

Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen  
Institut für Anglistik  
Seminar: Migration/Law/Gender  
Prof. Dr. Greta Olson  
Winter Semester 2016/17

# **My Reading Journal**

## **for the**

# **Migration/Law/Gender**

## **Seminar**

Jennifer Christen

████████████████████

██████████

██

Matriculation Number: ██████████

Date: 4 April 2017

# Content

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Preliminary Questions.....	1
1.2. Proceedings.....	2
2. Dietze, Gabriele (2016): “Das ‘Ereignis Köln’”.....	3
2.1. Expectations.....	3
2.2. Summary and Central Themes.....	3
2.3. Comments and Thoughts.....	5
3. Özcan, Esra (2013): “Lingerie, Bikinis and the Headscarf”.....	6
3.1. Expectations.....	6
3.2. Summary and Central Themes.....	6
3.3. Comments and Thoughts.....	7
4. Geddes, Andrew and Peter Scholten (2016): “Germany: A Country of Immigration after All”.....	8
4.1. Expectations.....	8
4.2. Summary and Central Themes.....	8
4.3. Comments and Thoughts.....	11
5. Stetz, Margaret D. (2000): “Woman as Mother in a Headscarf”.....	12
5.1. Expectations.....	12
5.2. Summary and Central Themes.....	12
5.3. Comments and Thoughts.....	14
6. Parker, Stephanie (2015): “Hidden Crisis: Violence against Syrian Female Refugees”.....	15
6.1. Expectations.....	15
6.2. Summary and Central Themes.....	16
6.3. Comments and Thoughts.....	17
7. Millbank, Jenni (2002): “Gender, Visibility and Public Space in Refugee Claims on the Basis of Sexual Orientation”.....	18
7.1. Expectations.....	18
7.2. Summary and Central Themes.....	18
7.3. Comments and Thoughts.....	21
8. Conclusion.....	23
9. References.....	25

Erklärung zum Urheberrecht

# 1. Introduction

[M]igration in human history is not only  
a story of the spread of humankind,  
but also a story of the transformation  
of human life again and again.  
(Manning 2013: 6)

Migration and all it entails has always been a part of human life. Some people might want to deny this fact, but re-location seems to be a characteristic of humanity and its history. Whether human beings have escaped unbearable circumstances or sought a better future – migration was the best solution for many women and men.

In the last few years, Germany and the rest of Europe have seen an increase of migration – even though some would like to pretend that it is a new phenomenon, it is not. However, it still raised doubts, concerns and questions. Furthermore, it made legal adjustments necessary. Hence, it is obvious to me that migration has an effect on humanity in more than just one aspect. It affects those who leave their past behind, as well as to those who “welcome”<sup>1</sup> migrants into their new homes. How do law and gender influence these people and their lives? How the reading material of the Migration/Law/Gender class approaches these topics, and to what extent they do so shall be the leading question of this reading journal.

Manning’s observation, that migration is a transformation of human life that occurs again and again provided the starting point for my reading journal. Most of my approaches to the topic of Migration/Law/Gender were, in some way or the other, focused on how these terms affect me, which I considered to be extremely selfish. That migration affected anyone made me look beyond myself.

## 1.1. Preliminary Questions

At first, it was difficult to think of suitable questions that were supposed to guide me through this reading journal. The most prominent one I came up with will be the one of how the various texts approach the topic of Migration/Law/Gender. What have

---

<sup>1</sup> I have put the word in quotation marks because welcoming someone seems like a positive gesture to me, and yet there are people who reject migration, and therefore do not fulfil the positive component of the word.

they chosen as their focus and how do they make their arguments clear? When they discuss gender, do they solely focus on women? When they discuss migration, do they also consider those living in the country that becomes the new home to many or do they mainly focus on migrants? In what way do they include law into their discussions and do they elaborate on the way it affects people? I will be looking for answers to these questions.

Another question that I will keep in mind during this journal is the historical perspective of Migration/Law/Gender. Manning's quote already made clear that Migration has a historical connotation, but what about Law or Gender? Will any text give a historical perspective of these topics? How is this executed?

The final set of questions, which will only be answered at the end of this journal, is whether the authors of the reading material agree on certain topics, of whether they have a common ground when it comes to these terms. If they do not have one, where do their views on certain points differ? Furthermore, as this my reading journal, the final part of it will deal with the way my views differ from the points provided by the authors, or whether they actually do not do so at all.

## **1.2. Proceedings**

Since I cannot even remember the last time I kept a reading journal (it must have been a product of my primary school days, and therefore was neither very structured nor academic), I have decided to follow a certain structure in this one. The first step of each entry will deal with my pre-reading experience. What are my expectations of the text I am going to read? Which things do I expect to be discussed in what way? I will attempt to formulate my expectations regarding the topics of Migration/Law/Gender.

The second step will give a summary and highlight the central themes of each text. I will outline these points in an attempt to make the text understandable, not only for myself, but also for others. This will give an overview of the things that I thought to be most important, as it will represent my understanding of the text.

Finally, I will comment on the central themes, expressing my own thoughts about them. These will also include whether my expectations have been met or not.

