



A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN'S HISTORY FROM c. 1990  
A SURVEY OF MONOGRAPHS, ANTHOLOGIES AND JOURNAL ARTICLES

By

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Problem statement

In her book *Liberals, Marxists, and Nationalists: Competing interpretations of South African History*, Merle Lipton proclaims that “History matters because it forms an important part of our consciousness, contributing to our beliefs of who we are, who our friends and enemies are, and how our societies might and should evolve.”<sup>1</sup>

The making of history takes place in an intricate field of production. Which history it is that eventually matters, depends on whose voices are heard, by whom. The circulation of ideas and the processes, by which some narratives gain dominance over others, continue to fascinate scholars from a number of fields. In tertiary academic institutions worldwide, the tendency over the past decades has increasingly been to measure the state of knowledge in outputs, particularly scholarly publications. History studies are no exception in this regard. This study probes into one single aspect of this production process of scholarly outputs; it traces the ways South African women’s history featured in monographs, anthologies and journal articles published from about 1990 to 2011.

The problem to be investigated is the extent to which research on women’s history in South Africa contributed to a more inherently feminist approach to South African history in general, during the first two decades of South Africa’s racially-inclusive democracy. The year 1990 marks a convenient starting point to probe the effect of South Africa’s changing political climate on women’s history. Internationally, the study of women’s history was established during the 1950s and 1960s. However, this trend reached South Africa only around the 1970s. According to Penelope Herrington, this was because “The survival there of the apartheid regime, and of a dominant culture that is not receptive to the expression of ideas, seem[ed] likely to inhibit the writing of women’s history.”<sup>2</sup> As late as 1990, in a review of radical history writing in South Africa, Belinda Bozzoli and Peter Delius lamented that women’s history “has not come to constitute a significant or recognisable separate field of scholarship in South Africa”.<sup>3</sup> In an

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<sup>1</sup> M. Lipton: *Liberals, Marxists, and Nationalists: Competing interpretations of South African History*, 2007, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> P. Hetherington, Women in South Africa: The historiography in English. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6(2), 1993, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> B Bozzoli and P Delius, Radical history and South African society, *Radical History Review* XLVI-XLVII, 1990, p. 33, in L Manicom, Ruling relations, rethinking state and gender in South African history, *Journal of African History* 33(3), 1992, p. 441.

article published in 1992, Linzi Manicom observed a change in this situation. She referred to the publication in 1990 of the book *Women and gender in Southern Africa to 1945* – a collection of essays which will also feature prominently in this study. Manicom further based her assessment on an increase in the number of journal articles published on the history of South African women from 1990, as well as the introduction of women’s studies programmes at some South African universities.<sup>4</sup> It is thus clear that structural and institutional shifts in the production of South African histories had already been under way by 1990, the year in which the ruling National Party released Nelson Mandela, and that transformations had already been well under way by the time elections took place and the African National Congress came to power in 1994.

The second motivational factor for taking 1990 as a starting point, concerns funding. In the apartheid years, in order to encourage research amongst South Africa’s increasingly isolated academic community, the so-called supply-side subsidy system was introduced. According to this system, South African universities were rewarded with state funding per peer-reviewed research output published in the name of the particular university. When the education system was reformed in the new democratic dispensation in the 1990s, the supply-side subsidy system was retained, and universities began to reward researchers personally for each publication unit he or she had contributed in exchange for subsidy for the institution provided by the Department of Higher Education and Training. Researchers were individually allocated research funding directly in accordance with the subsidy funding that their articles, books or patents had earned for the university. Not only changing ideologies and theoretical shifts in the discipline, but also decisions about funding academic practice, thus contributed to the shaping of scholarship in terms of where to publish and in what format to publish. Researchers would strategise in order to generate funding, and the presence, or not, of particular journals on the government approved lists became hotly debated issues. As expressed so aptly by Lynn Nyhart: “form follows funding”.<sup>5</sup>

A third factor was technology: As from the 1990s, researchers increasingly relied on electronic search aids to find appropriate material on particular topics, and there was also an increasing tendency amongst lecturers to compile readers for students, no longer requiring them to search in journals and books (on shelves) by themselves. The result was a growing alienation between

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<sup>4</sup> L. Manicom, *Ruling relations, ...*, JAH, p. 441.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by G. Penny in *Reflections. German polycentrism and the writing of history*, *German History* 30(2), 2012, p. 282.

the user and the context in which the research material was being used. Instead of joining a scholarly society and subscribing to its journal, researchers can now rely on their institution subscribing to an electronic platform on which the user can search through literally hundreds of different journals by typing in a few keywords. Rather contradictory, *where* something had been published, simultaneously matters more and less than ever before. The moment a researcher starts looking for a platform to launch his or her own research findings, the character, ethos and tradition of the particular journal to which the draft is being submitted, becomes very relevant. The politics of publishing have a definite effect on whose history will eventually be accepted, by whom, and where.

## 1.2. Purpose of the study

This study is an assessment of the writing of women's history in South Africa from the birth of a new democratic state in 1990, with the cut-off date roughly two decades later, around 2011, the year in which most of the information for this study was collected. The purpose is to explore how South African women's history has been accounted for. It seeks to determine how women have been written about since the new political dispensation in South Africa. While the project aligns itself with the aims of any historiography, the form of the study follows the way the 'industry' itself is increasingly being shaped. Linking up with the units of production at the disposal of researchers, and the platforms for consumption offered to readers, the following units of analysis had been selected: monographs, anthologies and journal articles.

While the prominent feminist and gender historians have not refrained from assessing their field over the past two post-apartheid decades, few publications of a historiographical nature actually appeared. The current research has been inspired by the kind of article Penelope Hetherington compiled in 1983 (*A historiography of Women in South Africa*)<sup>6</sup>, the kind of assessment Linzi Manicom published in 1992 (*Rethinking the relation between gender and the state in South African history*)<sup>7</sup>, the kind of stock-taking Paul Zeleza<sup>8</sup> had conducted for women more broadly in African historiography in 1997, and the kind of panel discussions held at history conferences – a

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<sup>6</sup> P. Hetherington, *Women in South Africa, ...*, IJAHS, pp. 241-269.

<sup>7</sup> L. Manicom, *Ruling relations, ...*, JAH, pp. 441-465.

<sup>8</sup> P. Zeleza, *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises*, 1997.

precious recording of such being Natasha Erlank and Lindsay Clowes's summary of a session held on occasion of the centenary of the University of Cape Town History Department.<sup>9</sup>

A number of historiographies on South African political history have been written by people like Paul Maylam (2001: *South Africa's racial past: The history and historiography of racism, segregation and apartheid*) and Merle Lipton (2007: *Liberals, Marxists, and Nationalists: Competing interpretations of South African History*), but no historiographical assessment of this scope has been forthcoming with regards to women's history. This should not be surprising considering the extent to which South African historiographies have been influenced by nationalist thinking that undermines women. As Marelize Grobler puts it, "Nationalist historiography's impact on the histories of women in South Africa is critical, because if nationalism influences the focus of historical research, and what historical images (geskiedsbeelde) are created, it follows that different nationalisms dictate what should be written about women in that nationalist context."<sup>10</sup> One of the aims of this study is to determine the extent to which the historical literature over the past two decades has managed to overcome what Belinda Bozzoli had described in 1983 as "...separate, sentimental studies on 'women' or even 'men and women' ... or glorifying in an uncritical manner the resistance of women in the past."<sup>11</sup> This study also seeks to ascertain whether historical writing has been re-recorded from a feminist view or if the role of women has just been added on as another part. It seeks to contribute to South African historiography by tracing the form and the content of scholarship produced on women's history.

### 1.3. Methodology

The study will attempt to 'map' academic writings that sought to address women's history over the past twenty years. In addition, the study will also analyse two seminal compilations, one edited by Cheryl Walker in 1990, and one by Nomboniso Gasa in 2007, concerning the extent to which they served as watersheds in the writing of women's history. These books have challenged the marginalisation of women's voices in every aspect of social life by trying to highlight the role of women within South African history. They address women's agency and ask questions that

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<sup>9</sup> N. Erlank and L. Clowes, Reports on colloquium sessions. Session 7: Writing and teaching gendered history in Africa in the twenty-first century, *South African Historical Journal* 50, 2004, pp. 231-236.

<sup>10</sup> M. Grobler, Towards a legal history of white women in the Transvaal, 1877-1899, MHCS dissertation, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 2009, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> B. Bozzoli, Marxism, feminism and South African Studies, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9 (2), 1983, p. 171.



elevate women's history to the same level as other themes in history, but each, of course, reflects the state of scholarship at the time of its appearance.

Hence, monographs, biographies, compilations and anthologies, reviews of these as well as journal articles will be assessed to determine if indeed Gasa's and Walker's volumes are framing the period under study as 'beacon'-books.

The study will systematically trace what had been produced in journals.<sup>12</sup> Then an attempt will be made to analyse whether and to what extent there has been a shift in ideology, theory and methodology that one may be able to distinguish between the scholarship of the past twenty years and the preceding decades. This will contribute to a better accounting of the state of women's history in future general assessments of South African historiography.

The study intends to trace production trends by comparing the offering in local South African journals with that in international journals as far as articles related to South African women's history are concerned. In which journals did the groundbreaking articles appear? Did writers from South Africa tend to publish in particular journals? Did their work have a presence in both local and international journals? And how did international scholars introduce their results on South African women's history? Did they publish first in international journals and then in local ones, or was there not necessarily any particular sequence followed?

The study of journals will assist the identification and testing of the productivity of clusters, or study groups, in writing of women's histories. Where do the contributors to the Walker and Gasa volumes feature? Why were certain South African Universities more active than others? Was there a preference for the study of particular themes or eras at particular times? Which time periods and topics have been neglected in the process? Where necessary, prominent women historians will be interviewed to find answers to such questions.

The study should also attempt to determine current perceptions around women's history from researchers. Prominent authors like Sheila Meintjes will be consulted. The interviewees will be asked whether in their experience, writing has overcome the downgrading of women's history.

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<sup>12</sup> Amongst the most prominent historical journals in South Africa, count *The South African Historical Journal*, *Historia and Social Dynamics*. International journals will include *The Journal of Southern African Studies*, *Journal of African History*, *History in Africa*, *Gender in History*. The use of electronic databases will make it possible to locate articles published in a wide range of journals, also ones not focusing solely on historical contributions.

#### 1.4. Key concepts

This section will explain the key concepts used in this study. Susan Kent explains *gender* as an idea that “defines what it means to be a woman or a man in a particular society and the kind of behaviour and thought that is considered to be feminine or masculine.”<sup>13</sup> Joan Wallach Scott argues that gender historians’ “goal is to discover the range in sex roles and in sexual symbolism in different societies and periods, to find out what meaning they had and how they functioned to maintain the social order to promote change.”<sup>14</sup> While Scott concedes that most of the time the words *gender* and *women* are used interchangeably, she does differentiate *women’s history* from *gender history*. She explains that whereas *gender* “includes but does not name women ... ‘women’s history’ proclaims its politics by asserting that women are valid historical subjects.”<sup>15</sup> According to Paul Zeleza *women’s history* “... focuses specifically on women’s experiences, activities and discourses....”<sup>16</sup>

Feminist history, according to Gwen Duganzich, is defined as being primarily committed to the task of making *women’s history* visible<sup>17</sup>. Walker defined feminist history as “one that sees the subordination of women in a given society as a problem, requiring explanation and challenge; it is not something to be taken for granted, or as part of the natural order of things.”<sup>18</sup> While feminist historians would approach all historical investigation with the aim to expose unequal gender roles as constructed, not all feminist historians are necessarily *women’s historians*, or, *historians of women*.

Yet it would be problematic if the study of *women* as historical subjects were not approached from a feminist perspective. Already in 1986 Scott argued for a disruption of the notion of fixity and that “historians need to examine the ways in which gendered identities are substantively constructed and relate their findings to a range of activities, [and] social organisations.”<sup>19</sup> The group of authors, who convened around Cheryl Walker in 1990 to compile a *gender history* for

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<sup>13</sup> S. Kent, *Gender in Prehistory*, 1989, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> J.W. Scott, *Gender: A useful category of historical analysis*, *American Historical Association* 91(5), December 1986, p. 1054.

<sup>15</sup> J.W. Scott, *Gender: A useful category*, ..., AHA, p. 1056.

<sup>16</sup> P. Zeleza, *Manufacturing African*, ..., p. 182.

<sup>17</sup> G. Duganzich, *She's who makes history: Reviewing the historical treatment of black women by four South African scholars*, *Historia* 44(1), 1999, p. 68.

<sup>18</sup> C. Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, 1991, p. xxiii.

<sup>19</sup> J.W. Scott, *Gender: A useful category*, ..., AHA, p. 1068.

South Africa until 1945, and around Nomboniso Gasa in 2007 to produce a history of women in South Africa, were all in agreement in this regard.

Manicom aptly describes the challenges when promoting women's history as a means towards a more convincing feminist approach to history in general. She says:

... formal recognition of women's studies as a distinct field of historical inquiry can exacerbate the patterns of ghettoization and marginalization that surround gender-aware historians and their work.<sup>20</sup>

And:

The further development of women's history in South Africa cannot therefore ensure either that it will be more valorized as a field of research or that it will be taken into account within mainstream history. Nor can it be assumed that the production of a 'critical mass' of feminist and women's history will prompt a more profound, gendered re-thinking of the historical enterprise. Such an outcome is dependent both on the institutional politics around the legitimacy of gender inquiry in what is now recognized as 'history' (including all its sub-disciplines) and on the way in which gender analysis is conceived by South Africanist historians.<sup>21</sup>

In a panel discussion held at the University of Cape Town in 2004, the participants acknowledged the challenges women and gender history face within the mainstream of history. The panel agreed that gender history requires "familiarity with a broad range of theoretical work merging out psychology, literary studies, cultural studies, anthropology and sociology..."<sup>22</sup> Perhaps this is the most common reason for trivialisation of gender history by general historians who are comfortable with just the mainstream. While most campaigned for gender history, and that women's history needs to graduate to gender history, Gaitskell defended women's history. She posits that women's history is a prerequisite to gender history, that we need to understand first what women were doing and how they experienced their lives before we move into gender history<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> L. Manicom, *Ruling relations*, ..., JAH, p. 442.

<sup>21</sup> L. Manicom, *Ruling relations*, ..., JAH, p. 443.

<sup>22</sup> N. Erlank and L. Clowes, *Reports on colloquium sessions*,..., SAHJ, p. 232.

<sup>23</sup> N. Erlank and L. Clowes, *Reports on colloquium sessions*,..., SAHJ, p. 232.

The study will research how women's history has been reinterpreted in the past two decades as compared to the previous decades. Have the past two decades moved from corrective history to actual agency? It is proposed that Butler's understanding of agency be followed. Butler argues that "...agency lies not in forsaking the position into which one is subjugated, but, instead, in inhabiting this position and then destabilising it through an iterative performativity"<sup>24</sup>

Authors like Shula Marks, Phil Bonner, Iris Berger and a few more, wrote more on new themes that challenged the male dominated and western oriented production of South African Women's History. However, little assessment of these productions has been given. This study intends to determine whether women's history production in the past two decades has been able to "...insist on the inadequacy of existing bodies of theory for explaining persistent inequalities between women and men"<sup>25</sup> Are women's history producers writing history as an interconnected process; as a social construct; or still based on women's struggle and nationalism only? Is the current writing criticising existing perceptions on women or does it show women's agency?

Andrea Cornwall identifies two perceptions that have always influenced the writing of gender in Africa. She argues that African women have been seen as victims. This perception has borne another perception being the contradiction of the Western pessimist; it depicts women as heroes and as being involved in resistance<sup>26</sup>. This study will investigate if in the past two decades, the production of women's history has overcome these stereotypes. It will seek to determine if women's history has been dominated by interpretations which had been channelled into a particular social class, or if it was about agency. That is, have women historians fallen victim to stereotyping themselves? Have writers of women's history sidelined other members of female communities?

Kwabena and Akurang posit that "... the distortion of information in the colonial period still poses challenges to the reconstruction of women's history."<sup>27</sup> There is a need to check if the

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<sup>24</sup> J. Butler, How bodies come to matter: An interview with Judith Butler, in M. Samuelson, *Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women? Stories of the South African Transition*, 2007, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> J.W. Scott, *Gender: A useful category,...*, AHA, p. 1066.

<sup>26</sup> A. Cornwall, *Readings in Gender in Africa*, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> O. Kwabena & P. Akurang, Aspects of elite women's activism in the Gold Coast, 1874-1890, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 37(3), 2004, pp. 463-464.

analysis of historical events in whichever period has been frank. Formes argues that we need to move beyond the “compensatory” and “complicity versus resistance” models of understanding women’s role.<sup>28</sup>

The study will seek to contribute to a historiography that will determine whether historians of women still focus on women’s struggle (patriarchy in the main) and nationalism (whether women are still embedded within nationalist thinking like the “*Mother of the Nation*” and liberation movements) or have taken another view on the roles of women in South Africa. It will also evaluate if writers over the past two decades have been able to “...use structural and narrative approaches to avoid serious hazards ... and correct serious inaccuracies”.<sup>29</sup> All these theoretical premises will have to be tested against what had actually been published. Monographs and articles on women’s history and the acknowledgment thereof not only in general South African Histories, but also in publications on South African historiography will have to be considered.

### 1.5. Theoretical approaches

Joan Wallach Scott identifies three theoretical patterns available to feminist historians: “The first, an entirely feminist effort, attempts to explain the origins of patriarchy. The second locates itself within a Marxian tradition and seeks an accommodation with feminist critiques. The third ... draw[s] on ... different schools of psychoanalysis to explain the production and reproduction of the subject’s gendered identity”<sup>30</sup>. These patterns are also recognisable on the South African scene.

In the 1970s, liberal feminists defined their efforts as opposition to patriarchy. They moved from the premise of society’s “false belief that women by nature, (are) less intellectually and /or physically capable than men, it excludes women from the academy, the forum and the marketplace.”<sup>31</sup> Their solution thus, according to Penelope Hetherington, “...is in terms of an extension to women the rights and freedoms available to men.”<sup>32</sup> They believed that the battlefield had to be levelled and all given an opportunity to excel. It is worth noting that the

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<sup>28</sup> M. Formes, ‘Beyond complicity versus resistance: Recent work on gender and European imperialism’ in S. Dagut, Gender, colonial 'Women's History' and the construction of social distance: Middle-class British women in later nineteenth century South Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26(3), September 2000, pp. 555-572.

<sup>29</sup> S. Dagut, Gender, colonial 'Women's History' and, ..., JSAS, p. 557.

<sup>30</sup> J.W. Scott, Gender: A useful category, ..., AHA, pp. 1057-1058.

<sup>31</sup> R. Tong, *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 1989, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> P. Hetherington, Women in South Africa, ..., IJAH, pp. 243.

nuances in women's history presented by the liberal feminists around the 1970s within South Africa were influenced by earlier anthropological descriptions of women in South Africa, influenced by Eurocentric biases and perceptions of the 'backwardness of Africans'. As Claire Robertson puts it, anthropologists "...dealt with women's roles, mostly in the context of biological reproduction ...embedded in descriptions of marriage customs or fertility rituals, witchcraft, and domestic labour."<sup>33</sup> In the process, they criticised a social organisation that was headed by males (patriarchy), blamed it for women's oppression and stayed away from attacking the capitalist apartheid state on the position women occupied.

The late 1970s witnessed a vigorous analysis and recording of women's history by academics who in their political thought were more conscious of the state machinery. Their interpretation of women's history caused a stir and a careful consideration of the role played by women in the development of South African histories. In the 1980s, most academics adopted a Marxist approach in defining women's history, led by Belinda Bozzoli.<sup>34</sup> Marxist feminists believed that private ownership of the means of production by a few, and not the rules of a particular society was to blame for the ignorance of women's plight in South Africa. Rosemarie Tong argues that Marxist feminists agreed that "[I]f all women – not just the relatively privileged or exceptional ones – are ever to be liberated, the capitalist system must be replaced by a socialist system in which the means of production belongs to one and all".<sup>35</sup> Marxist feminists were influenced by Karl Marx's interpretation of a class society oppressed by a capitalist state. Thus, the interpretation of women's history aimed to determine how women, as people, contested their space in the midst of an oppressive apartheid state.

In South Africa, Belinda Bozzoli and Helen Bradford have been credited as pioneers of this theoretical approach based on their earlier writings on women's history in South Africa. This point was also supported by Deborah Gaitskell at the colloquium sessions held in Cape Town in 2004<sup>36</sup>. Marxist feminist historians' goals have thus been "...directed at the transformation of the political order in South Africa but almost certainly towards democratic practices and the

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<sup>33</sup> C. Robertson, Developing economic awareness: Changing perspectives in studies of African women, 1976-1985, *Feminist Studies* 13(1), 1987, p. 98.

<sup>34</sup> B. Bozzoli . Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9(2), 1983.

<sup>35</sup> R. Tong, *Feminist Thought, ...*, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> N. Erlank and L. Clowes, Reports on colloquium sessions, ..., SAHJ, p. 232.

overturning of the Afrikaner state”.<sup>37</sup> This approach has been adopted by most of the commentators on South African women’s history to date.

This standpoint has been challenged by radical feminists who call for the destruction of cultural institutions like the family and the church, which they claim, perpetuate the oppression of women as child bearers. They posit that women should be able to decide what to do with their reproductive capacity without being cautioned by societal institutions. If women have this power, they would be free and their spaces would be controlled by themselves. Their beliefs emanate from their perception of diverse issues like abortion, birth control, sterilisation, abuse, domestic battery, rape, incest, lesbianism, sexual harassment, prostitution, female sexual slavery and pornography.”<sup>38</sup>

This approach is consistent with the environment that women created within abusive institutions that controlled women and relegated them to victim status. Thus, authors who pursued this approach called for the revolt against cultural traits that were imposed on women and assuming that women who engaged in the practices mentioned earlier are either immoral or disrespectful. It is the view of this research that while many approaches including psychoanalysis, postmodernism and socialism were considered when writing women’s history, the liberal, Marxist and radical interpretations became more prevalent in the analysis of South African women’s history.

As Lipton puts it, within the South African context, “the influence of and ideology seems less important than the heated, inflated rhetoric suggests. What seem more relevant are underlying, though largely implicit, differences in assumptions about individual and social behaviour, such as the role of self-interest and the nature of social change. Insufficient attention has been paid to the influence on historians of their professional and personal ties and animosities, evident in rivalries for jobs, status and power.”<sup>39</sup> This study, through the analyses of the Walker and Gasa anthologies and other material based on women’s history, will attempt to determine if women’s history has been influenced by the personal, ideological and/or social and political discourses, or whether the structuring of academia itself in a neo-liberal economy stymied the feminist project all over again as from the 1990s.

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<sup>37</sup> P. Hetherington, *Women in South Africa, ...*, IJAH, p. 243.

<sup>38</sup> R. Tong, *Feminist Thought, ...*, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> M. Lipton, *Marxists, and Nationalists, ...*, p. 6.

## 1.6. Chapter overview

The first chapter has examined the concept of women's history alongside other related concepts like feminist and gender history. Thereafter, it has provided an overview of developments in women's history until the 1990s.

Chapter 2 explores the issue that the neglect of women's history in general histories up until the 1990s reflects the strong nationalist tendencies that existed in the discipline at the time, as well as a lack of commitment to a feminist approach to history, particularly an African understanding of feminism. The chapter gives an overview of the most prominent work which had been produced on women's history in topic-specific monographs up until the 1990s.

Chapter 3 focuses on two anthologies, one that appeared in 1990 (Cheryl Walker's *Women and Gender in South Africa to 1945*) and a subsequent one published in 2007 (Nomboniso Gasa's *Women in South African History*). In this chapter, the study examines the change and tension between the two anthologies (Gasa takes Walker to task on a number of issues), not only by analysing the content of each, but also by situating each of these volumes among the monographs on women's history related topics that fed their discourse, or appeared at approximately the same time. Through the analysis of the Walker and Gasa collections, the study seeks to determine how these texts, which both in their titles and their composition claimed to be South African anthologies, address the role of women in history at a national level.

This should not assume that there were no other anthologies and monographs written during this period. For instance, Bozzoli's *Women of Phokeng*<sup>40</sup> traces the journey of twenty-two women from Phokeng into Johannesburg and how they defied the apartheid government which wanted to take their livelihood. Walker's monograph,<sup>41</sup> on the other hand, looks at women's roles in political organisations from the formation of the ANC women's league, women within the SACP, the anti-pass protests, women's roles in trade unions, and the formation of the Federation of South African Women. So, while these two books offer intense accounts of women's history, they also focus on particular themes, unlike *Women and Gender to 1945* which

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<sup>40</sup> B. Bozzoli and M. Nkotsoe, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, life strategy, and migrancy in South Africa 1900-1983*, 1983.

<sup>41</sup> C. Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, 1991.



is a collection of different essays from different authors with different views. So, the book offers a larger scope.

The study also explores Nomboniso Gasa's edited collection, *Women in South African History*, to find out if the change within women's history in South Africa that was anticipated by feminists and historians generally, indeed took place. This collection brought historical and contemporary women's issues into one book and challenged widely acceptable perceptions about women, that were inculcated by male-dominated history. There were other books published in this period, for example, Meg Samuelson's *Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women?*,<sup>42</sup> which concentrates on how prominent women like Krotoa Eva, Sara Bartman and Nonqawuse were used to consolidate South African transition as unifying symbols post 1990. In 2009, Hannah Britton, Jenifer Fish and Sheila Meintjes produced a collection called *Women's Activism in South Africa Working Across Divides* <sup>43</sup>, which covers topics ranging from women's interaction with state on gender issues to access to basic needs. However, these books concentrate on specific women and topics.

In chapter 4, the examiner explores how local journals have captured women's history. In this chapter, the study will trace how the journals have changed over time and what new themes have been introduced, and whether there has been a re-evaluation of the manner in which women's history had been captured. By local journals, I refer to the journals of South African societies or institutions.

Chapter 5 focuses on International journals. In this chapter, the researcher will trace the perceptions on South African women's history in this scholarship, the new themes that have been introduced, and whether there has been a re-evaluation of existing themes. International journals refers to journals based at institutions outside of South Africa. In accordance with the bias in scholarly publishing and South Africa's historical entanglement in mostly Anglophone networks, it is not surprising that most of these journals are based at institutions in Britain and the United States of America.

Chapter 6 concludes the study with a summary of my findings.

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<sup>42</sup> M. Samuelson, *Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women*, 2007.

<sup>43</sup> H. Britton *et al*, *Women's Activism in South Africa Working Across Divides*, 2009.

## CHAPTER 2: 'GENERAL HISTORY' AND 'WOMEN'S HISTORY' IN SOUTH AFRICA UP TO THE 1990s

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter has two sections. In the first part, an overview is given of the limited extent to which women's history, and consequently a feminist approach to history, featured in general histories of South Africa up to the 1990s. The second part introduces the work of some of the most prominent South African women's historians, and their contribution to the 'general history' project of that time. In this study, "general history" refers to the genre of historical writing attempting to produce comprehensive national narratives – typically, the history of a 'country'; or the 'making' of a society within national state boundaries, in this case, "South Africa".

The dismantling of Apartheid South Africa was encouraged and anticipated by the radical – and liberal – historians engaging with the country's past during the 1970s and 1980s. Besides a strong focus on race and class, the importance of gender and feminist history has also been rationalised since the late 1970s. And yet, it must be noted that while feminist historians had done a lot regarding the production of women's histories, 'general' South African histories and historiographies up until the mid-1990s have contributed less to the topic. As Manicom expressed it in 1992:

Historians doing 'general' or 'universal' history continue to ignore gender. With some women seen to be doing the work of gender history within a designated sub-field, other (particularly) male historians can rationalize an exemption from the struggle to integrate a gender perspective in to their work – a challenge that grows ever more sophisticated and consequential as feminist theory advances and one that potentially can undermine their mastery of the subject.<sup>44</sup>

### 2.2. 'General histories' of South Africa into the 1990s

The following paragraphs trace this treatment of women's history in general histories on South Africa produced from the 1980s and into the 1990s. I examine nine sets of general South African histories:

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<sup>44</sup> L. Manicom, *Ruling relations, ...*, *JAH*, p. 442.

Hermann Giliomee declared Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson's book, *A History of South Africa to 1870* (1982), to be “a turning-point in South African historiography to which all subsequent writing must relate.”<sup>45</sup> This is a powerful South African history which has strong chapter contributions from renowned historians like William Beinart, Shula Marks and George Frederickson, amongst others. However, this 475-page volume was neither a watershed for a feminist approach nor an appeal for the greater visibility of women in South Africa’s long past, because women and women’s history are mentioned only on a few pages. The same limited reference to women's history is also found in Paul Maylam's book, *A History of the African People of South Africa: from the Early Iron Age to the 1970s* (1989). According to Maylam, the book intended to “...look inside these African societies, examining their internal dynamics, regional variations, and process of change over time.”<sup>46</sup> Like most South African history volumes, Maylam mentions women in passing, in relation to beer brewing, issuing of passes or resettlement.

TRH Davenport’s *South Africa, a Modern History*, published for the first time in 1977, did little to address women’s history too. While reviewers hailed it as a strong book that captured the history of South Africa, the book dedicated only a few pages to the role of women in South African history. Women are referred to in this book when pass laws are mentioned, but their agency in terms of how they defied patriarchal tendencies from liberation movements, families and political parties, is not considered. *South Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, co-written by B.J. Liebenberg and S.B. Spies and published in 1993, also addressed women’s roles in history to a limited extent. The entire volume covers a few paragraphs on women’s history, mentioning them when reference is made to the work of the Black Sash. William Beinart’s book in 1994, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, also paid little attention to the topic.

Reviewers praised Robert Ross's *A Concise History of South Africa* as a succinct synthesis of South African history from agrarian to post-apartheid South Africa.<sup>47</sup> However, it also paid little attention to women's history. Few lines are dedicated to women and when mentioned, women appear as second-class labourers, oppressed people in institutions like traditional marriage or nationalism. The book fails to outline women's role within the United Democratic Front (UDF)

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<sup>45</sup> This comment was made by Herman Giliomee as an acknowledgement at the back cover of the same volume: M. Wilson & L. Thompson, *A History of South Africa to 1870*, 1982.

<sup>46</sup> P. Maylam, *A History of the African People of South Africa: from the Early Iron Age to the 1970s*, 1986, p. i.

<sup>47</sup> This is an acknowledgement comment at the back cover of this book, R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*, 1999.

and Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). Meanwhile, Leonard Thompson's *A History of South Africa* was described by Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu as an accurate and authentic account of the history of Africans in South Africa when it was published for the first time in 2001.<sup>48</sup> However, the book fails to take advantage of the new dawn in South Africa to reinterpret women's history in South Africa. While it covers South African history from known human habitation to the transition of power between Mbeki and Mandela, it did less to incorporate women's history.

Hermann Giliomee's *The Afrikaners, a Biography of a People*, attempted to address women's history. The book, published in 2003, commences by acknowledging that the role played by women had been underplayed in South African history books. Mention is made of the role of women in the Great Trek, the Anglo-Boer War (South African War), obtaining the vote for white women, the fight for Afrikaner identity and forging anti-British sentiments. While Giliomee attempted to give women's history some consideration, it was presented from an Afrikaner nationalist ideology. Women's agency in its own right has not been the topic of investigation.

Herman Giliomee co-edited the *New History of South Africa* with Bernard Mbenga (2007). The volume also featured little information on the history of women. Its many contributors include Sandra Swart, Andrew Manson, Jeff Pieres, Luli Callinicos, Albert Grundlingh, Christopher Saunders, Tom Lodge and Khehla Shubane. However, in its 454 pages, it fails to adopt a feminist approach or to offer any dedicated treatment women's history. While mention is made of women during the South African War, particularly in the concentration camps; this is done within nationalist thinking. Women are presented as either victims or heroes without showing how they came out against patriarchal and societal stereotypes within their role in South African history. Mbenga and Giliomee thus missed a chance to interpret experiences of South African women within women's history into their volume, even post apartheid.

The general histories into the 1990s did touch on the role women played, but to a limited extent. While these standard histories have acknowledged notable women like Winnie Mandela or Ruth First, reference to individuals did not capture the feminist interpretation of women's history. While themes like the march to the Union Building, beer brewing and others were mentioned,

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<sup>48</sup> This comment was made by Desmond Tutu, acknowledging accurate history written by a white person about Africans. The comment is written on the front cover of the book, L. Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 2006.

this was without any attempt to foreground women's experiences. For instance, where women were mentioned in relation to labour, the vital contribution of female labour that was unpaid most of the time was not considered. Quite often, the history of women is written about with reference to political events rather than the everyday struggles they encountered within the family, traditions or education. This argument is supported by Cheryl Walker who argued that "where women's presence is acknowledged, it is often to subsume them within the family or hide them behind abstractions such as reproduction and oppression, so that the full complexity of their lives, as well as their historical agency, becomes obscured."<sup>49</sup>

This perception was supported by Helen Bradford (1996) in her lamentation of the paucity of literature/monographs on women's history. She argued that "... with a few outstanding exceptions, there is a lack of awareness on the part of many radical South African scholars not concerned centrally with issues which feminists have raised about social exploitation."<sup>50</sup> Women's history consisted of recognising women's contribution to history, and how they fought for their position during historical events like the struggle against apartheid. This argument was supported by Gwen Duganzich as late as 1999, when she charged that little had been produced on the assessment of the writings on women's history.<sup>51</sup>

In conclusion, coverage in general histories of South Africa of women's history has not been sufficient. Where women's roles were mentioned, the focus could have been more prominently on how women were able to fight for their rightful positions within historical events. For instance, within nationalist history, how Afrikaner women undermined the *volksmoeder* ideology by adapting to Western cultures (from smoking to prostitution) and to what extent they overcame the oppression imposed by the patriarchal family are themes that needed to be discussed. Within the liberation movement, the participation of women in Umkhonto we Sizwe should not have exhausted the treatment of gender history; the hardships that those women experienced, their contestation of patriarchal leadership, reproduction issues within the liberation movements and other issues should have been mentioned. General histories have said little about reproduction, representation, family, women's role in the liberation movements and

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<sup>49</sup> C. Walker, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> H. Bradford, Women, gender and colonialism: Rethinking the history of the British Cape Colony and its Frontier Zones, c. 1806-70, *Journal of African History* 37(3) 1996, p. 134.

