homosexuality we can say a lot about the general of a culture saturated with heteronormativity. Berlant carries this insight into the study of affect and tracks how particular articulations of affect cohere into and allow us to gain a glimpse into larger structures of feelings. In her work on the obesity crisis in the US, she, for instance, focusses on

scenes of overeating as comforting acts of survival in a moment of fraying social relations and economic precarity in the US. Through this particular scene, she identifies and conceptualises more general structures of feeling like “slow death” (p.95) and “cruel optimism” (p.23) that, according to her, mark the affective condition of living in the ruins of the American dream.

Berlant’s (2011a) methodology might be understood as a continuation of case study methodologies that have long been a crucial analytical device in social science disciplines like sociology, politics and international relations. While she claims the terminology of the case, however, I prefer the language of the scene as it points to the kind of cultural analysis that this form of affect analysis is concerned with. Anna McCarthy (2006), for instance, has argued that scale shifting in cultural studies differs from scale shifting in other disciplines where it originally emerged with the promise of achieving “great positivist knowledge” (p.31). She argues that for cultural studies scholars, “moving between levels of abstraction is a way of relativising knowledges, revealing their origins in particular material conditions, not of striving toward all knowingness” (*ibid*). Following this, I prefer the concept of the affective scene as it speaks to a more open-ended form of social and cultural analysis. Firstly, the concept of the scene is associated with the language of theatre and film, where it describes a sequence in a longer plot line. This association highlights how scene analysis follows a more cultural understanding of the social that understands social and political life as constructed and performative and borrows heavily from cultural and literary analysis.³⁰ Secondly, it stresses a temporal understanding of the case in which the case is never a perfect representation — an equal piece among many — but an exemplary instance within changing temporalities. The scene then might best be understood as a mediated event and stresses both the interdisciplinary and historical character — the moving sideways and backwards — of affect analysis.

The methodology of the scene, however, begs to question as to whether any object can be used as a scene for affect analysis. The affect scholars I have discussed so far turn to variety of mediums to unpack the affective dynamics of particular

³⁰ It also highlights a particular affinity of affect analysis to film, screen and visual culture studies as seen not only in the influential work of Laurent Berlant who engages with film as her privileged medium of analysis but also the work of Tina Campt (2017) who provides insightful accounts of how affect is entangled with visual culture. See also Imogen Tyler’s (2008, 2013) scholarship on figures and Judith Butler’s (2006, 2009) theories of the frame, that I come back to in later parts of this chapter.

scenes. Cvetkovich (2003) for instance, analyses music videos, novels and oral histories to make sense of scenes of hope in AIDS activism and Ahmed (2010) examines film, novels as well as political and media discourse to understand scenes of happiness in multicultural Britain. Affective scenes might best be described as cultural objects that mediate a particular social and historical situation or event. The question of the scene is, therefore, less about particular genres or mediums and more about finding objects that provide a deeper insight into the structures of feeling of a particular social context. Berlant has described this methodological problem as finding adequate objects “for the kinds of speculative work we call ‘theory’” (2011a, p.21) — an object that is able “to bear the weight of an explanation worthy of attending to and taking a lesson from” (2007, p.666). The question of whether an object is worthy of attendance consequently depends on how central, exemplary or remarkable it is for a particular social and historical context (e.g. obesity as an exemplary and insightful scene for understanding affect in contemporary US culture). Often, however, the worthiness of a particular scene can only be judged in hindsight by the quality and insight of the analysis that it enables.

Affective scene analysis is consequently a highly interdisciplinary endeavour. There are a range of scholars who follow more disciplinary approaches and focus, for instance, on the relation between affect theory and the analysis of literature (Hogan, 2010, 2017) or film (Shaviro 2010; Breger, 2014). Raymond Williams (1983) likewise originally developed the concept of structure of feeling in relation to literature, which he saw as the privileged medium for examining the emerging affective dynamics of British working-class cultures. Most scholars, however, have followed Stuart Halls’ later program of cultural studies that engages with different social and cultural texts ranging from novels and film to music, pop culture and political and media discourse (e.g. Hall, 1997; Gilroy, 1987; Grossberg, 2010). The value of such an eclectic and interdisciplinary approach can best be seen in the more sociological work of Carolyn Pedwell (2014a) and Imogen Tyler (2013).

Through an “interdisciplinary analysis of an array of geo-political sites and cultural texts” Carolyn Pedwell examines “how empathy travels across cultural, geo-political and disciplinary contexts, with varying implications for how it and attendant notions of social justice and transnationality are formulated, materialised and put to political use” (p.xi). While Pedwell mostly uses the language of “sites” or “moments”, her approach comes close to my understanding of scenes. Her

methodology consists of zooming in and out of different social, political and cultural moments (or scenes) in which empathy is invoked — ranging from Obama’s campaign speeches and international development campaigns to the literature of Toni Morrison and Jamaica Kincaid. Setting up a conversation between these different scenes allows Pedwell to show that while empathy conforms to a more general affective grammar, it is highly contextual so that its political effect depends on where and how it is invoked. Instead of universal theories of emotion, she consequently argues for socially located studies of affect in which we pay attention to the ways in which normative invocations of affect come to regularly cement the status quo as well as to the ways in affective relations could “be translated differently” (xiv).

While Carolyn Pedwell’s analysis of empathy gains much from the wide range of different scenes she turns to, Imogen Tyler develops a highly insightful and more focussed methodology. Her interest lies less in developing an eclectic understanding of the cultural politics of emotions and more in how affect theory can help us make sense of one specific social and political situation. More concretely, she focusses on the circulation of disgust in political and media discourse during the UK austerity regime of the early 2000s to show how particular groups of people like the unemployed, migrants and the disabled come to be positioned and felt as “revolting”. This circulation and activation of disgust, she argues, helps to legitimise the further erosion of the welfare state and allows the government to implement evermore punishing social policies onto minority groups that are most affected by austerity. Next to political and media discourse, she also focusses on political movements and activist interventions such as scenes of naked protests staged by mothers detained in a women’s detention centre in the UK. Doing so, she shows how subjects contest the negative associations and affects of disgust that have been stuck to them. By focussing on a variety of material that has been produced in political struggles around austerity in the UK, she offers a powerful account of the affective dynamics that keep the current austerity regime alive while also pointing to potential sources for social transformation, solidarity and resistance.

b. Engaging Archives of Feeling

The interdisciplinary approaches developed in queer and feminist studies of affect offer insightful accounts of the social and cultural life of affect. They provide unusual

yet powerful perspectives onto the larger political dynamics of specific historical moments. These cultural studies approaches, however, have also attracted criticism particularly from within more established paradigms in the social sciences. Margaret Wetherell (2015), for instance has critiqued the use of mostly already existent “archives of feeling” and questioned the adequacy of reading affect primarily in cultural texts. While acknowledging that Ahmed’s work in particular “is beautifully designed for cultural analysis” (p.160), Wetherell has lamented that her methodological approach for the study of affect is overly textual. She critiques that by focussing so heavily on language and signs, “the negotiation and parsing of affects as complex, live, often highly troubled, ongoing categorisations of human action disappears once again” (p.159). Instead, she suggests that affect theorists would be better advised to follow her own theorisation of affective practice through more classical social science methodologies such as ethnography and interview studies as this would enable them to analyse “particular lines of activity, and the back-and-forth movements between actual social actors” (p.160).

Indeed, feminist scholars in emotion and affect research that use ethnographic methods and interview studies have undoubtedly produced highly informative accounts of how affect is produced, mediated and enacted in social practice. Valerie Walkerdine (2010), for instance, has produced multi-layered ethnographies of trauma and mourning among post-industrial communities in Northern England. Eva Illouz (2007) has tracked patterns of cold intimacies in neoliberal capitalism through interviews with people worn out from the pressures of neoliberal love markets. And, by living among white rural communities in Alabama, Arlie Hochschild (2016) has excavated the “deep stories” of collective forms of resentments that might help to explain Trump’s rise to power in the US. While this work has provided important insights into the lived experience of emotion and crucially informs my own study, I believe that setting up a hierarchy between the study of affect in social discourse and already existent public records and the more direct study of affective practice in interview studies and ethnography is misguided. In a partial rebuttal to Wetherell, Ahmed (2014) points out that “emotions are opaque” and adds that “whatever methods we use, whether we read documents that already exist in the public domain, as memory traces of histories that are with us, or whether we conduct interviews ... or do ethnography, this opacity is not something we can overcome” (p.216). She continues that we need to keep this opaqueness open and need to be transparent and

reflexive about any truth claims that accompany the study of affect as “claims that we can access the feelings of others would amount to a repetition of violence, a way of emptying the place of others by assuming their place” (*ibid*).

This is not to say that ethnographic methods cannot provide insights that a cultural analysis approach cannot. Yasmin Gunaratnam’s (2012, 2013) work on migrant hospices, for instance, provides moving, multi-layered accounts of how people come to terms with pain and death in the diaspora. While she acknowledges that “we cannot claim to fully understand the sources, routes, levels, temporality and meanings of [another’s] pain” (2012, p.119) her highly poetic ethnographic work, nevertheless opens up new pathways into understanding how people live and survive through forms of care and affective interdependence. This deep engagement with what she calls “learning to be affected” (p.117) is not something that my own work or that of others working within a cultural analysis approach to affect can claim to produce. The question of whether we primarily study affect in discourse or practice, however, cannot be understood as one of more accuracy or “truth” but needs to be understood as a question of emphasis and follow from the kind of questions we ask. As Gunaratnam (2003) has argued “social discourses and lived experiences are co-constituted — they intermingle and inhabit one another” (p.7). In a collaborative work with other feminist migration scholars (Jones et al., 2017), she has shown how methods of cultural analysis and interview studies can be combined to study how affect is mobilised and constructed within political and media discourse as well as how it is mediated, internalised but also challenged by different communities across the UK. Whereas the cultural analysis of texts lays bare the larger dynamics through which affect is expressed, articulated and shifted in public culture, the interview studies bring more insight into how particular discourses are negotiated, processed and contested on a more individual level. While in this case both approaches complement each other beautifully through the combined effort of seven researchers, studies that focus on one side of the often-overstated discourse/practice dichotomy still provide insightful ways into either aspect of affective politics.

What the cultural analysis approach offers is a deeper understanding of the ways in which affect is articulated, produced and contested within public culture so as to understand the larger social norms and histories that public feeling is shaped by. As Linda Åhäll (2018) has argued, feminist cultural analyses of public feeling are not about the “actual affective encounter”; they are not about how people feel. Instead,

she suggests that “by paying attention to structures of feeling in which the object affectively flows … we can focus on ‘the histories that come before the subject’” (p.12). She underlies this by her own analysis of media discussion focused on Lyndie England’s involvement in the torture of Abu Ghraib. By studying these media representations, she argues that we can gain a deeper understanding of “what the emotional obsession about torture and women does politically, beyond this individual case” (p.47). The analysis is not so much about

how we are called upon, interpellated, to feel about England (disgusted). Instead, it is about how the (gendered) boundaries of those structures are policed and reinforced through an affective logic, either manifested as ‘feelings’ or immediately mediated as a political ‘common sense’. (p.49-50)

Examining how affect is produced, expressed and contested in public culture, then, provides a way to dig into and uncover what Åhäll calls “that which goes without saying” (p.14).

This understanding of affect analysis as a way to understand that which goes without saying can also be found in the work of Ann Stoler (2011) who conceptualises affect as the central element for understanding how “common sense” is constructed (p.156). In her work on “colonial aphasia”, she focuses on the rhetoric of the Front National and Nicolas Sarkozy in the wake of the 2005 riots in France and tries to understand why a rhetoric that was “committed to the notion that personal and national security are threatened by ‘North African immigrants,’ the cités and their *racaille*” was so successful (p.131). Whereas statements describing racialised people living in the banlieues as “racaille” (thug) have often been labelled extreme and outrageous by the political left, Stoler suggests that they were so successful as they drew into common sense notions of what it means and feels like to be French. Statements like these disavow the memory and ongoing reality of colonial difference, yet simultaneously play into a well-established

structure of feeling and force embraced not by a fringe right wing but by a broad population that has held that the colonial past was not its history and that those involved in the latest protests and earlier ones were not and should not be part of France. (p.127)

This structure of feeling she calls colonial aphasia, a psychic state in which the history of colonialism is not simply repressed or forgotten but simultaneously activated and disavowed — as Frantz Fanon (2008 [1952]) put it “the European knows and he does not know” (p.154). While deeply embedded in the ethnographic tradition of anthropology, Stoler’s focus on public discourse allows her to draw out the dynamics of a deep seated structure of feeling that continues to shape French (and European) politics today.

Affect analysis in this vein develops in close relationship to, yet also in tension with, psychoanalytic modes of reading that have long argued that which remains unsaid is often central to the scene of analysis. While Stoler aims to go beyond psychoanalysis, through recourse to psychological concepts like aphasia, she nevertheless retains a focus on the psyche as a crucial part of trying to make sense of the political power of affect. Scholars like Joan Scott and Jacqueline Rose have long pointed out how the past lives in the present and have theorised the historical unconscious as the repertoire of latent affect. While Scott (2001, 2012) has used this understanding to craft more complex and less certain understandings of historiography, Rose (2003) has turned to literature as an encounter with the uncanny that can help us make sense of the historical processes of subject formation.

Similarly, scholars like Teresa de Lauretis (1987, 2008) and Laura Mulvey (1975, 1989) have used psychoanalysis to describe how in film, scenes can enact but also expose and displace existing social and psychic structures by altering our relationship to them. In many ways then, affect analysis tries to do what psychoanalytic modes of social and cultural analysis have long wrestled with: to provide a deeper understanding of people’s (often unconscious) attachments to power.³¹ While some affect scholars continue this tradition and work on specifically psychoanalytic understandings of affect (Baraitser and Frosh, 2007; Eng, 2010; Walkerdine, 2010), most queer feminist affect scholars — such as Ahmed, Pedwell or Berlant — make more strategic, hybrid and occasional use of it. Like me, they try to loosen the orthodox grip of the psychoanalytic approach while acknowledging the umbilical cord that irrevocably ties them to it.

³¹ A complex endeavour with a rich theoretical history that reaches back to the early Freudian-Marxist approaches of the Frankfurt School.

What can be distilled from affect theory's complex (and largely unresolved) relationship to psychoanalysis is an interest in what Judith Butler (1997) has described as the “psychic life of power” — the ambivalent processes of subjection that both keep us subject to but also produce ways to become subjects of and against power. The question of how “outside” forms of power and subjection work on the “inside” and are kept alive through psychic and affective forces is a key question for affect analysis. As Butler has suggested this is often a simultaneous process. The same psychic and affective structures that enable one’s subjection also are those from which resistance is enacted. A similar insight is provided by many of the best forms of queer and feminist affect analysis. In her study of photos taken throughout the black diaspora — including photographs taken in prisons in South Africa, ethnographic photographs of rural African women and police mug shots from the civil rights movement in the US — Tina Campt (2017) has developed a careful and ambivalent methodology for reading affect in visual culture which she calls “listening to images”. She shows how these photos continue to carry and evoke the trauma of colonialism, slavery and the prison-industrial complex as they were originally intended to control and subjugate their subjects. Yet simultaneously, she suggests that “listening attentively to these quiet photos gives us access to the registers of fugitivity they simultaneously animate and suspend, as well as the creative strategies of refusal they at once reveal and conceal” (p.9). What we can learn from her approach is that even the most violent archives of feeling are not only haunted and produced by the past but also provide a sense of potentiality and glimpses into futures that have yet to happen.

A feminist cultural analysis of affect might consequently best be understood as form of cultural analysis that takes different invocations of affect as their proper object of study. Zooming in on specific affective scenes, it tries to trace affects through their articulation, mediation and activation in a range of public social and cultural artefacts ranging from but not limited to political and media discourse, film, literary texts, photographs, art installations, social media debates and activist interventions. Rather than focussing on how people actually feel or respond to particular objects, it reveals the gendered, raced and sexualised norms that affect is more likely to accumulate along while also holding out sight for cracks and openings out of which affective attachments could be thought and forged differently. As such cultural affect analysis is an interdisciplinary methodology that focusses on tracing

the histories of public feeling while also attending to the sense of potential and futurity that might be inherent in them. Having laid out the key components of a feminist cultural analysis of affect from the work of some of its key proponents, let me now show how I deploy and adapt them for the study of affective borders.

3. Studying Affective Borders

a. Scenes of Affective Border Struggle

To understand what role affect plays in producing, sustaining and challenging the European border regime, I turn to an analysis of how the “refugee crisis” has been mediated in Germany. As I have explained in more detail in the Introduction, attending to how the “refugee crisis” in Germany was mediated and enacted provides a particularly fruitful case analysing the production and contestations of affective borders. Aiming to understand how affect circulates and is mobilised within this political moment, I focus on three key scenes of what I described in the last chapter as the “border spectacle” (De Genova, 2013, p.1181) of the long summer of migration in Germany. These are: the image of Alan Kurdi that was published in the early summer of summer 2015 accompanied by calls for a more humanitarian approach towards migration in German public discourse; the highly volatile debates after the New Year’s night of Cologne in which calls for stricter border controls were voiced in the public sphere and sexual abuse was framed primarily as a result of the recent refugee migration; and the ‘Wir schaffen das’ speeches that Angela Merkel gave throughout the long summer of migration and that marked the often-celebrated yet rather cruel state’s response to the “refugee crisis” that ultimately ended in the further securitisation of European borders.

I could have focussed on a range of other scenes that take a prominent place in the iconography of the “refugee crisis” such as the capsizing of refugee boats, the closing of the border in Hungary, or the Paris terror attacks that were often discussed in relation to, and conflated with, issues of migration. The former three, however, were the most mediated and discussed events in public discourse and those that arguably most crucially shaped and legitimised civil and state responses to the so called “refugee crisis” during the long summer of migration (see also Georgiou and Zaborowski, 2017). They provide accessible affective scenes that played a crucial role in the mediation of the “refugee crisis” and that allow insights into the dominant

yet contested structures of feeling that marked this political moment. More concretely, these three scenes allow me to access and reflect upon three different affects and the role they played in the border spectacle of the long summer of migration: empathy, anger and hope. The publication of Alan Kurdi was usually understood as the centre-piece in a “theatre of pity” (Chouliaraki, 2013, p.55) that called for empathy as the proper affective response to the “refugee crisis” and was often framed in relation to the presumable emergence of a new “Willkommenskultur” in Germany. In contrast, the New Year’s night in Cologne in which cases of mass sexual abuse were linked to discussions of migration and asylum unleashed a wave of anger, rage and resentment into the public sphere and was commonly seen as the turning point in the social climate and official policy of Germany. And Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” speeches that cut across this entire time-span were framed as the principle of hope for a new Germany that would not only make it through the long summer of migration but emerge as an economically stronger, more resilient and tolerant nation.

In examining these different scenes, I follow Ahmed’s (2004) approach of tracing these affects backward and sideways. In my first analytical chapter, I mainly trace invocations of empathy in relation to the image of Alan Kurdi sideways. I examine how the image was debated in media and political rhetoric focussing in particular on the stories, narratives and political demands that it was accompanied by. I also move backwards and locate its iconography in a longer representational history of innocence, childhood and victimhood that has long guided Western approaches vis-à-vis the Global South. In the chapter on the New Year’s Night on Cologne, I similarly look at how the event was discussed and reacted to across the media and political discourse as well as by feminist and anti-racist commentators and activists. I then move backward and trace the current eruption of anger into the longer histories of how sexual panics around racially marked others have operated as sites for securitising German citizenship since its inception in the German colonial Empire. And in the chapter on hope, I examine the invocations of hope across the various “Wir schaffen das” speeches that Angela Merkel gave during the long summer of migration. In doing so, I follow her rhetoric backwards and examine how Merkel mobilises German histories of exceptional achievement for overcoming the horrors of the Holocaust and the challenges of reunification as crucial drivers for her hopeful rhetoric during the “refugee crisis”.

As I have laid out in more depth in my last chapter, however, the border spectacle should not be understood as a top-down process engineered by the state or the media. Instead, it is volatile and contested site in which a variety of actors struggle for representational hegemony. As scholars like Sandro Mezzadra (2011) working within the “autonomy of migration” perspective have suggested, it is essential to study the reproduction of border not only through the “native’s point of view” — the codes and perspectives of the receiving country (p.128). Instead, he suggests that it also crucial to pay close attention to how borders are reproduced and contested through efforts of migrants themselves. This focus on border struggles is not to affirm a simple good/bad dichotomy between media and state responses, on the one hand, and migrants and solidarity activists, on the other hand, but means to acknowledge the crucial role that affected subjects play in the “reaction formation” that are borders (De Genova, 2016a, p.42). Katarzyna Marciniak and Imogen Tyler (2013), for instance, have shown how migrant protests not only contest the labels put upon migrants but, in doing so, also challenge and craft new conceptualisations of citizenship, borders and the political.

Having zoomed in on a particular scene to understand how a structure of feeling is articulated, I consequently move to related scenes in which this affects of empathy, anger and hope are contested, subverted and imagined differently. While, in the first analytical chapter, I start with an analysis of how empathy is articulated in hegemonic reactions to the image of Alan Kurdi, I subsequently turn to an analysis of documentaries and travelogues shot by migrants with their self-phones during their flight as well as to hunger strikes that were held by migrants across different cities in Germany to examine how (and if) these interventions articulate the call for empathy differently. In the chapter on New Year’s in Cologne, I contrast the nationalist anger that sprouted after the event with the rage of intersectional feminist and anti-racist migrant groups that tried to frame sexual abuse in German society as a general problem, and try to understand why they struggled to be heard in the public debate. And in the chapter on hope I examine Merkel’s utterance of “Wir schaffen das” in relation to how her hopeful logic was taken on and subverted by the Marches of Hope in which migrants took their fate into their own hand and walked from Budapest over the border to Austria and Germany. In all of the chapters, my focus lies on how interventions by migrants and other affected subjects reproduce and reinstall, yet also

circumvent and reframe, the dominant articulations of not only borders but the affect in question.

b. Border Archives of Feeling

As suggested in the Introduction, my understanding of affective borders is, consequently, best understood in a Gramscian spirit in which the question of affect is one of contestation and the struggle for hegemony. The focus lies on how particular structures of feeling become dominant and stabilised and what other forms of affective attachment become subsumed and buried as a result of this. Such a Gramscian understanding of political struggle means that I do not understand the public sphere to be the ideal space imagined by Jürgen Habermas (1991 [1962]) in which political decisions are debated in a fair and rational manner. Yet, I keep open the possibility that the public sphere contains within it counter-publics (Warner, 2002) in which not only political debate but also affect can be enacted and mobilised differently. Attending to these subjugated articulations of affect often involves what Tyler has called (2013) “fetishizing ‘the event’ by inflating the meaning and potential of protests as moments of political hope for the future” (p.12). And it entails what Campt (2017) has described as listening to the quieter voices of representation, which are often muted in the representational noise of the border spectacle.

Focussing on affect as a contested site of struggle and conflict further means that my archive contains not only dominant media representations and political discourse but also photographs and visual culture, documentary films, protest actions and social media discussion produced by migrants and solidarity activists themselves. In turning to these different mediums, I am less interested in the different genres or mediums in which I encounter affect and more in the affective politics that these objects make tangible for social and cultural analysis. Berlant (2011a) has described this methodological focus as making sense of the genre of affect that we encounter rather than the genre or material that we encounter it in. Next to political discourse, media reports, novels and poetry, Berlant often turns to film to make sense of structures of feeling in late liberal US culture. This focus on film, however, is less about the medium of film and more about what particular films can tell us about the way affect operates and is articulated in contemporary US culture. This is not to say that the genre or medium of the analysed object does not matter. Yet, it dispels

preoccupation with the medium beyond its centrality for understanding affective politics. In other words, formalistic concerns with stylistic devices such as the duration of shots, editing techniques or mis-en-scène in film are not foregrounded and only elaborated on if and when they are essential for understanding how affect is articulated in a particular object.

This approach is, of course, contested, particularly for media scholars who in the tradition of Marshall McLuhan (1994 [1964]) have long argued that “the medium is the message” (p.7). In trying to make sense of the proliferation of affect in the current political moment, a range of scholars have, for instance, argued that social media play a crucial role in the growth, expression and mediation of affect in contemporary politics. They have suggested that social media platforms are not only crucial for the development of collective affects (Baker, 2011) and the construction of new emotional architectures of political debate (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018) but have also posited that social media might lead to increased forms of resentment and anxiety in a time in which everybody is promised a voice yet few are actually heard (Davies, 2018). While I do not underestimate the importance of these debates and analyse social media content at different points in this thesis (Chapter 3 and Chapter 6), the question of what role different media play in the creation and expression of affect is not the focus and beyond the scope of this study. Instead, I trace and outline the larger patterns, narratives and frames that affects coalesce around. In doing so, I follow the lead of scholars like Ahmed, Pedwell and Tyler who have shown that it is through the repetition of discourses across a range of different media that they accrue affective value and come to resonate on a larger societal level. Such an approach sacrifices a more detailed analysis of the role different media play in shaping affective borders to uncover the wider discourses and narrative logics through which dominant structures of feeling are (re-)produced and contested.

In selecting and going through these different materials, I am, then, not guided by a focus on particular media or genres, but driven by uncovering the political grammars of different affects in the context of the long summer of migration. Åhäll (2018) has described this form of affect analysis as being led by “feminist curiosity” (p.38). Borrowing from Clare Hemmings (2011), Åhäll argues that affect analysis is motivated by an “affective dissonance” in which ones one’s own affective investment does not gel with the way in which affect is expressed within a particular scene of analysis (*ibid*). This triggers a form of curiosity that she claims can be channelled as

the fuel for interdisciplinary forms affect analyses that look for “that-which-goes-without-saying”, the often more hidden patterns and norms that help to explain the social flow and organisation of affect (p.45). In her discussion of Laurent Berlant’s methodology, Heather Love (2012) similarly describes restlessness as a crucial mode for analysing affective politics: “restlessness is the keynote of [Berlant’s] writing: she approaches a conceptual or political impasse like she is checking all the exits to make sure that they are, in fact, locked” (p.334). This form of restlessness transgresses boundaries of genre or medium and instead maps different articulations of affect in a variety of social and cultural objects. Driven by a restless feminist curiosity, throughout the scenes, I thus trace invocations of affect in and across different media to understand what politics of the border they produce, enact and make possible. In doing so, I am driven by political questions and the aim to decipher alternative political vocabularies in the cracks and shadows of dominant circulations of affect. My archival practice is, consequently, not guided by methods of randomised sampling that aim to establish statistical relevance and validity but by tracing, collecting and delineating a variety of different yet overlapping invocations of empathy, anger and hope.

Looking across different mediums, my aim is further not to understand what people have really felt or what the actual effect of a particular emotion is or was. Instead, I aim to gain a glance at more general structures of feeling and provide a critical reflection on what different invocations of emotions can do in the context of contemporary border regimes. Doing so, I break with the common division of positive and negative, “good” and “bad” emotions and instead examine the political work that different articulations of emotions do in particular contexts. Therefore, each of my chapters is preceded by a theoretical discussion of the affect in question — empathy, anger and hope — in which I conceptualise the emotion through attention to its most influential theorisations in queer, feminist and postcolonial theory. By guiding each chapter through the theorisation of a particular affect, I not only trace empathy, anger and hope within each scene but also problematise and read the scenes through the affect in question. This approach is closest to more anthropological studies by scholars like Didier Fassin (2013), Ghassan Hage (2003) and Stoler (2004, 2011) who likewise conceptualise the political dynamics of sentiments through attention to a specific social and historical moment.

Whereas I focus on empathy, anger and hope as they are the predominant affects through which these scenes have been understood and discussed in public culture, this does not mean that the affect in question is the only one that operates within these scenes. My discussion of the image of Alan Kurdi, for instance, would have looked different had I approached it primarily through the conceptual lens of grief or trauma. My argument on Cologne would have been altered had I analysed it through the framework of fear or panic. And my analysis of Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” speeches might have shifted had I studied it mainly with an interest in pride or guilt. Given the focus on different affects and their theoretical histories, affect emerges not only as the object of study but also as the analytical and epistemological lens through which I engage the particular scenes.

Because the circulation of a specific affect cannot be completely isolated from that of other affective states, however, I also come to touch upon and reflect on other affects. Affects are not concrete entities but work through and in relation to each other. Tracing the politics of empathy, I discuss affects of shock, disgust and discomfort as potential anti-dotes to the warm pull of compassionate harmony. In my reflections on anger, I include work on fear and insecurity as underlying forces for how anger and resentment are triggered in the context of growing precariousness and intensified struggles over identity, privilege and escalating inequalities. And in my chapter on hope, I likewise pay attention to acts of public mourning as well as affects of joy and laughter as crucial modes for the mobilisation of affective futurities. Doing so, my account of affective borders provides a rich and detailed accounts of the various emotions involved in contemporary practices of bordering that I bring together in a last concluding chapter on the paradoxical politics of affect through attention to the politics of guilt and shame.

c. Interpretative Strategies: Frames, Figures, Narratives

Having shown where and how I approach affect, the question remains how to read and interpret affect in the scenes and archives that I have selected and collected. As I have discussed above, affect is, and remains, opaque. The question of how we trace the breadcrumbs that it leaves behind in its circulation consequently remains a complex methodological puzzle. In trying to engage this puzzle, I borrow from a variety of interdisciplinary textual methodologies that queer feminist scholars of

affect have developed and further refined over the last years — especially the analytical devices of frames, figures and narratives.

One of the analytical devices I use throughout my chapters is the concept of the frame. In *Frames of War*, Judith Butler (2009) asks how some subjects become seen as grievable while others are positioned as unworthy of collective attention and public mourning. Engaging with the “war on terror” and the ongoing occupation of Palestine, she suggests that one way to consider this problematic is by focussing on the frames through which “we apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured (lose-able or injurable)” (p.1). Butler argues that particular framings of the war on terror enables the construction of its victims as "lose-able" precisely “because they are framed as being already lost or forfeited; they are cast as threats to human life as we know it rather than as living populations in need of protection from illegitimate state violence, famine, or pandemics” (p.31). A focus on frames consequently asks us to not merely study the content of particular representations but to examine why and how a particular representation has come into public focus in the first place. In other words, why and how is it that particular forms of death and violence are presented as worthy to care for while others either never come to public attention or are framed as legitimate forms of death — as collateral damage.

Throughout my thesis, I use the concept of the frame to examine how and why particular representations have become central to the scene of affect I examine. What is it about the image of Alan Kurdi that evoked such passionate calls for collective empathy in the public sphere? How did sexual violence become the key catalyst for the eruption anger and resentment across the political spectrum in Germany? And why out of all possible rhetorical figures was it the grammatically ambiguous sentence of “Wir schaffen das” that emerged as the key hopeful political slogan of the long summer of migration? As Butler (2009) suggests, the analytical value of the frame lies not so much in just considering what we find within it but also in questioning what falls outside of the frame: “to call the frame into question is to show that the frame never quite contained the scene it was meant to limn, that something was already outside, which made the very sense of the inside possible, recognizable” (p.9). Following this methodology, in Chapter 4, I further examine what the absence of hunger strikes and protest actions from common representations of German “welcome culture” tells us about the affective grammar of empathy. In Chapter 5, I study the longer histories of racial and colonial violence that have been

silenced in the eruption of nationalist anger about sexual abuse. And in Chapter 6, I experiment with what happens if instead of turning to Merkel’s rhetoric and the actions of the state we focus on migrant Marches of Hope as an alternative site for identifying hope and futurity.

The frame consequently emerges as a crucial analytical device for thinking about how my selected scenes have become central within the wider representational landscape of the border spectacle. Engaging more closely with the content of these representation, I draw on another, related analytical device: the figure. Borrowing from both Ahmed (2000) and Castañeda’s (2002) reflections on figures and figurations, Tyler (2008) has developed a “figurative methodology” (p.18). She suggests that the term “figure” describes “the ways in which at different historical and cultural moments specific “social types” become over determined and are publicly imagined (are figured) in excessive, distorted, and caricatured ways” (p.10). These figures become intelligible through the repetition of already established assumptions about particular groups in public discourse. In her words, “it is through the repetition of a figure across different media that specific figures acquire accreted form and accrue affective value in ways that have significant social and political impact” (p.19). The emergence of the figure of the “chav mum” in UK media rhetoric, for instance, she suggests, was crucial in justifying the further erosion of the welfare state and cuts to funding for women as it framed poverty as problem of bad individual choices and deviant forms of femininity.

While Tyler (2008, 2013) uses her figurative methodology primarily in the context of UK austerity regimes, figures also saturate the iconography of the refugee crisis — probably most crucially in the form of the shifting figure of the un/deserving refugee that is variably framed as a threat and/or enrichment to society and legitimises variable forms of humanitarian and securitising politics (Holzberg, Kolbe, Zaborowski, 2018). The question of figures consequently surfaces throughout my analysis from the “figure of the child” in Chapter 4 and the figure of the “racialised sexual abuser” in Chapter 5 to the figure of the “atoned German nation” in Chapter 6. Reading across these scenes, I elaborate on Ahmed’s insight that (2004) the figure of the migrant is always already so overdetermined through discourses of gender, race and sexuality that it provides a particularly sticky surface for affect to attach to. I consequently trace how the figure of the migrant changes and flips somehow effortlessly across and within the different scenes (e.g. from innocent child to sexual

abuser), yet I likewise engage activist interventions such as hunger strikes that break open the representational regime of the un/deserving migrant and that allow alternative figurations of migration and subjectivity to surface.

Most importantly, however, I take inspiration from different forms of narrative methodology that have been developed in contemporary affect research. In her most recent work, Arlie Hochschild's (2016) focuses on the "deep stories" (p.16) that animate resentment in a US American present worn down by neoliberalism. She suggests that internalised stories of unjust downward mobility — that proclaim that white working classes are being left behind while everyone else gets preferential treatment — are crucial as they provide easy and plausible explanations for channelling otherwise more diffuse emotions of resentment and envy. In her exploration of the stories we tell about feminist theory, Hemmings (2011) similarly shows how narratives of progress, loss and return are crucial for the production and legitimisation of different affective attachments that we might have to feminist politics. While progress narratives might allow us to position ourselves as the proud and dismissive carriers of the latest stage of feminist knowledge, loss narratives can ground (potentially likewise pleasurable) affects of resentment and grudge and motivate scholars to cling even harder to a wisdom that they perceive as having been unrightfully dethroned. The narrative form in which a particular problem is presented to us (and in which we present it to ourselves) is thus a crucial mode through which affect is channelled, produced and secured.

Making use of these insights, in the chapter on Cologne, I uncover the "deep stories" about racialised sexual Others that secure German conceptions of nationality and citizenship through heteronormative constructions of whiteness. In the chapter on Alan Kurdi I look at tragedy as a narrative form that allows Europeans to disavow their own complicity and responsibility in the production of border violence and to instead emerge as empathetic saviours. And in the chapter on hope, I uncover narratives of exceptional atonement as crucial narrative devices in the rhetoric of Angela Merkel for how the future is imagined and affectively legitimised. Similar to my use of frames and figures, I am also interested in what happens when these narratives break down and are retold from those most affected. How is the story of German exceptionalism engaged, reinscribed and challenged by migrants on their way to Europe? What happens when we foreground stories of racial and colonial violence over the narratives of the sexually abused nation? And what changes in our

understanding of empathy if the scene of empathy is retold not from the perspective of the subject but the object of empathy?

In asking these questions, I do not simply follow the credo of the “autonomy of migration” that borders need to be approached from the perspective of migrants themselves (De Genova, 2017, Mezzandra, 2010, New Keyword Collective, 2015; Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2013) but I am also influenced by black feminist scholars like Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) who has long pointed out that it is important to think from “the margins” (p.1265). Similarly, I take inspiration from postcolonial feminists who argue not only for the importance of crafting narratives that decentre what Hall (1991) has referred to as the “internalist” story” of Europe (p.18) but that are also accountable to the people most affected by its violent policies (e.g. Bhambra, 2017b; El-Tayeb, 2016). However, as Gayatri Spivak (2010 [1988]) in particular has so powerfully shown the voices and perspective of others are never self-evident or transparent. They cannot be simply recuperated but are always translated and filtered through the lens of the researcher. In relation to affect and her work on listening to images, Tina Campt (2017) has further argued that the affective stories we hear are as much about the sounds produced by the image as they are about what we think, want to and are able to hear. In thinking through my analytical approach, the question of location, ethics and accountability are consequently central. In the remaining part of this chapter, I want to attend to these dimensions in more detail and try to spell out the kind of critique that my form of affect analysis envisions and the role that I, as the researcher and critic, play within it.

4. Affect as Critique

a. The Importance of Location

My analysis cannot be separated from my own personal and political involvement in this study. Haraway’s (1988) insight that any form of research will only provide “partial perspective” (p.583) on a problematic and should be focussed on creating “situated knowledges” (p.596) is particularly crucial for the study of affect in which we are affectively entangled with the object of study. My location in regard to the affective scenes I study is central and has been questioned — occasionally by others and more frequently by myself. While a lot of the representations created in the border spectacle are exactly made and intended for white, middle class citizens like

me, there are others that might escape me as a male queer academic that approaches the topic mainly from a scholarly perspective. While I perceive my work as a critique of dominant racialised, gendered and sexualised sensibilities within German society that I am likewise produced by, my positionality, also emerges as a roadblock to some of the analyses. While I have hit early against the gendered and sexual norms of the nation, my citizenship status has allowed me to navigate these boundaries and provided me with forms of mobility that positions me in a privileged position vis-à-vis the borders of the state. My fear of the current border regime might consequently be less pronounced, my shame more articulated, and my hope differently motivated than that of subjects of the receiving end of its violence.

The question of location consequently has important repercussions for the ethics and arguments of my study. In relation to my research object, the border spectacle, I am positioned as a researcher and as a political activist but also as an active spectator. As a range of feminist scholars have argued, the gaze has long operated as a violent technology of male and colonial power — probably most poignantly by Chandra Mohanty (1988) who describes the epistemic violence that being “under Western Eyes” can produce (p.61). This problem is probably most poignant in my work on the image of Alan Kurdi. Despite having partly been promoted by his family, the gaze that the picture attracted was uninvited, if not non-consensual. As I discuss in more depth in Chapter 4, it easily re-fetishises the scene of death and was subject to not only patronising forms of empathic spectatorship but also racist attacks and ridicule. In engaging this image, my focus, therefore is not on the image itself but rather on the gaze that has centred around it. Inspired by Mulvey’s (1989) discussion of the gendered and sexualised gaze of classic Hollywood cinema as well as Lilie Chouliaraki’s (2013) more current engagements with spectatorship in humanitarian visual culture, my aim here is to deconstruct the ways in which suffering needs to be presented so as to fit into and evoke the affective grammar of empathy. My intent in studying this affective scene is to launch an “oppositional gaze”, not in the strict sense of bell hooks (1992, p.115) who describes it as the view from the gazed on back into the face of the gazing, but as a critical scrutiny into hegemonic practices of gazing that viewers of the image become interpellated in. This shift of emphasis, of course, does not get me out of the ethical dilemma of what it means to engage an image like this in the first place. Aiming to

highlight and examine the gaze rather than the gazed at, however, I have decided not to reproduce this image or any other images of migrants in the text or appendixes.

