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THE  
POLITICS  
OF FEAR

WHAT RIGHT-WING POPULIST  
DISCOURSES MEAN



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# 7

## GENDER AND THE BODY POLITIC: THE POLITICS OF PATRIARCHY

‘I maintain that the *people* of radical right populism may be envisioned as a family construction that contours a heteronormative worldview, which orders the society according to a paternalist logic that contains women in an inferior and dependent position, even when temporarily and conditionally allowing them in politics.’

Ovidiu Cristian Norocel (2013, 51)

### Contradictory Phenomena, Tendencies and Some Findings

To date, gendered discourses in the rhetoric of right-wing populist parties have been largely neglected and remain under-researched. Although there is much talk about right-wing ‘families’ and ‘party families’ as conceptual metaphors for the structure of such parties and their exclusionary ideology, there is little or no awareness of the relevance of gender politics and no acknowledgement that the ‘archetypical family’ focuses on the power hierarchies at work between men and women: white middle-class Christian women in the privileged position of power as *mater familias*, white middle-class heterosexual Christian men as ‘normal’, and all other individuals (i.e. those who differ in terms of gender, ethnicity/‘race’, religion, social class and sexual orientation) conceptualized as ‘outside’ of the family (i.e. as not belonging to the family at all). This conception persists, although it is obvious that the much quoted and invoked ‘people’ consist of men and women, of individuals of many sexual orientations, from a range of professions, different age groups and social classes; in fact, the frequently appealed-to homogeneity is rarely challenged with respect to gender dimensions.

Because of the explicit articulation of a patriarchal frame as well as the paradoxical power that some women have held and continue to hold in such parties, it is important to investigate both *why* the ideologemes of right-wing populism attract specific voters and *which* norms and values concerning gender politics are currently promoted. At this point, several levels need to be distinguished carefully: first, the composition of the electorate (which has been researched

in depth); second, the values and norms that characterize right-wing populist propaganda and refer to gender politics (and, related to this, ethno-nationalism, antisemitism and exclusionary body politics); and third, the specific image(s) that male and female leaders of right-wing populist parties strive to propagate of themselves.

The few instances in which the gender gap has been briefly mentioned occur in discussions about ‘modernization and globalization-losers’ (see Chapter 4): as men are frequently the victims of modernization, ‘having faced not only declining wages but also a loss of authority in their families at home vis-à-vis wives who are also wage earners’ (Kitschelt 2007, 1200), they tend to vote for right-wing populist parties that claim to protect and help them against the so-called privileged elites and against immigrants who are alleged to threaten them and take away their jobs. Hence, the argument goes, one needs ‘a firm hand that will control things such as rampant immigration, meddling by EU bureaucrats and so forth; in brief, a return to order’ (Gingrich and Banks 2006, 16). Or, as Campbell argues,

‘Woman’ as commodity, as carer, as producer and reproducer [...] is positioned anew as Other; the sovereignty of ideologies of masculinity is simultaneously rattled and reinstated. Gender, uniquely, exposes the limits of this articulation, its contradictions and – most important – its unsustainability. The old sexual contract is recognised as unsustainable but retained in modernised form. Neoliberal neo-patriarchy is the new articulation of male domination.<sup>1</sup>

(2014, 4)

Strong, charismatic male leadership is frequently highlighted as a salient characteristic of right-wing populist parties (see Chapter 6). However, as Norocel (2013, 51) rightly points out, there are or were, in fact, a number of female politicians in positions of power in right-wing populist parties, such as Marine Le Pen (Front National), Pia Kjaersgaard (Danish Peoples Party, 1996–2011), Krisztina Morvai (as MEP for Jobbik, who does not hold a leadership function but exerts considerable influence), Barbara Rosenkranz of the Austrian FPÖ (who stood for election for Austrian President in 2010, as illustrated in Chapter 5) and Heide Schmidt (a former deputy in Jörg Haider’s FPÖ before she left the party in 1993 and stood for election for Austrian President in 1992). Of course, we should not forget Sarah Palin or Michelle Bachmann, who are both very prominent Republican female politicians affiliated with the US Tea Party and, at first glance, seem to contradict the ‘strict father’ frame proposed by Lakoff (2008) which emphasizes male leadership. I will come back to this apparent paradox below. Suffice it to say at this point that these women all remain an important element in a patriarchal social order.

Two examples shall serve to illustrate the manifold contradictions of gendered body politics: the focus on veiled Muslim women as the ultimate ‘Other’ (Vignette 14) and the US Tea Party’s debates about abortion (Vignette 15). In the following, I shall by necessity restrict myself to some important theoretical approaches as it would be impossible to discuss all dimensions in the necessary detail.

## Plastic Woman and Cardboard Man

Conservative family values, homophobia and anti-abortion campaigns have become part and parcel of the ideologies of, at least, some of the right-wing populist movements in Central Europe and the former Eastern-Bloc countries as well of the US Tea Party.

The latter conservative tendency seems to be a reaction to what US journalist Hanna Rosin labels the ‘*end of men*’ (2013) in a book with this title. She identifies a noticeable change in US middle class gender politics associated with, as she suggests, the emergence of *plastic women* and *cardboard men*:

Plastic Woman has during the last century performed superhuman feats of flexibility. She has gone from barely working at all to working only until she got married to working while married and then working with children, even babies. If a space opens up for her to make more money than her husband, she grabs it. If she is no longer required by ladylike standards to restrain her temper, she starts a brawl at the bar [...]. They earn more than single women and just as much as the men [...]. Cardboard Man, meanwhile, hardly changes at all. A century can go by and his lifestyle and ambitions remain largely the same. A ‘coalminer’ or ‘rigger’ used to be a complete identity, connecting a man to a long lineage of men. [...] They [men] lost the old architecture of manliness but they have not replaced it with any obvious new one [...]. As a result men are stuck [...].

(2013, 7–9)

Gender relations are changing in a significant way, patriarchy is threatened, the world as ‘We’ know it no longer exists – with respect to the politics of race, gender and ethnicity. Thus, it is not surprising, I believe, that much fear constructed and launched by the extreme right-wing is projected onto fantasies and imaginaries of both empowered and independent white women as well as women symbolizing the ‘Other’, namely the veiled Muslim woman as metonym for the ‘post-modern stranger’ (see Chapter 4).

Creating scapegoats is certainly part and parcel of right-wing populist rhetoric. Fear of minorities existing ‘inside’ nation states is continuously emphasized, for example of Jews (perceived as a powerful group which allegedly dominates certain professions through a so-called worldwide conspiracy) as well as Roma (depicted as a symbol of the nomadic, uncivilized Other in Western and Eastern Europe). Both groups are marked as the ‘modern strangers’ that were already noted by Simmel (1950). Strangers within and outside are perceived as threatening (Christian) civilization, accompanied by a gendered discourse which, on the one hand, appeals to the liberation of women according to Human Rights Conventions and is directed against Muslim women and, on the other hand, restricts women’s rights via traditional Christian religious values directed against the freedom to choose abortion and to live independent lives (see below).

This gendered discourse clearly attempts to govern and regulate women’s bodies and minds, thereby objectifying and disciplining women. The ‘national family’ as imagined by such right-wing populist ideologies should preserve the traditional patriarchal order of the sexes and keep the nation’s body white and pure. Of course, this ideology resembles, and also draws on, conservative and fascist imaginaries which have been extensively investigated by Musolff (2010) in his research on the concept of the ‘*Volk*’ and the ‘*Volkskörper*’ across German nationalistic writing since the 18th century which led, amongst other ideologies such as antisemitism and racism, to the national-socialist ideology of the superiority of the white Aryan race.

Such body politics is inherently nativist and exclusionary; it excludes the strangers within and outside, also via conceptual metaphors: Jews and Roma are cast as ‘parasites’ that ‘destroy’ the host body from inside; migration is cast as a ‘disease’ or ‘illness’ which befalls the national body from outside (e.g. Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Chapters 2 and 4).

Strangers are also gendered, of course; currently, the post-modern ‘Other’ in much of the political debate across Western Europe, as stated above, is represented as the veiled Muslim woman.

## Intersectionality and the ‘Authoritarian Personality’

These complex interrelations were studied in detail, long before the work of Rosin and Norocel, by the group of researchers around Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer in the 1940s in the US. Their studies on the authoritarian character (published as *Studien zum autoritären Charakter*) confirm the assumption that various ideological set pieces such as ethnocentrism, antisemitism, sexism or nationalism belong to a *single* – the anti-democratic – *mindset*, what they termed ‘*Einstellungssyndrom*’. Within this ideological system they are not simply inter-related but connected dialectically and can reinforce each other. In case antisemitism and open racism are regarded as taboo, as happened in Germany and Austria after the collapse of the national-socialist regime, a functionally equivalent ideology – such as a chauvinistic nationalism or Islamophobia – can move into the foreground, behind which, however, the dynamics of the other ideologies continue to operate (e.g. Stögner 2014; Stögner and Wodak 2014).

