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rounding sexuality is considered as a real opportunity for married couples to attain fulfilment, because, once the couple is freed from the constraint of illegitimacy, it can taste carnal pleasure without the risk of pregnancy, unless when desired, initiate themselves in new sexual tech-

niques, enriching to both partners, through erotic films recorded on video cassettes or shown on television, for example.

In conclusion, we would like to say that the new sexuality is not completely sad and can also be practised with pleasure and happiness so long

as it is conceived within the legitimate context of marriage. However, all other forms of sexual relations outside marriage will only aggravate the frustration and alienation in a society in which sexual deprivation is still regarded as part of faith.

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## WEIGHING MANHOOD IN SOWETO

**T**he proposition of my male friends in Soweto is that a girlfriend is a form of 'property'. Three facts of life on the streets of Soweto, above all others, contribute to the basic plausibility of this notion. First, if a man expects a woman to be his 'girlfriend' he will have to pay. Whether it be buying drinks in a shebeen, purchasing the mandatory Valentine's Day gift, splurging on a Festive Season outing, or paying lobola prior to marriage... it is always the man who pays in order to secure access to sex. And pay he must. For a young man without money in Soweto—especially if he's without prospects of money in future—the chances of getting a steady girlfriend are slim (although a talent for smooth talking can offset, for a while, a deficit of cash). Marriage for the impecunious is out of the question.

Second, when a young man has a girlfriend he must expect to be prepared to defend her from being taken by others by force. The dynamics of violence amongst young men in relation to the seduction and abduction of women are both premised upon and reinforce the notion of 'girlfriends' as 'property'. Given the ever-present possibility of violence, any form of seduction becomes potentially dangerous and this in

turn feeds the dynamic of violence, placing a premium on securing the behaviour of a 'girlfriend' in consonance with notions of property. Finally, prestige amongst young men (and the not so young), is premised upon multiple sexual conquests and the ability to call many women a 'girlfriend'. As with other status goods, of which the motor vehicle is the most indispensable, status is directly related to number, value, and appearance. Let us examine each of these in turn.

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### Money

First Money. Organized prostitution is virtually unknown in Soweto, so we are not dealing with commercial sex here. I know of one shebeen where domestic servants from the nearby Indian township of Lenasia are said to sell their favours for cash, and the hostels in the days before they became open to families were long reputed as places where women could sell sex to the migrant men, but generally speaking a woman who wants to sell sex for cash or a man

who wants to buy must go to 'Town'. There, in central Johannesburg and Hillbrow, commercialized sex is the norm and tens of thousands of sex workers from all over sub-Saharan Africa ply their trade. In Soweto, however, while sex is not commercial it is still very much connected with money, albeit with much more complicated norms and rules than the free market system of Town. Let us set aside for the moment the question of female expectations regarding proper male behaviour—which, as I've noted above, most certainly includes him paying for all dating expenses and making presents to her and her family. Instead, let us focus on the question of male expectations.

Every young man knows that he is at a serious disadvantage in 'proposing' girls if he has no money, and I've many a time witnessed the anger and frustration of a friend who finds he can't compete for the love of a young woman with a man having money. A man with a car as well as money to spend has all the advantages. Typically, an impecunious young man proposing love will spin a web of stories about his prospects: My father is a businessman, but we are not on good terms at the moment.... My car is in the garage.... I am a stu-

dent and when I graduate.... I've heard countless variations of these themes amongst men bragging of their conquests. If he is a smooth talker, a lie suggesting prospects for a presently impecunious person might help him succeed in his conquest—or at least allow sufficient doubt as to give the young woman a pretext for accepting his proposal. Such stories, however, are a prerogative of youth when everyone plays with and upon dreams of a future. When a man reaches his thirties, or tries to propose a woman old enough to know better, it becomes more difficult to explain away poverty as a temporary aberration. In Soweto as everywhere, there are other economies of illusion for the aged, the sad, and the desperate.

