

INTEGRATING AFRIKANER WOMEN'S HISTORY IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL CAPS THROUGH AN EVALUATION OF WOMEN'S "SENSE OF INDEPENDENCE"

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Abstract

In 2011 the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for History at senior secondary school level was released. The content selection was directly influenced by the notion that History supports citizenship within a democracy. This opened the avenue for women's history to be introduced on senior secondary level. The aim of this article is twofold, namely to motivate the need to integrate women's history in implementing the senior secondary History CAPS by evaluating the content where women features and to provide an historical overview of Afrikaner women's role in South African history as an example of integrating Afrikaner women's history in the teaching of the CAPS content. The theories and methodologies of gender history are of the utmost importance to realise the civic aims of the CAPS, but the discussion of gender is beyond the scope of this article. This article identifies the lack of focus on women in the History CAPS despite the claim that history supports citizenship within a democracy by also representing gender-issues. Challenges to integrating women's history are then outlined. As an example of how women's history can relate to the major CAPS topics, an integrative and compensatory history of Afrikaner women is provided through evaluating women's "sense of independence" by describing their role in key events that shaped South African history, resistance against colonialism, and the development of proto-nationalism.

Keywords: Teaching History; Senior secondary school; Women's history; Gender history; History curriculum; Afrikaner women.

Introduction

In 2011 the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for History in senior secondary school was released. In the definition of history in section two of the Statement, it is declared that History supports citizenship within a democracy by "reflecting the perspectives of a broad social spectrum so that

race, class, gender and the voices of ordinary people are represented” and by “promoting human rights and peace by challenging prejudices that involve race, class, gender, ethnicity and xenophobia”.¹ The placing of gender on the agenda can be applauded, but this entails a thorough engagement with the existence of gender differences, the social construction of gendered identities, the contingency of gender, and dichotomies taking the form of hierarchical oppositions. This also includes a particular emphasis on women’s history that “strives to make students sensitive to the way meanings, past and present, are assigned to femininity and masculinity and how these meanings change”.² Although women are supposedly included in the curriculum, they are in fact nearly absent from the content.

Regarding engagement with gender as a concept, the History CAPS shows a total lack of contextualising gender and integrating women’s history into existing structures. It is my contention that women were included haphazardly and in an ill-informed manner on the side of policy makers. The limitations of the senior secondary CAPS History Curriculum have been extensively considered by P Kallaway in an excellent article published in *Yesterday and Today* in 2012.³ Among other aspects, he critiques the mentioned idea of civic education as not adhering to “the necessary condition for good history teaching...” and quotes Counsell in emphasising the need to “bring the epistemic tradition of history to the classroom in forms that allow the students to understand the grounds on which valid claims about the past can be made”.⁴ I am in agreement – even gender need not be incorporated via civic aims, but by adhering to the rich tradition of gender history as valid field of historical inquiry. However, within the context of the CAPS document, it would be fruitful to view women’s history in light of the civil responsibility as at least a noble aim concerning the inclusion of women and the acknowledgement of gender as a factor in history.

My aim with this article is twofold, namely to motivate the need to integrate women’s history in teaching the senior secondary History CAPS based on an evaluation of the content featuring women and to provide an historical overview of Afrikaner women’s role in South African history to demonstrate the integration of Afrikaner women’s history in the teaching of the CAPS

1 Department of Basic Education (DoE), *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: Grades 10-12: History* (Pretoria, Department of Basic Education, 2011), p. 8.

2 G Ten Dam & R Rijkschroeff, “Teaching women’s history in secondary education: Constructing gender identity”, *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 14(1), 1996, p. 75.

3 P Kallaway, “History in secondary school CAPS 2012 and beyond: A comment”, *Yesterday&Today*, 7, July 2012, pp. 23-62.

4 P Kallaway, “History in secondary school CAPS...”, *Yesterday&Today*, 7, July 2012, p. 33.

content. The theories and methodologies of gender history are of the utmost importance to realise the civic aims of the CAPS, but the discussion of gender is beyond the scope of this article. This article aims to start the discussion by throwing light on the lack of focus on women in the History CAPS despite the claim that History supports citizenship within a democracy by also representing gender-issues. Furthermore, challenges to integrating women's history are outlined. As an example of how women's history can relate to the major CAPS topics, an integrative and compensatory history of Afrikaner women is provided through evaluating women's "sense of independence" by describing their role in key events that shaped South African history, resistance against colonialism and the development of proto-nationalism.

The near absence of women: Further limitations of the CAPS History Curriculum

The History CAPS content selection was directly influenced by the notion that history supports citizenship within a democracy. This opened the avenue for women's history to be introduced on senior secondary level. However, as Kallaway shows, the document does not elaborate on how this notion is to be reconciled with traditional goals of history teaching.⁵ The inclusion of women's history presupposes its own traditional goals which are effectively summarised by G Fain: "The phenomenon of the appearance of the role of women in historical development is intended (and rightly so) to characterize the broader influence of all women and their contributions to political, cultural and economic history".⁶ In this section, I evaluate the content of the History CAPS documentation to identify problems associated with the inclusion – or exclusion – of women in the curriculum. This is done by looking at three topics specified in CAPS, namely topic one and six of Grade ten and topic three of Grade twelve.

Women are only mentioned three times in the whole spectrum of history covered from Grade ten to twelve. Topic one of Grade ten focuses on "the world around 1600". Teachers are to include, in all units, the role of women in society. This consists of a comparative overview of China, the Shongai Empire, India, and European societies.⁷ Kallaway argues that to engage with the role of women in this broad overview is an unrealistic call.⁸ There is no

5 P Kallaway, "History in secondary school CAPS...", *Yesterday&Today*, 7, July 2012, p. 30.

6 G Fain, "Teaching Women's History", *Clearing House*, 68(5), May/June 1995, p. 268.

7 DoE, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: Grades 10-12: History*, p. 13.

8 P Kallaway, "History in secondary school CAPS...", *Yesterday&Today*, 7, July 2012, p. 38.

mention of exactly where and how teachers should include women in the overview. I doubt that school libraries or public libraries in rural areas will have information on this broad inclusion of women. There is of course extensive research available on women's history in this era. The Renaissance is a case in point, exemplified by one of the first ever classic women's histories written by J Kelly-Gadol: "Did women have a Renaissance?"⁹ She reconceptualised the Renaissance through her "discovery" of women's role in this transitional era. It is an excellent example of women's role in society. However, given the lack of focus on women's history in the curriculum it is unlikely that all teachers were exposed to these studies at tertiary level. The faculties of education in South African universities prepare teachers to teach the curriculum and students are not confronted with the broad classic trends in Humanities on the level of "history proper" taught by the respective departments of history. Therefore, it remains unclear to me how teachers can be expected to incorporate the influence of women successfully within this topic without explicit and well-informed guidelines and applicable resource material.¹⁰ One is left with the idea that women were mentioned as an afterthought to adhere to the civic goals without much consideration or knowledge of the field's epistemic background.