## **2. Dietze, Gabriele (2016): “Das ‘Ereignis Köln’”**

### **2.1. Expectations**

I was not sure what to expect of the text. Prior to reading Dietze’s article, I had read a various number of texts dealing with what had happened on New Year’s Eve 2015, and most of them were dealing with the question of what had gone wrong, how this could be solved and what should be done with the offenders, in case they were found. I could not see “Das ‘Ereignis Köln’” doing the same. Therefore, I did not expect a condemnation of what had happened, but an analysis of how the media had handled the incident. My expectation regarding the topic of migration was that the text would argue against a generalisation of migrants.

### **2.2. Summary and Central Themes**

First of all, Dietze’s article refuses to see the Cologne incident as a clearly defined phenomenon. The incident itself may be of significance regarding certain discussions that dominate the German society, but once we get to the core of it, the invisibility of it becomes apparent. Although it is made up out of “vague and disparate” (Dietze 2016: 93) elements and can therefore not be clearly defined, the result, for many, seems to be clear: refugees are a threat to German women, and their removal has to be the only consequence.

Dietze states that Muslim migrants have been labelled as not being capable of integration. The debates over headscarves, the claim that Muslim women are oppressed, as well as the supposed aggression towards homosexuals have been defined as symptoms for this incapability. That they are not seen as racist is because what they criticise seems to be countering the positive norm of emancipation of western women. What does not seemingly fit into this norm is perceived as regressive.

The most important point, in my opinion, is that it has been assumed that sexism is a result of a foreign upbringing, known as ethnicism. Dietze also stresses that this is not seen as racist, even though it is. Ethnicism is an interplay of racism and sexism, only that the critique of supposed sexism of a certain group is used to disguise the racism.

Where Muslim families and their effect on society had been in the focus of discussion, there has been a shift so that the focus is now on the young, unmarried

Muslim man. This group was made out as a threat to the women who were representing western emancipation. The incident in Cologne finally created something, through what the unease against the young Muslim man could be expressed. This was only possible due to the discourse that happened prior to the incident, which criticised the politics of Islam and how it handles sexuality.

The incident also found its way into visual representation, despite the fact that the circumstances of the time of the incident (the darkness, as well as the surveillance cameras not providing clear pictures) do not offer a detailed view. Still, what happened afterwards, and the cover of the German magazine *Focus* shall be the example here, proved to be a visual expression of racism and (normalised) sexism at the same time. The body of a naked woman, covered with black handprints, even though most of those involved were “brown” rather than “black”. It goes back to a technique which roots from the time after the American Civil War. What was then known as the “rape-lynching-complex”, became the “harassment-deportation-complex” in the wake of the incident in Cologne (cf. Dietze 2016: 98).

Both complexes are an attempt to hide racism behind the claim that white women need to be protected against a predator, usually someone from a different culture or cultural background, by white men. The rape-lynching-complex, as well as the harassment-deportation-complex is built on the illusion that white women have been under attack, and that men need to act against this, in order to save their masculinity by keeping up the structures of patriarchy – something they can achieve via protecting women and their freedom – without being criticised for it. Whilst the rape-lynching-complex was aimed at destroying African American men physically in order to keep them from embracing their rights, the harassment-deportation-complex is determined to return the status quo of unseen sexism, by getting rid of “foreigners”. This is based on the misconception that Germany is not a country of immigration and that male Muslim migrants represent oppression of the western norm of female sexuality.

Western, or in this case, German society seems to be prone to misconceptions, one of the most striking one is the opinion that sexual freedom has been completely achieved in Germany. According to that, a person can only be free if they fit into what occidental societies perceive as freedom. The safety of this freedom and the people then legitimises governmental reaction, which, in turn, limits

civil freedom. Post 9/11 law are one example for this, and the debates about new laws after Cologne are another.

However, the efforts to protect white women seem to lead to the neglect of harassment of female migrants – harassment only seems to exist for white women. As well as the fact that male migrants have also initiated campaigns against sexism. There is still a long way to go, until the interplay of sexism and racism is recognised and deposed.

### **2.3. Comments and Thoughts**

Despite the text not being what I expected, reading it made me agree with almost all of its points. It is important to hold up a mirror to oneself every now and then, and that is what Dietze's text did, in my opinion. In retrospect, it made sense to me that every discussion that was led about migrants and their behaviour towards white women had its roots in the way German society had been told about immigrants and refugees in particular.

The incident in Cologne always seemed to be clear, but as Dietze correctly states, was anything but that. So many factors seem to have played into the incident and the interpretation that followed. The pre-incident discourse on migration, the refugee crisis, as well as the sexual exceptionalism of western societies are amongst these factors. Yet, it all seems to stem from one thing: superficial knowledge – which was a point I did not see as clearly mapped by Dietze as the others, which might be because it is quite obvious.

The comparison between the post-Civil War rape-lynching-complex and the harassment-deportation-complex seemed really on point to me. After all, both complexes mean the attack of something that seems foreign to one culture. It is quite alarming that women were used to justify both cases, and even more so, since it took a long time for women to stand up against the rape-lynching-complex – something that has not yet happened regarding the harassment-deportation-complex, as far as I know.

Something I could not agree with is that Dietze calls the depictions of women by magazines like *BILD* “normalised sexism” because some call it “sexuelle Aufgeschlossenheit”. Whilst I do agree that this is not criticised as widely as it would be if it came from another cultural area, I do not agree that these depictions went

unnoticed. However, since it is not specified which group did not notice it, the point is still legitimate.