If a young man is proposing love and he spends his money on a girl, he will consider that he has staked a property claim in her. That is to say that, insofar as she accepts his gifts, he will consider she has consented to sex; he deems himself entitled to gain access to her genitals. Now, in practice, this exchange is always a complicated business and I have many times heard women deriding the idiocy of boys who think they can buy themselves a girlfriend for the price of a burger and coke. But while it is undoubtedly possible for true love to bloom over that burger and coke, just as it is for the 'price' to be negotiated up and love to bloom later, every young woman who enters the dangerous game of dating knows that as soon as she accepts such gifts she is engaging in a negotiation in which the male's path leads directly and single-mindedly towards the goal of sex. If she doesn't want to play the end-game, she will not begin on the path. A girl or woman in Soweto is naive in the extreme if she doesn't assume there is a strong possibility of being raped should she accept a young man's presents while denying him sex. Indeed, most young men and a significant proportion of young women would not consider such forced sex 'rape,' and most young men I have known consider rape a form of property crime—the theft of something that doesn't

belong to you and should rightfully have been paid for. A young woman who finds herself facing the prospect of rape by a man who considers himself her boyfriend should not count upon gallant defenders coming to her aid. I have known of women who, after accepting beers bought by a man in a shebeen and then deciding they did not want to have sex with the man who paid, have been told by the shebeen keeper to whom they appealed for assistance: 'you have eaten his money, now go'.

In contemporary Soweto young men and women are in principal free to choose their own sexual partners and people play their games of sex with the same regard and disregard of the consequences as anywhere. Although parental and family pressures will be brought to bear when talking about marriage, there is nothing resembling arranged marriages here. In any case, there are very few parents capable of imposing their preferences upon their children—however they may feel about future spouses. But the whole enterprise is governed by three features which relate to the question of property: In the first place, although fully functioning fathers are few, a girl's sexuality is supposed to be guarded and protected carefully by her father, brothers, and other male relatives. It is considered extremely bad form, for example, for a man to propose love to his friend's sister. And unless he has been bought off in some way (such as being given beer and cigarettes), a girl's father will not generally be hospitable to her suitors or boyfriends. Secondly, while women cleave wholeheartedly to a monogamous ideal of romantic love, buttressed by Christian principles of family life, the majority of men practice and prefer an ideal of polygamy—at least, polygamy without responsibility. While very few urban men will adopt the formal roles and responsibilities accruing to the 'traditional' husband of multiple wives, almost all will strive for the status conferred amongst males through the boasting of multiple girlfriends. Yet, while respect, status, and prestige amongst males are premised upon

multiple partners, a man would be foolhardy in the extreme to admit to any of his girlfriends that she is not the 'only one'. Further, while norms of male comradeship impose a value of truth telling and honesty (in default of which, when it comes to the battle, you might find yourself on your own), it is entirely acceptable, from the male point of view, nay, mandatory, to lie to the women who love you. It is commonplace, and sensible, for women to say they distrust their men.

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The fact that sexual relationships are coloured by money does not in itself mean much in a place as poor as Soweto. When money is scarce, considerations of cash impinge upon every aspect of life. And when love is pure and true, money means nothing. But the problem of money enters these relationships in a more comprehensive way when the question of marriage arises. If the passages of seduction are lubricated by cash, or the promise of it, the path to marriage is paved with money. There are five principal phases in the marriage process, and they all impose financial burdens on the would-be husband. And despite the fact that cultural purists will insist that the institution of *lobola*, or bridewealth—which is almost universally practised here and paid in cash—does not involve the purchase and sale of women, the guys in Soweto will commonly refer to marriage as buying a wife. For most men, marriage is an unattainable ambition as each of the five distinct phases is prohibitively expensive and there is no way of fulfilling the obligations of marriage cheaply.

The first phase of marriage begins with negotiations over *lobola*. Typically, these talks between the man's uncles and the father and uncles of the woman will be prompted by pregnancy. In these negotia-

tions, cash price will be set (or, if marriage is out of the question, 'damages' will be charged for the offence). By paying damages, the young man will relinquish his rights to the child (although he may still be liable for child-support through the laws of the state). Proceeding with lobola will give the father the right to claim the child as belonging to him. In most instances, the price of lobola will range between fifteen hundred and ten thousand Rands, with the lower figure being favoured by middle-class parents who wish to observe the practices of tradition without inflicting on their daughter the resentment of a husband who feels he's paid too much, and thus entitled to treat his wife like a slave. Elite families are said to bandy about vast sums of tens of thousands for lobola, but I have no experience in that realm.

