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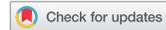
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The “migrant crisis” as racial crisis: do *Black Lives Matter* in Europe?

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ABSTRACT

We are currently witnessing a remarkable conjuncture between the escalation, acceleration, and diversification of migrant and refugee mobilities, on the one hand, and the mutually constitutive crises of “European” borders and “European” identity, on the other, replete with reanimated reactionary populist nationalisms and racialized nativisms, the routinization of antiterrorist securitization, and pervasive and entrenched “Islamophobia” (or more precisely, anti-Muslim racism). Despite the persistence of racial denial and the widespread refusal to frankly confront questions of “race” across Europe, the current constellation of “crises” presents precisely what can only be adequately comprehended as an unresolved *racial crisis* that derives fundamentally from the postcolonial condition of “Europe” as a whole, and therefore commands heightened scrutiny and rigorous investigation of the material and practical as well as discursive and symbolic productions of the co-constituted figures of “Europe” and “crisis” in light of racial formations theory.

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“Illegal”/deportable/disposable ... dead

The first intimations of a European “migrant” (or “refugee”) “crisis” arose amidst the unsightly accumulation of dead black and brown bodies awash on the halcyon shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Following the monumental shipwreck of 19 April 2015, in which as many 850 migrants and refugees were sent to their deaths, the accumulating momentum of a gathering storm of human mobility over both sea and land served to fix in place a newfound dominant common sense about a “crisis” of the borders of “Europe” (New Keywords Collective 2016). The putative crisis surrounding the influx of migrants and refugees in Europe – and the border spectacle that it generates (De Genova 2013) – has long been nowhere more extravagantly put on display than in the Mediterranean Sea, which is incontestably the veritable global epicentre of such lethal border crossings.¹ Human catastrophes at sea have

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transformed the maritime borders of Europe into a macabre deathscape (cf. Heller and Pezzani 2017; IOM 2014; Jansen, Celikates, and de Bloois 2015).

The brute *racial* fact of this deadly European border regime is seldom acknowledged, because it immediately confronts us with the cruel (post)coloniality of the “new” Europe. In the face of the inevitable and ever-more bountiful harvest of empire, past and present, the mobility of the vast majority of people from formerly colonized countries – indeed, the vast majority of humanity – has been preemptively illegalized (Andersson 2014; De Genova 2013, 2016; Karakayali and Rigo 2010; Scheel 2017). With the termination of the post-Second World War-era guestworker programmes, postcolonial labour migration from poorer countries assumed in the 1970s what was commonly the only permissible form, that of refugees fleeing persecution and seeking asylum (Karakayali and Rigo 2010). European states generally refuse to consider asylum applications lodged abroad, however, and there are ordinarily no provisions in their immigration guidelines for anyone to be given permission to travel to their countries to petition for asylum. Moreover, travelers from all of Africa and virtually all of Asia, as well as several Latin American and Caribbean countries, require visas for travel to any Schengen-zone country, for which the inordinate majority of prospective applicants cannot qualify (Scheel 2017).² Consequently, both labour migrants and refugees who cannot secure visas are compelled to first arrive on European territory as “unauthorized” asylum-seekers, and hence, as de facto “illegal migrants”, who only thereafter may petition for asylum. Furthermore, the European asylum system has routinely denied the great majority of petitioners formal recognition as legitimate asylum-seekers, and ordinarily grants refugee status to less than 15 per cent of applicants.³ Thus, the EU-ropean legal frameworks governing travel visas, migration, and asylum, together with the externalization of border policing and transportation carrier sanctions, preclude literally the vast majority of humanity from “legitimate” access to the European Union (EU). The fervent invention and fortification of a new border around the newly reunited “Europe” may therefore be understood to be nothing less than yet another re-drawing of the global colour line (De Genova 2016), and the institutionalization of what Étienne Balibar has tellingly suggested may be “a European ‘apartheid’” ([1999] 2004, 43–45; 2001; cf. van Houtum 2010). Only in this stark racial light, therefore, can we adequately assess the fact that the EU, for the last two decades, has actively converted the Mediterranean into a mass grave.

