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Júlia Garraio

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## **Hordes of Rapists: The Instrumentalization of Sexual Violence in German Cold War Anti-Communist Discourses\***

In German Cold War anti-communist discourses, the image of the Red Army as a “horde of rapists” worked as a strategy of exclusion in the construction of a national identity based on “Western values.” This paper analyzes the ideological dimension of the stereotypes of raped women and constructions of masculinity in two emblematic texts about the flight and expulsion of Germans from Eastern and Central Europe, and an anti-communist American propaganda novel. The mass rapes of German women in the context of World War II were signified as the result of “Asian barbarism” and communism. The instrumentalization of wartime rapes, by demonizing the Soviet Union, fostered the two pillars of foreign policy in the Federal Republic: European integration and the transatlantic alliance.

**Keywords:** anti-communism; Adenauer era; *Flucht und Vertreibung* [flight and expulsion]; sexual violence; xenophobia.

Post-1945 Germany is probably one of the places where the ideological rivalries and tensions of the Cold War played a greater role in determining the shape of states and national identities. The Adenauer era (1949-1963) may be summarized as a conservative period during which the country gradually joined Western political, economic and military organizations. Under the leadership of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967), the Federal Republic of Germany strived to win the confidence of the Allies and thus make room for itself among Western nations. The country’s joining of NATO in 1955, as well as its rearmament, and the emergence of an ideal of masculinity strongly linked to a supposedly non-aggressive militarism, must be understood in the light of the nation’s reinvention of itself as part of the West.<sup>1</sup> Anti-communism was central to this process of formation of the Federal Republic. Eric Weitz (2001: 220-22) observes that Adenauer’s deep distrust and fear

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The present paper is based on research carried out as part of the FCT-funded postdoctoral project on “The Memory of Suffering: Representations of violence in German literature about the Second World War” (SFRH/BPD/28207/2006). My work on the representation of sexual violence benefited greatly from my research as a member of the SVAC (“Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict”) network (<http://www.warandgender.net/>).

<sup>1</sup> See, in this context, some of the research conducted by Robert Moeller. In his work on German popular cinema of the 1950s, he analyzes the way in which, after the military collapse and the discredit of the sort of “racially superior” masculinity promoted by the Third Reich, the young state set itself to build an ideal of “morally superior” masculinity: that of the law-abiding citizen who does not partake of nationalist, expansionist obsessions, but, when under threat, is capable of taking up arms to defend family and country (Moeller, 2001: 123ss.; Moeller, 2006b).

of communism were the reason for his emphatic defense of the Transatlantic Alliance, thus making German reunification hard to achieve in the context of the Cold War. The Chancellor's view of the Soviet Union as the emblem of the worst that the age had to offer – from Marxism-Leninism to totalitarianism, pan-Slavism and atheism – was in fact widely shared in the public sphere of the young state, bolstered by the SPD's<sup>2</sup> traditional animosity toward the communists.

Dictated by the desire for closer ties with the West, this foreign policy coexisted with strong, East-leaning electoral pressure at the domestic level. I allude to the *Vertriebene*, i.e., the expellees from the territories lost by Germany in the war (East Prussia, Silesia, Pomerania) and from its neighboring countries (Czechoslovakia, the Baltic states, etc.).<sup>3</sup> These Germans, who made up about 16% of the population of the Federal Republic, were organized into powerful leagues and associations and rose to be an extremely strong pressure group, proving instrumental in the conservatives' consecutive victories. Until as late as 1969 there was a government ministry solely devoted to them,<sup>4</sup> and they managed to have one of their major claims included in the political debate: the recovery of their homes, which meant challenging the borders that had emerged from the war.<sup>5</sup> Adenauer's governments successfully navigated this seeming contradiction between a West-oriented foreign policy and a constituency that had its sights set on the East. Conditions were created for the expellees to start anew in the young republic, and steps were taken to get them to view the State as their new *Heimat* [homeland]: significant government aid to promote their economic welfare, a political discourse on the Federal Republic as the home of all Germans,

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<sup>2</sup> Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands – the Social Democratic Party of Germany.

<sup>3</sup> The word *Vertriebene* is closely linked to the concept of *Flucht und Vertreibung* [flight and expulsion], which designates one of the greatest migrations in human history (late 1944 through 1949) and on which there is an extensive literature. The Soviet offensive of 1945 caused a massive flight of Germans to the West. After the war, several regions in Central and Eastern Europe witnessed the violent expulsion of their German communities. Allied decisions in favor of redesigning the eastern borders (whereby Germany was to lose a significant part of its territory) and of ethnically homogeneous states also contributed to the expulsion of millions of Germans during the second half of the 1940s. The experience of flight and expulsion became one of the most controversial sites of memory in German culture (see, e.g., Hahn and Hahn, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte – Ministry of the Expellees, Refugees and War Victims.

