

A HISTORY OF MASCULINITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA: CONTEXT AND PARAMETERS

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Opsomming

Die geskiedenis van manlikheid is 'n relatief nuwe genre waarin Suid-Afrikaanse academici begin beweeg. Geslagsidentiteit en identiteitsvorming het vanaf die 1980s wêreldwyd meer aandag begin geniet. Identiteite word as belangrike faktore gesien in die vorming en instandhouding van gemeenskappe en kan die verloop van die geskiedenis net so veel as klas, ras, ouderdom, ens., beïnvloed. Die doel is om 'n werkbare voorstel vir die skryf van 'n geskiedenis van manlikheid uiteen te sit. Om die doelstelling te bereik word daar kortliks gekyk na wat manlikheid, identiteit, vrouestudies, mansstudies en geslagsstudies behels. Die geskiedenis van manlikheid handel oor identiteite en persepsies van wat dit is om 'n man te wees en wat die rol van so 'n identiteit in die samelewing is. Tradisionele geskiedenis wat meestal deur mans geskryf is (asook die wat deur vrouens vir vrouegeskiedenis geskryf is) dui op neutrale geslagsidentiteite. Die doel van manlikheidsgeskiedenis is dus om die geslagsidentiteit uit te lig.

South African academics are attempting to introduce the relatively new genre of masculinities into the social sciences.¹ The debate has, however, barely touched on the importance of masculinities in the South African historical context. Are masculinities as causal or relational to historical events as has been shown by the use of the constructs or attributes of race, class, status group, culture, etc.? Is gender identity a determinant for individual, group and institutional agency in history? Historical debate requires agreement among practitioners as to what is and what is not relevant within the genre and whether it constitutes a part of history at all.² In South Africa the picture of the masculinities discourse is, as yet, not very clear. Very little of the research done to date provides a clear framework for the historian. In an attempt to rush towards this new discourse historians may be rehashing their old ideas and research areas to fit [uncomfortably at best] the

¹ Jeremy Krikler was perhaps the first to use masculinity as a tool of analysis in his paper entitled: "Race, class and gender in proletarian militancy: The Rand Revolt in comparative perspective." African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand (September 1993). Sandra Swart and Kobus du Pisani followed with some studies in Afrikaner masculinities. Rob Morrell has however stepped to the fore in actively promoting studies in masculinity in starting with the Colloquium on Masculinities held in July 1997 at the University of Natal, Durban.

² G.R. Allen, "Relaxing the reflexes: Reflections on Herodotus' 'Historical truth'", *New Contree*, 42 (November 1997), p. 47.

masculinities mould. The aim of this article is then to provide some sound and clear [although not absolute and final] parameters within which historians can move to produce a History of Masculinities. To meet this aim a workable concept of what a History of Masculinities entails will be attempted by briefly looking at the concepts of masculinity, gender identity, Women's studies, Men's studies, Gender Studies, as well as an outline of the theories of masculinity and gender identity. Some examples from South African works are noted to illustrate workable parameters for a History of Masculinities.

Masculinity and gender identity

Gender identities are constructs of a society or culture within their particular era and location. These identities obtain reality through social (often-fictional) representations of dominant and oppressed types.³ To be a man or a woman is an integral part of the individual's social identity. Identities are the foundation for the relationships and interactions within societies, cultures, communities and status groups. Analysing the relationships between men and women, women and men, and men and men are important for a better understanding of the past and the present.⁴ Moves recently within gender studies have tried to analyse these identities as determinants in the course of historical events. The large body of work on gangsterism is one example of the analysis of these relationships within the microcosm of the society within which gangs operate in the past and the present.⁵

Masculinity and femininity are ideological and social constructs in which any society displays huge variations and experiences. Experiences and perceptions of individuals also do not necessarily correlate to the gender identities and roles enforced by society. Identities invariably determine an individual's status and position in society, as well as

³ Rob Morrell, "Masculinities in South Africa: Towards a gendered approach to the past", *South African Historical Journal* (November 1997) p. 169; Morrell expands on this and some other issues raised in this paper in the December 1998 (vol. 24) issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies*. The whole issue deals with masculinity and is a result of the Colloquium on Masculinities held at the University of Natal, Durban, in July 1997. For purposes of this article the papers presented at the Colloquium are mostly referred to because the research for this paper was done before the publication of the December 1998 issue of the *Journal*; L. Segal, *Slow motion: Changing masculinities, changing men* (1997), pp. xxix, xxxv; M.S. Kimmel and M.A. Messner (eds), *Men's lives* (1995), pp. xx, xxi, xxii, 6, 8, 9.