Migrant lives/“Black” lives

Prior to the record-high death toll of 2016, untold tens of thousands of refugees, migrants, and their children have been consigned to horrific, unnatural, premature deaths by shipwreck and drowning, often following protracted

ordeals of abandonment at sea.⁴ Little surprise, in light of the racial materiality of the unrelenting conversion of European borders into a ghoulish death-scape, that one mode of critical response was to invoke an analogy with the premier slogan of contemporary African-American civil rights struggles in the United States – *Black Lives Matter* – by insisting that *Migrant Lives Matter*.⁵ In a manner that is analogous but distinct from the outrageous fact that the proposition “Black Lives Matter” remains controversial in the United States, a European border regime that systematically generates and multiplies the conditions of possibility for mass migrant deaths compels us to reckon with the brute fact that the lives of migrants and refugees, required to arrive on European soil by “irregular” (illegalized) means, have been systematically exposed to lethal risks. Like the proposition “Black Lives Matter” in the United States, therefore, objective realities command that we admit that the proposition “Migrant Lives Matter” remains fundamentally in dispute in Europe. Furthermore, given that the horrendous risk of border-crossing death systematically generated by the European border regime is disproportionately inflicted upon migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa, we should be reminded here of Ruth Gilmore’s poignant proposition that this indeed may be taken as the very definition of racism: “Racism”, she contends, “... is the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death” (2007, 28). Hence, the poignant question of whether Black Lives Matter in Europe presents itself ever more urgently.

But why, and how exactly, has Europe so deftly managed to convert the precarious lives (and bodies) of migrants and refugees – disproportionately racialized as not-white, and in fact inordinately racialized as Black – into overtly de-racialized “migrant” lives? If migrant lives do arguably matter in Europe, why is it so persistently and perniciously difficult to recognize them as Black lives?⁶ And if objective circumstances conspire to ensure that these lives truly do not matter – that these migrant lives are rendered utterly disposable – does it not seem plausible, if not probable, that race has something to do with it?

It is noteworthy that we have also witnessed the emergence in Britain of a fledgling but spirited *Black Lives Matter* movement, explicitly dedicated to an anti-racist internationalist solidarity with the struggles against racist police brutality and murder in the United States, as well as elaborating a global analysis that links systemic racial oppression in the United States with racist policing and state violence in Britain. Still more pertinent, for present purposes, are efforts by the British movement to directly define anti-racist struggles in Britain – long associated with the politics of citizenship (much like in the United States) – to questions of: mass migrant (non-citizen) deaths during perilous crossings of the Mediterranean (not uncommonly fleeing geopolitical conflicts in which Britain has been implicated); abuses

perpetrated during immigrant detention, incarceration, and deportation; state-sanctioned Islamophobia through putative antiterrorist programmes; and the escalation of post-Brexit anti-immigrant hate crimes.⁷ Marking the fifth anniversary of the “lawful” London police murder on 4 August 2011 of an unarmed Black British man, Mark Duggan, which prompted riots across Greater London and numerous other English cities, the Black Lives Matter movement staged protests on 5 August 2016 in London, Birmingham, Manchester, and Nottingham, proclaiming: “This is a crisis.” Notably, access roads to the London Heathrow and Birmingham airports were specifically targeted for civil disobedience because of their association with the detention and deportation of migrants, including the death under restraint of Angolan deportee Jimmy Mubenga in October 2010 (BBC News 2016a; see also BBC News 2016b). A similarly salutary development directly inspired by struggles in the United States is evidenced by the emergence of Berlin’s *Ferguson Is Everywhere* campaign to denounce the killing of people of colour by German police.⁸ Inevitably, these initiatives build upon more longstanding anti-racist struggles in Europe, such as the London-based Campaign Against Police and State Violence, Berlin’s European Network of People of African Descent, Amsterdam’s New Urban Collective, and the Parti des Indigènes de la République in France (Essif 2015). Nevertheless, it is unmistakable that the Black Lives Matter struggles in the United States have had a direct energizing effect on these parallel European movements. It is vital here to recognize these analogies and transversalities, and particularly salient that these trans-Atlantic reverberations have remained emphatically racial in their political self-understandings and critical analyses.

Anyone concerned with questions of race and racism today must readily recognize that they present themselves in a particularly acute way in the European migration context, haunted as Europe’s borders are by an appalling proliferation of almost exclusively non-European/ non-white migrant and refugee deaths and other forms of structural violence and generalized suffering. Consequently, it is particularly crucial that we do the critical work of reconfirming the precisely *racial* specificity of what is so commonly and casually euphemized across Europe as “migrant” or “of migrant background”. The mass deaths of non-European migrants and refugees systemically generated by the European border regime do not exhaust what is at stake in the present historical moment, however. We have witnessed a remarkable conjuncture between the acceleration and diversification of migrant and refugee mobilities, on the one hand, and the mutually constitutive crises of “European” borders and “European” identity, on the other, replete with reanimated reactionary populist nationalisms and racialized nativisms, the routinization of antiterrorist securitization, and pervasive and entrenched “Islamophobia” (or more precisely, anti-Muslim racism). Positing the idea of “racial crisis”, Omi and Winant identified the police beating of Rodney King and the Los

Angeles rebellion in 1992 following the acquittal of the brutalizers as a watershed moment for racial politics in the United States ([1986] 1994, 145; cf. 1993). The same is plainly true once again for the contemporary Black Lives Matter movement's politicization of racist police killings inordinately perpetrated against African Americans across the United States. Analogously, we are challenged to discern the comparably momentous albeit multifaceted *racial* significance in the events of the last two years surrounding migration and refugee movements into and across Europe. The putative "migrant crisis" of Europe must be understood to be an historical moment of *racial crisis*.

