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Contributions from both established and younger scholars, particularly in Africa, are welcomed, and the editors would like to encourage innovative writing and research on a range of topics and with an array of conceptual frameworks.

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Masculinities in the African National Congress-led liberation movement: The underground period

Raymond Suttner*

This article aims to uncover elements of the formation and manifestations of masculinities within the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies. While notions of masculinity or masculinities have been examined in other literature, this work tries to specify the precise character of a distinct process and phenomenon in an organisation, primarily in its period of illegality. This bears resemblances to that found in other situations, but ANC masculinities have specificities that need to be brought into the foreground. This enquiry locates masculinity formation in situations and complexities that have not previously emerged. In certain ways, these relate to a past that is in some respects a warrior tradition. In part ANC masculinities also interface with belief systems that precede and coexist with the organisation's existence, for example the relationship between initiation and other rites of passage to manhood.

The later underground period has also to be related to what preceded it and some reference is made to the early ANC and the complex relationship between the organisation and the entry of women onto the political stage. In examining the period of illegality, underground organisation is understood to include not only acts performed within the country, but also the place where training and preparation occurred, which was generally outside the country. In other words, 'underground' is taken to include what is conventionally separated as part of the 'exile experience'.

This article argues that the reading given to early ANC texts and later autobiographies, outside of their full context, leads to an underplaying of the extent and significance of women entering 'male terrain'.¹ Furthermore, the emphasis on the text leads to a fetishisation and disembodiment of certain words

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1 N. Erlank, 'Gender and Masculinity in South African Nationalist Discourse, 1912–1950', *Feminist Studies* 29, 3 (2003): 653–72; E. Unterhalter, 'The Work of the Nation: Heroic Masculinity in South African Autobiographical Writing of the Anti-Apartheid Struggle', *The European Journal of Development Research* 12, 2 (2000): 157–78.



emphasising manhood and an automatic and incorrect reading of this as necessarily downplaying the political role of women. This interpretation is not substantially strengthened by the mainly privately expressed views of certain ANC leaders on relationships with their wives and other women.² But it is primarily flawed in its failure to give weight to the significance of *the reality of denial of manhood*, which also signifies specific and overwhelming disempowerment and subjection to political domination. The assertion of manhood needs, in turn, to be read as the language of rejection of this overlordship and assertion of political freedom.

For the period of illegality, Unterhalter³ has deployed concepts such as ‘heroic masculinity’ in relation to autobiographies, and while the scope is apparently limited, lack of qualification may sometimes lead readers to believe that the understandings provided, as with Erlank,⁴ go further than the area of enquiry. The notion of heroic masculinity (dealt with more fully later) refers to men being representatives of heroic projects, whose success is contingent on women being at home, often waving men goodbye as they depart to face danger. This article challenges the application of such concepts and understandings, arguing that there were both male and female (s)heroic projects, whose content was subject to extensive qualification and conditionality, in both cases.

Moving away from what is covered by these writings, often-unacknowledged elements of the revolutionary experience, in particular the impact on the personal and the emotional, are unpacked. These practices and notions of commitment can be interpreted as feeding into ideas of the male relating to ‘the rational’ and the female expressing ‘the emotional’. But there are again extensive qualifications found through showing different models of manhood within the organisation.

In general, a range of sites and modes of masculinity formation in the ANC are indicated, again subject in their interpretation to extensive qualification and conditionality.

ATTACK ON MANHOOD AND THE NEED FOR AFRICAN MEN TO ASSERT THAT THEY ARE MEN

Major works on Western masculinity primarily if not exclusively concern situations different from that of South Africa (and many other situations that experienced colonialism).⁵ When they speak of masculinity or masculinities

2 Erlank, ‘Gender and Masculinity’, 656ff.

3 Unterhalter, ‘Work of the Nation’.

4 Erlank, ‘Gender and Masculinity’.

5 For example R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), S. M. Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002).

they are not relating to a situation where manhood has been denied in the sense that it has been in the history of apartheid or colonialism generally. When they refer to 'hegemonic masculinities' or 'gender orders' they do not purport to cover the layers within these layers that also give meaning to attempts to reclaim manhood in the context of apartheid and colonialism.⁶

These works sometimes relate to claims of a denial of masculinity or crisis of masculinity on the part of men who feel that gender equality assaults their sense of manhood.⁷ They do not purport to address a situation where manhood is *actually assaulted*, that is, where men are called boys, no matter what their age, where many whites never bothered to even know their actual names.⁸ General J. B. M. Hertzog, former Prime Minister, expressed the childlike status of the African very plainly in 1926: 'Next to the European, the Native stands as an 8-year old child to a man of great experience – a child in religion, a child in moral conviction; without art and without science; the most primitive needs, and the most elementary knowledge to provide for those needs. If ever a race had a need of guidance and protection from another people with which it is placed in contact, then it is the Native in his contact with the white man.'⁹

This is not an unusual text for its time, in some ways a mild example from the genre of racist writings. What it signifies for our purposes is that the infantilisation of Africans and men in particular links to or seeks to justify political domination by designating Africans as a race that were children. It is in this regard part of a wider body of writing and thinking which spoke of colonial authorities having a 'sacred trust' to fulfil towards native peoples or as exercising some sort of tutelage over their charges.

In reading African assertions of manhood, therefore, we need to understand it as a challenge not only to a childlike status but as symbolising wider rejection of

6 Cf. Connell, *Masculinities* and Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*. See, in addition, L. A. Lindsay and S. F. Miescher, 'Introduction: Men and Masculinities in Modern African History', in *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* edited by L. A. Lindsay and S. F. Miescher (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), 6ff.

7 Connell, *Masculinities*, 84; J. Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002), ch. 4; C. Haywood and M. Mac an Ghaill, *Men and Masculinities* (Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003), 125ff; S. M. Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), for example 3–4, 6, 47–51, 139–40. A different species of 'crisis' is found in contemporary South Africa, with many men reacting against the gender equality clauses of the present constitution and current legislation protecting women from abuse.

8 See also F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 36–7. This is not to detract from women also being called 'girls', something to be considered in a wider study embracing femininity.

9 In M. Morris, *Every Step of the Way. The Journey to Freedom in South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004).

overlordship represented by such statements. The assertion of manhood is in this context a claim for freedom.

It was also a situation where colonialism and apartheid consciously set about subduing the military power and perceived sexual threat of the African male. The latter finds repeated expression in nineteenth century South African colonial commissions, with reference made to African men leading lives of 'indolent sensuality'. Because they batted in ease on the labour of their wives they did not fulfil their 'proper destiny' and work for the white man.¹⁰

It seems necessary to distinguish in a limited, but not absolute, way between the concept of masculinity and that of manhood. This article uses notions of masculinity to refer to socially constructed conceptions of what is meant by being a man, whereas the notion of manhood is more limited and is primarily related to notions of adulthood. It is used essentially in contrast with being a boy. In this regard, Lindsay and Miescher are helpful, referring to masculinity as a 'cluster of norms, values and behavioural patterns expressing explicit and implicit expectations of how men should act and represent themselves to others. Ideologies of masculinity – like those of femininity – are culturally and historically constructed, their meanings continually contested and always in the process of being renegotiated in the context of existing power relations'.¹¹

In regard to manhood they write that "[b]oy" has been an important social category in many African contexts, implying biological maleness, social (but not necessarily physical) immaturity, and in colonial situations, racialised inferiority in relation to "men".¹² . . . '[W]e distinguish between manhood and masculinity . . . *Manhood* refers to indigenous notions of male explicitly related to men's physiology, often recognised in terms of male adulthood . . . *Masculinity* is broader, more abstract, and often implicit'.¹³

What is captured in the second extract is that colonial and apartheid authorities did not treat Africans as boys for all purposes in that they recognised that processes of transition to manhood were taking place within African societies and generally did not intervene in these. It was only in the relations of these authorities with African males, in the context of the colonial encounter, that men were treated as boys. What this meant in the eyes of African men and their womenfolk and children is that men were men in one context but were unable or not allowed to perform the roles of men (admittedly patriarchal, though as

10 See H. J. Simons, *African Women: Their Legal Status in South Africa* (London: C. Hurst, 1968), 15.

11 Lindsay and Miescher, 4.

12 Ibid., 4–5.

13 Ibid., 5. Emphasis is in original.

will be seen, that must be qualified) including providing protection for women and children.

Non-intervention in the traditional process of manhood formation itself requires further study, explaining why it happened. We know that the culture of the Other was treated as exotic and that it was marginalised in relation to that of the coloniser. Even where some colonisers purported to value local culture it tended to be treated purely as an anthropological curiosity. Western music, art and other practices constituted culture of universal validity. African culture fell within the realm of anthropology.¹⁴ Non-intervention of colonisers in the African rites of passage to manhood meant that process was permitted, but it was not recognised as constituting manhood for purposes of coloniser/native relations. The validity of the transition within the society of the local people was not recognised in the colonial encounter. In colonial/native relations it was as if the native initiation process had not occurred at all.

Manhood had been conceived from early times as including a right and duty to protect. The content of this quality was much more than an element of patriarchal power. In so far as apartheid and colonialism invaded relations between husband and wife and father and child that was humiliating in itself. But in the context of colonial and apartheid domination 'protection' takes on a wider connotation than that which can be ascribed to patriarchy alone. Inability to protect came to mean inability to prevent your child or wife falling into the hands of police or, worse, security police, who were known to do serious harm.