The corresponding conceptions of masculinity and femininity have been defined in *Authoritarian Personality* as *pseudo-masculinity* and *pseudo-femininity*, and correspond in several respects to *Plastic Woman* and *Cardboard Man*, but in reverse order: *Cardboard Men* tend to be passive, whereas *Plastic Women* are defined as rather active by Rosin. Gender roles have been adapted to new developments in social reality; the imagined traditional constructions of masculinity have been shattered, or seem at least to be under massive threat.

It is striking that the authors recognize a bundle of attributes as pseudo-masculinity and -femininity that corresponds exactly to the social norms regarding dichotomous gender relations and gender roles (e.g. Stögner 2014, 42). In particular male informants in the study showed a statistically significant connection between authoritarian character traits and encrusted traditional ideals of masculinity:

In fact, there seems to be, in the high-scoring men, more of what may be called *pseudo-masculinity* – as defined by boastfulness about such traits as determination, energy, industry, independence, decisiveness, and will power – and less admission of passivity. An ego-accepted admission of passivity, softness, and weakness, on the other hand, is found predominantly in low-scoring men. [...] An analogous trend – although statistically not significant – toward what may be called *pseudo-femininity* is found in evaluating self-estimates given by high-scoring women. These women tend to think of themselves as feminine and soft; no masculine trends are being admitted [...].

(Adorno et al. 1967, 428)

To attest pseudo-masculinity and femininity, of course, it is not sufficient to identify the traits described above; what is, in fact, decisive is the rigidity and strictness with which the social conventions regarding gender relations and gender roles are adhered to, reproduced and propagated, as will be described below with respect to the religiously dominated abortion debates in the US. This may deprive individuals of any possibility to resist and fight the repressive tendencies in society and its oppressive structures. At the same time there is fear of a looming loss of security, which the oppressive conditions do seem to offer – at least for some women.

Behind the ostentatious over-emphasis of masculinity, however, we can clearly recognize a fear of passivity, dependence and loss of control – aspects which in bourgeois, Christian-Occidental modernity are unequivocally assigned to femininity (e.g. Stögner 2014, 43ff.). This refers to exactly those fears and desires that are rediscovered in the *Cardboard Men* more than 60 years after the initial publication of Adorno et al.'s (1967) *The Authoritarian Personality*. Then, these were mostly fears; today, they are many men's real experience of an actual loss of power and longings for a positively imagined past.

The studies of Adorno and his fellow authors are far from being outdated; quite to the contrary, they can offer one explanation (of several) for the often conservative, even reactionary gender politics of right-wing populism in the 21st century. Similarly, complex interrelations with other ideologies of exclusion as already described in the 1940s are still to be observed. The following discussion focuses on exactly such (an) *intersectionality*, that is, on the connections between new and old gender roles and regulations, the conservation of old social, patriarchal and authoritarian orders by calls for the ideals of tough men and leader figures as well as – in some instances such as the Tea Party in the US – by a ban on abortion and homophobia, but also by the defence against threatening gender politics from the Orient. This engenders apparent and virulent contradictions that need to be revealed and studied.

## The Gender Gap in the Right-wing Populist Electorate

Most right-wing populist movements have more male than female followers and voters. Accordingly, in the elections to the European Parliament in May 2014, more men participated than women overall (see Figure 7.1<sup>2</sup>), except for Estonia, Ireland, Malta, Finland and Sweden. Historically, women's votes have risen from 16 per cent in 1979 to 37 per cent in 2014 in the EU-wide elections to the European Parliament.

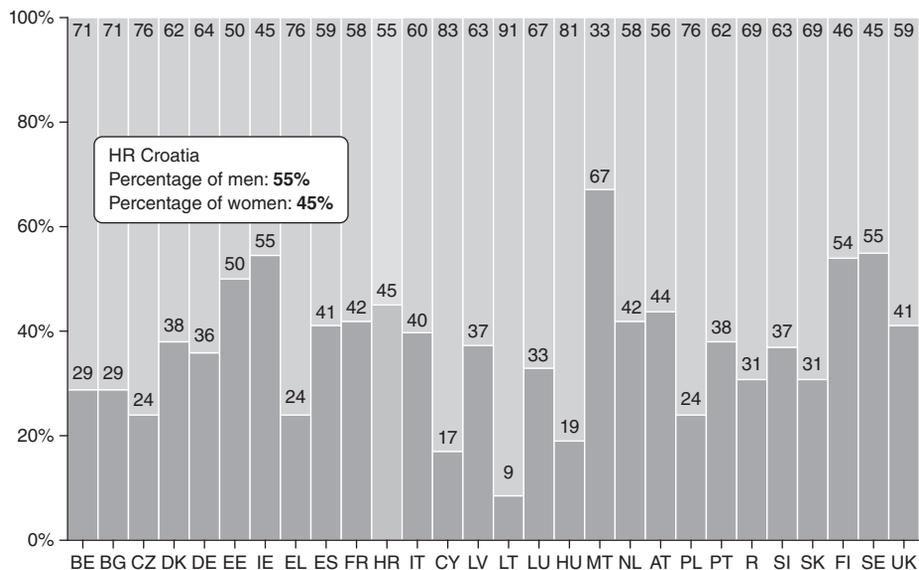


Figure 7.1 Gender distribution, European Parliament elections 2014

The distribution of voters according to the categories of age, profession, education and sex clearly shows that the highest percentage of voters for the Austrian Freedom Party, for example, are male workers between 16 and 29 years of age. Comparing left-liberal voters with the FPÖ voters in the age group below 29 years of age, it is noteworthy that 54 per cent of women cast their votes for the Social Democrats and Green Parties, whereas 51 per cent of male voters opted for right-wing and extreme right-wing parties (ÖVP and FPÖ).<sup>3</sup> This tendency can be observed throughout Western Europe.

There have, of course, been various attempts to explain the gender gap and the differences between East and West, once such differences were finally acknowledged. Historically, women used to vote like their male partners (Inglehart and Norris 2000); moreover, they usually tended to vote for conservative family values, thus for the conservative right-wing. This changed slowly from 1968 on, picking up pace particularly in the 1980s, due to women's growing independence, professionalism and new legislation related to women's equality and gender mainstreaming.

In Eastern Europe, the trend is quite the opposite: here, women tend to vote for conservative parties. Explanations of the differences between East and West have suggested that Western emancipatory movements were not attractive after 1989 in the former Eastern Bloc countries and that high unemployment rates usually affected women (see Meinhart and Zöchling 2014). Moreover, left-wing parties, especially in Scandinavia, integrate more female politicians, who also attract female voters. However, right-wing populist parties draw male voters, even if they have female figureheads and leaders like the Front National. The aggressive campaigning habitus seems to be more attractive for male voters than female voters in spite of Marine Le Pen's female leadership (at the 2012 national elections, 21 per cent and 15 per cent of the male and female electorate, respectively, voted for Marine Le Pen); the same is true for the Danish populist right-wing party, whose politicians are largely female. One factor, in particular, seems to attract female voters to elect Front National – the vehement anti-Muslim positioning. The self-styled role as protector of female liberties effectively counteracts the aggressive campaign habitus which many women do not seem to endorse.

Therefore at least three factors should be regarded as important when attempting to explain the manifest gender gap: the change of gender roles and the implementation of more liberal gender legislation after 1968; religious beliefs and related family values; and xenophobia (including, but not limited to, anti-Muslim beliefs). Notably, the biggest gap between female and male voters exists amongst young voters, which might seem counter-intuitive as younger generations are usually described as more open-minded and cosmopolitan. Even in countries with massive youth unemployment, women tend to vote for the centre-left. The male core voters of populist right-wing parties come from the working class and – as Meinhart and Zöchling (2014) argue – lose themselves in nostalgic memories of a mystified past, the 'good old days', fearing globalization and unemployment, and are therefore attracted to the typical scapegoat rhetoric of the right wing (see Chapters 1, 3 and 6).

In the US, the respective voting behaviour of women and men seems to follow a different tendency related to strong value struggles. Although more women voted for Clinton, Gore and Obama for president than for their Republican counterparts, there are nevertheless large groups of women who position themselves to the right and campaign against abortion and for traditional family values (Vignette 15). In such movements, religious value conflicts seem to override other, more traditional left/right cleavages. This is why debates about abortion (Pro-Life versus Pro-Choice) dominate the US public and have acquired the status of a litmus-tests: Pro-Choice indicates Democratic alignment, Pro-Life Republican alignment.