With the lobola price fixed, the second phase will commence: a 'down payment' will be made by the bridegroom, with the promise of more to come. At this point, the 'typical Soweto guy' (as he likes to be called) will consider himself married enough. His 'wife's' father, when there is one, will consent to her staying out overnight in his company and he can generally enjoy free and untrammelled access to her sexual favours. From the point of view of the families of both bride and groom, however, marriage is not complete until the full lobola payments are made, where upon beasts will be slaughtered, feasts made, and rituals fulfilled for the ancestors. A typical feast will cost in excess of ten thousand Rands. For not only do families, ancestors, and friends need feeding, but the whole neighbourhood in the vicinity of both bride and groom must be satisfied, and it is considered a shameful neglect to fail to do so. Considering that two thirds of young men in their twenties, prime marrying age, are unemployed and that 50% of households in Soweto have an average monthly income of less than R1,250, paying lobola and making a wedding feast are out of the question for most young men.

The next phase of marriage, called 'signing at the office', is simply the bureaucratic formality of having the union licenced by the state. This phase seems to have virtually no sentimental significance for most people. Its timing bears little significance either. And a marriage formalized on paper without payment of lobola or festivities will hardly be recognized as a real marriage by the families involved.

Finally, there is the 'white wedding.' Modelled upon the ritual performances of European marriage, with the church blessing, white dress, tuxedos, limousines, tiered cakes, and so on, the White Wedding is the crowning moment in a bride's love life. Every man I know in Soweto, however, despises the idea. The white wedding has little "traditional" ritual significance or religious purpose. It can be held years after all the other phases of wedding are complete. It is an occasion for ceremonial display, communal feasting and merry-making. Consequently, it is usually the cause of a great deal of envy and resentment in the community. A woman who endows herself with a white wedding in Soweto these days is a sitting duck for witchcraft.

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By inducing her husband to finance a white wedding (and typically the burden falls mostly on the husband), a woman is announcing to all other women in the vicinity, all other girlfriends and potential girlfriends, that the man is hers.

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More than anything, in my jaundiced view, a white wedding is the principal performance through which a woman can advertise, to other women, a property right in her man. For, as all the women in the neighbourhood well know, having a kid by him means nothing. Even when he pays lobola he might be doing it as much for his family as for her. But by inducing her husband to finance a white wedding (and typically the burden falls mostly on the husband), a woman is announcing to all other girlfriends and potential girlfriends, that the man is hers. The

families of bride and groom may also be proud to boast of such a wedding, but they would have been satisfied well enough with less. Such weddings, though still an object of fervent desire, are becoming scarce. In nearly ten years of hanging around in Soweto, I have only seen two friends marry. Almost everyone else has children, but no prospect of marriage. And I have seen no sign that the ceremonies and rituals of marriage are being tailored to financial practicalities.

Can these transactions be plausibly said to amount to a property right? Certainly it is possible to interpret them in other terms, and responsible spokespeople for decency and respectable 'Culture' will insist that to describe them as property transactions is an abomination. But, from the point of view of a cash-strapped 'Soweto guy', it is by no means outlandish to conclude that courting and marriage are akin to purchasing of things. Especially as, once he begins his payments, whether in token of seduction or as part of courtship, he deems himself entitled to, indeed, is required to insist upon, exclusive access to her sexual favours. Such exclusivity is a point of the utmost honour for virtually every man here and it is only in the context of the most casual coupling that a 'girlfriend' could be accepted as having other lovers. If it is pointed out to such a Soweto guy that there is a stench of hypocrisy clinging to his claims of exclusive access to the women he labels 'my girlfriends' while they must all cleave to virtuous monogamy, he will insist, foreclosing possibility of further debate, that 'I'm a Man, what can I do?'

Of course, despite the financial outlays, there are some limitations to the property concept when applied to a "girlfriend". Once he has made her his property, for instance, a man cannot sell his girlfriend. However, if he has paid lobola and she decides to leave him, he can demand his money back from her father. (He's unlikely to get anything though, for unlike the old days when the cattle transac

ted were still standing in the kraal, these days, the money quickly disappears. His father-in-law will feel guilty, nonetheless.) Indeed, having paid lobola a man considers himself entitled to expect that if his wife decides to leave him she will be encouraged most strenuously by her family to return. As for a boyfriend permitting a girlfriend to sever the property bond and dump him through her own free will, such a thing is considered anathema and is taken by many men as a just cause for administering a serious beating. Many women are killed by virtue of the logic: If I can't have you, nobody will.