That most of the accoutrements normally associated with citizenship were denied to men and women under apartheid was undoubtedly not a denial of manhood alone. But if one traces documented history whose discourse refers to emasculation and the need to restore manhood and a virile nation,¹⁵ unless it is also related to *the reality of denial of manhood*, it is chronologically historical, but ahistorical in failing to locate these assertions fully. If full weight is not given to the denial of manhood, one cannot give meaning to a claim of manhood. This masculine idiom is also, of course, the male-dominated language of the time, not only within African discourse.

The argument presented in this contribution is that one cannot read off gender relations or a negative relationship to women from the assertion of manhood in itself. At the same time, it is not claimed that the assertion of manhood being seen as a claim to liberation means that questions of gender equality are thereby resolved. What characterises that which Connell calls the 'gender order' needs to

¹⁴ I borrow here from J. Needham, *Within the Four Seas. The Dialogue of East and West* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 13.

¹⁵ Erlank, 'Gender and Masculinity', for example, 653.

be analysed by relying on data beyond such words.¹⁶ The object here is purely to argue that the assertion of manhood has no self-evident and timeless meaning, nor the meaning attributed to it in these writings, which purport from such usage to read notions of gender inequality and even broader political strategies.

Thus Erlank describes such *discourse* as ‘fundamental to understanding the political strategies of the ANC and other nationalist groups from the 1920s through the 1950s’.¹⁷ Furthermore, she claims that such discourse ‘explains’ some of the gendered currents that motivated nationalist activity during this period as well as some of the reasons why African male leaders were disinclined to involve African women in political activity undertaken as part of policies of opposition to the white South African state.¹⁸ A careful reading of her text does not appear to provide evidence that such causal connections necessarily existed.

The failure of the ANC to include women in these claims cannot be used to deny the reality that notions of a race that were children infantilised men and that their manhood was denied, even if that also applied to women. The assertion of a need to restore manhood was a legitimate claim, a legitimate part of a struggle for liberation. That ANC leaders make no mention of women in this period has no inherent meaning for the relations between men and women and the conception of these relations. That issue must be separately analysed and argued and, as will be shown, even where the concept of the nation was defined in terms of manhood, it coexisted with extensive political and public activity of women. The struggle to be a man meant the struggle for dignity and reclaiming of rights and to be treated as an adult human being. This is something that needs to be read into any analysis of ANC masculinities.

ANC MASCULINITIES

What makes ANC masculinities and what is their character? What are the factors that impact on manhood within the organisation? This article argues that these are very diverse and have different influences on different people, depending on their own specific identities within the organisation as well as prior to or alongside their membership of the ANC.

¹⁶ The concept of the gender order was first developed by J. Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1984). I refer to Connell here because of the article’s focus on masculinities and femininities, in so far as the character of masculinity is contingent on how femininity is manifested in particular contexts.

¹⁷ Erlank, ‘Gender and Masculinity’, 653

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

There is a fairly substantial literature on feminism or women's struggle for gender equality within or about the ANC-led liberation movement.¹⁹ However, the flourishing of masculinity studies on other continents has only recently had an impact on South African literature and scholarship relating to the liberation movement.²⁰ As far as I am aware, there are only two articles dealing directly with the question of masculinities in regard to the ANC.²¹ Only indirect reference is made to the subject in one chapter of a more general and pioneering collection on South African masculinities.²²

This article argues that the liberation struggle has thrown up distinct models of manhood. These notions are, however, as always, contingent on conceptions and practices of the feminine. Notions of masculinity are essentially conditional, contested, ambiguous or contradictory and have varied over time and at any particular moment and within any particular experience. The key factors influencing such notions in South Africa have been the political conditions prevailing both on the side of the apartheid regime and that of resistance forces, and the roles assigned to and assumed by women. This article hopes to prove these claims of diversity and conditionality, but focusing primarily on the period of illegality and underground organisation.

The ANC was formed in 1912 in the face of the establishment of the Union of South Africa two years earlier. Raising the notion of a 'native union', the ANC was in fact advancing in embryonic form the idea of an alternative or counter-nation, at first comprising only black men. The organisation did not at its inception envisage nonracialism, nor did it include women as members. Implicitly then, the notion of the national with which the ANC initially worked was one comprising African men only.²³ Taken at that level of official and

19 For example C. Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, 2nd ed. (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1991); J. C. Wells, *We Now Demand! The History of Women's Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993); H. Bernstein, *For Their Triumphs and For Their Tears. Women in Apartheid South Africa*, rev. ed. (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1985); S. Hassim, 'Identities, Interests and Constituencies: The Politics of the Women's Movement in South Africa 1980–1999' (Ph.D. thesis, York University, Toronto, 2002); and F. Ginwala, 'Women and the African National Congress: 1912–1943', *Agenda* 8 (1990): 77–93.

20 J. Cock, *Colonels and Cadres. War and Gender in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991) made an important earlier contribution.

21 Erlank, 'Gender and Masculinity', and Unterhalter, 'Work of the Nation'.

22 R. Morrell, ed. *Changing Men in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, London & New York: University of Natal Press, Zed Books, 2001).

23 R. Suttner, 'Democratic Transition and Consolidation in South Africa: Advice of "the Experts"', *Current Sociology* 52, 5 (September 2004): 755–73; P. Jordan, 'The South African Liberation Movement and the Making of a New Nation', in *The National Question in South Africa*, edited by Maria van Diepen (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1988); P. K. I. Seme, 'Native Union', in *From Protest to Challenge. A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882–1964*, edited by T. Karis and G. W. Carter, vol. 1, *Protest and Hope* by Sheridan Johns III (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 71–3.

constitutional politics the matter is clear and straightforward. However, within one year women were in the streets of Bloemfontein under the banner 'We have done with pleading. We now demand!'²⁴ They had entered the public domain, supposedly the preserve of men.²⁵

Women entered this terrain, but in a more radical, popular form – on the streets of one of the most conservative cities of South Africa. One year after the establishment of the ANC, they stepped into this arena as self-empowered actors, independent of their menfolk. This is part of a long history of women as political actors and subjects, constantly claiming the public space as theirs. That women entered the political stage and in this way immediately qualifies the significance of the formal and constitutional statement that women were not ANC members. It indicates that whatever status they were formally granted within the organisation, that could not dispose of the question of whether or not they were political subjects, with a concrete role in a future nationhood.

There were also clear divergences from constitutional provisions of the ANC. Women were in fact voting in elections for the highest office in the period when they were not supposed to be members.²⁶ Such practices cannot be brushed aside, nor are they cancelled out by statements or correspondence of leaders enunciating a specific ideal of manhood with a corresponding role for their womenfolk.²⁷ These statements are part of the history, but an element that needs to be supplemented.

JOINING THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND THE 'MAKING OF A MAN'

It is nevertheless true that the national liberation struggle is suffused with imagery relating to manhood, going back to the periods of early resistance to colonial conquest. There is also evidence that the national liberation movement connected in some cases with processes of *transition to manhood*.

Initiation to manhood, used loosely, is often found in the discourse and practices in various terrains of the liberation struggle. *The discourse of denial of manhood coexists with that of regaining manhood through the struggle or struggle-related activities*. A young activist of the 1980s, Mongezi Radebe, explains his political development through reading, including banned literature:

I know, for instance, people in Heilbron whom I had never thought were politically aware, and I got friendly with one and he gave me *The Struggle is My Life* by Mandela, and he said it's a

24 Wells, *We now Demand!*

25 See Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, 114, 117ff.

26 Cf. Ginwala, 'Women and the African National Congress', 88.

27 As in Erlank, 'Gender and Masculinity'.

good book, *it'll make me a man*. A man selling coal . . . I had never thought that he had been to school, and I knew him not to be in a position to read anything or write his name, but he gave me that book. So it was like that in townships all over.²⁸

This is obviously regaining manhood as discourse, or the discourse of transition to manhood being associated with joining the struggle, becoming part of the process that would end the infantilisation of men and regaining their place as adults.

The act of joining ANC or MK, the abbreviation commonly used to refer to Umkhonto we Sizwe (the Spear of the Nation, the ANC's armed wing) was associated in some situations with more specific processes for attaining manhood or rites of passage. It is not clear that this idea of initiation is always used tightly or that it interfaces purely with 'traditional' notions of initiation or necessarily gives new meanings or understandings to this process. What comprises initiation in all its variations needs further research.

The connection between transition to manhood and joining the liberation struggle is illustrated by moving to a much later phase, from the 1960s, where we enter a period ripe for the emergence of notions of 'heroic masculinity'. This is because the banning of the ANC (and the earlier illegality of the South African Communist Party (SACP)) created conditions where considerable danger attached to resistance. Yet the interface between masculinities and the struggle was extremely varied. In some ways it linked, in the imagery it drew on, to earlier pre-Union notions and values of manhood. These connoted martial bravery, men who possessed land and who were able to protect it and their women and children (see discussion of Makana below). In other senses it linked to age-old practices, originally requiring specific rites of passage in order to achieve manhood. These in many but not all cases were also associated with martial traditions.