Similarly, rather than just focussing on hegemonic representations, I focus on images and discourses that have been produced and put into the public sphere by people most affected by the border regimes themselves such as self-shot documentaries by migrants on their way to and across Europe, pamphlets produced by asylum seekers in hunger strike and images taken during migrant (solidarity) protest marches. These representations are often missing from hegemonic media and political discourse and, if not through interviews, bring the acts and perspectives of migrants into the centre of analysis. As discussed, this methodological choice partly follows the arguments of the autonomy of migration that highlight the importance of including the perspective of migrants into the study of borders. What these accounts often miss, however, is that people's perspectives are never transparent or self-evident. This insight is particularly crucial in research that affects marginalised, racialised and migratised subjects.³² Spivak (2010) has warned of "first-world intellectuals masquerading as the absent nonrepresenter who lets the oppressed speak for themselves" (p.263) and argued that the complexity of representation cannot just be disavowed by feminist scholars. Christina Sharpe (2016) has further warned how well-meant representations and investigations into blackness in particular can lead to the renewed emptying of life of the black subject. And Tyler (2006) has argued that research on migration can reinscribe un/deserving dichotomies not necessarily by just demonising but by romanticising the figure of the migrant.

In trying to circumvent the good bad binary and ethically engage with the "problem of speaking for others" (Alcoff, 1991, p.5) my methodological approach aims not at uncovering what "the migrant" really is, feels, or represents but about how representations produced by people affected by the European border regime contest, destabilise yet potentially also reinscribe the border. When engaging these materials, I examine the ways in which they trouble and feed into larger narratives and discourses that keep borders between people and territories in place — a

³² I am using the terminology of migratism here that Alyosxa Tudor (2017) has developed to describe "the discrimination based on the ascription of migration", which she uses in close relation to the terminology of racism and racialisation (p.23). I prefer the term migratism over the more psychological concept of xenophobia that seems to suggest an inbuilt "fear of the stranger".

perspective that is undoubtedly mine and says as much about my own investment as that of the people behind these representations. This points us to the importance of what Gunaratnam (2003) describes as realising that “how we produce knowledge about difference, and … what we know (or what we claim to know) is caught up with specific histories and relations of power” (p.3). She argues that we should understand knowledge as a “discursive practice” — knowledge does not just describe but also produces what we are researching (p.23). While my analysis is driven by my political conviction that borders are biopolitical structures that lead to the unequal distribution of labour, life and security — as outlined in Chapter 2 — my own work cannot be understood as separate from but must be seen as another instance in the “border spectacle” of the “refugee crisis”. This paradoxical position is not one that I can plan to get out of, but rather a necessary and potentially productively uncomfortable position. As Donna Haraway (2016) suggests the question of location should never be about arriving at a position of innocence but rather be about “staying with the trouble” (p.1). The questions of representation, positionality and critique consequently remain (and should remain) open questions that are central to all of my analyses across this thesis.

One crucial way of staying with this trouble is to craft writing that is transparent about my own investment and complicity in the scene of analysis. It entails a form of thinking on the page that invites the reader to follow me from the highways into the sideroads, dead-ends and possible escape routes of affective politics. What I hope emerges from this approach is what Hemmings (2018) has described as a “feminist politics of ambivalence” (p.30): a political and ethical ethos that even in the most penchant critiques remains open to the possibility that it might be otherwise and that the cleaning up of a political problem usually means that something else has been foreclosed, forgotten or pushed out of consideration. While I therefore come to judgements about particular scenes, affects and their circulation, I linger in the complexities, ambivalences and paradoxes not as an undecided cop-out but as an ethical way of navigating the tense and fragile space of producing knowledge in the context of war, displacement and state violence (Butler, 2006, 2009). This paradoxical politics of affective borders is something I come back to in my conclusion in which I spell out more clearly the paradoxical politics of affect that I have encountered, traced and enacted throughout my analyses. The problem of

location, however, also touches on the more general question of what kind of critique we want and imagine affect analysis to enact, that I want to end this chapter on.

b. The Question of Critique

In current scholarship, critique has come under heavy critique itself. A range of scholars have tried to move beyond the forms of social and cultural critique developed by scholars working in the tradition of Marxist, psychoanalytic and poststructuralist theory, most commonly described as a hermeneutics of suspicion.³³ In literary and cultural studies, scholars have tried to move from ideology critique and symptomatic readings to description and surface readings (Best and Marcus, 2009; Marcus, Best and Love, 2016). Similarly, in sociology, there has been a push from a critical sociology to a sociology of critique (Boltanski, 2011) and towards flat ontologies (Latour, 2004, 2007).³⁴ While feminist, queer and critical race studies have arguably formed around the critique of racism, sexism and heteronormativity, over the last years these discussions have likewise taken hold in gender studies. Karen Barad (2012), for instance, has argued that “critique is over-rated, over-emphasized, and over-utilized, to the detriment of feminism” and suggests that it has become a habit that does little than repeat totalising attacks on power in ways that are already known and assumed (para.4). Similarly, Sedgwick (2003) has tried to move beyond what she calls paranoid forms of reading that repeat well-rehearsed critiques of sexism, racism and heteronormativity and leave little space for reparative forms of engagement that might help us to arrive at new horizons and possibilities. And Rita Felski (2015) has scolded contemporary critique for its heroic posture that allows

³³ This term links back to Paul Ricoeur’s (1970) work on the “masters of suspicion”: Freud, Marx and Nietzsche who he suggests have developed and championed a powerful hermeneutics that unmasks the powers that operate behind hegemonic understandings of the world (p.33).

³⁴ It is important to note that all of these critiques of critique target different theoretical traditions. Luc Boltanski, for instance, focuses mainly on the legacy of Pierre Bourdieu in French sociology, Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus target Fredric Jameson’s methodology of “symptomatic reading” and Rita Felski primarily discusses what she understands to be the “hermeneutics of suspicion” in cultural and literary studies. Similarly, they differ in their intensity of critique. Bruno Latour and Barad, for instance, are more radical in their attack than Boltanski or Sedgwick. Nevertheless, the work of these scholars develops in relation to each other and expresses a more general unease with critique in contemporary social and cultural theory.

critics to position themselves as archaeologists or detectives that excavate the hidden structures of power that only they are able to see.

Affect has often been positioned as a solution that will lift us out of this impasse and towards more creative, spontaneous and hopeful forms of engagement. As I have argued in more detail in the last chapter, Chapter 2, I am as sceptical of this hopeful investment in affect as I am sceptical of the general move against critique in contemporary social and cultural theory. In a moment of growing nativist nationalism, intensified attacks on minorities and imminent environmental collapse, critique and even confrontation seem, if anything, more necessary. Furthermore, in the realm of gender studies, the critique of critique easily adds fuel to anti-gender attacks that frame feminist, queer and postcolonial knowledge-production as ideologically driven and overly political (Kuhar and Patternotte, 2017, Hark and Villa, 2015, Engenderings, 2019). I suspect that what lurks behind the critique of critique is a displaced disappointment that critique has not achieved what it promised to do. In her analysis of literary scholarship that argues for a “descriptive turn”, Ariana Reilly (2014), for instance, has wondered about the lack of specificity that scholars give for explaining what exactly the problem with critique and judgement are beyond the authors own political disappointment that critical theory has not translated into the social transformations that they had hoped for. Ahmed (2015) similarly argues that she can “understand this call to go beyond critique: if sexism keeps coming up, despite feminist critiques, in response to feminist critiques, it is tiring, it is exhausting” (para.17). Yet it does not mean that power relations are not operative anymore and do no longer need to be critiqued in their multiple formations.³⁵

Whereas the critique of critique often seems dangerous and overstated, the discussions that it has set off have often been insightful and invigorating (e.g. Ahmed, 2015; Hemmings, 2005, 2011; E. Fassin, 2011, D. Fassin, 2017). It has pushed social and cultural theorists to think harder about how we conceptualise power, where we identify potential and possibility and what role the location of the researcher plays in enacting critique — questions that in some ways have long been the bread and butter of feminist theory and analysis. Affect analysis provides a particularly insightful

³⁵ In other moments, Ahmed puts it even more sarcastically: “if feminist critiques of racism and sexism are knee-jerk, we might need to affirm the intelligence of feminist knees” (p.8).

method for grappling with these questions. While I take distance to the idea that affect might carry us beyond the well-trodden path of critique as discussed in the last chapter, I agree with Staiger, Cvetkovich and Reynolds (2010) that affect analysis can:

help us to perform critique in new ways — not necessarily to move beyond critique, but to do its work differently, by paying attention to ... cultural expression in ways that do not necessarily break down into convenient dichotomies between left and right, progressive and reactionary, resistance and containment. (p.6)

A feminist affect analysis, I suggest, helps us to craft more careful forms of critique as it makes us wrestle with the contested nature of power, highlight both oppression and potential and asks us to reflect on our own involvement in the scene of analysis.

Firstly, affect pushes us to wrestle with the contested nature of power.

Pedwell (2014a), for instance, describes affective politics as ambivalent and suggests that affects such as love or empathy can both enact violence and work towards repair and solidarity. Thus, the question of affect analysis is not whether a particular emotion is good or bad, but rather how it is invoked and enacted in particular social and historical situations. Contrary to Barad (2012) who suggests that critique no longer advances with care and rehearses totalising critiques of power, I argue that affect pushes us to think more carefully about the contested and ambivalent politics that it enacts. As such, far from ushering in the grim cage of paranoid thinking that Sedgwick associates with contemporary cultural critique (and that she herself used to be an undisputed heroine of), I cling to the promise that this line of scholarship also breaks open moments from which new forms of attachment could emerge or at least be intellectually conceived. In my reflections of empathy, we come across scenes of disgust and horror that might break open or even reverse the subject-object hierarchy of empathetic identification. In the chapter on hope, we encounter scenes of mourning and haunting that do not evacuate the past into a hopeful future but keep open the wounds of the past. And in the chapter on anger we see feminist rage that might break open new forms intersectional thought and action. This analysis of affective borders does not provide us with a clear pathways or solutions of how we can get out of, or overthrow, the violence of the European border regime. It nevertheless provides

glimpses into how structures of feeling could be organised and arranged differently within it.

Secondly, what marks affect as a potentially more nuanced form of critique is how it interpellates the critic into the scene of critique. As Staiger, Reynolds and Cvetkovich (2010) suggest, affect leads to more ambivalent and complex forms of critique because affect as the object of study cannot be separated from one's own affective involvement in the scene of analysis. As I have explained in the Introduction, the project for this thesis partly emerges from my own sense of uneasiness about feelings of national guilt and responsibility for the fate of migrants and for contesting the violence of the state. Similarly, in writing on empathy I had to work through my own attachment to the promise of empathy that remained and stubbornly resurfaced despite (or rather because) of my deconstruction of its political potential. In examining anger, I needed to confront my own anger about the intensification of racist sentiments as well as my own complicity in queer and feminist politics that might have contributed to their hegemony. And in writing on hope, I stumbled over the political depression and shame I felt for putting forward hopeful attachments that others might find counterproductive (or laughable and romantic). The project of writing on affect was, for me, the clearest articulation that thinking and feeling cannot be separated and of the Foucauldian truism that we are never outside of power. Far from the heroic master of critique that Felski (2015) evokes — the only one to see the light at the end of the tunnel — throughout the analysis I more commonly advance as a clumsy detective, stumbling over and illuminating my own complicities.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, I have shown how a *feminist cultural analysis of affect*, distilled from some of the most influential scholars in the field, provides a powerful methodology for studying the social and political life of affect. By focussing on specific affective scenes, this form of analysis provides insights into more general dynamics of different structures of feelings and traces how these are shaped through gendered, raced and sexualised norms and discourses. It engages with eclectic archives of feelings and entails a moving backwards and sideways that allows us to understand how affective states are constituted historically as well as how they work across

different media sites and discourses. Carrying these insights into the study of *affective borders*, I have proposed to study the German “refugee crisis” through a focus on three different key scenes: the publication of the image of Alan Kurdi, the aftermath of the New Year’s night in Cologne and Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” speeches. These scenes allow me to uncover and reflect upon the role that affects of anger, hope and empathy play in the long summer of migration in Germany. My methodology is consequently not about establishing that everyone feels a particular way or will react the same to say the news reports around the New year’s night in Cologne — my intention and argument is not to “access the feelings of others” (Ahmed, 2014, p.216). Instead, I trace and reveal the normative lines that help to explain why affect is more likely to attach and stick in one way than another. In this vein, I have argued that affect analysis needs to be understood in relation to feminist scholarship that has long tried to understand how people buy into the conditions of their own and others subjugation. It offers a method to draw out the unspoken facets of power and asks us to perform forms of social and cultural critique that engage the contested nature of power and question our own involvement in the scene of subjection.

Chapter Four

The Promise of Empathy: Affective Solidarity and the Limits of German “Willkommenkultur”

1. Introduction

When the European border regime collapsed for a moment in September 2015, Germany suspended the Dublin regulations and several thousand migrants entered Central Europe through the Balkan route (Hess et al, 2016). International news outlets like the BBC talked of a German nation “driven by empathy” (Hill, 2015, 1 Oct) and national media celebrated the emergence of a new “Willkommenskultur” (welcoming culture) in the country (Joffe, 2015, 10 Sep). Pictures of people waiting at train stations in cities like Munich, Hamburg and Berlin, welcoming asylum-seekers with banners, food and clothes, circulated around the world and public commentators heralded the reaction of the German state as a crucial defence of human rights and basic humanitarianism in the face of growing anti-migrant nationalism in Europe. While acknowledging the efforts made in parts of civil society and the relative value of this decision vis-à-vis other European governments, critics on the left were, of course, quick in pointing out the flaws, dangers and omissions of this perspective.³⁶ They warned of “fake” empathy that actually worked as a smoke screen to allow the government to cleanse their reputation after imposing brutal austerity measures onto Greece and other Southern European states, helped to hide the growing racism and hostility in the country and enabled the government to simultaneously tighten other parts of the asylum law. Others posited that it was not actual empathy but cold economic rationality that was the real reason behind allowing new labour power into an aging German society. What remained shared among all of these accounts, however, was that “real” empathy would be the adequate and desired answer to the “refugee crisis”.

In this chapter, I want to critically interrogate this promise of empathy. More concretely, I want to examine what different invocations of empathy (can) do in the

³⁶ While I come to touch upon them in this chapter, too, I engage with the reactions and critiques from the right in more depth in the next chapter, Chapter 5, on anger and resentment after New Year’s in Cologne.

public sphere through an analysis of the visual economy of this political moment. I start this chapter from the conviction that empathy is not a universal state, but a situated force shaped by its social and historical context (Pedwell, 2014a). Rather than embracing empathy as good in itself, I consequently examine how it operates and is constructed during the presumable emergence of a new German Willkommenskultur and illustrate how empathy can likewise stand in the way of its own promise. I do so by analysing how empathy is envisioned and constructed in three different scenes. First, I examine the agglomeration of images of suffering represented in mainstream media that is probably best captured by the now iconic image of Alan Kurdi, a two-year-old Kurdish boy from Syria who was photographed washed ashore dead on the beach of Turkey, which filled national and international news headlines throughout and beyond September 2015. Second, I analyse travelogues and self-made documentary films that were edited out of snippets that migrants shot with their cell phones while fleeing situations of war and deprivation and that were shown at film festivals and on national television. Thirdly, I turn to protest actions and hunger strikes that were staged by asylum seekers in Germany in the same period yet received relatively scant public attention.

Setting this analysis in dialogue with critical, feminist, queer and anti-racist, scholarly accounts of empathy, I suggest that whereas the dominant public reaction to the image of Alan Kurdi seems to correspond to what in feminist theory has often been referred to as “bad” empathy — empathy that reinscribes power hierarchies through a victimising subject-object relation — travelogues seems to invoke forms of “good” empathy that engage in a subject-to-subject dialogue, opening up spaces for a more complex engagement with power, difference and agency. Pointing out how both underlie the same sentimental tropes of national harmony and liberal recognition and necessitate an affective reciprocity of gratitude, I contend that the differentiation between “good” and “bad” empathy is more slippery than it seems, and leads us into dead-ends of political thinking. In a last step, I instead turn to the abject that necessarily needs to be cut out from these scenes of empathetic identification — expressed in protest actions such as hunger strikes — to suggest a different form of affective solidarity that, rather than emerging through feeling for or with the other, arises out of discomfort and shared concern for the racialised violence produced by border regimes of global inequality.

2. “Good” and “Bad” Empathy in Feminist Theory

Empathy has long been an object of hope in Western thought. Most commonly described as feeling with someone, or the "affective act of seeing from someone's perspective" (Pedwell, 2014a, p.6)³⁷, philosophers like Roman Krznaric (2014) have suggested that it is an affective capability "that has the power both to transform our own lives and to bring about fundamental change" (p.ix). Diaspora scholar Carolyn Calloway-Thomas (2010) suggests that "empathy is the glue that holds civil society together" and the "the bedrock of global intercultural relations" (p.7). And the economist Jeremy Rifkin (2009) argues that "global empathy" is a crucial force in reacting to the increasingly detrimental conditions created by war, environmental degradation and economic collapse (p.7). A lot of the work on empathy has, consequently, lamented a "compassion fatigue" in contemporary societies and focussed on how to nurture, enhance and cultivate more compassionate forms of feeling, acting and relating to each other (e.g. Höijer, 2004; Moeller, 1999).³⁸ Media scholar Lilie Chouliaraki (2006, 2013), for instance, thinks about how media representations can help to "create a global public with a sense of social responsibility towards distant sufferers" (2006, p.6); psychologist Martin Hoffman (2011) ponders how to create more compassionate judgments in court rooms and the philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2010) defends the humanities as a crucial resource for fostering the capability to step into someone else's shoes.

While empathy is located as a positive emotion across a range of different disciplines in the social sciences, it occupies a particularly central position in scholarly engagements with gender, race and sexuality. Feminist theory has long

³⁷ Like Carolyn Pedwell (2014a), I make little distinction between empathy, sympathy and compassion. While empathy is commonly used to describe the more general ability to "step in someone else's shoes", compassion and sympathy have a stronger connotation of "feeling someone else's pain". I use the more open term "empathy" to encompass the variety of scholarly debates that often use these terms interchangeably and to reflect on the different forms of affective solidarity that I encounter within the visual scenes that I analyse.

³⁸ There are two forms of compassion fatigue discussed in the current literature. One describes the wearing out of compassion as a result of a 24-7 news cycle that is seen to desensitise the public to the fate of others; the other a psychological condition that affects many people in care work roles such as nursing and social work (for a review of the literature on the latter see Sorenson, Bolick, Wright and Hamilton, 2016). While the two are interrelated, I am referring to the former.

debated the value and limits of empathetic engagements. Ranging from the highly optimistic to the staunchly sceptical, empathy has figured as a crucial object of feminist engagements in the work of scholars as diverse as Martha Nussbaum, Elizabeth Spelman, Maria Lugones, Carolyn Pedwell, Amrit Rai and Lauren Berlant. Seen as a positive, sticky emotion — an emotion that sticks bodies together (Ahmed, 2014) — what makes it so amenable to these fields of knowledge is its relation to questions of intersubjectivity. If a potential common concern among scholars working within the broad confines of gender studies is how processes of social separation, marginalisation and dehumanisation work through axes of difference such as gender, race, sexuality and class, empathy focussed on feeling for or with others might be seen as a force that can help to alleviate this dynamic. If, in a Butlerian (2006, 2009) vein, for instance, we understand the problem of violence and marginalisation to work through processes by which particular lives become grievable or not, a focus on empathy might be seen as the logical antidote that would expand the sphere of grievability to bodies that were otherwise excluded from it. As such, empathy is often discussed in close relationship to debates around relationality, care and solidarity and explored as a potential force for developing ethical relations to others.

Often positioned in the Spivakian terms as a force “that we cannot not want” (Dhawan, 2013a, p.152), empathy does not remain without criticism in feminist theory. Therein, the critique of empathy seems to conglomerate around three interrelated axes of contention: (1) power, (2) difference and (3) action. Firstly, scholars like Berlant (2004) have pointed out that empathy “is a term denoting privilege: the sufferer is over there” whereas the observer has the *power* to decide whether and how to help or not” (p.4). As such, Lugones (1987) has argued that rather than breaking or transforming unequal power relations, empathy often works to reinstall these. It can buy into victimising discourses that further disenfranchise the receiver of empathy and deny their agency. Studying the central location of sympathy in British colonial rule, Rai (2002), for instance, has shown that empathy as it was practised by missionaries and colonial philanthropists relies on the unequal power dynamics that it supposedly aims to dismantle — without a needy subject, the whole project would fall apart. The second point of critique centres around the idea of *difference*. Lorraine Code (1995) suggests that empathy can easily appropriate the

experience of others. Rather than respecting the boundaries between self and other, it consumes the other and projects one's own feeling and desires onto them. As such, it is unable to account for differences of location that require significant work to be overcome, producing instead a sentimental form of affective attachment that muddles them together. Thirdly, scholars point to the problem of *action* within the politics of empathy. Spelman (1997) points out how empathy can often forestall political action and engender individual responses to problems that are structurally created. Sara Ahmed (2014) similarly argues that "positive" emotions like empathy can privatise emotions rather than direct action at structures of inequality, and Pedwell (2014b) has suggested that empathy can go hand in hand with a "long articulated desire to explain social and geo-political conflict and inequity as the outcome of deficient cross-cultural understanding (rather than say pervading structures and practices of neo-colonial and neoliberal governmentally)" (para.13).

Responding to such critiques, we could suggest that "this is a form of lazy and false empathy in which we take the other's place" (Dean, 2004, p.96), rather than a more complex engagement with difference in which we work through, rather than plaster over, differences in power and positionality. Nussbaum (1996), for instance, holds that most critiques of empathy critique it for being not encompassing enough. They are not really essential critiques of empathy itself, but rather call for more expansive forms of empathy. And Pedwell (2014a) suggests that we need to keep empathy open as an ambivalent concept that needs to be understood in its particular social and political location. Whereas it can go hand in hand with neoliberal and imperial forms of exploitation, it can likewise open up new paths of solidarity and political action. As Clare Hemmings (2011) identifies, most scholars within gender studies have thus made a split between "good" and "bad" empathy (p.200). Whereas bad empathy describes a form of subject-object relation that consumes the other and leads to privatised sentimentality rather than public action; good empathy is seen as a subject-to-subject engagement in which difference is worked through rather than consumed and that redirects collective action towards changing social structures of violence and inequality. What remains open in such discussions is to what extent these forms of empathetic engagement can actually be separated out that easily. Are they really different forms of affective relationality or do they describe co-constitutive structures of feeling? More concretely, while it seems conceivable to make such a split on a theoretical level, can we likewise identify this division in the

engagement with an empirical scene of tense affective charge such as that of contemporary migration?

Moreover, what often gets side-lined in discussions around “good” and “bad” empathy is the unreliability of empathy. As probably one of the most ardent critics of empathy, Hannah Arendt (1990 [1963]) points out: "history tells us that it is by no means a matter of course for the spectacle of misery to move men to pity" (p.70). Her insight is as simple as pervasive. Empathy cannot be assumed but needs to be actively created, or at least discursively invoked and invited. Arendt takes this argument as a point to deny empathy as an unreliable guide to social justice that impedes a proper, rational discussion of politics in political life. While I disagree with her demarcation of the political as a restricted space of public rational debate, her argument points us to the question of failed empathy or even non-empathy. If empathy always carries the potentiality of staying mute and irresponsive, this muteness always haunts and even frames the scene of empathy. Arendt’s insight pushes us to a closer investigation into the conditions that allow empathy to emerge and be read as such in the first place. Rather than merely asking whether particular scenes evoke empathy or not, it brings attention to the larger discourses, tropes and genres that empathy needs to comply with in order to unleash its affective pull. What figurations, associations and narratives tropes does empathy need to invoke to (even have a chance to) unleash its affective pull in the first place?

In asking these questions, I am inspired by Judith Butler (2006, 2009), who similarly tries to understand what forms of ethical engagement emerge in the framing of war and atrocity. Which lives are imagined to be grievable and which fall outside of the bounds of intelligibility? Where do action and responsibility become located? And what can this teach us about the conditions that the “promise of empathy” is bound to and by in contemporary contexts of migration? In approaching my visual scenes, I consequently do not try to make a judgement on the actual effect of these representations (e.g. did they actually change social and political decisions), or their moral value (e.g. are they ethically valuable representations of suffering or not). Instead, I ask what these visual examples reveal about how empathy is articulated, scripted and invoked within contemporary scenes of suffering. What are the narratives through which empathy develops its affective pull within these scenes? How do these relate to and potentially challenge larger discourses and practices of border securitisation? And what does this tell us about dominant articulations of

empathy in the historical present? In doing so, my work is inspired by and develops in conversation with scholars like Miriam Ticktin (2011) and Didier Fassin (2011a) who, in the context of their reflections on humanitarianism, rather than deciding on the value of empathy *a priori*, have likewise tried to understand in more depth how it operates and is invoked in the context of contemporary migration and border politics in Europe.

3. Alan Kurdi and the Theatre of Pity

a. Tragedy and the Parental Duty of Care

The first image I want to turn to for this analysis is the image of Alan Kurdi. Filling global headlines, social media pages and news outlets for weeks, this image has become the iconic photograph of the so-called “refugee crisis”. *The Times* listed it as one of the most influential photos of all time (“The Most”, 2016, 18 Oct) and the BBC went so far as to affirm that “it was one of those moments when the whole world seemed to care” (Devichand, 2016, 2 Jan). The image constitutes arguably the most prominent representation of what, with Chouliaraki (2013), we could call the “theatre of pity” (p.55) that unfolded in the media debate around the long summer of migration. Murals were painted with Kurdi’s image, online petitions for better humanitarian protections were signed and a rescue boat in the Mediterranean was named in his honour. In Germany, the publication of the image further concurred with Merkel’s decision to defer the Dublin conventions that was often read as an act of “opening Germany’s doors to refugees” (e.g. Hill, 2015, 1 Oct) so that its publication was seen as a crucial event in the emergence of German welcoming culture. As such, it forms a particularly fruitful scene for understanding how empathy was framed, articulated and understood during the long summer of migration.

So, what is this picture that evoked such a strong reaction in the public sphere? On a surface level, it depicts the image of a young boy in red T-shirt and blue trousers lying face down on the beach. His body is motionless. Was he not lying head first in the waves, we might think he was sleeping. In most newspapers the image was published as part of a series in which we see a border guard agent picking up the dead

body and carrying him away from the sea.³⁹ It is a powerful image that evokes an almost visceral response. I remember the first time I saw the image at a train station in London. It was printed in a free copy of the Metro reading: “Europe could not save him”. Overwhelmed by the sheer gravity of violence depicted on the front cover, I had to stop for a moment. While I felt slightly uncomfortable in this voyeuristic act, another part of me was immediately interpellated in the scene of suffering. I was hit by a wave of pain about the death of the unknown child I was presented with and felt guilty for having allowed this violent death to happen. In this act of identification, a part of me became a direct agent in the narrative presented by the tabloid — Europe became me and I became Europe. And I was not the only one. A group of people had clustered around the newspaper pile and looked at the image with tangible concern. How, however, can we understand the affective pull of this image? What are the genres, figures and narratives that this interpellation works through?

In most publications of the image, it was commented upon through a terminology that framed Kurdi’s death as a “failure of humanity” — the most common hashtag that it was shared through on social media was #humanitywashedashore — or as a symbol for the “tragedy” of the refugee crisis. The chief editor of the *Rheinische Post*, for instance, described it as the “image to the largest humanitarian tragedy in Europe since the Second World War” (Bröcker, 2015, 4 Sep). I want to suggest that the choice of words is not coincidental but says a lot about the genre through which empathy is articulated and unfolds in these representations: tragedy. As Spelman (1997) points out, tragedy forms a privileged genre through which scenes of empathy become narrated. She states that “suffering that deserves to be tragic is noteworthy, in some sense exemplary, its threatening, chaotic horribleness diluted to some manageable degree by its riveting intelligibility” (p.35). Therein, she defines three main characteristics of tragedy. Firstly, tragedy describes the fate of a respectable, innocent person falling into misfortune. Secondly, these forces are larger and outside of the control of the person or any other people involved in the tragedy. And, thirdly, the tragic aims at a sense of catharsis through which the witness comes to reorient their approach to the world. Examining in more detail how the genre of the tragic unfolds in the dominant reactions to this image, in

³⁹ The photo was taken by the photographer Nilüfir Demir, who was covering the “refugee crisis” for a Turkish news agency when she found Kurdi’s body at the beach.

the following I want to suggest that the tragic invocation of empathy derives its emotional force through the affectively dense tropes of the family and the nation.

In several news stories, the photo was juxtaposed with earlier images of Alan Kurdi playing with his sibling or laughing into the camera next to a giant teddy bear. Several news stories further reported on the story of Alan Kurdi and his family trying to flee Syria to join their other family members in Canada via Europe after their visa was denied by the Canadian state, and focussed in on the pain that his family felt after his and his mother's deaths (e.g. Faller, 2016, 14 Jan). Haunted by the image of him smiling as a little boy, within these representational constellations, Alan Kurdi's body comes to stand in for the paradigmatic tragedy of an innocent life lost. As such it stands in a larger tradition of humanitarian images in which it falls to the "figure of the child"⁴⁰ to be the face of suffering — ranging from starving children on development aid campaigns to anti-war iconographies like the picture of Phan Thi Kim Phúc fleeing from napalm attacks in South Vietnam or Sharbat Gula holding the gaze of the camera from an Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan. These visual representations tap into romantic notions of children as innocent beings still untouched by the corruption of social and political life. Within such representations, vulnerability shifts from being represented as an unequally distributed yet historically created and always negotiated condition to an ontological condition of the Other.

Most importantly, however, the figure of the child activates an ethics of parental care. In an interview with the Spiegel, the media scholar Alexander Filipović (2015, Sept 3), for instance, states how he "had tears in (his) eyes. Imagining that this could have been my son — just the idea is unbearable". The emotive reaction of "this could have been my son" was mirrored in media reports across the German and international media landscape and memes were published showing Alan Kurdi in the safety of a cot, reading "this is how it should have ended" (Olesen, 2018, p.665). As Chouliaraki and Tijana Stolić (2017) have suggested, it was this sense of a failure of parental care in relation to the image of Alan Kurdi "that challenged the Western self-description of the caring parent and shifted the news narrative of the 'crisis' towards sentimental pity" (p.1168). Empathy in this scene consequently did not work through an act of direct identification or feeling the same, as a form of "emotional

⁴⁰ For a more in-depth discussion of the complex politics of the "figure of the child" see Claudia Castañeda (2002) and Jacob Breslow (2016).

equivalence" (Coplan, 2011), but through the affective template of the family. This could be seen in the mostly negative reactions to the photographs of Ai WeiWei in which he restaged the death of Alan Kurdi, lying face down on a beach in Lampedusa, for an art fair. While his action was widely called out for its violent appropriation, insensitivity and crudeness (see Mortensen, 2017, p.1155), parental sentimentality was mirrored in most media accounts of Alan Kurdi's death.

Compassion in the reaction to the image of Alan Kurdi consequently was expressed and invoked through an imagined form of kinship. Drawing on the philosophy of the Stoics, Nussbaum (1996) has suggested that such a logic of kinship constitutes the power and challenge of empathy by arguing that "each of us lives in a set of concentric circles — the nearest being one's own body, the furthest being the entire universe of human beings" (p.48). She presents these concentric circles — that extend from oneself, to the family, to the community, to the nation, to the world — as a universalist ontology of how empathy operates and argues that "the task of moral development is to move the circles progressively closer and closer to the centre, so that one's parents become like oneself, one's other relatives like one's parents, strangers like relatives, and so forth" (ibid). Nussbaum's moral imperative seems to rely on an essentialist understanding of affect in which the ontology of emotions remains untouched by the reach of the social. Having laid out in Chapter 2 how such accounts fail to take into account power relations and locate emotions in a nebulous sphere outside of history, I suggest that these concentric circles might better be understood as an inscription of social norms into the texture of affective life. Rather than as a fixed ontology, we might better conceptualise them as heteronormative and highly racialised cultural imperatives of feeling — a "feeling rule" (Hochschild, 1979, p.551) — that demarcates the lines through which affect ought to work. Whereas identification with "strangers" is seen as suspicious, the idea of care for your family is a powerful cultural frame that we are all expected to (and mostly do) comply with.

This parental relation of care that Europe needs to react to is further intensified through and plays into a long-standing infantilisation of the Global South vis-à-vis the "mature" Global North. Whereas the Middle East is commonly represented as a sphere of inability and helplessness, Europe, in the media coverage of Alan Kurdi, was imagined as the actor that, having failed in its parental duty, is asked to offer a helping hand to refugees in need. As Frantz Fanon (2005 [1961],

2008 [1952]) points out, the infantilisation of the Global South is steeped in colonial histories that framed the imperative to help the Other as the “white man’s burden” and constructed agency as the sole locus of Europe. Fittingly, the figure who, in this image, steps into fulfilling this failed parental duty is the policeman who, seemingly distressed from the scene of suffering he is witness to, comes to pick up the body from the beach. Several publications and story lines focussed exclusively on the story of the policeman, who emerges as subject of empathetic identification and likewise states that “I had to think of my own son and put myself in the position of his father” (“Toter Aylan”, 2015, 6 Sep). Represented in the figure of the police, it is the state that comes to take on the paternal and benevolent role of the saviour that could not save him. We can see how in this conflation the two affect-charged institutions of the family and state merge into one powerful affective assemblage of “Vaterstaat” (father-state) that, while having failed in his duty of care, emerges as the key figure of identification.

This attachment, however, seems to be an unstable one given that the policeman, Mehmet Ciplan, is Turkish. Commonly positioned as both “ally” and “other” of Europe, the geopolitical situation of Turkey troubles the easy identification with Europe in this image. Does the border guard here stand in or outside Europe? What is the Europe we are invited to identify with? And where are the borders between self and other supposed to be drawn? While this ambivalence points to the complex politics of borders and their enforcement, in most accounts of the image the question of location and context was brushed over and “the political, or political-economic, connections that link … viewer’s own history with that of ‘those people over there’” (Malkki, 1997, p.389) was obscured. Discussions of geopolitical relations were brushed aside and the location of Turkey and its role in enforcing and challenging the European border regime often remained a side-note or was simply located as the “coast of Europe”. It is here that the second tragic element of the genre comes to the fore. Rather than pointing to global regimes of exploitation, racial border regimes and war in the Middle East that led to this particular situation, the death of Alan Kurdi was predominantly framed as a tragedy of humanity. Similar to the chaos created by the Greek Gods of the Olympus, it is presented as the outcome of a chaos that seems futile to try to disentangle. Responsibility, in such representations, shifts from a critique and interrogation of Europe’s border regimes

and its historical role in the production of the geopolitical injustices to a universal responsibility to help.

Within the German context this universal responsibility to help was further motivated through a complex invocation of Holocaust guilt — an affective formation that I return to in more detail in the Conclusion of this thesis, in which I discuss the politics of guilt and shame. Most commentators made this link implicitly, such as is seen in the comment of the *Rheinische Post* cited above, who framed Kurdi's death as the “largest humanitarian tragedy in Europe since the Second World War” (Bröcker, 2015, 4 Sep). Other public figures like Angela Merkel, however, were more outspoken in their affirmation that the world sees “Germany as a country of hope and of opportunities, which has really not always been the case” and that the country should therefore take a central role in finding a solution to the refugee crisis (Die Bundesregierung, 2015, 31 Aug, para.10).⁴¹ As Gabriele Dietze (2016a) has suggested, the open wound of the Holocaust constitutes a crucial and highly productive field for addressing on-going histories of racism, violence and social exclusion in the context of post-war Germany. This possibility, however, is often forestalled through discourses that frame the act of “coming to terms with the past” (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*)⁴² as an accomplished act rather than an unfinished business to be worked through. Rather than interrogations of how Germany continues to operate as a racial and imperial state, the invocation of responsibility born from the crimes of the Holocaust can likewise create narratives that position Germany as a chastened nation in the position to help other places and their people who have not yet worked through their history. And indeed, within days of the publication of the image, newspapers like *The Guardian* titled that Merkel's new welcome culture “had consigned the ugly German to the past” (Freedman, 2015, 11 Sep).

What gets erased in such narratives of the atoned German saviour are not only ongoing complicities, but also the stories and narratives of migrants themselves. As Chouliaraki and Rafal Zaborowski (2017) have shown in a cross-analysis of media reports on the refugee crisis in eight European countries (including Germany), the voices of migrants were predominantly silenced, obscured and decontextualised. This

⁴¹ For a more in-depth analysis of her discourse see Chapter 6 on hope.

⁴² As I mentioned in the Introduction, in German, this process is normally referred to as “*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*” — a term that loosely translates to “coming to terms with the past” and is mainly used in the relation to the Holocaust and the Second World War in Germany (e.g. Adorno, 1996 [1959]).

matches the canonical analysis of Liisa Malkki (1996), who in her work on “speechless emissaries”, has suggested that in images of the refugee, “helplessness is vitally linked to the constitution of speechlessness: victims need protection, need someone to speak for them” (p.388). What makes this dynamic even more pronounced in the case of the image of Kurdi is that there is no subject to speak or even just gaze back. The child is dead and remains at the mercy of the uninvited judgment that we, the spectators make. This erasure of voice returns us to the third tragic element in the engagement with the image that, rather than as consensual form of mutual engagement, is primarily focussed on the cathartic experience of the spectator. Berlant (1998) has called this dimension the "great promise and threat" of the affective aesthetic of empathy, "the possibility that through the identification with alterity you will never be the same again" (p.648). The image of Alan Kurdi emerges with the powerful Butlerian promise to extend the sphere of grievability to subjects that have so far been excluded from it. Yet, the tragic genre that it was interpreted through seems to have pulled it into a largely "sentimental politics" that is "performed whenever putatively suprapolitical affects or affect-saturated institutions (like the nation and the family) are proposed as universalist solutions to structural ... antagonism" (Berlant, 1998, p.641). Consequently, while the image opened discussions and created anger about the restrictive policies of Europe, in the end, most media reports seem to have reified familiar attachments of national protection and the family.

b. Empathy as Humanitarian Securitisation

The reactions to the image of Alan Kurdi were not only of care but also of parental concern and anger. Several of the news stories focussed on stories of smuggler and human traffickers. Thomas Maizière, the Minister for Interior Affairs, for instance, called smugglers “dirty criminals”, and indeed the only people who were held accountable for the death of Alan Kurdi were two men from Turkey who had tried to “smuggle” Alan Kurdi and his family over the sea towards Greece (Timur, 2016, 4 Mar). These narratives go hand in hand with long-standing discourses in which it falls to smugglers and human traffickers to emerge as scapegoats for the violence created by border regimes of global inequality (Anderson, 2012; De Genova, 2013). Other media stories went even further and blamed Alan Kurdi’s family for engaging in this

irresponsible journey in the first place and insinuated that his father himself was a smuggler (e.g. “Steuerte”, 2015, 12 Sep). In stories like these, empathy was revoked and replaced through a narrative of blame that framed the tragedy as a self-induced harm resulting from careless or even evil acts of parenting. What these media reports highlight is how empathy induced through the assignment of vulnerability is highly precarious and always conditional. This conditionality was probably nowhere more evident than in the cartoon published by *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2016 that, to the question “What would have become out of the little Aylan had he grown up?” answers with a depiction of a young male sexual predator running after a group of women, and that was shared widely on social media (see Mortensen, 2017, p.1156). The cartoon builds upon long-established racist tropes of sexual predators, that I uncover in more detail in the next chapter on the New Year’s night in Cologne that this cartoon alludes to. What it crystallises is how, even in his death, Alan Kurdi is still suspected of the horror of sexual abuse that would renounce not only his right of citizenship but also his legitimacy to be an object of compassion.

