'WE ARE THE EUROPEAN FAMILY': UNSETTLING THE ROLE OF FAMILY IN BELONGING, RACE, NATION AND THE EUROPEAN PROJECT

Hannah Jones

Abstract

In the Brexit referendum debates and their aftermath, one popular call to solidarity within the EU came from artist Wolfgang Tillmans, who released a series of posters with slogans intended to rally voters to support remaining in the EU. This article takes one of those slogans – 'It's a question of where you feel you belong. We are the European family' – as a starting point to examine the openings and closures made available through calls to (trans)national solidarity on the basis of family. Drawing on critical autobiography, historical anthropology and analysis of trends in bordering and race politics, the article points to multi-layered and colonially inflected histories of 'family' in relation to national and continental belonging. Beginning with the sense of uncertainty over belonging and connection stirred up by Brexit, the essay acknowledges the comfort found by some in the seeming security of family. However, the article then engages with alternative realities of 'The European Family' – families separated by border controls, racialised as defective or oppressed by heteronormative patriarchy – and unsettles the problematic of 'European' in 'The European Family'. The paper identifies how empirical and metaphorical family relate to (trans)national belonging and citizenship. Bringing Tillmans' posters into conversation with some of Gillian Wearing's work on family and place, the conclusion offers some possibilities for thinking family/nation while retaining ambiguity, resistance and potential and resisting the closure of normative ideas, in favour of a more empirically grounded engagement with how 'real families' relate to and through nation.

Biographical note

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Banner image: Rita Duffy, *Soften the Border*, 2017 (detail). Recycled fabrics, installation on the Belcoo, Blacklion Bridge - Co. Fermanagh / Co. Cavan border, 2.5 x 30m. Image credit: Copyright of the artist, Rita Duffy. Photo credit: Stanislav Nikolov

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Introduction

In the years-long 'Brexit moment', evidence of turmoil about belonging, nationalism and dislocation has been all around. While some have reached out for solace and connection, gestures of connection can themselves alienate others, through claiming attention for one experience of the pain of nationalist rejection while seemingly ignoring histories of longer, more acute racialised border violence (Emejulu, 2016; Piacentini, 2016). This paper reckons with one mode of seeking connection and belonging: the appeal to (metaphorical) (trans)national family. In doing so, I seek to understand the appeal of this call, its limitations and – tentatively – its possibilities for a more inclusive solidarity that can take into account histories of violence enacted through practices of nation and family.

The title of this paper comes from an encounter with work made by German photographer and 2000 Turner Prize–winner Wolfgang Tillmans, which promotes a 'Remain' vote in the EU referendum (see Tillmans, 2016a). Frustrated by the official Remain campaign, Tillmans worked with artists and other collaborators in his *Between Bridges* project to produce his own publicity materials.[1] Using background images from his previous works in the series *Vertical Landscapes* (1995–), overlaid with short messages promoting voter registration and a Remain vote, the posters were distributed as open-source files which the public were encouraged to print and display, and use on social media. Hard copies were also distributed. Around 25 designs emphasised themes including having a democratic voice, youth mobility, and transnational familial and cultural links.

The poster which helped to trigger the thinking in this paper states Fig. 1.1): 'It's a question of where you feel you belong. We are the European Family.' Seeing this particular poster shared on social media in the aftermath of the referendum result, it became

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1   'Between Bridges is a foundation (est. 2017) for the advancement of democracy, international understanding, the arts and LGBT rights by Wolfgang Tillmans.' See: http://www.betweenbridges.net/anti-brexit-campaign.php
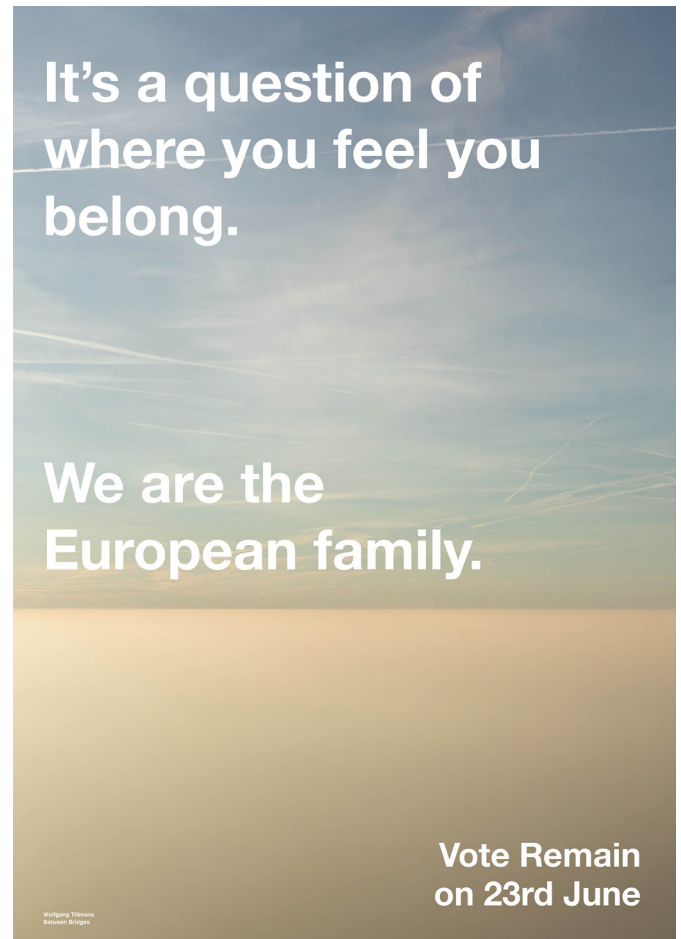

