

Extreme Misogyny

Materialization of a Paradox: Gender and the Far-Right

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Master's Thesis in Modern International and Transnational History

Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History

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Abstract

This thesis traces the historical trajectory of anti-feminist attitudes of the far-right. It is a paradox that the far-right oppose immigration in defense of liberal values such as gender equality when they chiefly appropriate an agenda that tends to infringe on the rights of women and minorities. The main accent of research on gender aspects of the far-right has previously been on radical populist parties, which leaves a gap for historical research on far-right movements such as *Nouvelle Droite*. This thesis explores *Nouvelle Droite* in the period between 1968 – 1990.

The analysis of *Nouvelle Droite*'s positions on women's rights confirms in part the scholarly consensus that gender is crucial and omnipresent in far-right discourses. The far-right in general weaponizes women's rights and gender equality to further a racially discriminative and anti-immigrant agenda. However, the far-right has become increasingly openly anti-feminist in recent years, which was not evident in the rhetoric of *Nouvelle Droite*.

Ideas of feminism and women's rights were important in the far-right realm in the decades between 1970 and 1990. However, *Nouvelle Droite*'s positions on women's rights ran contrary to established far-right ideology. Although the *Nouvelle Droite* espoused nativist and authoritarian views, they also voiced support for abortion rights, sexual freedom, and the right to wear the Muslim veil. Nonetheless, *Nouvelle Droite* spoke in favor of gender equality to justify a racial anti-immigration platform, and their feminism went little beyond rhetoric. Through their feminist self-framing, *Nouvelle Droite* argued that foreign cultures were incompatible with Europe, on account of their gender inequality and therefore inferiority of Europe.

Crucially, *Nouvelle Droite* reconceptualized terms such as sexual freedom, liberty, and feminism in accordance with their anti-egalitarian views. Therefore, concepts of feminism and gender equality must be seen in context to be fully comprehended. In the case of *Nouvelle Droite*, these concepts were layered with xenophobic and misogynist rhetoric.

Acknowledgments

I am inclined to adopt a long perspective on the journey that culminated in this thesis and consider those who have provided inspiration and motivation throughout my years at Blindern. When my master project started, all I knew, was that I wanted to write within extremism and gender. Since then, I have stumbled into the realm of the Nouvelle Droite, and by now I am highly invested.

As I have spent the past year studying why some people view women to be inferior, I am compelled to express my gratitude to some women I know to be capable, strong, and independent. Thank you, Ingrid, Kaja, Regine, Karoline, and Maren. You have filled my student days with insight, humor, and friendship.

My utmost gratitude goes to my supervisor Elisabetta Wolff. Thank you for your advice and support, and for pointing me in the direction of La Nouvelle Droite. Your expertise on the far-right is immense, and I treasure having been at the receiving end of your knowledge and compassion the past year.

I would also like to thank Inger Skjelsbæk at the Center for Gender Research and Center for Research on Extremism, for taking the time to meet with me back in January 2020 and discuss possible avenues for my research.

To my dear ones, thank you. Though you know little about political extremes in the 1970s, you know a lot about supporting me.

Ingrid Skrede, Oslo, June 2021

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Glossary

Ethno-Pluralism: A New Right concept in which different cultures and ethnicities should live separately of each other, in ethno-cultural regions, to preserve cultural specificity.ⁱ

The Far-Right: Refers to actors that are located to the far right on the left-right political spectrum. The ideology rests on the thought that inequalities are natural and therefore some groups are superior to others. This gives rise to especially *nativist* and *authoritarian* opinions.ⁱⁱ

Feminism: Advocacy for women's rights and belief in and desire for political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.

Groupement de Recherche et d'Études pour la Civilisation Européenne (GRECE): A study club that published magazines, the organizational part of the Nouvelle Droite, a metapolitical cultural school of thought.ⁱⁱⁱ

Intersectional Feminism: To understand that women's overlapping identities — including race, class, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and disability status — impact how they experience oppression and discrimination.^{iv}

LGBTQ: The acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.

Misogyny: Hatred of women.

Misandry: Hatred of men.

Multiculturalism: Cultural diversity within society; Composition of people from different ethnic backgrounds who work and live together. Minority groups are entitled to respect for their culture.^v Nouvelle Droite opposed this and countered with **Ethno-Pluralism**.

Nouvelle Droite (ND): The New Right. A collective term used to describe GRECE and its affiliated institutions as a whole and as an umbrella for the movement and people included, sometimes also throughout Europe.

Paganism: A vast and diverse movement of non-monotheistic spiritual beliefs and cultures.^{vi} For Nouvelle Droite, Paganism is closely linked to their ideas of ethnic reconstruction and Pan-European Empire.

Pan-European Empire: A unified and homogeneous empire for Indo-European people.

Patriarchy: A hierarchical-structured society in which men hold more power relative to women.

Sexism: The idea that women are inferior to men.

Introduction

i. Presentation

This thesis explores the historical trajectory of the far-right's relationship with feminism. The far-right is a faction of politics typically associated with *anti-egalitarianism*, *authoritarianism*, and *nativism*.¹ Through my thesis, I argue that anti-feminism is another central aspect of the far-right. That is done through an analysis of a French far-right movement known as *Nouvelle Droite*, and their views on women's rights issues in the period 1968–1990. A framing contention for the thesis is that gender analyses are essential to conceptualize the far-right. Such analyses can help to understand the intersection of gender with other issues within the far-right. The leading question thus becomes *how prevalent the far-right's opposition to gender equality historically has been*.

Gender issues and specifically antifeminism can be identified as central topics within the far-right. This is evident through the characteristics of male-domination of parties and movements, and stereotypical and highly masculine misogynist rhetoric.² The patriarchal feature is one characteristic of the entire conservative right-wing of politics. However, anti-feminist sentiments mark new nationalist policies and rhetoric, which mobilizes the populist and extremist right. As this thesis will show, this is rooted in, among other things, the 'great replacement theory' or 'takeover myth.' High birth rates among non-European immigrants coupled with policies that reduce the birthrate of the native population are believed to result in the decay of the ethno-European population.³ In this context, childbearing is instrumental to the future of the majority race.⁴

The connection between opposition to immigration and opposition to female emancipation is therefore evident. The work to strengthen the individual rights of women, children, and sexual minorities has in recent history met opposition and setbacks in countries where national conservatives and far-right populists are popular.⁵ Scholars on gender and the far-right have argued that a new form of patriarchy and masculine norms are on the rise, ushered by the grievance and fear that traditional values will erode.⁶ The far-right has successfully connected separate issues to a complete story about threats outside and within

¹ Jupskås & Leidig, (eds) "Knowing What's (far) Right", 4.

² Blee "Where Do We Go From Here?", 417, 419.

³ Døving, "Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia", 60.

⁴ Blee, "Where Do We Go From Here?", 420.

⁵ Graff & Korolczuk. "Worse than Communism and Nazism put together": War on Gender in Poland", 175-194.

⁶ Fangen & Skjelsbæk, "Editorial: Special Issue on Gender and the Far-Right", 411-415; Löffler, Luyt & Starck, "Political Masculinities and Populism", 1-9.

against national identity and societal order. Hence, opposition to gender and minority rights is becoming a cornerstone of far-right politics.

This thesis is a study of the French New Right, known as *Nouvelle Droite* (New Right). They were (and remain) a *metapolitical* group on the far-right that emerged during the Cold War. The period of study runs from the birth of the *Nouvelle Droite* in 1968 into the 1990s. Their stance on matters of gender equality, sexual freedom, and women's rights are topics for this analysis. The analysis of their gender views is coupled with an overview of contemporary far-right gender views, to trace continuity and change of views on feminism in the far-right. The main assumption has been that *Nouvelle Droite* espoused a conservative attitude towards gender and equality. Some of *Nouvelle Droite*'s views on women and equality, were different from the way gender is viewed by the far-right today. This change is crucial. The aim is to achieve a complete picture of how far-right ideologies evolve, indeed, by tracing the historical trajectory of the far-right's relationship with feminism. Hence, the thesis presents three main arguments.

First, one crucial aspect of far-right ideology is traditional gender roles. The *Nouvelle Droite* was tied together through the notion of a unified, homogeneous, pan-European empire regenerated in defense against dominant 'materialist' ideologies.⁷ In that context, reproduction and gender roles are arguably central. Gender analyses can therefore illustrate the intersection of gender with other topics within the far-right. The historical approach will show that the far-right ideology has changed in the last 60 years, and women's rights have been a prominent element in this, due to the centrality of difference and inequalities.

Second, certain paradoxes within the far-right relate to inconsistencies between the values they advocated, and the ideals embedded in their ideology. European far-right groups have tended to claim to be defenders of liberal or "Western" rights and ideals while espousing conservative or traditional ideals themselves. The *Nouvelle Droite* expressed support for feminist causes but maintained other positions that arguably hindered gender equality. For instance, the *Nouvelle Droite* denounced liberalism.⁸ This both contradicted the ideal of gender equality and exhibited the paradox of defending Western values opposite foreign cultures. The thesis explores *Nouvelle Droite*'s stances on gender issues and equality to uncover such paradoxes of values.

Third and lastly, it is a paradox that the far-right, whose key concern is opposing mobility across borders and who advocate isolationism and nationalism, often work transnationally.

⁷ Bar-On. "Fascism to the *Nouvelle Droite*", 327.

⁸ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*, 27-28.

While inherently viewed as nation-centered ideologies, far-right movements in general push agendas influenced by knowledge garnered through transnational networks. Paternotte and Kuhar, for instance, insist on the transnational nature of the discourse and strategies against gender in Europe.⁹ Nouvelle Droite (ND) originated in France, but their influence and networking mechanisms were transnational.¹⁰ Indeed, ND also placed little emphasis on national borders, and their aspirations included ideas of pan-Europeanism as ‘race’ was more crucial to them than nationality and national sovereignty.¹¹ Nouvelle Droite spread their ideas through and beyond Europe, and similar think tanks were modeled in other countries by the Nouvelle Droite blueprint. Central ND intellectuals created transnational ties with revolutionary right-wing thinkers throughout Europe. This strategy brought ND ideas to several European countries, as well as the American continents, Australia, and New Zealand.¹² This dimension places the topic within the scholarly field of transnational history.

ii. Organization of the Paper

Through a combination of literature study and analysis of primary sources, this paper traces the historical trajectory of views on gender, women, feminism, and equality within the far-right. I discuss secondary literature related to the issues brought together in my thesis; gender and the far-right. While conventionally viewed as unrelated themes, this thesis will contribute to bridge that gap.

The next sections of the introduction will outline a state of research on gender and the far-right, and penultimately a discussion of methodology. Following this, the first chapter, *Interpretations of Feminism and the Far-Right*, trace the main definitions and challenges of the concepts. Here, I unfold the theoretical argument that the far-right encompasses a series of paradoxes. This is done by taking the dominant definition of the far-right and systematically theorizing the elements of the far-right (e.g., authoritarianism, nativism) with gender and equality.

Thereafter, the second chapter, *the History of the French New Right*, sets the empirical scene from which the thesis has been developed. The focus will be on the Nouvelle Droite, its prominent figures and institutions, and role of women within the movement. Subsequently, the context is discussed, because France as a former colonial power is an informative case for far-right mobilization against gender issues. In addition, liberalism is used as a narrative for

⁹ Paternotte & Kuhar, *Antigender Campaigns in Europe*, 4.

¹⁰ Bar-On, “Fascism to the Nouvelle Droite”, 327.

¹¹ Bar-On, “Fascism to the Nouvelle Droite”, 327 ; Saint-Agnes, “Pour la Liberté Sexuelle”, 19.

¹² Bar-On, “Alain de Benoist: Neo-Fascism With a Human Face?”, 10.

the period of question. The reason is that liberalism captures issues of equality, imperialism, and extreme ideologies. Decolonization altered demographics in both the colonies and the center and forged political and economic ties between the colonizing states and the colonies. These ties lasted and affected foreign and domestic policies. Immigration is an example of a topic that can be linked to both colonialism and modern right-wing extremism. Thus, liberalism conceptualizes the discussion of the far-right and gender.

The third chapter, *Liberté, Egalité and Sexisme* constitutes a thematical analysis of Nouvelle Droite's views on the role of women, sexual freedom, abortion, and religious garments. This analysis is done by studying texts that demonstrate Nouvelle Droite's views on feminism and gender equality. The chapter discusses the problem of rejecting liberty and egalitarianism while at the same time denouncing sexism and misogyny.

Successively, the fourth chapter, *Left, Right, and the Misogyny in Between*, brings the story to a close. This chapter discusses the change in how gender equality has been regarded within the far-right. Crucially, also, that the very political landscape is changing. The topics at hand are historically significant yet remain relevant, as far-right activism has been and continues to be a considerable threat to security. Knowledge about the gender dimension of the far-right helps explain both the politics of global security, and trends in political violence. This is supported by scholars at the *Center for Research on Extremism* at the University of Oslo.¹³ Hence, the thesis will contribute to the literature that shows the relevance of adopting a gender perspective in historical studies of the far-right.

iii. State of Research

Nouvelle Droite

The origins of what today is known as the *Nouvelle Droite* can be traced back to 1968 when the journal *Nouvelle École* first appeared and to the founding of the study club called GRECE, acronym for *Groupement de Recherche et d'Études pour la Civilisation Européenne*. GRECE was officially established by 40 members that sought to radically transform the ideas and discourse of the French political realm.¹⁴ *Nouvelle Droite* connotes the entire movement and connected institutions and translates directly to *New Right*. The terms Nouvelle Droite, New Right, GRECE and abbreviation ND are at times used interchangeably in this paper.

¹³ Skjelsbæk, Leidig, Segers & Thorleifsson, "What Role Does Gender Play in the Far-Right?", 62-64.

¹⁴ Bar-On, "The Ambiguities of the Nouvelle Droite", 339.

Scholars who studied the initial doctrines of GRECE, outlined the following axes: National-Europeanism; critique of egalitarianism through the critique of Christianity; non-linear conception of time (cyclic); praise of Paganism (quest for Indo-European origins), anti-universalism; dislike/fear of the hegemony of the United States; anti-liberalism; right-wing Third Worldism (to avoid uprooting and immigration), and regionalism.¹⁵

Tamir Bar-On broadly conceptualize and treat the clusters of journals (*Nouvelle École, Éléments, Krisis*) and cultural institutes (e.g. GRECE) that initially were formed in France, which spread to other European countries, as the *European New Right* (ENR).¹⁶ Crucially, Bar-On delineated the Right to demonstrate that the ENR was a heterogenous body of thought, in which varying context, periods, countries, regions and ideological strands as well as personalities resulted in variations of the ENR.¹⁷ Moreover, according to Stéphane François, Nouvelle Droite influenced The New Right in Europe and established a transnational European New Right. For instance, there were different neo-right journals originating from the format of GRECE, and GRECE is said to maintain contact with likeminded people across Europe.¹⁸ Shortly put, the New Right was a heterogenous, yet coherent cultural ‘school of thought’, which managed to influence the discourse of extreme ring-wing political parties.¹⁹ This interpretation of the Nouvelle Droite constitutes the basis this thesis is created from.

Graham Macklin asserts that while previous studies have focused upon the foreign policy goals of radical and extreme right-wing and fascist parties, few have explored the nature of transnational networking by the far-right, through which it furthers an anti-globalist, racial agenda.²⁰ The assertion forwarded by Macklin is incorporated in the thesis, as the Nouvelle Droite clearly networked throughout Europe. In that respect, a few authors in addition to Macklin have conducted notable work. Andrea Mammone and Patricia Clavin have provided formidable research on transnational networking, and Anita Nissen has aptly studied that despite dissimilar domestic grievances, historical arcs and identities, far-right activists (in Europe) have constructed and maintained a common identity as Europeans.²¹

¹⁵ François, “Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite”, 24-25; Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*, 4, 7, 35; McCulloch, “The Nouvelle Droite in the 1980s and 1990s”, 162; Mammone, “The Transnational Reaction to 1968”, 231.

¹⁶ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*, 3.

