

ANTJIE KROG

'They Couldn't Achieve their Goal with Me'

Telling Rape During the South African War

Abstract – About two months before the South African war officially ended (31 May 1902), affidavits were taken from women about transgressions experienced at the hands of British soldiers and their armed black groups: plunder, killing of stock, abduction, sexual assault and rape. This essay is the first scholarly focus in terms of narrative and agency on the 32 affidavits of 24 incidences of sexual assaults and rape since a 25-year embargo on these documents was lifted in 1982. The shelving of these affidavits is indicative of how even multiple transcultural processes failed to create a sexual violence discourse in both colonial and post-colonial South Africa.

On 5 February 1902 Johanna Chatarina (sic) Geldenhuys told Commandant A. Ross that she was on a farm with a ten-year-old little girl, when three British troops entered the house.

Twee hunner greep my en sleepte my in de slaap kamer terwyl de derde een de dochtertje in een ander kamer nakend scheurde. Toen Hy de dochtertje nakend had, stak hy zyn vinger in haar lichaam, en zyde als Zy te on bekwaam is dan zal ik uw aanranden. Hy loste de dochtertje en greep my. Toen was de eerste twee die myn aangerand had aan de buite zyde van van (sic) de huis voor de venster. Op hunne paarden. Nadat hy my met zyn vuist geslagen had en myne keel toegedrukt had en aan myn gedaan had wat hy gewild had reed hulle weg.

Two of them grabbed me and pulled me into the bedroom while a third one took the little girl into another room tearing her naked. When he had her naked, he stuck his finger into her body and said if she was inept (*onbekwaam*), then I would come to get you. He left the girl and grabbed me [...] after he hit me with his fist, he strangled my throat and did with me what he wanted and then left with the other two (all affidavits translated from original handwritten Dutch into English by author of this essay).

1 Introduction

Three to six months before the South African war ended on 31 May 1902, affidavits of 32 incidents of sexual assault and rape were taken down in the Northern and North-eastern Free State. Between 28 December 1901 and 3 March 1902, on fourteen different days, landdrost H. Potgieter of Heilbron took down ten affidavits, Assistant Head Commandant C.C. Froneman from Winburg and Field Cornet M.F. Reeve (Keeve?) from Kroonstad took down four each, P.J.C. Fourie three, acting landdrost clerk P.J. Fourie and resident justice of peace J.A. van Niekerk two respectively, while Commandant A. Ross from Vrede, commandant J.W. de Vos, landdrost M.W. Serfontein, acting landdrost M.I. Fourie, special justice of peace C.F. Snyman, Commandant G.J. Beukes and acting assistant

landdrost D.W. Steyn all took down one affidavit relating to sexual violence.¹

Many more affidavits were taken, forming part of what has become known as the Havenga Collection (Klasie Havenga was the notary and personal assistant of General Hertzog,² but these 32 affidavits dealt specifically with 24 incidents of sexual assault and rape that had taken place within the previous months, so that some of the women still had marks and bruises on their bodies as evidence. The affidavits, gathered during a concentrated space of time from a small cluster of women living in the north-northeastern Free State, form coherent and concrete evidence of intensive sexual violence perpetrated on white women during the South African war, also known as the Anglo-Boer War. This essay is a close reading of these affidavits focusing exclusively on agency and voice, with a final reading in general of their initial purpose within a broader transcultural context.

2 Reading Rape: (Im)possibilities of Interpretation

In her benchmark work *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975/1993) Brownmiller reminds us that one of the oldest punishments that we know of, is the obligation to make compensation after rape. Tracing ‘punishments for rape from the Babylonian code to English common law’ shows how ‘typically punishment was usually brought by one man against another for damage to his property – rape was a “male protection racket”’. Because women were regarded as the property of their fathers and husbands who ‘owned’ their virginity and sexuality, they (and not the women) demanded compensation, retribution and revenge when these were ‘stolen’ (Plummer 1995: 72). This direct link to a husband is present in some affidavits. C.J.S. van der Merwe opens her testimony under her husband’s initials: ‘*Mevr J.H. van der Merwe verklaart [...]*’ The affidavit is signed C.J.S. van der Merwe and below it: ‘*J.H. van der Merwe – Haar man*’ (her husband). M.E. du Toit describes herself as Maria Elizabeth ‘*huisvrouw van A. du Toit*’ (housewife of A. du Toit). One also suspects male coercion in Mrs M.J.S. Koekemoer’s affidavit, signed with an X.

In recent years the subject of rape as a war strategy has become common knowledge with evidence produced that it was part of the terror tactic in the Spanish Civil war and more recently in Bosnia. Evidence was harder to find in the official records of the South African War, so that Bill Nasson writes that ‘(r)umours of mistreatment or of rape by “kharkis” or “kharkies” ran well ahead of the British push into the Orange Free State’ (Nasson 2010: 279). ‘One myth was that the invading army intended to “debase” the Boers by violating the racial purity of white womanhood’ (Nasson 2010: 278). At least one among this group of affidavits in-

1 These positions and titles point to the various legal systems that were transculturally jostling for authority in southern Africa: the nineteenth century Cape Colony system was premised on Roman Dutch law, while lawyers and judges were trained in Britain (Scully 1995: 338, 342).

