

**(DE)CONSTRUCTING WAR RAPED IDENTITIES  
-AWARENESS RAISING POLITICS ON MASS  
WARTIME RAPES IN CONGO-**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is grounded on an exploration of texts which are written in order to raise awareness regarding the mass rapes of women occurring during the armed conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo between 1996 and the present time. (Re)presentations of mass wartime rape will be engaged critically in reference to a theoretical framework which combines features of post-colonialism and feminist critical theory on the intersection of rape and war. The aim is to understand how is rape constituted as a paradigm and, furthermore, how does it function as a means of constructing imagined identities such as: the “Western” imagined interpretive community, the Congolese imaginative rape geography and the imagined monolithic victim and villain.

*Keywords: awareness raising, Congo, war, rape, paradigm, imagined identities.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1996 an armed conflict erupted in the central-African republic of Zaire. When the war ended in 1997 with the overthrow of the president by rebels who were receiving support from neighbouring countries, the country's name was changed to Democratic Republic of Congo, hereafter Congo<sup>1</sup>. On the grounds of this conflict, a year later, in 1998, the same country was to become the battlefield for a second war also known as Africa's World War or The Great War of Africa, involving eight African countries and a myriad of armed groups. Although this conflict was resolved in 2003, its aftermath, up to present, is characterized by skirmishes in some regions of the country. Beginning with 1996, armed conflicts in Congo are extremely complex in character and (academic) research in relation to them, while still ongoing, is mostly departing from stances such as the following:

“The wars of 1996-97 and 1998-2002 were civil wars, according to some. They were international wars according to others. They represent a continuation of Rwanda's Hutu-Tutsi conflict, pursued on Congo soil, for still others. They were resource wars, according to an abundant literature. The interventions of Congo's neighbours, Rwanda and Uganda in particular, were acts of self-defence. These neighbours were pawns of great powers. There seem to be an endless choice of descriptions and explanations.”<sup>2</sup>

Although the complexity of the wars' and their aftermath is related to the topic of my research and, if taken into account, could possibly alter the analysis and its findings, it is too vast to be pursued at this point. Furthermore, it surpasses the focus of the thesis, namely the constant occurrence of mass rapes of women as a characteristic of the armed conflicts in Congo beginning with 1996 and up to the present day, hereafter the Congo wars and their aftermath. The mass rapes in the Congo wars and their aftermath are today an issue on the

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<sup>1</sup> When and if I will refer to the country in a different period of time, I will emphasize it and mention the name accordingly, but hereafter, for the simplicity of argumentation and since it does not alter my research question or my analysis, I will use “Congo”.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Turner, *The Congo Wars. Conflict, Myth & Reality* (London: Zed Books, 2007), 8.

agenda of political international relations and humanitarian help, probably as a result of awareness raising actions in regards to them in the last years. Nevertheless, the matter of mass wartime rapes in Congo has been lacking academic research.

In this context, my thesis is a contribution to the academic research on the intersection of war and sexual violence<sup>3</sup> which, as will subsequently be explained, is grounded in the issue of international visibility of the mass wartime rapes. “(De)constructing war rape(d) identities-awareness raising politics on Congo” refers to a critical feminist analysis of (re)presentations of mass wartime rapes in a body of texts written for the purpose of promoting visibility at an international level with regards to the matter of mass rapes as a characteristic of the Congo wars and their aftermath. Hereafter this body of texts will be referred to as the awareness raising discourse. The main research question to be substantiated by this analysis is: how does rape function as a paradigm, namely a framework for constructing identities through (re)presentations of mass wartime rapes in the awareness raising discourse?

The awareness raising discourse is a body of texts comprising newspaper and magazine articles, international organization’s reports and texts produced in the framework of humanitarian campaigns focused on the issue of mass wartime rapes of women in Congo. I situate the awareness raising discourse within and as representative of “the West” and will define this construction in the following section, as a part of explaining the thesis’ research design. Nevertheless, I am aware of the essentialist and universalizing character of such a construction and the possible criticisms in reference to the thesis based on this ground. However, I believe that it not only simplifies the line of argumentation, thus simplifying the

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<sup>3</sup> The academic research on the intersection of war and sexual violence has known a boost beginning with the 1990s due to the occurrence of mass wartime rapes of women in the civil wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda and the extensive international attention given to them, transforming them in cornerstones of both academic research and political international relations.

reading process more easy, but it also helps emphasizing the results of my research with respect to issues of power relations in the production of *other* identities.

In this context, the thesis will explore assumptions and implications of (from a feminist perspective) problematic (re)presentations of mass wartime rapes for the constructions of identities in a framework of (power) relations linking “the West” with Congo. The theoretical framework, on which I elaborate in the first chapter, is developed by relating post-colonial theory with feminist critical theory on rape and war. In doing so, rape will be referred to as rather a symbol/ metaphor/trope/ paradigm than as a lived act of sexual violence. In my view, the former mystifies the politics of the latter. Nevertheless, I will constantly come back to the lived experience of rape which I do not want to render invisible or insignificant. Following from this, the argumentative thread of the thesis is organized around two main issues: the construction of the mass rapes of women during the Congo wars and their aftermath as paradigmatic and the construction of identities through the rape paradigm. The analysis chapter of the thesis (chapters 2 and 3) are organized around these issues. Departing from Giorgio Agamben’s use of the concept of paradigm, I consider the mass rapes in the Congo wars and their aftermath as paradigmatic. By paradigm I understand a framework which has an illustrative and technical role and which is rendered as such because it lies at the threshold between exceptionality and normality- it is exceptional in itself, but in a certain context it defines normality.

Thus, in the second chapter I proceed by focusing on two main representations of mass wartime rapes in the awareness raising discourse. They can both be interpreted as premises of considering rape as paradigm, namely the deployment of rape by means of discourse as a form of identity construction. Firstly, I explore the assumptions and implications of using rape as a trope. Therefore, as a main ground for argumentation, I focus on feminist critical theories about the relationship between woman and community. In this

framework I, then, analyze (re)presentations of mass wartime rapes in the awareness raising discourse. Secondly, I will address the construction of rape and impunity- which are the most pervasive issues criticized in the awareness raising discourse regarding the intersection of rape and Congolese socio-political practices- as cultural<sup>4</sup> characteristics of Congo. I am performing this task by combining feminist theories on rape occurrence with a historical perspective on Congo in reference to both rape and impunity. I legitimize the latter by arguing that the awareness raising discourse lacks such a point of view on the mass rapes of women in the Congo wars and their aftermath. In both cases I will situate my findings in a framework of war as an exceptional state of affairs.

The third chapter's argumentative thread draws on the exceptionality of war in order to set the ground for connecting Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities"<sup>5</sup> with Edward Said's concept of "imagined geographies"<sup>6</sup>. The aim is to define identity constructions engendered by (re)presentations of the mass wartime rapes in the awareness raising discourse. Thus, firstly I will explore the ways in which the pathological deployment of rape in the awareness raising discourse constructs Congo as "imagined rape geography". Secondly, I focus on the female and male identities constructed by (re)presentations of mass wartime rape in the awareness raising discourse. In the context of a rape paradigm, the focus will be on women and men as always already positioned as victims, respectively villains<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> I will use the term "cultural" in reference to the mystification of rape and impunity based on grounds of reiteration throughout the history of Congo. Moreover, I define it in terms of shared attitudes, values or practices that characterize a group.

<sup>5</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections On The Origin And Spread Of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). The concept of "imagined communities" was coined by Benedict Anderson as a ground for theorizing nationalism.

<sup>6</sup> See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). The concept of "imaginative geographies" has been coined by Edward Said in the theoretical framework of orientalism.

<sup>7</sup> I am borrowing the phrase "victims and villains" from Dubravka Zarkov and I will elaborate on my use of it in the section entitled "The (Imagined?) victim and villain". See Dubravka Zarkov, *The body of war: media, ethnicity and gender in the break-up of Yugoslavia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

Moreover, by focusing on arbitrariness as an aspect of imagining geographies<sup>8</sup>, I will criticize the unequal power relations between the (Western) imagined interpretive community of the awareness raising discourse as subjects and the (Congolese) imagined identity constructions of rape geography, victims and villains as objects of the awareness raising discourse.

The aim of my thesis is not to provide an exhaustive and universally valid interpretation of the analyzed texts, but to offer a possible interpretation of the texts by engaging them critically from a feminist perspective. I am by no means dismissing the reasons or purposes of the awareness raising discourse. At the same time, I am confident that (re)presentations of mass wartime rape need problematisation and containment, especially from a feminist standpoint and because they mediate the production of both identities, in particular, and knowledge, in general.

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<sup>8</sup> Said (1979), 54.

## **CHAPTER 1 – INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON (RE)PRESENTATIONS OF WARTIME RAPE**

In this thesis I propose an exploration of mass wartime rape by critically engaging with its' (re)presentations, and their implications, in what I will be referring to hereafter as the “awareness raising discourse”. By raising awareness I understand the process of informing and alerting the general public that a particular issue exists and that they should (re)act to it. Both awareness raising and the (re)actions engendered by it are simultaneously politicized and political. Firstly, their origin is highly embedded in a standpoint which may be defined through variables such as: experience in relation to the matter of the awareness raising process, economical status, geographical location, political views, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, etc. Secondly, their aims are focused on criticizing or challenging institutions or practices which are held accountable for the development of that particular issue which is the object of awareness raising. However, the main outcome of awareness raising is not necessarily action, as much as knowledge production regarding a particular matter. Furthermore, it can mediate the production of identities by means of both writers' and readers' participation in the production of meaning for/of the (re)presentations which are publicized through the awareness raising discourse.

In this context, regarding my research design, two aspects are of main concern: the process of constructing and defining the awareness raising discourse and the process of organizing the information from the awareness raising discourse in categories of (re)presentations. My research concerns online newspaper articles, international organizations' reports and humanitarian campaigns' websites which have been comprised in a single body of texts. I defined this body of texts as “awareness raising discourse” by drawing

upon Foucault's definition of a discursive construction: "whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a discursive formation"<sup>9</sup>. Newspaper articles, international organizations' reports and campaigns on the issue of mass wartime rapes in Congo can be considered as a single discursive body for the following reasons: they are all types of statements on a unique subject matter; although different in terms of their origin and original form, they are ultimately available for access in written form through the same channel of communication i.e. the internet (be it the online version of a newspaper, an online report written under the aegis of an international organization or the transcript of a debate held in the framework of a campaign); they are all previously positioned and constructed as having the functions of producing mass knowledge and engendering (re)action from their readers (in this case, mainly in a humanitarian framework).

The first criticism which could be oriented towards my research design is connected with the fact of having relied on online primary resources. This, however, is not a limitation insofar as all the texts selected in the process of research to make up the awareness raising discourse are available both online and in their original form. In regards to the selection process it is necessary to make reference to my experience regarding the mass rapes of women in the Congo wars and in the period following them, namely that of a more than two years constant reader and researcher of English written online and hard copy texts on the topic of ongoing armed conflicts in Congo which began in 1996. In this context, the selected texts were some which I had already been in contact with and also new ones. The criteria of selection included: availability for access- online text-, main topic- wartime rape-, language-

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<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, translated from the French by A. M. Sheridan Smith, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 38.

English-, purpose of text as stated by the writer- awareness raising. Although the language criterion clearly limits my research, to my best knowledge and, for example, in comparison to French similar sources, the English ones produced in the United States and the United Kingdom are offering a more extensive coverage of the topic in terms of numbers of texts and length. Furthermore, as I focus on the newspaper articles more than the other sources for reasons which will be obvious throughout the argumentation referring to the construction of an imagined interpretive community of the awareness raising discourse, English as language can legitimize, to a certain extent, references to this community as “the West”.

During my research I discovered that the topic of mass wartime rapes in Congo has received a small degree of attention in the United States and the United Kingdom mass media<sup>10</sup> before 2004<sup>11</sup>. Since then, however, the mass wartime rapes of women have been covered by the following mass media: The New York Times<sup>12</sup>- 4 articles, Ms. Magazine<sup>13</sup>- 1 article, The Washington Post<sup>14</sup>- 2 articles, The Los Angeles Times<sup>15</sup>- 1 article, Glamour Magazine<sup>16</sup>- 1 article, The Nation<sup>17</sup>- 1 article, The Guardian<sup>18</sup>- 4 articles, The Independent<sup>19</sup>-

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<sup>10</sup> The following short descriptions of the newspapers and magazines which have published articles quoted in this thesis are usually taken from the websites of the publications. I am not essentializing the category of readers for any of the cases, but am providing this information mainly in order to illustrate the character of the sources of texts. I will not include the websites of the sources in these footnotes as I will do that when quoting articles from them.

<sup>11</sup> (Ironically?) the international attention towards the rapes of women in the armed conflict in Congo amplified solely after the end of the official war was resolved.

<sup>12</sup> The largest metropolitan newspaper in the United States, with one of the most popular websites, characterized as rather liberal even by its editors, known for general reporting and international coverage, among the leading daily newspapers in the US.

<sup>13</sup> A landmark institution in both women's rights and American journalism.

<sup>14</sup> The newspaper with the largest circulation in the capital of the United States, having a particular emphasis on national politics and international affairs and regarded among the leading national daily newspapers in the US.

<sup>15</sup> The second-largest metropolitan newspaper in the United States and the fourth-most widely distributed newspaper in the United States, with an editorial policy which evolved from conservatism to the centre of the political spectrum.

<sup>16</sup> Women's lifestyle magazine, published monthly. I am referring to the United States publication. Usually not covering topics as the mass wartime rapes in Congo.

2 articles, National Public Radio<sup>20</sup>, CBS News<sup>21</sup>- 2 news reports or BBC News- 3 reports<sup>22</sup>. Furthermore, when researching the activist responses to this particular situation, I found that most of them are US based or that financial and political support for them is campaigned for in Canada, United States or the European Union (in all cases documents, testimonies of participants, transcripts of public statements, etc are available as a general rule in English language). In reference to humanitarian campaigns<sup>23</sup> I will focus on an international campaign involving V-day (a global movement to end violence against women and girls that raises funds and awareness) and UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)- "Stop raping Our Greatest Resource- Power to the Women and Girls of the Democratic Republic of Congo"<sup>24</sup>, and one which is defined by its founders as the result of mass media awareness raising on the mass wartime rapes in the Congo wars and their aftermath- Run for Congo Women<sup>25</sup>. Furthermore, international organizations' reports and news releases are generally available in online in an English version and circulated as such worldwide. The ones I will be referring to

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<sup>17</sup> The oldest continuously published weekly magazine in the US, dealing with issues of politics and culture and adopting a rather leftist stance.

<sup>18</sup> Leftist UK publication oriented towards the middle class, ranked in the first four daily newspapers in the UK based on the number of readers.

<sup>19</sup> One of the youngest UK national daily newspapers, published in a tabloid format, not affiliated to any political party, but labelled as liberal/ centre left publication.

<sup>20</sup> Privately and publicly funded non-profit membership media organization that serves as a national syndicator to 797 public radio stations in the United States, has received allegations of both conservative and liberal bias.

<sup>21</sup> One of the most popular news broadcast in the US, with correspondents and contributors offering hard-hitting investigative reports, interviews, feature segments and profiles of people in the news.

<sup>22</sup> Largest broadcasting news gatherer in the world.

<sup>23</sup> As in the case of the newspapers, the information further presented is paraphrased from the campaigns' websites. Insofar as I use different texts on the websites of these campaigns, I will provide a link to the homepage of each as I describe them summarily.

