

Rape, War and the Abject in Halima Bashir's *Tears of the Desert: A Memoir of Survival in Darfur*

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Abstract

Halima Bashir's *Tears of the Desert*, a memoir co-authored with journalist Damien Lewis, has received critical acclaim for exposing the atrocities that the government of Sudan commits, by proxy, against African animists, Christians and Muslims in the Darfur region in western Sudan. In this article, I examine how Bashir bears witness to the use of wartime rape as a weapon for ethnic cleansing. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's theorisation of the "abject" and on discourse on wartime rape by, among others, Catharine MacKinnon and Ruth Seifert, the article explores the precarious position of women and girls in warzones, highlighting the ways in which the maternal (and feminine) body is used as a site/sight of group struggles.

Key words: Bearing witness; wartime rape; ethnic cleansing; the abject; maternal body

Introduction

This article examines how Halima Bashir bears witness to the use of rape as a weapon for ethnic cleansing in *Tears of the Desert: A Memoir of Survival in Darfur*, which documents the author's lived experiences as well as the marginalisation and racist discrimination the Khartoum-led government allegedly commits, by proxy, towards African animists, Christians and Muslims in western Sudan. Central to the article's focus is Grace Musila's reminder that in nationalist discourses the nation is configured "as the land/subjects/female and the state as the rulers/male" (2009, p. 40). I would add that this symbolic construction of the female body implicitly suggests that women's violation entails destruction of a nation's, group's or community's identity. This is also what Ruth Seifert says when she notes that "violence committed against women is directed against the physical and personal integrity of a group. The rape of women as a community, culture or nation can be regarded—and is so regarded—as a symbolic rape of the body of that community" (1996, p. 39). I find Seifert's views

informative and I appropriate them here to explore the sense in which women's bodies are used as a battleground for group struggles in Bashir's memoir. A concern with women and girls' vulnerability to and survival of sexual violence looms large in *Tears of the Desert*, and is the prism through which the lives of Darfuris (both men and women) ought to be understood. Consequently, I show the sense in which the Janjaweed Arab militia use rape either to subjugate an entire Darfuri population to its will or to physically displace or annihilate them as a community in western Sudan.¹ I also hold that because of the rape, Darfuris suffer from collective trauma.

Bashir's witnessing against rape atrocities in *Tears in the Desert*, begins with two important encounters she had with the police and the Janjaweed. Born and raised among the black African Zaghawa community in Darfur, western Sudan, Bashir attended junior and secondary school in Darfur, before proceeding to study medicine in Khartoum. By the time she started practicing, aged 24, the Janjaweed had intensified their attacks on the hospital in Hashma (where she was doing voluntary work while awaiting government posting). When she inadvertently spoke to a journalist against the atrocities and intimated that the General Government of Sudan should help all Darfuris regardless of their ethnicity, the secret police came for her. She was driven to "a 'ghost house'—a place that looked just like any other residence, but was a secret detention centre" (Bashir 2009, p.184) where she was accused of being the Zaghawa doctor who helped the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM). She was ordered to sign a declaration form not to speak to the media again or face the consequences. As punishment following this incident, she was transferred to a remote village clinic in Mazkhabad in Northern Darfur. In January 2004, the Janjaweed attacked a primary school close to her new duty post and gang-raped more than forty girls² aged between seven and thirteen. After treating the "seething mass of crying, traumatised schoolgirls" that had turned up with their "shocked grieving parents" at her local clinic (2009, p.213), Bashir refused to stay silent once again, this time giving detailed witness statements to UN representatives about the attack on the school. Barely a week after the incident Bashir was abducted by state police and driven to a military camp on the outskirts of the village where she was interrogated, tortured, and then gang-raped for three days as punishment for speaking out and exposing the rape of women and girls by the Janjaweed (2009, pp.227-28). After she was released, she escaped to her home village. Five months later, the Janjaweed raided her village and killed most men including her father in the ensuing battle. Bashir fled her home in 2005 to seek asylum in Britain from where she co-wrote *Tears of the Desert* with Damien Lewis.