This leads us to what Anne Phillips (2015, 2016) identifies as the problem with liberal notions of humanism that most articulations of empathy in regard to the image were scripted in. She argues that although the assertion of our common humanity through affective bonds remains a powerful ethical and political ideal, “it too often involves either a substantive account of what it is to be human that then becomes the basis for gradations, or else a stripped down, contentless account that denies important differences” (Phillips, 2016, p.1). In the articulations of empathy expressed within and around the image of Alan Kurdi, we can see how these two dynamics work hand in hand. Whereas difference in the form of power and location is erased so that humanity can be thought of and felt as one big family, the question of racial and gendered disparities slips back into the frame through the question of who deserves to be part of this affective kinship in the first place. Whereas an innocent, dead child seems to be a most secure figure for evoking compassionate engagement, in the context of migration, even this compassionate engagement remains fragile and is always open to and conditional upon the judgement of the spectator.⁴³ What we

⁴³ A very straight forward application of this logic in relation to children can be observed in current moral panics over refugees “claiming to be under age” and the implementation of age-measurement technologies that are designed to identify whether people are actually minors and thus do not qualify for particular protection rights (Fekete, 2007).

find in the calls for humanity that tended to accompany the image of Alan Kurdi, then, is what Miriam Ticktin (2006) has usefully described as a “humanity devoid of social and political content; yet … that even in its minimalism keeps intact racial and gender hierarchies” (p.35). It is a humanity that is based on the logic of deservingness and treats difference according to the logic of: “recognize it exceptionally and deport the rest” (Ticktin, 2008, p.844).

This logic of deservingness is directly mirrored in Merkel’s famous summer press conference that was often heralded as the speech in which her humanitarian stance on asylum came to the fore. Appealing to the empathy of the nation, she refers to “situations and fears that refugees have to face, that we would probably simply collapse under” but then goes on to declare how we need to quickly establish “who belongs” and “who has nearly no chance to stay here” (Die Bundesregierung, 2015, 31 Aug). And indeed only a few weeks after granting asylum to Syrian refugees, new laws were passed that declared the states of Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro to be safe countries of origin, negotiations with Turkey and other “buffer” countries were started to effectively deter migrants from reaching Germany and a next wave of deportations was on its way. Borrowing from security scholars, we might best understand this process as part of a larger practice of “humanitarian securitization” (Walters, 2011; Vaughan-Williams, 2015), in which humanitarian concerns and processes of securitisation are not opposite forces but work as mutually reinforcing dynamics. Matching the arguments of scholars like Isabel Lorey (2015) who ask how processes of precaritisation work to make some lives more precarious while safeguarding others, scholars of the New Keyword Collective (2015) have suggested that this logic of humanitarian securitisation is the dominant framework underlying current European border policies, particularly in Germany.

The problem with empathy in regard to contemporary migration might consequently be not primarily an empathy fatigue, nor forms of fake empathy that distract from violent policies being implemented behind its smokescreen. Rather the problem with dominant articulations of empathy, as represented in the reactions to the image of Alan Kurdi, seems to be that they emerge within and as part of the power relations that they promise to challenge. Leticia Sabsay (2016) has described this only seemingly paradoxical logic in more depth. She suggests that humanitarian pleas for aid “seem to compensate for the deprivation and violence to which certain populations are subjected” (p.280), yet in the end seem to contribute to a vicious

circle as “humanitarianism may participate in the expansion of the biopower exercised over those populations … insofar as the very vulnerability of those populations becomes the ground of their regulation and control” (p.281). What we can derive from her argumentation is that the altruistic assignment of vulnerability as an ontological condition — that empathy in regard to the image of Alan Kurdi seems to rely on — work as part and parcel of biopolitical regimes of power, rather than a necessary roadblock to their operation.

This is not to say that there are no other readings of the image of Alan Kurdi or that this form of empathy is void. Given the drastic representation of violence within it, the image has likewise been used as a rallying cry on demonstrations and has opened a space for starting conversations about the border politics of Europe responsible for such death. It has similarly been used as symbol by migrants themselves to claim state responsibility and accountability in the face of violence and been held up in acts of public mourning that have created new bonds between migrant groups and other actors within the public sphere, a practice that I return to in the Conclusion of this thesis. Likewise, humanitarian actions should not be easily dismissed in a political context in which securitisation might well emerge as the more dominant or even only frame. Whereas I want to keep the reading of the image open in its multiplicity, I nevertheless suggest that the most dominant reactions reveal a particular inscription of empathy that corresponds to a more general “humanitarian reason” that operates as the dominant logic of how “the unwanted” (D. Fassin, 2011, p.133) are governed in Germany at this time. Rather than being a necessary antidote to the logics of the European border regime, then, it seems to form part of the affective fuel that a liberal system of humanitarian securitisation relies on.

From the theoretical discussion at the beginning of this piece, we might thus somewhat controversially think of the structure of empathy expressed in the dominant reaction to the image as corresponding to what scholars in the field of gender studies have labelled “bad” or “lazy” empathy — characterised in all three dimensions of power, difference and action. Rather than a genuine engagement with the other, this form of empathy seems to emerge through a subject-object relation in which the other remains defenceless to the affective inscriptions and judgments of the viewer. It preserves agency as a privilege of the spectator and erases differences of location and power through a sentimental focus on a shared family of humanity while reinstalling questions of disparity through racial and gendered assumptions that question who

deserves to be part of this affective kinship in the first place. And it shifts attention from the need for structural transformation to the individual and enshrines vulnerability as an ontological rather than an unequally distributed yet politically and historically produced and always negotiated condition of the other. While the figure of thought of “bad” empathy might admittedly be a bit schematic, let me defer its deconstruction for now and try to think about how other forms of empathy then would look. In other words, if the empathy circulating along the contours of the theatre of pity is not what most feminist and anti-racist scholars might have had in mind, what would or could a form of “good” empathy in the context of current migration then look like?

4. *My Escape and Refugee Travelogues*

a. Reversing the Gaze

If the theatre of suffering, best represented in the image of Alan Kurdi, was and continues to be the dominant mode of how empathy is invoked around migration in the European public sphere, it is not the only one. In the context of German Willkommenskultur, a range of “counter-strategies in the ‘politics of representation’” (Hall, 1997, p.8) were developed that tried to invoke empathy in different ways. A particularly prominent example of such strategies, that I want to turn to in the following analysis, is documentaries and travelogues that were edited out of films that asylum seekers shot with their cell phones during, before and after they made their way to Europe. These range from highly professionally produced films like the three-part BBC documentary *Exodus*, over online productions like the satirical *Refugee TV*, to local amateur photo exhibitions like *Refugeecameras* and *Images of War*. These productions coincide with the call for stronger representation of marginalised voices in the European public sphere and aim at reversing the unidirectionality of more dominant representations of migration and asylum. In a survey of migrant advocacy and activist groups in the UK, Nick Gill, Deirdre Conlon, Ceri Oeppen and Imogen Tyler (2012), for instance, attest that the collection and mobilisation of first-person accounts seems to be widely understood as the best and most effective way to reach the “undecided middle who have not firmly established opinions about migrants” and to repair the damage that pejorative depictions of asylum seekers have brought (p.28).

One of the probably most exemplary cultural production of this sort in the German context is the documentary *My Escape / Meine Flucht*. It features the stories of ten different asylum seekers that show and comment upon film snippets that they have shot on their way to Europe. The film was assembled and produced by the filmmaker Elke Sasse, whose aim it was to support asylum seekers to make the stories they had collected on their cell phones available to a larger audience with the intention to "create understanding and empathy for what people who are fleeing go through" (Ehrenberg, 2016, 10 Feb). Originally produced for the public TV-channel WDR (West German broadcasting), the film was also shown in a range of other locations. Several of the film's protagonists went on a screening tour through Germany to screen the film in places as diverse as Schaumburg, Mannheim and Berlin, where I saw the film for the first time in the Mosque at Flughafenstraße. It was further screened at documentary and human rights film festivals (e.g. Cologne documentary festival, Prix Europa), won several prizes such as the German Social Prize for civilly engaged journalism and has generally been commented upon as an "important film at the right time" that builds bridges and changes dominant perspectives on the "refugee crisis" (Ehrenberg, 2016, 10 Feb).

In the *Civil Contract of Photography*, Ariella Azoulay (2008) suggests that civil gazes are a crucial means for holding state power to account and to carve out critical counter publics. More specifically, she identifies film and photography as weapons for marginalised subjects to make a dent in the public imaginary, especially for people without or with insecure citizenship. After all if, as we have seen, one of the problems with dominant representations of "refugees" is the erasure of speech, self-made representations could be a powerful way to alter this dynamic. *My Escape* seems to directly follow this logic. The film focuses on the narratives of ten asylum seekers from Syria, Iraq, Iran and Eritrea who arrived in Germany in the course of 2015. This form of self-representation, however, raises what Spelman (1997) calls the "moral and political dangers of becoming the object of compassion" which bring up the question of how to "maintain authorship of your experiences, even as you urge your audience to focus on the ... suffering to which you have been subjected against your will" (p.70). The film tries to solve this dilemma by making use of a double layered lens of representation. While showing the original film material, it cross-edits these with scenes of protagonists commenting upon the material they shot during

their journey. As such, the film makes a conscious effort to forestall the reaction of the audience and guide the viewer's affective responses in particular directions.

Whereas the theatre of pity is mostly presented through the genre of tragedy, these visual scenes work through the more self-directed genre of the travelogue. Evoking the long colonial history of travel reports about trips into "far away exotic lands", it reverses this relation and offers a perspective onto Europe from the position of the Global South. Rather than an uninvited gaze onto the other that is mainly directed at the cathartic experience of the viewer, it presents an "oppositional gaze" (hooks, 1992, p.115) that becomes directed at Europe and its border regimes as the main object of inquiry. Through focussing on the stories in the form of a journey it partly de-sensationalises the idea of the "escape" and shows how such stories are a component of the lives of hundreds of thousands of people without, however, diminishing or normalising the violence or the conditions that makes this journey necessary in the first place. As such, it does not merely reverse the tragic and sentimental account of the theatre of pity through a heroic odyssey story but creates a more complex and ambivalent account of people's journeys to Europe. It is exactly this ambivalence, I want to suggest, that marks the film's potentiality to circumvent the sentimental politics of dominant framings of empathy.

Starting with film clips of bombs falling over Damascus, the film immediately draws the viewer into the reasons why people leave the places they used to live in. Rather than unleashing sensationalised scenes of destruction and extreme violence, however, in the next scene, it presents two of the main protagonists, Mohammad and Abdullah, showing clips from their life in Damascus before the war. Talking about the metal bands they used to be part of, the café, bars and concert houses they used to frequent, the horror of war is not told through the gruesome images that we are presented with in most media outlets but through the textures of everyday life that were destroyed by its onset. It is this shifting between the mundane and the extreme, the domestic and the grotesque, the daily and its collapse, that marks the rhythm of the film. As such, we are introduced to the next protagonist, Omar, through a clip showing him waiting at a bus stop in Turkey. Annoyed that the bus is late, he tries to make the most out of the time by taking selfies and shooting little videos of himself. Once on his way to Izmir, he is shown cheerful on the bus listening to music on his cell phone. A few scenes later, he comes back, but this time cramped into the tank of a transporter together with fifteen other people trying to cross over the border to

Hungary. Commenting upon the clips, Omar talks about how he still cannot believe how it was possible for fifteen people to breathe through a hole as large as his thumb. It is this collapse of “ontological security” (Giddens, 1991, p.35), the sense of basic reliability and continuity in the world, that the film focuses on and makes affectively tangible to the viewer.

Following the protagonists through their journey, the film does not represent the collapse as a nebulous tragedy, but as a socially and politically created situation. Narrating reasons for migration, it offers an insight into the geopolitical situations behind people's decision to leave, ranging from globally-induced poverty in Eritrea to the political repression in an Afghanistan torn apart by the “war on terror”. While the film presents a general background to the reasons for migration, most of the story-lines focus on the violence inflicted by their restricted freedom of movement. Following the protagonists through their journey to Central Europe, it offers a sense of the complex web of managed inhospitality that Europe has created around its borders, starting with passport checks in border regions like Libya, ship patrols and blackmailing in Turkey, up to border fences in Hungary and detention centres and deportations in Greece and Italy. Rather than abstract, this complex web of relations becomes affectively tangible. Turning their camera at a patrolling ship on the coast of Turkey, an oppositional idea to the representation of the policeman in the image of Alan Kurdi is presented. Filmed through a shaking cell phone, the protagonist talks about how he has been hiding here for more than two weeks and is running out of water and food. In a similar scene, the confusion and chaos created at the border in Croatia in which masses of people are being pushed from one place to the next, is articulated. Running around, one of the protagonists collapses. The state turns from an affectively charged saviour to an object of fear and suspicion.

Rather than a victimised account, the film thus presents a more complex portrayal of agency. Throughout the film, several clips show people singing songs in Arabic that they have made up on their journey. One of the reoccurring ones is:

To Germany, to Germany, we are illegally going to Germany and if we can't go over Turkey, then we will go over Spain. And don't forget from there we can go and stay in Austria or go to Hungary. Sweden is a warm welcome but they don't need more people. I swear, the most difficult is

England. To Germany, to Germany, we are illegally going to Germany
and if we can't go over Turkey, then we will go over Spain.

If the border regime is marked by what Anca Parvulescu (2010) describes as the "seriousness ... as a function of gravity, a matter of oppressive weight, a lead-effect" that fixes bodies in place, this song "is a gesture of the group responding to this exigency of life in common" through laughter and playfulness (p.5). Taking on and even cheering the term "illegally", the song reverses the judgment of the European gaze of the security regime and unmasks the brutal absurdity that lies behind any claims to "lawfulness". In this gesture, the journey through European borders becomes a playful act whose success is fragile yet framed as inevitable ("then we will go over Spain"). Despite the knowledge that going over Spain is not really an option for most of the protagonists coming from places East of Europe and that deportation, injury and even death might occur at any corner, it opens a space of potentiality that pokes holes into the seriousness with which both European security logics as well as sentimental forms of empathy are usually presented.

A similar use of laughter can be observed in the representation of human smugglers. Several story-lines focus on how, in the face of European border securitisation, the protagonists have no other choice but to cooperate with groups of human smugglers. Rather the spectacularised representation of smugglers as the actual problem of forced migration that again diverts attention from the larger structural questions which we find in the media reports around Alan Kurdi, however, here we get a sense of the ambivalent position that they occupy. Hamid talks about the smugglers as "having two faces": one face that is helping you and another one that can easily exploit your vulnerable position for economic gains. Alex, from Eritrea, for instance, describes how he got stuck in the hands of a group of smugglers in Libya. Being unable to pay the money, he was held captive, threatened and abused for several weeks until his family managed to pay the outstanding money. Salem, who came over the same route, further describes how she would only travel in large groups of women so as to forestall the constant threat of sexual violence they were exposed to. Rather than painting a simplified image of dependent helplessness, in the next scene the film shows Abdullah and Mohammad sitting at a beach in Turkey waiting to cross over to Lesbos. Filming how a group of smugglers tries to repair a boat that looks anything but fit for travel, Mohammad shouts to Abdullah, who is

holding the camera, "come film me". Raising his thumb and smiling into the camera, he says: "we are in the hands of traffickers. It's great!" The group around him breaks into laughter. In this scene, Mohammad directly plays with the imagined viewer on the other side of the camera. Forestalling the pre-conditioned idea of "being in the hands of traffickers" as a hopeless situation, he subverts the sentimental gaze of empathetic concern without denying the difficult situation that they are in. Rather than feeling *for*, he hence invites the viewer to feel *with* him and the complex situation he finds himself in.

Rather than being faced with a clear-cut one-way story, in *My Escape* the viewer is consequently presented with a multiplicity of voices that not only give different accounts of their journeys but are also internally and temporally split and conflicted. It is this polyphony of perspectives that one might suggest keeps the film from immediately being absorbed into a clear-cut sentimental tragic narrative of victimisation. It is ambivalence that might form the central element of what Berlant calls a "countersentimental modality" with the potential to disrupt simplified, sentimental forms of empathy (p.56). Given the theoretical discussion at the beginning of this reflection, we could consequently consider this film as invoking a form of "good empathy". It reverses the power relations of the gaze such that rather than being looked at, asylum seekers themselves navigate the stories they want to tell. It negotiates rather than consumes difference and marks clear boundaries of location that are not easily consumed by the greedy eyes of the spectator. And it directs attention to the structural conditions that induce hardship and violence while making the collapse of people's sense of ontological security a tangible experience for the viewer to relate to. Rather than a subject-object relation, empathy here hence emerges as a subject-to-subject engagement that opens up yet respects the distinctions between self and other.

b. Affective Reciprocity and the Abject of Recognition

The more ambivalent account presented in the film, however, seems to falter when it reaches its emotional climax. Having made it through the border in Hungary, Omar finally sits on the train to Germany. Commenting upon images of his train journey, he describes how after a while "Welcome to Austria" was announced in Arabic through the train's speakers. He states that "this was the best moment of the entire trip, no-one

so far has ever said 'welcome'. ... It was incredible to be in a place where everyone helps you". In the next scene, we see clips of people waiting at train stations, holding up banners, singing and cheering the arrival of the protagonists. Heba and her partner Ahmed similarly comment: "We were really surprised. We did not expect this. We did not expect people actually being happy about us coming here". It was this scene that was quoted in nearly all reviews of the film. After having gone to a screening in Schaumburg, one journalist, for instance, recalls how moving it was to see "how unbelievably speechless and happy the refugees shoot their arrival in Germany" (Stadt, 2016, 25 Sep). Sitting in the mosque at Flughafenstraße, it is likewise this scene that creates the emotionally densest moment. A shared mood of warm, fuzzy gratitude fills the space, the person next to me is sobbing and, while worried about the coming ending that has been suggested in the film all along, a sense of relief fills my chest. Turning into a material symbol of multicultural understanding, the mosque becomes a place of harmonious co-existence. For a moment it seems like everything can be okay, and — while the "paranoid" reader in me is in alarm (Sedgwick, 2003) — it feels good.

The strong emotionality of this scene is understandable simply for being the climactic endpoint of people in hardship having finally arrived at the end of their journey. This arrival, however, becomes framed as a harmonious national merging. Where before there were borders, violence and death, there now is altruism, belonging and harmony. Having made it through the border of the EU, Behnin, from Iran, is on her way from Lesbos to Greece. Filming her family sitting on the huge ferry, she talks about how she cannot believe what a difference this is from the small motor boat on which she made her way to Lesbos. The threat of death, the chaos at the border and the prison-like conditions of the arrival camp in Lesbos that were discussed in the scenes before retreat into the background and we get the sense of a brighter future to come. This future is confirmed in the last scenes of the film. Reproducing femonationalist discourses that mobilise tropes of presumable gender equality as a sign of distinction between a civilised West vis-à-vis regressive Muslim societies (Farris, 2017), Behnin is shown — without a headscarf — learning German. Other protagonists are presented doing internships in manufacturing, protesting against terrorism, engaging themselves in their local communities and building

snowmen. They are shown not only integrating into the cultural life of German society but becoming productive citizens in the labour market and politics.

Telling their stories in brightly lit, large apartments in Germany, all of the stories end in a happy ending of safe, national arrival. In the juxtaposition with the amateur clips of hardship and struggle, the film thus creates a clear narrative of progression into a better and more advanced future. This is not to say that these stories are incorrect or manufactured, but rather points us to the question of which stories cannot be included in this genre. In a telling slippage at the end of the film, we are, for instance, informed that Alex is threatened with being deported back to Italy. While this is mentioned, this story-line is not further explored. Instead, the film jumps to a scene of Sahmed finding her first apartment in Berlin. While violence of the borders are still shown at the border-zones of Europe, once arrived in Germany, discussions of the racialised policies and institutions of asylum camps, work restrictions, detentions, violent reactions of civil society or deportations are cut out from the scene entirely. It is at this point that the sentimental logics of the reactions to the image of Alan Kurdi seems to enter the scene that, rather than pointing out Germany's complicity in the production of violence, re-attaches the viewer to the nation as the social and emotional solution.

We could now suggest that this is an omission of the film or a slippage at which it is in danger of shifting into the more sentimental politics of “bad” empathy. Rather than reading this as a failure or break of the text, however, I want to take this argument further and suggest that it points to the troubles and limits of empathy more generally. More concretely, it highlights the narrative conventions that cultural texts need to comply with to be read as empathetic objects in the first place. These, I suggest, are not limited to *My Escape* but can be found across the genre of the migrant travelogue more widely. In an interview with the director of *Exodus*, for instance, one journalist starts their discussion of the film by commenting that it was “the acts of kindness that are revealed in the documentary that make it unique” and recalls how “at one point in the film, Ishra's father Tarek is expressing his gratitude for the welcome he received in Austria: 'I send my greetings and thanks to this country... put religion to the side. Humanity is more important'" (Harrisson, 2016, 13 July). In this quote, religion, or rather Islam, is positioned as a practice that needs to be left behind for people to share into the community of humanity (just like the headscarf in the scene described before). A belief in Islam is assumed to be a

dangerous attachment that stands in the way of inclusion and harmonious commonality. As Ahmed (2003) suggests, integration into the humanist fantasy of a national family of equals in which we all feel for each other commonly relies on the "condition that [the other] gives up visible signs of their 'concrete difference'" (para.24). Empathy becomes conditional on a stripping of rather than respect for difference. As such, instead of subverting the narratives of sentimental politics of "bad" empathy or the rhetorics of anti-Muslim racism, in this instance, empathetic engagement seems to directly rely on the same assimilationist logics.

While we could argue that this is a particularly drastic example, what it nevertheless shows is that empathy "is always marked by that which cannot be empathised with and draws a limit as a self-evident boundary for what (and who) can be included" (Hemmings, 2011, p.197). Empathy is pre-structured through the logic of recognition that, as Hemmings suggests, always works through the condition of: "I recognize you; you meet my criteria for recognition" (p.213). Religion here, however, is not only put aside for reasons of integration, but as an act of "gratitude". Similarly, the moment of affective density at the screening at which I watched *My Escape* for the first time comes at the point when the protagonists of the film are returning the "gift of empathy" they have received from people in Germany through thankfulness. In her discussion of love, Ahmed (2003) argues that in order to be the object of positive feeling one needs to reciprocate the feeling that one is the receiver of: "It is ... 'having' the right emotion that allows one to pass into the [national] community" (para.32). In the case of empathy the right emotion is, if not love, gratitude or at least thankfulness. Empathy consequently not only assumes a subject that complies with the demarcated conditions of recognition, but one that presents their deservingness through the right affective attitude (Fortier, 2008).⁴⁴

We can observe this also on a larger discursive level. Thomas De Maizière, the minister of interior affairs, who had blamed Kurdi's death on smugglers, argued that German Willkommenskultur (welcoming culture) needed to be accompanied by an Ankommenskultur (arriving culture) in which refugees needed to show respect and gratitude for the country that offered them asylum ("Unterbringung", 2015, 2 Oct). It is this form of affective reciprocity that I want to suggest is the real trouble with

⁴⁴ It might partly be this logic that explains the ongoing media fascination with representations of migrants holding up images of Merkel and publicly thanking her.

empathy in both its “good” and “bad” invocations and that helps us to explain how forms of empathetic engagement so easily make way for related feelings of anger and hatred. If the object of empathy does not respond with the right affective attitude, it creates a narcissistic blow, a feeling of hurt that the gift one has bestowed on the other, is not acknowledged.⁴⁵ It is this slippage that may explain how the presumable Willkommenskultur expressed in images welcoming migrants at train stations all over the country so easily made space for the intensified hostility that was unleashed into the public sphere after reports about cases of mass sexual abuse committed by racialised men during New Years in Cologne erupted in the public sphere (see the next chapter, Chapter 5, for a more detailed discussion of this hostility).

Both “good” and “bad” might hence be difficult to sever from a logic of recognition and inclusion that, as Anne Friedberg (1990) argues, tends to always be an “implicit confirmation of the ideology of the status quo” (p.45). Whereas empathy might be a crucial force in enabling forms of solidary action, these always remain tied to the conditions of the subject assigning the “gift of empathy” in the first place. In order to enable forms of affective identification, empathy thus relies on cutting off the abject that could disrupt its fragile suture from the scene of compassionate encounter. Reframing Julia Kristeva’s (1982) more psychoanalytic theorisation of abjection, Imogen Tyler (2013) conceptualises social abjection as exercises through which “different arms and operations of state … determine the value of life adjudicating on who is expendable and who is of worth” (p.46). The abject then describes those subjects, subjectivities and forms of expression that need to be expelled from the fantasy of national harmony. While the dominant reactions to the image of Alan Kurdi seem to plaster over questions of difference through the invocation of the family, in the travelogues difference similarly needs to be stripped off for the subject to fold into the empathetic embrace of national inclusion. Similarly, while in the theatre of pity the problem of deservingness seems to slip back into the frame through a question who deserves to be part of this affective family in the first place, empathy in the travelogue likewise relies on the subject having to prove that they are deserving

⁴⁵ This concept was mainly developed by Heinz Kohut (1972), who argues that narcissistic injuries occur when an individual is confronted with a situation that contradicts their firmly held beliefs about themselves. He suggests that this form of narcissistic injury quickly turns into narcissistic rage — a form of outward-directed aggression that keeps the subject from having their sense of self shattered.

of the gift of empathy. Both rely on a logic of national kinship in which sameness, or at least the desire to be the same, is the prerequisite for recognition and inclusion.

The difference between “good” and “bad” empathy that I have suggested so far, thus, is more slippery than it seems. Where the two visual scenes seem to most clearly differ are in questions of power and agency. While the image of Alan Kurdi offers a site of uninvited spectatorship that consumes the pain of the other, in the travelogues the question of consent and representation is reversed through migrants filming and commenting upon their own stories. However, the empathetic subject’s ability to retreat and refuse identification seems to dominate the scene of encounter in both cases. Similarly, while *My Escape* calls out the violence of the border regimes, does it not also redirect affective attachment to the nation as the site where protection and help can be sought? And is this attachment not even made more explicit in the narrative of the travelogues that ends in national harmony, than in the figure of death in the image of Kurdi that keeps shock and loss as potential sites for more critical affective engagements? These reflections are not meant to ultimately decide the larger or lesser political and/or moral worth of these different representations. Rather, I want to point out how difficult it is to decide what good and bad empathy might look like. While they might well differ in relation to power, difference and action, I want to suggest that trying to finetune these differences might send us down the wrong path of political thinking. In other words, if both require the gift of empathy as something that the object of empathy needs to deserve, empathy seems unlikely to undo its cruel bind in the context of European border securitisation. Instead, I want to think about what a form of non-empathetic relationality or solidarity might look like. While I do not want to dismiss the promise of empathy altogether (let me return to this question at the end of this chapter), I want to think about what happens when the abject, the scenes of discomfort and rejection, that necessarily need to be cut out from scenes of empathetic encounter enter or even become the centre of the scene of encounter.

5. Protest Action and the Practice of Hunger Strike

a. Self-Mutilation as a Politics of Refusal

In the last part of the chapter, I thus aim to think about what happens when the tensions of transnational power dynamics might not be so easily resolved and rather than striving for empathetic harmony, we face antagonism, confrontation and

discomfort. Engaging with representations of what Michelle Pfeifer (2018) has referred to as the abject of empathy staged in hunger strikes and public protests, I aim to think about what forms of relationality these might imagine but also what forms of affective politics they might foreclose. While Angela Merkel publicly appealed to the empathy of the nation and most media discussions focussed on the presumable emergence of a new Willkommenskultur, groups of refugees, irregular migrants and migrant solidarity activists staged protests in a range of cities. In the late summer of 2015 alone, nearly one hundred refugees went on hunger strike in Hamburg to protest the inhumane conditions of an improvised refugee camp housed in a DIY warehouse. In Hannover, fifty Sudanese refugees refused food and water to protest for a right of residence, and in Munich a long-lasting fight between refugee groups and the police erupted, highlighting the racist procedures of the asylum system at large and the city administration in particular. Simultaneously protests spawned up around the borders of Hungary, Serbia and Greece and in the refugee camps of Calais, and Idomeni people refused to eat in protest of the conditions that kept them in destitution — creating a dispersed yet interrelated network of protest movements calling out the violent practices of the European border regime.

The protest actions in Germany build on a long history of protest action, public occupation and refugee hunger strikes. After the Iranian asylum seeker Mohammad Rahsepar committed suicide in collective refugee housing in Würzburg in 2012, a protest wave erupted in Germany that reverberates up into the political present. Starting with a refugee tent in Würzburg, a Refugee Tent Action was started and dozens of protest camps emerged all over Germany that called out the racist practices of the German asylum system, demanding the right to stay and improved living conditions. In one of the most powerful moments of this protest movement, people marched from Würzburg and other protest camps around the country to Berlin and created a centralised protest camp on Oranienplatz in Kreuzberg. The camp became the epicentre of migrant protest organisation and worked as a base for other actions such as occupations and larger mobilisations (Steinhilper, 2016; Pfeifer, 2018). The camp was cleared in 2014, yet its spirit and migrant protest networks remained, as seen in ongoing refugee actions in Munich or sanctuary initiatives like Lampedusa Hamburg. As Elias Setinhilper (2016) suggests, however, in summer 2015 these protest actions were largely overshadowed by the wave of

Willkommenskultur that shifted the perspective from extending rights and changing structural impediments to migration in Germany to helping people in need through more charitable action.

Nevertheless, beneath the discourse of welcome culture, protest actions continued. A relatively small but exemplary protest during this time was staged in the city of Nuremberg. The location of Nuremberg is meaningful in two ways. Firstly, it is the seat of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and as such has often been the centre of migrant activism. Secondly, Nuremberg is located in the state of Bavaria and as such has one of the most restrictive asylum policies in the country, with the result that nearby cities like Würzburg, Passau and Munich have long been at the forefront of the refugee protest movements (Pfeifer, 2018). Already in August 2015, several hundreds of migrants had protested in front of the office of the BAMF and submitted a letter to its head in which they demanded that “refugees, independent of where they are from or what their status is, need to be given a prospect to live” (“Nürnberg”, 2015, 14 Sep). More concretely, they asked for a halt to deportations, an improvement in housing and changes in the German system of *Duldung* (toleration) in which people’s asylum cases are hanging and they are often restricted from working and moving outside of the area their accommodation.⁴⁶

After the head of the BAMF did not respond, five men from Iraq, Afghanistan and a woman from Ethiopia went on hunger strike. Following the tradition of the Refugee Tent Action, they occupied a square in the middle of town. As their demands continued to not be heard, they quickly escalated the situation and refused not only food but also water. Allen Feldman (1991) posits, while hunger strikes have often been discussed as a particularly prominent practice of non-violent resistance, this classification is misleading as it works on a conception of violence that counts as such only when it is committed against (hegemonic) others. Rather, he suggests that we should understand hunger strikes as a form of violent self-mutilation. Self-starvation starts a range of biological processes in the body. Heart and blood pressure drop rapidly, energy levels go down and the body starts breaking down protein from tissue unrelated to survival, such as the muscles in the eyes. Vision, sight and speech start impairing, pain spreads through the limbs and the body literally starts to

⁴⁶ For a video of some of these protests see (“Asylbewerber demonstrieren”, 2015, 17 Aug).

consume itself. From this perspective, hunger strikes might better be understood as a re-enactment of the subjugating violence inflicted by the state that one refuses to submit to. Explaining their motivation to refuse water, one of the protesters stated that “at home they will kill me in a minute, here I am dying slowly” (“100 Asylbewerber”, 2015, 17 Aug). Hunger strikes, in this logic, make the racial violence of the state visible by publicly enacting it on oneself.

The cultural politics of hunger strikes might thus best be described as what Leticia Sabsay, Zeynep Gambetti and Judith Butler (2016) have called "vulnerability in resistance" (p.1). Whereas in the visual scenes so far vulnerability seems to have mainly been scripted as a disempowering condition that calls for empathy and needs to be remedied through paternalistic forms of protection, in this practice vulnerability is reclaimed and enacted not as the counter-point but the source and focus of political action. The mayor consequently warned that "a fundamental good/item of the law [Rechtsgut] is under threat, namely the right to life" (“Hallplatz-Hungerstreik”, 2015, 25 Sep). In this archetypical description of biopower, the mayor reveals how the state was unable to react to the self-enacted seizing of life that questioned the state’s monopoly on the "right to make life and let die" (Foucault, 2003, p.241). In reversing biopolitical reason, the protestors consequently created a lacuna in politics in which the common protectionist spirit of humanitarian securitisation was thrown into limbo. As Tyler (2013) points out, such a moment is highly precarious in the sense that it engenders the potentiality for a different politics to emerge, but likewise creates a situation in which power might crack down with even more force. As such many of the more established refugee advocacy groups like Pro Asyl have often been against hunger strikes and warn of the violent reactions from state actors and civil society that could follow (Pfeifer, 2018). And, indeed, like in Munich, Würzberg or Berlin before, the city officials refused to give in to the demands of the hunger strikers. First the refugee camp was pushed from the centre of town and into a less frequented part of the city, shielded from passers-by, and a few days later the camp was evacuated. After eight days of strike, five of the strikers were hospitalised and the protest was ultimately dissolved.

Given the “failure” of the protest to achieve their demands, what do we make out of the affective politics of the hunger strike? By attempting to circumvent dominant forms of biopolitical control attached to the invocation of empathy, does it not create even more violent enforcements of power? Pondering over the same

question, Tyler (2013) suggests that this form of politics might not be so much about the individual act and its outcome, but rather about the interruption which repeated "fearless speech" gives rise to (p.102). Drawing on Jacques Rancière, she suggests that in the reiteration of these actions a "third space" can be opened in the public sphere that makes visible and questions some of the ways in which biopolitical power seems to operate. Even in its "failure", the hunger strike still hints at a disruption of the humanitarian securitisation complex. As Patrick Anderson (2010) points out, the often-forceful hospitalisation of hunger strikers unmasks the "liberal humanist discourse of protection" (p.140) and points out how the practice of "help" might likewise work as part and parcel of biopolitical governmentality that practices of humanitarian securitisation rely on. It opens up a space to confound "nationalist attempts to produce docile subjects whose relationship to the state is defined by subjugation, streamlined identification and unwavering participation in the project of purification that such relationships require" (p.137).

In her illuminating analysis of the cultural politics of earlier refugee hunger strikes staged in Würzburg, Pfeifer (2018) has channelled these insights and has called hunger strikes practices of "becoming flesh" (p.461). Drawing on black theories of refusal, she suggests that hunger strikes express a form of becoming minor that not only unmasks the racialised German asylum system, but also enacts a refusal of the biopolitical reach of later liberal state power. She argues that hunger strikes operate as:

a form of becoming flesh, which makes visible how racialized violence is enacted on the refugees' bodies [and] opens an arena for reclamation in which the hunger strikers could articulate a politics of refusal that subverted the logics of recognition, empathy, and suffering liberal rights discourses rely on and, instead, performed an embrace of the refugees' abjection. (ibid)

Therein, she suggests that the idea of abjection should not be understood as an ontological category but rather as a social location that is induced by the racialised asylum system that positions the body of the refugee in conditions of "living death" (p.461). An embracement of this abjection refuses both the inscription of power through regimes of biopolitical control and "evades the labouring of the racialized

body's suffering" that "white empathy" relies on (p.465). She takes the example of migrants suturing their lips as the most clear-cut example of this practice and cites refugees in Würzburg who declared that: "We are the voice of all asylum seekers that demand their rights. We cried loudly, but nobody heard us. Now we sutured our lips because everything has been said" (p.466). In articulations like these, she suggests that the people in Würzburg resist being interpellated into a dialogue that is already structured around either accepting the status of "living death" that has been assigned to them or going back home as the other viable option presented by the state.

b. Affective Solidarity and the Politics of Discomfort

If we take the refusal of empathy staged in the hunger strike seriously, what forms of affective solidarity, if any, then are gestured towards here? If, by rejecting the empathetic engagement that marks so much of the humanitarian impulse of paternalistic politics, hunger strikes throw state actors into a lacuna of biopolitical confusion, I want to suggest that it does the same to the cultural critique, solidarity activist and general witness of these strikes. While for cultural analysts like Pfeifer (2018) hunger strikes are mainly a form of becoming minor, a becoming flesh that offers the subject of the hunger strike a space of agency in the necropolitical regime of a racialised asylum system, scholars like Anderson and Tyler foreground the performative aspect of the hunger strikes that in the end are directed not only towards the state but also the public. As Anderson (2010) suggests, self-starvation "viscerally and affectively summons us to bear witness to the low, slow wasting away of human flesh" (p.2). What exactly it means to bear witness to this scene, however, remains elusive. As Hayley Rudkin (2012) points out, "while the starvation of the body still demands the empathy of common embodiment, the meaning of this empathic connection is unsettled by the starving subject's wish to destroy the body at the heart of it" (p.309). She wonders that "since we cannot help but recognise that suffering, and eventual death are on display before us, do we have a responsibility as witnesses to intervene? What has caused the subject to starve themselves?" and suggests that "while starvation elicits empathy, self-starvation both confounds and cries out for understanding" (ibid).

What forces this form of understanding in the case of hunger strikes staged in Germany, Pfeifer (2018) argues, is how it brings history back into view. She cites

activists from the Refugee Tent Action who argue that: “We are here because of the hundreds of years of colonisation, exploitation and fatal economic boycott, that destroyed the political and economic infrastructures of peripheral countries” (p.470). In statements like these, migration is positioned in direct relation to the history of colonial intervention that in the German context tends to be deflected through a narrative of “colonial loss” that affirms that, unlike France or the UK, Germany had a relatively small and short-lived empire. While according to Pfeifer such an argument melancholically erases Germany’s violent colonial past and fails to interrogate how coloniality continues to also shape German politics and cultural imaginations, she points out how hunger strikes offer “an alternative historiography between colonialism, fascism and immigration” (p.461) that does not position racialised governmentality in the past but as an ongoing practice in the present. Such a mobilisation of history is different to the sentimental invocation of a “responsibility to help”, of a chastened past that is commonly invoked in the German public sphere around images such as that of Alan Kurdi, but rather points to a politics of “duress”, a questioning approach to the ways in which histories fold back upon themselves (Stoler, 2016).