An inherently female agenda amongst other highly sensitive value judgements, such as pro or against gun control and pro or against national health legislation, thus serves to distinguish party preferences (Rosin 2013). These value conflicts have become more manifest with the rise of the Tea Party and the (frequently also racist) anti-Obama campaigns, usually identified with the former candidate for Vice President 2008, Sarah Palin (see Chapter 6). Indeed, the two polarized positions are symbolized by two famous women: Hillary Clinton on the one hand and Sarah Palin on the other. In this dichotomy, Palin symbolizes the attractive white woman who protects her family and draws almost exclusively on her intuition and common sense to achieve this. Hillary Clinton, in contrast, symbolizes experience with politics, with foreign affairs and intellectual engagement. Despite Palin's (efforts to) appeal to women, the core electorate of the Republican Party remains male. In fact, men tend to vote based on political ideology, while women remain a critical voting constituency that has to be attracted during each election cycle (Abramowitz 2011, 2014).

## VIGNETTE 14

### HEADSCARVES AND BURQAS – BODY POLITICS

Reviewing Islamophobic rhetoric in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century reveals that specific iconic images of the 'female' have become the ultimate 'Other'. Countless political debates have surrounded and continue to surround the so-called 'headscarf' (the *hijab*, which covers hair and sometimes shoulders, and the *burqa*, which covers hair, face and the entire body) as symbols of uncivilized, barbaric Islam and of the oppressed woman who should be liberated by the rules of Western culture. In this enterprise, interestingly, right-wing populist movements have aligned with some left-wing intellectuals and parties as well as feminists, assuming and presupposing that all veiled Muslim women are being forced to wear headscarves or the burqa and that the West faces a two-fold challenge and responsibility: to protect its women from oppression by Islam, and to empower and liberate oppressed Muslim women. This discourse has constructed a dichotomous and homogenous out-group which is perceived as extremely dangerous for Western societies; as mentioned in Chapter 6, this Islamophobic discourse is also instrumentalized to cover up other socio-political and, most importantly, socio-economic agenda: indeed, appeals to liberate women from 'textual-sexual oppression' (Amin 2014) unite more voters around the right-wing populist agenda than anti-modernization and anti-globalization agendas. Marsdal (2013) convincingly deconstructs the traditional left/right cleavage with respect to a change in voting behaviour related to social class in detail. He emphasizes that votes for (moral) values have substituted votes for parties and amply illustrates (e.g. for developments in Norway in 2010) that

[c]lass issues are shoved into the background and value issues come to the fore. Tensions over economic distribution and fairness are demobilized. This takes place, however, at the top level of party politics, and not in society. In society, economic and social inequalities and tensions have been rising over the last decades, not only in Denmark, but also all over Europe. The political demobilizing of class conflicts does not take place because most voters have come to emphasize value issues more than

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class issues, which they have not, but rather because, under the neo-liberal élite consensus on class issues, confrontation on moral and cultural issues ('values') has become the only available means of party-political and ideological demarcation [...]. Economic policy debates are dull and grey. Then, someone says something about the Muslim veil and media hell breaks loose.

(ibid., 51–2)

## The Swiss Debate about Minarets

Let us look at an infamous example of such construction, one that has been discussed in the context of anti-Muslim and Islamophobic campaigning, but not in relationship to gender dimensions (see also Betz 2013, 73–4; Kallis 2013, 64). In November 2009, a majority of Switzerland's voters supported a proposal to ban the construction of minarets (*Minarettverbot*) throughout the country. This outcome signified a huge political victory for the SVP, the Swiss populist right.<sup>4</sup> Challenging the building of minarets fitted well into the Swiss populist right's identitarian strategy, which is supposed to reinforce Swiss traditional identity while suppressing all others. The poster used by the SVP (Image 7.1) shows a Swiss flag pierced by black caricatured minarets resembling missiles and the silhouette of an equally caricatured Muslim woman in a burqa who is represented as leading this onslaught of missiles, standing on top of the Swiss flag, casting long shadows over it (thus metaphorically threatening and conquering the national body of Switzerland).



**Image 7.1** SVP poster 2009 calling for a ban on minarets

One woman stands metonymically for all Muslim women, for Islam per se and for the danger posed by Islam as she is not simply armed by missiles but has deployed them on

Swiss territory. The image also expresses a conceptual metaphor of war. Islam is thus alleged to be at war with Switzerland; Islam is presented as in the process of attacking Switzerland. An implicit and condensed argumentation scheme can also be deconstructed: continuing to allow minarets to be built would imply to stand by and idly watch Islam overrun Switzerland, a clear *topos of danger*. Presupposed as evidence (datum) is the – not proven – proposition that Islam is dangerous and will change Western (Christian) civilization through something unknown (and by implication dangerous); as unknown as the covered woman whose face remains invisible. At the same time, however, the covered woman symbolizes female (sexual) oppression, as she is seen as being forced to wear a burqa and abstain from Western clothing and, by implication, liberty. Of course, this begs the question as to why the poster does not depict bearded men or a combination of Muslim women and men. Arguably, religious Muslim women are most discernible in public space; they are marked and visible, gazed at by by-passers and frequently harassed.<sup>5</sup> According to Betz (2013, 73), Oskar Freysinger, a SVP Member of Parliament, characterized minarets as a ‘symbol of a political and aggressive Islam’ and a ‘symbol of Islamic law’, alleging that the ‘minute you have minarets in Europe it means Islam will have taken over’ (ibid.). Freysinger also justified the campaign with the argument that the Islamic doctrine was fundamentally incompatible with Switzerland’s order, based on secular law.<sup>6</sup> Most importantly, the construction of minarets was perceived as a first step towards the alleged ‘creeping Islamization of Switzerland’ (ibid.): banning minarets would make Islam invisible, prevent public calls to prayer and block the alleged attempt of introducing Sharia law in the country. Thus, the 2009 referendum achieved its purported goal: protecting and preserving Switzerland’s Christian and Western liberal values and traditions.

It is not by coincidence that the headscarf and burqa have become the symbols of the danger allegedly posed by Islam: the discourse about defending women’s rights against Islam has become ubiquitous and has been appropriated both by right-wing populist parties and by some feminists and left-wing parties. Surprisingly and suddenly, many men have become very concerned with women’s liberties and women’s rights. As Ho (2005), Sauer (2005) and Stögner (2014) argue, sexism is closely tied to nationalism and chauvinism, and thus also to body politics (see above):<sup>7</sup>

Both Muslim and non-Muslim women are the subject of this paternalistic, anti-Muslim nationalism. The ‘oppression’ of Muslim women by their menfolk is used to portray Islam as inherently misogynistic and oppressive, while instances of Muslim men harassing and sexually assaulting non-Muslim women have triggered a nationalistic response founded on the protection of our women.

(Ho 2005, 4)

(Muslim) women are thus caught in a double-bind, a typical no-win situation. Islam is depicted as inherently dangerous, to Muslim and non-Muslim women alike (Elver 2012, 7). Of course, many Muslim women are oppressed in their families and by their male siblings. However, this kind of discourse makes it virtually impossible to discuss the Islam-internal situation as every example would invariably reinforce the overall negative generalizations about Islam (Hamzeh 2011). Controversies about headscarves have thus become an arena of passionate debates and conflict about culture and civilization, about national identities and European identity. The struggle over identity is linked to sexual difference and sexual identities; in this case, a modern gender-egalitarian ‘Us’ against

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a pre-modern, patriarchal and sexist 'Them'. Similarly, Sauer (2005, 1) emphasizes that the headscarf or burqa should not be understood merely as a piece of cloth; rather, 'the body of the women is used as a signifier for cultural, religious and ethnic difference' (ibid.): the body of the generic Muslim women is used to illustrate and depict the threat posed by religious fundamentalism as well as the failure of ideologies and policies of multiculturalism. In short, we are dealing with value conflicts related to body politics. In the discourse, as evidenced by the poster analysed above, conflicts about values and religion, about what ultimately amounts to national identities, are carried out as power struggles over female bodies.

Media representations of Muslim women add to propaganda such as the SVP's by focusing primarily either on Muslim men or on the female 'Other' (Navarro 2010), but rarely, for example, on the large number of successful Muslim female university professors, lawyers and so forth. In this way, we are confronted with a new kind of orientalism which has substituted the former sensual image of Muslim women from the 19th and early 20th centuries (ibid., 98). By avoiding other salient issues such as women's rights, public freedoms or access to education, the discussion has been reduced primarily to the visual characteristics of the burqa and headscarf. Such media coverage also legitimizes the scarce reporting on women's rights in the Western world by presupposing a clear contrast between the East and West, between Islam and the Occident, which is equated with Christianity: unveiled women are assumed to be liberated and modern, while veiled women are seen as backward, traditional and intellectually retarded (ibid., 101). A fallacious argument is constructed by two hasty generalizations: first, by assuming two homogenous groups, Muslim women and non-Muslim women; and second, by backgrounding all other class, educational, professional and other markers of female identities. Following Ramirez (2006), this kind of imagination and construction of the 'Muslim woman' may be labelled as '*neo-colonial sexism*',<sup>8</sup> thus identifying a tendency striving to maintain the superiority of the West.