Wartime Rape and the Abject

A key observation that Lesley McDowell makes in her review of *Tears of the Desert* is that Bashir's account of her gang rape at the hands of the Janjaweed Arab militias in Darfur takes up a tiny part of this book (2008, n.pag.). Yet it is this small treatment of violence against women and girls in the text that is crucial to understanding how rape is used as a weapon of war in Darfur. My focus in this article leans towards the literal meaning of rape³ wherein I examine the discourse of conquest and subjugation through

rape, and its psychosocial effects on both men and women in Darfur. Indeed, while it is true that a huge chunk of the memoir talks about Bashir's childhood among her Zaghawa community, this largely idyllic picture does not reproduce so much as expose the racist ideologies of the Islamist government in Khartoum and its link to the brutal conflict currently taking place in Darfur. My reading of *Tears of the Desert* seeks to disentangle a number of interpretative knots and show how the weaponisation of rape works in the memoir.

Theorisations on systematic wartime rape have received considerable critical attention and a clear consensus emerges concerning the physical and psychosocial consequences of rape for individuals, families, and communities. Among the notable critics that have written extensively on the subject, albeit from different theoretical and ideological standpoints, Susan Brownmiller, Catharine MacKinnon, Claudia Card, Ruth Seifert and Sharon Frederick concur that wartime rape is a conscious government and/or warring side's policy, and that its aim is to traumatise not only victims but families and whole communities as well. Frederick's *Rape: Weapon of Terror* (2001) is, perhaps, the most unequivocal in its suggestion that wartime rape is a weapon of terror, and that its aim is either to subjugate an entire civilian population to the will of the attackers or to physically displace or annihilate them as a people (2001, p.5). MacKinnon seems to extend Frederick's views in her observation that wartime rape "happens on purpose, not just with the function of harming people, or of having sex, or of planting a flag, but to destroy peoples as such on a designated group basis" (2006, p.223). The point that Frederick and MacKinnon make here is that sexual atrocities against women are a weapon of war and ultimately a means to genocide.⁴ Wartime rape, in their view, is "rape under orders" (MacKinnon 2006, p. 187), something that is part of "an official policy of war in a genocidal campaign for political control" (MacKinnon 2006, p.187). Wartime rape is, for MacKinnon,

rape unto death, rape as massacre, rape to kill and to make the victims wish they were dead [...]. It is rape [...] as spectacle. It is rape to drive a wedge through a community, to shatter a society, to destroy a people. It is rape as genocide (2006, p.187).

Along similar lines, Claudia Card observes that rape in war (what she calls "martial rape") is an effective way to commit genocide against female community members since it "serve[s] as a bonding agent among perpetrators" while, at the same time, it works "to alienate family members, friends and former neighbours from each other" (1996, p.7). To suggest that wartime rape is not about destroying a community or group's identity both physically and culturally is, for MacKinnon, Frederick and Card, a disavowal of a narrative that constructs women as central to the continued existence of a family, community or nation. In Julie Mostov's words, "women are biological reproducers of group members, of the ethnonation. They bear sons to fight and daughters to care for the motherland" (1995, p.518). And because they are the ones biologically designed to reproduce the nation and preserve its numbers, they become the enemy's principal target if one intends to destroy a culture. Rape ensures that this destruction is complete, as the raped woman is often rejected by family and

community members. This is the case because, according to Dorothy Thomas and Regan Ralph, “by virtue of being a rape victim, a woman becomes the perceived agent of her community’s shame. In a bizarre twist, she changes from a victim into a guilty party, responsible for bringing dishonour upon her family or community” (1994, p.210). The overall effect of this, as expressed by Allison Reid-Cunningham, is that the family or community may be forced to cast out rape survivors and children born of rape, abuse them further, or even kill them thereby causing deeper emotional damage to all involved and tearing at the fabric that holds families and the community together (2008, p.291). Thus, society’s feeling of shame and wanting to erase rape victims (and their products) from its midst must be understood from Brownmiller’s point that after rape,

the collective spirit of women and of the nation is broken, leaving a reminder long after the troops depart. And if she survives the assault, what does the victim of wartime rape become to her people? Evidence of the enemy’s bestiality. Symbol of her nation’s defeat. A pariah. Damaged property. A pawn in the subtle wars of international propaganda. (1994, p.181)

This survey of scholarship on rape is important as it contextualises the central concerns of this article and helps us to understand the political, religious, cultural and racist undercurrents as well as the corporeal trauma that pervades *Tears of the Desert*.