### **3. Özcan, Esra (2013): “Lingerie, Bikinis and the Headscarf”**

#### **3.1. Expectations**

My expectations in the essay by Özcan were shaped by its subtitle, ‘Visual depictions of Muslim female migrants in German news media’. I expected an analysis of how Muslim women were depicted in German media, and of course, an interpretation of these depictions. The uncovering of stereotypes was another thing I expected from Özcan’s study.

#### **3.2. Summary and Central Themes**

The first central point of Özcan’s is that visuals, things we see, “shape people’s opinions and feelings in subtle ways” (2013: 427). The media uses this technique to model the way their audience understands the world. They have also played a crucial role in the way Muslim men and women are perceived. The image they have created shows “the Muslim” who lives in Europe but does not recognise its values, such as democracy and women’s rights.

According to Özcan, these images work as substitute for real Muslim women, as those who do not have the possibility to get in direct contact with female migrants use them as their source to understand a culture that is unknown to them. This “visual stereotyping” might be more subtle than “verbal stereotyping”, which can be very explicit, but it is still a strong way to “convey un verbalized meanings” (2013: 428). It is a typical case of the fact that showing is easier than telling.

Visual stereotyping does not portray the individuality of characters, but rather things that are common within cultural groups, as stereotyping means to lose sight of the individual. The repetition of visual stereotypes only reinforces them to a point, where they have become a part of representation and are not noticed any more.

Especially when it comes to Islam, western media tend to make no distinction between different Islamic groups, cultures and their histories. They are all depicted as being the same, which is actually not the case. Headscarves are another victim of this way of medial depiction, as their many different meanings, such as political

protest, expression of personal identity and “an attempt to create a more egalitarian society”, are widely ignored, in favour of them being a sign of oppression. The image of oppression, however, has turned into an image of terror. A headscarf now often seems to symbolise a threat to society.

The media goes so far as to use the images of Muslim women as a proof for non-integration. These women have become a symbol for “parallel societies” that do not seek contact to the world outside of their own community. Media, as well as politics, have concluded the failure of multiculturalism and declared that integration is the ultimate goal.

Everything that seems to represent the inability to integrate oneself is gendered. Honour crimes, arranged marriages and the female headscarf, all of these terms come back to gender and all of them are used to define the German identity, by saying that they are everything that a German is not. As a result, they have evoked a debate in German society.

When it comes to the visual depiction of the Muslim women, it is important to understand that different camera angles, types of shots, as well as the presence or absence of eye contact have different meanings and effects on those who see final images. Through the repeated use of limited framing techniques, visual stereotyping is created. Back views, for example, create a feeling of distance, whilst frontal views offer detailed information. The lack of eye contact turns people into objects because they are not given the chance to look back.

However, Muslim women are not only depicted on their own; they are also used as contrast to show the difference between the Orient and the Occident. By putting western women in lingerie next to Muslim women in headscarves, the media emphasises the supposed difference between cultures. Another portrayal of the female Muslim shows her doing “modern” activities, setting out to prove that the co-existence of tradition and modernity is possible. Yet, it still distinguishes between “their” and “our” world by making it look like the woman is doing something that is unusual for her.

### **3.2. Comments and Thoughts**

Ezra Özcan’s essay provided an interesting overview of how and in which ways Muslim women are portrayed in German print media. Her point that the lack of

contact gives the media the power to exercise influence on the audience seems one of great importance to me, and it is also a point I strongly agree with. As long as human beings have not experienced something of their own, they have to rely on the information they are given by different media.

The power of images seems to be undeniable – and how they are portraying something seems to be equally important as the question of what they are depicting. It is difficult not to blame the media on the rift between different cultures, as they seem to enforce this image of the existence of more than one world. The collision of these worlds seems noteworthy, but only when the western culture seems to be the one that is embraced.

It seems – now more than ever – important to be critical whenever general statements are made, as they seem to ignore many factors that would actually play an important role. Moreover, the media seems to bend facts into a direction of their liking, which is another reason to be sceptical towards the media.

## **4. Geddes, Andrew and Peter Scholten (2016): “Germany: A Country of Immigration After All”**

### **4.1. Expectations**

Germany as a country of immigration probably still lacks the agreement of many German citizens. Geddes’ and Scholten’s text is most likely to argue that Germany is, in fact, a country of immigration. Apart from the argumentation for this fact, I expect it to provide explanations about the legal difficulties immigrants and asylum seekers have to face. “Germany: A Country of Immigration After All” will most likely discuss the legal matters in more depth than Özcan’s and Dietze’s text, however, the gender issue will probably not as prominent as it was in these two texts.

### **4.2. Summary and Central Themes**

Despite being the home of many immigrants, Germany refused to consider itself as a country of immigration. On the contrary, immigration and all it entailed was not embraced with enthusiasm – and those who wanted to obtain the German citizenship were faced with numerous difficulties.

The statement that Germany was not a country of immigration was “‘a political-cultural norm’ and an element of national self-understanding”

(Geddes/Scholten 2016: 75) rather than an actual fact. The German population defined itself by claiming that they lived in a nation where immigration did not play a big role. The reasons for this kind of thinking were linked to the pre-unification days, when West Germany was a provisional state and not yet the complete nation it would become later.