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## British Debates about the Burqa

A second example, taken from the British context, serves to confirm and illustrate the above analysis and interpretation. Here, I rely on joint research with John E. Richardson (Richardson and Wodak 2009a).<sup>9</sup>

On 1 May 2008, local government elections took place in England and Wales, along with elections for the Greater London Authority and London Mayor. The BNP stood over 600 candidates across 74 wards in England and Wales.<sup>10</sup> A BNP leaflet, headed *The Londoner*, was a prominent feature of the party's London campaign. On their first 'National Weekend of Action' alone, the party apparently delivered over 100,000 leaflets across the capital (ibid.). Laid out in the style of a newspaper – complete with a clear sans-serif masthead – the remainder of the front page is arranged under the headline 'The Changing Face of London' (see Image 7.2).

The expression 'Changing Face' is used both metaphorically, to refer to the ways in which the character or disposition of London has (allegedly) changed, as well as literally, referring to actual individual faces of London's inhabitants, who metonymically represent the city in a generic way. The upper of two images show white families, the vast majority of whom are women and children, out socializing on a terraced street; food and drink are clearly included



Image 7.2 The BNP 'Londoner' campaign leaflet 2008

on stalls in the foreground of the image and flag bunting between the houses. From this and the clothes worn by the women and children, one can conclude that the photo was taken on the day of a social event during the late 1940s or early 1950s. Men are absent in this photo – and we can only speculate why this is so: a traditional social event where men are absent, working while women have free time? Or, as Richardson and Wodak (2009a) also propose, the poster may represent post-war London: men might still be in the army, as part of the Allied forces in continental Europe. Whatever the reason, a contrast between London then and now is constructed by juxtaposing white modern British women/families enjoying themselves and smiling, with traditional Muslim women whose faces are covered and thus cannot be seen. The combination of fun, friendliness and the place of the nation (metonymically represented by the flag, an instance of banal nationalism like the Swiss flag in Image 7.1) in everyday life constructs an idealized past for working-class Londoners (this is a terraced street, not one filled with Georgian mansion houses, which are modern despite the fact that they are in the 1950s, thus combining the notions of 'modernity' and the 'good old days').

The women in the lower image are less friendly. They are Muslim and wear the burqa. The viewer's attention is again directed by the use of the arrow on the left, this time pointing

to a woman putting up two fingers – a gesture directed at the photographer and hence also at the viewer. This is an interesting and, ironically, rather English gesture, usually taken as a sign of defiance or abuse – in effect meaning ‘fuck off’. The lower image is much darker than the upper, an effect mostly achieved by the black clothes worn by the three women. In contrast to the image above, this image is dominated by the three women – we are in closer proximity to them. The flier thus represents smiling white women with children in contrast with three huge women without children in black who, by implication, appear threatening and dangerous.

The selection of the image of the white women enjoying leisure time with their children at the very least represents a ‘modern traditional’ patriarchal view, in which women may well be ‘allowed’ to work but ‘remain primarily responsible for the family and the home’ (Mudde 2007, 93). Through various cuts (prams and children were digitally removed from the photograph) which we were able to trace (Richardson and Wodak 2009a, 66), the Muslim women are reduced to being instances of only *a Muslim woman*, not a mother, sister, aunt and so forth. As a result of the editing, cutting and enlarging of the original picture, the shape of the women has also been distorted – they look more squat and dumpy than they are in the original.<sup>11</sup> They are presented not only as dangerous but also as unfeminine and ugly, in contrast to the pretty white women above.

Thus, this flier supports the BNP’s ideal picture of London positioned at the top of the composition whilst their idea of the city’s terrible reality at present is situated underneath. The repeated use of ‘this’ is a particularly effective rhetorical device on the front page, and the principal element that allows a rhetorical integration of visual and verbal components of the argument. The first use (‘consider this’) forms part of a directive to cue up the argument presented on the front page: ‘they’ functions as a cataphoric pronoun, referring to the argument that the BNP wishes the viewer to consider. The second ‘this’ is a far more complex pronoun, simultaneously referring to the image above: the white street scene, as well as presupposing the qualities that London obviously used to possess. The pronoun is linked to the upper photograph through the semantic consonance between ‘the way London used to be’, ‘From this ...’, as a starting point contrasting with a change of state used on the intrusive arrow, and the global topic of ‘change’, introduced in the headline. The photo and the description of the represented London-past should be viewed and understood together: the street scene, depicting a universally white and predominantly female group, should be taken to denote a city which is seemingly ‘at ease with itself, friendly, happy and secure’.

This indexical slippage between image and description allows the BNP to insinuate that the ‘community values’ of the past are something to be desired and that the BNP aims to reintroduce them. However, the use of the second image, in opposition to the street party, enables the BNP to project issues of race, gender and religion as the cause of this alleged loss of ‘community values’. The choice to depict Muslim women in the burqa, the selection of this particular point in time (of someone making an abusive gesture) and the production decision to frame them in close-up, thereby denying them a sense of place and context, makes it difficult to construct any interpretation of the image other than one emphasizing their Muslimness. In turn, this foregrounding of the women’s Muslimness acts to emphasize the white, non-Muslimness of the women and children in the upper image. Hence, from this contrast, viewers can construe that London has changed drastically, and it is this change that has apparently brought with it the loss of a variety of positive social characteristics, such as ‘From this [friendly] to this [abusive]’ or ‘From this [happy] to this [unexpressive]’.

The final use of ‘this’ in the central verbal component of the front page – ‘If you would like London to be like *this* again ...’ – retains the complex way that this pronoun is used.

Here, ‘this’ refers anaphorically to the list of positive social and civic qualities listed immediately beforehand, as well as to the image from London’s past. Hence, the leaflet implicitly proposes a return to the positive social values listed – a list that triggers certain contemporary liberal values that most people would endorse. By foregrounding women, this flier obviously presents a gendered argument for the racial purification of the British capital. From this, it is possible to reconstruct a specific political stance and its underlying arguments:

1. London used to be white.
2. When it was white, London was at ease with itself, friendly, happy and secure.
3. The BNP wants London to be at ease with itself, friendly, happy and secure.
4. Islam is dangerous, that is, dark and black.
5. When Muslims live in London, London turns black.
6. Being at ease, friendly, happy and secure means being white.
7. Therefore, the BNP will make London white again.
8. Hence, Muslims should leave London (or be made to leave).

Muslim women stand metonymically for all ‘Others’ living in London (or Great Britain) as the agenda of the BNP is, as is well-known, significantly wider than this (see also Chapter 5; Richardson 2013a, 2013b). As in the Swiss example, a gendered argumentation is employed for exclusionary nativist body politics: Muslim women stand metonymically for Britain’s non-white and non-Christian, that is, minority ethnic communities in general. It seems, however, that this kind of exclusionary and racist rhetoric did not lead to the aspired victory at the elections. The results of the BNP were significantly below what had been widely predicted. Across the country, the party gained 10 local councillors, significantly fewer than the 40 they were reported as aiming for.

## Austrian Debates about the ‘Headscarf’

The final example for the gendered discourse of right-wing populist parties illustrates the appeal to liberate Muslim women from being coerced into wearing a headscarf – referenced in a slogan from the Austrian FPÖ during the Vienna 2010 election (Köhler and Wodak 2011) (see Image 7.3).

The translation of the message on this poster implies that ‘We’, written in capital letters and pointing to the image of HC Strache on the right who symbolizes the FPÖ and the



Image 7.3 FPÖ poster, Vienna election campaign 2010

‘proper’ Viennese, are the party that protects free women. This is juxtaposed with: ‘The SPÖ [the Social Democratic Party, until then holding an absolute majority in the local government] [protects] the compulsory wearing of head-scarfs’ (*Kopftuchzwang*, in German, is a composite noun). The verb is missing in this elliptic sentence, but is easily inserted via implicature from the first sentence. A contrast is established between the FPÖ as protector of women’s liberties and the SPÖ, which allegedly supports their oppression symbolized here, for the purposes of the FPÖ campaign, by the headscarf. At the most obvious level, there is a particularly insidious reversal of positions: the FPÖ is, in fact, arguing for a ban or prohibition of headscarves (to be precise, only against the religiously motivated wearing of headscarves, and only in the case of Islam), seeking to remove, much like the BNP in our previous example, what is seen as disturbing from the face of the city, that is, public space. The campaign is about enforcing – by social pressure if not by legislation – conformity to an idea of ‘modern’ femininity. The second proposition is moreover fallacious in so far as the SPÖ does not endorse the oppression of any women; nor does it endorse a compulsory wearing of the headscarf. What the SPÖ does support, however, is multiculturalism and the freedom of wearing whatever garments people choose as long as such conventions do not impinge on the Austrian constitution, the freedom of opinion and religious freedom (e.g. Sauer 2005). In this way, a straw man fallacy is used for positive self-presentation of the FPÖ, reversing the associations of ‘enforcing’ and ‘liberating’.

