

*Sex and Gender in Cross-cultural Fieldwork*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

——— Mary Ellen Conaway (1986) 'Introduction', in Tony Larry Whitehead and Mary Ellen Conaway (eds) *Self, Sex and Gender in Cross-cultural Fieldwork*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Wikan, Unni (1991) 'Toward an Experience-near Anthropology'. *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 285–305.

## Chapter 8

# Rape in the field

Reflections from a survivor

*Eva Moreno\**

Through field work at the pleasure of the host culture one learns one's place there and that it is one's only vantage point for penetrating the culture. Mistakes and mishaps in the field are great lamps of illumination if one survives; friendships there are the only greater source, besides being a divine comfort.

(Landes 1986: 139)

Aside from outright murder, rape is the ultimate sanction used by men to maintain the gender order.<sup>1</sup> Fear of rape forces women to abide by restrictions on physical movement and demeanor, and to conform to behavioral rules that govern most aspects of their entire lives.<sup>2</sup> That women are themselves to be blamed for rape is a prevalent notion in many societies, one that stems from the idea that it is the responsibility of women to make sure that they are not 'in the wrong place at the wrong time'. In other words, there are times, places, and situations out of bounds for women, which they traverse only at their own risk.

### Rape and female anthropologists

Anthropologists who do fieldwork in foreign societies or among unfamiliar groups find themselves outside the bounds of their own gender order. They seldom conform completely to the gender conventions of the society in which they do fieldwork. An acute problem for female anthropologists, like myself, is that members of the host society may try to force us into a local gender order, in precisely the same way as local women, who wittingly or unwittingly provoke and challenge the

\* The author's name and all other names in this chapter are pseudonyms.

existing order, are punished and brought into line. To some female anthropologists this can be a familiar situation, since we, in our home environment, may be perceived as recalcitrant rebels against a gendered order that does not easily allow independent, able women to rise above the prestige levels of our peers, and where sexual harassment is a standard measure taken by men to keep a male-dominated gender hierarchy intact. The potential for sexual violence against women, from harassment to rape-related murder, is present everywhere. In a field situation, the mere fact that one is a single female anthropologist doing her own thing may present an intolerable provocation to some individuals. Knowing that such risks face female fieldworkers, it is surprising that the anthropological literature is almost devoid of references to sexual violence to anthropologists.

There are many good reasons for this silence, some of them mentioned in other contributions to this volume. The element of blame that still attaches itself to the rape survivor means that women who have suffered sexual violence are afraid to damage their professional standing by talking about it. Among anthropologists, there is a tacit assumption often at work that a competent anthropologist would not place herself in a position where she could be raped in the first place (cf. Howell 1990: 93). There is also a predominant masculine view that equates vulnerability with weakness, which makes many women afraid to confront vulnerability for fear of being considered lesser anthropologists than our male colleagues. In the 'West', rape is still a stigmatized topic and victims often expect (and receive) little sympathy for their descriptions of assault. The recent reaction of some colleagues to reports of other kinds of personal violence against anthropologists in field situations, where the violence was seen as somehow the author's 'fault', suggests that the silence of rape victims is based on fairly accurate assumptions (Kulick 1994). The two instances of rape and attempted rape mentioned in Howell's book both led to the death of the victims, which may, sadly enough, be the reason why they are reported; since no further damage can be done to the professional lives of the victims, and they cannot themselves control what is written about them.

Besides concern about one's professional reputation, a further, major reason for the silence on rape and sexual assault is that those who have experienced such assault are very likely suffering from rape trauma syndrome. In describing the rape inflicted on her and her subsequent attempts to cope with it, Cathy Winkler observes that,

Rapists overrule not only the words and actions of their victims but also attack victims' definition of their body and their sexual self. Rapists' threats extend beyond superficial retorts and mentally and psychologically invade victims' beings and self-definition.

(1991: 12)

At the best of times, it takes a long time to overcome a rape trauma syndrome. Such an experience is devastating enough if it occurs in familiar surroundings. If it happens in a situation such as fieldwork, where one's sense of self is already under attack (Wengle 1988), many dimensions of the trauma, such as feelings of guilt, responsibility, and self-loathing, will be further aggravated. Unless the purpose of the writing is therapeutic or to provide legal testimony, it is almost impossible to write about the rape before the trauma is somehow brought under manageable control.

Then there is pure fear, a generalized fear by the survivor and an insidious relationship of fear between rapist and survivor that is likely to last until the death of either party. For the victim, this is fear of being raped again, or killed. Winkler writes that 'rapists bury land-mines in the bodies of their victims', land mines that explode in confusion, nausea, nightmares, tremors, depression, and shakiness (Winkler 1991). If the victim reports the crime, she fears retribution from the rapist. If the rapist should be brought to trial, not only does the survivor have to relive the experience publicly and see the assailant once again, but he may be acquitted of the crime, perhaps with a mind to seek revenge on her for turning him in. And even if the rapist is convicted, the survivor knows he will soon be out, perhaps ready to take revenge on his accuser.

Twenty years have passed since the events I am about to describe took place. After all that time it has still been difficult to write this piece. It is impossible to be a participant observer and eventual reporter in a situation where your life and self are at stake. Your emotions and fundamentally disturbed equilibrium are too private to be traded in for anthropological credits.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, time does make a difference. I can look back on the young person who was me, with sadness and fear, but also tolerance and a profound gratitude to the people in the field who interfered and stood by me. I now feel that I owe it to that young woman who was me, and to many other fledgling anthropologists, to recount this story as I understand events after two decades of trying to come to grips with what happened and why.

### A fieldwork experience

I first went to Ethiopia in 1964, on a five-week stay. I was 20 years old and propelled by an acute infatuation with an Ethiopian student in Sweden, my home country. A year later, I went back as a member of the Swedish Volunteer Service, to work for two years as a social scientist in a development-aid-funded technical organization. After those two years, I returned to Sweden to finish my undergraduate studies in sociology, but I was soon back in Ethiopia for several months in 1968 to do fieldwork for my final research paper.

When I returned to Ethiopia in February 1972 to do fieldwork for my doctoral dissertation, I had used the intervening years to delve into social anthropology for the Africanist knowledge I could not find in Swedish sociology. The goal of my research was to do an urban study, in the small southern town of Ketema, using both survey methods and life history interviews. To do this work, I needed an assistant to help me, preferably a person with a high level of education and a good command of English.

I would have preferred to work with a woman, and I spread that word through my contacts at the university and elsewhere. My networks came up with a couple of female candidates for the job; but in the end neither was interested in prolonged sojourns outside the capital. To most young, educated persons in Ethiopia, living outside the capital was extremely unappealing. If work 'in the provinces' was unattractive to young men, it was nearly impossible for young women. Educated girls, like all girls belonging to the upper echelon, were kept, as far as was possible, within their families until they were married. The few who were not under the guardianship of their families had other concerns that made them unwilling to leave the urban scene.

In the end, I had two young men to choose between, both of whom had been suggested by my university contacts. One was several years younger than myself, a sociology major with a high Afro hair-style, flared trousers, nervous at the interview: the very picture of a dandy from the city. The other – whom I will call Yonas – was a man my own age, unobtrusively dressed and coiffed, with previous experience as a fieldworker for one of the national government agencies. Yonas professed to be politically interested (which at that time meant that he was leftist) and did not seem nervous when we spoke. Both Yonas and my other prospective assistant had recently been thrown out of the university, the younger man for the first time, Yonas for the third.

Being expelled from the university was common in those days of

political tension, as university students in Ethiopia took the lead in protesting against autocratic political regimes. To be expelled three times, however, was odd. At the time, though, I interpreted this as a sign that Yonas was possessed by a commendable zeal in the pursuit of truth and justice – an interpretation no doubt encouraged by Yonas himself. After some consideration of which of the two men to choose, I finally decided on Yonas, on the basis of this zeal, his experience, his apparent calmness, and his professed interest in the study.