⁴ Morrell, "Masculinities in South Africa", p. 169; Kobus du Pisani, "Persepsies van manlikheid in die Afrikaanse gemeenskap, 1935-1995." Paper presented at sixteenth biennial conference of the South African Historical Society (6-9 July 1997), p. 1; J. Tosh and M. Roper (eds), *Manful assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (1991), pp. 1-2.

⁵ The body of work is too large for this paper but see for example K. Mooney's paper, "Sheila's, flick knives, and sexuality: Exploring masculine identities in the Ducktail youth gang subculture in post World War Two South Africa." Paper presented at Colloquium on Masculinities, University of Natal, Durban (July 1997).

being important for the individual's self image. Individuals thus measure themselves against abstract notions and ideas of what it means to be male or female. The complexity of identity formation has influenced historians to look at socio-cultural aspects rather than the biological make up of men and women.⁶

A single framework for gender identity within a society is difficult to isolate because of the complexities involved in acquiring that identity. Men are recognised to be more complex in their focal gender identity than females. The male's initial socialisation process identifies strongly with the mother. This constantly conflicts with created perceptions of the male identity. Masculinity is therefore difficult to pinpoint and is referred to in terms of 'Masculine mystique.'⁷ This makes life difficult for the researcher because fictional creations or recreations of the male ideal are often found in source material. The interrelationship between masculinity or male identity and perceptions of that identity are just as complex for research on any society or era. This close interrelationship leads to gender stereotyping in which gender roles and stereotypes are maintained by 'societal control myths.'⁸

Societal control myths are identified in the portrayal of dominant and subordinate cultural representations, which are linked to male social power. The dominant masculinity is referred to as the hegemonic form of masculinity. The hegemonic form imposes a set of values (white, heterosexual, Anglo-Saxon, middle class – WHAM) by silencing, criticising and condemning other opposing and different types of male behaviour and identity [black, homosexual, or other minorities]. The real experiences of men in a society, male fantasy and perceptions about male roles, as well as the divergence into other types of masculinity complicate this.⁹ Masculinity and male identity [as with gender identity in general] is also dynamic and can change over time. The individual's concept of masculinity can also change as he (or she) gets older. These complexities can be seen in the exchange of ideas between the colonies and the Imperial culture about what a man should be. Women complicate the concept of gender identity even further by reinforcing preconceived notions about male identities and roles within society.¹⁰

⁶ Kimmel and Messner, *Men's lives*, p. xx; Du Pisani, "Manlikheid in Afrikaanse gemeenskap", pp. 5, 6; D. Richardson and V. Robinson (eds), *Introducing women's studies* (1993), pp. 6, 13.

⁷ Du Pisani, "Manlikheid in Afrikaanse gemeenskap", pp. 1, 3; Tosh and Roper, *Manful assertions*, p. 17.

⁸ Tosh and Roper, *Manful assertions*, pp. xiii, 61-64.

⁹ Tosh and Roper, *Manful assertions*, p. xvi.; Morrell, "Masculinities in South Africa", pp. 168, 169.

¹⁰ Catherine Hall, *White, male and middle class: Explorations in feminism and history* (1992). For the formation and interaction between the Imperial metropole and the periphery see also P. Randall, *Little England on the veldt: The private school system in South Africa* (1982), p. 2. See for instance Helen Bradford, "Gentlemen and Boers: Afrikaner nationalism, gender and colonial warfare in the

Theories of masculinity and gender identity

Three basic models of masculinity developed from Freudian and Darwinian concepts dating from the 1840s and into the twentieth century. Much of this had to do with moral codes of conduct for 'proper' (biologically defined) men. Biological models looked at the ways in which biological differences (man's levels of testosterone as an aggressive, violence inducing hormone and oestrogen in women as the passive, emotional, tender hormone) affected males and females in programming different social behaviour.¹¹ Anthropological models focussed on cross-cultural masculinity by stressing the differences in behaviour associated with men from different societies or cultures. This mostly related to differences in the form of survival techniques adopted by men and women. Sociological models have played upon the socialisation process in infancy and youth in the accommodation of sex role stereotyping. (Expressed and imprinted by the traditional stereotype where baby girls wear pink clothes and boys wear blue). Sex role theory is, however, too prescriptive because it assumes a specific type of masculinity [usually the hegemonic type] as 'normal'.¹²