In the European context, the very figure of *migration* is always already racialized, and anti-racist struggles are inevitably concerned at least in part with the racial conditions of (non-European) migrants – even as dominant discourses of migration in Europe systematically disavow and dissimulate race as such (Balibar 1991, [1992] 2002, [1999] 2004; De Genova 2010b, 2016; Goldberg 2006). Nonetheless, the European intellectual and political context, more generally, remains exemplary of "what happens when no category is available to name a set of experiences that are linked ... to racial arrangements and engagements ... a case study in the frustrations, delimitations and injustices of political racelessness" (Goldberg 2006, 335–336). This is what David Theo Goldberg has tellingly designated *racial Europeanism*. Specifically referring to the presumptive elision of the analytical concept of race with the essentialist conceits of race-ism, and the pervasive reduction of any question of "racism" in European contexts to the historical experience of the Nazi Holocaust, Goldberg demonstrates how "Europe's *colonial* history and legacy dissipate if not disappear" (2006, 336; emphasis added). Sanctimonious desires to renounce race as a residually *race-ist* article of faith, in other words, supply the dubious pretexts for an astounding postcolonial historical amnesia. Moreover, we are left with the peculiarly European paradox of an anti-racism without race, which is to say, an anaemic anti-racism that reverts to the purest liberalism: a mere politics of anti-discrimination, which in its refusal to interrogate the sociopolitical production of racialized distinctions, re-stabilizes the notion that racism is little more than a discriminatory hostility towards phenotypic and anatomical differences, and thus re-naturalizes race as "biology". Banishing race as a critical analytical category, in other words, risks forsaking any adequate account of the distinctly *European* colonial legacies that literally *produced* race as a sociopolitical category of distinction and discrimination in the first place.

Although race is systematically dissimulated if not actively disavowed in many European contexts, therefore, we find ourselves, in Michael Omi and Howard Winant's words, "compelled to think racially" – because "opposing racism requires that we notice race ... that we afford it the recognition it deserves and the subtlety it embodies" ([1986] 1994, 159). Regarding the subtlety of race, it should be clear but deserves to be explicitly and

emphatically affirmed that this proposition in no way upholds any anachronistic notion of race as a “natural” (quasi-biological, pseudo-objective) fact of genealogy. The pernicious power of racial distinction operates precisely through the *naturalization* of social inequalities, constructing them as putatively “natural” (phenotypic, anatomical, physiological, “biological”) differences derived from common kinship and shared ancestry. But race is not a fact of nature; it is a sociopolitical fact of domination; indeed, race is the naturalized *effect* of a regime of domination orchestrated according to racialized distinctions and categories, which are themselves sociopolitical contrivances. Thus, race is not a fact of nature so much as a fact of racism, a fact of racialized domination, configured historically and continuously reproduced on a *global* scale – particularly the historically specific hierarchies of social power, wealth, and prestige enforced through violent and oppressive regimes of (European/colonial) white supremacy.

Whiteness as a racialized status ought not be reduced to any sort of simple synonym for Europeaness, as if there were a straightforward correlation of European origins and phenotypic “whiteness”, or to put it more bluntly, as if whiteness were simply a matter of “colour”. Indeed, the borders and divisions within Europe, or around which various notions of “Europe” have been contested, have themselves frequently been profoundly racialized ones. Foundational racialized distinctions and meanings, such as “white” or “Black”, which were literally invented, imposed, and enforced through various iterations of the global regime of European/colonial supremacy, retroactively, have been made to appear as the transparent and self-evident (“natural”) names for differences that only came to have the significance and gravity that they do because the particular forms of exploitation and domination that created them required and relied upon their naturalization.

Conversely, it is also necessary that we underscore the salience of the figures of migration and refugee movements into and within Europe for destabilizing, de-naturalizing, and de-essentializing yet again the pernicious persistence of encrusted and ossified racial nomenclatures. Hence, if we have the temerity to ask whether Black Lives Matter in Europe, we must nonetheless recognize that Blackness here must be conceived as more capacious than a mere synonym for African origin or ancestry alone. In other words, while never denying or disregarding the historical specificity of African experiences of white supremacy and the particularity for Africans and all people of African ancestry of being racialized as Black (cf. Chandler 2013, 2014; Gilroy 1993; Mbembe 2017), it is likewise instructive to recall that even for those who come to be racialized as Black, we must guard against naturalizing what is always an historically specific sociopolitical process of *producing* them as “Black”. In this regard, Stuart Hall’s reflections on his experience as a Black *migrant* are quite poignant:

I'd never called myself black ever in my life ... So it was a discovery for me, a rediscovery [in Britain] of the Caribbean in new terms ... and a rediscovery of the black subject ... I didn't choose that. I had no alternative. (Hall and Back 2009, 662)

In other words, although the centuries-old racialization of enslaved Africans and their descendants in the New World was indisputably a defining crucible for the global racial formation of Blackness, it was nonetheless the postcolonial migrant encounter with Europe that was, in Hall's account, tantamount to a migration into Blackness, a *re*-racialization, a subordination and subjection that was inextricable from the ongoing and unfinished business of (re-)producing racial distinctions and meanings. Thus, it is productive here to posit a conception of Blackness that exceeds the constrictions of the more rigid and conventional racial codifications that have been generated and sedimented historically.

If we are pressed in the present by the brutality of circumstances to examine the outlandish question of whether Black Lives Matter in Europe – and indeed, if we may posit the specifically *racial* question concerning the “migrant” or “refugee crisis” in and of Europe – such a line of inquiry must necessarily refer us to a Blackness that corresponds to the full range of racialized categories that white supremacy has orchestrated under the sign of negation. In other words, I refer here not to any supposedly “objective” or “natural” sort of (phenotypic, quasi-“biological”) racial Blackness that might be more predictably attributed to people of African origin or descent in particular, but rather to the pronouncedly heterogeneous spectrum of all those categories of humanity that European imperialism unrelentingly produced as its colonized “natives”. Hence, for present purposes, I am positing a more expansive, if provisional, understanding of Blackness as a racialized sociopolitical category that can be understood to encompass the full spectrum of social identities produced as specifically “not-white”. In this respect, migration and refugee movements may be recognized as providing crucial sites for what Achille Mbembe has tellingly depicted as “the Becoming Black of the world”, in which “the term ‘Black’ has been generalized” (2017, 6) and there is a “tendency to universalize the Black condition” (4).

“Terrorists”

Precisely when the public discourses of migrant–refugee “crisis” in Europe seemed to have reached an unsustainable crescendo over the summer months and through the autumn of 2015, and notably after the gruesome spectacle of mass deaths by shipwreck in the Mediterranean had receded in favour of the mass exodus over land across the Balkans of migrants and refugees (particularly those from Middle Eastern countries, with Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan among the most prominent), the grisly spectacle of

“terrorism” in Paris on 13 November 2015 supplied the catalytic event that could conjure anew the well-worn spectre of “Muslim extremism”. The spectacle of “Islamist terrorism” of course had already prompted an unprecedented heightening of securitization following the attacks in Paris in January 2015, centred on the massacre at the offices of the anti-Muslim satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* (De Genova 2017). In those prior events, the culprits had been (racialized minority) European citizens. Ornamented now with a (fake) Syrian passport fortuitously deposited in the vicinity of one of the November bombings, however, the horrific bloodbath in the heart of urbane Europe was quickly conscripted to allege that the seemingly uncontrollable refugee influx was somehow providing cover for a nefarious ambush by the putative enemies of “civilization” itself, and that the refugee crisis truly represented a security threat, after all (De Genova 2007, 2010a). Notably, immediately following the events in Paris, within a few hours – and within days of having been branded a “lawless slum” that presented the risk of an “infiltration” of “guerrilla warfare” – the migrant and refugee camps at Calais were subjected to what appeared to be a vicious arson attack (Campbell 2015).

In the ensuing days, amidst the predictable (indeed, obligatory) speculations about a hydra-headed phantasm of “foreign fighters” and “home-grown extremists” travelling unhindered between combat zones in Syria and western European countries, France – long among the most stalwart advocates of European integration – stridently called for an unprecedented securitization of the external borders of the EU’s Schengen zone of free mobility. Within a week of the events, amidst police raids against Muslim “suspects” across multiple countries, and various hysterical calls for mass internment, deportations, and the electronic monitoring of such alleged suspects, EU interior and justice ministers convened an emergency meeting and vowed to institute significantly tighter external border controls and expanded surveillance over human mobility, citizen and non-citizen alike. The urgent push to create new “hotspot” migrant and refugee reception and processing facilities (i.e. detention camps) at sites of illegalized border crossing (Garelli and Tazzioli 2016; Sciarba 2016), likewise, came now to be re-imagined as a matter of perimeter defence against terrorist infiltration, re-figured as vital strategic sites for “culling terrorist wolves from refugee sheep” (Lyman 2015). Despite the fact that all of the alleged culprits identified in the November attacks, as in the earlier attacks in January, were in fact (racialized minority) Europeans, therefore, the spectacle of terror nevertheless served quite effectively as a virtually unquestionable pretext for dramatically reinvigorated border enforcement. Despite the manifest absence of migrants or refugees in these events, in other words, the spectre of Europe’s “homegrown” (disaffected, “second-generation”) “Muslim extremist” *citizens* – routinely racialized as being “of migrant background” – served to re-confirm the pernicious affiliation between

migrants and refugees (as invasive foreign infiltrators) with the racialized threat of a corrosive and inimical pathology festering within the bosom of Europe.