This different mobilisation of history is particularly central to the staging of hunger strikes in Nuremberg. Envisioned by the Nazis as the “most German of all German cities” and chosen as the cultural and symbolic capital of the Third Reich, few cities in Germany try to bury their past as much as Nuremberg. A refugee camp in the centre of town that highlights the on-going racist practices of the state apparatus cuts through discourses that position “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” (struggles to overcome the past) as a completed process and straight into the open wound of the Holocaust. In their protest actions, however, migrants did not only confront the racialised asylum system but also highlighted ongoing complicities in the production of global inequality and violence. In the demonstration in front of the BAMF, protestors carried banners reading “dictatorial countries = direct death; democratic Germany = painful death” and called for an end of “the financial and political support of dictatorial regimes” in Africa and the Middle East (“Asylbewerber demonstrieren”, 2015, 17 Aug). Rather than positioning the West as the mature agent giving a “helping hand” to the Global South, they consequently point out how Germany, too, has “blood on its hands” and question the modernist narrative of civilisational progress. Giving out flyers to people walking past, the

appeal was not only directed at the state but also at citizens, who were asked to decide whether to stay complicit with these processes or unsettle their relatively secure position as citizens of the state.

What such a process makes tangible is a politics of difficulty in which we might be part of the problem and not the answer. Hunger strikes destabilise the fantasy of self-mastery that presumes that we already know where the problem lies and how we can act to alleviate it. As Rudkin (2012) suggests, in the best case, the empathetic rupture enabled through hunger strikes precludes us from jumping into immediate, mostly charitable, action, but rather asks for a deeper understanding of processes that brought us here in the first place. It is this form of relationality that Sabsay, Gambetti and Butler (2016) suggest becomes possible when vulnerability is reframed not as an opposition to but as a condition of resistance. Collapsing the difference between vulnerability and resistance might not only reframe vulnerability as a potential space of agency for the object of empathy but also deconstruct the invulnerability of the subject of empathetic action. Bringing back the larger Butlerian framework of ethics that weaves through this chapter might make this tension clear. Rather than merely extending the forms of grievability through representations of suffering (that easily reinforce paternalist forms of biopower), we might need to more carefully think about vulnerability as shared yet unequally distributed conditions. This does not mean a sentimental affirmation of “we all suffer” but rather a giving up of the fantasy of self-mastery that reinstalls the spectator as the ethical saviour within border regimes of humanitarian securitisation.

This form of “being undone” by the other (Butler, 2006, p.23), I want to suggest, opens up a space in which different forms of political alliances might emerge. In taking the risk of leaving the space of being unsettled prematurely, what I think arises in the cracks of the performance of hunger strikes is the suggestion of a different form of affective solidarity that does not emerge through a form of feeling for or with, but a shared outrage at and concern for the structures productive of violence and social death. As seen in the hunger strike, the performative reenactment of the violence inflicted upon the body is not meant to evoke sympathy but rather to call out the processes that made this act necessary in the first place. As such affective engagement is redirected away from the body that violence is inflicted upon to the entities inscribing that violence, hunger strikes ask us to find fault with the system, not the body. And whereas we might not always know where this “system” might be

located or where to look for it, the moment of hesitance can create an ethos of looking out for possible explanations.

In trying to find a different ground from which to think feminist solidarity, Hemmings (2012) suggests a similar line of argumentation. Disputing dominant approaches within feminist theory that would try to ground feminism either in fixed identity categories or processes of empathetic identification, she suggests that what might potentially unite feminist subjects is not their shared womanhood or empathetic concern for each other, but rather an affective dissonance between the world as it is and how we imagine it to be otherwise. In order for this discontent to emerge, however, she argues that first "an affective shift" must occur that makes dissatisfaction a felt and acknowledged reality (p.157). Such an affective shift always depends on the particular standpoint of the subject and as such keeps conflict and antagonism at the heart of any form of unified political action. Hemmings is further careful to point out that no one event would necessarily create such outcome: affective dissonance cannot guarantee feminist politicisation or even a resistant mode. And yet, it just might..." (p.157). Bearing witness to hunger strikes does not necessarily lead to states of anger, bewilderment, sadness, rage or fear that might engender other forms of affective solidarity. Quite the opposite, it can lead to dismissal ("they should be happy to be here!"), disengagement ("I can't watch this!"), or protectionism and hostility ("someone deport them!"). As such, just like the invocation of empathy through scenes of suffering, the affective generation of solidarity through actions like hunger strikes is highly precarious and can always fail. It does not necessitate any form of anti-nationalist (re-)politicisation or even resistant mode. And yet, it just might...

While I consequently suggest an affective solidarity that starts from our relationship to structures of violence rather than the pain of others, it seems to pose more questions than it answers. Because what would make this anger (or other affect) a potentially unifying condition, if not empathy? In other words, if processes of dehumanisation are (part of) the problem, how would bearing witness to actions like hunger strikes lead to solidary actions and not just further violence if not through processes of empathetic identification through which the other has already been acknowledged as a subject beforehand? Rather than a simple opposition to empathy, what I am calling for here then might be closer to what Yasmin Gunaratnam (2012) has described as developing more complex ways of "learning to be affected" (p.117).

Maybe then my suggestion is not altogether that different from alternative visions of “good” empathy that other feminist and queer scholars have suggested in their journey through the complex landscape of compassionate politics (e.g. Berlant, 1998; Rai, 2002; or Pedwell, 2014a). Relatedly, we could question whether this conceptualisation of affective solidarity not bring in the erasure of difference through the backdoor. If shared anger, fear or concern for the structures of control of violence becomes the condition that we can all agree upon, does this not easily erase the difference that this approach was supposedly aimed to keep intact? Does it, rather than conjuring, do away with the spectres of agency, power, and difference so that I can re-emerge as the ethical subject (again)? The question of affective solidarity thus remains an open one. Yet while I want to keep it open, I remain attached to the fantasy of an affective solidarity of the otherwise.

6. Conclusion

In a recent exhibition at the Tate Modern, artist Tania Bruguera created a *Forced Empathy Room*. Adjoining the grand turbine hall, she built a “crying room” filled with tear-inducing air. Before entering, visitors pass a security guard who stamps their hand with a constantly changing number. When I enter the space it is 10,110,926 — the number of people who migrated to another country in the last year plus the number of migrant deaths counted since the start of the project. In the description outside the space, the room is advertised as a place in which “a shared emotional response” will be created that might combat a social “sense of apathy” towards migration. Walking inside, however, all I encounter are perplexed people standing in a white cubicle, rubbing their eyes and looking slightly embarrassed. Coffee table books on contemporary art in their hands, two people next to me stare at the stamps on their hands. Like me they seem to wonder whether they are engaging in the right affective response. How is this empathy supposed to feel? What does it enable? And are we engaging in a politically transformative act of affective relationality or a largely self-referential gesture of sentimentality (that we can at least later tell our friends about)? The artwork takes no ultimate decision on the value and promise of empathy. Yet we leave with a sting in our eyes.

In this analysis, I have tried to leave a similar sting. Through an analysis of three visual scenes I have tried to complicate some of the hopeful attachments to the

promise of empathy that seem to permeate late liberal knowledge production in both its mainstream as well as feminist modes. Therein, I have suggested that the split between “good” and “bad” empathy that is often affirmed within feminist scholarship might not be as easily established nor as theoretically helpful as it might seem.

Whereas images of migrants circulating within the theatre of pity seem to mostly invite empathetic responses that might be labelled as “bad” empathy (in which power hierarchies are reinscribed through a victimising subject-object relation), travelogues might seem to invoke forms of “good” or at least “better” empathy (a subject to subject dialogue that opens up spaces for a more complex engagements with power, difference and agency). Questioning how within the context of contemporary migration and European border regimes both seem to circulate within the same frames of liberal recognition and national belonging, I remain hesitant about how easily they might be disentangled. Rather, I have suggested that empathy, in either articulation, folds into the bio-political modes of humanitarian securitisation that work exactly through caring for some deserving subjects while relegating others into spheres of non-intelligibility in detention camps, border points, and the mass grave of the Mediterranean.

This does not mean that my argument is simply or ultimately against empathy. It is, likewise, not to say that the circulation of empathy in these scenes is void or that the many civil society actions launched in the name of a new Willkommenkultur were not to be valued. In a moment of growing right-wing extremism in a range of global locations and a neo-fascist president in the White House even the most sentimental tropes of empathetic identification and altruism for marginalised populations seem to be under threat. As such, a simple rejection of empathy could lead into an empty politics of cynicism. On more pragmatic grounds, we might even suggest that at a political disjuncture like this one, sentimental forms of empathy are a crucial condition to be fostered within the public sphere exactly because they are so amenable and easily invokable within a (still) dominantly liberal framework of recognition. Borrowing from Spivak (1993), we could think of forms of “strategic” compassion as crucial strategies for affective mobilisation within the public sphere, which seems to be exactly the form of affective politics that a range of activists,

NGOs and other advocacy groups seem to currently embrace in regard to contemporary border politics.⁴⁷

While I want to keep the question of how to deal with liberal affects in times of waning liberalism open — which I come back to it in the Conclusion of this thesis — I believe that it is important to think beyond the so readily available promise of compassion. I am cautious of the stifling effect that an increasingly right-wing consensus has on the political imaginary of the left. The radical left (however we might define it) suddenly finds itself in the position of defending liberal notions that it would otherwise try to move beyond. In this chapter, I have argued that we should not fall into this trap and have kept a critical imaginary open from which other forms of political action might emerge. More concretely, I have tried to think and feel through what other forms of affective attachments are made possible when we try to move beyond the warm pull of empathetic engagement and turn to scenes of the abject that usually need to be cut out from scenes of empathetic encounter. Thinking through what it means to bear witness to hunger strikes, I have suggested a different form of affective solidarity that, rather than emerging through feeling for or with others, arises out of a shared concern for the border regimes and systems of global inequality that are productive of violence, death and precarity. Such an affective solidarity might emerge through a politics of difficulty, discomfort and outrage, a feeling for the ultimately shared yet highly unequally distributed conditions of vulnerability, or maybe even through forms of empathetic engagement. In any case, its (non)-emergence might play a crucial role in the ways in which an increasingly violent present might be able to be resisted.

⁴⁷ I am playing here on Spivak's (1993) conceptualisation of a "strategic use of essentialism" as a technique that minorities might use to make political claims based on otherwise unstable and potentially disempowering identity categories (p.4). However, she herself remains critical towards such strategic use of political categories as they can become an "alibi for proselytizing academic essentialisms" (*ibid*).

Chapter Five

In the Face of Anger: New Year's in Cologne and the Sexual Politics of Resentment

1. Introduction

Whereas in summer 2015 national and international media still reported about Germany as a bastion of humanitarianism that opened its door to refugees, and published pictures of German citizens waiting for migrants at train stops with blankets, balloons and welcome signs, in January 2016 this discourse took a drastic turn. After New Year's in Cologne, in which several hundred cases of sexual violence, theft and intimidation by racialised men were reported to the police, a wave of anger and indignation was unleashed into the public sphere. CDU vice-Chancellor Volker Bouffier famously declared that "Cologne changed everything" and captured how Cologne operated as a turning point in the social climate and official government policy of Germany (Birnbaum, 2016, 9 Jan). Media stories evoked the image of a country overrun by groups of violent, mainly Muslim, migrants from North Africa and the Middle East who take advantage of a weak and overwhelmed state — abusive foreigners that do not respect sexual freedom and gender equality and mistreat the generosity that they have been offered. The story of a compassionate country healing its dark past through humanitarian action that I described in the last chapter was replaced with the narrative of a naïve nation that is punished for its open border policies and that needs to stop covering up the harsh reality of migrant criminality and misogyny through a misguided welcome culture.

While in my first analytical chapter, I examined the conditional politics of empathy and the discursive construction of a German "Willkommenskultur" that seemed to have dominated the public sphere for the summer of 2015, in this chapter, I aim to make sense of how anger and indignation accumulated around "Cologne". How can we understand the growing hostility expressed in the outrage about migrants misusing the hospitality of the German nation? What is it about New Year's in Cologne that has sparked such a heated debate and what is it about *sexual* violence in particular that has catalysed such a radical shift in public discourse and national sentiment? This chapter emerges in conversation with a range of studies that have

tried to make sense of the current political moment in which anger and the politics of resentment are often identified as key forces behind the rise of nativist nationalism as seen, for instance, in the rise of Trump (Anderson, 2016; Cramer, 2016; Hochschild, 2016), Brexit (Bhambra, 2017a; Koch, 2017; McKenzie, 2017) or the Front National (Eribon, 2013; Stoler, 2016). It challenges popular political commentary and sociological analyses that frame resentment primarily as a reaction of the socially and economically “left behind” to the devastation of neoliberal capitalism and points out how anger cannot be understood without paying close attention to the racial, sexual and gendered hierarchies that it grows out of and works to protect.

More specifically, I argue that to understand anger we need to follow closely how it is socially and historically scripted. Anger does not describe a universally evil nor an innocent affective force, but an unequally distributed emotion that is imbued with the mark of history. Based on this understanding, I suggest that while anger about New Year’s Eve in Cologne operated as a catalyst for an already boiling resentment against the recent refugee migration and worked as an affective adhesive sticking together feminist, liberal and right-wing nationalist positions, it might best be understood as a “resonant echo” (Campt, 2005, p.53) of the colonial past that reverberates powerfully in a time of growing precariousness and challenges to enshrined entitlements in the nation. Contextualising Cologne in a longer series of sexualised panics around racially marked Others, I show how anger aligns itself along the “deep stories” (Hochschild, 2016, p.16) that secure German conceptions of nationality and citizenship through heteronormative constructions of whiteness. As long as these deep stories are not uncovered and retold, I suggest, little will or can be done in trying to challenge anger as a force for growing nativist nationalism in the historical present.

2. Following the Furies: Anger and Resentment in Feminist Theory

Anger is often identified as the affect that defines the political present. Pankaj Mishra (2017) has talked of an *Age of Anger* in which it works as the driving force behind the resurgence of reactionary and right-wing political movements in the 2010s ravaging from Western Europe and the US to India, Brazil and the Philippines. Arlie Hochschild (2016) identifies anger among white rural communities as a crucial force for the erosion of liberal democracy in the US. And Martha Nussbaum (2016b)

affirms that there currently is “no emotion that we need to think harder and more clearly about than anger” (para.1). While the current concern about anger grows out of the current crisis in liberalism, it links back to a longer tradition in Western social and philosophical thought in which anger was the emotion that already kept Aristotle and Seneca up at night.⁴⁸ Within this tradition, anger is commonly defined as an emotional response to a significant damage to something or someone one cares about, a damage that the angry person believes to have been wrongfully inflicted (Nussbaum, 2016a)⁴⁹.

Based on this conceptualisation, anger is often defined as the general term for a range of closely related sub or sister emotions such as resentment, outrage and wrath. These are sometimes differentiated in the hurt that they react to. The philosopher Robert Solomon (1993), for instance, suggests that anger describes a more general affective reaction to having been wronged or offended usually directed towards people of equal standing, resentment is directed towards a hurt inflicted by higher standing individuals while contempt is directed at lower standing individuals (p.211). Others have suggested that anger reacts to a hurt that offends you directly whereas resentment reacts to an attack on your moral values. On a social and phenomenological level, however, these distinctions are difficult to make so that I prefer a more open conceptualisation of anger and its sub-emotions for this analysis. I suggest that it is most helpful to think of these sister affects as differing mainly in terms of intensity, expression and duration. Whereas resentment describes the long-term and silent lingering of anger when it is not or cannot be expressed, fury and wrath mark intense outbursts of anger’s explosive charge.

Given its position as a central political emotion, anger has been and continues to be heatedly debated in feminist theory. What makes anger a problem for liberal feminist thinkers like Nussbaum (2016a) is the idea that anger asks for a form of payback. While anger can also develop passively and eat itself into body and mind (as in the case of holding a grudge or silent resentment), she asserts that anger mostly

⁴⁸ While in *On Anger*, Seneca was outright in his warning of anger as the emotion responsible for revenge, aggression and war, in the *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle paints a more differentiated image and argues that only excessive forms of anger and rage are a problem for proper ethical conduct. For a more thorough discussion of their philosophies of anger see Nussbaum (2016a)

⁴⁹ Nussbaum takes this definition from the *Nichomachean Ethics* as probably the most common theoretical source for defining anger.

comes to be projected outwards and asks for retaliation for the hurt that has been inflicted. For Nussbaum, this form of retaliation is opposed to actual justice as “inflicting pain on the wrongdoer does not help restore the thing that was lost” (p.20) As payback further easily leads to violent spirals of retaliation, she promotes “compassion and a forward-looking spirit of generosity and cooperation” to achieve more lasting forms of transitional justice (p.22).⁵⁰ Wendy Brown (1995) has similarly suggested that anger and resentment are politically unhelpful emotions. She suggests that resentment keeps us attached to the object of hurt rather than helping us to move beyond it and warns of building feminist politics and identities upon “wounded attachments” (p.52).

Given this assault on anger as a dangerous political emotion, a range of anti-racist and queer feminist scholars have tried to halt the slaughtering of the Furies on the altar of negative affect. Audre Lorde (1997), for instance, has pointed out how the general devaluation of anger has often meant a silencing of black women in politics. While anger expressed, for instance, as cold insistence might be read as a sign of strength in men in power, angry women in general, and women of colour in particular, are often marked as excessive and beyond rational thought and are in danger of being excluded from the sphere of the political. Speaking against such epistemic violence, Lorde (1997) defends anger as a crucial resource in her fight against racism and affirms that “anger is loaded with information and energy” (p.280). Building upon these insights as well as the long tradition of anger activism in queer movements⁵¹, Ahmed (2014) similarly suggests that anger and resentment do not necessitate a politics of retaliation, but can likewise be the fuel and messenger of an ongoing critique of the worlds we inhabit. While they can attach to the source of hurt, they might likewise go beyond it and gesture at different worlds beyond the horizon of wounded attachments. Anger from this perspective is not the opposite of

⁵⁰ To underline her point, she evokes the story of the Furies in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* — female underground deities of vengeance usually represented as beastly creatures having snakes for hair, dog's heads, bat's wings, and blood-shot eyes. After the reformation of the Athenian law system from a cycle of blood vengeance to a formalized legal system at the end of the *Oresteia*, the Furies are transformed into the human Kindly Ones — gentle, eloquent and wise protectors of justice. She, consequently, evokes anger as not only politically unhelpful but as antithetical to proper systems of justice in Western civilisation.

⁵¹ The most prominent examples for the importance of anger in queer thought and activism might be seen in Act Up - United in Anger as well as the British queer organisation OutRage! which both channelled anger and hurt into one of the most powerful movements of the 20th century. For an analysis of anger in Act Up, see Deborah Gould (2009).

proper justice, but is part and parcel of the move towards righting the wrongs of history.⁵² Rather than a moral rejection of anger, these scholars, consequently, offer a more complex understanding of anger as a potentially valuable affect.

What, however, often slips out of focus in these queer and anti-racist feminist revaluations of anger is that anger is not primarily a force that challenges but often works to defend the status quo. As Michael Kimmel (2017) suggests, anger is crucially linked to expectations — as an event is more likely to be perceived as a loss or hurt, when the person has the expectation that it is not supposed to happen (e.g. a waiter serving you the wrong dish). Expectations as a sense of entitlement lead to stronger feelings of being treated unfairly and a larger likelihood to act even more forcefully upon them (e.g. demanding to speak to the manager). In his studies on white masculinities, he calls this psychosocial dynamic “aggrieved entitlement” (p.31). He suggests that feeling entitled and not getting what you expected is a recipe for humiliation that easily ends in bursts of outrage and retaliation. It is this form of anger and resentment that scholars like Hochschild (2016) identify in white downward mobile communities in the US. She suggests that anger in this context emerges as a reaction to a perceived threat of loss of status and privilege and works to keep social inequalities intact, and even helps to further augment them.

What we, then, get in contemporary discussions of anger in feminist theory is a bifurcated theoretical terrain in which anger is framed as a crucial force for seeking justice and redress, on the one hand, and a defensive force that cements power and secures inequality and entitlements, on the other hand. Integrating the ideas of Didier Fassin (2013) into this feminist debate might be helpful for solving this dead-lock in political thinking. He suggests that anger should be understood not only from a phenomenological perspective but also as social and historical position and differentiates between states of resentment and ressentiment.⁵³ Ressentiment, for him, is a particular state of embodied memory that develops out of long-established experiences of injustice: “ressentiment is more than an affect, it is an anthropological condition related to a historical situation of victim — a description that does not suit

⁵² Insightful perspectives on this point can be found in black feminist perspectives on prison abolition and transformative justice that do not dismiss anger as a political force yet also do not understand it as the end point of political action (e.g. Davis, 2011; Davis, Davis and Davis, 2016).

⁵³ He makes this distinction based on the theorisation of ressentiment in Friedrich Nietzsche and resentment in the work of Adam Smith.

the ordinary experience of resentment" (p.256). He suggests that these forms of ressentiment can, for instance, be observed in the experiences of racial subjugation, torture and dispossession that blacks underwent during apartheid in South Africa, and can help explain why forms of reconciliation in the Truth and Reconciliation Committees were often insufficient in delivering (a sense of) justice.

Resentment, on the other hand, Fassin (2013) suggests, is a more diffuse, everyday affective experience of indignation and anger: "the resentful man is not directly or indirectly exposed to oppression and domination, but he expresses discontent about a state of affairs that does not satisfy him" (p.260).⁵⁴ Whereas ressentiment is always marked by a direct experience of historical injustice, resentment can also be experienced in place for someone else or out of a more general feeling of being treated unfairly that emerges from ones social position. He identifies resentment in the French police who articulate a sense of victimhood and feel scapegoated by the public, a feeling that has little to do with the power and trust that the police actually enjoys in society. Given the more diffuse character of resentment, he suggests that resentment is more easily mobilised and attaches to a variety of objects, as seen in the rancour that French police harbour for racialised youth and other marginalised populations, and that is further harnessed by government discourse (subjects marked by ressentiment, on the other hand, are less likely to not know or forget the subjects that hurt them).

This differentiation helps us to untie the Gordian knot of anger's bifurcated position not only in feminist theory but in contemporary political debate more generally. As Fassin (2013) suggests, in current political discourse resentment and ressentiment are often falsely equated such as in discussions that frame protests in the banlieues and racialised police violence as spirals of equivalent affective retaliation. It gives us a sense of how scenes of *ressentiment* discussed in the previous chapter on the refugee strike, or the actual experience of sexual violence that several women suffered during the New Year's night in Cologne might be different from the more diffuse states of *resentment* directed at migrants and racialised populations in Germany that were expressed in the aftermath of Cologne. In making sense of resentment, then, it is important to understand how more diffuse affects of

⁵⁴ While I object to Fassin's use of the generic masculine, it might be fitting for the description of resentment that is often infused with and driven by feelings of fragile masculinity (Kimmel, 2017).

indignation and hurt are activated and mobilised. Rather than taking them at face value, we need to understand how anger and resentment emerge in relation to other emotions such as shame and fear and be aware that the cause and object of anger might not always be the same. This point is most clearly made in psychoanalytic theories of anger, in which anger is understood as an affect that shields the subject from experiencing states of shame, hurt or fear that might otherwise overwhelm and threaten a person's stable sense of self (Tavris, 1989). In other words, while resentment might, for instance, be caused by a general sense of precarity it might also, or even more likely, be displaced onto even more precarious subjects instead of the social and economic structures responsible for this precarity (Kimmel, 2017).

From this perspective, it is crucial to examine how anger and resentment are mobilised in some ways and not others. As Ahmed puts it, anger "is dependent on how one reads what one is against" (Ahmed, 2014, p.174). The object of anger is never just given but needs to be analysed in its historical and contextual specificity. Hochschild (2016) has referred to this process as digging up the "deep stories", the sedimented narratives, that come to structure what we not only believe but also feel to be true about the world (p.16). What are the frames and discourses through which anger is invoked and articulated? How does anger interpellate some bodies as the subject of, while positioning others as the object of this anger? In other words, how do certain figures emerge as a threat to self and the nation and why do they come to be read as such in the first place? With this in mind, I want to turn to the analysis of how anger was articulated in public discourse in the wake of New Years in Cologne, and the political demands that were expressed in its aftermath. How was anger articulated, and what political demands were voiced in the debates following the night of Cologne? Who was positioned as the object and subject of resentment? And what narratives were mobilised in expressing and justifying the outpouring of anger into the public sphere? In doing so, I first turn to the dominant media debate and pay particular attention to prominent public figures and political authorities that shaped the discourse after Cologne.

3. Representing Cologne

a. The Problem of Talking about Cologne

Before turning to the analysis, I want to say a few words about the New Year's night in Cologne that anger accumulated around. On New Year's Eve 2015 in Cologne, several hundreds of cases of sexual assault, theft and intimidation took place at the New Year's celebration outside the central train station in the centre of Cologne.⁵⁵ The crimes were followed by a volatile debate about migration and Islam in which the crimes were primarily linked to Muslim migrants and asylum seekers from the Middle East and Northern Africa. Given this overdetermined framing, it is nearly impossible to talk about Cologne without affirming a particular construction of the event. As Sabine Hark and Paula-Irene Villa (2017) have argued, Cologne has become a "signature" event — an event that everyone seems to have a clear judgement on, and that yet remains "notoriously unclear" and contested (p.9). This is exactly what drew me to the event as I wanted to understand in more depth what this contestation can tell us about how anger circulates in the historical present in Germany. Presenting parts of this chapter at conferences and talking to other people about writing it, however, the most common questions concerned what *actually* happened. While some people were eager to hear their perspectives confirmed that the crimes were the actions of an organised sex mob of violent migrants, others wanted to hear that the cases of sexual abuse did not actually take place and were simply fabricated by the press. Uncomfortable with both longings for a politics of simplicity as well as my own desire to sweep any such questions under the carpet of misled empiricism, let me say a few words about why I want to keep the question of "what actually happened" open.

By the 18th of January 2016 official police protocols recorded 821 criminal charges out of which about 359 involved charges of sexual violence at the night of New Year's in Cologne (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2017, 23 Mar, p.15). While only about 100 charges were made on New Year's night and the immediate days after, the large majority of the charges were brought up after the 4th of January when

⁵⁵ The plateau in front of the cathedral of Cologne functions as the site for one of the largest New Year's celebrations in Germany. While that night several cases of sexual abuse were also reported in Hamburg, most cases took place in Cologne so that the largest city in Nordrhein-Westfalen became the centre of the media spotlight.

the media discussion had already ensued. Given the delayed accusations, a range of commentators have questioned the accuracy of the official numbers and argued that the media attention and the racialisation of the perpetrators had lowered the threshold for reporting and potentially led to several false accusations.⁵⁶ Others suggested that the few perpetrators who were arrested and convicted did not exclusively come from Northern Africa and the Middle East, and that many of them had been in Germany long before the recent refugee migration (e.g. Bax, 2017, 1 Jan). While I agree with these arguments, the sometimes-implicit suggestion that the incidences of sexual abuse in Cologne did not really happen is not only empirically untenable but also politically vexed. As activists fighting sexual violence have long pointed out, one of the biggest road-blocks for feminist critiques of sexual violence is that victims' accounts are dismissed and not taken seriously. As Sineb El Masrar (2016) argues, debates about crimes committed by racialised and/or religious minorities often end in either-or dichotomies in which you are either pulled into racist and anti-Muslim hate speech or end up excusing attacks and forms of violence that you firmly stand against. Moreover, such accounts easily buy into what Imogen Tyler (2006) describes as the common romanticisation of subjects on the receiving end of migratism and racism, in particular refugees, who come to be framed as eternal victims that cannot do any harm and are denied complex, agentic subject-positions.

A logical way of how anger comes to circulate around this event would then be to argue that Cologne was a particularly violent event, an unseen scale of sexual abuse. And indeed, in the debates following Cologne the police department was commonly quoted as confronting a “completely new dimension of crime” (e.g. Burger, 2016, 4 Jan). A range of feminist critics have shed doubt on such argumentation and pointed out that similar cases of sexual abuse happened every year at Carnival or the Oktoberfest. As long as perpetrators are mostly white Germans, however, they suggest sexual abuse and molestation are played down and seen as a trivial offences, a “gentlemen’s offence” (e.g. Lohaus and Wizorek, 2016, 7 Jan). Further, looking at official numbers that attest that nearly every second woman in Germany reports experiencing sexual violence at some point in their life — mostly at

⁵⁶ Blogger and media critic Dennis Knake (2016, 28 Jan) for instance, wondered about how the numbers of crimes and perpetrators that were associated with the night in Cologne constantly grew and compiled a list of the most recent cases in which sexual abuse committed by racialised men in Germany were made up by right-wing groups.

home and by people they know — it is obvious that large scale sexual abuse in Germany is by no means a problem that emerged with Cologne (Bundesministerium, 2004).

However, as María do Mar Castro Varela (2016) points out “the defence that sexism is also a problem in the rest of society ..., might be true, yet it is not really an analysis” (para.2). While it might give us a sense of how outrage about sexual abuse sticks to some bodies while passing over others (Ahmed, 2014), an argument of equivalence only gets us so far as it is in danger of flattening the specificities of different cases of sexual abuse and closes conversations with feminists who work on the complex intersectional politics of addressing sexual abuse within migrant, religious and communities of colour in Germany. Most importantly, as Carolyn Pedwell (2007) has shown in her intricate analysis of feminist argumentations of equivalence⁵⁷, analogies might be a forceful tool for interrupting essentialist argumentations, yet they often obscure how race, religion and nationality are crucial for the ways in which particular events come to be constructed differently. Rather than affirming or prematurely dismissing, I consequently condemn all cases of sexual abuse that did take place during that night, yet want to keep the exact contours of what actually happened open. What I am mainly interested in, instead, is how New Year’s in Cologne was framed as an object of anger, and how sexual abuse became legible as a problem of national concern.

b. Catalysing Anti-Migrant Sentiment

The discussion around cases of mass sexual abuse in Cologne by what tabloids like *Bild* referred to as “sex mobs” of Northern African migrants (“Wer seid ihr”, 2016, 5 Jan) unleashed a wave of anger and indignation into the public sphere. Right wing figures who had long been critical of the welcome culture of the summer of 2015 saw themselves confirmed in their worst nightmares, and revelled in having been right

⁵⁷ Pedwell’s (2007) work dissects feminist arguments of equivalence such as analogies between “African” practices of female genital cutting (FGC) and “Western” body modifications. She suggests that while such arguments can be powerful for countering cultural essentialism they often erase differences of race, nation and cultural difference and can conceal geo-political relations of power and privilege.

about the “dangers of migration”. Oliver Kehrl (2017, 29 Dec) from the Christian Democrats (CDU) evoked the dehumanising language of floods and waves so common to securitising discourses of migration to warn that “the loss of control, that we experienced in 2015 along the German borders, now swept over to Cologne”. The then head of the far right party, the Alternative for Germany (AFD), Frauke Petry similarly triumphantly claimed that the events were “the appalling consequence of a catastrophic migration and asylum politics” (“Übergriffe”, 2016, 05 Jan) and PEGIDA organised several marches in major cities including Cologne, carrying “rapefugees not welcome” signs that likewise popped up in forms of stickers in bars, lamp posts and other urban surfaces across the country. The debate following Cologne consequently directly intertwined with nationalist fears of “Überfremdung”⁵⁸ and the “Islamisation of the Western World” that groups like PEGIDA and the AFD had successfully been stirring up for several years now.

A call for harsher border controls that directly linked the New Year’s night to the recent refugee migration, however, was not only expressed by a few voices on the right, but was apparent across the political spectrum. The minister of Justice Heiko Maas, from the Social Democrats (SPD) spoke of a ”break of civilisation” (Zivilisationsbruch) (Fried, 2016, 07 Jan) — a term that not only invoked evolutionary understandings of civilisation pertinent to colonial discourses, but that in Germany had so far been confined to discussions of the Holocaust.⁵⁹ Boris Palmer from the Green Party asserted that “our generous help has been abused” (Kade, 2016, 12 Jul) and even Sarah Wagenknecht, head of the socialist party Die Linke, who still had an unconditional right to asylum enshrined in their party manifesto, declared that “who misuses their right to hospitality loses their right to hospitality” (Hagen, 2016, 12 Jan). Within this logic of “narcissistic injury”, (Kohut, 1972; see also last chapter, Chapter 4) rather than crimes to be punished by legal procedure, the events of Cologne became framed as signs of ungratefulness that justify the revoking of the right to asylum, and legitimise practices of deportation and detention. Even

⁵⁸ This term is difficult to translate. It describes the fear of “being overwhelmed or overrun by foreignness”. The term has long been used in debates against migration, Islam and difference and it is telling that the German language now has a word for this affective condition.

⁵⁹ A concept that was popularised by Dan Diner (1996) to describe the Holocaust as an exceptional crime of universal human importance. For a postcolonial discussion of this concept, its history and some of its tensions and Eurocentric assumptions, see Aram Ziai (2016).

international media like the *New York Times* called for “closing Germany’s borders to new arrivals”, “beginning an orderly deportation process for able-bodied young men” and “giving up the fond illusion that Germany’s past sins can be absolved with a reckless humanitarianism in the present” (Douthat, 2016, 9 Jan).⁶⁰

In these debates, Cologne seemed to have worked as a catalyst for an already boiling resentment against the recent refugee migration. Congruently, the debate after Cologne focused not only on migration and Islam, but also came to target the state, media and the feeling rules of welcome culture. Firstly, the heated debate around Cologne intertwined with long-standing resentment against a state believed to have turned its back on its citizens. Even before Cologne several media outlets had set the state’s expenditure for migration in competition with other welfare programs asking “Who should pay for this?” (Raffelhüsschen, 2015, 9 Nov) and asserted that the state put citizens at risk by letting criminals and terrorists into the country. In the wake of Cologne, this resentment found an outlet and focused in particular on the failure of the police. The head of Cologne’s police force Wolfgang Albers was fired days after the event, and at next year’s New Year’s Eve celebration in Cologne new surveillance systems were implemented, police presence increased and racial profiling was explicitly endorsed — on New Year’s 2016 the police in Cologne proudly tweeted how they were successfully inspecting hundreds of “Nafris” (a racist short term for “Northern African intensive offenders”).⁶¹ Moreover, right-wing commentators called for Merkel to take full responsibility and step down and attacked Hannelore Kraft, the social democratic head of Nordrhein-Westfalen who was long heralded as a potential future chancellor. She was ridiculed for her soft approach in handling the situation, and lost the coming state elections in the heartland of the SPD.⁶²

Second, anger was directed at the media. While newspapers, radio and TV-stations seemed to report about little else than Cologne, public commentators like the

⁶⁰ In the international debate, in addition to anger and resentment we can observe a sense of malice and Schadenfreude for having known better. Anglo-American media and political commentators, in particular, indulged in having been right in not following Merkel’s naïve and arrogant policies. For a telling articulation of this sentiment, see, for instance, the commentary piece by Ross Douthat (2016, 9 Jan) from the *New York Times* that I quoted earlier.

⁶¹ It turned out that the term has been used by the police for years, which speaks to the enshrined practices of racial profiling within the German police force.

⁶² Her defeat in the 2017 elections can of course not be solely attributed to Hannelore Kraft’s position in the aftermath of Cologne, but has definitely contributed to it.

member of parliament Hans Peter-Friedrich from the Christian Social Union (CSU) complained about a “Schweigekartell” (silence cartel) of the public broadcasters (“Ex-Minister”, 2016, 6 Jan). He referred in particular to public TV-stations that — given the ethical standards of the German journalism association — did not immediately report the ethnic and religious background of the perpetrators. Particularly in right-wing forums, these arguments cemented the already established notion that Germany was held captive by a “Lügenpresse” (lying press)⁶³ which intentionally keeps their audiences misinformed about the real costs of migration. But also liberal newspapers like *Der Tagesspiegel* asserted that “radical feminists and great moguls of political correctness relativize the crimes of Cologne” (Martenstein, 10 Jan) and *Der Spiegel* cheered that “Cologne is the beginning of the end of political correctness” (ref). Here commentators attacked not only anti-racist feminists who tried to question the conflation of sexual abuse with race and religion (whose efforts I discuss in more depth later) but also the “politically correct” debates of welcome culture in which people were supposedly not allowed to voice what they had suspected the whole time: that migrants were criminals, sexual abusers who do not respect the values and rules of the host-nation.

Third, the events congruently intertwined with a long-standing resentment against Gutmenschen (do-gooders) and the “feeling rules” (Hochschild, 1979) of welcome culture during the summer of 2015. In the context of the US, Laurent Berlant (2016b) suggests that what made Trump so successful was how he embraced anger as a force of anti-repression that would free people from the shackles of liberal feelings like empathy, shame and mutual respect. This dynamic, that I analyse in more depth in the Conclusion of this thesis, could similarly be observed in Germany, where anger was enacted as a freeing from the “feeling rules” (Hochschild, 1979) that demanded empathy, respect or at least quiet retraction in relation to migrants arriving at the shores of Europe. Cologne was seen as the event that would unmask these misguided attitudes so that now people could finally call things as they are and politicians like the Minister of Interior Thomas De Maizière (CDU) called for finally taking the worries of “common people” seriously (Sauter, 2016, 19 Jan). The

⁶³ The current popularity of this term is often understood in relation to the vocabulary of fake news used by Trump and his allies in the English language. However, the term Lügenpresse is closely tied to the history of National Socialism. Particularly during the 1930s, the Nazis used the term to attack the international press and to propagate antisemitic conspiracy theories.

discourse around Cologne, consequently, mobilised discourses of victimisation that posited that “common people” were not only attacked by migrants but also betrayed by the state, media and civil society. Discourses around Cologne, then, not only offered an outlet for anger but also provided legitimisation for its uninhibited expression in the public sphere.