From the very beginning of my relationship with Yonas, I had problems with authority. In my mind, and consequently in my behavior and talk, several conflicting conceptions of authority were superimposed. In my own society, differences of social and economic class certainly existed but were only subtly marked. In the 1940s and 1950s, the existence of class differences in Sweden had been ignored in official political rhetoric. This had changed drastically in the 1960s. Heightened awareness of class differences propelled attempts to eliminate the class markers and undermine the social and economic dynamics that reproduced class inequalities. This effort took many different forms, both officially and informally, from far-reaching reforms of the educational system, to an abolition of the formal, polite *vous* pronoun of address in speech.

In workplaces, this meant doing away with the markers of rank. One newly built university campus, for instance, had no separate dining or meeting spaces reserved for faculty; the same conditions were meant to apply to everyone. Although we never quite reached the point of addressing one another as 'comrade', titles were no longer used in face-to-face communication, and employees of all ranks within the same organization used first names to address one another.

But things were not really what they seemed to be. Beneath the professed equality we all knew perfectly well who the boss was and who the subordinate was; who decided and who was compelled to follow 'suggestions'. All we had done was set aside the more obvious markers of class and status. This worked, in an odd kind of way, because Swedes were a fairly homogeneous people with one religion, one language, and one race; descendants of the two-thirds that were left behind while the more daring lot disappeared to the United States at the turn of the century.

In addition to this confusing and contradictory stance toward authority that I brought with me from home, I also possessed a familiarity, mostly on a subconscious level, with the modern Ethiopian systems of stratification. Ethiopia was, and is, an extremely complex

society where different kinds of hierarchies intersect, enforce, and contradict each other. In the 1960s, the most prominent of those hierarchies was the political ('feudal') hierarchy, with the Emperor at the apex. Relatives of the Emperor made up the upper segments of this hierarchy.<sup>4</sup> Other hierarchies were the ethnic ones, the religious ones, the one based on modern secular education, and the one based on wealth. Superimposed on all of these were the gender orders, which were distinct for each ethnic group, including a separate gender order for the urban, 'modern' sector of society in which I had planted my roots.

This intricate webwork of hierarchy permeated every aspect of social life. It was everywhere, and was continually reinforced by practices of deference and domination that were inescapable if you were part of Ethiopian society. To be sure, my Ethiopian cronies abroad and in the capital were appalled at the open and ruthless exploitation built into and sustained by the manifold hierarchies; nevertheless, they – and I along with them – were part of the system and we all acted our part in dealing with ministers, beggars, officials, bosses, servants, prostitutes, brokers, thieves, husbands, and wives.

Without being aware of it, I had adopted the same attitudes and behavior towards people around me as my Ethiopian middle-class friends and companions. Unthinkingly, I expected the same kind of response from subordinates as they would have expected and received. I did not realize that the status I had held while living in Ethiopia before had been status by association, derived from the organization I worked for and from the status of the Ethiopians I associated with. Initially, my interaction with others as a solitary foreign researcher, equipped with a car and official permits and certificates, appeared to make most people accept the status I claimed.

After three months in Ethiopia, and one month working with Yonas in the capital on some archives, all preparations were over and I finally moved on to Ketema, with Yonas in tow.

Ketema twenty years ago was a busy town, expanding almost as one stood watching. It had about 12,000 inhabitants, from all of the major ethnic groups in the country. Its structure was typical of African roadside towns; a narrow belt of one-story adobe buildings with tin roofs that clung to a one-kilometer strip of all-weather highway. Nowhere did the town extend more than 500 meters from the highway.

The inhabitants of Ketema earned their living through trade, communication, services, and administration. The town was a town of

newcomers, divided along class, ethnic, religious, and neighborhood lines. It catered to travellers and traders; it was full of eating places, dormitories, 'nightclubs', and it hosted many one-room bars, run by single women who served local beer – and themselves – on demand. There were also a couple of banks, several gas pumps, two elementary schools and one junior high school, a police station, a sizeable daily market, and a very large weekly market. You could eat out in Ketema on anything from 5 US cents to 1.5 US dollars; you could spend the night in a dormitory for 10 cents or in a highly respectable hotel for 2 dollars.

When Yonas and I first arrived in Ketema, I decided to stay in the respectable hotel. I rented a room for Yonas in the same place, thus introducing a firm note of (assumed) equality into our relationship from the very start. Once we were established in the hotel, the first task that faced me was to find some place to live. I felt that as an anthropologist, I was expected either to live with a family or to have a household of my own. After all, who among us has not been appalled at backstage rumors of senior anthropologists working out of hotels? I realized later that in my situation in Ketema, the obvious thing would have been to set up permanent camp in one of the lesser hotels. But I had no eye for the obvious. I was set on doing things according to the book, and thus began house-hunting.

After having gone through the available dwellings in the town itself, I decided on a house a few hundred meters outside the town, even though it did not fit my idea of an ideal anthropological residence. The house was set apart from the town, and it was nice, spacious, and expensive. It was a stone construction, built by a minor official in a subdivision neighboring that of Ketema, for his eventual retirement. In the meantime, he wanted to rent out the house for a cost corresponding to that of his bank loan. With the house came the official's uncle and the uncle's wife, who lived in the servants' quarters in the back of the house and who looked after the house, when it was empty. On one side of the building was an unfinished hotel, on the other a plot of land used for growing potatoes.

The house was big enough for both me and my assistant, so I invited Yonas to have a room in the building. My rationale was that I could not afford to find him a reasonable place in town. In addition, however, I also felt that I might become very lonely in the evenings, so I wanted him around to have someone to talk to. I discussed the advisability of this arrangement with Yonas because I feared that living together might signal to the townspeople that the relationship between Yonas and

myself was more than one of employer–employee. Yonas told me that people in town would assume that we had sexual relations regardless of whether he shared the house with me or not, and that I therefore should choose the arrangement that was most practical. My apprehension was eased by the reactions of the old uncle, Benjamin, who was the caretaker of the house. Benjamin obviously did not imagine that Yonas and I were a couple; instead it was clear that he perceived Yonas as a kind of combination bodyguard/staff member.

Ketema, being the transient roadside town that it was, had nearly all essentials for hire. Before long, I had set up office, bedrooms, and kitchen with the aid of the local rental agency and some strong-armed daily laborers.

Early on, I developed serious doubts about Yonas' suitability as a field assistant. He was brooding, moody, excessively flattering, and habitually bragging – often of how he had got the better of someone who had insulted him. This was uncomfortable at the time. In hindsight, it was ominous. But time was short and I felt that I had no real alternative with whom I could replace him. I simply hoped for the best, calmed by my previous positive experience of working relations with young men who seemed superficially similar to Yonas.

One of the first nights in Ketema, while we were still in the hotel, Yonas appeared in my room one evening, dressed only in his underwear. This was my first indication that his interpretation of our relationship was very different from my own. In his view, he explained, the time had come for me to become his lover. I did not take his advance seriously, and I fended him off easily by reiterating my position: I had a permanent partner at home and I had no intention of having other relations while in Ethiopia. He went back to his room with no further protestations.

In retrospect, it seems incredible that this instance did not make me react more definitely. Thinking back, I realize that as a young woman I was so accustomed to men making unwelcome advances toward me that I considered Yonas' proposition quite 'normal'. It never occurred to me that, as his employer, I was actually in a position to demand that he stop bothering me with requests for sex. In addition, part of my own cultural baggage was an astonishing lack of fear. My generation of young women in Scandinavia felt safe, and was safe,<sup>5</sup> in our own countries. We carried our insouciance with us from the Arctic circle to the Sahara, fearing nothing, and usually getting away with it. Maybe our very innocence protected us. In addition, I had received no relevant

field training, nor did I have any senior colleague at home or in the field to whom I could turn for advice. And furthermore, I was also reassured by the chivalrous courtship I had experienced during my earlier years in Ethiopia. What I did not realize was that during those earlier years, I had seemed very young to my Ethiopian friends. They often thought me no more than a teenager – that is to say, inexperienced and in need of protection. Now, four years later, I was clearly a mature woman with no husband or male guardian present. Therefore, I appeared available.

At any rate, as far as Yonas was concerned, this was clearly the case, and soon his campaign was launched. For several weeks it consisted mainly of nagging – interminable 'why not?' – and of not heeding my persistent refusals – refusals that became more determined, definite, and exasperated as time went on. I did not understand why he would not give up. He did not understand why I would not give in.