<sup>24</sup> *Stop Raping Our Greatest Resource- Power to the Women and Girls of the Democratic Republic of Congo*, <http://www.stoprapeindrc.org/>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>25</sup> *Run for Congo Women*, <http://www.runforcongowomen.org/>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

were released under the aegis of Human Rights Watch<sup>26</sup> and Amnesty International<sup>27</sup> and were published online in English on the websites of the afore-mentioned organizations.

Positioning myself as a feminist reader of the texts, I organized the (re)presentations provided by the texts around five main recurrent issues in the awareness raising discourse regarding mass wartime rapes in Congo. The following categories of (re)presentation developed along my process of reading/ interpreting the texts: “fitting the case in pre-existent knowledge”, “contextualization”, “woman as community symbolism”, “the medicalization of rape”, “impunity and rape as culture?”, “testimonies of rape”. I proceeded to this categorisation in order to structure not only the (re)presentations in the awareness raising discourse, but, also my analysis. Thus, every subchapter’s line of argumentation is developed around mainly two of the categories enumerated above. Thus, for example, the chapter entitled “Always already raped with impunity?” references mainly information from the categories on “contextualization” and “impunity as culture”.

In order to respond to the main research question of the thesis, namely *how do (re)presentations of mass rapes during the Congo wars and their aftermath render rape as paradigmatic for the construction of identities?*, I am using critical discourse analysis applied to the body of texts comprising the “awareness raising discourse”. Since it is a qualitative method that I am applying in order to perform the analysis, the size of the sample is not as an important factor as “the structure, style and persuasive features of texts and how these features reflect the socio-cultural context, rather than the statistical representativeness of the chosen texts”<sup>28</sup>. Thus, by discourse analysis I understand a critical engagement with the choice of

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.hrw.org/> last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.amnesty.org/> last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>28</sup> Potter and Wetherell (1987: 161) in Deborah Lupton, *Moral Threats and dangerous Desires- AIDS in the News Media* (London: Taylor&Francis, 1994), 31.

words, the figures of speech, the style, the pervasive and persuasive features of the text, and the production and reproduction of meaning in a text. In regards to the latter, I am aware that the act of reading the texts is one of interpretation which is highly dependent on the positionality of the reader. Thus, although I am taking into account the writer of the text, I focus also on the reader as the receiver of the text and as a producer of meaning. The link between the writer of the text and the reader is in this case grounded on the reader's own interpretation of (re)presentations produced by the writer. Thus, my approach in regards to the text is a rather foucauldian one. Michel Foucault explores the relevance of the author in relation to the meaning or interpretation of the text. The author function represents for Foucault the fact that the author exists only as a function of written work and not necessarily as a part of the interpretive process<sup>29</sup>. In this context, the main aspect in which the author is relevant in my analysis is to support the idea of a correlation and interconnection between the three subcategories of primary sources. For example, I am analyzing a text originally publicized in an US women's magazine and which is written by Eve Ensler. At the same time, she is the main figure of the campaign organized by V-day and UNICEF in order to raise awareness and support the raped women. The descriptions of events or transcripts of speeches organized in the framework of this campaign and involving her are also part of the awareness raising discourse. Yet, not focusing explicitly on the writer of the text may be interpreted as an assumption of the readers having the same interpretation. However, I do not legitimize the argumentation on anything else, but the reading of the texts from my standpoint. This position is that of a feminist researcher with no direct involvement in the production of the awareness raising discourse or its object.

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<sup>29</sup> Michel Foucault, "What is an author?" in David Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory*, Second Edition (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 174-187.

Therefore, I am aware that there is no unique and “correct” reading of a text. I am not arguing that my reading and the analysis offer neither universal, nor generally valid interpretations of the (re)presentations. Such a task is beyond my thesis’ aims. Rather, I am interested in problematizing the awareness raising discourse as a mechanism of knowledge production by critically engaging with the (re)presentations through which it mediates the production of identities. Furthermore, insofar as I am setting the awareness raising discourse as mediating a relationship between “the West” and Congo, I set the grounds for the following analysis to challenge the matter of power relations between subjects and objects of the awareness raising discourse. In this context, I will now turn to developing an interdisciplinary theoretical framework combining post-colonial theory with feminist critical theory on rape and war.

In drawing the theoretical framework for analysing (re)presentations of mass wartime rape in the (Western) awareness raising discourse, I focused on explore the assumptions, power relations and implications of what I perceived to be a discursively constructed (Congolese) wartime raped woman. Therefore, I primarily situate the thesis in (and as) a post-colonial approach to the matter of mass wartime rape as it is (re)presented in the awareness raising discourse. In this context, I will explore the feminist theoretical perspectives on the patriarchal nationalist symbolic relationship between woman and her community and the female body as territory in a framework of war in order to engage critically with Western representations of African Congo in a rape paradigm. I define a rape paradigm as the deployment of rape in (and as the matter of) the awareness raising discourse which then mediates representations of various aspects related to the mass rapes in the Congo wars and their aftermath. As a means of better understanding the construction of this particular case of mass wartime rapes as paradigmatic, I next turn to feminist critical theories regarding rape

and link them with what I perceived to be missing (in terms of argumentation, rather than claims) from the awareness raising discourse, namely a historical development of Congo with impunity as a cultural characteristic. Furthermore, I address the mass wartime rapes (re)presentations through an orientalist theoretical framework, referring also to theories of nationalism and colonialism, in order to define a (Congolese) imaginative rape geography. Drawing on the above, I will finally refer to feminist theoretical approaches which I situate at the intersection of rape and war with orientalism, focusing on the female and male constructed categories of victim and villain. Not only as a conclusion, but rather as a constant throughout my analysis, I will raise questions of whether the only process of (re)presentation going on in the awareness raising discourse is that of the Congolese wartime raped woman. I do not aim to answer them completely as I ultimately understand this thesis as a starting point and not as an exhausted attempt of engaging critically with texts whose aim and intentions I do not dismiss, but whose means I criticize if I perceive them to be problematic (not only from a feminist perspective). The main issue of my reacting to the awareness raising discourse through an analysis of the (re)presentations it mediates is exactly this perception of them as problematic. And my evaluation of them being problematic relies on the fact that they engender the production of a humanitarian gaze oriented towards the Congolese wartime raped woman, which I rendered as continuing the 19<sup>th</sup> century humanitarian gaze oriented towards the African enslaved woman and/ or the African colonized woman. Although I will make references to the latter, my purpose is to offer a possible critical approach to the former.

Therefore I proceed by exploring the (re)presentations of the woman as a symbol of the community of which she is a part of<sup>30</sup> and the female body as a metaphor of the

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<sup>30</sup> In this thesis I will address this matter mainly in reference to feminist critical theories of nationalism. However, I will use the term “community” as it is more suited for the context of the armed conflicts presented in the awareness raising discourse and it has, in my opinion, more potential in reference to the argument of the thesis.

geographical space inhabited by that particular community<sup>31</sup>. In consequence, the body of the woman is defining the social body of that community in terms of borders. In a situation of war in which the female body is raped and rape is interpreted as a weapon of war in a framework of pre-existent unequal gendered power relations and patriarchal symbolism I, then, interpret the discursively constructed raped woman not only as a mechanism for (re)producing geographies and communities, but also for (re)producing geopolitical systems. In this context, I differentiate between two dimensions on which the *territoriality* of the raped body is reinforcing unequal power relations. One dimension is focused on the issue of massive, organized and systematic usage of rapes of women as means of control, exploitation, expulsion and dispersion of population, rendering rape as a weapon of war. Another dimension is reflecting a “Western”- African Congolese power relation in which humanitarianism is embedded due to its politicization and which are reproduced by the Western awareness raising discourse on mass wartime rapes in the Congo wars and their aftermath. In my analysis I will continuously refer to both of these dimensions of analysis: the former in order to analyze (re)presentations of the mass wartime rapes and the latter in order to analyze and situate identities grounded in these representations. The rape’s public(ized) representation is in both cases important for my critical analysis because I will ultimately argue that the raped woman’s (re)presentation gains its political “power” only after being situated in a public discourse, be it local or international.

In order to develop a theoretical framework which must firstly allow for an exploration of the connection between woman and community I will draw on Anthias and Yuval-Davis’ five major, but not exclusive, ways in which women are rendered as

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Robert M. Hayden (2000), Veena Das (1995), Claudia Card (1996), Joshua S. Goldstein (2001), Ann J. Cahill (2000).

participants in ethnic and national processes and in relation to state practices<sup>32</sup>. Insofar as elsewhere Yuval-Davis refers to ethnicity and nation as Andersonian imagined communities<sup>33</sup>, I will further draw on theories linking nation/ ethnicity and woman in order to explore the connection between community and woman. The roles Anthias and Yuval-davis are referring to in their analysis are highly dependent on historical, political, social, cultural and economical contexts<sup>34</sup> and are connected mainly to the capacity of the woman to reproduce the community in terms of members and in terms of boundaries, which renders her (body) as the object of politics. In times of conflict these boundaries are rendered to be exceptionally important and in keeping with this requirement of war laws to clearly define the public friend-public enemy relationship, the woman as symbol of those boundaries is politicized. As Veena Das argues, political programs are being inscribed on women's bodies<sup>35</sup>. Therefore, not only woman's representation is a metaphor for the collective, but her womb is rendered as a signifier of the social body and insofar as that social body inhabits a geographical space, her body comes to be a signifier of geographies *because* she owns a womb. One could even argue that in conflict situations ideological mobilization targets the body (or, more particularly the womb, in case of ethnic cleansing as the aim of violating the body) as territory to be conquered and controlled. Thus the female body becomes (geo)politicized. This positioning is important for understanding the grounds on which wartime rape occurs, or on which wartime rape is constructed into a weapon of war. The

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<sup>32</sup> Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Woman-Nation-State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 6 *seqq.* The five ways in which women participate in national processes and in relation to state practice are: as biological reproducers of members of collectivites, as reproducers of boundaries of ethnic/ national groups, as participants in the ideological reproduction of a group and as transmitters of its culture, as signifiers of ethnic/ national difference and participants in national, economic, political and military struggles.

<sup>33</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 18.

<sup>34</sup> Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Veena Das, "National Honour and Practical Kinship: Unwanted Women and Children" in Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp (eds.), *Conceiving the New World Order* (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1995), 212.

metaphor of the woman as a symbol of the community to which she belongs to is important for the analysis of the awareness raising discourse insofar as I want to emphasize the fact that woman is always already attributed to the community, without problematization, that the metaphorical construction itself is problematic because it relies in this assumption, both in the (re)presentations mediated by the aforementioned discourse. This assumption will be explored and engaged critically with both in setting the theoretical framework and in the analysis because it is linked directly to the construction of the woman as always already rapable.

Feminist critical theorists of rape have grounded their arguments in women's potentiality to be raped, thus enabling the construction of a universal, essential category of potentially raped women, namely women in general. Whether it is Susan Brownmiller's "male ideology of rape"<sup>36</sup>, Peggy Reeves-Sanday's "rape prone societies"<sup>37</sup>, the assumption is always already there. If and when war is brought in as a component of the framework in which rape is theorized, woman is even more rapable in Brownmiller and Sanday's view. Claudia Card argues that rape, no matter if it is civilian or martial, has the main function "to display, communicate, and produce or maintain dominance, which is both enjoyed for its own sake and used for such ulterior ends as exploitation, expulsion, dispersion, murder"<sup>38</sup>. War, however, is a state of exception<sup>39</sup>, in Agamben's terms, when what is usually perceived to be the exceptionality of mass rape becomes the norm. Furthermore, war also posits self-

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<sup>36</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against our will: Men, women, and rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 13.

<sup>37</sup> Peggy Reeves Sanday, "The Socio-cultural Context of Rape: A Cross-cultural Study", in Michael S. Kimmel with Amy Aronson (eds.), *The Gendered Society Reader* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 55-72. The definition of a rape prone society in Sanday's study is "a society in which the incidence of rape is high, rape is a ceremonial act, or rape is an act by which men punish or threaten women".

<sup>38</sup> Claudia Card, "Rape as a weapon of war", in *Hypatia*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Women and Violence (Autumn, 1996): 5-18, 7.

<sup>39</sup> See Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, translated by Kevin Attell, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

identification of those who take part in it in a framework of public friend-public enemy<sup>40</sup>, “all relationships [...] distilled into a means of defining the public friend and the public enemy”<sup>41</sup>. In this situation the symbol defining the friend or the enemy, the boundaries of their group’s affiliation, is highly important. On these grounds is the woman posited in the frontlines of the battlefield.

Focusing on mass wartime rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Alexandra Stiglmayer found that purposes served by wartime rape in this case included genocide, expulsion, revenge<sup>42</sup>. This explanation, however, situates rape in the exceptionality of the state of war. Catharine Mackinnon however considers that war is actually the normal state of affairs for women and they should be defined as always inhabiting zones of conflict with rape as an ever present possibility<sup>43</sup>. Departing from this, Ruth Miller translates the exceptionality of war into woman’s body and renders the womb as a biopolitical space of exception<sup>44</sup>. In this context of politicizing the womb and considering Nira-Yuval Davis’ and Floya Anthias’ view of women as biological reproducers of community’s boundaries, the focus on rape shifts from its scopes being exploitation, expulsion, domination towards the scope of ethnical cleansing. However, what Ruth Miller does is posit the woman’s womb as a ground for constructing her symbolic link with the community, while my reading of the previous theories situate this symbolism as a ground for rape. Nevertheless, in all cases, rendering rape as a weapon of war immediately

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<sup>40</sup> Carl Schmitt *apud* Ruth A. Miller, *The Limits of Bodily Integrity* (Boston, Ashgate: 2007), 160. Miller paraphrases Schmitt, arguing that “the basic function of a political order is to decide upon who will play the role of a public friend and who will play the role of a public enemy”. Miller, further on, explores the matter of mass wartime rape in this framework.

<sup>41</sup> Miller, 169-170.

<sup>42</sup> Alexandra Stiglmayer, “The Rapes in Bosnia- Herzegovina” in Alexandra Stiglmayer (ed.), *Mass Rape. The War against Women in Bosnia- Herzegovina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 82-169.

<sup>43</sup> Catharine MacKinnon *apud* Miller, p. 169.

<sup>44</sup> Miller, 173.

allows for a construction of the woman, during wartime, as “inherently rapable”<sup>45</sup> in Sharon Marcus’s words. Thus the intersection of rape and war is not restricted to the actual act of gendered sexual violence, but extended to a discourse on potentiality.

Ann J. Cahill, drawing on Foucault’s analysis of power as creative and docility of bodies, argues that: “the individual women rape victims who prosecute their cases were marked by the threat of rape—simply because they were women—long before their bodies were actually violated, and that their experience of rape is not exhausted (although it is certainly dominated) by the one particular incident which commands the court’s attention”<sup>46</sup>. As Judith Butler argues, the social invests the body with a meaning which is constructed and subsequently sedimented through reiteration<sup>47</sup>. In light of the above, it can be argued that perpetuating the idea of woman as symbol of the community engenders discourses which render her bodily integrity as a symbol of territorial and social boundaries’ integrity.