<sup>51</sup> G. Duganzich, She's who makes history: Reviewing the historical treatment of black women by four South African scholars, *Historia* 44(1), May 1999, p. 65.

how they challenged tradition and customs like marriage, missionary education and colonial influence.

Manicom, a commentator, warns against perpetuating the distinction between a gender-ignorant 'general history' and a separate 'women's history',<sup>52</sup> during the last decades of apartheid, 'women's history' did offer a productive site for feminist historians to work towards addressing the gaps in knowledge and awareness that were left by the general histories. The major contributors to this process will be introduced in the subsequent section.

### **2.3 The major contributions to South African women's history prior to 1990**

In 1988, Ken Smith gave the following assessment of his book *The Changing Past: Trends in South African Historical Writing*: "I have concentrated throughout on specific themes that seem to be saying something unique about one or other aspect of the past."<sup>53</sup> In Smith's assessment, neither women's history nor feminist approach to the South African past in general was one of these themes. Although Smith's statement confirms the poor featuring of a feminist agenda or research on women in the general works on South African history up to the 1990s, this does not imply that no studies had been conducted.

There was a significant number of authors who wrote women's stories because they were either activists or influenced by international feminist trends. The writing might have been compensational (trying to make up for, or rectify, a void left by the general histories), and based on careful consideration of the role women played from women's perspective. Much of it also confirmed Manicom's concerns about how deep-seated the neglect of women had been in the general histories of South Africa which had been circulating at the time:

.... central social and political categories and historical processes have not been subjected to sufficient scrutiny from a gender perspective. The reconceptualization of South African history in terms of gender requires minimally a more determined and relentless interrogation of those topics that are not immediately identifiable as 'women's history' or as gender-laden - questions of the state, war, colonialism, nationalist politics, urban class

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<sup>52</sup> L. Manicom, *Ruling relations: ...*, JAH, p. 441.

<sup>53</sup> K. Smith, *The Changing Past: Trends in South African Historical Writing*, 1988, p. 6.

formation, mine labour, etc., which have long been represented as the domain of 'general' history.<sup>54</sup>

One of the first substantial academic contributions to women's history has been by Claire Robertson Robertson contributed the chapter "Women in the urban economy", to the 1984 publication *African Women South of Sahara* edited by Margaret Jean Hay and Sharon Stitcher. Her research highlights the plight of African women within the urban areas and how they were exposed to the constraints of a social labour division and patriarchal oppression. She cautioned that apartheid disadvantaged women and that "[a]s long as the women sector remains mostly poor, the cycle will be perpetuated of high fertility-low education-low skills-low income-high fertility".<sup>55</sup>

In an article published in 1987, Robertson analysed the receptivity to considering the role of economics that had developed within interpretations of African women's history in the 1970s<sup>56</sup>. She questioned the way anthropologists studying African women up until the 1960s had based their findings on marriage and biological reproduction, and thus upheld practices of patriarchal dominance. Robertson acclaimed the publication of Ester Boserup's *Women's Role in Economy and Development* in 1970 as the catalyst that opened the door for new writings on the position of women, particularly in terms of the argument that while women performed indispensable labour, they were ignored and undermined by development planners.<sup>57</sup> Robertson affirmed that all disciplines concerned with women's issues, including psychology, sociology and history, needed to deal with the economic development of women in Africa so as to solve the many issues faced by them.

Another prominent contributor to women's history has been Deborah Gaitskell. In an article published in the *Journal of Southern African Studies* in 1979, Gaitskell evaluated hostels that were developed specifically for African women by Christian missionaries with the intention to

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<sup>54</sup> L. Manicom, Ruling relations: ..., JAH, p. 443.

<sup>55</sup> C. Robertson, Women in the urban economy, in M.J. Hay & S. Stitcher (eds.), *African Women South of Sahara*, 1984, p. 49.

<sup>56</sup> C. Robertson, Developing economic awareness: Changing perspectives in studies of African women, 1976-1985, *Feminist Studies* 13(1), 1987. This work was a review of the historical trends in a range of interdisciplinary studies that started to move from accepting anthropological analysis of women since pre-capitalist societies to a Marxist view of women's status.

<sup>57</sup> C. Robertson, Developing economic awareness, ..., FS, p. 100.

domesticate their movement and their employment.<sup>58</sup> The intention was to remove African women from the 'morally corrupt' streets of Johannesburg by providing spiritual guidance. However, this failed because of financial and disciplinary problems. In a subsequent article contributed to a book edited by Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone, Gaitskell looked into the way African women contested Christian and social pressures in the advent of industrialisation in South Africa. She investigated the role played by women's organisations like *Manyanos* and *Isililo* in their quest to challenge traditional marriage and teenage pregnancy as mothers. Gaitskell concluded that when women could no longer afford to be fulltime mothers and care givers, they channelled their energy to economic survival.<sup>59</sup>

In 1983, Gaitskell together with Judy Kimble, Moira Maconachie and Elaine Unterhalter, wrote an article on domestic workers in South Africa for an issue of the *Review of African Political Economy* dedicated to "Women, Oppression and Liberation". The authors sought to evaluate and analyse the triple oppression, as blacks, as women and as workers, suffered by black domestic workers in South Africa. Inspired by Jacklyn Cock's study of domestic work in South Africa, the authors of this article worked towards a clearer analysis of gender statistics in domestic services across all provinces in South Africa. They started by analysing gender and then relating it to race and class, questioning the assumption in missionary and patriarchal thinking that women should be the key workers in the domestic sphere. They argued that domestic services led to job segregation and the subordination of black women.<sup>60</sup> While laying their finger on the problem that women were relegated to domestic service owing to a class, racial and gender-divided society, they welcomed the investigation into this sphere by the government in 1982.

Also in 1983, writing an Introduction to a Special Issue on Women in Southern Africa for the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Gaitskell highlighted new methodologies in the analysis and interpretation of South African women's history. She applauded the change in perception since the 1930s when authors like Hansi Pollak, Monica Wilson and Ellen Hellmann viewed women's history from a liberal anthropological perspective within a family, a perception which was extended, through indoctrination, to African women. She also acknowledged and appreciated

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<sup>58</sup> D. Gaitskell, Christian compounds for girls: Church hostels for African women in Johannesburg, 1907-1970, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 6(1),1979, p. 44.

<sup>59</sup> D. Gaitskell, "Wailing for purity": Prayer unions, African mothers, in S. Marks & R. Rathbone (eds.), *Industrialisation and Social Change: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness 1870-1930*, 1982, p. 352.

<sup>60</sup> D. Gaitskell, J. Kimble, M. Maconachie & E. Unterhalter, Class, race and gender: Domestic workers in South Africa, *Review of African Political Economy, Women: Oppression and Liberation* 1983, 27(28), p. 89.



Cherryl Walker and Jacklyn Cock as the first South Africans to have produced comprehensive versions of the histories of domestic servants and women's organisations respectively. Gaitskell further acknowledged that all these contributions were influenced by Belinda Bozoli's powerful work published in 1983, which will be discussed hereunder.<sup>61</sup>

Gaitskell further published the article "Housewives, maids or mothers?: Some contradictions of domesticity for Christian women in Johannesburg, 1903-1939".<sup>62</sup> In this study, she looked into the role of Christianity in the domestication of African women. She looked at Violet Makanya and Charlotte Maxeke's roles in the shaping of family, with the mother being a full-time spiritual vocationalist who could plant vegetables, do laundry, cook and take care of children. Central to her argument was that Christianity offered African women a sense of importance as mothers and family instructors. This became more visible with women's rejection of passes to work in the city, preferring to become housewives and belonging to church organisations that gave them spiritual support. Gaitskell thus negated some European feminists' thinking that regarded family and marriage as oppressing institutions, arguing that African women embraced them with pride.<sup>63</sup>

Still in 1983, Gaitskell, Judy Kimble and Elaine Unterhalter further produced the article "Historiography in the 1970s: a feminist perspective". Here, the authors lamented how little the role of Afrikaner women was addressed within Afrikaner nationalist narratives. They took offence that the one woman mentioned in the book *Die Eerste Vryheidsoorlog*, an Afrikaner history edited by F.A. van Jaarsveld, A.P.J. van Rensburg and W.A. Stals, was Queen Victoria.<sup>64</sup> They also noted with concern that D.F. Malan's biography made little reference to the extent to which he relied on his wife and to the role she also played in promoting Afrikaner nationalism. The authors blamed this on liberal historians like Leonard Thompson and Monica Wilson, who focused part of their analysis on the effects of capitalism, and in the process allowed British thinking on women's oppression to gain momentum at the expense of Afrikaner women's history. This is a point, however, that Merle Lipton would have rejected in her more recent assessment of liberal historians' interpretation of South Africa's past.<sup>65</sup> Gaitskell, Kimble and

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<sup>61</sup> D. Gaitskell, Introduction: Special issue on women in southern Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 10(1), 1983, p. 8.

<sup>62</sup> D. Gaitskell, Housewives, maids or mothers?: Some contradictions of domesticity for Christian women in Johannesburg, 1903-1939, *Journal of African History* 24(2), 1983.

<sup>63</sup> D. Gaitskell, Housewives, maids or mothers, ..., JAH, p. 256.

<sup>64</sup> D. Gaitskell, J. Kimble & E. Unterhalter, Historiography in the 1970s: a feminist perspective, *Southern-African Studies: Retrospect and Prospect* 177, 1983, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Please see M. Lipton, *Liberals, Marxists and Nationalists*.

Unterhalter nevertheless insisted that Thompson and Wilson have failed to address the role played by women in South Africa in the broader sense as well.<sup>66</sup>

Another prominent earlier contributor to the history of women and their active role in the development of South African history, has been Shula Marks. In 1970, in *Reluctant Rebellion: The 1906-1908 Disturbances in Natal*, she articulated the role of Harriett Colenso in our understanding of Zulu history. Marks submitted that "...she was probably the best informed white witness of African affairs in Natal and Zululand at the time."<sup>67</sup> Marks further concluded that papers presented by Harriett Colenso to the British government unearthed inadequacies and counterpointed misrepresentations held by many whites about South African history. Marks also commented that "[t]he type of agitation she initiated, however – pamphleteering, petitioning, organising pressure groups – constituted an important lesson in ‘Clapham sect’ methods for Africans in Natal”.<sup>68</sup>

Marks continued to outline the importance of women’s agency. In 1972,<sup>69</sup> she discussed the roles played by Eva Krotoa within the Khoesan resistance to the Dutch, illuminating the pressures on Eva and how she was portrayed by her own people, particularly as a traitor. In 1986, she shifted her focus from the seventeenth to the twentieth century and offered an in-depth analysis of how the South African experience has created dependence and how agency has become difficult for some sections of communities.<sup>70</sup> In a further study published in 1989, she campaigned for the recognition of the challenges faced by Natal women when they were seen as food and child bearers by their partners and families. These women were to be kept in rural areas by both the government and the patriarchal expectations. Women “were regarded as perpetual minors, without legal status, and they had no independent right to own property and no access to cattle ...”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> D. Gaitskell, J. Kimble & E. Unterhalter, *Historiography in the 1970s ...*, SAS, p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> S. Marks, *Reluctant Rebellion: The 1906-08 Disturbances in Natal*, 1970, p. xxiii.

<sup>68</sup> S. Marks, *Reluctant Rebellion,...*, p. 68. (The Clapham sect was a group of reformists who fought together, believed and shared moral and spiritual bonds in England).

<sup>69</sup> S. Marks, Khoesan resistance to the Dutch in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, *The Journal of African History* 13(1), 1972, pp. 55-80.

<sup>70</sup> S. Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa: Class, Nationalism and the State in Twentieth-Century Natal*, 1986.

<sup>71</sup> S. Marks: Patriotism, patriarchy and purity: Natal and the politics of Zulu ethnic consciousness, in L. Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, 1989, p. 226,

One theme in women's history that became dominant outside the studies on Christianity and patriarchy was domestic service. Jacklyn Cock took a lead in the discussions through investigating how this labour affected and limited women's position in the labour market. In 1979, she argued that domestic services were imposed by the whites on blacks in order to perpetuate and extend the women's domination and subordination by European settlers. Thus, in educating Xhosa women on domestic work, the British attempted to save women from 'vicious' traditional practices – and hoped to inculcate subordination. The establishment of girls' schools as early as 1815, and Lovedale in 1856, were mainly intended to train African women in domestic skills, work and servitude. Cock concludes that women were domesticated and their domestic functions were appropriated in different conjunctures with respect to different classes.<sup>72</sup>

In 1980, the anti-apartheid Ravan Press published Cock's book *Maids and Madams: a Study in the Politics of Exploitation*. Here she challenged what was considered acceptable inequalities in South Africa at the time, particularly where maids were concerned. She criticised capitalism as an exploitative tool that was used to degrade women. The book offers an historical overview of domestic workers, their situation and structures that created this exploitation "... and draws on the insight from both sociology and history in order to locate domestic workers ..."<sup>73</sup> Cock expanded on the domestic issue in an article published in that same year, "Disposable Nannies: Domestic Servants in the Political Economy of South Africa". Here she focused on the exploitation of women by family as an institution. According to Cock, domestic work excluded women from the main labour market and thus perpetuated domination and subordination. This was related to a burden of socialising children to the current ideology and reproduce biologically and socially so as to satisfy the capitalist system and husbands. This article further looks into domesticity among white women who, while they had domestic servants, were themselves providing domestic service and were largely dependent on their husbands. Cock further refers to Marxist interpretation of domestic service, which maintained that domestic workers were unproductive.<sup>74</sup>

Still in 1980, in the article "Deference and Dependence: a Note on the Self-imagery of Domestic Workers", Cock continued to highlight the plight of domestic servants and how this sector

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<sup>72</sup> J. Cock, Domesticity and Domestication: A note on the Articulation of Sexual Ideology and the Initial Incorporation of Black Women in the Wage Labour, *African Perspectives*, 1979, p. 24.

<sup>73</sup> J. Cock, *Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation*, 1980, p. 7.

<sup>74</sup> J. Cock, Disposable nannies: Domestic servants in the political economy of South Africa, *Review of African Economy* 8(21), 1980, p. 42.

maintained inequalities between blacks and whites. Women's voices were not heard; they were vulnerable, powerless and easily exploited. According to Cock, these women were paid between R4 and R30 a month; and the law did not protect them. The situation was legitimised by a state that was both racist and sexist. These workers were thus trapped in a greedy, racist and sexist institution with no educational opportunities. Hence, in their deference; they became passive individuals who had to depend on this institution for food and money.<sup>75</sup>

Importantly, one cannot forget the contribution made to women's history by Julia Wells. Wells concentrated on how women resisted pass laws and engaged in political struggle at home within an apartheid system that did not allow opposition. She posited that in the midst of tough sanctions, there was unity between the coloured and black women as they revolted against the pass laws in 1913. The laws restricted women and imposed a monthly tax on everyone; thus, women suffered emotional abuse from the police, which warranted a revolt.<sup>76</sup> They rejected the general extension of pass laws to women and this led to the formation of women's structures, which stood against racial laws, detentions and oppression.<sup>77</sup> At the risk of being jailed, the women refused to carry passes and through their revolt succeeded in forcing the Native Affairs Department to review the laws. Women's passes were found to be undesirable and a threat to national security. This was, however, later revoked.<sup>78</sup>

In an essay focusing on Potchefstroom, Wells also evaluated how women defied traditional perceptions and became politically more active than men in the South African Communist Party (SACP) and demonstrations in general. She acknowledged the role of Josie Palmer, an active member of the SACP through whose leadership, women refused to carry passes and were not afraid of losing their jobs. Consequently these "...women remained a creative and challenging force, resisting the pull of the industrial centres toward what they perceived to be a poor quality of life."<sup>79</sup> Women fought for dignity and motherhood, against a system that intended to relegate

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<sup>75</sup> J. Cock, Deference and dependence: a note on the self-imagery of domestic workers, *South African Labour Bulletin*, 1980, p. 10.

<sup>76</sup> J. Wells, The war of degradation: Black women's struggle against Orange Free State laws: 1913 in D. Crummey (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa*, 1982, p. 254.

<sup>77</sup> Wells's presentation was a dissertation that covered women's discontents across the country which were aimed at forcing the state to stop the extension of passes to women. See Julia Wells, *The History of Black Women's struggle against pass laws in South Africa, 1900-1960*, PhD, Columbia University, 1982.

<sup>78</sup> Julia Wells's chapter was related to her doctoral research, which covered women's discontents across the country aimed at forcing the state to stop the extension of passes to women. See J. Wells, *The history of black women's struggle, ...*, 1982.

<sup>79</sup> J. Wells, The day the town stood still: Women in resistance in Potchefstroom, 1912-1930, in B. Bozoli, *Towns and Countryside in the Transvaal*, 1983, p. 300.

them to exploitation and nothingness. In another essay,<sup>80</sup> drawing a comparison between Bloemfontein in 1913 and Johannesburg in 1958, she looked into the reasons why and how women refused to carry passes. Wells posited that while some women might have been uneducated, they formed organisations like the Orange Free State Native and Coloured Women's Association (1913) and the ANCWL (African National Congress Women's League) (1958) to unite against pass laws. They rebelled because they refused to be relegated to domestic services and farm labour through the introduction of pass laws.

Elaine Unterhalter, on the other hand, focused on the general resistance by women, particularly around economic activities, forced removals and the position of women within political organisations. Together with Judy Kimble, she showed how women's emancipation was related to the national liberation struggle led by the ANC. They argued that these women advanced a socialist feminist principle out of the conviction that capitalist principles could not solve women's oppression. Hence, women within the ANC did not see women's emancipation as isolated from the national struggle. This shows that the ANC has always given women an organisational space and enabled women to take initiative in dealing with their own interests.<sup>81</sup>

Women resisted forced removals by the government to show their disregard for an apartheid system that intended to take their family life from them. Women in Mogopa, Mamelodi and the Western Cape resisted forced removals, protested against restrictions at funerals when they buried their children and refused restrictions on beer brewing, which was their livelihood.<sup>82</sup> They refused to remove their *doeks* for identity documents, protested against increased taxes and betterment schemes. What might have been unorganised and seen as populist by the state, was women fighting against the breaking up of their families and reduction of their income. Unterhalter concludes that "These examples highlight some of the features that seem common to the general growth in women's activism: organised campaigns, networks of neighbourhood support, local demands that imply demands of national liberation, and immense courage in the face of the brutal, armed power of the state".<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> J. Wells, Why women rebel: a comparative study of South African women's resistance in Bloemfontein(1913) and Johannesburg (1958), *Journal of Southern African Studies* 10(1),1983, pp. 55-70.

<sup>81</sup> J. Kimble & E. Unterhalter, "We opened the road for you, you must go forward." Women's struggles, 1912-1982, *Feminist Review* 12, 1982, p. 32.

<sup>82</sup> Please see E. Unterhalter, *Forced Removal: The Division, Segregation and Control of the People of South Africa*, 1987.

<sup>83</sup> E. Unterhalter, Class, race and gender, in John Lonsdale (ed.), *South Africa in Question*, 1988, p. 155.

Another prominent academic contribution came from Joanne Yawitch. In 1978, she presented a paper on the 1959 Natal Women's protest at a conference on the history of opposition in southern Africa at the University of the Witwatersrand. Here she looked at the Cato Manor women's protests against the banning of home beer brewing. These women viewed laws against beer brewing as a breach of their social order and this invoked rural radicalism and agency within the unfair apartheid legislation.<sup>84</sup> In 1980, in her honours dissertation, "Black Women in South Africa: Capitalism, Employment and Reproduction", Yawitch examined the problems encountered when analysing women in South Africa, their position in the reserves and specifically the Winterveld squatter camp, which she compared to British and Latin American women's experiences.

In this powerful challenge to women's studies, Yawitch argued that while there had been an attempt to address the role of women in South Africa, there had been little or no attempt to analyse women's issues, such as the relationship between the collapse of the reserve economy and the position of women. She criticised the over-emphasis on race at the expense of gender in previous historical analyses. She also highlighted how neo-Marxist interpretations tended to miss analysing women's positions (a position that is supported by Merle Lipton when criticising Marxist interpretations of history).<sup>85</sup> Yawitch nevertheless reaffirmed her Marxist stance in analysing women's history.<sup>86</sup> Yawitch continued this argument in her 1981 essay "Women and squatting: A Winterveld case study". Here she cautioned against explaining women's positions in previously determined concepts without necessarily trying to understand real problems. She looked at women as reproducers of labour and concluded that "their oppression as women is experienced as an intensification of their economic exploitation as members of the working class."<sup>87</sup>

Belinda Bozzoli is the most iconic contributor to feminist history in South Africa. She contributed to the initiation of women's history in 1975 when she hinted that local manufacturing companies led to a capitalist society that tended to dominate the individual. While not directly referring to women specifically, her attempt highlighted how South African local manufacturing protected

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<sup>84</sup> J. Yawitch, Natal 1959 – The Women's Protest, paper presented at the Conference on the History of Opposition in Southern Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, 1978, p. 206.

<sup>85</sup> See M. Lipton, *Liberals, Marxists, ...*, pp 1-240

<sup>86</sup> J. Yawitch, Black women in South Africa: Capitalism, employment and reproduction: Editorial Collective of Africa Perspective, Honours Dissertation, Wits University, 1980, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> J. Yawitch, Women and squatting: A Winterveld case study, in P. Bonner (ed.), *Working Papers in Southern African Studies II*, 1981, p. 224.

the state and subordinated the minority (including women).<sup>88</sup> In a seminar paper<sup>89</sup> presented at the African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand in 1981, she lamented the inadequate reinterpretation of women's history by liberal and Marxist feminists who could not deal with subtleties that portrayed the complexity of women's struggles and positions. This was because feminist writers ought to analyse women's history holistically, and realise that it was not through their separate writings that women's history would be understood. In actual fact, there ought to be a revolutionary consciousness amongst women writers to include domestic struggle in their analyses.<sup>90</sup> This was a powerful presentation that challenged both capitalism and patriarchy in South Africa as determinants of women's oppression. While maintaining a Marxist view herself, Bozzoli was also rebuking Marxists who presented women's history from a rectificatory approach and those who assumed that capitalism was solely to blame for women's oppression. For Bozzoli such short-sightedness underestimated other deterrents like rape and exclusion from power, and how women created agency in the midst of those obstacles.<sup>91</sup>

In 1983, Bozzoli resuscitated her position through a famous piece of writing<sup>92</sup> that changed the face of women's history in South Africa and guided almost all subsequent writing in the field. She inspired a feminist movement that did not only write about women, but looked into agency and the contestation of women's spaces. She called for a complete analysis of women's history without necessarily relegating it to gender. This was so because gender history includes but does not name women, while women's history proclaims its politics by asserting that women are valid historical subjects.<sup>93</sup> It focuses specifically on women's experiences, activities and discourses<sup>94</sup>. Bozzoli pleaded that some untested ideologies had to be questioned. She attempted to discover how female oppression interacted with class exploitation, with racial oppression and with capitalism.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> B. Bozzoli, The origins, development and ideology of local manufacturing in South Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 1(2), 1975, pp. 194-214.

<sup>89</sup> B. Bozzoli, Feminist interpretations and South African Studies, some suggested avenues for exploration, African Studies Seminar Paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 October 1981.

<sup>90</sup> B. Bozzoli, Feminist interpretations, ..., African Studies Seminar Paper, p. 34.

<sup>91</sup> B. Bozzoli, Feminist interpretations, ..., African Studies Seminar Paper, p. 4.

<sup>92</sup> B. Bozzoli, Marxism, feminism, ..., pp. 139-171.

<sup>93</sup> J.W. Scott, Gender: A useful category, ..., AHA, p. 1056.

<sup>94</sup> P. Zeleza, *Manufacturing African*, ..., p. 182.

<sup>95</sup> B. Bozzoli, Marxism, feminism, ..., JSAS, p. 140.

Cheryl Walker dealt with and intensively debated on the topic of women's organisations. In her Honours paper submitted at the University of Cape Town in 1974,<sup>96</sup> Walker argued that women's movements were ignored in South Africa by historians and politicians alike. In 1978, she continued with an investigation into women's organisations with a presentation on "The Federation of South African Women (FSAW), 1954-1962" at the Conference on the History of Oppression in Southern Africa. Here she investigated how the FSAW and ANCWL opposed apartheid as early as the 1950s, with protests against pass laws by about fifty thousand women in thirty different places, including rural areas like Zeerust.<sup>97</sup> Critical to Walker's presentation was that these women in FSAW came from different racial and political backgrounds; it was a multi-racial organisation that would unite women on the common ground of their womanhood and strive for their full emancipation.<sup>98</sup>

The role of women within the liberation movements, particularly the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) was also explored. Stephanie Urdang argued that women's participation in liberation movements helped them change their status: "The integration of women in areas of responsibility, authority and status has afforded them the opportunity to become active outside the home and begin to step out of their traditional roles."<sup>99</sup>

In 1985, Hilda Bernstein, an activist, produced the monograph *For their Triumphs and for their Tears: Women in Apartheid South Africa*, which illustrated how women experienced oppression as Africans, women and as workers. She argued that "[f]rom the beginning of industrialisation, therefore, African women were relegated to a position which had ever-spreading disadvantage. They were to fulfil their traditional role as bearers of children, they were to work on the land to supplement the low wages of male migrants..."<sup>100</sup> Therefore, women had to destroy the whole oppressive system – not only male attitudes, but the core structure of society – to gain their

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<sup>96</sup> This was published a few years later as C. Walker, *The Woman's Suffrage Movement in South Africa, Communications II* (Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1979). This book looks into white women's freedom movements from 1909. It traces their challenges and how they won against a government that tried to undermine them.

<sup>97</sup> C. Walker, *The Federation of South African Women, 1954-1958*, paper presented at the Conference on the History of Oppression in Southern Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, January 1978, pp. 183-184.

<sup>98</sup> C. Walker, *The Federation of South African Women, ...*, p. 187. Walker further noted that FSAW rejected and challenged the racial exclusiveness of some political organisations and called for equal treatment of women in the workplace.

<sup>99</sup> S. Urdang, *Women in contemporary national liberation movements*, in M. Jean Hay and S. Stitcher (eds.), *African Women South of Sahara*, 1995, p. 166.

<sup>100</sup> H. Bernstein, *For their Triumph and for their Tears: Women in Apartheid South Africa*, 1985, p. 9.



emancipation. In this regard, Bernstein confirmed Manicom's concern with South African historiography up to the 1990s which looked at cracks on the surface rather than the deep rooted causes of women's oppression. In order to understand women's history, one had to look into deep rooted structures and practices that oftentimes far overstretched the topics obviously related to women.

In 1987, Jeff Guy argued that pre-capitalist societies had already perpetuated women's oppression. In *Analysing Pre-Capitalist Societies in Southern Africa*, Guy lamented the fact that it was acceptable that men would own and control livestock (wealth) while women were classified as children and relegated to subsistence agricultural activities. Thus, labour was divided according to gender.<sup>101</sup>

Christine Qunta's *Women in Southern Africa* was also published in 1987, and she offered a counterfactual argument. She challenged African women to write about themselves in order to avoid being misrepresented. She noted that South African women's history has been written by observers who "...tend to employ theoretical assumptions and a methodology which hampered or in some cases precluded a realistic assessment of the subject matter."<sup>102</sup> Thus, Qunta called for women to fight against colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism in an attempt to obtain their emancipation. Effectively, Qunta argued that colonialism ignored the active participation of women in the African societies, contrary to what Guy had argued above. She held the view that powerful contributions by women like Queen Nonesi of Tembuland, Chiftainess Sutun and MmaNtatisi were excluded from colonialist historiography and history.

Dabi Nkululeko supported Qunta's argument in "The right to Self Determination in Research: Azanian Women". Nkululeko argued that research on women's history was controlled by neo-colonialists so as to produce what European dominant economies wanted. Hence, women could not directly write about themselves, and when they tried, they had to depend on the same racist structure and institutions for funding. According to Nkululeko, colonial funding into research rather "supported endeavours that attempted to see racial equality than the ones that wanted to reclaim Africa and opposed capitalism".<sup>103</sup> She posited that colonial funding favoured white

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<sup>101</sup> J. Guy, *Analysing pre-capitalist societies in Southern Africa*, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14(1), 1987, p. 21.

<sup>102</sup> C. Qunta, *Women in Southern Africa*, 1978, p. 11.

<sup>103</sup> D. Nkululeko, *The right to self-determination in research: Azanian women*, in C. Qunta, *Women in Southern Africa*, 1987, p. 93.

women to write about black women, thus perpetuating a wrong history. She called for liberation movements to start funding African woman writers, but cautioned against male domination within such structures. She argued that African women needed to start writing about themselves, rather than having outsiders assume particular perceptions of them.

In 1989, Lindiwe Mabuza compiled the anthology *One never Knows: An Anthology of Black South African Women Writers in Exile*. Mabuza acknowledged the triple oppression, but further advanced an argument that women's emancipation could not only be achieved through a feminist movement, but also through the liberation movements, side by side with men.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, Emma Mashinini's monograph, *Strikes have Followed me all my Life: A South African Autobiography*, explored the role of women in trade unions, how women took over shop floors in the 1970s-1980s in a fight against oppression and how they were able to relinquish their homes and risked prison, loss of family and a patriarchal backlash by fighting unjust labour laws.<sup>105</sup>

Also in that year, Hilda Bernstein produced another monograph that accounted for how women whose husbands were arrested at Rivonia struggled in their social lives and at home. This book covers the agonies of these women who supported their husbands at court dressed in gold and green colours,<sup>106</sup> faced pressures from the state and accounted to their kids on the absence of their fathers.

From 13 to 18 January 1990, a conference was held in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, which would make an important contribution towards women's history in South Africa. The papers at the Malibongwe Conference were presented by South African women authors in exile. Unfortunately, the conference archive is not well organised. It is not formally bound; so, the sequencing of the paging is not always logical. In some cases, authors' names are not mentioned and pages might look the same. Some of these papers can be found at the University of Pretoria. The topics of the presentations ranged from culturally accepted practices that women found themselves oppressed by in South Africa, to politics, policy, family, the ANC, social and economic challenges. Paper 1 discusses cultural and traditional practices like *lobola* and how they enhanced or retarded women's progress.

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<sup>104</sup> L. Mabuza, *One Never Knows: An Anthology of Black South African Women Writers in Exile*, 1989, p. viii.

<sup>105</sup> E. Mashinini, *Strikes have Followed me all my Life: A South African Autobiography*, 1989.

<sup>106</sup> H. Bernstein, *The World that was Ours: The story of the Rivonia Trial*, 1989, p. 119.

One major issue dealt with at this conference was how education was used by the state to oppress women ideologically and through content channelling. Paper 2, presented by the Federation of Transvaal Women, and Paper 3, titled Education and the Oppression of Black Women under Apartheid, highlight how the state used Bantu Education to continue women's oppression through the enhancement of different gender roles. The curriculum presented exposed women to male dominance. According to Paper 3, "[a]t an ideological level, the inferior status of black women is propagated through negative portrayals of them as the lowest of human species, far beneath their white sisters and capable of very little else beyond deceit and obeying others".<sup>107</sup> Paper 3 then proposed non-sexist People's Education as alternative.

This conference also looked into family as an institution, and powerful presentations on this came from Albie Sachs and Nolulamo Gwagwa. The two looked at how the family perpetuated women's oppression, with Sachs looking at how family law impacted on women. Albie Sachs also wrote on "Judges and Gender: The constitutional rights of women in post-apartheid South Africa". In this paper, Sachs argued that the constitution should be written in gender neutral language. Gwagwa on the other hand, presented a paper that looked into some practical challenges women faced and possible agency. Bridget Mabandla, who later become South African Minister of Public Enterprises and Justice and Constitutional Development and a founding member of the National Committee for the Rights of the Child and Women's Coalition, also presented on Women and Law in South Africa. She examined black women and common law marriages, women under the legal system, constitutional options for women and ANC constitutional guidelines.

Another major theme at this conference was policy and how that affected women. Under the rubric Formulating National Policy regarding the Emancipation of Women and Promotion of Women's Development, there was a paper which looked at how the constitution of the country could address black women's rights. Another paper called for the ANC to draw a future policy that would guide the government on women's capacitation, equality and equal participation.