“Sexual predators”

Following the violent events in Paris that served to re-energize the securitarian figuration of “the Muslim” as Europe’s premier Other – a racialized condensation of *un-reason*, manifested as religious fundamentalism, fanaticism, and terrorism – the abrupt outbreak in January 2016 of a moral panic over multiple sexual assaults during the New Year’s Eve festivities in Köln/Cologne promptly delivered up yet another instantiation of the ostensible Muslim Problem. Allegedly perpetrated by unruly mobs of young men, casually characterized as being “of North African or Middle Eastern appearance”, the Cologne events reinvigorated the racialization of “Muslim” identity. In the face of these offences, the racialization of “Muslims”/“Arabs” (eagerly depicted as including recently arrived asylum-seekers) could now be represented in terms of unsavoury cultural differences that had to be excoriated and criminalized as transparently inimical to “European” norms of civility and moral decency. Revealingly, the eminent philosopher and cultural critic – and avowed (“leftist”) Eurocentric⁹ – Slavoj Žižek seized upon the refugee crisis as an occasion to unabashedly celebrate Europe, demanding: “Isn’t the very fact that millions want to go to Europe proof that people still see something in Europe?” (2016b). Confronting the Cologne events, then, Žižek unsurprisingly adopted the condescending moralistic standpoint of European (white) supremacy: “Immigrant refugees”, as he designated them,

... are well aware that what they are doing is foreign to our predominant culture, but they are doing it precisely to wound our sensitivities. The task is to change this stance of envy and revengeful aggressiveness ... they have to be educated (by others and by themselves) into their freedom. (2016a)

Making his commitment to a culturalist Europeanism still more emphatic, Žižek goes further:

Europe needs to be open to refugees, but we have to be clear they are in our culture. Certain ethical limits ... are non-negotiable. We should be more assertive toward our values ... Europe means something noble – human rights, welfare state, social programs for the poor. All of this is embodied in enlightenment of the European legacy. (2016b)

Discussing the wider question of the refugee “crisis”, and exuding his characteristic flair for unapologetic authoritarianism, Žižek elsewhere contends:

Europe should organize itself and impose clear rules and regulations. State control of the stream of refugees should be enforced through a vast administrative network encompassing all of the European Union ... Refugees should be

reassured of their safety, but it should also be made clear to them that they have to accept the area of living allocated to them by European authorities, plus they have to respect the laws and social norms of European states Yes, such a set of rules privileges the Western European way of life, but it is a price for European hospitality. These rules should be clearly stated and enforced, by repressive measures (against foreign fundamentalists as well as against our own anti-immigrant racists) if necessary. (2015)

Replete with the obligatory critiques of the immanence of refugees to the havoc wrought by global capitalism and perfunctory gestures against neocolonialism as well as anti-immigrant racists, Žižek goes further still, and even transposes his advocacy of “repressive means” into a call for “military and economic interventions” (2015). More specifically, he has proposed the European “militarization” of migration management in the war-stricken sites from which refugees flee, in order to “organize airlifts and regulate immigration” in places such as Syria and Libya (2016b). That is to say, Žižek unreservedly advocates a militarist Eurocentrism with regard to the challenge of imposing an unprecedented control of the borders of “Europe” and all those who may become the presumptive beneficiaries of Europe’s “hospitality”. Notably, Žižek’s insistence upon a recognition of the agency of the migrant–refugee Other merely becomes an occasion for projecting the migrant–refugee’s subjectivity as an unsavoury and misguided one: “not just escaping from their war-torn homelands; they are also possessed by a certain dream ... offering themselves to become cheap precarious workforce, in many cases at the expense of local workers, who react to this threat by joining anti-immigrant political parties” (2015). Thus, he implies that it is the migrants and refugees themselves who are the real cause of such European excesses as far-right anti-immigrant racism, and consequently contends that refugees must be held to account for their own “responsibility in the crisis” (2016b).

Deemed to be dangerously deficient in terms of “European values”, the presumptively culturally alien, newly arrived and unassimilated (and by implication, unassimilable) Muslim/Arab asylum-seekers were now re-figured, in the aftermath of the Cologne events, as probable sexual predators and potential rapists, suspected of dangerous and violent types of putatively “cultural” tendencies towards flagrant misogyny and “uncivilized” forms of deviancy and perversity. Thus, a menace previously fashioned as the rather more rarefied threat of terrorism could now be dramatically expanded to encompass virtually all Muslim men as potential criminals. Predictably, this anti-Muslim moral panic was laced with racial hysteria: images proliferated in the mass media in Germany of white women’s bodies stained or otherwise graphically violated by black or brown hands (Lalami 2016).