## Violence

Second, Violence. All dating and mating in Soweto takes place against a backdrop of endemic violence and rape. A 1998 survey conducted for the Southern Metropolitan Local Council of Johannesburg, which includes parts of Soweto, concluded that in the past year 'three out of every ten women in the ... area were victim to a severe form of sexual violence.' [CIETafrica, 29/5/98]. This figure strikes me as somewhat high, and statistics about rape and sexual violence are notoriously problematic, but Interpol's International Crime Statistics for 1995 cite a rape rate in South Africa as a whole of 115.2 per 100,000, which is double the next highest rate for neighbouring Swaziland—and compares with 37.1 for the United States or 28 for Zimbabwe or 7.6 for Germany. (Cited in *SAPS Quarterly Crime Statistics*, 2/98.) Regardless of the statistics, most residents of Soweto would have no hesitation in saying the incidence of rape and other forms of sexual violence there is extremely high. Young women, especially, negotiate public space—streets, schools, and social gatherings knowing they risk abduction and rape at any time. The colloquial term for this sort of abduction is 'Jackrolling', after a gang of rapists active in the early 1990s called the Jackrollers. Young men in the company of young women know they may be called upon to defend them from Jackrollers at any time, too.

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Abduction and rape does not happen to everyone, and in fact a woman is more likely to be raped by a relative, acquaintance, boyfriend, or single stranger in a public place, than a Jackroller. It is, however, this possibility of abduction that shapes all experience of public space and considerations of security are paramount when girls go out in Soweto. Consequently, men vastly outnumber women at public gatherings—except those held in churches. Private places, of course, have their own terrors, and much sexual violence is perpetrated inside homes by members of families—typically by fathers, stepfathers, and uncles [CIETafrica 27/5/98]. For when young men and women are gathered together in public places, clear rules of propriety in the use of violence govern their interactions.

Imagine you are a Soweto boy at a party with your girlfriend. At such gatherings, a basic gender segregation is the norm. Men talk, drink, and dance with their male friends and women with their female friends. Some mixing will take place, and the unattached boys will be on the lookout for possible girlfriends to propose, but generally men will predominate at the gathering and segregation is the norm. Now, say you are drinking with your friends (and the general norms of alcohol consumption are, to put it mildly, excessive) and another man approaches your girlfriend and begins talking to her. If she is a sensible and dutiful girlfriend, she will ignore him completely and engage in conversation only with her female friends. Indeed a sensible young woman wouldn't dream of engaging in conversation with a man outside her home. For the general presumption is that there is no such thing as an innocent—that is, non-sexual—conversation between a young man and a young woman. A young man

talking to a young woman is presumed to be 'proposing love.' And all seemingly innocent social intercourse between them is predicated upon the possibility of sexual connection.

When a boy proposes love to a girl she is supposed to refuse. To do otherwise for most girls would be tantamount to declaring herself a *sefebe* (prostitute) which, unless she is in fact seeking commercial gain, she will be unwilling to do. Indeed, according to 'tradition', a girl is supposed to physically resist a suitor's entreaties—hence the expression *umdongsa ambambe*, [grab and hold] describing the procedure of proposing. A young man who wants to talk to a young woman with a view to proposing love should grab her firmly by the wrist. She will twist her arm and squirm to break free. The boy will tighten his grip. She will twist harder. Sometimes, to the eyes of an outsider, it will appear as if they struggle in deadly earnest until the pair breaks apart laughing and the girl, free now to escape, remains to chat further. Perhaps the girl will continue the conversation out of arm's reach. When she is willing to listen to the boy's proposal, she will allow him to hold her loosely by the wrist. If you wander the streets of Soweto on an afternoon or weekend when the youngsters linger, you will encounter this gesture as commonplace play in the mating game. Most of the time these dances of love and rejection are innocent enough and most boys are decent enough to desist after a girl makes her lack of interest clear. And despite the fact that she almost always says 'No!' at the preliminary stage of proposing she will make it clear when she means 'Yes.' However, the same ritual can initiate abduction with a view to rape when 'No!' will not be taken for an answer. And such a rape will probably be preceded by the pro forma declaration of 'love' as in the 'I love you...' prelude to a regular seduction.