The second mention of women brings us to South Africa. Women are never again mentioned in a global context despite the emphasis on teaching History through a comparative approach. Topic six of Grade ten covers the South African War and the Union of South Africa. The role and experiences of women in the war are emphasised.¹¹ However, the First Boer War is not mentioned. This leads to a lack of context, which may lead to disproportionate views, as women also played a role in this war. By excluding it, it is not possible to demonstrate the important notion of a continuous female influence that needs to be emphasised.¹² A good deal of material is available on this topic - as Kallaway also points out¹³ - including on women's history. However, emphasising the *experiences* of women is different from evaluating their *role* in the war and thus granting them *agency*. Consequently, teachers can fall into a reductionist trap regarding women in the South African War, namely by focusing on their *suffering* only. In its current form, the door is left open for reductionist interpretations of women's experience of the war as the content

9 J Kelly-Gadol, *Did women have a Renaissance?* (Boston, MA, Houghton Mifflin, 1977).

10 See the next section on the nature of including women effectively in a curriculum.

11 DoE, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: Grades 10-12: History*, p. 18.

12 See the overview of women's sense of independence.

13 P Kallaway, "History in secondary school CAPS..." , *Yesterday&Today*, 7, July 2012, p. 41.

mentions the concentration camps and “experiences of Afrikaners”¹⁴ and women in the same breath. The History CAPS mentions that “the section on the South African War from 1899 to 1902 needs to reflect recent research”.¹⁵ As will become evident in my exposition of women’s sense of independence, research on women’s role in the war abounds, but mainly in scholarly journals and academic anthologies. If teachers were not exposed to this at university level, or are not purposely provided with current research, they might struggle to find relevant sources to place women in context of recent studies.

Women only rightfully pop up in topic three of Grade twelve dealing with the civil society protests from the fifties to the seventies. Although this is a commendable attempt to include women, the elaboration in the overview is highly problematic. The unsubstantiated claim that “black women see themselves first as black, and white women see themselves first as white” is appalling, at least in my opinion. Such a statement can only be regarded as a gross overgeneralisation, as no evidence is provided to support that this was the case for *all* women, or that this was a conscious personal conviction. It also excludes alternative convictions possibly held by women in shaping their identities and roles in history, such as a woman considering herself firstly as wife to her husband or mother to her children, or a child of God.

In the same section the “middle class Black Sash” is mentioned.¹⁶ The irony is biting, as the implication here seems to be that the Black Sash too saw themselves first as white, rather than human beings or even women, regardless of the fact that they fought for equality and inclusivity. They were indeed white women who used their racial position to protest the unjust laws of Apartheid. But it would be an apparent oversimplification to assume these women necessarily firstly regarded themselves in terms of black-white opposition. This statement is a blatant insult to the Black Sash Movement that sowed the seeds of non-racialism and human rights for all. This attests to an over-emphasis on race and the lack of epistemic consideration of the theoretical underpinnings of women’s and gender history on the side of policy makers. When working with women and gender, essentialist notions like this should distinctly be avoided or else fail in achieving civic goals. Gender, for

14 The use of the term “Afrikaners” is problematic in this context. It supposes the monolithic nature of identity whereas historians made an immense effort to show identity is fluid. This term only came to be used as a standard ethnic label during the first part of the twentieth century and well after the war. The “Afrikaners” have mainly been referred to as “Boers” during the war. Kallaway drove the point home that we cannot view history through the lens of hindsight or presentism. See P Kallaway, “History in secondary school CAPS...”, *Yesterday & Today*, 7, July, 2012, p. 28.

15 DoE, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: Grades 10-12: History*, p. 18.

16 DoE, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: Grades 10-12: History*, p. 28.

example, is contextual. G Ten Dam and R Rijkschroeff rightly argues that:¹⁷

Femininity and masculinity are not intrinsically the same or different. The meaning of gender varies according to context. Femininity, masculinity, and the unequal relationship between men and women are social manifestations that can assume a different form again and again.

Kallaway justly points out that the curriculum “tends to ignore complexity and *context* and reverts excessively to narrow notions of race and nationality in what appears to be a quest for ‘relevance’”.¹⁸ Today, the chairperson of the Black Sash is a black woman – so much for presentism and “relevance”. Furthermore, in terms of resistance movements, no mention is made of the Liberal Party and Progressive Party. As Kallaway mentions: “One cannot help wondering why this is so!”¹⁹ Helen Suzman and her contribution certainly merits mentioning at the very least.

Topic three of Grade twelve is presented in a vacuum and further bolsters Kallaway’s argument, quoting Tosh, that “any feature of the past must be interpreted in its historical context”.²⁰ If this is not done, students tend to think in “bubbles” instead of seeing history as extended progression.²¹ The liberation of women extends as far back to the Enlightenment and consequences of the French Revolution. No history of this phenomenon can begin without at least considering Mary Wollstonecraft – not to mention First Wave Feminism. Furthermore, the political role of women need not only be a focus on women’s liberation, as I show in the short history of Afrikaner women’s sense of independence.

The South African senior secondary History curriculum lags behind dreadfully where women’s history is concerned. In comparison, the Dutch example of dealing with women’s history in senior secondary school, from as early as the 1990s, can be mentioned. In 1990 and 1991 women’s history in senior secondary school was included as a compulsory theme of examination in the Netherlands. A group of professional historians were advised by and accountable to the Dutch Ministry of Education. Women’s history was supported by arguments on both an individual and social level by reappraising the roles of women in the past to enable students to better understand their

17 G Ten Dam & R Rijkschroeff, “Teaching women’s history...”, *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 14(1), 1996, p. 75.

18 P Kallaway, “History in secondary school CAPS...”, *Yesterday&Today*, 7, July 2012, p. 28.

19 P Kallaway, “History in secondary school CAPS...”, *Yesterday&Today*, 7, July 2012, p. 47.

20 J Tosh, *Why History matters* (London, Palgrave/Macmillan, 2008).

21 P Kallaway, “History in secondary school CAPS...”, *Yesterday&Today*, 7, July 2012, p. 32.

present gendered society.²² The final examination topic adhered to the standards of women's history: "Continuity and Change: The Position of Women in the Netherlands and United States of America, 1929 to 1969". Women featured in terms of family, work, and politics.²³ This speaks of an integrative and truly comparative approach. The main difference between South Africa and the Netherlands is that the latter had a clear aim with women's history and understood that its significance "extends beyond the acquisition of subject matter knowledge" through the advice of women's historians who provided the much needed background to the Dutch Ministry of Education. As such the epistemic background of women's history was incorporated successfully and purposefully into the existing curriculum structures. It also places women in a contrary light – they did not only *struggle* for equality – they were *visible* and *contributed* in all aspects of society.

Kallaway points out throughout his article that the curriculum does not engage with revisionist challenges posed to historiography since the seventies.²⁴ The gross over-emphasis on race is a case in point. However, since the sixties, one of the major challenges to History as a discipline and all historiography in general has been the rise of women's history as a legitimate historical topic. Great strides have been taken these past fifty years and it is safe to say that women and gender have become indispensable to our understanding of history. The lack of almost any true engagement with women's history in the CAPS content attests to a possible ignorance on the part of policy makers or the inherent political motives of the History CAPS that contributes, in my opinion, more to racial division than the inclusive ideals set out in the understanding that history supports citizenship within a democracy. In effect this renders civil goals unattainable. Race and class are represented throughout the content, but gender is lacking. Women's history can indeed contribute to a more inclusive perspective on History. A starting point would be addressing the apparent lack of inclusivity promoted by the curriculum namely the near absence of women. This need not be the case and I would subsequently like to briefly highlight inclusivity standards as applicable to a History curriculum.

22 G Ten Dam & R Rijkschroeff, "Teaching women's history...", *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 14(1), 1996, p. 72.

23 G Ten Dam & R Rijkschroeff, "Teaching women's history...", *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 14(1), 1996, p. 73.

