

IN THE NAME OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

THE RISE OF FEMONATIONALISM | SARA R. FARRIS



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SARA R. FARRIS

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FOR MARIA AND ANTONIO,

MY PARENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AN	Alleanza Nazionale (Italy) (National Alliance)
CAI	Contrat d'Accueil et d'Intégration (Contract for Reception and Integration)
CSWP	Commission Staff Working Paper
EC	European Commission
EIF	European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals
FN	Front National (France) (National Front)
HCI	Haut Conseil à l'Intégration (High Council for Integration)
ILO	International Labor Organization
LFS	Labor Force Survey
LN	Lega Nord (Italy) (Northern League)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFII	Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration
PAVEM	Participatie van Vrouwen uit Etnische Minderheidsgroepen (Participation of Ethnic Minority Women)
PDL	Il Popolo della Libertà (Italy) (People of Freedom)
PVV	Partij voor de Vrijheid (Netherlands) (Party for Freedom)
TCN	third-country national
UMP	Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (France) (Union for a Popular Movement)
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (Netherlands) (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)

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Introduction

In the Name of Women's Rights

I think we are dealing with very sick women [i.e., full-veiled Muslim women] and I do not think we have to be determined according to their pathology.

—ÉLIZABETH BADINTER, a French feminist philosopher

Islam . . . expels Jews and gays and flushes decades of women's rights down the toilet.

—GEERT WILDERS, the leader of the Dutch far-right Party for Freedom

There cannot be a regularization for those [migrants] who entered illegally, for those who rape a woman or rob a villa, but certainly we will take into account for regularization all those situations that have a strong social impact, as in the case of [female] migrant caregivers.

—ROBERTO MARONI, the ex-leader of the Italian far-right party Northern League

The success of the far right in the 2014 elections for the European Parliament attracted a great deal of international attention. Across the continent, nationalist right-wing parties either won an unprecedented number of seats or consolidated their significant popular support.¹ These electoral achievements, coupled with the harshness of the anti-Islam slogans that characterized the parties' campaigns, triggered fears of a return of fascism. Yet one of the striking features that distinguishes contemporary European nationalist parties from their older counterparts is the invocation of gender equality (and occasionally LGBT rights) within an otherwise xenophobic rhetoric. Indeed, despite their lack of concern with elaborating concrete policies of gender equality and their masculinist political style, these parties have increasingly advanced their anti-Islam agendas in the name of women's rights. From Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, to Marine Le Pen

in France and Matteo Salvini in Italy—the key animators of the “brown international” upon which this book focuses—one of the central tropes mobilized by these right-wing nationalists is the profound danger that Muslim males constitute for western European societies, due, above all, to their oppressive treatment of women.²

Some scholars have described the nationalists’ turn to themes of women’s equality as an attempt to modernize their agenda and increase their female constituencies.³ Others have drawn a link between Europe and the United States, where conservative politicians framed post-9/11 imperialist wars in the Middle East as missions to liberate Muslim women from Muslim men.⁴ And yet right-wing nationalists are not the only forces waving the banner of women’s equality in ways that seem to contradict their core ideologies and policies. On the other side of the political spectrum some well-known and outspoken feminists have also joined the anti-Islam choir. Throughout the 2000s, the internationally renowned French feminist philosopher Élisabeth Badinter, the Dutch feminist politician Ayan Hirsi Ali, and the famous Italian “occasional feminist” Oriana Fallaci denounced Muslim communities as exceptionally sexist, contrasting them to western countries as sites of “superior” gender relations.⁵ Similarly, women’s organizations as well as top-ranking bureaucrats in state gender equality agencies—often termed femocrats—all singled out Islamic religious practices as especially patriarchal, arguing that they had no place in the western public sphere.⁶ Accordingly, they all endorsed legal proposals such as veil bans while portraying Muslim women as passive victims who needed to be rescued and emancipated. This heterogeneous anti-Islam feminist front, thus, presented sexism and patriarchy as the almost exclusive domains of the Muslim Other.

The peculiar encounter between anti-Islam agendas and the emancipatory rhetoric of women’s rights is not, however, restricted to nationalists and feminists. Neoliberal advocates who are otherwise antinationalist have also increasingly deployed anti-Islam representations in the name of women’s rights.⁷ A good example of this are the civic integration programs for “third-country nationals,” programs that are, as I will explain, a landmark of neoliberalism. Designed to foster the inclusion of migrants into the fabric of European societies, these programs have made migrants’ long-term residency dependent upon a certified commitment to learn the language, culture, and values of the destination country. They urge migrants both to

acknowledge women's rights as a central value of the West and to assimilate to western cultural practices, which are presented as more civilizationally advanced. What is striking here as well is that civic integration policies tend to generalize claims regarding the inherent misogyny of Muslim communities and apply them to all non-western migrants.

Thus, three very different political actors—right-wing nationalists, certain feminists and women's equality agencies, and neoliberals—invoke women's rights to stigmatize Muslim men in order to advance their own political objectives. But why are these different movements invoking the same trope and identifying Muslim men as one of the most dangerous threats to western societies? Are nationalist parties “betraying” their traditionally antifeminist politics, feminists their emancipatory politics, and neoliberals their antinationalist politics as they all deploy women's rights against Muslim male subjects? Who exactly are the nationalist, feminist, and neoliberal forces mobilizing gender equality against Islam, and what are their specific arguments? Are we witnessing the rise of a new, unholy alliance, or is this seeming consensus across the political spectrum merely coincidental and contingent? And, finally, why are Muslim women being presented with offers of “rescue” in a context of rising Islamophobia and anti-immigration sentiments, particularly regarding employment and welfare?

As I discuss in the following sections, various scholars have explained the new centrality of gender and sometimes gay equality within anti-Islam agendas as a consequence of the shift to the right and the war on terror that marked the 2000s in Europe and the United States—particularly after 9/11. They thus emphasize the securitarian logic of the contemporary rescue narratives targeting Muslim women as victims and read these narratives mainly as political constellations that characterize the current neoliberal and nationalist Zeitgeist.

This book argues instead that important political-economic dimensions underlying these paradoxical intersections in western Europe have, for the most part, been overlooked. Furthermore, I claim that the ways in which anti-Islam campaigns in the name of gender equality feed on and shape broader anti-immigration and racist ideologies and institutions have not received the sustained attention they deserve. *In the Name of Women's Rights* thus intends to propose new links, conceptualizations, and categories of analysis in order to decipher the reasons for the surprising intersection among nationalists, feminists, and neoliberals. In order to name this

intersection and frame the political-economic logic underpinning it, I introduce the notion of femonationalism.