¹⁷ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*, 4.

¹⁸ François, “Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite”, 45-46.

¹⁹ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*, 4, 7.

²⁰ Macklin, “Transnational Networking on the Far-right: The Case of Britain and Germany”, 176-198.

²¹ Mammone, “On the Extreme Right and Transnational History” 2015; Clavin, “Defining Transnationalism,” 2005; Nissen, “The Trans-European Mobilization of “Generation Identity”, 2020.

The Coupling of Gender and the Far-Right

While the far-right has accumulated extensive research, some argue that its gender dimension has remained largely understudied.²² Whereas others would contend that gender is beyond a doubt a feature of the far-right, and moreover that gender is significant in politics, both right-wing and otherwise.²³ In terms of previous academic work, Cas Mudde has done a formidable job in surveying the far-right, its characteristics, actors, and policies.²⁴ Others whose literature has been profoundly important as resources, are Tamir Bar-On, Stéphane François, Alberto Spektorowski and Andrea Mammone who has studied the Nouvelle Droite. The gender and sexuality aspect has been studied by Katrine Fangen, Cathrine Thorleifsson, George Mosse, Kathleen Blee, and Niels Spierings among others.

There has emerged literature that focuses on the gender dimension of *radical right populist parties* in Europe, due to their rise from marginal to government positions. An extensive and recent account is edited by Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte. It illustrates the complexity of gender in politics, namely that it is a nexus between nationalism, religion, redistribution, and reproduction.²⁵ The volume *Right-Wing Populism and Gender. European Perspectives and Beyond*, by Gabriele Dietze and Julia Roth demonstrate how gender is *important* for the far-right.²⁶ By coupling right-wing politics and gender, the authors uncover the relationship between masculinity, gender politics, traditional family values and feminism within the right-wing of politics. A third edited work by Michaela Köttig, Renate Bitzan and Andrea Petö, *Gender and Far-right Politics in Europe*, shows that there are ideological links between far-right movements and antifeminist men's rights movements. This moreover alludes to how the juxtaposition of gender and far-right is becoming a conscious strategy.²⁷

Tjiske Akkermann has through her transnational research on the far-right demonstrated the liberal versus conservative paradox. Far-right parties have since the 1990s gained more conservative stances on gender equality policies than the traditional conservative parties, on for instance childcare, family planning, and public participation for women. Crucially, Akkerman explained that the far-right use a liberal rhetoric on gender equality, yet suggest restrictive policies like veil banning, and curbing immigrant-family reunion.²⁸ This is consistent with similar research on contemporary far-right politics but is dissimilar to what the Nouvelle Droite espoused. Either the ND and contemporary far-right conceptualize their

²² Taggart, Kaltwasser, Espejo & Ostiguy, *Populism: An Overview of the Concept and the State of the Art*, 2017.

²³ Blee & Creasap, "Conservative and Right-Wing Movements," 224.

²⁴ Mudde. *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, 2016.

²⁵ Kuhar & Paternotte, (eds) *Anti-gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing Against Equality*, 2017.

²⁶ Dietze & Roth, *Right-Wing Populism and Gender. European Perspectives and Beyond*, 2020.

²⁷ Bitzan, Petö & Köttig, *Gender and Far-right Politics in Europe*, 2017.

²⁸ Akkerman, "Gender and the Radical Right in Western Europe", 37-60.

views on women differently, or issues of women's rights has become more salient for the far-right in the period after 1990.

All these contributions have provided a solid introduction to the current climate of gender discourse in Europe. It furthermore offers evidence of international campaigns against gender equality, which remain avenues for further research.

The literature discussed above mostly uses the party organization and the national realm as objects of study. Hence, this leaves a gap for a study of far-right movements that are not parties grappling for a seat in parliament or government. Moreover, a historical perspective is sometimes missing, meaning there is room for a thesis that historically traces the topic. This assumption is supported by Kathleen Blee, who suggests that the nature of the far-right is in flux, "moving both toward global integration and toward locally distinct networks and groups."²⁹ Blee's article represents the development of feminist scholarship on the far-right, which recognizes that the far-right build political efforts on and gain support for misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia.³⁰

Coupling of Anti-Feminism and Anti-Immigration

According to consolidated research, the general assumption that build anti-feminism or 'anti-gender' is that traditional values such as archaic family and gender roles are threatened or under siege. Therefore, the rise of the radical right is assumed to stall the advancement of feminist causes. The lack of support for gender equality by some European right-wing parties is shown by Niels Spierings and Andrej Zaslove.³¹ In concise terms, the radical right advocates a return to traditional family values and advocates against promoting gender equality.³² Benchmark characteristics detected in scholarly literature are, therefore, promotion of the 'natural family', archaic gender roles and masculine tropes, and opposition to homosexuality and gender equality.³³

Opposition to immigration – across the political spectrum – is an issue which most forcefully mobilizes politically.³⁴ Similarly, opposition to feminism is becoming a mobilizing issue. A central trope in far-right discourse is that the 'liberal establishment', meaning most often the politicians in power, are traitors responsible for the rapid decay of the nation.³⁵ What

²⁹ Blee, "Where Do We Go From Here?", 429.

³⁰ Blee, "Where Do We Go From Here?", 416-431.

³¹ Spierings & Zaslove, "Conclusion: dividing the populist radical right", 164.

³² Notwithstanding the oft mentioning of family, it is seldom expounded or explained what is meant by that. That could be due to the implied importance of it; family is crucial, and everyone has some form of understanding of its value. To avoid definitions also allows the far-right the benefit of only needing to detect deviations of family.

³³ Dancygier, "Another Progressive's Dilemma: Immigration, the Radical Right & Threats to Gender Equality", 59.

³⁴ Dancygier, *Immigration and Conflict in Europe*, 3-20.

³⁵ Thorleifsson, "The Swedish Dystopia: Violent Imaginaries of the Radical Right", 532.

lacks research, however, is which place antifeminism has in that narrative. Therefore, when aiming to understand the span of the ideology of the far-right, anti-feminism is relevant. Still, research on this is often, as shown, conducted on political parties and the party organizations.³⁶ Surely, political parties play a prominent role in shaping, creating, and influencing policies and laws. However, both loosely and highly formalized organizations have an agency in influencing attitudes in public opinion. The Nouvelle Droite chose their agency model to be *metapolitical* to convey their views and influence politics without being a participating actor in politics. Therefore, the Nouvelle Droite is an informative case to study the coupling of anti-feminism and anti-immigration in a changing political landscape.

Anti-gender and anti-immigration issues are thus closely linked. In fact, as demonstrated, where immigration is considered in political science or humanities research, gender is often a component or variable mentioned in the discussion. Women figure centrally in the fears of the radical right in two ways. First, as potential victims of an (often immigrant) other, and second as reproducers of the nation.³⁷ Research demonstrate that it is common for organizations and activists on the far-right to legitimize anti-Islamic attitudes and strict anti-immigration politics by referring to women's rights and women's security.³⁸ Therefore, migrants are perceived as risks by the far-right, in terms of women's security. All the while, the far-right appropriate traditional conservative gender politics, which might not advance gender equality. This is a paradox of gender and the far-right.

iv. Literature and Method

This work aims to demonstrate continuities and change of views on gender equity within the far-right. The overall goal is to combine a secondary literature study with an analysis of primary sources. Moreover, this is a thesis within the transnational history field. Therefore, the analysis of Nouvelle Droite is largely based upon the work done by Tamir Bar-On, who has argued that ND created a European-wide far-right political culture.³⁹ Bar-On argued that the worldview of ND was shaped by transnational influences and that the ND, in turn, shaped a decidedly more right-wing political culture in Europe.⁴⁰ The arguments presented in the thesis are limited by the scope of the empirical case, which is the French New Right.

³⁶ Spierings, "Why Gender and Sexuality Are Both Trivial and Pivotal" 2020; Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, 2007; Donà, "What's Gender Got to Do with Populism", 2020; Dancygier, "Another Progressive's Dilemma", 2020.

³⁷ Akkerman, "Gender and the Radical Right", 37-60; De Lange & Mügge, "Gender and Right-Wing Populism"; 61-80.

³⁸ Meret & Siim, "Gender, Populism and Politics of Belonging, 78.

³⁹ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*, 29.

⁴⁰ Bar-On, "Ambiguities of the Nouvelle Droite", 334.

Nonetheless, the Nouvelle Droite had a transnational dimension and can thus be treated as the *European New Right*.⁴¹ Therefore, findings in the thesis are relevant at a transnational level.

The framing assumption for this thesis is that there has historically been a presence of anti-feminist attitudes within far-right movements. Consequently, the approach has been to find out whether there has been an opposition to gender equality in rhetoric and action by the Nouvelle Droite. This is similar to the method of Köttig et al. from 2017, albeit their study was upon radical right parties.⁴² In order to identify what anti-feminist attitudes of the far-right looks like, I have opted to take a broad approach to include any type of mention of women, gender, feminism and sexuality, as well as masculinity, ideas of men, and family.

The method used in this thesis is informed by the reflections made by Kathleen Blee in her recent study on gender and the far-right. Blee presents fallpits connected to centering gender as a framework, similarly to how frameworks that sideline gender are problematic.⁴³ Issues of gender and sexuality matters across the political spectrum and is not a sidetrack of discussion of the far-right. However, as advised by Blee, to search for gender risks being an error of evidence, which makes it difficult to assess how gender matters, also vis-à-vis other components like context. This of even more importance in the study of the Nouvelle Droite, who already transcend known dichotomies of politics, and because the period of research predates contemporary terms and concepts connected to how feminism is perceived today.

Importantly, primary sources have been selected to represent a specter of intentions, aims and time. I did not know if I would find anything regarding topics of women, gender, and equality. The primary sources are first and foremost magazines of the series *Nouvelle École* and *Éléments*, published by GRECE. Various statements, articles from journals and books, are read with the purpose of identifying gender sentiments and thoughts. Gender, femininity, women, and sexuality appeared in several contexts and editions. There are in fact explicit texts by GRECE about feminism, such as a chapter named *Against Sexism: For the Recognition of Gender*.⁴⁴ To not obscure the different ways gender matters, I have opted to use gender as a question, to elicit presence and importance, as advocated by Blee.⁴⁵ Through this method, I have attempted to understand the relationship between women's rights and the far-right, and the many paradoxes therein.

⁴¹ Bar-On, "Transnationalism and the French Nouvelle Droite", 199-223.

⁴² Bitzan, Petö & Köttig, *Gender and Far-right Politics in Europe*, 2017.

⁴³ Blee, "Where Do We Go From Here", 427-428.

⁴⁴ De Benoist & Champetier. *Manifesto for a European Renaissance*, 35.

⁴⁵ Blee, "Where Do We Go From Here", 427-428.

Some research this thesis is based upon may be argued to be an analysis of the 21st century, and too far removed from the period this thesis covers and thus best certified to depict the present. However, the field of far-right movements and gender is an emergent one, which makes it difficult to find equally helpful literature that is older. The secondary literature remains valuable, due to their extensive and sound descriptions of masculine tropes, traditional gender roles, and nationalism. In short, they provide a methodical footing. To avoid presentism, secondary literature is intended to aid in the discussion of the primary sources, which will be assessed in the context of their own time. This thesis is not an attempt to find any evidence or lack thereof of a present-day feminism of 21st century Western Europe. On the contrary, it aims to trace continuity or change in the anti-gender attitudes from post-war Europe to European politics of the 21st century.

While my endeavor is to present an extensive and thorough analysis of the Nouvelle Droite, I do not imply that this thesis constitutes an all-compassing review of the literary products by the scholars and thinkers of the Nouvelle Droite on the issue of gender. Certainly, this is one contribution to the lacunae on the matter of gender and the far-right in the general, and the European New Right in particular. A crucial constraint has been that of language, as most of the written works by the Nouvelle Droite are in French. Therefore, a lot of time has gone to translation.⁴⁶ Moreover, I have not consulted each debate where gender or women have been an issue in the larger French context. In addition, I have relied on secondary literature on the various ways to interpret the Nouvelle Droite. The realm of the far-right is vast in its own, and the Nouvelle Droite is a case particularly ambiguous, as one author put it.⁴⁷ My ambition has not been to locate the Nouvelle Droite per se, but to position it somehow for operational purposes. A central assumption is that the far-right, being to the right on the scale, have had a tendency in recent times to incorporate the conservative agenda. The Nouvelle Droite incorporated in some instances the agenda of both the Left and Right. The analysis of feminism, traditionally a hallmark of the left, therefore, becomes extra interesting. Indeed, perhaps the Nouvelle Droite only incorporated left-wing issues such as gender equality to create a distraction from their predominantly far-right heritage. It is time to delve further into these issues.

⁴⁶ I have bought 4 editions of the magazines *Éléments* and *Nouvelle École* from the GRECE website. Certainly, one could discuss the issue of indirectly funding GRECE; nonetheless the magazines are valuable as sources.

⁴⁷ Bar-On, "Ambiguities of the Nouvelle Droite", 333-351.

I. Interpretations of Feminism and the Far-Right

The First Feminist on the Guillotine

The French national motto is a tripartite expression of French ideals that can be traced back to the French Revolution. When the Constitution of 1848 was drafted, the slogan *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* was defined as a ‘principle’ of the Republic. However, while the French Revolution ushered a transformation of the views on humanity, rule of law and human rights, it only granted rights of franchise and property to white men.⁴⁸ Which is why, the gains for women (and many men) in general were miniscule. The paradox is most visible through France’s continued colonial empire.⁴⁹ To counter the emphasis on *fraternité*, a female journalist under the name Olympe de Gouges wrote the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen* as a reponse to the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* from 1789.⁵⁰ She exhibited that the declaration in fact only concerned and served a few men. De Gouges was targeted by the *Reign of Terror* for her feminism, and for opposing slavery and capital punishment. Because De Gouges dedicated the declaration to Queen Marie Antoinette, she was accused of advocating constitutional monarchy and was executed by the guillotine on the charge of treason.⁵¹

Feminism

Feminist tradition as it evolved in Western culture and politics stemmed from the ideas of the Enlightenment. It drew on rationality and liberalism. The following section will outline a brief historiography of women’s rights, feminism, and gender consciousness in politics in the 20th century.

A way to capture the essence of feminism, is that there has historically been a plea for a “recognition of a woman’s essential and complete personhood”.⁵² This plea has appeared in many forms but is at its core an advocacy for women and can thus be described as the essence of feminism. In her extensive work on *gender consciousness* in politics, Sue Tolleson Rinehart offers a minimal definition that the premise of feminist thought resonates with the claim of a woman’s right to full participation in society.⁵³ This essence and minimal definition is what is used to operationalize this paper. However, differences of feminism are adamant and pertain to tradition, and moreover vary regarding nature of participation, purpose, and justification.

⁴⁸ Samson, *The Colonialism of Human Rights*, 5, 15; Woodward & Woodward, *Why Feminism Matters*, 101.

⁴⁹ Conklin, “Colonialism and Human Rights, A Contradiction in Terms?” 419-442.

⁵⁰ Olympe de Gouges, *Déclaration des Droits de la Femme et de la Citoyenne*, 1971.

⁵¹ Olympe de Gouges. *Les Droits de la Femme. A la Reine*, 3.

⁵² Rinehart, *Gender Consciousness and Politics*, 5.

⁵³ Rinehart, *Gender Consciousness and Politics*, 6.

Accordingly, Rinehart argue that people in the twentieth century might not have identified as a ‘feminist’ in the sense it is understood today.

Modern feminism has been understood as the support of the judicial, social and political equality of the sexes.⁵⁴ Kantola and Lombardo define opposition to gender equality as “any activity in which a perspective of opposing feminist politics and gender equality policy is articulated in a way that can be expected to influence or is actually influencing politics or policymaking at any stage”.⁵⁵ The definition draws attention to activities and centers on what is done by actors. Opposition is understood as not only intentional but also as a side-effect of other dominant intentions. This definition is beneficial to this thesis because it may aid in identifying activities or rhetoric aimed at influencing policymaking and public opinion.