24 P Kallaway, "History in secondary school CAPS...", *Yesterday&Today*, 7, July 2012, p. 44.

The need to integrate women's history in teaching the senior secondary History CAPS

In a few instances I have referred to the epistemic background of women's and gender history. I am of the opinion that the teaching of women's history should adhere to these standards. The reason is that women's history is a complicated project with an inherent ambiguity. In the words of one of gender history's greatest pioneers, JW Scott, women's history "is at once an innocuous supplement to and a radical replacement for established history".²⁵ Scott shows that writing a mere supplement, adding women to "established history" as an afterthought, is not enough. She expresses it as follows: "women cannot just be added without a fundamental recasting of the terms, standards and assumptions of what has passed for objective, neutral and universal history", for that view of history "included in its very definition of itself the exclusion of women".²⁶

How does one adhere to this standard when teaching women's history? To truly include women would mean rewriting the curriculum. It is unlikely that this will happen to the extent necessary anytime soon. However, there are ways in which teachers can include women in existing curriculum structures. Feminist scholars refer to an *integrative* approach.

G Riley shows that by 1979 women's history was recognised as a legitimate field and writing about women has "been implemented with a vengeance".²⁷ However, during that time women's history was not yet incorporated into all American History courses. She mentions the complexity of women's history and discusses the six ways in which women's history can be incorporated into existing curriculum structures. These six approaches are as follows: 1) "remedial" (remedying the omission of women); 2) addressing women's history through the study of "Great Women"; 3) the "oppression"-approach (the mentioned view of women's history as a "struggle"); 4) the "political" way of viewing women (focusing on women's liberation); 5) social history (home and family); and the sixth teaching device, namely viewing "women in" (women in social movements, women in war, women in colonial South Africa, et cetera).²⁸ All of these approaches have their virtues and shortcomings and Riley effectively points out that not one of these approaches are sufficient if they are used in isolation as *the only* lens through which women are viewed. As an alternative

25 JW Scott, "Women's history", P Burke (ed.), *New perspectives on historical writing* (Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), p. 50.

26 JW Scott, "Women's history", P Burke (ed.), *New perspectives on historical writing...*, p. 58.

27 G Riley, "Integrating women's history into existing course structures", *The History Teacher*, 12(4), August 1979, p. 494.

28 G Riley, "Integrating women's history...", *The History Teacher*, 12(4), August 1979, pp. 495-497.

she proposes an “integrative approach” to arrive at an effective teaching strategy. She elaborates that “the integrative technique utilises some combination of part or all of the above viewpoints in a mix that is comfortable for the instructor, students and course involved”.²⁹ This approach is the nearest that adheres to the standards set out by Scott as “[t]he integrative technique is intended to make women’s history jibe with other course content, rather than riding shakily and rather obviously upon its crest”. Although proposed in 1979, no women’s historian would argue that this approach does not adhere to the tradition of teaching women’s history today – especially where there is a need to incorporate women into curriculums where they are still absent. It is evident that the History CAPS does not follow this approach where women are concerned.

Thus far I have focused on pointing out shortcomings of the curriculum in my critique of it. I now turn to considering how to address these shortcomings, given the fact that policy cannot be changed overnight, and may remain unchanged despite scholarly calls to do so. Firstly, the aims of the curriculum may be realised through engaging with the policy document in innovative ways. Secondly, the content and women’s history can also be approached in an integrated way where possible. Women can be *properly* incorporated in history teaching by means of Riley’s integrative approach. In the following section I present an integrative history of women that can “jibe” with other course content and also supply a much needed context for the CAPS content through the discussion of women’s role. It focuses on Afrikaner history, touching on “key events” in South African History. This short history mainly serves as a compensatory approach to an integrative history of Afrikaner women up until the beginning of the twentieth century based on the CAPS content.³⁰ It is especially relevant to topic six of Grade ten (The South African War and Union).

A short history of Afrikaner women’s sense of independence up until the nineteenth century

Brief historical background: The first instances of Dutch-Afrikaans women’s sense of independence

The roots of the pursuit of independence among the group of white people in South Africa who would eventually become the Afrikaners, can be traced back to the eighteenth century trekking farmers of the Cape. In 1657 Jan

29 G Riley, “Integrating women’s history...”, *The History Teacher*, 12(4), August 1979, p. 497.

30 The fluidity of identity is pointed out through showing how Afrikaner women’s identity evolved through history.

van Riebeeck allowed nine Company officials to farm as “vryburgers” (free citizens/burghers) with the objective of providing food for the refreshment post. The numbers of the free burghers grew as immigrants from the European continent accelerated the natural increase of the white population in the Cape. Since the Dutch East India Company had never intended the post at the Cape to become a colony, the Company could not keep up with the needs of a growing new nation on African soil. Back in 1706 Dutch women already joined their men in protesting against the corrupt rule of governor WA van der Stel. They aired their grievances verbally to “landdros” (magistrate) J Starrenberg who reported to Van der Stel: “the women are just as dangerous as the men, and they do not keep quiet”.³¹ One of the first instances where a sense of freedom was articulated was the struggle of the Cape Patriots for more civil rights and freedom from the Company, but they also expressed their aversion to the Company’s rule.³² This was during the period 1784 to 1785. AP van Rensburg states that the patriots drew up documents signed by “eminent citizens of the Cape of Good Hope... representatives of the volk”. The signatures of quite a number of women also appear on these documents.³³

Thus the burghers steadily began turning their backs on the Company, the sea and commerce and by their *isolation* in the interior began to develop a lifestyle of their own. CW de Kiewiet comments on this isolation and says “... this isolation sank into their character, causing their imagination to lie fallow and their intellects to become inert. Their tenacity would degenerate into obstinacy, their power of endurance into resistance to innovation, and their self-respect into suspicion of the foreigner and contempt for their inferiors”.³⁴ So a love for the *unregulated* freedom and a desire for its preservation germinated among these new Africans.

With the isolation from the motherland as well as the challenges and sense of independence in the frontier areas, the white settlers gradually began losing their ties with the Netherlands and other mother countries. A sense of independence on the frontier took the burghers in the direction of a *new* identity although certain basic legacies from Europe lived on. It should be kept in mind, however, that at this stage the burghers did not yet have a nationalist feeling of solidarity among themselves. This would only come about in the nineteenth century.

31 AJH van der Walt et al., *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika* (Kaapstad, Nasou, 1965), p. 82.

32 L Maritz, “Afrikanervroue se politieke betrokkenheid in historiese perspektief met spesiale verwysing na die Women’s National Coalition van 1991 tot 1994” (Ph.D., University of Stellenbosch, 2004), p. 3.

33 AP van Rensburg, *Moeders van ons volk* (Johannesburg, Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, 1966), p. 111.

34 CW de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic* (London, Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 17.

As the burghers adopted farming with livestock their need for land increased and the borders of the “refreshment post” kept on expanding. The stock farmers soon became trekking farmers (who roamed about in a nomadic way with their stock to available pastures). They were pioneers on a living/open frontier.

The border or “frontier” is a most interesting phenomenon in history which reached a particular peak in the colonial expansions of the nineteenth century. Lamar and Thompson writes that the frontier should be regarded “not as a boundary or a line, but as a territory or zone of interaction between two previously distinct societies”.³⁵ It was on the frontier that definitions of civilisation were created on the foundation of anti-civilisation. Words like “barbarism, savagery, heathenism” are very often used to describe conditions on the frontier and to justify colonial expansion.³⁶ In South Africa of the nineteenth century the entire area outside Cape Town can be seen as a “frontier area”. The interaction on the frontier during the nineteenth century indicated that one of Lamar and Thomson’s “previously distinct societies”, namely the Cape trekking farmers, began penetrating the territory of the already settled black communities of South Africa by “opening” the frontier. “Opening” the frontier supposes that new influences are brought within the zone by a new community. With reference to this E Cloete writes:³⁷

Frontiers are said to ‘open’ with the arrival of the intruding society. Like much colonialist rhetoric the connotation of opening can be read analogous with the idea of ‘bringing the light of civilization, with freeing an area from ‘savagery’ and ‘barbarism’... [s]uch a dichotomy often provides the justification for further expansionism and colonization.