Whether or not the young man 'pushes his position' towards the goal of sexual conquest, the working presumption for you, the boyfriend at the party, is that even his most inno-

cuous conversation with a female has that ultimate goal in mind. Furthermore, when a young woman willingly engages in conversation with a young man fitting the role of potential suitor (that is, not a relative or close friend of a relative), she is presumed willing to at least entertain his proposal whether or not one is forthcoming—even if the goal of sexual union may be far in the distant future. Consequently, from the perspective of a vigilant boyfriend, a girlfriend who talks to other young men is one who is prepared to entertain their proposals. She is thus challenging a central tenet of her boyfriend's manhood, to wit: his exclusive access to her genitals and sexual favours. She will have to be 'disciplined'.

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So, you're at the party and you see another man approaching your girlfriend. They begin a conversation. It is possible that the conversation is unavoidable for the young woman. Perhaps the other man is a friend of one of her girlfriends, or a schoolmate to whom she should appear friendly. In that case, the conversation should not continue for more than the minimum required for courtesy—a minute or two. A decent young man in this position will gather from her response that she is someone else's property and leave her be. (If he's lucky, he might succeed in getting a phone number surreptitiously for later.) If, however, the girlfriend does engage in conversation with the young man, and he is unknown to you, her boyfriend, you must soon enter the scene. As the boyfriend, you will make it clear to the other man, politely, that the girl is yours. You might also indicate to your girlfriend your displeasure over her talking with other men. A stern glance should remind her that she

risks a beating by continuing like that. Now, if the other young man is a peace-loving individual, he will desist. He might even consider making friends with the girl's boyfriend to show that there are no hard feelings or ulterior motives. If, however, he does not cease talking to the 'girlfriend' he is issuing a challenge to the manhood of her partner. At which point you, as the boyfriend, should make it very clear that they are making you angry. You should confront him 'in a rude way.' If the other man does not desist at that point, especially if he is a stranger to you, you must start a fight.

Of course, if the young men negotiating this sort of engagement are too drunk, too headstrong, rude, vicious or cowardly, the conflict will not necessarily take this hypothetical course. There might not be time for the carefully calibrated escalation of hostility and demonstration of possession. For example, someone of a violent disposition and accompanied by sufficient comrades to profit from making trouble might decide to stake a claim to a woman. That would be considered brazen theft, but it happens often enough. Every young man in Soweto dreads the moment when some well-armed thug steps up and tells him 'This is my girlfriend' and takes her. This is how sensitive young men will justify the fact that even they are very touchy about others talking to their girlfriends. A young woman with a strong sense of her right to be sociable and free can be a dangerous person to be around in public. Amongst the most volatile and dangerous situations to be in is one where there is a small number of unattached women in a place, such as a shebeen or tavern, full of men drinking who are not close friends. For as soon as one man seems to be making headway in claiming a woman as his own, someone else is bound to get roused. The problem is that as well as drinking far in excess of what might fuel conviviality, young men in Soweto are often armed.

My friend Mpho explained the essence of these dynamics to me

once after we had suffered just such a flare-up between two young men over a girl at a party we'd organized:

the man is protecting what he deems are his rights. You know, from the way that we grew up here in Soweto we know that when someone does that to you it is not just a matter of he is proposing your girlfriend but he is provoking you. Sort of, like, trying to weigh your manhood. In most of the incidents, boys will try to retain manhood. And always it leads to a fight. A lot of young men have really passed away due to this.

Indeed, while there are no figures available to prove this, I would assert on the basis of my experience that such conflicts are the principal cause of violent death and injury amongst young men in Soweto, possibly outnumbering death by auto accident and certainly greater than the numbers killed in the political conflicts of the past. And when the fight starts, the unwritten laws of brotherhood require that friends of both parties join in either to stop the conflict or prosecute it to victory. Friends who prove unwilling to do so will be excluded from the rights and privileges of brotherhood—principally, the right to expect others to support them in similar situations in the future. If a woman wishes to avoid these dynamics of violence between young men she will have to stay at home. Most do. And most young men leave their girlfriends at home when they go out in Soweto. (And they don't want to call round to her place and find her talking to another man.)