Beyond this, far-right ideology is constructed around binary codes and temporal narratives, which can be othering and create a cleavage among people.⁵⁶ One such binary separation is between the masculine and feminine. In her book *Visualizing the nation. Gender, Representation and the Revolution in Eighteen-Century France*, Joan Landes argue that representations of women within popular imagery of the French Revolution contributed to individuals’ self-understanding as citizens of the nation-state.⁵⁷ This is significant in more than one way. First, bodies are political, and the way they are depicted is as well. Second, the way bodies and genders are depicted have a real influence in how citizens see themselves and can moreover be a tool to control how roles are self-observed and exhibited. Seeing as this thesis will consider how the far-right is positioned on gender issues, it is arguably helpful to consider that gender is affected by power structures around it.

An important issue regarding power structures in society, within feminist debate, is known as *intersectionality*. It means to acknowledge and treat the diversity that exists between women. Despite best intentions, the feminist movement can be exclusionary if it overlooks various aspect such as background, socio-economic status, and distinctiveness.⁵⁸ Indeed, to treat women as one singular group may result in ignoring patterns of prejudice; minorities’ specific struggles and systemic discrimination on the basis of not only sex, but also race, class, (dis)ability, age, caste, or religious beliefs. As formulated by Rinehart in her book from 1992, The most searing challenge to the universality of gender consciousness was race.⁵⁹ In the nexus of gender and the far-right, the topics of race, ethnicity and heritage are potentially

⁵⁴ Delmar, “What is Feminism?”, 8-29.

⁵⁵ Kantola & Lombardo, “Strategies of right populists in opposing gender equality”, 5.

⁵⁶ Alexander, “Raging against the enlightenment: the ideology of Steven Bannon”, 141.

⁵⁷ Landes, *Visualizing the nation. Gender, representation & the revolution in Eighteen-Century France*, 1.

⁵⁸ Rinehart, *Gender Consciousness and Politics*, 10; Lugones & Spelman, “Have We Got a Theory for You”, 575.

⁵⁹ Rinehart, *Gender Consciousness and Politics*, 32.

potent, due to the stark opposition by the far-right against immigration and foreign cultural traditions. Due to this, women of color have historically battled both sexism and racism, often in tandem.

The general political and social climate for gender equality in the 20th century was one under development. According to Rinehart, gender differences were not viewed as important during the century. Moreover, the postwar era was conservative in approach to women and their role in politics.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, there was an upsurge in women's political participation in the 1970s, which accumulated more attention to women from scholars and journalists, who in 1980 discovered the *gender gap*. The gender gap revealed the cleavage between men and women in terms of political preference.⁶¹ Research of the time found that women were not apolitical and undifferentiated, but rather political and heterogenous. In fact, most of the French female electorate voted for the left and aided François Mitterrand in winning the 1981 election.⁶² The transition to *gender consciousness* recognized that relation to the political world was shaped by the physical fact of one's sex.⁶³ This in turn arguably meant that politics could affect men and women differently. A fail to recognize that would allude to someone's view on gender equality. How these issues transpired in the far-right will be discussed next.

The Far-Right

As an umbrella, the *far-right* encompass the extreme right, radical right, and populist right. In this paper, the *far-right* is used extensively.⁶⁴ This allows to include what both adherents, opposers and scholars refer to, including electoral parties, movements, groups, and cultures that have far-right agendas. While the different terms are used interchangeably in this paper, because scholars refer to the far-right with various terms, there are some differences that it is fruitful to be aware of. The broad definition makes it possible to discern commonalities in how the far-right is gendered, while it is kept in mind that there exist considerable differences among the various segments.

The term *radical right* is most precise within a context of ideological rejection of parliamentary liberalism, which emerged late in the 1900s in Europe.⁶⁵ One way to approach *extreme right* is to view it as a subcategory of political extremism. First, political extremism is defined as opposition against democratic values and institutions. Next, it becomes right-

⁶⁰ Rinehart, *Gender Consciousness and Politics*, 12.

⁶¹ Rinehart, *Gender Consciousness and Politics*, 13.

⁶² Kaufmann-McCall "Politics of Difference", 282.

⁶³ Rinehart, *Gender Consciousness and Politics*, 14-15.

⁶⁴ Blee "Where Do We Go From Here", 417.

⁶⁵ Griffin, "Interregnum or Endgame", 16.

wing political extremism because it rejects the principles of equality, which left-wing extremism does not.⁶⁶ *Radical right populism* does not want a new order to replace the liberal system. However, radical right populism critiques the representative democracy, constitutes a challenge to the established system and universalist principles, believes in direct democracy and referendums, but accept the rules and the liberal values. Moreover, only one ethnic group is considered worthy members of society.⁶⁷ Hans Georg Betz and Carol Johnson have pointed out that it is difficult to get a firm grip on the radical right namely because it is both democratic and extreme.⁶⁸ Indeed, the far-right has shown the ability to reconcile formal support for democracy as the preferred system, all the while espousing a political doctrine that is at its core anti-liberal and therefore extreme, according to Betz and Johnson. However, it could be problematic not to recognize the division between radical right and extreme right, as the extreme right is also characterized by the instigation and/or use of violence.

The most common characteristics used to define the far-right are, according to Jérôme Jamin, extreme nationalism, racism, ethnocentrism, anti-communism, focus on law and order, anti-pluralism, and opposition to democracy.⁶⁹ The radical, extreme, and populist right have historically been related to specific issues that have gone through few changes. For instance, immigration has always been central. The type of immigrant, however, has been subject to variations. As an example, the far-right has conceptualized racism built on the interaction between different cultures that emerged in the wake of decolonization.⁷⁰ Cas Mudde asserts that different actors perform their ideology dissimilar but offers consensus that the far-right share a core ideology that combine *populism*, *authoritarianism*, and *nativism*.⁷¹

Nativism is an ‘ethnic understanding’ of the people, created by the combination of nationalism and xenophobia. Non-natives, implying both people and ideas, are a threat that must be removed. Thus, nativism is an excluding form of nationalism characterized by prejudice and cultural racism, which creates enemies and opposition to welcome certain groups into society.⁷² *Authoritarianism* is the idea and plea for a strict and orderly society, where punishment is due when rules are broken. This idea is typical for almost all ideologies on the far-right. Cas Mudde defines the final element, *populism*, as an ideology that consider society as split into two homogenous and antagonistic groups; ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’. Populism suggest that politics should reflect the ‘general will’ of the people,

⁶⁶ Jamin. “Two Different Realities. Notes on Populism and the Extreme Right.”, 43.

⁶⁷ Griffin, “Interregnum or Endgame?”, 23.

⁶⁸ Betz & Johnson, “Against the Current-Stemming the Tid”, 312-313.

⁶⁹ Jamin, “Two Different Realities.”, 43; Betz & Johnson, “Against the Current-Stemming the Tide”, 311-327.

⁷⁰ Prowe, “‘Classic’ Fascism and the New Radical Right”, 304-305.

⁷¹ Mudde, *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, 4.

⁷² Mudde. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 22.

Volonté Générale. The populist radical right thus claims to be the voice of the people. Mudde further emphasizes that it is the combination of the three elements that make an ideology radical and populist-right.

To form the ‘othering’ part of their narrative, populisms tend to lean on a traditional patriarchal order, according to Ute Leimgruber. Hence, any ‘others’ who advocate plurality and diversity, are considered inferior.⁷³ The far-right also divides certain religions or sexualities into ‘others’, for instance through a stigmatization of Muslim immigrants as a threat to women’s rights and sexual tolerance.⁷⁴ Mudde and Kaltwasser observed in 2015 that the relationship between populism and gender had so far received little academic attention. Although, they contended that any difference between people, including gender differences, might be irrelevant to populist politics.⁷⁵ However, the far-right ideology in general rests on the thought that inequalities are natural and therefore some groups are superior to others.⁷⁶ This gives rise to especially *nativist* and *authoritarian* opinions, and arguably also ideas of gender roles.

Conversely, gender equality and dismantling of patriarchal structures are not typical features for the far-right. Rather, family and gender policies have historically had a central role in nationalist and far-right rhetoric, according to Katrine Fangen and Lisanne Lichtenberg. For instance, conservative movements and parties places emphasis on traditional families and gender roles.⁷⁷ On the other hand, Blee argues that some versions of the far-right tend to be compatible with gender equality ideas.⁷⁸

Accordingly, it is evident that the field of gender and the far-right is in emergence and there is a lack of consensus on how to view the connection. In sum, it can be argued that the far-right in general support a conservative and control-based view on women and gender equality. And at minimum, the gender dimension of the far-right should not be discarded until it is fully contextualized.

⁷³ Leimgruber, “Hostility toward Gender in Catholic and Political Right-Wing Movements”, 11, 10.

⁷⁴ Moghadam & Kaftan, “Right-Wing Populisms North and South”, 7.

⁷⁵ Mudde & Kaltwasser “Vox Populi or Vox Masculine”, 1-2.

⁷⁶ Castelli, Leidig, & Ravndal, “What Characterizes the Far-Right Scene in Europe and Beyond?”

⁷⁷ Fangen & Lichtenberg, “Gender and Family Rhetoric on the German Far-Right”, 1.

⁷⁸ Blee, “Where Do We Go From Here”, 422.

II. The History of the French New Right

A History of La Nouvelle Droite and Their Ideology

In 1968, against the backdrop of the student and worker uprisings in France and the Cold War, the project of La Nouvelle Droite, *the New Right*, came to life in France.⁷⁹ It was founded by around 40 ultra-nationalists, including Alain de Benoist, one of Nouvelle Droite's most prominent thinkers.⁸⁰ GRECE was a thinktank inaugurated to reach the ambitions of the Nouvelle Droite. It articulated and constructed the political ideas of ND through publications and seminars. *Groupement de Recherche et d'Études pour la Civilisation Européenne* – for short GRECE – connotes that it held, like several other far-right groupings, a fondness for the philosophy and politics of ancient Greece.⁸¹ In essence, their utopia was a world order in which a 'Indo-European' people would live in a large Pagan empire.

GRECE's member were urged to mix with the decision-makers in France and Europe. This was a concentrated strategy to unify the thought and action of France's brightest and most powerful people to create the framework for an elitist, hierarchical, and anti-liberal revolution in the future.⁸² The inspiration came from Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), who argued for the importance of having cultural power for the seizure of political power, termed 'cultural hegemony'.⁸³ This term described how a ruling class could control the rest of society, through presenting their own values and actions as universally significant.⁸⁴ Further, the ND were influenced by Julius Evola (1898–1974) from whom they coined their strategy, *metapolitics*.⁸⁵ "Politics is not the affair of GRECE (...) GRECE intends to work on the meta-political level... where a collective mentality and therefore a popular consensus is elaborated."⁸⁶ Therefore, the Nouvelle Droite was neither a political party, an interest organization, nor a violent extra-parliamentary group. The ND was rather a 'cultural school of thought',⁸⁷ and a metapolitical movement.⁸⁸ This form of organization was picked to spread their ideas across society as a whole.⁸⁹

⁷⁹ Bar-On, "Neo-Fascism With a Human Face?", 6.

⁸⁰ Duranton-Crabol, *Visages de la Nouvelle Droite*, 250-251. No female names listed.

⁸¹ Bar-On, "Neo-Fascism With a Human Face?", 6-8.

⁸² Bar-On, "Ambiguities of the Nouvelle Droite", 339; McCulloch, "The Nouvelle Droite in the 1980s and 1990s:", 160.

⁸³ Éléments, "La Revolution Conservatrice", 9.

⁸⁴ Laclau & Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 65-71.

⁸⁵ François, "Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite", 24.

⁸⁶ Quote by GRECE Secretary-General Pierre Vial, retrieved from McCulloch, "The Nouvelle Droite", 160.

⁸⁷ This is the term used by Anne-Marie Duranton-Crabol in *Visages de La Nouvelle Droite. Le GRECE et Son Histoire*, 40.

⁸⁸ Bar-On, "Transnationalism and the Nouvelle Droite", 200.

⁸⁹ McCulloch. "The Nouvelle Droite in the 1980s and 1990s", 160.

Two central topics, namely the *Conservative Revolution* and *Paganism* is beneficial to understand. The Conservative Revolution was a cultural school of thought which originated in Germany after 1918, in opposition to the Weimar Republic. It was characterized by rejection of democracy and parliamentarism. They opposed the process of modernization triggered by the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution. The resulting political doctrines were the rejection of rationalism, industrialization, urbanization, liberalism, as well as traditional conservative values, including Christianity.⁹⁰ From this the founders of GRECE found a lot of inspiration, as they adopted contempt for Christian ethics, liberalism, democracy, egalitarianism, and were starkly anti-modern. This is especially visible through their many studies on Indo-European traditions and the strong interest in Paganism.⁹¹

Paganism was a ‘religion’ without beliefs, without Churches and without clergy. GRECE was attracted to it because they were anti-authoritarian and looked for a spiritual path suited to their convictions.⁹² Neo-paganism was on the rise in Europe in the 1960s. It coincided with the decline of Christianity and countercultures in the wake of 1968 uprisings, such as the questioning of Western values.⁹³ Connected to this, it is typical in the French context to distinguish between the Far Right in general and the New Right (Nouvelle Droite) Whereas the Far Right were morally conservative and in support of Catholicism, neo-liberalism, and proponents of values of family, work and country, the New Right were against liberalism and Christian values.⁹⁴

Crucially, scholars have found that ND espoused a heterogenous ideology without a common platform.⁹⁵ Nouvelle Droite hailed from a right-wing tradition, yet were influenced by the ideals of the New Left and the 1968 revolutionaries.⁹⁶ First and foremost, they advocated pan-Europeanism, focus on cultural heritage, paganism, and refusal of religion.⁹⁷ In addition, they incorporated issues typically associated with left-wing politics, including solidarity with ‘Third World’ countries, anti-imperialism, anti-racism, and feminism.⁹⁸ Bar-On firmly asserts that ND was decisively far-right.⁹⁹ On one hand, the ND did not explicitly profess allegiance to any of continental Europe’s diverse right-wing traditions. On the other

⁹⁰ François “Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite”, 99-100.

⁹¹ François “Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite”, 8.

⁹² François “Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite”, 10.

⁹³ François, “Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite”, 10.

⁹⁴ Kofman, “Gender, ethnicity and the Right in France”, 93.

⁹⁵ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*, 12.

⁹⁶ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*”, 3-4, 17.

⁹⁷ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*, 9.

⁹⁸ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*, 9-12, 76-77.

⁹⁹ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*”, 7, 9-12: “Origins in ultra-nationalism, the revolutionary right, and fascism.”

hand, the ND was indebted to old values of archetypical European ultra-right.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Nouvelle Droite found inspiration from a plethora of sources. Therefore, the far-right seeks to transcend the modern cleavage of left and right.¹⁰¹

That a far-right movement adopted leftist stances sounds paradoxical, when traditionally a right-wing movement would oppose leftist issues. However, the interest in the New Left was also not entirely new in French history. According to Zeev Sternhell, imparted by Andrea Mammone, the interest in leftish themes stemmed from the roots of fascism, and their synthesis of opposite political-cultural trends.¹⁰² This thesis shows that even though they incorporated left-wing issues as mentioned above, they did it to come across as moderate and non-far-right. For instance, the Nouvelle Droite pledged to be anti-racist, albeit in their own view: They emphasized cultural differences as something that had to be protected.¹⁰³ They named it *a right to difference*. The reason for being aware of Nouvelle Droite's racism, is that the way they reconceptualized racism resembles how they reconceptualized other topics.