Feminist writers stripped these three models of their ideological base in the early 1970s. By the late 1970s researchers in the United States moved away from assumptions of gender superiority. Men and masculinities were looked at differently to the traditional gender role prescriptions. Feminist approaches were used to look at the problematic, historically and culturally specific, and unattainable ideal of the contemporary sex role model.¹³ Masculinism (as with feminism) saw maleness as part of a political statement.¹⁴ Borrowing from the feminists was criticised because it was seen as ahistorical because it did not look at the way in which sex roles modify and change gender expectations over time. The dynamics of power and domination of, and inside, relationships and society was also denied by these approaches.¹⁵

South African War" on the women's roles in the continuation of the war by questioning the man's manhood, pp. 8-14. Paper presented at UNISA Conference (August 1998). Not yet extensively explored by Women's history is the concept of women adopting masculine traits. See Sylvia Vietzen, "The letters speak: Mary Moore, war and the Battle of Colenso, December 1899." Paper presented at UNISA Conference (August 1998). See also Jacklyn Cock, *Colonels and cadres* (1991).

¹¹ Researchers in the 1990s have debunked this myth as men and women have both chemicals in their bodies in quantities, which vary from individual to individual. See Kimmel and Messner, *Men's lives*, pp. xv, xvii, xvii.

¹² Kimmel and Messner, *Men's lives*, pp. xv, xvii, xvii.

¹³ Kimmel and Messner, *Men's lives*, p. xviii.

¹⁴ Kimmel and Messner, *Men's lives*, p. xix.

¹⁵ Kimmel and Messner, *Men's lives*, p. xix.

The academic approach to masculinities was delayed and only developed during the 1980s. Work produced prior to this was seen as an attempt by middle class white men to hold on to power. Researchers still backed away from wider gender issues and approaches because of the implications this had for their own masculinity and changes to their male identity.¹⁶ R.W. Connell was one of the first male researchers to actively use some wider gender approaches by looking at the role of masculinities within patriarchy. A class based understanding of history also influenced his work. Work done in women's studies in the early 1980s, which looked at gender role expectations within a class, race, age, sexual orientation, ethnic and demographic context, promoted the new approach to the study of masculinities.¹⁷ The South African social historian, Charles van Onselen, also started exploring the concepts of patriarchy and paternalism within class and race relations during the late 1980s, as did South African female writers with women's history.¹⁸ The concepts of patriarchy and paternalism are important to a study of masculinities in the South Africa context. Both black and white societies are based on and have relied on the male dominated household and extended family. Male dominated family structures (patriarchy) rely on coercion as well as fatherly love and material well being supplied by the male (paternalism) to maintain power and dominance.¹⁹ Patriarchy is a dual system of male oppression over women and other men. Research which exposed this dual system of oppression pointed to the stratification of masculinities, which compete aggressively (and sometimes violently) with (and within) one another and society.²⁰

Research into masculinities has highlighted that male identities are socially constructed, changeable and often contradictory.²¹ International researchers prefer the social constructivist perspective in their approach to masculinity. Men [and by implication women] are not seen as biologically determined beings. The complex socialisation

¹⁶ Kimmel and Messner, *Men's lives*, p. xix; Tosh and Roper, *Manful assertions*, p. 7.

¹⁷ Morrell, "Masculinities in South Africa", pp. 169, 170; Segal, *Slow motion*, p. xxiv.

¹⁸ See for example Charles van Onselen, "Race and class in the South African countryside: Cultural osmosis and social relations in the sharecropping economy of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950"; and "The social and economic underpinnings of paternalism and violence on the maize farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950." African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand (13 May 1991). The research for both these papers culminated in publication of *The seed is mine: The life of Kas Maine, a South African sharecropper* (1996), which uses both patriarchy and paternalism in analysing the racial and class interactions.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* ; See also Morrell, "Masculinities in South Africa", p. 172.

²⁰ Segal, *Slow motion*, p. xx ; Kimmel and Messner, *Men's lives*, pp. 6, 8, 9; See also the work of Van Onselen referred to in footnote 18 as well as Liz Walker, "Abortion: Some insights into power and patriarchy." Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of the Witwatersrand (20 March 1995).