Figure 1.1: Wolfgang Tillmans, pro-EU/anti-Brexit campaign, 2016. (Image credit: Digital, available online at https://tillmans.co.uk/campaign-eu)

clear that it also acted as a source of comfort for some, a reassertion of connectedness and belonging across national borders within the European Union, no matter what the referendum said. The 'question of where you feel you belong' is not a simple one. It is cross-cut by questions of power, history and personal circumstances – including during the 'Brexit moment' of uncertainty, anxiety and anger. The feeling of where one belongs is not a personal feeling but a *public feeling* (Ahmed, 2007; Cvetkovich, 2012). While 'family' is often thought of as a source of comfort, connection and safety, it is also – much like nation – an exclusive institution, and one that involves power, hierarchy, submission and oppression within its empirical and figurative manifestations. It is much easier to imagine family, and belonging to one, as an undifferentiated comfort and good, for those who have not experienced domestic abuse, ostracization or family breakdown. Similarly, it is much easier to imagine national belonging or homeland as an easy or unproblematic 'good feeling' for those who have not experienced racism, citizenship discrimination, transnational separation or diasporic melancholy. One does not simply 'choose' to belong to a nation, or

family, but depends on a reciprocal relationship which might be denied in a way that goes to the very essence of who a person is seen to be (Ahmed et al, 2003).

In many ways, Brexit is not a unique moment. It is one within which echoes and hauntings of earlier and ongoing divisions of racialised nationhood and practices of family inclusion and exclusion resonate in powerful ways (Bhambra, 2017). This article considers the fractures visible in the Brexit debates as just one example of how borders and inclusion/exclusion across them, and one's belonging, can change without oneself changing or moving in any way. In doing so, the trope of (trans)national belonging evoked through a metaphor of family, as in Tillman's work, is re-examined. While both family and nation tend to be used rhetorically as if they are timeless and fixed, the first section of the paper considers how they actually parallel one another in their blurrings, shiftings and contradictions. Some contradictory attempts to fix shared family forms and (trans)national ideals are highlighted, including both rejection of queer families and racialised religious groups from the nation, and the reincorporation of one of these groups in order to stigmatise the other.

To extend this recognition of shifting forms of family, and the implications of family in constructing race and nation, the next sections consider examples of family practices used to construct the position of racialised insiders and outsiders to The European Family. Firstly, drawing on Ann Laura Stoler's work on the codification of intimate relationships in Dutch colonies and Gloria Wekker's critical autobiographical reflections on being a 'postcolonial' Dutch subject, I point to (a) how intimate family practice is a fundamental part of constructing both race and nation, and (b) how the European project (of developing and maintaining European power) always involved the labour and bodies of those deemed outside the racialised European Family and continent.

Coming back to the current moment, I consider how state-sanctioned marriage and patriarchal presumptions continue to be instrumental in maintaining racialised border controls in Europe. This is explored with particular reference to the case of Mohamed Bangoura, a six-year-old boy deprived of his British citizenship in 2018 on the basis of his mother's marital status, while out of the UK without his parents.

As another example of how one's belonging can shift without one moving or changing, and to demonstrate the immediacy of how intimate family and history intervene in current bordering and racialising practices, I draw on my own experience of becoming a dual national in response to the Brexit result, which I pursued in response to being made to feel an outsider,

but clearly from a position of citizenship privilege. Keeping in mind the historical contingency and the racialised, classed and gendered power relations at play in the status of citizenship/family, this experience is put into conversation with the contemporaneous ways in which holding dual nationality – or just the potential of it – has become a risk, particularly mobilised against those suspected of terrorist involvement, such as in the case of teenage mother Shamima Begum.

Having laid out these complexities of what 'The European Family' and 'the question of where you feel you belong' might mean, but recognising the deep appeal of familial connection, I return to contemporary political art to look for other possibilities of reimagining family, race and nation. In this instance, I consider the work of Gillian Wearing on her projects *Family Monument, A Real Birmingham Family* and *A Real Danish Family*, which have attempted to expand the connection between real and imagined families and place identities in ways that rely less on fixed and exclusive ideal types.

The final section of the paper draws these cases together to make sense of what an imaginary of national or European family might enable or foreclose. Here, I return to Tillmans' posters but bring them into conversation with Wearing's work which begins with the intimate (and 'real') and reflects on the local, regional and national collective. Might this provide an alternative way of imagining connection and solidarity without closure and exclusion?