Still, the post-unification days saw a peak of immigration, which were mostly caused by asylum seekers. Germany was proved to be “the European country that was most open to international migration in the 1990s” (2016: 76), which does not really support its stance on not being a country of immigration. In general, there were four main sources of post-war immigration; Aussiedler (ethnic Germans), who returned to their ethnic origins, guestworkers, who were recruited to support the agricultural as well as the industrial sector from 1955 to 1973, their family members, and asylum seekers. Their rights increased the longer they stayed in Germany.

The group of asylum seekers was the object of post-Second World War obligations that later caused a number of debates in Germany. Said obligations had brought a high number of migrants into the country, especially compared to other EU member states. The increasing support for right-wing parties played its part in the amendment of Article 16 of the Basic Law, which “constrained the state’s capacity to regulate access to its territory” (2016: 80). It was later brought into line with the law of the other EU member states and the Dublin Convention, giving Germany the capacity of regulating migration back.

However, there was no official approach to the regulation of immigration in Germany until the 2000s. By 2015, the approach to skilled migration had become quite liberal, which seems to be the general case. Skilled migration might still be debated, but it was not received as negatively as other kinds of migration. Germany even needed immigration, but it also the integration of migrants.

The legal impacts of migration ranged from a Green Card programme that was supposed to attract high skilled migrants. It had nothing in common with its American namesake, as it did not offer an easy transition from a card-holder to a permanent resident, to so-called ‘integration contracts’ and, later, an immigration law. Labour market reforms influenced immigrant integration policies, as they were adapted to the needs of the labour market.

The immigration law was not met with enthusiasm by every political party. The CDU/CSU opposed the law, citing their worry about the impact immigration

would have on the German culture. This was also seen as a reflection of the public discontent with immigration and multiculturalism.

The law was passed, even though it did not have the desired effect on skilled migrants. It needed further adaptations, such as the recognition of qualifications that were gained abroad. Another measure was the introduction of tests that preceded (or succeeded) migration to Germany. Migrants are now required to attend ‘integration courses’, which include language training, as well as civic education. In case the migrants want to become German citizens, they have to take a citizenship test. Asylum seekers became the centre of attention once more, when the refugee crisis arose in the 2010s. Angela Merkel’s liberal refugee-policy was met with criticism. Yet, Germany’s chancellor also pressed for a shared responsibility of Europe.

During the development of new policies, integration was not really a target, since that would mean that the constant denial of not being a country of immigration was not true after all. Even though Germany does not consider itself a country of immigration, and despite the low naturalisation rate, which is due to the difficulties imposed by the German law, it does acknowledge the concept of denizenship, which means the inclusion into German society, without actually being German. Foreign workers finally had access to the same social right as German citizens. It meant a greater legal security, but becoming a naturalised citizen of Germany was still difficult.

Migrants mean diversity – and whilst some German cities embraced it, others did not and might still be struggling to actually do so. Beneath the surface, there are still concerns regarding immigration, which seem to manifest themselves in a clash between those who encourage diversity and those who see immigration as a threat to the German culture (which includes groups like PEGIDA and other similar groups that appeared all over Europe). Incidents like the one on New Year’s Eve in Cologne created a negative public mood – which was proved by the high percentage of Germans who agreed with PEGIDA. Yet, there were counter demonstrations that strongly opposed their views.

Like other European countries, Germany’s relationship to migration seems to be ambivalent. The reception seems to depend on the kind of migration. Whilst high skilled migrants are mostly seen in a positive way, guestworkers and their families are seen less positively. Despite the reluctance to admit so, Germany is a country of immigration.

### 4.3. Comments and Thoughts

Germany's reluctance – or rather said – refusal to acknowledge that it is a country of immigration seems quite striking to me, since migration has and will always be a part of it. As the aforementioned quote by Manning says, it has always been a part of human history. Germany is certainly not an exception here, even though it has been for a long time, especially in regard of its legal situation, not compliant with other European countries.

I admit that these are my personal views, which were probably influenced by the history of my own family, and that there might be reasons for opinions that differ from mine. Whilst I was reading the text, I started to understand the difficulties my own maternal great-grandfather, a migrant, and grandfather, an Aussiedler who returned, had to face.

Even though the text is specifically about Germany, I would have wished it to elaborate on if and how immigration had similar influences and debates in other European countries. It would have been interesting to read more about the rise of right-wing parties like the Front National in France or the Partij voor de Vrijheid in the Netherlands seem to harbour, and how they might differ from German parties like the NPD or AFD.

Furthermore, I did not agree with Geddes and Scholten that Germany has not seen a rise of populists and right-wing parties, like other European countries have. In the wake of PEGIDA, the high results of the AFD in some federal states disprove the authors here. In some cases, the statements of some members of PEGIDA or the AFD have not only proved their belonging to the right-wing political sector, but they have also been plain racist and inhuman.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, saying that Germany is different from France, the Netherlands or the UK in that aspect does not reflect the truth. Populists like Marine Le Pen or Geert Wilders might be more outspoken than Frauke Petry, but in the end, they all seem to share the same principles.