I also draw on Julia Kristeva’s theorisations of the “abject” to argue that since time immemorial the maternal (and feminine) body has been used as a site/sight of group struggles. In what remains one of the most comprehensive theories of abjection, Kristeva avers in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) that the abject is someone who is dirty, the “improper/unclean” (1982, p.2). Kristeva further notes that “the one by whom the abject exists is [...] a deject who places (himself), separates (himself), situates (himself), and therefore strays instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing.” (1982, 8; original emphases and brackets). From Kristeva’s observations we can deduce that the main point of her theory is that of a liminal subject, someone who is “in-between,” “ambiguous,” “composite” (1982, p.4) and often anxious of their true station in life. As I discuss in the next section, victims of rape and their immediate community in Bashir’s memoir embody Kristeva’s idea of the abject.

While abjection is often characterised by one’s disturbance of “identity, system, order” (Kristeva 1982, p.8), Bülent Diken and Carsten Laustsen, among others, persuasively argue that one’s disturbance of identity and inferiorisation are not just aspects but indeed the basic fabrics of abjection because more often than not, there is minimal interaction between the raped and, consequently, “dirty” victim and the rest of the community members. As Diken and Laustsen also argue, “the rape victim often perceives herself as an abject, [...] ‘dirty,’ morally inferior person” because “the penetration inflicts on her body and herself a mark, a stigma, which cannot be effaced” (2005, p.113). Diken and Laustsen add that this abjection “has a communal aspect as well” in that “the victim is excluded by neighbours and by family members. Hence

[she] suffers twice: first by being raped and second by being condemned by a patriarchal community” (2005, p.113). What is probably most disturbing about this discourse is that it labels one part of the community – women – as victims who are not only endangered by hetero- and homosexual men, but also treated as filth. This, of course, is another example of the operations of incipient and insidious power relations that determine that which is considered to be ‘good’, and that considered to be deviant (indecent or ‘taboo’). This is further illustrated in the next section, where raped women are treated with disdain and abjected beings.

Raped, “Guilty” and Abjected: Women’s Bodies as Sites/Sights of Struggles

A close reading of *Tears of the Desert* confirms Kristeva’s theory of abjection as it demonstrates, for example, how those who have been raped are wracked by guilt and are treated as outcasts by their communities. This is exemplified through Miss Sumiah, the teacher who is raped alongside the schoolgirls in the memoir. Unlike the girls who can narrate their ordeals to their parents, Sumiah decides to tell “not a word about what had happened to her” (2009, p.215) because “She was married, and she didn’t want her husband to know” (2009, p.215). Besides, “She was feeling guilty: guilty that she hadn’t resisted her attackers, fought them off, or died trying to do so” (2009, p.215). Similar words are echoed by Bashir herself when she runs away to her home village after she is also gang raped. She confesses to her father that she felt guilty (2009, p.230), as if she had deliberately invited the soldiers on her.

In *The Politics of Sexual Violence* (2016), Healicon proposes a psychosocial discourse of harm through which rape victims are usually misunderstood in the way they articulate their experiences. She calls it the “credibility conundrum” and argues that rape victims usually suffer from “the fear of not being believed, of being cast a[s] liar[s]” (2016, p.41) by the communities. Healicon insists that this discourse is so prolific that “it has become the measure of women’s credibility and therefore their claim to truth” (2016, p.40); and that it is “significant enough to silence women who have experienced rape [...] and inhibits [their] attempts at seeking advice, support, and justice” (2016, p.41). In *Tears of the Desert*, this fear is demonstrated by Sumiah and is located within “accepted” and “acceptable” Darfuri images, metaphors and tropes of rape victims as people who “were somehow seen as being damaged goods, their lives destroyed by the evil that had happened to them” (2009, p.216). Elsewhere, Bashir speaks of victims of rape as “likely to be treated as [...] outcast[s] by their community, and even their family” (2009, p.234). Here, Bashir’s notion of raped women as damaged goods and outcasts recalls notions of taboo, filth and pollution that Kristeva associates with the abject.