Even the iconic innocent – Aylan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian refugee boy found dead on the Turkish shores of the Aegean Sea, whose image had catalysed an outpouring of sympathy and compassion – was now, just

a few months later, callously denigrated in a cartoon published by the notoriously anti-Muslim French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Under the titular heading “Migrants”, the drawing depicts two lascivious pig-like (or ape-like) men with lolling tongues and out-stretched groping hands, chasing two women. An insert at the top the cartoon duplicates the famous image of Kurdi, laying face-down on the beach, drowned. The top of the page poses the purportedly comical riddle: “What would little Aylan have become if he had grown up?”; the answer appears at the bottom of the page: “Ass fondler in Germany”. Plainly, the cynical and derisive insinuation was that even this helpless and harmless victim, by sheer dint of the barbaric moral deficiencies of his despised Muslim heritage, could only have inevitably become a vicious perpetrator, one more predatory miscreant, like all the rest of the Muslim migrant men alleged to have perpetrated the sexual assaults in Cologne. This abject Aylan, notably, was not the newly arrived “foreigner” – no longer the victimized refugee deserving of rescue by the self-styled humanitarian border regime (Andersson 2017; Garelli and Tazzioli 2017, forthcoming; Heller and Pezzani 2017; Pallister-Wilkins 2015; Tazzioli 2015a, 2015b) – but instead a menacing projection into the future: his moral turpitude was that of the purportedly irredeemable foreignness attributed to opportunistic “migrants” and the unassimilable “second generation”, the incorrigible racialized minority, the presumptively oxymoronic European Muslim. Thus, the figure of the refugee – so recently fashioned as an object of European compassion, pity, and protection – was re-fashioned with astounding speed, first as the potential terrorist who surreptitiously infiltrates the space of Europe, and then as the potential criminal or rapist who corrodes the social and moral fabric of Europe from within.

Most significantly, the controversy around the Cologne events immediately authorized public debates over how recently arrived refugees and migrants could be expeditiously rendered deportable and promptly expelled. The rather selective logic of antiterrorist suspicion that had been mobilized for the purposes of more stringent (external) border enforcement, once confronted within the European interior with the palpable presence of recent arrivals of “Muslim” refugees and migrants, was promptly re-purposed as a considerably more expansive problem of internal law enforcement, emphatically conjoined to arguments for new powers to unceremoniously deport allegedly criminal asylum-seekers. Thus, nebulous and spectral affiliations are invoked to encompass refugees, (“illegal”) migrants, smugglers, sexual deviants, religious fundamentalists, criminals, “homegrown” and international terrorists, and “foreign fighters” along an inchoate continuum of suspicion and contempt: the “fake” asylum-seeker therefore re-appears now not only as the actual (duplicitous) economic migrant, but also as the (deviant) rapist whose culture or morals are simply inimical to the “European” way of life, or as the (devious) terrorist who conceals himself among the genuine refugees

in order to wreak havoc upon Europe. Above all, migrant and refugee mobilities and subjectivities have instigated for European authorities an epistemic and governmental dilemma regarding an amorphous mob composed simultaneously of people “in need of protection” shadowed by the spectre of predators or enemies against whom Europe itself must be protected. Hence, the “emergency” associated with the uncontrolled arrival of migrants and refugees quickly became not only a matter of border enforcement but also mundane policing, and signalled an incipient crisis not only of the borders of Europe but also of the entire fabric of the European social order.

“Muslims”

Importantly, the racialization of “Muslim” as a category of pronounced non-whiteness is an inherently equivocal one, encompassing a variegated spectrum of gradations of “colour” extending from the vaguely “off-white” through the gamut of “browns” and “blacks” (De Genova 2010a). Thus, “Muslim” operates as a racial condensation that is produced as inherently heterogeneous, while yet inimical to the white (Christian, “European”) identity of “the West”. Indeed, its racial productivity is predicated on precisely this phenotypic ambiguity: the racial instability of the figure of “the Muslim” is, consequently, always subject to suspicion, commanding antiterrorist surveillance and further investigation in the incessant securitarian police work of uncovering the potential “extremists” who supposedly refuse to be assimilated and are susceptible to “radicalization”. In this respect, the European racial order produces and sustains a permanent suspicion and (at least) latent hostility towards “Muslims” in a manner that nonetheless appears to uphold the official “anti-racism” that has become an ideological fixture of post-Holocaust racial Europeanism. This ostensibly race-neutral ideological short-circuit is achieved through the hegemonic demand for “integration” on the parts of migrants and their European-born “second-generation” progeny, racially minoritized as being “of migrant background”. As in the larger metaphysics of antiterrorism, the dominant theme has consistently been not an indiscriminate “clash of civilizations” against Islam as such, but rather a persistent and unrelenting impulse to sort and rank “Muslims” as “good” ones or “bad”, “integrated” or “communitarian”, “friend” or “enemy”, “with us” or “against us” (De Genova 2007, 2010a, 2010b, 2017).