---

<sup>2</sup> I am referring to Frauke Petry's proposal of shooting at immigrants as a last resort to protect German borders, which she mentioned in an interview with Tim Sebastian in 2016. (cf: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anmDcVeuZwA>)

## **5. Stetz, Margaret D. (2000): “Woman as Mother in a Headscarf. The Woman as War Refugee and the North American Media.”**

### **5.1. Expectations**

My first thought before reading the text was that it would be another discussion about the depiction of Muslim women. I was sure this text would give an overview over how society thinks of the Muslim woman as mother and her role in the family, with a focus on women refugees.

Another pre-reading thought was linked this article to Özcan’s essay about the depiction of Muslim women in the media. Like “Lingerie, Bikinis and the Headscarf”, I thought that Stetz’s text would most likely discuss how refugee women – mothers in particular – were depicted in print media. It would be interesting to see if and what had changed in this aspect.

### **5.2. Summary and Central Themes**

“Woman as Mother in a Headscarf” discusses the depiction of female refugees during the Kosovar refugee crisis. One of Stetz’s central points is that female war refugees have a number of needs, and some of them are difficult to be fulfilled. However, the media does not depict a multi-dimensional image of these women, limiting their needs.

Despite focusing on Kosovar women, the way the North American media depicts them says more about the “nostalgia in North America for conservative gender roles than it says about the actual ethnic Albanian woman” (Stetz 2000: 66) who had to leave their homes behind. The media wants to put these women into a corner by applying their own wishes for gender rules to them. Stetz calls this popular phenomenon “Woman as Mother in a Headscarf”. The rapid spread of this image proves how appealing it seems to be to the audience.

Yet, it is important to put this image aside and see behind the curtain the media has hung over these women. Once this is done, it is clear that refugee women have the same needs that western women have. Most of these needs were, according to Stetz, still unmet at that time. Gender, and the perception of it, becomes another conflict zone, however, it seems even more difficult to escape it.

The depiction of refugee women has a great value for anti-feminists. It confirms their beliefs in which women are “simple creatures, whose ‘natural’ roles come down to a single biological function, and who are chiefly in want of (masculine) protection” (Stetz 2000: 66). The refugee woman becomes nothing more than a mother (she has fulfilled the biological function of giving birth), whose sole purpose is to flee into men’s arms, wanting them to ensure her safety. Of course, the circulators of these images have declared feminism a dead cause beforehand. The picture that is painted of western feminism is dominated by greed – women who already have everything just want more.

In this light, the *Time* created a different image of Kosovar refugee women, a more sentimental one. A photograph of a woman holding a child or a crying child leaning on his mother both focus on the mother role, instead of the woman as an individual. This, once again, stresses the media’s attempts to show women who are reduced to their basic functions in times of war.

These images have also been used by charities. They evoke compassion and therefore make people donate money. That these women might be more, might be even fighting for the resistance is completely ignored in favour of the delicate and vulnerable mother and her child, who convince people to make a donation because they are a picture of innocence and vulnerability. That these women are, in the case of the Kosovar women, white is another advantage. If they were not, they would probably go unnoticed. However, their belonging to the Muslim community is concealed and not mentioned at all – since the media has built up a picture that says Muslim equals terrorist.

The public seems almost unwilling to recognise the competence, intelligence and capability of refugee women. This, according to Stetz, is due to the preference of superiority of the western world. Women that do not come from the same backgrounds cannot be as self-determined as western women are. By identifying “conflict zones” where women are different from what is perceived as progressive, society has become another conflict zone, “where homelessness, violence, and oppression are nearly as commonplace as in areas of ethnic warfare” (2000: 68). What makes the own society a dangerous place is glossed over. Whilst media depictions are not generally wrong, they exclude many factors, stripping the refugee women of their individuality and diversity – it also makes it even more difficult to estimate the help and support these women actually need.

The picture the media paints of these women makes it look like they do not require much. They are selfless, caring for their family and not for themselves. Moreover, they are always assumed to be a heterosexual part of the nuclear family. Hence, they only require what is necessary for their family, especially their children. The wish to be educated would never cross the women's minds. It would not benefit their families as it does not fulfil the basic needs of having a place to live and something to eat.

The European depiction of refugee women differs from the North American one. European media does show the woman as strong, intelligent individual, one that is deeply affected by the loss of their personal networks. Helping these women does therefore mean so much more than providing a home and food for them. It means more than ensuring their survival. It means to give them the chance to re-establish their personal networks and to allow them to exercise their talents and ambitions.

Furthermore, specific needs, which include medical services and psychological counselling, have to be fulfilled. The media, however, has been silent over the question of whether rape crisis centres have been established inside refugee camps, although they have acknowledged that rape is a crime some refugee women are familiar with. Aid against domestic violence is another factor these women need. Relocation does not end domestic violence; on the contrary, it might even make it more severe. Therefore, it is crucial to help refugee women who have been the victim of any kind of abuse. That refugee camps do not end these traumatic experiences, but might even encourage them, is ignored by North American media.

### **5.3. Comments and Thoughts**

In the "Expectations" chapter, I mentioned that I expected Margaret D. Stetz's text to have similarities to Esra Özcan's text. After reading, I know that these similarities do not exist, or if they do, they are very subtle and have slipped my recognition. Whilst both focus on how women are depicted and what these images convey, Özcan's text rather deals with the technical part, and Stetz's text deals with the background, the surroundings, as well as the impact of these depictions.