Short for “feminist and femocratic nationalism,” femonationalism refers both to the exploitation of feminist themes by nationalists and neoliberals in anti-Islam (but, as I will show, also anti-immigration) campaigns and to the participation of certain feminists and femocrats in the stigmatization of Muslim men under the banner of gender equality. Femonationalism thus describes, on the one hand, the attempts of western European right-wing parties and neoliberals to advance xenophobic and racist politics through the touting of gender equality while, on the other hand, it captures the involvement of various well-known and quite visible feminists and femocrats in the current framing of Islam as a quintessentially misogynistic religion and culture. In order to define and map out femonationalism, this book focuses on three specific national contexts (the Netherlands, France, and Italy during 2000–2013) and three specific political actors and agendas: (1) nationalist right-wing parties (the Partij voor de Vrijheid [pvv; Party for Freedom] in the Netherlands, the Front National [FN; National Front] in France, and the Lega Nord [LN; Northern League] in Italy); (2) a number of prominent feminist intellectuals and politicians, women’s organizations, and femocrats within these countries; (3) and neoliberal policies targeting non-western migrants within civic integration programs.

Two qualifications are needed at this point. First, I should stress that, unlike the right-wing nationalist parties that instrumentalize gender equality within broader anti-immigration campaigns, the feminists, women’s organizations, and femocrats whom I foreground have directed their main criticism at Muslims and not at migrants more generally. However, this book details the involvement of some of these feminists, women’s organizations, and femocrats in the elaboration and implementation of some components of civic integration programs that target non-western migrant women in general.⁸ I thus show how anti-Islam rhetoric has permeated institutional mechanisms that target the non-western migrant population at large. *In the Name of Women’s Rights* attempts to unravel this complex interweaving, claiming that while anti-Muslim rhetoric has become the dominant anti-Other rhetoric, it dovetails at certain moments and in certain locations and discourses with anti-immigration rhetoric. I explain this complexity by, on the one hand, pointing to how the slippage between

anti-Islam and anti-immigration politics occurs through the assumption of the Muslim man and woman as the main representatives of the binary *oppressor* and *victim*. This binary is then projected and generalized to non-western migrants from the Global South more generally (as, for instance, in the case of the civic integration policies). On the other hand, I discuss how the binary of oppressor and victim used today to foreground Muslims in particular feeds on representations and stereotypes that were deployed during colonial times in all three countries and that are part and parcel of more general racist repertoires.

Second, my critique of the western European portrayal of Muslim women as the quintessential victims of non-western patriarchy does not in any way imply a denial of the inequality or repression to which these women, like women from any other cultural/social/national background, may potentially (and often factually) be subject within their societies. Yet this book is concerned above all with their *representations* and *conceptualizations* in the western European cultural imagery and with the ways in which such representations and conceptualizations are informed by (and in turn inform) deeply rooted racist stereotypes as well as economic interests and practices, which affect other non-western (migrant) women as well.

Ultimately, *In the Name of Women's Rights* aims to introduce a more robust theoretical framework for analyzing the deployment of gender equality within xenophobic campaigns. It does so in a way that moves beyond the "political" lenses that have largely dominated the analysis of these phenomena. The weaving together of right-wing nationalism, certain strains of feminism, and neoliberalism in the name of women's rights needs, I maintain, to be deciphered by disclosing its very concrete political-economic modes of operation. The introduction of the notion of femonationalism therefore aims to provide a theoretical concept to capture the political-economic agenda informing the invocation of women's rights by a range of different actors. This invocation, I argue, is intimately informed by a profound fear of the Other and, given our current historical conjuncture, by Islamophobia. Accordingly, I suggest that femonationalism must be understood as an ideology that springs from a specific mode of encounter, or what I prefer to call a convergence, among different political projects, and that is produced by, and productive of, a specifically economic logic. The

next sections are thus devoted to clarifying three key theoretical dimensions of femonationalism: femonationalism as *convergence*, as *ideological formation*, and as *neoliberal political economy*.

Femonationalism as Convergence

In the Name of Women's Rights proposes to analyze the intersection among nationalist right-wing parties, certain prominent feminists/femocrats, and various neoliberal policies that seem to merge at the crossroad of anti-Islam and anti-immigration campaigns in the Netherlands, France, and Italy, as a case of *convergence*. The term describes the encounter between different actors and movements in a given space without them losing their relative autonomy, and without the encounter itself (necessarily) producing identity or homogeneity. There is a large body of critical literature documenting the paradoxical endorsement of women's and LGBT rights by right-wing and traditionally antifeminist/homophobic parties and neoliberals, as well as the support, in recent years, by some feminists and queers of Islamophobic agendas. Scholars have used two main approaches to explain the type of encounter between nationalism, feminist/queer movements, and neoliberalism. The first approach refers to this encounter as "instrumentalization" and "exploitation." Such an approach has been put forward, for instance, by the sociologist Éric Fassin and the critical race scholar Liz Fekete in the context of their respective discussions of "sexual nationalism" and "enlightened fundamentalism." They introduce these notions to define the deployment of women's and LGBT rights in anti-Islam and anti-immigration campaigns in various western European contexts.⁹ The second perspective, which focuses on notions of "collusion" or "alliance," has been proposed most prominently by the queer scholar Jasbir Puar in her study of "homonationalism."¹⁰ This concept foregrounds the ways in which gay rights have been mobilized against Muslims and racialized Others within new homonormative frameworks.

By proposing to understand femonationalism as the outcome of a convergence, my aim is not to reject these analyses. Instead, I hope to provide a conceptual framework that can better explicate the distinct and heterogeneous configurations upon which this book focuses. Indeed, I argue that the notion of convergence enables us to ask two important questions about Dutch, French, and Italian nationalist right-wing parties, neoliberals, and

the composite feminist/femocratic camp I explore. First, what are the ideological matrices that have encouraged these parties, actors, and movements to advance anti-Islam/anti-immigration politics, in spite of the significant differences among them? Second, what interest might right-wing nationalists, neoliberals, and feminists/femocrats have in endorsing a type of politics that is (or appears to be) at odds with at least certain aspects of their political agendas?

I explore the first question by providing a critical genealogy of right-wing parties' participation in anti-Islam and anti-immigration campaigns in the name of women's rights. This book accordingly charts the shifts that have occurred within the nationalist right-wing camp: from "ethnic nationalism" to "cultural nationalism" and "western supremacy"—particularly in Italy and France—or from "western supremacy" to "ethnic nationalism" in the case of the Netherlands.¹¹ *In the Name of Women's Rights* thus critically addresses the tendency within the scholarly literature to define far-right parties like the PVV, the FN, and the LN as "populists." While this term is employed to capture the demagogic nature of their embrace of themes that did not previously figure in their agendas, I argue that the concept of populism—at least on its own—fails to address the core ideological matrix that leads these right-wing parties to foreground gender equality within xenophobic campaigns. As a modality of political mobilization centered upon the binary "Us" versus "Them," populism can account for right-wing forces targeting Muslim and non-western Others as enemies of western societies. However, it cannot explain the paradox according to which these parties do not frame Muslim and non-western migrant *women* as enemies in the same way, or even how they offer to rescue these women. I thus contend that if we want to decipher this seeming paradox, we need to draw on theories of nationalism, particularly in the ways they are articulated within postcolonial feminism and critical race studies.