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<sup>107</sup> Paper 3, Education and the oppression of black women under apartheid, *in* Malibongwe Conference Proceedings, Amsterdam, January 1990, p. 3.

## 2.4. Conclusion

This chapter outlined and surveyed major literature interpretations, presuppositions and theories on women's history between 1970s and 1990. This period has indicated that much of the debate within general histories surrounding the history of women, was within the gambit of national politics and concentrated much on resistance. While it would be simplistic to argue that general histories treated women's history very lightly by not giving it more emphasis, it is worth noting that each writer was influenced by own agendas. As Maylam (2001) puts it, "The task of historical reflection is inevitably coloured by the standpoint in time from which it is attempted and by the context in which it is undertaken."<sup>108</sup>

Nevertheless, it is also clear that general histories failed to capture women's history. This was so because historians were concentrating more on racial relationships of the time. However, whether nationalistic or not, there was a chance for historians to encapsulate women's history within the main discipline without relegating it to a few side-lines within a nationalist viewpoint. The women's history that manifested in the scholarship presented in the first part of this chapter was weak.

However, when an opportunity arose, women's history was attended to vigorously by sociologists, historians and academics who provided a positive wave of interpretation of South African women's history. A new generation of scholars who tended to translate their political and ideological instincts into their perceptions, opened new avenues such as Marxist and radical views. However, this was a movement that wanted to challenge the invisibility of women within historical texts, it was about recognition within mainstream history discipline. These authors were not necessarily historians but activists who were revolting against nationalist historical writings and ignorance of historical phenomena of note. While it is not the intention of this conclusion to pontificate the work of others, and thus sound authoritative, some issues need to be raised. Initially, most of the presentations on women's history were corrective and lacked in exposing women's agency. The writing on women's resistance against pass laws for instance, examined the actual resistance without necessarily discussing the agency that women created and spaces they contested. The same would apply to writings on patriarchy, which most acknowledged that the system, including the family, oppressed women, but how women

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<sup>108</sup> P. Maylam, *South Africa's Racial Past: The History and Historiography of Racism, Segregation and Apartheid*, 2001, p. 207.

themselves created their nuances as mothers, and caregivers, was given less attention. The problem here was that authors and academics tried very hard to historicise the topic, in the process, failing to draw a contrast between practical and strategic theoretical positions.

The survey in this chapter indicates that there were serious challenges to the writing of women's history. Women's history writers were forced to write from a rectificatory and reactionary angle. Their objection to paucity of women's history in the mainstream history came in theoretical patches that attacked the state and the patriarchy, with less emphasis on the common writing. Hence, most of the writing referred to in the second part of the chapter did not show agency: authors recorded what women went through and the unfairness of various institutions that oppressed them. Perhaps this was also so because universities themselves were not all encompassing and its funding model channelled nationalist thinking. This position was recognised by Yawitch (1978 and 1980) and Bozzoli (1981 and 1983).

The arguments and references above cannot claim to be exhaustive; they are examples of an account of scholarship over the period before 1990. However, consulted references show that this period was dominated by a lamentation of the paucity of recognition of women's contribution to history. The other challenge was that there were few contributions from African activists. When they did contribute, they challenged universities for relying on funding by colonial and racist institutions. They also revolted against other activists, mainly whites, who wrote on behalf of African women and exploitation.

The subsequent chapters will discuss two powerful volumes that that have largely contributed to women's history. This study will examine Cheryl Walker's volume, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, (1990) and Nomboniso Gasa's *Women in South African History* (2007) and their reviews and how they have influenced women's history. The study will also discuss both historical and contemporary South African journals, how they have addressed issues raised by Walker and Gasa and how to some extent, they have been influenced by the two volumes. Thereafter, the study will also investigate how international journals have interpreted South African women's history, whether they have different views and approaches from local journals or not. In the process, the researcher will make reference to responses from interviews conducted, to check if indeed, after the first wave of women's writings; things have remained the same or have changed in the period between 1990 and 2011.

## CHAPTER 3: TWO ANTHOLOGIES, TWO DECADES, TWO AGENDAS: AN OVERVIEW OF CHERRYL WALKER AND NOMBONISO GASA'S EDITED VOLUMES

### 3.1. Introduction

In Chapter 2, it was discussed how women's and gender history was marginalised in general histories of South Africa well into the 1990s. This tendency was juxtaposed to the prolific work on women's and gendered history that had been produced in journals, books and monographs over the same period.

The state of women's and gender history by 1990 was captured in the Cheryl Walker edited volume *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*. In 2007 another volume of chapters edited by Nomboniso Gasa was published under the title *Women in South African History*. By referring to the Walker volume, the new book simultaneously acknowledged the prominence the 1990 collection had gained in the study of South African women's history, and announced its intention to supersede it as an assessment of the current state of the field. These anthologies were by no means the only ones with a focus on women's and gender history to be produced post-1990, but few others claimed the same comprehensiveness through their titles,<sup>109</sup> as indicated in Chapter 1. This chapter investigates the meaning and the significance of such publications with a focus on the Walker and Gasa edited anthologies. Their content is being analysed and their reception being traced, including, and as far as possible in the limited scope of this MA study, the impact they had on the production of histories of women in South Africa.<sup>110</sup>

Walker's collection was hailed by many reviewers (as will be indicated in this chapter) as the first comprehensive collection that questioned the biased male dominated history which excluded women from Southern African history. Most contributors were well-read academics and were expected to question patriarchal tendencies that were reinvented by colonists and historians alike. Gasa's edited collection on the other hand, came later into a democratic South Africa (13 years later and notably focused only on South and not the broader southern Africa) and featured

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<sup>109</sup> An example of a collection of essays with a more specific focus, which had appeared between the Walker and Gasa volumes, was W. Woodard, P. Hayes & G. Minkley (eds.), *Deep Histories. Gender and Colonialism in Southern Africa*, 2002.

<sup>110</sup> A grammatical note on the use of tenses in this chapter: In order to challenge the notion of the 'timelessness' and 'inherent' truth value of historical knowledge, and in an attempt to emphasise the extent to which it had been constructed in time and over time, this chapter is written in the past tense, and all utterances and statements by historians are reported as historical events, linked to the dates at which they were published.

contributions from both academics and activists whose interpretation of women's history had to review earlier methodologies of writing women's history.

This chapter will attempt to show how these two comprehensive books functioned in the processes of interpreting women's history. The agency (will of power/ instrumentality) required to produce and promote the books, the approaches taken in the two collections and the way the former influenced the latter, will be investigated.

### 3.2. Walker's Collection

Cheryl Walker's collection, *Women and Gender in Southern African History to 1945*, received a resounding acceptance as the first comprehensive feminist historical collection in South Africa. Reviews will be used later in the chapter to show this. The collection was mainly influenced by the concerns expressed by Belinda Bozzoli in her famous 1983 essay, "Marxism, feminism and South African studies" in which she had referred to the "patchwork quilt of patriarchies"<sup>111</sup> to explain the diversity of gender oppression in the nineteenth-century southern African landscape. Mapping a new path for the interpretation of women's history, Bozzoli's article became the foundation for most subsequent writings in women's history in South Africa to date.

Bozzoli's essay became a model for women's history within academic and activist circles, questioning the interpretations of South African women's history from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. This pervasive reversal was a move to trace and articulate women's role in the ordering and disordering of South African society over time. Bozzoli's eloquent appeal became resonant within feminist history in the 1970s and 1980s, as women debated contours that were meant to address the interstices that undermined women's history in South Africa.

Walker gave recognition to Bozzoli's inspiration on the first page of her overview chapter introducing the book. The book was jointly published by David Philip in Cape Town and James Currey in London. From Walker's notes of thanks in the preface, it is clear that the book had benefited from transnational scholarly collaboration. Not only University of the Witwatersrand-based sociologist and fellow contributor to the book, Jacklyn Cock, was lauded for her support, but also Stanford University's Centre for Research on Women (later Institute for Research on

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<sup>111</sup> B. Bozzoli, *Marxism, Feminism*, JSAS, pp. 139-171.

Women and Gender) was recognised for the support they had rendered Walker as an affiliated scholar during the mid-1980s.<sup>112</sup>

The aim of Walker's collection was to expose the responses and roles of women in the pre-capitalist societies right into the labour-intensive period. How women played a part in the formation of the economy and political landscape was central to this collection. On page four, Walker raised a number of questions that were intended to be addressed by this collection. The questions framed the intended impact of women's history in Southern Africa. But most importantly, Walker wanted the book to address the historical gap that saw women's contribution being sidestepped by main historical writings. While women's history had somehow been accounted for prior to this publication, this book was intended to give this women's history an academic stature and bring into the equation that which had been ignored by mainstream history books at the time.

The volume is divided into seven sections or units, namely,

- Transition from the pre-colonial era;
- Colonial patriarchy;
- Christianity and education for domesticity;
- Indentured labour;
- Migrant labour and female migration to towns; and
- Heroines, deviants and suffragists.

These themes were cross-cutting; therefore, they allowed for a particular thread that saw all chapters being related and raising issues that were previously ignored. The contributors all had substantial academic experience with the themes they considered. At the time when the volume was published, almost all the contributors were working as lecturers at different universities locally and internationally.

Jeff Guy, at the time, teaching African History at the University of Trondheim, Norway, concentrated on the transition from the pre-colonial era as he opened the collection by defining in detail common features of women's oppression in pre-capitalist societies and how men abused women's labour. He argued that African women's history had been one of oppression and exploitation, but that the nature of the exploitation changed drastically once a transition

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<sup>112</sup> C. Walker, *Women and Gender in Southern African History to 1945*, 1990, preface.



had been made to a cash economy in the colonial era.<sup>113</sup> Walker summarised Guy's argument as follows:

Women exercised control over the agricultural process and, by virtue of the central importance of their fertility to society, enjoyed considerable status and a degree of autonomy not appreciated – or replicated – within colonial society.<sup>114</sup>

What Guy managed to unearth was the fact that pre-capitalist societies oppressed women as objects of men. That women and children were regarded as economic possessions that had to be controlled by men. Women were not voluntarily working the fields and giving birth, they were forced by circumstances which had to enrich a patriarchal society. The essay was more on the nature of exploitation of women than the resistance, thus assuming that women themselves were party to this exploitation. However, through his rectificatory approach, Guy concluded that this exploitation needed to be researched further.

Contributions raised what other general histories did not raise. They went above just mentioning women. Sandra Burman, then a research fellow at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University, and visiting research fellow at the Socio-Legal Unit, University of Cape Town, concluded the section on the transition from the pre-colonial era by evaluating the position of women's legal status between the Basotho traditional and colonial laws. This indicated the extension of the British colonial patriarchal system in a more sophisticated way. One could not deny that the legal system was structured to defend women's exploitation; however, the system developed a family law which supported polygamy and the signing of binding contracts where males had to give consent on behalf of the women. Burman was able to indicate how both traditional and colonial laws perpetuated the mistreatment and the undermining of women. Women were regarded as minors by both traditional and colonial legal systems, and were thus invisible to patriarchal society. "Women were regarded as perpetual minors and only in exceptional circumstances did a woman become the head of the family".<sup>115</sup> Burman herself acknowledged that there was no easy answer to whether women benefitted or suffered from the changing legal status.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> J. Guy, Gender oppression in South Africa's pre-capitalist societies, in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, p. 34.

<sup>114</sup> J. Guy, Gender oppression in, ..., p. 8.

<sup>115</sup> S. Burman, Fighting a two-pronged attack: The changing legal status of women in Cape-ruled Basotholand, 1872 – 1884, in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, p. 55.

<sup>116</sup> S. Burman, Fighting a two-pronged, ..., p. 74.

Jacklyn Cock, then a senior lecturer in the Sociology Department at the University of the Witwatersrand, opened the colonial patriarchy period by examining how Xhosa women were incorporated into a colonial system through education and conversion to Christianity which did not give them freedom. “Thus, education operated largely as the crucial agency of social control and cultural reproduction, defining and reinforcing certain social roles and initiating people into those skills and values which were essential for effective role performance”.<sup>117</sup> This contribution showed how colonial laws like Ordinance 49 of 1829, which regulated the flow of labour, forced women into domestic service through the provision of passes. The education system and labour laws that were passed during this period were meant to continue the marginalisation of women. Women were not just willing victims of oppression, they were coerced into servitude by the same laws and institutions that were meant to protect them.

Anne McClintock, Assistant Professor in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, New York, closed the colonial patriarchy theme by reviewing how gender and women’s position were depicted within a novel narrative. She submitted that Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* illustrated how a declining Victorian patriarchal system was regenerated in South Africa by Shepstone, thus, laying claim to female labour, as was practical within an African family (as explained by Guy). Thus, “...*King Solomon’s Mines* figures the reinvention of white imperial patriarchy through a legitimising racial and gender poetics.”<sup>118</sup> McClintock, however, did not show the response of women to either colonial or traditional oppression. For her, it was more about how women were used and which strategies were used to win them over, but not about women’s agency.

Sheila Meintjes, by then a lecturer in Political Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, opened the Christianity and education for domesticity section through an investigation of roles of voiceless women at Edendale at the height of the missionary era in Natal. Meintjes argued that missionaries extended female ‘work’ in a different and more attractive manner. “Christian women remained under the power of men, as did their children, in ways that were significantly different from settler society, where another set of laws governed family relations.”<sup>119</sup> The

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<sup>117</sup> J. Cock, Domestic service and education for domesticity: Incorporation of Xhosa women into colonial society, in C. Walker, (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, p.95.

<sup>118</sup> A. McClintock, Maidens, maps and mines: *King Solomon’s Mines* and the reinvention of patriarchy, in C. Walker, (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, p. 124.

<sup>119</sup> S. Meintjes, Family and gender in the Christian community at Edendale, Natal, in colonial times, in C. Walker, (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, p. 142.

changes brought by missionaries failed to provide women with independence. For instance, on the issue of marriage, Meintjes submitted that while it was regulated, it did not remove male domination; instead, women were now controlled by colonial patriarchy.

Heather Hughes, at the time, a lecturer in the Department of African Studies at the University of Natal, Durban, contributed to the theme of women and Christianity by writing on the Inanda Seminary for African women in Natal.<sup>120</sup> She explained that it was intended to provide African women with a voice through education. It was intended to remove women from servitude by training them in sewing, cooking and cleaning, "... the very existence of the seminary enabled girls to exercise a greater degree of choice over their lives, presenting them with an avenue of escape from oppressive social expectations and sexual relations."<sup>121</sup> However, this objective was not met because women continued the same chores as in their society. What Hughes argued here, was that the education provided was not meant to free the mind, but prepared the girls for marriage and Christian life. How women took advantage of new ways to challenge patriarchal society was not shown.

However, Gaitskell argued that women did indeed use Christianity as an opening to reveal agency. In her chapter, Gaitskell, at the time, teaching History at London University's Extra-Mural Centre and the Worker's Education Association, continues the Christianity theme<sup>122</sup> by investigating the relationship between domesticity and conversion to Christianity, the growth of women's associations, and the results of Christian women's mobilisation. Gaitskell charged that missionary stations provided alternatives for young girls who escaped polygamy, widowed wives, 'barren women' accused of witchcraft and all oppressed women. Gaitskell was somehow able to indicate that women used their church groups to challenge both men and the church. She was able to capture nuances created by women and noted that while the church colluded with male stereotyping, African women were able to contest their space, that is, to challenge the difficult environment they were facing. Moreover, irrespective of their literacy level, women were able to

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<sup>120</sup> In the volume, however, her contribution was grouped with the papers dealing with women's migration and urbanisation.

<sup>121</sup> H. Hughes: "A Lighthouse for African womanhood": Inanda Seminary, 1869-1945, in C. Walker, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, p. 209.

<sup>122</sup> Although, in the volume, it is rather being grouped under the theme of African women's urban migration.

change the face of the spirituality in the church and the conduct within unions. They made these more African and introduced their own style of preaching.<sup>123</sup>

Jo Beall's chapter in this volume evaluated the plight of Indian women in the sugar plantations in Natal. Beall, who was with the Department of African Studies at the University of Natal, traced this exploitation from India and its extension in Natal by the employers in the sugar plantations. In this sole theme on indentured labour, Beall argued that "[e]mployers were able to benefit not only from female labour, which was very poorly remunerated if at all, but also from not having to bear the direct cost of introducing this labour supply."<sup>124</sup> Although Beall's piece is informative, women's agency is not explicit. One could deduct, though, that women's agency was prevalent when they refused forced marriages and when single women moved from partner to partner for social and economic benefit. Beall was, however, more concerned with exposing women's exploitation than exploring agency and contested spaces.

Walker, at the time, a lecturer in the Sociology Department at the University of Natal, Durban, opened the discussion on migrant labour and female migration to towns by charging that women's history was subsumed into family and marriage life in African societies. Her essay looked into the way women were affected by the migrant labour system as against restrictions imposed on them by their husbands, chiefs and the colonial system. "Some of the strategies used to prevent female migration involved direct prohibitions on the mobility of women through pass laws and restricted access to transport".<sup>125</sup> However, women still escaped, but this escape did not necessarily mean freedom.

Walker was able to indicate how women were impacted on by the migrant system. Nevertheless, just like most of the contributors in this collection, she failed to overtly expose women's agency. She concentrated more on the negative impact of the migrant labour system. While she attempted to hint that women were able to face difficult challenges through the process of migration, one would have thought that the themes of beer brewing and prostitution would be expanded upon as possibilities for agency. Nevertheless, it should be commended that the

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<sup>123</sup> D. Gaitskell, Devout domesticity? A century of African women's Christianity in South Africa, in C. Walker, (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, pp. 251-272.

<sup>124</sup> J. Beall, Women under indentured labour in colonial Natal, 1886-1911, in C. Walker, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, p. 152.

<sup>125</sup> C. Walker, Gender and the development of the migrant labour system, c. 1850-1930, in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, p. 180.

notion of escape was discussed cautiously to indicate women's willingness to move from oppressive encounters.

Phil Bonner, at the time, an Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Witwatersrand, closed the theme by arguing that women used urbanisation and migration to defy the apartheid laws in the 1930s. Bonner argued that the beer brewing regulation was oppressive and unacceptable because most of the women engaged in this had lost their husbands, were deserted or did not have access to land in rural Lesotho and Mozambique. Beer brewing was perceived as 'misbehaviour', considered immoral by both the state and the Basotho men. It was a sign of women who did not want to be controlled. However, this was how women contested their spaces; it was created by independent women who saw beer brewing and prostitution as survival strategies. What was seen as promiscuous in state and other patriarchal eyes was independence to women in their own view. While the chapter acknowledged the role played by women in the beer brewing protests, it did not clearly indicate agency. The notion of prostitution was mentioned but not fully developed. Nevertheless, it was shown that both the men and the law were unable to control women and this gave them the freedom to do what they wanted.

Elsabe Brink, then lecturing within the Department of History, Rand Afrikaans University (now University of Johannesburg) provided an analysis of the Afrikaner woman within the Afrikaner society who was regarded as a *volksmoeder*, a mother of the nation. Brink opened the last theme, Heroines, deviants and suffragists, by arguing that "... the Afrikaner woman was depicted not only as the cornerstone of the household, but also as a central unifying force within Afrikanerdom and, as such, was expected to fulfil a political role as well."<sup>126</sup> Thus, idealised womanhood became central to Afrikaner nationalism because she had to portray discipline and conformity and sacrifice herself for social needs and expectations. "Their heroism, patriotism and defiance of the British enemy became bywords and were added to the already existent image of Boer women."<sup>127</sup>

Brink's study was an investigation of Boer women's historiography and how it contributed to the creation of the *volksmoeder*. She posited that while women's history received attention within

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<sup>126</sup> E. Brink, Man-made women: Gender, class and the Ideology of the *Volksmoeder*, in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, p. 273.

<sup>127</sup> E. Brink, Man-made women, ..., p. 277.

the Boer community, it was meant to develop Afrikaner nationalism. Brink's piece managed to highlight how the *volksmoeder* was conceptualised and actualised. Nevertheless, the agency found in this is quite limited. Brink did not show how the same women used their actions as a break from male oppression. Thus, this presentation became an analysis of how women's history and position was used by prominent Afrikaner nationalists to advance the Afrikaner culture.

The essay in the volume by Linda Chisholm (with the Department of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand). investigated deviance by girls at Eshowe reformatory, which was recorded by the authorities as ill-discipline, mental discipline, mental disturbances and feeble mindedness. Chisholm's point here was that the defiance by white girls was interpreted as degeneracy. White girls were criminalised for transgressing not only the rules of socially acceptable feminine behaviour, but also those rules regulating relations between black and white.<sup>128</sup> The chapter showed how young girls were controlled by the state, but their resistance was not presented as a form of agency. It only managed to indicate how girls' schools inculcated superiority and racial discrimination, even within isolated white girls.

Walker concluded this volume by submitting that the fight for women's enfranchisement was a whites' only issue prior to 1930. The Women's Enfranchisement Association of the Union (WEAU), structured along racial lines, organised a move to have white women being enfranchised in South Africa. Therefore, Walker noted that there was no single women's suffrage movement because the ANC was concerned with protecting the Cape enfranchisement and did not, by then, recognise women's membership. WEAU, on the other hand, was segregating and sectionalist. It spoke for middle-class white women who fought for recognition in the Cape, equal to black enfranchisement. Women's enfranchisement was influenced by the gender politics of the time, thus no single suffrage movement could develop to campaign for women's liberation and therefore, women's suffrage became a second-hand issue for political parties. This suffrage vehemently confirmed different gender reproductive roles of women as nurturers of children and enforcers of morality. "Thus, the suffragists did not challenge the view that women's primary responsibilities were domestic and that marriage and motherhood constituted women's most important achievements."<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> L. Chisholm, Gender and deviance in South African industrial schools and reformatories for girls, 1911-1934, in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, p. 306.

<sup>129</sup> C. Walker, The women's suffrage movement: The politics of gender, race and class, in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, p. 338.

Walker's chapter was able to indicate the pains that women suffragists went through to gain a vote. She was able to highlight the weaknesses of this movement; particularly that it was more of a racial issue than a feminist issue. While she argued that this suffrage movement was unable to provide total women's agency, Walker failed to show it. One is unable to see how white women used this movement as a contestation of their space, let alone that it was a racial movement. One cannot trace how white women within WEAU negotiated their spaces within a male dominated thinking. While the divisions within this group were clearly indicated, how they presented women's agency was not shown.

### **3.3. Reviews of *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945***

Walker's collection was a watershed in South African women's history in 1990. It was the first of its kind in the history of South Africa. As the first comprehensive book of essays on women's history, it invoked many to recognise women's history. The collection was widely reviewed by both local and international academics. It was declared an iconic contribution within history circles. Nevertheless, it was accepted with mixed emotions. In the section below the reviews are traced in some detail in order to give an impression of the scope and the nature of the book's scholarly reception at the time.

Adeline Korb wrote a review for one of the 1991 issues of the *South African Journal for Cultural History*, a journal which historically had focused mostly on white and specifically Afrikaner cultural history (African culture having been relegated to the field of anthropology). Korb applauded the contributors to the Walker volume for venturing into a period of great change in Southern Africa (the period of economic change from pre-capitalist to capitalist, from independence to subjugation, from rural to urban)<sup>130</sup> and looking into the role of women during this turbulent period. Korb emphasised that the collection was unearthing the position and role of women as a topic which had thus far been neglected. She concluded her review by submitting that "[t]his is an excellent work, well executed. The methodology employed and the objective, scientific presentation of facts, makes it a good reference work."<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> A. Korb, *Women and Gender in Southern africa to 1945*, edited by C Walker: book reviews. , *South African Journal for Cultural History* 5(1), 1990, p. 32.

<sup>131</sup> A. Korb, *Women and Gender in Southern africa to 1945*, edited by C Walker: book reviews., *South African Journal for Cultural History* 5(1), 1990, p. 32.

This position was supported by Lynda Gilfillan (at the time from University of Pretoria) in her review for the literature studies-orientated journal *Current Writing* (1990). Gilfillan argued that the collection had brought meaningful research, and foregrounded women's agency as an alternative to stereotyped writing of women's history, towards a more transformed history. "Women's agency is hereby posited as an alternative to the prevailing stereotype of the passive victim woman; moreover, power itself is perceived as being not entirely monolithic."<sup>132</sup>

Ros Posel of the University of Natal concurred with Gilfillan in the review she wrote in 1990 for the *South African Historical Journal* – the flagship journal of the historical profession in South Africa at the time. Posel argued that this collection was able to re-write history with gender becoming a mandatory category of historical analysis.<sup>133</sup> While Posel identified some gaps in this collection, she expressed the firm believe that the collection had given historians a worthy touchstone for the future.<sup>134</sup>

Abroad, Kathlene Sheldon of the University of California wrote a review published in the *International Journal for African Historical Studies* in 1991. Sheldon assessed the collection as full of analysis on available documentation and one that dealt with wrong perceptions that had been created by Europeans on women and their roles in South Africa. Like the commentators in the South African journals, Sheldon also credited the collection for desisting from writing women's history from a victim's perspective, opting, at least to some extent, rather to illustrate how women played their role despite trying times. She further concurred with the South African reviewers that the collection raised new questions that should guide fresher women's history.

However, over and above this credit, she pointed to the fact that the collection was "strongly influenced by relying on evidence drawn from white and/or male sources".<sup>135</sup> She also held the view that the book reflected a sense of South African insularity. Nevertheless, Sheldon received the collection as "an excellent set of contributions, providing a great deal of new historical research and with an analysis that generally succeeds in framing the papers within the changing

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<sup>132</sup> L. Gilfillan, *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, edited by C. Walker, *Current Writing* 2(1), 1990, pp. 175.

<sup>133</sup> R. Posel, *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, edited by C. Walker, book review, *South African Historical Journal* 25(2), 1990, p. 263.

<sup>134</sup> R. Posel, *Women and gender, ...*, SAHJ, p. 264.

<sup>135</sup> K. Sheldon, Namibia: *Women in War* by Tessa Cleaver; Marrion Wallace: *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* by Cheryl Walker, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 24(3), 1991, p. 656.



definitions of women and gender roles in the multiplicity of societies that make up South Africa.”<sup>136</sup>

Christine Sylvester, then with the Northern Arizona University, reviewed the book for the prestigious London-based *Journal of Southern African Studies (JSAS)* in 1991. She too declared that the collection was an “admirable and intriguing feminist-minded volume that focused on experiences of womanhood.”<sup>137</sup> Sylvester posited that this volume addressed how women’s activities had contributed to the ordering and disordering of their societies. Yet, she questioned the lack of interpretation of women’s action from the essays that were less bold. She argued that Walker’s introduction was ambiguous and that essays written by other contributors seemed to be dislocated from her thinking – a motion that would subsequently be refuted by Shula Marks (her review discussed below).

Sylvester also questioned Walker’s conviction that the collection addressed both racial and gender oppression of women, pointing to the fact that all the authors were white and only two were men. She criticised Jeff Guy’s commitment to the perception that the control and appropriation of women’s labour was the sole feature of pre-capitalist indigenous states and underscored variations and agency created by women in other spheres – a point on which she would be supported by Marks.

Shula Marks, Professor of history at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, reviewed the Walker volume for the gender studies journal *Agenda* in 1991. Marks applauded the collection, appreciating its stance on placing men and women at the centre stage to unravel gender relations in Southern Africa.<sup>138</sup> Unlike Sylvester, she praised Walker’s introduction as a powerfully argued overview which not only managed to lace all the essays in context and relate them to one another, but also brought out the major themes and suggested some remaining ones for further research.<sup>139</sup> Marks did take issue with the absence of women’s voices in this collection owing to the research having been based mainly on archival documents. With Sylvester, she maintained that Guy’s presentation reduced women to victim status owing

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<sup>136</sup> K. Sheldon, Namibia: Women in, ..., IJAHS, p. 657.

<sup>137</sup> C. Sylvester, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* by Cheryl Walker, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 17(1), March 1991, p. 165.

<sup>138</sup> S. Marks, Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945: Cheryl Walker, Review, *Agenda* 9, 1991, p. 82.

<sup>139</sup> S. Marks, Women and, ..., p. 83.

to his insistence that the history of women is the history of their oppression.<sup>140</sup> She singled out Phil Bonner's piece as showing women's agency by indicating how women took action against beer brewing laws. But she concluded that most of the chapters dealt with the position of women rather than agency. Yet she was optimistic that this collection would be able "... to enrich our historical understanding of women and gender relations from a variety of theoretical and empirical perspectives ... and establish beyond doubt the validity and vitality of a women's history situated in the broader context of gender relations."<sup>141</sup>

Jane Carruthers from the History Department at the University of South Africa was even more critical than the reviewers for the two above-mentioned international journals when in 1991 she discussed the book in her department's journal *Kleio*.<sup>142</sup> She concurred with most others that the book would be crucial and valuable for future researchers, but she proclaimed, like Sylvester in *JSAS*, that most chapters had not met the aims of the book as set by Walker in her introduction. Carruthers also observed a lack of cohesion and focus – Guy's chapter for instance being too wide and Meintjes's chapter being too narrow in her estimation. Carruthers posited that most chapters were not sitting well with the title of this book; which to her did not accurately reflect its contents, as it concentrated to a large extent on the world of women. While applauding the book for providing the reader with a lens into women's contribution towards building South Africa, she expressed the hope that Cheryl Walker would be working upon a further publication which would explore the changing relationships between men and women in more detail.<sup>143</sup>

This view was shared by Margo Russel from the University of Stellenbosch. In her review, appearing in *African Affairs* in 1992, she argued that this collection was composed of discrete descriptive chapters that lacked theoretical signposts.<sup>144</sup> Russel was highly critical in her review when pointing out that, for part of the collection, secondary sources were consulted while primary sources had readily been available. A historical gap could not be filled by disregarding conventions of historical scholarship, she argued. She also noted with concern what she referred to as the use of big jargon and contradictions and misinformation by some of the contributors,

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> S. Marks, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945: Cheryl Walker, Review, Agenda 9*, 1991, p. 90.

<sup>142</sup> *Kleio* was overhauled in the early twenty-first century to become the *African Historical Review*. This made it possible for the journal of the History Department of the University of South Africa to continue its tradition of high quality research articles on a broader, continental scale.

<sup>143</sup> J. Carruthers: C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945, Kleio XXIII*, 1991, p. 115.

<sup>144</sup> M. Russel: C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945 (Review), African Affairs 91(363)*, p. 313.

like Brink and McClintock.<sup>145</sup> She was more impressed with chapters like Gaitskell's and Bonner's, probably because of their application of primary sources. While Russel did not believe that the collection filled the historical gap as proposed by Walker in her introduction, she conceded that it raised pertinent issues and patched some holes.

In 1992, the Walker volume featured in the review section of the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*. Marc Epprecht of the University of Dalhousie reviewed it together with a monograph which had also appeared in 1991: *Women of Phokeng* by Belinda Bozzoli. In his assessment of the Walker collection, Epprecht mentioned its indebtedness to Bozzoli's earlier work: "In essence, Walker has put together the first comprehensive response to Bozzoli's challenge to develop the empirical base for a gendered history of South Africa."<sup>146</sup> Epprecht was of the view that although the contributors to the Walker volume used old sources that preached male domination, they were able to decipher the andocentric biases.

While Femi Ojo-Ade, then based at St Mary's College of Maryland in the Department of Foreign Languages, was also critical of the absence of black contributors in this collection, she credited Walker for writing "...with the dexterity of a surgeon to expose and then bring together the essential features of each study in a remarkable analytical-synthetic exercise that can only be applauded, not least because it will make many wish to read the whole book from cover to cover".<sup>147</sup> She believed that this was a good contribution, but she also warned that the absence of black contributors narrowed the quality. According to Ojo-Ade, "...it is a fact that few outsiders, if any, can ever do justice to the existence, essence, and experience of an oppressed people".<sup>148</sup> Ojo-Ade's review had appeared in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* in 1992.

The Walker collection was indeed widely reviewed. In 1992 even the journal *Victorian Studies* featured a review by Paula M. Krebs of Wheaton College, for whom the book was a response to a Victorian perception of gender roles and studies in South Africa,<sup>149</sup> particularly on policies that

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<sup>145</sup> Please see M. Russel: C. Walker (ed.), *Women and, ...*, AA.

<sup>146</sup> M. Epprecht: *Women and Gender Southern Africa to 1945* by Cheryl Walker; *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life strategy and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1993* by Belinda Bozzoli, Mmantho Nkotsoe, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 25(2), 1992, p. 401.

<sup>147</sup> F. Ojo-Ade: *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* by Cheryl Walker; *Mothers of the Revolution: The War Experiences of Thirty Zimbabwean Women* by Irene Staunton (Review), *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30(4), 1992, p. 693.

<sup>148</sup> F. Ojo-Ade: *Women and Gender, ...*, JMAS, p. 694.

<sup>149</sup> P. M. Krebs, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* by Cheryl Walker, *Victorian Studies* 36(1), Autumn 1992, p. 89.

intended to reinvent male domination through training and courts. Kerbs argued that this collection also dealt with cultural perceptions, like the *lobola* payment, but also the solutions put forward by missionaries that perpetuated women's oppression. Thus, according to Krebs, this collection dealt with women's exposure to foreign administrative controls and laws that were meant to oppress them. Krebs too noted with concern the absence of black contributors, while as many as three chapters were dealing with white women in South Africa.