As of today, the depiction of refugee women still seems to focus on her role within the family. Many pictures show refugee women as a mother with her child, instead of the individual person. They still create an image that, in many cases, seems

to remind me of the Virgin Mary with her newborn child. Whenever charity organisations use this kind of image, the question of whether they do so in order to allude to Christian values arises – and whilst reading the text I was wondering whether that was the reason why the belonging to the Muslim community was not mentioned by charity organisations back then.

One thing that has certainly changed since the article was published is the state of feminism. Whilst it was declared dead in 2000, it seems to be pretty alive seventeen years later. There is no doubt that feminism still has a long way to go, but it is certainly not dead. What has prevailed, and I am speaking from my own experience, is the negative stance of anti-feminists. They still perceive feminism as a kind of greed, and unfortunately, they will probably keep doing so.

Another point related to the state of feminism came to my mind whilst reading the text. Namely, that feminism barely seems to extend to non-white women. Yet, I had to correct my assumption, as the existence of anti-racist and decolonial feminism do not support my initial opinion. Yet, I strongly agreed with Stetz's statement that white refugee women get more support than women of other ethnicities. This is something that still leaves me quite worried about the future of feminism.

The reading left me with the question of whether rape crisis centres have finally been established in refugee camps. A quick online research was not able to answer my question. It seems to me that not much has changed regarding this topic.

## **6. Parker, Stephanie (2015): “Hidden Crisis: Violence against Syrian Female Refugees”**

### **6.1. Expectations**

My choice to include this text in this reading journal was based on the questions Margaret D. Stetz's text “Woman as Mother in a Headscarf” left me with. I was wondering whether anything had changed in the fifteen years that had passed since “Woman as Mother in a Headscarf” was published. That refugee women were still subject to violence was answered by the title of Parker's report, but had the way this violence was handled changed? Were refugee women finally able to get the support they needed? These questions made up my pre-reading expectation.

## 6.2. Summary and Central Themes

Parker's report describes a part of the Syrian conflict that is, despite the high rates of occurrences, barely addressed: gender-based violence among female refugees.

The picture of Turkish landscape is now mixed with the picture of refugee women and their children asking for help. However, their requests, which they carry out with shame, are ignored by onlookers. More than that, the women are branded as "dangerous" by tourist guides, who probably see them as nothing but an unwelcome distraction that mars the beauty of what they are showing to tourists.

There is a rising tension between the Turkish population and the refugee women, who "signify a weak point of the Middle East – the Syrian conflict" (Parker 2015: 2341). They do not fit into the picture of a strong and beautiful Middle East. This conflict, as well as the rising tension, makes those who are most vulnerable, girls and women in this case, suffer even more. Gender-based violence blooms in surroundings like these, becoming "one of the world's most widespread human rights violations and public health issues" (ibid.).

Researchers found out that women of Syrian communities were subject to gender-based violence prior to the Syrian conflict, however, the circumstances of the crisis and the conditions the refugees have to live in only contribute to more violence against females. Yet, these women seem to be reluctant when they are asked to report mistreatment, explaining that the intention behind the mistreatment is not negative. They accept their situation and continue to suffer from the mistreatment.

Since refugee girls and women do not open up to the police, but only to humanitarian and women groups when an intimate partner is involved, the official statistics do not mirror the actual problem. The longer the situation lasts, the higher the rate of gender-based violence, but only a small number of abuse is actually reported.

The journey that should take these women to safety is paved with struggles and also with sexual abuse. The family ties that should protect refugee women are often disrupted, leaving them alone in a dangerous environment. Additionally, they become victims of exploitation, which goes so far that they "are often forced to exchange sexual acts in return for items like food, clothing, and shelter" (2015: 2342). The suffering does not end once they have arrived at new locations, though. On the contrary, it puts them at more risk of being exploited or abused.

It is important to include refugee women and girls in the emergency and humanitarian response plan – because they are the only ones who can determine what they need and what is to be done in order to help them. It is clear that the root causes of violence have to be uncovered to solve the problem of violence against women and girls. It is, however, difficult to do so, since sexual violence is, for various reasons, often hushed up and denied.

As sexual violence is a tactic of war, it is important to raise the living and safety standards of Syrian female refugees, if the global future shall be a positive one.

### **6.3. Comments and Thoughts**

Parker's report was the first article, unlike others, did not deal with the depiction of (refugee) women, but rather focused on the difficulties they have to face. Amongst these is violence, which they have to suffer because of their sex. This means that violence against refugee women still exists. The willingness to make the lives of these women easier by giving them the chance to report the crimes has increased. This still does not mean that all needs of refugee women are met, which might be due to the reluctance they show towards reporting violence.

An elaboration on things that are done to fight gender-based violence would have been a great addition to Parker's article. Of course, she mentions the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and their plan to empower women and reduce gender-based violence, but she does not mention how they plan to do so (aside from including women and girls in the discussion about the things that need to be done). This might be an issue that would fill a whole article by itself.

MDG's plan to welcome female refugees at the political discussion table suggests that the state of feminism has changed, or at least is going to change in the future. This is one of the differences to what Stetz's stated in her text. Whilst no one seemed to be willing to include refugee women when their needs were discussed, the picture has changed – and it seems like people have realised that a global well-being can only be achieved by giving refugee women the chance to be involved in this change.

