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Speaking in Tongues: Language and National Belonging in Globalizing Europe

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During the past two decades, the political landscape of Europe has undergone dramatic change. The powerful matrix of global capitalism has deeply affected European nation forms, social ideologies, and political systems, as suggested by German unification, the collapse of the Soviet regime, the war in the former Yugoslavia, and the subsequent formation of the European Union, including the Europeanization of post-socialist states. In this context, the historical fixity of borders, bodies, and spaces has been unmoored.¹ The end of the Cold War furnished new possibilities for envisioning society, promoting major transformations in the fabric of Europe's national communities.² In addition, the emergent entanglements of state and corporate interests not only changed the political contours of Europe but also altered the social conditions under which imaginaries of belonging are brought to public visibility.

How is citizenship configured in this globally transformed political space? In the European Union, the realities of ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism have unraveled the idea of *citizens* as homogenous or undifferentiated aggregates. Yet as Europe strives to achieve political and economic unity, we see a concurrent push toward inequality, cultural exclusion, and linguistic marginalization.³ The legacies of colonialism and fascist nationalism not only continue to imprint the privilege of whiteness onto the new map of Europe, but they also sustain the fortification of Europe as a hegemonic "white" space.⁴ From this perspective, the focus on citizenship in Europe by detour to the master narratives of Cold War national history, as I argue here, requires a critical reassessment. In efforts to both accommodate and repel the tension-fraught effects of a globalizing Europe, local reassertions of nationality have given rise to new measures of exclusion, framed by anti-immigrant sentiments, the closure of borders, and ethnoracial nationalism.

In this essay, I examine how such assertions of nationhood have gained prominence in European Union countries. My analysis of the shifting parameters of national belonging proceeds by a focus on one case example: post-unification Germany. While specific concerns about border security or legacies of national history might not be applicable to all European states, we see a common push toward national distinction and emergent forms of lingual citizenship. Since the 1990s, the projected frontiers of European nations, the lines dividing the native from the foreign, are increasingly mapped through the medium of language. In Germany, as in France, Holland, Belgium, and Denmark, or Austria, national identity politics have become language politics, a terrain marked by fears of linguistic estrangement and a public preoccupation with preserving an authentic national interior. The *nation* is configured as a speech community of ethnic Germans. How did this come to pass? In tracing the political production of linguistic

nationalism, my analytic attention is focused on post-unification Germany, a “nation form”⁵ that tends to legitimate itself by recourse to corporal metaphors. Linguistic nationalism draws on quasi-mythic notions of the German political community as a language-body, a closed linguistic corpus, which is presumed to be organic, essential, and pure. Language nationalism, which aims to protect the integrity of this ethno-linguistic entity, is located on an imaginary landscape of intensely charged concepts: nation, nature, and race.

Building on these insights, my reflections on language politics in contemporary Germany rely on a montage of data from multiple sources. Informed by earlier studies of ethnoracial machinations in Europe and across the globe,⁶ my project draws on long-term fieldwork in Germany. During a four-year residence as a faculty member at the University Tuebingen from 1997 to 2001, I had the opportunity to become an observing participant of the problematic formation of the European Union, the EURO zone, and the subsequent implementation of Europeanization initiatives, such as language reform and the rearticulation of immigration policies. Living and working in Germany provided me with unique opportunities to participate in diverse forms of community; to engage in discussions with students, colleagues, and family members; and to conduct informal interviews with neighbors, strangers, immigrant workers, journalists, bureaucrats, state officials, and schoolteachers. Between 2002 and 2012, I was able to refine my primary field data with follow-up research trips that ranged from a few weeks to several months each year, and included study-travel to various cities across Europe (Venice, Budapest, Frankfurt, Oslo, Bergen, Munich). My insights about German nationalism and immigrants’ everyday experiences were further enhanced by my extensive scrutiny of media images, news reports, and political discourse, as well as European Union and United Nations documents. Guided by the expansive scholarship on racial formations in twenty-first century,⁷ the presentation of my research findings follows a critical approach to contemporary forms of national belonging.

My essay begins with a brief sketch of the broader context of transborder politics in Europe. The selected vignettes include Germany’s self-representation to the world, central to which is the trope of the nation as a white female icon, whose erotic allure propagates open borders for foreign investors. This gendered fantasy of nationhood coexists with European national discourses about the entry of Muslims (most recently, Syrian refugees) into Europe, which is perceived as a threat to national sovereignty and culture. In presenting these contrary approaches to border security, my aim is to offer an overview of racializing practices in and by European countries prior to analyzing the emergent phenomenon of linguistic nationalism in specific EU member-states. In the subsequent sections of this article, my discussion turns to the German citizenship debates and the push for border fortification via the instrument of a national language. Here my evidence derives from a diversity of intersecting political fields: lingual citizenship, language reform, and the formation of German literary societies, which render visible the phantasm of language purity and the fear of linguistic difference. These are themes that I also investigate by a critical reexamination of ethnographic research. My essay interrogates language as a battleground that problematizes immigrant presence and national belonging in postunified Germany, a country which is also a core nation-state in a multiethnic and plurilingual Europe.