This book also interrogates the arguments put forward by several prominent and influential feminist intellectuals and politicians (including of Muslim background), women's organizations, as well as femocrats from left to right in their anti-Islam campaigns. I show that despite the many political, theoretical, and biographical differences among these feminist actors, the common denominator of their anti-Islam stance is a fundamental agreement that gender relations in the West are more advanced and must be taught to Muslim women who are otherwise taken to be agentless

objects at the mercy of their patriarchal cultures. It is this fundamental agreement, I argue, that brings feminists and femocrats of different political stripes to position gender equality and Islamic practices as opposed.

This western supremacist-inflected lens has also informed the civic integration policies that are nationalist as well as neoliberal through and through. By analyzing these policies, I show how they have become a key site where the convergence between the anti-Islam positions of feminists and nationalists with neoliberalism occurs. These policies, as I explain below, are informed by the neoliberal logic of workfare and individual responsibility and have blended together with the right-wing ideology of homogeneity and superiority of the (western) nation as well as with the “westocentric” feminist notion of emancipation through work.

The notion of convergence also helps us answer the second question raised above: namely, what interests do right-wing nationalists, neoliberals, and feminists/femocrats have in endorsing a type of politics that is (or appears to be) at odds with at least part of their own political agendas? In asking this question, I draw on Derrick Bell’s “interest-convergence theory.”¹² This theory posits that the dominant racial group will support the subaltern racial group’s fight for equal rights only if the former believes it has something to gain in the process. Transposing Bell’s argument to the understanding of the convergence among nationalists, neoliberals, and feminists/femocrats on issues of gender inequality and Islam in the three countries upon which I focus, *In the Name of Women’s Rights* explores the strategic calculations, gains and losses, and benefits and costs for nationalists and feminists, in particular when endorsing a politics they had not previously supported.

On the one hand, I maintain that by encouraging a rhetoric of division, or a Manichean splitting of the political and ideological debate into one counterposing “Us” (white, European, western, Christian, civilized, “women-friendly”) to “Them” (nonwhite, non-European, non-western, Muslim, uncivilized, misogynist Others), right-wing nationalist parties have everything to gain. In a historical conjuncture in which the theme of gender equality, like that of human rights, has become the common currency in the name of which new racist and imperialist configurations of power become hegemonic, a vague, mainstream idea of gender equality can quite easily be used opportunistically by these parties to contribute to the consolidation of the nationalist project. Indeed, these parties’ invocation of the lack of gender

equality within immigrant and particularly Muslim communities has been instrumental to generate and reinforce racist sentiments among western Europeans.¹³ On the other hand, I argue that by converging with anti-Islam and racist voices in the name of women's rights, feminists and femocrats effectively lose. That is, by suggesting that gender inequality is an issue affecting mostly non-western women, the anti-Islam feminists and femocrats have contributed to diverting attention away from the many forms of inequality that still affect western European women. Neoliberal governments have seized on the opportunity opened up by the identification of women's rights as a "migrant/Muslim woman-only issue" to decrease funds for more universal programs aimed at tackling gender injustice more generally.¹⁴ Instead of helping it to gain more visibility, the widespread resort to the theme of women's rights as a "civilizational" battle demotes it from the rubric of general societal problems and dislocates it as a "non-western women problem" only—or as a problem that affects western European women as potential victims of Muslim and non-western/nonwhite men.

It is here that my notion of convergence departs from that of Bell. While his interest-convergence theory helps us to analyze the tactical intentions (and manipulations) behind nonemancipatory political movements' sudden endorsement of emancipatory projects, Bell's theory cannot account for the reasons emancipatory movements or oppressed subjects might converge with conservative parties. It also cannot explain why emancipatory movements fail to question the sudden endorsement by conservatives of previously denied or contested rights. In other words, the interest-convergence theory, as framed by Bell, cannot explain the "self-defeating" invocation by some feminists and women's equality agencies of anti-Islam arguments in the name of women's rights. Even though some of the feminists and femocrats endorsing these arguments might think that their stance brings gender equality back more prominently onto the public agenda, in this book I explicate how and why the opposite is actually the case.

The convergence producing femonationalism thus can be seen as the result of (and as producing) a fundamental tension and contradiction: that between the nonemancipatory forces of Islamophobia and racism on one side, and the emancipatory struggle against sexism and patriarchy, on the other. This book maintains that it is precisely *this* tension that makes femonationalism simultaneously so strong and widespread, but also (at least potentially) so fragile. The strength of femonationalism lies above all in

the fact that the foregrounding of Muslim (and, to a lesser extent, non-western migrant) men and women as respectively “oppressors” and “victims” is accomplished thanks to the participation of a range of prominent feminists and femocrats as well as some female politicians/public figures of Muslim background. *In the Name of Women’s Rights* thus details how their participation in the anti-Islam discourse reinforces the stigmatizing operations of the nationalists and mainstream media because it allows them to invoke these feminists and femocrats as “privileged insiders” who have firsthand experience of gender inequality. Simultaneously, this book suggests that this tension also makes femonationalism a fragile convergence that may be weakened when its contradictory components are critically confronted.

My notion of convergence thus acknowledges and emphasizes the constitutive frictions and differences, gains and losses, that inhabit the femonationalist camp. It stresses that the relationships among different social and political actors and agendas constituting the ideological space of femonationalism are multiple, ambiguous, and potentially beyond the actors’ own intentions. As I intend to show, a deeper understanding of these contradictions can help us to advance a radical critique of the negative effects of this convergence on gender justice in general.

Femonationalism as Ideological Formation

Different names have been given to the political constellations emerging out of the intersection among nationalist, neoliberal, and feminist or LGBT politics in a range of countries. Yet whether in terms of a *Zeitgeist*, a discursive tactic, or a political project, scholars have mostly pointed to the political-conjunctural dimensions of this phenomenon.¹⁵ More specifically, they have foregrounded the contemporary temporal juncture in which these encounters take place, yet they have paid insufficient attention to their histories. For this reason, I argue that the convergence among nationalist right-wing parties, neoliberal policies, and feminists/femocrats in the three countries I examine is better captured in terms of an *ideological formation*. There are three important theoretical reasons for qualifying femonationalism as an ideological formation.

First, the notion of ideological formation allows us to examine the philosophy underpinning femonationalism—a philosophy that I previously

identified as a common conviction regarding the supremacy of the West over the Rest. But it also enables us to identify what is new and what is déjà vu within this formation, or what I would term its “modularity.” By invoking the concept of modularity to account for femonationalism’s seeming ubiquity, I bring into play one dimension of Benedict Anderson’s theory of nationalism. As I discuss at length in chapter 3, this concept refers to the double character of the nation-form (i.e., both universal and particular) and to its capacity to be transplanted across space and time. As Manu Goswami argues in her discussion of Anderson’s concept of modularity, “nationalist claims of particularity and the imagined singularity of national formations only become intelligible against and within a global grid of formally similar nations and nation-states.”¹⁶ Accordingly, the notion of the modularity of femonationalism foregrounds how the current positioning of Muslim men and women—with the latter playing the role of the passive victims of non-western male violence who require protection—can be regarded as a contemporary face of a well-known western topos, namely, that of the “white men [claiming to be] saving brown women from brown men,” to use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s apposite formulation.¹⁷ Today, Muslim women personify the homogenizing figure of the non-western woman as the victim par excellence of non-western male violence in the western European imagery. I thus show that while current media and political discourses focus on male Muslims as oppressors, in western Europe the male immigrant threat in the 1990s came from the East. The bad immigrant was then mostly embodied by eastern European men, usually portrayed as involved in criminal activities and sex trafficking, while women from these countries were often depicted as victims of a backward culture and/or of the sex industry.