While all this was going on, data collection got under way. My aim in gathering data was to trace as many of the respondents as I could from a household survey that had been conducted several years previously by the national statistical agency. I wanted to check on the reliability of the survey technique in a setting such as Ketema, and to get an inkling of different kinds of change in the population.

To help with this work, I had employed a middle-aged messenger from the Community Development Center. He was the scout; he went around town with a list of the respondents, starting out by finding the ones he already knew, and then locating others in a snowball fashion. His work was absolutely crucial; not only did he find or get information on 80 per cent of the original respondents, he explained the study to the respondents, persuaded them to agree to a second interview, and set the time for that interview. The messenger, Yonas, and I would then interview the respondent with a modified version of the original questionnaire.

As time went by, I felt that my presence was not required during the interviews and I increasingly left Yonas and the messenger to carry them out on their own, while I devoted myself to checking and organizing the compiled data. I was gradually recovering the language skills I had possessed when I left Ethiopia in 1968, but I had not mastered the art of conducting a formal interview with strangers. In the unnatural situation of a formal interview, I realized that I was using Amharic as if it had been Swedish, in a manner as alien to Ethiopians as if I had in fact been speaking a foreign language. Furthermore, hardly any of the respondents had spoken to a foreigner before and the experience affected them greatly. Some simply did not hear me and

merely stared, or mumbled that they did not speak English. After proddings from the people listening in on the interview (there were always people listening in) they would listen and respond, but the situation clearly made them feel uncomfortable. I could not have carried out this work on my own. Not that Yonas was much of an interviewer himself, being much too direct and brusque. Without the preparations done by the messenger we would probably have ended up with a large number of refusals. As an interviewer, I think Yonas was conditioned by his previous role as an official in interview situations where the respondents had no choice about whether they wanted to participate or not. At this point in the work, however, I was not yet aware of Yonas' faults as an interviewer. That insight came later, when I could compare his style with that of other persons working with me.

After weeks of daily nagging, Yonas quieted down, and for a while I thought he had given up the idea of sexual conquest. I later understood that he had merely changed his tactics. He now embarked on impressing on me how crucial his presence was to my work. In the picture he painted, the townspeople identified the study with him, not with me. He led me to believe that our industrious messenger would take orders only from him, and that I would have to start all over, from scratch, in another town, if he decided to quit and leave me.

What went on in the town I did not know. I was used to being stared at, to parents picking up their children to show them the *ferenji*, the foreigner. Ketema was not a friendly place. It was a town of strangers, with different languages and habits, full of prejudice and mutual suspicion. Although I was uneasy about the way the townspeople ignored me, I was not surprised. I blamed it on my own ineptness and inherent timidity. Increasingly I felt that I lived in a glass bowl, with people looking in on me and me I looking out at them, but with no real contact, no genuine communication.

By the time we had been at work in Ketema for two months, I was beginning to feel quite shaken. My uneasiness about my isolation was compounded by Yonas' broodiness, which seemed to grow by the day. He had frightening, screaming nightmares, easily audible in my room, which was next to his. When he went out at night, he had taken to carrying a gun. The gun worried me, even though I knew that Ethiopian men prided themselves on being armed, and I had often seen other educated men from the capital bringing hand-guns along when they went out of town. My concern was over what Yonas, in his agitated and surly frame of mind, might do with his gun.

Lacking effective authority, I tried to handle the situation with quasi-psychological techniques that were meaningless, inefficient, and condescending under the circumstances. For instance, thinking/hoping that showing trust would generate trustworthiness, I did not lock my bedroom door. Sure enough, I woke up one night to find Yonas in the middle of the room, furiously accusing me of sleeping with everybody else except him.

I do not remember how I repelled this particular advance, but Yonas left the room after a few minutes of loud complaining about my sexual discrimination against Ethiopian men. He believed me to be promiscuous: why, he demanded to know, would I not be promiscuous with him? Henceforth I locked my room carefully, with a bitter feeling of failure and guilt.

Then, one day, Yonas suddenly announced that he quit. The next day he left.

At first, his decision to leave the job made me frantic. His continual insistence that I was dependent on him had influenced me profoundly: I had no doubt that my work in Ketema was linked to his person and that I would have to start all over again in another town if he left. Months into fieldwork, I still seemed to be completely incapable of establishing rapport with anybody. The townspeople were distant; even though most respondents answered our questions, they did so with little enthusiasm and the interviews led to no further contact. At this point I believed that this was because the townspeople wanted nothing to do with me.

Besides Yonas, the only people in Ketema with whom I had any kind of social relationship were Benjamin, the old guard who had come attached to my house, so to speak, and his wife. Benjamin was a retired soldier in his late seventies who used to be in the Emperor's service. Upon retiring, he had been promised a piece of land near Ketema where he would be able to support himself farming. Once actually there, however, the local officials would not honor his claim and he was left without means of support. It was his firm opinion that 'if the king only knew' things would be put right. But he had no ways of reaching the king, and while waiting for imperial intercession, he had accepted the position of guard for his nephew's house. Not that he held a very high opinion of his nephew, whose apparent wealth implied advanced levels of corruption, but . . .

His wife Sofia was many years his junior. They had been living together for a year when we met. She had only one eye, and was energetic, industrious, and realistic. She saw the old man as a gullible

dreamer but a good man, to be respected for his bravery and his old age. She told Yonas that she had had offers from wealthier, and therefore more attractive, men, but that she felt it her duty to stay by the old soldier, who, in her opinion, could not possibly manage on his own.

The two of them had an easy-going, friendly relationship. Sofia supplemented their income by going around baking in wealthier households several times a week. She also distilled spirits in an ingenious still, composed mainly of bamboo sticks, calabashes, and cow dung. The couple consumed much of what they produced themselves; they often called me in for a snort on my route to and from the latrine ('Good for the heart!'). What they did not drink themselves went to supply some of the simple drinking places in town. The old man, in addition, furthered their economy by renting a piece of land where he grew cereals for their own use and for the market.

Sofia helped me out with washing, cleaning, and shopping. She was very interested in the doings of other people, and was lively and talkative, making her a wonderful source of information about everyday life in Ketema. Through her I learnt many things, including some of the strategies the townspeople used to manage economically.

Benjamin took his guarding seriously. When I told him that Yonas was no longer going to work for me and had left the house, he made no comments. Yet the same night when it was time to go to bed, he came into the house, bringing his big coat and blanket (and a kitten for company), and proceeded to bed down in front of my bedroom door. I was touched, of course, but also deeply embarrassed. The guard did not budge; there was no other way to keep me safe at night, he explained: he could not hear me from his home should anything happen, and it was his responsibility to see that nothing did. In the morning he wrapped up his bedding and went home.

After a couple of days on my own, I was beginning to collect my wits again and, to my surprise, I actually began to feel relieved at Yonas' departure. It looked as if I was finally getting out of what had become an insufferable situation. Changing towns might not be such a bad idea. I was beginning to think that I could start anew with an assistant from whatever town I might choose to work in. A real worry, however, was the short time at my disposal for my fieldwork. My whole project had already been delayed substantially because of the Ethiopian government's reaction to some critical articles that my anthropology supervisor had published in Swedish newspapers. Because of those articles, my research visa had been put on ice, and I spent nine months

at home, waiting for the visa and consequently using up my research grant money. Moving to a new town and starting over would mean risking running out of money. However, my plan was simply to be less ambitious, and to try to make as much use as possible out of the material that had already been gathered in Ketema.

At that point, as I was actually beginning to feel happy at the prospect of starting over again, Yonas came back. He returned nonchalantly, as if nothing had happened, to see if I had changed my mind. Of course, he told me, he never really intended to quit. He was just upset because I would not sleep with him. But now he was ready to get to work again.

In spite of my relief that Yonas had gone, I realized that to take him back would be the 'easy' way out. I was going to be leaving Ethiopia soon for a month-long vacation. Yonas and the messenger could wrap up the re-study phase on their own, I reasoned. In a month or so, the first phase of the investigation would be over. Some sort of study seemed possible even if I had completely abandoned the notion of doing fieldwork with the depth I had intended, or the way I assumed all other anthropologists did it. I acquiesced to Yonas' return.