2 The chairperson of the board of the Anglo-Boer War museum in Bloemfontein, Dr Jan van der Merwe, establishes the origin of these testimonies as part of evidence-gathering to make international propaganda against the barbaric deeds of Britain in contravention of the Hague Convention. Klasie Havenga, notary and personal assistant of General Hertzog who requested the affidavits, took care of these documents which later became part of his much larger private documentation, embargoed as a whole (Grundlingh 2013: 52-53).

dicates that rape formed part of some kind of collaboration between Africans and 'the imperial occupation' (Nasson 2010: 249): C.J.S. van der Merwe says: '*Hij heft haar gezegd [...]*' (He – the black man – told her that the orders from his officer was that they could do with the women what they wanted).

Although the active international intervention of feminist groups from the 1970s onwards changed the circumstances and context in which many women could tell stories of sexual violence (Plummer 1995: 51), prior to this, especially during the early 1900s, it must have been extremely difficult for women narrating rape to find examples that could resonate even faintly with what they sensed as their *own* experience. An important barrier, recognised by researchers, was vocabulary. Elizabeth van Heyningen mentions how seldom women's illnesses were being mentioned in concentration camp records: 'probably because of Victorian reserve. It was for example taboo to refer to the sexual organ' (Van Heyningen 2013: 129). How to describe what is happening? What are the nouns for that which one sees? How to verbally process revulsion, implied lust and the power relations within a very rural but Victorian-influenced upbringing?

Anna Gesina van Loggerenberg tries to describe her encounter with a British soldier as follows:

[...] en drukte mij op het (Bed) neder terwijl hij alreeds zijn gulp open had en de beele 'affaire' voor mij zichtbaar, toen schreeuwde ik zoo luid ik kon, en toen kwam de ander Engelsche man ook de kamer in en, drukte mijn mond zoo geweldig toe dat by mijn mond en wangen bezeerde, zoodat mijn aangezicht rood van bloed was en in den tusschentijd was, de ander Engelsch man bezig nadat hij mijn beenen open breken en Aldus trachtte mij te verkrachten

[...] pushed me down on the bed, his fly was already open and his whole affair visible to me. I shouted as loud as I could, but then the other Englishman also came into the room and closed my mouth with such violence that my mouth and cheeks were injured, so that my face was red with blood, and in the meantime the other Englishman was still busy, after he exposed my legs, he proceeded to break them open and thus tried to rape me.

Mrs Stiar tells it this way:

Later kwam twee (British soldiers) en verzocht my om te halen, toen ik weigerde, Knopen zy de broeken van vooren los, en toonde my hunne voorhuiden, dreigde my dood te schieten indien ik niet inwillig met hun. Ik werd zoo bevreesd dat ik de myne kindren nam en vluchte. Zulle gebruikte een vreeslyke taal [...].

Later two others were sent to convince me, when I refused, they unbuttoned their pants in the front and showed me their foreskins, threatened to shoot me if I did not agree to them. I became so frightened that I took my children and fled. They used terrible language.

This affidavit also illustrates the kind of problematic turning point so often present in rape narratives: what happened between the moments of swearing, exposing, threatening to shoot and the 'taking' of children to flee? Was fleeing always an available option? Why wasn't it taken earlier? Was she trying to protect her property, or was there not really a threat, but merely an unpleasant incident? Did the

men 'have their way' after which she was allowed to leave, but was she unable to say this in front of the oath taker?

The phrases used for sexual violence in these specific affidavits also display an absence of *coherent* vocabulary. This may be due to the fact that the Dutch language was in the midst of being creolised into what was to become Afrikaans. The affidavit recorders were probably reasonably educated for their time, but the Dutch they used varies considerably in terms of verb tenses, case-endings and spelling (e.g. 'by' and 'hij'; *kleederen*, *kledern*; *Baionet* instead of *bajonet*). Also noticeable is how the phrasing varies according to the identity of the statement taker: magistrate H. Potgieter uses the phrase '*niet zyn doel heeft bereikt*' in three texts (not achieved his goal); field cornet Reeve writes: '*na dat ik alle pogingen [...]*' (after I applied all attempts, I escaped from their hands).

In her much praised paper, 'Rereading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England,' G. Walker (1998), who examined over 100 seventeenth century narratives, strongly emphasises that texts stemming from legal sources such as court records of earlier periods should and could *not* be read with the same tools as those used for modern oral narrations recorded by fieldworkers and specially designed units: '[T]he modern understandings of rape testimonies might provide inappropriate interpretive frameworks for those produced in other historical contexts' (Walker 1998: 2). She reminds us that affidavits are collective efforts between affiants and takers of oaths. The degree of influence over the text depends on who has the most knowledge of the legal requirements in terms of language, form and procedure, as well as of the reason why the affidavit is to be taken down.

However, the 'real' knowledge of what had happened, Walker suggests, lay with the women:

Rape narratives told in legal setting were at once personal and public. Entrenched in the practices and strategies of an individual's everyday life and embedded in an institutional framework, there are several reasons why the personal, reflexive nature of these tales cannot be dislocated from the circumstances in which they were told (Walker 1998: 3).