<sup>5</sup> This issue was a common concern of the main political parties at the time, as evinced by several election posters showing maps of Germany with 1937 borders and the caption "Das ganze Deutschland soll es sein" – "It has to be all of Germany." (A 1949 CDU poster can be seen at <http://www.wahlen-98.de/HTML/ARCHIV/AFSETTIMELINE.HTM>; a 1948 SPD poster is available at [http://www.museen-sh.de/ml/digi\\_einzbild.php?pi=146\\_54-1996&inst=146&mab\\_id=146&nameInst=Stadtmuseum%20-%20Warleberger%20Hof&page=7&action=vonsuche&r=82](http://www.museen-sh.de/ml/digi_einzbild.php?pi=146_54-1996&inst=146&mab_id=146&nameInst=Stadtmuseum%20-%20Warleberger%20Hof&page=7&action=vonsuche&r=82)). With Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik, the SPD moved away from these claims, which came to a final end with the 1990 Unification Treaty.

incorporation of the memory of the lost East into the national identity, good official relations with the leagues and support for their cultural activities. No doubt political leaders knew that there was no turning back: with the signing of the Potsdam Agreement on 2 August 1945, the Western Allies had sanctioned the redrawing of borders and population transfer as a way of preventing tensions in the future. Government policies to provide support to the expellees may thus be seen as a way of alleviating that loss. Adenauer's famous visit to Moscow in 1955 has all the signs of this course of action. The goal of this historical trip was not to discuss borders or the return of the expellees, but rather an issue regarding which German public opinion felt very strongly at the time: the liberation of the German soldiers still held captive by the Soviets. As far as official discourse was concerned, the success of this mission was decisive in portraying the Federal Republic as the homeland of all Germans.

The purpose of the present paper is to clarify one aspect of the abovementioned seeming contradiction between a West-oriented foreign policy and a constituency whose interests lay to the East. Based on discourses about the mass rape of German women by Soviet soldiers<sup>6</sup> – a key experience of flight and expulsion – I will attempt to show the way in which the memory of what the expellees went through tended to reinforce the two pillars of the Federal Republic's foreign policy in the context of the Cold War: European integration and the transatlantic alliance. I will use two emblematic, expulsion-related texts to analyze the way in which the image of the Soviet rapist was conducive, in that particular context, to the construction of a certain pro-European and pro-Western German identity. The first of these two works, *Martyrium und Heldentum Ostdeutscher Frauen. Ein Ausschnitt aus der Schlesischen Passion 1945/4* (1954) [The Martyrdom and Heroism of the Women of East Germany: An excerpt from the Silesian passion, 1945-1946], was written by Johannes Kaps, a prominent theologian in Catholic circles and in the Bavaria-based community of expellees, who strived to raise awareness in the "Christian West" about the expulsion of Germans as a result of the war.<sup>7</sup> The volume in question is a collection of stories of sexual violence, killings

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<sup>6</sup> For studies on sexual violence perpetrated by the Soviet Army against German women, see, among others, Naimark (1995) and von Münch (2009).

<sup>7</sup> Johannes Kaps (Breslau, 1906 – Munich, 1959) came from a Catholic family and was ordained priest in 1935. In 1939, shortly after the outbreak of World War II, he returned to Breslau. According to Hans-Ludwig Abmeier, Kaps seems to have devoted himself to the cause of the release of persecuted priests and against the deportation of Jews and "cross-breeds" (but Abmeier adds that, because of the destruction of war, there are very few documents to confirm it). A witness of the capitulation of Breslau on 6 May 1945, Kaps gave testimony of the atrocities committed against the German population. In August 1945 he left the city and took refuge in the West, giving an account of the conditions of extreme deprivation of the German population of Silesia, after

and hardship that bear witness to an engagement, from a German Catholic point of view, with the rape of German women.<sup>8</sup> The second text, *Ostpreußisches Tagebuch. Aufzeichnungen eines Arztes aus den Jahren 1945-1947* [Prussian Diary. A Physician's Notes 1945-1947],<sup>9</sup> is by Hans Graf von Lehndorff, the descendant of an influential Prussian family and a prominent figure in expellee circles.<sup>10</sup> Endorsed by the Federal Republic's authorities, von Lehndorff's journal was one of the most popular memoirs of expulsion of its time. Finally, I will also argue that the image of the Soviet rapist running through these expellee accounts ultimately plays a role that is similar to that of an American propaganda novel that was hugely successful in 1950s Germany: *The Big Rape* (1951), by James Wakefield Burke.<sup>11</sup>

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which he travelled to Rome to apprise Pope Pius XII of the situation. In the following years he was very active in providing support to the expellees now living in the Federal Republic. As of 1952, he was the head of the Catholic Church's Parish Register Services and of the Expellees Archive, in Munich [Katholischen Kirchenbuchamtes Archivs und für Heimatvertriebene]. With a view to internationalizing the expellees' issue, along the goals set forth by then Minister of Expellees Hans Lukaschek, Kaps's trilogy on Silesia was translated into English, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese during the 1950s (Abmeier, 2000/2001: 183-185). The English translation, by Gladys H. Hartinger, was first published in Munich by Christ Unterwegs, in 1955.

<sup>8</sup> This is the closing volume of a trilogy on the end of German Silesia. Two volumes had already been published: *Vom Sterben Schlesischer Priester 1945/6* [The Martyrdom of Silesian priests 1945-46], in 1950, and *Tragödie Schlesiens 1945/6 in Dokumenten* [The Tragedy of Silesia 1945/6 – A documentary account], in 1952/53. Most of the accounts in the 1954 volume were collected in the early 1950s for Kaps's unpublished *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Erzdiözese Breslau in den Schicksalsjahren 1945 bis 1951* [Contributions to the history of the Archdiocese of Breslau in the fateful years of 1945-1951].

<sup>9</sup> The diary was originally published in 1960 as part of a government project to collect documentary evidence on the expulsion of Germans from Eastern and Central Europe [*Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa*]. The original title of the diary was *Ein Bericht aus Ost- und Westpreussen 1945-1947* (A Report from Eastern and Western Prussia 1945-1947). In 1961 it was published autonomously (München: Biederstein) under its present title, and it went through numerous editions over the years. In the 1960s it was translated into several languages. The English translation, entitled *East Prussian Diary: A Journal of Faith, 1945-1947*, was published in 1963.