The group of trekking farmers on the Eastern frontier of the Cape fits this description by Cloete very well. W Postma follows a distinctly colonial rhetoric when writing about Afrikaner women’s part in “opening” the frontier. He narrates that these people took their own ideas on civilisation into the interior with the aim of “taming” the wild open regions by bringing the “light of civilisation” and “opening up South Africa for Christianity and Civilisation”.³⁸ E Stokenström concurs with this and mentions that the whites on the frontier “did not lapse into barbarism altogether... “mainly for two reasons”: “The old pioneers took along the Bible to be a light on their dark road” and “another reason why the farmers of the old stock on the frontier

35 H Lamar & L Thompson, *The frontier in history: North America and Southern Africa compared* (New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1981), p. 7.

36 EL Cloete, “Frontierswomen as volksmoeders: Textual invocations in two Centuries of writing” (M.A., University of South Africa, 1994), p. 43.

37 EL Cloete, “Frontierswomen as volksmoeders...”, p. 44.

38 W Postma, *Die Boervrouw: Moeder van haar volk* (Bloemfontein, Nasionale Pers, 1918), p. 84.

retained their character and morals in the wild interior was that they were accompanied by *women*” – the bearers of the traditions like European concepts of “home” and “family” as well as morality.³⁹ It was mainly circumstances on the frontier that contributed to the development of a strong individualism among the trekking farmers and to fanning further the custom of being “independent” – a process which undoubtedly also influenced the women. For generations they were accustomed to very little or virtually no control by government, neither were there institutional factors which could restrict them. It is therefore understandable that any threat to the *status quo* would elicit great resistance.

Both the expansion movement to the Eastern frontier and the *isolation* of the trekking farmers nurtured a love of freedom and self-determination which would later become one of the most distinct characteristics of the Afrikaner. FA van Jaarsveld writes “from the border pioneer a new kind of colonist emerged ...” and H Giliomee speaks about “[a] special kind of burgher”.⁴⁰ Van Jaarsveld, in a more balanced way, also concurs with De Kiewiet’s view quoted above when elaborating on the characteristics of the growing nation: “There were characteristics like individualism, advanced by the isolated farms, and independence, skilfulness, obstinacy, resistance to coercion, love of freedom and of the veld with its open spaces”.⁴¹ When the British occupied the Cape in 1795, and with permanent British governance in 1806, the new government would be confronted with exactly these characteristics.

In order to show that women exhibited a strong sense of independence we need to look at its manifestations in times when it emerged most noticeably. Typically this happened when women’s “freedom” was jeopardised. In other words women’s *struggle* for independence from Britain will be analysed in terms of their *sense* of independence and its articulation/manifestation.

During the course of the nineteenth century there were mainly three events which provide sufficient evidence of Afrikaner women’s reaction to British domination. During the first, namely the Great Trek there was not as yet any ethnic consciousness among Afrikaners and the “spirit of independence” should be seen in the light of the trekking farmers’ *status quo* on the border. During the second and third event, namely the so-called “wars of independence” there already was something that can be called nationalism

39 E Stokenström, *Die vrou in die geskiedenis van die Hollands-Afrikaanse volk* (Stellenbosch, Pro Ecclesia, 1921), p. 232. Stokenström’s own emphasis.

40 H Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people* (Richmond, University of Virginia Press, 2003), p. 21.

41 FA van Jaarsveld, *Die ontwaking van die Afrikaanse nasionale bewussyn, 1868-1881* (Johannesburg, Voortrekkerpers, 1959), p. 16.

or at the very least proto-nationalism.⁴² The nature of women's sense of independence had changed in the time between the Great Trek and the South African War. Women's part in this struggle for independence should be seen in this light, since the women saw their own struggle for independence as the struggle against British rule.

Voortrekker women's sense of independence during the Great Trek

In the exposition above frequent reference was made to the trekking farmers. This group of people trekked into the Cape interior, mainly in search of new pastures for their livestock. There also was a second group of emigrants who would leave the Cape Colony, but for political reasons, namely the Voortrekkers who took part in the Great Trek. The mass-migration of those taking part in the Trek was in resistance against British governance and an expression of their will to determine their own fate.

Conditions in the frontier areas compelled the colonists who lived there to take action. There are many reasons for the Great Trek but they can be summarised in the words of Giliomee "... as a lack of land, labor and security, coupled with a pervasive sense of being marginalized".⁴³ The feeling of being marginalised was fanned by the British administration of the Cape and chiefly by a widespread dissatisfaction with Ordinance 50. The causes of the Great Trek are generally interpreted as a lack of labour as a consequence of the Ordinance and the liberation of slaves; as well as a shortage of land and security; but in particular for women, the equalisation of races was also a cause.⁴⁴ This equalisation conflicted with the women's religious principles influenced by the Dutch Reformed Church. The pioneers' faith was based in Calvinism which taught that if the Christian convictions and customs of a group of people were suppressed, subjects were allowed to throw off the yoke of the government.⁴⁵

Women's positions were strengthened by the fact that church membership was restricted to white persons. By 1790 about ninety per cent of the huge Stellenbosch congregation were confirmed members of the church. The white community, the slaves and other servants who formed part of the black community, were therefore distinguished from one another by the restriction

42 H Giliomee, "The beginnings of Afrikaner ethnic consciousness", L Vail (ed.), *The creation of tribalism in southern Africa* (London, Currey, 1989), pp. 21-54.

43 H Giliomee, *The Afrikaners...*, p. 144.

44 L Maritz, "Afrikanervroue se politieke betrokkenheid...", p. 3.

45 DJ Kotzé, *Nasionalisme: Geskiedenis en pan-nasionalistiese bewegings* (Kaapstad, Tafelberg, 1970), p. 22.

of church membership. The result of this was that children born of mixed blood were entered in the slave register and could not lay any claim to the estate of the family. In this way the European woman would strengthen her position in the community.⁴⁶ The emancipation of slaves and the equalising of races under Ordinance 50 would pose a threat to this position.

To the Dutch-Afrikaans women religion was therefore one of the main reasons for leaving the Cape Colony. One example of such a woman was Anna Steenkamp, a cousin of Piet Retief. She saw the equalisation of slaves as conflicting with God's laws and with the natural distinction between race and religion.⁴⁷ Pioneer women therefore felt that their freedom was jeopardised by the social equalisation of people belonging to different status groups. Maritz says that "race exclusivity, based on Christian convictions, was the motivation behind the desire to move away from the British government and govern themselves".⁴⁸ Thus some of these influences contributed to some of the sources from that time being of the opinion that women were more determined to trek than men.⁴⁹

Based on this, it seems reasonable to deduce that that women's motives to move did not stem from a sense of community or a feeling of patriotism and solidarity for an ethnic group. The reasons for the Great Trek was something that moved the pioneers *personally*. LM Kruger mentions that before 1870 there was a kind of "individualism" or "pre-individualism" among the pioneers.⁵⁰ This means there was a lack of common discourse. The spirit of independence and feeling for their own among the women who took part in the Great Trek should therefore be seen in light of the already mentioned *status quo* on the frontier. Nevertheless the women were conscious of the fact "that they were participating in unusual and significant events"⁵¹, seeing that the reasons for the Trek were not only social and economic, but also political. This becomes clear from the diary of Anna Steenkamp. About her diary she writes "This writing is made for my family, children and grandchildren who are still living in the interior at the moment, so that they can know why their parents and grandparents left their country ..." and about the political aspect

46 H Giliomee, "The rise and fall of Afrikaner women", 2 August 2003 (available at <http://www.litnet.co.za/seminarroom/afwomen.asp>, as accessed on 10 September 2016), pp. 7-8.