For example, the gender of legal officials has a large impact:

Some historians have argued that women's speech about sex and the female body constituted a 'women's culture of shared knowledge' which was not accessible before a male or mixed-sex audience [...] talking about rape formally before male officials might have produced a differently nuanced account [...] individuals often have complex motives and agendas, experienced a wide variety of pressures and expectations [...] Fears of reprisal, concerns about reputation, private enmities, as well as love – all these emotions and others could have some bearing on how a tale is told (Walker 1998: 4).

The question has to be raised at this point: how should an affidavit of sexual assault have been formulated at that time to appeal to the fluid powerful international system of ideas about autonomy, personhood, rights, and citizenship? Wanting to use these affidavits to create international anti-British propaganda indicates the kind of options that was made available through the various textured Dutch and British colonial influences at the turn of the century. General Hertzog, for instance, who ordered the gathering of these affidavits, was educated as a lawyer in Amsterdam.

3 Female Resistance and Race in the Havenga Affidavits

Although one bears in mind the warning about inappropriate interpretative frameworks, the works of Theidon and Bennett (1997) are helpful in alerting one to hidden information in some of the texts. Emanating very vividly is the vulnerability of the women and children in their isolated homesteads. Initially they had gardens, crops, livestock, could shoot and drive horses and carts, but a young mother or teenage daughter was immensely vulnerable should a group of soldiers arrive at the door.

In his make-or-break strategy in 1901 Kitchener released 100 columns of between 1200 and 2000 soldiers plus armed African mounted scouts to sweep the countryside (Nasson 2010: 233) creating an army with a 'gargantuan appetite' (Bradford 2002: 42). Thousands of men 'overwhelmingly young and unmarried, in an institution designed to turn boys into men, could prove their masculinity through scorn for domesticity' (Bradford 2002: 42). By the end of the war, many female headed households had very little left to plunder except their bodies.

Another feature of the affidavits is how, despite isolation, well-informed the women were about the movement of British soldiers: 'On 19 February two English troops came to my house [...] The whole English contingent of General Knox was already past. They were the last troops that arrived at my door that day' (A.G. van Loggerenberg). Molestation by troops under General Rimmin(g)ton (C.J.S. van der Merwe) as well as by the much-praised members of Brabant's Horse (E.L. Meintjes) are described.

Theidon worked in a different context: from 1980 to 1992, an internal war raged among the guerrilla group *Sendero Luminoso* (SL), the *rondas campesinas* (armed peasant patrols) and the Peruvian armed forces. Her research found that after the first rapes took place in a Peruvian village, women began to inform young girls about what was physically happening to them, assisting with survival strategies of processing. Similarly, in the Anglo-Boer War, younger and smaller female-headed families moved to nearby or family farms for a more extended female network of resistance and support. Johanna Sofia Grové affirms that she lives on the farm Dyselspruit, Heilbron, but until the end of the war had stayed on the farm Stavon (sometimes spelt Stavone or Stavori), Kroonstad. Sarie Magrietha Cilliers lived on Elandspruit, Kroonstad, but also moved to Stavon. Anna Geertruide (sic) de Jongh lived in Sterling, Heilbron, but went to live with her mother on Burnetsland, Kroonstad. The mother herself had previously lived on the farm Roodepoort, before she also moved to Burnetsland during the war. Nonnie, the wife of General de la Rey, remarks late in the war that she was astounded at the large numbers of women and children still in the veld and how 'well they looked, despite the fact that they were wanderers/vagabonds' (*swerwelinge*) (Grundlingh 2013: 86). The women protecting and assisting one another in this way, underscores Rehn and Sirleaf's observation of how conflict changes gender roles: 'Women may acquire more mobility, resources and opportunities for leadership. But the additional responsibility comes without any diminution in the demands of their traditional roles' (Rehn & Sirleaf 2002: 2).

Resistance is mostly described through the often effective use of knives, axes, shouts, physical attacks and forms of distraction. The hysterical wail of children also, though not always, had an effect: while he was busy

om mij met geweld te dwingen onzedelijkheid met hem (British soldier) te plegen, doch ik weigerde direct, en hij hield aan en wilde mij tusschen de boomen in brengen doch ik verdedigde mij en zei dat ik hem liever een brood zou geven toen zeide hij, neen, dat wil ik niet hebben maar slechts bij u een rukje slapen ... toen hij mij vast drukte schreeuwde en huilde mijne kindertjes zoo, dat hij mij los liet en mij vroeg om hem slechts maar te kussen

(to force me with violence to commit indecency with him, [...] my small children shouted and cried so that he let go of me and asked whether I would just kiss him') (J.C.P. Nel). Curiously enough, of the 24 incidents, only three had the affiants *admit* to rape and all three were perpetrated by black men, one of these incidences with black offenders unexpectedly has more than one witness. Was more than one witness necessary for plausibility or would more witnesses result in stronger condemnation of the black men?

Research suggests that success in terms of the prosecution or plausibility depends upon how closely the account of rape matches certain culturally-held narrative expectations. 'Thus a survivor who tells of being raped by a stranger, or a white woman who is assaulted by a black man, has a much stronger chance of being regarded as producing a "plausible" tale than a black woman raped by her acquaintances late at night' (Ratazzi 1987; Bennett 1997).