I returned to Ethiopia a month later and found the situation in Ketema as I had left it. Yonas was, if possible, more aggravated than before, and he resumed his campaign of sexual conquest immediately. He began taking out his gun at home. Glowering, he would put it on the table, together with his stock of bullets – five or six – and polish them, trying at the same time to impress me with the potential danger of gun use. I hysterically refused to admit even to myself that this little arms demonstration in any way concerned me. Gradually my sense of reality was giving way until I became just as preoccupied with Yonas, his moods, threats, resignations, and pleadings, as he had become obsessed with me and my resistance to his desires.

Our situation resembled that of a battered wife and her assailant. Seen from the outside, I could have stepped out of the situation at any time. But inside the circle cast by our grotesque relations, I had no ability to defend myself against his manipulations. I could not understand what was going on, except that Yonas seemed to be in the grip of a neurotic, fixed idea and could not be reached by reason or argument. All I could hope for was that the first phase of the study would soon be completed, so that I would have an excuse to put an end somehow to my association with Yonas.

In trying to cope with the extreme stress I felt, I found pretenses to

visit the capital. I also fled regularly into writing and reading, and I could bring myself to make no decisions about the next step in the investigation. Gloom.

Finally, one of my oldest Ethiopian friends managed to break through my inertia. I had dropped in at his office in the capital for a cup of coffee and a chat. Casually I told him, as a joke, no doubt, about the bullet-polishing sessions. My situation in Ketema was assuming an eerie quality of normality as my vision of anthropological fieldwork receded. My friend Michael's reaction was unequivocal: 'Get rid of the man at once! If you don't he is likely to kill you.' Michael offered to lend me a gun. In his view, the situation was too serious for me to be unarmed. I declined, but I returned to Ketema finally realizing that I was in danger.

Even now, though, I was not up to firing Yonas. The many months in Ketema had locked us in a ghastly struggle of wills over which of us would be the one to define our relations. This ongoing battle had left me with a sense of Yonas' inevitability. During the previous several months, however, I had made the acquaintance of two expatriate ladies living in the neighboring town of Woha, 20 kilometers away. They were seasoned in the service of British Overseas Aid and the World Health Organisation (WHO), and had worked for more than fifteen years in Asia and Africa. Seeking temporary escape from my glass bowl, I had taken to visiting them during weekends, in what provided a tremendous release from the pressures of 'home'. I had a car, and the younger of the two had a spare bedroom. Ketema was less than 20 minutes away by car. To break up our incongruous household, I decided to leave Ketema and accept the younger woman's standing offer of bed and breakfast, even if this act felt like the final betrayal of my own neurotic fixed idea – that of fieldwork 'according to the book'.

On the morning of 4 October, I told Yonas that I was dissolving the household. Furthermore, I would do it the next day. To my surprise, Yonas seemed to accept the new arrangement. But the same night I woke up. Someone was knocking at my door. I turned on the light and looked at my watch. It was one o'clock in the morning.

'What is it?'

'It is me, Yonas! I'm being eaten alive. Hand me the flea spray!'

The flea spray? Was it in my room? Why was it in my room?

I put on my dressing gown. Flea spray in hand, I unlocked and opened my door. Yonas pushed the door with all his strength and forced his entry into the room.

Time stopped. My room was fairly large and bare. My bed was in a

corner. The window facing the front garden was shuttered from the inside. The guard Benjamin was sleeping in his own shuttered house, an unreachable 20 meters from where we were. My outer wall on the gable had no window. We were alone.

Yonas grabbed me, my gown, my hair. I was paralyzed. All I could bring myself to do was to retreat into the room, trying to loosen his hands from around my throat.

And then I screamed. Or rather, someone in me screamed. I heard myself screaming – an inarticulate scream, not calling for help, but shrill, loud, like a siren. My whole body seemed to have taken on a life of its own, refusing to move, to kick, to fight back – to do any of the things I knew that it could do. And that horrible scream. Even as I heard the screaming, though, I realized that there was nobody to hear me. There was a potato field just outside the house, but nobody was in that. Benjamin did not hear well, anyway there were three walls and many meters between us; his wife could not possibly hear me either. And what if someone did hear? Yonas had told me many times that people believed we were lovers anyway; men regularly beat their wives; they would side with Yonas, thinking that I had earned whatever was coming to me.

Yonas made no headway with me. We were the same height, he was no heavier than me and no stronger. My body was stiff as a tree trunk. It kept up its shrill, piercing screaming.

Cold sweat poured down Yonas' face and made his hands slippery. His eyes were huge, bulging, mad. He was beside himself with rage and determination. Unreachable.

He was wearing striped pyjamas with pockets. From one of those pockets, he now brought out his gun, almost reluctantly, making sure which way it pointed so as not to shoot himself accidentally. Backing up a few steps, he pointed the gun at me.

The screaming stopped; my mind and body reunited with the realization that my life was at stake, whether he shot me deliberately or not. If the gun went off accidentally, I might bleed to death.

As I looked at the mouth of the gun I had a vision of being directly beneath the black night and the cold, distant stars, cool, clear-headed, with death minutes, maybe seconds, away. And what for? A fixed idea, a manic determination not to give up, to uphold my definition of who I was at any cost?

Yonas began speaking. He told me that since I had decided to leave the house in Ketema he knew this was his last chance to have me. And he would have me now, whatever the cost to himself. He did not care



any more if he lived or died as long as he finally had me. I replied, coldly and perfectly numb, that he could have anything he wanted, anything at all.

At precisely that moment, there was a tremendous pounding on the shutters. Loud voices, many voices, pummelling, shouting. Yonas momentarily lost his step. We were both astounded. Who could it be? Who? To me it was as if the black, void sky had opened and angels had descended to interfere. A fraction of a second passed. Then Yonas recovered and began shouting commands to the people outside. He was absolutely certain they would obey.

'Go back to your beds!', he ordered them, 'she only had a bad dream. She is alright. Go home!'

They did not oblige him at once. 'We can't hear her!', they shouted back, 'She is dead! You have killed her!'

Yonas grew more adamant, 'Go back to your beds! I am telling you, she is alright!'

The noise subsided. My hopes died. It was as I feared; the angels were of lesser rank than Yonas; they would have to obey. They would believe what he told them.

But then the voices came back, shouting, 'We can't hear her! We are going for the police!'

While this was going on, Yonas kept poking the gun at me, gesturing me toward the bed. His frenzy appeared to be fueled in part by the interference from outside. He let off a seemingly endless stream of words, accusations, explanations. Still beside himself, shaking, clammy, eyes popping, he told me his version of our fieldwork from the moment he had decided to apply for the job. He threw back at me words I had said to fend him off, and emphasize my determination not to have sex with him, but he twisted my words, interpreted them to mean the opposite of what I had intended. All I had said he understood against his image of me as an indiscriminate, promiscuous woman.

I moved toward the bed and sat down. He came toward me, holding me at gunpoint, and still talking, pausing in his tirade only long enough to fling occasional commands to the people outside, who had now gone back to pounding the shutters. He let his pyjama bottoms drop. I pulled up my nightgown and dressing gown. At the sight of my genitals his movements were arrested for a moment.

He fell on top of me but had problems with the gun. He tried to push the gun between our bodies to be sure of control while raping me.

But he had stretched his capacity to the limit. Keeping me subdued, telling his story, calming the people outside, and penetrating an

unwilling woman – all at the same time – could not be done. The moment our genitals touched he ejaculated. I think. Perhaps his erection collapsed and all that wetness was my body's reaction to rape. I don't know.

And then Yonas' frenzy was over. His features returned to normal. His eyes became comprehending again. He was afraid. He wanted to be comforted, so he sat on my lap, with the gun still in his hand but no longer pointed at me. After a while he pulled up his pyjama pants, went to the front door, and unlocked it to let the people see for themselves that I was alive and 'alright'.

Yonas must have been a frightening sight, disheveled and pouring with sweat, with a gun in his hand. The people outside drew back. For all they knew he had a corpse inside.

Then Benjamin stepped forward, with all the authority of a royal soldier, erect and tall. 'Let me in to see her', he commanded.