47 A Steenkamp et al., *Die dagboek van Anna Steenkamp en fragmentjies oor die Groot-Trek* (Pietermaritzburg, Natalse Pers, 1939), p. 11.

48 L Maritz, "Afrikanervroue se politieke betrokkenheid...", p. 4.

49 H Giliomee, "The rise and fall of Afrikaner women...", p. 14.

50 LM Kruger, "Gender, community and identity: Afrikaner nationalism in the *Volksmoeder* discourse of *Die Boerevrou*, 1919-1931" (M.A., University of Cape Town, 1991), p. 54.

51 EL Cloete, "Frontierswomen as volksmoeders...", p. 49.

she writes “it is unnecessary to quote anything more about these disputes since I am conscious that you are familiar with all these matters”.⁵² Women were so closely involved in the events that Anna Steenkamp just assumed the reader would be familiar with them.

Voortrekker women actively took part in the Great Trek. They left the Cape Colony in family units, in other words, the women did not join the men *after* the trek, but were entirely part of the challenges and hardships accompanying it. This means that they later also felt that they (who had shared in the hardships of the Trek) could lay a claim to self-governance and independence from a foreign power.

During the course of the Great Trek women often contributed to the pursuit of self-governance by serving as great motivation in difficult times. Shortly after the Voortrekkers' arrival in Natal there was some indecisiveness among the trekkers since Mpanda, half-brother of Dingaan, posed a real threat. Delegorgue, a French traveller and natural scientist writes that if Mpanda took one more step “... the advice of the women would prevail, for the African Dutch women have strong opinions and do not hesitate to make them known. The husbands do as their wives bid them”.⁵³ In this case the women's opinion was that the men had to stay and resist Mpanda.

Voortrekker women often took an active part in the many battles and skirmishes of the Trek. Hendrina Joubert (wife of Piet Joubert) remembers how women chopped off the hands of Zulu impis who tried to untie the wagons. She also remembers that watch was kept at night and that even young girls took turns to stand guard. She describes it as follows:⁵⁴

We did not know the word “nervous”. Do you know what the women did? They had no use for something like nerves ... they had to cast the bullets. Casting bullets while the spears whistled above their heads. It often happened that the Zulu's came up to the laager without being noticed to try and untie the wagons. Many a woman, I myself as well, kept an eye open if we were not busy casting bullets ... then we would see a hand appearing, nothing but a black hand trying to untie the wagon, and we would chop off the hand. There stood the men, shooting, there were the girls behind their fathers, loading the rifles, there were the women, casting bullets ... we could not even call to them, we chopped off the hands.

The “feeling of independence” among Voortrekker women can also be seen as a desire once more to have the peace and quiet of a settled home. The

52 A Steenkamp et al., *Die dagboek van Anna Steenkamp...*, p. 11.

53 A Delegorgue, *Travels in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1990), p. 83.

54 R Koopman, *Wat mev. joubert vertelt* (Kaapstad, HAUM, Dasseau, 1915), pp. 23-25.

domestic sphere was the place where Voortrekker women's authority resided. It is interesting that this very opinion was articulated by women later on. R Postma writes: "The Voortrekker woman took her domestic surroundings along with her. Even on the road she made the wagon into a home where her husband could find a place to rest and her children could be taken care of and taught, where God's Word could be opened and read in a devout atmosphere".⁵⁵

It is understandable that women's active participation in the Trek made them feel that they had a right to independence from Britain and self-governance. This feeling among women certainly was best expressed in the events surrounding the annexation of the Republic of Natalia and the controversy around Susanna Smit.

The first substantial group of whites who penetrated Natal were the Voortrekkers. By 1839 there were approximately 6000 Voortrekkers living in the Republic of Natalia, south of the Tugela River. In 1843 Britain was on the verge of annexing this territory. Britain's objective, among others, was a strategic one, to prevent other European powers from gaining a foothold on the southern tip of Africa. At the beginning of August 1843 the British High Commissioner, Henry Cloete, arrived in Pietermaritzburg to negotiate the annexation of the Republic by Britain. A document was presented to the Volksraad (House of Representatives) setting out the articles of annexation. In Pietermaritzburg members of the Volksraad debated on whether they should accept the annexation, trek away or remain there and resist Britain. The Voortrekkers had limited options.

While the commissioner was staying in Pietermaritzburg a deputation of Voortrekker women, led by Susanna Smit, wife of the reverend Erasmus Smit, came to see Henry Cloete. Here Susanna Smit very clearly verbalised the Voortrekker women's sense of independence. The most significant evidence of Susanna Smit's public statement can be found in the commissioner's report:⁵⁶

The state of suspense in which I was kept was agreeably relieved by a formal deputation which I received from the standing committee of the ladies of Pietermaritzburg, headed by Mrs Smit, the wife of a person officiating as missionary. The spokeswoman commenced by declaring that, in consideration of the battles in which they had been engaged with their husbands, they had obtained a promise that they would be entitled to a voice in all matters concerning the state of this country; that they had claimed this privilege, and although now repelled by the Volksraad, they had been deputed to

55 R Postma, "Die kind en die Groot Trek", *Huisgenoot Gedenkuitgawe*, p. 156.

56 J Bird, *The annals of Natal – 1495 to 1845*, 2 (Cape Town, Maskew Miller, 1888), pp. 258-259. The contemporaries' reference to blacks was revised in this quotation.

express their fixed determination never to yield to British authority; that they were fully aware that resistance would be of no avail, but they would walk out by the Drakensberg barefooted, to die in freedom, as death was dearer to them than the loss of liberty.

According to G Preller, who used eye witnesses' recollections when compiling his popular histories of the Great Trek and the South African War, Smit narrated the story of the Voortrekkers' journey into the interior. She spoke about the uncertainty of life on the Eastern border of the Cape Colony, the lack of sympathy the farmers received from the British authorities and the final necessity to move away from the colony. She further told of the "wild country and its wild inhabitants", the loss of life they suffered at the hands of the Zulu and their eventual victory at Blood River. After Smit had addressed the commissioner, another woman, Johanna Maré, read a petition signed by 400 women. In this petition they attacked the British government for their intended take-over of the Republic at a time when at last they had peace in the region and the farmers had settled.⁵⁷ Emotions seem to have run high in the hall. FL Cachet relates that one of the women in the meeting was so agitated that she wanted to attack the commissioner: "So high did emotions run that a woman in the Volksraad Hall at Pietermaritzburg wanted to attack Commissioner Cloete with a sword".⁵⁸ The women's attitude towards him annoyed Cloete very much. He felt that they had far too much to say and regarded it as "a disgrace on their husbands to allow them such a state of freedom".⁵⁹

Although the words of Susanna Smit were used in the service of Afrikaner nationalism in the twentieth century and events revolving around her statement were hugely romanticised,⁶⁰ the whole affair says much about women's sense of independence. There are two dimensions to Susanna Smit's public statement to the commissioner. In the first instance there was the distinct wish *not* to live under British rule. It would leave the feeling that the whole trek, every hardship of which was shared by the women, had been in vain. The hardships of the Trek without doubt fanned women's sense of independence specifically from Britain since they had *moved away* from British rule. In the second place there is a deeper dimension indicating that Voortrekker women had a very vigorous sense of independence for women of that era. This was the desire to have a say in matters of the government of the Republic. Not

57 GS Preller, *Andries Pretorius: Lewensbeskrywing van die Voortrekker kommandant-generaal* (Johannesburg, Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, 1940), pp. 293-294.