Following from this last point on and keeping in mind a pervasive idea of the awareness raising discourse, namely that the mass wartime rapes are *just* the consequence of what is perceived to be a historically problematic social body in relation to a rape paradigm. The usage of rape as trope for enabling analyses of exploited land and woman is illustrative of this point. However, this historical perspective is rather implied or directly stated, than argued, in the awareness raising discourse. However, in my opinion, a historical perspective on Congo in reference to rape and issues connected to it, is an important aspect of discussing the mass rapes of women in the Congo wars and their aftermath. Thus, one section of the

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<sup>45</sup> Sharon Marcus, “Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention” in Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (eds.), *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 387. Sharon Marcus provides a critical exploration of feminist perspectives on rape and argues that in general they present rape as an inevitably material fact of women’s life.

<sup>46</sup> Ann J. Cahill, “Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body”, in *Hypatia*, vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter, 2000): 43-63, 59.

<sup>47</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 7.

thesis will be oriented towards linking and analyzing (re)presentations of mass wartime rapes in the awareness raising discourse with events and socio-political practices in the Congolese society. To this end, the focus will be to debate over the ideas of impunity and rape as cultural characteristics of Congo, and not as specific to the time frame of the Congo wars and their aftermath. Thus, I will refer firstly to feminist critical theories of rape, mainly drawing on Brownmiller and Sanday's perspective on rape occurrence, in relation to the awareness raising discourse's (re)presentations. Furthermore, I will focus on the link between rape and impunity in reference to two moments in the history of Congo for which accounts and analyses point towards both of these issues- the colonial rule of Belgium's King Leopold at the turn of the last century and the gaining of independence from Belgium in 1960. In this framework I will try to criticize rape and impunity as Congolese cultural practices, but at the same time not dismiss the possibility of them as a part of the war culture in Congo.

However, such conceptualizations are possible only inside existent patriarchal cultures where rape is inextricable from heterosexism<sup>48</sup> and unequal pre-determined gendered power relations between women and men inside the socio-political body. Furthermore, the consequence of a focus on wartime rape as a weapon of war engenders an interpretation of it as solely a communicative mechanism between men (rape as something that men do). In Hayden's view this reinforces the actual "premises that make it effective"<sup>49</sup>, namely, in the case I am analyzing, the idea that by raping the women in a community, one can control that community because the woman embodies the community. In any way, this perspective on wartime rape has blurred, in my opinion, the aspect of the rape as lived experience (rape as

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<sup>48</sup> Spike V. Peterson, "Sexing Political Identities: Nationalism and Heterosexism", in *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 1(1), June 1999: 34-65, 37.

<sup>49</sup> Robert M. Hayden, "Rape and Rape Avoidance in Ethno-National Conflicts: Sexual Violence in Liminalized States", in *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 102, No. 1 (March, 2000): 27-41, 34.

something women (or men) experience)<sup>50</sup>. The awareness raising discourse will be addressed in regards to both perspectives.

Concerning the implications of (re)presentations of mass wartime rape, it can be argued the awareness raising discourse mediates a process of constructing Congolese identities, as well as “Western” ones. In order to explore such processes I draw on a theoretical framework organized around theories of orientalism and nationalism, as well as feminist critical theories on the matter of war and rape and the politics of publicizing rape. As I previously mentioned in relation to the symbolism of woman as nation, I am drawing on theories of nationalism which allow me to develop arguments regarding communities of people which are not necessarily nations. In the case of the woman as community symbolism through in relation to the awareness raising discourse, community refers to any group of people in Congo defined by a commonality of experience, socio-cultural practices, location, etc. In the following arguments I will draw on a theory of nationalism which I found to be suited to (de)construct “the West” in relation with the awareness raising discourse.

Benedict Anderson grounds his theory of nationalism in the idea that print capitalism had made a great contribution to the production of nations as “imagined communities”<sup>51</sup>. He argues that printed versions of newspapers, for example, “made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves and to relate themselves to others, in

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<sup>50</sup> Cahill, 45. The author argues that the discussion around rape changes if there is a shift in the debate from looking at rape as something a man does, rather than as something that woman experiences. Yet, she further on claims that redefining rape as something woman experiences is problematic because women and men can be raped.

<sup>51</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections On The Origin And Spread Of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 6. Anderson defines nation as “an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”. The sense of the word imagined in this construction is a creative one, as “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear from them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”. See Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 1983), p. 6.

profoundly new ways”<sup>52</sup> through the texts they are reading. Moreover, in an analysis regarding the coverage of Islam in the United States media, Edward Said argues that Islam is for the Western scholar and reporter, as well as for the Muslim, “an act of will and interpretation which takes place in history”<sup>53</sup>. He, then, provides arguments for defining “communities of interpretation”<sup>54</sup> as a ground for constructing identities we can recognize. Recognizing the situatedness of knowledge produced through the awareness raising discourse, I focus now on the constructions of identities in and of that knowledge. Moreover, Cindy Patton argues for the existence of spaces of knowledge as an expansion of Andersonian imagined communities and in defining these spaces focuses on the idea of “imagining community from face-to-face contact to mediated hyperspace and everything in between”<sup>55</sup>. Drawing on the above definitions I want to argue for the existence of an imagined interpretive community of the awareness raising discourse. I define it as a community of people sharing the knowledge of the mass wartime rapes due to their interaction with awareness raising texts and who, through their particular reading of the texts, participate in the production of the texts meaning through interpretation.

Cynthia Enloe describes the act of increasing the visibility of rapes as a political act and warns about the fact that those performing this act should be aware of the complexity of raped women’s stories<sup>56</sup>. She also claims that wartime rape, unlike wartime prostitution is something that shocks<sup>57</sup>. The shocking-element is undeniably a characteristic of texts oriented

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<sup>52</sup> Anderson, 36.

<sup>53</sup> Edward Said, *Covering Islam: how the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 45.

<sup>54</sup> Said (1981), 45.

<sup>55</sup> Cindy Patton, *Globalizing AIDS* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xxi.

<sup>56</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers- the international politics of militarizing women’s lives* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 109.

<sup>57</sup> Enloe, 108.

towards raising awareness and since it is a problematic one it needs to be engaged critically. Concerning this matter, it can be argued that (re)presentations of mass wartime rape in the awareness raising discourse tend to be pathological<sup>58</sup>.

To continue, and link the issue of pathologization with the imagined interpretive community of the awareness raising discourse, Edward Said's concept of "imagined geographies"<sup>59</sup> will function as a theoretical point of departure for defining the identity of Congo as a country in relation to the rape paradigm engendered by the awareness raising discourse. In summary the process of imagining geographies is "the universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is <ours> and an unfamiliar space beyond <ours> which is <theirs>"<sup>60</sup> in an arbitrary way. In this context I argue the following: deployment of rape by means of pathological (re)presentations engenders the construction of Congo as an imagined rape geography which is not *ours*, when *we* may be the Western imagined interpretive community of the awareness raising discourse. I am grounding this concept in the argument of the previous section on rape as Congolese cultural constructions with men as always already rapists and women as always already rapable. Furthermore, I will be drawing on what I defined as a pathologization of Congo by means of (re)presenting mass wartime rapes. Thus, the imagined interpretive community of the awareness raising discourse may articulating Congolese identities by rendering them as abnormal since they are exceptionally rape identities. I will come back to the idea of Congo as a space of exception constantly throughout the thesis because insofar as exceptionality is rendered abnormal, it means that in the process of (re)presenting it as such, normality is set up/ constructed. This

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<sup>58</sup> By pathological I understand something which is connected to or indicative of disease, is rendered as a deviation or as something abnormal, excessive (implying thus normality which is set up arbitrarily).

<sup>59</sup> Said (1979), 49-73.

<sup>60</sup> Said (1979), 54.

links with Said's idea of arbitrariness in articulating imagined geographies<sup>61</sup> and points towards power relations between the subjects articulating identities and the objects whose identities are articulated.

However, the idea of arbitrariness can also function, when engaged critically with, as a criticism oriented towards the awareness raising discourse which, in my view, has the potentiality to set normality arbitrarily and hegemonize territory<sup>62</sup>. Space then is set out as a divisible object<sup>63</sup> on which boundaries are drawn by quotidian realities like reading a newspaper. Moreover, in this context, it can be argued that the awareness raising discourse does not solely mediate processes of identity construction/production in relation to a "Western" imagined interpretive community and the imagined rape geography of Congo. Simultaneously, it functions as the mediator of a gaze oriented from the former towards the latter. In light of this, it engenders the idea of (re)acting to the situation of the raped women not out of a sense of *identification with* them ("a commonality of experience"<sup>64</sup>), but as a result of *identification of* the raped women or the rape space.

In regards to the identity of the wartime raped woman, Cynthia Enloe argues that "the women who suffer rape in wartime remain faceless" (thus, in my opinion, not women, but a

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<sup>61</sup> Said (1979), 50.

<sup>62</sup> Sankaran Krishna in Shapiro, Michael J. and Alker, Hayward R., (eds.), *Challenging boundaries: global flows, territorial identities* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press: 1996), 204. Sankaran Krishna argues: "quotidian realities can reveal how cartography produces borders, the arbitrariness involved in the creation of normality, and the fluid definitions of space and place that prevail in the midst of efforts to hegemonize territory". I depart from his claims and argue that at the same time quotidian realities can function as cartography.

<sup>63</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, *The geography of ethnic violence: identity, interests, and the indivisibility of territory* (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 2003), 10. Territory as indivisible subject (nonmaterial value- can neither be divided, nor exchanged) and divisible object (material resource, can be divided and exchanged).

<sup>64</sup> Aili Mari Tripp, "Challenges in Transnational Feminist Mobilization", in Myra Marx Ferree and Aili Mari Tripp (eds.), *Global Feminism- Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006), 309-310.

monolithic woman) because they merge with the war torn landscape<sup>65</sup> and their rapes are included most of the times in the category *lootpillageandrape*<sup>66</sup>. I argue that this argument, in light of the symbolism of female body as territory, is a premise for exploring what I defined as the *monolithic*<sup>67</sup> (Congolese) wartime raped woman. In defining this concept I draw on Chandra Talpade Mohanty's criticism of Western scholarship as being involved in the production of the category of the "<Third World Woman> as a singular monolithic subject"<sup>68</sup>. The construction of a monolithic Congolese wartime raped woman through the awareness raising discourse is done by using similar colonialist and universalistic mechanisms as those involved in Mohanty's monolithic third world woman in Western academia. The "methodological universalisms"<sup>69</sup> involved in her analysis can be translated into the awareness raising discourse and used in order to deconstruct the monolithic Congolese wartime raped woman. Furthermore, it can be argued that by producing an imagined rape geography through the awareness raising discourse, a space in which, pathologically, all armed men are rendered potential rapists and all women potentially raped, the argument of a monolithic identity for the raped women may be a valid one in regards to both "victims and villains". In the book "The body of war: media, ethnicity and gender in the break-up of Yugoslavia", Dubravka Zarkov entitles a chapter "On victims and villains"<sup>70</sup>. In this chapter she explains how the raped women and the rapists are constructed into victims and villains by means of

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<sup>65</sup> Enloe, 108.

<sup>66</sup> Enloe, 132.

<sup>67</sup> I am borrowing this term from Chandra Talpade Mohanty in order to place my argument along the side of her criticism of Western academia as a producer of a monolithic "Third World Woman". See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses", in Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (eds.), *Feminist Postcolonial Theory* (London/ New York: Routledge, 2003), 49-74.

<sup>68</sup> Mohanty, 49.

<sup>69</sup> Mohanty, 62 *seqq.*

<sup>70</sup> Dubravka Zarkov, *The body of war: media, ethnicity and gender in the break-up of Yugoslavia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 143-154.

representation in mass media coverage or academic works. In this thesis' last chapter, the (re)presentations of raped women and rapists in the awareness raising discourse will be addressed having her analysis as a starting point.

In a more theoretical stance, the concept of mass wartime rape itself, is a highly essentializing construction if only for the word “mass” which has given it the “power” to enter discourse as an encompassing, specific and exceptional situation which the international community needs to deal with. As cynical as it might sound, the concept has taken raped women from the category of war casualties and has given a category of their own, without the possibility of individualization<sup>71</sup>. And breaking a category into smaller categories is not going to undermine their essentialist character, but rather reinforce it based on other criteria<sup>72</sup>. Coming back to the issue of rape as a weapon of war, Hayden argues that “at least some women in Bosnia see the international focus on rape as depriving them of personality and agency”<sup>73</sup>. Drawing on Cahill’s argument that there is a difference in defining rape as something that men do or something that women experience<sup>74</sup>, it can be argued that, although at the level of aid actions, wartime rape of women is focused on as something women experience, while at the legal level the focus seems to be on rape as something men do. Thus, the issue of representation becomes problematic due to the fact that it can both empower and disempower the raped women. Raped women, Hayden argues, have criticized the way in which organizations have represented them<sup>75</sup>. The case of the awareness raising discourse also

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<sup>71</sup> For a criticism of the use of mass wartime in the international discourse rape as an essentializing category that engenders lack of agency see Hayden (2000) and Enloe (2000).

<sup>72</sup> Diane Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference*, New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 20. I have developed this argument along Diane Fuss’s idea that “fragmenting the subject into multiple identities” does not equal de-essentializing.

<sup>73</sup> Hayden, 35.

<sup>74</sup> Cahill, 45.

<sup>75</sup> Hayden, *Op. cit.*, p. 35

often lacks self-reflexivity and containment in its (re)presentations of mass wartime rape. This, in my view, can become problematic for the construction of raped women's identity and their agency.

In this context, the last issue to be problematized in the upcoming analysis is that of agency. Probably the most important issue at stake is the fact that the politicization of the raped female body in a discourse of/on war and justice has almost made invisible the idea of female raped body as lived body. Although Cahill suggests that the public(ized) raped body can engender agency by drawing attention and become a ground to legitimize challenges and changes to existing power relations<sup>76</sup>, I still find this sort of agency as somewhat problematic because the act of becoming a public(ized) raped woman is itself one which can (not necessarily will) be embedded in a web of power relations.

However, if one turns to the lived body as a way of giving agency to the raped woman, I would say that the possibility that this body leaves for resistance could build into a ground for an authentic agency. By authentic I mean in this case, agency which is not reinforce the objectification of the raped woman in a subject-object relation mediated through the awareness raising discourse. Approaching already politicized constructions of rape is, however, a broad and complicated matter which, in the context of this thesis, raises issues of critical engagement with one's own and other's ethical and cultural principles. Ethical issues aside, it is indeed a matter which needs problematization and containment. Thus, insofar as the aims of the thesis are not to provide clear cut and universal answers, I consider that it can, in spite of the limitations, function as an option to approach problems of discursively constructed identities of others in connection to (and inside a paradigm of) rape.

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<sup>76</sup> Cahill, 59 *seqq.*

## CHAPTER 2 – (DE)CONSTRUCTING THE PREMISES OF A PARADIGMATIC RAPE<sup>77</sup>

In the process of increasing public visibility on the mass wartime rapes of women in the Congo wars and their aftermath, the awareness raising discourse also mediates the construction of rape as a paradigm for introducing and criticizing Congolese socio-political practices. In this chapter I am focusing on two main representations of mass wartime rapes in the awareness raising discourse which I interpreted to be the premises of considering rape as paradigm. Firstly, I explore the assumptions and implications of using rape as a trope. Therefore, as a main ground for argumentation, I focus on the relationship between woman and community in relation to the (re)presentations of mass wartime rapes in the awareness raising discourse. Secondly, I will debate over the construction of rape and impunity- which is the most pervasive issue raised in the awareness raising discourse at the intersection of rape and socio-political practices- as cultural<sup>78</sup> characteristics of Congolese society. I will do this by situating them in a historical perspective. The first part aims to challenge problematic (re)presentations of rape from a feminist perspective, as well as their consequences in reference to the process of constructing the Congolese raped woman's identity. The second part of the chapter is organized around the scope of challenging representations of rape and impunity as an permanent realities for the Congolese woman. In both cases I will situate my analysis in a framework of war as an exceptional situation and question the idea of rape as paradigmatic for the Congolese society in general or solely during wartime.