Peter Delius has suggested that Pedi initiation processes stressing a warrior tradition facilitated recruitment to MK.²⁹ In situations where the warrior notion of manhood was hegemonic, it certainly could be of assistance in recruitment for armed struggle. The late Zingiva Nkondo, when asked why he joined MK, indicated that they (the Shangaan) were 'always ready'. He explained that he was a descendant of Soshangane, leader of one of the groupings that broke away from Shaka's Zulu kingdom and established the Gaza Empire in what is now Mozambique. As a descendant of this warrior

28 In Julie Frederickse, *The Unbreakable Thread. Non-Racialism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, Harare: Anvil Press, 1990), 158. Emphasis added.

29 P. Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle. Reconstruction and Resistance in the Northern Transvaal* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, Oxford: James Currey, 1996), 129.

tradition, Nkondo saw himself as having a predisposition towards entering a war situation, where required.³⁰

BECOMING A MAN THROUGH JOINING MK: THE DINOKANA EXPERIENCE

Initiation arises in processes related to MK, in a more specific way than Delius reports, in the former Western Transvaal, now the province of North West. Around the time of the Rivonia trial the community of Dinokana, a village forming part of Lehurutshe near Zeerust, was emerging from intense battles with the government over the Bantu authorities system, attempts to depose their chief and the extension of passes to women.³¹ This patriarch/women alliance may again manifest the ambiguities already referred to, including assertion of power over women, but it simultaneously demonstrates a desire to avoid humiliation and powerlessness in relation to a state that could harm their womenfolk.

Some of the chiefs in the community had sided with the women and also decided to throw their weight behind the ANC. They had set up underground structures, which they linked to MK and its recruitment machineries. Referring to the decision, Victor Moche, an early MK recruit says:

But being chiefs they had then called village councils, *lekgotla* as it is called . . . After persuading the villagers that this was the right thing to do, they had then levied a 'head tax' on each household in terms of providing human power to join MK. So if you had a family of four young men, the eldest would be told, you will go to Gauteng to work for the family and you will send number two to school, number three is too young so he will stay at home and he will look after his parents and the cattle and number four will go to MK. So they allocated the family in this way.³²

The community refers to this as the 'decision under the tree', a tree opposite the current offices of the chief's councillors. As with many physical objects to which ritual significance is attached, this tree has peculiar qualities in that its branches fall off at the slightest touch.³³ According to Radilori John Moumakwa, who was one of between 50 and 80 boys³⁴ who were sent out of the village, they were told that it was time to *bokwa* or *bolala*, that is, it was no longer the responsibility of their fathers to provide trousers.³⁵ Certain

30 Interview 18 September 2002, Johannesburg.

31 Cf. A. Manson, *The Troubles of Chief Abram Moikwa. The Hurutshe Resistance of 1954–1958* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1983) and 'The Hurutshe Resistance in Zeerust 1954–1959', *Africa Perspective* 22 (1983): 62–79.

32 Interview, Victor Moche, 23 July 2002, Johannesburg.

33 Personal experience of author on touching a branch.

34 The approximation of the numbers relates to some of the original 80 being sent back by the then Bechuanaland authorities.

35 Interview, 15 May 2003, Mafikeng.

informants claim the boys had just returned from initiation.³⁶ According to other sources, such as Moumakwa, they were still to be initiated, in this case through joining MK. Dr P. M. Sebate of the African Languages Department of the University of South Africa provides his understanding of the meaning of the term *bolala* in this specific context:

What 'go bolala' means here is that the boys had to go out to be initiated in the teachings of MK so that they could be men amongst men; men who would not be afraid to withstand the cold winter, the beating of the enemy, and the wrath of the forest. Having graduated as MK soldiers, these 'boys' would be able to protect their families, villages and above all their nation.

I do think 'the age of 14' [mentioned by Moumakwa in my interview] tells you something, 'that boys who go out for initiation are between childhood and manhood.' Normally when *bogwera bo bolola* (initiates go out) village boys from a number of sub-courts gather at the main court (*kgotlakgolo*) of the village where the chief resides. It is then that the chief of the village gives an instruction that *bogwera bo bolole* (initiates should go out). These boys will be in the forest at an area selected or chosen by the village witchdoctor (traditional healer). They will be there for the three winter months, where they will be taught work songs, war songs and hunting songs; and, that a stick thrashing can only kill an ant.

. . . Remember, after initiation these boys will have qualified as 'men' . . . [W]hen boys from Dinokana went out to join MK, they were between childhood and manhood and were tasked to go out and learn 'war songs', to protect their nation, that the 'whipping they received from the white man could only kill an ant'.³⁷

That in teaching war songs MK may have provided elements of what was required in their transition to manhood can be seen in the words of the following song played on Radio Freedom:

Abasakwazi Nokupumula (They Cannot Rest)

LEAD: *Bayekeleni, sobabamba ngobunyama*

CHORUS: *Nangokuhlwa*

LEAD: *Abasalali, umkonto, mkonto wesizwe*

CHORUS: *Abasakwazi nokupumula*

Umkonto uzobashaya, uzobaqeda

³⁶ According to Zakes Tolo, who also comes from the area, but is of a much later generation. Personal communication, 20 May 2003.

³⁷ Dr P. M. Sebate, by e-mail, 20 May 2003. In Z. I. Matumo, comp., *The Setswana English Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Gaborone: Macmillan, 1993), 222, the following entries are found:

'*boloditse* . . . *bolotsa*, has let out, as livestock from the kraal or initiates of an initiation rite and *bolodiswe* . . . *boloditse*, have been let out, as livestock from the kraal, or initiates of an initiation rite.'

In J. T. Brown, comp., *The Setswana Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Johannesburg: Pula Press, 1980) 30, one finds:

'*Bolola* . . . *bolotse*, go out of kraal of cattle, etc; set out on a journey; go on the war-path'.

LEAD: *Mabesati bayagalena*

Sizofika sifuna, umkonto we sizwe

CHORUS: *Ushona ngapha, ushona ngale,*

Bayawazi

Translation:

Let them be. We will get them when it's dark. / When night comes / They cannot sleep, due to the spear, the spear of the nation / They cannot rest / Our army will hit them, we will finish them / When they try to do one thing or the other / The people's army will come / Here now, then there – they learn of our elusive forces.³⁸

Moumakwa refers to *bolwa* in this context as being 'the opposite' of what it would normally be:

Initiation, that's a *bolwa*. Now that one was opposite, now you go to join MK.

Q: Had you not been initiated?

A: No.

Q: Oh, so this was instead of initiation?

A: It's a form of initiation.

Q: It's a way of becoming a man?

A: It was a way of becoming a man.

Q: Oh, it wasn't after initiation, because your age group, age-set was going to get initiated through MK?

A: Through the MK.³⁹

Clearly the rites of passage in these cases relate to preparation for warfare. In the case of the Dinokana situation, one sees the disruption of conventional rites of passage in a situation of societal stress. Similar processes have been recorded in the case of Palestinians during the Intifada, where experiences of youth clashing with the Israelis and being imprisoned were treated as displacing normal routes for attaining manhood. Generational hierarchies are subverted and youth

³⁸ From *Radio Freedom. Voice of the African National Congress and the People's Army Umkhonto We Sizwe*. (Rounder CD 4019, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996).

³⁹ Interview.

returning from prison are treated as men enjoying greater seniority than their own parents.⁴⁰

In another situation, the element of secrecy attached to initiation ceremonies was involved in the recruitment of people to join an underground unit in the Matatiele area of former Transkei. Recruitment was restricted to those who had been part of the same initiation group, though not all were necessarily selected. Their common experience enabled those selected to assess the suitability of others. However, the secrecy that they shared as an initiation group was seen as a core basis for establishing themselves as an illegal unit.⁴¹

TRANSITION TO MANHOOD ON ROBBEN ISLAND

In some cases, the ANC directly intervened in the process of transition to manhood, though there is no firm evidence of a specific decision mandating those who executed the tasks. Some ANC prisoners, especially the young people who arrived after the 1976 risings, wanted and expected to perform initiation rituals while on 'the Island'. Joseph Faniso Mati says:

We realised that most of these youngsters were to stay in prison for a long time and that circumcision was necessary for them. It was all done clandestinely. We did not know when it would happen and the ANC pretended as if they did not know about it. There were no celebrations afterwards and we would only discover it the following day when we were going to play soccer and found that most of the youngsters were not there.⁴²

They had been circumcised by [Johnson Malcomess] Mgabela – in small groups together. They would stay in the cell the following day or two – no water, their wounds being dressed by Mgabela, sometimes suffering from severe pain. All of this was done with the connivance of the person in charge of the hospital.⁴³

Mgabela describes his role:

When I first came to work in the hospital, I felt happy. I wanted for quite some time to work there, because I was an *Ingcibi* when I was outside. An *Ingcibi* is the person who performs circumcision – cuts the boys, dressed their wounds, helps them to become men. Long before I

40 Cf. J. Peteet, 'Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada', in *The Masculinity Studies Reader*, edited by R. Adams and D. Safran (Malden, Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), chapter 18.

41 Interview M. Mandubu, 29 July 2004, East London.

42 The experience may have differed in various sections of the prison. Ahmed Kathrada records being asked by a PAC prisoner to help organise a celebration to celebrate the transition to manhood of two prisoners who had been initiated. See A. Kathrada, *Memoirs* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 283.