*Women and Gender in Southern African History* was not only reviewed in a wide range of journals, it also continued to be reviewed over a relatively extensive period of time. As from 1993, the reviews started affirming the deductions and conclusions of a number of previous reviewers.

Writing for the journal *Signs* in 1993, Gay W. Siedman, of the University of Wisconsin argued that the collection used limited and possibly biased archival sources; that the changes in gender relations captured by the authors were limited owing to the strong patriarchal structure in the pre-colonial and colonial era. Siedman stated that the authors looked at how gender oppression was reinvented by colonists who colluded with local chiefs, but that they did not show exactly how women contested this position. "Rather than describing women's organized resistance, as much previous feminist historiography in the region has done, the collection seeks to explain ... the pervasions of women's conservatism through South Africa history."<sup>150</sup> Regardless of her criticism, Siedman too acknowledged that the approaches used provided for changing dynamics within women's history.

In 1994, Jane L. Parpart of the Dalhousie University, writing for the *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, also argued that the collection was "...an impressive compendium of South African scholarship on women's history in the region. It reflects the rich historiography so characteristic of South African history, with its extensive archival resources and well developed historical debates".<sup>151</sup> At the same time, she also noted that in the collection, "less emphasis is placed on women's resistance to patriarchal ideologies and struggles between women and men so

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<sup>150</sup> G. W. Siedman, *The Comfort of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* by Louise White: *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* by Cheryl Walker, *Signs, Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 18(3), Spring 1993, p. 710.

<sup>151</sup> J. L. Parpart: *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* by Cheryl Walker, *Canadian Journal of African Studies Revue Canadiennedes E'tudes Africaines* 28(2), 1994, pp. 378-379.

common to daily life”.<sup>152</sup> The collection thus did not give more details on women’s agency, and Parpart expressed the hope that future black feminist historians would clearly unpack nuances created.

Donald Wilson, for a 1994 issue of the *Journal of the International African Institute*, argued too that this collection was like an alternative to a hidden history. Wilson, unlike other reviewers, believed that the aims of the book as set by Walker in her introduction were met. He posited that the collection was able to fill the absence of women in Southern African history (historical gap) by dealing with themes from pre-capitalist to labour migrancy at the level of gender relationships. Wilson submitted that “Here we have a fuller and more wide ranging examination ... What these essays display so well, though, is that absence from the record does not mean that women were either politically or historically passive.”<sup>153</sup>

As late as 2007, Van der Spuy (then with Castleton State College) and Clowes (with the University of Western Cape) acknowledged that this was the first comprehensive book of essays on women’s history. However, they submitted that the collection was more concerned about the continuation of patriarchal oppression from pre-capitalist African societies to colonial societies. It was not concerned about agency, but male domination. “Walker’s (and Guy’s) key concern was how oppression impacted on women, rather than how women acted on their own behalf...”<sup>154</sup>

It is clear that the Walker collection received a resounding reaction. This on its own, proved that it was a watershed in the history of women’s history in South Africa. It was reviewed locally and internationally. It is interesting to see how many South African Universities responded to this collection. Reviews from Margo Russel (University of Stellenbosch); Jane Carruthers (Unisa), Ros Posel (University of Natal) and Lynda Gilfillan (University of Pretoria) show how widely this offering was received. Other reviews were mainly from international universities that showed interest in the history of women in South Africa.

While most of the reviewers were in agreement with the level of debate as being low in the collection, they all also agreed that the collection was a watershed. They concurred that the

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<sup>152</sup> J. L. Parpart, p. 379.

<sup>153</sup> D. Wilson: Cheryl Walker, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Review), *Journal of the International African Institute* 64(3),1994, p. 444.

<sup>154</sup> P. Van der Spuy and L. Clowes, *Accidental feminists? Recent Histories of South African Women*, *Kronos* 33, 2007, p. 214.

collection had taken the debate on women's issues in South Africa to a higher level. It is also clear that criticism of the book was informed by particular preconceptions and historical approaches. This is clearly evident in Russel's analysis of Guy's contribution as descriptive while Wilson regarding it as informative and crucial in understanding women's position and the change they experienced from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist society.

In hindsight, when interviewed in 2013, the editor herself did not see the book as a watershed, arguing that there had been many other important contributions before. Rather, she believed that it "was a valuable collection in its time that brought together components of that body of work in an edited collection".<sup>155</sup> Also looking back from a vantage point in 2013, Professor Deevia Bhana, with the University of Natal School of Education also concurred that while she did not believe it was a watershed, she posited that the "collection reflects a moment in history. Its value lies however in the fact that women's history in S[outh] A[frica] was and is neglected but this is not peculiar to South Africa and has a global order to it – the neglect of women in history at a global scale."<sup>156</sup>

The collection was able to raise that women issues have been ignored for a long time, so let's bring it out. According to gender historian and head of the History Department at the University of Johannesburg, Natasha Erlank (interviewed in 2013), before this book, people worked individually with nothing systematic, but this collection brought them together and they started to talk about gender.<sup>157</sup> Gender specialist Amanda Gouws, also interviewed in 2013, maintained too that the collection "is one of the first books to document women's history and contribution to political change in South Africa".<sup>158</sup> She explained that, after *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, many contributors then focused on agency within women's history. While the collection concentrated mainly on the role played by women within the development of South African history, women history writers started looking at strategic and practical issues that were undermined by general histories. Denise Walsh, an Associate Professor, Woodrow Wilson Department of Politics and Women, Gender and Sexuality, also argued that "...there are many wonderful publications from a wide range of disciplines, including history, to choose from (e.g., Cornwall 2005). The Walker collection stands out among them for its range across time, breadth

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<sup>155</sup> C. Walker's response to a written interview dated 26 August 2013.

<sup>156</sup> D. Bhala, response to a written interview dated 15 October 2013.

<sup>157</sup> N. Erlank, Interview conducted on 10 September 2013, through Skype.

<sup>158</sup> A. Gouws response to a written interview dated 12 November 2013.

of themes, and unique analytical insights.”<sup>159</sup> Hannah Britton, the Director of the Center for the Study of Injustice at the Institute of Policy & Social Research at the University of Kansas, on the other hand, believes that “...this work has been instrumental in having scholars and leaders recognize the role women played in history, politics, economic, and religion. It gave voice and visibility to a strong legacy of women’s activism during a time when it was both unexpected and unseen. It is a work we all turn to, even today. Though there may be limitations when looking back at a work like this, it still should be celebrated for what it did for women’s history for the first time and in a new and important way.”<sup>160</sup>

Most reviewers had been unanimous in singling out Gaitskell and Bonner’s contributions as splendid and deserving of great applause. It is also evident from the reviews and the analysis of the chapters that not all the aims as highlighted by Walker in the introduction have been met. But what is key is that the collection has sparked a huge debate, albeit in the absence of black historians. This is so because either way, history had to be written, irrespective of the colour of the historian. If it is biased, then it will be challenged, if there are gaps, then they will be filled by future historians. This book has also informed and encouraged a number of writings on women’s history in South Africa (this will be highlighted in the next chapter).

The twenty-first century saw another women’s history collection, edited by Nomboniso Gasa (a political activist against apartheid, and postgraduate researcher at the University of South Africa’s Department of History) in 2007. Contributions came from historians, feminists and activists. This collection, *Women in South African History*, had hoped to turn women’s history around and show how women crossed boulders, and challenged wrong methodologies used to unpack women’s history. Its main theme was to show how women emancipated themselves from hardships in the midst of the triple oppression they faced as women, mothers and workers.

### **3.4. Gasa’s collection**

Unlike Walker’s collection, Gasa’s edited volume *Women in South African History* was not meant to close a historical gap. It was “...not a corrective effort to make women visible in history, to write women’s history or to fill the gaps which are missing in various historical and social science works about women’s place and location ... (but) ... to write of women’s location, presence and

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<sup>159</sup> D. Walsh, response to written interview dated 13 February 2014.

<sup>160</sup> H. Britton, response to written interview dated 30 January 2014.

experience in history.”<sup>161</sup> The aim of the collection, according to Gasa, was to provide the reader with a quest for women’s emancipation.<sup>162</sup> The intention of the volume was to revisit how women’s history had been written with contributions from both activists and academics. Contributors were supposed to write about the “women who cross rivers and surmount unimaginable challenges, the kind we prefer not to think about, these women who follow the flow of the Limpopo southwards – they too seek their emancipation”.<sup>163</sup>

Therefore, this volume was expected to bring a mixture of approaches, analyses and themes on the position and role of women in the major South African currents. The volume was also intended to prove “...the importance of recognising women’s multiple and varied experiences and identities, and [assist] with building a feminist theoretical, conceptual and ideological response that is centred on this”.<sup>164</sup> Just like Walker, Gasa acknowledged that this volume was not exhaustive as some themes like Indian women, women in the PAC and other political bodies had not been covered.

It should also be noted that unlike the Walker book which was an academic project published by independent publishers, Gasa’s volume was a government project, commissioned and funded by the Department of Arts and Culture and published by the Human Sciences Research Council in Pretoria. The “Age of Hope through Struggle to Freedom” logo of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Women’s March [to the Union Buildings in 1957] is also displayed on the cover. The racial diversity of the contributors and the dual academic/nation building approach to the project projected the intellectual image of the new democratic South Africa led by the former liberation movement-turned governing political party. Positioning itself on the cover page as a “transdisciplinary combination of seasoned and new voices” it aspired to mark a new turning point in the writing about women’s history in the country.

The volume was divided into four parts that re-evaluated and challenged invisibility of women within South African history. Part one discussed “Women in the pre-colonial and pre-Union” periods. The intention was to revisit how women’s history had been recorded in this period. According to Gasa, chapters in this section “... depart from many conventional epistemologies of

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<sup>161</sup> N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus’imbokodo, bawel’imilambo/They remove boulders and cross rivers*, 2007, p. xviii.

<sup>162</sup> N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in, ...*, p. xv.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv.

<sup>164</sup> N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in, ...*, p. xviii.



women's participation in historical eras to show the varied ways in which women's agency indelibly shaped experiences and understandings of previous eras ... they bring feminist lenses to bear on what masculinist or so-called gender neutral and/or gender blind historiography occludes, at the same time that they interrogate the lessons suggested by history's silences".<sup>165</sup>

Part Two dealt with "Women in early to mid-twentieth century South Africa", particularly how they responded to major currents that were happening in South Africa. Authors here looked at the women's response and actions to their dislocation from decision making positions in the formation of the union and its laws and within the labour atmosphere.

Part Three examined armed struggles and mass gendered experiences. It was the intention of this section to look at the role of women during this politically tense period, particularly after the Rivonia Trial. The contributors to part three had an opportunity for consulting primary sources and personal accounts, aiming to look into the role of women in the greater scheme of things.

Part Four dealt with "The 1990s and beyond: New identities, new victories, and new struggles". The struggles included health and political challenges that women faced. The chapters explored the contemporary challenges like prostitution and HIV/AIDS. It is behind this backdrop that one can safely posit that post Walker's volume, Gasa's volume selected itself as a watershed. The reviews and conclusion in this chapter will determine if indeed the aims as set by Gasa herself had been met. The conclusion will also seek to determine if Gasa's volume was able to address gaps left by Walker's volume. The following paragraphs will look into the chapters in Gasa's volume and try to determine if they were able to capture Gasa's intentions.

The first part of the volume deals with the role of women in pre-capitalist societies. Jennifer Weir (a Senior Lecturer in Academic Staff Development within the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) at Murdoch University in Australia) submitted that chiefly women and women leadership have always existed in South Africa. Evaluating chiefly women and leadership in the nineteenth century, she called into question the perception that women played secondary roles when married to chiefs or when they were chiefs themselves. Using a case study about Shaka, Weir argued that "women leadership took a variety of forms, sometimes in the military, but more

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<sup>165</sup> N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in, ...*, p. xix.

often economic and religious”.<sup>166</sup> Women were thus able to break patriarchal dominations and took important decisions for their communities. Powerful women existed even before Shaka’s rule. According to Weir, women were often involved in men’s roles such as military combat. She referred to Queen Manthatise and Machibise as having been successfully engaged in expeditions against male leaders. They used their positions to take control; they were not passive victims as previously recorded, and this showed women’s agency.

The next contributor to the volume, Pumla Gqola, holds a PhD in Postcolonial Studies from the University of Munich, Germany, with a thesis on slavery and the South African post-apartheid imagination. At the time of writing she was the leader of Open Speak at the Meraka Institute and an Extraordinary Associate Professor at the University of the Western Cape. In her chapter, she argued that the slave history in South Africa does not cater for voices of slaves themselves. She argued that there had been a plethora of views on slave women held by the settlers and historians alike, but where this had been documented, it was related to other themes in history, not exclusively to enslaved women’s views. Unlike in Walker’s collection, Gqola went beyond the treatment of slave women. She looked at the role of slave women, why they were regarded as unproductive and how the white settlers viewed them.

Together with Zine Magubane, Gqola postulated that the penultimate agency by slave women was deliberately constructed as primitive conduct. “Such moves reduce successful resistance through flight into evidence of the innate inferiority of the Khoe/San and other slaves”.<sup>167</sup> Gqola posited that under such invisible position, slave women persisted in the resistance to oppression. A slave woman, like Jaira, pointed at the white advocate as the father of her children, thus avoiding sale.<sup>168</sup> According to Gqola, “[a] feminist project that concentrates on making slave women more visible should pay attention to what is known, knowable, suggested about these lives: the influences, movements, echoes, ways through which they made meaning of, and other ways in which they shaped South Africa”.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> J. Weir, Chiefly women and women’s leadership in pre-colonial Southern Africa ‘Like three tongues in one mouth’, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus’iimbokodo, Bawel’imilamho/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 4.

<sup>167</sup> P. D. Gqola, Tracing the elusive lives of slave women in (slavocratic) South Africa, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus’iimbokodo, Bawel’imilamho/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 24.

<sup>168</sup> P. D. Gqola, Tracing the elusive, ..., p. 25.

<sup>169</sup> P. D. Gqola, Tracing the elusive, ..., p. 32.

In her contribution to the book, Helen Bradford, a South African historian and researcher who had specialised in topics on war, labour, literature, photography, reproductive politics and millenarianism in a colonial context, questioned narratives that interpreted the Nonqawuse story for decades. She was afforded an opportunity to revisit her earlier methodologies within women's historiography. She fathomed that the narratives had undergone numerous male biased interpretations, ranging from a Xhosa perspective that Nonqawuse was a mistaken birth, then an accusation that she had been used by the imperial government to destroying the Xhosa society and finally, an interpretation of the Nonqawuse dilemma as children's act of madness. Bradford opened this debate by not only giving an analysis, but going beyond acknowledging the story, and unpacking nuances/subleties created by women in the midst of strong male kingship.

She submitted that this historical event was a protest by women against male domination: "they were being invited into a world where the sexes mingled, subject to rules which curbed male privileges and gave women opportunities".<sup>170</sup> Bradford maintained that the reading of the Nonqawuse story should not only be based on the past male narratives, but also on how the patriarchal system was destroyed prior to Nonqawuse's birth. Nonqawuse cannot be blamed for the death of Xhosa tradition at the time; this was resultant of a weakened patriarchal system. Women took advantage of this weakness and the gap in the patriarchal system; thus they challenged male-dominated decisions. Women were thus accused of causing a disaster, when they called for the cleansing that challenged immoral actions and oppression. The Nonqawuse actions were therefore agency, and not just events that was caused by a woman, and had started long before Nonqawuse was born.

Elizabeth Van Heyningen, a social historian, especially of the social history of medicine, concluded this section with a study on the South African War. She argued that Boer women in camps fought against British doctors' ill-treatment and at times had them fired. They did not accept the conditions they were living in, they negotiated the poor situations they faced. This led to the formation of the Ladies Commission, led by women to investigate women's conditions in the camps. She also concluded that the war gave voices to British women who were loyalists.<sup>171</sup> Van Heyningen failed to show how the Boer women withstood the ill-treatment, though.

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<sup>170</sup> H. Bradford, Not a Nongqawuse story: An anti-heroine in historical perspective, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilamho/ They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 70.

<sup>171</sup> E. Van Heyningen, Women and Gender in the South African War, 1899–1902, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilamho/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 113.

Nomboniso Gasa herself introduced Part Two, on women in early to mid-twentieth century South Africa, by calling for the reinterpretation of women's history. This was in line with what she had called for in her introduction: that women's history should be written from a woman's perspective and that the woman's role in the shaping of South Africa should be evaluated. Gasa purported that women's history had always been presented along disempowering contours that oppressed women's agency. In the process, Gasa argued that such narratives had been unable to decode the actual role of women in South African politics.

Gasa maintained that South African women's historiography should not only be about writing about the position of women, but also about how they acted, their discourse, choices and the nuances they created. It should be about the spaces they contested rather than confirming male stereotyped perceptions of women's history. "Somewhere in the vast space in between the extremes, to which the pendulum swings, there is rich, textured, layered and complex discourse and experience of women's making sense of their lives and finding new agency and ways of being."<sup>172</sup>

Gasa argued that previous interpretations of women's history had failed to record those nuances, in the midst of opposition from their male counterparts, as indicated in Chapter 1 with regards to the contribution of general histories towards women's history. She questioned the inability of authors like Walker, in her book *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (1991) and Julia Wells, in her work *We now demand! The history of women's resistance to pass laws in South Africa* (1993) in outlining and interpreting women's agency. Gasa argued that Walker, Wells and many others recorded women's history as reactionary. They did not see it as women's political trajectory. Some authors had failed to raise women's refusal to carry passes and pay fines as nuances and agency, this was how women raised their opinions and challenged oppression that faced them as women. This served as a response to Walker's argument that women's voices were silent in 1913, effectively imposing that women's impact in the 1913 march was unquantifiable but huge. A reference to Walker's *Women and Gender in Southern Africa* betrays Gasa's acceptance of the watershed status of Walker's book. Gasa acknowledged that Walker's

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<sup>172</sup> N. Gasa, 'Let them build more gaols', in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 132.

contribution had opened new debates: the collection might have not reached its objectives, but it surely raised questions that influenced her book.

In her analysis of the perceived silences of women within political circles, which were allegedly outlined by Cheryl Walker (1991), Gasa aligns herself with Ginwala (1990), by maintaining that “[t]he complexity of African women’s political struggle calls for an approach that examines the spaces in-between; the vast grey areas which are rich and complex with women’s real experience must be explored fully”.<sup>173</sup> Gasa acknowledged the limitations on women during this era, but maintained that women defied oppression and created nuances that showed their strength. She rebuked women’s historiography that failed to unearth agency, which accepted that women were functional within the male wing and hence were silent and guided solely by nationalist thinking. Women were not silent, invisible and dormant as some feminists posited.

Luli Callinicos, a social historian and heritage expert, and at the time the Chairperson of the National Heritage Council, revisited life histories in her contribution. She argued that part of the paucity of actual women’s history was that feminist and general histories tended to provide narratives that made assumptions about women’s experiences. She therefore provided a discourse that directly allowed women to air experiences in both apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Callinicos’s subjects recalled how they defied apartheid rules despite hardships and cruel treatment. She used interviews to bring women’s history to life. Interviews with Martha Msomi and Thoko Virginia Mngoma were used to show how women defied domestic work expectations, joined the ANC and campaigned for the organisation in the midst of apartheid laws. Callinicos charged therefore that women did not solely depend on men, they had contested their working space and challenged previously male dominated terrains like political activism. “Some women decided to be more answerable to themselves for their decision and direction.”<sup>174</sup>

Iris Berger, a feminist scholar and activist and Chair of the History Department at the University at Albany, State University of New York, investigated how women asserted their position in a male-dominated movement. Berger submitted that women challenged inequalities with men at

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<sup>173</sup> N. Gasa, ‘Let them build, ...’, p. 145.

<sup>174</sup> L. Callinicos, Testimonies and transitions: Women negotiating the rural and urban in the mid-20th century, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus’imbokodo, Bawel’imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 116.

work. She concluded that the fact that the 1931 and 1932 strikes were led by women challenged white society's perception about women as they transcended the perception that they were always shadows of their husbands and church. Women extended union mobilisation even to lowly paid workers in the Cape and elsewhere.<sup>175</sup> She clearly summed up the role of women in trade unionism as "having changed women's personal and collective identities, helping to shape the contours of a later South African feminist agenda..."<sup>176</sup>

Gasa concluded this section by submitting that the 1950s provided a shift in women's activities. Women chose not to entertain patriarchal perceptions within the ANC and thus organised their march without the full blessing of the leadership. She argued that the march brought together women from different races and ideological backgrounds and social strata.<sup>177</sup> She also argued that the protest against passes stalled the provision of passes to women as Wells had also submitted in her work of 1993. By deploying women leaders in the march, woman movements contributed to a more vital, inclusive political process.<sup>178</sup> This was so because even in the grip of a repressive government, women were still able to organise a significant event. Gasa concluded that the women's march should not be seen in the context of national liberation, but as a struggle for the public domain.<sup>179</sup>

Part Three of the collection, "War: Armed struggles and mass gendered experiences", began with a chapter by Raymond Suttner, at the time a Research Fellow in the History Department at the University of South Africa. Suttner used archival materials and oral interviews to investigate the role of women in the ANC-led underground. The study concluded that women were key in the underground movement. Women operated on dangerous missions within and outside the country. Suttner believed that in this section, the role of women "... needs to be understood as entailing a number of components, including planning, reconnaissance and a variety of other forms of preparations".<sup>180</sup> In essence, Suttner dismissed the degrading perception that women

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<sup>175</sup> I. Berger, *Generations of Struggle: Trade Unionism and the roots of feminism, 1930-1936*, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 190.

<sup>176</sup> I. Berger, *Generations of Struggle*, ..., p. 204.

<sup>177</sup> N. Gasa, *Feminisms, motherisms, patriarchies and women's voices in the 1950s*, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 220.

<sup>178</sup> J. Wells, *We Now Demand! The History of Women's Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa*, 1993, p. 140.

<sup>179</sup> N. Gasa, *Feminisms, motherisms,...*, p. 214.

<sup>180</sup> R. Suttner, *Women in the ANC-led underground*, in N. Gasa, (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 243.

were passive passengers during the ANC-led underground period. Women tested routes and accommodated comrades on necessary and important missions.

Jacklyn Cock was one of only two contributors to the Walker volume who had also written a chapter for the Gasa-edited book. Well known for her work on domestic servants in the 1990s, she had in the meanwhile been promoted to Professor in the Sociology Department at the University of the Witwatersrand and published more books on women in South Africa. In her contribution to Gasa's book, she reviewed how women contributed to the peace process in South Africa during and after the apartheid years. She analysed how women under the auspices of the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) in the apartheid years, campaigned against a high military budget and re-militarisation that had taken the form of deployment of soldiers in war-torn African countries, particularly in Angola and Mozambique where the ANC was housed, but also within South African townships.

The ECC held the view that those deployments warranted higher defence expenditure and a SANDF rearmament programme.<sup>181</sup> Cock's chapter thus indicated how white women fought for peace, and this irked the state, as the notion of *volksmoeder* was thus undermined within a male dominated National Party. When the ECC changed its name to Ceasefire in 1993, it continued to challenge rearmament and deployment of troops and was thus labelled, again, treasonable and anti-government. This group thus remained relevant in the new South Africa, with a new call for a gun free society.

Janet Cherry, an independent researcher and feminist activist based in Port Elizabeth,<sup>182</sup> evaluated women's role in the 1980s township uprisings in the Eastern Cape. She concluded that because of the restrictive laws, women's organisations emerged in large numbers. Women were organised within the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation and formed the Port Elizabeth Women Organisation (PEWO) much to the dislike of the ANC Women's League, FEDSAW and the

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<sup>181</sup> J. Cock, 'Another mother for peace': Women and peace building in South Africa, 1983–2003, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, p. 260.

<sup>182</sup> Cherry is involved in research on women's rights in rural areas as well as historical research and on research projects for the Human Science Research Council and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and taught at Rhodes University and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

ANC itself. “The younger women in PEWO also played a proactive role in organising school boycotts and went around checking whether the boycott was being adhered to.”<sup>183</sup>

Women addressed their issues in all organisations and this took centre stage within the United Democratic Front (UDF), which saw the formation of a UDF women’s organisation. Hence, women were not passive members of community organisations; they contested for their spaces within such organisations and took radical steps in addressing women’s and social issues. Cherry further concluded that women took ‘male’ spaces by challenging apartheid in a brave manner, even if it meant risking losing their jobs, in an attempt to fight for a proper livelihood. “The entire female workforce in the township, most of whom were domestic workers, engaged in a totally successful withdrawal of their labour.”<sup>184</sup>

Pat Gibbs, an oral historian,<sup>185</sup> concluded part three by providing women with a voice in determining their role in trade unionism and a fight for gendered labour treatment and justice in South Africa. Gibbs interviewed women to record their experience in labour movements in South Africa. She evaluated the women’s agency within trade unionism through the case study of the Kiviets family and their experiences. In the midst of harsh treatment from the state and employers, women from this family became shop stewards and contested unfair labour practices like racial discrimination, low salaries, unfair leave and unfair dismissals of women. While women faced family breakdown in their shop steward life, they persisted for the sake of recognition of women within Cosatu and on shop floors.

Sheila Meintjes, who had been involved in feminist politics since the early 1970s, opened the final part: “The 1990s and beyond: New identities, new victories, new struggles”. Meintjes is the only other author besides Cock who had also contributed to the Walker volume. She still worked in the Political Studies Department at the University of the Witwatersrand, and whereas her chapter in the earlier book reflected her academic beginnings in historical studies, her contribution to Gasa’s book was more in line with her status as feminist scholar and gender

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<sup>183</sup> J. Cherry, ‘We were not afraid’: The role of women in the 1980s’ township uprising in the Eastern Cape, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus’iimbokodo, Bawel’imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 285.

<sup>184</sup> J. Cherry, ‘We were not afraid’, ..., p. 298.

<sup>185</sup> Gibbs focused on prioritising the voices of the past above the narratives of the present and was a co-writer of two chapters for the first two volumes of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* for the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET). Please see P. Gibbs, *Women, labour and resistance: Case studies from the Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage area, 1972-94*, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus’iimbokodo, Bawel’imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, pp 315-343.



activist. Meintjes's career between historical writing and feminist political theory sheds significant light on the differences between these fields, which will become apparent in the discussion of journal articles on women's history to be discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

In her contribution to Gasa's volume, Meintjes used interviews to determine the force behind the naked women's protest in July 1990. She submitted that while the naked women's protest seemed to be derogatory and degrading to some, the nakedness was used as a strategy to demand houses. Women used their bodies to shame the municipal authorities for failing to respond to their needs.<sup>186</sup> By fighting the Urban Areas Act through undressing in public, women forced their voices to be heard and this informed future legislation formulation in South Africa, for example in the formulation of the Constitution. Apart from these, women won many victories, they influenced the outlawing of rape in marriage, seen the recognition of domestic violence as well as the review of the status of customary marriage. They have also ensured that discrimination against women was made illegal.<sup>187</sup> While Meintjes's contribution in Walker's collection had been concentrated on contradictions of Christian promises to women, her methodology and approach changed. She was able to show women's agency.

Nthabiseng Motsemme, at the time, working on her PhD on issues of HIV/AIDS, love, intimacy and the politics of survival, contributed a chapter to the Gasa book in which she looked at women's discourses at the time of HIV/AIDS, either as infected or otherwise affected. According to Motsemme, due to poverty, women end up looking for other means of survival, irrespective of their knowledge of the pandemic. Women at Chesterville resorted to the *ukuphanda* cult as a survival strategy. Women looked for rich or working men to fend for them, and in return, fend for their families, including their parents who accepted this trend. "There is an unspoken expectation at home that after a night out [with a boyfriend], she must come home with something that contribute to the household economy."<sup>188</sup> Contrary to the contributions in Walker's collection, Motsemme was able to show how women used prostitution as a means for survival. While it might have been seen as immoral, it was used to uplift women's livelihood and challenge traditional roles.

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<sup>186</sup> S. Meintjes, Naked women's protest, July 1990: 'We won't fuck for houses', in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 350.

<sup>187</sup> S. Meintjes, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 362.

<sup>188</sup> N. Motsemme, 'Loving in a time of hopelessness' On township women's subjectivities in a time of HIV/AIDS, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 391.

The second-last chapter of the book was contributed by Caroline Wanjiku Kihato, at the time, a Policy Analyst at the Development Bank of Southern Africa, and editor of *Development Southern Africa*, investigating immigrant women in Johannesburg. In her chapter, she concluded that contrary to the perception that they were victims and passive, these women left their homes because they were strong and wanted to learn. Therefore, for their survival, these women negotiated their space with everyone in whichever way, even if it might be deemed immoral. These women embodied multiple identities, sometimes using them strategically to their own advantage.<sup>189</sup> Even in prostitution, women made a choice and used it strategically to get what they wanted.<sup>190</sup> Nothing was decided for these women because they moved into the city breaking away from their patriarchal societies. These women survived social and economic marginalisation, physical damage and traditional oppression.

Finally, Yvette Abrahams concluded this offering by taking a personal journey in re-reading and re-evaluating the historiography about Sarah Bartman. She rebuked patriarchal and racist narratives that have been based on epistemological biases in reading and relating both the Sarah Bartman and the Khoe history. Abrahams was able to provide a womanist lens to the evaluation of the life of Bartman from a personal journey. For her, this was “...a quest for self-understanding and self-retrieval from the obscurities of a language not created for my benefit, a turnaround polemic against racist and sexist cultural texts which silenced me through their animosity, and a contribution towards a communal project of creating a more hospitable mental environment for African creativity.”<sup>191</sup> While this journey exposed her prejudices, it was able to question historians and authors’ motives in outlining the life and presentation of Sarah Bartman.

It is clear that the contributors to Gasa’s volume were writing authoritatively on their particular fields. While some reviewers like van der Spuy and Clowes would take serious exception to the volume, one cannot deny that this was a powerful contribution after Walker’s volume. Contributors were able to not position women in the history of South Africa, but they were able to re-write women’s history from a woman’s lens. They were able to “remove boulders” as the

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<sup>189</sup> C. Wanjiku Kihato, *Invisible lives, inaudible voices? The social conditions of migrant women in Johannesburg*, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, p. 400.

<sup>190</sup> C. Kihato, *Invisible lives,...*, p. 414.

<sup>191</sup> Y. Abrahams, *Ambiguity is my middle name: A research diary*, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 421.

title claimed, and show women's agency in every aspect of their lives. This volume was able to close some of the historical gaps that were either left or shown up in Walker's volume. The contributors to Gasa's volume managed to employ history's conventional methods to unpack women's role in South African history. The chapters by Yvette Abrahams, Helen Bradford and Pumla Gqola to mention but a few, have re-written and revisited past methodologies in explaining the role of women in South African history.

The Gasa collection has responded well to Manicom's concern, expressed in the article she had published in the *Journal of African History* in 1992, that "South African feminist historians are white and middle class."<sup>192</sup> The collection has moved boulders by covering what historians had narrow focus on when addressing women. Contributors have moved from addressing social history to engaging in political and state history to conceptualise how women have built the South African state. Issues that were relegated to men, like war or labour were addressed. The collection was able to confirm Manicom's perception that:

The reconceptualisation of South African history in terms of gender requires minimally a more determined and relentless interrogation of those topics that are not immediately identifiable as 'women's history' or gender-laden – questions of state, war, colonialism, nationalistic politics, urban class formation, mine labour, etc., which have long been represented as the domain of 'general' history.<sup>193</sup>

### 3.5. Reviews of Women in South African History

Ekine Sokari, a freelance writer and a researcher, reviewed the Gasa volume in one of the 2007 issues of *Pambazuka News, Pan African Voices for Freedom and Justice*. She argued that Gasa's compilation presented a fresh, radical feminist approach to women's history that outlined the challenges and dangers women faced in the process of history in the past three hundred years. She believed that the book was "a radical departure from the traditional history texts in that it uses feminist analysis rather than the 'more acceptable gender analysis' in its approach by examining the ways in which gender intersects with race, class and other forms of identity and location in South African history".<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> L. Manicom, *Ruling relations: ...*, JAH, p. 442.

<sup>193</sup> L. Manicom, *Ruling relations: ...*, JAH, p. 443.

<sup>194</sup> S. Ekine, *Women in South African History: Book Review*, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/books/40950>. Retrieved 13.04.2012.

According to Sokari, authors in this collection went beyond just a presentation of how women were treated; it went on to indicate how they contested their spaces, that is how they fought for recognition, how they re-evaluated the roles played by women in the making of South African history. It also did not only give voice; it went into the challenges women went through to gain those voices. According to Sokari, the book challenged uncontested perceptions about women in trade unionism, slavery, mass mobilisation and blatant racist and sexist male, and to some extent, female women's history writing. She mentioned specifically Yvette Abrahams' piece on Sarah Bartman, which took issues with racist historical writing and with paucity of sources. Like many other contributors to the book, she went beyond ordinary narratives and submitted that the white society raped Sarah Bartman and the Khoesan people. They were degraded and abused, but Bartman's agency in her survival in the midst of violence, showed resistance by Khoe women, and women as a whole in South African history.