The outpouring of anger after the night of Cologne, thus, should not simply be understood as a spread of far-right sentiment and rhetoric but also reveals swelling forms of resentment that lurked underneath the conditional logic of welcome culture. An event like Cologne acted as a powerful outlet for people to resolve the moral duty and responsibility that the arrival of people in Germany demanded of them without appearing compassionless. If migrants are after all — as always suspected — criminals and sexual abusers, we need not be so morally correct any more, but can fall back into the fantasy of an imperfect but ultimately just global order. While “we” have tried our best, “they” are threatening us and show no respect or gratitude — allowing people to reverse a structural power relation into one of individual hurt and threat. Similar dynamics could be observed after the terrorist attacks of Paris and Berlin in which refugees shifted from being framed as “victims of terror” to “terrorists under disguise” (Holzberg, Kolbe and Zaborowski, 2018, p.543). Yet, while I am convinced that Cologne was less the trigger than the catalyst of already existent resentments, a simple release model would underestimate the role that gender, race and sexuality played in the construction of and emotional reaction to Cologne. After all it was not just *any* form of crime but *sexual* abuse that the discussions following Cologne circled around.

c. Feminist Convergences

What made the debate about Cologne so powerful is how it was fought on feminist grounds. Major conservative newspapers like *Die Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* blamed the events on a “toxic mixture of North African-Arab culture and religion” (Schirmbeck, 2015, 11 Jan) and *Die Welt* declared that “migration imports an archaic image of women” (Ghadban, 2016, 1 Feb). Within these narratives, sexual abuse is framed as a novel form of gendered violence introduced by racialized Others. Statements like these mobilize a clash of civilisations discourse in which Europe is framed as a sexually liberal place of gender equality threatened by the misogynist,

backwards and rather nebulous migrant Other (Farris, 2017, Sabsay, 2012). As Éric Fassin (2010) suggests, the “image of the sexual clash of civilizations” has become one of the key ways in which the politics of migration are secured in Europe (p.509). In the aftermath of Cologne, this image was probably nowhere more evident than in the cover pages of the conservative *Focus* and the traditionally leftist liberal *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (see e.g. “Kritik”, 2016, 12 Jan). They respectively depicted a naked white woman covered in black hand prints; and a black arm reaching into the crotch of a white female silhouette. The accompanying subtitles directed blame at “sex-attacks by migrants” (the sub-title of the Focus cover) and “young Muslims [who] cannot face the other sex in a relaxed way” (the accompanying text of the SZ cover).⁶⁴

What these images show, is how representations of race (black hands/handprints, white body/silhouette), religion (young Muslims) and nation and citizenship (sex attacks by migrants) are conflated into one unholy assemblage of the “foreign sexual abuser” (see also Dietze, 2016b). This figure is turned into an object of knowledge and control. Yet, given its unclear contours, the foreign sexual abuser ultimately remains what Ahmed (2004) has referred to as an unclear, a “ghostlike figure in the present, who gives us nightmares about the future, as an anticipated future of injury” (p.124). According to Ahmed, the “impossibility of reducing [negative affect] to a particular body allows [it] to circulate” and attach to all kinds of racialised bodies deemed to be a threat to the nation (ibid). Rather than blocking the accumulation of affect, then, the shifting and muddled constructions of race, religion and nationality make these representations so affectively powerful, and allow rape to be framed as a threat to the nation. While the images position the black sexual intruder as the object of anger and fear, empathetic concern is directed towards the helpless and abused white female body (that is simultaneously made available for the intrusive gaze of the spectator). As Anne Phillips (2013) suggests, rape has historically been constructed as a “property crime” not as taking anything away from women but as theft from other men, father and husbands robbed of their wives, daughters and honour (p.42). Therefore, it has operated as a particularly salient motif

⁶⁴ While the editors of the generally left-leaning *Süddeutsche Zeitung* later apologised for the racist imagery, the chief editor of the more conservative *Focus*, Ulrich Reitz, defended their cover by asserting that who says that the cover is sexist or racist “is afraid of the truth” (“Rassistische Titelbilder”, 2016, 10 Jan).

for the construction of the nation that is often figured through recourse to the vulnerable white female body that needs to be protected by the masculine powers of the state. Rather than *ressentiment* about the violent assault on women, the images consequently seem to articulate a more diffuse sense of *resentment* about a nation presumably under threat from violent migrants.

This logic was likewise mirrored in the unholy alliances between feminist and right-wing commentators. In her book on the New Year's Eve in Cologne, *The Shock*, the public face of feminism in Germany, Alice Schwarzer (2016), variably warned of “fanatical followers of Schiha Islam”, “uprooted, brutalized men from Morocco and Algeria” and “men from ex-colonies who still have a score to settle with the West” and, therefore, intentionally attack the core achievements of German society: gender equality and female emancipation. Her rhetoric frames sexual violence not as a structural form of gendered violence but as a weapon used in geopolitical conflicts. She does not just evoke a classical “clash of civilisations” rhetoric but frames sexual abuse as a conscious strategy of war used by enemies of the nation, and argues that the state needs to react with similar force. In the face of such “terrorism”, she was supported by figures like the influential journalist and self-described “new feminist” Birgit Kelle who argued that, we need “new heroes” — men “who would defend their women with the fist” (Kelle, 2016, 25 May). Rescue came in the shape of Björn Höcke from the AFD who, even before Cologne, has shown his concern for “growing spaces of fear, especially for white blond women” (Zschaler, 2016, 19 Jan), as well as high-ranking politicians like the head of the CSU Horst Seehofer who asserted that Germany needed a “zero tolerance approach towards criminal migrants” and a harsher legal system “with teeth and punch” (“Seehofer will”, 2016, Jan 11).

More liberal voices in the public sphere tried to question this highly militaristic rhetoric. Yet, they similarly cemented discursive borders between the sexually liberated host-nation and the sexually uncontrolled migrant by appealing to a more humanitarian discourse and suggesting that people need to show concern for migrant women who also are the victims of sexualized violence. In articles such as “It's not just after Cologne that women lock their doors” (Heidenreich, 2016, 20 Feb), a range of newspapers covered incidents about sexual violence and abuse in asylum centres. Within these reports, women are not only represented as voiceless victims whose problems stem from their communities rather than the situations of war and deprivation they are fleeing, or the European border regimes that put them in this

position in the first place, but are likewise often positioned as the creators of their presumably oppressive situation. For instance, in an article entitled “Be angry with Muslim women”, Femen-activist Zana Ramadani (2016, 14 Jan) argues that Muslim women, as mothers, pass the “Islamist values” to their sons, which are framed as the driving force for misogyny and sexual violence. Empathetic concern and distancing anger here again rather than as opposites emerge as two sides of the same coin. As in public debates around the veil, Muslim women are framed as victims that are likewise to be blamed for their presumably oppressed position.

The crime of sexual abuse consequently seemed to have worked as an affective adhesive that sticks together far-right, liberal and feminist actors and perspectives. In all three discourses, sexual abuse is articulated through colonial tropes that have long positioned sexual violence as a pathology of the Global South — a problem of predatory, uncivilized men abusing the weak and helpless “third world woman” — while marking the West as space of progressive gender equality (Dhawan, 2013b; Kapur, 2013; Mohanty, 1988; Spivak, 2010 [1988]). In her work on “femonalationalism” Sara Farris (2017) has documented a reactivation of these discourses in current US and Western European politics where discussions around gender equality and gendered violence have become increasingly central for legitimising imperial projects such as the war in Iraq and enforcing border and racialised labour regimes in Europe. In the context of France, Miriam Ticktin (2008) has further shown how only particular orientalist forms of sexual violence become legible as issues of national concern. She defines discourses of sexual abuse as the “language of border control” and shows how orientalist framings of sexual violence work to offer exceptional entry to victims of sexual abuse that reaffirm narratives of gender equality and superior civilisation, while the spectre of the barbaric sexual abuser legitimizes deportation and deterrence for the rest (p.863).

What makes this invocation of feminist rhetoric particular in the current German context, however, is that emerges in relation to a virulent surge of anti-gender politics in which, next to Islam and migration, “gender-mainstreaming”⁶⁵ has

⁶⁵ In contrast to other national contexts in which anti-gender politics are usually incited around the concept of “gender ideology”: in Germany “gender-mainstreaming” has become the favoured term in anti-feminist movements. The term originates in the gender equality goals of the UN and became a popular term in German diversity management initiatives and campaigns.

increasingly been positioned as the other big threat to the nation. As Hark and Villa (2015) point out, within the last years, discussions around issues such as trans rights, gender-neutral language, and the visibility of queer politics have created growing anxiety within both right-wing and liberal circles. Groups of “besorgte Eltern” (concerned parents) have mobilized against the teaching of sexual diversity in schools and it is not unusual for gender professors to be threatened and assaulted.⁶⁶ Far from this happening in opposition to the nationalist feminist rhetoric after Cologne, these discourses often intertwine. Birgit Kelle (2013, 6 Feb), for instance, who blamed the Cologne on archaic forms of patriarchy, simultaneously warns of gender-mainstreaming as a “mad ideology” whose ultimate goal is the destruction of the family. Similarly, shortly after Cologne the infamous essayist Harald Martenstein (2016, Jan 10) argued that “it is about Islam, stupid” and warned of the dangerous image of women that this “ideology” perpetuates. Defending women against Islam, however, did not keep him from continuing his weekly tirades against feminist, queer and trans politics in his weekly column at Germany’s most influential weekly *Die Zeit*, in which he consistently critiques gender studies as an “anti-science” that tries to erase the natural difference between the sexes.

As shown, the uptake of feminist positions for nationalist argumentations within Germany simultaneously reinforces conservative ideas of the family and a biologically essentialist, mostly heterosexual, gender binary.⁶⁷ The question emerges as to how we understand this particular invocation of conservative feminist politics, that works along racial lines while cementing the heterosexual family and a naturalised gender binary. Whereas the convergence of feminist and right-wing politics expressed in the discourse around Cologne is often positioned as a relatively recent phenomenon, I want to suggest that what makes it so amendable for the evocation and mobilisation of anger is how it links back to longer histories. Tracing anger “backward” (Ahmed, 2004, p.102) shows how such seemingly paradoxical invocations of feminism are not new, but link back to the ways in which German citizenship and nationality have been entangled with normative understandings of

⁶⁶ A particularly prominent case were the attacks on Elizabeth Tuider, professor for diversity at the university in Kassel, who became the target of hate speech and death threats in 2014 after publishing a book on sexual pedagogy.

⁶⁷ As such, the German debate is different, for instance, from the more homonational take-up of feminist and queer positions in the Netherlands (Bracke, 2012; Fassin, 2010)

gender and sexuality from their early days within the German Empire. As I show in the following, sexual panics about racialized Others have a long history in German politics, in which the figure of the “foreign sexual abuser” has been a potent figure to secure the nation as white and heterosexual whenever such seemingly stable definitions were at stake.

4. Historicising Cologne

a. Sexual Panics and German Citizenship

In the wake of Cologne, a range of critical feminist commentators have pointed out how the conflation of sexual violence with discourses about race, religion and nationality needs to be understood in relation to colonial and imperial histories. Khola Maryam Hübsch (2016, 20 Apr), for instance, has suggested that during Cologne we see a reformulation of what Spivak has called the colonial rationale of “white men saving brown women from brown men” into the “protection of white women from brown men” (para.7). The figure of the racialized “sexual aggressor” has undoubtedly been productive in a range of different historical and geographical contexts such as in helping to legitimize colonial rule in British India as well as in justifying lynching of Afro-American men during the Jim Crow era and fuelling the prison-industrial complex in the US today (Davis, 1981, 2011). However, such examples do not provide a more in-depth examination of how these tropes have been mobilised in the context of Germany and have, therefore, often been met with dismissal. As explained in the introduction, in Germany, colonial continuities are commonly portrayed as problems of “real” colonial Empires like France and Britain, and the question of race is often pushed aside as a particular social problem and obsession of the US. As Fatima El-Tayeb (2016) argues, however, like in the rest of Europe, contemporary racism and anti-migrant sentiments can only be understood in relation to the legacies of European colonialism as well as Germany’s own colonial and fascist histories.

Based on these insights, I suggest that the sprouting of anger around Cologne cannot be understood without paying close attention to the deep entanglements of nation, race and sexuality within Germany that link back to the construction of German nationhood and the implementation of the first citizenship laws during the colonial Empire in 1919. As Ann Stoler (1995; 2002) has shown so powerfully, in the context of European high imperialism and race science, sexuality played a crucial role

in legitimising colonial rule as it established a clear line between respectable bourgeois white sexuality and the unrestrained barbaric sexuality of the colonized. German colonial rule in South-West and Eastern Africa was similarly based on the image of uncontrolled and excessive black sexuality. While the control of white women was seen as the privilege of the rational white man, El-Tayeb (1999) suggests "black men were not 'real men' since they missed the intellectual and moral qualities that justified male dominance, but at the same time, they symbolized the essence of maleness, an excess of "normal" male sexual aggression" (p.155). The unrestrained sexual impulses of the colonized were a particularly productive trope for justifying colonial rule so that "there was an almost automatic reference to black men's "natural" drive to rape white women, whenever white oppression needed to be portrayed as mere self-defence" (ibid). Discourse of sexual aggression not only positioned colonized subjects as driven by nature and not reason and hence unable to govern themselves, but also evoked the idea of being under attack, which reversed the logic of domination and marked colonialism as an act of self-defence.

The question of sexuality most strongly surfaced in discussions around "miscegenation" and "racial mixing". Interracial sexual affairs and marriages within the colonies threatened the boundaries of the Empire, because it was through marriage that white German men extended the rights of the polis to their wives and children. These bonds questioned the racial purity of a relatively young nation-state eager to establish its superiority not only vis-à-vis the colonized but also other imperial powers, in particular France and Britain (Wildenthal, 2001). Therefore, interracial marriages were outlawed per decree in most of the colonies by 1912, and in 1913 a new nationality law was established that enshrined the principle of *jus sanguinis* — extending citizenship according to one's bloodline (El-Tayeb, 1999)⁶⁸. Sexual tropes of excessive black female sexuality that lured white men into unnatural relations, as well as that of black men raping white women were

⁶⁸ These laws are based on the Prussian citizenship laws, established in 1871, that were likewise based on the logic of *jus sanguinis* and that became the basis of the legal system of the German Empire. However, during this time different federal citizenship laws still played a crucial role and a German citizen was anybody who held citizenship of one of the states of the German Empire. The first national German citizenship laws are, therefore, usually traced back to the legislations of 1913.

evoked to justify these legislations. They not only marked consensual love relations and sexual affairs as contaminating the nation, but also as ultimately coerced and involuntary (Wildenthal, 2001). From its inception, definitions of citizenship in the German Empire were based on gendered and sexualized discourses of racial purity that evoked Germany as “a raced and gendered body”, made vulnerable through “the female body as the vehicle, conduit, or site of entry for potential pollution” (Campt, 2005, p.41).

After Germany lost the First World War and its colonies, the outrage about interracial sexual relations would resurface again with full force when the French occupation army positioned several hundreds of colonial soldiers in the Rhine area. In what became known as the “Black Shame” or the “Horror of the Rhein”, a range of civil society groups, political parties, churches and women's organisations, supported by the government and financed by important industry, started a campaign that mobilized the “the image of the ‘primitive African beast’ that roamed around the streets of a civilized nation raping and killing” (El-Tayeb, 1999, p. 164). Even more drastic in their racist portrayal of black men as animalistic creatures abusing and kidnapping helpless white women, images from this period published in satire magazines and propaganda drawings show uncanny resemblances to the title covers appearing after Cologne. Moreover, as Tina Campt (2005) points out the, panic around mostly consensual relations between white women and black soldiers similarly worked as a “national adhesive” for a nation in search of repairing a wounded national pride and identity (p.62). Colonial tropes of black sexuality as excessive, animalistic and threatening were evoked to gain sympathy from other European powers, and helped to reframe Germany's position from that of an aggressor responsible for the first World War to that of an unfairly treated “victim of black aggression” (El-Tayeb, 1999, p.164).

The logic of a community of blood that was enshrined in the nationality laws of 1913, and underlined most of these panics, was taken to an extreme during the Third Reich where race became “the organizing principle of social, political, and economic life” (Campt, 2005, p.165). Before the Nuremberg laws and the systemic extermination of non-“Aryan” life in the concentration camps, racial policies such as sterilisation and hygiene laws were implemented and white German women faced laws which circumscribed their choices of sexual partner to only those of pure Aryan heritage. They faced severe prohibitions and sanctions for engaging in

sexual conduct with black, Roma and Sinti and most explicitly Jewish men (Fehrenbach, 2005). Particularly in the early days of the Reich, it was again through figurations of sexual abuse that Jews were invoked as sexual predators coming to threaten the innocent Aryan female body, and that played a crucial role in the early days of antisemitic pogroms and the mass mobilisation for national socialism. As Dagmar Herzog (2007) points out, the Nazi regime might not so much be characterized as sexually repressive than as aligning sexuality along heteronormative — as seen most explicitly in the systematic persecution and extermination of gays and lesbians — and racial lines. While it allowed relatively liberal sexual morals for white, straight Aryan Germans, it evoked sexuality with and of non-heterosexual and non-Aryan people as deviant and dangerous. Antisemitic sexual propaganda published in magazines like *Der Stürmer*, a popular antisemitic national weekly that showed a “relentless obsession with ‘documenting’ Jewish sex criminality and the prevalence of ‘race defilement’” offered an excuse for pornographic indulgence and gave a “crucial moral permission to hate without guilt” (p.39-40). Here again the body of the white female attacked, this time attacked by monstrous Jewish men with tentacles, emerged as the symbol for the white and innocent German nation.

After the horrors of the Holocaust and the end of the second World War, the hope for a new beginning, a “Stunde Null” (hour zero) was on the horizon, which would have seen the construction of a new democracy freed from the racial logics of the past. However, while the Nuremberg laws were abolished and a program of denazification implemented by the Allies, the old colonial laws of *jus sanguinis* were reinstalled so that the notion of the body politic as a community of blood persisted (El-Tayeb, 1999). Race was officially side-lined as a relic of the past, yet already during the process of denazification, scandals about interracial relations between black American GIs and white German women again filled parliamentary and public discussions. These not only rearticulated fears of black male sexuality, but also enabled white German men and the white troops of the US army to bond as they “both agreed upon the necessity to ‘defend’ white womanhood and police white women” (Fehrenbach, 2005, p.34). As a role model for the young German democracy, the racially segregated US military reasserted that democracy was still a notion meant primarily for white Europeans. From the beginning of the Federal

Republic,⁶⁹ then, Germany clung to a “colour-blind” ideology that hinged on “the firm conviction that [Germany] would be free from structural racism” (El-Tayeb, 2016, p.7), while enforcing it in all spheres of political, economic and social life.

As such, racialized communities like black Germans and Sinti and Roma were treated as anomalies in an otherwise racially and ethnic homogenous country that vigorously defined itself as a “non-immigration country”. As I have similarly discussed in my introduction, citizenship remained an ethnic and racial category in which “native” white Germans were socially and legally differentiated from all “Ausländer” (foreigners), which found its expression in policies such as the guest worker initiative of the 1960s and 1970s that expected workers to eventually return to their home countries (Kaya, 2013) — who were likewise suspected of raping blond women after their work shifts (Foroutan, 2016b). After mobilisation by migrant groups, people of colour and other activists from the left in the 80s and 90s, citizenship and naturalisation laws in Germany were eventually altered in 2000 and children born in Germany to non-German parents were given the chance to claim formal citizenship (Howard, 2008). Despite these legal changes, the narrative of the German people as an ethnically homogenous population, however, persevered, and race continues to operate, often under the guise of “cultural difference”. This can be seen, for instance, in ongoing moral panics around the “Islamification” of Europe (Rommelspacher, 2002) or in the framing of the Turkish-German community as an ethnocultural counterfoil to the construction of a “truly” German identity (Mandel, 2008). Within such discourses, sexuality and gender continue to play a crucial role as seen in emotive discussions around issues such as honour killings or the Muslim veil (Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2009, 2014) as well as the eugenic Sarrazin debates of 2010

⁶⁹ My historical excursion focusses primarily on the history of Western Germany as the state whose citizenship laws were adopted after reunification. As Aleksandra Lewicki (2018) points out, despite its identification as an anti-fascist state, the GDR also treated migrants who mainly came as guest-workers from other socialist countries like Vietnam and Mozambique as racialised foreigners meant to return home and concludes that both “German states claim to have overcome the legacy of racism, but project and normalise a myth of ethnic homogeneity, and nurture a sense of superior entitlement in their citizenry” (p.63). For a more thorough discussion of how migration and citizenship were legislated and debated in relation to guest workers in the GDR see Almut Zwengel (2011) and see Peggy Piesche (2002) for an analysis of the GDR’s racial politics vis-à-vis black minorities. How exactly socialist and colonial histories intersect is currently heatedly debated across the social sciences in Germany. For some insights into this crucial debate see El-Tayeb (2016).

that circulated around the bestseller “Germany gets rid of itself” that warned of the overpopulation of Germany through Muslim women.⁷⁰

b. A Resonant Echo

What this admittedly patchy historical overview shows is how the anger that was incited around Cologne needs to be understood in relation to both legal and cultural definitions of German nationality and citizenship that link back to colonial fears of black sexuality and miscegenation. As Ahmed (2014) affirms so evocatively, emotions sediment over time and come “to reside in objects, only through an erasure of the history of their production in circulation” (p.11). While the source of anger is seen as residing in the body of the racialised migrant, the histories that have come to make him legible as a source of negative affect are erased. In their analyses of the nationalist debate after Cologne, Stefanie Boulila and Cristiane Carri (2017) come to a similar conclusion and argue that “Cologne highlighted the persistence and denial of institutional and structural racism” (p.290). From this perspective, we might understand the outrage about cases of sexual abuse in Cologne as, borrowing from Campt (2005), a “resonant echo” (p.53) — a sound that still clearly reverberates in the present but whose origin has been lost and is no longer recognized. In a context in which race has become “buried alive” (Goldberg, 2008, p.1) the traces of its sexual history have likewise been submerged. Tracing this echo back in time, however, we can see how many of the fears around Cologne mirror long-established anxieties of national impurity, in which it was nearly always the trope of excessive sexuality that helped re-establish clear lines of who and who does not belong to a national body defined in racial, gendered and sexual terms.

⁷⁰ In 2010, Thilo Sarrazin, a member of the Social Democrats (SPD) and the then head of the German Federal Bank (Bundesbank), published a book with the title *Germany Gets Rid of Itself: How we are Putting our Nation at Risk*, in which he warns of a combination of low birth rates, a growing lower-class and the increase in migration from Muslim countries to Germany. His racist and eugenic arguments and demagogic rhetoric have been widely critiqued (see, for instance, Foroutan, Schäfer, Canan and Schwarze (2011) for a dissection and refutation of his arguments). Nevertheless, his book became one of the best-selling books in post-war Germany, with more than 1.5 million copies sold in two years, and triggered a vicious debate about race and migration.

What the metaphor of the echo further highlights, however, is how this anger should not be understood as a clear-cut “colonial continuity” but a more complex, contextual reverberation — a sound that can alter and that resonates according to the context of its reverberation. Within the discussion of Cologne, we can, for instance, see how early colonial fears of racial pollution (e.g. the association of dirty/black hand prints in the Focus cover), merge with orientalist and anti-Muslim tropes that are resurfacing in the war on terror (Said, 1997; Rommelspacher, 2002). A wide array of sources framed the sexual assault in Cologne through the concept of “taharrush” — a term popularized in the context of group sexual assault of women during the protests on Tahrir Square in Cairo. Angie Abdelmonem, Rahma Esther Bavelaar, Elisa Wynne-Hughes and Susana Galánet (2016) have traced how this term came to travel from feminist activist spaces in Cairo to the mainstream (feminist) discourse in Germany and highlight how the German use of the term relied more on orientalist tropes than any actual transnational engagements with the problem of sexual violence. They argue that whereas practices of mass sexual abuse on Tahrir Square were often politically motivated and organized acts to crack down political dissent, in Germany they came to be framed primarily as cultural practices located in the hard-wired behaviours of racially marked subjects.

What the figure of the echo further highlights is how the defence of the nation in presumably feminist terms is not entirely new either. Lora Wildenthal (2001) points out how women played a crucial role in empire building. While only some of them defined as feminists, most of them stood up for women’s rights and highlighted their unique importance for white racial purity and the inculcation of German culture in the family. As such they campaigned against interracial marriage and circulated an image of African and Pacific women as sexually promiscuous and inferior. These efforts continued into the Nazi regime and also after the war women’s groups have repeatedly been engaged in nationalist endeavours often in opposition to the what they saw as the patriarchal practices of the Global South. The current articulation of femonationalism, then, needs to be understood in a longer historical perspective in which narrow conceptions of citizenship and nationality have long been protected by recourse to the protection of proper femininity (and masculinity) and the white heterosexual nuclear family. The use of nationalist argumentation for the protection of women paired with simultaneous attacks on feminist struggles as dangerous, mad

and excessive are consequently not paradoxical, but mutually reinforcing discourses that have long been key for the construction of the nation.

c. The Myth of the Left Behind

By helping us contextualise Cologne in a longer series of sexual panics, the echo also troubles dominant explanations for the rise of anger and resentment in political and academic discourse today. In the US, for instance, many scholars and public commentators have tried to make sense of the rise of Trump through narratives of the “left behind”: white lower-class voters, mostly (ex-)blue-collar workers whose industries have been destroyed through technological advances and neoliberal globalisation and who now come to project their outrage about the economic demise onto indifferent liberal elites and racial and ethnic minorities. As outlined earlier, a very similar discourse can be found in Germany, which not only resurfaced in public debates around Cologne but is also becoming increasingly popular in political commentary and sociological explanations for the rise of anger, resentment and the populist right. Pointing to the relative strength of PEGIDA and the AFD in former Eastern states like Saxony and Brandenburg, in Germany, these narratives focus in particular on rural and post-industrial areas in the former East. Citizens here, or so the story goes, have long been disadvantaged and not been included in Germany’s post-reunification economic growth so that their anger now easily incites around migrants and refugees who are seen as receiving the attention that they have been denied.

This now nearly common-sense left behind narrative works on a number of problematic assumptions. First, it enacts the idea that the politics of resentment is primarily a problem of the working classes. It individualizes structural problems and outsources the problem of negative affect and racism onto the body of the uneducated, Eastern German Hartz-IV Empfänger (benefit recipient). An outsourcing that is not only politically problematic but also empirically untenable. In a powerful rebuttal of the left behind narrative in the US and Britain, Gurinder Bhambra (2017a), for instance, shows that it was primarily white middle-classes that voted for Trump and Brexit. Even more explicit patterns can be found in Germany, where anti-migrant resentment after Cologne was expressed from across the political and social spectrum, and explicitly far right political parties like the AFD are mainly made up of established (white and male) middle-class voters (Niedermayer and Hofrichter, 2016;

Bergmann and Diermeier, 2017). Second, the assumption of the left behind is based on a white-washing of class and political economy. As Bhambra (2017a) suggests, ethnic and racial minorities as well as migrant workers that continue to be structurally disadvantaged in the labour market are erased from the analysis. Rather than thinking the question of neoliberal demise intersectionally, such a discourse tends to pitch white working classes against racialized minorities and newly arriving migrants — where concern and understanding are usually directed towards the former. Third, as (Éric) Fassin (2019) argues most of the parties like the AFD and the political demands carried by this upsurge in anger are not actually voiced against but in line with neoliberal policies, and ask for further deregulations of the market and a stronger accountability of the individual.

This is not to say that economic dimensions play no role in the rise of resentment in Germany today. As Oliver Nachtwey (2016) states, despite the common perception of Germany as the economic motor of Europe, the last decades have seen a radical precaritisation of the labour market. He traces how employment protections were reversed, temporary and subcontracted labour increased, and the German model of coordinated market economy radically liberalised and eroded. This climate of precarity, Nachtwey (2016) points out that forms a fruitful ground for demagogic rhetoric that displaces social problems onto minorities — in particular migrants — and argues that rather than actual economic bereavement, this anxiety is often about “relative depravity” in which more established groups “try to stay up by kicking downwards” (p.40). More importantly, as Brown (2017) suggests, neoliberalism is not only an economic but also a social and ideological project that provides fuel as well as the political rationale for current articulations of resentment. Authoritarian in character, neoliberal ideology tends to dismiss ideas of social justice, democratic negotiations and the redistribution of resources and political power. It attacks the value of society, fetishises individual freedom and legitimises escalating inequalities.⁷¹ This logic is mirrored in current outbursts of resentment that pitch migrants against local workers and make them responsible for the demise of the

⁷¹ Brown is cautious here to point out that this authoritarian turn was not intended by the intellectual heads of neoliberalism like Samuel Hayek who saw it neoliberal doctrine as a means against totalitarian forms of government. Therefore, she calls the current outgrowth of right-wing sentiments “*neoliberalism’s Frankenstein*” (para.60).

economy, as well as in the articulation of rage after New Year's in Cologne that rejects complex, intersectional analyses and calls for carceral punishments.

The figure of the resonant echo supports the argument that neoliberal forms of resentment emerge out of and protect racial and gendered hierarchies and enshrined entitlements to the nation. As Naika Foroutan (2016a) suggests, even though “Germany of 2015 is marked by intense inequality between the richest and poorest, economic explanations are insufficient to make sense of the racist defence and the small-minded feelings of being overrun and flooded” that are currently sprouting in Germany (p.99). She suggests that instead we need to understand these affects as part of a larger struggle about social, cultural and political power within the nation. In a context in which every third child in Germany now has a “migratory background”⁷², the recent refugee migration highlighted the extent to which homogenous definitions of German nationality are no longer applicable. Strides have been made by postcolonial, black, and migrant (solidarity) groups that challenge the ideas of racial and cultural homogeneity, and by queer and feminist movements that unsettle traditional definitions of the family by enacting new forms of kinship and affective affiliations. Foroutan suggests that many people in Germany resist these changes. Yet, rather than embracing and explaining these new realities, political elites are calling for taking the fears and worries of the “common people” seriously. As a result, as in historical moments before, a sexual panic about racialized Others works as a welcome outlet for reversing some of these transformations, and for questioning the authority of the state. Feeling the nation as a victim in need of repair allowed people of different political affiliations to come together and reaffirm racial and heteronormative constructions of what it means to be German.

This leads us to an interesting question of how to engage this moment and how to unsettle the forms of racial resentment that we see unleash in its wake. In her pamphlet *For a Left Wing Populism* Chantal Mouffe (2018) has suggested that we need to engage the resentment of the left behind, and that we should integrate them

⁷² This somewhat awkward German term derives from the fact that Germany takes no census about race or ethnicity (doing so would be, similar to in France, seen as racist). Instead, it differentiates people by the generation of migration. Every person who was not born or who has one parent that was not born in Germany is counted to have a “Migrationshintergrund”. While the term is also used in some critical migration and policy research what this term effectively does is enshrining a distinction between “real” and “other” Germans and is often problematically used when people want to refer to people of colour or religious minorities.

into a common struggle against subordination, oppression and discrimination through the construction of a common people. A key element of this strategy is to mobilize people's misplaced anger away from migrants and racialised minorities towards neoliberal elites and big corporations. The resonant echo sheds doubt on such strategy. If, as shown, anger is deeply embedded in long histories of not only economic but racial and gendered hierarchies, how then do we reframe anger away from migrants and towards big business? Moreover, how do we mobilize around a common conception of the people if "das Volk" has already been constructed in racial and gendered term? In a rebuttal to Chantal Mouffe, (Éric) Fassin (2019) has similarly pointed to this flaw in populist strategy and suggests that starting with the resentment of the political right makes us go down the wrong path as their resentment is not just about economic demise but a deep seated and often even pleasurable rejection of the Other and the liberal elites said to protect them. In this neofascist moment of neoliberalism, he suggests, we should not mobilize around a common conception of the people but reactivate a confrontational left wing politics.

While I agree with his argument, the problem of how and whether to confront and engage the resentment of others remains. With this in mind, I consequently want to turn to how other feminist and anti-racist actors engaged this vexed political moment. How did intersectional queer and feminist actors who had long fought against sexual abuse *and* against racism and violent border regimes engage this political moment? What were their responses to the vicious entanglement of right-wing, liberal and feminist discourses? How did they make sense of Cologne and what strategies did they deploy in trying to unsettle the wave of resentment that they were faced with?

5. Contesting Cologne

a. Strategic Silence

When writing this chapter, an email from LSE's German Society landed in my email inbox asking whether I wanted to moderate a discussion with Alice Schwarzer on the events of New Year's in Cologne. Rather perplexed about this unexpected offer, it made the question of how to engage the resentment sprouting in the wake of Cologne even more immediate. Based on my analysis of the echo, my sense was to refuse the debate. And I was not alone. Even before Cologne, Nicola Pratt (2013) suggested that

to avoid complicity with their “racialized co-optation” in nationalist and imperial projects, we should employ “a strategic silence about women’s rights more generally”. She suggests that “from the position of academia in the European and North American world the only way to avoid becoming complicit in racialising discourses and co-opted in the pursuit of the ‘war on terror’, is to be strategically silent about ‘women’s rights’ *per se*” (p.70). Instead we should focus our efforts on highlighting the destructive effects of nationalism, militarisation and neoliberalism.

Pratt’s proposal is surprisingly radical and somewhat disturbing. Yet, it is an embracing of silence that I can sympathize with. While the press ridiculed the silence of leftists feminists in the wake of Cologne, I likewise did not want to be associated with Schwarzer’s lineage of feminism, nor normalize her perspective augmented by the echo of racial and gendered nationalism as a fair position in an equal debate — not to mention that I probably did not have the best positionality from which to challenge her perspective. I similarly did not want to talk about Cologne with my housemate, who finally thought we would have some perspectives on gender politics in common, or the political sociologist at LSE who ranted about how it was finally time to stop obsessing about refugees and instead attend to the actually left behind. All I could think of was to retreat and to try to suffocate them with silence, superior silence in which I, of course, knew better but did not have to reveal or make myself vulnerable. Particularly, in the context of anger, I thought there must be something to the project of retreat — taking distance so affect can cool down and clear off.

A range of actors similarly ridiculed and bypassed the dominant terms offered to discuss Cologne. Journalist Mely Kiyak (2016, 20 Feb), for instance, vented her frustration about the public discourse on Cologne in a range of polemical articles and speeches. In one of her pieces, she ironically asserts that “boy oh boy, now they are also assaulting our women” and jokes how relieved she is that now finally we can talk about the “testosterone infused danger of the Muslim with a Koran under his arm and a fake passport in his pocket” (para 1). Instead of giving into the seriousness of the debate, she mocks its racialised set-up to then suggest that if someone “starts a sentence with ‘the Muslims...’” there is no point in even trying to engage in debate as these people “have given up thinking” (para 10). She consequently, goes against common calls that we should “speak with right-wingers” (Leo, Steinbeis and Zorn, 2017, p.1) and instead embraces the weapon of irony and satire. Rather than mocking the debate, other people side-lined it, continued their activism and highlighted issues

that they considered worthy to be actually angry about. Anti-racist groups campaigned against the problem of racial profiling that was bluntly displayed in the wake of Cologne. Moreover, anti-border activists continued to highlight the human rights violations that the EU and the German state were actively involved in, including the creation of conditions that facilitate sexual abuse in detention and refugee camps inside and outside of the borders of Europe. In such actions, activists tried to flood the public sphere with the circulation of counter-anger — as such “unsticking” the anger away from the body of racialised and migratised minorities, and onto the social and political practices productive of institutionalized forms of racial and sexual violence.

While I endorse this strategy, I also knew that a general silence on Cologne itself was not a particularly feasible strategy. In a rebuttal to Pratt, Afiya Shehrbano Zia (2013), for instance, suggests that her arguments come close to argumentations made by religious and conservative elites within the Global South that ask that feminists should not “hang out their dirty laundry to dry in the eyes of the West” (p.74). As such, rather than feminist solidarity, it easily enacts a renewed silencing of feminist voices from the Global South. In terms of affect, we might further add that strategic silence leaves the space open for anger to sprout. While anger might superficially cool down, my historical analysis has shown that the deep stories that anger accumulates around easily become reactivated. Rather than letting these stories rest, they need to be actively uncovered, engaged and retold. Whereas my stepping in to debate Alice Schwarzer might not have been the most successful way for doing so, leaving the floor entirely to her could likewise not be the answer.

b. Love and Forgiveness

Other activists focussed on engaging and reworking the anger that they saw themselves confronted with. A common strategy in this regard was to counter anger with narratives and sentiments of multicultural harmony. Organisations like the German-Turkish Union Cologne, Tunisian Youth and Syrian Men for Fairness gave out roses to women in the cities like Cologne, Berlin and Stuttgart. These were often accompanied by letters and flyers reading statements like “not in my name” in which the authors distanced themselves from the perpetrators and condemned the crimes of the New Year’s Night (“Rosen zur Entschuldigung”, 2016, 19 Jan). Many of those

statements highlighted how such events had nothing to do with Islam or Arab culture and how they should not be used to “divide us”. Similar accounts can be found in interviews published by newspapers like die *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that offered Arab men the space to write about their perspective on the event and put them in the cruel position to affirm statements like “I have been here for a year and have never done anything” (Schlüter, 2016, 2 Feb). In subsequent actions, a number of activists from organisations like Avaaz, primarily white German women, reciprocated the action and handed roses back. They framed this as an act of thankfulness for their prior gestures and a sign against racism and xenophobia.

These actions were reported by a range of newspapers, videos were put on YouTube and shared on social media. Rather than further feeding anger, these actions tried to evoke Nussbaum’s (2016a) idea of a “forward-looking spirit of generosity and cooperation” (p.22). They created moving media representations that highlighted forms of “conviviality” (Gilroy, 2004, p.xi) that were hidden in the shadow of Cologne. Doing so, they hark back to the emotive language of welcome culture, and reactivate earlier representation of people welcoming each other at train and bus stations. This form of activism, however, is confronted by the paradox that in order to undo the culturally essentialist framing of the event, it likewise needs to reaffirm it. In a revealing scene, in one of the YouTube videos, an elderly woman asks the man giving him the rose “but what do you have to do with this?”. The problem with such actions is that they implicitly take on the stigma of “collective guilt” that is put on racialised minorities, in particular Muslim communities, and cement the idea that Cologne indeed arose out of shared religious and cultural practices. As such, actions like these do not necessarily contest the deep stories of how sexual abuse is constructed in the German imaginary, and can further entrench a dangerous dichotomy between “good” and “bad” Muslims (Mamdani, 2002). Moreover, these actions tend to elide the violence of the heart of “chivalry” through a normalising gesture of heterosexual romance as such plastering over rather than addressing the structural problem of sexual violence.

c. #Ausnahmslos and the Redirection of Anger

The most dominant response by anti-racist and intersectional feminist activists to the hegemonic circulation of anger was by mobilising it. Several groups organized

counter-demonstrations to that of PEDGIA and the AFD and declared that their feminism was anti-racist. The biggest initiative in this regard was the campaign #Ausnahmslos” (without exception). Initiated by a collective of journalists, academics, artists and other public figures, the group organized several demonstrations and an online petition that was signed by several hundred supporters, which argued that “the sustained fight against sexualised violence of any kind of is of highest priority” and warned that “it is harmful for all of us if feminism is exploited by extremists to incite against certain ethnicities, as it is currently done in the discussion surrounding the incidents in Cologne” (“Gegen sexualisierte Gewalt”, 2016, 13 Jan). While #Ausnahmslos employed an explicitly intersectional approach and spoke out against nationalist appropriation of their arguments, they mostly focussed on the problem of sexual abuse and called for “stronger support of rape crisis centres and counselling support”, “increased educational work and awareness campaigns” and “gender and sexualised violence sensitivity trainings” for the police and law-enforcement (ibid). Moreover, they lobbied for a reform of the sexual abuse laws in Germany, in which the guidelines of the Istanbul conventions of 2011 would finally be implemented.⁷³ In other words, #Ausnahmslos countered the mobilisation of resentment that framed the situation as an abuse of the nation-state by expressing resentment about structural sexual abuse that women in Germany are subjected to. They aimed to resist the nationalist appropriation of feminist resentment and tried to use the moment to address more general dynamics of sexism and racism in society by, for instance, pointing to the hypocrisy of the debate in which conservative politicians like Horst Seehofer, who now called for harsher punishments against the “sex attackers” of Cologne, had still voted against rape in marriage being a crime in 1997.

In trying to push through a reform of the sexual abuse legislation in Germany, feminist activists, however, found themselves in a tricky and highly sticky terrain as they operated in a discursive landscape that was dominated by echoes that directly linked sexual abuse to religion, race and nationality. They were attacked by political commentators like Martenstein who suggested that feminists trying to initiate a more

⁷³ While Germany signed the Istanbul Convention of 2011, it never fully implemented their guidelines. Rape, for instance, was only a punishable offence if the victim could show that they had actively resisted (even a verbal “no” would not count under this legislation). Similarly, forms of sexual harassment such as groping were not punishable by law.

intersectional debate around the night of Cologne were relativising the crimes, and compared them to Holocaust deniers (see Boulila and Carri, 2017). Most importantly, appealing to a transformation of the law, feminists groups like #Ausnahmslos acted within the carceral logics of the state. As Angela Davis (2000) has asked so poignantly in a speech on black feminist responses to sexual violence: “can a state that is thoroughly infused with racism, male dominance, class-bias and homophobia and that constructs itself in and through violence act to minimize it in the lives of women?” (p.4). Her question alerts us to the fact that how anger and resentment can open new forms of justice in response to sexual violence and racism, yet might likewise fuel state policies that often come to hit the subjects who already are most affected by structural violence the hardest. In the context of the US, Kimberlé Crenshaw (2011), for instance, has shown how legislations on gendered violence are linked to mass incarceration and the prison-industrial complex, and often not only lead to black men but also women of colour being “overpoliced and underprotected” (p.1442).