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<sup>77</sup> I don't use the plural in this case because I ultimately want to refer to the idea of rape as a paradigm. This, however, does not mean that the actual rapes which are presented in the awareness raising discourse and on which the thesis is grounded are conflated through this title in a monolithic rape.

<sup>78</sup> The term "cultural" is used in reference to the mystification of rape and impunity based on grounds of reiteration throughout the history of Congo. Moreover, I define it in terms of shared attitudes, values or practices that characterize a group

## 2.1. *The Congo rape(s)*

The phrase “the rape of Congo” was encountered once<sup>79</sup> in the body of texts constituting the awareness raising discourse. Nevertheless, this particular use of rape as trope for illustrating the state of affairs of the country is suggestive of this section’s argument regarding the construction of rape as paradigmatic. Furthermore, it can function as a starting point to proceed to this argumentation. Thus, in my analysis of the awareness raising discourse I am not referring to the actual act of rape as lived experience of gendered sexual violence (although by no means dismissing such an approach and constantly coming back to it hereafter). I am, however, referring to rape as a paradigm for introducing, depicting, analyzing additional issues which are present in the awareness raising discourse in connection it. For example, it can function as a means of criticizing socio-cultural or governing practices which characterize the organization and governing of the Congolese society by departing from the intersection of such practices with the matter of rape. Simultaneously, the usage of rape as trope implies a correlation between the rapes of women in the Congo wars and their aftermath and the rape of Congo as a country. Thus, symbolisms of woman as community and female body as land, which are highly problematic from a feminist perspective, are reproduced. Ultimately, the reproduction of this symbolism and its implications enable an approach to rape as a paradigm in the awareness raising discourse. The text in which I encountered the above quoted phrase was actually presenting the mass wartime rapes of women as “*merely* part of a larger rape, the rape of Congo”<sup>80</sup>. This is the context in which I situate the plural “rapes” used in the title of this section.

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<sup>79</sup> Johann Hari, “Congo’s tragedy: the war the world forgot”, *The Independent*, May 5, 2006, available online at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/congos-tragedy-the-war-the-world-forgot-476929.html>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>80</sup> *Idem*, emphasis mine.

The experience of rape is represented throughout the awareness raising discourse as both woman's and community's experience. One example illustrating this point also suggests that the reproduction of the woman-community relationship symbolism may be grounded in the way the native doctors perceive the occurrence of rapes. In order to support this claim I will quote at length from the testimonies of doctors interviewed by reporters and which are reproduced as such in two newspaper articles:

“It destroys the morale of the men to rape their women. Crippling their women cripples their society.”<sup>81</sup>

“Once they have raped these women in such a public way,” he said, “sometimes maiming them, destroying their sexual organs — and with everybody watching — the women themselves are destroyed, or virtually destroyed. They are traumatized and humiliated on every level, physical and psychological. That's the first consequence. The second consequence is that the whole family and the entire neighbourhood is traumatized by what they have seen. The ordinary sense of family and community is lost after a man has been forced to watch his wife being raped, or parents are forced to watch the rape of their daughters, or children see their mothers raped.”<sup>82</sup>

Insofar as doctors function as a sort of specialized source of information, the reproduction of their accounts legitimizes a functioning of the awareness raising discourse as a mechanism of connecting woman and community by translating the experience of rape from woman to the entire community.

Moreover, two thirds of the texts analyzed refer to the mass wartime rapes of women as having the “function to display, communicate, and produce or maintain dominance”<sup>83</sup>. The rape of women by armed men is thus portrayed as a means of the armed men's (group) imposition and exercise of authority over the raped woman's community<sup>84</sup>. It is a tactical

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<sup>81</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>82</sup> Bob Herbert, “The Invisible War”, *The New York Times*, 21.02.2009, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/21/opinion/21herbert.html>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>83</sup> Claudia Card, “Rape as a weapon of war”, in *Hypatia*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Women and Violence (Autumn, 1996): 5-18, 7

<sup>84</sup> I am appropriating the community to the woman by means of language because in my view there is a relation of dependence which could function in this direction also and which has not been, to my knowledge, clearly and directly discussed in academia. However, it is out of this thesis' reach, but it can function as a starting point for future research.

move of war (“a strategy to disrupt society”)<sup>85</sup>, a means of genocide (“done to exterminate the population”<sup>86</sup>) or as a statement of political authority (“a way to ensure that communities accept the power and authority of that particular armed group”<sup>87</sup>). In this framework the woman is perceived as a mediator through which authority over a particular community is enforced and rendered visible through her rape. The quoted statement of an NGO representative in Congo for a news broadcast was that: “When a woman is raped, it’s not just her that’s raped. It’s the entire community that’s destroyed”<sup>88</sup>. Further on, a United States newspaper’s article covering the mass wartime rapes of women in the Congo wars and their aftermath, written by a United Nations official working in the field of humanitarian affairs and emergency relief, is highly questionable in terms of reflexivity towards representations of women imbued with patriarchal ideas about the woman as embodiment of community or nation. He states that “the ripple effect of the attacks goes *far beyond* (emphasis mine) the individual victim, destroying family and community bonds” and that “there can be no dignified, peaceful future for Congolese society as long as its mothers, grandmothers, sisters and daughters are subject to the most dehumanizing of crimes”<sup>89</sup>. It is not only that the rape victim’s experience is rendered somewhat minuscule or insignificant in comparison to the collective’s experience of that rape and its consequences for the community, but also that the dignity of a country lies within the treatment that the country’s women receive. Furthermore,

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<sup>85</sup> Rod Nordland, “More Vicious Than Rape”, *Newsweek Web Exclusive*, November 13, 2006, available at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/44653>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>86</sup>Stephanie Nolen, “<Not Women Anymore...>”, *Ms. Magazine*, spring 2005.; Rod Nordland, “More Vicious Than Rape”, *Newsweek Web Exclusive*, November 13, 2006, available at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/44653>, last accessed at 06.06.2009 and Rod Nordland, “More Vicious Than Rape”, *Newsweek Web Exclusive*, November 13, 2006, available at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/44653>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>87</sup>Anderson Cooper, “War Against Women”, *CBS News*, August 17, 2008, available online at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/01/11/60minutes/main3701249.shtml>, last accessed 06.06.2009.

<sup>88</sup> *Idem*

<sup>89</sup> John Holmes, “Congo’s rape war”, *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 2007, available at [http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-holmes11oct11\\_0,6685881.story](http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-holmes11oct11_0,6685881.story), last accessed 06.06.2009.

the same author defines rape as “the most dehumanizing of crimes”, rendering every raped woman (in the Congo wars and their aftermath) as a non-human. The title of an article in a women’s magazine in the United States comes to support this idea. It (the title) is made up of a quote taken from a raped woman’s testimony and states: “Not women anymore...”<sup>90</sup>. What is the purpose to have (re)presentations of non-women in a women’s magazine I, then, ask? Does “the Western” interpretive community of that magazine need an abjected *other* as a means to define humanity, not-rapeedness, or, ultimately, womanhood<sup>91</sup>? In this case, is woman defined by her non-rapeedness? Furthermore, insofar as the raped woman is representative of a country, of a raped Congo, one can legitimately ask whether the construction of an inhumanly rape(d) Congo is serving the self-construction of a humanly non-rapeed-West? These are questions which will be addressed throughout the thesis.

In the introduction to the thesis, the complex character of the armed conflicts in Congo was presented. In light of that, it is difficult to argue that rapes occurred inside a clearly defined public friend-public enemy framework<sup>92</sup>, politicizing rape as a mechanism of constructing the friends and the enemies. The (re)presentations of mass wartime rape which will be analyzed further show that understanding rape in the Congo wars and their aftermath is a task as difficult as that of understanding the armed conflicts themselves.

As, described earlier, the (re)presentations of mass wartime rape in the awareness raising discourse is done primarily in terms of considering the rape of women as a signifier of

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<sup>90</sup> Stephanie Nolen, “<Not Women Anymore...>”, *Ms. Magazine*, Spring 2005, available online at <http://www.msmagazine.com/spring2005/congo.asp>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>91</sup> I have made this argument based on the idea of abjection as failure to exclude. Georges Bataille defines abjection as “the inability to assume with sufficient strength the imperative act of excluding object things (and that act establishes the foundations of collective existence)”. See Georges Bataille in Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 56.

<sup>92</sup> Miller addresses the politicization of wartime rape in regards to the case of Bosnia- Herzegovina in such a framework, drawing on Carl Schmitt’s argument that the political is firstly defined as that which decides on the distinction between public friend and public enemy. See Ruth A. Miller, *The Limits of Bodily Integrity* (Boston, Ashgate: 2007), 159-164.

territorial occupation<sup>93</sup>. In this sense the rapes of women can be interpreted as to be “carving political programmes on women’s bodies”<sup>94</sup>. Moreover, two newspaper articles specify the fact that rape can be *read into* in order to produce information regarding what armed group is controlling a certain territory, where the raped woman reports to have been raped. The criterion is the actual type of rape. This classification is done by doctors whom have become familiar with the specificities of wounds suffered by women depending on the armed group to which the rapist belongs to<sup>95</sup>. Rape wounds, then, are represented as a trademark of territorial occupation. In the context of the Congo wars such a way of politicizing rape can have an important meaning. It can translate into a map of territorial control based on the criterion of armed forces. In a war where mapping the control areas of such a variety of armed groups is almost impossible, rape is therefore represented as a possible mechanism of carrying out such a task. Nevertheless, the idea of keeping track of armed groups’ occupation of Congolese land by “reading into” women’s rape wounds reinforces the objectification of woman. Furthermore, it can be interpreted as an instrumentalisation of the female body which is rendered as a material means of communicating between those inscribing the wounds (armed men) and those reading them (male doctors).

In continuing with the correlation between the female body and the country’s land, I will focus now on descriptions of women’s rapes and the exploitation of the country’s resources. During my research I found that the terminology used to perform such illustrations is similar. Ironically enough, the awareness raising subjects criticize constantly the idea of

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<sup>93</sup> See Robert M. Hayden (2000), Veena Das (1995), Claudia Card (1996), Joshua S. Goldstein (2001), Ann J. Cahill (2000).

<sup>94</sup> Veena Das, “National Honour and Practical Kinship: Unwanted Women and Children” in Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp, (eds.), *Conceiving the New World Order* (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1995), 212.

<sup>95</sup> Stephanie Nolen, “<Not Women Anymore...>”, *Ms. Magazine*, spring 2005.; Rod Nordland, “More Vicious Than Rape”, *Newsweek Web Exclusive*, November 13, 2006, available at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/44653>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

women as property (they are the property of husbands, then they the property of rapists). However, to begin with the framework of discussing the rapes focuses on the wars in Congo and the majority of texts treat this issue in connection to control over resources. Representations of rape in the awareness raising discourse seem to fit Cynthia Enloe's lootpillageandrape<sup>96</sup> category:

What the awareness raising discourse points out in a critical manner is that woman is situated in a discourse of value (considered "a scant value"<sup>97</sup>), rendered as equal to a natural resource. Thus, she can be exploited by being forced into slavery, discarded because she is no longer physically fit, excluded because she is infected, etc. Ironically enough, to illustrate this connection I care to refer the title of one of the most pervasive awareness raising and anti-rape campaign having as subject the mass wartime rapes of women in Congo: "Stop Raping Our *Greatest Resource*, Power To The Women And Girls Of The Democratic Republic Of Congo"<sup>98</sup> (emphasis mine).

Aside from the matter of objectification of the woman subsequent to her being raped, I want to emphasize the fact that it seems the woman is rendered as *something* or *somebody* completely replaceable, a sort of regenerating resource that fits in a category, a non-human<sup>99</sup>. Ultimately the woman is rendered existent/ human in this framework solely as a wife: "women are raped because they are accused of being the wives of a certain group and raped

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<sup>96</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers- the international politics of militarizing women's lives* (Los Angeles, University of California Press: 2000), 138.

<sup>97</sup> Maryam Elahi, "War on Congo's women", *The Guardian*, December 12, 2007, available online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/dec/25/waroncongswomen>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.stoprapeindrc.org/>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>99</sup> I have already introduced idea of raped woman as non-human by employing the psychoanalytical category of the abject in relation to the raped woman.

again and again as a new militia takes over the area”<sup>100</sup>. At this point the category of “woman” collapses into the category of “wife”. Whilst this is presented as a feature of the exceptional situation of the Congo wars, thus as an African problem, it is actually one of the most important feminist critiques of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century’s Western bourgeois family’s assumptions: woman as wife becomes property.

However, the fact that she is appropriated as a wife by any other group winning fights in a particular area disrupts an authentic connection between her and the community she is supposed to represent by being situated in a framework of marriage. This, of course, points towards a society which indeed objectifies women to a great extent, even up to the point of legitimizing rapes based on artificially created bonds between a woman and a community.

In criticizing this society, texts in the awareness raising discourse point out the following: “there is such stigma associated with rape in Congo- where female virginity is prized and the husband of a rape survivor is considered shamed- that rape survivors are routinely shunned by husbands, parents and communities”<sup>101</sup>. In light of the above argumentation on the collapse of the category of woman into the category of wife, I want to argue that being raped equals social death for a woman insofar as her existence is restricted to the framework of her role in the family. The long term consequences of rape include: unwanted pregnancy, colostomy bags, HIV infection. This can be translated in a woman caring the child of another man, being physically unfit for work or bearing children again or becoming a source of HIV infection for her husband or children. She is, thus, not woman anymore. In this context, rendering the doctor as the only person who can give back her

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<sup>100</sup> Jan Goodwin, “Silence=Rape”, *The Nation*, February 19, 2004, available online at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040308/goodwin>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>101</sup> Stephanie Nolen, “<Not Women Anymore...>”, *Ms. Magazine*, spring 2005.; Rod Nordland, “More Vicious Than Rape”, *Newsweek Web Exclusive*, November 13, 2006, available at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/44653>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

womaness, practically presents him as having the power to make live<sup>102</sup>, in Agamben's terms. In this context, does the doctor become the mediator of the process through which women begin transcending the consequences of rape?

The raped woman's representation stands, at all times, in connection with (and as a symbol of) a raped community. One can argue that the patriarchal metaphor of woman as symbol of the community, imbued with unequal gendered power relations, permeates the mass production of knowledge/ meaning about socio-cultural principles of organizing the Congolese society. This is done through the awareness discourse on the mass rapes of women occurring in the Congo wars and their aftermath. Whether or not this contradicts the stated aim of the awareness raising texts to create a public space for raped women where they can voice their rapes and not be excluded, a space different from the criticized patriarchal Congolese society, is open for debate.

Thus, in this section I have explored the implications of using rape as a trope in a framework of war for the (re)presentations of the (raped) (Congolese) woman in the (Western) awareness raising discourse. My aim was to point towards the problematic implications of such representations which situate the raped Congolese woman at an intersection of unequal power relations in which she is always situated on an inferior position. Drawing on this I will focus in the following part of this chapter on (re)presentations in the awareness raising discourse regarding impunity and rape as Congolese cultural constructions which are positioned as grounds for the existence of the paradigmatic mass rapes of women during the Congo wars and their aftermath in the first instance.