The Nouvelle Droite claimed that the 'right to difference' was not intended to exclude people. They opposed how immigration was a way of creating a 'melting pot' that eradicated differences. They argued that liberal anti-racism in essence was non-respecting of other people and their cultures.¹⁰⁴ In contrast, they opted for 'differentialist anti-racism', which was constructed by the idea of "the refusal of both exclusion and assimilation: neither apartheid nor the melting pot; rather, acceptance of the Other through a dialogic perspective of mutual enrichment".¹⁰⁵

Alain de Benoist was the first to write about 'differentialism', and who moved the Nouvelle Droite toward condemning racism on the basis of that philosophy.¹⁰⁶ De Benoist has made the argument that to deny the right to be different, was racism.¹⁰⁷ In article titled *Against Racism*, de Benoist developed the general view of the Nouvelle Droite on races, which would be refined over the years as 'differentialist anti-racism'.¹⁰⁸ This is important to know in order to understand their views on gender equality. Because indeed, behind cloaked words the Nouvelle Droite's intentions would sometimes appear. De Benoist claimed that the central issues of the traditional right, among them genetics, race, and inequality, were discredited by

¹⁰⁰ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*”, 4, 7, 35; McCulloch, “The Nouvelle Droite in the 1980s and 1990s”, 162; Mammone, “The Transnational Reaction to 1968”, 231.

¹⁰¹ Betz & Johnson, “Against the Current-Stemming the Tide”, 312-313.

¹⁰² Mammone, “The Transnational Reaction to 1968”, 231.

¹⁰³ McCulloch, “The Nouvelle Droite in the 1980s and 1990s”, 161.

¹⁰⁴ De Benoist & Champetier, *Manifesto for a European Renaissance*, 34.

¹⁰⁵ De Benoist & Champetier, *Manifesto for a European Renaissance*, 34.

¹⁰⁶ François, “Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite”, 50.

¹⁰⁷ De Benoist, *View from the Right*, 16.

¹⁰⁸ François, “Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite”, 50: The article was published first in 1974. An article by the same title was later printed in Benoist & Champetier, *Manifesto for a European Renaissance*, 33.

their association with Nazism.¹⁰⁹ The underlying doctrine is that the Nouvelle Droite were for clear and strong identities.¹¹⁰ Identity was paramount to ND, therefore, they rejected egalitarianism.

The Nouvelle Droite rejected the ideas of the Enlightenment, including the principle of egalitarianism. Essentially, egalitarianism is the doctrine that people are equal, and thus deserve equal treatment, rights, and opportunities. In his *View from the Right*, de Benoist wrote that the principal enemy in the world was egalitarianism, because it “reduces the worlds diversity”.¹¹¹ It is a paradox that the ND appeared as proponents of gender equality. The elimination of gender discrimination would bring the world closer to egalitarianism. However, in a response de Benoist wrote to Bar-On, de Benoist accused Bar-On of confusing equality and egalitarianism, which de Benoist asserts and insists to be ‘very different notions’.¹¹² Accordingly, the refusal of egalitarianism was predominantly focused on arguments either regarding ethnicity, nations, genetics, in essence anti-immigration arguments, or as a critique targeted against Western liberal ideals in general.¹¹³

According to Nouvelle Droite, the spirit of the 1789 Declaration of Human Rights had to be rejected. Their convoluted anti-democratic offensive is crucial for the analysis of ND feminism. The ND called the foundations of the welfare state into question through their critique of liberalism and democracy. Consequently, they opposed the state’s intervention in the struggle against inequalities. In most interpretations of liberalism, poverty and disparities in conditions of life are offences against liberty. Alain de Benoist, on the other hand, argued that the French Revolution constituted a stage in degeneration of Western civilization. Therefore, he sought to dismantle the egalitarian heritage of 1789.¹¹⁴ The problem for the ND, was that through universal suffrage, all people were placed at the same level, thus differences were not recognized.¹¹⁵

Diversity and inequalities of the world were a good, according to de Benoist.¹¹⁶ The ‘uniformization’ of citizens were seen as a totalitarian character of democracy. The Nouvelle Droite believed people were biologically different. They claimed that through difference and inequality, one could find liberty, in contrast to how equality and egalitarianism would give liberty. Thus, crucially, the New Right redefined concepts of liberty, equality, and justice.

¹⁰⁹ Sheehan, “Review of Vu De Droite”, 15; Bar-On, “Neo-Fascism with a Human Face?”, 8.

GRECE warned its members to avoid “outdated vocabulary,” code for language linked to Fascism and Nazism.

¹¹⁰ De Benoist & Champetier, *Manifesto for a European Renaissance*, 32.

¹¹¹ De Benoist, *View from the Right*, 9, 16.

¹¹² De Benoist, “Alain de Benoist Answer Tamir Bar-On”, 149.

¹¹³ Bar-On, “Ambiguities of the Nouvelle Droite”, 334, 335.

¹¹⁴ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*, 29.

¹¹⁵ Laclau & Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 173-174.

¹¹⁶ De Benoist, *Les Idées à l’Endroit*, 81.

This reconceptualization is important to understand because those concepts are important for gender equality.

While it is possible to see contemporary debates on anti-capitalism, anti-immigration and anti-liberalism mirrored in late-century Nouvelle Droite, it seems more challenging to draw a parallel between today's anti-gender positions to the gender views of the Nouvelle Droite in the 1970s. At the onset, given the emphasis that the ND put on traditions and cultural heritage, it is possible to assume that traditional gender roles and views of the core family is a closely connected value and ideal. This assumption would be confirmed by contemporary literature on far-right ideology.¹¹⁷ Moreover, the rejection of liberalism and egalitarianism implies the rejection of gender equality.

Why should we care about the Nouvelle Droite? Most of the dogmas they sought to diminish, such as liberalism, Americanization, and globalization came out strengthened at the end of the Cold War. At the time, some scholars assumed the victory of market liberalism and democracy, and crucially, the hegemony of the United States of America.¹¹⁸ In addition, the Nouvelle Droite had their prime in terms of attention and relevance in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Finally, perhaps evident already, gender parity and minority rights were not what chiefly preoccupied the Nouvelle Droite during this period.

However, there are a few reasons why one should care about the Nouvelle Droite, and what is more, their positions on feminism and equity. The impact of their ideas are still felt, incorporated, and perpetuated today, and can be seen in growing skepticism toward mainstream parties, a generally more right-wing political climate, and opposition to the European Union, mild immigration policies, and multiculturalism.¹¹⁹ In for instance Germany, the most extreme wing of the extreme-right party Alternative für Deutschland, *Der Flügel*, perpetuates a view that glorifies the old Prussia, they talk of Cultural Hegemony, and also favors remigration of millions of German citizens, who have “unwanted ethnic background”.¹²⁰ Clearly, the Nouvelle Droite's influence and relevance persist to this day. Coupled with what research has shown to be a misogynist turn of the far-right, the role of women and feminism within the Nouvelle Droite is crucial to understanding the modern development of far-right ideology. Certainly, where are the women?

¹¹⁷ Moghadam & Kaftan, “Right-Wing Populisms North and South”, 2. “Their (right-wing populist movements) notions of femininity, and of women and the family are traditional”.

¹¹⁸ Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992.

¹¹⁹ Bar-On, “Neo-Fascism with a Human Face?”, 3.

¹²⁰ Dypvik, *Det mørke Tyskland, ei reise blant høyreekstremistar*, 2021.

Where are the Women? Central Figures in the Nouvelle Droite

The origins of the “European New Right” can consequently be traced to GRECE, founded by Alain de Benoist, Jacques Bruyas and Jean Jacques Mourreau, with the collaboration of Claude Valla and Dominique Venner.¹²¹ Duranton-Crabol lists four women among the personalities that collaborated with GRECE between 1968 and 1977.¹²² The leading members of GRECE from the start in 1968, who all remained active through the next two decades, were men.¹²³ Therefore, it can be recognized that GRECE was a predominantly male-driven school of thought from the start. Their background moreover stemmed from hyper-masculine far-right groups and movements.¹²⁴ For instance, when he was younger, Alain de Benoist belonged to the ultra-nationalist, pro-colonialist university student movement known as the *Fédération des Étudiants Nationalistes* (FEN).¹²⁵ Moghadam and Kaftan have shown, which is also evident in Nouvelle Droite, that right-wing populist movements are gendered, meaning that their leaders and founders are mostly men, and their discourses and tactics often display ‘hypermasculinity’.¹²⁶

Hypermasculinity is a form of exaggeration of virility and physicality. Crucially, violence is viewed as manly. Likewise, stereotypical feminine traits and emotional displays are disregarded as weakness. Hence, women are seen as weak, and any dangerous or violent behavior is good and manly.¹²⁷ George Mosse provided one of the first historical descriptions of masculine stereotypes in modern Western culture and exhibited that modern nationalism emphasizes masculine virtues. Military virility is embedded in ideals of masculine character, nationalist projects and citizenship.¹²⁸ Male populist leaders, both left and right, frequently emphasize militaristic virility and authority to distinguish themselves from the feminine, the elites, and to connect to the people.¹²⁹ Political masculinities are crucial for the reproduction of power relations.¹³⁰ This can be interesting for several reasons, including how masculine stereotypes are used to reinforce preferred leadership styles. However, for the topic at hand, it is most valuable to understand that masculinity can be used to degrade femininity, ridicule homosexuality, and finally that masculinity operates as a norm that structures ideas and politics.

¹²¹ Spektorowski, “The New Right: Ethno-regionalism, ethno-pluralism & the emergence of a neo-fascist ‘Third Way’”, 116.

¹²² Duranton-Crabol, *Visages de la Nouvelle Droite*, 252.

¹²³ McCulloch, “The Nouvelle Droite in the 1980s and 1990s”, 160.

¹²⁴ François, “Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite”, 19.

¹²⁵ Bar-On, “Ambiguities of The Nouvelle Droite”, 339.

¹²⁶ Moghadam & Kaftan, “Right-Wing Populisms North and South”, 2.

¹²⁷ Craig, “Hypermasculinity”. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2 Jan. 2019.

¹²⁸ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 109.

¹²⁹ Geva, “A Rose by This Name”, 22-23. Löffler, Luyt & Starck, “Political Masculinities and Populism”, 1-9.

¹³⁰ Löffler, Luyt & Starck, “Political Masculinities and Populism”, 5.

The Nouvelle Droite showed a special fondness for the “Old West”, certain places or historical regimes that they view to be an important source for Western culture, which they called ‘Indo-European’. Examples of such places or mythology are is the Celtic civilization, Greek and Roman Empires, Scandinavia (Viking culture) and Norse Mythology.¹³¹ This heritage is of importance for the Nouvelle Droite as they view it as the source of their civilization.¹³² Donna Zuckerberg is one author who has studied the self-demonstrated link between modern far-right men and Greek and Roman mythology, which is used to invoke age-old masculine ideals and modern tropes to preserve and promote traditional male and female values and identities.¹³³ This establishes that the divide between the masculine and feminine is nothing but new, grounded in historical demarcations, and through it, the topic of gender is highly politicized in the public sphere.

Gender and sexual politics have been recurring themes of the far-right, though they are not considered defining characteristics. Therefore, gender is ubiquitous, yet context-dependent within the far-right.¹³⁴ Far-right strategies include not only indirect but also direct opposition to gender equality and draw on old and traditional gender imageries packaged in new populist ways. It will be shown too, that for the Nouvelle Droite, women and femininity were objects (of study, of consideration, of interest) but marginally participants.

To the question of their feminism, Alain de Benoist answered that the Nouvelle Droite was supportive of “positive feminism”, opposition to the war of the sexes, and against reduction of equality to sameness.¹³⁵

The general position of the ND at that moment [1970s and 1980s] was a resolute feminism, refusal of patriarchal attitudes and practices, together with the idea that physiological, biological, and psychological specificity of the women have the same value as the specific features of men. An important text was published in the 1970s in the journal *Nouvelle Ecole*, where the ND took stand in favor of pro-choice in the debate about abortion. At that time, abortion was still illegal in France, but there was already a big controversy between the pros and the cons regarding the legalization of abortion. The ND took position for the legalization.¹³⁶

From this, it appears that Nouvelle Droite held quite progressive views on women’s rights. Especially the mention of patriarchal attitudes and view of equal value between men and women coupled with the stance on legal abortion attest to this. In addition, Pierre Andre

¹³¹ De Benoist, *View from the Right*, 20-114.

¹³² Nouvelle École no 11, “Voyages Organisés”, 93; Duranton-Crabol, “Nouvelle Droite Entre Printemps et Automne”, 42.

¹³³ Zuckerberg, *Not All White Men*, 2018.

¹³⁴ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 96.

¹³⁵ My interview with Mr. Alain de Benoist, 11.03.2021. Cited with permission.

¹³⁶ My interview with Mr. Alain de Benoist, 11.03.2021. Cited with permission.

Taguieff poses that there were several articles devoted to feminism in the magazines *Éléments*, during the 1970s.¹³⁷ Anne-Marie Duranton-Crabol has also found that GRECE were pronounced in favor of abortion and feminism in the 1970s.¹³⁸

During the 1970s and 1980s, though the ND was in its ‘heyday’¹³⁹, the ND was also in its infancy. Overall, feminism and *gender mainstreaming*, which will be elaborated on, was also in development. As shown by the quotation above, the ND had a position of ‘resolute feminism’, albeit self-stated. Certainly, they also claimed to be resolute anti-racist while espousing xenophobic and racist attitudes. However, as previously confirmed, the ND did incorporate issues traditionally belonging to the left, and feminism was one of these.

Despite that de Benoist’s answer was formulated with the benefit of hindsight, there appears to be truth behind the claim, as the ND demonstrated support for free abortion, and later the right for Muslim girls to wear the veil.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, it remains uncertain whether this type of feminism was at the time meant to be about actual social and political change, or if it was *instrumental*.¹⁴¹ Instrumental support for women’s rights can be understood as mainly theoretical and not practical *engagement* on issues. For instance, ND voiced feminist issues because it was the right thing to do, or rhetoric and words were viewed as enough effort. On the other hand, instrumental in its original meaning is to be contributive or influential, which would mean that the Nouvelle Droite voiced support for women’s rights to exhibit their progressive and liberal views to counteract the more hostile rhetoric used on culture and races. A third interpretation of instrumental feminism is that feminism was used as a rhetorical trick or smokescreen, and a tool to further their own agenda. The focus on equality could be a part of the narrative of differences between cultures, as will be argued later.

The inclusion of women into the Nouvelle Droite would allude to ‘actual’ and not rhetorical feminism, and be confirmation that ND meant that women could participate alongside men on the same terms. In the interview with Mr. de Benoist, the ND founder claimed that there were several women active and prominent within GRECE and ND, quote: “Many women were members of the GRECE and/or wrote in our publications: Anne Jobert, Laurence Terry, Isabelle Conrad, Isabelle Gilbert, Claudine Glot, etc.”¹⁴² When looking up

¹³⁷ Correspondance between Ingrid Skrede and Pierre Andre Taguieff, 13.03.2021.

¹³⁸ Duranton-Crabol, “Nouvelle Droite Entre Printemps et Automne”, 42.

¹³⁹ Bar-On, “Ambiguities of The Nouvelle Droite”, 334.

¹⁴⁰ Mammone, “The Transnational Reaction to 1968”, 231.

¹⁴¹ Fangen & Lichtenberg, “Gender and Family Rhetoric on the German Far-Right”, 3.

¹⁴² My interview with Mr. Alain de Benoist, 11.03.2021. Cited with permission.

these women, they appear with comparably few hits in contrast to their male counterparts.¹⁴³ At first glance, the women held less prominent positions in Nouvelle Droite than the men. Claudine Glot came up as a contributor in three editions of *Éléments*. In comparison, both Pierre Vial and Alain de Benoist authored three articles each in the same edition where Claudine Glot had one.¹⁴⁴ However, Glot was one of six who contributed to a special issue for GRECE, named *Pour Un Gramscisme De Droite* (for a right-wing Gramscianism).¹⁴⁵ Gramscian thought was a central portion of the ideological foundation of the ND, and thus a significant editorial to be part of. Claudine Glot also stands out as one of the women who is possible to track down through a wide search on the internet.