In fact, reading the affidavits gives an impression that most of the sexual assaults were committed by black men, but the numbers reveal the following puzzling breakdown: 32 affidavits were given on 24 incidences which consist of: seven incidences of molestation (two committed by black men), nine incidences of violent assault and attempted rape (four by black and five by white men); five attempts of rape without violence being mentioned (!) (all British soldiers); one violent assault and rape by black men; and two violent rape by black men. According to these affidavits British soldiers were responsible for most of the violence but not of any rape! This has multiple implications: perhaps the Boer women were a match for British soldiers, which would explain the frankness about brutal female resistance with axes and knives, while black men's more 'successful' activities with Boer women left the Boer men no choice but to start some kind of negotiation.

Race was already a complicated issue during the war. Mrs de Jager testifies that three black men 'who were with the enemy' arrived at her door. There was clearly also 'another kind' of black men who were 'with us'. At this time, one in four men on commando was black. Nasson quotes Emily Hobhouse's remarks about the relationship in the concentration camps between Boer women and their black domestic workers: '[There] appears to be undue familiarity; some natives sleeping, eating and drinking in the same tents as whites' (Grundlingh & Nasson 2013: 171). He also refers to the fact that British intelligence officers were 'shocked' at the free engagement and sharing of facilities and utensils between Boers and their black assistants (Grundlingh & Nasson 2013: 171). Of course that does not indicate that black people were regarded as equals, but it was easier to engage with those 'with (under?) us' than black men behaving as if they have the same power over women as white men.

It is worth remembering though, that race was as important, if not more, for the British Empire. Krebs quotes anti-war propagandist W.T. Stead's remarks in 1900:

The crowing horror and worst outrage of all was not the violation of Dutch women by English soldiers, but the exposure of these unfortunate white women to the loathly horror of compulsory intercourse with the Kaffirs. That this has taken place repeatedly is proved by the execution of Kaffirs (Krebs 1999: 98)

Krebs suggests that commentators on the war, such as Stead and writer Arthur Conan Doyle, made black men the 'locus of animal sexuality to be counterposed against the white man's controlled, civilized sexuality' (Krebs 1999: 106). British soldiers could be sexual predators, while African men had to be rapists. In the way the accounts of sexual violence and race were structured in these affidavits, it is clear that the Boer men were buying into and confirming these very sentiments.

4 Negotiating Survival, Narrating Rape

According to Theidon (2007), one often finds detail in narratives that seem to have nothing to do with the issue of rape or violent assault, but was clearly deliberately negotiated by the narrator into the text. Theidon, in her research into the internal armed conflict of the 1980-1990 in Peru, observes that when Peruvian women finally began to talk about the rapes that they experienced by the hand of three armed groups:

[...] they located that violation within broader social dynamics. They detailed the pre-conditions that structured vulnerability and emphasized their efforts to minimize harm to themselves and the people they cared for. With their insistence on context, women situated their experience of sexual violence [...] *within womanly narratives of heroism* (my emphasis, Theidon 2007: 465).

The largest part of the eighteen-year-old and unmarried Johanna Sofia Grové's affidavit, for instance, describes *not* the terrifying violence, but the fight between the sisters and two black men about the 'portmanteau' filled with clothes. Why this emphasis? Following Theidon, one could argue that clothing underlines the aggressive sexual behaviour of men who are grabbing at, stealing, tearing, ripping off clothes, blankets and underclothes. Apart from these being essential for survival in winter and the privacy of the body, clothes also 'house', nurture and protect the body, thus forming a crucial part in maintaining its integrity.

But more is spilling from this narrative of displacement linking it to the question of nakedness in contrast to the social function of clothing marking the status of humanity. This point of losing, denuding, appears in several of the affidavits, signifying dehumanization in a very powerful way. These women were not only robbed of their language, stripped of their clothes, their livelihood, but their very capacity was repudiated to signify beyond their instrumentalizability.

Striking, too, in this respect, are phrases about jumping in or out of domestic spaces, which appear eleven times in these affidavits. Fleeing in and out of rooms and houses, locking and closing bags, cupboards and doors indicate household spaces where feminine honour holds sway as extensions of the female body. Some of the other negotiations for survival in these affidavits include offering freshly baked bread to an officer instead of sex, or taking care of a captain's pos-

sessions in order to keep some livestock (J.C.P. Nel). Aletta Christina Reeve refused to flee from the hands of a grabbing British soldier, because of a girl of thirteen years in the house, while Johanna Chatarina (sic) Geldenhuys explains how her body was exchanged for that of her daughter. Mrs P.J. van der Merwe tells how she took an axe and guarded the door. So did Mrs F. Stiar from Honingklip, Harrismith:

Dat vyand hier kwam woude in huis komen [...] hy [nam] de Baionet en stak met mening my op de maag te treffen, maar ik keerde met de hand, en kreeg een open sny aan de hand.

The enemy wanted to come into the house [...] he took his bayonet and stabbed with full force in my stomach, but I stopped it with my hand and got a big open cut.