58 FL Cachet, *Worstelstrijd der Transvalers* (Amsterdam, Höveker & Wormster, 1989), p. 248.

59 J Bird, *The annals of Natal – 1495 to 1845*, p. 259; K Schoeman, *Die wêreld van Susanna Smit, 1799-1863* (Cape Town, Human en Rousseau, 1995), pp. 112-159.

60 EL Cloete, "Frontierswomen as volksmoeders...", p. 55.

only does the Great Trek give evidence of the Voortrekker women's (later Afrikaner women's) sense of freedom, but their active participation in the Trek undoubtedly also fostered the feeling of independence among them and, as Susanna Smit's statement clearly shows, made it easier for women to articulate it. Susanna Smit's descendants' struggle against British domination reached its peak during the nineteenth century in the form of the First "Anglo-Boer War". During the First as well as the Second "wars of independence", or "wars of liberation", Afrikaner women played an essential part.

The Boer women's sense of independence during the "wars of independence"

With the annexation of Transvaal the Voortrekkers' "individualism" changed into a sense of solidarity with one another. Before the 1870's there was a distinct lack of a sense of community, and Giliomee says that "extreme individualism, self-aggrandizement and even anarchy" had a hey-day in the two republics before the late 1870's.⁶¹ The annexation of Transvaal in 1877 changed this and gave a start to Afrikaner nationalism. EJP Jorissen confirms this in his "Transvaal memories, 1876-1886" by making the following remarks:⁶²

The consciousness of a 'fatherland' grew slowly, and unless it fills all heads and hearts, self-interest, or what one takes for it, still rules ... The Boer lived on his own farm, free from contact with government: a king in his own realm. If his peace was disturbed and he was compelled to meddle in political matters, it was not the interests of the country or of the state but those of his friends, his clique or his church which stirred his heart. Only after, and definitely as a result of, the annexation did the consciousness of being citizens of a country awake among the Boers.

The first British annexation of Transvaal in 1877 initially did not evoke much reaction. R Haggard writes that "the majority of the inhabitants, who would neither fight nor pay taxes, sat still and awaited catastrophe, utterly careless of all consequences".⁶³ This state of affairs is not surprising considering the lack of a common consciousness and state institutions which up to that stage were characteristic of the Transvaal. However, within the next few years matters quickly changed. There was an extensive rise of a common consciousness which converted into mobilisation strategies against Britain. These strategies included huge meetings of Transvaal burghers in "national" gatherings, a journey all through South Africa by the leaders of the "Zuid-Afrikaansche

61 H Giliomee, "The beginnings of Afrikaner ethnic consciousness", L Vail (ed.), *The creation of tribalism in southern Africa*, p. 24.

62 EJP Jorissen, *Transvaalsche herinneringen, 1876-1886* (Amsterdam, De Bussy, 1897), pp. 21-22. My own emphasis.

63 Quoted by LM Kruger, "Gender, community and identity...", p. 59.

Republiek” and a media campaign in the paper *De Volkstem* which had become the mouthpiece of Transvaal’s struggle against British annexation.⁶⁴ Kruger mentions that especially the national gatherings offered the opportunity for the development of a community feeling among the Boers.⁶⁵ Jorissen writes about one such a meeting that “the different parties, political and of churches, gained the insight that there was something higher than these small circles, that there was a Fatherland which encompasses everything and everybody”.⁶⁶ It is therefore clear that the sense of independence held by the old colonists, pioneers, Voortrekkers and Boers converted into something like a patriotic feeling in the late 1870’s – the rise of proto-nationalism.

The Boer women were not excluded from this process. Giliomee records that women were at the heart of the Transvaal rising against the British annexation in 1880-1881 which led to the victory of the Boers at Majuba and the retreat of the British from the Highveld.⁶⁷ O Schreiner supports Giliomee’s view and sketches a picture placing women in the centre of the uprising.⁶⁸

The Transvaal War of 1881 was largely a woman's war; it was from the armchair beside the coffee table that the voice went out for conflict and no surrender. Even in the [Cape] Colony at the distance of many hundred miles Boer women urged sons and husbands to go to the aid of their northern kindred, while a martial ardour often far exceeding that of the males seemed to fill them.

Schreiner’s opinion that the women were sometimes more determined than the men, found concrete expression in the South African War. It is important to keep in mind that in the Boer communities women were often actively involved in public and political matters, although they had no political rights. SB Spies elaborates on this involvement of women by mentioning “that women ameliorated the harshness of pioneering conditions, played a leading role in educating their children and used their ‘womanly power’ to support or incite their men during times of political crisis”.⁶⁹ Moreover women’s influence was strongly based in their positions as the crux of huge, sound family units. Olive Schreiner writes on the position of the Boer woman that “[a]s a rule she not only brings to the common household an equal share of material goods, but, and this is infinitely of more importance, she brings to

64 EL Buys, “Die drukkers- en uitgewersbedryf in Transvaal, 1857-1902” (M.A. dissertation, Rand Afrikaans University, 1988), p. 54; LM Kruger, “Gender, community and identity...”, pp. 58-59.

65 LM Kruger, “Gender, community and identity...”, p. 59.

66 EJP Jorissen, *Transvaalsche herinneringen...*, 1876-1886, p. 44.

67 H Giliomee, “The rise and fall of Afrikaner women”, p. 15.

68 O Schreiner, *Thoughts on South Africa* (Johannesburg, Africana Book Society, 1976), p. 176.

69 SB Spies, “Women and the war”, P Warwick & SB Spies (eds.), *The South African War: The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (Harlow, Longman, 1980), p. 162.

the common life an equal culture. The fiction of common possession of all material goods... is not a fiction but a reality among the Boers, and justly so, seeing that the female as often as the male contributes to the original household stock".⁷⁰ With the outbreak of the South African War most of these family units were disrupted and women in their own way also took part in the war and the struggle against Britain. It was during the war that women's sense of independence changed into a kind of fanatic republicanism, a nationalism which assumed fidelity to the Boer republics and was recorded by many contemporaries who wrote about the war.⁷¹

On 11 October 1899 Boer women took control of the farms when their husbands were called up to the commandos. Together with their children they ensured that the farming was carried on. Other women again, who did not have sufficient food or clothing or who felt threatened by the indigenous people, moved to the towns.⁷² For as long as the British were kept at bay on the borders of Transvaal and the Orange Free State, the women played an incredibly important role in the war, at both a spiritual and a material level. They sent letters and messages of encouragement to the burghers on commando as well as supplies from the farms.⁷³ This pattern changed forever with Lord Robert's invasion in the Western part of the Orange Free State in March 1900 and General Buller's seizure of Transvaal in June 1900. The policy used by Roberts, Buller and later Kitchener regarding the women and children is significant for this section of the article. The way they saw Boer women portrays a notion of these women's sense of independence and the Boer women's reaction to the steps taken by the British throws further light on this.

The enormous suffering and hardship that women were prepared to go through left both the Boer men and the British speechless. Women hid in mountains, woods or in the plants on river banks, others walked around in the so-called *vrouwen laagers* (women's laagers) to prevent themselves from being caught and sent to the concentration camps.⁷⁴ Other women assisted the Boers in an organised way by spying on the British for them. This facet of women's struggle against Britain is set out in Johanna Brandt's publication "The Petticoat Commando".⁷⁵

70 O Schreiner, *Thoughts on South Africa*, p. 175; H Giliomee, *The Afrikaners...*, pp. 231-232.

71 E van Heyningen, "The voices of women in the South African war", *South African Historical Journal*, 41, November 1999, pp. 22-34.