Consequently, specifically anti-Muslim formations of far-right racial nationalism have abounded (Fekete 2004, 2009), from Anders Breivik’s neo-medievalist campaign of mass murder in Norway, to the English Defence League, to Pegida (Patriotische Europäer Gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes) in Germany. What is perhaps most significant in these developments, however, is the capacity of these blatantly racist movements to dissimulate their racism with recourse to the contention that their particular grievances

and animosity, rather than an indiscriminate antagonism to all people who are deemed to be racially different, are selectively reserved for “Muslims” and the phantasmic menace of “Islamization”. The historical specificity of such anti-Muslim racism is clearly distinguished by its enunciation within the now-routinized ideological rubric of the so-called Global War on Terror. Not uncommonly, however, these forms of discrimination are justified through the liberal pretence of secularism. Here, we need only to recall recent campaigns to prohibit the construction of minarets and to aggressively target identifiably Muslim women through bans on various Muslim practices of gendered “modesty”, from headscarves to “burkinis”. Nonetheless, the complacent demand for “integration” consistently enfolds the Muslim Question within the broader parameters of a cultural politics of “European” identity that is inextricable from the present racial crisis.

Re-articulating “European”-ness through the “migrant crisis”

With this remarkable cross-contamination of divergent discourses of “crisis”, we find ourselves in the presence of what Balibar has depicted as an “immigration complex”, which induces “a transformation of every social ‘problem’ into a problem which is regarded as being posed *by the fact of* the presence of ‘immigrants’ or, at least, as being aggravated by their presence”—regardless of the problem in question (1991, 219–220; emphasis in original). Now, however, the typical and well-worn European immigration complex has been amplified and intensified into a migration–migrant–refugee–border “crisis”, through which the figures of migration and refugee mobilities uncannily resonate and ramify with multiple overlapping sociopolitical formations of “emergency” (New Keywords Collective 2016). Most notably, in all of these manifold incarnations of the migrant–refugee “crisis”, what is repeatedly reconfigured and reinstated is a more fundamental antagonism between “Europe” (and “Europeans”) and the unsettling and invasive (or alternately, corrosive) alterity of diverse figures of putative non-Europeanness: “migrants”, “refugees”, “asylum-seekers”, “foreigners”, “minorities”, “Muslims”, and so on. That such figures tend to be overtly de-racialized and ostensibly race-neutral only amplifies the intensity of their persistent juxtaposition to the figures of “Europe” and “European” identity. Their heterogeneous origins and consequently their inherently diverse and divisive racializations are not immediately apprehensible as a unified racial formation. Nonetheless, the variety of these “minority” subjects in Europe become readily affiliated precisely because they tend to be newly (re-)racialized and subordinated according to such racially equivocal and thus expansive logics. Thus, they always coexist and overlap with overtly racialized and relatively exclusive terms, such as “Blacks” or “Arabs”, for instance, while also presenting themselves in more inclusive and capacious terms, such as “Muslims” or “migrants” or

indeed, persons “of migrant background”. In this regard, anxious securitarian iterations of the Muslim Question are always anchored in a minoritizing discursive continuum that includes the more bluntly and indisputably racial category of Blackness as an inevitable bedrock of its ideological repertoire. Thus, we must begin to take stock of the multiple, inherently inconsistent and contradictory ways in which “European”-ness itself is (re-)articulated precisely as a *racial* formation of postcolonial whiteness (De Genova 2016).