‘Free women’ in English stands for *‘freie Frauen’* in German, establishing alliteration with the name of the FPÖ in German, namely *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, favouring a reading of *freiheitlich* as describing a party which stands for freedom. What kind of freedom, we might therefore ask, does the FPÖ envisage for women? In Chapter 5, media and FPÖ slogans of and about a prototypical ideal FPÖ woman, Barbara Rosenkranz, when standing for election for Austrian President were already briefly summarized: she is first and foremost a good mother, indeed a mother of 10 children; being a good mother implies that she cares for her family. By implication, and drawing on a particularly old-fashioned idea of the nation (and the national body), she is also credited with the ability to care for her political family and in consequence for Austria, should she be elected as President. In her book *MenschInnen. Gender Mainstreaming – Auf dem Weg zum geschlechtslosen Menschen* (2008) she warns Austrians that feminism, if left unopposed, would destroy the ‘right’, that is, ‘proper’ or ‘true’, order of the sexes. She declares that:

It is clear that the position of woman in our society must be entirely equal, there can be no exceptions to this. But it is equally a fact that successful femininity and motherliness must not be separated, if we as a whole want to have a future.

(ibid.)<sup>12</sup>

Femininity and motherliness (though not the more biological ‘motherhood’) are thus the salient characteristics of any good woman, not just by preference or social convention, but as responsibility and existential duty to an obscure community of ‘us as a whole’, presumably Austrian society or even humanity – this relates well to definitions of the ‘Grizzly Moms’ by the US Tea Party (see Chapter 6 and Text 7.3. below). *Freie Frauen* in the campaign poster shown above could also imply a number of other meanings, being a collocation open to many readings: women who are free (free from what?); women who are free of any

obligations, thus not committed and not married (free for whom?), with a subtext implying a woman who is (too) sexually liberated or even a woman who could be used for sex (thus, actually a prostitute).

Below, the usual FPÖ slogan (reproduced on all posters in this election) is repeated as a brand: 'WE [capitalised and thus emphasizing contrast] are here for the Viennese' in a rather idiomatic German phrasing. This slogan relates to the capitalised 'We' in the first sentence and clarifies the in-group: the 'real Viennese', consisting of free women, thus non-Muslims. Muslims are excluded from the Viennese and signified by women wearing the headscarf. Apart from excluding Muslims, the political opponents – in the case of the local Vienna elections, most prominently the Social Democratic Party – are also excluded from the real Viennese (as are the Jews, Roma, and other ethnic minorities; see Image 1.1). The metonymy of the headscarf serves political goals: the Social Democratic Party and its multicultural policies are implicitly defined as too lenient and self-sacrificing vis-à-vis foreign cultures, most notably Islam, accepting their traditionalist and anti-modern ways, thus becoming at least complicit in constraining (women's) freedom and rights. This claim is fallacious on many levels as the FPÖ endorses traditional and conservative family values, whereas the Social Democrats support women's rights and – since the 1970s – have implemented much legislation protecting and enforcing women's equality, women's chances to combine family and career options, and women's free choice for abortion. 'Free' in the context of the FPÖ thus suggests precisely the opposite meanings of the common and conventional usage of the term in current political rhetoric and thus constitutes an attempt at redefining and reformulating meanings (and subsequently, values). Such Manichean rhetoric necessarily prohibits any differentiated and rational discussion about the existing oppression of some Muslim women. The use of such strategies of exaggeration and the *straw man* fallacy leaves no space for other opinions or views.

## **US Debates about Abortion: Campaigning against *Pro Choice Roe vs. Wade* and its consequences**

On 27 February 2012, I was able to interview a journalist working for Aljazeera America, in Washington DC. Talking about the Republican primaries and their conservative values, the journalist told me that 'abortion as topic serves as a joker. Whenever candidates have nothing else to say about any other topic, abortion as hot topic appears in the debate or interview'. I had noticed, of course, that in the US abortion has remained one of the most salient issues – in contrast to Western European countries, where this issue has been marginalized since the 1970s and certainly could not serve any candidate in any party as a possibly successful electoral agenda – usually debated, legislated and regulated by male politicians and many fundamentalist religious groups led by women. Nevertheless, I was surprised that this topic would be seriously discussed for almost 20 minutes in the Republican Primary Presidential debate in Arizona on 22 February 2012, televised live on CNN, this being one of the main debates between the four Republican candidates standing for election in the primaries for presidential candidate against Obama. Moreover, I must admit that I was shocked that some female Tea Party candidates, amongst them Michelle Bachmann and Sarah Palin, actually argued that women should be forbidden to undergo an abortion even

if conception occurred as a result of rape. In contrast to the European right-wing populist and conservative body politics, it is thus not the headscarf or the burqa which dominates the gendered political discourse on the right in the US – it was and continues to be control over abortion (and contraception) as symbolized in the controversy between ‘Pro Life’ and ‘Pro Choice’, in addition to other salient issues such as gun control, national healthcare and so-called illegal immigration from South America (e.g. Abramowitz 2011; Greenhouse and Siegel 2012; Staggenborg 1991).

On 22 January 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States decided on the now famous *Roe vs. Wade* case (410 US 113 (1973)), which is widely regarded as one of the landmark decisions by the US Supreme Court on the issue of abortion. As Staggenborg (1991, 37) elaborates, *Roe vs. Wade* was decided simultaneously with a second case, *Doe vs. Bolton*. The Supreme Court ruled 7 to 2 that a right to privacy under the due process clause of the 14th Amendment extended to a woman’s decision to have an abortion, but that this right must be balanced against the state’s two legitimate interests in regulating abortions: protecting prenatal life and protecting women’s health (ibid., 192). Greenhouse and Siegel (2012, 253) present much documentation regarding the case where the Court tied state regulation of abortion to the third trimester of pregnancy. This decision marked the end of a long struggle between the women’s movement and medical associations, on the one hand, and – as main protagonist of the anti-abortion movement at that point in the time – the Catholic Church. *Roe vs. Wade* essentially reshaped national politics, dividing much of the US into Pro-Choice and Pro-Life camps, while engendering many grassroots movements on both sides.

However, this decision did not mark the end of the debate but actually prompted an enormous public reaction which persists even today, revolving around issues including whether and to what extent abortion should be legal, who should decide the legality of abortion, what methods the Supreme Court should use in constitutional adjudication, and what the role of religious and moral views should be in the political sphere. The more recent polarization on abortion has many reasons: the opposition to President Obama per se (see Chapter 6) and to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA; usually labelled derogatively as ‘Obamacare’ and vehemently opposed by the US Republican Party and the Tea Party as well as fundamentalist Christian religious groups)<sup>13</sup> has to be considered as a salient factor as well. The (PP)ACA actually presents the first, more or less successful, legislation for national healthcare designed to be available to almost all Americans, including contraception and abortion costs.<sup>14</sup>

## The ‘Arrogance of Ignorance’ – Grizzly Moms

The US Tea Party was founded in its current form by Republican Congressman Ron Paul on 16 December 2007, the 234th anniversary of the famous Boston Tea Party. This launch served libertarian agenda and created a divide in the Republican Party. The main target of the Tea Party was and continues to be Barack Obama (see Glossary for more details). Sarah Palin, a prominent member of the Tea Party, was nominated as candidate for Vice President by the Republican Party in 2008 and quickly became a symbol for the agenda of the Tea Party, which consists mainly of elderly white middle-class men with extremely conservative views (Abramowitz 2011). Indeed, having conducted multiple opinion polls and surveys, and having compared these results with other members of the Republican

Party, Abramowitz states that Tea Party members oppose *inter alia* the healthcare reform, the economic stimulus programme, federal funding of stem cell research, federal funding of clean energy research, financial reform and raising taxes on upper income households, gun control, foreign aid programmes and – abortion (ibid., 13). Importantly, however, and apart from such ideological conservatism, both racial resentment and dislike for Barack Obama had significant effects on support for the Tea Party (ibid.). In short, anti-government stance, neo-liberal policies, Christian religious fundamentalism, racism and the disciplining of female bodies are part and parcel of the US Tea Party movement and hence of the Republican Party.

Sarah Palin's Grizzly Moms were strategically introduced to the campaign to attract more female voters as the gender gap is most apparent amongst Republican voters. By endorsing all of the above-mentioned neo-liberal ideologies, conservative values and gendered disciplining policies, this successful female politician (and media celebrity), who continuously stated that she was able to combine her family obligations with her commitment to being Alaska's governor, contributed substantially to reproducing the patriarchal order of the sexes (e.g. Rodino-Colocino 2012; Schowalter 2012). She was able, as McLaren aptly describes, to instrumentalize her charm and attractive looks, 'to inject herself as the new face (literally and figuratively) of the Republican Party, employing abecedarian attempts at crafting her "knowing wink" for the titillated cameras that seem transfixed by her beauty queen looks' (2009, 805). In this way, Palin strategically polarized the country between 'rural Americans and the Eastern elites, between people of color (including immigrants) and hard-working White males' (ibid.). Finally, she also played the race card as many voters could not imagine a black man in the White House (see Chapter 6).