²¹ Morrell, "Masculinities in South Africa", p. 169.

process forms and modifies gender identity to comply with changing circumstances.²² Masculinities are therefore not ordinarily produced by the individual [referred to as individual agency], but rather from social meanings derived from what masculinity is not. Masculinity is not feminine, not touched by inferiority [often referring to race], and definitely not 'gay'.²³ South African historians like Kobus du Pisani also prefer to use this form of analysis.²⁴ This may stem from the emphasis placed on the social aspects and impact of our history on society in the South African historiography.

The aspects and theories of masculinity and gender identity looked at here will provide some foundation for a workable notion (looked at later in this article) of what a History of Masculinities entails and where to set possible parameters for this new genre in South Africa.

Women's Studies, Men's Studies, and Gender Studies

International Gender Studies has moved from its origins in feminism to women to men and to broader based gender research.²⁵ Feminism, Women's Studies and Men's Studies currently still maintain their research focus. Feminist writing has a political agenda in promoting equality for women. Women's Studies include feminism and gender studies in placing women at the centre of historical and social analysis.²⁶ Men's Studies courses flowed from Women's Studies principally in the USA during the 1980s. The aim with Men's Studies was to deconstruct and reconstruct masculinities as a supplement to Women's Studies. Some looked to this development with suspicion, as it would again focus on men, annex hard gained ground and generally dilute past and future feminist research. Despite

²² Kimmel and Messner, *Men's lives*. pp. xx, xxi, xxii.

²³ Segal, *Slow motion*, pp. xxix, xxxv.

²⁴ Kobus du Pisani, "Wanneer 'n Boer nie meer boer nie: Die impak van verstedeliking op die vorming van hegemoniese manlikheid in die pre-apartheidsera (1934-1948)." Undated paper prepared for publication at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education; and "From puritanism to postmodernity - changing perceptions of masculinity in the Afrikaans culture." Paper presented at second international conference on "Crossroads in Cultural Studies", University of Tampere, Finland, (28 June to 1 July 1998); Rob Morrell's work also suggests the use of the social constructivist perspective.

²⁵ Gwen Duganzich, "She's who make history": A review of the historical treatment of black women by four contemporary South African scholars." Department of History, Rand Afrikaans University, (June 1997), p. 5.

²⁶ Duganzich, "She's who make history"; D. Richardson and V. Robinson (eds), *Introducing women's studies* (1993), p. 23.

the concerns raised, it was still recognised that it was important for male introspection to effect personal change to male power structures.²⁷

Men's Studies in the US was concerned with unlocking the gender neutrality of men in the same way that earlier feminists attempted for women. Recognition was still given to the role played by Women's Studies and the importance of gender as the central motive in organising social life. The men's movement in Britain during the 1980s was tied to feminist and liberationist ideals in which men wanted to divest themselves of the deformities which violent patriarchy was perceived to have engendered in men. The aggressive competitiveness of an inherited male dominance needed to be transformed in an emerging post-modernist world.²⁸

In the late 1980s and early 1990s Gender Studies was established as a field of research in Britain. In the US the division between Men's Studies and Women's Studies was maintained. Gender Studies looked at gender division as socially constructed, as part of social practice, social structures and the imagination.²⁹ Gender Studies presupposes an analysis of the interaction between men and women (and of masculinities and femininities) as part of the same society. Men and women are not seen, researched or analysed in isolation from one another and the society at large. Gender Studies or Gender History does not see Women's History and Men's History (or Men's Studies and Women's Studies) as separate issues when looking at society.³⁰ Gender Studies extends hegemonic male power from the personal and structural oppression of women to interactions with [as well as responses to] the family, other forms of male identity and the effects on history and society. Work done by Jacklyn Cock in the South African context is based on a broader analysis of gender identity.³¹ Opposition to Gender Studies was concerned that it would become a more politically correct expedient than Women's Studies and its separation from Men's Studies. Women would then be denied as a focus in research by depoliticising the relations between the sexes. It can be argued, however, that Women's Studies presents an imbalance in analysing the power relationships between men and women because only

²⁷ Richardson and Robinson, *Women's studies*, p. 23.

²⁸ Kimmel and Messner, *Men's lives*, p. xiv.; Tosh and Roper, *Manful assertions*, pp. 6, 11; John Bottomley, "The Burghers of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR): Proto-capitalists - or the typical warriors of an early modern conquest". Paper presented at Colloquium on Masculinities, University of Natal, Durban, (July 1997), pp. 1, 2, 4-6.