72 F Pretorius, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog* (Kapaastad, Struik, 1998), p. 54.

73 F Pretorius, "The fate of Boer women and children", F Pretorius, *Scorched earth* (Cape Town, Human & Rousseau, 2002), p. 37.

74 H Giliomee, "The rise and fall of Afrikaner women" ..., p. 15.

75 J Brandt, *Die Kappie Kommando of Boerevrouwen in geheime dienst* (Cape Town, HAUM, 1915).

In the struggle against British imperialism many Boer women even threatened to take up arms if their men were too cowardly.⁷⁶ Although women did not take up arms in an organised way there are isolated incidents where they were indeed involved in battles. Examples of these are M Kranz who was with the men during the campaign in Natal and H Wagner from Zeerust “who spent five months fighting in the laagers and trenches without her identity being revealed”.⁷⁷ There were also other women but these examples serve to prove that the women were fully conscious of what was jeopardised by the war, and that they, just like the men, were prepared to fight for its preservation. There even is evidence that women’s sense of independence was stronger than that of the men, as transpires from their conduct towards men who had left the front. After devastating losses in the second phase of the South African War the burghers of Transvaal by June 1900 were ready to surrender. Two factors stemmed this: the Free State burghers under President MT Steyn, and the Boer women of the two republics.⁷⁸

H Bradford refers to GM Theal’s comment on Boer women’s sense of independence during the war when he says: “Remember, the women are the fiercest advocates of the war to the bitter end. For independence the Boer women will send husband and son after son to fight to the last”.⁷⁹ Women not only attempted to dissuade their husbands from giving themselves up, but in many cases forced them to. Men who had left their commandos returned to a home where there was bitter resistance against the fact that they were not on the front. The wives of these men in some cases refused to feed them, threatened to take their places in the commandos and made it clear that they regarded the men as cowards.⁸⁰ Many instances were recorded of women who were of the opinion “Go and fight. I can get another husband but not another Free State”. “Remain loyal to your duty... I can always find another husband but not another Transvaal”. JH Breytenbach writes that Boer women could reprimand deserters and renegades far more effectively than the Boer generals could.⁸¹

After the British had vanquished the Free State towards the middle of 1900, there already were many *hensoppers* (Boer’s who gave up arms) who had

76 E Brink, “Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the *volksmoeder*”, C Walker, *Women and gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town, David Phillip, 1990), p. 276.

77 SB Spies, “Women and the war”, P Warwick & SB Spies (eds.), *The South African War...*, p. 162.

78 H Giliomee, “The rise and fall of Afrikaner women” ..., p. 14.

79 GM Theal, quoted by H Bradford, “Gentlemen and Boers: Afrikaner nationalism, gender and colonial warfare in the South African War”, G Cuthbertson, AM Grundlingh & ML Suttie, M.L (eds.), *Writing a wider war: Rethinking gender, race, and identity in the South African War, 1899-1902*, p. 47.

80 H Bradford, “Gentlemen and Boers...”, G Cuthbertson, AM Grundlingh & ML Suttie, M.L (eds.), *Writing a wider war...*, p. 49.

81 JH Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog, 1899-1902*, 5 (Pretoria, Nasionale Pers, 1983). p. 451.

surrendered. Boer women's sense of independence emerges forcefully towards those who did not show the same sense. M Marquard tells of one Boer woman's opinion of them: "[W]e think the men should be on commando instead of meekly giving up their arms to, and getting passes from, the English".⁸² In one of the concentration camps the British contemplated separating the *hensoppers* from the women in the camp because the women had such an attitude of hatred against them.⁸³ A Grundlingh writes that one *hensopper* in a concentration camp wrote that he was "unmercifully persecuted by the anti-British sex".⁸⁴ The fact that the Boer woman's sense of freedom and resistance against Britain was extremely strong, is mitigated by her willingness to undergo the inhuman suffering in the concentration camps, as well as the comfort they derived there from the idea of independence.⁸⁵

The scorched earth policy of the British as well as the system of concentration camps was part of Britain's military strategy. The support given by the women on the farms, complicated matters for the British. Moreover the resistance of the Boers on commando was fanned by the women. So Britain definitely was also confronted by the Boer women's sense of freedom as becomes evident from Kitchener's words to Roberts: "... there is no doubt the women are keeping up the war and are far more bitter than the men..."⁸⁶

Women's help to the commandos as well as their espionage activities posed a real threat to the British. It was this threat that formed one of the main reasons for the establishment of the concentration camps. Kitchener expanded the camps not only to settle the burghers who had given themselves up but also the Boer women and children. His reason is clearly set out in a telegram he sent to the Secretary of War in London: "Every farm is to them [the Boers] an intelligence agency and a supply depot so that it is almost impossible to surround or catch them". The women who had moved to the towns after the outbreak of the war also housed and hid Boer spies there.⁸⁷ On women's espionage the war correspondent Edgar Wallace said "[w]omen have played

82 M Marquard, *Letters from a Boer parsonage* (Cape Town, Purnell, 1967), p. 78.

83 H Giliomee, "The rise and fall of Afrikaner women" ..., p. 13.

84 AM Grundlingh, *Die 'Hensoppers' en 'Joiners': die rasionaal en verskynsel van verraad* (Pretoria, HAUM, 1979), p. 142.

85 Of course this is not applicable to every woman who experienced the war but it gives an idea of the feeling among the majority of Boer women.

86 Letter: HH Kitchener / F Roberts, quoted by SB Spies, "Women and the war", P Warwick & SB Spies (eds.), *The South African War...*, p. 168.

87 SB Spies, "Women and the war", P Warwick & SB Spies (eds.), *The South African War...*, p. 164.

a great part in this war, not so much the part of heroine as of spy” and that “through ill nature women and children make war on us”.⁸⁸

Although women's suffering in the concentration camps was used to fan nationalist sentiment among the Afrikaners after the war, the statements by women in these camps do give a sense of the significance they attached to liberation from British rule. E Steenkamp writes about a certain Boer woman, Janse, who on her death bed found consolation in the thought that the war was not in vain: “Every woman who died in this war has suffered for freedom and justice for their nation and future generations. They seek no monuments for this, no honour for themselves. The greatest honour that they can receive is the realisation of the ideal for which they died”.⁸⁹ The republicanism of Boer women in the camps is also confirmed by E van Heyningen who relates that Boer women were not silenced by the British officers but “[in] the camps they often expressed their anger loudly and vigorously”.⁹⁰ H Bradford agrees with this by pointing out that “[w]omen were not... imprisoned for flaunting republican sympathies”.⁹¹ So Boer women could publicly air their views on Britain as well as their hatred for everything British. So much so that British troops began to feel uncomfortable about the extent of this hatred. Bradford mentions that they remarked “Boer woman – strong, fierce, and uncompromising – is a force to be reckoned with”.⁹²

Giliomee follows the same train of thought as Bradford, pointing out that the Boer surrender to Britain caused the women to cling all the more to their own culture. In reaction to the scorched earth policy of the British, a Boer woman wondered whether she should allow her children to continue learning English. Another Free State woman reflected on the qualities which distinguished her from the British and her answer was republicanism, history, the language and “hatred of the [British] race”.⁹³ A British visitor after the war, JR Macdonald, remarked “[it] was the *vrouw* who kept the war going on so long. It was in her heart that patriotism flamed into an all-consuming heat. She it is who returns, forgiving nothing and forgetting nothing”.⁹⁴

88 E Wallace, quoted by PM Krebs, “The last of the Gentlemen's wars: Women in the Boer War concentration camp controversy”, *History Workshop* 33, 1992, p. 44.