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<sup>102</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

## ***2.2. Always already raped with impunity?***

In the process of publicizing the occurrence of mass rapes during the Congo wars and their aftermath, one pervasive feature of all texts in the awareness raising discourse is the fact of situating women always in positions of being raped or rapable. Although this aspect will be analyzed extensively in the last section of the thesis entitled “(Imagined?) victim and villain”, I want to explore at this point the socio-political assumptions (as they are presented or implied in the awareness raising discourse) which ground such an arbitrary act of positioning the Congolese women in an always already (rape) victim category. In order to do this I will situate rape and the socio-political practice of the Congolese society which is most criticized in the awareness raising discourse in connection to rape, namely impunity, in a historical perspective.

Criticism towards issues of socio-political practices in the Congolese society in connection to the mass rapes of women focuses primarily on the idea of a “culture of impunity”<sup>103</sup> in which the government representatives are presented as participants, thus pointing towards issues of governmentality. One example could be the fact that government soldiers are involved in the raping of women and the government “has taken no significant effort to bring those responsible to justice”<sup>104</sup>. As a secondary issue, the awareness raising discourse targets the medical system of the state. Although medical aid and issues connected to it occupy far more space in the economy of the analyzed texts in comparison to juridical issues, one particular article presents the two in a framework of priorities, motivated through the idea that prevention is ultimately more important than reparation:

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<sup>103</sup> Jan Goodwin, “Silence=Rape”, *The Nation*, February 19, 2004, available online at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040308/goodwin>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>104</sup> Maryam Elahi, “War on Congo’s women”, *The Guardian*, December 12, 2007, available online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/dec/25/waroncongoswomen>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

“Although the hospital can always use more money, the real need is for a political response to the violence. Barring that, Dr. Mukwege would at least like to get real protection for the women once they leave the hospital. <I patch them up and send them back home,> he says, <but there is no guarantee they will not be raped again>.”<sup>105</sup>

Coming back to the matter of impunity, in my view, suggesting or stating a claim of impunity as cultural is an act which should be grounded in a historical contextualization of Congo as a state and as a society in regards to this issue. Insofar as the problem of impunity is brought into discussion in connection to the mass wartime rapes of women in the Congo wars and their aftermath, contextualizing gendered sexual violence in Congo is also important in order to legitimize or dismiss claims of gendered sexual violence as cultural (i.e. a rape culture?).

The main feature of the awareness raising discourse which enables and requires a historical perspective on the intersection of rape and impunity is the rape *of* Congo, thus referring to rape as trope rather than the actual act of gendered sexual violence. The colonial rule of Belgium’s King Leopold<sup>106</sup> is the major point of reference for supporting ideas of continuity in terms of genocide or high numbers of civilian deaths caused by use of extreme violence in order to impose political authority. The discourse on the exploitation of resources which were given value in a Western society of consumption at the expense of civilian deaths for which nobody was held accountable is the one making the link between two situations occurring one century apart. I will quote here, in order to illustrate this point, one paragraph

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<sup>105</sup> Eve Ensler, “Women Left for Dead- and the Man Who’s Saving Them”, *Glamour Magazine*, August 1, 2007, available at <http://www.glamour.com/magazine/2007/08/rape-in-the-congo>, last accessed 06.06.2009, emphasis mine.

<sup>106</sup> For a thorough analysis of Belgium’s King Leopold rule in Congo in a framework of debate focused on issues of colonialism, international relations and humanitarianism see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s ghost*, (Mariner Books, 1999).

from a newspaper article whose author received the “Amnesty International Newspaper Journalist of the Year”<sup>107</sup> award for his reporting on the present situation in Congo:

“Belgians established the nation-state in the Congo, and they designed it to be a vampire-state. The only change over the decades has been the resource snatched for Western consumption- rubber under Belgians, diamonds under Mobutu, coltan and cassiterite today.”<sup>108</sup>

I want to underline the fact that the discourse on resources and exploitation has been, in my opinion, used also in some of the texts which are part of the awareness raising discourse in regards to women’s status in the Congolese society. Although I agree that an account of women’s status in the society is necessary, especially from a historical perspective, and I find it problematic that the mass mediatisation of the rapes does not touch upon this matter only scarcely, I am critical of it when done in an economical framework and I will analyze the implications of this type of discourse in the section entitled “(Imagined?) victim and villain” in the final part of the thesis.

The question arising at this point regards not only similarities between Congo’s state of affairs at the two ends of the twentieth century, but also the matter of a historical perspective in relation to issues of rape and impunity. The awareness raising discourse lacks this sort of analysis or presentation. In order to proceed to such an analysis as a means to dismiss or support claims of cultural impunity and cultural rape in the Congo, I will focus now on my own experience as a member of the awareness raising discourse’s interpretive community<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>107</sup> I am including this information here in order to point the fact that international organizations focused on human rights and humanitarian issues intersect in their work with mass media knowledge producers on the issue of Congo (this is solely an example) due to the fact that their aim is similar to some extent, namely awareness raising.

<sup>108</sup> Johann Hari, “Congo’s tragedy: the war the world forgot”, *The Independent*, May 5, 2006, available online at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/congos-tragedy-the-war-the-world-forgot-476929.html>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>109</sup> See the first section of the thesis for a definition of an interpretive community and its purpose in the theoretical and methodological framework of the awareness raising discourse’s analysis.

During the research it became more and more obvious to me that the contextualization of *the rapes of women in Congo* in the awareness raising discourse on the mass wartime rapes lacks the details, analysis and reflexivity of *the rape of Congo*, i.e. the contextualization of the Congo wars and their aftermath in a body of both mass media and academic texts using a framework of international relations from a historical perspective. Although my focus is strictly the issues of mass wartime rapes' (re)presentations in what I previously defined as the awareness raising discourse, I believe that at least some people whom interacted with the texts which are part of this discursive construction have done their own research in an attempt to better understand the situation which was presented to them in a discourse demanding their (re)action. "Sponsor a woman *today*" or "Donate *now*"<sup>110</sup> are two of the features of humanitarian campaigns oriented towards the raped women in Congo. After all, my perspective on awareness raising is that it has a general aim of triggering the reader's personal interaction with the matter presented.

Therefore, an aspect of awareness raising discourse on mass rapes in the Congo wars and their aftermath which I consider to be poorly presented, but highly important for debating ideas (present in the awareness raising discourse as rather statements than an argumentations) of impunity and rape as cultural constructions, is a historical perspective on both issues of impunity and gendered sexual violence in Congo. In order to support this argument I will firstly refer to Belgium's King Leopold's rule of Congo at the turn of the last century and secondly to the celebration of Congolese independence in 1960.

Although there are references to the Leopoldian rule of Congo in the awareness raising discourse on mass wartime rapes, I have mentioned before that their presence is made solely by means of employing rape as a trope. The present economical, social and political

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<sup>110</sup> "Run for Congo Women", <http://www.runforcongowomen.org/>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

context is linked to the Leopoldian rule which is referred to as a historical precedent for nowadays crisis' in Congo in a discourse on civilian death and natural resources. One article in a US women's magazine introduces this link as follows:

“you have to go back further than 1996 to understand what is going on in the Congo today. This country has been tortured for more than 120 years, beginning with King Leopold of Belgium [...]”<sup>111</sup>.

Furthermore, the awareness raising discourse is imbued with accounts describing a contemporary state of impunity. Such claims are connected to the prosecution of rapists: “in this culture of impunity, people know they can get away with anything. Every armed group is equally culpable”<sup>112</sup>. The emphasis falls not only on the actual state of impunity, but also on the fact that “people know” this is the principle regarding accountability in the Congo. The Congo as a country is furthermore depicted through “widespread indifference, climate of impunity, no functional justice system to speak of”<sup>113</sup> in relation to the mass rapes of women. The (lack of) response is situated generally in a discourse of will to go through with ending impunity in regards to the rapes:

“people denounce the rapes but do nothing to bring the rebels to justice”<sup>114</sup>.

“Congo's government has taken no significant effort to bring those responsible to justice, new laws have paid lip service to sexual violence, but no one has been prosecuted”<sup>115</sup>.

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<sup>111</sup> Eve Ensler, “Women Left for Dead- and the Man Who's Saving Them”, *Glamour Magazine*, August 1, 2007, available at <http://www.glamour.com/magazine/2007/08/rape-in-the-congo>, last accessed 06.06.2009, emphasis mine.

<sup>112</sup> Jan Goodwin, “Silence=Rape”, *The Nation*, February 19, 2004, available online at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040308/goodwin>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>113</sup> John Holmes, “Congo's rape war”, *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 2007, available at <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-holmes11oct11,0,6685881.story>, last accessed 06.06.2009.

<sup>114</sup> Jan Goodwin, “Silence=Rape”, *The Nation*, February 19, 2004, available online at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040308/goodwin>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>115</sup> Maryam Elahi, “War on Congo's women”, *The Guardian*, December 12, 2007, available online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/dec/25/waroncongowsomen>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

However, hinting at a historical continuity is not always solely a legitimizing factor for cultural constructions. I argue that through claims of a “*tradition* of epically bad government”<sup>116</sup> the awareness raising discourse functions as a mechanism of orienting accusations towards abstract features of Congo in searching for a reason to explain impunity in regards to the mass wartimes rapes. Drawing on this argument I want to challenge the idea of cultural impunity in the Congo because it can open a space for the interpretive community of the awareness raising texts to engage in a process of categorising societies based on abstract universalizing and essentializing processes. Thus, instead of focusing on individual perpetrators or specific issues of governmentality, the public is presented not only with a collective villain which embodies every armed man in Congo, but with an abstract entity which conflates socio-political practices and historical context. Bringing tradition into the debate may open ways for discussing cultural constructions, but I believe that in this case it also opens the debate in terms of abstract constructions of *them* and *us*.

Aside from reinforcing general ideas regarding African bad government, one consequence engendered by looking at rape and impunity as mechanisms of positing a distance between *us* and *them* is the fact that in describing a Congolese culture of impunity regarding gendered sexual violence, the awareness raising discourse subtly generates questions of African sexuality from a North American and Western European perspective. This aspect situates my analysis at this point in the debate regarding rape as an act of violence or rape as a sexual act<sup>117</sup>. One could then interpret the (re)presentations of mass wartime rapes

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<sup>116</sup> John Holmes, “Congo’s rape war”, *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 2007, available at <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-holmes11oct11,0,6685881.story>, last accessed 06.06.2009.

<sup>117</sup> The account of this debate’s origins in terms of literature is given by Craig T. Palmer in the introductory part of the essay “Twelve Reasons Why Rape Is Not Sexually Motivated: A Skeptical Examination”. He argues that until the early 1970’s, most researchers of rape, while acknowledging that many motivations could be involved in any given rape, assumed that sex was a predominant motive (Amir, 1971; Gebhard et al., 1965; LeVine, 1959; Schultz, 1965; Schiff, 1971). This viewpoint was “significantly altered by the feminist movement” (Sanders, 1980, p. 22). In fact, revealing rape “to be a political act that indicated nothing about male sexuality” (Symons, 1979, p. 104) became a “focal point of feminist theory” (Sanders, 1980, p. 22). See Craig T. Palmer, “Twelve

of women in the awareness raising discourse as a problematic issue of Congolese sexuality performed inside a framework of war and unequal gendered power relations. Subsequently, it can engender the reproduction of borders separating the Congo in terms of problematic sexual behavior.

In the context of historicizing the Congo, a rather useful connection can be made between such phrases as the “murderous madness” of sexual violence in conflict<sup>118</sup>, used in an international organization’s report in reference to the Congo wars, and portrayals of African sexuality in the colonial era. In reference to the portrayals of African sexuality from a historical perspective I want to bring into discussion Suzette Heald’s idea that “given the radical and disjunctive nature of the transformational processes in both colonial and post-colonial Africa, and the very rapidity with which many of the traditional sexual regulations and norms broke down in well attested cases following early colonial contact, it is to change and not to continuity that we should be looking”<sup>119</sup> when discussing this matter. However, to extrapolate this argument, throughout my research I constantly found descriptions which led me to think of continuity rather than change in the representations of problematic African sexuality from a Western perspective. One particular example is the fact that the awareness raising discourse refers to wartime rape as “norm”<sup>120</sup>, as “almost a cultural phenomenon”<sup>121</sup> or

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Reasons Why Rape Is Not Sexually Motivated: A Skeptical Examination”, in *The Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Nov., 1988): 512-530, 517.

<sup>118</sup> International Alert Press Release, Panel on The Causes and Consequences of Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (New York, March 2004) apud ‘Broken Bodies, Broken Dreams: violence against women exposed’, 2005, p. 181, IRIN, humanitarian news and analysis, a project of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

<sup>119</sup> Suzette Heald, “The Power of Sex: Some Reflections on the Caldwells' 'African Sexuality' Thesis”, in *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (1995): 489- 505, 502.

<sup>120</sup> Anderson Cooper, “War Against Women”, *CBS News*, August 17, 2008, available online at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/01/11/60minutes/main3701249.shtml>, last accessed 06.06.2009.

<sup>121</sup> Stephanie McCrummen, “Prevalence of Rape in E. Congo Described as Worst in the World”, *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2007, available online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/08/AR2007090801194.html>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

as a “habit” while in an analysis of African sexuality performed for academic publication it is claimed that in Africa sex is “a worldly activity like work or eating and drinking”<sup>122</sup>. Moreover, just as the mass media in the United States and United Kingdom makes references *today* to “unspeakable acts” of gendered sexual violence to which the Congolese women are submitted during the war<sup>123</sup>, Adam Hochschild paraphrases European explorers of Western Africa who, in the *late 19<sup>th</sup> century* “told riveted audiences how the great hairy beasts (gorillas) abducted women to their jungle lairs for purposes too *vile* to be spoken of”<sup>124</sup> (emphasis mine). African representations of sexuality seem to be always too outrageous for the Western public.

This framework is furthermore complicated by the European colonizer’s vile performances of heterosexuality in the African colony of Congo. Accounts of European colonizers stealing and treating African school girls “in despicable ways”<sup>125</sup> or extreme violence oriented towards colonized women are described by 19<sup>th</sup> century Western human rights activists focused on the genocide in the Congolese colony of Belgium’s King Leopold. “*Hunted women* [...] flying panic stricken to the bush”<sup>126</sup> is a phrase which belongs to the text written by Hochschild, but it may as well be a part of a text from the awareness raising discourse.

Another parallel can be drawn between the confession of a woman being forced to work at brick-making during King Leopold’s rule of Congo and who testified to being

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<sup>122</sup> Caldwell et al., (1989: 203) in Heald, 495.

<sup>123</sup> Maryam Elahi, “War on Congo’s women”, *The Guardian*, December 12, 2007, available online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/dec/25/waroncongoswomen>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>124</sup> Hochschild, 27.

<sup>125</sup> Hochschild, 126.

<sup>126</sup> Hochschild, 205.

punished twice by sentries “putting clay in my vagina”<sup>127</sup> and the testimony of a raped woman in the Congo wars: “he went for his rifle, pressed it on the outside of my vagina and shot his entire cartridge into me”<sup>128</sup>. The degree of similarities between the sexual violence against Congolese women at two different moments, one century apart, by armed men, is in my opinion a possible illustration of continuity in the Congolese society in terms of sexual violence against women by armed men. However, it can also be coincidence.

