



## Rape of Europa: Fear of Muslims

*“ The problem with rape groups who deal with rape is that they try to educate women about how to defend themselves. What really needs to be done is teaching men not to rape ”. (Kurt Cobain)*

*“ Collective fear stimulates the herd instinct and tends to produce ferocity toward those who are not regarded as members of the herd ”. (Bertrand Russell , **Unpopular Essays**)*

*“ ... when you take fright and add to it ignorance, you get hatred . That ‘s a very unattractive equation ”. (Ann M. Martin, **Here Today**)*

Earlier in the week I received an email link to a segment from an Andre Rieu concert on you tube which came highly recommended as “ hilarious ”. From time to time I have enjoyed his music , often accompanied by extravagant spectacles for global , overflow audiences now in the millions. This Dutch virtuoso violinist and conductor of his Johann Strauss orchestra , has been criticized as a feel-good populist who mixes classical music with modern song , which doesn't concern me as a non-musician and I applaud his commitment to featuring , extraordinary, young , as at yet unknown talent.

As it turned out , this segment filmed in November 2015 featured a Spanish

theme “ Espana cani ”, meaning Gypsy Spain. Soon after the orchestra struck up the famous , if not iconic, Paso Doble instrumental piece by Pascual Marquina Narro (1873-1943) c.1921 - also known as “ Spanish Gypsy Dance ”, two players in a bull costume appeared and jauntily danced their way down an aisle toward the stage. In Spanish culture, the bull has been long revered as a symbol of a fierce power, stability, courage and ability to fight as well the essence of potent male fertility. While the concert crowd warmed to the appearance of the bull and his gentle antics, nuzzling a lady here and there...the energies soon changed as he spied a well - fed, lady wearing a flowing ensemble in flaming red chiffon.

This “ lady in red ”, (well paid actress), pantomimed a response of shock and fear as the bull approached , gestured a helpless shriek , then turned and ran, arms and legs flailing , on up the aisle toward an exit with the bull in avid pursuit . Amid riotous laughter, the pair soon re-appeared upon a bullring stage set behind the orchestra while the “ terrified ” lady in red dashed for safety into a darkened arch of a bullring portal ... Soon thereafter , the festive bull gaily emerged , cavorting about while sporting her bright red bra dangling from one of his horns ...which clearly implied : rape . The beast’s, shamelessly satisfied , pleased with himself and triumphant display evoked more laughter and applause...all in good fun in this carnival atmosphere. And yet, for me, as a social traumatologist , the image of her trophy- bra dangling from his horn, struck a very deep nerve, especially in view of recent events in Europe where the subject of rape is definitely up , and not without controversy.

As a cultural historian , I have been long familiar with the importance of bull imagery in Western art and culture from classical times up to and beyond Picasso’s *Tauromachia* (Bull Fight series) and his sexually explicit, often ambiguously complex, erotic depictions of woman and bull; provocative, angry and tender. Yet , upon seeing this rather burlesque episode at the concert , the image that flashed forward into my mind was not Picasso, as I might have

expected, but rather Titian's timeless masterpiece: "The Rape of Europa" (1560-1562).

The 16<sup>th</sup> century Venetian artist drew upon this long standing theme in Western art which dates back to classical times as described in Ovid's **Metamorphoses** wherein the lustful Zeus, in the guise of a bull, abducts Princess Europa in a manner which celebrates aggressive force in pursuit of erotic fulfillment. In Titian's bold diagonal composition, Europa is depicted in a posture of near abandon. Her disordered drapery, rendered in vibrant colors as though painted with fingers rather than brush strokes, shimmers and swirls just above her opening thighs and the bull's long and quivery tail, in reference to the sexual violence to come. Interestingly, the myth of the Rape of Europa has been adopted by the European Union, and this image has become a semi-official symbol of this institution, as a supranational personification of the European region and appears on a number of coins and banknotes. ( Charles FitzRoy, **The Rape of Europa**, 2015 ).

Although the Rieu concert triggered some nearly timeless rape imagery, with or without the bull, it not so surprising that Titian's masterpiece came to mind in light of the quasi-apocalyptic hysteria sweeping the continent with fears of a Europe-wide "epidemic of rape". While this subject had been in the air since the recent arrival of huge numbers of immigrants and refugees from war torn Middle Eastern countries, along with fears of disease, displacement, political and economic stability, events that erupted on New Year's Eve in the west German city of Cologne brought fears of rape and sexual assault to a new level of crisis. According to **Der Spiegel**, a lot happened on New Year's Eve in Cologne, much of it contradictory, much of it real - both exaggerated and horrifying. Politicians, community leaders and the media, fearful of igniting anti-refugee and immigrant sentiment were accused of first ignoring and then downplaying an ethnically, racially and ideologically motivated, mass sexual assault upon hundreds of women by a mob of nearly a thousand North African and Arab men ,

including three alleged rapes specifically designed to terrorize. Adding to the confusion, German police were apparently and inexplicably powerless in the midst of these massive violations.

This picture is further complicated by the fact that there was an explosion of violence that same night in five countries and a dozen cities, which opens the way to speculation that these attacks were coordinated. If so by whom and to what end? Suspicion abounds that right wing , and neo-Nazi populist elements may have been involved , at least at some level, in an effort to discredit foreigners and strengthen their agenda for stronger police and government controls against unwanted non - European “ invaders ”. This bears some consideration given media reports of behavior of several “attackers” that seems consistent with professional agent provocateurs . In one instance an Arab man allegedly waved asylum papers in front of police and then tore them up while taunting that he could just get new ones tomorrow. Others supposedly shouted things like “ You can’t touch us. Mother Merkel invited us here ” and ,“ We’re Syrian and so you have to be nice to us.” Indeed, many Syrian refugees have reported that others were claiming to be Syrian in order to gain certain privileges.

Feminist reactions to the New Year’s Eve attacks were mixed and somewhat contradictory. While some have remained silent about Islamic provocations out of fear of being seen racist, others call out the massive hypocrisy of such public concern given that sexual violence against women was a long standing problem before the refugees arrived. Other concerned citizens wonder if there might be a contrived over-reaction by the media and others in the guise of a concern for women’s safety that conceals their underlying racism.

Given Germany’s and the Germanic people’s long history of threat from Islamic invaders dating at least as far back as 17<sup>th</sup> century battles between the forces of the Christian West and the Islamic Ottoman Empire, it is not surprising that many are experiencing this current influx of refugees from Islamic countries as yet

another invasion of the West. From time immemorial, rape and sexual humiliation have been a feared and fearful weapon of invaders everywhere as a tool of domination . In Germany, there are many who still remember the multiple horrors brought by the “ hords from the East ” towards the end of World War II , when battle crazed Russian soldiers overran the country and raped thousands of German women.

Adding to this unspeakable nightmare was the humiliation of men who could not protect their women as well as a targeted humiliation of Third Reich racial hygiene laws which legislated Slavs as sub-human , inferior races not fit to breed or sexually engage with Aryans in any way whatsoever.

Whatever the facts as to what exactly did or did not happen on New Year's Eve in Cologne and other European cities , there remains an urgent reality that there are vast cross-cultural and potentially painful differences between immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees and their host countries, especially in regard to men, women , sexuality and the law. This potentially explosive state of affairs must be immediately and compassionately addressed in the interest and safety of all concerned.