And indeed in June 2017, the German parliament passed a set of new laws, known as the “No means No” legislations, that included a number of demands long made by feminist activists. While conservatives attacked the reform, activists from the left had seemingly finally achieved what they demanded. The laws, however, were directly tied to harsher migration and deportation laws. Under these laws, asylum seekers convicted of sexual abuse could be deported more easily. This meant a twofold punishment for asylum seekers that is not applicable to German citizens, which also makes it more difficult for victims to file charges — particularly if they come out of the immediate families or surroundings of the perpetrators. Similarly, the law included a separate legal category for sexual abuse committed by groups that, according to feminist activists, does not only speak to the racialised implementation of the reform but might also be unconstitutional as it easily leads into forms of collective punishment (Antons and Busch, 2017). In their reflections on the reform that they and other activists had so long fought for, Daniela Antons and Eva Busch (2017), thus, put a big question mark behind the question of whether this reform can be seen as a feminist success. The echo seemed to have had the last word, and anger was the only appropriate answer left.

6. Conclusion

In *Scandal in Togo*, Rebekka Habermas (2016) digs up the story of Geo Schmidt, an officer in the German colonial Togo, who became infamous for sexually assaulting black women in the colonies. While his case troubled the self-image of the German colonial Empire supposed to bring “civilisation” to Africa, Rebekka Habermas suggests that Geo Schmidt’s story was not exceptional but an everyday episode in colonial history, in which the control over colonised sexuality was an incremental part of imperial rule. Her book challenges common conceptions of sexual abuse in which sexual aggression is assumed to originate from racialised subjects, and emerges as part of a larger post- and decolonial movement in Germany that tries to highlight and retell histories of racial and gendered violence. Postcolonial groups located in most German cities call for renaming street names honouring former colonial officers, are transforming anthropological museums and exhibitions that show art and religious artefacts stolen from former colonies, and push for an inclusion of colonial history in the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with) the Holocaust (Pape, 2017). Simultaneously, former colonised groups like the Herero and Nama call for the return of skulls and bones still held in medical institutions, and demand reparations for colonial genocide (Rechavia Taylor, 2019). In these actions, people not only mobilise their own anger and hurt about historical forms of oppression but also reframe the narratives that the nation is constructed through.

This chapter emerges in relation to these efforts by highlighting different histories that help us to explain the current sprouting of resentment in Western democracies. While I have suggested that anger might well be understood as a catalyst for an already boiling anti-migrant sentiment that stuck together feminist, liberal and right-wing positions, I have argued that we might best understand the outrage about the night in Cologne as a resonant echo of the colonial past. Cologne needs to be understood in a longer series of sexual panics about racialized sexual attackers that have helped the nation to come together in times of perceived national crisis. This dynamic seems to be activated today where it not only helps to push out racialised subjects and migrants from the borders of the nation, but also works to enshrine heteronormative constructions of what it means to be German. I have

suggested that while this echo reverberates powerfully in the current moment, its noise simultaneously erases the traces of its own production.

As I have shown, the gendered and racialised histories that anger needs to be understood in relation to, however, are not only written out of most public discourses around the night of Cologne. They are also missing in popular scholarship and political commentary that frames the growth of resentment and anger in the political present mainly as a result of neoliberal demise and economic deprivation. These stories of the left behind, I have suggested, are not only insufficient for understanding how resentment grows in the current political moment but also might push us in the wrong direction of trying to challenge them. The figure of the echo puts into question calls for left wing populism that simply ask us to channel people's anger away from the body of the migrant and towards the structures and individuals responsible for the current economic demise. Even intents to reframe anger in order to address structural problems of sexual abuse and racialised exclusion struggled to break out of the preestablished racial and national lines that they were scripted in. Rather than just mobilising anger and resentment, we might consequently need to work on and think more carefully about how to challenge old and how to tell new stories that destabilise common assumptions of who belongs to the people, and who is positioned as a threat to them in the first place.

Chapter Six

“Wir schaffen das”: Hope Beyond the Humanitarian Border

1. Introduction

After the end of 2015 and the New Year’s events in Cologne, the situation in Germany and Europe grew increasingly dire. On a European level, we could witness the dismissal of European asylum protections, the externalisation of borders through transit centres and hotspots and the increasing criminalisation of sea rescue and migrant solidarity. On a national level, Merkel’s coalition government likewise incrementally eroded the asylum system and made deportations and detention a policy priority. At the same time, neo-fascist parties that call for a closing of national and European borders gained ground like the Law and Justice Party in Poland, the Lega in Italy or the Freedom Party in Austria, which over the course of the next years would even make it into government. While the long summer of migration thus started as a moment of hopefulness, it seems to have ushered in an increasingly hopeless present. In this last analytical chapter, I want to bring some perspective into this development and (re)turn to the politics of hope and affective futurity. More concretely, I want to think about where hope might be found in times of seeming hopelessness by examining how hope has been envisioned, enacted and mobilised by different actors throughout the long summer of migration. How do the politics of hope operate? How have they been mobilised by different actors around questions of borders and migration? And what role does hope play in foreclosing but also opening up of new horizons for the political organisation of society? Based on critical theories of hope, my intention is not only to critique hegemonic forms of hopeful reattachment but also to activate minoritarian modes of reading potentiality into more quotidian acts of survival.

To do so, I analyse the activation and redistribution of hope in and across Angela Merkel’s slogan of “Wir schaffen das” (We can do this) and the March of Hope held by migrants on their way to Germany, both of which link back to the beginning of September 2015 when the European border regime was momentarily

brought to its knees.⁷⁴ Through a close reading of her political speeches and rhetoric, I, first, turn to Merkel’s famous utterance that has been heralded and critiqued as the principle of hope for overcoming the “refugee crisis”. While seemingly opening the horizon for an open, more humane Europe, I suggest that Merkel’s rhetorical use of this statement and her accompanied policies of humanitarian securitisation redistribute hope away from migrants and towards a nation imagined to be in the need of protection. In a second step, I turn to the March of Hope, in which migrants contested the restrictive border policies of the EU by simply walking from Hungary over the border to Austria and Germany, to see how the “spirit of utopia” (Bloch, 2000 [1918], p.1) embedded in Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” is reinterpreted, resisted and reclaimed by migrants on their way to and across Europe. Based on this analysis, I posit that cross-border marches reveal and open up practices of care, solidarity and the commons that gesture and extend beyond the humanitarian border envisioned by Merkel’s politics. They provide us not only with the political demand for no or, at least, more open borders, but also with the utopian horizon of a world in which the relationality of social life is not framed through threat and biopolitical control but in which collective infrastructures are valued as enabling life to flourish and persist.

2. Opening Pandora’s Box: Conceptualising Hope

Different to empathy or anger, hope seems to have received relatively little attention in social and cultural theory. It has been treated with suspicion, theorised rather superficially or as Vincent Crapanzano (2003) attests it simply “has been ignored” (p.5). This “aversion” to hope in social theory might be explained out of the perception of hope as a vague and imprecise concept and realm of experience (Smith, 2005, p.45). While some have conceptualised hope as a practice (Haran, 2010), virtue (Mittleman, 2009) or method (Miyazaki, 2004), it is usually defined as an affective state characterised by the desire for something to happen without the guarantee that this process or event will actually take place. As Rebecca Coleman and Debra Ferreday (2010) argue, on a phenomenological level it is characterised by the warm

⁷⁴ The term “schaffen” does not have a direct translation into English. The phrase is best translated as “We can do this”. Yet the verb “schaffen” also carries the connotation of to manage, to work or to achieve. I come back to the question of why the multiple connotations of the verb matter for how Merkel’s sentence was mobilised during the long summer of migration.

expectation of joy and fulfilment, yet it can likewise be accompanied by anxiety and fear that the desired event will not take place. The exact contours of hope, thus, remain contested so that it easily merges and overlaps with similar concepts, such as optimism or desire. Terry Eagleton (2015) has tried to bring some clarity to their differentiation. He describes optimism as the belief that things will work out because they always have and desire as the more general libidinal attachment to an object that the desiring subject craves. Hope, in contrast, describes the emotional attachment to the possibility of change in contexts of adversity. It assumes the feasibility and possibility of creating what one does not encounter in the present.

As Nicholas Smith (2005) explains, however, hope's questionable reputation stems not only from its lack of definitional clarity but also from its perception as morally dubious — mainly due to its strong association with religious thought. In Christian theology hope is defined as one of the three virtues and it is commonly associated with the promise of the afterlife or the arrival of the Messiah. Due to this association, modern philosophers like Spinoza, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche have framed hope as a passive and untrustworthy emotion that hinders human flourishing. This is probably most evident in Nietzsche's (1996 [1878]) characterisation of hope as the last object to escape Pandora's box — not as a means to assist people in the face of the just released evils — but as “the worst of all evils, for it protracts the torment of man” (p.45). As Alan Mittleman's (2009) incisive reading of hope across modern philosophy shows, however, even in the most pessimist work like that of Nietzsche, hope re-emerges throughs the backdoor. While Nietzsche might despise the hope of Christian “slave morality”, he, nevertheless, is caught by its affective spell in his lustful longing for the arrival of the “Übermensch”.⁷⁵ In other words, once it is in the world, hope cannot just be pushed back into Pandora's box.

It is this argument about the inevitability of hope that the key theorist of hope, Ernst Bloch (1986 [1954]) built his oeuvre on. He suggests that people are fundamentally determined not just by the past and present but “that man is essentially determined by the future” (p.5). He defines hope as a quotidian yet utopian sentiment

⁷⁵ Nietzsche actually partly acknowledges this point and makes a distinction between “hope against life” and hope that is “on the side of life” (see Hage and Papadopoulos, 2004, p.120). A similar structure of thought can be found in Schopenhauer who despises the striving nature inherent in hope yet remains hopeful for a world of renunciation and detachment or Spinoza who, while critical of hope's passive and vulnerable facets, attaches hope to the vision of a truly liberal society (see Mittleman, 2009).

that permeates all of social life and must be understood, not just as a moral issue, but as a crucial driving force for most social and political transformations. Hope, in this invocation, is not just the passive anticipation for an abstract ideal to come but an active force that works to bring into being what it desires. What Bloch further points out is that part of the appeal of thinking about hope is its open-ended nature. As Mary Zournazi (2002) argues thinking about hope entails giving up on clear “ratifying systems of thinking and belief” (p.17) and fostering an open approach to what hope might mean in the social where, as Ghassan Hage (2003) has suggested, on the most fundamental level, it describes the affective mode in which humans relate to a situation they wish to encounter in the future. Accordingly, in most more recent postcolonial, feminist and queer theorisations, the question of hope has shifted from an ontological (what is hope?) and moral (is it good or bad?) to a more analytical question of how hope operates as a social and political force (e.g. Berlant, 2011a; Coleman and Ferreday, 2010; Cooper, 2013; Duggan and Muñoz, 2009; Hage, 2003).

The general consensus within these accounts seems to be a rather pessimistic one that attests to a shrinking of hope in contemporary societies, where former hopes and utopian longings have largely been diminished and co-opted.⁷⁶ Ghassan Hage (2003), for instance, has usefully suggested that societies function as “mechanisms for the distribution of hope” (p.15). With the advent of neoliberalism, he suggests, we can see how hope is increasingly distributed away from the many and towards a select few. This shift, he suggests, operates both through the concentration of wealth, the destruction of social welfare and chances for social mobility, as well as ideologically through transforming collective hopes for solidarity and care into individual aspirations of survival and success — a shift that he traces from Thatcher’s Britain to John Howard’s Australia. As a result of this redistribution, he suggests, all

⁷⁶ We can also observe this narrative in accounts that do not take hope as their explicit focus of study. Feminist and queer scholars wonder how the emancipatory ideals of feminist liberation and sexual revolution have been incorporated into post-feminist (Gill and Scharff, 2011) or worse homonormative (Duggan, 2003; Puar, 2007) and femonational politics (Farris, 2017). Postcolonial scholars point to the lack of ideological and affective perspectives in a world in which the dreams and desires of decolonisation have largely been shattered in the face of corrupt postcolonial states and the tenacity of the global colour line (Scott, 2004, 2013). And Marxist scholars have suggested that the authoritarian aberrations of real existing communism and the co-optation of the radical energies of the 60s and 70s into contemporary capitalism have ushered in the privatisation of hope, where it functions mostly in an individualising manner as the neoliberal pull towards self-optimisation, consumption and competition (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Thompson and Žižek, 2013).

that is left for most people are fearful attachments to “paranoid nationalism” in which hope is derived from the promise that the nation-state will at least protect you from the demands of those who are even worse off than you (p.31). In her related work on the neoliberal demise of the US, Lauren Berlant (2011a)⁷⁷ has similarly suggested that in the current moment in which economic, social and ecological conditions are deteriorating what remains are hopeful attachments to the good life that, at least in the US, often hark back to the imaginaries of the post-war period: sentimental longings for the normative family, the couple and the nation that promise protection from the cold embrace of neoliberal capitalism. She suggests that these fantasies are *cruel* as their affective appeal is rising despite or rather because their material realisation is becoming less and less viable.

Within this context of lost, redistributed and cruel attachments, the question of “what alternatives remain for remaking the fantasmatic … infrastructure of collective life?” has become paramount (Berlant, 2013, p.259). It is here that returning to Bloch (1986) might be useful — he likewise regarded the study and cultivation of hope not just as an intellectual but a political problem, as its absence is easily filled by the political right (a process he himself observed during the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930s). Bloch argues that whereas critical theory has primarily focussed on the “cold stream” of dissecting and exposing social structures and systems of power, it also needs to engage the “warm stream” of utopian desires and fantasies (p.209). Opposing both Marxist and psychoanalytic thought that derive their analytical power primarily from the past⁷⁸, he suggests that we need to engage with the “not-yet-conscious”, those utopian desires and hopes that are not yet realised but lie dormant within the present (p.201). For him turning to hope does not mean turning to idealism and fantastic visions (which he dismisses as “abstract utopias”) but to “concrete utopias” — “forms and contents which have already developed in the womb of present society” (p.623).⁷⁹ Similar arguments are being made today when scholars

⁷⁷ While Berlant focusses on the affective dynamics of optimism, her use of that term is similar to my understanding of hope as the emotional attachment to the possibility of change in times of adversity.

⁷⁸ Ernst Bloch is referring to Marxist theory that explains the dynamics of current societies out of historical materialism and Freudian psychoanalysis that understands the psyche as the sedimented layers of the (often traumatic) experiences of the past.

⁷⁹ Erich Fromm (1968) has similarly called this the “vision of the present in a state of pregnancy” (p.13). What is striking is the shared gendered terminology that frames the

such as Sedgwick (2003) argue for reparative reading practices that go beyond the paranoid mode of a “hermeneutics of suspicion” as the default mode of critical theory. Within these modes of analysis it is hope itself “by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates” (p.146). Hirokazu Miyazaki (2004) has described such a practice as a “method of hope” in which turning to hope is itself a hopeful practice mediated as much by the hopes and desires of the researcher as by the hopeful object itself (p.24).

The implementation of such a method of hope can be observed in a small yet growing body of literature that tries to locate “spaces of hope” (Harvey, 2000) in the cracks of neoliberal capitalism and paranoid nationalisms. In queer and feminist studies in particular, scholars have tried to decipher alternative forms of living in collective political projects and everyday moments of resistance and defiance.⁸⁰ In his work on *Cruising Utopias*, José Muñoz (2009), for instance, has famously read forms of queer futurity in the cultural practices and communities created by queers of colour in the US. By turning to projects as diverse as lesbian bathhouses and state equality initiatives, Davina Cooper (2013) has similarly shown how “everyday utopias” can help us not only understand how people live on and resist under conditions of hardship but also rethink social and political concepts such as care, justice and equality (p.2). And Kathi Weeks (2011) has suggested that outlining the conceptual work inherent in concrete utopias such as feminist strikes can help give the object of hope clearer contours — thus helping to turn more fleeting affective states into long-term political practices.

From this perspective, studying hope means enriching critiques of hegemonic structures through reading practices that are open to encountering the utopian in the quotidian. Rather than merely dismissing its object, such an approach requires looking for “the spirit of utopia” within and around one’s object of critique. Such an approach to the study of hope, I suggest, is particularly crucial for current scholarship on borders and migrations in which scholars and activists are looking for visions that

present as female and generative. Although Bloch and Fromm are cited in queer and feminist scholarship, little has been made out of ways they gender and sexualise temporality.

⁸⁰ Next to the more sociological work that I review here, there is a wide-ranging body of literature that takes Bloch’s theories as an inspiration in literary studies. For formative works in literary utopian studies see Krishnan Kumar (1987), Ruth Levitas (1990) and Fredric Jameson (2005). For a discussion of the history of utopian studies in literary studies see Peter Fitting (2009).

trouble the concept of citizenship and break with the nation-state as the central unit of social and political organisation (Anderson, Sharma and Wright, 2009; Bauder, 2014). Miriam Ticktin (2016) has powerfully argued that if we want to counter growing nationalisms and the securitisation of borders in Europe we need to extend our understanding of the political. She suggests that in a moment in which “it seems the only subject position available to those who are not trying to build fences or walls is ‘humanitarian’” we need to make space for “new political and affective grammars” that go beyond the “humanitarian border”, which, as I have analysed in Chapter 4 and as I demonstrate in more depth in this chapter, filters out deserving from undeserving populations and enshrines exclusionary notions of belonging (p.255-256). With this theory and method of hope and the necessity for new affective grammars in mind, let us turn to the most prominent invocation of hope during the long summer of migration in Germany.

3. “Wir schaffen das”

a. Hope as Categorical Imperative

Certain sentences reach beyond their immediate utterance. They resonate with the affective charge of a particular moment and come to reverberate as idioms in public and everyday life. In the context of the long summer of migration in Germany, probably the most resonant sentence in this regard was Merkel’s statement “Wir schaffen das” that has variably been praised and critiqued as the “principle of hope” (Löbbert, 2015, 6 Feb) for a new Germany. It became the centre of heated political debate; articles and books were published with titles such as *We can do this, We cannot do this!, Why we have to do this* and *Can we do this?*; and its relevance continues to be debated in parliament, media and civil society today. While the sentence has clearly developed a life of its own, I want to focus on its initial invocation⁸¹ and take a closer look at the way it has been mobilised by Merkel herself. What is it about this statement that lends itself to such wide-ranging debate

⁸¹ The sentence “Wir schaffen das” was actually first uttered by Merkel’s coalition partner and the, then, Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel from the Social Democrats (SPD), who used it in an online speech after visiting a refugee shelter. He stated “peace, humanity, solidarity, justice: these are European values. Now we have to prove them. I am sure we can do this!” (Mitglied des Bundestages, 2015, 2 Aug). The sentence, however, only became known and picked up as a political slogan when Merkel appropriated it.

and mobilisation? How did Merkel embed it in her political speeches? What political demands and policies were enacted in relation to its articulations, and what can this tell us about the potential of hope in the context of the long summer of migration?

The first time that Merkel uttered this sentence was on the 31st of August 2015 when thousands of migrants on their way towards Germany and Austria were stranded on the main train station in Budapest. Stepping in front of the cameras for her yearly summer speech, Merkel declared:

I say simply ... the motive with which we approach these things must be: we have accomplished so much — we can do this! We can do this and what stands in our way needs to be overcome, needs to be worked at. (Die Bundesregierung, 2015, 31 Aug, para.26)

Given the birth of the sentence in the context of giving refugees from Syria access to asylum, Merkel's statement was often read as an act of "opening borders" and a humanitarian slogan focussed on alleviating the hardship of migrants across Europe. Once the sentence was in the world, she repeated the sentence in important public speeches like her talk at the CDU-party congress in December 2015 and her New Year's address of 2015 and used it to defend her vision of a pragmatic yet open Germany in shorter speeches after critical political events such as the terrorist attacks of Ansbach, Würzburg and Munich in summer 2016.

The sentence resonates with earlier hopeful political slogans like Obama's "yes we can". Whereas Obama's sentence contains an assertive "yes", however, Merkel's more neutral "we can do this" is based on a more pragmatic affective grammar. Rather than painting the image of a bright future in which freedom, equality and the American dream will flourish, she mobilises hope from the lessons and hard work of the past. Stating that "we have done so much, we can do this", she names getting through the banking crisis, stopping the use of nuclear energy after the disaster of Fukushima and coming together after natural catastrophes as recent moments of disaster management that her government has successfully led (Die Bundesregierung, 2015, 31 Aug, para.13). Most importantly, however, across her speeches, she refers to the achievement of rebuilding Germany after the Second World War and reunifying East and West Germany after the fall of the wall as the two monumental efforts in modern German history, whose hands-on spirit, she

suggests, needs to be reactivated in the current moment of crisis: “the examples of the past teach us: whenever it matters ‘we … are able to do what is right and necessary’” (para.18).

It has been suggested that the use of such historical argumentation gains particular weight through Merkel’s own biography. Political scientist Joyce Marie Mushaben (2017) argues that Merkel’s effort “to turn the nation united into a land of immigration and integration derives from her experiences as a former GDR citizen” (p.516). She posits that Merkel working her way up as a woman from a small town in the GDR to the head of a reunited, democratic Germany lends credibility to her defending a liberal system of equality, human rights and the rule of law. To stress her point, Mushaben refers to Merkel and her husband quoting Václav Havel, the former Czech dissident who became president after the fall of the Wall, in the intermission of a benefit concert for refugees in January 2016: “Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out” (cited in Mushaben, 2017, p.531). This invocation of hope relies less on the optimistic vision of an idealised world to come and more on the lessons of history that have taught us the universal value of human rights and the rule of law. It is a Kantian understanding of hope in which the use of universal morality and categorical imperatives constitutes the best compass for approximating states of “perpetual peace” (Kant, 2003, [1796], p.1).

According to Mushaben (2017), what makes Merkel’s statement of “Wir schaffen das” even more remarkable is how it goes against the political mainstream that has long been dominated by Merkel’s own party, the Christian Conservative Union (CDU). As Fatima El-Tayeb (2016) outlines (and I have unpacked in more detail in the previous chapter, Chapter 5) the German political establishment has long fought against acknowledging that Germany is a “country of immigration”. Merkel’s party has stubbornly resisted extending definitions of Germanness beyond the racial logic of *jus sanguinis* — changed in law only by the coalition government of the Social Democrats and the Greens in 2000. Mushaben (2017), however, suggests that a real change in Germany’s approach towards migration came with Merkel’s reign, starting with her National Integration Plan of 2007 and culminating in her efforts

during the “refugee crisis”, which directly contradicted the anti-immigration line cemented by her former mentor and long-term chancellor Helmut Kohl.⁸²

And indeed, Merkel faced opposition for her decisions and rhetoric during the long summer of migration. She was attacked by right-wing activists who called her a “traitor of the people” (Volksveräterin) when appearing in public such as during a visit at the refugee centre in Heidenau (Wittrock, 2015, 26 Aug). These attacks were fuelled by key figures of the far right like Alexander Gauland, now co-head of the Alternative for Germany (AFD), who declared that “we do not even want to do this” (Wir wollen das gar nicht schaffen) (Pollmer and Schneider, 2015, 9 Oct), as well as critics within her own party. Horst Seehofer, head of Merkel’s sister party the Christian Social Union (CSU), for instance, refused to take on her slogan and continuously pushed for limits on the number of migrants who could be granted asylum. At the CDU congress in December 2016, Merkel directly confronted the critics within her own party by arguing that “the CDU is a party that from the beginning knew that after the horror of the Second World War and the Holocaust our Germany could only come back to its feet politically and morally if we overcome separations and build bridges beyond the borders of our own country” (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2015, 15 Dec, p.37). She further suggested that the act of reaching out and building bridges becomes ever more important in a globalising world in which risks of terror, war and climate change can only be managed across national borders. In doing so, she turned “Wir schaffen das” into a moral imperative that moved a critical, even hostile, party to standing ovations.

However, Merkel’s slogan was not only of significance in Germany but also in European and global politics more generally. *Time Magazine* declared her “Person of the Year 2015” and named her the “chancellor of the free world” (Vick, 2015, 9 Dec), and she was repeatedly discussed as a favourite for the Nobel Peace Prize. And certainly, Merkel’s position stood out in relation to the many increasingly nationalist, even neo-fascist, governments within the EU. Openly illiberal governments in Hungary and Poland boasted about not taking in any refugees, and the UK, which had long implemented a hostile environment policy, refused to admit more than 20 000

⁸² The National Integration Plan was a reform that made “integration” the top policy priority. It is rather ironic to suggest that this reform constitutes a major shift in Germany’s approach towards migration as it has been critiqued for its nationalist and assimilationist approach. See Kien Nghi Ha (2009) for a critical discussion of the National Integration plan through a postcolonial lens.

asylum seekers in 2015 (Eurostat, 2016). Within this context, Merkel pushed for EU-wide reforms of the migration system⁸³ and argued that “universal civil rights have so far been deeply intertwined with Europe and its history …] and are one of the founding impulses of the European Union” (Die Bundesregierung, 2019, 31 Aug, para.27). As a result, far-right figures like Viktor Orbán (2015, 2 Sep) attacked her “Wir schaffen das” approach for encouraging migrants to come to Europe and forcing policies onto less powerful countries within the EU. Similarly, on the left, critics insinuated that the real motivation behind Merkel’s politics must have been the economic impetus of recruiting new labour into an aging society. Pablo Iglesias (2015, 15 Oct), head of the Spanish left-wing party Podemos, for instance, publicly questioned her true motivations and complained that Merkel’s self-aggrandising “Wir schaffen das” rhetoric “seemed like [she] wants to be praised for simply doing [her] duty”.⁸⁴

At the same time, however, many liberal, centrist and left commentators praised her take and read in as a vision of universal morality and hopeful pragmatism. These included not only the voices of influential liberal figures like Barack Obama and George Soros but also some of the most prominent left-wing public intellectuals and critics of Merkel’s austerity politics of the last years. The key theorist of European nationalism, Étienne Balibar (2015, 8 Oct) declared that Merkel’s actions “deserve the greatest respect” as they defend a vision of “the right of asylum and against Fortress Europe”. Long-time opponent of the government’s social and economic policies, Jürgen Habermas (2015, 28 Oct) joined into the chorus declaring that “we can do this, we have to do it”. And even probably the most outspoken and influential critic of Merkel’s austerity politics of the last years, ex-finance minister of Greece, Yanis Varoufakis (2015, 13 Sep)⁸⁵ argued that in Merkel’s statement, he “found hope that Europe’s soul hadn’t disappeared completely”. He praised “one of Germany’s grandest gifts to humanity: the philosophy of Immanuel Kant” and argued

⁸³ Most notably, Merkel tried to introduce a European wide quota system that, after heavy resistance from states like Poland, the UK and Hungary, was never really implemented (Zaun, 2018).

⁸⁴ Both of these interventions were made in the German public sphere. Pablo Iglesias gave an interview to the liberal weekly *Die Zeit*, while Orbán wrote several guest pieces for the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

⁸⁵ These commentaries were published as guest entries in major national newspapers. Balibar published in the liberal *Die Zeit*, Habermas in the left-leaning *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and Varoufakis in the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

that the spirit of “Wir schaffen das” carries the vision for a more humane Europe that could transform both border and austerity politics in Europe. The commentaries from the left were, of course, partly strategic and tried to seize the moment to push for transformations of the European Union. Nevertheless, they raise the question of what to make of Merkel’s political slogan and approach during the “refugee crisis”. Does Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” politics constitute a pragmatic force for a more humane and less bordered Europe? Could the slogan, which seemed to have convinced her conservative party, liberal voices, as well as parts of the left, also help to stem the tide of right-wing mobilisations and reverse the intensification of border securitisations in Europe?

b. Deportations “With a Friendly Face”

What makes Merkel’s statement so remarkable is that it contains no clear subject, object or action. The “we” (wir), the “doing” (schaffen) and particularly the “this” (das) are undefined and can be filled with a range of different meanings. It is this open grammar that helps to explain both the vivid social life that the phrase took on and Merkel’s own versatile and open yet targeted political use of this sentence. After headlines that 71 migrants died in a truck in Austria circulated all across Germany, Merkel started her summer speech by referring to “situations and fears that refugees have to face, under which we would probably simply collapse” (Die Bundesregierung, 2015, 31 Aug, para.7). Referring to the right of asylum enshrined in the German constitution, she argues that German citizens need to contribute to a “national task” of helping migrants overcome these difficult situations (para 13). As I have already mentioned in Chapter 4, however, she then continues that this “national task” is about establishing “‘who has a high chance of staying?’ just as much as it is about declaring ‘who has nearly no chance of remaining with us?’” (para 20). It is at this point that the unsteadiness of the open signifier “this” becomes evident and the versatile politics of her rhetoric productive. In one moment, the politics of “Wir schaffen das” calls for humanitarian action based on alleviating the hardship of migrants; in the next, it encompasses the management and securitisation of borders based on alleviating the “hardship” of the nation. The phrase slips from promising the protection of migrants to the protection of the nation.

This logic becomes even more tangible in the speech that Merkel gave in front of the CDU delegation in December 2015, in which she declared that: “the task that we have ahead of us — the many, many refugees — is massive”. Suggesting that “we need to take the worries of people seriously”, she argues that “that is why we want to and will reduce the numbers of refugees noticeably” (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2015, 15 Dec, p.30). Within this statement, the “this” that needs to be overcome changes from the difficulties that migrants face as reasons for and on their way to Europe to migrants themselves as burden and danger to the German nation. Invoking the “refugee crisis” in line with nuclear catastrophe, the banking crisis and even the Holocaust accrues a different connotation in this grammatical construction. It shifts emphasis away from the war, violent conflict and economic destitution that caused many people to move in the first place and instead seems to suggest that migration itself might be understood as a catastrophe. This sense of threat and crisis is further augmented through the ambivalent meaning of “schaffen” in German that, more than just “doing” or “accomplishing”, in this context carries the connotation of “managing” or even “coping with something”. In line with Hage’s (2003) suggestion that the state operates as a key node for the redistribution of hope we can see how in this rhetoric hope is shifted. Whereas Merkel’s statement and accompanied policies have generally been understood as a caring gesture that promises a better future for migrants coming to Europe, her deployment of the sentence gradually shifts hope away from migrants and towards a nation imagined to be in need of protection from them.

This redistribution of hope is expressed more clearly in the rest of Merkel’s speech where she names a list of measures that have and need to be taken so that “we” can fulfil “our humanitarian responsibility” (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2015, 15 Dec, p.31). Within this list, she names a couple of assisting measures like more funding for municipalities and increased investment into social housing (p.32), but mainly calls for securitising policies. These include national policies like making deportations a priority, changing financial support for asylum seekers to non-cash benefits and the suspension of family reunification for recently arrived migrants, as well as foreign-policy measures like declaring the countries of the West Balkan safe, implementing the EU-Turkey deal, and an the expansion of Europe’s outer border controls, border police forces and coastal guards (p.31-34). Whereas most scholars have read Merkel’s mantra of “Wir schaffen das” as either contradictory to or a

smoke screen for pushing through harsher asylum laws, here we can see that rather than a diversion tactic or position that contradicts her humanitarian stand, the humanitarian and securitising elements of her speeches are mutually reinforcing. It is a convergence that she never makes a secret of and that her fellow party-member Guido Wolf referred to as “two sides of the same coin” when introducing her in his welcome speech at the CDU delegation (p.17).⁸⁶

William Walters (2010) has powerfully argued that we are witnessing the emergence of a humanitarian border in Europe and suggests that the borders of Europe operate simultaneously as caring and securitising structures — structures that save lives and provide protection for some on the basis of deterring and excluding others. In line with this logic, in a particularly revealing part of her speech, Merkel suggests that “asylum seekers need to stay in reception centres for up to six months, if they come from secure sending countries … so that at the end of their trials they can be better repatriated if their asylum cases are denied” (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2015, 15 Dec, p.32). Given that this would simply constitute the enforcement of an asylum system implemented for the protection of the most vulnerable subjects, she suggests, we “can also do this with a friendly face” (*ibid*).⁸⁷ Within this logic of the humanitarian border, deportations become friendly acts of enforcing law and order. Acts that, as Ticktin (2011) has similarly shown in her analysis of French deportations of the sans papiers, are not committed in opposition to but in the name of humanitarianism. What triggered a standing ovation from Merkel’s party might thus have been less her loosening of the European border regime and more her emotive justification of policies that restrict movement to and within Germany out of a humanitarian rationale.

⁸⁶ At the time, Guido Wolf was the head of the CDU in Baden-Württemberg and got to give the short welcome address before Merkel’s speech. He stated that “self-evidently, we have a humanitarian responsibility for those coming here who are politically persecuted in their home country. … yet it is also clear — and that is the signal of this party convention: we want the refugee flows that developed over the last months to be clearly reduced, because we cannot overwhelm the people in our communities. This is part of taking political responsibility: these are two sides of the same coin” (p.17).

⁸⁷ A “friendly face” that Merkel infamously showed when she was confronted on national television by a crying Palestinian girl from Lebanon who asked why she could not stay in Germany despite having grown up there. Merkel assured her that she did very well in asking a question on TV, patted her head and explained that she cannot stay as “politics are hard sometimes” and that “some people will have to go back” (Munzinger, 2015, 16 Jul).

What led to further applause was how Merkel tied this “humanitarian imperative” (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2015, 15 Dec, p.26) to the benefits that migration promises to bring for Germany. Arguing that any “country profits from successful immigration” (p.40), she reminded the audience that “no other country needs Schengen as much as Germany” (p.34) and suggested that Germany needs to be open to immigration not only out of a moral imperative but also to stay internationally competitive: “in a globalised world the ability and willingness to adapt decides who has the power over the future” (p.38). Rather than reading this as proof of a purely economic rationale behind her action, as suggested by leftist figures like Pablo Iglesias, however, I suggest that it points us to how humanitarian rationales cannot be separated from economic calculations in times of neoliberalism (Buckel, 2016). Underlying Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” rhetoric then lurks a conditional logic that not only splits deserving from undeserving refugees, but also plays into larger social discourses that evaluate migrants according to their economic contribution to the nation (Holzberg, Kolbe and Zaborowski, 2018).

In some ways, this insight might not be very surprising given that I started my analysis with the (head of) state and end with the structure of citizenship that Imogen Tyler (2010) has argued is “designed to fail specific groups and populations” (p.61). What makes Merkel’s slogan so remarkable, however, is that her rhetoric seems to offer hope to migrants while simultaneously eroding the material and ideological ground that hope is built on. It reveals how the Kantian appeal to hope as an act of establishing universal laws of morality embedded in universal civil rights falters when those civil rights are only granted to citizens in the first place. As Hannah Arendt (2017 [1951]) has so evocatively pointed out, the system of civil rights is based on the exclusion of those who fall outside of the logic of the Westphalian nation-state order: the stateless, the undocumented and migrants with no nation (able or willing) to enforce their rights. With Hage (2003), we might add that a Kantian ethos redistributes hope to those who are already assumed to be the subjects of hope, citizens as the promised benefactors of the nation. In contrast, migrants and refugees, even though they seem to be the benefitting subjects of Merkel’s invocation of hope, are the first to be materially, as well as ideologically, cut out from its promise of futurity.

c. National Exceptionalism and Emergency Temporalities

In order to be cut out from the promise of the future, however, migrants are first cut out from the narration of the past. As Ticktin (2016) argues, the problem with most humanitarian accounts of the “refugee crisis” is the temporality of emergency that they are positioned in and that leaves no space to “to understand events in a larger historical context” (p.262). In her speeches, Merkel participates in presenting the “refugee crisis” as an emergency and frames the arrival of migrants as an unexpected event that “poses an enormous challenge” (Die Bundesregierung, 31 Aug, para.12). Merkel does mention the war in Syria, alludes to the situations in Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan and frames the current refugee migration as a “rendezvous with globalisation”⁸⁸ in which Germany is confronted with the fact that social, political and economic problems can no longer be confined to national contexts (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2015, 15 Dec, p.38). Yet, any more complex engagement with reasons for why people migrate is missing from her speeches and Germany’s own complicities in causing people to migrate are obscured. Germany’s role in helping to destabilise the Middle East (for instance through weapon sales to Saudi Arabia or the deployment of US drones from German military posts) remains unaddressed. Similarly, trade policies that keep countries of the Global South from having equal access to the world market, Structural Adjustment Programmes that erode social infrastructure or Europe’s central historical responsibility for causing the climate crisis remain unmentioned (see El-Tayeb, 2016). By side-lining such connections and instead invoking migration as a problem that comes to Europe from outside, Merkel’s speeches disconnect “connected histories” (Bhambra, 2017b, p.404) and evade historical responsibility.

Moreover, as I have shown in Chapter 4, framing migration as a sudden humanitarian problem that calls for our help erases the crucial role that the European border regime has played in creating the “tragedy” of the refugee in the first place. Bernd Kasperek and Marc Speer (2015) have similarly pointed to the irony of this historical erasure and wondered how during the “refugee crisis” Germany,

⁸⁸ This expression was originally coined by the Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble who used the phrase a few weeks earlier in a speech in which he compared the recent refugee migration to an “avalanche” that could only be halted through global negotiations and bilateral agreements (“Schäuble warnt”, 2015, 12 Nov)

“regardless of its role as architect and driving force of [the European border] regime, wins worldwide acclaim for its humanitarian stance” (para.16). After all, Germany was one of the key drivers in implementing the Dublin system that outsourced the handling of asylum applications to the European periphery, plays a crucial role in financing the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex, and is at the forefront of securing deals that further externalise border controls to regions and states outside of Europe. According to Walters (2010) and Ticktin (2016) this naturalisation of the border is the key problem with a call for a more humanitarian border: it precludes any fundamental critique of borders as biopolitical structures of control and instead draws attention to how borders can be managed more “humanely” and efficiently.

The problems with Merkel’s humanitarian emergency rhetoric resonate with Crapanzano’s (2003) critical stance toward the politics of hope. He argues that hope can lead to an erasure of the past as it keeps people’s gaze turned to the future so that rather than engaging in the struggles of social change and transformation, they remain complicit, paralysed and stuck in the status quo. Bloch (1986), however, reminds us that the most moving visions of futurity are formed in relation to and out of the already existing material of the past. In Merkel’s rhetoric we can discern a complex combination of these only seemingly paradoxical temporalities of hope: while obscuring some histories — those of global inequality, Western imperialism and the construction of racialised border regimes — Merkel derives the source of hope from other histories — those of exceptional national achievement. This is different to the US rhetoric in which optimistic attachment arguably operates through sentimental tropes of domestic intimacy, family and the nation (Berlant, 2011a), or Australia where societal hopelessness has ushered in paranoid forms of colonial white nationalism (Hage, 2003). Instead, in the following I want to show how in Germany hopeful attachment seems to mainly operate through narratives of exceptional national achievement that, as Gabriele Dietze (2016a) has pointed out, currently cluster around the three pillars of exceptional historical atonement, economic superiority and sexual and gendered progressiveness.