Next, Anne Jobert is listed with 25 contributions to *Éléments*, including an 86-page essay on the relationship between science and the sacred, and has thus the most substantial portion of articles. Jobert appears to have offered pieces on various subjects, from anti-enlightenment to paganism, predominantly within philosophy. Neither Isabelle Conrad nor Isabelle Gilbert showed up on any searches in ways that could confirm their affiliation with GRECE, either on the *Éléments* website or elsewhere. Laurence Terry appears to have contributed five articles to *Éléments*, one being titled *Libérez Les Hommes!* (Free the men) A closer attempt to find out who Laurence Terry was uncovered that she is a pseudonym used by Michel Marmin, a male journalist and first president of the magazine *Éléments*. Marmin used the female pseudonym Laurence Terry when he wrote about feminist issues or sexual liberation.¹⁴⁶ Hence, only two of the names de Benoist offered turned out to be women who contributed to GRECE. Comparatively, 55 men are listed as collaborators of *Éléments*, alongside two women. Interestingly, neither of the two are women de Benoist made mention of.

The French Political Context

The French political landscape was during this period in transition, and the Nouvelle Droite can be seen as a product of the general ambiguity of the time. The significance of gender in the far-right is shaped by the significance of gender in broader society.¹⁴⁷ As we have seen, the French New Right hailed from a varied intellectual and political heritage. Similarly, there has historically been a dynamic relationship between the left and right in France. This

¹⁴³ The process consisted of searching their names on the *Éléments* website, to quantify their contributions. I also searched their names on Google to see if they appeared there. None of them did in a way that I could with accuracy identify them.

¹⁴⁴ *Éléments* no 50, March 1984. "L'argent".

¹⁴⁵ Actes de colloque, N° 16, April 1982. "Pour un gramscisme de droite".

¹⁴⁶ Footnote in Duranton-Crabol, "Nouvelle Droite Entre Printemps et Automne", 42.

¹⁴⁷ Blee, "Where Do We Go From Here?", 422.

interaction was presented by for instance Tamir Bar-On, who argued that said relationship was instrumental in the evolution of the Nouvelle Droite and European New Right in general.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, in the following section, the political context in France will be examined.

France is, as succinctly presented by Bar-On, both the birthplace of the 1789 Revolution, the universal declaration of the Rights of Man, and the nation with some of the most potent revolutionary right-wing traditions in Europe.¹⁴⁹ As contradicting as these opposing traditions sound, it may not be utterly impossible to imagine that one country could nurture and harbor equally forceful, revolutionary, and persuasive yet opposing world views.

The process from ideal to practice is long. It can be identified that equality is a core ideal embedded in the French Republic.¹⁵⁰ The strategy to achieve gender equality through laws and policies, is known as *gender mainstreaming*¹⁵¹. It is an approach to policymaking that considers the interests and concerns of both women and men. The first French law on the gender equality came in December 1972, on equal pay, and subsequently a record of gender equality legislation was rolled out.¹⁵² Yet despite this, the first reference in French politics to gender mainstreaming appeared first in 2000.¹⁵³ This could be seen in a broader international context, because the first actual step towards the gender mainstreaming approach in policymaking was introduced in 1985, at the Nairobi World Conference on Women.¹⁵⁴ However, the same decade under scrutiny in this thesis, was by the United Nations declared the decade for women (1976–1985). Hence, ideas of gender mainstreaming and consequently, feminism in politics emerged in the 1970s but were not part of national and international domain until the late 1990s.

It can be argued that the prevalence of liberalism as well as both the critique against it and embrace for it, can serve as a narrative, or help conceptualize the period under discussion. Liberalism brings together issues of the welfare state, feminism, far-right *illiberalism*, multiculturalism, and major developments of the period such as decolonization. Domestically, France's relationship with liberalism was conflicted, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. On the one hand, political elites were hostile to liberalism and did not want to be associated with it. The word 'liberal' had a stigmatized position in everyday politics. On the other hand, it can

¹⁴⁸ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*, 23.

¹⁴⁹ Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*, 22.

¹⁵⁰ Art 3 of the preamble of the Constitution 1946: "the law guarantees women in all areas equal rights with men". Section 3 of the Constitution: "the law favors equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elective functions". Art 1 of the Constitution: establishes the principle of equality between women and men.

¹⁵¹ Gaer, "Mainstreaming a Concern for the Human Rights of Women", 98-99.

¹⁵² Loi n°72-1143 du 22 décembre 1972. *Relative à l'égalité de rémunération entre les hommes et les femmes*.

¹⁵³ European Institute for Gender Equality, *Gender Mainstreaming/Country Specific Information/ France*.

¹⁵⁴ "Report of the World Conference to the United Nations Decade for Women" Equality, Nairobi (15 - 26 July 1985).

be argued that liberalism was the hegemonic discourse, as the wave of neoliberalism swept across the world in the 1980s. According to Emile Chabal, this apparent paradox owes to the fact that there was confusion regarding the definition of liberalism in France.¹⁵⁵ Apparently, the *French Left* failed to incorporate liberalism during the twentieth century. On the other hand, liberalism and the *French Right* had a more pronounced relationship. The right-wing president between 1974 and 1981 proposed to make France into an ‘advanced liberal society’. He backed his approach with social legislation such as the legalization of abortion and divorce. However, the political right-wing imploded in 1981 when Mitterrand came to power, which ended moderate liberalism.¹⁵⁶

Through a look at France’s relationship with liberalism, it is evident that the country’s political landscape and general direction were difficult to grasp also from within. The period under question, the 1970–1990 stretch, can be seen as the end of another period, an era of unbroken growth and relative prosperity known as ‘*Les Trente Glorieuses*’. From the end of the Second World War in 1945 and until 1975, France was a full participant in the industrial, consumer, and nuclear age.¹⁵⁷ This laid the foundation for much optimism and progress. However, The Glorious Thirty came to an end. The apparent prosperity and stability dwindled when events such as the 1970 oil shocks shattered the perception of economic and political certainties.¹⁵⁸ By 1985, French politics had undergone changes so profound that they had no similarities to any time before, nor had any particular or characteristics of its own. Thus, the period of interest in this paper was one of transition.

Crucially, it was in this period that the dichotomies of left and right became less relevant than they had been. France’s politics were previously starkly ideological and opposing. During the 1970s French politics were appeased as well as more fragmented.¹⁵⁹ In addition, France was characterized by networks of far-right think tanks who influenced politics.¹⁶⁰ Thus, the rapture between Left and Right could no longer capture the increasing complexity of politics. However, while partisan disagreement may have curtailed in those years, a number of issues abounded, such as rising unemployment, immigration- and integration related difficulties, colonial nostalgia, voter apathy and revival of the extreme-right.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ Chabal, *A Divided Republic*, 233-234.

¹⁵⁶ Chabal, *A Divided Republic*, 247-248, 249.

¹⁵⁷ Chabal, *A Divided Republic*, 1.

¹⁵⁸ Chabal, *A Divided Republic*, 1.

¹⁵⁹ Chabal, *A Divided Republic*, 1-2.

¹⁶⁰ Chabal, *A Divided Republic*, 253.

¹⁶¹ Chabal, *A Divided Republic*, 1-2.

The Far-Right and Liberalism – A Turbulent Relationship

An important result of emphasis on liberalism was the international recognition that colonialism and exploitation of other peoples by Western imperialists were unsound and unjust policies.¹⁶² One crucial process that transpired predominantly before the 1970s and during the period at hand was that of decolonization. By the 1960s, the sheer number of new states shifted the power dynamics of world politics, and the right to self-determination in former colonies altered the economy and politics of imperial states such as France.

Imperialistic endeavors have been found to create domestic political unrest and grievance as well as obvious foreign suffering. Diethelm Prowe has argued that far-right racism was formulated based on interactions between different cultures in the wake of decolonization. Factors that induced this was terrorism, wars of independence, and increasing dependency on labor force from ‘the third world’.¹⁶³ Due to this, even though countries did not have colonies anymore, they were deeply affected by the decolonization experiences, one result being the creation of multicultural societies. France was a former and recent colonial power, that undoubtedly carried the experiences Prowe listed. Once upon a time, they could proudly claim to be a great world power, but in the wake of brutal wars of independence, France had to reconceptualize their role in the world.¹⁶⁴ The far-right in general exploited this. They viewed decolonization as a backwards development, and any incident of crime, unemployment or general insolvency could serve as proof of that fact. Prowe asserts that due to this, after 1970 the far-right developed racism connected to colonialism. More precisely, the end of imperialism recreated the nature of racism.¹⁶⁵

In the early days, several of GRECE members hailed from an ultranationalist perspective that originated in the wake of the Algerian independence.¹⁶⁶ Even so, according to Stéphane François, Nouvelle Droite condemned each of the following: colonialism, immigration, nationalism, and globalism. Within this somewhat complex view, they considered ‘cultural interbreeding’ to be dangerous, because they favored ‘cultural particularism’.¹⁶⁷

The Nouvelle Droite believed that Europe and the Third World shared a common struggle for emancipation from American cultural imperialism. That is why, during the Cold

¹⁶² This should not be read as an argument that decolonization occurred as a direct result of advocacy by Western liberals.

There is no room for a full nuancing of liberalism and Western exploitation, however: As the core of liberalism is liberty, consent of the governed and equality before the law, the argument can be made.

¹⁶³ Prowe, “‘Classic’ Fascism and the New Radical Right”, 304-305.

¹⁶⁴ Chabal, *A Divided Republic*, 16.

¹⁶⁵ Prowe, “‘Classic’ Fascism and the New Radical Right”, 304-305.

¹⁶⁶ Griffin, “Between Metapolitics and Apoliteia” 43.

¹⁶⁷ François, “Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite, 51.

War, the Nouvelle Droite called for an alliance between Europe and the Third World.¹⁶⁸ This breaks with the assumption from Prowe that the far-right viewed the decolonization as a backward development and demonstrates that Nouvelle Droite reconstructed and changed their own ideas. They changed from being pro-imperialism to against colonization.¹⁶⁹ Nouvelle Droite's view on issues of colonialism and immigration evolved, and they increasingly cloaked racist positions in 'the right to difference'. It can nevertheless be argued that they modeled a theory of society based on colonial and decolonial experiences intrinsic to French society. This is crucial to understand, because it seems the ND were intent on not being ousted from the public sphere based on racism and extreme ideology. Similarly, they might have opted to appear as feminists and advocated for instance free abortion to balance or cover their illiberal postures.

The Nouvelle Droite opposed liberalism in general. This would entail rejecting a political philosophy based on liberty, equality before the law and human rights. Liberal ideology include support for an array of views, but in general liberalism endorses support of free markets and trade, individual rights and freedom, democracy, secularism, gender equality, racial equality, internationalism, freedom of speech, press and religion.¹⁷⁰ In addition, it is possible to talk about "liberal values" in a way that means support for any of the dogmas that often in modern contexts are referred to as 'western ideals'. Crucially, these are values that the far-right often claim to be protectors of, vis-à-vis 'foreign' threats. This thus becomes a paradox within the general ideology of the far-right, because the Nouvelle Droite rejected liberalism, as they saw liberalism as the main ideology of modernity.¹⁷¹ The added dimension is that free trade, open borders, immigration, multiculturalism, and liberal values in general, have in the view of the far-right created a dreadful situation in terms of economy and culture. Therefore, the far-right invokes protection of liberal rights when they see fit and reject them in the cases where liberalism contradict their views.

This chapter has established that the Nouvelle Droite was a male-led movement with a varied ideological heritage. The few female members and marginal contribution on their behalf testament to the general tendency of the far-right to be a predominantly male political faction. On the other hand, despite that the feminist movement was still young, GRECE published several articles on issues of femininity, women's rights, and equality, and voiced progressive stances on abortion rights. The contextualization for the landscape ND was born

¹⁶⁸ Spektorowski, "The New Right", 118.

¹⁶⁹ De Benoist & Champetier, *Manifesto for a European Renaissance*, 33.

¹⁷⁰ Hobhouse, L. T., & Frost. *Liberalism*, 22-38.

¹⁷¹ De Benoist & Champetier, *Manifesto for a European Renaissance*, 14.

from and grew in, showed that the general flux of the political landscape is reflected in the Nouvelle Droite. Rather than a paradox, it makes sense that the ND brought together ideas, concepts and traditions that historically had been separated. Ideas stemming from the Enlightenment and liberalism ushered the process of decolonization, which in turn shaped the racist ideology of the Nouvelle Droite. It is therefore argued that the Nouvelle Droite viewed liberalism as negative first and foremost in terms of multiculturalism and identity. However, the ND stressed the difference between equality and egalitarianism, thus reiterated their commitment to the former while denouncing the latter.¹⁷² Based on this, it can be argued that they coupled their racial theory with the Europe's relative gender-equal society to (re)construct a New Right-feminism.

¹⁷² Benoist, "Alain de Benoist Answers Tamir Bar-On.", 141-68.

III. Liberté, Egalité, Sexisme

Feminism in the Far-Right Between 1970 and 1990

The paradox remains. When the Nouvelle Droite rejected the legacy of the Enlightenment, they also abandoned the ideals that were the foundation of the administrative and legal equality of men and women. That legacy constituted gains for women, minorities, and various disadvantaged groups, even though they were hard won and not immediately earned. Nonetheless, it appears contradictory to on the one hand embrace the equality of genders, and on the other hand reject the ideals that were meant to protect that equality. For this reason, it becomes crucial to study how salient women's rights have been within the Nouvelle Droite, and how they viewed such issues. In this penultimate chapter, the New Right's positions on feminism are understood as a result of predominantly two conceptions. (1) Western culture was incompatible with foreign cultures, and (2) women's rights were emphasized to exemplify how equal and free Western Europe was, compared to other (non-Western) countries. This line of argument will be shown through a discussion of themes the Nouvelle Droite elevated, including the 'female condition', sexual freedom, abortion, and religious freedom.

The Feminine Condition

The 11th volume of the magazine *Nouvelle École* 1970 was titled *La Condition Feminine*. In that edition, women's rights in different cultures were subjects of discussion. The following sections will focus on how GRECE argued that 'Western countries' were superior to foreign cultures in their treatment of women. First, it shall be discussed how GRECE reconceptualized feminism in their own views, which could either be one of many variations, or a derailing of what feminism entailed.

In the introductory article of *La Condition Feminine*, Jean Claude Bardet wrote that there was a paradox to feminism, because women apparently wanted to be both man and woman. Bardet thus interpreted feminism to mean that women wanted to "emancipate oneself from" and "identify oneself with" men.¹⁷³ "It seems that, fascinated by the prerogatives of masculinity, women wanted to combine the traditional responsibilities that are theirs with those that men have always exercised."¹⁷⁴ However, the author misunderstood feminist grievances. There was a distinction between being equal in terms of opportunities, power, and respect, and being entirely similar. When women wanted the same opportunities and influence as men, it probably did not mean that women wanted to become men, but rather wanted equal

¹⁷³ Bardet, "Itineraire", 10.

¹⁷⁴ Bardet, "Itineraire", 10.

rights and opportunities. However, contemporary feminists also argued that there was a paradox at the heart of feminism, Nancy Cott formulated thus:

It aims for individual freedoms by mobilizing sex solidarity. It acknowledges diversity among women while positing that women recognize their unity. It requires gender consciousness for its basis, yet calls for the elimination of prescribed gender roles.¹⁷⁵

Despite this, the paradoxes were not the same. The feminist critique was based on a seemingly contradictory strategy, in which both unity and diversity was a goal at the same time. Nouvelle Droite's views were based on a critique of women who wanted to become men, implying their fear that differences should disappear.

The ND believed that feminism would lead to the eradication of differences between feminine and masculine. This materialized as the foremost concern, rather than concern for actual issues faced by women.¹⁷⁶ Bardet argued that female emancipation would entail the eradication of differences, that functions and attitudes of men and women would assimilate and become interchangeable.¹⁷⁷ Such an egalitarian idea was deemed harmful. Alain de Benoist also argued elsewhere that genes determined men's tendencies towards aggression and domination. Women on the other hand, were biologically submissive, passive and their principal role was to bear children. Any change away from those biological conditions was threatening to virility.¹⁷⁸ By extension, they had fears concerning decline of Western population and invasion by foreign elements. This arguably shows how gender differences were important for the far-right, because they alluded to how society should function and how values should be transmitted.¹⁷⁹

Nouvelle Droite did not agree or overlooked that gender roles were socially or culturally shaped, not biological determinants. Bardet argued that the catalyst for this was that women wanted to "play the same role" as men. He did not indicate what that meant or implied. Moreover, Bardet stated that the traditional responsibilities of a woman should not be shared with the man. "The woman no longer wants to be at home, of course. But behind this requirement, another underlying requirement arises: that the home should disappear."¹⁸⁰ Bardet's statement risked overlooking that women's liberationists at the time claimed that

¹⁷⁵ Cott, "Feminist Theory and Feminist Movements: The Past Before Us", 49.