Karen Bruns, who was with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), wrote a review of the Gasa edited collection which appeared on the HSRC publishers' press portal. She argued that the book's authors brought different, unique viewpoints to previously unknown women's history. The book "...sets out to showcase women's location, presence and experience in history from different points of view".<sup>195</sup> In essence, the review acknowledged that previous narratives had perpetuated patriarchal views of women's contribution to history, thus ignoring nuances and agency created by women. Burns argued that because authors ranged from activists to academics, the book provided women's history from all aspects of life, particularly from a feminist perspective.

Teresa Barnes, with the University of Western Cape, submitted that the Gasa collection was unapologetic in explaining women's history from a feminist perspective. She charged that the book presented the choices, agency, voice and nuances created by women in the midst of patriarchal domination.<sup>196</sup> It illuminated and explored traces of resistance, and embodiment of women's agency and contours that defied a single interpretation of women's history. She maintained that authors were able to decode women's action within a male dominated history discipline. Thus, while women might have been narrating on well-known topics like women in leadership, they asked questions that recognised women's agency in decision making.

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<sup>195</sup> K. Bruns, *Women in South African History*, HSRC [www.pressportal.co.za](http://www.pressportal.co.za), p. 1. Retrieved 13.04.2012.

<sup>196</sup> T. Barnes, Review, *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, bawel'imilambo/They remove boulders and cross rivers*. Nomboniso Gasa, ed., *Feminist Africa* 9, 2007, pp. 139-142.

Patricia Van der Spuy and Lindsay Clowes wrote a review for the University of the Western Cape based historical journal *Kronos*. They looked into Gasas' edited volume and a book by Helen Scanlon also published in 2007: *Representation and Reality: Portraits of Women's Lives in the Western Cape 1948-1976*. They were not as complimentary of the Gasas volume as Sokari, Burns and Barnes. They acknowledged that this collection was path breaking, but they surmised that, because of its political nature, contributors failed to become part of the history process promised by the editor. These two reviewers questioned the lack of historical self-reflective writing that would have given this volume real nuance not limited by academic and political chains. While they cited Gqola, Bradford and Abrahams' chapters as moving and self-reflective, they questioned the exclusion and unfair criticism levelled against pioneers like Walker and Wells who, had they been given a chance, would have reflected on their earlier writing, as having been part of a historical process. "There is an apparent scapegoating of two specific historians, Julia Wells and Cheryl Walker, whose work in the 1980s – influenced by contemporary concerns – laid much of the groundwork of the histories of women's militancy in South Africa, and, ironically of this very volume."<sup>197</sup>

These two reviewers also argued that authors in this volume had failed to present their feminist approach and had failed dismally to engage with debates around gender analysis and feminism. In essence, the two reviewers found contradictions between the editor's preamble that called for emancipation, historical process and trans-disciplinary methodologies and the actual narratives presented by contributors. They argued that the intensity of the debate proposed by Gasas was not reflected in most chapters.<sup>198</sup> They further challenged its innovativeness and regretted the absence of what they would have considered fresh authors, who might have brought new perspective by infusing their personal experiences into their narrative and thus rethink past methodologies.

As indicated earlier, this collection had not been reviewed as widely as the earlier Walker collection. However, the majority of reviewers appreciated this book as a watershed in South African Women's history. It re-evaluated women's history from a feminist and activist perspective. While most thought that the collection would not evoke objective analysis of the

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<sup>197</sup> P. van der Spuy and L. Clowes, Accidental feminists? Recent histories of South African Women, *Kronos* 33, 2007, p. 228.

<sup>198</sup> P. van der Spuy and L. Clowes, Accidental feminists?, ..., *Kronos*, p. 230.

complexity and multiplicity of women's stances because it was conceptualised by the government department of Arts and Culture, most reviewers acknowledged that the contributors had transcended that barrier. While it is clear that Gasa and her fellow contributors referred little to the Walker volume, she acknowledged, albeit very briefly, that Walker's work had contributed to understanding the expression of women's status within South African history.

### 3.6. A brief comparative reflection on reception

Thus, far this chapter has given an outline of the content of the volumes edited by Walker in 1991 and Gasa in 2007, and the response to this work expressed by peer reviewers in scholarly journals after its publication. The fact that the Walker volume had been reviewed far more extensively and that reviews continued to appear several years after the date of publication, compared to the relatively few reviews of the Gasa volume, cannot serve as a sole indicator of the a superior reception of the one above the other. Walker's volume was a first; no such volume had existed up to date and a book following in that wake would not have been expected to make as big a wave as the first. Also, it has been common among journal editors in more recent years to complain that scholars rather tend to allocate their research time to producing subsidy-eligible articles of their own than reviewing their colleagues' books, an activity which had been relegated to scholarly community service or collegial courtesy in a system which does not recognise reviewing books as a 'performance indicator'.

Yet the point, which remains, that Walker's book received far more reviews than Gasa's, may gain increasing significance when considered along with the fact that the citation history for the Walker volume is also more illustrious than that of the Gasa volume. Encouraging for the Gasa volume is to observe that the Walker book's impact seems to have increased with age. By mid-June 2015, Google Scholar had registered 274 citations for the 25-year old book *Women and Gender in Southern Africa* and 20 citations for the 8-year old *Women in South African History*.<sup>199</sup> While the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) revealed no record of the Gasa volume being cited in any of the journals it covers, the Walker volume had been cited in journal

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<sup>199</sup> Many thanks to University of Pretoria Information Specialist Alett Nell for assistance in obtaining this data. See the following article for an explanation of the value of Google Scholar as a source to evaluate the impact of books in book-oriented disciplines like history. The authors explain that traditional citation indexes like Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus are article-based and thus not as useful for subject areas, like history, in which "books and monographs are one of the main platforms for research communication". K. Kousha, M. Thelwall and S. Rezaie, Assessing the citation impact of books: The role of Google Books, Google Scholar, and Scopus, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, November 2011, p. 2157.

articles and dissertations indexed by this bibliography 57 times between 2003 (the year in which the data collection had commenced) and 2014.

Bibliometric data in itself, of course, is neither self-explanatory nor conclusive of any tendencies. As Kousha, Thelwall and Rezaie remind readers in a study from 2011, influential research can remain uncited and bibliometrical indicators are no replacement for research-quality assessment.<sup>200</sup> When moving on to a further set of information, about the prevalence of the two books in libraries in South Africa and across the world, it is clear that the Walker volume had circulated far more efficiently over the past two and a half decades than the Gasa one over the almost-decade since its appearance: The WorldCat database holds information for 675 copies, 188 of them e-books, of Walker's *Women and Gender* in libraries worldwide, and 12 hard copies of Gasa's *Women in South African History*. SACat indicates that 36 South African libraries hold a copy (electronic and hard copies respectively) of the Gasa-edited book. With the HSRC's open access policy, however, the latter can be downloaded from the website of the press free of charge. It is significant that this free access has not translated into intensive citation over the past few years.

With these hard facts in mind, it helps to turn, for perspective, to scholars who had been working, writing and teaching in the field. In an interview in 2013, Sheila Meintjes, who had contributed to both volumes, pointed out that Gasa's book was not intended to contest Walker's collection, but to show how women do shape within different institutions.<sup>201</sup> It was meant to tell a story, not to give too much information, because it had been aimed at public consumption. On the same topic, also in an interview in 2013, Natasha Erlank concurred. She argued that what Gasa's collection does, which *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* doesn't do, is to tackle issues that became polemical in the 1990s around the difference between Western style socialist feminism (and what some of the contributors in Gasa's collection termed Western feminism) and womanism.<sup>202</sup> What is key in the comparison of the two collections is that the two were produced in different contexts, with Walker's collection concentrating on the history of gender while Gasa concentrated on women in history, also women inserting themselves into the future history. Gasa's collection is more contemporary and less historical. In 1992, Manicom

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<sup>200</sup> K. Kousha, M. Thelwall and S. Rezaie, Assessing the citation impact of books: The role of Google Books, Google Scholar, and Scopus, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, November 2011, p. 2148.

<sup>201</sup> Sheila Meintjes, interview conducted at Wits on 21 August 2013.

<sup>202</sup> Natasha Erlank, Interview conducted on 10 September 2013, through Skype.

pointed out that it could not be “assumed that the production of a 'critical mass' of feminist and women's history will prompt a more profound, gendered re-thinking of the historical enterprise”.<sup>203</sup>

In the subsequent chapters it will be illustrated that the trend in Gasa's volume had been one reflected in the publication of journal articles as from the 1990s. It seems as if feminist activists' profound, gendered rethinking had been more focused on the present than on the historical enterprise.

### 3.7. Conclusion

Walker's and Gasa's volumes stand out as two beacons that have presented women's history with new perspectives as opposed to previous historiographies that ignored women's history. The reviews of both volumes serve as a testimony to their impact and the fact that they have sparked debate within feminist circles. As van der Spuy and Clowes argue, *Women in History* was not the first comprehensive volume on the history of women, as mistakenly implied in Sokari's review of Gasa's volume. Walker's volume was, evident from the fact that even some of the contributors, including Gasa herself, made reference to the volume. The reviews of the two volumes showed that the two books were received differently mainly because of the reviewers's positions. Most of Walker's reviewers had been adamant that the contributors did not dwell much on the agency and how women contested situations they faced. The Gasa reviewers, on the other hand, believed that the contributors had gone beyond just rectificatory history, they had explained how women contested the contours of an uneven society. They did not just re-write what women did in history, they showed how women challenged patriarchal society. For instance, the collection was able to revisit the position of slave women, the plight of women within HIV/AIDS environment and reviewing how women's history has been presented.

Gasa's volume, unlike Walker's, was able to take in women's perspectives by engaging in interviews on women's experiences. However, it should be noted that Gasa's volume tended to criticise Walker's volume rather than acknowledging its impact on women's history in South Africa. As indicated earlier, van der Spuy and Clowes argued that “[t]here is an apparent scapegoating of two specific historians, Julia Wells and Cheryl Walker, whose work in the 1980s

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<sup>203</sup> L. Manicom, *Ruling relations, ...*, JAH, p. 443.



– influenced by contemporary concerns – laid much of the groundwork of the risks of women’s militancy in South Africa and ironically of this very volume.”<sup>204</sup> Surely, most of the contributors to Walker’s volume were practising lecturers with background on the themes they presented. That none was a black person cannot be contested. However, Gasa’s discomfort<sup>205</sup> with Walker’s use of terms like “womanism”, could have been based on her background as a political activist.

The main difference between these two volumes is that while Walker’s volume did not include all racial groups in South Africa, Gasa’s volume attempted to accommodate most races. Moreover, the sources available to Gasa’s contributors were more accessible than at the time of Walker’s volume being published. In terms of similarities, both volumes acknowledged that their contributions were not exhaustive and that there is still a room for further debates around women’s history in South Africa. Indian identity, PAC and Inkatha membership, lesbian rights and many other themes were not covered intensively in either of the volumes. Nevertheless, the two volumes have proven to be dealing with women’s history in South Africa in detail. As collections, they are indeed two beacons in the historiography of South African women’s history, and for anyone trying to get an understanding of the field, two indispensable points of departure.

However, irrespective of all reviews mentioned above, the fact remains that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were few black academics who could have contributed to Walker’s volume. Thus, it is an unfair criticism that the volume excluded black academics. Those that were there were much more concerned with the fight against apartheid than looking into the role of women in that struggle. The readings here have also indicated that even women in exile were more concerned about a liberation struggle than emancipation of women as individuals. Nevertheless, Gasa’s volume is a testament that a lot had changed between 1990 and 2007. More black women have by then become academics and lived in a politically free South Africa, so they could more easily contribute to the volume.

The audiences, for which the books were intended, were different. Walker’s volume was a collection of essays that was not commissioned by anyone, neither the state nor Afrikaner nationalists. On the other hand, Gasa’s volume was commissioned by the state and had the particular aim to reach out, to show how women had emancipated themselves. With Walker’s

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<sup>204</sup> P. van der Spuy and L. Clowes, *Accidental feminists?, ..., Kronos*, p. 228.

<sup>205</sup> N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in, ..., p. xvii.*

volume focusing on the history of women and the history of gender, the role women had been able to play in the development of South African society; but in Gasa, contributors revisited what has been written and commenting on contemporary issues. So then, the two volumes bear testimony to shifts in woman historians' writing and feminist thinking from the early-1990s to the late-2000s.

While the two collections have done a great deal in addressing women's history in South Africa, one cannot ignore the fact that they are more located within social history and limited in political history. In this way, they seem to be perpetuating the 1970s theoretical perception, the recuperative history. They seem to use "[t]he research into women's history that began to be carried out in the late 1970s under the general rubric of revisionist or radical South African history ... redressing the absence of women from the historical narrative – or part of it anyway".<sup>206</sup>

The next chapter examines how local journals have contributed to women's history narratives in South Africa. The researcher attempts to determine whether journal articles accounted for some of the gaps left by Walker and Gasa, and whether authors of journal articles recognised any influence from the two collections.

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<sup>206</sup> L. Manicom, *Ruling relations, ...*, JAH, p. 446.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH RELATED TO WOMEN AND HISTORY IN “LOCAL SOUTH AFRICAN” JOURNALS

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter takes stock of South African journal articles on the role of women in South African history that were published over the past two decades, the period that followed the publication of Walker’s anthology and which also coincided with the process of the dismantling of apartheid. It moves from the premise that “our relationship to our past is, ultimately, a lived one and it is this experience of time and history that renders our historical inquiries relevant and necessary. Feminist historiography is premised on this understanding. It cannot deny the experience of oppression and sufferings we, as women, live through”.<sup>207</sup> The purpose of the chapter is to determine how women’s history was accounted for in ‘local journals’ (the concept will be described shortly) in the period between 1990 and 2000. It will attempt to show how the scholarship on women’s history differed from and attempted to augment or redress general histories. It will also be ascertained whether authors publishing in these journals had been influenced by the Walker (1990) and Gasa (2007) collections. Generally, the chapter intends to investigate whether the writing on women's history in South Africa was able to reconstruct women's narratives and recapture its ferment<sup>208</sup> and whether this was able to challenge the conspiracy of silence that perpetuated preconceived ideas of representation. The many articles referred to hereunder; address both women's struggles and emancipative roles they played in South Africa. They look into the social construction of women as oppressed by the social and cultural powers”.<sup>209</sup>

In search of the research outputs on women’s history, the journals acting as mouthpieces of South African historians had to be scrutinised. The researcher stumbles upon some complications, since not only the Historical Association of South Africa (with its journal *Historia*) but also the Southern African Historical Society (with its journal *The South African Historical Journal*) offer membership to historians specializing in South African history. Furthermore, besides these “general” journals, various history departments at South African universities also patronise their own journals. Amongst these are: *Kronos* by the University of the Western Cape,

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<sup>207</sup> Discussion: Understanding feminist historiography, *Economic and Political Weekly* 25(31), 1990, p. 1736.

<sup>208</sup> H. D. Graham, American women's history during the 1970s, *OAH Magazine of History* 3(3/4), 1988, pp. 24-27.

<sup>209</sup> C. Corrin, *Feminist Perspectives on Politics*, 1999, p. 3.

the *African Historical Review* (previously *Kleio*) by the University of South Africa, the *Journal for Natal and Zulu History* by the University of KwaZulu-Natal, *New Contree* by the North-West University and the *South African Journal for Contemporary History* by the University of the Free State.

The South African Society for Cultural History also publishes its own journal, the *South African Journal for Cultural History*. Then there are also multi-disciplinary journals, like *Social Dynamics* administered from the University of Cape Town, and journals in other fields, like religion studies, which also present a strong interest in women's historical role in society (Pretoria-based *Missionalia* and *Verbum et Ecclesia* amongst many others).

Because of the feminist nature of the scholarship surrounding women's history, omitting feminist journals when writing this chapter was hardly conceivable. Therefore, the journals *Transformation* (published by the University of KwaZulu-Natal, its mandate being to debate the transition of South and southern African societies and how this affects African development), *Agenda* (published by University of South Africa, with a mandate to espouse feminist writing) and *Feminist Africa* (published by the University of Cape Town, mandated to challenge exploitation and marginalisation of gender and feminist issues across African states and societies) were consulted.

Of the historical journals, the two major ones, *Historia* and the *Southern African Historical Journal* were analysed. *Kronos* was included because of its marked focus on women's history, and the *South African Journal for Cultural History* on the supposition that cultural historians should focus on gender as one, amongst a number, of useful categories to analyse culture.

While women's history was accounted for pre-1990, it was Walker's 1990 collection that revived the review of how women's history was captured in South African historiography. As will be indicated in the paragraphs that follow, Walker's collection was cited on numerous occasions by authors in South African journals, indicative of the fact that the collection was a watershed. While the collection might have concentrated more on the position of women than on their role and fight to remove themselves from oppression, it provided future scholars with tools to challenge perceptions that prevailed amongst some historians in South Africa.

In 1991, the Gender Research group of the University of Natal organised a Conference on Women and Gender in South Africa to discuss women's rights. This resulted in a number of essays on women that were published by various authors on different platforms and formed a departure point from where to explore the interpretation and recording of South African women's history in the period under study. Contributors challenged Marxist interpretations of women's history and the Malibongwe papers. The conference boosted academics who were determined to discuss the status of women through a feminist lens. Most authors had been inspired by the work of Bozzoli (1983) and Walker (1990).

In the discussion that follows, the research on women's history encountered in the local journals are grouped into what could have been identified as recurrent themes. The first section offers an analysis of how historical journals have accounted for women's history, while in the second section, the social science journals with their focus on contemporary issues are scrutinised for the rather different ways in which they have approached themes around women's history. This will help in explaining how scholarship has or has not changed the face of women's history in South Africa.

## **4.2. Historical journals**

### **4.2.1. Power structures**

#### *Enslaved women*

In 1996, *Kronos* dedicated a whole volume to women's experiences in South African history. Part of the debates centred on enslaved women. Christina Landman, a theologian/church historian from the University of South Africa (UNISA), Yvette Abrahams, from the University of the Western Cape and a Commissioner at the Gender Equality Institute and Patricia van der Spuy, a historian from the University of Western Cape, wrote contributions. In the *South African Historical Journal* of 2010 Jessica Murray, Associate Professor in the English Department, UNISA, presented a re-evaluation of enslaved women within South African history.

These authors' contributions can be summarised as follows: While general history books acknowledged enslaved and exploited women like Krotoa, Bartman and many other Khoe women, these authors posited that theirs was a story of women who celebrated life – and

stopped living when there was nothing more to celebrate.<sup>210</sup> Abrahams was creative and experimented with speculative history, not stopping at what was provable, but exploring what was plausible.<sup>211</sup> She argued that Eva was traumatised, an indication that she had been raped, which could have led to her becoming an alcoholic.<sup>212</sup> This contradicted the general perception of this history that did not go deeper into unpacking the positions of enslaved women. Historians studying this period tended too easily to assume that slave women were silent and invisible, without necessarily using their skills to unearth slave experiences. By re-evaluating enslaved women's history, it became clearer that slave women were instrumental in building their families. Historians were challenged to recognise the biases within themselves that closed their minds to women's perspectives and women's experiences and reduced slave and settler women to factors of fertility.<sup>213</sup> Gqola acknowledged this view in her contribution to Gasa's edited volume in 2007,<sup>214</sup> where she looked at the role of enslaved women in building society. It should be noted that Abrahams, who had been part of this group of female scholarly voices heralding a new way of thinking about enslaved and co-opted women in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Cape history, also ended up contributing to Gasa's volume.

Legal history documents from courts on matters relating to enslaved women were also silent. However, Murray managed to use the gaps to conclude that the silence of slave women who had been victims of violence can be read as enacting rather than concealing the truth of their lives.<sup>215</sup> This had been supported by Gqola, who three years previously in the Gasa volume posited that “[w]hile it would have served an African/postcolonial feminist historiographical narrative well to be able to reveal how enslaved women such as Catharina, Steyntyje, Jaira, Krotoa, Sara, Leentje, Minerva and Hester saw themselves and interpreted their daily realities, historical records do not hold such nuances.”<sup>216</sup> These authors were able to provide a new perspective and interpretation of the role that enslaved women played in their societies. While they were vulnerable to slave owners' and men's power, enslaved women stood their ground, challenged

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<sup>210</sup>C. Landman, *The Religious Krotoa*, *Kronos* 23, 1996, p. 34.

<sup>211</sup> Y. Abrahams, *Was Eva raped? An exercise in speculative history*, *Kronos* 23, 1996, p. 4.

<sup>212</sup> Please see the full article for Abrahams's analysis of this speculative approach.

<sup>213</sup> P. van der Spuy, *What then, was the sexual outlet for black males? A feminist critique of quantitative representations of women slaves at the Cape of Good Hope in the Eighteenth Century*, *Kronos* 23, 1996, p. 56.

<sup>214</sup> See N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 22.

<sup>215</sup> J. Murray, *Gender and Violence in Cape Slave Narratives and Post-Narratives*, *South African Historical Journal* 62(3), 2010, p. 459.

<sup>216</sup> P. Gqola in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 37.

oppression and fought for their families. This interpretation was lacking in the general histories that showed enslaved women as victims, and at times, voiceless people.

### *The fight against patriarchal systems*

The following authors re-evaluated women's social positions and their fight for freedom within oppressive Dutch and British systems: Kirsten McKenzie, an Associate Professor in the Department of History at Sydney University writing in *Kronos* in 1996, Jennifer Weir, of the University of Western Australia, writing in the *South African Historical Journal* in 2000, Sarah Duff, as a University of Stellenbosch student writing in *Historia* in 2006 and Ria van der Merwe, from the University of Pretoria Archives, also writing in *Historia*, in 2011. McKenzie found out that within the white community, women's public independence that was enjoyed at the end of the 18th century was eroded by the 1854 constitution that sought to disassociate women from the public mechanisms of power embodied in the vote.<sup>217</sup> Women were honoured at home rather than in public economic action. However, at the same time, "[r]oyal women's significance in the Zulu state went beyond functions of production and reproduction. The leadership activities were not confined to the private domain, but exercised publicly and through ritual."<sup>218</sup> Weir found that chiefly women helped in the development and decision making in the pre-colonial Zulu state, with Shaka accommodating their intelligence. This analysis provides an insight into how the re-evaluation of the role of women has altered previous interpretations of the formation of the Zulu state.<sup>219</sup>

This is a theme that Walker's collection did not cover; However, in Gasa's collection, the same author, Weir (2007) attended to the issue by concluding that:

Chiefly women were not the subordinates of male dictators, as has been widely accepted in much of the literature on the history of groups such as the Zulu in southern Africa. It is quite clear that certain women possessed real political, economic and ritual power in the pre-colonial period. The wide-ranging roles that they occupied at various times do not indicate that such women assumed chiefly roles in the absence of suitable males or in lieu

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<sup>217</sup> K. McKenzie, Wollstonecraft's models? Female honour and sexuality in middle class settler Cape Town, 1800-1854s, *Kronos* 23,1996, p. 74.

<sup>218</sup> J. Weir, "I shall need to use her to rule": The power of Royal Zulu Women in pre-colonial Zululand, *South African Historical Journal* 43(1), 2000, p. 21.

<sup>219</sup> Weir expands on this notion in her contribution to Nomboniso Gasa's collection, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007.

of men, or as surrogate men as has often been assumed. Women were not women lobbying to gain the rights of men.<sup>220</sup>

Furthermore, between 1895 and 1910, the New Woman (including educated and independent young Afrikaner women), learned new European cultural practices like smoking and hiking at colleges, which indicated the accommodation of women's burgeoning liberation.<sup>221</sup> This self-definition removed them from their parents' and families' shadow, created new social networks and concentrated more on the experience of being a college girl than obtaining a higher cause of professionalism.<sup>222</sup> They further took male courses like engineering and female lecturers also sought equal pay and benefits from the university, which they previously did not receive owing to the *volksmoeder* thinking.<sup>223</sup> This broke patriarchal stereotypes as they became involved in politics and changed the rigidity of the college by organising parties, cycling or playing hockey, contrary to reliance on the Church. These emancipative traits can be traced from Walker's "The Women Suffrage Movement in South Africa" (1990) and the *volksmoeder* ideology depicted in Elsabe Brink's "Man made women", in Walker's volume published in 1990. Female students thus challenged Afrikaner nationalist ideas and did not agree to be controlled by male-dominated thinking that undermined their capability. This re-evaluation of Afrikaner women shows that they did not accept everything; above all, they challenged a man-made *volksmoeder* ideology, in the process challenging the rigid sexist Afrikaner oppression of women.

#### **4.2.2. Re-evaluation of writing on women's history and women studies (Silence and Invisibility)**

Andre Appel writing in *Historia* in 1998 as a historian from the University of Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town-based historian Elizabeth van Heyningen, writing in the *South African Historical Journal* in 1999, revisited official records and scholarships that rendered women invisible and silent through omission during important events in the history of South Africa. They also explored how women's studies were accommodated within South African universities. Contrary to the silence and invisibility of women in the labour records and war policies presented in general histories, their research showed that women were able to swell the professional 'male'

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<sup>220</sup> J. Weir, Chiefly women and women's leadership in pre-colonial southern Africa, in N. Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/ They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, 2007, p. 17.

<sup>221</sup> E. Bradlow, in Sara Duff, From New Women to college girls at the Huguenot Seminary and College, 1895-1910, *Historia* 5(1), 2006, p. 76.

<sup>222</sup> S. Duff, From New Women, ..., *Historia*, p. 23.

<sup>223</sup> R. van der Merwe, Moulding volksmoeder or volks enemies? Female students at the University of Pretoria, 1920-1970, *Historia* 56(1), 2011, p. 99.



ranks in education and government structures. They revealed that it was possible to refuse getting married and to have extra-marital affairs, thereby defying church perceptions. Appel reported on Port Elizabeth women who “worked on the salt pan, tapped aloe juice, did some dressmaking and also on occasional wage labor outside the settlement.”<sup>224</sup> Also, at the turn of the century, as van Heyningen pointed out, they “played a crucial role ... in maintaining the morale of the nation at war, and encouraging their men to fight. The war drew women into public political life.”<sup>225</sup> The re-reading of diaries, letters and reminisces of women’s records in the nineteenth century suggested that the absence of women’s voices in historical records should not translate to historical passivity and insignificance.<sup>226</sup> Therefore, it can be argued that the absence and silence of women during the nineteenth century resulted from lack of in depth historical research.

Natasha Erlank, of the University of Johannesburg, writing in *Kronos* in 1996, Duganzich, working at Bryanston High School and writing in *Historia* in 1999, Zimbabwean Anthony Chennels, research affiliate at the University of Pretoria and writing in *Historia* in 2004, and Archie L. Dick, from Library Sciences at the University of Pretoria, writing in *Historia* in 2004, also reviewed how women were written about in nineteenth century in South Africa. They investigated the concerns of colonial women through the re-reading of their letters, took stock of feminist writing of black history, investigated how women in the nineteenth century mimicked the British tone and character so as to gain recognition in literature writing and how both Afrikaner and English women used reading to capacitate nation building.

Their findings were detailed and showed that women had contributed largely to the political and social development of South African society. For example, Natasha Erlank argued that most colonial women in the Eastern Cape were more concerned and pre-occupied by their social/class status and acceptance by their male dominated society, than racial segregation.<sup>227</sup> English women accepted other women irrespective of race as long as they belonged to a particular class.

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<sup>224</sup> A. Appel, Trying to make them visible: Women in Port Elizabeth in the late-nineteenth century to early-twentieth century, *Historia* 43(1), 1998, p. 18.

<sup>225</sup> E van Heyningen, The voices of women in the South African War, *South African Historical Journal* 41(1), 1999, p. 43.

<sup>226</sup> Appel was referring here to Cheryl Walker’s collection of 1990, pp. 2-3, which clearly influenced his article. He further acknowledged Jacklyn Cock where he questioned the education system offered by British missionaries as it ignored and undermined women’s role in the society.

<sup>227</sup> Please see Natasha Erlank, Writing women in (to) early nineteenth century Cape Town, *Kronos* 23, 1996, pp. 75-90 for an in depth analysis of the concerns of these women in the nineteenth century.

Duganzich on the other hand, investigated how Bozzoli, Cock, Gaitskell and Walker<sup>228</sup> have presented African women's history. She observed that when studying the history of black women, Bozzoli, Cock, Gaitskell and Walker have not isolated their histories on black women to only the political input these women have made in resistance activities. "This is, I believe, what sets them apart from those writers who have exploited the 'traditional struggles perspective' in their works when focusing on or making reference to black women in the past. Bozzoli, Cock, Gaitskell and Walker have extended their examinations to the domestic and psychological spheres of the feminine domain and emphasised not only the particular material and economic concerns and difficulties of Black women in South Africa, but also that these women have ambition, pride, a sense of self and wills of their own."<sup>229</sup>

In this way, these scholars have in fact recognised that black women had a domain of their own, "one consisting of concerns and circumstances that do not simply support the traditionalist masculine domain".<sup>230</sup> This assessment fitted well with the approach of the 1990s, when historians started looking at black women's role more holistically rather than casting them in a generalised political role. Duganzich referred to Walker's volume a number of times with regards to the role of black women in migrant labour and the way this role had been underscored by the fact that academics writing on women's history were more concerned with theoretical positions than evoking the role of black women in the development of women's history.<sup>231</sup>

Chennels and Dick investigated how white women used writing and reading to gain social status<sup>232</sup> and, used their women's organisation, Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging, which was ethnic and empowered for racialised upliftment, to push for a love of reading which extended to Afrikaans history and language.<sup>233</sup>

### History of photography and memory

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<sup>228</sup>G. Duganzich, "She's who makes history": Reviewing the historical treatment of black women by four South African scholars, *Historia* 44, 1999, pp. 65-83.

<sup>229</sup>G. Duganzich, "She's who makes history" ..., *Historia*, p. 82.

<sup>230</sup>G. Duganzich, "She's who makes history" ..., *Historia*, p. 82.

<sup>231</sup> C. Walker, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, p. 2, in G. Duganzich, "She's who makes history": Reviewing the historical treatment of black women by four South African scholars, *Historia* 44(1), 1999, pp. 81-82.

<sup>232</sup> A. Chennels, The mimic women: Early women novelists and white South African nationalisms, *Historia* 49(1), 2004, pp. 71-88.

<sup>233</sup> A.L. Dick, Building a nation of readers? Women's organizations and the politics of reading in South Africa, *Historia* 49(2), 2004, pp. 23-44.

Helen Bradford, with the University of the Western Cape African Gender Institute writing in *Kronos* in 2004, Kim Miller, of Wheaton College writing in the *South African Historical Journal* in 2011, and Simone Kerseboom, of Rhodes University writing in *Historia* also in 2011, investigated how women were used and their historical roles accounted for in both photography and memory. This theme was never considered in the general histories referred to in this research. The intention was to expose the bias towards women's representation in heritage, how memory was used to oppress women and the manner they were depicted in photography. In analysing how the British captured Nonqawuse's pictures, Bradford concluded that Nonqawuse's pictures in frame portrayed the imprisonment of African women, making a mockery of their body parts and continuing to imprison their thinking, blamed for causing poverty and distraction in their community.<sup>234</sup>

Miller, after evaluating and lamenting the effectiveness of the representation of women in monuments, suggests that "...it is possible to interpret this particular erasure of women's presence in the public sphere as a denial of the validity of women's political agency".<sup>235</sup> She argues that women have not been given the recognition they deserve, owing to the complexity of the legacy of the feminist movement,<sup>236</sup> as in the issue of monuments. Kerseboom on the other hand, after studying how Bartman's body and memory were used/interpreted in South Africa, concluded that "...Bartman's history was re-shaped, re-cast and re-invented into an ideal story for the South African transition, thus separating and dis-remembering the real, lived personality from the myth created to serve the process of nation-building".<sup>237</sup> Furthermore, "...the mythography of Bartman's legacy in South Africa was altered in order to include broader meanings as the post-apartheid state faced new challenges ... and... Bartman's mythology in post-apartheid South Africa became a site on which Mbeki could construct and reiterate the new ideologies that would denote his presidency. Mbeki's presidency was built on the narratives of national healing".<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> For a deep analysis of Bradford's writing please see H. Bradford: Framing African women: visionaries in Southern Africa and their photographic afterlife 1850-2004, *Kronos* 30, 2004, pp. 70-93.

<sup>235</sup> K. Miller, Selective silence and the shaping of memory in post-apartheid visual culture: The case of the monument to women of South Africa, *South African Historical Journal* 62(3), 2011, p. 314.

<sup>236</sup> K. Miller Selective silence, ..., SAHJ, p. 298.

<sup>237</sup> S. Kerseboom, Grandmother-martyr-heroine: Placing Sara Bartman in South African post-apartheid foundational mythology, *Historia* 56(1), May 2011, p. 64.

<sup>238</sup> S. Kerseboom, Grandmother-martyr-heroine, ..., *Historia*, p. 72.