Not all affidavits figure resistance to rape as straightforwardly as in the case of Mrs. Stiar, however. Anna Geertruide de Jongh was with her mother on the farm Burnetsland, district Kroonstad, on the night that three black men, searching for Boers, hammered at the farmhouse door. One of them grabbed the nineteen-year-old and unmarried Anna, threw her on the floor, lifted her clothes with one hand and pushed her upper body down with the other.

Ik stootte hem weg maar ik was naderhand te vermoed en te machteloos zoodat ik maar slechts worstelde wanneer myn adem weer by komt. Ik voelde zyn schaamdeel tegen myn bloot lichaam herhaaldelyk. Ik geloof niet dat hy zyn doel bereikt heft doordat ik gedurig worstelde wanneer in myn vermogen en ook telkens zyn een hand beekry en vasthield en ook omdat het kaffir volgens zyn ademreuk halfdronken was van kaffirbier. Ik voelde geen pyn in myn schaamdeel maar had erg pyn in myn rug, beenen en armen en ook had ik blaauw merken aan myn beenen, armen en op myn ellenboog was de vellen afgeschuurd tegen den grond liggende te worstelen.

I pushed him away but finally became too exhausted and powerless, so that I could only struggle when my breath returned. I felt his 'schaamdeel' (literally shy-part) against my naked body repeatedly. I do not believe that he achieved his goal, because I struggled right through whenever I could [...] and also because according to the smell of his breath he was half drunk from maize-beer. I felt no pain in my 'shy-part,' but had much pain in my back, legs and arms and also blue marks on my legs, arms and my elbow had no skin as I wrestled on the floor.

In the mother's affidavit, the three black men arrived at three o'clock that night. One of them grabbed Anna, but she and two of her other daughters tried to free her.

Doch ik was te machteloos en kaffir oorweldigde my en trok haar los van my en wierp haar tegen den grond en viel op haar neer telde haar kleeders op en nam de houding aan als of hy vleeschelyk gemeenschap met haar had, maar ik weet niet of hy zyn doel heeft bereikt want ik was asof ik van myn zinnen was door schrik en angst. Terwyl kaffir bezig was my gemelde dochter Anna Geertruida alzo te verkrachten wilden myn reeds genoemde twee dochters Engela en Maria, my dochter Hester en Mev Alida Haasbroek en ik haar ontzetten maar hy sloeg ons weg en dreigde ook om ons te schieten met zyn geweer dat langs hem lag. ... ik meen het duurde ongeveer half uur dat hy met Anna Geertruida bezig was en toen hy haar losliet stond zy op en was laf (unclear handwriting) en half flauw. Ik gaf haar water te drinken terwyl zy langs my kwam zitten. Toen hy klaar was verliet hy het huis zonder iets te zeggen. Het is my een van de bitterste oogenblikken die

ik ooit beleefd had. Ik zie myn dochter liever als een lijk wegdragen eer dat ik haar zoo zou zien verkrachten.

[...] the black man held on to her and the other two girls were beaten away when they tried to help. But I was also powerless and the black man overwhelmed me and pulled Anna away from me, threw her on the floor and fell on her, lifted her clothes and took on the bodily position as if he has fleshly intercourse with her, but I do not know whether he achieved his goal, because I was out of my mind from fear and anguish. While he was busy in this way wanting to rape named Anna, my two daughters, as well as my daughter Hester and Mrs Alida Haasbroek tried to free her, but we were beaten away and he threatened to shoot us with the gun that was next to him. Anna Gertruida shouted and struggled so that her shoulder, arms and legs were full of blue marks and bruises. I estimate that he was busy with Anna Gertruida for about half an hour, and when he let go of her, she got up and was weak and wanted to faint. I gave her water to drink while she came to sit next to me. When he was finished he left the house without saying anything. This is one of the bitterest moments I have ever endured. I would rather see my daughter being carried away as a corpse than see her raped like this.

There is much that is not clear in these two versions. The young, unmarried and probably sexually little-experienced Anna Gertruida admits that she could only 'fight back' when her breath returned and that at times she lost consciousness. She also felt the penis against her genitals, yet 'believed' that she was not raped. The mother says that 'I do not know whether he achieved his goal, because I was out of my mind with fear and anguish', yet in the next sentence she says 'while he was busy in this way wanting to rape named Anna' and later 'I would rather see my daughter being carried away as a corpse than see her raped like this'. So why did magistrate H. Potgieter, on the list he sent through to head commandant C.R. de Wet, sum this incident up as 'attempted rape'? Potgieter dealt with two sexual violence cases and classified both as attempted rape.

Describing sexual intercourse necessarily depicts a woman's submission, a succumbing, albeit through and with violence, says Walker in her study on accounts of rape. She maintains that, especially during these early times 'there was no popular language of sexual non-consent upon which women could draw. This is the sense in which there were "no words for rape's reality"' (Walker 1998: 8). She reminds us that in earlier times the language of true self-defence was male, and that women's honour was imagined differently. Prescriptive femininity embraced the concept of physical weakness, or 'corporeal impotence'. Non-consent is defined as kicking, screaming, biting, clawing and hitting, but if a woman displayed more effective self-defence, it could at once make her 'less womanly' which was not advisable for 'a successful rape narrative' (Walker 1998: 9).