¹⁷⁶ Bardet, "Itineraire", 10. *"But what about "emancipation" which is reduced to wanting to attribute to oneself the characteristics of the category from which one claims to be "free"? Nature created the masculine and the feminine".*

¹⁷⁷ Bardet, "Itineraire", 14.

¹⁷⁸ Kofman, "Gender, Ethnicity and the Right in France", 92.

¹⁷⁹ Kofman, "Gender, Ethnicity and the Right in France", 95.

¹⁸⁰ Bardet, "Itineraire", 13.

women were oppressed.¹⁸¹ Not only by patriarchal ideology, but also by a deepening economic crisis, rightward drifting of politics and so-called “pro-family” currents which really were anti-feminist and homophobic.¹⁸² Although the feminist movement lacked a coherent strategy and was fragmented, they in general regarded the sharing of responsibilities, burdens, and opportunities as the goal, whether at the university, the workplace, in politics, or the home.¹⁸³ Thus, the Nouvelle Droite argued for a biological determination of the social and political spheres. This furthered men’s appropriation of women’s bodies and ran counter to attempts of female emancipation.

To summarize, in the seventies, the Nouvelle Droite argued that the differentiation of male / female social roles was “a fact of culture which is grafted onto a fact of nature.”¹⁸⁴ A study on contemporary attitudes to gender equality of the *German* far-right found that some groups think men and women have equal rights despite their differences.¹⁸⁵ However, the New Right emphasized the importance of differences although equality does not mean similarity. With caution, it is possible to trace a similarity in how gender equality is used by the far-right to justify claims about threats to society. This seems to be an element of continuity in far-right ideology, traceable to 1970 in this case. The change might be how gender differences were reiterated by the Nouvelle Droite contra other far-right movements.

The Nouvelle Droite’s *the female condition* did little to further a feminist cause. If anything, it only served the differentialist narrative. In their view, non-Europeans should not assimilate into an *Indo-European* identity. Within that scheme, gender and racial identities intersected, as will be shown in the following sections.

Ethno-Pluralism and Paganism – Women’s Rights as Guise for ND Agenda

Jean Claude Bardet explored the historical condition of women, however predominantly how women had been viewed as commodities throughout history.¹⁸⁶ Bardet gave examples in filigree, such as depictions of prostitution, harems, polygamy, and how women were viewed as unclean during menstruation and after pregnancy in some cultures, or marriages where payment was an element.¹⁸⁷ Notably, the examples were picked from either the Middle East; an Assyrian or African Tribe; were related to Muhammed, a Hebrew person or a Rabbi; or referenced the Babylonian legal text ‘The Code of Hammurabi’ which was composed circa

¹⁸¹ Maroney, “Feminism at Work”, 102.

¹⁸² Maroney, “Feminism at Work”, 102.

¹⁸³ Miscellaneous, in *What is feminism?* Mitchell & Oakley, (eds), 46, 50, 52, 87, 104.

¹⁸⁴ François, “Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite », 420.

¹⁸⁵ Fangen & Lichtenberg, “Gender and Family Rhetoric on the German Far-Right”, 12.

¹⁸⁶ Bardet, “Theme Central”, 20.

¹⁸⁷ Bardet, “Theme Central”, 27.

1755–1750 BC.¹⁸⁸ Bardet was careful not to include examples from either contemporary day or from Europe. This is peculiar in more ways than one, seeing as there could be found cases from Western culture that would illustrate oppression of women, if that was the intention.¹⁸⁹ Additionally, the approach evidenced the lack of concern for women of the Global South in then-present context. The discussion could have benefited from examples of contemporary times to lift current issues, again, if that was the intention.¹⁹⁰ What is more, the continuing depiction of women as objects or inferior was merely furthering the same narrative. A feminist approach would arguably balance highlighting the continuous disfavored position of women in society with underscoring the agency women had. Therefore, the objectification of women in ancient cultures neither acknowledged the strides made in female emancipation, nor shone a light on contemporary challenges.

Rather, women's rights were invoked to make a point a case for incompatibility of cultures. "There is no marriage when there is no consent," says the French Civil Code. But in the Muslim law, such authorization is never necessary."¹⁹¹ This example insinuated that French culture was superior when it came to women's rights, while Muslim culture was used as examples of primitive, misogynistic, patriarchal and inferior views. Lastly, the use of ancient places in the global south, and ancient textual sources were used to supply a coating of historical authenticity. There was no further certainty of the claims as accurate, nor the significance for the argument. Hence, the meaning was implied and attainable to those who adhered to the notion of racial difference. The depictions of inferior views of women in ancient and religious cultures, not to mention the general and undocumented reference to *primitive taboos, probably African origin* can be seen as an element of the argument of 'right to difference' that the ND advocated. By expounding how different foreign values were from the values of Western (Indo-European) culture, the ND meant to evidence that the cultures were irreconcilable.

The examples of Western gender equality contrasted the Muslim and African ones, to demonstrate differences between cultures. The condition of Western women was apparently far better. Examples of Indo-European culture depicted 'mothers who enjoyed real consideration in Rome', girls who were 'listened to' among the Vikings, and women in Sparta who enjoyed sexual freedom before marriage. About the Greeks, "there is no ritual purification, nor wearing of the veil, nor confinement" of women, and on the Irish, an example

¹⁸⁸ Bardet, "Theme Central", 20.

¹⁸⁹ One example is Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, in which gender and its relations to racism, sexuality, nationality and culture is theorized.

¹⁹⁰ As an example, Marion den Uyl, "Dowry in India: Respected Tradition and Modern Monstrosity" tackles this dilemma.

¹⁹¹ Bardet, "Theme Central", 21.

of women having political, religious, and military functions.¹⁹² The ND thus implied that ‘Indo-Europeans’ had superior moral and ethics, through a comparison of women’s treatment by the Celts, Germans, Scandinavians, Greeks, and Spartans, vis-à-vis the Assyrians, Hebrews, African, and Babylonian. However, Bardet chose to omit that while in his own text, when he distinguished Norway, Iceland, Denmark, and Sweden for their emancipated legislation regarding women, the literature Bardet used to back his claim compared the Scandinavian countries as more advanced than Spain, Italy, France, and Germany.¹⁹³

Bardet’s article exhibited how the female body simultaneously was as a tool and a victim for various actors such as the Church or ancient societies.¹⁹⁴ To reiterate, the Nouvelle Droite rejected any religious custom and favored paganism. However, while Bardet depicted how the Church or foreign cultures harassed women in the past, he arguably perpetrated the same form of discrimination. Bardet could have utilized examples of how misogyny manifested itself in contemporary times. Rather, Bardet made use of examples from ‘Hebrews’ and ‘Assyrians’, or through lamenting the condition of women within the Church.¹⁹⁵ Instead of tackling contemporary feminist issues, Bardet listed example on example of how women were victimized elsewhere, to further the anti-Christian and nativist agenda of ND. If that was an example of ‘resolute feminism’, it entailed to omit actual issues of their day, and use ancient texts as an example of gender inequality in other cultures as indirect juxtaposition to Western culture.

Sexual Freedom

GRECE published several articles infused with traditionalist thought. Traditionalism posited radical anti-modernist ideas. The Nouvelle Droite longed for the far past of their ‘ancestors’, and rejected various characteristics of modern society, such as egalitarianism, overpopulation, dissolution of community solidarity, and the sexual revolution. They believed these concepts were a form of tyranny.¹⁹⁶ In response, according to Francois and Bar-On, the traditionalists of the New Right longed for a society that was patriarchal, conservative, and hierarchical.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² Bardet, “Theme Central”, 31-33.

¹⁹³ Bardet’s reference, Paul Gide, wrote that in the Kingdom of the Lombards, the woman could not own any property, whereas among Scandinavians, women sometimes owned buildings. Moreover, in Italy, a widow remained chained to the husband’s family; while in Norway or Sweden, the widow could return to her own family. Bardet wanted to trace the origins of “Germans” by using laws from Scandinavia. However, that was misleading when Bardet talked about Scandinavians, Germans, Lombards and Gauls as a homogenous group, and Gide compared them.

Gide, *Étude sur la condition privée de la femme dans le droit ancien et moderne*, 223 ; Bardet, “Theme Central”, 29.

¹⁹⁴ Bardet, “Theme Central”, 10, 21.

¹⁹⁵ Bardet, “Theme Central”, 27. “Among the Hebrews, writes Maurice Haj je, after the consummation of the marriage, a matron shows friends the linen stained with blood, an unmistakable sign of the bride’s virginity. This cult finds its supreme expression in the idealization of a total contradiction, childbirth without the “help” of sexuality: The Virgin Mother”.

¹⁹⁶ François & Bar-On, “The Nouvelle Droite and “Tradition”, 100-101.

¹⁹⁷ François & Bar-On, “The Nouvelle Droite and “Tradition”, 101-102.

These depictions appear to run counter to feminist thought, which sought to dismantle patriarchal, conservative, and non-progressive structures in society. It also goes against de Benoist's quote earlier in this paper. Therefore, it appears difficult to reconcile 'resolute feminism' with traditionalism, but nonetheless these were positions the Nouvelle Droite combined. The paradox remains, though, when traditionalists' hatred for modernity was expressed through rejecting the *sexual revolution*. The sexual revolution is arguably an important aspect of feminism. Conversely, the Nouvelle Droite made the argument that anything that deviated from a nuclear family and marriage, was equal to destitution, because family was the 'most completed level of evolution'. Thus, in the view of the ND, total freedom of sexuality was a regression of evolution.

While the feature in the eight Nouvelle École was titled *For a Sexual Liberation*, its connotations were situated in the familiar New Right critique of Christianity.¹⁹⁸ The reading was ambiguous as to exactly how the ND conceptualized sexual liberation. On the one hand, it was seen as a threat or problem, and on the other, they also appropriated and altered sexual liberty in tune with own views, like they had done with racism and feminism.

GRECE essayist Yves de Saint Agnes argued that sexual freedom as he traced it, and opposed it, urged to push freedom to its most 'extreme consequences': Proponents of sexual freedom demanded the officialization of homosexuality, *zoophilia*, and for national brothels.¹⁹⁹ Although lacking examples to substantiate those claims, Saint Agnes further argued that sexual freedom would destruct specificity of the sexes, remove individual limits and erode life as they knew it.²⁰⁰ As he put it, "water is a good that quenches our thirst, but it is one that can drown us". This exhibited the view of the Nouvelle Droite, that the evolution of sexual freedoms would not only lead to a unisex society where sexual differentiation was abolished, but also that it would lead to the complete destitution of morals and values.²⁰¹ Sexuality for the ND was tied to a notion of choices and responsibility, which also alluded to how they viewed issues of homosexuality, family, and reproduction. Arguably, these issues were closely linked, and important for the Nouvelle Droite.

The fear of sexual liberation can be seen in a broader context, which is how the far-right have attempted to control women's bodies. Saint Agnes wrote "we glorify motherhood" and that pregnancy should be a consequence of an act of will, not as benefit or punishment.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Saint-Agnes, "Pour la Liberte Sexuelle", 14.

¹⁹⁹ Saint-Agnes, "Pour la Liberte Sexuelle", 15.

²⁰⁰ Saint-Agnes, "Pour la Liberte Sexuelle", 17.

²⁰¹ Saint-Agnes, "Pour la Liberte Sexuelle", 17, 18. "*The evolution of society shows a tendency to diminish the differentiation of the sexes. Down with the hero, long live the deserter; down with the father of the family, long live the pederast! (...); down with the strong man, long live the waste; down with life, and long live death.*"

²⁰² Saint-Agnes, "Pour la Liberte Sexuelle", 20.

Volunteer motherhood was advocated in a plea to the “Western man to awaken”. It was up to the man to rediscover the relationship between a man and a woman, removed from any idea of defilement, according to Saint-Agnes.²⁰³ Two things spring to mind: First, in a declaration for voluntary *motherhood*, they appealed to *men*, instead of women, or both. Sexuality and motherhood were linked because the ND argued that sexuality predominantly was a biological function, that of reproduction.²⁰⁴ Second, their stance on sexuality was coupled to a homophobic view of relationships, where anything but a relationship between man and woman was an abomination. Their discriminatory views on same-sex relationships were evident in statements that homosexuality was a pathological deviation in behavior, and that science would remedy it in the future, as if it was a disease.²⁰⁵ Seeing as family and reproduction was emphasized by Nouvelle Droite, it is evident that archaic gender roles underscored ND’s ideology.

Additionally, the text implied that ND views on sexuality not only was coupled to homophobia and reproduction, but also to racist ideology. In a passage, Saint-Agnes argued that a woman who committed adultery violated the principle of ‘family integrity’ because she could risk introducing foreign blood into the family. Such ‘interbreeding’ endangered the family. Saint-Agnes argued that to infringe on the lineage of the family was a larger problem than the adultery itself.²⁰⁶ The ND believed that humans could be divided into families, nations, and races, and furthermore that those categories had certain national, historical, and ethnic specificity. Furthermore, any attempt to ‘solve the problem of sexual freedom’ without considering those ‘facts’ were seen to be futile.²⁰⁷ Therefore, to introduce sexual freedom in Western Europe was a poor plan. Characteristics that apparently were inherited from a long way back, would be at risk of mixing, which was bad. An increasingly free and liberated way of life would bring ‘interbreeding’ and thus dilution of interited archetypes. In their view, “a French or more broadly West European man would not be able to return to his position.”²⁰⁸ A final supplement is that the ND went so far in their defense against mixed marriages, that Alain de Benoist spoke in defense of marriage between relatives to preserve family lineage.²⁰⁹ ND thus argued against sexual freedom due to the dangers of demographical decline, a central component of the takeover myth.

²⁰³ Saint-Agnes, “Pour la Liberte Sexuelle”, 20.

²⁰⁴ GRECE, “Itineraire”, Nouvelle École 8, April-May 1968, 5.

²⁰⁵ Saint-Agnes, “Pour la Liberte Sexuelle”, 22.

²⁰⁶ Saint-Agnes, “Pour la Liberte Sexuelle”, 21.

²⁰⁷ Saint-Agnes, “Pour la Liberte Sexuelle”, 19.

²⁰⁸ Saint-Agnes, “Pour la Liberte Sexuelle”, 19.

²⁰⁹ “Throughout the Middle Ages, the Church was obsessed with the fight against incest (...) The proscription of marriage between relatives, even distant relatives, not only eliminates a considerable number of possible wives, but directly against a traditional logic, characteristic of aristocratic marriage”. François, “Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite,” 418.

The growing freedom of morals combined with growing possibilities of ethnic mixing, gave an acute character to the question of sexual freedom.²¹⁰ Sexual liberation was a topic in which the Nouvelle Droite's notions on race, family, homosexuality, feminism and also their outlook for society intersected. Seeing as the ND were opposed to anything 'totalitarian', their positions on sexual liberation and feminism may be read as an opposition to any process of modernity that might want to change society further away from Pagan tradition. Moreover, the views ND espoused on sexualization was tied to their views on tyranny in a special way. According to François, the ND saw the freedom of sexuality not as liberation, but as a form of oppression, and spoke of it as 'totalitarianism'.²¹¹ This exhibits how women's sexualization and position in society played a role in the larger ideology of the Nouvelle Droite.