<sup>10</sup> A member of an ancient line of Prussian nobility, Hans von Lehndorff (Graditz bei Torgau, 1910 – Bonn, 1987) is related to several important figures in twentieth century German history: his grandfather, Elard Januschau-von Oldenburg (1855-1937), was an influential member of the conservative camp during the Weimar Republic, and Heinrich Graf von Lehndorff-Steinort, who was executed in September 1944 for participating in the July 20 conspiracy to assassinate Hitler, was his cousin. Hans von Lehndorff studied medicine and was running a military hospital in Königsberg when the Red Army took the city. He fled to the West in 1947, and from the time of his arrival in the future FRG he kept links with expellees' organizations. In 1981 he was awarded the most prestigious prize given by East Prussia's associations of expellees: the Preußenschild, awarded by Landmannschaft Ostpreußen (Hamburg).

<sup>11</sup> The texts analyzed in this article are in line with the ideological manipulation of sexual violence directed against German women in World War II. Although the memory of these violations was particularly felt in nationalist and anti-communist milieus and even in revisionist discourses, one should not associate the issue exclusively with these sectors, as it was also addressed by texts from many other quadrants. Thus we have the Russian testimonies to start with, namely by Lew Kopelew (the autobiography in which he tells of the violence committed by the Red Army against the German people was published in the Federal Republic in 1976 under the title *Aufbewahren für alle Zeit* [To Be Preserved Forever], with an afterword by the writer Heinrich Böll) and Alexander Solzhenitsyn (his memories of the atrocities against the Germans upon the conquest of East Prussia were the inspiration for *Ostpreußische Nächte. Eine Dichtung in Versen* [Prussian Nights. A Poem], published in the Federal Republic also in 1976). On the German side there are a number of accounts, memoirs and even some literary texts whose ideological provenance differs from that of the texts analyzed in the present article

The image of Asia or the East as the embodiment of a barbarian, dangerous and cruel Other is a recurrent one in the construction of European and Western identities. After the October Revolution, Russia (and, eventually, the Soviet Union) emerged as a catalyst for fears, the Eastern “monster” incarnate, as anti-communism gradually took on orientalist connotations. Bolshevism and Communism were not viewed as European or Western phenomena, but rather as the hallmarks of an alien counter-model. The German territory provides a paradigmatic illustration of this meaning of Bolshevik Russia as the incarnation of the absolute Other (see, for instance, Ayçoberry, 2003; Moore, 2003). These phobias associated with anticommunism existed in several European countries. In Germany they ran throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and spearheaded some of the more salient continuities between the Third Reich and the Federal Republic. Horrid images of sexual violence were common in this context, as attested to by anti-Bolshevik Nazi propaganda, which never stopped to frighten people with the “hordes of Soviet rapists,” especially in the last months of the war.<sup>12</sup> As noted by Atina Grossmann, this is exactly where propaganda proved ominous. And that, in turn, helps us understand the impact of these National Socialist discourses and imaginaries upon Germany’s memory of defeat, as well as the country’s self-perception as a people of victims (1995: 113-117, 1998: 221-24).

The propaganda of Adenauer’s conservative era made blatant use of the traumatic experience of the rape of German women by members of the Red Army to justify some of its political positions, which explains its portraying of the Soviet Union in terms of an aggressive, repellent masculinity.<sup>13</sup> Let us consider a 1952 poster of the *Volksbund für Frieden und Freiheit* [People’s Union for Peace and Freedom], an organization first established in 1949. It alludes to rape using it as a metaphor for German-Soviet friendship,

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(see, for instance, the 1966 novel *Westend*, by Annemarie Weber, or Christian Graf von Krockow’s 1988 account *Die Stunden der Frauen. Nach einer Erzählung Libussa Fritz von-Krockow* [Hour of the Women. Based on an oral narrative by Libussa Fritz-Krockow]). Most of the studies on the treatment of this topic in the context of German culture focus on *BeFreier und Befreite* [Liberators Take Liberties], a documentary about rape in 1945 Berlin by feminist filmmaker Helke Sander. Made in 1992, the film met both with great popular success and full-blown controversy.

<sup>12</sup> The phobia of the “hordes of Mongolian savages,” eager to murder, pillage, destroy and rape, had been one of the fears most fostered and exploited by the National Socialist authorities to mobilize people for the fight against the Soviet offensive, especially after the Nemmersdorf massacre (October 1944), when German women and girls were brutally raped and murdered. Regarding the use of racist stereotypes for demonizing the Soviet Union in pre-1945 Germany (not just in National Socialist circles) and the image of the rapist soldier in wartime propaganda, see, for example, Ayçoberry (2003: 455-65) and Moore (2003: 31-42).

<sup>13</sup> Thumbnails of some of these posters can be seen at <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/roehrigw/lva/ws9596/texte/kk/dhm/bsp.html>. Retrieved March 8, 2012.

with the purpose of exposing the rival German state as the offspring of a female Germany overpowered by a male Soviet Union. Elisabeth Heineman pays special attention to a poster of the conservative coalition CDU that reads “Nein, Darum CDU” [No, therefore CDU], in which the Soviet Union is portrayed as a threatening Asian man. According to Heineman, this type of imagery, which resonated with the age-old phobia of Genghis Khan’s “hordes of rapists” and had figured so prominently in wartime propaganda, is a clear indication of how sexual violence against German women was used in the Federal Republic as an expression of Asian barbarism and as a metaphor for the brutalization of Germany and its Western Christian culture by communism (Heineman, 1996: 355, 367-73). In the public sphere, therefore, rape and violation were not recalled as acts of sexual violence against women and young girls in the framework of armed conflicts marked by patriarchal cultures with a strong ethnic component. Instead, they were made into political images that were firmly embedded in Cold War discourses. The two German texts I will now proceed to analyze, together with the novel *The Big Rape*, are perfect illustrations of this signification of sexual violence.