These authors were able to determine the bias that politicians and artistic professionals used to oppress women and cautioned against it. While general histories did not cover this theme, Abrahams's contribution in *Gasa* (2007, Chapter 16), provides a feminist analysis of Sara Bartman and cautions against how historians have objectified her.<sup>239</sup>

### 4.2.3. Religion

#### *Jewish identities, missionaries and Christianity*

Nomathamsanqa Tisani, writing in *Kronos* in 1992, Edna Bradlow, a retired University of Cape Town lecturer writing in *Historia* in 1998, Natasha Erlank from the University of Johannesburg, writing in the *South African Historical Journal* in 2000, Lize Kriel, with the University of Pretoria, writing in *Historia* in 2008, Lize Kriel with Alan Kirkaldy from Rhodes University writing in the *South African Historical Journal* in 2009 and Deborah Gaitskell with the University of London, writing in the *South African Historical Journal* also in 2009, re-evaluated the theme of Christianity and provided different findings on the subject. While this theme was covered in general histories, and in the Walker and *Gasa* volumes, these authors moved on to give it a feminist interpretation. They looked into the role of missionaries in the lives of mostly black women because mission stations provided a dual, contradictory space where women could run to but also where women were exploited.<sup>240</sup>

There were good lessons within missionary history, like from the Ruth Alexander Ladies' Association which raised the issues of both woman and child abuse. The association was not simply an institution controlled by a male missionary society, but a partner whose efficiency and independence were organised.<sup>241</sup> The role of missionaries was ambiguous, for instance, the Scottish missions provided Xhosa women with education, albeit for domestic purposes, "[h]igher education for women, whether for domesticity or not, had not previously been supported by missionaries. They blocked both independently-minded female teachers from operating in their area of influence as well as the establishment of a Girls' Department at Lovedale".<sup>242</sup> But, with the Scottish missionaries' provision of higher education, this was minimised.

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<sup>239</sup> Please see *Gasa* (ed.), *Women in, ...*, pp. 421-451.

<sup>240</sup> N. Tisani, The shaping of gender relations in mission stations with particular reference to stations in the East Cape frontier during the first half of the 19th century, *Kronos* 19, 1992, p. 76.

<sup>241</sup> E. Bradlow, The social role of Jewish women in the Grunderzeit of the Cape Jewish Society, *Historia* 43(2), 1998, p. 80.

<sup>242</sup> N. Erlank, Raising up the degraded daughters of Africa: The provision of education for Xhosa women in the mid-nineteenth century, *South African Historical Journal* 43(1), 2000, p. 38.

Thus, contrary to certain beliefs that all missionaries oppressed women and perpetuated a patriarchal system, some like Deaconess Anneliese Doerfer appreciated and assisted African women, and regarded herself as black and worked closely with the Africans.<sup>243</sup> So, some women missionaries had fought hard for proper racial representation and capacitation of women. For instance, within the Anglican mission, reports indicate that by 1913 there was an increased intake and training of African women as missionaries and nurses while by 1936, there were thriving youth movements that were driven by women educators and learners.<sup>244</sup> At the same time, the assumption that women were the most susceptible to conversion to Christianity from their African culture was heavily disputed. In fact, it was the VaVhenda chiefly women who colluded to stop their husbands and sons from conversion, ostracised them and eventually won.<sup>245</sup> For instance, Mphaphuli's conversion was halted by his mother's threat to take her life.<sup>246</sup>

Some of these analyses above were highly influenced by Walker and Gasa. For instance, in an attempt to show how Jewish women created agency, Bradlow referred to three essays from Walker's collection including the overview by Walker, "Domestic service and education for domesticity" by Cock; and "Family and gender" by Meintjes. Erlank referred to Cock's concern over the domestication of Xhosa women by the colonial education system – also from Walker's collection (1990). She posited that while there was a struggle to educate women, at least Xhosa women were able to get higher education equal to their male counterparts. Kriel and Kirkaldy referred to and agreed with Nomboniso Gasa that "there is nothing inherently conservative about women's defence of their homes and families"<sup>247</sup> when trying to show that women had decided to protect their culture, while men were willing to give it up.

#### 4.2.4. Women's organizations.

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<sup>243</sup> L. Kriel, Intersections of gender and race in the missionary correspondence of Deaconess Anneliese Dorfer, East and South Africa, 1936-1937, *Historia* 53(2), 2008, p. 124.

<sup>244</sup> D. Gaitskell, Gender, power and voice in South African Anglicanism: The Society of Women Missionaries Journal, 1913-1955, *South African Historical Journal* 61(2), 2009, p. 269.

<sup>245</sup> L. Kriel and A. Kirkaldy, Praying is the work of, ..., SAHJ, p. 322.

<sup>246</sup> L. Kriel and A. Kirkaldy, Praying is the work of, ..., p. 324.

<sup>247</sup> N. Gasa, *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, in Kriel and Kirkaldy, Praying is the work of men, not the work of women: The response of BaHananwa and VaVhenda women to conversion in the late nineteenth-century Berlin Missionary territories, *South African Historical Journal* 61(2), 2009, p. 329.

The theme of women's organisations was also attended to by various feminist historians like Gaitskell, van Heyningen and Merrett. Central to their research was whether women's organisations have been effective in the political and economic development of South African history and society and whether there has been a single and strong women's movement in South Africa. Their main focus was women within the Women's Enfranchisement Association of the Union (WEAU), Afrikaner women within the National Party and their work within the Women's Guild in the period after the South African War.

They found out that "[n]ot only did the women's National Party draw thousands of Afrikaner women into explicit political activity in these years, they also brought them up against the harsh reality that many of their dearest causes would languish if they themselves remained unenfranchised..."<sup>248</sup> Gaitskell acknowledged the spate of work conducted by Walker (1990) on the role race played in dividing women's suffrage movements, and the influence of the English suffragist.<sup>249</sup> Furthermore, they also found out that some organisations raised women's issues and brought them into the public domain for debates with patriarchal structures. A particular example is the Women's Guild "in the context of the war it could justify its existence by acting a putative woman's role as a healer..."<sup>250</sup>

#### **4.2.5. Women's reproduction and health**

One of the newest themes featured by the journals under investigation between 1990 and 2011 has been women's reproduction and their health. Authors wanted to check how women used their reproductive rights to advance women's issues and how they defied health legislations that oppressed women. Catherine Burns of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Sussane Klaussen from the University of Victoria, investigated these issues. An important case study was Louisa Mvemve and her role in using her traditional medicines to bridge the colour divide in South Africa. This shed light on how women applied their traditional mid-wife skills, healing and medicines across all races in the midst of racial discrimination and while leading a middle class (Victorian) life. Even though she was African, she "laid bridges between herself and working class

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<sup>248</sup> D. Gaitskell, The imperial tie: Obstacle or asset for South Africa? *South African Historical Journal* 47(1), 2002, p. 23.

<sup>249</sup> D. Gaitskell, The imperial tie, ..., pp. 3-8.

<sup>250</sup> E. van Heyningen and P. Merrett, 'The healing touch': The Guild of Loyal Women of South Africa 1900-1912, *South African Historical Journal* 47(1), 2002, p. 50.

white women and men ... In her work as mid-wife in Johannesburg and the East Rand towns she provided a service and a level of expertise not easily available to any women of colour.<sup>251</sup>

‘Poor white’ women in Johannesburg resisted forced sterilisation that was intended to curb the ‘poor white problem’. By refusing to attend the Race Welfare Society (RWS) of Johannesburg Clinic, ‘poor white’ women managed to force the clinic to change its approach “... and perhaps most importantly, through their reluctance to use the RWS’s services, poor and working-class women not only dashed the hopes of eugenicists who believed that birth control would solve poor whiteism, feeble-mindedness and other social ills...”<sup>252</sup> In refusing forced sterilisation, women were able to make their own changes against the male-dominated government. The theme of the ‘poor white problem’ had been attended to before, within general histories. However, it had never been looked into from a feminist perspective like Klaussen has done.

#### 4.2.6. Legal history, legal position

Nigel Penn of the University of Western Cape, looked into the unjust eighteenth century system that had Maria Mouton hanged for allegedly having had a sexual relationship with a male slave and killing her husband. Penn argued that the court ruling to execute Mouton was based on an immoral principle, mainly because she was involved with a black man. This ruling showed an oppressive patriarchal judicial system that tolerated white men having adulterous relationships with female slaves, while it was a taboo for white women to do the same.<sup>253</sup> The judicial system was subjective to a pure white race, thus interracial relationships were perceived as dilution, particularly where women were concerned.

Premesh Lalu of the University of Western Cape, investigated how the Dutch law interpreted Bartman’s suicide, based on their preconceived complicit perception of her race as inferior. While Lalu was not questioning the law *per se*, he argued that the historiography that deals with this suicide cannot escape guilt as its encounter with the past is mediated by the same legal archives that privileged male narratives and the Dutch legal system.<sup>254</sup> In his presentation, Lalu avoided treating Bartman as either a victim or a martyr, but looked into the interpretations of

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<sup>251</sup>C. Burns, Louisa Mvemve: A woman’s advice to the public on the cure of various diseases, *Kronos* 23, 1996, p. 134.

<sup>252</sup> S. Klaussen, Women’s resistance to eugenic birth control in Johannesburg, 1930-39, *South African Historical Journal* 50(1), 2004, p. 169.

<sup>253</sup> For the full story of Maria Mouton and other similar cases that showed male domination in this period, and how such cases were treated differently, please see Nigel Penn, The wife, the farmer and the farmer's slave: Adultery and murder on a frontier farm in the early eighteen century Cape, *Kronos* 28, 2002.

<sup>254</sup> P. Lalu, Sara’s suicide: History and the representational limit, *Kronos* 26, 2000, p. 100.

her death. Lalu was able, through historical writing, to move from sweeping generalisations about this interpretation, to showing how limited the historiography of Bartman's suicide was, in the process showing agency in the interpretation of women's actions.

As indicated earlier, this re-reading of Bartman was discussed in detail by Abrahams in Gasa's collection five years later. Abrahams took a personal journey in her attempt to present a historiography of Bartman and showed how mainly male authors misrepresented facts in analysing Bartman. Ten years later from Lalu's presentation, Simone Kerseboom recorded how even within the new South Africa, Bartman's image was used to unify the country. She confirmed the concern that the history of Bartman has not been viewed from a woman's perspective, the patriarchal ruling party and authors have always written about her without considering the pain she went through.

#### **4.2.7. Preliminary deductions**

The sub-sections above have shown how historical journals have attempted to raise and address themes that were highlighted by Walker (1990) and Gasa (2007). A lot of themes have been addressed ranging from the role of women in slavery, women's organisations, missionary encounters and reviews of literature. However, of concern is the number of publications that covered women's history in the journals consulted. Statistically, few articles related to the history of women were presented in these journals (Please see Table 1) This may be indicative of less contribution in women's history among the patrons of the South African historical journals – or a lack of interest to showcase feminist research in these 'general' South African history journals. Nevertheless, there are other multi-disciplinary journals that have managed to cover some themes that were not visible in the journals above.

For instance, women's roles in the development of nationalistic ideas have been underrepresented (in the history journals under investigation) during this period. However, Louise Viljoen, studied the impact of nationalism on the construction of gender and sexuality within the autobiographies of Petronella van Heerden (1887-1975), a successful Afrikaner woman medical practitioner and Elsa Joubert (1922-), a successful Afrikaner novelist. Viljoen observed that Petronella's autobiography shows the nuances and agency created by her in the



midst of strict patriarchal societal expectations.<sup>255</sup> Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, continued the study of the impact of Afrikaner nationalism on women. She studied how the Carnegie Report looked at women when dealing with the poor white problem in the 1930s. The report was sensationalised to uplift Afrikaner nationalism. Willoughby concluded that the report presented the 'poor white women' phenomenon from a perspective of guilt and culpability.<sup>256</sup> However, in the case of the 'poor white problem', the paragraphs above have indicated how feminist research has disputed previous research findings and hence presented it from a woman's lens rather than a nationalist view.

### **4.3. An overview of contemporary journals**

As indicated earlier, it was difficult to evaluate women's history articles without looking at the angle from which contemporary journals approached their analyses of women's role in South African society. What follows is an overview of the themes concerning contributors to South African journals focused primarily on the social and political analysis of the current day – journals serving researchers in, among other disciplines and fields of study: sociology, political science, cultural studies and feminist studies. In contrast to the historical journals previously analysed and for the sake of convenience, in this study they are referred to as 'contemporary journals'. They have sought to provide a radical approach to contemporary issues. They might have been greatly influenced by historical research; however, they have not been limited to an analysis of the past in their approach. They have proven to provide feminist historical context as well as to deal with recent and ongoing issues that affected women

#### **4.3.1. Representation and women's gains**

Political representation of women has been the main focus of contemporary journals in South Africa. Wendy Annecke, Patricia Horn, Natasha Primo, Shireen Hassim and Suzanne Francis are but just a few of the scholars who re-evaluated women's representation after 1990. In their quest to expose how women have fought for equal representation they "challenge(d) patriarchal and apartheid structures wherever they exist."<sup>257</sup> The scholarship showed how women fought

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<sup>255</sup> Please see L. Viljoen, Nationalism, gender and sexuality in the autobiographical writing of two Afrikaner women, *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* 34(2), 2008, pp. 18-20.

<sup>256</sup> See T. Willoughby-Herard, 'I'll give you something to cry about': The intra-racial violence of uplift feminism in the Carnegie Poor White Study volume, *The mother and daughter of the poor family*, *South African Review of Sociology* 41(1), 2010, pp. 78-104.

<sup>257</sup> W. Annecke, The launch of the Women's League, *Agenda* 8, 1990, p. 2.

for representation within the ANC and organised across all faces of the country to allow for women's emancipation.<sup>258</sup>

Qualitative research was used to determine the role of women from resistance to empowerment. The research indicated that there was a need for re-positioning and reassessment of women's organisations to push for transformation.<sup>259</sup> The scholarship also assessed the notion of women's gains post apartheid and how women used those gains to debate their citizenship in a new democracy. Those gains had to facilitate political agency in creating spaces for women to articulate their needs and interests in policy terms.<sup>260</sup> Nevertheless, Hassim cautioned that “[c]hanging inequities in social and economic power will require not just the increased representation of women within the state, but also the increased and assertive representations of poor women within the state, as well as a strong feminist movement outside the state.”<sup>261</sup>

In a case study based on the KwaZulu-Natal local parliament (legislature), it was discovered how good intentions with women's representation in legislature is underscored by “...party identity, and racial and cultural conceptions of representation that divide women and strengthen resistance to change.”<sup>262</sup> While the intention of institutional structures like the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) was to address women's issues and representation, this agenda could not be easily attained because it was based on the perceptions that women's experiences were common and flowed from patriarchal oppression and that women's activities in parliament could work in unison. Hence in KZN, owing to party lines and racial divisions, woman representatives have failed to challenge males in parliament because they had to tow party political lines and failed to take advantage of spaces created by the WPC.<sup>263</sup>

The theme of women's representation was important in contemporary journals at this time. While some authors have agreed that women's representation in the new South Africa did not translate into gains for women and relief to women's discourses, what these authors were

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<sup>258</sup> P. Horn, Conference On Woman and Gender in Southern Africa, Another view of the dynamics, *Transformation* 15, 1991, p. 64.

<sup>259</sup> N. Primo, Women's emancipation: resistance and empowerment, *Agenda* 34, 1997, p. 32.

<sup>260</sup> H. Shireen, From presence to power: Women's citizenship in a new democracy, *Agenda* 40, 1999, p. 16.

<sup>261</sup> S. Hassim, Terms of engagement: South African challenges, *Feminist Africa* 4, 2005, p. 10.

<sup>262</sup> S. Francis, Gender numbers and substance: Women parliamentarians and the politics of presence in KwaZulu-Natal, *Transformation* 70, 2009, p. 119.

<sup>263</sup> S. Francis, Gender numbers and, ..., *Transformation*, p. 137.

suggesting was that there had been a need for a new movement that would organise across political and racial lines to ensure effective representation. These scholars have also shown the challenges that faced women in trying to build a strong, common sisterhood. They acknowledged challenges like racial divides and political affiliation as some of the obstacles on the path to unity amongst women and women's organisations. Nevertheless, it is also clear that women fought for recognition within political parties, legislature and parliament and have thus contributed greatly to the shaping of a new dispensation post 1994.

#### **4.3.2. Existing patriarchal system**

How did the same patriarchal power structures, commencing from pre-capitalist societies, reinvent themselves in the post apartheid South Africa? Kopano Ratele illustrated a response to this thorny question by indicating that the "current ruling masculinity duplicated a design of practices, relations, and supportive cognitive and affective discourses that sought to have us believe in the naturalness of men's power over women, other men, and children."<sup>264</sup> She used famous rape trials in the country and denialism on HIV/AIDS to indicate how even in the new dispensation, patriarchal oppression had been taken into state power, and women continued to be oppressed. Hence, there exists a male domination within our government that continues to ignore and undermine women's gains post 1994. The nature of HIV/AIDS denialism in the late 1990s to early 2000s together with high-profile rape cases by some government officials and the protection of such by political parties, illustrated that women continued to be oppressed in the same way as in the pre-capitalist era.

#### **4.3.3. Survey of literature**

Contemporary journals have also presented their analysis and observation of how women have written about themselves and how they have been written about. Scholarships from these journals have provided a re-evaluation of women's history and activism from a feminist perspective. Some of the feminist historians were fortunate to have been able to revise their earlier positions through review of their own work in various fora. Interestingly, in 2011, *Transformation* published reflections by numerous authors on their earlier publications. Of note was Jo Beall, Shireen Hassim and Alison Todes's review of their 1987 article and Sheila Meintjes's

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<sup>264</sup> K. Ratele, Ruling masculinity and sexuality, *Feminist Africa* 6, 2006, p. 56.

of her 1996 article. These authors had a chance to review their earlier stances on their position on women's history and evaluated their methodologies and approaches. Beall *et al.* came to the same conclusion in the 2011 essay, that gender cannot be delinked from class, although they are not equivalent concepts.<sup>265</sup> They still located women's oppression within male domination and called for autonomous women's mobilisations within the ANC and many other organisations. While liberal feminists held a different view and called for equality of men and women before the law, these three scholars felt that women will be more effective if they were autonomous.

Meintjes also confirmed her earlier conclusions that the Women's National Coalition had failed to address and confront gender violence and inequality while it had the space (constitutional mechanisms) to do so, succumbing to patriarchal tendencies that were embedded within nationalist mobilisations.<sup>266</sup> This re-evaluation showed how patriarchal domination continued post 1994. Further, it confirmed that women have failed even within the new South Africa, to develop a strong united women's movement.

The current role of South African Universities – in offering pro-women sexuality programmes, was evaluated. Shireen Hassim, Jane Bennett and Vasu Reddy, and Zethu Matebeni,<sup>267</sup> investigated the level at which South African universities engaged with sexual and gender studies and the complexity of sexuality studies/research when investigating intimacies within black lesbian groups. These topics were not presented in any of the general histories or historical journals referred to in this research. However, these authors, in an attempt to present the manner in which universities have engaged in women's studies from a feminist point of view; have tried to unpack salient issues around these topics.

#### 4.3.2. Health

Another interesting theme that was openly discussed from a woman's lens has been abortion. This topic has been a taboo to speak about in the past from both traditional and religious

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<sup>265</sup> J. Beall, S. Hassim and A. Todes, We are all feminists now: reflections on "A bit on the side", *Transformation* 75, 2011, p. 101.

<sup>266</sup> Please see S. Meintjes, Reflection, The women's struggle for equality during South Africa's transition to democracy, *Transformation* 75, 2011, pp. 107-115.

<sup>267</sup> Please see J. Bennette and V. Reddy, "Feeling the disconnect": Teaching sexualities and gender in South African Higher Education, *Feminist Africa* 9, 2007, pp. 43-62, Z. Matebeni, Standpoint. Vela Bambhentsele: Intimacies and complexities in research within black lesbian groups in Johannesburg, *Feminist Africa* 11, 2008, pp 89-96 and S. Hassim, The limits of popular democracy: Women's organisations, feminism and the UDF, *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 51, 2003, pp. 48-73.

perspective. When it was discussed, it was presented as though women who go through it are immoral. However, some contemporary journals have provided a re-evaluation and re-reading of the abortion issue. Macleod, used literature analysis to determine what the societal expectations were on young women and abortion. Her diagnostic study concluded that churches and other organisations based their assessment of abortion on their understanding of a foetus. Some commentators based their adjudication on abortion on their pre-definition of abortion as a problem and a foetus as a baby.<sup>268</sup> The study observed, however, that young women defied expected societal norms on fertility and the handling thereof, including ill-informed Christian perceptions about abortion. Women challenged this stereotyping by claiming control over their reproductive process by opting for abortion. They were doing what they thought was best for them, even if it meant aborting a foetus, irrespective of societal expectations. Abortion was a tool used by women to contest patriarchal and religious oppression.

#### **4.3.5. Legal history, land and Muslim Law**

How have women been affected by the law in South Africa? Has the law taken into consideration the rights of women, or has it enacted the same oppression within marriage or land ownership from colonial and apartheid eras? Contemporary journals researched how progressive laws sought to protect women, and how effective they were, in the new South Africa. Amanda Gouws, Dzodzi Tsikata and Hoodah Abrahams-Fayker, investigated how the South African law, land and marriage affected women within the new dispensation. After careful considerations of the law, it was observed that while the state structures created hope for women, they tended to force them to over rely on the state in the process, and this demobilised their activism. There has been no direct, guaranteed relationship between having structures in place and gaining policy influence or access for women.<sup>269</sup>

In addition, there was a call for a feminist discussion that would allow women to take charge of a reproductive economy. This was based on the fact that sub-Saharan governments were not doing enough to address the women's land question. There is a need for governments to link land and labour policies to women's needs. A research agenda which would demystify

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<sup>268</sup> C. Macleod, Developing principles for research about young women and abortion: A feminist analysis of difficulties in current South African studies, *Feminist Africa* 11, 2008, p. 68.

<sup>269</sup> A. Gouws, The politics of state structure - citizenship and the national machinery for women in South Africa, *Feminist Africa* 3, 2004, p. 4.

segregation and segmentation should contribute to more gender equality in resource control and the type of work done by women.<sup>270</sup>

Finally, in terms of marriage, it was discovered that within the Muslim laws, regardless of a plethora of protective laws within the South African constitution, Muslim religious marriages are not recognised and thus remove Muslim women from the benefits of civil marriages. Women can neither dissolve their marriages nor access certain resources as wives. Nevertheless, Muslim women have a reprieve because the constitutional court was able to overturn certain Muslim Personal Law judgments against women. Even so, the problem is that “...one cannot rely on the courts to provide relief to the majority of Muslim women who do not have the financial resources, education and or time to turn to the courts for relief.”<sup>271</sup> The law in the new dispensation has always had a supportive impact on South African women. The land and ownership laws, particularly in rural areas, remain a challenge for women.

The nature of scholarship in the journals focusing on contemporary issues is very clear; it does not depend on historical journals and questions raised by such. It is more concerned about recent issues and how women should emancipate and position themselves to retain the gains offered by the constitution. It is also clear that contributors to historical journals and contemporary journals circulate in relatively separate scholarly networks. There are few contributors from the historical journals writing in the contemporary journals and vice versa. This divide has to a certain extent been addressed in Gasa’s collection, where contributors were both historians and activists.

Contributors to historical journals are not suspected of having been unaware of current women’s and feminist issues. However, the concern of their work had not been the matters of recent urgency, but how women had dealt with those same issues in the past. For instance, the issue of representation was clearly covered with reference to the ANC in exile, Afrikaner nationalism, British rule in South Africa and encounters with missionaries. Rarely does one find contributors to contemporary journals go deep into the past. Inversely, historical studies were not at the cutting edge of feminist scholarship. The researchers studying the contemporary situation reflect

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<sup>270</sup> D. Tsikata, Gender, land and labour relations and livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa in the area of economic liberalisation: Towards a research agenda, *African Feminist* 12, 2009, p. 25.

<sup>271</sup> H. Abrahams-Fayker, South African engagement with Muslim Personal Law: The Women’s Legal Centre, Cape Town and women in Muslim marriages, *Feminist Africa* 15, 2011, p. 60.

and reveal the climate and condition in which historians delved into the deeper past at that very moment in time.

Journal articles in *Agenda*, *Feminist Africa* and *Transformation* indicate the issues of the moment, which must inevitably have affected the way historians studied past events at the time. One might say that the two are living in separate worlds. The fact that some of the contributors to contemporary journals would not agree to the interviews in this study stating they were not historians, supports the researcher's argument.

It is perhaps important to note that while there is such a difference, both categories of journals have taken cue from the Walker (as indicated above) and Gasa collections. What is more important again is that in comparison, Gasa's collection was able to make inroads into transcending this contemporary/historical dichotomy. Contributions ranged from colonialism right through to very recent history and thinking about history, unlike Walker's collection, which rightfully, concentrated on the burning historical issues which had occurred prior to the 1940s, but were debated in the 1990s. Perhaps, at a time when society was not free to address reigning inequalities, showing up the historical making of these, was the activist's only recourse?

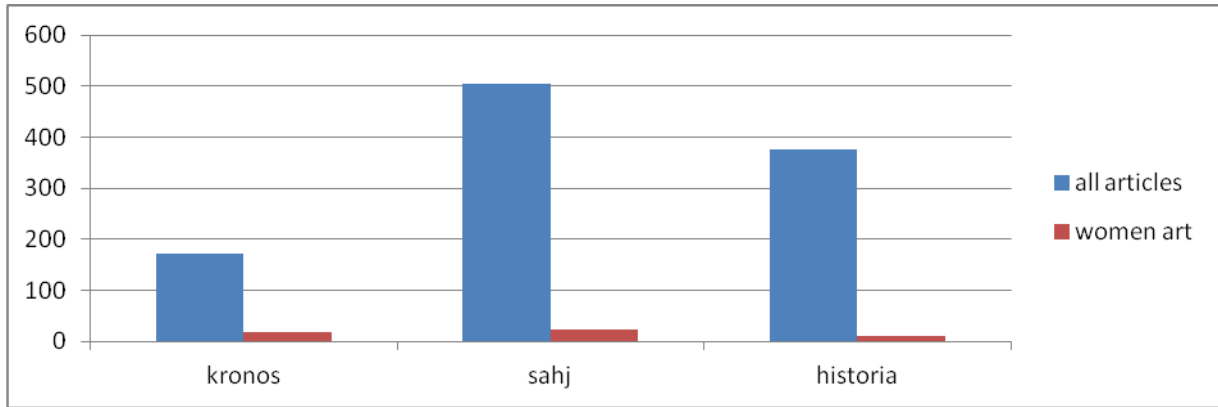
#### 4.4. Assessment and conclusion

While the majority of South African journals that concerned themselves with women's issues were consulted, this chapter cannot claim to be exhaustive. What has become clear from the profile of the editors and contributors is that most South African universities have contributed greatly to women's history as well as feminist research on contemporary challenges, and are continuing to do so. UNISA Press publishes the *Southern African Historical Journal* as well as *Agenda*, which concerns itself mainly with South African women's issues of the present day. The University of the Western Cape publishes both *Kronos* and *Feminist Africa*.

The following graph indicates the number of articles that have been carried in the respective major local *historical* journals<sup>272</sup> mentioned in this chapter, over the 18-year period, versus women's history articles carried in the same journals:

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<sup>272</sup> Please note that the number of articles counted here excludes editorial introductions and notes, front matter, review articles, book reviews, interviews, miscellany, book features, perspectives etc. However, in the case of the *South African Historical Journal*, focus articles have been counted.



The statistics above show that there has been little focus on topics from women’s history in these historical journals. Perhaps this confirms Natasha Erlank’s observation that not many people are writing about women’s history, except in journals dedicated to women.<sup>273</sup> The following table and graph for the period 1991-2010, kindly provided by Erlank from the University of Johannesburg, elaborate on this notion:

*Table A*

	1991-G	1991-NG	1995-G	1995-NG	2000-G	2000-NG	2010-G	2010-NG
<i>SAHJ</i>	6	94	8	83	6	42	1	65
<i>Historia</i>	1	27	0	53	0	38	2	43
<i>African Studies</i>	1	12	1	35	2	10	0	20
<i>Kronos</i>	0	10	1	19	3	14	TBC	TBC
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>128</b>

\* NG: Non Gender articles  
G: Gender articles

*Graph A*

<sup>273</sup> N. Erlank, Interview conducted on 10 September 2013, through Skype.



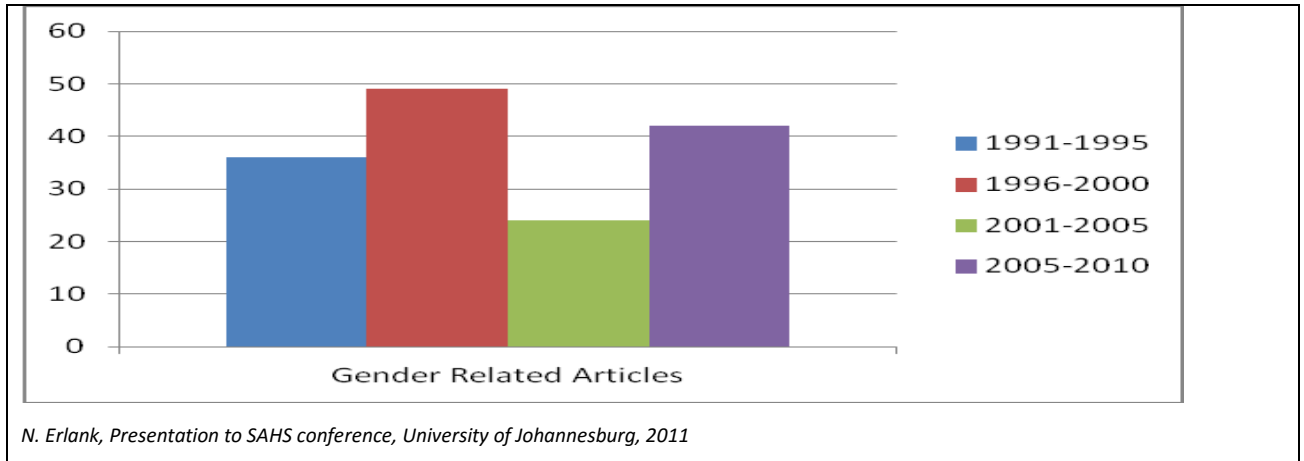


Table A and graph A above indicate that there is little emphasis on women’s history in historical journals. This raises a huge concern because it implies that some of the roles and challenges faced by women in the past are not researched. It also suggests that the interest in women’s history in South Africa is dwindling.

This chapter has shown that how women are written about depends on the nature of the journal. Historical journals concentrated on women’s history while contemporary journals concentrated on feminist issues of their time. Historical journals looked into the position of women in the shaping of a modern South Africa, what agencies there were and how women challenged their oppression. Issues of marriage, patriarchy, slavery, nationalism, missionaries, health and legal history, and also literature reviews and re-evaluations of women’s position from earlier women’s history offerings and the emancipation of women have come out as the most consistent topics in these journals.

It is also interesting that most contributors to these journals were academics from the 1980s who have been largely influenced by women’s history in the 1970s and had contributed to Walker’s 1990 collection. People like Bradford, Meintjes, Cock, Bonner, Gaitskell, Brink and Walker have written in the 1980s and continue their presence in historical and some contemporary journals. These men and women have influenced other authors in the 1990s, like Motsemme, Gqola, Gouws, Gasa and Matebeni, who are both activists and academics.

Contemporary journals have looked into women’s representation, policy implications on women, rights of women, social issues like rape, HIV/AIDS, housing, water and poverty. These journals have seen a mixture of contributors from academics to activists. Their standpoint had thus not

been historical scholarship at all costs, but they preached women's agency in every quarter of our lives in South Africa.

The second difference is the period of study covered. Historical journals tended to revisit earlier periods that were not properly covered within South African women's historiography. Contemporary journals on the other hand, question the perpetuation of stereotyping and patriarchal tendencies that flow from earlier periods and are still practised in South Africa irrespective of new policies that are set to free women. While some contributors to contemporary journals, like Abrahams and Cock, might still be looking into earlier topics like Khoesan women and domestic work, they have tried to contextualise the topics to women's current positions in their communities.

However, little has been done on traditional roles within chieftaincy and rituals. Of interest has been *lobola* and its impact on women, that is, marriage as a form of oppression. In fact, South African journals are yet to deal in detail with issues of African women and their role in nationalism and the shaping of modern South Africa. A lot has been recorded on the role of Afrikaner women. Proportionally, there has been an over-representation in local journals, particularly historical journals, of Afrikaner women and their role in nationalism. There seems to be less focus on African women and or relationships between races in both historical and contemporary journals. Perhaps the reason is the over representation of white contributors to historical journals. Even if it were so, will this imply that white historians of women cannot give an account of African and Indian women's history? History should be accounted for by any historian, not based on colour. While this comment might seem very sensitive, it is one that must be evaluated by feminists and historians (not only women) writing on women's history in South Africa.

Contemporary journals are also facing a huge opportunity of addressing this imbalance, but have not been able to take full advantage of it. One would have thought that contributors here would have taken advantage of this gap and addressed African women's history. The presentist approach in the studies looking into current problems, need to be overcome. And that can be done if South African feminist/activist/sociologist researchers and historians take more cognisance of one another. Historians can add more depth and dimension to studies interesting to these scholars at the moment (e.g. marriage and fertility, poverty, land.)

The question of common sisterhood/sameness was intensively dealt with in an attempt to highlight the different levels women's history should engage with, avoiding overreliance on men. Political leadership put strains on women's unity as politicians exact loyalty first and foremost to their own parties. This leaves non-government organisations in the forefront, even though they have financial and social constraints. The multiple legislations on the protection of women's needs and status should not be overlooked though. A lot has been done legally in South Africa to advance women's positions. But it is within the same legislations that we need to develop how women take centre stage and make legislation practical. Nevertheless, the writings on women's history in South Africa have "...enriched our theoretical discourse and at the same time have reclaimed and made more visible the deeds of their and our forbearers. Their analysis of the intersections of race, class, and gender, of womanist consciousness, and of the culture of dissimulation or dissemblance have challenged both black and women's historians in profound ways."<sup>274</sup> The journals analysed in this essay were able to develop a place for women through activist and scholarly narratives presented via women's lens.