Shifting and reifying European family

Christian democracy protects us from migration, defends the borders, supports the traditional family model of one man, one woman, considers the protection of our Christian culture as a natural thing.

(Orbán quoted in Reuters, 2018)

Family is an inherently gendered and racialising category in the context of Western Europe. State sanctioning of intimate relationships has historically served to organise economic relationships, national inclusion and practices of racialisation. There have always been alternative formations of family and practices called family, which reject the normative model or enact it in alternative ways (longstanding examples include informal adoption or cross-generational care arrangements), alongside more recent changes in the cultural and legal acceptance of same-sex unions. Similarly, the EUropean subject exists in multiple forms, often transgressing the normative vision of whiteness, Europeanness or

legitimacy.[2] If this were not the case, there would be little need for the proclamations of those such as Hungary's prime minister Viktor Orbán, who fearthese everyday 'alternative' ways of being might prove more attractive than his 'Christian, one man, one woman' dream. Family, however defined, tends to relate back to obligation, care and biological relatedness (whether real or fictive). The home and family are most often used metaphorically to mean comfort, but can also be places of repression, control and violence (e.g., Barrett and MacIntosh, 1982; Ahmed et al, 2003).

One parallel between the European Union and the project of the modernised normative family is their continual reinvention; their reimagining of restrictive structures (patriarchy, national borders) while still hanging onto the original form and therefore the problems of exclusive, hierarchical logics. The European Union project is at one level of course about breaking down national borders – in terms of trade certainly, and in an idealistic vision, in terms of a peace project between European nations previously divided by war and political conflict. However laudable this may seem, there are limits to this vision both in its idealistic form and in practice. The most obvious being that the transnational, borderless ideal itself has borders, ones that are increasingly fiercely guarded in part as a result of the freedom of movement within the territory: Fortress Europe. Like families, nations themselves have shifting internal allegiances and rivalries.

Even those who have lauded the post-national idealism of the EU project (e.g., Favell, 2019) recognise that EU freedom of movement and related easy connections beyond national legal and affective belonging is, in the simplest terms, only available to EU citizens. The Schengen area of frictionless movement and the removal of internal borders has since its inception been dependent on enforcing ever more stringent external borders. Increasingly, this also involves enlisting neighbouring countries in the process of restraining entry to the EU for 'immigrants', in return for partial access to movement within the EU for those neighbouring countries' citizens (Grzymski, 2019). The boundaries of who 'belongs' to the European family is strictly policed – even to the extent of reinstating internal EU borders (Lendaro, 2016).

The EUropean dream of liberalism, the free market and free movement is not just premised on exclusion, but also challenged from 'within' by far-right illiberal populism in countries such as Poland and Hungary (Graff, Kapur and Walters, 2018, p.551), and

increasingly in more long-standing EU family member countries. Politicians' claims to defend 'Christian marriage' are mobilised as a reason for defending EU borders (from Muslims). Elsewhere, those apparently on the opposite end of a political spectrum use a defence of LGBT+ rights to likewise stigmatise and exclude Muslims from inclusion in the Euro/national family (Puar, 2007), while minority fundamentalist Muslim, Jewish and Christian groups form coalitions in opposition to queer families (Haynes, 2019; Volpe, 2019; Barnabas Fund, 2019).

The persistence of family in empire

'The European' can hardly be imagined without an understanding of Europe's embroilment with geographies and peoples of the world (Goldberg, 2006). Both national identity and race/racism as we currently understand and experience them have been produced through histories of colonial conquest, genocide, slavery and resource extraction by Europeans (Bhattacharyya, 2018). This developed through physical force, certainly, but also through technologies of family and reproduction. Anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler's (1989, 2002) landmark work on Dutch colonial practices is exemplary in demonstrating how this worked in practice, in this instance through the transforming practice of 'concubinage', or informal but institutionally accepted coupledom, in which norms of race and gender not only related, but constituted one another. The 'European family' considered in Stoler's work is a projection and construction of 'European' identity and pretended superiority, as performed in parts of the world dominated and ransacked by European national powers, to sustain this power through the ongoing construction of racialised privilege. Within the relationships formed by early European settlers and local women, in both everyday relations and formal bureaucratic rulings, race as a category was constructed over time through the instigation of taboos and how they related to material changes in circumstance:

> Unions between Annamite women and French men, between Javanese women and Dutch men, between Spanish men and Inca women produced offspring with claims to privilege, whose rights and status had to be determined and prescribed. From the early 1600s through the 20th century the sexual sanctions and conjugal prohibitions of colonial agents were rigorously debated and carefully codified.
>
> (Stoler, 1989, p.637)

2   The capitalisation EUrope/EUropean is used to acknowledge that the European Union does not include all of Europe, but in fact erects borders within the continent around its members (see, for example, Grzymski, 2019).