By describing how one ran away or was overcome by exhaustion, positively denotes presence as well as deflects notions of female complicity and disorderliness in a way that would not affect the male listener's sympathy. In this affidavit, both mother and daughter de Jongh gave physical resistance, but their affidavits underplay it by telling about fainting and exhaustion so that the avoidance of rape was left vague and attributed to flight or the intervention of others, rather than female prowess (Walker 1998: 18).

5 Innocence and Complicity within Narrative Frames

Aletta Cecilia de Jager testifies:

[...] ik woon op de plaats Sterkfontein District Bethlehem op de 8ste Februarie 1902 trok een lager van de Engelsche omtrent twee mylen van mijn huis voorby van de troepen kwam by mijn huis ging weg zonder iets te doen dat onbehoorlyk is nadat de troepen omtrent drie minute weg was kwam bij mijn huis twee gewapende kaffers die onder de vyand behoort de een kwam mijn huis in en vraag my om by my te slaap in mijn kamer ik dreigde hem met een mes te steek doch hy neemde de mes uit my hand ik wilde toen de deur uitvlug doch de kaffer pakte my en sleep my naar de kamer toen kwam zyn maat ook de huis in en gryp my ook zy scheurde toen myne kleeren de een houde my toen vas en de andere was bezig my te verkrachten hetgeen hy ook deed ik verweerde my maar zij waren te sterk en ik wilde my verwurg waardoor mijn krach toe verzwak en zij instaat was my geheel te verkrachten de een was eers bezig en toen klom de andere een op mij en verkrachte my ook ik heeft aan hun gezeg ek is ziek maar zij hoorden niet ik is zeker dat altwee in myn lyf was; nadat altwee klaar had heeft zij my gelos en was toen weggegaan; ik was toen vier dagen bedleggend vanwee de stampe en mishandeling.

I live on the farm Sterkfontein, district Bethlehem. On the 8th of February 1902 an English contingent passed about two miles from my house. Some of the soldiers came into the house but did nothing untoward (*onbehoorlyk*). About three minutes after they left, two black armed men who were with the enemy came to my house one of them entered and asked to sleep with me in my bedroom. I threatened to stab him with a knife, but he took the knife from my hand. I wanted to escape through the door, but he grabbed me and dragged me into the bedroom. Then his friend came in and grabbed me as well. Then they tore my clothes. The one held me down and the other was busy raping me, which he subsequently did. I resisted but they were too strong and strangled me, through which my strength waned and they were able to rape me completely. The first one was busy first and then the other one climbed onto me and raped me also. I told them that I was ill, but they didn't listen. I am sure that both of them were in my body (*in myn lyf*). When they finished, they left me and went away. I was then bedridden for four days because of the pushing around and abuse.

Bennett (1997) suggests that to function fully as a 'victim' within the narrative of rape, the woman has to be 'innocent of complicity with that crime,' but her credibility can be degraded by the very stereotypic requirements that grant her tale independent validity. 'Most stereotypes about rape seek to accuse survivors of their own assault. The creation of her "credibility" then, for the survivor, is an almost *oxymoronic task*' (Bennett 1997: 101, emphasis added). Clearly, the mere positioning of oneself in a narrative as a survivor of rape comes at great personal risk in terms of credibility and integrity!

For decades feminists have fought internationally to change the attitude of both women and men towards rape: that the victim has not 'looked' for it, that she should not feel complicit, that a woman has the right at any time to say no and that should be respected, etc. But if women's bodies are the battlefield of men, how does one prevent the degradation of one's body? The self is the body and the integrity of its wholeness. Invasion by bullet or knife pierces this wholeness, its integrity, but the skin and flesh offer provable resistance evident in bruises and wounds, hence the emphasis in these affidavits on the wounds. Invasion by a pe-

nis through an opening for which the main engagement has probably previously been pleasure, means that the body has not resisted like skin and flesh; it has 'allowed' invasion through the place of pleasure. To admit to rape is to admit that something perhaps not as deadly as knife or bullet has entered the body, but nothing was properly pierced to show that it was fiercely rejected by the body. This probably plays a role in the hard work rape survivors have to do to rid themselves of self-blame: the mind knows it, but the body battles to deal with the fact that it was entered and the vagina's resistance cannot be physically shown. One is left in the lurch by the very thing that makes one female.

Bennett describes the problem from another angle: 'a body is visibly as "whole" after rape as before. There are likely to be abrasions, bruises ... but these markings are mere witnesses to the presence of violence; they only hint at the "wound" itself in a script that lends itself as easily to the description of an unfortunate accident as to the (sometimes) temporary annihilation of the semiotic process through which a woman may make sense of her self' (1997: 98).