89 E Steenkamp, *Helkampe* (Johannesburg, Voortrekkerpers, 1941), p. 115.

90 E van Heyningen, “Women and gender in the South African War 1899-1902”, N Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African History* (Cape Town, HSRC, 2007), p. 93.

91 H Bradford, “Gentlemen and Boers...”, G Cuthbertson, AM Grundlingh & ML Suttie, M.L (eds.), *Writing a wider war...*, p. 48.

92 H Bradford, “Gentlemen and Boers...”, G Cuthbertson, AM Grundlingh & ML Suttie, M.L (eds.), *Writing a wider war...*, p. 49.

93 H Giliomee, “The rise and fall of Afrikaner women” ..., p. 13.

94 JR Macdonald, *What I saw in South Africa* (London, Echo, 1902), p. 24.

Women's republicanism and sense of independence did not wither with Britain's victory over the Boer forces. The following quotation from a study by Van Heyningen is an excellent example of women's feelings after the war:⁹⁵

Still they can never take from us the feeling that we are Republicans and Freestaters, let them call us what they will. We were born and bred here; we have the old traditions, which alone can make a nation; our fathers and brothers have fought for the country, and they and our grandfathers have helped to build up a dynasty which has been the freest in the world; and what is more the enemy have not and can never have "the taal", as we know it – the taal which will not die out for 50 generations of Englishmen and more. They are strangers in a strange land, and will remain so – for this war has taught us what we are – has brought out the Afrikanerism which hitherto has lain dormant in us. Even today, the entrance of the enemy here has caused hundreds of irresolute men and women to feel what they are losing, and [therefore] to side entirely with us. And in this question women cannot be left out. It is not the boer who will long continue to breed race-hatred which is inevitably between us & the enemy – it is his wife who sitting alone on her farm, does & will instil into her children, that intense hatred of the Englishman, which she looks upon as part of her religion. The Boer goes to market, sells his wares to the English; gets to know & tolerate & perhaps even like him in time. But the Boer woman – never. An Englishman especially at such a time as this is to her as a red rag is, to a bull.

The above are the words of Elsa Levisseur as quoted by Van Heyningen. It effectively summarises the sentiment of many Boer women after the war. To women holding this point of view the "struggle" against Britain was clearly not something of the past. With the dawn of a new century, women's sense of independence would embed itself even deeper in the emerging Afrikaner identity. However, the seeds have been planted for the construction of the *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation) to bear fruit in the new century. As an Afrikaner identity construction the *volksmoeder* would give meaning to Afrikaner womanhood and would both empower and constrict women in the years to come. The South African War shaped the *volksmoeder*-identity into a coherent form and historical material was used by both nationalist politicians and Afrikaner cultural entrepreneurs to construct an enduring image of womanhood. Although the old "bitter end" generals of the war would become the leaders of the Afrikaners in the beginning of the new century, it by no means entailed that Afrikaner women were indifferent towards politics. Women's sense of independence and patriotism during the war would obtain for them a central place in public life. This place was not necessarily a say in political matters but manifested as a symbol of Afrikaner values (although used by male Afrikaner nationalists). Therefore women were

⁹⁵ E van Heyningen, "The voices of women...", *South African Historical Journal*, 41, p. 28.

not mere instruments in male hands but after the war made their mark in society by means of a huge number of women's associations. Van Heyningen writes "The war drew women into public political life. The changes in white women's role in society between 1902 and 1914 testify to the function of the South African War in breaking the conventional mould and modernising South African society".⁹⁶

Not only would women after the war enter the public sphere by belonging to women's associations, but women's matters also came on the political agenda of the post-war Afrikaners. The reason for this is that gender relations are altered during any war. The observation has been made that war gave women "considerable independence and public experience, often leaving them with a greater familiarity with confronting local bureaucracy than their husbands had when they returned from the front, the experience brought with it... a pride and social identity".⁹⁷ In the exposition in the previous section on Boer women's sense of independence during the war, it is clear that some women rose above their circumstances in spite of the dire conditions in the concentration camps and laid even more legitimate claim to political agency than in the past.

Conclusion

The above history places women firmly within the *context* of key events in South African history and the history of the Afrikaner. It integrates women in a remedial way by showing their role in history. Reference is made to certain "Great Women" who are specifically mentioned. The "oppression" of women is outlined and inferred in terms of how they navigated their "inferior" position by means of their sense of independence.⁹⁸ Although these women were not suffragists or feminists, the "political" is emphasised by looking at how women claimed a special place for themselves through their influence. Their importance as the crux of large family units and their role in the "home" (even if it was a wagon) is touched upon and the whole history follows the "women in" approach to show their role *in* the broad spectrum of history through the lens of their sense of independence. This integrative approach

⁹⁶ E van Heyningen, "The voices of women...", *South African Historical Journal*, 41, p. 43.

⁹⁷ J Fentress & C Wickham, *Social memory: New perspectives on the past* (London, Blackwell, 1992), p. 141.

⁹⁸ Focusing exclusively on the oppression and "dreadful circumstances of women" leads to the fallacy of judging contemporaries by twenty first century standards and also tends to underrate the experiences of other contemporaries who also experienced oppression. See G Riley, "Integrating women's history...", *The History Teacher*, 12(4), August 1979, p 496. Focusing on how women maneuvered their position in dire times with a focus on their own convictions avoids this pitfall.

emphasises women's agency and cast them in their rightful role as historical subjects who exerted an influence on the course of history. The same approach can be used to include the role of women of other races and ethnicities.

I acknowledge the shortcomings of this history. It does not serve as a complete alternative or explanation for the content in the History CAPS and only focuses on Afrikaner women, but my aim was to provide an example of *integrating* women into the existing content. I also see this as a way of providing the context that Kallaway showed to be lacking, and at the same time focus on women. The focus need not only be on this specific period. Women's role in the formation of Afrikaner nationalism during the twentieth century has been extensively covered.⁹⁹ This is another avenue where women can be integrated. It includes their role in the language movement as well as social and cultural movements. The History CAPS only mentions the male dominated FAK, Broederbond and Afrikaans media – while nationalist women's organisations abounded.

If women's history is not taken seriously, the idea of citizenship-democracy will never be realised. As I mentioned previously, the idea of a "supplement" in women's and gender history is *highly* problematic. However, the CAPS History Curriculum leaves us with little choice. Supplements, then as a feasible alternative, need to be integrative if they are to adhere to the standards of women's history. Critical feminist historians in South Africa are in the position our colleagues around the world found themselves in during the 1960s and 70s with regard to our school curriculum. This is lamentable, but it should also appeal to our social responsibility. In the end, it is the responsibility of the historian to stand guard over our discipline. Platforms like *Yesterday and Today* can be used to supplement the curriculum in terms of making history more accessible to teachers – histories that both engage with current historiography and adheres to a truly integrative approach to women's history.

From this discussion, it becomes evident that women have played a continuous and fierce role in South African history. By ignoring women as contributors to society, to the extent apparent in the History CAPS, is concerning as it encourages ignorance amongst our children and an incomplete sense of our history as South Africans in context.

99 C Blignaut, "Untold history with a historiography: A review of scholarship on Afrikaner women in South African history", *South African Historical Journal*, 65(4), 2013, pp. 596-617.