43 J. K. Coetzee, L. Gilfillan and O. Hulec. *Fallen Walls. Voices from the Cells that Held Mandela and Havel* (Cape Town, South Africa: Robben Island Museum, 2002), 52. It is interesting that the necessity of initiation to manhood is related to returning home while, as indicated later in the text, some people felt they could be initiated only on returning home from exile.

started to work in the hospital one boy came to me. He knew that I did that work outside and he wanted me to circumcise him. But I was afraid that if they discovered that I did it, they would put me away for an extra two or three years. After this boy, other youngsters also approached me: 'We are getting old here inside. And there are still more years because we are doing fifteen, seventeen, eighteen or twenty years. When we go home, we will be old and this thing must be done.'

In the meantime, some of the boys among us continued to demand: 'You must cut us!' They even said: 'You refuse to help!' I started to realise that these boys of the Western Cape, Transkei, Border and the Eastern Cape had a better chance now. And they would be old when they were released. After all, Schoeman [the head of the hospital] was not too negative and the prison chiefs took no steps after Fourie had left. [A white warder who had Mgabela circumcise him, only to have it discovered by the authorities.] So the next year I started to circumcise. It was April/May 1974 that I started, right up until July and then I stopped. Then I started again in December. So many! Do you know how many altogether? Three hundred and sixty one – total number!

You see, after 1976 all these school boys were arrested; they were flocking to the Island. They all said they wanted to go and be circumcised by me . . . Later on, we accepted that the prison authorities would look the other way. They pulled up their shoulders and said that nobody should come and tell them that somebody else had cut him.⁴⁴

Circumcision of Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and black consciousness youth, resisted by sections of their leadership, sometimes paved the way for their recruitment to ANC.⁴⁵

More investigation will be required to understand what significance and meanings attach to the demand for initiation in this context. Did it emanate mainly from people coming from certain parts of the country, in particular rural areas and especially the Eastern Cape, as this evidence suggests? In so far as the ANC and MK was primarily an urban movement, to what extent does the existence of certain townships (for example Guguletu and Kwazakele) or pockets of townships (for example parts of Soweto) that are ethnically very homogeneous and sometimes more tenacious in holding onto older practices than people in the rural areas, explain this phenomenon? What did resort to such rituals mean? Is it to be interpreted purely as continuation of a 'traditional' practice, without which manhood could not be attained? Or did observance of these rituals also connote elements of resistance, as has been the case in other situations?⁴⁶ Many writers have shown that the same phenomenon may have exactly the same form, where its social significance varies under different conditions.⁴⁷

44 Coetzee, Gilfillan and Hulec, *Fallen Walls*, 71.

45 Ibid.

46 A. Spiegel and E. Boonzaier, 'Promoting Tradition: Images of the South African Past', in *South African Keywords. The Uses and Abuses of Political Concepts*, edited by E. Boonzaier and J. Sharp (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988), 52ff.

47 For example Spiegel and Boonzaier, 'Promoting Tradition', 53; E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Some decades back Philip Mayer, in a study of initiation practices in New Brighton Township, showed how conditions in the city, in the absence of adequate infrastructure and broader social conditions, precluded observance of rituals in the same way as in the rural areas.⁴⁸ As in the case of resort to diviners and healers, we may be dealing with the coexistence and intersection of distinct forms of social knowledge and belief systems.⁴⁹ While Mayer reports that most Africans in his study placed great store on acquiring the knowledge and technical skills provided by ‘Western’ education, initiation schools were regarded as providing additional social knowledge and skills needed to acquire manhood.⁵⁰

Obviously we need to interrogate these claims more closely, in particular, the degree of flexibility within this process or notions of manhood. Alternatively, what changes have occurred, and to what extent is this reflected in expectations of initiation practices and the actual conduct of these and teachings by those officiating on the Island?

Clearly, in carrying out initiation on Robben Island many of the features of ‘traditional’ initiation, in particular the extent of seclusion and the presence of elders to lecture initiates on the significance of transition to manhood, could not easily be replicated. In the account thus far circumcision has been emphasised, though it comprised merely one element of a wider process of induction into manhood. What modalities were used to encompass these, or were they not dealt with in the situation on the Island? To what extent did an abridged form of initiation (if it was that), change its meaning or implications?

A discussion in July 2004 with a former PAC prisoner on Robben Island, who was circumcised by Mgabela and wishes to remain anonymous, confirms that the process involved was not merely circumcision, but initiation. The former prisoner stated that he was sent to the Island at the age of 17 and considered it necessary to be initiated, and that while Mgabela conducted the circumcision, other older prisoners instructed the boys, becoming men, on the ‘qualities attached to manhood’, and how they should conduct themselves as men. It was not clear from the discussion whether this instruction entailed a specific conception of manhood *deriving from their being political prisoners*. From what was

48 P. Mayer, ‘“Traditional” Manhood Initiation in an Industrial City: The African View’, in *Man: Anthropological Essays Presented to O.F. Raum*, edited by E. J. de Jager (Cape Town: Struik, 1971), 7–18.

49 On access of MK to *sangomas/inyangas* in certain situations, see R. Suttner, ‘Culture(s) of the ANC of South Africa: Imprint of Exile Experiences’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 21, 2 (May 2003): 314–6 and ‘Being a Revolutionary: Reincarnation or Carrying over Previous Identities? A Review Article’, *Social Identities* 10, 3 (2004): 415–31.

50 Mayer, ‘“Traditional” Manhood’.

related, it appeared to conform to what are described as ‘traditional’ conceptions of such instruction. It is hoped that further research will contribute towards clarification. Supporting the evidence that the process was more than circumcision is Kathrada’s account of two prisoners who had been circumcised ‘wrapped in blankets’. Kathrada also reports on the disagreement amongst prisoners over the practice, described by some as reactionary.⁵¹

If the authorities turned a blind eye to the practice, why was this the case? Was it because they saw no harm, and in fact recognised beneficial results deriving from what they identified as ‘traditional’ ritual, cementing notions of unchanging ‘tribal’ and ethnic identities? To what extent are we dealing with a phenomenon whose meaning was contested? What was the precise attitude of the ANC towards initiation practices, assuming they must have been aware of these being conducted, seeing that senior members were involved? What meaning did the organisation attach to these practices? (No former Islander with whom I have spoken appears to have been unaware of this practice.)

INITIATION IN EXILE

It is not clear to what extent initiation practices were implemented in exile. I have been told that many people, some as old as 40, were initiated on their return to South Africa. But in Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO), established by the ANC in Tanzania, initiation was an issue. It is reported that it was not easy for a Sotho man to have a relationship with a Xhosa woman. This was not because of ethnic animosity, but because the Sotho students might not have gone through initiation, and could be seen as *amakhwenkwe*, ‘boys’, as males who have not yet undergone initiation are referred to in Xhosa society.⁵²

For those who wished to be initiated there were South African *ingcibis* available. But Dr Siphokazi Sokupa, a medical practitioner at SOMAFCO, is reported as saying that the boys were not taken to live in the bush for a period, as the tradition required. It was feared that in tropical surroundings so different from the veld of the Eastern Cape, students would develop diseases such as malaria.⁵³

Such initiation, occurring under *de facto* ANC auspices, leaves unstated precisely what notions of manhood were entailed. What meanings of manhood were

51 A. Kathrada, *Memoirs* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004) 283.

52 S. Morrow, B. Maaba and L. Pulumani, *Education in Exile. SOMAFCO, the ANC School in Tanzania, 1978 to 1992* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004), 107.

53 Morrow, Maaba and Pulumani. *Education in Exile*, 107.

commended to the initiates? That boys were circumcised signifies little, for that is an operation that can occur outside of initiation. What needs to be probed further is whether, in the different conditions in which these youth found themselves, on Robben Island and in SOMAFCO the notions of masculinity took on connotations which stressed martial or other values. It is by no means clear that notions of initiation within South Africa follow any one pattern. The traits that are commended to boys as desirable for a man in the instructions they are given before and after the circumcision may vary considerably. It is also important to note the role of women in these processes; men do not become men without the substantial (and generally unacknowledged) role of women. This has always been the case, but this phenomenon may have become more prominent in the current period.⁵⁴

MANHOOD AND THE EARLY MARTIAL TRADITION AS INSPIRATION TO LATER GENERATIONS: EARLIER WARRIORS

When Nelson Mandela made his speeches from the dock in court cases in 1962 and at the Rivonia trial in 1964, he referred to the impact that tales about earlier warriors had had on him:

[W]hen I was a boy brought up in my village in the Transkei, I listened to the elders of the tribe telling stories about the good old days, before the arrival of the white man . . . Then the country was ours, in our name and right. We occupied the land, the forests, the rivers; we extracted the mineral wealth beneath the soil and all the riches of this beautiful country without let or hindrance. Then the country was ours, in our own name and right . . . We set up and operated our own government, we controlled our own armies and we organised our own trade and commerce. The elders would tell tales of the wars fought by our ancestors in defence of the fatherland, as well as the acts of valour performed by generals and soldiers during those epic days. The names of Dingane and Bambata, among the Zulus, of Hintsá, Makana, Ndlambe of the Amakhosa, of Sekhukhuni and others in the north, were mentioned as the pride and glory of the entire African nation.⁵⁵

This was or was to become an important part of liberation discourse over the years that followed. All broadcasts of the ANC's illegal radio station, *Radio Freedom*, would begin with references to earlier warriors of various peoples of South Africa. Illegal pamphlets referred to this heritage. Even to this day, it is conventional in

⁵⁴ Personal communication from Nomboniso Gasa, on the basis of research in Ntshingeni village, June 2004. Discussion with Dr W. Serote, Maputo, January 2004.