Finally, the text on sexual liberation exhibits the Nouvelle Droite's view on incompatibility of cultures, which has been a recurring argument in the analysis of ND in this thesis. Saint-Agnes wrote that the problem of sexual freedom reflected a much larger antagonism, between Western thought and the Middle Eastern world. In the ND view, the West had a supreme value.²¹² Nouvelle Droite's general analysis of society showed that they anticipated the downfall of society and Western culture. One of the most frequent forms of anti-progressivism in the discourse of neo-pagans and traditionalists of the New Right revolves precisely around the notion of decline as an inevitable end.²¹³ For the Nouvelle Droite, the end might very well be ushered in by multiculturalism.

Veil of Multi-Ignorance

During the 1980s, scholars and politicians became increasingly aware that France was multicultural.²¹⁴ In the early 80s, issues of immigration and national identity were subject of heated discussion. The Nouvelle Droite argued that French people had the right to protect their cultural identity from influence by other, foreign elements.²¹⁵ When juxtaposed with the preceding quotes where ND called themselves feminists, the idea of protecting cultural identity revealed that they paid little mind to paternalistic structures that upheld misogynist and racist culture in Western society. Quite the reverse, public discourse on oppression of Muslim women increased during the 1980s, and Islam was portrayed as backwards and suppressant of women.

²¹⁰ Saint-Agnes, "Pour la Liberte Sexuelle", 23.

²¹¹ François, "Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite," 426.

²¹² Saint-Agnes, "Pour la Liberte Sexuelle", 22.

²¹³ François, "Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite", 340-342.

²¹⁴ Vichniac, "French Socialists and "Droit à la Différence"", 41-43.

²¹⁵ Vichniac, "French Socialists and "Droit à la Différence"", 44.

Two hundred years after the French Revolution, there was an event that culminated in a wider debate regarding the status of women in Muslim communities. In France, the idea of *l'école laïque* (secular and religiously neutral education) had a historical and political central position. During an otherwise normal day in September 1989, three Muslim girls insisted on wearing their headscarves to class in a junior high school outside of Paris, upon which the Principal responded by expelling the students.²¹⁶ One reason the incident could spark such intense feelings could be that the institution that was in place to create French cultural and political identity, the school, was 'under siege'.²¹⁷ The principle of secularism was highly important, and as a general ideal, education systems were in place to create the future, and produce a sense of national identity and purpose, in essence, building democracy.

Since the late 20th century, the far-right have depicted Muslim women as oppressed victims of a misogynistic religion.²¹⁸ The far-right (among others) called for women's self-determination, and therefore advocated the ban for the Muslim veil. Thus, the far-right presented themselves as rescuers of oppressed women. However, GRECE and Alain de Benoist positioned themselves differently in the 1980s and 90s, and advocated the right to wear the veil. In some ways, this too can be read as a 'rescue of women', but with the inverted motivation than the far-right in general: Self-determination as the right to wear the veil.

Effectively, the young women had the alternatives of giving up either their religious rights or educational rights. One had the possible consequences of ousting them from their family, while the other could ban them from participating in society, through higher education, employment, and shared cultural identity. In sum, to drive them out of the school system would mean that they were cast out from the system of integration.²¹⁹ Some feminists saw the scarves as a sign of women's oppression, while others saw the claim to remove it as an attack on pluralism.²²⁰ The importance of female emancipation was reiterated as a central value of French civilization, by feminists as well as Prime Minister Rocard.²²¹ This example unveiled the squeeze women were put in at the intersection of ideals and practice of gender equality: The wearing of headscarves by Muslim women in Western countries arguably became a poster image of immigration opposition, and where the division between feminists and misogynists was blurred.

²¹⁶ Vichniac, "French Socialists and "Droit à la Différence"", ", 46.

²¹⁷ Vichniac, "French Socialists and "Droit à la Différence"", 47.

²¹⁸ Fangen & Lichtenberg, "Gender and Family Rhetoric on the German Far-Right", 19-20.

²¹⁹ Vichniac, "French Socialists and "Droit à la Différence"", 49.

²²⁰ Vichniac, "French Socialists and "Droit à la Différence"", 51.

²²¹ Vichniac, "French Socialists and "Droit à la Différence"", 49.

In a polemical passage, the French Minister of Defense argued that letting young Muslim women wear scarves to school, was equal to letting go of French values.²²² Essentially, due to events that transpired one morning, France was on a slippery slope toward an Islamic and religious society. The *Affaire des Foulards* (veil affair) demonstrated how gender parity was an anticipated geopolitical threat, because women's rights issues implicated a threat to the ideals and cultural foundation of the state. This idea can be traced to the takeover myth, which has been a recurring perceived threat by the far-right. Connected to this myth is the fear that institutions are in decay or crisis. For instance, immigrants could pose a threat to the legitimacy of the foundation of society, be it family, school, church, monarchy, or any other institution who provided safety.²²³ In this instance, Islam posed a threat to the secular education system, a cornerstone of French society. In that situation, the Muslim girls and by extension Islam, posed a threat to modernity, including secular society, freedom of the individual, equality, and Western democracy. This was at odds with the dominating norms in France. However, paradoxically, most of those were the values the Nouvelle Droite also opposed: Modernity, equality, democracy, and individual liberty. Accordingly, it can be assumed that this was the reason why ND spoke in favor in wearing the veil.

The ND argued that migrants did not desire to emigrate, which for many may have been true.²²⁴ However, realities of migration processes were far more complex, as immigrants as a group, and their push and pull factors varied from case to case.²²⁵ To put them in a singular category glossed over a complete and complex set of factors for migration.²²⁶ Scholars have argued that a major pitfall in discussions of migration is a "one-sided approach", which emphasized the cultural and ethnic characteristics of immigrant groups.²²⁷ It has been argued by Pierre-André Taguieff that the racist discourse perpetrated by the ND in essence reiterated the distinction of various ethnic groups, and the segregation between them.²²⁸ Due to this, it can be assumed that the Nouvelle Droite argued for the right to wear the veil, in order to underscore the incompatibility between Islam and the West. Therefore, their support for the Muslim girls was instrumental in their more general aims of repatriation of non-native immigrants.

Their stark stances in favor of abortion, the right to wear the veil, and against colonialism, and for alliance with the Third World, ran counter to the mainstream policies of

²²² Vichniac, "French Socialists and "Droit à la Différence"", 50; Vincent, "Du clivage au consensus culturel", 227-268.

²²³ Døving. "Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia:", 63.

²²⁴ De Benoist & Champetier, *Manifesto for a European Renaissance*, 34.

²²⁵ Hoerder, Lucassen, & Lucassen. "Terminologies and concepts of migration research", xxvi, xxxiii.

²²⁶ "The industrialised (sic) nations have reduced man to the level of merchandise that can be relocated anywhere"

²²⁷ Hoerder, Lucassen, & Lucassen, "Terminologies and concepts of migration research", xxxv.

²²⁸ Taguieff, "The New Cultural Racism in France", 109-122; Flood. "Nationalism or Nationism?" 91-92.

their current political climate. Coupled with the tenets they opposed; it is possible to see multiculturalism as a common denominator, which the ND feared.²²⁹ When gender and feminism is introduced into this, it can further be argued that feminism was predominantly a scheme adopted into their larger strategy against multiculturalism. Conversely, had they been genuinely invested in a feminist cause or cared for migrant women, they could have addressed how multiculturalism affected women.

According to Susan Okin, the French accommodation of polygamy illustrated a growing tension between feminism on one side, and the protection of a cultural diversity (multiculturalism) on the other.²³⁰ In the 1980s the French government permitted immigrant men to bring numerous wives to France. While the *foulard affair* accumulated massive attention, the public received scarce knowledge on how the women affected by polygamy saw it as a barely tolerable condition.²³¹ However, through a longer passage about the dread of group marriages, the ND drew a direct link between polygamy and the end of civilization.²³² Thus, concern for polygamy, and in a broader sense women's rights, was not a result of feminist sympathies, but rather motivated by Pagan and traditionalist world views. While the Nouvelle Droite could have argued for the possible tensions between feminism and multiculturalism, and possible challenges posed to women's rights by multiculturalism, they did not. Yet, if that was their endeavor, it was not apparent.

Gender Consciousness

To reiterate, Nouvelle Droite distinguished itself from both feminists and the classic reactionary postures of the far-right.²³³ On the one hand, they openly used the word "feminism", while on the other hand, they did not tackle the range of contemporary women's rights issues, more so that they used women's rights to establish difference of cultures. Therefore, it can be argued that their feminism was on the surface, used to further their nativist and Pagan agenda. Apart from references to violence against women in foreign cultures, other real issues of sexism and misogyny; harassment; domestic violence; or rape was not mentioned in the magazines sampled in this thesis. On the other hand, Nouvelle Droite proved to have an interest in issues regarding women and equality, and explicated progressive views

²²⁹ Kofman, "Gender, Ethnicity and the Right in France", 96.

²³⁰ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 10.

²³¹ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women*, 9-10.

²³² Bardet, "Itineraire", 14.

²³³ François, "Les Paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite", 420.

on for instance hymens, miscarriages and abortion, topics which remain potent and taboo.²³⁴ Issues such as abortion have been of interest for citizens and politicians alike, as it touches on central concerns where the public and private sphere intersects, like family planning, economy, population growth, and health. In addition, it dwells in the landscape of philosophy and ethics, human rights, and feminism. Therefore, on that issue the ND were quite ahead of their time.

Also, the lack of current women's rights issues could owe to the fact of male dominance within GRECE. Rinehart posited that *gender consciousness* for men was less likely, owing to the argument that men did not assess their fortunes relative to other groups, particularly if they were white, in which case their fortunes were the yardstick against which other groups measured themselves.²³⁵ That, coupled with the fact that feminist discourse was not mainstream at the time, evidences that GRECE was more outspoken and progressive on women's issues than most of the contemporary debates.

For the ND, women were equal but still different. The distinction between equality and difference have been crucial to feminist debates, and feminists have made considerable progress in deconstructing the equality/difference binary and go beyond it.²³⁶ Does a recognition of difference imply that gender equality is unattainable? Probably more interesting, is whether difference implies inferiority. The ND espoused a view of gender differences based on 'scientific' biological studies, which handed different biological attributes and qualities to men and women.²³⁷ One can easily draw a parallel to Nouvelle Droite's differentialist racism. Non-Indo-European cultures (shorthand for Muslim and African) were also seen as equal and different, which moreover implied inferior. Therefore, there is a similarity in biology used as explanations for difference as inferiority.

Newer feminist scholarship on nationalism has theorized and documented the centrality of women, gender, and the female body to the implementation of nationalist goals. In response to immigration, the far-right's answer is a retreat to nationalism, strict border and immigration control, and 'traditional' values.²³⁸ Fangen and Lichtenberg has shown that the far-right use women's rights instrumentally in order to legitimize their arguments against Islam and Muslim immigrants, for instance by claiming that women's rights are threatened.²³⁹

²³⁴ "Let us also reaffirm the right to sexual freedom for young people before marriage and strongly condemn the unhealthy cult of virginity. It suffices to recall briefly the immensity of the social hypocrisy brought about by the obsession with the hymen" Yves de Saint-Agnes, "Pour la Liberte Sexuelle", Nouvelle École 8, 22.

²³⁵ Rinehart, *Gender Consciousness and Politics*, 33.

²³⁶ Woodward & Woodward, *Why Feminism Matters. Feminism lost and found*, 104-105.

²³⁷ Bardet, "Itineraire", 14, 15.

²³⁸ Moghadam & Kaftan, "Right-Wing Populisms North and South", 1, 3.

²³⁹ Fangen & Lichtenberg, "Gender and Family Rhetoric on the German Far-Right", 7.

Especially in the past decade, the strategy to invoke women's rights to stigmatize Muslim men has become so prevalent, that it has its own term, called *femonationalism*.²⁴⁰ The Nouvelle Droite's rhetoric on women's rights thus far seems consistent with fears of multiculturalism. Moreover, the entanglement of gender and immigration by the Nouvelle Droite was not out of concern for neither native nor immigrant women. This alludes to a certain continuity of importance of women's rights in the far-right. So why would a conservative far-right movement emphasize women's rights and gender equality?

Placing Women at the Front

To put a female front on politics has been an old tactic of right-wing populism and European fascism, according to Carol Mason. Mason has shown that despite the cited motive to advance women, their actual agenda is to diminish women's political power.²⁴¹ Thus, the advocacy for gender equality could be used opportunistically by the far-right to gain political power and cultural capital.²⁴² Moreover, the scholars who have researched the strategy of deploying pro-woman rhetoric, have found that gendered politics always are racial politics as well.²⁴³

Narratives surrounding women's status and health are plentiful. Some narratives that have been maintained by the far-right consider women as *victims of free abortion* and ignore that many women experience relief rather than regret or grief after terminating an unwanted pregnancy.²⁴⁴ If this has been the general tendency, then Nouvelle Droite represents an exception. GRECE appeared to convey actual sympathy and understanding for the physical and emotional trauma of abortion, a tolerance for the need to perform them, as well as shedding light on the taboo of miscarriages.²⁴⁵ The argument that Nouvelle Droite developed a feminist way of thinking, is supported by Andrea Mammone.²⁴⁶

In one of the first editions of Nouvelle École, a central ND figure named Jean-Claude Valla had a nine-page article on *Le Probleme l'Avortement* (the problem of abortion).²⁴⁷ The text can be read as an advocacy for free abortion and a criticism against Christianity. It reads as sympathetic to the challenges faced by women who were denied abortion, as well as aware of hypocrisies that existed in the debate.²⁴⁸ Moreover, Valla clearly espoused a stance toward free abortion, as he viewed clandestine abortions to be a big problem, out of concern for the

²⁴⁰Term coined by Sara Farris, in 'Femonationalism and the "regular" army of labor called migrant women', 184–99.

²⁴¹ Mason, "Opposing Abortion to Protect Women", 665.

²⁴² Mason, "Opposing Abortion to Protect Women", 666.

²⁴³ Mason, "Opposing Abortion to Protect Women", 666.

²⁴⁴ Mason, "Opposing Abortion to Protect Women", 666.

²⁴⁵ Vetillard. "Avortement", 91-92.

²⁴⁶ Mammone, "The Transnational Reaction to 1968", 231.

²⁴⁷ Valla, "Le Probleme l'Avortement", 9.

²⁴⁸ Valla, "Le Probleme l'Avortement", 13.

wellbeing of the expecting mothers who were refused (or shamed from) a medical abortion.²⁴⁹ This was in stark contrast to how abortion generally would be conceived by the far-right in the 21st century.

The mobilization by the far-right on gender equality, especially since the 1990s, indicates a change with how the far-right viewed abortion in the 1970s. From the 1990s, the far-right designated a central role for women in the political and economic chain of production. Instead of championing abortion rights like ND, the contemporary far-right fought *against* abortion in the name of protecting women. According to Carol Mason, that demonstrates how the far-right integrated women's rights with the fear of becoming an ethnic minority.²⁵⁰ In line with the *takeover myth*, the far-right feared they would become victims of demographic demise, and wanted to protect women as 'victims of abortion' in order to boost population growth.²⁵¹ Opposite this, the ND argued for the women's rights to decide for herself, and that patriarchal structures had laid the foundation for how society took control over female bodies, exemplified by abortion laws.²⁵² It is in the abortion debate the ND represents a clear contrast with scholarly consensus of the far-right, and moreover the most progressive feminist positions.

The staunchest opposers of abortion have often had religious motivations. Especially in recent years, transnational connections on the issue of abortion have been made based on religious and conservative ideals.²⁵³ However, the ND was anti-religious, and starkly opposed how monotheistic religions usually controlled women's bodies. In their struggle against multicultural societies, the Nouvelle Droite (1) did not have a strategy to force pregnancies to go full term, and (2) opposed religious and liberalist foundations in politics first and foremost. Therefore, in the 1970s, the ND did not aim to control female reproduction to safeguard an Indo-European heritage.