We encounter more evidence about abjection in the memoir when Bashir is raped. After the incident, she escapes to her home village where she locks herself up in her grandmother’s hut for days, “hiding from the world” (2009, p.232). Bashir further relates that,

The only people who knew what had happened to me were my family members, and *they were determined to keep it that way.*

When people asked why I had come home, they said that I'd sought safety in the village from the war. Because I didn't want to see anyone, they told visitors that I was resting after a long and difficult journey (2009, pp.232-33, my emphasis).

Shame and fear of social exclusion infiltrate this narrative insofar as Bashir's family is embarrassed to tell fellow villagers what had happened to their daughter. The family is consciously aware of the damage the gang rape has done to the family name and it quickly moves in to protect Bashir (and itself) from further humiliation.

The feeling of guilt, as a marker for rape victims, captures the complicity paradox which suggests that "women who have experienced sexual violence feel complicit in their abuse and blame themselves" (Healicon 2016, p.63). Thus, if placed within its cultural context, Sumiah and Bashir's feelings of guilt and their inability to tell their stories in the memoir fits into "typical" rape myths that usually deny and trivialise sexual violence against women by transferring blame for rape from the perpetrator to the victim. Brownmiller's critique of male distrust of raped women is particularly informative in this regard. In her study *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975), Brownmiller's attributes this suspicion to "male fear of the false rape charge brought by a lying woman – the old syndrome of Potiphar's wife" (1975, p.370). The concern over the false rape charge operates more as a cover than as an expression of real fear; it justifies male disbelief in female testimony.

There is a poignant exchange between Sumiah and Bashir concerning their ordeal, presented in the memoir as one that exposes Sudan's racial bigotry where the Janjaweed Arab militias use rape as an instrument to diminish the black community's identity and force them out of Sudan. This is exemplified in Sumiah's account of what the Janjaweed said to her and the girls as they were being raped:

They were shouting and screaming at us. You know what they were saying? 'We have come here to kill you! To finish you all! You are black slaves! You are worse than dogs! Either we kill you or we give you Arab children. Then there will be no more black slaves in this country' [...]. [T]hey were laughing and yelping with joy as they did those terrible things. Those grown men were enjoying it, as they passed the little girls around.

[...]

For two hours they held the school. They abused the girls in front of their friends, forcing them to watch what they were doing. Any girls who tried to resist were beaten in the head with sticks or rifle butts. (2009, pp.217-18)

From Sumiah's graphic description of the gang rape above, one gets the impression that it verges on the bestial in its evocation of "shouting," "screaming" and "yelping" men with "guns, knives and heavy sticks" that were used on any girl who tried to resist the rape. Sumiah adds the ominous observation that the whole gang rape "was like a

band of wild animals just jumping on us and forcing us on the floor” (2009, p.217). The animalistic imagery with which the Janjaweed are described here horrifies the reader, just as the debasing manner in which the rape victims are treated further disturbs us. The traumatic nature of the Janjaweed’s actions is accentuated in Sumiah’s retelling of what Reid-Cunningham describes as the Janjaweed’s “dehumanizing epithets featuring racialised or gendered slurs” (2008, p.287). As Sumiah further relates:

In all the confusion one or two of the girls managed to escape. They ran to their homes and raised the alarm. But when the parents rushed to the school they found a cordon of government soldiers had surrounded it and were letting nobody in. If anyone came too close, the soldiers shot at them with their guns. Parents could hear their daughters screaming but there was no way they could help.

[...]

‘Before they left, they spat on us and urinated on us,’ Sumiah whispered. ‘They said: “We will let you live so you can tell your mothers and fathers and brothers what we did to you. Tell them from us: If you stay, the same and worse will happen to you all. Next time, we will show no mercy. Leave this land. Sudan is for Arabs. It is not for black dogs and slaves’ (2009, pp.217-18).

In creating a cordon around the school and the soldiers’ senseless shooting at anyone who comes too close, the memoir captures a clear link between the Janjaweed militias and the Khartoum-led government. This link implicates the latter as sanctioning the Janjaweed’s atrocities in Darfur, even when it is likely the Janjaweed’s actions have no blessing from the central government. Similar racialised slurs are repeated to Bashir after she is also gang raped. Before she is released, one of her captors tells her:

‘You know what we have decided to do with you?’ he announced, quietly. ‘We’re going to let you live. We’re not going to kill you. Get it? Not die. Not die. Live.’

[...]