Moreover, as postcolonial critics have compellingly shown, in colonial times in the Netherlands, France, and Italy (among others), the insistence upon unequal gender relations and the idea that colonized women were victims of patriarchal violence—which were understood as markers of indigenous populations’ “culture”—was instrumental in strengthening the technologies of domination over colonial subjects.¹⁸ This book thus charts the historical recurrences and ideological premises underpinning the contemporary mobilization of gender equality as a tool to depict male Others as sexual threats and female Others as sexual victims and as the property of western “saviors.” It is this rearticulation of all these

ideas, fragments, and traces from the recent past in the changed context of neoliberalism and rising Islamophobia that defines the modularity of femonationalism.

Second, femonationalism operates “through discursive regularities” that, as Stuart Hall put it, are at the core of ideological formations. For Hall, ideological formations are those that “‘formulate’ their own objects of knowledge and their own subjects; they have their own repertoire of concepts, are driven by their own logics, operate their own enunciative modality, constitute their own way of acknowledging what is true and excluding what is false within their own regime of truth. They establish through their regularities a ‘space of formation’ in which certain statements can be enunciated.”¹⁹ The notion of ideological formation thus allows us to conceptualize more precisely the discursive plane that constitutes and consolidates femonationalism. The contemporary mobilization of feminism to promote anti-immigration and Islamophobia within an increasingly nationalist framework would not be thinkable without the deployment of a massive discursive media apparatus. One has only to think of the enormous media display to which the West has been subjected, particularly since 9/11: the bombing of Afghanistan presented as necessary to liberate Muslim women from the burqa; draconian immigration laws in the Netherlands passed to purportedly avoid the “import” of brides from Morocco or Turkey; or, more recently, the portrayal of Syrian male refugees as responsible en masse for the sexual aggressions against and robberies of women during the New Year’s Eve festivities in Germany. This apparatus, then, has produced the unquestionable and conclusive association between gender violence and Islam. Femonationalism, in other words, has been constituted and nourished through the production and practice of meanings that have come to saturate the western cultural imaginary: namely, through the condensation of such meanings, symbols, images, and discursive regularities into the *senso comune* (literally, “common sense”), to use Gramsci’s apt concept.²⁰

Finally, I conceptualize femonationalism as an ideological formation because I claim that the mobilization of gender equality by nationalist parties, neoliberals, and feminists/femocrats in ways that intensify xenophobia also stems from very concrete economic interests. In his seminal text, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Louis Althusser invited us to think of the materiality of ideologies in terms of the ways in which they serve the reproduction of the material conditions of production. That is,

for Althusser, ideological state apparatuses (i.e., the family, the media, the school, religion, etc.) play the role of guarantors in the reproduction of the conditions that re-create exploited labor power on a daily basis, both materially and psychologically. Althusser saw these apparatuses as functioning in a way that ensured the maintenance of the conditions for the subjection of the subaltern classes to (and their internationalization of) the “dominant ideology.”²¹ In its Althusserian articulation, the notion of ideological formation thus urges us to explore femonationalism’s concrete materiality. The notion of ideological formation, then, suggests that we must examine the forms in which the convergence between a number of heterogeneous political subjects on the notion that sexism is the exclusive domain of the non-western Other conceal the need to maintain and reproduce specific political-economic arrangements. Ultimately, as I will explain in the next section, the notion of femonationalism as an ideological formation allows us to demonstrate how the xenophobic mobilization of gender equality reinforces the material chain of production and social reproduction.

Femonationalism as Neoliberal Political Economy

The few studies that have attempted to take into account the political-economic dimensions of the turn to gender and gay quality by conservative, neoliberal, or racist politics have referred mainly to neoliberalism as a type of background force. For example, Sirma Bilge maintains that the possibility for gender and sexuality to become the “operation field of racist and imperialist nationalisms” is mainly due to their “fittingness” with the neoliberal mode of hiding structural inequalities behind cultural conflicts.²² Similarly, Paul Mepschen and Jan Duyvendack have stressed how neoliberalism has facilitated the encounter between LGBT and nationalist politics not only by promoting the rise of a gay consumerist culture but also by reaffirming the authority of the nation-state over the production of identities, while allowing for the (de)regulation of the economy.²³ They thus maintain that sexual nationalisms are consistent with neoliberal strategies of market segmentation and the promotion of chauvinist politics.

These previous studies, however, treat neoliberalism as the economic theater of operation for the encounter between a different array of forces, but not as one of the main characters onstage. While agreeing that neoliberalism is central for understanding these phenomena, this book argues that

neoliberalism is not simply the contextual ground on which the femo-nationalist convergence takes place, but it is itself constitutive of such a convergence. The mobilization of women's rights within xenophobic campaigns, which has become prominent under neoliberalism, does not merely divert attention away from growing economic inequalities by means of "culturalist" modes of displacement. Nor has such mobilization operated solely through making equal rights campaigns functional to consumerist cultures. Rather, I understand neoliberalism to be a political-economic formation that "institutionalizes" the femonationalist ideology as part of the functioning of the state apparatuses in order to (re)organize the productive and particularly the socially reproductive sphere.

In the Name of Women's Rights details the neoliberal institutionalization of femonationalism by analyzing the economic components of the civic integration programs for third-country nationals. As I mentioned above, these programs require migrants to learn what are claimed to be the main cultural tenets of the receiving European states in order to be granted residency. Here gender equality is presented as a pillar of the western European nation, and the declaration of respect for women's rights has been turned into a condition for settlement. By reconstructing the history of the implementation of these programs, and the political profile of their designers and supporters as well as their gendered dimensions, I show how they have incorporated the representation of Muslim women and men—as, respectively, victims and oppressors—into the disciplinary apparatus of the state's policies on immigration. I thus demonstrate how these policies are a specific and very concrete site in which we see a slippage between anti-Islam stereotypes and processes of Othering that involve and affect not only Muslim women but also non-western migrant women more generally. Furthermore, I detail how civic integration policies do not operate merely at the "disciplinary" level of the state, framing Muslim and non-western migrant males as misogynist subjectivities in need of re-education. Instead I demonstrate how these policies also crucially operate at the economic level.