⁵⁵ N. Mandela, *The Struggle is My Life* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1990) 149–50. See his almost identical statement in the Rivonia trial, at 161. See also Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, at 128–9 regarding similar upbringing of boys in Sekhukhuneland. In an interview Walter Sisulu describes similar veneration of these heroic figures in his childhood; see W. Sisulu, *I Will Go Singing. Walter Sisulu Speaks of his Life and the Struggle for Freedom in South Africa* (New York: Robben Island Museum in association with The Africa Fund, c. 2001), 18, 214; for the way he taught history classes on Robben Island, see 164.

ANC celebrations, such as the presentation of the 8 January statement on the organisation's anniversary, to refer to these past heroes. This established a notion of the male warrior as hero in ANC self-identity, or as a model to be emulated. This remained part of Mandela's thinking in 1990, when he is quoted as referring to his military training in Algeria as having 'made me a man'.⁵⁶

In conducting the armed struggle, cadres were encouraged to see themselves as 'picking up the spear' that had been dropped when Bambata and others had been defeated in the last armed rebellion before Union, in 1906, and thus continuing a tradition of martial heroism and resistance.

The heroes, it will be noticed are all male. Certainly there were women warriors such as MaNthathi, who as the mother of the heir to the Tlokwa led her people in war, though not against the colonists. In the case of the Moorosi, as will be seen, women were prepared to fight the colonists. The exact role of women in these situations needs further examination.

One of the key figures in the heroic iconography listed by Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu was Makana,⁵⁷ who led an attack on the garrison in Grahamstown in 1819 and was sent to Robben Island, where he died trying to escape.⁵⁸ Of the many interesting features of Makana's life, some also raise issues of manhood. For instance, at that time there was conflict between Ndlambe, the regent of the Rarabe clan, and his nephew, the heir Ngqika (called Gaika by the colonists), who was collaborating with the colonisers (and, as often happened in these relationships, was 'rewarded' in the end by also having his own land seized). What is interesting for our purposes in defining the areas of difference between Ndlambe and Ngqika is reference in official literature to the followers of Ndlambe *not regarding Ngqika as a man*.

When Makana surrendered to the British in order to end the warfare and plunder of Xhosa lands, a delegation of councillors approached the British and, according to the British record, used language suffused with masculinist imagery to justify their rights:

Our fathers were MEN; they loved their cattle; their wives and children lived upon milk; they fought for their property. They began to hate the colonists, who coveted their all, and aimed at their destruction. [Emphasis in original]

⁵⁶ Quoted in Cock, *Colonels and Cadres*, 169.

⁵⁷ Sometimes referred to as Makhanda, Makanda or Nxele, meaning 'the left-handed one'.

⁵⁸ E. Roux, *Time Longer than Rope. A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa*, 2nd ed. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 8–17; N. Mostert, *Frontiers. The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 426ff, 472ff, 480–1; T. Pringle, *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa* (Cape Town: Struik, 1966), 216ff.

Now, their kraals and our fathers' kraals were separate. The boors made commandoes on our fathers. Our fathers drove them out of the Zuurveld; and we dwelt there, because we had conquered it. There we were circumcised.

...

We wish for peace; we wish to rest in our huts; we wish to get milk for our children; our wives wish to till the land. But your troops cover the plains, and swarm in the thickets, where they cannot distinguish the man from the woman, and shoot all.

You want us to submit to Gaika [Ngqika]. That man's face is fair to you, but his heart is false. Leave him to himself. Make peace with us. Let him fight for himself – and we shall not call on you for help . . . But if you will still make war, you may indeed kill the last man of us – but *Gaika shall not rule over the followers of those who think him a woman.*⁵⁹

This discourse illustrates an early theme of manhood being associated with willingness to resist, willingness to defend your land and protect your people, womenfolk in particular, who were not supposed to be targets in warfare. The depiction of Ngqika as a woman implies cowardice and treachery, while morality and honour are associated with being a man. Similar imagery is found during the Moorosi rebellion against the British in 1879, when the British hold Chief Moorosi's son, Lehana, captive and he hesitates over rescuing him. Atmore reports: 'Moorosi was under great psychological pressure to authorise the rescuing of the prisoners before it was too late. Lehana's mother is said to have upbraided him: "I don't produce children for the white man. You take this skirt and give me your trousers [a very short Basuto garment]"'.⁶⁰ Even in this process of women challenging gender roles, they accepted the notion – by reference to wearing pants – that warfare was an attribute of manhood.

Clearly, then, when Mandela and Radio Freedom invoked the memory of Makana and others they were appealing to a martial and primarily masculinist tradition. But within that martial tradition, as it evolved, there were variations, with the full extent of women's role still to be uncovered and acknowledged. It is argued below that later periods disclose many variations in manifestations of masculinity and femininity, some diverging from notions of 'heroic masculinity', including what may be called 'heroic femininity' and others conforming to these.

⁵⁹ Pringle, *Narrative*, 285–7, referred to by Pringle as a 'manly remonstrance' at 287. Spelling as in original. Emphasis in final sentence inserted.

⁶⁰ A. Atmore, 'The Moorosi Rebellion: Lesotho, 1879', in *Protest and Power in Black Africa*, edited by R. I. Rotberg and A. Mazrui (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 3 at 23. Atmore's spelling of Basotho.

HEROIC PROJECTS

Notions of ‘heroic masculinity’ have been drawn from masculinity theories and applied to the South African situation.⁶¹ While there is definitely something useful and suggestive in this approach, we need to be extremely wary of casting notions of heroism within a monolithic model. Even where someone may well be correctly designated as a male hero, by the definitions of the struggle concerned or by other forms of characterisation, we may well find, as the evidence to be presented shows, that these heroic figures have quite varied ways of playing out their masculinity and heroism or conduct themselves in a manner that requires modification of this notion. This is not necessarily to contest the way in which some literature does depict male heroism, as Unterhalter shows; however, that is not the only model of manhood and heroism found within the ANC-led national liberation movement. Also, as indicated, the ‘heroic project’ was never confined to men.

Underground work and ‘revolutionary masculinity’

Underground work may have been mainly the work of men, leaving women behind to look after children and attend to other household responsibilities. In this respect it conforms to or is depicted as conforming to a pattern of ‘heroic masculinity’, where the man is assumed to ‘make history’ and the woman’s domain is the private sphere.⁶² Thus Ben Turok writes after having placed a bomb at the Rissik Street post office:

Mary [Turok’s wife] asked me what the matter was and I was not able to tell her, but she knew that I was on edge. When she read the newspaper the next day, everything became clear. She was rather resentful at not having known about my MK role and we discussed this. *Certainly, she had to pay as high a price as I did. She had previously been left with the children while I was in hiding and she had to face the police when I was away. But our security demanded this kind of balance and she was bound to accept the arrangement.*⁶³

And again:

Deeply steeped in these [revolutionary] texts, I now saw myself as a typical communist revolutionary. I held senior posts in the ANC,⁶⁴ SACP and MK. My personal life was now overtaken by my being swamped with work; I was constantly in meetings. Mary had also

61 Cf. Unterhalter, ‘Work of the Nation’. See also Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, below.

62 Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, 114, 117ff and ch 5 generally.

63 B. Turok, *Nothing but the Truth. Behind the ANC’s Struggle Politics* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2003), 130. Emphasis added.

64 For the record, whites could not be members of the ANC until the 1969 Morogoro conference opened membership to those based outside the country.

become fully integrated into the work of the COD⁶⁵ as chair of the Johannesburg branch *while trying hard not to neglect the boys . . .*⁶⁶

In other words, Ben Turok's job was to concentrate on revolutionary texts and activities. Mary could be involved, but without neglecting the children. The assumptions, which need to be problematised, appear to be in line with the masculinist view that man has been assumed to 'make history'.⁶⁷

This consigning of women to the private domain relates to a heroic male mythology.⁶⁸ Stephen Whitehead writes:

Despite its inherent flaws, the image and mythology of man leaving home to engage in a heroic project maintains a resounding presence in most societies. We see the mythology at work in the notion of 'man as hunter'; the adult male subjecting himself to the rigours and dangers of the wild, far removed from the comfort of (female) home . . . Yet despite their absence from the main scene, which such notions suggest, women play a key role in the imagery of 'man in his world' . . . Woman is the Other that necessarily exists in order to allow man to assume his central role. Indeed, at a practical level, women are usually the ones who make the necessary sacrifices of time and energy in order to supply the means and space for men to exercise their heroic project.⁶⁹

. . .

In the 'real world', the dilemmas of the heroic male project, together with their irresistible character, are caught in the timeless images of men trudging resolutely off to war, waved off by their womenfolk.⁷⁰

Elaine Unterhalter, in a study comprising mainly South African 'struggle autobiographies', identifies a common construction of masculinity in texts across race, class and generation:

The work of heroic masculinity . . . is work where men cross boundaries of race, class, ethnicity and age, trusting different men (and some women) with their lives, generally despite the effects of socialisation, and the strictures of the state which warn against such a course . . .

Heroism and adventure is work lived exclusively in the public realm, which must be supported unquestioningly by the private sphere (mothers, wives, girlfriends, children) . . . In men's autobiographical writing the support provided by a feminised portrayal of 'home' is always complemented by male camaraderie, deep bonds of friendship formed in adversity. Side by side with heroic autonomy, is deep loyalty generally to other men. If there is a choice between the private (feminine) world and the public sphere of heroism and adventure, the

65 This is the abbreviation for the Congress of Democrats, an organisation formed for whites within what became the Congress Alliance, comprising the ANC, South African Indian Congress, Coloured Peoples' Congress, COD and later SACTU, which was formed in 1955.