‘... We’re going to let you live because you’d prefer to die. Isn’t that clever for us? Aren’t we clever, doctor? We may not have your education, but we’re damn smart, wouldn’t you agree?’

[...]

‘The Croucher shrugged. Anyway, go. Go. It’s over, for now. You know what rape is, so go. The Teacher and the others – they’ve shown you. As for me, I wouldn’t touch a black dog like you [even] if my life depended on it. Anyway, go. Go and tell the world. For the rest of your life you’re going to have to live with it. Go and tell whoever you want to what rape is’ (2009, pp.227-28).

In Sumiah's and Bashir's descriptions of the two incidents of gang rape, the female body is used as a symbol of filth, symbolised by the Janjaweed spitting and urinating on them contemptuously. Such acts confirm one of Seifert's five theorisations on the motives of rape in and after war, that there is a virulent misogyny towards women that is lived out in times of crisis. Seifert is of the opinion that "women are raped not because they are enemies, but because they are the objects of a fundamental hatred that characterizes the cultural unconscious and is actualised in times of crisis" (1994, p.65; Brownmiller, 1975, p.35). She thus finds "the thesis that rape is primarily a matter of revenge against the enemy" (1994, p.65) less convincing. Overall, the privileging of misogyny over women's rights implicates the granting of male aggression in contexts of war whereby the female body is not only objectified but also treated with abhorrence. This partially explains why most women are killed after being raped.

Arguably, the strongest message to be made about the precarious position of women in war zones is articulated by Vesna Kesić, who opines that they "are bodies in pain, regardless of which ethnic group is at some point recognized as aggressor and which as victim" (2002, p.311). Kesić's observations are based on the fact that since time immemorial, women and their bodies are the material with and over which battles are waged, an idea that recalls Brownmiller's thesis that "the body of a raped woman becomes a ceremonial battlefield, a parade ground for the victor's trooping of the colours" (1975, p.38). The combat imagery of "trooping of the colours" is particularly useful as it signals conquest of one nation by another, followed by the conquering nation's act of planting its colours (or flag) in the conquered's territory. Brownmiller's views are in concord with those of Seifert and MacKinnon, who specifically single out the discourse of conquest and subjugation by rape as a violent assertion of virility on the one hand and masculine impotence on the other. Indeed, MacKinnon makes a direct (though implicit) reference to Brownmiller: rape in war "has been used as a ritual of degradation of the other side, a way of instilling terror, a tactic of demoralization, a plundering of the booty, and a humiliation rite for the men on the other side who cannot (in masculinity's terms) protect 'their' women" (2006, pp.222-23; original brackets; see also Seifert, 1994, p.59). MacKinnon's concern is that apart from affirming manhood, "rape in war serves as specific psychological warfare and a method of communication, providing symbolic as well as actual reward and symbolic as well as actual revenge. It means supremacy: we are better than you. And possession: we own you" (MacKinnon, 2006, p.223). This is what leads Brownmiller to say that

Men of a conquered nation traditionally view the rape of 'their women' as the ultimate humiliation, a sexual coup de grace. Rape is considered by the people of a defeated nation to be part of the enemy's conscious effort to destroy them. In fact, by tradition, men appropriate the rape of 'their women' as part of their own male anguish of defeat [...]. [R]ape by a conqueror is compelling evidence of the conquered's status of masculine impotence. Defence of women has long been a hallmark of masculine pride, as possession of women has been a hallmark of masculine success (1975, p.38).

The message behind these polemics is that the body of a woman is used as a conduit for confirming and reinforcing masculinity in contexts of war. Unsurprisingly, most Darfuri men join the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement after the rape of their women and the attack on the village. The reason, as Seifert speculates, is because they feel “wounded in their masculinity” and fear that they will be “marked as incompetent” if they don’t protect ‘their’ women (1994, p.59). Thus the rape of women in *Tears of the Desert* is not just an assault on male power; rather, it symbolises the defeat of the state-as-male, in Musila’s conceptualisation of the term (2009, p.40).

Although *Tears of the Desert* speaks to the larger collective experience of Darfuris, Bashir concentrates on the micro-narrative of her father and two male siblings to show how they are slighted and hurt upon discovering that they had failed to protect her from being raped. For example, her brother, Omer, is seen “stomp[ing] around looking enraged and fiery” (2009, p.232) while her father “promise[s] to find the people who had [raped her]” (2009, p.230), adding he would “find them and kill them all” (2009, p.230). Needless to wonder, when the Janjaweed raid their village the men decide to fight them off with their spears and rusty guns, literally trying to salvage their lost manhood by, among other things, protecting their women.