And Yonas did. Then he turned on his heels and rushed away into his own room, locking the door behind him.

Benjamin entered my bedroom, and stretched out his arms towards me. 'My dear child', he cried, 'has he raped you?'

I fell into his arms, not weeping, but shaking uncontrollably. I wanted to get out of the house immediately. I dressed hurriedly, with difficulty.

Benjamin went past Yonas' room to get me a glass of water. As he returned from the kitchen, Yonas stormed out of his room, again frantic, prepared to shoot. The old man stepped between us, and told Yonas to return to his room. He did, and I went out to the car and drove the 20 minutes down to Woha where I found refuge with Sally, one of my two foreign friends.

I never saw Yonas again.

I later learnt that after I left, Yonas appeared from his room again and agreed to hand over his gun to the old man. Benjamin promptly carried the gun outside and buried it under the dirt floor of his own house. He then locked the doors to my room, the kitchen, and the office inside the house so that Yonas could not enter any room other than his own.

In the morning, Yonas asked to be let into the other rooms, claiming he had personal belongings in the office. The old man refused to let him in, saying that I had locked the doors and taken the keys with me when I left. He was afraid, as I was, that Yonas would destroy the material we had already collected. Yonas then took off for Woha himself, seeking

shelter with some co-ethnic friends of his who were teachers and officials in that town.

### Perspectives on the rape

Rape in any form is about power and male domination. From the literature, it appears that the most common form of rape is for a man to violate a woman he already knows. One frequent scenario is that of a man who considers himself entitled to sex with a woman who does not accept what he perceives as sexual obligation. These men's demands to have their expectations fulfilled fuel their sense that they have the right to obliterate the will of women under their domination (Brownmiller 1975). Seen in this light, what happened to me in Ketema differs little from what happens to thousands of women annually in every country in the world.

Nevertheless, Ketema is in Ethiopia, and an interpretation of the outrage must be peculiar to that country and the circles to which I and Yonas belonged. Having different Ethiopian interpretations spelled out for me immediately after the events helped me survive, cope, and eventually return to a 'normal' – but different – life as an anthropologist. The openness I encountered was triggered by the assault itself, then by my making the crisis public, by the genuine gratification people felt at pointing out what I ought to have done, and, I think, by the fact that Yonas had broken a series of taboos.

### *Yonas' justification of the rape*

The following account of the way Yonas justified his act and intended to wreak revenge on me was given to me by Yonas himself during the rape, as described above. Although throughout the rape he appeared to be completely beside himself with fury and determination, he was absolutely lucid, clear, and comprehensible in his speech. He wanted to make certain that I understood exactly what he was saying. What he told me was burnt into my memory, because of the extreme situation, and because of the shock I experienced as he made me understand how I had been manipulated and maneuvered by him from the very beginning of our relationship.

Long afterwards, I wondered about Yonas' need to tell why he must rape me. Maybe it was not so remarkable. When rape is punishment, then surely it must be imperative for the assailant to assure himself that the object knows why she is being punished.<sup>6</sup> What follows is the

essence of what Yonas said during the rape situation; this is his view as he stated it.

Yonas had taken the job as my field assistant and accepted the prospect of months of work in the provinces because he wanted to have a foreign lover. This was the premise on which he went to work for me. He did not say why he was so keen on having a foreign woman. I can only assume that he had accepted the imagery which circulated among some Ethiopian groups that foreign, uncircumcised, independent women were sexually adventurous and promiscuous. He wanted me to understand that there was no other reason why he had applied for the job as my field assistant.

From the beginning of our association I had, in his view, implied that a sexual relation was a real possibility; we only had to wait for the right time and place. He quoted verbatim my turns of phrase or choice of words that on numerous occasions had confirmed his belief that I did eventually intend to gratify his desire. His memory was astounding. I felt intense shame when I heard my own words accurately repeated but distorted to imply meanings that were never intended. He started looking for significance and collecting signs that I would relent on my position when we met, and had continued until he began to suspect that he was going to be 'cheated'.

Yonas firmly believed that a woman will never reveal her true intentions to a man; therefore everything I said he understood in every way except the literal. All his friends, and his girlfriend in the capital, believed that we were living together as lovers. His girlfriend had therefore left him. The world pointed fingers at him. He had felt deep humiliation and failure when he was assumed to be my lover. In his view, no one would have believed him if he had said that it was not true. (I doubt that he had done much to inform his acquaintances about the true state of affairs. Not being able to seduce such a sexually voracious person as he had convinced himself that I was would not have improved his image as a man.)

He was positive that I had had sex with multitudes of other men. He had spied on me in the capital, and other persons had helped him follow me around. He knew exactly who I had seen. I met many white men unchaperoned; this meant that I had to be sleeping with them.

It was at this point I discovered the source of my isolation from the townspeople. Yonas explained to me that he wanted to keep me dependent on him. Therefore, he had actively worked to keep me isolated in Ketema. With great relish he told me how people had sought him out many times because they were keen to get to know

me and to find out what my work in Ketema was all about. He had told them that I was not interested in the townspeople, that I did not want to talk to them or have anything to do with them. He was explicit on this point, wanting me to know how clever he had been in keeping me to himself. He probably also found satisfaction in making me understand how completely I had been in his power. *He* could make or break my work.

He was deeply disappointed and bewildered when I did not live up to my 'promises' of sex. He had come to the conclusion that my people were prejudiced against men who were not white. Racial prejudice became the only possible explanation for why I consistently refused his sexual overtures. He concluded that Swedes were as prone to racial prejudice as Americans or Britons, from whom one could expect no better.<sup>7</sup>

Once he had understood that I was not going to fulfill what he saw as his legitimate demands, he had begun planning his revenge. He told me that he had been planning the assault for months. He actually explained his entire scheme before he had brought it to completion because he was so certain that I was in his power, that no one would believe me. I think he was afraid that I might not understand that these events had happened because he willed them and because he was in absolute control.

Yonas had not only manipulated the past, but intended to control the future as well. This is how he predicted the chain of events following the rape: I would fire him. Since we had an employment contract, he would then take me to court for breach of contract. He would dispute my right to fire him. I would then say that he had raped me. He would deny the accusation and no one would believe me. I would have to pay him heavy compensation for firing him unfairly and maybe be made to take him back. My humiliation at his hands would then be total.

About six weeks prior to the attack, he had asked me to make some changes in our contract. I did not understand the reason for this at the time, but saw later how those changes, which in effect made it more difficult for me to end his employment, had strengthened Yonas' plan. When I suddenly announced to him that I was dismantling the household, I had forced his hand. He would either have to carry out his plan that last night or lose the opportunity.

Yonas' story poured out of him as he was pacing the floor in front of the shuttered window, gesticulating with the pistol, and pausing every once in a while to order the people outside to go away. I was sitting on the edge of my bed, waiting for what was going to happen next. On

some level, I do not think I really believed that Yonas would complete the rape within earshot of the people outside. At the same time, though, I was beyond caring. My entire concern was about getting out of the situation alive.

Once the fire had gone out of him and his senses returned to normal, Yonas stopped talking.

#### *Benjamin's and Sofia's reactions to the rape*

Benjamin and Sofia later told me that they had not heard my screams. But on the other side of the fence that separated my compound from the potato fields was a temporary camp of farm laborers, men who had been hired to pick potatoes. Benjamin had visited them when they first came, and had invited them into the compound.

It is very significant that neither Yonas nor myself 'remembered' these farm laborers. In Ethiopia, not everybody is a person, a somebody. Servants, paupers, beggars, people from low-status ethnic groups, and 'heathens' do not count. As I had understood it, persons below one in ethnic, economic, or occupational rank were not regarded as 'people', whereas those equal and above always were. If you were a 'nobody' you might as well be part of the furniture as far as your superiors were concerned. Yonas knew the potato pickers were there. Still, he clearly did not recognize them as people who might intervene, and therefore he went ahead with his plan as if the field had, in fact, been empty. He had simply forgotten all about them.

But the field was not empty, and the farm laborers had been aroused at once by my screams. From Benjamin, they knew very well who I was. They also knew that the old man considered himself my ultimate guardian. Therefore, they lost no time in forcing the fence and waking the old man from his sleep.