Whiteness as a National Emblem: Branding Distinctions

What resources are mobilized by European nation-states to reclaim their sovereignty under globalization? In the twenty-first century, the manufacture of European national distinction has increasingly shifted to the market place, the terrain of advertising, fashion, and media. Culture industries manufacture national distinction by means of commodity desire and consumption. When circulated across political borders to attract foreign investment and international consumer attention, such marketing re-

lies on familiar motifs: gender, sex, and race. Consider the following example, a worldwide marketing campaign sponsored by the German government and launched in 2006.

SNAPSHOT ONE. In London, New York, and Tokyo, gigantic billboards in subway stations and airports promote financial investment opportunities in Germany by featuring supermodel Claudia Schiffer.⁸ Seductively posed, her pale-white body is stretched horizontally across the visual frame: an endless space of whiteness. She is casually positioned, reclined on her side. The silky fabric of the German national flag, which is tenderly draped across her torso, accentuates her body's nudity, revealing the immaculate smoothness of her legs and arms. She is facing the camera, her head slightly propped up, framed by her arms and cascading blond hair. Posed against a white screen, she extends an invitation as part of the global marketing campaign: "Invest in Germany—Land of Ideas." This advocacy of monetary investment in German business ventures is further articulated by a series of suggestive slogans: "Discover the beauty of the deal"; "Invest in Germany, boys"; "Interested in a serious relationship?"; "Come on over to my place"; "Follow your instincts."

In the spaces of transborder capitalism, the German marketing initiative is infused with erotic messages. The campaign toys with the seductive image of the goddess *Europa* (interweaving myth, history, ancestry) and the lure of the iconic "white woman" to evoke gendered fantasies of sexual conquest and erotic capture. The campaign-designers envision international investors as male, as businessmen, whose lurid economic desires can be fulfilled by intimacy with the German nation as a female plaything. In this fantasy, transnational financial endeavors are crafted as intimate erotic encounters. Capital investment in Germany is presented as a sexual adventure. The white female body/nation is offered up as a consumable commodity in global capitalist space. Although the white female figure inhabits this imaginary terrain, she is branded as a political subject: the German flag envelops her body; she is marked as a national icon. Like a ventriloquist's doll, she gives corporal form and voice to the nation's desires.

But the work of neoliberal economies, with their seductive promise of unlimited possibilities, is simultaneously defended as a state-protected privilege, a concession of citizenship reserved for European nationals. The political spaces of capitalism are closely guarded. Lawmakers, politicians, and media industries call upon imaginaries of language, gender, and race to authorize or deny participation in the dreamworlds of prosperity. The formation of the European security state after 9/11 2001 has intensified this process by giving rise to new border regimes. Founded on a cohesive network of political, military, and corporate interests, the neoliberal security-state has fundamentally altered the possibilities for negotiating matters of belonging in Europe. My research across Europe's multinational spaces reveals that the collusion of global economic restructuring and entrenched local commitments propagates old as well as new disparities.

Modalities of Difference: Gender, Race, and Immigration

As a reformist entity, the European Union has positioned itself as a legal order against the unprecedented fluidity and instability of global power relations: the judicial system, according to Clare McGlynn, has become the "Union's genetic code."⁹ Although founded on a political order sensitive to difference and social equality, the quest for unity and uniformity tends to erode acceptance of otherness. In other words, Europe's preoccupation with judicial matters, which seeks to neutralize legal pluralism and minimize the incoherence of rights in political practice, produces unforeseen results. Following McGlynn: "There is a tendency for the presence of rights to somehow construct the ideal rights-bearing

citizen. This assertion of ‘ideal citizen’ models, with its consequent marginalization and exclusion of the non-ideal, carries a particular resonance for feminists” and civil rights advocates.¹⁰

European family policy reforms provide an instructive example: by a focus on protecting women’s reproductive capacity, the figure of the single, childless, or lesbian woman is rendered invisible.¹¹ While granting generous provision for maternity leave and maternal health care, such policy measures confirm prevailing gender expectations: men’s non-involvement in domestic tasks is not challenged. In the family reform documents, “women are presented as a homogeneous category without race, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, ability or any other life dimension.”¹² Women’s distinguishing feature is the ability to produce children. Europe’s legal intervention in the family aims to protect female procreativity as a matter of equal opportunity, thereby reifying women’s traditional roles as mothers and caregivers. Although focused on enabling women’s participation in the marketplace without infringing on maternal responsibilities, Europe’s legal rights discourse does not prioritize gender equality. The reforms and provisions speak to political concerns about a demographic crisis, a shrinking European population, which is attributed to decreasing fertility rates among white women.¹³

In what manner are national hegemonies of being and belonging transformed when subjected to the regulatory mechanisms of the European Union? The formation of a united Europe requires normative standards for implementing binding policies: the rights of equality or prohibitions of discrimination need to be enforceable across different nation states. Governed by efforts to avert a legitimation crisis, European unification proceeds by a turn to the global legal order: the supranational polity is stabilized by drawing on the repertoire of human rights laws and the “universally valid” normative underpinnings of legislation. Europe’s interface with global legislative standards facilitates political integration. But at the same time, as Jo Shaw cautions, “dominant ideologies about women, motherhood, family life, and the sexual division of labor” become European legal doctrine without critical attention to the diversity of women’s experience.¹⁴