### **Martyrs of Bolshevism**

In the preface to Kaps’s book, written by Joseph Ferche – who presents himself as the sole surviving bishop in Silesia to have witnessed firsthand the invasion of the enemy from the East – the atrocities that fell upon the German people at the end of the war are presented as part of an ancient history of Christian suffering at the hands of the infidels: “The aim of this book is to record for history the heroism shown by German women and girls during the onslaught of the Bolshevik hordes, and to serve as a cautionary tale for the Christian West and the world as a whole” (Kaps, 1954: 7).<sup>14</sup>

In the words of the bishop, in the years 1945/46 Silesia resembled an arena of martyrs, a place where believers suffered harsh trials (*ibidem*: 7). Thus the book’s epigraph is a quote from the Roman Breviary alluding to the Virgin and Martyr Saint Lucy: “If I am dishonoured against my will, my chastity will secure for me a double crown of victory” (*ibidem*: 3). Maria Goretti, the twelve-year-old Catholic Italian girl who was killed in 1902 as a result of attempted rape, and the ceremony of her canonization in 1950, play a crucial role in the introduction. Goretti is presented as a forerunner of wartime German women: “In the East

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<sup>14</sup> Translated from the German.

we had hundreds of Marias Goretti: is there anyone who speaks of them?" (*ibidem*: 9). The depositions themselves, gathered from German believers, including a large number of priests and nuns, are framed by religious terms and imagery.<sup>15</sup> In order to find a language and categories for making sense of their experience of the end of the war and of Soviet occupation, the expellees resort to the Christian imaginary, as illustrated by the following excerpts (the first by a nun, the second by a "young mother from Breslau"):

The Russians lost all sense of shame. They were hordes of Mongols of the worst kind, as we were to learn later, with a satanic look on their faces. Then our martyrdom began [...]. (*ibidem*: 75)

It must have been like this among the early Christians, a community joyful and true, nothing fake about it. (*ibidem*: 126)

The emphasis on sexual violence is used to demonize the Soviet Union as a polity that does away with the most basic social and moral norms when it brutally smashes the pillars of patriarchal society and Christian morality: it respects neither female virginity nor marriage bonds, nor does it refrain from lusting after the spouses of Christ. The amount of cases involving the rape and murder of nuns, some of them told in the first person (*e.g.* Kaps 1954: 43ff.), together with corpse desecration/violation (*ibidem*: 82), stand out as the epitome of the lack of values, the civilizational chaos and the savagery of which the victors are accused in these testimonies. See, for instance, the rape and killing of an eighty-five-year-old deaf-blind nun (*ibidem*: 90). The following deposition summarizes the message that runs throughout the book, as it blames atheism and communism for sexual violence: "That is the great tragedy of the Russian people: once they were forcibly deprived of religion, the people did not know the seventh or the tenth commandment, nor the sixth and the ninth! Many women and girls were dishonored in a violent and most bestial manner" (Kaps, 1954: 99).

These acts of violence are imputed to the negation of God in the aftermath of the October Revolution. In this context where blame is pinned on communism, the last few pages, devoted to the "good Slavs" – the Poles and Russians who protected German women – are of the utmost importance. In his introduction to the second chapter, Kaps had already argued for the need to tell between a minority of Polish communists, who, led by hatred and

<sup>15</sup> The abundance of depositions by clergy and members of religious orders, as well as the ample use of Christian imagery by the expellees, are primarily a direct consequence of the method of documentation adopted by Kaps, who moved mostly among church-going expellees from the Munich area.

Soviet influence, participated in the rapes, and the majority of the Polish population, supposedly made up of good, God-fearing people.

The text's silences and omissions are an immediate giveaway of the problematic nature of sexual violence as a signifier of communism. In fact, no mention is made of the extremely high levels of sexual violence committed by the German troops in the East,<sup>16</sup> or of the rape of German women by members of the Western Allied Forces.<sup>17</sup> This has to do, to a certain extent, with the dual, Manichean way in which this phenomenon is viewed: since sexual violence, according to the text's logic, is a hallmark of the non-believers, it cannot conceivably be practiced on a large scale by Christian nations. And given that the abuses suffered by Silesian Germans are not analyzed as part of the spiral of violence caused by the war and the crimes initiated by the German people in the political context of the attack on the Soviet Union, the German women who were raped tend to be perceived as the victims of a conflict that goes beyond the framework of the Second World War. These are stories about Christian girls and women who were abused by the Bolsheviks, where violence is framed, on the one hand, in a narrative of Christian persecution, and on the other in the fecund tradition of the Christian martyrs of chastity (Goretti, Saint Lucia and others). As a result, the Soviet Union is primarily seen as a scourge of believers, and rapes emerge as the recurrence of an ahistorical phenomenon: the fight of Evil versus Good, sin versus chastity, barbarism versus civilization. Both geographically and culturally, the borders are easy to draw: from the Bolshevik East (Asia) comes barbarism; the Christian West (Europe) is where Good dwells. There, in Christian Europe, is where the German people supposedly belong.