Unsurprisingly, the ending of *Tears of the Desert* harks back to the idea of a disintegrated society. Indeed, what picture do we get in Part Three of the memoir where we see the men taking up arms to protect their women/land from the Arab ‘invaders’? What does Bashir imply when she says that after the first Janjaweed attack, her whole community was in “a process of collective mourning, as people shared their pain and their hurt with others who had suffered” (2009, p.249)? These questions are interlinked in that they speak of a collective Darfur sensibility that appears to have been breached by “outsiders.” As such, besides the presence of corporeal trauma, Bashir tries to explain the collective traumatic episodes of both men and women in her memoir. In “Notes on Trauma and Community,” Erikson defines collective trauma as “a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality” (1995, p.187). Erikson further describes the effect of collective trauma on the society in the following terms:

[it] works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with ‘trauma.’ But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that a community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared. (1995, p.187)

Likewise, the picture that the reader gets upon reading *Tears of the Desert* is that of a Darfuri community that has literally fallen apart; one that is experiencing psychocultural trauma. After the Janjaweed raid Bashir’s village and kill all men, for example, we next hear of the surviving women and children leaving their homes. This moment—of all Darfuri men being killed by the enemy, leaving behind raped and perhaps pregnant women—is highly symbolic if we consider the configuration of nation as female. It shows, in bold relief, that the Darfur region is a helpless (and

implicitly weak) land/subject/female without its male members to defend it from further violation. Akin to what is known as castration anxiety in Freudian terms, this idea is particularly relevant to social constructions of masculinity where men who fail to protect their women are perceived as weak. This leads me to say that the burden of masculinity is the act of asserting to the other male that it is still virile and capable of defending itself and protecting its women. The fact that Part Four of the memoir focuses on the journey trope (in which Bashir literally runs away from her community, and into exile) is further testimony to the “insidious awareness” and “gradual realization” Erikson talks about in her essay (1995, p.187), that as a community Darfuris no longer exist to support let alone defend themselves from danger. We are thus called upon to empathise with this communal suffering which also signals the destruction of an entire society.

Conclusion

It is often thought that an entire community feels violated when its female members are violated by the enemy. This idea is particularly relevant to the symbolic meaning of wartime rape, since hegemonic military logics see the violation of a woman’s body as symbolising the defeat of a nation. This is what Kristeva refers to as abjection. With this point in mind, in this article, I have examined how wartime rape traumatises women, girls, their families and immediate communities in Bashir’s *Tears of the Desert*. I have also shown how, because of the collective trauma, the Darfur as a region “strays” on its path to nation-building because of the way the region is feminised and metonymised as woman over whom different forms of masculinities fight either to conquer her resources or protect her from further exploitation. This understanding would fit into the accusations that have been levelled against the Khartoum-led government at some point that it continues to marginalise Darfur even though the region’s resources are the country’s economic mainstay.

Notes

1. This is not to suggest that the rape of women in the text is exclusively a Sudanese phenomenon nor that raping women typifies the activities of the Janjaweed Arab militia in Sudan. Neither do I envision the General Government of Sudan as silently encouraging violence against women. Many Sudanese communities do not condone any form of gender based violence, justified on the grounds that every social unit must live in harmony with each other.
2. The exact number of those raped is not known. As Bashir herself observes, “there were more rape victims than that” (2009, p.216). She suspects that some parents “were so ashamed [to bring their daughters to the local clinic] that they had taken [them] home” to “treat them privately with traditional cures. In that way, they hoped to keep the violation of their loved ones secret” (2009, p.216).
3. There are many definitions of rape. My own understanding of the term is that it is an event that occurs without the other person’s consent, and which involves the

use of force or threat of force. It also involves penetration of the victim's vagina, mouth or rectum either by a penis, fingers or an object. In this study, I limit the use of the term to those incidences where women and girls are penetrated through the vagina, since this is what we encounter in Bashir's memoir.

4. It should be noted that although this is true, it is not always the case. Rape has been used in different wars whether they be classified as genocide or not.

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