'White' or 'European' superiority and separateness from locals had to be maintained in order to maintain colonial authority. White poverty, sickness and old age was shipped back to Europe (Stoler, 1989, p.655). When white supremacy was thought to be 'in jeopardy, vulnerable, or less than convincing', colonial elites moved from endorsing concubinage to bringing European women to colonies as wives in 'full-blooded' European families (p.639). As such, the colonial project was intimately entwined with social and legal constructions of family. While intimate life involved personal feeling and connection, this was recognised as either a political tool or political threat in connecting or separating groups through defining entitlement (or not) to resources, rights and respect.

Stories of promise of membership of The European Family ultimately thwarted by race are visible too in the embers of European empires. In *White Innocence* (2016), gender theorist Gloria Wekker considers her own 'European family' story, and how it fits into ongoing, multi-layered European racialising regimes. She writes:

> My own family migrated to the Netherlands in December 1951, when my father, who was a police inspector in the Surinamese force, qualified to go on leave for six months to the 'motherland,' where we eventually stayed permanently … The regulation for leave in the motherland was of course meant for white Dutch civil servants only, who should not 'go native,' losing their sense and status of being Dutch, but my father had risen to a rank where he qualified for that perk … It was only decades later that I realized that the reason why we found our first house in the old Jewish neighbourhood of Amsterdam was that 70 percent of Jews in the Netherlands were abducted during World War II…

(p.8)

Wekker continues:

> My family became subject to the same postwar disciplining regime that was meant for 'weakly adjusted,' white lower-class people and orientalised Indonesians … The postwar uplifting regime consisted of regular unexpected visits from social workers, who came to inspect whether we were duly assimilating, that is, whether my mother cooked potatoes instead of rice, that the laundry was done on Monday, that we ate minced meatballs on Wednesday, and that the house was cleaned properly.

(p.9)

In her account, Wekker highlights the nature of European racialising logic. Firstly, the same regulations described by Stoler, intended to keep Dutch colonial officers connected to the *motherland*. Then, when the Wekkers exceptionally took up this offer, they found themselves re-classified from Dutch (colonial) citizens to 'undesirables', ostracised from national belonging through the surveillance of their family life – and the inseparability of racialising processes of class and classed processes of racialisation (see also Virdee, 2014) – while noting that the home they found was itself cleared by the internal European racial 'regulation' of the Holocaust.

The Wekkers are one way to reconceive a quintessentially 'European Family' as exceeding the bounds of European continental territory, or as a family that exists in relation to Europe, its history and present. They grew and lived in a European-controlled territory, and took advantage of the myth-making of that territory which relied for loyalty and order in part on an idea that the wealth of and belonging to Europe was available to its imperial subjects. In moving to the 'motherland' within Europe, the racial differentiation at the heart of European identity and 'civilisation' was demonstrated again, with the policing of behaviours within the continent of Europe – even, ironically, where the cleanliness and fastidiousness, which apparently needed to be inculcated within families, such as the Wekkers, were made more difficult by the less 'civilised' housing conditions in Amsterdam than in Suriname ('having come to the motherland, we did not have an indoor shower and had to bathe in a tub in the kitchen, as was usual [in the Netherlands] at the time' (p.8)). Thus the 'European Family' was policed, codified and reimagined outside the territory of continental Europe, as part of the wider project of defining and defending white supremacy. This expectation of welcome and inclusion in a European empire that was taught to imperial subjects, only to find the opposite on arrival in the 'motherland', is something mirrored elsewhere, including more recent reverberations in the case of the 'Windrush Scandal' in the UK (Wardle and Obermuller, 2018; De Noronha, 2019).

Taken together, we can see through these examples crossing time and continents a way of imagining The European Family differently. It is both a national and an intimate project, one that assigns legal rights through governmental regulation of personal relationships, and one that reasserts that only some are truly recognised as family members.

The persistence of marriage as bordering technology

I have so far discussed the ways in which ideas of an inclusive transnational family of the EU are challenged by the barriers around the EU, tensions within it and

the ongoing familial connections and denials associated with colonial adventures of individual EU member states. However, in an era of superdiversity, we can see that both reconfigured transnational relations, and reconfigured familial relations, can still end up with a bitter reminder of the restrictions of inclusion in both national and intimate families.

Consider the case of six-year-old, British-born Mohamed Bangoura. In 2018, he was refused re-entry to the UK and thereby separated from his mother for two weeks until the matter was resolved following campaigning, media outcry and support from his MP and MEP. Mohamed had been visiting his uncle in Belgium over the summer. His mother, Hawa Keita, had come to the UK from Guinea and the Home Office claimed it had sent her a letter revoking Mohamed's passport in March 2018, on the basis that 'Mohamed was only entitled to British citizenship through his mother or her husband, but neither was settled in the UK when he was born' (BBC News, 2018). That is to say, Mohamed was registered as having British citizenship for the first six years of his life, but at that point, the Home Office apparently identified new information about his parents' visa status and revoked his citizenship – leaving him effectively, in the words of media reports, 'stranded and stateless' (BBC News, 2018). Keita stated that she never received the letter and consequently did not anticipate problems when Mohamed went to visit family and friends for the summer holidays. It was only on the return to the UK that border guards reported a problem.