When violently assaulted during a robbery, the story can be told without having to be on guard against a possible degradation of the self. Admitting to a wrong choice doesn't affect plausibility. The marks on the body are honourable emblems of brave combat. Even non-existent resistance becomes evidence of the attacker's brutality and casts no aspersions on one's character. When someone pins you down on the ground with his body and penetrates your heart with a knife, there is no shame in it. But when somebody pins you down and penetrates your vagina with a penis, there is, if not shame, then at least hesitation. The heart presents honour, but the vagina somehow not. The ripped heart presents a clean wound and blood; the ripped vagina is perceived to be oozing both blood and current, past or future lust. The vagina is an orifice, says Mary Douglas (1990: 60), and orifices are regarded as the most marginal parts of the body, where outside and inside converge, and that which oozes from these vulnerable points – blood, milk, urine, faeces – transgresses boundaries and makes things messy and smelly.

The remarkable affidavit of Cecilia de Jager deals openly with what happened to her, while at the same time tries to give evidence of resistance and pain. The invasion (*ik is zeker dat altwee in mijn lyf was*) becomes more poignant read through the four kinds of narrative frames identified by Bennett (1997: 104-5) as they untangle the ways in which this affidavit creates a mobile, credible and accountable subjectivity (Georgaca 2001: 227). According to Bennet there is a need for the raped person to develop a central agency, a kind of polyphonic self, in which all positions have their own voice and can be coordinated. The four frames she distinguishes are:

the narrative frame, in which the 'I' is positioned in the immediate context of the rape; the pragmatic frame, in which the 'I' marks the mind of the speaker as the resource of the narrative; the analytic frame, in which the 'I' is concerned with the relation between experience and language; and finally the reflexive frame, in which the 'I' ponders the meaning of the rape for her.

In Aletta de Jager's affidavit the first narrative frame provides the local, temporal context: the farm near Bethlehem, an English contingent two miles away, soldiers dropping by, doing nothing, then the arrival of two black men. The pragmatic frame

presents action requiring counter-action: sex was demanded, a knife pulled and removed, violence ensued, sex enforced, finally men leaving. The analytic frame reveals a consciousness of what is being said: Aletta is asked to 'sleep' with the man. Under the circumstances, this could be regarded as a somewhat 'civil' (although not desirable) opening to what would end in a violent rape. In other affidavits women testified that they were simply grabbed and pulled outside, or accosted with 'vieslike' (filthy) language. One woman says a troop asked for sex in the way sex was asked from black women, i.e. derogatory (*Op den 13 den feb kwam een Engelsch man bij mij [...] Toen vroeg hij mij weder zoo als aan meiden gevraagd wordt*).

The black men arrived about three minutes after the British troops left, so one can assume some kind of tacit agreement. In an effort to resist, Aletta told them that she was ill (menstruating?). When this was ignored, she arrived at the reflective frame explicitly pondering the meaning of the event and stating the legal requirements for rape: 'both of them were in my body'. This is a powerful yet devastating remark. She didn't find 'was raped' enough. She had to confirm that both were inside, as if occupying space in her. At the same time she didn't let go of the words 'my body' as if to say: you may have been inside me, but it is still my body, you have inflicted violence, have treated me in this terrible way, but my body remains mine. The fact that you were both *IN* my body is only possible because I, as the protector of this body, *am* its integrity.

She returns to the pragmatic frame of action/reaction: 'When they finished, they left ('los') me and went away. I was then bedridden for four days because of the pushing around and abuse'. There is something incredibly lost and sad in these last sentences (the Afrikaans word 'los' (leave) carries a sense of abandonment) affirming the implication that the body was not only damaged, but abandoned and ultimately lost.

I find this affidavit immensely powerful in the way the reflexive 'I' weaves together the experiencing and thinking 'I's in an overall frame with its own subjective continuous viewpoint. It tells the terrible through the integrity of the self, and through holding on to ownership of the body's integrity. But the context is heart-breaking. Does she already suspect that the war is lost and hopes fervently that this telling, as a kind of price for freedom, will somehow repair and redress something? Does she already despair, knowing that like the scorched landscape around her, life and those of the people she loves will never be the same?

Aletta Cecilia de Jager made this affidavit on a farm near Bethlehem on 3 March 1902, barely a month after the rape and two months before the end of the war. There is no indication of her age, or who else was with her. We do not know what happened to her, what the 'results' of the rape on her body was, who came back to her after the war, and what happened then on the farm Halfmaan.

Conclusion

An Afrikaans novel about the war, *Rang in der Staaten Rij* by Dot Serfontein, ends with the main female character giving birth to a baby in a cave, the product of rape by a black man:

I see the tiny hands making fists, the little mouth opening to reach for breath, the little feet kicking. Then, as if in a dream, I see Aunt Bet taking a folded piece of cloth. She presses it down over the little face and keeps it there. The tiny hands grab wildly, the little back making a bowlike movement, then, slowly, everything releases, the child lies motionless. 'It was stillborn,' says Aunt Bet in a flat voice (Serfontein 1979: 172; my translation).

I grew up with the story of a midwife who attended communion services but refused to take any wine or bread because of 'what she had to do during the war'.

Although it is often assumed that rape annihilates agency, this small band of unknown and forgotten women verbalised the ways in which that was resisted. They accomplished not only their sheer survival on desolated farms (where at least family members were not dying like those in the concentration camps) by regularly negotiating survival and escapes from armed men, or dealing with the after-effects of their wounded bodies and minds, but also choose to tell their story in male presences, describing it in such a way and not another, emphasising this detail and leaving out that one, telling and also not-telling.