²⁹ Richardson and Robinson, *Women's studies*, pp. 23, 322; Tosh and Roper, *Manful assertions*, p. 11.

³⁰ Penelope Hetherington, "Women in South Africa: The historiography in English", in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies.*, 26, 2 (1993), pp. 253-255; Richardson and Robinson, *Women's studies*, pp. 23, 322; Tosh and Roper, *Manful assertions*, p. 11.

³¹ See for example Cock, *Colonels and cadres*.

women are seen as oppressed within society.³² Gender Studies also poses problems for other researchers because it appeared to promote the classless, raceless, androgynous 'human actor of consumerist society.'³³

Why is it important to make this emphatic distinction between Men's Studies, Women's Studies and Gender Studies? The assumption that Gender Studies (and by implication gender equality)³⁴ only has to do with women has become entrenched in South African thinking.³⁵ The problem with this assumption is that men are again seen as gender neutral with static and uniform identities in their oppression of women. It also assumes women's gender neutrality. This is clearly not the aim of a gendered approach to research. There are as many femininities as there are masculinities. The question of the masculine female (or gender role swapping) has had very little attention paid to it in the South African context.³⁶

Gender Studies is more complex and a broader area of study than the restricted fields of either Women's studies or Men's Studies. The question is how does this all fit in with an attempt at providing workable parameters for a History of Masculinities? The History of Masculinities may be seen as part of Men's Studies and ultimately an integral component (with Women's History) of gender analysis. Researchers need to be aware of these distinctions if they want to contribute meaningfully to expanding and enhancing our understanding of the role gender plays in both history and society.

What is the History of Masculinities?

The History of Masculinities does not refer to the traditional histories written in the past predominantly by men. Traditional histories not only exclude women from history but also saw men in a gender neutral and disaggregated manner. Traditional histories elevated great men (and sometimes a few great women) and assumed a static and uniform image

³² Richardson and Robinson, *Women's studies*, pp. 24, 322; Tosh and Roper, *Manful assertions*, p. 13.

³³ Richardson and Robinson, *Women's studies*, pp. 24, 322.

³⁴ Gender equality also presupposes that women should be put at the forefront of social and political reform in South Africa. While acknowledging that women's opportunities have been and are limited by a male dominated society, it will be unsuccessful unless the perceived threats to masculinities are addressed at the same time. The high incidence of 'Jackrolling' or gang rape (seen as a form of sport and proof of manhood) in the townships is indicative of this. See *The Star* of 4 January 1998 for a report on 'Jackrolling'.

³⁵ Morrell, "Masculinities in South Africa", pp. 171,172; Also Morrell's article, "The new Man?", *Agenda*, 37 (1998); J. Oyegun, "Working masculinities back into gender", *Agenda*, 37 (1998).

³⁶ Sylvia Vietzen briefly highlights this in "Mary Moore", p. 17.

of masculinity in a very diverse society.³⁷ Past histories [even those which focussed on women] submerged gender identity, attempted to make masculinity monolithic and constantly emphasised the differences between males and females, heroes and cowards, as well as burying masculinity in seemingly true accounts of the past.³⁸

The History of Masculinities is about male identities, masculine images, portrayals of those images, male behaviour and perceptions of what it means to be a man. The History of Masculinities looks at how male gender underpins social life and cultural representation. It sees men in their divergent, competing and changing forms of male identity.³⁹ Central then to the History of Masculinities are power relationships and the way in which gender acquisition is manifested in a society.⁴⁰

Some parameters for a South African History of Masculinities

Can international research be useful in the South African context? Some theoretical aspects may be useful but would need to be adapted to suit the South African context. The theories of patriarchy and paternalism have already been used extensively in South African women's and social histories. Work done by the Australian writers Bob Connell and Jeff Hearn may be useful because of the similarities in the experiences of colonialism.⁴¹ A tenuous link with British writers like John Tosh (writing in a broader Africanist context) is still notable. All three these researchers presented papers at the Colloquium on Masculinities held in Durban in July 1997. Their work was of a theoretical nature, which did not necessarily make the connection to the South African context. The body of international work does, however, not appear to be exerting a notable influence on a South African History of masculinities. This may be because the genre is relatively young in South Africa. The other problem faced by English researchers may be their lack of the necessary linguistic skills to tackle South African History properly. Essential historic indicators may then be missed by their research.⁴²

Identifying and breaking down stereotypes and rebuilding a more nuanced image of male identity or masculinity is an important starting point for the writing of a History of Masculinities, even if a minority masculinity or a subculture is the focus of the research. The History of Masculinities is about the dynamics of male imagery and portrayals of male

³⁷ Morrell, "Masculinities in South Africa", p. 172; Tosh and Roper, *Manful assertions*, p. 1.