As a means of supporting claims of continuity and, implicitly, of rape as cultural in Congo I will refer to Susan Brownmiller’s analysis of mass media (re)presentations of rapes of white Belgian women by black Congolese soldiers celebrating the independence from Belgium in 1960 and their new president, Patrice Lumumba<sup>129</sup>. Although she is acknowledging the scattered accounts of rapes by reporters who “were hardly writing for major outlets”<sup>130</sup>, she however makes a point out of the idea that “there were rapes in Congo” and furthermore, that “the Congolese during those brief, unhappy days in July 1960, were doing no more than the colonialists had been doing to black women for a century”<sup>131</sup>. She emphasizes a particular reporter which had observed with equal indignation the rapes of both black women (in intertribal fighting) and white women (while celebrating independence) by armed men engaged in processes connected to conflict situations. Thus, Brownmiller supports her theorization of rape occurrence based on claims of a “male ideology of rape” in general

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<sup>127</sup> Hochschild, 254.

<sup>128</sup> Eve Ensler, “Women Left for Dead- and the Man Who’s Saving Them”, *Glamour Magazine*, August 1. 2007, available at <http://www.glamour.com/magazine/2007/08/rape-in-the-congo>, last accessed 06.06.2009, emphasis mine.

<sup>129</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against our will: Men, women, and rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 132. She focuses on the politicization of rapes in the mass media in the following framework: pro Patrice Lumumba-against Patrice Lumumba/ ignore rapes- report rapes.

<sup>130</sup> Brownmiller, 138.

<sup>131</sup> Brownmiller, 137.

and, more particularly, that “rape flourishes in warfare”<sup>132</sup> and “war provides men with a tacit license to rape”<sup>133</sup>. Her mass media analysis adds to my attempt of historicizing of sexual violence against women in Congo. In this context, I want to argue that it becomes legitimized to a certain extent to argue for the existence of grounds based on which the Congo can be labeled as a society where rape accompanies situations of armed conflict (colonization, independence, civil war) as a means of illustrating political authority.

What Brownmiller’s perspective on rape does not take into consideration is social, economical, cultural and political relativism of societies and, in my opinion, reinforces ideas of patriarchy, rather than patriarchies, which is problematic in the context of post-colonialism(s) and third wave feminism(s). Moving away from the idea of a universal male nature of rape grounded on biological assumptions, but keeping in mind a categorization of Congo as an exceptional rape capital of the world, I will refer to Peggy Reeves Sanday’s concept of rape-prone society<sup>134</sup>. She focuses on rape, not as an act that “keeps all women in a constant state of intimidation” but rather as “an act that illuminates a larger social scenario”<sup>135</sup>. Sanday argues that “rape is an enactment not of human nature, but of socio-cultural forces” and that the “prevalence of rape should be associated with the expressions of these forces”<sup>136</sup>. Furthermore, she also presents a causal relation between war and rape: “when

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<sup>132</sup> Brownmiller, 32.

<sup>133</sup> Brownmiller, 33.

<sup>134</sup> Peggy Reeves Sanday, “The Socio-cultural Context of Rape: A Cross-cultural Study”, in Michael S. Kimmel with Amy Aronson (eds.), *The Gendered Society Reader* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); 55- 72.

<sup>135</sup> Brownmiller *apud* Sanday, in Kimmel and Aronson, 56.

<sup>136</sup> Sanday, in Kimmel and Aronson, 68.

warfare is reported as being frequent or endemic (as opposed to absent or occasional) rape is more likely to be present”<sup>137</sup>.

In my view, Sanday’s conceptualization of rape occurrence allows for an argumentation on categorizing the (re)presentation of the Congolese society in the awareness raising discourse as a rape prone society. I will support this claim by providing a description of the Congo by using information from the awareness raising discourse. Thus, the prevalence and intensity of sexual violence in Congo are described as “almost unimaginable”<sup>138</sup> with often cases in which “all the women in the village were raped”<sup>139</sup>. Moreover, rape has become “habit”<sup>140</sup>. Further on, as mentioned before, the rapes are presented as a means of controlling populations or attacking enemy groups by raping *their* women. The idea of rape as a direct consequence of war is present in most of the (re)presentations of mass wartime rapes in the Congo wars and their aftermath. One example of such an approach is: “Poverty, chaos, disease and war. These are constants of eastern Congo. Many people believe that the rape problem will not be solved until the area tastes peace.”<sup>141</sup>

The representation of mass wartime rapes as a consequence of the war relies on a perspective on rape as being triggered by a specific, exceptional situation, supporting thus the aforementioned idea of a Congolese war culture of rape. Furthermore, impunity as well, is

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<sup>137</sup> Sanday, in Kimmel and Aronson, 70.

<sup>138</sup> Stephanie McCrummen, “Prevalence of Rape in E. Congo Described as Worst in the World”, *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2007, available online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/08/AR2007090801194.html>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>139</sup> Chris McGreal, “Hundreds of thousands of women raped for being on the wrong side”, *The Guardian*, November 12, 2007, available online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/nov/12/congo.international>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>140</sup> Rod Nordland, “More Vicious Than Rape”, *Newsweek Web Exclusive*, November 13, 2006, available at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/44653>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>141</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “Rape Victims’ Words Help Jolt Congo Into Change”, *The New York Times*, October 17, 2008, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/18/world/africa/18congo.html>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

presented in the awareness raising discourse as a constant characteristic of Congo, but which is more visible in a state of armed conflict: “having a gun means you can act with impunity”<sup>142</sup>. Thus, war is actually the trigger for impunity and rape to become pathological.

In this exceptional situation of war the woman is rendered as *homo sacer*<sup>143</sup>, therefore women which may be killed without impunity. Insofar as earlier in the thesis I discuss the (re)presentations of rape which render the woman as socially dead because she is rejected by the family and the community and in light of the argument concerning impunity as a characteristic of the exceptional state of war in Congo, in this case *homo sacer* defines a life which may be raped without impunity. In the next chapter I address the identity of the Congolese wartime raped woman as “bare life”<sup>144</sup> and develop further on the politics of mourning in relation to the awareness raising discourse insofar as it is directly connected to the concept of *homo sacer*. *Homo sacer* may be a person which is killed and not mourned publicly, therefore valueless.

What is important to emphasize, however, is not the fact that the Congo which is presented in the awareness raising discourse engenders representations which render this country as ‘fit’ to be categorized as a rape prone society characterized by impunity, even if only in times of war, but the fact that the discourse allows and engenders such a categorization in the first place. The category itself comes to signify the position of Congolese women in a situation of war as always already raped with impunity based on statements, rather than arguments, regarding Congolese socio-cultural practices. Thus, the

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<sup>142</sup> Jackie Martens, “Congo rape victims seek solace”, *BBC News*, January 24, 2004, available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3426273.stm>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>143</sup> For an exploration of the concept of *homo sacer* see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>144</sup> For Giorgio Agamben *bare life* represents life which is at risk to be killed in a state of exception. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

(re)presentations of rape in the awareness raising discourse can be summed up in what Claudia Card calls “the ubiquitous threat of rape in war”<sup>145</sup>. This sort of (re)presentations become problematic, in my opinion, from a feminist perspective at the point where such a pre-existent status of women is assumed, thus leaving no space for resistance. Furthermore, what allows for an *identification of Congo* as an (exceptional) rape prone society (as opposite to a rape free society<sup>146</sup> which is not Congo?) based on (re)presentations from the awareness raising discourse which are oriented towards a Western interpretive community?

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<sup>145</sup> Claudia Card, “Rape as a weapon of war”, in *Hypatia*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Women and Violence (Autumn, 1996): 5-18, 7.

<sup>146</sup> Peggy Reeves Sanday, “The Socio-cultural Context of Rape: A Cross-cultural Study”, in Michael S. Kimmel with Amy Aronson (eds.), *The Gendered Society Reader* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 55-72. The definition of a rape prone society in Sanday’s study is “a society in which the incidence of rape is high, rape is a ceremonial act, or rape is an act by which men punish or threaten women”.

## CHAPTER 3 – IMAGINED IDENTITIES

The argumentative thread of this chapter connects Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" with Edward Said's concept of "imagined geographies" in order to define identity constructions engendered by (re)presentations of the mass wartime rapes in the awareness raising discourse. The context in which I set up the argumentation is the functioning of this discourse as a mediator of the mass rapes of women during the Congo wars and their aftermath for the imaginary of a Western interpreting community. Thus, firstly I will explore the construction of Congo's identity as a country, finding that inside a rape paradigm<sup>147</sup>, this identity is that of imagined rape geography. Secondly, I will focus on the female and male identities constructed by (re)presentations of mass wartime rape in the awareness raising discourse. In regards to them I find that women and men are always already positioned as victims, respectively villains. Moreover, by focusing on arbitrariness as an aspect of imagining geographies which is emphasized by Said, I will criticize the unequal power relations between the (Western) imagined interpretive community of the awareness raising discourse as subjects and the (Congolese) imagined identity constructions of rape geography, victims and villains as objects of the awareness raising discourse.

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<sup>147</sup> I have defined rape as a paradigm in the case of the awareness raising discourse as the deployment of rape through which socio-political practices can be understood and identities can be constructed.

### 3.1. *The imagined rape(d) geography*

This part of the thesis is organized around defining the concept of “imagined rape geography” by referring to the (re)presentations of mass wartime rapes of women during the Congo wars and their aftermath in the awareness raising discourse. The idea of an imagined raped geography, which is also referred to in the title, is a means of linking this argumentation to the first section of the thesis which was focused on implications of the usage of rape as trope for referring to the historical exploitation of Congo’s resources. I will introduce Edward Said’s concept of (arbitrarily) “imagined geographies” in the analysis of mass wartime rapes’ (re)presentations in order to explore the identity of Congo as it may be produced for/ in the imaginary of “the West”. To some extent, the underlying idea of this chapter is the geopolitical<sup>148</sup> aspect of the deployment of rape.

A way of understanding the awareness raising discourse is as having the function of a mechanism which, by means of a paradigmatic rape<sup>149</sup>, mediates representations of Congo for the imaginary of “the West”. I will draw on this definition and on the link between geography and communication, namely that “all spaces are produced *through representation*, which occurs by means of *communication*”<sup>150</sup>, in order to introduce the idea of producing the Congo as space through representations of mass wartime rape. Moreover, I will reflect upon the problematic power relations and implications regarding the fact that the awareness raising discourse enables a (Western) imagined interpretive community to perform an *identification*

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<sup>148</sup> By geopolitics I refer here to the more broad understanding of relations between political power and geographic space.

<sup>149</sup> See the previous chapter entitled “(De)constructing the premises of a paradigmatic rape”.

<sup>150</sup> André Jansson & Jesper Falkheimer, “Towards a Geography of Communication”, in André Jansson & Jesper Falkheimer (eds.), *Geographies of Communication. The Spatial Turn in Media Studies* (Göteborg: Nordicom, 2006), 9.

of a (Congolese) imagined geography based on representations of it mediated through (re)presentations of mass wartime rapes.

Benedict Anderson argues that print capitalism had made a great contribution to the production of nations as “imagined communities” because it “made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways”<sup>151</sup>. Applying this framework to the awareness raising discourse helps me to claim that this function of print capitalism is complemented, or even replaced, today by online availability of information, the ritual of connecting to those receiving the same information as you by reading the same newspaper or the same website baring many similarities between them. Drawing on this, I want to argue that the imagined interpretive community of people whom have become aware about the mass rapes occurring in the Congo wars and their aftermath is a group of people connected by their sharing a certain piece of knowledge about events which have occurred and are still occurring in an “unfamiliar space”<sup>152</sup> to which they do not have direct access otherwise than through the awareness raising discourse. The actual existence of this space may be transmitted to them by means of the awareness raising discourse on mass wartime rapes. Thus the deployment of rape indirectly renders existent the space where rape occurs, namely Congo. In this context the awareness raising discourse mediates a process of accessing the unfamiliar.

In trying to define the complexity of the armed conflicts in Congo, explain the occurrence of mass rapes as a characteristic of these conflicts and depict the rapes and the raped women, the awareness raising discourse constantly employs the idea of exceptionality and difference:

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<sup>151</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections On The Origin And Spread Of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

<sup>152</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 54.

“The sexual violence in Congo is the worst in the world.”<sup>153</sup>

“In conversation with Amnesty International delegates, experienced United Nations delegates and international humanitarian non-governmental organizations staff were unanimous that they had never *come across as many victims of rape in a conflict situation* as they had in the Democratic Republic of Congo.”<sup>154</sup>

“<I think what's different in Congo is the scale and the systematic nature of it, indeed, as well, the brutality.> she (senior Congo researcher at Human Rights Watch) explains.”<sup>155</sup>

Difference, aside from aiming to attract increased attention, allows for hyperbolization and exceptionalization. In the case of the awareness raising discourse on mass rapes in the Congo wars and their aftermath this is followed by stigmatization. For example, Provinces in Congo are rendered “the rape capital of the world”<sup>156</sup> or the country itself is even referred to as “hell”<sup>157</sup>. By collapsing these processes in a framework for analyzing (re)presentations of mass wartime rapes I will argue that a feature of the awareness raising discourse is the pathologization of both mass wartime rapes in the Congo wars and their aftermath and of Congo itself. Exploring this aspect of the awareness raising discourse functions as an argument to advance the process of defining an imagined rape geography.

I will, therefore, proceed to the analysis of what I perceive to be one problematic aspect of two thirds of the texts, especially newspaper and magazine articles. This is the extensive (re)presentations of mass rapes in a medical discourse. Drawing from this point on medicalization I argue that, in order to construct the (Congolese woman) “suffering

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<sup>153</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “Rape Epidemic Raises Trauma of Congo War”, *The New York Times*, October 7, 2007, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/07/world/africa/07congo.html>, last accessed 06.06.2009.

<sup>154</sup> Amnesty International, *Democratic Republic of Congo: Mass rape - time for remedies*, available online at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR62/018/2004/en/63b10028-d57f-11dd-bb24-1fb85fe8fa05/afr620182004en.html>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>155</sup> Anderson Cooper, “War Against Women”, *CBS News*, August 17, 2008, available online at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/01/11/60minutes/main3701249.shtml>, last accessed 06.06.2009.

<sup>156</sup> Nicholas D. Kristof, “The Weapon of Rape”, *The New York Times*, June 15, 2008, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/15/opinion/15kristof.html>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>157</sup> *Idem*.

strangers”<sup>158</sup>/ suffering other, the awareness raising discourse follows some lines of (re)presentation which aren’t only rendering visible the mass wartime rapes, but they are also constructing them as pathological<sup>159</sup>. In the process of close reading the texts which compose the awareness raising discourse I found three dimensions through which the awareness raising discourse renders both mass wartime rape and, furthermore, the Congo, as pathological. These dimensions are: illustrating the occurrence of mass rapes in the Congo wars and their aftermath by employing medical terminology, legitimizing the awareness raising discourse through doctors’ testimonies and the male doctor- female patient relationship in a post-colonial framework of analysis. I will focus solely on the first dimension since it is directly connected to the aspect of defining the Congo inside of a rape paradigm, thus by constructing identities by means of deploying rape. Nevertheless, I believe the other two dimensions are just as important in understanding what could be referred to as pathological representations of mass wartime rapes in the awareness raising discourse.