In the mainstream news coverage, the case was resolved when Mohamed was issued with a temporary travel document enabling him to be reunited with his mother – following pressure from both MPs and journalists. The final outcome for Mohamed and his mother was not made public.

What did emerge more quietly in legal analysis was that this is not an isolated case (Hickman, 2018). The problem with Mohamed's status derived from the marital status of his mother. Both of Mohamed's parents were legally resident in Britain at the time of his birth, and his biological father's name was entered on his birth certificate. His parents assumed that he qualified for British citizenship because of having one parent who was 'a British citizen or has settled status (i.e. the right to remain in the UK permanently) at the time of [his] birth' (Hickman, 2018). Mohamed would qualify through his father, who was a British citizen, and it was on this basis that his passport was issued. The problem arose because in British citizenship law, it is the husband of the mother who counts as the 'father' for citizenship purposes – and not the biological father. Keita was still married to another man, who was not a British citizen; they were

separated, and he was living in Guinea (Crisp and McCann, 2018). This was what the Home Office had discovered, and on this basis had revoked Mohamed's citizenship lawfully, though perhaps not fairly. Other cases where citizenship has been denied on the same principle exist; one case heard around the same time in court prompted a judge to make a 'Declaration of Incompatibility' stating that the legal situation is incompatible with human rights law and should be changed by government (Hickman, 2018). While the British Nationality Act 1981 made it possible to receive British nationality through one's mother as well as one's father, it retained this patriarchal attachment to marriage, which expects a mother to be in a married relationship with the father of her children.

It is not clear how Mohamed's parents' marital status 'came to light' at the Home Office. It is worth noting however that it is not only in this situation that the apparently anachronistic importance of marital status determines residence and citizenship rights. Civil partnership and established non-marital (but evidentially cohabiting, coupled and romantic) relationships are now considered valid family connections in immigration applications to the UK. However, the marriage route still remains the 'safest' in terms of convincing authorities of a valid and legitimate connection; hence the Home Office's fascination with the idea of 'sham marriages' (Wemyss et al, 2018). While marriage and family continue to be considered valid reasons for transgressing national borders, the policing of the 'truth' of the romantic relationships underpinning marriage contracts becomes a concern of the migration-minimising state. In the UK, the Home Office has demonstrated this through its high profile and militarised raids on wedding ceremonies, often in the company of local journalists who will publicise further the government interest in identifying the absence of true love (Jones et al, 2017, p.69).

There are countless examples of the way in which gendered and racialised familial relations are policed as a way of enforcing (trans)national borders, often reinforcing potentially repressive relations within the intimate family: the privileging of family reunification as a means of attaining residence in a territory; discriminatory income thresholds for being allowed to bring a foreign spouse into a territory; the strange logic of the 'Surinder Singh' route to family reunification in the UK through which British citizens could avoid the income threshold otherwise required to bring their non-EU spouse to join them, by moving to another EU country, and becoming qualifying European nationals; the 'primary purpose rule' in the UK which, between 1983 and 1997 required applicants for family reunification visas to demonstrate 'that the

marriage was not entered into primarily to obtain admission to the United Kingdom'; the barbaric 'virginity testing' of South Asian women seeking UK visas, to ascertain whether they were 'really' new brides; the recognition (or not) of same-sex marriage within immigration regimes; the rejection of asylum claims grounded on homophobic persecution on the basis of a judge's assessment of a claimant's sexuality and relationships; and the mobilisation of claims to respectability and stability of family relationships by those who would otherwise question the institution's conservatism, in order to attain geographical security (Lutz, 1997; Chavez, 2013; Sirriyeh, 2015; Wemyss et al, 2018; Griffiths, 2019).

Until now, I have discussed the crossing of borders largely with a lens of entering (or being rejected from) belonging to a particular/new trans/national family. However, another way in which family practices and lived experiences of bordering are parallel, is that one can be a member of more than one family (intimate or national) at once – and that this multiple membership itself, while mundane, can also fundamentally bring into question some of the claims about absolute loyalty or belonging that lie at the base of both institutions.

Dual nationalities: citizens of the world/ nowhere
Talking about family is personal. So let me give a personal example. My maternal grandfather came to the UK from Germany in 1938, when he was twelve, travelling with his parents from Nuremberg where, had they stayed, they would not have survived. Once in England, they were all made stateless by the removal of German citizenship from all Jews by the Nazi government. Later they were naturalised as British citizens. As I discovered after the Brexit vote, this fortunate escape from unspeakable consequences had become my own opportunity to acquire ongoing EU citizenship, whatever happened to UK membership.