³⁸ Tosh and Roper, *Manful assertions*, p. 1.

³⁹ Tosh and Roper, *Manful assertions*, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Morrell, "Masculinities in South Africa", p. 169.

⁴¹ Morrell, "Masculinities in South Africa", p. 172.

⁴² Bottomley, "Burghers of the ZAR", p. 11.

images. Stereotypes are created and are just as prevalent within non-hegemonic masculinities as they are within hegemonic masculinities. Some important questions then need to be asked to produce a reasonably successful History of Masculinities. What images and portrayals of images are created and used by [and for] a particular masculinity? What is the hegemonic [or stereotypical] perception within society of what a man should be? What is the stereotype of other or 'lesser' [referring to those with little or no power over society as a whole] masculinities? How and by what means are these images portrayed and strengthened? How does the stereotype or hegemonic masculinity contrast with the minority (or subcultural or merely 'the other' type of) masculinity? What are the power relations inherent in the interaction between the hegemonic, the minority and the society as a whole?⁴³ Can other masculinities be identified within the group isolated for research? For example the South African homosexual masculinity has a number of subcultures.⁴⁴ The same would go for divergent Black, Indian, Coloured and White masculinities in the South African context. How do these masculinities justify their existence? What role or perceived role do women play in reinforcing or denigrating a type of masculinity or the perceived male role in society?⁴⁵ How do men use women to uphold or deny masculinity or particular masculine traits?⁴⁶

Black and white South African societies are rooted in a duality of powers within patriarchy and paternalism.⁴⁷ How have these acted upon each other and within one another? How have these two concepts been reinforced or negated by the portrayal of certain images and by implication the exclusion of certain images? What challenges have been made by more youthful masculinities on these two concepts?⁴⁸ Patriarchy and paternalism should not be used in a structuralist sense to define pure power relationships as some South African scholars (notably Van Onselen and a number of female historians writing on women's history) have already done. A History of Masculinities should rather look at how these two concepts form part of or impact upon masculinity or male images or perceptions

⁴³ See K. Mooney's analysis of the relationship between 'traditional' or patrilineal/patriarchal masculinities in opposition to youth culture during the 1950s and 1960s in "Sheila's, flick knives and sexuality."

⁴⁴ See Vasu Reddy, "Guys for dolls: Reading bodies in the South African Gay press." Paper presented at Colloquium on Masculinities, University of Natal, Durban (July 1997), pp. 4, 7.

⁴⁵ See again Helen Bradford, *Gentlemen and Boers*, pp. 8-14, on the women's roles in the continuation of the war by questioning the man's manhood; See also for instance Jeremy Krikler's analysis of women used to ostracise the strikebreaker during the 1922 Rand Revolt by questioning his masculinity in "Race, class and gender in proletarian militancy", pp. 4, 5.

⁴⁶ Krikler, "Race, class and gender in proletarian militancy."

⁴⁷ See Van Onselen, *Kas Maine*.

⁴⁸ See Morrel, "Masculinities in South Africa", p. 174, for a reference to Ben Carton's analysis of youthful masculinities challenging the system during the Bambatha rebellion.

of masculinity. A History of Masculinities should attempt to remove the gender neutrality still inherent in South African research on patriarchy and paternalism.⁴⁹ The masculinity analysed should not only be placed within its historical context, but also within its race, age, class and cultural context. For example gangs have a distinct age, demographic and historical context.⁵⁰

All these questions may provide the basis for a sound History of Masculinities. They would perhaps also need to be placed within the context of the socialisation process itself. This is perhaps one of the keys to understanding how and why a man (and his masculine or so image) acts or reacts in the way he does. Bear in mind that changes during an individual's (or society's) lifetime may alter ideas and perceptions obtained through the socialisation process. How are these changes absorbed and manifested by male imagery and portrayals of masculinity? In the final analysis it is the imagination and skills of the researcher, which allows for a successful interpretation or reinterpretation of primary or secondary texts available as sources to remove the gender neutrality of men. This insight must still take place within the discipline of sound historical practice, but may require the critical skills applied mainly in the analysis of literary texts.⁵¹