## **7. Millbank, Jenni (2002): “Gender, Visibility and Public Space in Refuge Claims on the Basis of Sexual Orientation”**

### **7.1. Expectations**

The only text that mentioned the sexuality, albeit only briefly, was Margaret D. Stetz’s “Woman as Mother in a Headscarf”. Therefore, it seemed to be necessary to look at a text which focused on gender-related need for asylum. Since homosexuality is still a reason to seek asylum, it is important to understand the difficulties lesbian or gay asylum seekers have to face in the country they hope to be their shelter. Hence, my main expectation is that Millbank’s text explains which difficulties arise and which influence law has on these difficulties.

### **7.2. Summary and Central Themes**

The inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and HIV status as part of the definition of a refugee, who belongs to a particular social group, is relatively new. The European Parliament only voted in favour of this inclusion in 2002. This was only the first step in the refugee determination process, as the question of whether a person is in danger of being persecuted because of their sexuality must be determined as well. This question is linked to the gendered notion of the public and the private.

Millbank found out that the claims of lesbians are often rejected on the ground that their experiences are “too private”, whilst gay men are seen as “too public”. Lesbians and gay men, therefore, seem to belong to different gendered realms. The cases in which asylum was not granted show that the presence of gay men and lesbians in public is seen as a violation of limits. There seems to be a link between homophobic violence and visibility.

It is more likely for lesbians to be a victim of harassment or assault at home than it is for gay men. The attacks are often carried out by men known to them, which shows a similarity between homo- and heterosexual women. They also have to deal with sexual assault as persecution – which is a phenomenon shared by female refugees.

Generally, lesbian claimants had lower chances of being granted asylum than gay men. In Canada, however, more lesbian claimants are successful than men, whilst in Australia, there is almost no application approved. This is due to Australia tribunal characterising their experiences as “merely private”, since most assailants

are a part of the lesbian's private sphere. The tribunal "projected conceptions of appropriate gender norms" (Millbank 2002: 728), meaning on norms that came from a heterosexual surrounding, which made it possible to shift the characterisation of private. Public experiences were turned into private experiences, often claiming that these were individual experiences, which were probably even provoked by the applicant.

In contrast to Canada, Australia shows little to no interest in the specific human rights of lesbian women. They were either grouped into the heterosexual category of "women" or the male category of "homosexual", but not into their own group of "lesbian women". This would have been vital, but was ignored and resulted in a disadvantage in the refugee decisions. What is even worse that these cases reflect "gendered assumptions about women's relationship to the private [and] also reflected hetero-normative assumptions about queer sexuality as a sexualised rupture of the (natural) public order" (Millbank 2000: 728).

Gay men, on the other hand, had a higher success rate than lesbian women, when it came to asylum-claims based on their sexuality, yet they were also more likely to have encountered direct persecution because of it. The decision-makers took the, indeed inexcusable, approach that gay men were "deserving objects of neutral criminal law because of their own sexual (or sexualised) transgressions" (729) – in other words, that they deserved persecution because of their sexuality and their behaviour.

In many cases, the question of whether it was justifiable to grant protection was determined by the applicant's conduct. Was it necessary or choice to reveal their sexuality? When men were attacked on beats that were the only available or anonymous place where they could express their sexuality, protection was more likely to be granted. If gay men chose to express their sexuality in public – even holding hands in public was seen as an unacceptable choice – they were not as likely to be granted protection. The decision-makers erased the public, as well as the sexual agency or choice when they granted asylum.

Visibility played an important part in Australian decisions. It was stressed "that there is no human right to publicly embrace, to flaunt, proclaim, parade or hold hands" (730). That this, in turn, would mean that there is also no human right that protects heterosexual needs to do that, a fact that was widely ignored. The Australian decision-makers, however, tried to determine what was appropriate or not, instead of

letting the applicant decide. Their view that homosexuality could and should be secret, enabled them to label repressive nations as safe, because they tolerated homosexuality as long as it was not visible. In some cases, the Australian tribunal even required discretion and thus shifted the responsibility to ensure protection on to the applicant.

The Australian tribunal seemed to confuse homosexual identity with homosexual sex, claiming that displaying sexual acts in public was not an essential part of being homosexual. This seems to normalise heterosexuality, declaring homosexuality as something that can be hidden in order to be a “normal”, that is, a heterosexual, member of society. The Australian tribunal tried to determine what the acceptable public behaviour was; however, their definition seemed to be shifting the private and public realms to their liking. Whilst Australia held close to the discretion requirement, Canada, at least in most cases, did not. The Immigration Review Board (IRB) heavily opposed the discretion requirement, stating that many things that are covered by the European Commission Directive definition of a refugee can be done in secret and yet none of them are required to be hidden.

The Canadian tribunal was able to understand the connection between being openly gay and self-identity, self-respect and self-expression. Yet, the concept of visibility also seemed to be a victim of misconceptions. It was assumed that closeted applicants could continue to live that way because they had managed for so long. If they kept being closeted, they would not be at risk of persecution. Lesbian women and gay men who were able to blend in with the heterosexual society were in no need of protection.

The English tribunal argued that a gay man was not really out because his private and working relations did not know he was gay. Instead of granting him protection, their decision to reject his claim forced him to remain closeted. That neither being closeted or being out was a static state was completely ignored. To whom homosexuals out themselves is their decision, and sometimes depends on various factors – one of them being the degree of surveillance they are under.