In contemporary Europe, gender politics are reconfigured by a global imaginary. But in this process, ethnonational and local machinations of race, sex, and nation remain uncontested.¹⁵ The turn to global human rights is a legitimating practice: it advocates a pseudo-rational universalism that negates awareness of the existing modalities of gender and ethnoracial inequalities. In this manner, the religious practices and social worlds of Muslim women as immigrants or refugees have gained attention as critical transborder matters and national security issues rather than as formative fields of civil rights, democracy, and citizenship. Despite the interface with global human rights norms, Europe’s imaginaries of national belonging remain exclusionary and ethnocentric. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that immigration policies and cultural attitudes to ethnic diversity are not yet uniformly synchronized among European Union member states, as suggested by the following example:

SNAPSHOT TWO. In Bulgaria, a European Union state since 2007, the trope of the *Muslim woman* has promoted intense debates about the public frontiers of gendered subjectivities. As in France, where Islamophobia is implicated in the controversial ban on the Muslim headscarf in public schools, Bulgaria has considered “legal regulations on the wearing of religious symbols” by women.¹⁶ Similar controversies about the *hijab* have emerged in Holland, Belgium, Italy, and Germany, where the admissibility of ‘conspicuous’ religious clothing in public schools and secular institutional spaces has come under consideration by lawmakers. In Bulgaria, however, as Kristen Ghodsee observed, when several Muslim schoolgirls filed complaints with the national *Commission of Protection Against Discrimination*, the court’s ruling merely affirmed the local headmaster’s authority to enforce existing school uniform codes. In those cases, where such dress codes were already in place, Muslim schoolgirls were mandated to continue their public educa-

tion “bareheaded,” a decision judged to “promote gender equality.”¹⁷ In other instances, where no such dress codes were evident, the commission ruled that the schoolgirls were free to wear whatever clothing they desired. By empowering local institutions, postsocialist Bulgaria has managed to safeguard the public deportment of Muslim female bodies from state intervention.

Bulgaria’s judicial approach is remarkably different from the course of action taken in other western European countries, where the public demeanor of Muslim women is socially monitored and legally restricted. In Bulgaria, Muslims are political subjects with long-standing claims to membership in the national community: “Unlike in Germany, Britain or France, Bulgaria’s Muslims have been [citizens for centuries] as a legacy of the Ottoman Empire.”¹⁸ The religious attire of Muslim girls is thereby less entangled in debates about immigration, national security, and the resistance of ethnic minorities to integrate or westernize. While not completely disengaged from Europe’s neocolonial or imperialist legacies, including ethno-religious intolerance, the headscarf debates in Bulgaria are differently encoded by economic rationality: secondary education in Bulgaria depends on tuition-paying students and the continuous enrollment of Muslim girls in public schools is judged a critical issue.¹⁹ By contrast, in France, a Muslim woman’s hijab and facial covering is deemed an “assimilation defect,” a rejection of French values of equality,²⁰ which results in the denial or negation of citizenship status.²¹

Why has the Islamic female body been so vigorously pushed into the center of political attention? Spectacularized by media, commodified by political discourse, and scrutinized in public debates, the figure of the Muslim woman has emerged as a global symbol of modernity’s female double. In Europe’s orientalist imagination, the public sight of veiled female bodies invokes fantasies about polygamy, arranged marriages, honor killings, domestic confinement, and other imagined affronts to European sensibilities regarding gender roles and sexual mores.²² The practice of female veiling is interpreted as an outward sign of the patriarchal reach of Islam, which prevents Muslim women from shedding their cultural allegiance and inhibits their ability to become assimilated European subjects. This Europeanizing logic negates the meanings attached to the veil by Muslim women themselves, who wear it as a dense signifier of distinction, social standing, devotion, and protection. The use of the veil or some other form of head-body-covering has historically been regarded as a liberating device. As a means of “portable seclusion,” as Lila Abu-Lughod explained, it grants women the freedom of mobility.²³ Since a conventional ‘cover’ enables Muslim women to freely move about in public, it makes little sense that they should desire to denounce or abandon this article of clothing. But in Europe, in the volatile terrain of national border security and anti-immigration sentiments, this practice has been encoded with different meanings. Interpreted in political terms as a barrier to cultural integration and as an embodied sign of oppression, the practice of female concealment has become a battleground—a criminalized site—for disciplinary intervention.

Negating Europeanness: The Muslim-Arab-Other

Seen through the affective resonance of a global security lockdown, Europe’s Muslim women are linked to an intrusive, negative ‘immigrant’ presence that needs to be diminished or controlled. Under such conditions, marked by a politics of fear and fluctuating demands for border fortification, divergent images of dangerous alterities are assembled to create a unitary figure: the Muslim–Arab–Other. This iconic template presents a montage of diverse tropes: the *immigrant*, the *terrorist*, the *refugee*, and the *enemy-outsider*. Criminalized as icons of global instability, disorder, and terror, Muslims are stripped of their right to belong. In the European Union, as suggested by the Bulgarian case, this imaginative turn against Muslim minorities has however not yet garnered uniform support. Global anxieties are variously