As often as not, when such conflicts take place between young men the young woman in question would not consider herself anybody's girlfriend; she serves merely as a pretext for young men to fight. It was only through long experience in Soweto that I came to understand that there is virtually no woman there who is not considered the property of someone, even though she might deny the fact or not even realize it. And it was through bitter experience, too, that I learnt that the will or desire of the woman, when it comes to these violent struggles between men, has nothing to do with the issue. Moreover, it is quite possible for a man to believe he is

valiantly defending not property but a woman's right to choose her own lover and decide her own sexual fate, and yet be caught up in exactly the same dynamic of violence. For as far as the staking of a property claim in a woman is concerned, there is no shortage of young men who would consider chasing away a woman's boyfriend analogous to the work of harvesting the fruits.

Let us consider the question of 'discipline.' As we saw in the story of love and war above, 'discipline' involves the application of physical force as a form of punishment. The verb 'to discipline' is one of those English words that gained currency in Soweto during the times of political struggle (to 'organize'—as in 'organize some few beers...'—is another). It bears overtones from the struggle ideology extolling the virtues of the 'disciplined comrade' and carries memories of the scores of people punished in those days for political infractions. It is something that one does to one's own. The police were never said to 'discipline' comrades no matter how many they beat or killed in punishment. 'Discipline' is something meted out to children by their parents and to 'comrades' by their leaders when they misbehave—and women by their men. Corporal punishment is the rule rather than exception here.

While the viciousness which Mandla displayed when he saw his girlfriend Phila talking to another man was generally viewed as excessive, most young men (and their elders, too) accept the legitimacy of the basic 'right' of a man to discipline his woman. Indeed, in the context of the sort of violent dynamics outlined above, most would consider it a necessity. Questions arise over the relative entitlements of husbands and boyfriends to discipline 'their' women. The general right of a husband to punish, however, physically if necessary, is largely taken for granted (although it will always be disputed in any particular instance.) The right of a boyfriend who has not paid lobola will be denied. When for example, a friend of mine beat his

girlfriend to death with a rubber pipe when he found her talking to another man, the magistrate, in passing a sentence of three years manslaughter, said: 'You weren't even married. You should have just left her.'

If a young woman smokes in public in the township while in the company, of a man who deems himself her boyfriend... such a behaviour signifies to other men either that she is available for 'proposing' or that the man is not man enough to control her, and, therefore, is not man enough to prohibit other proposals or to protect her.

The presumption is that a husband, if he is a real man, should be able to control the behaviour of his wife. When Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was still married to Nelson and was indicted for kidnapping Stompie Seipai, for example, a common question asked was: what sort of president will he make if he can't even control his own wife? Amongst young people, one of the forms of behaviour by a girlfriend which is most pregnant with signs of male impotence, thereby obliging a boyfriend to exert his disciplining power, can be seen in the proprieties surrounding smoking. Virtually every man in Soweto smokes; sharing cigarettes is a staple of male sociability. 'African' women, however, are not supposed to smoke cigarettes. If they desire nicotine, they may snort ground tobacco in the form of snuff. If they must smoke, they should do it in private—out of sight of parents, elders, and brothers. An African woman who smokes cigarettes openly is not only flaunting her disregard of convention but is taken to be making a statement about her sexuality. Prostitutes in the bars and hotels of central Johannesburg smoke heavily. Many 'Coloured' women smoke, and for Africans this is just one more sign of their general moral laxity. For a young African woman in the township, however, the act of smoking in public is tantamount to advertising herself as a prostitute. Older single women can enjoy their cigarettes in public if they wish as no man feels it incumbent upon himself to police

her sexuality. But a young woman doing so is asking for trouble.

These days, many younger women, especially the more rebellious of college students, take pleasure in flouting the smoking conventions. They see snuff as a thing for old ladies. They like to assert their independence and can sometimes do so sometimes on campus with impunity. But if a young woman smokes in public in the township, especially where alcohol is being consumed, while in the company, of a man who deems himself her boyfriend he will become enraged. For such a behaviour signifies to other men either that she is available for 'proposing' or that the man is not man enough to control her, and, therefore, is not man enough to prohibit other proposals or to protect her. That is to say, her smoking is a direct affront to her boyfriend's 'manhood.' In my experience, a great deal of effort is expended by young men in seeking to dominate the public behaviour of 'their' women in line with notions of propriety that seem to me, cynical as I am, consonant with claims of property.