It was only after the referendum that I found out that descendants of those Jews, trade unionists and others who had been deprived of German citizenship between 1933 and 1945 were entitled to 'restoration of citizenship', as a form of cross-generational reparation from post-war German governments. I learnt some German at school but had always felt uneasy visiting Germany because of this family history, and doubt that I would have pursued this citizenship at all if it had not been for the threat of Brexit.

The number of British people seeking restitution of German citizenship as I have increased dramatically since the Brexit vote – from around 20 per year before 2015 to 3,380 in the two years following the referendum (Harpin, 2018). There has been some news coverage of this, in which people affected tend to emphasise either their wish to travel freely and

maintain EU rights after Brexit, or re-discovering their family history and roots as German Jews (BBC One, 2017). The central motivation for me was less the ability to skip passport queues, than a feeling of threat – perhaps irrational, but viscerally felt. The feeling of the walls closing in; the feeling of the necessity of collecting as many passports as possible in case of the need to flee.

While many non-UK citizens from other EU countries are feeling uncertain about their ability to stay in this country, many UK citizens are considering whether they will be forced to stay whether they want to or not, in a place that may continue to change in unanticipated ways. That latter group of people may say 'lucky you!' in response to my explaining that I am a dual British-German citizen now. Indeed, it is a privilege to now hold not one but two of the world's most 'powerful passports' in terms of mobility through visa-free travel (Passport Index, 2019). But I am not sure if luck is the right word. What is? The instinct to apply for 'restitution' of my German citizenship was born of fear, possibility and a cheeky desire to play the insane citizenship system at its own game. The absurdity of having both passports when I have no desire to live in Germany with all its hauntings, or away from the UK with its more familiar ghosts. The question about what my Grandpa would have thought of it. The absurdity of applying for restitution of a citizenship I have never had, when without the removal of it from my grandparent neither my mother nor I could exist. The idea of being grateful my great-grandparents had to leave behind their home, friends and belongings to survive; the idea of not being grateful that they were able to when so many others could not escape.

This is all part of a complicated, entangled family legacy, a European legacy and a European family legacy. But, at present, my citizenship and residency are not in question. For me, dual nationality is an option, an opportunity. But I gained it at the same time that others are finding that dual nationality – or even just eligibility for it – puts them at risk of having one citizenship removed, or even of being rendered stateless. The legal processes that have enabled this denial of one membership of national family, casting out by reinstating another, has been documented by Nisha Kapoor in her work on understanding the counter-terror matrix (2018), and it has been brought to public attention by the case of Shamima Begum.

Begum, a British teenager, travelled to Syria in 2015 at the age of 15 with two friends of the same age, planning to join the Islamic State (IS) militant group. Four years later, she was found in a Syrian refugee camp by a *Times* journalist and her presence highly publicised – as was the imminent birth of her third child. At nineteen, two of her children had already

died in refugee camps, and her Dutch husband – an IS fighter – was being held in Kurdish detention in Syria. Begum told journalists she wished to return to the UK with her child, but, following successive front-page headlines such as 'No Regrets, No Remorse, No Entry' (*The Sun*, 15 February) and 'Jihadi Bride Wants Baby on NHS' (*Metro*, 15 February), British Home Secretary Sajid Javid revoked her UK citizenship; she was no longer considered part of the British/European family ('You're Up Brit Creek', *The Star*, 20 February). Nor was her baby son, who died at a few days old. This was a populist move, indicated by the outrage at Begum's apparent involvement in IS. However, it was controversial in less populist milieus for two main reasons: firstly, the removal of her British citizenship made her stateless – an action forbidden in both UK law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; secondly, as a child her involvement in IS was the result of abuse, meriting her protection (Yusuf & Swann, 2019). The statelessness question was argued on a technicality – that because Begum's mother was 'believed to be' a Bangladeshi national, Begum was entitled to apply for Bangladeshi citizenship until her 21st birthday (BBC News, 2019). Since she had made no such application, she was made stateless by Javid's actions; the Bangladeshi government made it known they would reject any application from her. What we see here is that fundamental tenets of human rights law, established as principles of European (and global) life after the Nazi Holocaust, are not maintained for those who are deemed not European *enough*. National citizenship – like family – is not a 'question of where you feel you belong', but a question of power. It is a racialised and gendered power to exclude from not only (trans)national family belonging on the basis of tracing intimate family genealogies that trump individual lives, but through this, to exclude from humanity.

It is important to put this case in conversation with German attempts at reparation through restitution of citizenship to descendants. Both illustrate how membership of a (trans)national family is both dependent on and analogous to membership of the intimate family, and that how one 'feels' may not allow one to be part of either kind of family if (parts of) that family refuses one. This is reinforced by the revelation that following the post-referendum rise in applications for restitution of German citizenship, the High Commission began refusing applications, often on the basis that citizenship could only be passed through the paternal line in German law until 1953 (Connolly, 2019).