While religious beliefs cannot explain the ND agenda for women's rights, the question of gender importance remains. It is certain that fear of demographic dilution remained a most mobilizing factor. As mentioned earlier, the combined cruelty of racism and misogyny has been felt first and foremost by women of color. Intersectional analyses of abortion have found abortion politics to be profoundly linked with racial implications.²⁵⁴ Following this argument, the Nouvelle Droite's views on abortion was somehow linked to their nativist agenda. Far-

²⁴⁹ Valla, "Le Probleme l'Avortement", 15.

²⁵⁰ Mason, "Opposing Abortion to Protect Women", 686.

²⁵¹ Mason, "Opposing Abortion to Protect Women", 686.

²⁵² "Giving life should be a joy, not a social duty modeled on forced labor.", "Women are still too often tossed about at the mercy of religious laws or the parties in power", Dr. F.B. "A corner of the veil", 92.

²⁵³ Mason, "Opposing Abortion to Protect Women", 678-679.

²⁵⁴ Mason, "Opposing Abortion to Protect Women", 666, 668.

right opposition to abortion in general has centered on how one must control the female body to control the nation.²⁵⁵ This line of argument was not visible in the nativism of the Nouvelle Droite. Instead, there was no future where a Western nation could be taken over, the only future was where every ‘non-native’ moved away. The reason was the idea of the ‘the right to difference’. The Nouvelle Droite wanted differences to be visible, to argue further for the incompatibility of cultures. Therefore, the advocacy for free and legal abortion could be used to emphasize the values of feminism and gender equality in the West, vis-à-vis the misogynistic and paternalistic others.

Seemingly, ND advocated feminist issues to further their ethno-nationalist agenda by presenting sexism and patriarchy as the nearly exclusive domain of non-Western countries.

²⁵⁵ Mason, “Opposing Abortion to Protect Women”, 680.

IV. Left, Right, and the Misogyny in Between

Bar-On showed that right-wing, left-wing, and “no-wing” far-right movements around the world seek to defend their distinctive identities against the weight of globalization and modernity processes.²⁵⁶ The ND viewed modernity and progressive politics as symptoms of civilizational decadence and decline, including the “increasing indistinction concerning male and female social behavior”.²⁵⁷ They were not alone in this, however: Since the French revolution in 1789, the French extreme right was preoccupied with the disintegration of societal morals and values brought by the multiple processes associated with modernity.²⁵⁸ Indeed, this is rooted in their opposition to egalitarianism on account of its reduction of difference. Ironically, the nationalist and anti-globalist cores in extremist movements across Europe unite transnationally in resistance to what is called ‘gender ideology’, a term that encompasses attitudes that oppose ‘full’ gender equality.²⁵⁹

Misogynist Narratives: Continuity and Change of the Far-Right and Gender

Research has shown that opposition to multiculturalism grew after the period under discussion in this thesis. Various anti-immigration and Islamophobic far-right groups apply rhetoric of progressive gender values to gain followers. In this case, gender equality and women’s emancipation are framed as ‘true national values’ that are threatened by immigration. This is done also to position themselves as different from the perceived imminent (Muslim) threat that they link to immigration. Some political parties—for example, *Rassemblement National* in France identify as LGBT-friendly as a strategy. Mobilization along the lines of progressive policies therefore serves the anti-immigration purpose, according to Fangen and Skjelsbæk.²⁶⁰ This shows that is a clear continuance in how the far-right use women’s rights to position Europe as distinctively ‘superior’ than other cultures.

The far-right object to liberal democracy due to its protection of minority groups. The reason is that the far-right view pluralism as a threat to the people who are homogenous in ethnicity and moral.²⁶¹ This is also an element of continuance from the *Nouvelle Droite*, who asserted that immigration would lead to the dilution of culture and tradition. According to Spierings and Zaslove, gender is crucial to this nativist agenda of the far-right.²⁶² This is

²⁵⁶ Bar-On, “Neo-Fascism With a Human Face?”, 2.

²⁵⁷ De Benoist, “On Identity”, 20.

²⁵⁸ François & Bar-On. “The Nouvelle Droite and “Tradition”, 100.

²⁵⁹ Fangen & Lichtenberg, “Gender and Family Rhetoric on the German Far-Right”, 21.

²⁶⁰ Fangen & Skjelsbæk, “Editorial: special issue on gender and the far right”, 413.

²⁶¹ Mudde, *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*, 5.

²⁶² Spierings & Zaslove, “Conclusion: Dividing the Populist Radical Right”, 167.

exhibited in a paradoxical manner. Across populist radical right parties, rhetoric is as mentioned filled with liberal references. Simultaneously, they advocate the freedom of immigrant women. All the while, they view migrants as a single group, and see them as a threat to the liberal freedoms acquired in the West. In addition, they do not support emancipatory policies for immigrant women. In fact, the far-right aim to implement restrictive policies in defense of a liberal and equality agenda they do not support. This complicated relationship with liberalism is evident across the far-right realm.

This reveals the tension between multiculturalism and women's rights. Tension occurs when for instance cultural or religious groups that multicultural policies seek to protect, systematically suppress the rights of women and children. Examples of said oppression are e.g., enforced marriages and genital mutilation. Akkermann and Hagelund argue that these issues became more prominent after the terrorist attack on United States on September 11th, 2001, because then, women were dealt a more central place in the discussion about the division between the Islamic world and the West.²⁶³ On the other hand, this thesis has shown that such discourse was common within the Nouvelle Droite from the 1970s. However, a change since then has been that Europe's Muslim population has increasingly been seen as a threat, and Muslim alienation has grown stronger.²⁶⁴ Multiculturalism is thus challenging. Women's rights are one of the main issues that demonstrate these tensions. It is evident today, in western democracies where gender equality is widely accepted and protected, and it was evident within the Nouvelle Droite at a time when gender equality discourse was under development.

The Nouvelle Droite opposed multiculturalism since their inception; and contemporary feminist literature has increasingly grown critical of it as well. Gender issues cannot fully explain the challenges of multiculturalism, but it plays a crucial role in explanations of failed integration by the far-right. In the 1970s, ND used oppressive gender relations among ethnic minorities as explanations of why cultures should not be mixed. Today, the same oppressive gender relations are used to demonstrate failed integration, for instance when immigrants do not absorb values of host countries, such as gender equality.²⁶⁵ Thus, the far-right rhetoric of ND from the 1970s has become an increasingly acceptable anti-immigration rhetoric for radical-right parties today, due to public discourse on gender roles.²⁶⁶

²⁶³ Akkerman & Hagelund, "Women and Children First!", 199.

²⁶⁴ Akkerman & Hagelund, "Women and Children First!", 199.

²⁶⁵ Akkerman & Hagelund, "Women and Children First!", 213.

²⁶⁶ Akkerman & Hagelund, "Women and Children First!", 213.

The Misogynist Turn: From Secluded Sexism to Open Opposition

Because it has an authoritarian dimension that appeal to natural orders and nativism; gender and sexual relations are ideal markers for distinguishing the good from the threat. Threats are by the far-right thought to emerge from ‘non-native groups. Therefore, Spierings offers the argument that groups who demand equality can by the far-right be perceived as a threat to the unity and stability they seek.²⁶⁷ On the other hand, the voicing of women’s causes represented few pitfalls for ND. They could champion abortion rights and equality because it could not harm them or their cause. The far-right may also be looking to appropriate a gender equality agenda to garner support.²⁶⁸ However, increasingly, far-right organizations that are inspired by the Nouvelle Droite, such as *Generation Identitaire*, might invoke feminism and women’s rights with entirely different motives.²⁶⁹

Correspondingly, the chief change in feminist rhetoric within the far-right is that to mobilize *against* gender equality has proven useful. Gender-equality and pro-gender norms are in those instances framed as part of the unappealing globalization agenda. Accordingly, increased acceptance for feminism is constructed as a threat. Russia and Poland are among some countries in Europe who have taken an ‘illiberal turn’. In such socially conservative societies, violence in close relationships is defended as a component of national sovereignty and culture.²⁷⁰ To uphold and preserve traditional gender values and roles for men and women are at the heart of the globalization resistance, and ideals of house and family find support across various nationalistic, religious, and extremist groups.

Within the *anti-gender* view, feminism is perceived as fundamentally antagonistic to men, thus avoiding the benefits of gender equality enjoyed by men. Such *men’s rights activists* may either fully proclaim hatred of women and/or wish to restore masculine dominance.²⁷¹ The traditional gender roles familiar from this thesis is a favored solution. The opposition to women’s emancipation also encompasses hatred for LGBT and sexual minorities. These movements identify gender and sexual freedom as the enemy, rather than as symptoms of a greater challenge: political and cultural crises of liberal democracy.²⁷² Yet, there is no simple equation-mark between anti-gender movements and the far-right, even though the far-right have appropriated the anti-gender rhetoric.

²⁶⁷ Spierings, “Why Gender and Sexuality Are both Trivial and Pivotal”, 43, 49.

²⁶⁸ Spierings & Zaslove, “Conclusion: Dividing the Populist Radical Right”, 171.

²⁶⁹ Sarai B Aharoni & Élise Féron, “National Populism and Gendered Vigilantism: The Case of the Soldiers of Odin in Finland”, 2019. The authors argued that the activities of anti-immigration groups such as the Soldiers in Finland demonstrated a feminist security dilemma concerning the way securitization of public gender-based violence was used to enhance militarized performance of white masculinity.

²⁷⁰ Holm-Hansen, “Vold i nære relasjoner som tema i russisk og polsk politikk, 255-268.

²⁷¹ Träbert, “At the Mercy of Femocracy?”, 275.

²⁷² Kovàts, “The Emergency of Powerful Anti-Gender Movements in Europe”, 185.

Indeed, far-right parties across Europe propagate rhetoric on men and women based on stereotypes and genetic differences. This is aimed at preserving society against modernization.²⁷³ Again a clear continuance from the ND is apparent. The most evident legacy of Nouvelle Droite is the transnational *Identitäre Bewegung* (Generation Identity) in Europe, which originated in 2012 in France as *Génération Identitaire*. They opposed mass immigration in Europe, to protect the ‘national identity’ against a ‘multicultural Europe’.²⁷⁴ As a parallel to Nouvelle Droite, the GI also fear the ‘great replacement’ or ‘takeover’ by immigrants. Generation Identity promotes classical conceptions of heterosexual masculinity and traditional gender roles. In addition, the interdependence of racism and sexism is evident, because women’s roles are ascribed due to biological arguments, which again are following a racist logic.²⁷⁵

As previously demonstrated, Nouvelle Droite abandoned the left-right dichotomy and opted for a retail ideology, which sampled a variety of issues typically belonging to either side.²⁷⁶ The way of ignoring classical division lines in politics is vital to understand the role of gender in Nouvelle Droite. As the far-right appropriates typical left-wing issues such as gender equality, and these issues are latched onto a nationalist perspective, the far-right ideology could either be expanded upon, or else these factions of the far-right will be categorized as ideological and political outsiders.²⁷⁷ Gender-equality norms, therefore, are a central issue for right-wing extremist groups in defining what the groups are for and what they are against.²⁷⁸ In such a context, an understanding of the historical trajectory of women’s rights in the far-right is vital.

²⁷³ Dubslaff, “Women on the Fast Track”, 164.

²⁷⁴ Blum, “Men in the Battle for the Brains Constructions of Masculinity Within the “Identitary Generation”, 324.

²⁷⁵ Blum, “Men in the Battle for the Brains Constructions of Masculinity Within the “Identitary Generation”, 330.

²⁷⁶ De Benoist, *View From the Right*, 15.

²⁷⁷ Akkermann & Hagelund, “Women and Children First!”, 200.

²⁷⁸ Fangen & Skjelsbæk “Editorial: Special Issue on Gender and the Far-Right”, 413.

Conclusion

This thesis has studied the historical relationship between women's rights and the far-right. The far-right combine anti-immigrant opinions with nationalism and traditionalism, which puts issues of racism and women's rights at an intersection. Crucially, the thesis acknowledges and theorizes the diversity within far-right movements, beyond anti-immigration attitudes of political parties. The criticality of gender in the far-right, coupled with its rapid global rise has urged the need to locate how gender issues function within the far-right realm. In this thesis, I have attempted to do so through well-substantiated and broad claims about gender and the Nouvelle Droite, that are legible and useful to scholars and publics alike, in the study and understanding of the far-right. I argue that women's rights are a central component of far-right ideology, but the *far-right's opposition to gender equality has become more prevalent in the 21st century, than it was between 1970 and 1990*. This thesis has found that the far-right's views on women have changed since 1990s. Where the Nouvelle Droite applied a smokescreen of gender equality advocacy to further a racist agenda, the far-right today openly oppose female emancipation.

Scholarly consensus argues that the Nouvelle Droite had a feminist way of thinking. I counter this and argue that *seemingly feminist* positions were only a diversion. Nouvelle Droite advocated gender parity to further their ethno-nationalist agenda by presenting sexism and patriarchy as the nearly exclusive domain of non-Western people. Hence, I question whether this entails actual feminism. This diversion strategy is visible in the far-right in Europe today as well. Gender has historically held multiple and important roles for the far-right. A change is that recently, the far-right sees feminism and women's rights as a threat, and masculine victimhood is on the rise. This is however not so different from the masculine rhetoric by the ND, who feared that egalitarianism would eradicate gender differences, which was dangerous in their view. Although, the ND did not express a direct threat posed by feminism.

The lack of equality endured by women of foreign cultures was used by ND to evidence and promote their racist ideology and was not used to address current issues or female oppression in society. Nouvelle Droite furthered pejorative images of African and Middle Eastern men, and so constructed racist discourse of non-Western people. This was implicitly meant to present non-natives as a threat to Western values. ND thus emphasized gender-equality to argue Western general superiority. They juxtaposed the deplorable fate of women in Africa and the Middle East, with the empowered condition of women in Europe. By furthering liberal views on women and sexual freedom, they moreover presented the West as a safe and progressive space. In contrast, other cultures were depicted as "different", implying sexist, misogynistic, primate and generally inferior. This implicitly meant that

foreign cultures were incompatible with Western values. Therefore, much like their views on races, the views on women's rights were only progressive on the surface.

Far-right rhetoric tend to be nativist and exclusionary, which has implications for women, gender equality, and social reproduction. For instance, the protection of women and visibility of gender equality is claimed to be necessary to protect the nation. The Nouvelle Droite romanticized the feminine and masculine pair, as if the ideals embedded in these two nouns were the defining traits of being men and women of the 20th century. Increasingly, the feminine and masculine demarcations are used by the far-right to justify a retreat to arcane gender roles. The paradox remains. Women's rights in the far-right have brought into view the tension between commitment to liberal values as an argument against immigration, and the rejection of liberalism in any other aspect of society. In effect, the far-right apply instrumental feminism combined with otherwise conservative and traditional views on women in society.

Another paradox is that the Nouvelle Droite originated largely as a synthesis of two starkly different ideological currents. Though they were part of a right-wing tradition, the Nouvelle Droite adopted social and economic concerns of the political left. This speaks to how the far-right is moving away from traditional markers of ideology. Contemporary far-right, moreover, introduce well known issues like anti-immigration anew, and label them identity politics. Therefore, the far-right seeks to transcend the modern cleavage of left and right, and to reconceptualize issues of liberty and feminism.

Based on how women's issues are being conceptualized in the 21st century, it seems that feminists increasingly have become a scapegoat for those who have seen their positions in society dwindle because of multiculturalism, based on a fear of losing their country and the culture that traditionally has been central. Moreover, the far-right has been successful in drawing support from those groups who have felt threatened by increased gender equality and female empowerment.

Women and their bodies continue to be used by the far-right in a variety of ways. Events after the period under investigation in this thesis could deepen the understanding for this interaction of gender and the far-right. Further avenues for research include women's roles within these movements, both in terms of participation, how they are required, and how they appropriate issues. In addition, the paradox of women being both inferior to men and at the same time potential threats to masculinity is a paradox which is hard to reconcile. The rise of the radical right is assumed to stall the advancement of feminist causes. Therefore, despite the paradoxes, the facts remain that the far-right see differences as a good and will keep on labeling inequalities in ways that favor their nativist and authoritarian agenda.

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Endnotes

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