galvanized in different countries. In Germany, the figure of the Islamic Other is given life by anti-Turkish sentiments, a racial formation energized by memories of postwar economic reconstruction, 'guest' worker recruitment programs, and the desired impermanence of a mobile ethnic labor force. Anti-Islamic politics in France are nourished by resentments against Muslim immigrants from North Africa, whose precarious status as a racial minority in the center of Europe is an effect of the aftermath of French colonial violence. In the Netherlands, the figure of the Muslim is populated by Indonesian immigrants, whose citizenship rights are entangled with their status as descendants of slave laborers in Dutch plantation colonies. In each of these cases, the ethnographic life of Muslim communities has been shaped by political histories, societal memories, and demographic realities. But such local complexities are globally unremembered, replaced by a singular, non-temporal, spatially mobile template: the Muslim Other. The negated icon can thereby subsume salient ethnicities, "drawing together West Indians, Africans, South Asians into a blackening singularity as uninvited immigrant presence."²⁴ Reified by global ideologies, the construct of the Islamic Other furnishes a distorted lens for assessing difference and alterity.

Embedded in political fantasies about national security, terrorism, and border protection, as Achille Mbembe observed, Europeanness "is imagined as an identity against the Other."²⁵ Tangible alterities or figures of difference (the veiled Muslim woman, the Arab terrorist, the black immigrant) occupy a strategic place in the determination of Europeanness and the articulation of the corresponding fields of whiteness. These "largely unspoken racial connotations" of national belonging in Europe, as Stuart Hall suggests, are encoded by a cultural logic of difference that promotes either assimilation or exclusion.²⁶ National distinction is manufactured along a narrow register that "accords differing groups cultural normativity or deviance."²⁷ In this volatile terrain, according to Leora Bilsky, the European nation state is "caught between the need to enforce sameness and the fear of absolute difference, with no middle ground."²⁸

What modalities of gender or race and what machinations of belonging are deployed by Europe's border regime when assessing residence or citizenship privileges for immigrants? Europeanness is both confirmed by appearance and corroborated by performance. Practices of "cultural citizenship" or "social processes of whitening," as Aihwa Ong points out, are monitored by public officials to ascertain whether a person's "embodiment of culturally correct citizenship and privilege" has been successful.²⁹ The Europeanization of Muslim women not only prohibits the public assertion of ethnic difference but also demands a refashioning of femininity. The forcible unveiling of the Muslim woman's body in European nation states, as in France or Germany, suggests that integration or assimilation requires compliance with the practices of capitalist consumer culture. Minority women are rendered 'white' or socially acceptable when they embody the sexualizing regimes of commoditization.

Shifting Signposts of National Belonging

At this juncture of globalization, national security, and Europeanization, the cultural politics of belonging to a nation-state in Europe continue to be haunted by the histories of empire and colony. Why should this be the case? And what impact does it have on matters of national belonging? While conventionally located in a distinct geographic space, Europe stretches far beyond continental boundaries as a result of the formation of the European Union. For concurrent with the inclusion of the various member states, the European Union has also incorporated those overseas (remnant colonial) territories that did not yet achieved independence from former imperial nations. As a geopolitical entity, the European Union thereby extends across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, reaching from Indonesia, Africa, South and Central America to Polynesia. Examples include the overseas territories of Portugal, Spain, and Denmark (Greenland), the United Kingdom (Cayman, Turks and Caicos Islands, Virgin Islands, British

Indian Ocean Territories, Bermuda), France (French Polynesia, Martinique, French Guiana, Reunion), and the Netherlands (Aruba, Antilles). National subjects who legally reside in these various non-selfgoverning parts of the world have become European citizens with the inclusion of the respective Metropolitan states as Union members. What are the implications of this political reality for European pluralism?

The resident populations of EU overseas territories are European nationals. As European Union citizens, they are granted the same privileges and rights as any other European national with regard to travel, mobility, work, and residence (across the Schengen zone). In this context, the relative degrees of 'whiteness', as defined by the European national self-imagination, no longer hold up as publicly validated signs of belonging. How then have European nationals "fashioned their distinction"³⁰ in attempts to reconstitute themselves as global citizens in a multi-ethnic, plurilingual, and postimperial Europe? Markers of nationality, I argue, have shifted or expanded from visual to auditory signposts. Language competence and speech habits have become political instruments for measuring degrees of assimilation and, in turn, suitability for citizenship. In addition to appearance or skin color, national languages are used as sites for demarcating inclusion and exclusion. Although the European Union population is plurilingual, member states and national regions have begun to fiercely defend their sovereign political borders by mandating language tests for immigrants. While defined by a unique political history, Germany is a case in fact.

German unification in the 1990s, that is, the integration of the socialist East with the capitalist West, posed a profound challenge: the creation of a single nation-state and the transformation of legal subjects (citizens) into nationals. A unified Germany necessitated alternative ways of *thinking* and *feeling* the nation. By what means could such a sense of participation in a political community be produced? According to Etienne Balibar, there are two complementary routes to this: by *language* and by *race*.³¹ These principles of national belonging, as my research reveals, often operate together, in tandem.