Broxmeyer provides an acute analysis of Sarah Palin's persona, her self-presentation as well as the reasons for choosing her as candidate in the 2008 presidential election:

By choosing Palin as a running mate, the septuagenarian McCain strove to find a symbolical midwife to birth conservatism anew after the disastrous effects of the Bush administration on the electoral prospects of the Republican Party. After all, she was the mother of five children and yet a self-proclaimed political virgin, barely into her first term as governor of Alaska and virtually unknown on the national scene. Channelling the forces of sentimental populism, Palin fused the supposed inherent goodness and patriotism of market fundamentalism and heteronormative culture together with the possibility of a national-capitalist future. During the election, Sarah Palin brought infantile citizenship to the forefront of American politics as never before and demonstrated its potency as a national fantasy, as well as its internal contradictions. Despite, or more likely because of, her electoral defeat, Palin has become a 'singular national industry,' amassing a twelve-million-dollar postelection bonanza from her book deal [and] her Fox News show, *Real American Stories*.

(2010, 144)

The 'Mama Grizzly' coalition emphasizes 'kitchen table economics', that is, the position that the state budget should be run like the family budget. As women are daily involved in caring for their families and living costs, they should know – by common sense and experience – how to run the state. The conservative group Concerned Women for America (CWA) actually provides members with a brochure entitled 'How to Lobby From Your Kitchen Table'. This anti-intellectualism is vehemently directed against the elites, and more specifically against Obama, who studied at Harvard and personifies intellectualism.

In a speech given in Washington, DC in May 2010, Palin campaigned for a Pro-Life agenda as well as fiscal policy while employing motherhood and ‘frontier feminism’ (a term insinuating the courageous female pioneers in the Wild West) as supposedly valid evidence. In her 2010 book *America by Heart: Reflections of Family, Faith, and Flag*, she makes this connection explicit:

Moms just kind of know when something’s wrong. It’s that mother’s intuition thing, I think. We can tell when things are off-base, off-course, and not right. And we’re not afraid to roll up our sleeves and get to work and get the job done and set things straight. Moms can be counted on to fight for their children’s future.

(cited in Schowalter 2012, 44–5)

Such a common-sensical, anti-intellectual and anti-elitist stance resonates well with the political figure of Barbara Rosenkranz, the BNP’s and FPÖ’s gender ideology, and the nativist-nationalistic body politics as presented by Norocel (2013). Comaroff highlights the specific right-wing populist agenda of Palin in the run-up to the 2008 US election and argues that ‘if Palin’s populism was of the right-wing, “call it like I see it” kind’, then many defined Barack Obama ‘a left-wing populist (the phrase is often used interchangeably with socialism among US conservatives)’ (2011, 100). Grizzly Moms are, the Tea Party members claim, the core of the traditional white Christian family and, by consequence, the core of the American nation, as imagined by the founding fathers, the Constitution, and the pioneers who conquered the Wild West. By implication, only white, middle-class, heteronormative Christian mothers are appealed to and also attracted as voters and activists; the Tea Party has almost no non-white members (Abramowitz 2011, 2014). Men do not feel threatened by the Grizzly Moms as the patriarchal male position of power is not challenged by what they represent – the traditional family and conservative values remain sacrosanct. Media studies and opinion polls after the 2008 election provide evidence that Palin neither harmed nor helped McCain; indeed, her candidacy may have contributed to a loss of support amongst swing voters (Kenski 2010; Knuckey 2011; Wasburn and Wasburn 2011).

## VIGNETTE 15

### MEN DEBATING ABOUT WOMEN’S RIGHTS: THE CASE OF ABORTION

On 22 February 2012, four male candidates participated in the Republican presidential primary debate in Arizona, televised live on CNN: Rep. Ron Paul, Texas; former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich; former Senator Rick Santorum, Pennsylvania; and former Governor of Massachusetts Mitt Romney. John King, CNN anchor and chief national correspondent, moderated the debate. Questions were asked from the public, some spontaneous, some prepared beforehand, and read out by the moderator.

This was the final of a course of 20 debates during which some candidates had already stepped down or had been voted out.<sup>15</sup> The first question concerns the national debt, posed by a member of the audience. After about 20 minutes of heated discussion, CNN takes the first break. King then poses the second question himself:

## Text 7.1

‘Since birth control is the latest hot topic, which candidate believes in birth control, and if not, why? As you can see – it’s a – it’s a very popular question in the audience, as we can see. Look, we’re not going to spend a ton of time on this but it is – please.’

The formulation of the question implies that the audience insists on this topic, that it is important, but also that not too much time will be spent on it – in this way, the moderator relativizes the relevance of this issue and emphasizes that it is on the agenda due to popular request (but possibly in spite of CNN or himself). Newt Gingrich is the first to respond. In his turn he first defines birth control, that is, abortion, as a religious issue in which the state should have no say; second, he attacks his fellow participants for not having opposed Obama when voting for ‘legalizing infanticide’. He then immediately turns against Obama himself, whom he accuses of ‘protecting doctors who killed babies who survived abortion’:

## Text 7.2

*Gingrich:* No, I think – look, I think there’s – I want to make two – I want to make two quick points, John.

The first is there is a legitimate question about the power of the government to impose on religion activities which any religion opposes. That’s legitimate.

[applause]

*King:* Sure is.

*Gingrich:* But I just want to point out, you did not once in the 2008 campaign, not once did anybody in the elite media ask why Barack Obama voted in favor of legalizing infanticide. OK? So let’s be clear here.

[applause]

If we’re going to have a debate about who the extremist is on these issues, it is President Obama who, as a state senator, voted to protect doctors who killed babies who survived the abortion. It is not the Republicans.

This segment illustrates that abortion is a highly politicized issue, instrumentalized here as a means to an end against both opponents in the same party, the Republicans, and against the incumbent presidential candidate of the Democratic Party, Barack Obama. The discussants have to address each other, the live audience and the many million viewers on CNN, nationally and globally. The Gingrich example exemplifies how this multi-addressing is achieved by mentioning and drawing on many instances of the past (voting behaviour in the House and Senate), usually realized as *topoi of history and authority*, as well as by providing different narratives of the candidates’ own campaigning against abortion (and thus justifying their previous decisions) over the years. In the context of the debate, each candidate has to distinguish himself from the other three and ‘tell his own story’.

By labelling abortion as ‘infanticide’, Gingrich implies that what is at stake here is the life of an already fully grown infant and not an embryo. Listeners and viewers would thus associate the killing of a baby or even a young child with this term. Second, he accuses

(Continued)

*(Continued)*

Obama of protecting murderers – doctors who killed babies (in his wording, not embryos), without giving any evidence for this claim. Third, he attacks his fellow Republicans for not having opposed such murder. The first turn thus sets the scene for viewing abortion fallaciously as the killing of full-grown babies, that is, as murder, and thus as a terrible crime. Notably, mothers and women are absent in this first turn and, as will be illustrated in the following, throughout the entire debate about abortion.

Immediate reactions amongst the three other candidates are necessarily oriented towards the accusation of not having opposed Obama and other state bills sufficiently as well as providing their own stance. Mitt Romney, second to speak, focuses on the religious dimension by continuously repeating the adjective ‘religious’ (e.g., religious conscience, religious freedom, religious tolerance), the first point on Gingrich’s list, and agrees that the state should not intervene in religious issues:

### Text 7.3

*Romney:* [...] Well, we found out when Barack Obama continued his attack on religious conscience. I don’t think we’ve seen in the history of this country the kind of attack on religious conscience, religious freedom, religious tolerance that we’ve seen under Barack Obama. Most recently, of course –

*[applause]*

– most recently requiring the Catholic Church to provide for its employees and its various enterprises health care insurance that would include birth control, sterilization and the morning-after pill. Unbelievable.

And he retried to retreat from that but he retreated in a way that was not appropriate, because these insurance companies now have to provide these same things and obviously the Catholic Church will end up paying for them.

But don’t forget the decision just before this, where he said the government – not a church, but the government – should have the right to determine who a church’s ministers are for the purposes of determining whether they are exempt from EEOC or from workforce laws or labor laws.

He said the government should make that choice. That went all the way to the Supreme Court. There are a few liberals on the Supreme Court. They voted 9–0 against President Obama. His position –

*[applause]*

– his position – his position on religious tolerance, on religious conscience is clear, and it’s one of the reasons the people in this country are saying we want to have a president who will stand up and fight for the rights under our Constitution, our first right, which is for freedom of religion.