Close reading of these affidavits overwhelms one with the force with which they foreground sexual violence and its complex relationships with power, vocabulary, event and context: how these women tell what has happened so that they can live with it, while simultaneously not hampering the glimpses of a future that their husbands, families and communities might have when their words are being used to seek some kind of justice. One wonders what was on their minds when they wrote or signed these sparse texts. Were they, walking back to their annihilated lives, sensing in the words of Ortiz, that 'torn' from their 'native moorings' they were trying to deal 'with the problem of disadjustment and readjustment, of deculturation and acculturation – in a word, of transculturation' as South Africa was being turned into some kind of postcolonial state by the Act of Union 1910 after the war? (Ortiz 1995: 98; Attwell 2005: 2). Did they understand and agree that their narratives were to be used in an attempt by Afrikaner men to save their own honour in the face of those with whom they were making a peace pact?

Against the background of early twentieth century patriarchy, the Afrikaner post South African war narrative turned for many generations around two basic focus points: the *bittereinders* and the *konsentrasiekamp*. The monuments built were for them, the paintings and the poems, the novels and plays. To have been in a concentration camp or exiled as prisoner of war became the ultimate badges of Afrikaner honour. The *hendsoppers* and the women groups on the farms have, in comparison, received scant attention,³ mainly because they were probably not useful in negotiating a post-war life.

For Afrikaner men, having just lost a war, it was important to regain control at least over the personal sphere of their lives for which the image of vulnerable, suffering women was immensely useful. By claiming that they signed for peace because of the suffering of women and children, women's mobility and independence could be reined in and redirected to support men in rebuilding fam-

3 Creating much anger the focus has slowly shifted to traitors and hendsoppers (see Grundlingh 1979, Blake 2010 and recently a film 'Verraaiers' (Feb 2013, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2247109/>). Many of the affidavits were translated for the first time from the handwritten Dutch into Afrikaans, and published by A.W.G. Raath in his book *Vrouleed* (1993). Two novels were published recently about rape in a concentration camp.

ily life. An awareness of women who grouped together and successfully kept themselves and their large families alive through negotiations with friend and foe, white and black, was not helpful in the re-establishment of Boer power over women.

But the final obliteration of these affidavits, first by not using them and thereafter embargoing them, is at least as tragic as their content. My suggestion here is that, in this instance, the very empowerment transculturation *could* have brought, failed them. I use the term transculturation in the way Attwell (2005) suggests, namely as a process in which the disempowered, using the tools of the powerful, begins a dialogue with the powerful in order to create a new relation based on new terms. Being in contact via representatives and educated civil servants with citizens of a broader world than the two Boer Republics, there was clearly an awareness among the Boers that they could 'use' the violations of the British army to negotiate some power and honour for themselves by discrediting the enemy in terms of universal values. The women told their stories within this context and might have shared a desire to expose the mighty Empire: using the law and the media on an international scale. Within this transcultural process of hitting back, another smaller transcultural process took place: that of the women asserting agency within (and despite) the strict and male-controlled format of the affidavit. They narrate their experiences within broader and subtler forms of bravery and made it clear that the assaults were not the only suffering they have had. When peace finally arrived for those of whom some still had bruises on their bodies, there was a massive drive to reconcile Boer and Briton within a proper Union of South Africa. Within this process of letting bygones be bygones, of sharing the country's land and resources among white people only, affidavits of severe violations had no place.

So through this collusion between two white male hierarchies, these affidavits were in the first place recorded by the Boers in a way which placed the blame for rape squarely on black men, letting British soldiers go scot free. Secondly they were then temporarily shelved by these men and finally had to suffer an embargo because of, according to Van der Merwe, the political sensitivity of some *other* documents in the Havenga collection (Grundlingh 2013: 52-53).

This complicity of Boer and Briton men, effectively and regrettably removed male violence against women from the national agenda. They needed everyone to believe that they were reconciling and sharing, not with rapists, but with ordinary, if not honourable, white men. In this potentially potent 'contact-zone' between cultures, white men collaborated to gain dominance in both gender and race and so destroyed whatever possibilities existed to address violent behaviour in this once-off post-war rhizome.

The implication of that was devastating. The kind of discussion necessary to interrogate the complex ways in which violence manifests against one's own wife and daughters, one's workers, the subsistence farmer on one's land, the poor in the street, etc., never took place. Nor the ways in which the Empire left a legacy of brutal sexual violence against women in its wake of colonial conquest across the world; nor how the 'reconciliatory sharing of spoils' between white men glossed over the fertile ground for thriving racist views in white rural communities of the two Boer Republics; nor was the racist impact within white rural households af-

ter encouraging black men to 'do with white women what they want' ever dealt with. It was only when South Africa accepted a constitution based on equality and safety from violence, that the various levels of deeply rooted brutality, violence and devastation of men against the vulnerable in society seemed to burst like an evil boil into the open, leaving South Africans aghast within its toxic suppurations – as if we, for many decades, did not know that it was there, nor where it had come from.

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Adres van de auteur

Faculty of Arts, University of the Western Cape
akrog@uwc.ac.za