Real families

> We … asked people what they thought the 'family' was, and they said the usual things – 2.4 children and a mum and dad, and so on. And then we asked them about their own families, and it was very different: 'Oh, it's just me and my mum.'
>
> (Wearing quoted in Aspden, 2014)

The metaphor of 'The European family' is very real, both as a post-national form of belonging and an intimate relation governed by post-national EU regulations and enforcement. Calls like that reproduced by Tillmans, to a particular and bounded solidarity which leaves the idea of 'family' unquestioned, form part of that regulation and exclusion, even when the intention is something like the opposite – and even when the author is someone who has elsewhere explored more boundary-blurring forms of intimacy or family (e.g., Tillmans, 1992, 1993). The 'question of where you feel you belong' is not the simple personal choice or affiliation implied by Tillmans' poster, but something regulated by power and privilege shaped through forces of class, race, gender, sexuality, history and nationality.

Membership and full recognition within this family is at the expense of others who are not part of the family. Attempts to join are rebuffed as an intrinsic part of maintaining a feeling of belonging – and power – for existing members. But are there other ways of constituting family as a form of non-exclusive connection?

Gillian Wearing won the Turner Prize in 1997, three years before Tillmans. In the years since then, family and relationships have become a major theme of her work. This extends to a number of her pieces, but here it is particularly relevant to focus on three of them: *Family Monument/A Typical Trentino Family* (2007), *A Real Birmingham Family* (2014) and *A Real Danish Family* (2017) (Figs. 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4). Through each of these interventions, Wearing has engaged in studies of the contested nature of belonging, place and connection, through a seemingly simple device of constructing a bronze sculpture as a monument to local family. My suggestion is that these engagements provide a more capacious understanding of connections across, within and regardless of borders, while also drawing attention to the wider wounds from which the Brexit debate can distract.

While my attention to Tillmans' work begins with a metaphor of family which I have tethered back to empirical families, Wearing's work starts with empirical families but ties them to bigger questions of place, connection and belonging. In her first piece in this series, she worked with a gallery in Trento, Italy,

Figure 1.2: Gillian Wearing, *A Typical Trentino Family*, 2008. Bronze and granite. Trento: Piazza Dante. (Photograph by Francesco Serra, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)

Figure 1.3: Gillian Wearing, *A Real Birmingham Family*, 2014. Bronze and granite. Birmingham: Ikon Gallery/Centenary Square. (Photograph by Brianboru100, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)

Figure 1.4: Gillian Wearing, *A Real Danish Family*, 2017. Bronze, spray paint and granite. Copenhagen: SMK. (Photograph by Ann Priestley, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)

to engage with local concerns about the demise of the nuclear family and falling birth rates. To explore these questions, a statistical profile of the 'typical' family in the city was put together (a heterosexual married couple with two children), and families fitting that profile were invited to audition to be cast as a bronze statue for public display.

After the Trento piece, Wearing wanted to explore less the 'typical' family, but 'real families'. It was in the Birmingham and Danish pieces that the project developed in more expansive ways. Foremost, candidates to become the 'real family' cast in bronze simply had to identify themselves as a family; they could be a group of people constructed in any way (or a single person), as long as they self-identified as family. This in itself invited a contemplation of the various meanings of 'family', as we can see from the statement from Wearing quoted above. Further, the tying of each project to a place identity (whether city or nation) invited an examination of what such belonging might mean. Where this element might easily have created precisely the kind of exclusions I have critiqued around the idea of The EUropean Family above, in practice a more historically and sociologically minded recognition of shifting belongings was able to prevail, in dialogue between the artists, curators, the 'judges' invited to help choose the final families and the accompanying TV shows, events and their audiences (Fabricius et al, 2017). Though the statue often appears as the focus of each of these projects, the process of engaging 'real families' and a debate about belonging and representation, through the selection of the family, is really at the heart of each work.

For *A Real Birmingham Family*, Wearing encouraged a broad and open idea of family and also an emphasis on belonging to a place (the city of Birmingham). The family chosen were two sisters, Roma and Emma Jones, and their two sons (and Emma's pregnancy bump). Ikon Gallery, through which the project ran, stated that 'No limits were placed on how the twenty-first[-]century family might define itself' (Ikon, 2014) and the sisters said:

> Our family is made up of two sisters who are single parents that support each other and play a major part in each other's lives. We have lived in Birmingham all our lives, in many different areas across the city. Being mixed race we feel at home here as it's so diverse and multicultural. […] We feel it highlights the fact 'family' is an indestructible bond between people that is universal. It doesn't matter how it is made up.
>
> (Jones family quoted in Authi, 2013)

This challenge to the idea of the nuclear family differed from the statue built in the original *Family Monument* project in Trento, which had focused on statistical norms and finding a final 'perfect family' as one newspaper described it (Drake, 2007). Even in the statue of the nuclear family of the Giulianis, there was challenge to the fixity of local belonging, with the group including a Greek wife, an Italian husband, their daughter, son and dog. Wearing made clear that one motivation for developing a similar project in her hometown of Birmingham was to move from the perfect family to a real family and highlighting a variety of forms families can take (Brown, 2014).