The seemingly disparate or discrepant racialized flashpoints of Europe’s multifarious “crisis” – from Lampedusa or Lesvos or Calais, to Paris or Brussels or Nice, to Cologne – have plainly not entailed the sorts of racial crisis instigated or provoked directly by racially self-conscious sociopolitical movements, such the Black Lives Matter struggles over the last few years, much less the Civil Rights and Black Power struggles of the 1960s and early 1970s in the United States and beyond. Obviously, apart from the promising but comparatively small-scale manifestations of organized anti-racist self-assertion, the recent events in the European context do not ordinarily articulate a coherent oppositional politics, if any. Nonetheless, their very existence has an objectively political character inasmuch as they are repeatedly made the object of moral panics and produced as a “problem” that is consistently posed in terms of what a nativist (white) *we* – the nation, “Europe”, “the West” – will do with *them*. Thus, the succession of reiterations of a crisis of sovereign control over borders and the governmental impasse provoked by the autonomy of migrant and refugee movements has continuously been reconstructed not merely as an “integration” dilemma or an affront to national (or European) “culture”, “values”, or “civilization”, but also as an outright menace to law and order and, to one degree or another, a security threat that purportedly legitimates a state of emergency. In this respect, these events have represented major disruptions in the “unstable equilibrium” of what Omi and Winant have incisively depicted as “the racial state” and its social order, and have commanded the requisite strategies and tactics of absorption and insulation through which to re-domesticate racial transformations and restabilize the dominant racial politics of the hegemonic sociopolitical order ([1986] 1994, 86–87). Comparable to the L.A. rebellion twenty-five years ago or the Black Lives Matter struggles today, then, but in ways that are still more variegated, convoluted, and equivocal, recent events in Europe signal a veritable racial crisis precisely because they “[intensify and reveal] the ambivalences, fault lines, and polarizations which characterize ... racial identities today” (1993, 104–105), and likewise, summon forth tremendous political energies devoted to the re-articulation of their meanings and consequential salience ([1986] 1994, 89–91). This, indeed, is precisely what is at stake when one such as Žižek, hailing from Europe’s pathologized Balkan borderland, pronounces, “*We* [Europe] have to be clear *they* are in *our culture* We should be more assertive toward *our values* Europe means something noble” (2016b; emphases added).

Here, we are reminded that all “Europeans” – those who may pretend to the status of not being “of migrant background” – are certainly *not* equally “European” or “white”, nor are they “white” in the same ways. Like the racial formation of whiteness itself, the homogenizing character of a racial formation of “European”-ness (or European whiteness) is precisely devoted to obfuscating and suturing what are otherwise profound and consequential differences and inequalities. The constitutive contradictions and intrinsic antagonisms of Europeaness, in its real heterogeneity, are precisely what the homogenizing racial formation of whiteness serves to superintend and re-code. As with whiteness, so we may posit of “European”-ness: it has historically acquired a spurious semblance of integrity or coherence solely based on its presumptive derision for and subjugation of whatever is produced as *non*-European. Consequently, the production of “Europe” through the refortification of borders has become synonymous with the utter disposability of black and brown lives.

Notes

1. For a global overview of the escalation in migrant deaths, see IOM (2014) and the IOM’s “Missing Migrants Project”: <http://missingmigrants.iom.int>.
2. The Schengen Area, the European area free of border controls or passport checks for travellers from the 26 countries that are signatories of the Schengen Accord, includes 22 of the 28 EU member states, plus an additional 4 countries that are not EU members. The Schengen accord pre-dated the European Union, but was incorporated into the EU’s Amsterdam Treaty of 1997, with provisions for some member states to opt out.
3. Even in the extended aftermath of the Arab Spring and ongoing civil wars in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia, alongside political turmoil in Eritrea, in 2012, for example, first-instance “refugee” recognition across all EU member states was only 13.9 per cent, with 73 per cent of all asylum applications rejected outright (European Commission/Eurostat News Release [22 March 2013]: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-22032013-BP/EN.PDF).
4. The most comprehensive database documenting migrant and refugee deaths during attempts to traverse the borders of Europe is “The Migrants’ Files”, www.themigrantsfiles.com, a data project coordinated by Journalism++, which estimates the total number of European border deaths at more than 30,000. See also IOM (2014), Spijkerboer and Last (2014), and van Houtum and Boedeltje (2009), cf. IOM’s “Missing Migrants Project”: <http://missingmigrants.iom.int>.
5. This was the principal slogan of a protest on 25 April 2015 directed at the European Commission’s offices in London, called by the Movement Against Xenophobia and supported by the Stop the War coalition, BARAC UK (Black Activists Rising Against Cuts), and Global Justice Now.
6. Notably, in their six-point platform of demands, the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), a collective of more than fifty Black-identified organizations in the United States – where racial Blackness is presumptively affiliated with African-American U.S. citizens and tends to be systematically dis-articulated from “immigrants” – has nonetheless explicitly recognized that the criminalization of “immigrants” is disproportionately experienced by those migrants who come to be racialized as “Black”. See <https://policy.m4bl.org/end-war-on-black-people/>.

7. See, in particular, the video call for a UK-wide #Shutdown racism/#Shutdown violence/#Shutdown borders protest on 5 August 2016, posted on the Black Lives Matter-UK Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BLMUK/home>.
8. "Ferguson" refers to the police murder of African-American Michael Brown on 9 August 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri, a predominantly Black suburb of St. Louis where community outrage erupted repeatedly in both protests and rioting over an extended period (through the first anniversary of the killing in August 2015).
9. For Žižek's defence of Eurocentrism, see Žižek (1998), and remarks in Žižek and Horvat (2013, 56, 179).

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