Although the collapse of the socialist regime in the German Democratic Republic and the opening of the Berlin Wall in 1989 were supported internationally, visions of an expansive German state evoked an apprehensive uneasiness. Subsequent anti-refugee riots, anti-immigrant street violence, the destruction of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, the arson murders of Turkish and other immigrant families, and the fire-bombings of refugee housing, all "seemed to confirm warnings of the political consequences of German unification."³² Segments of the German population wanted to "reaffirm ethnocultural homogeneity—as expressed in the slogan 'Germany for Germans' and the often repeated mantra 'Germany is not an immigration society.'"³³ Such sentiments reemerged in 2014, energized by the PEGIDA movement (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamicization of the Occident) and its slogan: 'We are the Nation' (*Wir sind das Volk*). The anxieties of German integration, the influx of refugees, and matters of European border security became trigger points for excavating collective sentiments and memories of a national community of ethnic Germans.

What were the political responses to this crisis of identity formation? Preoccupied with gatekeeping, border-guarding, and national armament, German politicians were persistent in their refusal to "improve the protection of minorities through detailed anti-discrimination legislation."³⁴ The political answer to the challenges of inclusion took form through government campaigns "against the perceived abuse of the liberal right of asylum by so-called economic refugees."³⁵ Applicants for political refugee status were criminalized.³⁶ Portrayed as parasites, freeloaders, and welfare spongers, ethnic minorities were treated as a threat to the German nation.³⁷ The political instrumentalization of anti-foreign sentiments by mainstream democratic parties promoted an ethnic fortress mentality: the closing of national borders, the reduction of the resident alien population, and the limiting of immigration, in particular that of refugees.³⁸ A political climate, which encouraged a renaissance of nationalism, ethnicization, and racism, effectively impeded the implementation of programs designed to safeguard the legal status of foreign nationals and their offspring born in Germany.

Nurtured by an understanding of nationhood as a homogenous community based on common descent (*Abstammungsgemeinschaft*), the formation of a united Germany was complicated by an organic notion of belonging.³⁹ The citizenship law of the Federal Republic of Germany determines national membership through the idiom of descent, as expressed by the Latin term *ius sanguinis*, “power/law of blood.”⁴⁰ Enacted in 1913—and still in effect today—the German citizenship law permits, and even encourages, the “nation’s racial closure.”⁴¹ In other words, immigrant children born in Germany do not automatically acquire citizenship status.

Making Nationals: Blood, Space, and Language

How can immigrants become German citizens when nationality is rooted in descent by blood? This question became a much-contested issue in 1998, when the leftist coalition government made a concerted effort to reform the country’s naturalization practices. The German Chancellor wanted “to create an open society, with flexible borders, to make Germans capable of joining the European Union.”⁴² Yet attempts to reform the citizenship law by eliminating the blood-principle of national belonging proved unsuccessful.⁴³ A subsequent proposal, introduced by independent democrats (Free Democratic Party) under the heading “dual citizenship for children” seemed more palatable. Dual citizenship or binationality was to create a hyphenated identity for second-generation immigrants by appending German citizenship to that of national origin.

The proposal affirmed the privileged status of native-born Germans. As citizens by hereditary sanguinity, German nationals retained their membership in an ethno-racial community of descent. But immigrants, perceived as transient bodies in geopolitical space, merely gained an identity supplement. Dual citizenship, acquired by *ius soli* (territory/residence), was read as a signifier of otherness, marking a life course of displacement and uprootedness. The legal reform instituted a two-tiered, caste-like system of national belonging: by blood (descent) and by space (residence); one native-German, based on consanguinity, which is presumed to be natural, authentic, and permanent; the other foreign-German, based on territorial affinity, which is deemed artificial, inauthentic, contractual, and impermanent. Given the underlying racial paradigm, it seemed only logical that the citizenship status of immigrant children be temporary: in its current form, as ratified in 2002, German nationality can be abrogated upon a child’s entry into adulthood.⁴⁴ The hyphenated citizen is treated as a *flexible* commodity: German nationality is issued on loan; the German passport is granted to immigrants as a revocable entitlement. In a united Germany, *natural* or inherited citizenship enshrines claims of allegiance to a national community of blood; by contrast, “*flexible* citizenship”⁴⁵ is treated as a counterfeit form.

The nationality debates had a decisive impact on border matters, resulting in ever more drastic restrictions on access to citizenship. In response to the mandates of unification, and in seeking to reconcile the uneven recruitment of subjects by regimes of blood and space, German politicians began to redefine the frontiers of the nation-state in terms of linguistic practices. By the late 1990s, issues of sovereignty and nationhood were recast by visions of the German body politic as a discrete community of native-language speakers. This premise of linguistic unity was transferred to the threshold of nationality. Germanness was to be expressed through the idiom of language. The transformation of political subjects into nationals should now require an act of linguistic performance: speaking German. Such a formation of linguistic nationality, although intended to promote inclusion, became simultaneously a mechanism of segregation and exclusion.