However, in regards to the depiction of mass rapes in the Congo wars and their aftermath, I will proceed to analyze examples from the vocabulary used to present the mass wartime rapes. The first observation one can make regards the usage of the medical “epidemic” term in order to present the actual occurrence of mass wartime rapes of women, with “the epicentre of Congo’s rape epidemic” being the South Kivu province of the country<sup>160</sup>. Furthermore, the mass rapes of women are also depicted as a “problem which has

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<sup>158</sup> Kevin Rozario, “Delicious Horrors: Mass Culture, The Red Cross, and the Appeal of Modern American Humanitarianism”, in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Sep., 2003): 417-455, 441. The article’s argument is constructed around the idea that “It may be dismaying to acknowledge that our virtues are commingled with our vices, that the pain many feel on behalf of suffering strangers is often inseparable from a sense of relief that *it is them not us*, and perhaps even from a strange voyeuristic fascination that borders on titillation” (emphasis mine).

<sup>159</sup> As a working definition of “pathological” I understand firstly the characteristic of being indicative of a disease and, secondly, the idea of being marked as abnormal due to exceptionality and excessiveness.

<sup>160</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “Rape Epidemic Raises Trauma of Congo War”, *The New York Times*, October 7, 2007, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/07/world/africa/07congo.html>, last accessed 06.06.2009.

*metastasized* into a larger social phenomenon”<sup>161</sup>, leaving room for the imaginary of the interpretive community to establish just enough links between rape and any other serious disease.

I want to argue that by offering presentations and analyses of the rapes in a framework using medical terminology one directly points towards the idea that rape is not necessarily an act of will to (enforce) power (of men over women, of men over communities, etc), but that it is a sickness, a deviation. The question is whether this is a deviation of the male nature or of the nature of Congolese society itself? Moreover, this idea actually enforces a symbolism of men raping women as a paradigm of understanding Congo. War, in this equation, functions as a trigger for the development of rape of women into a social phenomenon, rather than an act of man, functioning actually as a legitimating stance for rape (“war gives men a tacit license to rape”<sup>162</sup>) when accountability and responsibility in regards to the act of rape is shifted from man onto the environment.

Furthermore, the medicalization of mass wartime rapes of women shifts the attention from rapists as individuals to the rapist as a collective identity<sup>163</sup> which will be explored in the next section. In this context, referring to the occurrence of mass wartime rapes as an epidemic allows for the discourse on accountability and responsibility to shift its orientation from the male nature (in times of war), onto the socio-cultural characteristics of the Congolese society (in times of war). In this sense, the medical terminology used to describe the occurrence of mass wartime rapes is undermining the possibility to connect rape to man, shifting this matter towards more abstract features like socio-cultural principles. To conclude, I want to argue that by rendering the mass rapes in Congo as an epidemic, one stigmatizes the Congo itself as a

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<sup>161</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>162</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against our will: Men, women, and rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 33.

<sup>163</sup> See the chapter entitled “(Imagined) victim and villain” for a broader analysis of this idea.

dangerous area ‘infected’ with rape. Moreover, rape has “*become* almost a cultural phenomenon” in Congo<sup>164</sup>, it has the status of “norm”<sup>165</sup> and sometimes is even understood as a “legacy of war”<sup>166</sup> and not as a specific characteristic of war. These phrases all imply that rape, through excessive reiteration- as discourse and as act of sexual violence-, becomes reified and alters not solely the body of woman, but also the body of the Congolese society.

Thus, there is a link between the medicalization of the mass rapes’ representations and representations of the Congolese society as a rape prone society. This process, I argue, mediates the development of a gaze between the interpretive community of the awareness raising discourse and the discourse’s objects. I am referring here to the idea that in a humanitarian framework, the imagined community of interpretation is enabled through these representations to not only render the Congo as a pathological rape prone society and, through this, to construct itself as having healing and reconstructing (respons)abilities which could resolve the rape problem, engendering change in the functioning of that society. I am quoting here at length from the description of a raising awareness campaign in order to illustrate this idea:

“The “Turning Pain to Power Tour”—beginning February 11<sup>th</sup> in New York City before moving to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Atlanta and Washington D.C.— supports a joint V-Day and UNICEF campaign to *expose* the devastating impact of rape on Congolese women's health, their families and their communities.”<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>Stephanie McCrummen, “Prevalence of Rape in E. Congo Described as Worst in the World”, *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2007, available online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/08/AR2007090801194.html>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>165</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “Rape Epidemic Raises Trauma of Congo War”, *The New York Times*, October 7, 2007, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/07/world/africa/07congo.html>, last accessed 06.06.2009.

<sup>166</sup>Rape legacy of DR Congo Conflict, BBC News, 5 November, 2003, available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3243101.stm>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>167</sup> <http://www.vday.org/pain-to-power-tour>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

“If 250 women who have been raped, torn, starved and tortured can find the strength to dance us up a mountain, surely *the rest of us can find the resources and will to guarantee their future.*”<sup>168</sup>

Not only is the discourse of “othering” visible in the latter quote, but issues of *us* as potential providers of good government (as opposed to Congo’s “tradition of epically bad government”<sup>169</sup>) for *them* is rather obvious. The “horror that is Africa”<sup>170</sup> is rendered changeable by means of our resources and will. Moreover, the *identification of*<sup>171</sup> rape as a problem requiring a solution comes to support ideas of rendering them as pathological. Insofar as this is exceptionally a Congolese problem, Congo itself is pathologized.

In order for the imagining process to develop more clearly or maybe have an emphasis to it, the drawing of spaces happens inside a familiar framework. Thus, the mass wartime rapes of women are presented to the reader in a manner which allows for comparisons with known and largely used concepts, events, or ideas. Therefore, one of the features of the awareness raising discourse, employed especially in the newspaper articles (probably because they are oriented towards the idea of mass knowledge production at a clear and fast pace) is the usage of titles or presentations which refer to phrases such as: “the war against women”<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Eve Ensler, “Women Left for Dead- and the Man Who’s Saving Them”, *Glamour Magazine*, August 1, 2007, available at <http://www.glamour.com/magazine/2007/08/rape-in-the-congo>, last accessed 06.06.2009, emphasis mine.

<sup>169</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “Rape Epidemic Raises Trauma of Congo War”, *The New York Times*, October 7, 2007, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/07/world/africa/07congo.html>, last accessed 06.06.2009..

<sup>170</sup> Jan Goodwin, “Silence=Rape”, *The Nation*, February 19, 2004, available online at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040308/goodwin>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>171</sup> The idea of visibility is recurrent throughout the awareness raising awareness discourse and is focused mainly on the lack of media coverage and international (re)action towards the mass rapes of women in Congo. In this context, reporters and campaigners self-position themselves as a sort of spokespeople mediating the process of rendering the rapes visible.

<sup>172</sup> Anderson Cooper, “War Against Women”, *CBS News*, August 17, 2008, available online at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/01/11/60minutes/main3701249.shtml>, last accessed 06.06.2009.

or “Congo’s rape war”<sup>173</sup>. The unfamiliar is thus appropriated or rather apprehended “properly” by being presented in a familiar terminology.

Coming back to the idea of an imagined raped geography, this phrase refers also to one of Said’s critiques of imagining geographies, namely the arbitrariness<sup>174</sup> of this endeavour. Thus, I understand an imagined raped geography also in terms of being articulated through representations of it as a space in the imaginary of *another* whom is in no direct connection to it. In Edward Said’s words, it is an “unfamiliar”<sup>175</sup> space. Furthermore, mediating representations which engender stigmatization of a space as rape geography, aside from being a reductionist, essentialist and universalizing process, brings into discussion issue of self-reflexivity of those giving meaning to the representations. That this meaning bares social, cultural, political or even economical values is no matter for debate. However, that this meaning is attached by those producing it to a space which is then mapped in reference to it is an issue which needs to be engaged with critically as it is deeply entrenched in the idea of arbitrarily drawing borders of spaces. Additionally, one needs to ask what are the implications not only of producing space (imagined geography), but of producing a certain type of space (imagined rape geography)? Are boundaries set up in order to position “their” space or “our” space<sup>176</sup>? I argue that this mass wartime rape space, rendered exceptional and abnormal functions as a abjected space which allows for non-rape spaces to exist, just like the abjection of the in-human woman which was explained in the previous chapter may function as a means of setting up the human woman.

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<sup>173</sup> John Holmes, “Congo’s rape war”, *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 2007, available at <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-holmes11oct11,0,6685881.story>, last accessed 06.06.2009.

<sup>174</sup> Said (1979), 54.

<sup>175</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>176</sup> *Idem.*

In light of the above I define an imagined rape geography as an unfamiliar space which is arbitrarily mapped/ articulated in a rape paradigm as exceptional, abnormal and pathological in reference to rape occurrence. However, it must be taken into consideration that, in this context, the existence of this imagined geography as a rape geography is conditioned by the state of armed conflict. This concept introduces the issue of rape as an perpetual war reality. In this context, I turn now to the discussion of victims and villains.

## 4.2. *The imagined victim and villain*

In light of the creative aspect of imagining implied by the concept of imagined identities and that of imagined geographies, I proposed to understand the concept of imagined identities as identities created/ constructed through the process of interpreting (re)presentations of mass wartime rape in the awareness raising discourse. In this context, the analysis will now focus on Dubravka Zarkov's analysis of identity constructions of victims and villains in regards to the Bosnian case of mass wartime rapes<sup>177</sup>. Thus, I argue that the awareness raising discourse mediates the imagining of these two categories of female and male actors involved in the act of rape. In this context I explore such categorizations in regards to the mass wartime rapes in the Congo wars and their aftermath in terms of both the assumptions they rely on and their consequences, arguing that they function based on orientalist principles of essentializing, universalizing and reducing the (Congolese) other to either *just* a victim or *just* a villain.

Paradoxically, the awareness raising discourse is imbued with raped women's testimonies of rape. I say paradoxically because I interpret such testimonies as grounds for deconstructing the essentialist, reductionist and universalistic category of victim. The raped women have names, are characterized shortly and pieces of their rape experience descriptions are inserted into the mainstream oriented (re)presentations of the impact of war on women. However, they all follow the same narrative line<sup>178</sup>, thus collapsing the particular testimonies

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<sup>177</sup>Dubravka Zarkov, *The body of war: media, ethnicity and gender in the break-up of Yugoslavia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 143-154.

<sup>178</sup> I was in doubt on whether to quote testimonies of the rape experience for a long time since I have great ethical issues with the perpetuation of rape stories and the acts of violence depicted in them. I see this sort of repetition of violence as highly problematic. There is a thin line between rendering rape visible as a mechanism of awareness raising and exposing the bare nakedness of a raped woman and her rape experience. The matter of agency in connection to this issue will be addressed at the end of this section. Ultimately, I decided not to quote the testimonies in order to prove this point. If this renders it invalid for the reader, I can only point her/ him to read the testimonies.

in a common collective framework which can function as ground for the construction of a *monolithic Congolese raped woman*<sup>179</sup>.

The interesting aspect of this is the fact that the testimonies of rape are not only narratives of rape, but are sometimes taking the shape of a becoming-narrative, a sort of summarized *bildungsroman* in which the members of the imagined interpretive community of readers are involved as a sort of witness. Beverly Allen, talks about “the narrative trap”<sup>180</sup> and makes a thorough analysis of the consequences of adopting such a representational practice of wartime rape<sup>181</sup>. Her claims regard the “tremendous social power” of stories as linear narratives, legitimizing the listeners as a community. Moreover, she comments on the false consequences of linear narratives (apparent order, repeating the experience of rape, etc) and on the position of the reader as voyeur. In regards to the latter point I would argue that this is exactly the position created by the awareness raising discourse for the people who are exposed to it insofar as it is defined as a means of engendering (re)action through (re)presentation. Additionally, such a position implies a pre-existent distance between the subjects of the awareness raising discourse and its objects. Whether or not this distance can translate into a consuming gaze (insofar as the awareness raising discourse can be criticized as a mechanism of commodifying the experience<sup>182</sup> of rape to a certain extent) is debatable. In

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<sup>179</sup> I am borrowing this term from Chandra Talpade Mohanty in order to place my argument along the side of her criticism of Western colonialism involved in the production of the category of “Third World Woman”. See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”, in Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (eds.), *Feminist Postcolonial Theory* (London/ New York: Routledge, 2003), 49- 74.

<sup>180</sup> Beverly Allen, *Rape Warfare. The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 33.

<sup>181</sup> Allen, 32-39.

<sup>182</sup> I made this claim based on the idea that what in Rajaram’s view is the commodification of refugee experience can be translated into the implications of the awareness raising discourse’s (re)presentations of mass wartime rape for the experience of the raped woman. Rajaram (2002: 251) argues that “...refugees are confined to their body. That is, they are rendered speechless and without agency, a physical identity, or rather a physical mass within which individuality is subsumed. Corporeal, refugees are speechless and consigned to visibility: to the

keeping with the “economical” framework, I will point what I found to be a problematic politicization of the rape experience, namely placing the testimony of rape in a becoming narrative of personal and economical development. I quote here at length from a news broadcast in order to support this claim:

“At a halfway house down a dusty road from the clinic, 22 recovering rape victims learn to weave handbags and how to make bread and soap, in the likelihood their families will reject them and they will have to make their own way in the world. <This way they feel useful, and maybe can recover some respect from their families,> said Mulolo. “Even though they were raped, they must know they’re still important.”<sup>183</sup>

Raped women, *seem*, as I mentioned in the beginning of this section, to be escaping the essentialist and universalistic trap, when presented in the context of mass wartime rape, by means of their personal, individualized testimonies. However, this is also contradicted by the fact that before even presenting the state of facts or analyzing them, the awareness raising discourse situates all Congolese women in an always already potentially raped category. In Congo “sexual violence is the worst in the world”<sup>184</sup>, in some communities “almost every woman was raped”<sup>185</sup> and eastern Congo has been stigmatized as “the rape capital of the world”<sup>186</sup>. These are phrases appearing in either the title or first paragraph of mainstream newspapers’ online editions’ articles covering the mass wartime rapes during the Congo wars and their aftermath. Such (re)presentations support the idea of Congo as a rape prone society,

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pictorial representation of suffering and need. One of the central effects of this consignment is the “**commodification**” of refugee experience”. See quote in Erin K. Baines, *Vulnerable Bodies-Gender, the UN and the Global Refugee Crisis* (London: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>183</sup> Christine Lagorio, “War Rape Trauma Lingers in Congo”, *CBS News*, June 25, 2005, available online at [http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/06/22/world/main703577\\_page2.shtml](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/06/22/world/main703577_page2.shtml), last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>184</sup> Stephanie McCrummen, “Prevalence of Rape in E. Congo Described as Worst in the World”, *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2007, available online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/08/AR2007090801194.html>, last accessed at 06.06.2009 and Jeffrey Gettleman, “Rape Epidemic Raises Trauma of Congo War”, *The New York Times*, October 7, 2007, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/07/world/africa/07congo.html>, last accessed 06.06.2009.