Indian women's history has not been accounted for properly either. The explication of their role in the shaping of South African history is limited, and most of the times when mentioned, it deals with family rather than any other aspect. While women's role in politics has been considered, contributors tend to concentrate on the African National Congress and the National Party. The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) is mentioned briefly, but it will be interesting to read about women's agency within most political parties in South Africa, including the Pan African Congress or Inkatha.

The theme of motherhood seems to be neglected. Historians are slowly moving from this theme and in the process are undermining the one important part of women's role in the development of South African history. The concerns of the two camps remain, where historical journals tend to be focusing largely on history and contemporary journals on current issues. There seems to be silence on the part of feminist activists within historical journals and a concentration by African contributors on contemporary rather than historical journals. This apparent disassociation tends to imply that there is no united vision in addressing women's issues from a historical point of

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<sup>274</sup> D.C. Hine, International trends in women's history and feminism: Black women's history, white women's history: The juncture of race and class, *Journal of Women's History* 4(2), 1992, p. 127.

view. Fields represented in the contemporary journals – sociology, law, gender and feminist studies – are not open enough to historical inquiry. One would have thought that feminist activists would have infiltrated historical journals and revisit misconstrued representations of women’s history and try to link the past to the present.

The period after 1990 was a watershed owing to the political changes and a chance to reposition women’s voices. The period opened new vistas of looking into the past; so, most feminists chose to contribute to contemporary journals on issues that were raised previously by Walker’s collection of essays and other historical journals. This is why the themes in these two sets of journals are similar, but they remain two separate entities.

## CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH RELATED TO WOMEN AND HISTORY IN 'INTERNATIONAL JOURNALS'

### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter attempts to capture how 'international journals' perceived women's history in South Africa and how that relates to the image of women's history as portrayed in prominent collections on the topic – the 1990 Walker and 2007 Gasa volumes specifically. It seeks to investigate whether the trends in these journals echoed those in South African journals, whether there was perhaps a preference for (some) women's historians rather to publish internationally. 'International' in this context again invokes the challenges, as discussed in the introductory chapter, faced by South Africa-based researchers affiliated to universities relying on the Department of Higher Education and Training for subsidy. According to this model, the historian's decision of whether to make her findings available to a local audience or to a network of researchers mostly based in the United States or Britain, becomes increasingly connected to the South African Universities' bid for international visibility in a strive towards higher, measurable, research impact and better international rankings. In this context, journals administrated by societies, universities and publishers based in the northern hemisphere (and generally referred to as 'international' journals) had become associated with a tendency to be deemed more authoritative than 'local' equivalents. While the recent digitisation of journal content, and their online availability, as well as the increasing trend for local journals to hand over their administration and marketing to international publishing houses scramble such hierarchical thinking, it does not obliterate it.

The chapter provides an overview of a number of international Journals. The major journal consulted is the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, editorially anchored at the London-based School of Oriental and African studies and published by Routledge (United Kingdom). Thematically, it covers African Studies in the Southern African region, including historical research and assessments of contemporary matters in its scope. This journal is popular for contributions on South African women's history and has seen both local and international authors commenting on the state of women's history in South Africa.

The other internationally-based journals which had been selected for a probe into content related to South African women's history, are:

- the *Journal of African History* published by Cambridge University Press;

- the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, based at Boston University;
- *Social identities*, dealing with interdisciplinary studies and an international focal point for theorising issues at the interface of social identities, published by Routledge;
- the *Journal of Historical Studies from Africa* published by the University of Toronto;
- the journal of the *National Women's Studies Association*, featuring multicultural feminist scholarship linking feminist theory with teaching and activism, published by Indiana University Press;
- *Feminist Studies*, the first scholarly journal in women's studies, published by the University of Maryland;
- *Feminist Review*, an interdisciplinary journal dealing with feminism, published by Palgrave Macmillan; and
- *Women's Studies Quarterly*, published by the Feminist Press at the City University of New York.

What follows is a harvest from these journals, of articles featuring aspects related to women's history and feminist scholarship in South Africa. Parallel to the investigation in the previous chapter, this chapter will trace trends first in the historical journals and thereafter to look into the journals with a stronger contemporary focus.

## **5.2. International historical journals**

### **5.2.1. Women's representation and political activism**

Shireen Hassim of the Department of Political Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, and Daniel R Magaziner, Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Yale University, evaluated the role of women in political parties. Hassim examined the role of women within the African National Congress (ANC) in exile, underground movements and gender, and Magaziner looked into the role of women within Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) respectively.

In an attempt to decode how feminist and gender discourses and demands impacted on the functionality of the ANC in exile and how the ANC responded to them, intense research was vital. These authors used archival material and interviews to research and reveal real women's struggles within liberation movements. Unlike in the general histories consulted in this research, which was dependent on secondary sources, it was discovered that in fact, women were active

within the ANC underground. According to Hassim, women formed the Women's Section and the Emancipation Desk under Zanele Mbeki; took care of newer members providing them with care, food, health, child care; were elected as ANC representatives abroad<sup>275</sup> (e.g. Ruth Mompati and Barbara Masekela).

In the process, women challenged the ANC's rules that did not allow them to complain; hence "...this work pushed some women activists to question the extent to which the movement was, in practice, committed to women's equality and whether in fact women stood to gain equality automatically from national liberation."<sup>276</sup> Hassim was able to show that woman comrades were not inactive, they fought for recognition within a male dominated ANC. Raymond Suttner concurs in Gasa's volume where he notes different roles played by women within the ANC in exile.<sup>277</sup>

Magaziner evaluated women's role within the BCM. This line of focus, of looking into the role of women in a different liberation organisation from the ANC, was neither covered by the contributors to Gasa's volume nor local journals referred to in this research. Of particular interest was the manner in which Steve Biko and the BCM used masculine language against the apartheid government and the question whether that demonstrated the silence of women, or if the period warranted that men were to represent women.<sup>278</sup> A key concern was whether women in that period accepted their silence for the sake of the national struggle because they accepted second hand roles as assistants in the BCM versus the feminist perception that women had to fight against their oppression and challenge the status quo within their organisation and against apartheid.

This research by Magaziner posits that women forced their BCM male counterparts to accept them, even though their masculine writing does not reflect this outright. Contrary to perceptions that feminism failed to challenge the status quo within the BCM and allowed masculine and

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<sup>275</sup> S. Hassim, Nationalism, feminism and autonomy: The ANC in Exile and the Question of Women, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30(3), 2004, p. 443.

<sup>276</sup> S. Hassim, Nationalism, feminism and autonomy: The ANC in Exile and the Question of Women, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30(3), 2004, p. 436.

<sup>277</sup> Please see Suttner, R., Women in the ANC led underground in Gasa, N., *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilamho/ They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, pp. 233-255.

<sup>278</sup> \*For an in-depth analysis of this contradiction and support and counter support of BCM and its perception on the role of women, particularly from leaders like Barney Pitso, Mamphela Ramphele etc, please see Pieces of a (Wo)man: Feminism, Gender and Adulthood in Black Consciousness, 1968-1977 *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37(01), 2011, pp. 45-61.

patriarchal leadership to fight apartheid, there is evidence that women within the BCM organised (in churches and amongst the youth, for example) and challenged the apartheid regime.

When bringing the issues raised by Hassim and Magaziner in relation to the what the Walker and Gasas volumes had on offer, the verdict is as follows: women in political party life were not addressed by Walker and her fellow-contributors at all, while the issue of women in liberation movements was raised in the Gasas's volume by Raymond Suttner,<sup>279</sup> although he restricted himself to the role of women in the ANC underground. Women in the Black Consciousness Movement did not feature.

### **5.2.2. Re-evaluation of scholarship on women's history and women's studies (Silence and Invisibility)**

Perhaps the most common theme after politics and representation has been the re-evaluation of the literature on women's history studies. The following authors re-evaluated literature on women's history in South Africa: Penelope Hetherington, Helen Bradford, Iris Berger,<sup>280</sup> Marijke du Toit, writing on the 1904-1929 period, Georgina Horbell<sup>281</sup>, Liz Stanley and Helen Dampier, and Barbara Caine.

Part of the findings was that the "historiography of South Africa has been transformed since the 1970s as a result of the work of neo-Marxist historians who undermined the hegemony of the earlier liberal interpretation of the South African past..."<sup>282</sup> By then (around the 1970s), the interpretation of women's history was mainly based on theoretical lines; however, as Natasha Erlank argues in her interview, this theoretical approach in the writing of history has changed in recent times and authors have now become bio-polemic.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Please see R. Suttner, *Women in the ANC-led underground in Gasa*, 2007, pp. 233-255.

<sup>280</sup> Berger examined how Mrs Madie Hall Xuma used her American thinking to assist African women to break with a male dominated society.

<sup>281</sup> Horbell used actual literature books by white women to indicate white women's fear of apartheid. The analysis shows that not all white women supported apartheid, they presented their frustration about apartheid thus in books. Please see G. A. Horbell, *Whiter Shade of Pale: White Femininity as Guilty Masquerade in "New" (White) South African Women's writing*. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30(4), 2004.

<sup>282</sup> P. Hetherington, *Women in South Africa*, ..., IJAHS, p. 241.

<sup>283</sup> N. Erlank, Interview conducted on 10 September 2013, through Skype.



This is emphasised by the fact that the articles and books by women's history contributors like Marks, Walker, Bozzoli, Well and Yawitch "...are almost all about the related themes of black women's material and psychological oppression in South Africa and their resistance to that oppression".<sup>284</sup> This confirms that a lot has been written about women, albeit at the risk of repeating the same themes that were tackled in the 1970s and the fact that by then, it was white women writing about black women.

The historiography based on the nineteenth century Cape Colony history and its frontier zones within major historical texts were very silent on women's issues. This denial of the existence of women's presence required the rethinking of traditional approaches to history. This was mainly because in the late 1960s, almost everything was about males in the major historical narratives and texts about the Cape Colony that captured life and societal activities. It was assumed that the population was predominantly men. This gave the impression that women were non-existent; owing to the empirical inaccuracies in the historical texts on this period, women were portrayed as unimportant and this led to uninformed interpretations.<sup>285</sup> It was discovered that the language within in this period referred to the population as being sons of chiefs, hunters, traders and raiders. The bias was also towards Christian ideologies according to which women was excluded because they could not be ordained.<sup>286</sup>

Within the white society, the perception of the role of women on Afrikaner Nationalism was also evaluated by feminist scholars. Some scholars have always presented Afrikaner women as passive and silent, particularly general histories (see Chapter 1) but Du Toit dispels this perception and argues that from the inception of the South African communities, Afrikaner-Dutch women have participated in the construction and articulation of gendered Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>287</sup> Afrikaner women were neither passive nor domesticated victims, they were financially able and challenged common oppressive trends irrespective of their allegiance to the church and their husbands. For example, women raised the ballot issue for women in the midst of their accommodation of motherhood and opposition from men and the church who argued that the provision of the ballot would lead to social chaos.

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<sup>284</sup> P. Hetherington, *Women in South Africa, ...*, IJAH, p. 269.

<sup>285</sup> H. Bradford, *Women, gender and colonialism; Rethinking the history of the British Cape Colony and its Frontier Zone, c. 1806-70*, *Journal of African History* 37(3), 1996, p. 370.

<sup>286</sup> Please see the above article by H. Bradford, pp. 351-370.

<sup>287</sup> M. du Toit, "The Domesticity of the Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929", *Journal of African Studies* 29 (1), 2003, p. 175.

Du Toit challenged Brink's essay, "Man-made women" in Walker 1990<sup>288</sup>, which assumed that even the unpublished works of Erika Theron and Hansie Pollak had little impact on popular consciousness. Nevertheless, she acknowledged that Brink's essay have accommodated the role played by Afrikaner women in the development of the Afrikaner culture. Du Toit used archival materials to reach her conclusion that Afrikaner women challenged man-made patriarchal oppression and culture like the 'mother of the nation' thinking.

International journals also took stock of feminist and gender historiography from the South African War to 1940. A quantitative study was used to determine how Afrikaner nationalist writers created memory and how feminists' testimonies on this period have been used by various authors to promote the Afrikaans culture. Reading from numerous literatures, including Brink's article, "Man made women" from Walker (1990), it was discovered that Afrikaner women created organisations that promoted their language and culture. They contributed to the building of the Afrikaner nation, a point that is less visible in most Afrikaner general histories. Those women organisations have also recorded women's voices in magazines and promoted Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, thus contributing to nationalism.<sup>289</sup>

These findings confirmed that the works of M.M. Postma, R. Hendrina and E.M. Neethling, have contributed largely to Afrikaner culture. Therefore, men were not the only contributors to Afrikaans cultural development, women also did: "Women with nationalist political conventions were active in cultural politics across this period, around the making of memory about the deaths in concentration camps of the South African War..."<sup>290</sup> It was not men who contributed to cultural entrepreneurship from 1902, but women who were the prime movers rallying the elite and the *volk* from the domestic through to the women's congresses and parties.<sup>291</sup> Many Afrikaner women who wrote on the cultural development of Afrikaans supported the Rebellion of 1914 and raised many women's issues at that time.

Conclusively, women were not passive as general histories would want us to believe as per their limited recording of the role of Afrikaner women in the building of the Afrikaner Nationalism.

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<sup>288</sup> Please see E. Brink, "Man-made Women", in Walker, 1990, pp. 269-270.

<sup>289</sup> L. Stanley and H. Dampier, Cultural entrepreneurs, pro-nationalism and women's testimony writings: From the South African War to 1940. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33 (3), 2007, p. 506.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 502.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 516.

Autobiographies were also examined, like a review of Helen Joseph's role in the formation of the Garment Workers Union. Joseph transcended race and colour, and was able to fight against the Sophiatown forced removals. She was involved in the key chapter of the liberation struggle,<sup>292</sup> an area that was dominated by males. She contested a strong force in apartheid through her involvement in Amnesty International and various Christian organisations. This theme had been highlighted in Walker (1990) where the role of women in an organised labour environment was discussed.

### **5.2.3. Power structures: The fight against patriarchal oppression and submissiveness (pre-colonial to post-apartheid period)**

There are cultural roles and practices that women challenged because they resulted in societal domination and exclusion of women. Such practices expected women to submit to men and tradition, effectively encouraging patriarchal power structures. International journals re-evaluated this trend and investigated if women left it unchallenged. The following authors re-evaluated how women were excluded or used within cultural structures and how they challenged such structures: Timothy Keegan, Nthabiseng Motsemme, Marijke du Toit, Bridget Theron from UNISA, and Leslie Bank.

From the re-evaluations, it became clear that white women's changing roles around 1912 threatened white men's power and pride. It was assumed within the white society that women were the custodians of the pure white race. They were expected to avoid defilement and contamination of the white race at all cost. Their decision to go into prostitution, enter into the workplace and become breadwinners, threatened white men's positions and this caused panic and a sense of insecurity and less dependence on white men. "Defilement of white women threatened the purity of the race."<sup>293</sup>

Through prostitution white women undermined a deep seated sense of white men's control and domination and this challenged white manhood<sup>294</sup> and power. This was a clear sign of white

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<sup>292</sup> B. Caine, Helen Joseph: A South African revolutionary, but a Lady of the British Empire, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34(3), 2008, p. 581.

<sup>293</sup> T. Keegan, Gender, degeneration and sexual danger: Imagining race and class in South Africa, ca, 1912, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27(3), 2001, p. 475.

<sup>294</sup> My emphasis: White men could not bear the fact that white women engaged in prostitution with the 'inferior race', this demeaned their status and to protect their 'pure race', they had to bring forth the rape argument to deal

women's agency and contestation of the suppressive myth of the *volksmoeder* (man-made women, as Brink refers to them). The scare of sex-obsessed black men raping white women preached in the 1910s was a metaphor that explained the fear of defilement of the white race as white women were challenging existing patriarchal roles.

The silence of women in post-apartheid South Africa was also investigated. Black women's silence has not only perpetuated patriarchal tendencies, but has also been praised as a sign for black political solidarity. "In the name of homogeneity and political solidarity, challenging black female-male relationships is easily constructed as fracturing the idea of 'cohesive community' and thus discouraged from public official discourse."<sup>295</sup> In post-apartheid South Africa, the silence has been perpetuated by the insensitive narratives on the role of women in resistance because they are shaped and told by men. Therefore, a challenge is for women to re-evaluate this silence and unpack how political allegiance created silence.

This tendency towards silence ignores how women fought for recognition during apartheid. Using evidence from interviews with different black women who came from different generations in post-apartheid South Africa, about blackness in experience and in colour, Motsemme concluded that women have been formalised as victims during colonisation, and that this was extended into apartheid and confirmed by the TRC.<sup>296</sup> Nevertheless, women have always used silence as a contestation of oppression. They have used silence to withdraw their labour and submission. To be clearly understood, the silence needed to be told at a meta-narrative level, through women's own voices, because when told by men, the silence was understood to be a confirmation and conformation of patriarchy. Motsemme was able to bring history and contemporary activism into a single conversation.

During the South African War, Victorian women also defied the British authority: "...women were breaking new grounds by making their voices heard beyond the confines of the domestic sphere..."<sup>297</sup> These women used their humanitarian positions to challenge male stereotypes and broke into formerly male-only jobs and became journalists in the war. In evaluating four women

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with women's agency. Surely, the law then would act swiftly, but, white women contested their space and challenged society.

<sup>295</sup> N. Motsemme, Gendered experiences of blackness in post-apartheid South Africa, *Social Identities* 8, 2002, p. 649.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 651.

<sup>297</sup> B. Theron, Victorian women, gender and identity in the South African War: An overview. *Journal of Historical Studies from Africa* 38(1) 2006, p. 5.

who either contested male leadership or colluded with it during the war, Theron concluded that white women played a crucial role in shaping women's status in the war and while this might not be well documented, it does not necessarily follow that women were inactive. Women's role was not pitiful; they negotiated spaces and challenged oppression, and discrimination: "...women became involved in welfare, propaganda societies and administrative duties."<sup>298</sup>

Feminist and gender studies continued to investigate how women fought for recognition and freedom and how they faced challenges in both rural and urban areas. For example, in the Eastern Cape, women transcended their educational background to take over the opportunities presented by the government.<sup>299</sup> They formed the Masilakhe sewing group and Masikhuthale beadwork group and learned marketing and how to operate in competitive industry. They were able to link the village activity to the general economic activities.<sup>300</sup> They transcended their poverty lines and illiteracy levels and challenged their social status and dependence on their husbands by forming their own clubs to support each other during cultural activities.

These women bought alcohol and had fun; and, this masculine activity signalled a shift from being considered as inferior to clear recognition. "By usurping what was ostensibly a male ritual of power and converting it to an expression of female power and solidarity, Mooiplaas women were doing much more than sharing and drinking together. They were laying claim to a powerful and authoritative tradition".<sup>301</sup>

Within the Afrikaans community, the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereeniging (ACVV) moved from being a social and caring organisation to a cultural organisation promoting language. This promotion was done through newspapers, including the views of the Nasionale Vroue Party and the pledge to remove unnecessary respect given to men's political knowledge.<sup>302</sup> Du Toit notes

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<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>299</sup> After the 1958 land appropriation and the withdrawal of the state's technological assistance in the Mooiplaas area, a huge gap of poverty was opened. Bank argues that in the midst of this situation, modern Xhosa women (school) and the traditional Xhosa women (red) transcended the social gap and restrictions to relief poverty in their community.

<sup>300</sup> L. Bank, Beyond Red and School: Gender, tradition and identity in the rural Eastern Cape, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28(3), 2002, p. 643.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 646.

<sup>302</sup> M. Du Toit, The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29(1), 2003, p. 171.

how this organisation was positioned and made to promote Afrikaner Nationalism, as indicated by Brink in her contribution on “Man made Women” in Walker’s 1990 collection.<sup>303</sup>

Clearly, these authors’ re-reading of literature and re-evaluation of the role women played in the in the challenges that were presented by cultural practices, show that contrary to common belief, women were not passive. Women challenged masculine traits like drinking beer and contributed to the building of their societies.

#### **5.2.4. Women’s economic activities**

One of the common themes in the literature over the past twenty years was the impact and contribution women had on the economic development of their communities. Both Gasa and Walker have hinted at this theme. However, urban historian Bill Freund, and Jock McCulloch, of RMIT University Australia’s School of Social Science and Planning, and Maren Bak from Goteborg University, went deeper into these debates to clarify how women physically contributed to the economic development of South Africa.

In an attempt to establish whether the traditional Indian household chores system was extended in the South African context or if this was replaced by wage labour, Freund came to the same conclusion as Beall in Walker’s collection (1990). Indian women worked outside the household nexus to augment their husbands’ salaries. Even though this action was associated with poverty, “[a]fter World War II, and especially from the 1950s, however, women acquired new skills while the drastic demands imposed by population removals to states-built townships changed this situation very markedly.”<sup>304</sup> Therefore, Indian women in South Africa contributed a lot to their husbands’ wealth and success. Patriarchal tendencies among Indians could not oppress them in taking care of their business and family life.

While the theme of Indian women was relatively poorly accounted for in the journals and compilations examined in this study, Freund was able to analyse how Indian women defied patriarchal domination and assisted their families to prosper.

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<sup>303</sup> Please see E. Brink, “Man-made Women: Gender, class and the ideology of the Volksmoeder in Cheryl Walker (ed), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, pp. 273-292.

<sup>304</sup> B. Freund, Indian women and the changing character of the working class Indian household in Natal, 1860-1990, *Journal of Southern African studies* 17(3), 1991, p. 429.

Jock McCulloch looked into the contribution of women in asbestos production in the Northern-Cape belt. Their role was silenced by the exclusion of women from the Department of Labour's records owing to gender discrimination practices of the time. McCulloch concluded that women did contribute to the production of asbestos even though the mine-owners kept their numbers a secret, "...their invisibility in the official record in no sense diminishes the importance of their labour."<sup>305</sup>

In her article, Maren Bak provided an interpretation of the home economy that was created by women in Gugulethu, in the midst of HIV/AIDS and the absence of fathers/husbands.<sup>306</sup>

### 5.2.5. Religion: missionaries

The theme of missionaries was very popular in the 1980s and has been covered in various general histories and collections, including Walker (1990). However, this theme was minimally covered by international journals. Deborah Gaitskell, investigated how missionary women, between 1906 and 1960, helped develop African women personally and spiritually. She used case studies of some missionary women to determine the level of personal attachments to African women's development. Her conclusions indicate how Deaconess Julia helped married women to form social groups, established a domestic training centre and built hostels for African women working in the city of Johannesburg.<sup>307</sup> Hannah Stanton, another woman missionary, worked closely with African women and encouraged protests against forced removals in Lady Selborne. Through this influence, Gaitskell concluded that "[f]ar from race and religion being a fatal combination, religion was one of the few forces that brought at least some women together across growing racial divide".<sup>308</sup> While this conclusion might be contested by radical feminists, Gaitskell's argument remains that not all missionary women were indifferent to local challenges in their fervour to convert African women to Christianity. The meta-narratives of such contacts reveal that some missionary women tried to create agency for African women. Gaitskell reached almost the same conclusion in her research published in 2009 in a local, South African journal, in which she maintained that not all missionaries left a negative legacy; some were

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<sup>305</sup> J. McCulloch, Women mining asbestos in South Africa, 1893-1980, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29(2), 2003, p. 432.

<sup>306</sup> M. Bak, Townships in Transition: Women's caring keeps the township together, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34(2), 2008, pp 255-268.

<sup>307</sup> D. Gaitskell, Female faith and the politics of the personal: Five mission encounters in twentieth century South Africa, *Feminist review* 65, 2000, p. 72.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88

determined to upgrade the lives of women.<sup>309</sup> Of course Gaitskell does not suggest that African women by themselves could not create agency and contest their spaces.

### 5.2.6. Gender violence and relations

Heicke Becker, with the University of the Western Cape in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Natasha Erlank, and Helen Moffett of the University of Cape Town, tapped into women and gender violence studies. These authors used quantitative research/interviews to investigate how gender violence was perpetuated from the pre-capitalist to the apartheid period.

In an attempt to provide San women with a voice, unlike in most South African historiographies where San women are almost non-existent, Becker insisted that a re-evaluation and a rewrite of the San women's history from the feminist perspective was crucial. Contrary to perceptions that the San community was not sexist, gender violence did occur. Men discriminated against women in this society and gender violence existed owing to jealousy from men and the fact that the San women were being accused of not doing things correctly.<sup>310</sup> San women showed some signs of independence by working on the farms and this indicated that women were able to augment family income and were not entirely dependent on men's hunting and provision of food. This conclusion resonates well with Gqola's contribution in Gasa's collection from 2007, where she argued that Khoe women did challenge colonial and patriarchal oppression.

Within the African population, gender was used to perpetuate violence. This trend was used by both missionaries and African males alike. According to Erlan, "Gender, as a result, came to assume particular importance as a maker of a difference."<sup>311</sup> Women were expected to perform certain work that relegated them to their homes. When they deviated, some people blamed Christian values for the dilution of African gender views which increased immorality. At the same time, Europeans saw African men's views as primitive. Unfortunately, female views were not considered. Hence, "[o]ne of the major differences between the two groups lay in perceptions of

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<sup>309</sup> Please see chapter 4, the article referred to is D. Gaitskell, Gender, power and voice in South African Anglicanism: The Society of Women Missionaries Journal, 1913-1955, *South African Historical Journal* 61(2), 2009, p. 269

<sup>310</sup> H. Becker, The least sexist society? Perspectives of gender change and violence amongst southern African San. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29(1), 2003, p. 12.

<sup>311</sup> N. Erlank, Gendering commonality: African men and the "1883 Commission" Native Law and Custom, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29(4), 2003, p. 952.



male-female relationships characterized by the subordination of women.”<sup>312</sup> Gender difference was thus used to oppress women.

This conclusion on the role of gender in the subordination of African women and their culture could be traced in Guy’s conclusion in Walker’s 1990 collection: that missionaries, colonial or pre-capitalist structures did not offer a better solution to African women; the colonial powers through missionaries offered another form oppression. In the same volume, Gaitskell also supported this argument.

The issue of rape was raised from a feminist view and challenged the stereotype that resulted from the apartheid system that wanted to teach the oppressed a lesson when standing up for themselves. According to Moffett, men try to teach women a lesson through rape when they try to stand up for themselves. There is therefore a relationship between rape and the legacy of apartheid.<sup>313</sup> It is clear from Moffett's argument that the patriarchal stereotype that existed during apartheid still exists today as a tool of power. This means that men use rape to show their power, to ensure that they gain superiority where women contest their position and space. When women stood up for themselves, they often received a backlash.<sup>314</sup>

From pre-colonial to post-apartheid times, violence against women has been rife and while there are numerous laws that intend to curb this violence, it is clear that patriarchal power sustains it. The research from the above authors managed to show up traits of violence that are seldom covered by people in power while historically, that trait has been ongoing. Moffet’s article was able to link both historical and contemporary issues.

### 5.2.7. Motherhood

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<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 953.

<sup>313</sup> H. Moffett, "These women, they force us to rape them": Rape as narrative of social control on post-apartheid South Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 32(1), 2006, p. 130.

<sup>314</sup> Moffet posited that patriarchal domination and intolerance of women as a stance can be traced from political chauvinists that feel offended by women who challenge expected norms. She used the attack on Charlene Smith, a rape victim and anti-rape campaign activist, by people leading the government, to show how patriarchal tendencies in power reacted to challenges on women issues, especially when a leader is against a particular notion. Smith preached the link between rape and HIV/AIDS and because of his stance on the issue of HIV/AIDS then, the president showed his irritation by calling Smith a racist twice, thus ignoring the issue of violence against women, and rather, shifting the focus to racism.

One of the key themes that were evaluated by international journals was motherhood. This theme was not accounted for in local journals referred to in this research. Sheila Rowbotham, made her perceptions on motherhood known when she concurred that “[f]eminists have maintained that motherhood carries both oppressive and fulfilling elements.”<sup>315</sup> Her argument posits that motherhood should be freely chosen and may not be necessarily liberatory and fulfilling to all women. However, within the South African context, this view could be different. At times, it might have been used as agency, and a space where women had total control of their being.

Walker clarifies this point after reviewing feminist scholars’ perception on motherhood in South Africa. She concluded that the sensationalisation of the collusion and difference of motherhood perceptions as presented by various authors in South Africa was losing the plot on women’s importance. She argued that women as life-givers have the capacity which could be celebrated without endorsing women’s submission to men or the tyranny of particular under-resourced domestic and child care regimes.<sup>316</sup> In essence, motherhood is a social construct that provides self-worth that should not be related to submission or lack thereof to men.

Thus, what was important was that historians have begun to contest their views on motherhood, and whether Western perceptions on this notion should take precedence in a South African context where women used motherhood to fight oppression. Western feminism might have seen motherhood as oppressive, but the South African context should not be generalised because motherhood was used to contest both patriarchal and the apartheid systems.

The arguments presented above are a brief overview of how international journals have viewed South African women’s history. The articles consulted here are historical and the contributors by and large shared the same sentiments on the themes highlighted in local journals. Most themes are the same; for example, missionaries, representation, political activism, re-evaluation of women studies and power structures. However, the approach seems to be different at times. In terms of representation, international journals tend to be more critical, questioning the system instead of showing how the gains women received should be used.

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<sup>315</sup> S. Rowbotham, To Be Or Not To Be: The dilemmas of mothering, *Feminist Review* 31, 1989, p. 82.

<sup>316</sup> C. Walker, Women, 'tradition' and reconstruction, *Review of African Political Economy* 21(6), 1994, p. 437.

The following paragraphs attempts to account for how the international journals commented on contemporary issues in South Africa. Some journals like the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, have accommodated both historical and contemporary issues.

### 5.3. Contemporary international journals

#### 5.3.1. Representation

The most common themes emanating from a social scientific approach to the contemporary, covered by international journals over the past two decades, have been politics and the question of representation. All the following authors investigated how women gained political power and recognition in the South African parliament post the demise of apartheid in 1990: Gisela Geisler of the Michelson Institute, Jacklyn Cock and Alison Bernstein, Thenjiwe Mtintso, Denise Walsh, with the University of Virginia, Hannah Briton with the University of Kansas in the Department of Women's Studies and Political Science and Alison Goebel of the Queens University. These authors appreciated the successes that came with the democratic South Africa post 1990. The ANC gave women an opportunity to hold strategic cabinet positions that influenced policy and women's issues due to their long experiences in the struggle against apartheid. Nevertheless, this success was not without challenges as women parliamentarians had differences owing to political deployment policies coupled with a greater allegiance to party pretences than common sisterhood.<sup>317</sup> Furthermore, they appreciated the fact that the Women's National Coalition (WNC) was unique and was the first and most successful in the world because it was based on accepting the differences African women faced. It was a watershed and was based on real issues faced by women from many political and social groups. "The WNC was the shared ground from which the categories of women's needs and experiences were constructed."<sup>318</sup> After a long period in South African history where black women saw feminism as a foreign ideology while educated white women generalised and prioritised their own fortunate experiences, the WNC was offered a new collective identity and a commitment to inclusiveness that showed feminist solidarity in contrast to the different interpretations of the concept prior to 1990.

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<sup>317</sup> G. Geisler, "Parliament is another terrain of struggle": Women, men and politics in South Africa, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 38(4), 2000, p. 621.

<sup>318</sup> J. Cock and A. Bernstein: Gender differences: struggles around "Needs" and "Rights" in South Africa, *NWSA Journal* 13(3), 2001, p. 140.

Not only did the WNC concentrate on race and politics, but also, among other issues, on homelessness and polygamy. "It provided a platform for the formulation of gender specific demands by the mass of women who generally do not accept the label of feminism, but express its principles in their actions and commitments."<sup>319</sup> The gender unity within the WNC accepted the importance of a family in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa while Western Feminism tended to see family as oppressive. The WNC therefore sustained the acknowledgement of a difference and this became a catalyst for coalition building and helped feminism regain its transformative potential.<sup>320</sup>

Nevertheless, this period, a political watershed in 1994, saw strong women who led the women's movement being seconded to parliament. This weakened the grass roots women's movement and exposed divisions between women within the liberation struggle and thus failed to build a new women's movement in South Africa. "There were a number of reasons for the disorganization of the women's movement, not least the estrangement between those in power and those 'left behind'".<sup>321</sup> A gap between women in general and women in parliament was thus created and women themselves had to see how to fill it by creating a new struggle that would fight divisions and patriarchal policies that could not be defended by women in parliament owing to their political allegiance.

Political allegiance has thus disturbed strong women's movements that existed prior to the 1990s. Women's representation in parliament did not translate into women's gain. This conclusion is in line with the arguments of Walker (1990), Hassim (2005) and Francis (2005), that women were unable to create a strong movement owing to political affiliations.