Within the framework of Cold War geopolitics and anticommunism, the aims of *The Martyrdom and Heroism of the Women of East Germany* are inextricable from a subtext that calls for the re-Christianization of Europe and which can be summed up by the final words of one of the testimonies: "Almighty and kindly God, give the Russians the grace of conversion and bring peace to all peoples" (Kaps, 1954: 46). The allusions to the "good Slavs" should also be seen in this light. For Kaps, the gruesome war experiences had surely caused many on both sides to feel closer to the divine, and that return to God was to be the force leading to future reconciliation and peace among the peoples of the world: "Let us then hope that the innocent victims from Eastern Germany have not suffered in vain, but rather laid the

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<sup>16</sup> On sexual violence perpetrated during the attack on the Soviet Union, see, e.g., Mühlhäuser (2010).

<sup>17</sup> On sexual violence by members of the U.S. military, see, e.g., Lilly (2007).

foundations for a better Christian future for both Germans and Slavs” (*ibidem*: 23). This desire to rechristianize Europe also had in mind certain social practices of the Federal Republic of Germany. In his introduction, Bishop Ferche writes that the sacrifices recounted in the book should be held up as an example at a time when so many German women lightly risked their honor (*ibidem*: 8). Throughout the text it becomes more and more obvious that re-Christianization is just another word for regulating moral behavior and sexual norms (disapproving sex outside marriage, condemning abortion, promoting the ideal of woman as wife and mother), which clearly places the book within the period’s conservative offensive on social mores.<sup>18</sup>

### **An Asian avalanche**

Lehndorff’s diary also resorts to biblical imagery to depict Germans as the victims of persecution, associating them with the chosen people and the followers of Christ, while the Soviets are viewed as their ruthless executioners.<sup>19</sup> Just as in Kaps’s book, the sufferings of German women are imbued with Christian allusions. The *Doktora* is typical of this tendency to depict the victims of rape as innocent figures, sacrificed by the invaders’ bestiality and lust. The suggestion of a link between this character and two major biblical texts, the Epistle to the Hebrews and especially the eighth chapter of Romans (between the pages of which the narrator finds his companion’s diary after she dies), is extremely relevant. The latter text, intended to provide spiritual guidance to the early Christians in times of persecution, makes redemption of carnal sin contingent on transcending the flesh by way of the spirit. The body may be abused and destroyed, but if the spirit remains pure, the soul will fear neither death nor eternal damnation.<sup>20</sup> This is a crucial question for the image of the victim as constructed

<sup>18</sup> For an analysis of the way in which Kaps uses sexual violence in wartime to promote some central tenets of the Catholic doctrine of the period, see my “Mártires cristãs do bolchevismo: as violações de alemãs na Segunda Guerra Mundial sob um olhar católico” [Christian Martyrs of Bolshevism: A Catholic perspective on the rape of German women during World War II], in Mário Matos and Orlando Grossegeisse (eds.), *Intercultural Mnemo-Graphies/ Interkulturelle Mnemo-Graphien/ Mnemo-Grafias Interculturais*. V. N. Famalicão: Edições Húmus (forthcoming).

<sup>19</sup> Here are a few examples: the plagues of ancient Egypt are invoked to describe German suffering at the hands of drunken soldiers (Lehndorff, 2005: 72); when the narrator feels tempted to kill a Soviet soldier, he sees himself in Moses’s shoes (*ibidem*: 75); upon being arrested, he thinks of Jonah swallowed by the whale (*ibidem*: 80); during a storm, he imagines himself dealing with Noah’s predicament (*ibidem*: 140); when he flees Königsberg, two women friends give him a replica of Raphael’s Liberation of Saint Peter (*ibidem*: 163).

<sup>20</sup> Kaps follows a similar line of thought when he quotes Augustine and a 1945 epistle by the Hungarian bishop József Mindszenty to absolve from sin the women who were raped by the Soviets.

by the text: the flesh, the physical or material appearance, had been fouled, but the spirit, guided by one's devotion to others and to the Christian faith, had stayed pure.

Although Lehndorff dwells longer on the crimes of the Third Reich (albeit mostly within a narrative framework that views Germans as the victims of Hitler),<sup>21</sup> the account of the years he spent under Soviet occupation perpetuates the dichotomies that were central to Kaps: civilization/barbarism, Christianity/communism. From the start the East is associated with savagery. Its famished herds (suggestive of the Soviet advance) are viewed as a harbinger of chaos (Lehndorff, 2005: 10). The bonfires in the hospital courtyard, around which the conquerors size up their loot, remind the narrator of a gypsy camp and make him imagine himself in the heart of Asia; next he describes Königsberg as an island invaded by gray lava (*ibidem*: 68, 70). The conquerors seem the incarnation of an Eastern barbarity that destroys people, civilization and nature. The arrival of the Red Army brings with it the violent destruction of German culture, the collapse of a Christian order and the onset of chaos. The soldiers are described in terms that suggest animal brutality ("hyenas," "baboons" [*ibidem*: 73; 77]), especially in the context of the rapes. The Soviets and their collaborators plunder, destroy, rape, dance like savages, and get drunk. The Germans, on the other hand, toil, clean up, cultivate the land, help each other, try to comfort those who suffer the most, read the Bible, sing and pray to the Lord.<sup>22</sup> Belief in God emerges as the crucial difference between the two peoples, as suggested when the author attempts to explain the rapes:

And this raucous language, this barking which the Word seems to have deserted long ago. And these fierce children, these fifteen and sixteen year olds, throwing themselves at the women like wolves, not really knowing what is at stake. This has nothing to do with Russia, nothing to do with any particular people or race – this is the godless human being. (Lehndorff, 2005: 67)

The Russian people's alleged lack of culture is repeatedly hinted at throughout the narrative, but in the end sexual violence is mostly laid at the door of the October Revolution and its parting with God. Thus German suffering comes across as a product of a society that is devoid of spiritual values, which is a reading in line with the dominant discourses of the

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<sup>21</sup> It is important to point out Lehndorff's efforts to present his family as an example of German suffering at the hands of the Nazi and Soviet authorities: his mother, who had been sent to the Gestapo prisons, was killed by the Soviets in January 1945; his aunt was arrested by the Nazi authorities and later subjected to the torment of Soviet occupation; and his cousin Heinrich Graf von Lehndorff-Steinort was executed in 1944 for participating in the attempt on Hitler's life.