Conclusion

A problem inherent in the international arena is the academic and political division between women, men and gender. The theoretical debate about separation, assimilation or transformation is confusing. The contention is that both men and women should be analysed in the South African context under the umbrella of gender studies or gender history. Women's History and the History of Masculinities should supplement and feed each other rather than competing, or even worse, becoming vehement opponents in the South African context. The mistakes and wasted time inherent in the theoretical debate [often with some political or ideological agenda] could then be avoided. One of the more prominent mistakes would be to ignore masculinity and the perceived threats to that masculinity in favour of gender studies (read as women). By addressing these subconscious male fears, socially and historically, academics may provide a better understanding of the problems faced by the implementation of a new constitution in South

⁴⁹ Jeff Guy looked at patriarchy and paternalism in "An accommodation of patriarchs: Theophilus Shepstone and the foundation of the system of administration in Natal." Paper presented at Colloquium on Masculinities, University of Natal, Durban (July 1997); without attempting to unlock the gender neutrality of the actors.

⁵⁰ For some insights into the age and demographic context of gangs on the Cape Flats see Don Pinnoc, *The Brotherhoods: Street gangs and state control in Cape Town* (1986). Also refer to M. Fenwick, "Tough Guy, eh': The gangster figure in *Drum*", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, (December 1996).

⁵¹ This was used with some success by Kobus du Pisani in analysing issues of *Die Huisgenoot* from 1935, 1965 and 1995 in "Persepsies van manlikheid."

Africa. The constitution is admittedly far advanced in terms of society's thinking about itself.

Researchers rushing into a History of Masculinities should avoid simply rehashing old material and then presenting this as a History of Masculinities. To do so could present a number of pitfalls and problems. Weak arguments are fleshed out to make masculinity the determinant in the course of events analysed, when clearly class, race, imperialism or other factors override gender identity. Secondly, the links [if any] between masculinity and these other factors are not clarified. Thirdly, the absolute focus on masculinity may lead to incoherent ideas on the relationships between men and women in their gender identity within society. Relationships between men and women are singularly more influential than other societal relationships. The increasingly violent nature of male responses and relations with women can be linked to the erosion of old masculinities in a changing world. Afrikaner masculinities during the 1920s and 1930s experienced such changes (urbanisation combined with modernisation) as a perceived threat to their traditional role as husbands and fathers. Women became financially more capable, the men less so, which inevitably lead to forms of family fracture and even violence.⁵² A History of Masculinities may then be important as an indicator in the violent nature of contemporary South African society.

The role which sport and gangsterism plays in creating and maintaining masculine identity has been researched in South Africa. Other issues around rural-urban constructs, modern over pre-modern (and possibly post-modern), minority subcultures [for example gay masculinities], the creation and maintenance of hegemonic masculinities and their oppression of both women and men are all areas needing attention. Afrikaans speaking whites and blacks in South Africa have had prolific attention paid to them in history in general over the past decades after the Second World War but very little has been done on English speaking white South Africans and English speaking settlers. This may tie in with a more gender-nuanced study, possibly in a comparative frame of reference, to ideological differences and similarities in the race and class context of South African society. The ideals of the passive warrior status of Gandhi as opposed to the more martial, aggressive and violent stance of Smuts could provide interesting insights into the role masculinity played in our history. Doing justice to such an enquiry requires the rigours of traditional historical in-depth and extensive primary research.

The History of Masculinities is about self-image in all its clothing. It is a petri dish of behaviour and brotherhood, of social and solitary men. It is about aggressors who write poetically about their conquests and poets who write aggressively about their manhood. It is about looking back at a clearer assumption of maleness. Yet we must not look too closely at the images only but also the space which outlines it. It is in these outward

⁵² See here Elsabé Brink, "The Garment Workers and poverty on the Witwatersrand, 1920-1945 African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand (26 May 1986).

portrayals and disguises that we will find unexpected and new pointers in our history. We will see different forces and fates that have bustled and bolstered the discipline of history in all its guises.

**** This article was written as a result of research for the author's Honours degree at Rand Afrikaans University.