In the accompanying public debates, the criteria of eligibility for naturalization and citizenship (*Einbürgerung*) were linked to language: the immigrants’ knowledge of German. Christian Democrats insisted that applicants for citizenship status needed to document their “integration into German soci-

ety” by having achieved an “attestable level of language fluency.”⁴⁶ Potential immigrants, according to this proposal, were expected to enroll in mandatory German language courses, preferably in their home countries; the applicants’ linguistic competence was to be certified by means of a final exam.⁴⁷ The working draft of the dual-citizenship proposal likewise insisted on “sufficient familiarity with the German language” as a prerequisite for naturalization.⁴⁸ The primary aim was to “promote the integration of foreigners by offering German language courses. Foreigners completing such courses could obtain ‘integration certificates’ that entitled them to receive unlimited work permits.”⁴⁹ Representatives from liberal and conservative political parties regarded a formal evaluation of the applicants’ “knowledge of the German language” as indispensable.⁵⁰ The Bavarian Christian Union Party demanded a standardized “spelling test” for citizenship applicants.⁵¹ Likewise, Social Democrats wanted to determine whether resident aliens had acquired “sufficient mastery of German.”⁵² Otto Schilly, then federal minister of domestic affairs, suggested in his original draft proposal that foreigners should be denied German citizenship if “communication with them proved impossible” and “if they were unable to make themselves understood in German.”⁵³ In its current form, as ratified by Germany’s parliament in 2002, and reaffirmed in 2008, the legal provisions of the national integration text determine “German language competence” as a prerequisite for residence permits (for spouses) and naturalization.⁵⁴ However, in 2011 the German Supreme Court and the EU High Court have contested these provisions as incompatible with the anti-discrimination provisions put in place in 2007.⁵⁵

This emphasis on linguistic nationality might explain why German lawmakers agreed to extend the right of citizenship to children: second-generation immigrants can “inhabit the national language and through it the nation itself.”⁵⁶ The linguistic construction of national membership “possesses plasticity,” for a language community “is by definition *open*”: ideally it “assimilates anyone, but holds no one”; and although it continuously absorbs new members, it “produces the feeling that it has always existed.”⁵⁷ Linguistic nationality fabricates “a collective memory which perpetuates itself at the cost of an individual forgetting of ‘origins.’”⁵⁸ This formative power of linguistic systems, which provides nation-states with the capacity to absorb and assimilate a diversity of subjects, seems to exhibit a democratic propensity. But such a making of nationals is also inherently coercive: through the medium of language, and its strategic deployment in citizenship and immigration politics, the nation engrafts a hegemonic memory of Germanness.

Language Proficiency and Racial Hierarchies

Language politics in a united Germany seek to reinvigorate a fictive ethnicity of Germanness: the national community, that is, the population included and governed within the political frontiers of the state, is ethnicized through language. By imagining the German nation-form as a linguistic entity, social or political disparities can be “expressed and relativized as different ways of speaking the national language.”⁵⁹ This has obvious political consequences. While the unity of a language community appears naturally predestined, German unification shows that linguistic uniformity is not sufficient to produce or to sustain ethnicity. Its historical specificity is affixed to a multitude of countries. As in the case of a divided Germany, the same language may be used by different nations. The same applies to English or French.⁶⁰ For language “to be tied down to the frontiers of a particular” national form, it requires “an extra degree of particularity,” a “principle of closure, of exclusion.”⁶¹ This principle is evident in the racialization of language.

The ability of foreign-born individuals to increase the range of their linguistic competence, and to thereby become German nationals, is guarded by a racial imaginary of segregation and prohibition. Access to language learning is severely restricted, and achieved by the closure of linguistic borders. Pub-

lic language programs for immigrants are offered, but the eligibility for enrollment is determined by their origin and residence status. Former labor migrants with their families and offspring, recognized political refugees, immigrants or resident aliens, and ethnic German resettlers are treated differentially. The categories of foreignness and ethnic difference are constructed by variable degrees of linguistic access. For instance, applicants for political asylum, even recognized refugees, are officially forbidden to enroll in state-funded German classes: “No public efforts must be made to promote the assimilation or integration of individuals, whose long-term presence in Germany has not been confirmed.”⁶² Certain foreign populations are to remain culturally excluded and linguistically isolated.⁶³ This policy of linguistic segregation for refugees stands in stark contrast to the nation-state’s treatment of other foreign-born individuals. Ethnic German resettlers from Russia or Eastern Europe are granted unconditional language access: legally defined as nationals, based on the principles of filiation and *ius sanguinis*, the blood-right of extended kinship, their linguistic integration is supported by a multitude of separate government budgets. Resident aliens or immigrants, however, can enroll in subsidized German language courses only if they meet certain conditions. The decisive factor is their national origin: citizens of the European Union states or former German contract-states are permitted to enhance their German language competence.⁶⁴ But even in these cases, learning is restrictive: the duration and intensity of language programs (by hours, vocabulary, grammar) varies with each category of the ethnic register.

Therefore, the “openness of the linguistic community is an ideal openness”:⁶⁵ its permeability is in reality controlled by the official German phantasm of hereditary ethnic substance. And the greater the state’s intervention in the foreigners’ access to German, “the more do differences in linguistic competence function as ‘caste’ differences, assigning different ‘social destinies’ to individuals.”⁶⁶ Under these conditions, strategies of linguistic exclusion come to be associated with “forms of a *corporal habitus*” that “confer on the act of speaking,” in its particular, idiosyncratic traits, “the function of a racial or quasi-racial mark”:⁶⁷ “foreign accents,” degrees of language competence (broken German), unaccustomed and non-standard “styles of speech, language ‘errors’ or, conversely, ostentatious ‘correctness’” instantly designate a non-native speaker as “belonging to a particular population and are spontaneously interpreted as reflecting a specific origin” and judicial or “hereditary” status.⁶⁸ The production of Germanness thus also entails, following Balibar, a “racialization of language” and a “verbalization of race.”