Premised upon the idea that Muslim and non-western migrant women are backward individuals who are mostly confined to the home, from 2007 onward civic integration policies in the Netherlands, France, and Italy have encouraged these women to integrate economically by seeking

employment outside the household.²⁴ As I discuss in chapter 4, economic integration for non-western migrant women in particular (Muslim and non-Muslim alike) has effectively functioned through the application of neoliberal workfare devices. Women's organizations and gender equality state agencies have supported and been actively involved in implementing these initiatives, which address the difficulties of the female migrant population in the labor market of the country of destination. An in-depth analysis of these initiatives, however, underscores that non-western migrant women participating in civic integration programs have been systematically directed toward a handful of job types: hotel cleaning, housekeeping, child minding, and caregiving for the elderly and/or the disabled. In spite of the great emphasis placed on the need for these women to emancipate themselves by entering the productive public sphere by the various feminists, women's organizations, and the femocrats that I discuss in this book, in reality non-western migrant women have been confined to care and domestic work in the private sphere. There is thus a contradiction when feminists and femocrats urge emancipation for Muslim and non-western migrant women while channeling them toward the very sphere (domestic, low-paying, and precarious jobs) from which the feminist movement had historically tried to liberate women. This is not merely a rhetorical contradiction but is concretely performed in action. In order to understand the underpinnings of this "performative contradiction," I reconstruct a critical genealogy of the notion of economic independence as it emerged in different waves of the feminist movement, and the related concepts of productive work as opposed to social reproduction. This critical genealogy suggests that it is precisely the tension between these two realms (i.e., production and social reproduction) and the devaluation of social reproduction by many western European feminists that have unwittingly contributed to the reconfiguration of social reproduction as a sector dominated by a very marginalized and vulnerable section of the workforce, namely, Muslim and non-western migrant women.

In the Name of Women's Rights also documents the active role of right-wing governments and of some nationalist right-wing parties in the early 2010s in directing these women into the care and domestic, or social reproductive, sector. I highlight the role of the 2007–2011 global financial crisis as the crucial backdrop against which the nationalist and neoliberal

rhetoric of non-western migrant men and women (Muslim and non-Muslim) as oppressors and victims needs to be understood. By documenting how processes of “commodification of care” during the crisis have impacted the expansion of the labor market of female migrant caregivers, this book examines the complex ways in which Muslim and non-western migrant women have become the main providers of social reproduction in a context of growing demand for care. In addition, through a detailed analysis of data on non-western migrants’ economic performance in terms of employment trends and sectors between 2007 and 2013, I demonstrate that Muslim and non-western migrant women were not only spared during the crisis, but their employment and activity rates actually grew during these years. Unlike non-western migrant men, who most often find work in economic sectors in which relocation and closure of productive sites can easily be used as “crisis-management” devices to reduce the number of laborers, non-western migrant women are in fact mostly employed in the care and domestic economy. This is the sector to which capital’s classic crisis-management operations do not apply: social reproduction, quite simply, cannot be relocated or shut down during times of economic crises. Care work must continue even during periods of recession to guarantee the daily functioning of our societies. Indeed, in the present context of western European women’s growing rates of employment, it is increasingly Muslim and non-western migrant women who are providing care for children, the disabled, and the elderly. This is occurring precisely at a historical moment in which western Europe both is privatizing welfare services and is confronted with an ever-larger aging population.

I argue that the emphasis on non-western migrant women overall as individuals to be helped in their integration and emancipation process, including through job offers, is possible because they, unlike male migrant workers, currently occupy a strategic role in the social reproductive sector of childcare, elderly care, and cleaning. Rather than “job stealers,” “cultural and social threats,” and “welfare system parasites”—all designations regularly used for Muslim and non-western migrant men—Muslim and non-western migrant women seem to be those who allow western European men and particularly women to work in the public sphere by providing that care that neoliberal restructuring has commodified.

In the Name of Women’s Rights thus suggests that the double standard applied to Muslim and non-western migrant women in the public imagi-

nary as individuals in need of special attention, and even “rescue,” operates as an ideological tool that is strictly connected to their key role in the *reproduction of the material conditions of social reproduction*. Femonationalism should be understood as part and parcel of the specifically neoliberal reorganization of welfare, labor, and state immigration policies that have occurred in the context of the global financial crisis and, more generally, the western European crisis of social reproduction. The very possibility that nationalists and neoliberals can exploit emancipatory ideals of gender equality, as well as the convergence of feminists/femocrats with anti-emancipatory, xenophobic politics, springs in large part from the specifically neoliberal reconfiguration of the western European economy in the past thirty years.

A Note on Methodology

This book focuses on the Netherlands, France, and Italy as significant cases for the study of femonationalism. Since the early 2000s these three national contexts have gained international prominence as leading European laboratories for the convergence among the nationalist right, neoliberal policies, and anti-Islam feminists and femocrats. Despite the obvious distinctions between the Dutch, French, and Italian contexts—in terms of immigration histories, cultures of integration, nationalities, and types of migration, as well as differences in the respective traditions of nationalist and feminist movements, and application of neoliberal agendas—they have nonetheless exhibited a striking resemblance and synchrony in the development of femonationalism. My objective is not to provide a discrete assessment of each country, or even a comparative typology. Rather, this book attempts to highlight the parallels among these national contexts and political actors and to disclose the transnational character of femonationalism within the local. Albeit specific to these national settings, the theorization I offer provides a conceptual framework that may be useful for analyzing similar phenomena in different national settings across western Europe in particular and in the West more generally.²⁵

With this aim, I analyze the three most prominent right-wing nationalist parties in each of the three countries (i.e., the PVV in the Netherlands, the FN in France, and the LN in Italy). While they do not represent the

whole nationalist constellation in each context, they have played a crucial role in each country's political life since the mid-2000s. More important, these three parties have largely determined the right-wing nationalist turn that has characterized Dutch, French, and Italian politics in the second decade of the millennium. Their emphasis on Muslims and non-western migrants' alleged negation of the nation's authentic roots, culture, history, and values, as well as their mobilization of women's rights against non-western Others, have been widely covered by the mainstream media and invoked in public debate.

Second, I analyze the claims made by feminists who have come to public prominence from the early 2000s onward due to their resolute embrace of anti-Islam arguments. My exploration focuses on the most influential and vocal group of actors in each country: prominent feminist intellectuals; feminist politicians from left to right, including some of North African or Muslim background; women's organizations; and key figures in state gender equality agencies, or femocrats.

Finally, this book analyzes the deployment of gender equality themes in anti-Islam and anti-immigration campaigns by examining the neoliberal philosophy underpinning the new civic integration programs promoted by the European Commission from the early 2000s onward. I detail the ways in which the neoliberal agenda of workfare prioritizes "skilled migration" and frames migrants' integration as a matter of both individual responsibility and economic contribution, while showing how these agendas intersect with the stigmatization of non-western (unskilled) migrant males in the name of women's rights.