<sup>22</sup> There are moments when this image is somewhat qualified. That is the case, for example, when, apropos of cannibalism among the Germans, Lehndorff acknowledges that such acts are caused by hunger (rather than by Asian culture, as stated earlier with regard to cannibalism among the Russians) (2005: 160).

Federal Republic's leagues and associations of expellees.<sup>23</sup> In addition to perpetuating the image – much cherished in expellee circles – of East Prussia as a land of extreme beauty destroyed by Soviet rage, the diary, just like Kaps's text, depicts the Germans from the Eastern territories as the blameless victims of the crimes committed by National Socialist Germany. It fashions them into a paradigm of Western Christian culture, a civilizing hub embodied in a cultured, orderly society, under threat from the East. Both Kaps and Lehndorff thus demonstrate in exemplary fashion how the traumatic experience of flight and expulsion was suffused with religious meaning and lent itself to the anti-communist struggle. The depiction of the expellees and of the raped women as epitomes of a persecuted Christian culture dissociated them from the National Socialist regime and made them appear solely as emblems of Soviet terror.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the homogeneous, terrifying image of the Red Army that runs through the accounts of the expellees tended to discredit the German Democratic Republic while legitimizing the Federal Republic and the Western powers. After Germany's complete military defeat in 1945, in the midst of all the international rivalries, the fears and ideological confrontations of the Cold War, the stories of persecution and abuse at the hands of the Red Army and the descriptions of deprivation and economic chaos under Soviet occupation came to be understood, first and foremost, as evidence of the vicious nature of communism and of its inability to ensure the well-being of the people. They were also interpreted as signs of the urgent need to join those Western military and political institutions that presented themselves as counterweights vis-a-vis Soviet power and as alternative systems to the communist economic model. Hence the importance of the geographical structure of the accounts: survival only becomes possible with the promise of reaching those zones occupied by the Western Allies. The idyllic landscapes to the East might well be lost, but under the protection of the West it was still possible to start anew, living with dignity and preserving the memory of the past. As Lehndorff puts it at the end of his diary,

Now it was time to take the first steps on the path that offered me a new existence. And I was faced with the question: what will this new existence be like, and who will make the decisions

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<sup>23</sup> On the type of memory of the past that was dominant within the leagues, see, for instance, Hahn and Hahn (2003: 338-51), Moeller (2001: 51-87) and Münz and Ohliger (2003: 380-1).

<sup>24</sup> A number of studies show how the Cold War favored the appropriation, in the Federal Republic, of flight and expulsion as a collective German experience, and argue that this site of memory was given a central role in the construction of a national identity as a people of victims (see, e.g., Heineman, 1996; Moeller 2001; Moeller, 2006a; Ohliger and Münz, 2003: 384-5; Schmitz, 2007).

on it? Will this be an indifferent existence, one hardly worth living? Or will God, in His mercy, grant me, as well as all those who went through the same as I, the grace of being able, throughout our lives, to say something about what we saw and heard? (2005: 286-7)

So it was that this type of memory contributed to the construction (perhaps the maintaining) of an absolute Other, an enemy who, although geographically placeable, was mainly the product of cultural constructs. This brutal, atheistic Asian enemy rising out of the expellees' accounts helped the Federal Republic define itself within the international order of the Cold War as part of Western Europe. If peril lay to the East, then salvation was in the West: to wit, in the Federal Republic – the *bona fide* Germany – and with the Western Allies and their political, military and economic structures (NATO and the EC), as only these were in a position to protect the Christian West from the godless East.

### Germany as a female body for the taking

In their instrumentalization of rape to denigrate the Soviet Union, the expellees' accounts are echoed by a 1950s best seller that at first glance might strike us as the antithesis of the conservative Christian discourse observed both in Kaps and Lehndorff. I allude to the novel *The Big Rape*,<sup>25</sup> by James Wakefield Burke, an American war correspondent who supposedly worked as a public relations adviser under General Clay himself in the years 1947-48.<sup>26</sup> Presenting itself as a documentary novel, the text, which is primarily to be read as pulp fiction,<sup>27</sup> draws from historical events (the rapes committed by the Soviets during the conquest of Berlin) to create a fictional web of adventure and revenge filled with violent, sadistic sexual encounters. Martin Meyer conjectures that the novel was sponsored by the U.S. authorities in the context of the fight against the Soviet Union's ideological influence and expansion on German soil (Meyer, 2001: 168).<sup>28</sup> There are, indeed, unmistakable marks

<sup>25</sup> The original text was published by Rudl in Frankfurt am Main in 1951. There followed the New York edition, in 1952, by Farrar, Straus and Young. There were many other editions, including by other publishers. There are two German translations: the first, by Werner Asendorf, is entitled *Die grosse Vergewaltigung* (Frankfurt am Main: Rudl, 1952); the title of the second translation, by Ursula Lyn, is *Frau komm* (Berlin: Amsel-Verlag, 1953, 1956).

<sup>26</sup> Lucius D. Clay (1897-1978) is known for the decisive role he played in occupied Germany, particularly during the Berlin Blockade (1948-49), one of the tensest moments of the Cold War.