Benjamin was horrified at Yonas' assault. He had not for an instant believed that I had sexual relations with Yonas. After the rape, again and again, the old man complained bitterly of how Yonas had failed him. 'I trusted him as I trusted myself', he said, 'I was sure you were safe with Yonas in the house. How could I otherwise have allowed you two to be alone in there?'

Once the old guard was aroused, he lost no time in coming to my rescue. He said that he and the others were certain that I was dead, because of the way my screams rang out and then stopped completely. Still, they had all hesitated about bringing in the police until they knew for certain what had happened.

I was profoundly moved by Benjamin's reasoning and his unquestioning solidarity with me. I probably owed him my life,<sup>8</sup> and had myself seen him put his life at stake for me.

#### *Men's reactions to the rape*

As the rape became known in Ketema, I received a number of reactions from both men and women. How men reacted depended on how close they were to me and to the drama itself, and how they perceived Yonas.

Benjamin, as I have just noted, was shocked and prepared to act. He voiced no opinions about what I should do afterwards; as far as I understood him, he thought my own shock and near breakdown were correct and adequate reactions to what happened. He agreed that he had indeed saved my life and recognized the deep obligation I had incurred because of this.

The only person who insisted that I go to the police was a young man in town, a teenager whom I had supported since my volunteer days. This man became very upset when I chose not to report the rape to the police. There were several reasons behind my decision not to report to the police. At the time of the rape, in the middle of the night, the main reason was that the only other rape of a foreign woman that I had heard about until then had taken place in a police station, with the police as rapists. I was afraid that the local police would simply carry on where Yonas had left off. Later on, other reasons became more important, such as not wanting to be held up in Ethiopia for months, maybe years, waiting for an uncertain trial. My fear of what would happen if Yonas were acquitted was very strong. I felt that he would be quite likely to seek revenge if I tried to turn him in. Indeed, months later I received an anonymous note from Yonas, handed in at the post office in Ketema, containing the single line, 'Stop your slander, or else.'

Among other men in town, more distant, the consensus seemed to be that something like rape had been bound to happen. I remember one civil servant telling me that Yonas and myself were like a young bull and a heifer locked in a corral. When I asked why no one had warned me of what they saw as an inevitability, he replied, 'You know us, you know our habits and our culture. We did not want to insult you by coming with advice.'

Once the rape had occurred, I noticed no change in the behavior of people I regularly dealt with, such as the old messenger, officials at the local bank, post office, etc. It turned out that Yonas was not at all liked.

His *hauteur* and successful attempts at keeping me isolated had earned him no friends.

The day after the assault, after I definitely decided I did not want to involve the police, a bank official in the nearby town of Woha agreed to act as go-between, to help me terminate my employer-employee relationship with Yonas. The reason why I needed to contact Yonas again was because his story about how he would sue me for compensation haunted me. Until our contractual relations were dissolved, I lived in absolute panic about what he might do next. Maybe he would still find a way of hauling me into court to claim the official compensation he had been dreaming about. Or maybe the fact that he had not been able to penetrate me during the rape had left him in a worse position than when he was merely rejected. Would he try again, then? Or would he kill me to make me shut up?

The banker met Yonas two days after the events. Yonas denied that anything untoward had happened; he told the banker that he could not understand why I did not want to continue working with him. He very much wanted to continue assisting me. Yonas appeared completely calm and reasonable, there was no indication that things were not as he presented them. The banker believed him.

The banker then escorted me back up to Ketema, to pick up some necessities and to find out what had happened after I left. The house was exactly in the same state as it had been when I rushed off in the middle of the night. Benjamin had not opened the doors to my bedroom and the office since then. When the banker saw the confusion in my room, tufts of hair lying about,<sup>9</sup> and the remains of my torn dressing gown, he apologized. And if he had still had any doubts about the veracity of my tale he would have been convinced by Benjamin, who was bursting to tell all. This was the first time I found out how my rescue had been organized.

The banker's reflections were then typical of what I was told by several other men. 'We Ethiopians only rape women we know', he explained. His advice was that I should not have remained in one place for as long as I had. I think the maximum 'rape-safe' time he mentioned was three weeks. In order to escape molestation, I should have moved between towns, doing as much work as I could in that limited time. He failed to see that I had come to no harm at the hands of the local men from Ketema. The fact was that Yonas was much more like the banker than he was like the locals. Listening to other accounts of threats and assaults among women anthropologists and volunteers in Ethiopia, it later became clear to me that the most serious danger

has always come from officials, assistants, and boyfriends – persons belonging to the section of educated, ‘modern’ men whom foreign women are most likely to depend on and befriend.

When I protested at the banker’s advice, saying that no serious fieldwork could be done hopping from one place to the other, he suggested that the only other alternative was to ‘do what our women do’. To observe and adjust. To create a ‘family’ and stay within its confines, protected by kinsmen and servants. This was in effect what Benjamin had tried to do for me, as he attempted to create a protective group that ensured that no ill-intended men could reach me. In Benjamin’s eyes, I did not blunder when I allowed Yonas a room in the house. It was instead Yonas who was to be blamed and punished for not living up to the protective role that he had been expected to fulfill.

Another clue to the complex of sexual conquest and male domination was given to me by an old acquaintance, who, lamenting the fact that he had not propositioned me when we had had official dealings with one another six years earlier, explained that he had not made clear his intentions then because he was not certain I would have accepted him. ‘You see’, he told me, ‘we do not ask until we are certain of being accepted. It is difficult for an Ethiopian to face being turned down.’

One dimension of the rape that prompted men to heap scorn on Yonas was the fact that he had used a gun. Rape is one thing, I came to learn, using a gun to subdue a woman is quite another. That, for many men, was what made this rape particularly inexcusable and shameful. Men should master women with words and the *dula*, a big stick that is a common means of defense and attack, one that looks more like a baseball bat than anything else. Many times I had heard Ethiopian men quote the saying, ‘With donkeys and women you talk with a *dula*.’<sup>10</sup>

It seems as though, for some men who commented on the rape, the very masculinity that was to be proven by the rape was put in question by the use of the gun. What sort of man was this, who could not make it without threatening a woman with a gun? On this count I had men’s unquestionable sympathy. Guns spelled death, which was something quite different from proving your point to a reluctant woman.

On a visit to Ethiopia many years after the rape, I discovered that Ethiopian legal praxis does not recognize ‘rape’ as a crime against women unless the woman concerned is a proven virgin. This was true in the 1970s and it is still true today.

### *Women’s reactions to the rape*

The rape in Ketema altered my relations with women in Ethiopia completely. My introduction to Ethiopian society had been through men. During my early years in the country, working as a volunteer, all my workmates were men. When I gathered material for my final research paper, in 1968, all my contacts had been men. My original fascination with Ethiopia was powered by intense infatuation with an Ethiopian man. Men, men, men. Women in this world of men were secretaries, servants, relatives, – to me ‘non-persons’, in effect.<sup>11</sup>

All of this now changed. If the women in my immediate surroundings, with the exception of Benjamin’s wife Sofia, had until now demurred, served, kept quiet, looked down, and been ‘nice’, they now stood erect, left the shadows, looked me straight in the eye, spoke up, and were furiously cynical.

What they said was simply that this is what we all suffer for being women. As long as we are women we are at the mercy of men. There was no need for me to feel ashamed or unhappy. What had happened to me was horrible and dreadful, but, unfortunately, normal. ‘As long as we are women . . .’

After the rape, women told me many tales of sexual violence at the hands of men. Their lack of trust in men was absolute. For many women, the prospect of a happy life was the possibility of a life without permanent bonds to men. Economic independence, surrounded by a family of your own, lovers if you wanted them, but no men with rights through marriage or the like – this was their utopian goal.

I felt guilty and ashamed of having been taken in by the male vision of the world, and the picture of sexual warfare painted by the women to whom I spoke was strangely comforting. In my conversations with women, the focus was frequently off me and on the iniquitous sexual organization of female dependency, where sex and domestic services are exchanged for economic security, and where the dependent woman loses her self-determination when she submits to a bond to an individual man. The man, in this contract, loses nothing except maybe his peace of mind, since he continually fears being ‘outbid’ by wealthier, more powerful, and therefore more attractive men.