66 Turok, *Nothing But the Truth*, 139. Emphasis added.

67 M. O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1983).

68 Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, 117ff.

69 Ibid., 119.

70 Ibid., 120. What characterised the South African situation is that there were generally no 'goodbyes' to loved ones, and that it was also a heroic female project, as indicated.

choice is always made by the author for the public world, backed up by reference to history. The sacrifice of 'the soft world' of feminised relationships is justified in terms of the 'hard achievements' of heroism and male camaraderie.⁷¹

This may accurately convey the content of these works. However, further evidence from outside of such writings creates complexity in applying this picture to South Africa. There were women such as Ray Alexander, who joined the Communist underground, while her husband, Jack Simons, refused to do so, to some extent reversing conventional domestic responsibilities.⁷² This replicated a pattern in their marriage, where Jack, a leading theorist, would drive Ray to her trade union negotiations and wait in the car, having to content himself with his books, flask and sandwiches.⁷³ It is also a characterisation that is immediately qualified by different conceptions of manhood, some of which are referred to below, as well as by the reality of women not always conforming to these conceptions of their role. There were women as well as men in MK and the broader underground, as we will see. In some cases these women had men under their command.⁷⁴

DIVERSE MODELS OF MANHOOD

It is interesting to investigate and interrogate the models of manhood within the ANC. There were many people who may have represented, through their conduct, models that were commended to others, much like the Cubans say 'be like Che [Guevara]'. Many of these may well conform to macho militaristic images. Military activities themselves may encourage traditional notions of manhood.

One of these individuals, however, who was one of the most famous revolutionary models, did not conform to 'traditional' or contemporary 'hegemonic' macho notions of manhood. This was Vuyisile Mini, composer of revolutionary songs, including the famous '*Nants' indod' emnyama . . . /Watch out Verwoerd/Vorster here comes the black man*'. Mini was a South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) unionist, early MK soldier and Communist. He died on the gallows, convicted on false evidence. Cadres used to be told stories about Mini being offered his freedom on death row in exchange for supplying information about his comrades, and refusing. In the tradition of freedom

71 Unterhalter, 'Work of the Nation', 166–7.

72 R. Alexander Simons, *All My Life and All My Strength. Autobiography*, edited by R. Suttner (Johannesburg: STE Publishers, 2004); R. Suttner, 'The Reconstitution of the South African Communist Party as an Underground Organisation', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 22 (January 2004): 43 at 49.

73 Alexander Simons, *All My Life*.

74 See below and interview, Faith Radebe, 2004. There are many such women, including Thenjiwe Mtintso, Dipuo Mvelase and (now General) Jackie Sedibe (MK name Molefe).

fighters ‘holding their heads high’, Mini is said to have walked his last steps to the gallows singing some of the many freedom songs he had composed.⁷⁵

These are the qualities often associated with being a revolutionary, and in particular with what one may call ‘revolutionary masculinity’, found especially in someone like Che Guevara or Chris Hani (MK and SACP leader, assassinated in 1993). The oral and written tradition amongst the members of a liberation movement tends to create a model of what is revolutionary conduct and which people are exemplars of such conduct. Clearly Mini has been projected as representing such a model.

But there was also a side to Mini that is not so easily assimilated into this convention (just as there are elements of Chris Hani’s *persona* which, it will be shown, raise similar ambiguities in accommodating such a label). In so far as it is a masculinist tradition, there are elements of his conduct that disrupt the conduct supposedly expected of male heroes.

Sobizana Mngqikana, as a member of the Border Regional Command Secretariat, was instructed, after the formation of MK in 1961, to write to comrades in Port Elizabeth demanding a report back on the ANC conference that had been held in Lobatse in 1962. In some ways this mode of operating was a hangover from the earlier period of constitutionalism, demanding normal forms of accountability, without sensitivity to the changed conditions demanded by illegality.⁷⁶ Sobizana Mngqikana reports:

In response to our demand a delegation comprising Vuyisile Mini and [Caleb] Mayekiso⁷⁷ came to East London. The meeting lasted from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. the following day. The four-room house in which we held the meeting was discreetly guarded and secured by MK cadres. Before we could delve into the main part of the meeting, Mini, in tears, expressed dismay at the uncomradely letter we had written. ‘Did we know the implications of the resort to armed struggle’, he asked? ‘Did we appreciate that blood is going to flow and that lives are going to be lost?’ At some stage he couldn’t continue as tears rolled down his cheeks. Mayekiso, I remember, mildly reproached him: ‘Vuyisile, Vuyisile stop this, stop this!’ After a while he cooled down and proceeded to give a report of the Lobatse conference and the expectations that the leadership had of us . . .⁷⁸

75 K. Luckhardt and B. Wall, *Organise or Starve! The History of the South African Congress of Trade Unions* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), 177–8, who refer to Mini as a ‘musician and poet of exceptional quality’. See also material on websites: ‘Vuyisile Mini Worker, Poet and Martyr for Freedom’, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/misc/mini.html>; ‘Vuyisile Mini’, <http://disa.nu.ac.za/articledisplaypage.asp?filename=DAS186&articletitle=Vuyisile+M>; ‘Vuyisile Mini’, <http://www.sacp.org.za/biographies/vmini.html>.

76 See discussion of other examples of this phenomenon in R. Suttner, ‘Early History of the African National Congress (ANC) Underground: From the M-Plan to Rivonia’. *South African Historical Journal* 49 (Nov. 2003): 123 at 139.

77 He was also to die after torture in police detention.

78 Interview S. Mngqikana, 2 February 2001, Stockholm.

What this account shows is a revolutionary hero conducting himself in a manner that does not conform to conventional notions of manhood according to which men are not supposed to shed tears, that being the role of wives and widows. It contradicts the idea found in much masculinist discourse that the rational is the prerogative of males and the emotional that of females.⁷⁹ In other words, MK soldiers, and members of ANC are provided here with a model of manhood that may disrupt conventional military expectations of what it entailed to be a man.

The model presented by Chris Hani is especially important because in some ways he has attained heroic status equivalent to that of Che Guevara in the Cuban struggle. This is not to suggest that all who admire him emulate all elements of his personal conduct, nor that Hani was a saint. But there is a complexity in Hani's life and a definite break from stereotypes of the male hero that need to be factored into any account of masculinities within the ANC.

This often stereotypical notion of macho soldiers is countered by Faith Radebe's account of male soldiers' longing to have children visit the camp in Angola. She reports how they continually asked that Angolan women be allowed to visit the camp with their children so that they could have children around them. In the same camp men objected to pregnant women being sent to Tanzania to have their babies, which they did because the only facilities were available there. They wanted women to have babies in the camp and facilities to be provided. They longed for elements of normality in their lives, represented in this case by the presence of babies.⁸⁰

Revolutionary morality and the suppression of the personal

Involvement in a revolution, which is what motivated the ANC/SACP underground organisation, especially in the period of insurrection, raises under-researched questions concerning the impact of these activities on conceptions of the personal and the negation of intimacy associated with overriding demands for sacrifice and loyalty to something greater than oneself. It may be that many of these values also feed into conceptions of masculinity already referred to, which may be dominant (though contested) in the ANC's self-conception, and in particular in those activities of the organisation considered most heroic.⁸¹

⁷⁹ See Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, ch 5, especially 179, Connell, *Masculinities*, 39, 164–5, 187.

⁸⁰ Interview Faith Radebe, 11 October 2004, Johannesburg.

⁸¹ Unterhalter, 'Work of the Nation', Suttner, 'Being a Revolutionary'.

There is a substantial body of revolutionary literature, some of which used to be much sought after, which has a specific orientation towards the place of the personal. Liu ShaoQi, notes from whose work ‘How to be a Good Communist’ were found in Nelson Mandela’s handwriting at Rivonia, is one of these.⁸² He writes very bluntly: ‘A PARTY MEMBER’S PERSONAL INTERESTS MUST BE UNCONDITIONALLY SUBORDINATED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE PARTY . . . At all times and on all questions, a Party member should give first consideration to the interests of the Party as a whole, and put them in the forefront and place personal matters and interests second . . . [E]very Party member must completely identify his personal interests with those of the Party both in his thinking and in his actions . . .’⁸³ In essence, a revolutionary is taken to be an individual who expects nothing personally, and who is prepared to sacrifice all personal needs in order to ensure success of the struggle.⁸⁴ Consequently, there is no sacrifice too great, nor any situation in which personal needs may supplant those of the organisation. The heroic legacy of party cadres is constantly communicated to members.⁸⁵ The French Communist Party, during the period of resistance to Nazism, was known as the ‘Party of the executed’ because it suffered so many deaths in the Resistance.⁸⁶ The exemplary revolutionary life of Ernesto Che Guevara, the famous Argentinean-born Cuban revolutionary, inspired generations of revolutionaries throughout the world. Yet his ideas also contain a specific notion of the personal and the political that we are in a position to interrogate more closely now.⁸⁷

Earlier, examination or discussion of this nature might not have been possible for many who were in the thick of the liberation struggle, given the conditions of operation. Furthermore, whatever the dangers or negative legacies in this perspective, to which I will draw attention, Guevara’s position and that of Liu, just quoted, may have been among the conditions necessary for success in revolutionary ventures. Single-mindedness may have been required to carry out the tasks of a revolutionary successfully, and also helped blot out some of the pain.⁸⁸

82 N. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom. The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Randburg: Macdonald Purnell, 1994), 347.