<sup>27</sup> See the poor quality of the paper used in these editions and the pictorial content of the front and back covers.

<sup>28</sup> In truth, mass rapes became a serious public relations problem for the Soviets, which might explain, among other things, the humiliating defeat of the KPD (German Communist Party) in the 1946 elections in the city of Berlin, a former bastion of communist power in the Weimar Republic. For that reason, some voices close to the SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, the party that was to rule over the German Democratic

of anti-communist propaganda in *The Big Rape*. Through the use of sexuality and of masculinity/femininity stereotypes aimed to generate national constructs and national paths, the text ultimately seeks to undermine the credibility of Soviet power among its audience. To that end, it resorts to such pre-1945 stereotypes as the Mongolian hordes. Let us look at the Red Army's last appearance in the novel:

Eight or ten Russian soldiers of the Oriental type were standing or milling around, waiting for their officer to make up his mind. The officer was a smallish lieutenant, with a round Mongolian face and up-slanted eyes. He was pacing up and down angrily. Behind the group of soldiers they saw Bruno. He was suspended by his hands and feet, spreadeagled between two trees. He was alive but barely conscious. His clothes had been stripped off and they could see the marks where he had been flayed and beaten. The lieutenant stormed, ranted. [...] The officer was boiling mad. [...] Pointing to Bruno he cried an order: "Sderite s nego zhiviem kozhu!" Lilo's fingers dug into Marlene's arm. "Let's get out of here!" [...] "There's nothing in the world we can do for Bruno now" [...]. Lilo knew she would not tell Marlene what was happening to Bruno at this moment. She knew she would never tell anyone that the Mongolian lieutenant had ordered: "Skin him alive!" (Burke, 1953: 316-7)

Rape committed by the members of the Red Army is used to associate communism with savagery and to conjure up the image of an Asian, barbaric, bloodthirsty East.<sup>29</sup> In the description of Soviet soldiers there are recurrent intimations of a threatening, repellent and perverse masculinity: the use of violence as sexual gratification and the celebration of military victory; the transmission of venereal diseases; drunkenness as a normal condition for sexuality; repeatedly abusing the same woman in violent orgies; and also the presence, during sexual encounters, of torture-related practices. This kind of negative masculinity is a dramatic counterpoint to the healthy, protective, more potent masculinity personified by the American soldiers,<sup>30</sup> who are viewed as saviors when they arrive in Berlin at the end of the novel:

A few days later Lilo stood at the edge of this same wooded area and watched the first detachment of Americans come into Berlin. She saw the new Commandant for the U.S. Sector of Berlin. [...] Behind the general's car came his deputy, a colonel [...]. Lilo felt naked as they

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Republic) attempted to attribute the persistence of the rapes in the collective memory to Western propaganda (Grossmann, 1998: 223-225).

<sup>29</sup> *The Big Rape* recuperates a number of stereotypes that had been very common in the anti-communist discourse of the Third Reich, albeit in the new context of rejection of National Socialism, and eschewing the anti-Semitism of Nazi propaganda (namely its identification of Soviet leadership with a Jewish elite accused of manipulating the uncultured Russian people in order to destroy the West).

<sup>30</sup> Needless to say, the U.S. military also had to deal with numerous cases of sexual violence perpetrated by American soldiers against German women and girls (see, for instance, Lilly, 2007). Based on the testimony of a number of American officers, Atina Grossmann (1998: 225-6) comes to the conclusion that in the early years of the occupation the Americans showed little surprise or disapproval in relation to the sexual violence committed by the Soviets against German women.

[the colonel's eyes] rested for a brief moment on her. There was something strong and fierce about this little man. [...] Lilo recalled what Pavel had said about him and now, having seen him, she understood why the Russians did not want to deal with him.

Then came the 82nd Airborne. They were giants of men – tall, huge, powerful. There seemed to be no small or even medium-sized soldiers among them. They were giants all! In contrast to the Russians there was something immediately sharp and commanding about these troops. Their uniforms were neat, clean and trim. With their trousers tucked in their paratrooper boots they all seemed to have extraordinarily long legs. Their faces were uniformly bright and clean. All seemed to be happy. There were no dark brooding faces. (Burke, 1953: 317-8)

This is the higher masculinity (both in a moral sense and in terms of physical potency) the female protagonist accepts and embraces at the end of the novel. Petra Goedde (1999) argues that personal interaction between the American soldiers and German women helped transform the United States' perception of Germany, from male aggressor to feminized victim. *The Big Rape* paradigmatically illustrates this feminized image of the former enemy as a fragile entity threatened by evil, dangerous masculinities. There is, in the character Lilo, a clear identification between the female body and a nation in search of direction. As a personification of Germany in defeat, the character serves as a kind of battleground for the ideological struggle of the Cold War. She starts her sex life with Bruno, a childhood friend who had allowed the system to manipulate him and who, as a member of the SS, symbolizes criminal Germany, guilty of the war crimes committed in the concentration camps. The young man's fanaticism is a decisive factor in making Lilo lose interest in the relationship as German defeat spells the waning of that masculinity. Faced with the risk of rape, she chooses to submit to one of the conquerors – Pavel, the handsome torturer of the Soviet secret services. The protagonist then experiences moments of seduction and sadomasochistic ecstasy with one of the victors of the battle of Berlin, but her lover's dark, calculating and even cowardly side<sup>31</sup> becomes increasingly salient and causes her to lose interest in him. Finally she envisages the Americans as the bearers of a protective masculinity and the promoters of a decent future for herself, her family, and Germany as a whole. The final paragraphs, in which the protagonist becomes fully aware of Germany's absolute defeat and decides to join her former enemies, clearly shows the intersection of sexuality and politics by conveying Germany's alignment with the United States through the metaphor of female sexual surrender:

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<sup>31</sup> Lilo realizes that Pavel will never help her avenge the rape of her mother and sister by the two Red Army soldiers because he fears the repressive Soviet machine and values his power as a Soviet officer above all else.