In some societies, gay men and lesbian women may be able to live a closeted life forever, but in others, they are not. There are countries in which suspicions already arise once a person does not marry at some point during their adulthood. Still, tribunals seem to accept closet-ness as a safe state.

Lesbian women and gay men constantly have to weigh the risk of being visible against the positive outcomes. They have to consider whether they want to live a safe life or whether they want to live free life. What is visible and what is not, is still determined by the decision-makers and not by the applicants. This proves that the discourse, as well as the legal situation still needs to be improved.

### **7.3. Comments and Thoughts**

Reading Millbank's text proved to be quite emotional to me. It is still hard to fathom that people in need of protection were, and maybe still are, denied help because their sexuality is different from the decision-maker's norms. That homosexuality was still seen as "not normal", whilst heterosexuality was seen as normal, is something that seems as a leftover from a long-gone century.

To blame human beings for their sexuality is inhuman and reveals a kind of thinking that does not show any progression at all. Lesbian women and gay men do not deserve any kind of punishment or persecution because of their public behaviour – which is not so different from the way heterosexual people behave. What is acceptable and what is not still seems to be determined by hetero-normativity.

This also made me wonder whether the decision-makers would think differently if heterosexuals were persecuted for embracing or holding hand in public. Their argument that there is no human right that protects affection in public when homosexuals are concerned should also be applied to heterosexuals. However, they would probably not apply this kind of arguing in this case.

It was shocking to read that a man was described as "not really out" only because his family and colleagues did not know about his sexuality. Once again, I was wondering whether it was necessary for heterosexuals to explicitly state that they were heterosexual in order to be recognised as such. This only seems to prove that a society's habits of generally assuming the heterosexuality of an individual die hard.

Assuming that closetedness is a safe state completely ignores the possibility of psychological damage, which alone is outrageous. The tribunals of the receiving countries willingly approve of risking the applicant's health – and thus their safety as well. It proves that the adaptation and improvement of laws is a process that is absolutely necessary, as it should be self-evident that every human being, despite

their sex, gender, nationality or beliefs is entitled to freedom, self-determination as well as mental and physical health.

## 8. Conclusion

As this reading journal progressed, it became an increasingly emotional affair. My initial take, which I abandoned quickly, was to analyse the structure of the text, which proved to be quite difficult because the content took over and left little room for the structure of the texts. This was probably also due to the fact that my knowledge about the issues related to Migration/Law/Gender was basic at best. Hence, I took the chance to broaden my knowledge about these topics, rather than analysing structures – something I am already experienced in.

To return to one of my initial questions of how the topics were treated by the texts, it seemed to me that law was only once the predominating point. In general, gender and migration were given much more space. However, this might be due to the fact that these topics are closely intertwined. Whilst it was mentioned every now and then in most of the text, the only text that had its focus set on law was “Germany: A Country of Immigration After All” by Geddes and Scholten. When it comes to the historical perspective, it was also the Geddes and Scholten text that offered most of it.

It was quite difficult to find points I did not agree with. Most of the statements made by the authors seemed accurate and important to me. The way German, as well as international media depicts migrants or refugees is something that should not be trusted blindly – although I admit that it is tempting – especially since the media is the first source for many when it comes to topics related to migration.

The necessity to see more than helpless women in female refugees also became evident. In my opinion, the media should start to recognise what these women have gone through and how much strength this required. Furthermore, whilst I do understand that charities want to help, it felt wrong to see them use women in this certain way – and even more so to know that it seems to be necessary to depict these women at their weakest point to make western societies help them, whether it is by donating money or offering protection.

If it had not been clear before, after Millbank’s text it was absolutely certain that the laws regarding migration and gender still had to be worked on. Moreover, hetero-normative standards should not be imposed on lesbian women or gay men. Society needs to understand that they have the same rights to display their sexuality

as heterosexuals – and that they should be granted protection from those who persecute them for something they cannot change.

It will probably be a long way until these things change, however, to ensure a stable and safe future for everyone, they have to. It is also important to realise that is not going to ruin this future, but enrich it. After all, it has always been a part of humanity.

## 9. References

- Dietze, Gabriele (2016): “Das ‘Ereignis Köln’”. In: *Femina Politica* 1: 93 – 102. Print.
- Geddes, Andrew & Peter Scholten (2016): “Germany: A Country of Immigration After All”. In: *The Politics of Migration & Immigration in Europe*. Los Angeles: Sage. 74 – 99. Print.
- Manning, Patrick (2013): *Migration in World History. Second Edition*. London/New York: Routledge. Print.
- Millbank, Jenni (2002): “Gender, Visibility and Public Space in Refugee Claims on the Basis of Sexual Orientation”. In: *Seattle Journal for Social Justice, Vol. 1, Issue 3, Article 61*. 725 – 742. Print.
- Parker, Stephanie (2015): “Hidden Crisis: Violence against Syrian Female Refugees”. *The Lancet* Vol. 385: 2341 – 2342. Print.
- Özcan, Ezra (2013): “Lingerie, Bikinis and the Headscarf. Visual Depictions of Muslim Female Migrants in German News Media”. In: *Feminist Media Studies* Vol. 13, No. 3. 427 – 442. Print.
- Stetz, Margaret D. (2000): “Woman as Mother in a Headscarf”. In: *Canadian Women Studies* 19.9: 66 – 70. Print.