Linguistic Nationalism: The Rise of Language Purists

During the 1990s, an era marked not only by German unification but also the constitution of the European Union, the sense of belonging to a linguistic community has reemerged as an icon of Germanness, invigorated by the myth of ethnic unity through language purity. Since German unification, a diversity of literary societies has come into existence to reclaim and fortify the nation’s linguistic boundaries. Under the impact of global capitalism and European integration, which gave rise to hybrid forms of multilingual communication, Anglicization, and a traffic in foreign vocabularies, the survival of Germanness—signified by German language—is deemed threatened.⁶⁹ The rapid formation of literary societies attests to the reinvigoration of a popular nationalism committed to the closure of linguistic frontiers: a desire to purge the national idiom—the “beloved mother tongue”—of contaminating foreign influences.

Most prominent is the “German Language Society” (*Verein Deutsche Sprache*). Founded in 1997, it recruited over 16,000 dues-paying members in less than four years. By 2013, it had more than doubled its membership.⁷⁰ The members, drawn from a broad social spectrum, stand united as “citizens for the preservation and cultivation of German.”⁷¹ According to the society’s official charter, the members are bound “to defend the self-esteem and dignity of all human beings, whose native tongue is German”; “to combat the amalgamation of German” and its “excessive inundation” by foreign words; and to protect the

“cultural distinctness” and “survival of the German language.”⁷² The movement’s publicity campaigns, via the Internet, newspapers, and television, seek to implant in public consciousness a sense of linguistic ruin: the adulteration and corruption of the “national character” of German by the infiltration of foreign idioms.⁷³ Media headlines since 1997 in both local and national papers articulate the movement’s concerns: “Battling against word heretics”; “Safeguarding the German language”; “Language purification”; “The shambles of language”; “Against language trash”; “The corruption of the German language”; “Protection against language dirt”; “The purging of language”; “Fighters for the purity of German”; “The foreign subversion of language is shameful”; “Against language colonization”; “The murder of language”; “Pro German.”⁷⁴

In an effort to sustain media coverage and public support, the German Language Society has launched a series of initiatives: the establishment of local and regional chapters; the creation of a nation-wide language forum; the production of Germanized glossaries and dictionaries; the bestowal of literary prizes and awards; and the administration of language tests. Moreover, in trying to gain recognition as a public service advocate, the *German Language Society* has inaugurated a “linguistic consumer protection” program. Under this rubric, the language practices of major service sectors are scrutinized for potential assaults on the national idiom: the use of foreign words, especially Anglicisms, is rendered a public offense. The targets of inspection include the postal service, hospitals, funeral homes, airlines, train companies, and “German health insurance providers, German TV guides, German political parties, German travel agencies, German utilities, and German mail order companies.”⁷⁵ The furor of the publicity scandals provoked by such language tests and linguistic consumer protection surveys has effectively placed an entire society on language probation: national allegiance is enforced by linguistic censorship; nationalization proceeds by the erasure of non-German vocabularies (which is also a turn against Europeanization).

The ethnicization of language is enforced by other publicity campaigns. Since 1997, this movement of “language warriors” or linguistic purists regularly conducts nation-wide media contests in search of “the most un-German word [*Unwort*] of the year,” the “language heretic [*Sprachhunzer*] of the month,” and “the language adulterer [*Sprachpanscher*] of the year.”⁷⁶ The finalists, typically businesses, institutions, or public figures, are chosen on the basis of nation-wide opinion polls; the protagonists are then put at the pillory to be publicly ridiculed or shamed on charges of language defilement.⁷⁷ Such media campaigns are televised and publicized on the news, Facebook, and Twitter, thereby broadening the public reach of shaming.

Conclusion: Language Politics in a United Europe

The ethnonational fabrication of language has profoundly altered the conditions under which issues of immigration, citizenship, and national sovereignty are brought to light in public debates in the European Union. According to Claudia Breger:

Inclusivity with respect to race, national origin, language, and/or religion has perhaps proven to be more challenging in the German context. To be sure, the new century brought, on the one hand, belated—and internally fraught—processes of opening up hegemonic German conceptions and practices of national distinction... On the other hand, these hopeful developments have been counteracted by the confluence of local legacies of exclusion with transnational Islamophobia trends... Over the course of the past decade, German public discourses have been marked by a frightening intensification, and mainstreaming of anti-Muslim racism.⁷⁸

In this social climate, questions of immigration and national identity have been variously thematized in Europe. Language has become an ethnoracial formation within the broader European concerns of border protection and national belonging. Germany is not an isolated case. France has declared French as the official national language by a constitutional mandate: government business, legal transactions, social services, health care, and public education, including universities, are bound to the exclusive use of French. This mandate is however less successful in the private sector. Despite the European Union's advocacy of multilingualism and the push for 'languages without borders,' recent surveys suggest that less than forty-two percent of the European student population achieves rudimentary competence in a second language.⁷⁹