Romney uses his turn to generalize the attack on Obama, claiming that the President never considers religious conscience and even dominates the Catholic Church, a typical

straw man fallacy, generalizing and exaggerating specific opinions which, however, remain unsubstantiated. Thus, he argues, even the Catholic Church will be forced in one way or the other to allow for birth control without mentioning any evidence for this claim. His disgust with the situation he has just described is performed and intensified by the exclamation 'Unbelievable'. He then continues to list some other state interventions into religion which were, however, rejected by the Supreme Court. This fact now allows him to represent Obama as unrealistic, non-strategic, non-religious, or even as unintelligent – when all Supreme Court judges vote against a bill, the bill (by implication) has to be truly wrong. Moreover, Romney draws on the Constitution as legitimation – a *topos of authority* as everything written in the Constitution is accepted as right per se, even after centuries have passed and interpretation of laws has necessarily changed. The constitution is thus regarded as a sacred text, including the obligation to interpret it literally.

At this point King interrupts and steers the discussion back to the original topic and addresses Rick Santorum directly, by quoting the former Senator's publicized opinion that contraception is dangerous. In his reply, Santorum ventures even further from the original topic of birth control and starts elaborating on overall heteronormative and conservative family and social values. He first quotes – again a *topos of authority* – from the *New York Times* that many children are born out of wedlock (i.e. if the NYT reports a survey it must be right) and continues by emphasizing the plight of such children – indeed, in this short turn, the word 'children' is repeated seven times in order to highlight and foreground his focus:

## Text 7.4

Santorum: What we're seeing is a problem in our culture with respect to children being raised by children, children being raised out of wedlock, and the impact on society economically, the impact on society with respect to drug use and all – a host of other things when children have children.

And so, yes, I was talking about these very serious issues. And, in fact, as I mentioned before, two days ago on the front page of *The New York Times*, they're talking about the same thing. The bottom line is we have a problem in this country, and the family is fracturing.

Over 40 percent of children born in America are born out of wedlock. How can a country survive if children are being raised in homes where it's so much harder to succeed economically? It's five times the rate of poverty in single-parent households than it is in two-parent homes. We can have limited government, lower tax – we hear this all the time, cut spending, limit the government, everything will be fine. No, everything's not going to be fine.

There are bigger problems at stake in America. And someone has got to go out there – I will – and talk about the things.

And you know what? Here's the difference.

The left gets all upset. 'Oh, look at him talking about these things.' You know, here's the difference between me and the left, and they don't get this. Just because I'm talking about it doesn't mean I want a government program to fix it.

That's what they do. That's not what we do.

(Continued)

*(Continued)*

Santorum sets out by identifying an existing problem: poor teenagers having children. The solution he suggests to this problem is to protect and save traditional families, without resorting to any intervention by the government, as he alleges the political left would do. He does not propose any practical solutions such as programmes for schools or even allowing teenagers to access contraception or undergo abortion should no other help be available. His fallacious argument is founded on the premise that the core heteronormative family is dissolving ('is fractured') and that, as a consequence, poverty is rising and children are not protected. No evidence is provided, however, that 'healthy' families would be able to avoid falling into poverty. In this turn focused on children, mothers (and fathers) are not mentioned. Children are the victims of a destruction of family values. These values are essentialized and not challenged: marriage between a man and a woman is taken as a given – no mention is made during the entire debate of mothers or women, the two terms or even synonyms are not uttered once. In terms of the Republican candidates' positioning, relevant social global changes such as new family patterns are not accepted, but are perceived as deviant, as the causal consequence of fractured families and the primary cause for poverty, drug abuse and the suffering of children. Santorum typically positions himself as courageous and brave enough to speak out for the poor and for the children; he constructs a clear distinction between 'me and the left' as well as between 'we' and 'they', i.e. 'the government', and criticise the status quo should he be elected; thus he would be able to propose changes but nevertheless, the government should not intervene (*topos* of saviour combined with *topos* of critique).

As the final candidate to respond, Ron Paul takes the floor and emphasizes his general and well-known libertarian values with respect to abortion:

## Text 7.5

*Paul:* As an OB [obstetrician] doctor, I've dealt with birth control pills and contraception for a long time. This is a consequences [*sic*] of the fact the government has control of medical care and medical insurance, and then we fight over how we dictate how this should be distributed, sort of like in schools. Once the government takes over the schools, especially at the federal level, then there's no right position, and you have to argue which prayer, are you allowed to pray, and you get into all the details. The problem is the government is getting involved in things they shouldn't be involved in, especially at the federal level.

[*applause*]

But sort of along the line of the pills creating immorality, I don't see it that way. I think the immorality creates the problem of wanting to use the pills. So you don't blame the pills.

I think it's sort of like the argument – conservatives use the argument all the time about guns. Guns don't kill, criminals kill.

[*applause*]

So, in a way, it's the morality of society that we have to deal with. The pill is there and, you know, it contributes, maybe, but the pills can't be blamed for the immorality of our society.

[*applause*]

Ron Paul introduces his statement by drawing on his expertise as obstetrician. He equates the state's intervention on birth control (via nationalized healthcare) with other interventions on religious practices. Due to his libertarian values, the state per se should have no say, not on health or abortion or schools or religion. In this way, Paul frames the abortion issue as an example of the more general policy as enacted by the Obama government (i.e. the Democratic Party), which is allegedly supporting strong state intervention. Independence of the state and individual responsibility are core elements of such a libertarian, neo-liberal stance.

Moreover, he introduces concrete actors to the discussion – people taking contraception (pills) or people using guns. Referring to a popular argument on gun control, he iterates that it is not the pills or guns that deserve blame but the immoral people who use them to perform criminal acts. By putting pills and guns on the same level, he also fallaciously equates them and their users in a completely decontextualized way: people taking contraception pills kill (babies), just as much as people using guns do if they are criminal and immoral. It is thus immoral society that is to blame, since (it is presupposed) it supports immoral people (i.e. women) who then take pills and kill (per implicature) babies/embryos (a *post hoc propter hoc* fallacy). The primary presupposition in this brief statement, however, is that the state (i.e. Obama and his healthcare act) are to blame – for providing access to contraception, the morning-after pill and birth control via abortion.

In their first turns, all four participants effectively discuss values, not concrete policies, and put the blame on immoral society and state intervention into birth control (as well as either explicitly or implicitly the healthcare bill and the Obama administration, who allow for access to abortion and contraception paid by the Affordable Care Act). Moreover, a specific scenario is created via the *topos of danger* and the straw man fallacy according to which the traditional core family is being destroyed, society has become immoral, and social, moral and religious values are being challenged because of recent political developments. The victims are infants, babies and children born 'out of wedlock'. Nevertheless, the four candidates position themselves differently and also perform differently in this debate: Gingrich is direct and immediately sets the frame by labelling abortion as 'infanticide'; Romney presents himself as the overall protector of religion and religious conscience; Santorum puts social issues, society and family, and especially poverty on the agenda, and he presents himself as the courageous would-be saviour of the traditional family and American values; and Paul puts forth the obviously fallacious argument of equating pills with guns, thus referring to Gingrich's 'abortion-equals-murder-frame' albeit on a quasi-expert level. Not surprisingly, the debate then turns to a discussion of core Republican and Tea Party values while re-enforcing the attack on the Obama administration and Obama personally, for example, when Romney postulates that 'this isn't an argument about contraceptives, this is a discussion about, are we going to have a nation which preserves the foundation of the nation, which is the family, or are we not?' and thus endorses the agenda highlighted by Santorum.

The (traditional) family is metonymically equated with the nation – a strikingly obvious example of gendered body politics. A few minutes later, Gingrich agrees with Paul in arguing that '[w]hen you have a government as the central provider of services, you inevitably move towards tyranny, because the government has the power to force ... and this is true whether it's Romneycare or Obamacare or any other government centralized system'. In this way, Gingrich reframes the current democratic election as a choice between tyranny (allegedly the current government) and freedom (the Republican positioning).

## Afterthoughts

Clearly, as Vignettes 14 and 15 amply illustrate, gendered ideologies have to be considered when analysing right-wing populism. Values related to traditional patriarchy are part and parcel of the exclusionary and nativist, nationalistic belief systems which most right-wing populist parties endorse. However, they manifest themselves in different images, symbols and domains.

In Europe, specifically in Western Europe and in Scandinavia, the burqa-wearing woman stands for danger and threat to European civilization: indeed, the veiled women has become the generic ‘Other’, symbolizing the alleged dangers posed by Islam, by different cultures and religions, different rituals and customs, and a different way of life. Dichotomies are erected between quasi-homogenous ‘civilized’ Europeans and ‘anachronistic, even barbaric’ Others from the Orient. A *neo-colonial sexism* has emerged in which the Muslim female body is seen as incorporating all evil, everything the West (and Western females) should beware of. Of course, such disciplining and regulating of the female body implies that women should be subject to patriarchal domination which can, as has been illustrated above, be implemented both by men and women. This ideological positioning has become salient and overrides the former left/right cleavage. It has become a *conflict about values, not about social class, age or education* and so forth.