Suddenly the realization struck hard and deep and poignantly in her heart that Germany had lost the war, was completely felled, utterly flat on its back, abysmally prostrated and finally *kaputt!* [...] Sobbing as if her heart had burst into a thousand pieces she threw herself onto the ground and wept into the earth. [...]

She arose finally [...]. She felt an opening of the heart, a freshness. She smiled her slanting smile. [...] There was cool vengeance in something that had been drummed into her head over and over again. Dr. Goebbels had preached it almost continually in the last days of the war. Paul, Papa, Bruno and Pavel had said it: that the West would eventually fight the East.

When the West and the East finally came to open war, where would Germany stand? One thing was clear: Germany would be the main battleground. Her people, then, were again to be ground by the engines of destruction. [...] Survival! Above all things she must survive. If enough strong-hearted Germans managed to survive, the *Vaterland* would live. She had survived the rape of Berlin. Surely she could manage from here on. Papa had given her a thumbnail sketch of the Americans. The preview she had seen pleased her. Through Bruno she had learned when to give herself; through Pavel she had learned when not to give herself. What could the Americans teach her? Well, she was ready to meet the enemy. [...]

She walked with the confident tread of one going forward to a pleasant sure duty, and in the supple freedom of a woman who had habitually walked in her girlhood, bare-foot and bare-legged, on the brown sea sand. Thus she took her way along Argentinische Allee, toward the Stars and Stripes, which waved in the July afternoon over the US Press Center. (Burke, 1953: 318-20)

The protagonist's final choice is decisively influenced by her father, who alerts her to the need to submit to American authority and accept atonement, but who also comforts her with the prospect of a future of abundance under U.S. protection. This particular character, who represents an old, conservative Germany which had coexisted with and yielded to Nazism without ever having shared its values, is crucial for the redemption of the German people. This aspect must surely have contributed to the book's popular success in the Federal Republic. It offers a vision of the past in which most Germans of the 1950s liked to see themselves reflected, and that is essentially similar to the propositions underlying Lehndorff's memoir: the crimes of the Third Reich were the responsibility of a small minority (the party leaders, the SS, the Gestapo); "ordinary" Germans were morally decent individuals; the Soviet invasion was accompanied by extreme forms of brutality that, by and large, had unjustly hit the innocent majority of the population; even for the victims of Nazism themselves, Soviet power had brought nothing but more suffering and death. In this regard, the fate of the two Jewish sisters in the novel is of major significance: having survived the anti-Semitic persecutions under the Third Reich, they are brutally raped by a group of drunken Red Army soldiers on the night before the First of May, the great Soviet

holiday, as a consequence of which the youngest of the two, aged 12, dies of a venereal disease contracted on that occasion.

This type of construction of the past, based on the demonization of Soviet power and the victimization of the German people at the hands of the Red Army, was not targeted at German audiences alone. In fact, the novel is an attempt to counter Soviet cultural influence and seduce the German public by the allure of a strong alliance with the United States, while seeking to justify in the eyes of Americans their country's new alliances in the Cold War world: the former Soviet allies were now the enemy, and the former German enemies had become allies.

### **Final considerations**

The persistent objectification of the sensual female body, the recurrent associations between desire, sexual pleasure, danger, power and violence, a sort of voyeurism in the belabored description of the sexualized, raped female bodies, the profuse descriptions of sexual encounters, and the very setting of a central moment in the heroin's revenge in a luxury brothel (probably based on Berlin's famous Salon Kitty), are all conventional features of a certain type of "adult" entertainment literature, the kind of pulp fiction that blends violence and libertinism and to which *The Big Rape* belongs. These traits stand in sharp contrast to both Kaps and Lehndorff, whose approaches to sexual matters are characterized by modesty and understatement. While in these two authors the victims of rape are asexual beings and models of domestic and Christian virtues, in Burke we have women who are sexualized and available, female bodies ready to be taken and enjoyed and who are also willing to enjoy. In the ideological context of the Cold War, however, the two stereotypes of the raped woman underlying these texts – the angel and the seductress – play a similar role as far as the political reinvention of Germany is concerned: to bear witness to Soviet brutality and to indicate that the right course for the new Germany, the good Germany, lay with the Western Allies.

When the issue of the rapes became the subject of wide media attention in unified Germany, particularly in the context of the reception of the 1992 documentary *BeFreier und Befreite* [Liberators Take Liberties], the texts analyzed here had been, to a large extent, all but forgotten. There was at the time constant talk of the persistence of a taboo regarding the sexual violence committed against German women. The present paper should leave no

doubt about the fact that in Germany the memories of the rapes were not a new topic in the public domain. On the contrary, they had a past history of ideological instrumentalization, and one not immune to racist discourses. What director Helke Sander, as well as other German feminists who took an interest in the subject, sought to do should then not be perceived as the breaking of a taboo, but rather as an attempt to redeem the memory of sexual violence through the reinvention of a discourse whereby the suffering could be expressed outside a nationalistic, xenophobic mold. Therefore, in order to understand the meanings acquired by this theme in post-unification Germany one must take into account the hegemonic discourses of the Adenauer era in which those memories had been recollected.

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