My analysis of the rise of femonationalism employs diverse methods, including interviews with key respondents, participant observation, analysis of statistical data, and critical discourse analysis (CDA). In particular I have examined party programs, political speeches and interviews, visual materials (videos, posters, documentaries), official EU and national documents, immigration and integration laws and policies, as well as data on labor and migration from the Labor Force Survey, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the International Labor Organization. The analyses and arguments I present are also informed by many years of scholarly work on gendered migration, multiculturalism, and the gendered division of migrant labor in all three contexts.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1, “Figures of Femonationalism,” reconstructs a critical genealogy of the mobilization of women’s rights in the Netherlands, France, and Italy from 2000 to 2013. It provides a detailed account of the ways in which three right-wing nationalist parties have increasingly resorted to a rhetoric of gender equality in order to advance their anti-Islam/anti-immigration political agendas. This chapter also traces the participation of several prominent feminist intellectuals and politicians, women’s organizations, and femocrats in the campaign against Islamic patriarchy and Muslim women’s “special exposure” to misogyny and gender violence. The claim in this chapter is that the constitution of a common space in which seemingly oppositional forces such as feminism and right-wing nationalism can voice concerns about gender violence as the exclusive domain of the Muslim Other stems from a shared belief in the supremacy of western values.

Chapter 2, “Femonationalism Is No Populism,” begins with a discussion of how, in the past decade, sociologists and political scientists have understood right-wing parties’ exploitation of gender equality as a form of populism. Challenging this approach, it argues that the concept of populism fails to make sense of the centrality these parties assign to gender equality. Instead, I contend that if we want to grasp the reasons for the sudden and instrumental mobilization of feminist issues by these right-wing parties, we need to draw on the theories of nationalism developed in the context of postcolonial feminism and critical race studies. To do this, I explore the emergence of femonationalism within the historical context of decolonization of non-western countries and recolonization of non-western subjects in Europe and the West. I thus link these discussions to notions of “racialization of sexism” and “sexualization of racism.”

Chapter 3, “Integration Policies and the Institutionalization of Femonationalism,” discusses the recent legislation on civic integration, implemented in the Netherlands, France, and Italy between 2006 and 2013 by neoliberal governments with the support of nationalist parties. Focusing on civic integration programs, I show how gender equality and women’s rights are among the most important values that migrants are expected to internalize and respect. While influential interpretations of civic integration policies have claimed that the theme of gender equality conveyed

by these policies demonstrates the liberal, as opposed to nationalist (and racist), character of these programs, I demonstrate that the opposite is actually the case. I show that civic integration policies are arguably the most concrete and insidious form of the institutionalization of femonationalism as an ideological formation.

Chapter 4, “Femonationalism, Neoliberalism, and Social Reproduction,” focuses on one largely overlooked point of convergence between anti-Islam feminist, nationalist, and neoliberal politics: namely, the policies pertaining to non-western migrant women’s “economic” integration. I begin by showing that the demand that these women participate in work is largely framed within a context of workfare. Second, I demonstrate that the implementation of these policies, including by some prominent feminist politicians, women’s organizations, and state gender equality agencies, has functioned through actively directing non-western migrant women (Muslim and non-Muslim alike) toward the care and domestic sectors (social reproduction), which has traditionally been conceived as “feminine.” The contradiction emerges when we recall that it is precisely against this gendered division of labor—men in the public sphere, women in the private—that the feminist movement has historically struggled. To understand the conditions of possibility for, and the trajectory of such a contradiction, I propose that we reconstruct the complex feminist genealogy of economic independence, and the related concepts of productive work, which has historically been placed in opposition to social reproduction. This critical reconstruction enables us to better grasp how some feminists and femocrats have converged with the ideology of femonationalism.

Chapter 5, “The Political Economy of Femonationalism,” emphasizes that the double standard applied today to non-western migrant populations—according to which men are the “dangerous Other” while women are the “victims to be rescued”—follows a political-economic logic. I argue that we need to rethink and challenge the prevalent assumption that immigrants and women constitute a “reserve army of labor.” Analyzing the strategic role of non-western migrant women (Muslim and non-Muslim alike) in the social reproductive sector of care and domestic work, in the context of the state’s retreat from public care provisions, aging populations, and growing participation of western European women in the labor market, I show that the cheap labor of migrant women has become essential for the reproduction of western European societies and economies. Even during

the recent economic crisis, the rate of employment of migrant women in the care and domestic sector grew, unlike (male) migrant employment in other sectors. This testifies to a fundamental difference between male and female migrant labor in contemporary western European societies: unlike their male counterparts, immigrant women now belong to what can be called a “regular army of labor.” This category enables us to lay bare the economic rationale behind the representation of Muslim and non-western migrant women as “redeemable subjects.”

Ultimately the analyses provided in these pages underscore how the mobilization of women’s rights within xenophobic campaigns has not been limited to political rhetoric. A detailed analysis of the political-economic foundations of these developments is essential not only to strengthen our critique but especially to help us find alternative political practices to confront their devastating consequences.

NOTES

Introduction

- 1 Three far-right nationalist parties came first in their respective countries: the Danish People's Party obtaining 25 percent (+18.7) of the vote; the FN obtaining 26.6 percent (+11.8) of the vote; and the United Kingdom Independence Party with 27.5 percent (+11.4). In general, far-right parties obtained their highest results in western European countries (with the exception of Hungary). For a more extensive commentary on these results, see Cas Mudde's analysis, "The Far Right in the 2014 European Elections: Of Earthquakes, Cartels and Designer Fascists," May 30, 2014, in the *Washington Post*: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/05/30/the-far-right-in-the-2014-european-elections-of-earthquakes-cartels-and-designer-fascists/> (accessed March 3, 2015).
- 2 See the article "The 'Brown International' of the European Far Right" by Thanasis Kampagiannis in *Left Flank*, January 12, 2014, available at <http://left-flank.org/2014/01/12/brown-international-european-far-right/> (accessed January 2, 2016).
- 3 Bartlett et al., "Populism in Europe"; Mayer, "From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen"; Akkerman and Hagelund, "'Women and Children First!'" ; Towns et al., "Equality Conundrum."
- 4 The invasion of Afghanistan that followed the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York was presented to, and endorsed by, the international public as a mission to liberate Afghan women from their oppression under Taliban rule just as much as an act of defense and retaliation against the perpetrators of the attacks. From then onward, images of veiled Muslim women as imprisoned bodies have entered our western collective unconscious alongside those of Muslim bearded men seemingly plotting terrorist onslaughts against western targets. All across the West, not only right-wing nationalist and conservative forces but also some leftist and feminist organizations and public figures have endorsed the portrayal of Muslim women as victims to be saved. In the United States, the Feminist Majority Foundation, one of the leading feminist voices in the country, effectively supported the invasion of Afghanistan as necessary to liberate Afghan women from "gender apartheid" (Russo, "Feminist Majority Foundation's Campaign to Stop