In the US, on the other hand, we encounter a different bio-politic: the debates in the US are concerned with protecting the white heteronormative American family, thus emphasizing family values. These family values are related to women’s duties – they are the primary care-takers as mothers and wives; they also possess the necessary common-sense intuition which is deemed – as proposed by frontier feminism – salient to be able to govern the country. Thus, women as care-takers and as mothers are foregrounded, firmly repositioned in their traditional gender roles. The primary value conflict is centred on this female role: abortion and contraception are viewed as endangering the values of the white heteronormative family and the ‘pure’ American population. In this way, the Tea Party and parts of the Republican Party retain a conservative ideology which has been transcended in Western Europe and is not part of the usual right-wing populist agenda there. Indeed, these values contradict the attempt to ‘liberate women’ (see above, Vignette 14); whereas in the US, this value conflict retains the status of a litmus test, distinguishing between Democrats and Republicans. This difference can also be explained by the important role of Christian religion in the US and the prominence of secularism in Western Europe. The investigation of gendered body politics, both in Europe and the US, substantiates the assumption that the conceptual metaphor of the ‘family’ has taken on a nativist dimension, related to the ‘authoritarian syndrome’ as well as to post-modern bio-politics and the threat, experienced by many in our globalizing societies, of changing gender roles.

## Endnotes

- 1 See [www.opendemocracy.net/5050/beatrix-campbell/neo-liberal-neopatriarchy-case-for-gender-revolution](http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/beatrix-campbell/neo-liberal-neopatriarchy-case-for-gender-revolution), accessed 21 May 2014.
- 2 Figure 7.1 lists the countries in alphabetical order with their conventional acronyms: BE – Belgium; BG – Bulgaria; CZ – Czech Republic; DK – Denmark; DE – Germany; EE – Estonia; IE – Ireland; EL – Greece; ES – Spain; FR – France; HR – Croatia;

- IT – Italy; CY – Cyprus; LV – Latvia; LT – Lithuania; LU – Luxembourg; HU – Hungary; MT – Malta; NL – Netherlands; AT – Austria; PL – Poland; PT – Portugal; RO – Romania; SI – Slovenia; SK – Slovakia; FI – Finland; SE – Sweden; UK – UK (see [www.results-elections2014.eu/en/gender-balance.html](http://www.results-elections2014.eu/en/gender-balance.html), accessed 23 July 2014).
- 3 [www.profil.at/articles/1422/576/375649/europawahl-2014-warum-frauen-maenner?google\\_editors\\_picks=true](http://www.profil.at/articles/1422/576/375649/europawahl-2014-warum-frauen-maenner?google_editors_picks=true), accessed 23 July 2014.
  - 4 As Betz (2013, 74) notes, the leader of the SVP, Christoph Blocher, was opposed to this campaign; it seems that the SVP was far from unanimous in supporting the initiative.
  - 5 See Ho (2005), Sauer (2005), Navarro (2010), Flam and Beauzamy (2011), Read-Ghazal and Bartkowski (2000) and Wodak (2008) for more details on the impact of ‘the gaze’ as experienced by male and female migrants and, specifically, by veiled Muslim women.
  - 6 Interview with Oscar Freysinger, 16 December 2009, quoted after Betz (2013); [www.swissinfo.ch/eng/Specials/Minaret\\_Debate/Result\\_and\\_reactions/Minaret\\_vote\\_was\\_a\\_lesson\\_in\\_civic\\_spirit.html?cid=7916178](http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/Specials/Minaret_Debate/Result_and_reactions/Minaret_vote_was_a_lesson_in_civic_spirit.html?cid=7916178), accessed 16/9/11; also [www.reitschule.ch/reitschule/mediengruppe/Medienspiegel/09-04-28-MS.html](http://www.reitschule.ch/reitschule/mediengruppe/Medienspiegel/09-04-28-MS.html), accessed 16 September 2011.
  - 7 See also Rosenberger and Sauer (2013) for more details.
  - 8 As Navarro (2010, 112) emphasizes, such racist discourse does not only occur in the West: ‘In Muslim countries, the representation of Western women highlights prostitution, pornography and lack of respect for women.’
  - 9 Here, I only discuss the gendered dimension extensively and refer readers to the original article for a comprehensive analysis of the racism propagated by the BNP compared to posters of the Austrian right-wing populist parties (Richardson and Wodak 2009a, 61–9). I am very grateful to John Richardson for allowing me to use the poster and parts of our analysis in this chapter.
  - 10 The BNP also entered 10 candidates for the GLA London-wide candidate list, one constituency candidate (for the London constituency of City and East) as well as Richard Barnbrook as their Mayoral Candidate. The London Assembly is made up of 25 members and is a unique case in British politics, being decided by a partial system of proportional representation: 14 members of the Authority are elected via a ‘first past the post’ system to represent constituencies; these are supplemented by 11 London-wide members elected through PR. Political parties need 5 per cent of the vote to get one of these 11 seats, 8 per cent for two and 11 per cent for three (see Richardson and Wodak 2009a for more details).
  - 11 The original image, entitled ‘Many British Asians don’t feel British’, taken by a Press Association photographer, is available to view at [http://prints.paphotos.com/pictures\\_679845/Many-British-Asians-dont-feel-British.html](http://prints.paphotos.com/pictures_679845/Many-British-Asians-dont-feel-British.html), accessed 19 May 2008.
  - 12 The German original reads ‘*Es ist klar, dass der Rang der Frau in unserer Gesellschaft ein gänzlich gleichberechtigter sein muss, da kann es keine Abstriche geben. Ebenso aber ist es eine Tatsache, dass erfolgreiche Weiblichkeit und Mütterlichkeit nicht auseinanderfallen dürfen, wenn wir im Gesamten eine Zukunft haben wollen*’ (Rosenkranz 2008).
  - 13 <http://obamacarefacts.com/obamacare-facts.php>, accessed 13/8/14. Indeed, in an interview on CNN, 3 June 2014, Dr Ben Carson from John Hopkins University stated that, ‘Obamacare was the worst thing what happened to the United States since slavery’ ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_toMKpsGW2o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_toMKpsGW2o), accessed 13 August 2014).
  - 14 One example of the enormous struggle is indicated by the filibuster by Texas senator Wendy Davis on 25 June 2013. She held an 11-hour long filibuster to block State Bill 5, which featured restrictive abortion regulations and would have led to the closure of all but five clinics in the state. The bill would have required abortion clinics to have hospital privileges and be

classified as ambulatory surgical centres, which supporters say would ensure better care for women but others say are simply intended to make it more difficult for women to access health services. The conservative majority in the Senate was convinced the bill was certain to pass if it came to a vote, so Davis launched a filibuster, a procedure in which a speaker attempts to talk and therefore hold the floor until the session ends, making a vote impossible. Davis filibustered for 11 of the 13 hours necessary, talking and standing for the entire time. This event caused an enormous tweet storm (see Dewey, 2013). The pink sneakers she wore during the 11 hours quickly became a metonymy for the 'Pro-Choice Movement' ([www.google.hr/search?q=wendy+davis+pink+sneakers&tbm=isch&imgil=oN0oivsxgYrz7M%253A%253Btk5Jor2ToFI2M%253Bhttp%25253A%25252F%25252Fblog.chron.com%25252Fshopgirl%25252F2013%25252F06%25252Fwendy-davis-pink-sneakers-kick-up-funny-reviews%25252F&source=iu&usg=\\_\\_Xy-52HpKPEHxnlQQRKk-iAKdPlk%3D&sa=X&ei=bzrrU4j-KKnmYQOehICQBQ&sqi=2&ved=0CBwQ9QEwAA&biw=1188&bih=585](http://www.google.hr/search?q=wendy+davis+pink+sneakers&tbm=isch&imgil=oN0oivsxgYrz7M%253A%253Btk5Jor2ToFI2M%253Bhttp%25253A%25252F%25252Fblog.chron.com%25252Fshopgirl%25252F2013%25252F06%25252Fwendy-davis-pink-sneakers-kick-up-funny-reviews%25252F&source=iu&usg=__Xy-52HpKPEHxnlQQRKk-iAKdPlk%3D&sa=X&ei=bzrrU4j-KKnmYQOehICQBQ&sqi=2&ved=0CBwQ9QEwAA&biw=1188&bih=585), accessed 13 August 2014).

- 15 See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republican\\_Party\\_presidential\\_debates,\\_2012](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republican_Party_presidential_debates,_2012) (accessed 13 August 2014) for the entire list of debates and candidates. In the following detailed analysis of the sequence focused on abortion, I use the official transcript provided by CNN (<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1202/22/se.05.html>). As the focus of my analysis of the debate is not its typical interactional aspects, I neglect many hesitation phenomena, intonation and a multimodal analysis. Instead I focus primarily on the specific arguments employed by each candidate to support his respective Pro-Life stance, having also to simultaneously distinguish himself from the other discussants (although they all seem to agree in general and maintain a Pro-Life stance).