Key among Merkel’s use of narratives of exceptional achievement is the historical narrative of post-war recovery and atonement that she repeatedly refers to in justifying and defending her insistence on “Wir schaffen das”. In responding to

how and why she can be so hopeful in the face of the “refugee crisis” she suggests that:

I can say “we can do this” because it is part of the identity of our country to do great, to build the country of the economic miracle out of the rubbles [of the Second World War] and to become a highly regarded country of unity and freedom after the division [into East and West Germany]. (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2015, 15 Dec, p.29)

Gabriele Dietze (2016a) has referred to the narrative of Germany overcoming both its socialist and, most importantly, its fascist past to emerge as an internationally respected liberal democracy as the exceptional “narrative of penance and atonement” (p.3). She argues that during the “refugee crisis” the memory of the Holocaust was mobilised as a key motivator for critical responses towards the European border regime in Germany. As I lay out in more detail in the Conclusion of this thesis, the mobilisation of Holocaust guilt helps to animate migrant solidarity movements and is continuously used to shame the political right. In Merkel’s rhetoric, however, more than through guilt the memory of the Holocaust is invoked through articulations of pride for having made it and dealt so well with these histories. This progress narrative allows the German government to escape its own complicities and role in keeping global inequalities intact. Instead, it can portray itself as a chastened nation helping others in need and giving moral lessons to states that have not yet worked through their past.

Éric Fassin and Aurélie Windels (2016) point out that this humanitarian gesture, which allowed the German nation to “escape the fate of the past and project themselves in the future”, also relates to the more recent past of austerity politics in Europe (p.7). Only weeks before Merkel gave her famous “Wir schaffen das” speech, protestors in Southern Europe still carried images of the chancellor adorned with swastikas and SS-symbols at protest marches due to Germany’s central role in imposing austerity politics on Greece and other countries of the EU. Within this context, Merkel’s humanitarian gesture of extending asylum rights to some of the recent migrants helped to shift her constricted position within European politics and

turned her from the figure of the emperor to that of the saviour.⁸⁹ As Fassin and Windels argue, it made the politics of Germany's neoliberal policies desirable — a neoliberalism that they suggest is so strong that it does not necessarily need to retreat to racism and anti-migrant rhetoric to legitimise itself. And indeed, in her speeches, Merkel consistently refers to the exceptional economic position of Germany and argues that Germany can help as “we have the lowest unemployment rates and the highest occupation rates of unified Germany. The state has not made any debt for two consecutive years. Wages are rising, the economy is robust and innovative” (Die Bundesregierung, 2015, 31 Dec, p.2).

Next to the mobilising histories of exceptional German atonement here we can see how Merkel's rhetoric also draws on what Dietze (2016a) calls the second pillar of German exceptionalism: fiscal exceptionalism (p.4). Dietze describes how after the war national pride in Germany derived mainly from the economic achievements of the “Wirtschaftswunder” (economic miracle). This sense of pride, she suggests, intensified after Germany got through the economic crisis of 2008 relatively unharmed and took on a dominant role in legislating on the Euro crisis. Despite the international critique that Merkel received for her hard line on austerity, she consistently refers to this period and proudly remembers how “we rolled up our sleeves and step by step changed things for the better, including in the fight against the financial crisis, the international one as well as the Euro crisis” (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2015, 15 Dec, p.41). Varoufakis' hope that Merkel's Kantian gesture in regard to refugee politics would similarly extend to economic policies and lessen the imposed austerity on Southern Europe was consequently disappointed. Instead, both the decision to allow migrants into the country and the implementation of austerity politics in the European South were justified not just as politically effective but also as morally right decisions.⁹⁰ The national exceptionalism of

⁸⁹ In July 2015, the leading German tabloid the *Bild* showed Merkel wearing a Prussian pickle helmet on its cover and called for an “Iron Chancellor” who would not offer any more loans to Greece. Only two months later, the weekly, *Der Spiegel*, printed a cover of Merkel dressed as Mother Theresa in response to her political stance in the “refugee crisis”. While both covers were partly ironic, the shift in imagery still captures a shift in public perception that Merkel went through during this time. For a reproduction of both images see Fassin and Windels (2018).

⁹⁰ Probably not a surprise to Varoufakis (2016), who himself has written extensively on how the concepts of debt and guilt do not just translate to the same word in German (“Schuld”) but also intersect in moral terms so that under German ordoliberalism paying back ones debt is not just an economic but also a moral imperative.

atonement and fiscal superiority converged and justified each other. This alignment of discourses silenced public discussion that tried to draw connections between European politics of migration and regimes of austerity and continued to destroy the material grounds from which hope and resources for migrant hospitality in the European South might have been mobilised.⁹¹

Most importantly, the narrative of exceptional achievement also reinforces a dubious relation between Germany and its ongoing histories of fascism and racism. Invoking “a new country born from the rubbles of the past”, Merkel presented the process of “coming to terms with the past” as a relatively finished process rather than an ongoing struggle with a still festering wound. She praised civil society efforts to help migrants settle in Germany and spoke out against the “prejudice”, “coldness” and “hatred” that she herself encountered when she was attacked and insulted by people from the far-right (para.9). Yet any more thorough engagement with neo-fascism and structural and institutional racism that, among others, was so blatantly shown in the recent NSU-murders and the cover-up by the police, state and legal apparatus⁹² remains unaddressed in her “Wir schaffen das” speeches. Instead, she positions migrants as a potential threat to a nation based on exceptional achievement. In her speech to the CDU delegation, for instance, she evokes discourses that frame migration as a “clash of civilisations” and asks:

What effect does our way of life have on the many people that are coming to us from the Arabic world, from Muslim countries? What effect does their cultural character have on us? Will we ... with so many people coming from a different cultural circle than ours, still be the Germany that we know, the Germany that is strong and has made us strong? (p.36)

⁹¹ For an insightful discussion of how austerity and (anti-)migration politics intersect in Greece see Anna Carastathis (2015).

⁹² Between 2000 and 2007 a German Neo-Nazi terrorist cell, the National Socialist Underground (NSU), killed ten people in different cities in Germany, out of which nine had Turkish, Kurdish and Greek backgrounds. Despite suggestions by the families that the murders must have been committed by people from the far right, the police suspected “foreign” organised crime networks and investigated the murders under the title “murder series Bosphorus”. In the media, it became known under the even more derogatory term “Kebab Murders” (Döner-Morde) as several of the victims worked in doner kebab shops. The murders were only cleared accidentally in 2011 and not only revealed racial police and media bias but also state complicities as it was revealed that the neo-Nazi perpetrators most likely received cover and support from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Von Der Behrens, 2018).

Merkel's answer to these questions is a general "yes" that she underlines with the vision of "a Germany with equality between man and woman and without any form of antisemitism, xenophobia or discrimination against homosexual people". Yet, she goes on to declare that "whoever seeks refuge with us, needs to respect our laws, values and traditions" (p. 40) and adds that "to say it crystal clear, our laws are above honour codex, tribal and family rules" and declares that "Multikulti leads to parallel societies and remains a living lie" (*ibid*). What begins as a call for a more tolerant and open society, then ends as a call for tighter rules for integration and assimilation. With terms like "parallel societies", "honour codex" and "Multikulti" this call buys into not only the vocabulary of, but also common fears stirred by the far right. The attack on "Multikulti" (a belittling abbreviation for multiculturalism), in particular, has long been part of Merkel's rhetorical repertoire. It ranges back to an (in)famous speech that she gave in 2010 in which she declared that "multiculturalism has utterly failed". This statement was not only politically dangerous but also rather ironic given that at the time Germany had implemented almost none of the policies associated with multicultural politics (Kymlicka, 2012, p. 17).

What further stands out in Merkel's rhetoric are the reoccurring references to gender equality and tolerance towards sexual minorities.⁹³ Dietze (2016a) has referred to this European-wide discourse of "sexual exceptionalism" as the third pillar of German exceptionalism (p.3-4). It is an exceptionalism that, as I have shown in Chapter 5, has become a crucial distinguishing feature for civilisational superiority that seems to be not only crucial for the mobilisation of anger but also central for the invocation of hope. We can see here how "the nation rather than being a reality that needs to be protected becomes a fantasy that needs to be protected from reality" (Hage, 2003). As Hage argues, it is such a dynamic that "generates the paranoid border disorder to paranoid nationalism" (p.40), that opens the door to sexual panics like that of Cologne where sexual abuse is framed as a cultural issue that gets imported into the country by migrants from different and ultimately less civilised and developed parts of the world. Yet, Merkel's invocation of moral and cultural

⁹³ The invocation of narratives of sexual exceptionalism is striking given that, during her time as Chancellor, Merkel has consistently stood in the way of even the most mainstream progressive sexual and gender policies, such as gender quotas or same-sex marriage. She only legalised same-sex marriage in 2017 when forced to do so by all the other major parties in parliament and even then she herself abstained from the vote.

exceptionalism is likewise amenable to other discussions that explain current social problems in Germany from essentialised understanding of cultural difference. A particularly (deluded yet) telling example in this regard are current debates that make Muslim minorities responsible for the resurgence of antisemitic violence in a German society that presumably has worked through and overcome its own antisemitic resentments (El-Tayeb, 2016).⁹⁴

While Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” rhetoric seems to open the “we” of the nation to subjects that so far have not been counted as part of it, it clearly delineates the idea of a German nation, or Volk, with concrete values, language, traditions and laws that need to be defended against migrants troubling its moral, fiscal and sexual exceptional achievements. In some ways, then, the “we” in “Wir schaffen das” is not far from the “we” that is mobilised in the populist “we are the people” (Wir sind das Volk)⁹⁵ rhetoric of PEGIDA and the AFD. Not only on the level of grammar does the politics of “we can do this” easily slip into the far-right proclamations that “we cannot do this” or that “we do not want to do this. The open grammar of the statement that made “Wir schaffen das” so amenable also seems to be its downfall. Whereas Merkel started the phrase as a caring gesture that eased the way for thousands of migrants to gain asylum in Germany, her rhetoric simultaneously played into the right-wing demands that it seemed to fend off. It invites people in yet likewise cuts subjects who have never been imagined to be part of Germany’s exceptional history out of its promise and positions migrants as potential threats to this delicate fantasy — threats that need to be either assimilated or deterred. What we then find in Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” politics is a redistribution of hope that while offering hope to migrants (and people in solidarity with them) with one hand takes it away with the other and then redistributes it to a nation imagined to be in need of repair and protection.

While the analysis of Merkel’s rhetoric reveals the complex mechanisms through which this redistribution of hope takes place, it also confirms what our, or at

⁹⁴ Despite the evidence that more than 90 per cent of crimes against Jews are committed by the political right (“Starker Anstieg”, 2019, 14 May).

⁹⁵ Originally the term “We are the people” links back to the peaceful protest movements of the late 80s that led to the fall of the Berlin wall and helped to overthrow the government of the GDR. Today it has been appropriated by groups like PEGIDA whose use of the term is closer to the racial definitions of the Volk during the Nazi era than those of the democratic movements of the 1980s.

least my, “paranoid”, or rather critically trained, mind already suspected: “hidden violence” and the “ruses of power” (Sedgwick, 2003, p.140). My reading of Merkel’s rhetoric and policies could consequently easily be perceived as cynical. It could be seen as an academic critique that is insensitive to the fate of thousands of people who gained access to asylum as a result of her policies and the variety of groups working and mobilising on the ground that made “Wir schaffen das” not only a political slogan but also at least partly a lived reality. To counter such a reading I want to be clear that my argument is not that Merkel’s statement is inherently “bad” or that it is used in intentionally misleading and cunning ways (even though it might have been). Instead, I have suggested that her rhetoric reveals the paradoxes and political problems of the humanitarian border that links humanitarian logics of help and assistance to securitising frames of assimilation and deterrence. Rather than undo, it reinforces borders between citizens as the recipients of the hopeful visions of the nation-state and migrants positioned as potential threats to this fantasy.

Given that Merkel’s phrase started with the caring gesture of extending asylum rights and deferring the Dublin regulations, then, the question emerges as to what an invocation of this gesture would look like that does not end up folding back into the biopolitical regime of the humanitarian border. In the following, I want to engage with this question in more detail. In doing so, I take Hage’s (2003) proposition that we should understand hope as a distributed resource seriously and examine in more detail how the hopeful spirit inherent in Merkel’s slogan was engaged by people most affected by her border policies. Rather than throw “Wir schaffen das” in the bin of bad politics filled by leftist gestures of “state-phobia” (Dhawan, 2016, p.51), then, I aim to examine how the spirit of “Wir schaffen das” was appropriated, reinterpreted and resisted by migrants and solidarity actors on the way to Europe. After all, if we understand Merkel’s rhetoric and policies as a redistribution of hope, it could also be distributed otherwise.

4. March of Hope

a. The Autonomy of Migration

Merkel first uttered the phrase “Wir schaffen das” at a moment of significant social mobilisation. When stepping in front of the cameras for her summer speech, thousands of migrants had already made their way from Spain and Italy and most

prominently from Turkey through Greece and the Balkan route towards Germany. While the Balkan route had for several months provided a relatively safe and invisible path towards Central Europe, in September a halt was put to this route by the Hungarian government. As the first Schengen country in the South-East⁹⁶, Hungary started barring migrants from boarding trains in Budapest and tried to forcefully relocate them into refugee camps instead. As a result, several thousand migrants were stuck at Keleli station in Budapest. Upon hearing that Germany might give asylum to Syrian citizens, a number of migrants opted for a simple yet surprisingly effective plan: they would simply walk to Germany and Austria by foot (Kasperek and Speer, 2016). The march, which was joined by several thousand people, became known as the March for Hope. Similar to Merkel's slogan, it developed a life of its own and inspired a range of other Marches of Hope such as a march from Idomeni in Greece to Macedonia in early 2016 and from Serbia to Croatia and Hungary in November 2016.

The March of Hope can be seen as a defining moment within the long summer of migration that inspired and was inspired by Merkel's rhetoric of "Wir schaffen das". Reports and images of the march were widely circulated on national and international media and #MarchofHope became a popular hashtag on Twitter and other social media channels. Kasperek and Speer (2015) point out that, as a result, this journey quickly came to occupy a crucial "place in the iconography of this long summer of migrations: a long line of people who, after a week of waiting, reappropriated their own mobility and collectively left Budapest" (para.13). They suggest that "under the pressure of these images and with the knowledge that a repressive strategy had failed, Germany and Austria announced that they would open their borders and admit the migrants" (ibid). More than a moment in which Germany generously opened its borders, the beginning of September thus might best be understood as the moment in which the already precarious border system of the EU broke down through the relentless mobilisations of migrants (see also Hess et al., 2016).

For the remaining part of this chapter, I want to turn to these mobilisations. Following the insights of an "autonomy of migration" approach that

⁹⁶ Greece, as the actually outermost South-Eastern state of the EU, had effectively given up enforcing the Dublin regulations months before (Kasperek and Speer, 2015)

studies “migratory movements and conflicts in terms that prioritize the subjective practices, the desires, the expectations and the behaviours of migrants themselves” (Mezzadra, 2011, p.121), I want to think about what happens when we turn our analysis from the state as the main distributor of hope to its reclamation by migrants themselves. How did people on the move mobilise hope? What kind of political demands did they make, enact and share on their way across Europe? And what “vision of the present in a state of pregnancy” (Fromm, 1968, p.13) might be found in the collective organisation of this movement? For these reflections I turn to how the March of Hope was enacted and mediated in the “border spectacle” (De Genova, 2013; see also Chapter 2) of the “refugee crisis”. To do so, I turn to mainstream media reports of this event, as well as accounts that have been left by migrants and solidarity actors on social media platforms like Twitter (#MarchOfHope) and the online archives of migrant solidarity groups like MovingEurope, Bordermonitoring and Migszol. I read these representations with and against the rich ethnographic archive that was produced by critical migration scholars who did (Kallius, 2016; Kallius, Monterescu, Rajaram, 2016; Kasparek and Speer, 2015; Santer and Wriedt, 2017).

b. Movement as Necessity, Resistance, Joy

Judith Butler (2015) suggests that when bodies assemble on city squares, on the street or in other forms of public space they are exercising a “right to appear that asserts and instates the body in the midst of the political field, and which, in its expressive and signifying function delivers a bodily demand for more liveable … conditions” (p.11). In the March of Hope, we, however, not only witness bodies assembling collectively in public space but also bodies that move, cross boundaries and enter spaces they have been so far denied entry to - bodies that have been denied the right to appear in public in the first place, racialised bodies of illegalised migrants, the undocumented and the stateless. A multitude of images and representations of these bodies in movement circulated through the public sphere after migrants made their way from Budapest towards Germany. While many of them were taken by major news sources, others were produced and shared by people on the move themselves. Within these different enactments and representations of movement we can decipher the articulation of a variety of political demands.

Probably the most dominant political demand voiced in the March of Hope was the claim to the right to asylum. As Kasperek and Speer (2015) document, many people made their way towards and over the border after the rumour spread that Syrian migrants might be granted asylum in Germany, a story that was also picked up by most major newspapers and news channels that shared accounts of migrants hoping for refugee status in Germany. The most prominent imagery accompanying these stories were pictures of people on the march carrying and holding up photos of Merkel. Probably the most iconic photo in this regard was that of an injured man on crutches leading a migrant march on a highway towards Germany while carrying an image of Merkel around his neck (e.g. Orth, 2015, 4 Sep). Here movement is portrayed as an act of necessity, struggle and pain, and it is not incidental that this image was the most shared representation of the March of Hope on national and international media. The image clearly fits the logic of empathy that demands ontological vulnerability as the feature of deservingness that I analysed in Chapter 4. Given its affective overdetermination, the image clearly plays into the logic of the humanitarian border in which the state — in the figure of Angela Merkel — is again framed as a benevolent protector, as such referencing and relying on the often paternalistic logic of humanitarianism that only allows certain victimised and therefore deserving bodies to enter the nation.

However, simply dismissing the image out of its amenability to the humanitarian border would too easily deny the act depicted in the image itself. As Imogen Tyler and Katarzyna Marciniak (2013) suggest, the paradox of migrant protest is that “immigrant protests are ‘acts’ against the exclusionary technologies of citizenship, which aim to make visible the violence of citizenship as regimes of control” (p.146). However, they add that “in order to effect material changes, protestors are compelled to make their demands in the idiom of the regime of citizenship they are contesting” (*ibid*). Given this logic, for Tyler and Marciniak, immigrant protests like the one captured in the image do not necessarily overcome but “expose the contradictions and inclusionary/exclusionary dynamics of contemporary modalities of citizenship in instructive ways” (p.144). What emerges in the scene of people on the march holding up images of Merkel is a reclamation of her “Wir schaffen das” ethos that holds her accountable for and against her own rhetoric and shifts the “we” from the nation-state to migrants themselves. Hope, in other words, is appropriated by migrants to demand the rights they have been denied yet

promised. In the vocabulary of Engin Isin (2009), we could understand the act depicted in this image as an “act of citizenship”, the process through which subjects who have been denied entry to the nation constitute themselves as citizen agents, as such shifting hope and agency from the state to themselves (p.368).

A similar logic is expressed in scenes of people heading marches while waving EU flags, which were likewise shared widely across the media landscape. Most of these images focus on marchers being led by young men with EU flags over the highways of Hungary and Austria (e.g. “Fußmarsch”, 2015, 4 Sep, p.10). While the symbolic embrace of the EU might be read as a form of cruel attachment to the entity that denies their entry, it likewise holds these institutions accountable to the promise that representatives like Merkel claim them to be built on. In their discussion about undocumented migrants in California singing the national anthem in Spanish, Butler and Gayatri Spivak (2007) encounter a similar paradox. Butler suggests that what emerges in this act is a “performative politics … in which to make the claim to become legal is precisely what is illegal, and is made nonetheless and precisely in defiance of the law by which recognition is demanded” (p.62-63). Within this performative politics we can see the mobilisation of what Arendt (2017) has called the “right to have rights” as the basis for political action (p.388).⁹⁷ Holding the flag, migrants unveil the hypocritical invocation of the EU as the protector of universal civil rights by figures like Merkel and call on the institution to overcome the exclusions that they are built upon. Subjects who have so far been denied access to the state are writing themselves into the structures of citizenship and in the process open spaces for others to follow them.

In other representations of the March of Hope, a different set of political demands is articulated. Activist migrant and migrant solidarity blogs and media outlets published a variety of stories and reports on the March of Hope in which they reported on human rights violations and called for an overhaul of the restrictive policies of the EU.⁹⁸ They document scenes of police violence and racial profiling

⁹⁷ For insightful discussion of what it means when marginalised subjects from the Global South make claims to the “right to have rights” see Sumi Madhok and Robin Dunford and Sumi Madhok (2015) and Sumi Madhok (2017).

⁹⁸ For a collection of several of these accounts see the compilation by the support and documentation network *Moving Europe* (“March”, 2016, p.5). For a more thorough engagement with human rights violations and the experience of migrants see also the study conducted by scholars engaged with Migszol (Gunesch et al., 2017).

such as when migrants trying to cross the border from Serbia to join the march were teargassed and interned in a camp in Röszke and point out that many people on the move demanded not only asylum but also the “right to move” more generally (“March of Hope”, 2016, p.5). Similarly, on Twitter, stories and images of the marches shared by migrant and migrant solidarity organisations were occasionally accompanied by hashtags such as #overcomingthefortress and #openborders. Within these accounts, movement is framed and enacted as a heroic act of defiance that resists the restrictive border policies of the EU. By crossing the border between Hungary and Austria, a border that for most EU citizens is no longer notable, people on the move question the regimes of (im)mobility that allow some bodies to cross freely while denying others this possibility. The unequal distribution of hope is laid bare and substituted by the egalitarian demand for redistributing hope equally, including to people beyond the border. Europe here is reframed from the seat of universal rights and justice to a defensive structure that safeguards life and security for some at the expense of others. Hope is directed not towards recognition by the EU but towards overcoming its protectionist policies and creating a world with no or at least more open borders.⁹⁹

The accounts published by activist organisations likewise show how many migrants linked their demands to more complex engagements with the questions of global inequality and the unfolding events in Northern Africa and the Middle East. Speer and Kasperek (2015) recall that one of the “the most beautiful aspect[s of the March] is the fact that along with the refugees from Syria, the original power and hope of the Arab Spring has come to Europe for the second time and challenged its boundaries” and suggest that “the rhythm and determination of the slogans that were chanted, for days on end … seemed strangely familiar” (para 18). Syrian civil society

⁹⁹ Such politics are often summarised under the banner of “no border” politics. While I generally agree with this demand, the question of open borders is and should remain a contested one. For instance, we might question whether borders are essential for postcolonial states in the Global South who long fought for sovereignty from imperial powers and be alert that a borderless world can likewise be neoliberal dream, or rather nightmare, in which capital, resources and labour would flow freely and without social securities or protections (Bauder, 2014). As Bridget Anderson, Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright (2016) point out an anti-capitalist no border politics is exactly about grappling with such paradoxes and contesting how capital and imperial power already travel freely while human movement remains constricted. A no border approach is consequently best understood as a position of critique rather than a blueprint for global political organisation. As I show in the following, however, a no border politics is not the only way in which the imaginaries of the European border regime can and are being contested.

organisations similarly discussed how “coming together people can change the European asylum policy” yet also called for more thorough support of “those that have not fled yet and instead continue trying to build a future in Syria” (“Days of Hope”, 2015, 7 Sep). In actions like these, migrants on the move centred their own stories, narratives and histories and highlighted the complex situation in the Middle East and Northern Africa, as well as Western complicity with it, which were so often cut out of more humanitarian accounts of the long summer of migration (Holzberg, Kolbe and Zaborowski, 2018).

What gets lost in these more outspokenly political representations of movement, however, are the quiet frequencies of people simply moving, waiting, eating or resting: people in the quotidian efforts of sustaining, making and living life. As Muñoz (2009) points out in his work on queer futurity, it is often these “quotidian gestures [that are] laden with potentiality” (p.91). While most of these gestures operate under regimes of invisibility that do not make it into the news, activist accounts or onto social media (Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos, 2008), we get a sense of them in “refugee selfies” that people took during the march. Smiling into the camera, people positioned themselves in front of scenic views like that of the bridge over the Danube in Budapest or simply took pictures of themselves and fellow marchers while waiting on the side of the highway.¹⁰⁰ As Sandra Ponzanesi (2018) points out, it was these images that evoked the most furious reactions in public discourse. She argues that they led to people being labelled “economic migrants”, as “real refugees” would never have access to technologies of the selfie. Most importantly, however, people in these photos portray the wrong affective attitude. The seemingly careless act of smiling into the camera troubles the imperative of suffering that needs to be conveyed in order for people to be read as deserving refugees. Rather than as a moment of flight, in these images movement becomes reframed as an act of travelling, an arduous travel that nevertheless also entails moments of pleasure, excitement and laughter. As Dimitris Papadopoulos, Niamh Stephenson and Vassilis Tsianos (2008) proclaim, “laughter is [a] prime mover of escape. Escape is joyful” (p.xx).

¹⁰⁰ Migrant selfies were not exclusive to the March of Hope but were a consistent feature of the border spectacle of the long summer of migration ranging from people taking images on boats crossing the Mediterranean to migrants taking pictures with Angela Merkel. For a more in-depth discussions of the complex politics of the “refugee selfie” see Lilie Chouliaraki (2017) and Roopika Risam (2018).

What this laughter points us to is how migrants do not necessarily resist something but by “defy[ing] the borders that block their future, expose the limits of liberal citizenship without ever intending it” (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2013, p.188). These selfies extend the binary understanding of movement as either an act of violent necessity or one of heroic resistance to a more complex and less spectacular form of living life in conditions of (im)possibility. What emerges within the diverse visual archive of the March of Hope, then, is what I want to call a horizon of hope that extends the frame of humanitarian securitisation. This horizon points beyond representations of movement in which migration could only ever be represented and read as a threat — floods swamping the country — or an act of total despair — figures of pity that need help. It reframes the spirit of “Wir schaffen das” and shifts our attention from the managerial logic of humanitarian securitisation to the emergence of collective agency in the face of despair. What this analysis shows is how political demands are variably articulated as a claim for citizenship or a more radical demand for open or at least less violent borders and Western accountability in the face of global inequality. Yet, political action most clearly emerges in the more quotidian registers of defiantly living life in circumstances of adversity. In other words, while a spirit of utopia is clearly articulated in the collective enactment of free movement and the resistance to border violence, as I illustrate further in the following, it primarily emerges in the infrastructures that enable this freedom of movement to be enacted in the first place.

c. Mobile Commons, Care and Public Mourning

If in the March of Hope, freedom of movement is articulated as a shared vision of futurity, then how is this freedom not only articulated but also made possible? In other words, how do we understand its emergence in the cracks of the European border regime? Drawing on the work of Arendt, Butler (2015) reminds us that “freedom does not come from me or from you: it does happen as a relation between us, or indeed among us” (p.89). She argues that the act of freedom is not about “finding the human dignity within each person, but rather understanding the human as a relational and social being, one whose action depends upon equality and articulates the principle of equality” (p.89). From this, she follows that freedom and “the claim of equality is not spoken or written but is made precisely when bodies

appear together, or rather when through their action, they bring the space of appearance into being (*ibid*). Thinking with Butler, then, the question of what politics are enacted in the March of Hope is not simply about the claim for positive rights (in the sense of recognition by the state) or the claim for negative freedom (articulated in a call for freedom from the violence of the border). Instead, it emerges in the conditions that enable people to come together for political action in the first place. It leads us to ask for what Butler (2015) calls the conditions of collective agency.

As Annastiina Kallius, Daniel Monterescu and Prem Kumar Rajaram (2016) point out the March of Hope only came about through the material and affective infrastructures of assistance, exchange and sharing that migrants created on their way to Europe. They suggest that “migrant occupation of [parks] and other seemingly neutral nonplaces, such as highways, created spaces where people forged horizontal political solidarities (p.9). On social media, we can still find maps that migrants shared among themselves pointing to the safest and easiest routes through the Balkans and over the border to Germany and links to webpages that list resources, safe houses and contacts of asylum lawyers, as well as images of people sharing equipment, tents, blankets and food (e.g. W2eu, 2016). Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2013) call these forms of self-woven infrastructure the “mobile commons” that they define as “migrants' resource and path for surviving the pressures of sovereignty and capitalist exploitation” (p.192). They suggest that mobile commons are “neither private nor public, neither state owned nor part of civil society; rather [they] exists to the extent that people share [them] and generate [them] as they are mobile and when they arrive somewhere” (p.190).

The mobile commons include not only invisible knowledges of mobility (as in the sharing of routes, information and maps) and informal economies (as in the sharing of food, clothes and other objects) but also, most importantly, the creation of new communities of justice and politics of care (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2013, p.191). This enactment of mobile care disrupts two fundamental principles of how care is envisioned (and commonly enacted) in liberal thought. Firstly, care in the mobile commons is not confined to the family unit and goes beyond the borders of both kinship and the nation. Within the mobile commons created during the March of Hope, relations of sharing and assistance were created between groups of people who often did not know each other before they met so that as many people as possible could participate in the movement (Speer and Kasperek, 2015). This sharing of care

offers glimpses into more horizontal regimes of assistance in which care and political action are directly interwoven.

Secondly, mobile commons break with the classical division that positions care as a private endeavour and therefore as separate from the public realm of political action. Even in Arendt, whose political philosophy I started this section with, the private and political realms remain separate. Finding hope in the Roman polis, she brushes over the fact that men were only enabled to engage in political action by the reproductive labour done by slaves and women in the private sphere (Benhabib, 1993). Instead, in the mobile commons care and political action are directly interwoven. This is not to say that the mobile commons are free of gendered and racialised divisions of labour. As Carla Angulo-Pasel (2018) points out in her ethnography of migrants fleeing through Central America, most of the reproductive and emotional labour during their travel, especially childcare, continues to be done by women. She further points out how these spontaneous infrastructures can also put women at increased risk of mistreatment and sexual abuse. Nevertheless, she suggests that in mobile commons we can observe ruptures in the traditional relations of care that engender new affiliations and solidarities. As Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) suggests, an attention to care is a crucial part of the project of developing "a more radically democratic way of listening to neglected things" (p.58). It shows how seemingly uneventful practices of the everyday might entail the seeds for radically transformative political projects.

A particularly revealing example of these politics of care and justice during the March of Hope could be seen in the vigil that migrants held before the march at the main train station in Budapest. After 71 people died in the truck that tried to cross over to Austria, several hundred people came together in front of the Budapest train station in a vigil organised by the grassroots organisation Migszol. People lit candles and put up a large banner reading "Europe your hands are covered in blood". Films of the vigil were shared on major news sources (e.g. Domokos, Khalili, Sprenger and Payne-Frank, 2015, 10 Sep) and even after the official event was over, people kept joining the vigil including a group of Muslims who started praying and chanting in Pashto and Urdu (Kallius, Monterescu and Rajaram, 2016, p.28). In these acts, migrants claim and appropriate public space and refuse to let go of the dead. Like Antigone who insists on the burial of her fallen brother, migrants here rewrite the parameters of who counts as a subject worthy of mourning (Butler, 2000). In doing

so, these acts of public mourning operate as acts of communal care in the face of pervasive violence. They provide a sense of solidarity that, while faced with destruction from all sides, collectives of people create the infrastructures that sustain life and care in the face of death and adversity.

It is in this enactment of hope in the face of loss that Ernst Bloch's (1986) idea that even in turning to the past people are future-oriented becomes tangible. In a Freudian perspective we might read forms of public burial either as melancholic gestures that keep people from getting over the object that was lost or as acts of "proper" mourning in order to move on from the lost object (Eng and Kanzanjian, 2002). In the vigil held at the train station in Budapest, however, the intent was not to remain paralysed in the face of the dead nor to get over them, but to retain their memory while moving forward. After all, it was the vigil that started daily protests against the state and after which migrants demanded to be let over the border (Kallius, 2016). Such an invocation of hope troubles not only Freud's but also Merkel's temporal logics. Arguing that "we are all shocked by the awful news", Merkel's government framed the killing of migrants in the truck in Austria as a sudden state of emergency to be solved through humanitarian securitisation — assisting migrants in need while decreasing future migration. In contrast, the act of public mourning staged by migrants "insists on going beyond the temporality of emergency to include the haunting of the dead, and to demand accountability and responsibility" (Ticktin, 2016). It does not replace ongoing histories of imperial violence through narratives of national exceptionalism, but in Avery Gordon's (1997) words, brings the "ghostly matters" of border violence and global inequalities into the centre of public attention. In doing so, it highlights "the living effects, seething and lingering, of what seems over and done with, the endings that are not over" (p.195). Forms of backward-looking affects like mourning and grief, here, consequently, do not emerge as antidotes but part and parcel of an invocation of hope that insists that a different world is only possible if we care for the wounds of the past.

d. Solidarity Beyond the Humanitarian Border

Hope in the March of Hope, then, might best be understood not simply as a call for citizenship, nor as a heroic vision of a world without borders. Instead, it emerges in new relations of care and solidarity that, while keeping the memory of violence and

destitution alive, offer a glimpse into “a primary condition of existence [as] the immersion into the worlds you inhabit and share with other people as you move” (Trimikliniotis, Parsanolou and Tsianos, 2015, p.1039). The mobile commons however not only involve migrants on their way to and across Europe but also extend to European citizens engaged in solidarity actions. The March of Hope would not have been possible without “unexpected horizontal solidarities involving private citizens working with migrants, standing with them in their protests, sheltering people, and transporting them to the Western border” (p.3). Migrant solidarity organisations in Hungary assisted with legal aid and resources like tents and blankets, and provided places to sleep and vehicles for travel. A variety of civil society organisations organised car convoys and the #MarchofHope hashtag was quickly followed by the hashtags #carsforhope and #busesforhope that people from Austria, German and Hungary used to organise private bus and car transport over the Hungarian border.

Already before the media had put the Balkan corridor into the spotlight, several initiatives helped people to get over the border. Here people took on the position of one of the most vilified figures of the “refugee crisis” — that of the human smuggler. In doing so, they point out how the violence of human smuggling becomes a necessity in a situation in which common means of travel are denied — thus reversing relations of law and morality. Similarly, during the March people helped out to show how the aims of the state were not necessarily shared by the population. As a result, Annastiina Kallius (2016) reports that “along their way, the marchers found food and water bottles waiting for them, as Hungarians living along the route expressed their support by whatever means they could” and notes that “other supporters joined the march by car, providing slow ride for the elderly, for the children, and others who were not able to walk” (p.139). These efforts made for moving images shared on the news all around the world (e.g. Domokos, Khalili, Sprenger and Payne-Frank, 2015, 10 Sep) and pressured the German government to take action. After one day, bus convoys were organised by the German state. While many of the exhausted marchers were hesitant about this offer that before had resulted in people being placed in asylum camps against their will, with the eye of public media attention upon them, they entered the vehicles provided by the state.

In these moments, the humanitarian actions of the state and other large organisations appropriated and merged with the grassroots solidarity actions.

Nevertheless, differences between the logics of humanitarianism and the solidarity actions could be observed. Whereas major humanitarian organisations mainly confined themselves to charitable action by providing blankets, food and water to migrants and pointing out human rights abuses not in line with EU laws committed by border agents, the more grassroots organisations focused on providing infrastructures of mobility, organising places to sleep, sharing travel routes and legal support as an alternative infrastructure of care to the state. While many of the activists were part of both organisations so that the boundaries were blurred, they also differed in the organisations' approach towards other marginalised groups within Hungary. While most humanitarian organisations refused to offer assistance to homeless or Sinti and Roma populations within Hungary, smaller groups like Migszol framed their and the migrants' struggle as a shared one, united against the structural racism and regimes of inequality created by the Orbán regime (Kallius, 2016; Kallius, Monterscu and Rajaram, 2016). In the context of ongoing austerity regimes, mobile commons consequently also operated as a nexus for rethinking social welfare systems and as meetings points for migrant, labour and anti-austerity efforts (see also Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou and Tsianos, 2015). These more holistic efforts often overlapped but also stood in contrast to humanitarian actions that primarily focussed on the alleviation of the suffering of particular subjects.

What this short comparison (of ideal types) underlines is that while solidarity activism is easily incorporated into the humanitarian border, it also gestures towards forms of collective organisation that go beyond it. Whereas the humanitarian border evoked in Merkel's rhetoric harnesses care out of an impetus to reduce suffering while keeping the basic biopolitical logic of its political reason intact, mobile commons intend to reframe the structure of citizenship by rebuilding the infrastructures of care beyond biopolitical reason. Examples of such solidarity institutions could not only be observed in and on the March from Budapest but all around Europe from the migrant squats in Athens (Squire, 2018), to collectively organised alarm phones at the Mediterranean (Stierl, 2015) and sanctuary cities and initiatives across Europe (Bauder, 2017). Being part of the mobile commons, most of these infrastructures were, however, temporary. After the media attention had faded and most of the migrants had left Kelili station, the Hungarian government built a fence on the border to Serbia and migration to and through Hungary declined. Most importantly, however, policies by other European member states like Germany such

as declaring Serbia a safe country proved effective and pushed the buffer zone of the EU further out. As activists from Migszol report (Gunesch, Kallius, Mahr and Rodgers, 2017), as a result, only few months later the train station in Budapest resembled a ghost place in which only faint traces of the mobilisations of the summer could be identified.

These traces still work as reminders of how social relations could be organised differently. Borrowing from Berlant (2016a), what remains in the traces of these mobilisations is the horizon of "common infrastructures that absorb the blows of our aggressive need for the world to accommodate us [and that] ... hold out the prospect of a world worth attaching to that's something other than an old hope's bitter echo" (p.414). In other words, while potentially saying as much about my own affective investment as about that of the people involved in these mobilisations, the traces of the March of Hope continue to work as a simple reminder that "no one person suffers a lack of shelter without a social failure to organize shelter in such a way that it is accessible to each and every person" (Butler, 2011, p.2). More than that, they highlight that this failure is not a biopolitical necessity — the spirit of "Wir schaffen das" does not need to fold back into paranoid nationalism and biopolitical control — but a collective decision that could also be made differently. The Marches of Hope not only mobilise hope towards inclusion into the state or opening its borders but also express a longing for a world in which the relationality of social life is not framed as threat and danger to be managed but in which collective bonds are valued as enabling life to flourish and persist. Such practices are not without conflicts or injustices but, nevertheless, point to infrastructures of care that extend beyond biopolitical regimes in which life is enabled for some at the expense of others.

5. Conclusion

In the novel *Exit West*, Moshin Hamid (2017) constructs a world in which magic doors appear that enable immediate travel from one geopolitical location to the other. Through this narrative device, he invites us into a, if not borderless, porous world in which people fleeing from war and destruction find their last possibility of survival in these doors, while others use them for travel and transnational connection. Throwing the international political system into crisis, the magic doors become heavily controlled by Western states and incite political violence. While at first it looks like

the existence of these doors will usher in war and state-led genocide, a more hopeful political future develops. Initiatives pop up in which the state assists people in constructing new settlements of cohabitation and conviviality from Lampedusa to the posh boroughs of West London and the Bay area of the US. Often read as Moshin Hamid's reflection on the "refugee crisis" his novel does not depict a classical utopian vision of perfect harmony but, nevertheless, engages the hopeful idea that in the face of adversity and need people might create new infrastructures of care, solidarity and the commons.