There are notable national differences in multilingual proficiencies. In the United Kingdom, second language competence drops to fourteen percent, and in France to nine percent. These statistics are however misleading. The 2011/12 surveys focus exclusively on formal second-language education in schools, where English, French, German, and Spanish or Russian remain privileged. These studies thereby ignore immigrant students' native language skills and multilingual competence in Arabic and Turkish or other Asian or African languages, which are not perceived on equal terms with Europe's national speech communities. The political and educational institutions of the European Union not only negate non-hegemonic forms of multilingualism, but treat native-speakers of non-national languages as foreign. Language nationalism is articulated in terms of race in the United Kingdom, where the members of the white British working-class fear to become 'invisible' or 'ethnically erased' by immigrant speech-communities, a process imagined as a blackening of the white phenotype by non-European language speakers.⁸⁰

The presence of diverse populations in the European Union, whether immigrants, refugees, tourists, or citizens from member states or overseas territories, has complicated matters of national distinction by the signs of color: the racializing codes of 'whiteness' or 'blackness' are no longer reliable tools for ascertaining foreignness. In turn, language politics in Europe have become matters of national security. This is accomplished by both the racialization of language and the verbalization of race. Although the impact of global capitalism in Europe might serve as a catalyst for linguistic pluralism, such currents of change are always culturally mediated, resisted, transformed, and politically negotiated. While the future of a truly plurilingual Europe remains uncertain, the push for national sovereignty and the racialization of language has had a decisive impact on the turn toward exclusionary policies of citizenship in a globalizing Europe.

Notes

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33. Kurthen et al., "Postunification Challenges," 5-6.
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37. Margret Jäger, "Sprache der Angst," *die tageszeitung* (March 24, 1993): 1; Linke, "Politics of Blood."
38. For further discussion, see Faruk Sen, "Managing the Integration of Foreigners in Germany," American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, Washington D.C. (March 31, 1999); Philip L. Martin, *Germany: Reluctant Land of Immigration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). In response to economic pressures, German labor laws for foreigners were revised in 2000. Since then, refugees are legally permitted to seek employment after several months of residence in Germany. Yet in reality, local bureaucracies stifle this process. Applications for work permits by refugees are categorically rejected. Local labor offices justify such practices by reference to statewide unemployment figures, which show a surplus of job-seeking German citizens. However, in local demographic terms, this is a statistical fiction that is strategically deployed against foreign applicants by an ethnonationalist system of governance.
39. Jäger, "Sprache der Angst"; Linke, "Politics of Blood."
40. Germany's Basic Law, article 116a.
41. Günter Frankenberg, "Eine Rolle rückwärts: Streit um den Doppelpaß," *Die Zeit* 8 (February 18, 1999): 11.
42. Thomas Darnstädt, "Staatsbürgerschaft," *Der Spiegel* 7 (February 15, 1999): 30.
43. Frank Böckelmann, "Bürgerrechte mit Rabatt," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 272 (November 23, 1998): 49; Andrea Böhm, "Die Mischung macht's," *Die Zeit* 8 (February 18, 1999): 13-16.
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49. Philip L. Martin, *Germany: Reluctant Land of Immigration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 36-7.
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52. Tagblatt, "Staatsbürgerschaftsreform," *Schwäbisches Tagblatt* 55 (January 18, 1999): 2.
53. Tagblatt, "Staatsbürgerschaftsreform," 2; Barbara John, "Who is German?" American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, Washington, D.C. (January 28, 1999).
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56. Balibar, "Nation Form," 99.
57. Balibar, "Nation Form," 98, 99.
58. Balibar, "Nation Form," 99.
59. Balibar, "Nation Form," 97.
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61. Balibar, "Nation Form," 99.
62. Veronika Kabis-Alamba, "Deutsch für alle--nein Danke?" *die tageszeitung* (November 1, 1999): 18.
63. Klaus F. Geiger, "Einstellungen zur multikulturellen Gesellschaft," *Migration* 9 (1991): 11-48; Klaus J. Bade, *Ausländer, Aussiedler, und Asyl in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1992).
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71. Verein, "Startseite," *Verein zur Wahrung der deutschen Sprache* (1999): <http://vwds.de>.
72. Verein, "Startseite," *Verein Deutsche Sprache* (2001); Verein, "Satzung," *Verein Deutsche Sprache* (2001).
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74. Zeitungsartikel, "Artikel über den Verein zur Wahrung der deutschen Sprache, 1997-1999" (1999): <http://www.vds-ev.de/presse/>; Verein, "Pressespiegel," *Verein Deutsche Sprache* (2001).
75. Verein, "Sprachtest," *Verein Deutsche Sprache* (2001): <http://vds-ev.de/denglisch/sprachtest.php>.
76. See Tagblatt, "Sprache: Unwort 1999 gesucht," *Schwäbisches Tagblatt* 55 (October 22, 1999): 1; Tagblatt, "Shea bedauert 'Unwort'," *Schwäbisches Tagblatt* 56 (February 17, 2000): 2. The media contests, ushered in by a Frankfurt linguist, attempt to censure "the irresponsible or discriminating use of public language" (Janich, "Sprachkultivierung," 82). The annual campaigns produce a form of ethno-political correctness by a focus on the "misuse" of words: language practices are monitored for "un-German" transgressions. Such a public censorship of speech acts seeks to discipline cultural attitudes and values through the policing of language.
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