<sup>185</sup> Diane Taylor, “Congo rape testimonies – Aged one to 90, the victims of hidden war against women”, *The Guardian*, December 5, 2008, available online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/dec/05/congo-rape-testimonies-walungu>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>186</sup> John Holmes, “Congo’s rape war”, *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 2007, available at [http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-holmes11oct11\\_0,6685881.story](http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-holmes11oct11_0,6685881.story), last accessed 06.06.2009.

which was explained in the section entitled “Always already raped?”. To support the idea of such a society, the awareness raising discourse focuses particularly on depicting a society where rape is the norm and not the exception, but this is presented to be an exceptional situation in itself. I argue, in light of the findings in the previous chapter, that the imagined rape geography of Congo is exceptional because it is fuelled by an exceptional situation of war and not because it is characterized by exceptionality in terms of rape occurrence. It is, to draw on Agamben’s theoretical approach, a space of exception where (our) exception has become (their) norm.

Furthermore, in this particular space of exception, which has already been defined as rape geography, every woman is rendered as a *homo sacer*, her rape being situated on an equal position with (social) death. I elaborated on this claim in the previous chapter based on presentations in the awareness raising discourse in relation to the status of the raped woman in the Congolese society. What renders her as a *homo sacer* is her potentiality to be raped in this particular rape geography. As states of exception mark the possibility to take life, the valueless life, *this* space of exception, marks the possibility to rape the valueless. This proximity of rape for every Congolese woman renders her, in my interpretation, as a “bare life”<sup>187</sup>, to continue in Agamben’s terms, because she is basically life that can be killed/ raped (or killed by means of rape) during an exceptional state of war. This process of positioning all women in the same situation of potentially raped grounds, in my opinion, the construction of a *monolithic Congolese woman* as bare life in regards to rape and mourned by “the West”, in the awareness raising discourse and as a (re)action to it, for her ascribed status in the

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<sup>187</sup> For an exploration of the concept of *bare life* see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

Congolese society: “they (women in Congo) have no power, no rights, and no value”<sup>188</sup>. Moreover, the (re)presentations of raped women continue to construct them as victims in terms of identity also in regards to their need of medical help, as powerless patients. The idea of powerlessness is constant in the depiction of the Congolese (raped) woman in the awareness raising discourse oriented towards “the West”. She is a resource for her family, her community and her country, a wife, a patient, she is raped, value-less and silenced. However, she is given (political) value in/by “the West” which recognizes her potentiality to engender change through a “Congo’s growing movement of women leaders”<sup>189</sup>. The value-related (re)presentations are completed by portrayals of women as economical actors. In this role they are also presented through a discourse of victimization, helplessness and hopelessness. The idea of women literally “carrying the Congo on their backs” is taken up by newspaper articles that provide analyses which further the issue of mass wartime rape in Congo towards the status of women in the country outside the rape and war framework<sup>190</sup>.

What is furthermore interesting is that the awareness raising discourse employs a politics of mourning all (raped) Congolese women and (re)presenting them as sacrificed victims of war. In this context, the discourse focuses on appropriating value to the raped women through the production of a community which can publicly mourn them<sup>191</sup>. This not only raises questions of why, in the first place, the woman is situated continuously in a

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<sup>188</sup> Eve Ensler, “Women Left for Dead- and the Man Who’s Saving Them”, *Glamour Magazine*, August 1, 2007, available at <http://www.glamour.com/magazine/2007/08/rape-in-the-congo>, last accessed 06.06.2009, emphasis mine.

<sup>189</sup> <http://www.vday.org/node/1549>, last accessed at 06.06.2009. This is a press release from V-day regarding one part of the campaign “Stop Raping Our Greatest Resource, Power to Women and Girls of DRC”, namely the “Turning Pain to Power Tour” which features playwright Eve Ensler and Congolese ob-gyn Dr. Denis Mukwege.

<sup>190</sup> Johann Hari, “Congo’s tragedy: the war the world forgot”, *The Independent*, May 5, 2006, available online at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/congos-tragedy-the-war-the-world-forgot-476929.html>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>191</sup> I developed this argument based on the concepts of *state of exception*, *homo sacer* and *bare life* as they appear in the philosophy of Giorgio Agamben. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

discourse on value, but also on issues of constructing the imagined interpretive community of the awareness raising discourse as involving in the politics of the Congolese social organization.

Keeping in mind that the matter of rape cannot be separated from that of war in this analysis, I will come back now to the debate over rape as sex-rape as violence<sup>192</sup> in relation to representations of mass wartime rapes in the awareness raising discourse. One type of presentations reflect Cynthia Enloe's category "lootpillagelandrape"<sup>193</sup>: "each new battle is followed by pillaging and rape"<sup>194</sup>. However, presentations of rape as a weapon of war are the most pervasive ones, coming up in about 90% of the texts I have analyzed. One might argue that there is no sexual component to it based on these (re)presentations.

However, the emphasis in the presentations of the rape experiences falls onto the aspect of extreme violence for which those accountable should be prosecuted. Ultimately rape is rendered as a crime of war and, furthermore, every armed man is guilty of it. The unanimous stance of all texts is that those responsible for the mass rapes of women are all men carrying a gun. In this context the perpetrators are presented as a static collective character, they are one and the same in the story of rape: "any person in uniform is an enemy to women"<sup>195</sup>, "everyone of dozens of armed groups has used rape as a weapon"<sup>196</sup>. Theoretically, this follows Susan Brownmiller's ideas that "war gives men a tacit license to

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<sup>192</sup> See the section entitled "Always already raped with impunity?" in this thesis.

<sup>193</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers- the international politics of militarizing women's lives* (Los Angeles, University of California Press: 2000), 138.

<sup>194</sup> Anderson Cooper, "War Against Women", *CBS News*, August 17, 2008, available online at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/01/11/60minutes/main3701249.shtml>, last accessed 06.06.2009.

<sup>195</sup> Eve Ensler, "Women Left for Dead- and the Man Who's Saving Them", *Glamour Magazine*, August 1. 2007, available at <http://www.glamour.com/magazine/2007/08/rape-in-the-congo>, last accessed 06.06.2009, emphasis mine.

<sup>196</sup> Stephanie Nolen, "<Not Women Anymore...>", *Ms. Magazine*, spring 2005, available online at <http://www.msmagazine.com/spring2005/congo.asp>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

rape”<sup>197</sup>. Furthermore, presentations of rape as a weapon of war support Catharine MacKinnon’s argument regarding the treatment of mass wartime rape as a weapon of war<sup>198</sup>.

The problematic aspect of this collective identity which is the perpetrator is that it contributes to the idea that the crime of rape is a universal attribute of the armed man in the Congolese society and comes back to the idea of a rape prone society discussed in the second chapter. Even more, such a collective identity implies that the perpetrators will never be caught and prosecuted for their faces are lost in the collective identity that I was mentioning above. The problem of prosecuting rapists is situated in a relation which opposes “the Western” civil society that holds it as an immediate necessity and the Congolese government which is presented as participating in the perpetuation of rapes and impunity alike. In my opinion this opens a debate over the Western perceptions of (African, Congolese) bad governmentality and understanding the awareness raising discourse as a ground not only for humanitarian intervention, but for change in the Congolese governing practices and socio-political mentalities fuelling those practices.

An important aspect to notice is that in a few texts and extensively in the campaigns, the doctors are constructed as a competing type of masculinity for the rapist, as a model of moral integrity and as a sort of both physical and psychical healers. I will quote from an article which adopts this approach in the representation of a Congolese doctor:

“[...] this holy man who was sewing up women as fast as the mad militia men could rip them apart. [...] there are men who take their sorrow and helplessness and destroy women’s bodies- and there are others with the same feelings who devote their lives to healing and serving.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Brownmiller, 13.

<sup>198</sup> Catharine MacKinnon, “Rape, Genocide and Women’s Rights” in Alexandra Stiglmayer (ed.), *The War Against Women in Bosni-Herzegovina* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 183-196.

<sup>199</sup> Eve Ensler, “Women Left for Dead- and the Man Who’s Saving Them”, *Glamour Magazine*, August 1. 2007, available at <http://www.glamour.com/magazine/2007/08/rape-in-the-congo>, last accessed 06.06.2009, emphasis mine.

Thus, the doctor stands for a symbol of healing and also as the one trying to intervene in the destruction induced by rape. The sanctification of the doctor in comparison to the demonization of the armed forces is, in my opinion, just another way of illustrating the situation of the mass wartime rapes of women in Congo in a public friend-public enemy<sup>200</sup> of the rape victim, namely the doctor as public friend and the rapist as public enemy. This argument supports such phrases such as “war against women” or “femicide”.

Furthermore, the categorization of rape as a weapon of war reinforces the actual “premises that make it effective”<sup>201</sup>, namely, in the case I am analyzing, the idea that by raping the women in a community, one can control that community. Hayden calls this a trap in which one can fall while justifiably prosecuting for individual justice<sup>202</sup>. If one takes Hayden’s point as valid, I believe it is a trap in which the awareness raising discourse has fallen, but on the other hand a trap in which, personally I find it difficult not to fall if the purpose is some sort of search for justice on behalf of the raped women. Thus, I will not engage on a debate over this issue insofar as I ultimately understand it in terms which situate the raped woman in a problematic situation from the start, namely a debate on whether to choose personal justice for being raped over reproduction of collective patriarchal symbolisms which make the rape possible in the first place.

The already problematic essentialist and universalistic categories of victims (women) and rapists (men) is complicated by the accounts of male victims of rape and differences between rapists on grounds of inflicted wounds. Accounts of raped men are extremely rare; I

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<sup>200</sup> Ruth A. Miller, *The Limits of Bodily Integrity* (Boston, Ashgate: 2007), 160.

<sup>201</sup> Hayden, Robert M., “Rape and Rape Avoidance in Ethno-National Conflicts: Sexual Violence in Liminalized States”, in *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 102, No. 1 (March, 2000), pp. 27-41, 34.

<sup>202</sup> *Idem*

personally have found one<sup>203</sup> and it is part of an enumeration, lacking both description and analysis. Presenting males as victims of rapes is in the case quoted above a means of characterizing a particular armed group's rape typology therefore, it does not focus on the victim, but rather on the rapist's affiliation to an armed group. Furthermore, some texts present a sort of differentiating process in which rapists are put into categories based on the type of wounds they inflict as an act of rape. This has been discussed in the section regarding the "Congo rape(s)" I argue that it refers solely to a fragmentation of a category in sub-categories which does not stand for an anti-essentialist and anti-universalizing argument<sup>204</sup>.

Despite problematic implications, the importance of raising awareness on matters of mass wartime rape is by no means dismissed, nor minimized in this analysis. Nor is the fact that, as it is actually presented in all of the texts, this discursive construction has the purpose of mediating the process of self-voicing one's rape. Thus, it sets itself as both a ground for and a means of rendering the raped woman as visible and her voice as heard, standing in opposition with the criticized socio-cultural practices of a patriarchal society which renders the raped woman invisible and silent. Furthermore, the raped women presented in the articles are constructed first and foremost as survivors through the simple fact that they are voicing their stories. They have survived rape and their voice is proof of that insofar as through their speaking about their rapes they are overcoming their invisibility. However, the line between invisibility and non-existence is very thin and the fact that they are rendered visible through their rape (stories) in a world which did not (care to) know of their existence up to their

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<sup>203</sup> Stephanie Nolen, "<Not Women Anymore...>", *Ms. Magazine*, spring 2005, available online at <http://www.ms magazine.com/spring2005/congo.asp>, last accessed at 06.06.2009.

<sup>204</sup> I developed this argument along Diane Fuss's idea that "fragmenting the subject into multiple identities" does not equal de-essentializing. See Fuss, Diane, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference*, New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 20.

testimony of rape is problematic. As they are brought to (social) death in Congo subsequently to their rapes, they are brought to life in “the West” by means of their rape (story).

In connection to this matter of visibility as existence, I want to come back to the silence matter and link it to agency. The discourse on silence is very pervasive in the awareness raising discourse on mass rapes of women during the Congo wars and their aftermath. A total silence regarding the wars and the aftermath crisis, the silence of the Congo regarding the rape of women and the rape of the country, the silence of raped women in a society which outcasts them for being raped. All these silences are criticized and challenged by the awareness raising discourse. Furthermore, the idea of “turning pain into power”<sup>205</sup> relies on rendering the rapes visible through voicing them. Moreover, empowerment is associated with the act of public testimony, of voicing one’s rape. In this sense the awareness raising discourse sets as its function to mediate the inclusion of the raped women into the public space, of Congo and the West. The problematic aspects of this process lie for me in the idea of building agency on the reiteration of rape. Without dismissing the physical and psychological scars of wartime rape I am arguing that this sort of agency grounded on the rape itself might be valid and validating only insofar as one understands the woman always in connection to her rape, thus perpetuating her identity as a rape woman. Moreover, empowerment on grounds of pain is again a problematic politicization of the experience of rape since, in an orientalist and colonialist framework, it can refer to identification of bad (Congolese) socio-political practices by “the West” and positioning the raped woman as a mediator of change. Whether or not this is actually diminishing whatever agency the raped woman has is debatable, but nevertheless it is, in my opinion, a perspective which should be taken into consideration in regards to the awareness raising discourse.

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<sup>205</sup> Which is also the title of a campaign aiming to “get the word out about the violence against women in Congo”. See <http://newsite.vday.org/pain-to-power-tour>, last accessed at 07.05.2009.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the last chapter focused on the issue of agency because I believe that with respect to this matter the argument of my thesis can be expanded. I am arguing for connecting agency with the *matter* of rape, namely the lived raped body, in the framework of war. This type of approach would offer the possibility to explore the lived experience of rape and the female body as site of resistance in connection to the process of identity production mediated by the awareness raising discourse. However, the main research question to have been substantiated by the previous analysis was: how does rape function as a paradigm, namely a framework for constructing identities through (re)presentations of mass wartime rapes in the awareness raising discourse? Thus, the grounds on which the thesis was written allow for a discussion of the rape experience and the raped body primarily through the (re)presentations of mass wartime rape in the awareness raising discourse. This perspective was intentionally cut out of the thesis because, in my view, the (re)presentations of mass wartime rape, although legitimized by testimonies of rape, are problematic. I make this claim based on the fact that, in spite of the overall praiseworthy aims of the awareness raising discourse, it commodifies the experience of rape by situating it in a discourse on value.

Therefore, I ask, what is the value of rape? It can be argued that this is a general problem of understanding and researching wartime rape. The value of rape stands in rendering rape as a weapon of war, the raped body as territory or the raped woman as a symbol of a dominated community. These are all stances of commodifying rape. Their common feature is a focus on the woman as a passive receiver of value which is given to her through rape.

The point I made in the first chapter regarding the Congolese woman's existence for "the West" solely inside a rape paradigm needs to be brought up again, since in itself, this is an act of placing value on the act of rape. And from this perspective rape equals existence.

This thesis's argument has been organized around the kind of representations and identities embodying such a *raped existence*; namely, rape as perpetual reality for Congolese women; Congo as imagined rape geography; the monolithic Congolese victim of rape which conflates every raped woman in the Congo wars and their aftermath and to some extent every Congolese woman because she is rendered as always rapable; the monolithic pathological rapist.

Yet, if not raped, then inexistent? In this context the question is: inexistent for whom? The rapist, the family, the community, "the West"? However, if the woman is not connected to either of these, does rape still function as a signifier of her existence? Do these questions link back to the lived body as a site of resistance? These are all questions I raised for myself during the writing of the thesis as I was questioning the ethics of rendering rape as a paradigm explicitly. However, I constantly came back to the title of the thesis and reminded myself that I am writing the thesis in order to emphasize this fact in order to criticize it and problematize it. Yet, it has to be mentioned again that I am not dismissing the practice of awareness raising or its aims.

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