Examining the Marches of Hope in relation to Merkel's statement of "We can do this", I have suggested that such hopeful utopianism might likewise be deciphered in political action today. Going beyond the rhetoric and actions of the state, I have shown how the enactment of mobile commons in migrant marches offer glimpses into different practices of care, solidarity and the commons that extend beyond the biopolitical regime of the European border regime. Whereas Merkel's "Wir schaffen das" redistributes hope away from migrants and towards a nation imagined to be in need of protection from them, migrants reclaim these hopes on their way to and across Europe. While dominant mobilisations of hope that work through narratives of exceptional national achievement might reattach us to the status quo by erasing the histories that have created the problems of global inequality and racialised border regimes in the first place, in these marches we encounter mobilisations of hope that do not cut off but stay with the wounds of the past.

In relation to theories of hope, my analysis has consequently suggested that we should not give up on hope in times of hopelessness. Instead, I have argued that we should channel a Blochian spirit that aims to decipher sparks of utopia in the everyday of collective organisation and living life in the face of adversity. My hope is that such an approach can help loosen our stubborn attachment to paranoid nationalisms and instead add affective fuel to what Wendy Brown (2015b) has called the "willingness to risk becoming different kinds of being", which she describes as "a desire to alter the architecture of the social world from the perspective of being disenfranchised in it, a conviction that the goods of the current order are worth less than the making of a different one" (p.107). Rather than searching for hope in the arms of the state, I have suggested that we might do better in turning to minor acts in everyday political struggles that reach beyond the humanitarian border. Such acts, I have suggested, open our perspective to a horizon of hope in which the relationality

of social life is not framed through threat and biopolitical control but in which collective infrastructures are valued as enabling life to flourish and persist.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion: Shame, Guilt and the Paradoxes of Affective Borders

1. The Walk of Shame

In summer 2015, members of the European United Left staged a “Walk of Shame” in the European parliament. They rolled out a 100 metre-long carpet reading the names of migrants who had died as a result of the border policies of the European Union. The carpet consisted of an excerpt of the List of Death, compiled by the anti-racist coalition United for Intercultural Action, that documents the deaths of 36 570 people since the establishment of the EU in its current form with the Maastricht Treaty of 1993.¹⁰¹ It lists migrants who died not only in the Mediterranean and other points of border crossing but also in detention camps, asylum units or following deportations. Rolled out in the halls of the European parliament, the list forced members of parliament to walk over the fate of people who have died through policies that they have helped create or made little effort to alter. The “Walk of Shame” was one of several actions in which the List of Death was used as a political tool for shaming the European Union by highlighting the ongoing murderous violence of the borders of Europe. With the help of the artist Banu Cennetoğlu, the List was put up in public places all over Europe — hung in the metro in Hungary, shown in train stations in Austria and on advertising surfaces in Germany, the UK and the Netherlands. Simultaneously, it was published in national newspapers like *Der Tagesspiegel* in Germany and *The Guardian* in the UK, exhibited on art festivals and galleries and widely shared on social media and in migrant rights campaigns.

For my concluding reflections to this thesis, I engage with the List of Death to think about what its use and political circulation can tell us about the possibilities and contradictions of mobilising shame as a political force in the current political moment. I do so not only to reflect in more depth on the central role that shame and guilt play in the production and destabilisation of affective borders in Germany,

¹⁰¹ These numbers are taken from the most recent version of the “List of Death” from the 1st of April 2019 (“The List”, 2019).

which I have touched upon at different moments in these chapters, but to draw out in more detail the paradoxical logics of affective politics that I have traced and analysed throughout this thesis. I take the concept of “paradox” from the work of Joan Scott (1997) and Wendy Brown (2000) who have used it to describe a politics whose proposition is true and false, useful and limiting at the same time. Both of their scholarship focusses on the paradoxes of feminist politics in the context of liberal Western democracies. Joan Scott argues that in order to claim equality the feminist movement in France likewise needed to stress difference and particularity. Wendy Brown reversely suggests that in order to stress difference and claim women’s rights as particular rights feminists likewise need to allude to and embrace universalism and sameness. One way or the other, Scott and Brown point out, feminist politics are caught up in paradoxical logics that often reaffirm that which they critique.

Borrowing from this line of thought, I suggest that the politics of affective borders are characterised by similar paradoxes. Affects like shame and guilt work to simultaneously destabilise and reify the norms and discourses that sustain the borders of Europe. Before I delve deeper into the paradoxes of affective borders and reflect on the theoretical and political contributions of this thesis, I want to have a closer look at the ways in which the List was used to shame Europe and evoke guilt in Germany.

2. Paradoxes of Shame

The List of Death documents the names, regions of origin and causes of death of people who have died within the European border regime.¹⁰² Over the last decade, the List has become a crucial tool in border activism and has been supported by more than 500 NGOs and anti-racist, feminist and migrant grassroots organisations across Europe who have used it in their efforts to highlight the mass killing of migrants as “the shame to Europe’s civil conscience” (United in Action, 2018). As queer scholars like Eve Sedgwick (2003) and Elspeth Probyn (2005) point out, shame is a public emotion that relies on making something that you do not want to be revealed known to the outside world. While it can be enough for oneself to know about the shameful

¹⁰² Despite the best efforts of a wide network of researchers, journalists and local experts, many of the names and information on the List are missing and the actual number of people killed by the European border regime is estimated to be even higher.

act that one has committed, shame is augmented in the face of others. Shame, in other words, requires a witness. The List enacts this act of public shaming by bringing the murderous violence enacted at the borders of Europe to public attention and, in the case of the “Walk of Shame”, into the heart of political power. It highlights the deaths of people who in a Butlerian (2006, 2009) vocabulary are not only deemed not valuable enough to be grieved but whose lives are framed as not even important enough to be counted by a European border regime otherwise so concerned with surveillance and documentation.

One of the paradoxes we can question in this regard is whether by counting bodies and documenting them in a black and white grid, The List partly re-enacts the cold violence of the state that it calls out. A violence in which migrants, rather than fully-fledged subjects, again appear as mere numbers of the dead — traces of the subaltern that haunt but do not speak (Spivak, 2010 [1988]). Martina Tazzioli (2015), for instance, has argued that the politics of counting border deaths participates in a governmental logic that erases individual life stories, thus flattening the historical and social relations that caused these deaths in the first place. While I agree with her argumentation, the List also constitutes an important instrument of documentation that has given power to the claims of a range of migrant groups and organisations. These groups use the List to detach shame from the body of the illegalised migrant and instead highlight the state apparatuses responsible for their abject position. Indeed, while many of the migrant groups involved in the activism have called out the practices of the EU for decades, the List has helped them solicit a public affective response and to gain support from established institutions, national newspapers, art galleries and political parties.

This support is paramount because shame not only requires a witness but the gaze of someone we respect or deem important. The key theorist of shame, Silvan Tomkins (1962), argues that shame works in relation to a person or object that we have invested with interest. Shame is only felt and acknowledged *as shameful* in relation to what we deem important and valuable. Based on Tomkins’ insight that shame and interest are closely linked, Probyn (2005) points out that “whatever it is that shames you will be something important to you, an essential part of yourself” (p.x). She illustrates that if neither she, nor other witnesses agree that heteronormativity is something to aspire to and being queer is shameful, calling her so will fail to create the shame it intends. This means that shame can only be

mobilised within an (at least partially shared) system of value. More concretely, it needs to be invoked in relation to a shared ideal of who, or what, one aims to be. In psychoanalytic vocabulary, this means that shame emerges in the gap between the ego and the ego-ideal — the inner image of the ideal self that the ego aspires to.¹⁰³

In the walk of shame, this gap is created by pointing out the mismatch between the ideal of Europe as the carrier of universal human rights and the guarantor of equality, liberty and justice and the murderous machine of the European borders regime that migrants encounter at, and within, its borders. Dating back to 1993, the List deals a blow to idealised self-understandings of Europe as it points out that border deaths are nothing new or exceptional but have been part and parcel of the EU (since its current constitution in the Maastricht Treaty of 1993). It highlights the Arendtian (1951) insight that human rights have only ever counted for (European) citizens and are useless without a state able, or willing, to enforce them. As such, it shows that the European border regime cannot be disentangled from the legacies of colonialism and racial capitalism; or what with Vijay Prashad (2018), we could call the “ongoing division of humanity between those who live in zones of great war and poverty … and those who live with the illusion of peace, in countries that produce the conditions for war but deny that they have a hand in it” (p.9). However, while the “Walk of Shame” unveils the notion of Europe as the carrier of universal human rights and equality as a fantasy, it likewise reaffirms, (or rather has to reaffirm), this fantasy. After all, carrying the List into the EU-parliament, only works if we assume that while the EU is the originator of this violence; it might also be the place where this violence would be resolved.

John Braithwaite (1989) has usefully analysed the precarious dynamics of public shaming that make such a reaffirmation necessary. Braithwaite makes a crucial distinction between *reintegrative* and *disintegrative* forms of shaming that, I suggest, also provide a useful avenue for understanding acts of public shaming. Whereas disintegrative shaming formulates critique as an attack on the person or institution (border deaths are a result of the structural constitution of the EU), reintegrative shaming focuses on actions and is followed by gestures of acceptance and reparation

¹⁰³ The concept of the ego-ideal was developed by Sigmund Freud (2014 [1914]) in his early writings *On Narcissism*. The central role of the ego-ideal for making sense of shame was developed in more depth by Gerhart Piers and Milton Singer's (1953) whose ideas still shape most contemporary psychoanalytic understandings of shame.

(border deaths are a ‘mistake’ of the EU that might be overcome through more humane policies).¹⁰⁴ The List could be used for forms of disintegrative shaming that would confront Europe as what Sabine Broeck has called “a colonialist product which guards its comparative wealth and guarantees of freedom carefully” (Broeck in Brock and Saucier, 2019, p.25). This form of shaming would ask for a radical reformulation of European borders and citizenship and highlight that global inequalities need to be tackled through radical forms of redistribution. Disintegrative shaming, however, as Braithwaite (1989) argues, leaves little place for betterment and is commonly met with resistance, retreat or further violence.

Given this logic, like in the “Walk of Shame”, the List of Death is commonly mobilised in a more reintegrative manner that affirms the notion of Europe as the haven of democracy, liberty, and universal human rights. This could be seen at the “Walk of Shame”, during which members of the United European Left stood next to the list carrying banners that read “je suis un migrant”. In this action, mostly white European citizens and members of parliament identify with, and as, dead migrants. Written in French, these banners are a direct nod to French notions of universal humanism — a powerful value system that is arguably formative within, and recognised across, the European continent. Carrying these banners activates the idea that Europe is the philosophical and moral home of this form of humanism and denounces that this system of value is currently violated through the treatment of migrants at the borders of Europe. It evokes the notion of a community of equals in which the death of the Other also becomes a hurt to the Self. The paradoxical tension of such an invocation is, as we have seen in the analysis of empathy in Chapter 4, that it muddles and flattens historical relations of power and difference. Direct identification with migrants erases dimensions of race, gender and class and obscures the historical processes that have led to some subjects being killed at the borders of Europe, while others are imbued with the agency to advocate on their behalf. What we can see in the “Walk of Shame”, then, is a highly paradoxical mobilisation of shame that works to highlight the murderous violence of borders while at the same time activating discourses that erase the differences in location and power that they are founded on.

¹⁰⁴ While Braithwaite’s ideas were developed in the context of criminology and with the aim to reintegrate offenders back into society, his insights can also help us make sense of acts of public shaming in relation to state-bodies and supranational institutions.

2. Paradoxes of Guilt

The paradoxical logics of reintegrative shaming becomes even more clear when we look at how the List was used and communicated in the German context. Rather than through French notions of humanist universalism, here, shame was evoked in reference to historical guilt and narratives of exceptional moral responsibility. In a collaboration with the daily left-leaning national newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*, the List was published in Germany on the 9th of November, a date that occupies a central position in German collective memory. In the accompanying article that explains the editors' decision to publish the List on this date, they describe the 9th of November as "a fateful day for the Germans". It marks not only Hitler's first attempted coup in 1923, but more importantly, the Reichspogromnacht of 1938 that commemorates the height of anti-Semitism and Nazi terror during the Third Reich.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, it marks the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 that denotes the beginning of German reunification (Casdorff and Marold, 2017, 9 Nov, para.1). The article suggests that having made it through these histories "is a gift, after everything that was. Yet it is also an obligation, to again and again live up to and do justice to this gift" (ibid). In this rhetoric, responsibility for altering the fate of migrants is explained out of Germany's socialist and most crucially fascist histories. It is articulated in relation to a sense of gratitude for having received another chance and an ongoing sense of guilt that demands that this chance be used for more ethical acts in the present.

Shame and guilt are closely related affects that are most commonly differentiated in relation to the source of negative feeling that they derive from.¹⁰⁶ As Sedgwick (2003) suggests, whereas shame is a negative feeling about who one is (a not so just and equal Europe after all), guilt is associated more with particular actions (the crimes of Germany's past). Guilt, moreover, has an even more moral character than shame in which the negative feeling does not just emerge from a mismatch between what one aims to be and actually is, but a deep feeling of moral doubt and

¹⁰⁵ In English, this day is still commonly known as the "Kristallnacht" (Crystal Night) a term that derives from the shards of broken glass that littered the streets after the windows of Jewish-owned stores, buildings and synagogues were destroyed. The term was popularised by the Nazis so as to give it a positive connotation (Adorno, 1996 [1959]). For that reason, I use the more critical terminology of the "Pogromnacht" (night of pogroms) to describe the 9th of November 1938.

¹⁰⁶ In the psychological literature, both of them are often discussed as self-conscious emotions. The third crucial self-conscious emotion is pride that I come to later (Lewis, 1993).

remorse for actions that have trespassed one's ethical code. In psychoanalytic vocabulary, this means that if shame arises out of a mismatch between the ego and the ego-ideal, guilt emerges in the gap between the ego and the super-ego as the internalisation of cultural and moral rules.¹⁰⁷ As such, mobilising guilt might be an even more potent affect for holding people and institutions to account for their actions as it cuts into the deep layers of morality and ethics. Given this logic, the mobilisation of guilt — and particularly guilt around the Holocaust — has long been a crucial motor for and target of activism around borders and migration in Germany. Since public intellectuals like Karl Jaspers (1999 [1946]) and Theodor Adorno (1996 [1959]) demanded that Germany cannot just disavow, but needs to work through and confront, its past, the mobilisation of guilt around the Holocaust has been a crucial affective grammar through which German politics has been animated and contested.¹⁰⁸ This has been particularly the case for migration and border politics because the absolute right to asylum was originally enshrined in the German constitution out of Germany's responsibility for causing the refugee crises of World War II (Olick and Levy, 1997).

A telling invocation of such guilt during the current “refugee crisis” could be seen in the activist intervention “The Dead are Coming” that echoed the “Walk of Shame” in its affective strategies and attracted significant media, political and scholarly attention during the summer of 2015 in Germany. In this action, the activist-artist collective the Centre for Political Beauty (CfP) staged a mass burial in front of the Bundestag to call attention to the migrants killed at the borders of Europe. In explaining the rationale for their political activism, the CfP (2015) declared that:

¹⁰⁷ This argument can also be traced back to the work of Piers and Singers (1953).

¹⁰⁸ Jaspers was a German philosopher and psychiatrist whose 1946 lectures on the “Question of German Guilt” triggered important discussions about how the nation should relate to its past. Adorno, the head of the Frankfurt School, gave a similarly influential lecture on “what does it mean to come to terms with the past” in 1959. Jaspers is more forgiving in his ideas and argues that the question of guilt depends on how involved a particular individuals was in the crimes of the Holocaust. Adorno has a more encompassing understanding of what it means to come to terms with the past and suggests that “the past will have been worked through only when the causes of what happened then have been eliminated. Only because the causes continue to exist does the captivating spell of the past remain to this day unbroken” (p.103). As such, Adorno’s understanding is closest to my understanding of Holocaust guilt as a crucial source for keeping the wounds of the past open and to address ongoing injustices in the present.

“The group’s basic understanding is that the legacy of the Holocaust is rendered void by political apathy, the rejection of refugees and cowardice. It believes that Germany should not only learn from its History but also take action” (para.1).

As I have explained in the introduction, such an affective commitment to a politics of “never again” likewise shapes my own political subjectivity and partly motivated this thesis. Indeed, I was there, among the other activists digging graves in front of the Bundestag — guilty, angry, hopeful. Together with several hundred other people, we stormed the lawn in front of the Bundestag. Armed with shovels, sticks and flowers, we dug up graves, put up tombs and small shrines until the entire area in front of the parliament resembled a cemetery. Like the “Walk of Shame”, it was only by walking over “dead bodies” that politicians could come into parliament.

Our digging attracted substantial media coverage and scholarly debate. Maurice Stierl (2016) has lauded the action’s confrontational style of shock and transgression that goes beyond the sentimental politics of humanitarian empathy that I analysed in Chapter 4. Samuel Merrill (2018) further stresses the historical element of the action and suggests that it constitutes a form of “activist remembrance” (p.161). He points out that weeks after the action, anonymous graves dedicated to migrants would appear in parks and flower beds in cities all across Germany. These graves resembled the Stolpersteine (stumbling stones) that are put in front of houses in several cities in Germany to commemorate people who were killed in the Holocaust. It enacts a similar disruption of the everyday and stages multi-directional memory work that connects the history of the Holocaust to other historical and present injustices.¹⁰⁹

Others were more critical. Aleksandra Lewicki (2017) cautions that while the digging of graves opened the space for all kinds of people to participate, in the end, the artists of the CfB remained the “puppet masters” and “refugee’s rights and political subjectivity … derivative of and activated by European citizen’s political

¹⁰⁹ The CfP does not only focus on the history of the Holocaust. In other actions they have likewise mobilised memories of the division of Germany and the Berlin Wall. For example, on the 25th commemoration of the fall of the Berlin Wall, they stole the white crosses which are put up next to the German parliament to remember the people who were killed trying to cross from East to Western Germany and brought them to the outer borders of Europe. In doing so, they aimed to highlight the hypocritical commemoration of German border victims in a political moment in which people are killed as a result of European borders on a daily basis.

agency” (p.284). She refers here particularly to a related action in which the CfP brought over the bodies of two Syrians who had died in the Mediterranean to give them an actual burial in Germany. While they got in touch with their families who were present at the funerals, the family members had scripted roles in this enactment that largely followed the plans of the artists and their name and stories and viewpoints remained unspoken. Jennifer Gully and Lynn Mie Itagaki (2017) have suggested that in this constellation the body of the dead migrants became a “new symbol for the nation, an ethical symbol that reminds Europe, but especially Germans, of the sacred obligation their privileges of life and security demand” yet a symbol that ultimately “depends on the reaffirmation of the nation-state and the opposition between citizens and non-citizens” (p.296). They argue that while it was dedicated to dead migrants, it kept living migrants out of the sphere of political action.

And indeed, different to the acts of public mourning I discussed in Chapter 6, during “The Dead are Coming” the people digging graves next to me were likewise mostly white European and German citizens — often putting up crosses in an unquestioned act of Christian symbolism (see also Lewicki, 2018). We could explain the overwhelming presence of European citizens during the action as a marker of the safety that citizenship provides which is needed for acts of civil disobedience. The families of the two buried people, for instance, mainly stayed silent and anonymous as they did not want to have their asylum cases jeopardised (Lewicki, 2018). However, I want to suggest that the lack of migrant voices in this form of activism also has to do with who is interpellated and called upon through the invocation of Holocaust guilt. In his political manifesto, the founder and master-mind of CfP, Phillip Ruch (2015) asks “who else if not the country of Holocaust perpetrators is morally obliged to lead and offensive battle against genocide and human rights violations and unjust regimes?” (p.277). The answer to this rhetorical question are that the leaders of the battle are people who identify with this country, citizens who share, and have been constructed as, the carriers of Holocaust guilt in the first place. What we can see in this rhetorical question, then, is that, as Sara Ahmed (2014) has argued, shame and guilt can work not only as a mode of recognition of injustices committed against others, but also a form of nation-building “as declarations of shame can work to bring the ‘nation’ into existence as a felt community” (p.101). In other words, shame and guilt interpellate particular bodies into the felt community of the nation while leaving out others.

In the formulation of Ruch, however, it is not any nation that is created through shame and guilt, but an exceptional one. He suggests that people who take up the moral duty of the Holocaust and fight against current injustice are “great souls” of “exceptional moral beauty” who rise above “unaffected common souls” (Ruch, 2013). We have come across this narrative of exceptionalism at several points throughout the thesis, probably most clearly in the analysis of Angela Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” speeches in Chapter 6 where I have shown how the invocation of historical guilt can turn into a source of pride for dealing so well with these histories. The question that the mobilisation of shame in “The Dead are Coming” brings to the fore, then, is the question of who is included and excluded through the ways in which affective borders are drawn and redrawn through the mobilisation of shame. As Lewicki (2018) and Gully and Itagaki (2017) have argued, in actions like “The Dead are Coming”, the people most affected by the violence of the border are easily sidelined and turned into mere extras or symbols of political action. If we take this argument even further, we could suggest that the formulation of guilt as an emotion to be acted upon by “great souls” also leaves the space open for migrants, too, to be positioned as “unaffected common souls” who have not yet learnt the lessons of the Holocaust. Fatima El-Tayeb (2016) has traced how, in contemporary Germany, Holocaust guilt is not only invoked in relation to state violence but increasingly mobilised to stir anti-migrant and anti-Muslim resentment. She argues that the memory of the Holocaust became crucial in justifying the war against terror in the early 2000s and is increasingly used to stigmatise Muslims as the “real fascists” who bring antisemitism and fanatic authoritarianism to an atoned German nation — threatening a society that has learned to do better from the past.¹¹⁰

Such anti-migrant mobilisation of Holocaust guilt is of course far from, and at no way intended, by Ruch’s philosophy of “aggressive humanism” or by my own

¹¹⁰ El-Tayeb traces this discourse to the early 2000s in which conservative voices argued that Germany had a particular responsibility to support the war in Iraq so as to defeat the “fascism of Saddam Hussein”. Since then, the discourse has primarily been used against Muslim minorities within Germany that are framed as essentially authoritarian and antisemitic. She further points out that the anti-Muslim mobilisation of Holocaust guilt is by no means confined to the political right. It has increased divisions within the anti-fascist left that since the 1980s has been split into an “anti-imperialist” left that is against all forms of Western interventions and state violence and an explicitly “anti-German” left that out of its commitment to be accountable to the horrors of the Holocaust ironically (and scarily) comes to align itself with Israel and the US and mobilises against the Palestinian cause and increasingly Islam and the Arab world more generally (p.177).

digging of graves in front of the Bundestag. But what El-Tayeb's warning shows, is that in the German context, activists aiming to mobilise shame and guilt to highlight the violence of national borders are confronted with the paradox that in doing so they might likewise reinscribe them. Shaming the European Union, or the German state respectively, works to highlight the ongoing violence of the European border regime and calls attention to the fate of people that are subjected to this violence. It forges critical linkages between historical and current injustices and calls for recognition and repair. At the same time, however, shame and guilt can also hide and reinstall the borders that their mobilisation aims to contests. Shame and guilt can work to create new communities of feeling in which migrant voices and perspectives are either erased through humanist discourses of universalism that flatten power relations and difference. Or they can reinscribe borders through narratives of national exceptionalism that again imbue citizens of the nation with special moral and political agency while excluding the people who are most affected by European border regime.

3. Paradoxes of Affective Borders

Consequently, the mobilisation of shame and guilt does not simply dissolve but redraws affective borders. It is this paradoxical logic of affective borders that I have traced, uncovered and analysed throughout this thesis. In the context of the “refugee crisis”, empathy, anger and hope work in highly ambivalent and often paradoxical ways as they commonly redraw and reinscribe the affective borders that they hope to contest. Empathy emerges with the powerful promise that it will create new bonds of relationality that overcome differences of race, class, gender and sexuality and help to include people into spheres of care and grievability that have so far been excluded from them. Yet, as shown in Chapter 4, in the discourses that accompanied the publication of the image of Alan Kurdi, empathy was commonly invoked through sentimental narratives of the family and national protection that reinstall hierarchies between the subject and object of empathy and cement borders of power, difference and location. Anger can be a crucial fuel for feminist and anti-racist action and carries the potential to right the wrongs of the past. However, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 5, in the aftermath of New Year's Eve in Cologne, anger primarily worked as an affective adhesive that brought together right-wing, liberal with leftist and feminist actors to defend exclusionary constructions of German nationality and citizenship.

And hope can inspire and open new horizons for political action. Yet as demonstrated in Chapter 6, in Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” speeches, hope was invoked through nationalist narratives of exceptional achievement that while promising migrants entry to the nation likewise positioned them as potential threats to this delicate national fantasy.

Across these chapters, I have demonstrated that the paradoxical logics of affective borders are not random or accidental but stem from the ways in which affect works its power through social discourses, norms and systems of value. Affective states like empathy, anger and hope, I have argued, need to be understood as historical forces that come to feel familiar and right through the constant reiteration of particular frames, figures and narratives in social and political discourse. In my discussion of empathy in relation to the image of Alan Kurdi, I have shown how empathy is invoked and articulated through the figure of the innocent child that has long been a central trope for constructing the Global North as the benevolent helper of the less developed Global South (rather than an active part in its ongoing subjection and exploitation). In my reflections of anger, I have further excavated the deep stories that have long positioned racialised sexual abusers as a threat to the nation. In doing so, I have pointed out how anger emerging in the aftermath of New Year’s in Cologne might best be understood as a resonant echo of a colonial past that reverberates powerfully in a time of growing precariousness and challenges to enshrined entitlements in the nation. And in my discussion of hope, I have demonstrated that hope in Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” speeches is constructed through narratives of sexual, fiscal and moral exceptionalism. This narrative of exceptional achievement allows the nation to project itself into the future so as to escape the violence of the past and the responsibilities of the present.

It is at this point that my thesis deviates from many of the more hopeful invocations of affect in contemporary scholarship that tries to think about affect primarily as a force that works outside or beneath the reach of discourse and representation. Instead, I have suggested that affective borders need to be understood in close relationship to notions of hegemony and common sense and are crucially shaped by intersecting discourses of race, gender and sexuality. Both anger and hope are produced and legitimised through narratives of sexual exceptionalism and gender equality that distinguish the “progressive, sexually liberated West” from the “backwards, misogynist and sexually repressed rest”. Empathy towards migrants

arriving at the shores of Europe is likewise infused by these discourses and is commonly invoked through gendered and sexualised narratives of innocence.

Affective borders should consequently not be understood as personal states outside of the reach of the social but as intersubjective and paradoxical forces that are infused with the mark of history and unequal power relations. While affects like empathy, anger and hope can work as forces that activate political dissent and create new bonds of solidarities, more often they work as the ties that bind us to the status quo.

We could suggest that ending my analysis with the paradox creates a rather sobering analysis of the political present. As Brown suggests “paradox is certainly not an impossible political condition, but it is a demanding and frequently unsatisfying one” (p.238). She states that

Unlike contradictions, which can be exploited, or mystification, which can be exposed, or disavowal, which can be forced into confrontation with itself, or even despair, which can be negated, the politics of paradox is very difficult to negotiate. Paradox appears endlessly self-cancelling, as a political condition of achievements perpetually undercut, a predicament of discourse in which every truth is crossed by a counter-truth, and hence a state in which political strategizing itself is paralyzed. (p. 239)

We could suggest that this paralysis is made even worse in the current moment in which the European border regimes has, if anything, become even more violent and in which liberal articulations of sentiments like empathy, hope or shame that were so central during the summer 2015 are increasingly replaced by more authoritarian ones. In the context of shame, this could be seen when in Liverpool, the “List of Death” that was shown as part of the Biennale 2018 was vandalised and destroyed. The List that was exhibited on a public mural not far from the centre of town was torn down and spray-painted with slogans like “invaders not refugees”. Shame for the death of migrants, in this instance, was outright rejected and dismissed.

Acts like these do not remain confined to Liverpool. They have become common occurrences across Europe where calls for explicitly illiberal forms of governance are rising as seen in the popularity of Victor Orbán in Hungary, Matteo Salvini in Italy or Marine Le Pen in France. What is most telling about this intensification of authoritarian politics is how it also engenders a change in the

“feeling rules” of liberal democracies (Hochschild, 1979). In the context of the US, Lauren Berlant (2017) has partly explained the rise of Donald Trump out of his promise for “emotional freedom”, in particular, the freedom from shame. She suggests that Trump was not voted into power despite of, but because of, his boisterous behaviour and unrestricted attacks on minorities. His attacks enact the promise that people would be free from the shackles of “politically correct” feelings that demand respect and understanding in the face of others. Lawrence Grossberg (2018) has similarly described a shift in the affective landscapes of the US towards more authoritarian modes of engagement in which moral sentiments are rejected as unnecessarily restrictive and affects of hostility and superiority are given free reign as expressive forces. In Europe, we can witness a similar development towards what I would call an affective regime of shamelessness. It can be seen in the Polish government continuing to proudly declare that they will not take in any refugees, the British government insisting on their hostile environment policies and the Italian government cheering the criminalisation of sea rescue and denying migrants stranded on boats in the Mediterranean entry to country. In Germany, we can see the same affective trend in which the interior minister Horst Seehofer recently celebrated his 69th birthday with 69 deportations to Afghanistan, the AFD publicly calls for an end to the “Schuldkult” (guilt-cult) of Holocaust commemorations and Merkel has increasingly retreated from her “Wir schaffen das” rhetoric.¹¹¹

None of these authoritarian politics are entirely new. As highlighted at different points across my thesis, racism and neo-fascist tendencies have never been absent from European political life and the murderous violence of the European border regime has been installed and strengthened well before the current “refugee crisis”. Similarly, even explicit intents to halt, or at least tone down, the commemoration of the Holocaust so as to make space for untampered feelings of

¹¹¹ For example, Björn Höcke, a high ranking AFD politician, publicly called the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin “a monument of shame” (ein Mahnmal der Schande). He lamented that “we Germans are the only people who have planted a monument of shame into the heart of its capital” and argued that Germany needs a “180 degree turn” in its memory politics (Kamann, 2017, 18 Jan). Out of protest against his speech, the CfP built a mini-copy of the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe in front of Björn Höcke’s house. While this action shows that there is resistance to the erosion of shame in the German context, it was also revealed that as result of their action, the CfP was surveilled by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution that had registered the group as a potential left-wing terrorist organisation (Reuter, 2019, 3 Apr).

pride and German nationalism have been part of the Federal Republic since the early post-war years.¹¹² Nevertheless, the current intensification of authoritarian politics leads me to question whether my analysis and critique of the paradoxical politics of affective borders during the arguably more hopeful “long summer of migration” hit the right target. Is it not cynical to question articulations of empathy in relation to the death of Alan Kurdi at a moment in which children crossing borders are increasingly stripped of rights, detained and deported? Why would I try to critique the nationalist undertones of Angela Merkel’s hopeful “Wir schaffen das” speeches if her most successful critics come from further on the political right? And what is the point in laying bare the exceptional logics that underground activist mobilisations of shame in Germany when the underlying narratives of collective guilt and responsibility are slowly being eroded? Instead of putting my paranoid gaze onto the pitfalls of predominantly liberal articulations of empathy, anger and hope, maybe I should defend their redeeming aspects against illiberal attacks? After all, particularly in relation to shame, we could suggest that, borrowing from Spivak (1993), structures of feeling that emerge out of, and defend, liberal imaginaries are something that we “cannot not want” if we want humanitarian campaigns to have even the slightest chance to be effective (p.64).

While I believe that there is something integral to this line of argumentation, throughout this thesis I have argued that we also need to critique and think beyond the structures of feeling that defend the status quo of European (neo)liberal democracies. As Éric Fassin (2018) has suggested, the current “fascist moment in neoliberalism” is not radically different from the neoliberal politics of the last decades, particularly when liberal leaders like Merkel or Macron do relatively little against the rise of authoritarian regimes across Europe and often even promote the same policies if they are effective in curbing migration and protecting “Fortress Europe”. Wendy Brown (2019) similarly has argued that the current authoritarian

¹¹² Particularly striking cases, for instance, were the much-celebrated Nobel Peace Prize talk of Martin Walser of 1998, in which he suggests that the imposed shame around the Holocaust hurts the German nation and hinders Germans from being a “normal people” (cited in Rensmann, 2004, p.184). Similarly, the publication of a critical book by the American political scientist Daniel Goldhagen in 1996, who describes the Holocaust as a “German national project” that many Germans willingly participated in, was met by wide-spread dismissal and hostile claims that the real problem was Goldhagen’s desire for revenge and his inability to let go of the past (p.183). For a more thorough discussion of the mobilisation and denial of collective guilt in Germany see Lars Rensmann (2004).

turn in Western liberal democracies emerges out of the “stealth revolution of neoliberalism”. Neoliberalism has not only created the conditions for escalating inequalities which provides fuel for populist politics but has also provided the value system of competition, deservingness and individual responsibility that the authoritarian right thrives on. And Miriam Ticktin (2018), who has long pointed out that humanitarian and securitising logics do not work as antidotes but often mutually reinforce each other, has suggested that the challenge of the moment is to understand what affective and political grammars are shared across liberal and illiberal forms of governmentality.

Based on these insights, my intention throughout the thesis was to track and show how liberal, leftist and right-wing politics are entangled and (can) slip into each other. Affect theory has proven to be a particularly powerful analytic for doing so. A focus on the paradoxical logic of empathy enabled me to shed light on how the often-celebrated emergence of “Willkommenskultur” in early summer 2015 could so easily make space for a more hostile and protectionist atmosphere. I have suggested that if the gift of empathy is not returned through acts of gratitude and assimilation, empathy can easily turn into more defensive feelings of anger and outrage. Further, my focus on anger and resentment has allowed me to show how it is only through an attention to affect that current convergences between feminist and nationalist right-wing positions in Europe can be explained. In the aftermath of Cologne, it was resentment and anger about racialised sexual abusers that worked as an affective adhesive and stuck together otherwise seemingly opposing positions. Moreover, through a focus on hope I could show how Merkel’s “Wir schaffen das” rhetoric was able to gain praise for opening the borders of Europe from liberal and leftist actors in Europe. Yet, the slogan could likewise be used to mobilise her own conservative base and justify the subsequent tightening of the European border regime and erode asylum protections in Germany. This is not to say that politics are just about affect, or that affect explains such political ambivalences in their entirety. But it shows that a focus on affective borders can draw us towards the more complex and hidden dynamics of political mobilisation that often escape simple left and right classifications through which political subjectivities are commonly understood.

In Foucauldian (1984) terms, we could suggest that my analysis has not suggested that “everything is bad but that everything is dangerous” (p.343). Thinking with Sedgwick, whose nagging comments I have repeatedly come back to throughout

this thesis, we could now suggest that such an analysis constitutes a simply paranoid reading that does little to inspire new thought and political action. In contrast to this position, throughout the thesis, I have shown how the paradox of affective borders calls for the necessity of thinking and moving beyond dominant structures of feeling. If articulations empathy do not work as a necessary roadblock, but can reinstall hierarchies between citizens and migrants or even fuel resentment against them, then we need to think harder about alternative forms of affective solidarity that undo these power relations. If anger continues to align itself along racial, gendered and sexualised lines that secure white constructions of the nation, we need to pay attention to, and try to augment, forms of feminist rage that break open new forms of intersectional action and analysis. And if hope is expressed through national narratives of exceptional achievement that again cut out undeserving migrants from the borders of Europe, we need to turn to alternative practices of care and the commons to gain inspiration for more hopeful imaginaries of the future.

This does not mean that we resolve the paradox of the affective border but that we push at its limits. For Scott and Brown, paradoxes are not simply dead-ends that bring political thought and action to a halt, nor do they mean that everything is simply ambivalent, complex and relative. Instead Scott (1996) suggests that it is by thinking through the complexity of the paradox that the “subversive potential of feminism and the agency of feminists” (p.16) emerges. She argues that resolving the paradox into either a politics of universalism, or that of particularity, would mean giving into the illusion that there could be an untainted ontology from which political action could be conceptualised and enacted. Instead, she asks us to learn to stand on paradoxical grounds and push at the limits of what is politically possible and imaginable. Brown similarly suggests that the paradox is politically productive if it is understood as “affirming the impossibility of justice in the present, and as articulating the conditions and contours of justice in the future” (p.240). In other words, she suggests that grappling with paradoxes can help us to identify the limits of the political and “articulate a field of justice beyond “that which we cannot not want””(ibid). For both Scott and Brown then, it is in the excess, in the internal

contradictions and at the limits of the paradox that new forms of political action might be found.¹¹³

Throughout this thesis, I have tried to identify the excesses, break open the internal contradictions and push at the limits of affective borders. In my reflections on empathy, I have identified what other forms of affective solidarity are made possible when we try to move beyond the warm pull of empathetic engagement and turn to scenes of the abject that are usually cut out from scenes of empathetic encounter. Thinking through what it means to bear witness to hunger strikes, I have suggested a different form of affective solidarity that, rather than emerging through feeling for, or with, others, arises out of a shared concern for the border regimes and systems of global inequality that are productive of violence, death and precarity. In my work on anger, I have highlighted the efforts of anti-racist feminist groups that tried to frame sexual abuse in German society as a general problem not confined to migrant communities. Pointing out how these campaigns struggled to break out of the preestablished racial and national lines that anger was expressed through, I have suggested that these efforts might be substituted by decolonial efforts that question the narratives through which the German nation is constructed in the first place. And my reflections on hope, I posited that cross-border marches reveal and enact practices of care, solidarity and the commons that gesture and extend beyond the humanitarian border envisioned by Merkel's politics. They provide us not only with the political demand for more open borders, but also with the utopian horizon of a world in which the relationality of social life is not framed through threat and biopolitical control and in which collective infrastructures are valued as enabling life to flourish and persist.

In terms of reading practices, this has meant that rather than replacing, we should bring together critical and more reparative modes of analysis that keep open the possibility that in the cracks of paradoxes new potentials for political action and solidarity might be found. After the "List of Death" was vandalised in Liverpool, the artist Banu Cennetoglu decided to keep the torn list hanging as "a manifestation and reminder of this systematic violence exercised against people" (Liverpool Biennal, 2018). This scene draws our attention to a political moment in which we might need to think harder about not only our political strategies, but the structures of feeling that

¹¹³ For a useful discussion of the politics of paradox see also Jacqueline Gibbs (2018) insightful analysis of the paradoxical position of vulnerability in feminist politics.

we want those political strategies to tap into and emerge from. Leaving the List hanging not only defies the fear that the current political moment instils but also enacts a stubborn resistance to let go of the violence of the past. It speaks against the eroding ground on which acts of shaming meant to counter such violence can be enacted and highlights the necessity of crafting alternative visions that a feminist, queer and anti-racist left might mobilise to fill the void left by the gradual erosion of the liberal consensus in the historical present. Rather than a moment of loss and despair, I suggest we embrace this paradoxical challenge as an opportunity to reimagine the limits of the political.

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