- Gender Apartheid"). On the other side of the Atlantic, the German feminist icon Alice Schwarzer has been one of the most vocal opponents of Islam as a misogynist religion and culture, and she was echoed by a wide array of political forces from left to right. This attitude is so widespread in the country that according to a survey conducted by the polling agency Allensbach in 2012, 83 percent of Germans associate the word "Islam" with "oppression of women." In Sweden and Norway, a convergence between feminists and right-wing/anti-immigration parties such as the Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden Democrats) and the Framskrittspartiet (Progress Party) has taken place in the name of gender equality against non-western immigrant communities (Roma and Muslims in particular). If we turn to other western countries, the situation is not all that dissimilar. After the 2005 racist "Cronulla riots" in Sydney, when white Australians assaulted men of color for days while accusing them of being rapists, MP Carl Scully declared he was "concerned a small number of Middle Eastern males appear to have a problem with respecting women" (Ho, "Muslim Women's New Defenders").
- 5 Oriana Fallaci did not define herself as a feminist, although she was associated with liberal feminism due to her endorsement of battles for the rights for abortion and divorce in the 1970s.
 - 6 I here use the definition of femocrats in *Inside Agitators* by Hester Eisenstein as "feminists in state bureaucracy." For a comprehensive discussion on the notion of femocrat and state feminism in transnational perspective, see Haussman and Sauer, *Gendering the State in the Age of Globalization*. See also McBride and Mazur, *Politics of State Feminism*.
 - 7 Neoliberalism is generally associated with political-economic doctrines promoting globalization. It is thus assumed to transcend national boundaries and to reject nationalist ideologies. Chapter 3 challenges this widespread view. For an overview of these debates, particularly within the field of international political economy, see Harmes, "The Rise of Neoliberal Nationalism."
 - 8 Some of the arguments most recently deployed by some feminists and femocrats to stigmatize Muslim males and to portray Muslim women as victims to be saved replicate stereotypical representations of the alleged victimhood of non-western women that characterized western European accounts of migrant women at least from the 1970s onward. Moreover, the civic integration policies that some feminists, women's organizations, and femocrats supported, or directly implemented on the basis of their anti-Islam perspective, apply not only to migrants from the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia, but also to Africans in general, Albanians, Russians, Serbians, Chinese, and so forth (in short, to non-EU/non-western migrants). For this reason, throughout this book I refer to Muslim and non-western migrant men and women, unless the context requires reference to specific nationalities and/or religious affiliations. In particular, I will highlight how the majority of Muslim

women (migrants and nonmigrants alike) and of women migrating to western Europe from the Global South and from some of the countries of the postsocialist bloc are affected by at least some of the policies and processes I outline in this book.

- 9 Éric Fassin examines the ways in which in both France and the United States themes of sex and sexuality, gender equality, and gay rights have been displaced from the private to the public/political sphere. The foregrounding of sexual freedoms as matters of open, public discussion, and thus, “democratization,” however, has been accomplished through the identification of migrants, and particularly Muslims, as aliens to those same processes. Sexual democracy, or the sexualization of democracy, has thus been instrumentalized in the service of sexual nationalism, whereby migrants’ and Muslims’ integration and loyalty to their hosting western nations are tested by means of their commitment to the sexual values of these nations (É. Fassin, “Sexual Democracy and the New Racialization of Europe”). Drawing on the notion of “cultural fundamentalism” to describe the dogmatic and exclusionary ways western culture has been rebranded by the right wing as a tool for Othering migrants, in a famous 2006 article Liz Fekete coined the term “enlightened fundamentalism.” This term describes the powerful deployment of women’s rights and gay rights by right-wing parties in contemporary xenophobic campaigns across Europe and their resort to the Enlightenment tradition as the foundation of western European culture, aimed against Muslims and migrants more generally. According to Fekete, what has made enlightened fundamentalism so strong in the aftermath of 9/11 is the way in which many “self-proclaimed feminists” jumped on the right-wing “band wagon” (Fekete, “Enlightened Fundamentalism?,” 12). Accordingly, Fekete accuses these feminists of “paternalism” and points to their contradictions when they support repressive policies like Muslim veil bans in the name of women’s freedom of choice. For Fekete, both the right wing and feminists are “exploiting” the theme of gender equality within cultural fundamentalist campaigns. Similarly to Fassin, the Dutch sociologists Paul Mepschen and Jan Willem Duyvendak also use the notion of “sexual nationalism” to discuss contemporary public representations of Muslims as a threat to sexual freedoms in the Netherlands. Specifically, they explicate the sexualization of nationalism in terms of the “culturalization” and “sexualization” of citizenship, that is, the ways in which Dutch citizenship is understood more and more in terms of cultural and moral identifications. Accordingly, they show how Muslims and other non-western migrants are criticized for their supposed lack of loyalty to certain European cultural constellations and sexual liberties, which are now recast as the foundation of western history. Mepschen and Duyvendak also see the foregrounding of sexual freedoms in anti-Muslim agendas as an instance of “instrumentalization,” particularly in the case of the “populist right.” What facilitates this instrumentalization, they further maintain, is the

neoliberal context, understood as a “project to reinforce or restore the authority of state institutions over the production of (national) citizenship and political subjectivity and the regulation of labor markets and urban marginality” (Mepschen, Duyvendack, and Tonkens, “Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands”). See also Mepschen and Duyvendack, “European Sexual Nationalisms.”

- 10 Centering her attention on the intersection between gay politics and US nationalism after 9/11, Jasbir Puar emphasizes the exclusionary state as the master signifier of the contemporary focus on male Others as misogynistic and xenophobic enemies of western civilization. More specifically, Puar discusses the encounter between US nationalism and queer sexual politics in terms of “collusions,” which she sees as productive of a “homonationalist” formation. Puar’s “homonationalism” thus both describes the mobilization of gay rights against Muslims and racialized Others within the American nationalist framework, but also refers to the integration of “homonormativity”—that is, domesticated homosexual politics—within the US agenda of the war on terror. As Puar puts it, homonationalism is a “discursive tactic that disaggregates US national gays and queers from racial and sexual others, foregrounding a collusion between homosexuality and American nationalism that is generated both by national rhetorics of patriotic inclusion and by gay and queer subjects themselves” (Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 39). Puar has drawn attention to the manifold ways in which the US state of exceptionalism and exception has co-opted important sections of the gay movement. Rather than a mere instrumentalization, or tactical exploitation of the theme of gay rights by nationalism, Puar thus highlights the active involvement—and responsibilities—of the queer movements themselves that have supported (wittingly or unwittingly) this new racist configuration. Puar’s work has been greatly influential in setting the terms of the debate among scholars. Discussing the deployment of gender and LGBT equality in the Québécois and Dutch public debate on Muslim patriarchy, Sirma Bilge and Sarah Bracke, respectively, adopt Puar’s concept of homonationalism as the new hegemonic form of sexual nationalism. While the former stresses the collusive role of Québécois “state feminism” in particular in the establishment of the governmental rhetoric positing Muslims as a peril to women and gay rights, the latter explores both the “alliance” between Dutch feminism and right-wing xenophobic politics seeking to “rescue” Muslim women from their alleged oppression, as well as the application of such rescue narratives to queer movements. Bilge also gestures toward a materialist understanding of the collusion between feminism, LGBT, and anti-Islam rhetoric by foregrounding neoliberalism as the backdrop of Québécois contemporary sexual nationalism, which enables the marketization of feminist and LGBT movements. See Bilge, “Mapping Québécois Sexual Nationalism in Times of ‘Crisis of Reasonable Accommodations’”; and Bracke, “Subjects of Debate.”