83 Liu ShaoQi, *Selected Works of Liu ShaoQi*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984 [1939]), 136–7. Capitals in original. See also Turok, *Nothing but the Truth*, and Suttner, ‘Being a Revolutionary’.

84 Cf. G. Hermet, *The Communists in Spain. Study of an Underground Political Movement*, translated by S. Seago and H. Fox (Westmeath, Hants.: Saxon House, Lexington Books, 1971), 148ff.

85 Hermet, *The Communists in Spain*, 149.

86 R. Palme Dutt, *The Internationale* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964), 271.

87 Cf. C. Guevara, *Che Guevara Reader. Writings on Guerrilla Strategy, Politics and Revolution*, Edited by David Deutschmann (Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press, 1997 [1965]).

88 Cf. R. Suttner, *Inside Apartheid’s Prison. Notes and Letters of Struggle* (Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001), for example ch. 1.

The argument will not be that some harmonisation between personal and political needs was always impossible. There are cases where it was achieved, despite the great stresses. It may be that Albertina and Walter Sisulu achieved this in their marriage.⁸⁹ Walter and Albertina Sisulu's responsibilities to the 'ANC as family' do not seem to have impaired their conventional role and exercise of responsibilities to children and grandchildren. In fact, Walter Sisulu was constantly consulted on Robben Island about the naming of children and asked for his advice on other family issues. Albertina Sisulu's role as mother cannot be narrowly confined to that of a caregiver or whatever other conventional notions attach to motherhood. As a mother, she also saw herself as a politiciser of her own children and a wide range of others who came to be embraced in the notion of 'sons and daughters'.⁹⁰

It may nevertheless be true that the denial of the personal was *generally* one of the conditions for the successful carrying out of revolutionary activities in many situations. The reason for probing is that there are consequences and scars that have been left through these sacrifices and they need to be recognised, acknowledged and, if possible, remedied.⁹¹ Yeats, in his profound but ambivalent poem commemorating the martyrs of the Irish Easter 1916 rising, writes:

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.⁹²

This numbing of emotions may be part of the legacy of ANC/SACP underground organisation, for it may well be that these conceptions of revolutionary morality were more thoroughly absorbed in the underground situation than any other site of struggle.⁹³ There are sacrifices beyond those that are known that remain with many people, unacknowledged as part of their contribution.

Underground work and its secrecy forced choices, with enduring pain and guilt, on many cadres. Many had to leave their homes and families and loved ones,

89 E. Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu. In Our Lifetime* (Claremont: David Philip, 2002); R. Suttner, 'A Revolutionary Love', *Mail & Guardian*, 19 February 2003.

90 See A. W. Marx, *Lessons of Struggle. South African Internal Opposition, 1960–1990* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1992), 100; T. Strasburg (director), *A South African Love Story – Walter and Albertina Sisulu* (Quest Star Communications, 2004), statement of Lindiwe Sisulu.

91 See interviews in H. Bernstein, *The Rift. The Exile Experience of South Africans* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994).

92 W. B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973), 204.

93 This suppression of emotions was also very necessary in prison, where prisoners sometimes felt that allowing themselves to hope for release and a satisfying personal life would weaken their resolve. See Suttner, *Inside Apartheid's Prison*.

usually without informing them of their departure.⁹⁴ At the time, the expectation was that they would soon return, instead of being away for decades. Many left children as babies, only to see them again three decades later.⁹⁵ When explaining that the underground group to which he belonged (after release from the first of two terms of imprisonment) used to tell young people that the time had come to leave to join MK, Anton Qaba was clear that there was no opportunity for farewells. There was no such thing as 'I have left this or that at home'. Allowing people to return to their homes could compromise the security of everyone involved in the operation.⁹⁶

Hilda Bernstein captures the pain:

Exile exacts its price not only from those who leave, but also from those who are left: parents and siblings; and wives and children left by husbands who fled across the border, often without a word of farewell and leaving behind no money for material needs . . .

Many who left concealed their intention to depart from those closest to them – parents, wives (mostly; few women left husbands), brothers and sisters – both for self-protection and to protect those left behind from reprisals and allegations of complicity. Then their lives were haunted by the unresolved departure – not having said goodbye . . . Without the rites of farewell the one who had departed was already within the realm of the dead.

Abrupt and secret departure added a sense of guilt to the exiles' pain of unresolved separation from the closest members of the family. Some mothers left babies, believing they would be reunited within a short time – only to meet them again when they were strangely grown . . .⁹⁷

Eric Mtshali left to join MK in 1962 without being able to inform or say goodbye to his wife or children. Eight years later, without having had any contact, his wife died.

Q: So you have no idea of what your wife thought about your just disappearing?

A: Absolutely

Q: Did it pain you a lot?

A: Yes it did, but I took it like a man . . .⁹⁸

Faith Radebe fully accepts the need in a revolution for operational considerations to take precedence. However, this placed intolerable strain on

94 For example N. Duka, *From Shantytown to Forest. Story of Norman Duka*, recorded and edited by Dennis and Ginger Mercer (Richmond, BC Canada: LSM Information Centre, 1974), 58ff; Thomas Nkobi and Ruth Mompati in Bernstein, *The Rift*, 16–7, 18–20, 21–2.

95 Interview with Ike Maphotho, 28 January 2004, Polokwane

96 Interview with Anton Qaba, 2 March 2004, Pietermaritzburg.

97 Bernstein, *The Rift*, xiv. See the account of Ruth Mompati in *The Rift*, 20–2.

98 Interview with Eric Mtshali, 8 February 2003, Johannesburg.

her marriage. Husband and wife were not able to spend time together or sufficient time together at important moments of personal crisis or illness. She is clear that this did not feed into already existing weaknesses in her marriage, but states that the demands of the national liberation movement made it impossible to relate in a manner that could sustain the relationship. Her comments, however, are not intended to blame or repudiate the revolution or the liberation movement. It is a reality that Radebe sees as regrettable, but one of the necessary or inevitable fallouts from a revolution.⁹⁹

This type of severance of relationships was not peculiar to underground organisation in that imprisonment often ruptured relationships irreparably.¹⁰⁰ Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Communist who died in Mussolini's prison, never saw his wife or children after his arrest.¹⁰¹

Success in underground work meant that operatives had to harden themselves and repress basic needs to communicate with others. The work meant concealing important parts of their lives and fears and anxieties. Often this created misunderstandings in not meeting people's social expectations, or simply failing to explain adequately why some or another thing was done or not done.¹⁰² Underground life sets serious limits on social and emotional life, and safeguarding what is done below the surface limits what can be done above ground.

Love for the people versus interpersonal love

Paradoxically, neither Liu nor Guevara denies the importance of love. In the revolutionary context, however, they do not conceive of or acknowledge love as an inter-personal phenomenon. Personal love is supplanted by 'love for the people'.¹⁰³ Guevara writes:

At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality. . . . *Our*

99 Interview. Obviously when one is outside such a struggle and does not make the choices Radebe makes one can adopt various moral positions towards the break-up of a marriage. Radebe had nevertheless made certain choices and she recognises this as being the unfortunate outcome.

100 Cf. interview with Ahmed Kathrada, 18 February 2003, Cape Town and many references in Kathrada, *Memoirs*.

101 G. Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary* (London: New Left Books, 1970).

102 Cf. Jeremy Cronin quotation in Frederikse, *The Unbroken Thread*, 126–7.

103 Although the testimony of Guevara's daughter, Aleida, in an article on his *Motor Cycle Diaries*, indicates an atmosphere of love in the family environment. See 'Riding My Father's Motorcycle' at <http://www.cubasolidarity.com/aboutcuba/cubaspeaks/cheguevara/041009aleida.htm>, where she describes him as 'the most complete man I've ever met'.

vanguard revolutionaries must make an ideal of this love of the people, of the most sacred causes, and make it one and indivisible . . .

The leaders of the revolution have children just beginning to talk, who are not learning to say 'daddy.' *They have wives who must be part of the general sacrifice of their lives in order to take the revolution to its destiny.* The circle of their friends is limited strictly to the circle of comrades in the revolution. There is no life outside of it.

. . . We must strive every day so that this love of living humanity is transformed into actual deeds, into acts that serve as examples, as a moving force.

. . . There is also the danger of the weakness we can fall into. If a man thinks that dedicating his entire life to the revolution means that in return he should not be distracted by such worries as that one's child lacks some necessity, then with this reasoning one's mind is open to infection by the germs of future corruption.