### *My own reactions to the rape*

After the rape, I was overwhelmed by a flood of information on gender relations and sexuality, but I was in no position to record, understand,

or utilize the material. I felt naked, a simple civilian, a deserter from the anthropological field. Any idea that I should put my situation to anthropological use felt blasphemous, a continuation of the rape situation. There was nothing professional in what I was going through. I could barely hold myself together. I was dependent on my surroundings for security and my mental health. The rape had reversed a hierarchy where until then I had held the dominant position as researcher, professional, and foreigner. Now I was just a woman, looking to other women around me for guidance, safety, and advice.

Immediately after the assault, I had two strands of feelings. One was a tremendous fury. If I had had the gun my friend Michael had wanted to lend me, I felt capable of shooting Yonas on the spot. This rage remained with me for years.

The other was immense fear. Part of it was irrational. I felt I would die if I ever laid eyes on Yonas again. I know now that this is a standard reaction among rape survivors. Part of the fear was probably well founded. Yonas had set out to punish me and had constructed an elaborate plan of how this would be done. His plan had failed. If he started out by being humiliated by my refusal to accept him sexually, he left with a humiliation increased manyfold. His social inferiors had intercepted him, disobeyed him, and refused to accept his definition of our relations. He had been disarmed by a servant. He had been tricked and fooled. He had failed sexually. And I knew all this and could easily reveal it.

Intuition told me that I was in much greater danger after the assault than before, and that I would continue to be in danger until I was out of the country, a continent away. Or until one of us was dead.

As mentioned above, I used the regional manager of one of the national banks as intermediary to establish contact first with Yonas' intermediaries and then with Yonas himself. Yonas finally agreed to sign a paper releasing me from all further obligations, but to do so, he demanded two months' pay and a letter of recommendation. I paid and wrote the recommendation. He even had the audacity to amend the letter.<sup>12</sup>

The days until these matters were settled were days of panic. I recall crouching in the locked bathroom in the house of my hostess for hours, not daring to be alone in the rest of the house for a minute. 'There are those who cope, and those who don't', she told me, recalling incidents from her fifteen years as headmistress in a school in Tanzania. I was not sure that I belonged among those who coped.

With the release paper signed, I felt free to leave. I returned the

rented furniture and sold the remaining household utensils. The research material I stored with friends. I made an agreement with Benjamin to continue paying his salary, and turned over the house to his nephew. I then returned to my home country to recover.

I came back to Ethiopia two months later, my morale bolstered by the presence of my mother and my partner from home, who had long planned to visit me in the field anyway. For the duration of their month-long visit, I debated whether or not I could bear to pick up the threads and continue work in Ketema. In the end I decided to stay.

I finished a second survey phase in Ketema, which took another few months. Without Yonas to isolate me, I developed a great number of contacts in the town and could easily have gone on to more intensive work if my mental equilibrium had not been so precarious. It seemed that the rape drama had made me a real person in the eyes of the townspeople, who no doubt had debated events thoroughly in my absence. I sensed neither lack of respect nor moral judgment of me, which, of course, does not mean that negative opinions were absent. After four months my time was up and I left Ethiopia.

I managed quite well as long as I was in Ketema, which ironically became the only place in Ethiopia where I really felt safe, since I was convinced Yonas would not dare to appear in the town again. Once home in Sweden after fieldwork, however, I suffered a delayed reaction. In part, this was similar to what any rape survivor goes through. I had nightmares for years, and for many months I was unable to think about anything else. 'Normal' guilt feelings were exacerbated by my thinking that I had created the situation myself, that I had in fact set up Yonas in the rapist role. Emotionally, I somehow felt that Yonas had the right to be seeking revenge. In fact, it was only in the course of writing this chapter that it has finally dawned on me that it was Yonas who maneuvered the whole relationship from the moment he first heard of a foreign woman wanting an assistant. I have known this ever since hearing Yonas' tale on that fateful night. Somehow, however, I have not understood what it meant until now.

## Discussion

Despite the twenty-odd years since the start of the second wave of feminist anthropology, and despite the fact that 'gender', as a consequence, has definitively been brought into much of anthropological understanding and analysis, anthropology has yet to come to terms with the fact that anthropologists are themselves gendered.<sup>13</sup> The

demographic breakdown of social and cultural anthropology is similar to that of many other disciplines in the humanistics and social sciences: there is a majority of young women among students, but a gradually decreasing proportion of women as one approaches the apex of the academic hierarchy (Sanjek 1982). This kind of gendered pyramid structure ensures that female dominance in numbers does not translate into corresponding influence on the academic establishment.

Anthropologists 'at home', in universities and departments, and in our lives outside academic institutions, are part of gender orders specific to the times and societies we live in. A central aspect of academic life, however, is the denial of gender at work. That is to say, we are expected to study, administer, write, and teach as if gender did not matter. This fiction is an integral part of academic life, and it can be upheld because we only spend part of our lives at the university. We leave the supposedly 'gender-free' world of academia at the end of the day to go out and assume a multitude of gendered roles. Some go home to put their feet up, read the evening newspaper, and delve into the latest anthropological periodicals after dinner has been provided. Others go home to shop, cook, and do dishes, laundry, and whatever else is necessary for life to go on.<sup>14</sup>

For female anthropologists, one of the consequences of the fictitiously 'gender-free' life we lead at university is that, if we bring up issues that are specific to us as women in the academic context, we run the risk of doing damage to our identities as anthropologists. This is, of course, because the archetypal anthropologist is a man. Part of the hidden agenda for female anthropologists is, therefore, to avoid drawing attention to ourselves as women when we establish our professional identities. After all, who wants to be a *female* anthropologist when it seems possible to be a 'real' anthropologist?<sup>15</sup> As far as the danger of sexual violence is concerned, it may be part of a woman's daily life, but it is not seen to be relevant to the professional part of ourselves – the 'anthropologist' part. 'Anthropologists' don't get harassed or raped. Women do.

In the field, the false division of time and space between the 'professional' and the 'private' that underpins the supposedly gender-neutral identity of the anthropologist collapses completely. In the field, it is not possible to maintain a fiction of a genderless self. It is not possible to be an unmarked 'anthropologist'. In the field, one is marked. One is perceived to be, and one perceives oneself to be, a gendered anthropologist – a female anthropologist or a male anthropologist. And as gendered anthropologists, we cannot only be attractive

to others and feel attraction ourselves – we can also be the target of sexual violence; violence that is directed, as it was in my case, as much at our 'professional' selves as it is at our 'private' selves (where, indeed, is the difference?).

The multidimensional meanings of sexual relations in the field can never be the same for female and male anthropologists. The thundering silence of heterosexual men on the subject is in itself ominously meaningful. Field accounts from women have frequently mentioned sexual aspects of the field situation, probably because in many fields the sexual problematic is forced on female anthropologists and shapes the kind of work we are able to do. The possibility of sexual violence, explicit or implied, is a means by which the movement and activities of women are restricted in many social contexts, and it is therefore an issue that most female anthropologists must deal with, where male anthropologists need not.<sup>16</sup> The question of whether to have sexual relations in the field is something that many female anthropologists have to deal with not occasionally, or once in a while, but more or less continuously, as males like Yonas ask, nag, and demand. All of this is different for men. Other sexual activities are different as well. Commercial sex, for example, might be available for men but never for women.

Rape is a vicious, murderous relation. Rape creates a chasm of mutual incomprehension between women and men. The will to rape is impossible to comprehend for women, and the consequences of rape for the victim-survivor may be equally difficult to understand and to empathize with for men. This being the case, maybe it is not strange that rape has remained a non-subject within our discipline, all other considerations apart. When I returned to my university department in Sweden after the assault in Ethiopia, I told my colleagues what had happened. My female colleagues all expressed shock, concern, and support. My two academic supervisors, on the other hand (both of whom were men), listened to me recount the tale of the attack, but offered little sympathy and never mentioned the topic of rape again. I later heard that one of them told a female graduate student that I must have acted like a fool in the field. Another senior male anthropologist, upon hearing about the rape, sighed that 'Such things happen to women in the field'.