The beyond-the-nuclear-family approach appeared to be in retreat in the following work, the 2017 *Real Danish Family*, which resulted in a statue of Yenny and Michael Lysholm Thorsen and their child. However, the apparent nuclear family ideal was subverted, in that the decision-makers emphasised the Lysholm Thorsens' story: Yenny became pregnant within weeks of them meeting, and they decided to marry quickly to become parents, while recognising their relationship may not last forever. This seemed to please both marriage-enthusiasts and 'modernisers' identifying the contingency of family units. Further, this Real Family also emphasised quietly the transnational making of Danish families: Yenny was born in Colombia and grew up in Denmark, adopted by white Danish parents; Michael was born to Danish parents living in Italy.

What these Real Families offer is not only an engagement with the variety of family structures and their change over time (which is also evident in the statues themselves, with both Emma Jones and Yenny Thorsen pregnant when they posed). They also gesture, perhaps less visibly, to the ways in which families and belonging are made up across place and time, even when a particular family is embedded in a particular place (Jones & Jackson, 2014). As the curators' publication from A Real Danish Family notes, not only are people in families made up of connections across places and times, but creating the *Real Danish Family* involved global connections including a British artist, Danish families and judges, a sculptor in London and a bronze casting workshop in China (Fabricius et al, 2017, p.45).

Conclusion: more than Brexit wounds

Perhaps Tillmans and Wearing would see themselves as having similar conceptions of the family: Tillmans, I am sure, would argue that his call to 'the European family' we are all in was intended as an inclusive one. It was, after all, part of an explicitly political intervention with an impulse to maintaining transnational relationships. But as outlined above, the weight of the signification of 'The European Family' is too heavily racialised, both in symbolism and in continuing legal, institutional and everyday practices, for this message to be an inclusive or liberatory one. What Wearing's work discussed here offers and Tillmans' anti-Brexit

work does not, is an opening to question the (located) family – without necessarily jettisoning anything of worth it may contain. This is not simply a result of the end-process of the families chosen and cast in static bronze, but in the conversation about making and remaking families, transnational families, queer families, race, marriage and time.

Tillmans' comments on the nature of belonging and connection he and others find in the European Union project were underlined by comments he made on his 'Anti-Brexit' blog, such as: 'We have in the last decades become a European family, with much less dividing us than connecting us' (Tillmans, 2016b). This statement presaged the 'we have more in common than what divides us' sentiment which became associated with British Member of Parliament Jo Cox after her assassination at the hands of an anti-EU white supremacist misogynist in June 2016. Like the More in Common project to memorialise Cox, Tillmans' politics are moderate rather than radical or revolutionary (Jones, 2019). Tillmans told *The Guardian* newspaper in 2016: 'I'm an activist for moderation […] I have lived here for 26 years and contributed to British taxes […] I have been the recipient of the Britain's biggest art prize […] So, I think I'm allowed to speak on something I believe passionately in' (Tillmans quoted in O'Hagan, 2016). This appeal to the narrative of the good and worthwhile migrant, rather than a claim to universal rights, matches his calls for solidarity with 'refugees from terror and war' (Tillmans, 2016b) which similarly remain mired in tropes of undeserving vs. deserving travellers (signalled by refugees), with less attention to the complications of the journeys of those whose movement is neither EU-sanctioned nor within the narrow scope of the recognised refugee (Jones et al, 2017, pp.120–40).

The problem with such a position is the same as the problem with the call to The European Family – most specifically to the definite article in this phrase, which reinforces an idea of an exclusive and identifiably, bordered European ideal, which necessarily cuts out other possibilities. This contrasts with a reading of Tillmans' background images to his EU posters, 'photographic images of horizon lines between sea, cloud and sky', as about 'the non-solidity of borders speak[ing] to the predicament of the political situation we are in' (Demircan, 2016, p.35). Perhaps there was possibility there, for a more encompassing response of solidarity rather than solidity; but the nature of engaging with a political moment and its hegemonic insider/outsider logics lends itself to reproducing the enclosure of The European Family rather than the possibilities of less bordered connection.

My suggestion is that the idea of belonging to a/ the European family can only begin to be an inclusive vision if, as in these works by Wearing, we take as our starting point the lived experience of actual families in/ across/between Europe. That is, if we recognise that families are partial, shifting, separated, traumatic, as well as connected, whole, comforting – and that the same goes for nationhood. The Brexit moment's shifts in dual nationality and hence dual allegiance within/ across/outside "'The European Family' are a direct response" to The European Family's own closures and containments, but also rely on a re-awakening or re-evaluating of trans-national and trans-historical familial connection. The 'question of where you feel you belong' can contradict – yet still co-exist with – power structures that allocate belonging.

In examining some non-normative examples of European families, I do not intend to reclaim a celebratory notion of this concept. Rather, the cases I outline are about trauma, fear and disruption as much as attachment, comfort and support. The point is, these experiences of family are as much a part of the fabric of 'EUropean' experience as any other; indeed, they haunt the imagined ideal of cosy, safe, home which EUropean family conjures and allows for only some.

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