In our case *we have maintained that our children should have or should go without those things that the children of the common man have or go without, and that our families should understand this and struggle for it to be that way . . .*¹⁰⁴

Liu relates the question of love to 'communist morality', the need to 'show loyalty to and love for all comrades, all revolutionaries and working people'.¹⁰⁵

Ray Alexander Simons describes how she was unwilling to return to Latvia, from where she had emigrated as a teenager, in order to be with her fiancé. '[A]lthough I was not in love with any other man, *I was indeed "in love" with the people here, the country and the struggle against race discrimination*'.¹⁰⁶

Writing of the Spanish Communist Underground, Guy Hermet refers to the party as 'a sort of extended family in which memories and hopes are shared and to which [the member] is tied both emotionally and materially. In a letter to his wife from prison Julian Grimian uses just the word – family – when he refers to the party, saying that it was sending him too many parcels, considering the financial difficulties it was in'. The USSR also formed an over-arching family figure for party members.¹⁰⁷

In South Africa, Communists sometimes used the word *family* as a metaphor or code word to refer to the party. This was also true of the ANC. One woman cadre, in explaining to her children that she had to leave them behind in Tanzania in order to execute an ANC assignment, tells them, 'although I may be your mother, your real mother and father are the ANC. The ANC will look after you, feed you and clothe you'.¹⁰⁸ This conception is found earlier, in

104 Guevara, *Che Guevara Reader*, 211–2. Emphasis added.

105 Liu ShaoQi, *Selected Works*, 137.

106 Alexander Simons, *All My Life*, 81. Italics inserted.

107 Hermet, *The Communists in Spain*, 149.

108 In Z. Majodina, *Exiles and Homecoming: The Untold Stories* (Johannesburg: Heinemann South Africa, 1995), 29.

recollections of the role of volunteers in the Congress of the People campaign, which led to the adoption of the Freedom Charter. Mrs Sibanda, an old volunteer from Cradock, reported, 'Whenever we went to people's houses, and they were in trouble, or had problems, we would become mothers of that family, and men volunteers should be fathers'.¹⁰⁹

Dealing with the question of comrades marrying while in MK, von den Steinen refers to 'the common slogan that the ANC was each comrade's mother and father'.¹¹⁰ Permission had to be sought from the ANC leadership before a couple could marry. Security considerations made contact with family back home difficult, if not impossible, and placed strain on young couples who felt that taking such a step without the knowledge of their family was problematic.¹¹¹ Baleka Mbete argues that the need for the organisation to approve was not a manifestation of authoritarianism but a responsible attitude, ensuring that adequate investigations were conducted to ensure that other parties were not prejudiced, for example, undisclosed spouses left behind in South Africa. There was also an overall need to care for young people who left in their teens and had no role models other than the mothers and fathers in the ANC.¹¹² Even once such permission had been received, however, the needs of the organisation sometimes placed inordinate strain on these relationships, with partners often being deployed far away from one another.

The question one may ask today relates to the consequences of wives or children not being consulted about the sacrifices that the (usually, but we have seen not always) husbands/revolutionaries decided should be their lot.¹¹³ We know this consultation usually did not take place and may well have endangered the activities of MK had it occurred. Obviously this left much 'unfinished business' possibly needing to be resolved. It is also interesting that the designation 'revolutionary' in much revolutionary literature appears to be assumed to apply almost exclusively to males.

109 R. Suttner and J. Cronin, *Thirty Years of the Freedom Charter* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), 12.

110 L. K. von den Steinen, 'Soldiers in the Struggle. Aspects of the Experiences of Umkhonto we Sizwe's Rank and File Soldiers – the Soweto Generation and After' (MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1999), 207.

111 *Ibid.*, 207–8.

112 Interview with Baleka Mbete, 19 February 2003, Cape Town, and with Pallo Jordan, 20 February 2003, Cape Town.

113 Apart from the earlier quotation regarding sacrifices that the revolution demanded of families of the leaders, one of the most famous revolutionary statements, Che Guevara's farewell letter to Fidel Castro on resigning from the Cuban government, cited in Guevara, *Che Guevara Reader*, 354 includes the following sentiments: 'Wherever I am, I will feel the responsibility of being a Cuban revolutionary, and I shall behave as such. I am not ashamed that I leave nothing material to my children and my wife: I am happy it is that way. I ask nothing for them, as the state will provide them with enough to live on and have an education'.

These notions of love may also have resulted in specific conceptions of parental responsibility and relationships, as part of this vision of a broader love of the people that tends to supplant or downgrade the interpersonal, including responsibilities towards children. Freddy Reddy, a psychiatrist working in MK camps in Angola, from the 1970s reports a consultation in which he was involved concerning a young man who left the country to join MK, but mainly to meet his father. He had hardly known his father, who had been in prison during his childhood and then joined MK outside. Reddy describes their meeting and the differing reactions of father and son:

The first time he saw his father was on the parade ground during inspection. He was very excited, but his father gave not the slightest sign of recognition, nor did he contact him later after the inspection. The boy was emotionally devastated. He felt that his father did not love him. It was not very long before he developed confusional psychosis. On asking his father why he ignored his son, he replied that *everyone in the camp was his children*: 'I could not give him special treatment'.¹¹⁴

How widespread was this attitude? To what extent was the embrace of this wider notion of parenting an adoption of wider responsibilities towards children in general, or was it primarily a mode for displacing or repressing the need for responsibility towards one's own children?

In fact, many young people missed their parents very much. Phumla Tshabalala speaks of missing her mother every night. But it was not only the young girls or women; she said there was no one who did not miss their mother. In fact, Gertrude Shope, head of the ANC Women's Section, was asked to visit camps for two days instead of one because there were so many young men who wanted to be with a motherly figure.¹¹⁵

Women in MK testify to Chris Hani's departure from what may often have been the norm, making cadres feel that their personal fears and emotional make-up were as much the concern of the army as strategy and tactics. Dipuo Mvelase, a female MK commander, describes the way in which Hani raised issues that for many people were outside the bounds of revolutionary discourse:

He was . . . a comrade to whom you felt you can say anything and not feel bad about it, whether it is personal or . . . about the struggle . . . Someone you could confide in, probably say certain things that I couldn't even say to my mum . . . Despite the fact that everybody needed his attention because he was the commander . . . we had about three hundred new recruits and he

114 F. G. Reddy and S. M. Karterud, 'Must the Revolution Eat its Children? Working with the African National Congress (ANC) in Exile and Following its Return', in *Group Process and Political Dynamics*, edited by M. F. Ettlín, J. W. Fidler and B. D. Cohen (Madison: International Universities Press, 1995), 217 at 226. Italics inserted.

115 Interview with Phumla Tshabalala, 13 July 2003, Johannesburg, and with Nomphumelelo Setsubi, 20 August 2004, Pretoria; confirmed by Faith Radebe interview and Reddy and Karterud, 'Must the Revolution', 227.

spent every single evening talking to us. And you felt wanted, you felt at home. You felt important you know.

Asking you about your family, how you feel, what is your experience, do you miss home? Questions that you thought you wouldn't be asked because we are in a revolution . . . you as a person, you get lost . . . But Comrade Chris made sure that you don't get lost . . . [H]e humanised the struggle . . . He made every one of us feel we count. This is something that one never experienced before, because there are those big expectations that revolutionaries have to do this – have to sacrifice that. That revolutionaries are ordinary people, one never felt that until I met Comrade Chris.¹¹⁶

Hani also integrated this concern with the personal into the way cadres were briefed prior to being sent on missions into the country. His briefing:

had more to do with you and your readiness than with the details of your mission. He would ask: are you really ready and some people find they are not really ready to come into the county. But they are scared because they will be called cowards . . . less revolutionary.

He made you feel that if you are not ready it doesn't mean you are less revolutionary . . . You can still make a contribution and to win the war it doesn't mean you have to be in the country . . . And Comrade Chris used to be more concerned about you succeeding, you fighting so that you can fight tomorrow. Not you fighting and making a sacrifice and be put in the heroes' book. The *life* of each and every soldier used to be very important to him. He used to ask: Do you think there are things that are personal that you need to sort out? His view was that if you go home with the baggage of certain personal problems that are not resolved, that are not addressed, you might not be very, very confident in fulfilling your mission – that you might *die* and that used to concern him *very, very much*.

We all joined the army because we were angry, but once you are there . . . some people discover that they really don't want to go back home and fight, you know, and because of an army situation there isn't enough space to accommodate that . . . Comrade Chris managed to accommodate it because he used to deal with us individually and discuss with us and find out what troubles us, what makes us happy, you know, and that . . . was very important, more important than the mission itself because these people – we have to implement these missions, and not some objects because they happen to have skills . . .¹¹⁷

Women in MK also testify to Hani's always stressing gender issues, introducing rules to protect women from abuse and seeking to ensure that they were deployed for what they were trained to do, as soldiers, equal to the men.¹¹⁸

NO EASY ROUTE TO CHARACTERISING AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS MASCULINITIES

This article has tried to convey through a limited period of ANC history the essential conditionality of any assessment of masculinities within the

¹¹⁶ Interview with Dipuo Mvelase, 29 June 1993, Johannesburg. Nomphumelo Setsubi in interview reports similar impressions.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Dipuo Mvelase, 29 June 1993, Johannesburg.

¹¹⁸ Interviews with Dipuo Mvelase and Nomphumelelo Setsubi.

organisation. The ANC carries a number of legacies within its organisational consciousness, practices and individual identities. Some of these are warrior traditions. Some link the ANC to cultural systems preceding and coexisting with members joining the organisation. Some stress specific conditions of manhood that may presuppose limits on the role of women. Yet other elements of that legacy are conducive to realising gender equality. Notions of manhood within the ANC are diverse. It may be that the examples of Hani and Mini are atypical of MK or MK leadership or that of the ANC-led liberation movement as a whole. They nevertheless represented role models for many, which perhaps complicates the picture and indicates the urgent need to go beyond formal texts or other writings and uncover the variety of actual relationships that existed. Before more can be said, further research needs to be done in order to bring this legacy to the surface and unpack the extent to which it affects the present.

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