- 11 While holding to a nationalist agenda, since the early 2000s the LN and FN have progressively adopted a “western supremacist” vocabulary, which enabled them to enter—and to be heard within—the mainstream public debate. Instead, the PVV began its campaign against the alleged illiberalism and misogyny of Islam in the name of the “superior” liberal values of the West, only to progressively move to a more chauvinist, nationalist repertoire. For a discussion of the notion of western supremacy—which I provide in chapter 1—see particularly Bessis, *Western Supremacy*; and Bonnett, “From the Crisis of Whiteness to Western Supremacism.”
- 12 In a famous 1980 article Derrick Bell described the US Supreme Court’s 1954 verdict to declare public schools’ racial segregation as unconstitutional as a case of “converging interests.” According to Bell, the Supreme Court’s decision to support the battle for civil rights of African Americans at school was motivated by the fact that whites saw political as well as economic gains in ending (at least on the legal front) school segregation. According to Bell, such a decision, first, “helped to provide immediate credibility to America’s struggle with Communist countries to win the hearts and minds of emerging third world peoples”; second, it “offered much needed reassurance to American blacks that the precepts of equality and freedom so heralded during World War II might yet be given meaning at home”; finally, “segregation was viewed as a barrier to further industrialization in the South” (Bell, “Brown versus Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma,” 524–525).
- 13 Eisenstein, *Feminism Seduced*; Perugini and Gordon, *Human Right to Dominate*.
- 14 Outshoorn and Oldersma, “Dutch Decay.”
- 15 Zeitgeist: Mepschen and Duyvendack, “European Sexual Nationalisms”; discursive tactic: Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; political project: Fekete, “Enlightened Fundamentalism?”
- 16 Goswami, “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form,” 785.
- 17 Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”
- 18 MacMaster, “Colonial ‘Emancipation’”; Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*.
- 19 Hall, “Toad in the Garden,” 51.
- 20 The concept of *senso comune* in Gramsci describes an idea that in a given epoch and society has become dominant through its fabrication and uncritical and often largely unconscious perception and internalization, regardless of its status as true or false. For an extensive treatment of this concept and problematic in Gramsci’s work, see Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*.
- 21 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.” While I take from Althusser’s theorization the importance of understanding ideology within the broader context of production and reproduction of capital, my reading of femonationalism through these theoretical lenses runs against a certain tendency in Althusser to focus on ideology in general. Partially following the

insights of Michel Pêcheux, I speak of ideological “formation” rather than ideology as such, in order to emphasize that femonationalism is historically determinate and requires broader theoretical tools and historical contextualizations to be properly decoded. See Pêcheux, “Mechanism of Ideological (Mis)recognition.” In contrast to a certain tendency in Althusser to think of ideologies as internally uniform, however, I stress the internal inconsistencies, fragmentation, and contradictions of femonationalism as a specific ideological formation of the twenty-first century. Althusser tended to conceive of ideologies as almost direct functions of state deliberations and ultimately productive only of subaltern subjects—insofar as ideological interpellation, for Althusser, is what produces individuals as subjects, in a way that seems not to leave room for the emergence of critical, antagonistic subjectivities. For a critique of this element in Althusserian ideology theory, see Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*.

- 22 Bilge, “Mapping Québécois Sexual Nationalism,” 306. Bilge understands neoliberalism as the logic that merges equal rights agendas and business rationalities by means of marketizing equality social movements such as feminism and LGBT and turning these movements’ supporters into consumers and neoliberal subjectivities. The end of “neo-liberal equity politics,” accordingly, is the reduction of “social justice to a question of rights and [the concealment of] harsh operations of global capitalism and underlying systems of structural injustice” (306).
- 23 Mepschen and Duyvendack, “European Sexual Nationalisms.”
- 24 The European Integration Fund was established in 2007. Chapter 4 discusses at length how this fund has been used by various organizations, including women’s equality agencies within and outside state bureaucracy, to promote the economic integration of non-western migrant women. I thus show the contradictions opened up for feminists in particular by the concrete implementation of these economic integration policies.
- 25 By “western Europe” I am referring to the area comprising the fifteen member-states of the European Union prior to the accession of ten candidate countries—mostly from eastern Europe—in 2004, alongside the non-EU countries Switzerland and Norway. The restriction of my analysis to western Europe, rather than to Europe, or to the European Union as a whole, is due to two main reasons. First, despite the recent incorporation of most eastern European countries into the European Union, western and eastern Europe still constitute, and are perceived by the population at large, as two distinct political, social, and economic blocs. In terms of migration flows, for instance (a key area of interest of this study), whereas most western European countries are mostly areas of immigration—including of eastern Europeans—eastern European countries are areas of emigration to the western regions. Furthermore, at the level of ideological construction, whereas western European countries are depicted (and depict themselves

as) “occidental,” modern, free, democratic, and rich, eastern European, or postsocialist, countries, instead are portrayed as “oriental,” authoritarian, undemocratic, and poor. This also explains processes of “racialization” of eastern Europeans by western Europeans, which lead to most eastern Europeans being depicted as a homogeneous and inferior group. There are, to be sure, important differences in the ways western Europeans portray different eastern European countries. For instance, in the western European imagery some central and eastern European countries/populations are not as “backward” as others (as in the case of the Baltic populations, due to their particular history in the context of the Soviet Union). On the other hand, populations from southern European countries (as in the case of Italians, Greeks, Spaniards, and Portuguese) have been subjected to stereotyping and Othering at different times in history, despite the fact that today they are widely acknowledged as belonging to western Europe. Yet in spite of these differences, what I stress here are the underlying similarities in the western European imaginary regarding eastern European countries, which account for the ways in which processes of racialization toward eastern Europeans take place. Furthermore, as I discuss throughout this book, eastern European women and men—like other non-western subjects in the western European imagery—are framed according to categories derived from processes of “racialization of sexism” and “sexualization of racism.” Not only are eastern European men therefore portrayed as oppressors and women as victims, but also sexism is considered as a problem that troubles eastern European communities more than it does western European ones (see chapter 1). The second reason that I refer to western Europe, rather than Europe, is to avoid making generalizations that pertain only to western Europe and not to eastern Europe. For a discussion of the construction of eastern Europe as “Other,” see Kideckel, “Utter Otherness”; Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*; Bakic-Hayden, “Nesting Orientalisms.” For a discussion on the representations of the eastern European woman in the West, see Lutz, “Limits of European-ness”; Suchland, “Is Postsocialism Transnational?”; Andrijasevic, “Difference Borders Make”; and Andrijasevic, “Beautiful Dead Bodies.”

1. Figures of Femonationalism

- 1 Throughout this book I use the notion of right-wing nationalism to describe the politics of the PVV, FN, and LN. As I explain at length in chapter 2, I deliberately avoid the term “populism” to describe these parties’ ideologies, as I consider such a concept imprecise and misleading.
- 2 I here use the definition of femocrats by Hester Eisenstein as “feminists in state bureaucracy” (Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators*).
- 3 Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”