Feminists and historians commenting on contemporary issues attempted to determine the difference between sisterhood and actual representation in higher positions, as in government. Because women in parliament are bound by social and political structures, none can represent a universal interest. When checking their perceptions about women's representation versus women's expectations, or universal sisterhood, Mtintso's interview results for both male and

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<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143. (The two authors posit that the WNC defeated the perception of Western Feminism that assumed that accepting differences meant subversion of feminist thinking. Western Feminist thinking did not apply within the WNC due to different experiences between South African women and Western women.)

<sup>320</sup> J. Cock and A. Bernstein: Gender differences, ..., *NWSAJ*, p. 151.

<sup>321</sup> G. Geisler, "Parliament is another terrain of struggle", *Women, men and politics in South Africa, The Journal of Modern African Studies* 38(4), 2000, p. 627.

female ANC cadres in parliament showed that “[it] is clear that women cannot be subsumed into a unique and singular category called ‘woman’ nor can there be universal interests that all women represent at all time”.<sup>322</sup> Clearly, Mtintso argued that by 2003, women in parliament represented a particular group with a particular interest with a different understanding of patriarchy. The results of Mtintso’s interviews show that the ANC cadres believed in practical interests and not strategic ones, because strategic interests would not remove women from their socio-economic poverty.

Mtintso further maintained that strategic interests were too academic to move women from poverty; this was refuted by Gasa in the compilation she edited in 2007. Gasa argued that both practical and strategic interests are intertwined and cannot be separated. There is a need, therefore, for a development feminist theory informed by practical experiences of women in parliament and those in popular movements.<sup>323</sup> While ANC women represented ANC principles, scholars contributing to contemporary journals looked at practical successes that women gained post 1994, in matters ranging from taxation, and women’s budget, to the termination of Pregnancy Act.

With reference to Gaitskell’s article in Walker’s collection of 1990,<sup>324</sup> Briton interviewed women campaigning against violence in the bureaucratic South African state. She concluded that women faced a mammoth task organising against a democratic state which included women who were once part of their anti-government movements. Gender violence struggles have been relegated to non-governmental organisations as women in power have limited time to deal with women’s issues. Women are faced with new gender violence in the form of housing shortages, HIV/AIDS, health care issues and poverty.<sup>325</sup> Hence, the fact that women took positions in government, did not imply that women’s struggles in general were alleviated. Instead, gaps between women inside and outside the system were merely deepened, and increased along party political lines.

It would appear then that the gains by women were challenged because violence against women increased, which was blamed on the government. However, Goebel challenged anti-government

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<sup>322</sup> T. Mtintso, Representivity: false sisterhood or universal women's Interests? The South African experience, *Feminist Studies* 29(3), 2003, p. 571.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 578.

<sup>324</sup> Please see Deborah Gaitskell, Devout domesticity? A century of African women’s Christianity in South Africa, in Cheryl Walker, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, 1990, pp. 251-272.

<sup>325</sup> H. Briton, Organising against gender violence in South Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23(1), 2006, p. 160.

scholarship and press that criticised the South African government for having abandoned the poor, particularly women, in the wake of many service protests. Goebel argued that despite all the state's shortcomings, it had managed to provide for women and children within the social welfare structures. Goebel also challenged current scholarship on women's activism that concentrates largely on "gender-based violence, the co-optation of feminist politics by state machinery, and enduring divisions across race and class in women's and feminist movements."<sup>326</sup> According to Goebel, such scholarship ignores grassroots movements that deal with the provision of housing and other services which are dominated by women. Goebel also challenged a subjective popular press and scholarly observers that report on social activism during service protests but are not necessarily involved at grassroots level.

The response of scholars like Desai and Pithouse to this accusation confirmed Goebel's argument that scholars are at times unable to report objectively on integrating women's experiences in their research. Goebel argued that "[t]he realities of F-HHs wherein women are raising children mostly on their own without help from children's fathers or their families, mean struggles for services and livelihood are gendered struggles."<sup>327</sup>

Contemporary journals have thus examined how women have continued to fight against violence that is perpetuated by the new laws and structures that were meant to protect them.

### **5.3.2. Survey of women's history studies and literature**

The survey of women's history has shown how this discipline has changed over time, particularly after 1990. Authors commentating on women's issues tended to concentrate on contemporary rather than historical issues. Nevertheless, the survey of how women have written about themselves or how they were written about in South Africa was not popular with contemporary international journals. It was mainly Debby Bonnin, who investigated how women's studies were accommodated at universities and other institutions such as unions and non-government organisations in South Africa. Of the 21 questionnaires sent to different South African

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<sup>326</sup> A. Goebel, "Our struggle is for the Full Loaf": Protests, social welfare and gendered citizenship in South Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37(2), 2011, p. 371.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 388.

universities, at least 12 responded and indicated that they offered women's studies albeit hosted by different departments.<sup>328</sup>

This indicated a move towards decoding women's studies in South Africa. The courses offered dealt with issues concerning women including harassment and this led to the formation of gender committees and affirmative action at universities.

In the process, women's studies became recognised and addressed and impacted on the politics of patriarchy and control at universities even through tough challenges like the suspension of women's studies at some universities prevailed. Bonin's study appreciated a positive picture of the future of women's recognition that would be analysed from an academic position unlike a few years previously.

### **5.3.3. Women's reproduction and health**

The agency shown by women on reproduction and choice has also come to the fore during this period. Women have begun to challenge common perceptions about marriage expectations and general fertility stereotypes in particular. The following scholars investigated how women have responded to challenges they faced regarding control of their reproduction in South Africa. Abigail Harrison and Elizabeth Montgomery of the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Vaccine Research Unit, South African Medical Research Council, and Stephanie Urdang, a consultant on Gender and HIV/AIDS in the USA.

According to Harrison and Montgomery, the decision by women to deviate from the norm (having children within marriage, which is seen by some as oppressive) may be seen as a contestation of women's rights and a formal sense of agency. Women use fertility as an affirmation of social status and as proof of womanhood rather than as a symbol of marriage.<sup>329</sup> This has been a direct challenge to popular belief that women should only have children within marriage. In a way, this move challenged patriarchal and Christian perceptions which used fertility and reproduction as a form of control.

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<sup>328</sup> D. Bonnin, Women studies in South Africa, *Women's Studies Quarterly* 24(1/2), 1996 p. 380.

<sup>329</sup> A. Harrison and E. Montgomery, Life histories, reproductive histories – rural South African Women's narratives of fertility, reproductive health and illness, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27(2), 2001, p. 328.

This point also illustrates the fact that women had started to take control of their reproductive processes. While Guy in his 1990 contribution to Walker's *Gender* volume indicated that pre-capitalist society expected that women needed many children to help the husband to grow his economic strength,<sup>330</sup> Bonin's article argues that that perception has changed within women's circles.

One major theme discussed around this period by international journals has been how women survived and created agencies in the midst of the impact of the HIV/AIDS crisis, either as infected or affected. This theme was also raised by Motsemme, in the 2007 volume edited by Gasa. The silence around the HIV/AIDS crisis had distracted the care economy that is assumed to be mastered by women. Women who are HIV positive tend to neglect their health because they are responsible for basic necessities like fetching water in the rural areas to taking care of their infected families. Research has indicated that girls drop out of schools and women leave or lose their jobs to take care of their families in the unpaid care economy when sick. "The burden on women and girls to look after the ill can create a time poverty so severe that households implode under the strain."<sup>331</sup> This care often removes women from getting treatment themselves and some resort to unsafe sex as a means to source income. In the process, they run a risk of multi-infecting themselves. But most importantly, in times of HIV/AIDS, women and young girls become household heads.

Urdang posited that while the Southern African government is investing large amounts of money into the HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment plans, they are failing to address women's care economy and their struggles, because "when this work is valued, understood and counted, it will no longer be possible to ignore or take for granted one of the most critical and urgent issues underpinning the AIDS crisis."<sup>332</sup> This scholarship has focused on how women had been affected by HIV/AIDS rather than just generalising its impact. It showed that women are the most hit because of the societal expectation. What becomes worse is that in rural areas, where women are mainly responsible for the care economy, the government does not show assistance. The provision of ARVs cannot be the sole assistance; rather, the government should be able to assist such women to continue taking care of their care economy.

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<sup>330</sup> Please see Jeff Guy in Walker, 1990, pp. 33-47.

<sup>331</sup> S. Urdang, The care economy: Gender and the silent AIDS crisis in southern Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 32(1), 2006, p. 167.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.



#### 5.4. Conclusion

In the contributions to international journals assessed in this chapter, an attempt was made by most of the authors to go beyond just the role women played, by looking more into how women reacted to oppression. In the processes, the historiography of women's history tended to develop a relationship with other disciplines like anthropology, sociology and political studies. As Penelope Hetherington had already observed in 1993, "the historiography of women inevitably takes the reader well beyond the work produced by professionally trained historians. Perhaps because those interested in African history and women's history tried to establish new fields within academia at about the same time, both groups have historically sought contact and institutional relationships with people in other disciplines".<sup>333</sup>

Most of the research reviewed uncovered a great wealth of contributions by women towards the cultural, economic and political development of South Africa which was given little attention in the general histories. But, it was also clear that, while the period under study still showed some links with the themes highlighted in the 1970s, some newer challenges remained minimally addressed in the periodicals under scrutiny. This is not to say that no or little research had been conducted on themes like the history of sexuality or women in religion during this period. Yet, the themes related to contemporary challenges around political activism and a movement towards representation were the ones that featured by far more prominently. It should be considered that increasing specialisation in the maturing field of women's history may have resulted in a tendency to deposit theme-specific research in niche publications, but the aim with this study had all along been an investigation into the visibility of women in 'general' scholarship which can all too easily be rendered gender-neutral or gender-ignorant.

The theme of motherhood is an issue in women's history that deserves proper attention. Both local and international journals need to look into this theme properly and check how important it has been within the history of South Africa. Trends in international journals have echoed those in South African journals. International journals consulted in this study have underrepresented some themes like slavery and African women's role in nationalism in South Africa. It is also clear

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<sup>333</sup> Penelope Hetherington, *Women in South Africa*, ..., IJAHS, p. 263

that some South African authors who have not contributed in local historical journals preferred to publish internationally.

International journals tried to respond to the Walker and the Gasa compilations. Most refer to Walker's collection on themes of missionaries, nationalism and the fight against patriarchal systems. Thus, some articles have taken cue or responded to issues raised by Walker and her contributors. While both historical and contemporary journals might not have responded directly to the Gasa collection, the international journals focusing on contemporary research have commented on issues espoused by Gasa's compilation, for example, the impact of HIV/AIDS and matters concerning representation.

What has been interesting is the make-up of academics and activists who contributed to international journals. Women of colour and white women seem to be contributing without boundaries, and a balanced analysis of women's history is being presented from different racial perspectives, unlike in the 1970s and 1980s when academics were mainly whites. Nevertheless, as Penelope Hetherington argues, "[t]he direction taken by women's studies in South Africa in recent years has led back to questions concerning the power structure in families in pre-capitalist society and the survival, or otherwise, of ideologies that imply roles of dependence for women under capitalism."<sup>334</sup>

International journals concentrated largely on how women's representation in parliament has had an impact on the improvement of women's lives and their economic position. It became clear that feminist authors themselves are not in agreement on how to handle this issue. However, they are in agreement that universal sisterhood is unlikely. This theme is closely related to women's political activism, mainly within the ANC, BCM and to some extent the National Party. The theme of Afrikaner Nationalism was, however, re-evaluated, particularly emphasising the fact that women were actively involved in party political developments and struggles. Women were not inactive; they challenged patriarchal tendencies and ensured that women's voices were heard.

The fact that feminism has grown from the 1970s should allow an understanding that women might have taken a particular position to defy spaces of that time: "Feminism had travelled the

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<sup>334</sup> P. Hetherington, *Women in South Africa, ...*, IJAHs, p. 264.

intellectual currents of 1970s black South Africa, from the UCM to political funerals, to a status quo that demanded that women take adjunct suffering to its next level and deny even their custodial rights as mothers.”<sup>335</sup>

There was indeed a shift from presenting traditional themes from the position of women to agency. While the themes remained the ones addressed from the 1970s, the approach was different. It is also clear that some of these themes are linked to the themes captured in Walker’s volume, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*. The fact that some of the authors mentioned in this chapter referred back to the volume and some picked on the themes coming from the volume, is an indication that Walker’s book was a watershed; it initiated new avenues and thinking within the old themes. The new approaches introduced in the international journals can also be seen in the manner in which Gasa’s collection is captured. For instance, the themes of political activism, health, motherhood and trade unionism are captured intensively in the Gasa collection, in a way that shows how women’s emancipation worked out within South African history. The trends in both local and international journals are thus similar. The same themes are presented and increasingly, owing to the globalisation of knowledge dissemination, the audience is becoming increasingly the same.

Authors like Gaitskell, Bradford, Hassim and Erlank have published in both local and international journals. Their main arguments remained the same and as those in the 1980s. They continued working on issues raised by Walker (1990), explored them further, contested each other’s perceptions and related them to contemporary issues. Although the scholars did not agree with each other in some areas, the great majority of them have in the process of the development of women’s history, abandoned the victim and heroin syndrome in favour of the emphasis on women’s agency. The review above showed that South African women’s history themes developed into more contemporary thinking while it still investigated pre-capitalist, capitalist and contemporary issues.

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<sup>335</sup> D.R. Magaziner, *Pieces of a (Wo)man: Feminism, gender and adulthood in Black Consciousness, 1968-1977*, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37(1), 2011, p. 61.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

South African women's history has been disseminated in various forms, ranging from monographs to collections of essays to articles in scholarly journals, both 'local' and 'international'. Some of these media had been dedicated to women's history exclusively and in other instances articles and chapters featured amongst relatively gender-insensitive historiography. Women's history has fought for its current status against patriarchal tendencies and exclusion and developed from liberal, to Marxist and radical perceptions in an amazing fashion. Researchers have defied the odds and captured women's role in the development of South African history and society from women's lens and accommodated both historical and contemporary issues so as to provide a holistic evaluation of this role.

Broadly speaking, historiography of women in South Africa can be categorised into five main periods, namely, the pre-colonial period; the colonial era into the first decades of the twentieth century; 1930s-1950s; 1960s-1980s; and 1990s to present. Writings on the pre-colonial period and the colonial period up to the South African War concentrate mostly on women's role in the development of South African law and social construction. Writings on the period 1930-1960 are characterised by politics, trade unionism and women's cultural roles and witness many nuances, including a focus on powerful women in South Africa who challenged both apartheid and cultural discrimination against women. The 1961-1980 period is characterised by narratives that address women's reactions to apartheid laws and the formation of civic associations, their role in the ANC, and issues around settlement. The scholarship on this period concerns itself with women's agency in the responses to government's repressive laws.

The last period, 1990 to the present, is represented in radical and critical feminist and historical authorship. The political, social, cultural, moral and economic being of women is being interrogated and analysed. Scholarship on women in this period continues to expose women's struggles and agency. Scholars have also investigated how South Africans have used and abused women's symbols to forge unity.

It is common among historians to acknowledge the effect the moment they are writing in has on their assessment of the particular past period they are writing on. From the beginning of the 1980s to the late 1990s, historians could have been expected to present their argument from either a liberal or a radical Marxist perspective. Initial contributors were mainly white academics

who wrote on women's history across races and tried to bring it to the attention of South Africans. In the process; they presented women as heroes, and wanted to correct myths that women were weak and hence could not have contributed to the historical development of South Africa from pre-colonial times. However, this trend changed drastically after 2000 when more African women entered the fray as both activists and academics. Women's history has moved from compensatory, and complicity versus resistance modes to an act of agency.

Walker's (1999) and Gasa's (2007) collections emerged as beacons of this history. Walker's collection was published at the early stages of women's history in South African. It came when local histories were giving women's history less attention and attempted to give women a voice by trying to rectify the situation. In the process, it dealt with the position of women from pre-capitalist to the industrial eras. It was not mainly concerned with agency at the time, but on how women's role has been important but ignored by major histories. However, the lack of agency in this collection does not translate to it being weak; instead, it was a powerful tool at a time and still gathers reference from many historians and activists alike. Reading this collection provides an insight into the role played by women in the development and contestations of exploitation and dependence. The collection raised a number of concerns and themes that needed serious attention by historians as academics and activists. The study of both local and international journals has indicated a concern and response to questions and issues raised by Walker.

Gasa's collection on the other hand, came after 1994, a political watershed that afforded both black and white academics and activists an opportunity to present their views without restriction. Reading through the collection one gathers that the book is multi-racial and cultural and able to traverse the divide between historical research and commentary on contemporary issues – Gasa herself and Abrahams playing an important role in this regard with their contributions. The collection was able to address the concerns Walker raised in 1990 but now up to the contemporary level.

Nevertheless, the collection did not get receive as huge recognition as Walker's collection had previously, probably because it could have been thought to be a government initiative and thus advancing a particular political line.

One of the challenges has been a move on from writing from mainly a political point of view that concentrated on the dismantling of apartheid but, in the processes, carried the risk of undermining women's history. Erlank posits that "There has been a move from grand narrative of apartheid history dominated by the story of anti-apartheid struggle", a story which unfortunately "did not give space to women."<sup>336</sup> Hence, the significant burden on book publications like the ones edited by Walker and Gasa, professing in the titles to feature South African women's history, to produce a counter-narrative. Between the two collections, the one from 1990 and the other from 2007, women's history had grown to greater proportions.

The study has shown, and confirmed with statistics, that there are few contributors to women's history in the academic journals dedicated to South African history. Ironically, the urge to bring women back into history, and attempts at unearthing their role and position in society seem to have resulted in a much stronger concentration on research into contemporary than past issues. The issues of violence against women, patriarchal tendencies, health and contestation of everyday life, are certainly themes that have been discussed from a historical perspective in the past, but are now far more prominent on the contemporary stage.

The journals consulted in this study were able to show that the period under study presented a forceful movement that relinquished women's studies from the inclination to compare, the syndrome of pitting the women versus the men, in favour of an approach to women as individuals. It is clear that women's history has been captured from different angles, in both contemporary and historical journals. Irrespective of the differences between the two, where the contemporary seems to be concentrating on recent struggles and the historical on the re-evaluation of the position of women and their agency at a particular time in the past, there is a testament of huge improvement in the recording of women's history. What remains a challenge to women's history in South Africa is for historians and social scientists to bring the discourses in their respective journals into a single perspective.

Unlike in the 1970s, the writing of women's history in South Africa has succeeded in moving from analysing women in a particular social class to a broader assessment of their the impact, roles and agency within women's and gender studies. Nevertheless, the study has also shown that among investigations of women's agency and their changing position there has been a prevalent

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<sup>336</sup> Natasha Erlank, Interview conducted on the 10 September 2013, through Skype.

number of studies focusing on Afrikaner women. Especially when assessing what history journals had produced, the abundance of articles revisiting Afrikaner or white women's roles is striking. Investigations range from the agency of the *volksmoeder* to the role of white women in the South African War and the representation of white women in photography.

Another prominent theme in the scholarship has been how women contested their spaces within political parties, for example, within the ANC, BCM and the NP. Of note has been political struggle for power and recognition within the ANC. Hassim has written greatly on this theme. Baleka Mbete and Frene Ginwala have also provided an insight into how the ANCWL have struggled to gain recognition and advanced women's issues at a political level, not just allowing the deep seated patriarchy within the ANC to dictate to them.

Nevertheless, it also clear from both local and international journals that research is still lacking in the analysis of the role of women in other political parties than the ANC. Women within the ANC are the most referred to and this creates an impression that they are the only ones that have contributed to the fight against patriarchy. This assumption cannot be correct. Therefore, there is a room for writers of women's history to explore how women in other political parties have contested their spaces and contributed to the building of a strong women's literature.

Within the NP, women fought for enfranchisement and recognition. Outside the political line, Afrikaner women contested Afrikaner manhood by engaging in prostitution and beer drinking, an act considered immoral and demeaning the Afrikaner womanhood. So, women in South Africa were able to contest male domination in their own way and finally got the recognition they deserved.

What has been thorny however, has been the fact that while there have been great strides forward within the writing of women's history, both feminists and women historians tended to sideline other women. Feminist scholars and historians alike are yet to cover a great deal of history on Indian, Coloured and African women. While black women have been studied to a certain level of representativity, the same cannot be said of Indian, coloured, Jewish and Chinese women in South Africa, about whom relatively little had appeared. Therefore, while stereotyping within women's historiography might have been addressed, it still remains a challenge. The

biggest challenge will probably be to study ethnically or racially constituted communities without essentialising ethnicity or reifying racial categorisation.

Perhaps, what is important, is to ask whether people should rather conduct research about themselves, and what the historian's responsibility is to conduct research beyond his or her own frame of reference?<sup>337</sup> That is, who researches what about whom? Should whites continue to do research about black women and capture their roles from their own perspective? What if we do not have contributors to the making of historical knowledge from a particular race? Recent contributions have seen feminists from most racial backgrounds, like Hoodah Abrahams-Fayker writing on coloureds/Muslim and Indian women. However, it is just a drop in the ocean, it does not suffice to be equated to scholarships on either whites or black African women.

Women's history in the period under study has focused on the legal, cultural, social, political and economic spheres rather than only on Nationalism and Christianity (Missionaries) as was the case in the 1960s. According to Meintjes, women's history has moved from dealing with conditions of women, to their development, to citizenship and to body politics.<sup>338</sup> The initial step of recording the conditions of women, which she terms the critique of identity crisis, has prevented transformative feminist history in South Africa.<sup>339</sup>

Erlank also notes that "[i]n the 1990s, people were more explicit about their gender history together with feminist history as well. (Now) people no longer write about gender as they used to. People are no longer producing gendered history as it used to be... (and) people writing women's history are very keen to include agency and choice but many people aren't writing women's history and are not concerned about issues of gender."<sup>340</sup> This is indicative of the fact that there has been a shift in women's history themes.

It is also worth noting that women's historical writings have concentrated greatly on women in urban areas. Little is documented about rural areas where women continue to struggle against patriarchal laws emanating from traditional leaderships and effects of migrant labour. While

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<sup>337</sup> Natasha Erlank, Interview conducted on the 10 September 2013, through Skype.

<sup>338</sup> Sheila Meintjes, Interview conducted at Wits University on the 21 August 2013.

<sup>339</sup> Sheila Meintjes, Interview conducted at Wits University on the 21 August 2013.

<sup>340</sup> N. Erlank, Interview conducted on the 10 September 2013, through Skype.



Motsemme<sup>341</sup> has written greatly on the impact of HIV/AIDS, this needs to be researched deeply from a historical perspective in rural areas where women continue to be victims of the pandemic and battle for themselves and their children.

There is a need though, in future research, to develop a clear line between women's history and gender studies. Are these disciplines the same, or is women's history a sub-discipline of a greater contribution to a feminist perspective? It came to the researcher's attention as he tried to engage with a number of possible interviewees that some opted not to be interviewed because they perceived themselves as not dealing with women's history. These possible interviewees have contributed largely to the role women played in South African history; the fact that they were not comfortable addressing women's history raises yet the question of whether feminist, gender and women's history are the same. Perhaps the discipline is so open that women's history cannot be assumed to be only historical but as including disciplines within itself that need to be clearly outlined. On this point, Walker provides clarity on women's history: "I don't see Women's History as a separate discipline but a sub-field of enquiry that needs to ask questions of historical research and writing that is not gender-sensitive but also keep in touch with developments in other sub-fields as well as in social theory on gender, intersectionality, etc, more generally."<sup>342</sup>

Against this background of feminist scholarship as reflected in journals such as *Agenda* in the early 1990s, women historians delved into the past and their treatment of historical topics mirrored their frustrations with the situation in their present. While there is no clear awareness of or conscious effort to create synergy between feminist scholars focusing on analysing the present, and those researching the past, what seemed to unite the efforts of activists and historians was to highlight women's historical oppression, and seek for opportunities for agency.

There has been an increase in women's contribution in the development of South African history and practical and strategic matters. According to Erlank, local journals have made an international impact, for instance, the *South African Historical Journal* (and *Agenda*) has joined the scholarly publisher Taylor and Francis; hence there has been an uptake and use of local

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<sup>341</sup> N. Motsemme, Loving in a time of hopelessness: On township women's subjectivities in a time of HIV/AIDS. In Gasa, N., *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilamho/They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers* (pp. 369-396).

<sup>342</sup> C. Walker, Response to interview questions dated 26 August 2013.

South African journals internationally, including South Africa's gendered history, because local journals are now easily available in an international market.<sup>343</sup>

The evidence presented in this study shows that while the number of articles in local historical journals has increased in the last twenty years, the math is not in favour of articles focusing on women. Perhaps future researchers will have to check if the same trend is manifesting itself within the local historical journals produced in other countries. The local journals have managed, nevertheless, to differentiate themes and uncover practical issues affecting women. The few articles produced as per evidence above, have been able to capture a great deal in regards to women's issues.

What should be done to revive and prioritise the historiography in women's history from a historical perspective? The government and institutions of higher education need to recognise the importance of this genre. There is need for an increase in the intake of students in history and concentrate on women's history. Deevia Bhana argues that we need to "[i]ncrease the number of students at both undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the field of women's history, identify the institutions in the country where academics furthering such work can be located and provide funding for students and support the academics to increase the research base. Work with the DoE and DoHET and raise this as important. Include the Social Science and Humanities charter and work with people like Ari Sitas to foreground this area of work."<sup>344</sup> She is supported by Gouws who submits that "[y]ou need to have more trained women's historians and they need to raise consciousness about women's history. It cannot be expected of the rest of us (those who do different types of research to do this). There needs to be workshops and conferences and academic courses on the issue of women's history."<sup>345</sup> Walker, on the other hand, points out that we "need to ask questions of historical research and writing that is not only gender-sensitive but also keep in touch with developments in other sub-fields as well as in social theory on gender, intersectionality, etc. more generally."<sup>346</sup>

The changing trends in the historiography of women's history in South Africa have been positive and have gained international recognition. This historiography has grown into a forceful entity

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<sup>343</sup> N. Erlank, Interview conducted on the 10 September 2013, through Skype.

<sup>344</sup> D. Bhana, Response to written interview dated 15 October 2013.

<sup>345</sup> A. Gouws, Response to written interview dated 13 November 2013

<sup>346</sup> C. Walker, Response to written interview dated 26 August 2013.

that has raised numerous themes that addressed women's issues without fear. Both the Walker and Gasa collections, though not the only ones during the period under study, have provided an impetus to the robust engagement with women's issues from both activists and historians alike. While there might have been differences of approaches in the capturing of women's agency, clearly, women's history has gained the recognition and emphasis it deserves. Challenges are still there, there are also issues to be researched as indicated in the paragraphs above, but overall, the historiography of women's history from 1990-2011 has shown agency, moved from writing compensatory history and avoided placing women against men in the analysis of women's history.

## TABLES

These tables indicate the number and names of South African Journal articles on women's history on the period under study

**Table 1**

Title	Journal and year
Making an informed choice: Discourses and practices surrounding breastfeeding and AIDS G Seidel -	Agenda, 1998 - Taylor & Francis
Afrikaner identity: culture, tradition and gender E Cloete -	Agenda, 1992 - Taylor & Francis
Act of omission: Gender and local government in the transition J Robinson	- Agenda, 1995 - Taylor & Francis
Women's organizations in the Western Cape: vehicles for gender struggle or instruments of subordination? G Fester	Agenda, 1997 - Taylor & Francis
Invitation to debate: Towards an explanation of violence against women M Van Zyl	Agenda, 1991 - Taylor & Francis
Motherhood deterred: Access to maternity benefits in South Africa R Boswell, B Boswell	Agenda, 2009 - Taylor & Francis
Gendered citizenship, race and women's differentiated access to power in the new South Africa E Salo	Agenda, 2007 - Taylor & Francis
Am I just a white-washed black woman? What transformation means to a privileged young black woman N Mkhize	Agenda, 2005 - Taylor & Francis
Engendering migration in South Africa R Boswell, S Barbali	Agenda, 2007 - Taylor & Francis

Effective Organizing in Terrible Times: The Strategic Value of Human Rights for Transnational Anti-Racist Feminisms B Schulman	Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism, 2004 - muse.jhu.edu
Overcoming the sisterhood myth F Fouche	Transformation, 1994 - history.ukzn.ac.za
The women's struggle for equality during South Africa's transition to democracy S Meintjes	Transformation, 1996 - transformation.ukzn.ac.za
Overcoming the sisterhood myth F Fouche	Transformation, 1994 - history.ukzn.ac.z
Gender, numbers and substance: Women parliamentarians and the 'politics of presence' in KwaZulu-Natal S Francis	Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern ..., 2009 - muse.jhu.edu
Migrancy and HIV/AIDS: A historical perspective S Horwitz	South African Historical Journal, 2001 - Taylor & Francis
Gender and Slavery: Towards a Feminist Revision P Van der Spuy	South African Historical Journal, 1991 - Taylor & Francis
'Almost a Public Calamity': Prostitutes, 'Nurseboys', and Attempts to Control Venereal Diseases in Colonial Natal, 1886–1890 JC Martens	South African Historical Journal, 2001 - Taylor & Francis
History, She Wrote: A Reappraisal of Dear Louisa in the 1990s J Parle	South African Historical Journal, 1995 - Taylor & Francis
'I Shall Need to Use Her to Rule': The Power of 'Royal' Zulu Women in Pre-Colonial Zululand J Weir	- South African Historical Journal, 2000 - Taylor & Francis
Labour Migration, Labour Shortage, and Employer Response in Swaziland, 1935–1945 HS Simelane	South African Historical Journal, 2001 - Taylor & Francis
The Imperial Tie: Obstacle or Asset for South Africa's	South African Historical Journal, 2002 -

Women Suffragists before 1930? D Gaitskell	Taylor & Francis
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**Table 2**

Journal	Year and volume	Author	Total s.
<i>Kronos,</i> <i>JSTOR Archive collection</i>	No 19, Nov 1992 pp 64-69	N. Tisani	19
	No 23, Nov 1996, pp 3-157	Y. Abrahams, C Landman, K. Schoeman, P. van der Spuy, K. McKenzie, N. Erlank, W. Woodward, C. Burns and G Minkley	
	No 25, 1998/1999, pp 4-16	A. Bank and G. Minkley	
	No 25, 1998/1999, pp 50-71	A. Malan	
	No 26 August 2000 pp89-101	P. Lalu	
	No 28, Nov 2002, pp 1-20	N. Penn	
	No 30, Nov 2004, pp47-93	R. Ross; H. Bradford	
	No 33, Nov 2007, pp 211-235	P. Van Der Spuy and L. Clowes	
No 34, Nov 2008, pp66-85	H. Bradford and M. Qotole		
<i>South African Historical Journal</i> <i>Taylor and Francis</i>	No 27, issue 1, 1992, pp 50-74	P. van der Spuy	22
	No 28, issue 1, 1993, pp119-150	E. Bradlow	
	No 33, issue 1, 1995, pp 13-82	R. Viljoen; J. Parle; N. Erlank	
	No 35, issue 1, 1996, 89-114	Y. Abrahams	
	No 39, issue 1, 1998 pp 91-110	L. van der Watt	
	No 40, issue 1, 1999, pp 51-73	L. Vincent	
	No 41, issue1, 1999, pp 22-43	E. van Heyningen	
	No 43, issue 1, 2000, pp 3-80	J. Weir; N. Erlank; H. Sapire	
	No 45, issue 1, 2001, pp 53-78	S. Klausen	
No 47, issue 1, 2002, pp 1-50	D. Gaitskell; E. van Heyningen and P. Merret		

	No 50, issue 1, 2004,pp 152-169 No 51, issue 1, 2004, pp47-67 No 59, issue 1 2007, pp 47-78 No 61, issue 2, 2009, pp 216-253 No 62, issue 3, 2010, pp 444-462 No 63, issue 2, 2011,pp 295-317	S. Klausen  P.T. Mgadla J. Gelman Taylor B. Brammer; E. Cleal  J. Murray  K. Miller	
<i>Historia</i>	No 43, issue 1, 1998, pp 9-28 No 43, issue 2, 1998, pp 67-85 No 44, issue 1, 1999, pp 65-83 No 49, issue 1, 2004, pp 71-88 No 49, issue 2, 2004,pp 23-44 No 51, issue 1, 2006, pp 1-27 No 53,issue 1, 2008, pp 82-101 No 56, issue 1, 2011, pp 63-76 No 56, issue 1, 2011, pp 77-80	A Appel. E. Bradlow G. Duganzich A. Chennels A. Dick S.E. Duff T. White  K. Simone R. van Der Merwe	9

## Appendix: Interview questions

1. Would you regard Cheryl Walker's collection, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, a watershed in South African Women History? Please explain.
2. How would you compare it to Nomboniso Gasa's collection, *Women in South African History*, released in 2007?
3. Do you think the South African historians pre 1994 had captured the role of women in South Africa effectively? Please explain.
4. What is your view on the current trends in South African Women's history? Have we been able to reinterpret women's agency? Are current writings challenging different perceptions about the role women play or played?
5. In your view, are local journals giving women's history a chance in their publications as compared to international journals? Please explain.
6. There seems to be a gap between contemporary and historical journals on women/feminist writing. Why do you think this is so? Why are there a lot of contributors to contemporary journals than historical journals? Are historical journals losing touch with practical struggles?
7. What is the way forward for women's history in South Africa? What strategies do we need to engage with this discipline outside the academic? That is, make it more visible without necessarily relying on the politicians to raise it?



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