When I set out to do fieldwork in the 1970s, I worked in Ethiopia with no understanding that my own gender might be an important factor in the fieldwork I did. All I had heard on the topic was my male supervisor telling me that female fieldworkers had advantages over male fieldworkers, because female anthropologists often had access to both female and male social circles. In actuality, the niches open to

female fieldworkers vary from field to field, just as the backgrounds of anthropologists vary, and as the fit between the anthropologist and her or his field varies.

What does not vary is the fact that women must always, everywhere, deal with the spectre of sexual violence in a way that fundamentally differs from anything that our male colleagues have to contend with. This does not mean that sexual violence is, by definition, a 'woman's problem'. On the contrary, rape is most certainly part of a profoundly male problematic. And the point of this chapter is that, whatever else sexual violence against anthropologists may be, it is *by definition* an anthropological problem. It concerns all of us, women and men, and it warrants a strong place on the mainstream anthropological agenda.

### Afterword

Well after this chapter was completed and sent into the publishers with the book manuscript, I was suddenly confronted with another, quite unanticipated reason why sexual violence in the field is so rarely discussed in the anthropological literature. Just before the proofs were about to be set, Routledge contacted me and suggested that my contribution be changed to make 'Yonas' even more impossible to identify. Calling him by a pseudonym, as I had done (and continue to do), was not considered sufficient to ward off a possible slander suit against Routledge from 'Yonas' – even though the events described in my contribution took place twenty years ago and in a country in which, as I have noted, legal praxis does not recognize rape as a crime against women who are not proven virgins. Instead of introducing fictional elements into the text that would have distorted the dynamics of the situation that ultimately led to the assault, I chose to publish the chapter using a pseudonym for myself. My use of a pseudonym is therefore not to protect my own identity but, rather (and I hope that the weighty irony here is not lost on anybody), to protect the identity of the rapist.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Margaret Willson and Don Kulick for the encouragement and collaboration they have offered in the writing of this chapter.

### Notes

- 1 Rape always implies death. In this chapter I discuss rape as a means to punish, chastise, and reform individual women. Men and children are also raped, and rape is used on collectives of women in war, but these instances are beyond the reflections made here.
- 2 See, for instance, Gearing's contribution to this volume.
- 3 In her contribution to the groundbreaking anthology *Women in the Field*, Diane Freedman writes about how she returned to the field soon after the death of her husband, and how she was overwhelmed with information on death and mourning, as her informants tried to comfort her. She could take no notes and made no professional use of all this. It was real life, aimed at her, not coins for the anthropological market (Freedman 1986).
- 4 See, for instance, Markakis (1974) for an authoritative description of the Ethiopian polity prior to 1974, or Kapuscinski (1983) for a picture of the atmosphere surrounding the imperial palace.
- 5 I am not implying that there was *no* sexual violence against women in Scandinavia at this time, only that the incidence was low – very low compared to the United States, for instance.
- 6 The man who raped Winkler also spoke to her at length.
- 7 I have not encountered this kind of interpretation from other Ethiopian men. Ethiopians are very color conscious, but *white* is certainly not at the apex of the color hierarchy. When I worked as a volunteer for the Swedish volunteer service, a number of my Ethiopian workmates told me that their families were afraid they would marry a foreigner and thereby 'ruin the blood' of the family. In a similar vein, Ethiopians are fond of telling foreigners of how God, when creating humankind, cast aside the black and the white man alike, preferring the brown Ethiopian, who was created with exactly the 'right' color. Yonas' accusations of racism may have arisen from conversations with his friends who had experienced racial prejudice outside Africa.
- 8 No matter what Yonas' plans had been before the rape, I honestly believe that had we been alone he would not have been able to extricate himself from the situation without killing me.
- 9 I did not feel Yonas pulling my hair out while trying to subdue me with his hands.
- 10 This saying was part of the reason why I expected no help even if someone heard my screaming.
- 11 To be truthful, this was no great change from how I saw the world of meaning and consequence at home.
- 12 It never occurred to me that there was actually an alternative to resolving the situation in the very Ethiopian way that I opted for. I could have gone all foreign – involving the embassy and the university that sponsored my stay, invoking all those beautiful letters of permission and protection that had circulated in the bureaucratic structure prior to my arrival in Ketema. In fact, while I felt I was only floundering about in Ketema, miserably failing my anthropological mission, I had actually acquired a thorough knowledge of many salient aspects of Ethiopian urban life. Maybe participant observation is often like this. We have our minds set on the goals of research agendas, invested in long before we ever arrive in the field, and so we do not appreciate the knowledge and insights that are



thrust upon us, since it is the 'wrong' knowledge and insight, not primarily about the topics we had set our hearts on studying.

- 13 There are certainly many other important distinctions largely ignored or unrecognized.
- 14 Micaela di Leonardo writes in the acknowledgements of her 1991 anthology: 'Most of the contributors (and I) are women in "sandwich generation" positions: especially subject to medical and personal crises – and to those of kin and friends of both parents' and children's generations' (di Leonardo 1991: xi). It goes without saying that there is as yet no 'sandwich generation' of men.
- 15 Dorothy Smith has coined the phrase 'bifurcated consciousness' to describe how women in social science manage to take part in an academic enterprise that denies the validity of our life experience as women, and where we are brought to accept male definitions of academic standards in the theory and practice of our disciplines (Smith 1987: 6).
- 16 Unless they are accompanied by wives or daughters. But again, that is 'private', and they might not consider their safety to be part of the fieldwork.

## References

- Brownmiller, Susan (1975) *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- di Leonardo, Micaela (1991) 'Introduction', in *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Freedman, Diane (1986) 'Wife, Widow, Woman: Roles of an Anthropologist in a Transylvanian Village', in Peggy Golde (ed.) *Women in the Field: Anthropological Experiences*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Howell, Nancy (1990) *Surviving Fieldwork: A Report of the Advisory Panel on Health and Safety in Fieldwork*. Special Publication of the American Anthropological Association No. 26. Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association.
- Kapuscinski, Ryszard (1983) *The Emperor: The Downfall of an Autocrat*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Kulick, Don (1994) 'Response to David Lipset's letter to *Anthropology Today*, December 1993'. *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 13.
- Landes, Ruth (1986) 'A Woman Anthropologist in Brazil', in Peggy Golde (ed.) *Women in the Field: Anthropological Experiences*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Markakis, John (1974) *Ethiopia: The Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Sanjek, Roger (1982) 'The AAA Resolution on the Employment of Women: Genesis, Implementation, Disavowal and Resurrection'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 845–68.
- Smith, Dorothy E. (1987) *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Wengle, John L. (1988) *Ethnographers in the Field: The Psychology of Research*. Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press.
- Winkler, Cathy (1991) 'Rape as Social Murder'. *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 12–14.

# Afterword

## Perspective and difference: sexualization, the field, and the ethnographer

Margaret Willson

The field of sexuality; sexuality in the field: I offer here an analysis of the discussions in this volume. As editors, Don Kulick and I did not dictate or even suggest what areas of sexuality in anthropological fieldwork our contributors might wish to discuss, but they produced a surprisingly integrated group of articles. Each one reflects and adds to the insights of the others – an Escher effect of argument – to create a prism of refracted ideas and possibilities. In this afterword, I shall have space to explore only a few of these.

The ideas in the chapters seemed to connect as concentric circles. I arrange my analysis starting from the larger circle – a consideration of sexuality as it exists in the concept of the field itself and the sexualized relationship between the theoretical 'ethnographer' and the 'field'. In the second section, I discuss the ethnographer's position – and how the ethnographer is positioned – as a sexualized subject *within* the field. In the final section, in this ever decreasing series of concentric rings, I explore the notion of a sexual identity within the ethnographer, of the parts of body and parts of identity that communicate, and miscommunicate, the intentions of a sexual whole.

### Perspectives and penetration: sexing the field

Potash's statement that 'we cannot describe institutions as if they were gender neutral when they are not' (cited in del Valle 1993: 4) is applicable to two central institutions of anthropology: the ethnographer and the field. In recent reflexive writing on the relationship of the role of ethnographer and his or her interpretation of cultures, Crapanzano compares the ethnographer to the phallic god Hermes, who sets