## Status

Finally status. In Soweto, status accrues to the man who can claim to possess girlfriend/s adjudged beautiful and women so considered tend to be drawn towards high-status males. (As already mentioned, among men the ideals of 'manhood' rate polygamy highly, while women cleave to norms of monogamy.) In relation to the economics of status and beauty, the extraordinary ubiquity of beauty pageants serves in establishing hierarchies of pulchritude in which, by the time she reaches adolescence, every girl knows her place. For by the time she reaches adolescence, unless she is universally adjudged ugly (and some girls are given the name Mampe [ugly] at birth, just as others are called Bontle [beauty]), an average Soweto girl will have competed in dozens of beauty pageants at the creche, primary school, high school, in the streets after school ... and she

will know how she rates in relation to her peers.

For a young man in Soweto, a great deal of his sexual life can be described as an uphill struggle, to establish a valid property claim upon the genitals of a woman he can call his own—the norms of genital property rights—the rights to use, occupy, own the fruits of, prevent other's access to, and, ultimately, to discontinue occupancy of a woman's sex organs—prevail.

Even though these beauty pageants for children are an exclusively female past-time, with little reference to male perspectives in their conduct, they definitely serve in assigning a sense of value to each girl's understanding of her looks and that has a strong impact upon her reckoning of future life prospects. Teenage girls who are considered pretty are encouraged by their friends and families to compete in more professional pageants sponsored by hair salons, soft drink companies, taverns, and other small businesses. If successful there, they consider the Miss Soweto contests, and, ultimately, dream of one day being crowned Miss South Africa. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of these contests in the lives of girls. *The Sowetan*, the largest circulation daily newspaper in the country regularly carries photos and reports of the pageants. They are analogous to the dreams of soccer stardom amongst boys. Serious contestants know themselves as entitled to high-status boyfriends, drivers of late-model cars.

I have deliberately presented the preceding discussion as if women were merely passive objects of property whose personal desires were entirely secondary to the conduct of their affairs. In reality, of course, this is not the case. Nowhere near it. I hope, however, that the above discussion has made clear that for young men, there are substantial pressures to behave as if this were the case. Indeed, for a young man in Soweto a great deal of his sexual life can be described as a struggle,

indeed, an uphill struggle, to establish a valid property claim upon the genitals of a woman he can call his own. And even a young man who did not want to conform to these proprietary norms, a man who wished to express his love and sexuality in other ways, would find himself under serious pressure to conform. For in relations among men, the norms of genital property rights—the rights to use, occupy, own the fruits of, prevent other's access to, and, ultimately, to discontinue occupancy of a woman's sex organs—prevail. A great deal of the male struggle to achieve mastery over 'his' woman reduces to an endeavour to bend her will to this end. And I've been told countless times by men in Soweto, though I still don't really want to believe it, that if you don't behave in this way your woman won't respect you. Of course, everyone insists, that when 'true love' and 'tender care' are in operation, this struggle for genital property is irrelevant because the treasures of love are granted freely.

#### Manhood, manhood, manhood

I now want to suggest that in reality the struggle to achieve the status of true manhood in Soweto is an unequal battle. For a young man caught up in the norms of mastery and property, the chances of successfully imposing his proprietary dominance upon a woman are slight. Quite simply, most young men will never have enough money to sustain over the long-term a credible attempt. Furthermore, most of the women in Soweto are adamant, despite the fact that they may have to submit from time to time to the depredations of men who claim to love them, that they are the proprietors of their own genitals and every other aspect of their persons.

Now, while the dreams of prosperity for all were kindled in the years of transition, since the end of apartheid as the new regime settled into business, most people are finding their status, conditions, and chances of life largely unchanged. Indeed, many of the changes introduced in

the era of democracy—especially the requirement that township residents start paying for municipal services and electricity—made life much tougher for most ordinary people in places like Soweto. And as politics became a skilled profession for a few instead of the way of life it had been for a multitude in the days of mass campaigns and street battles, even the status and prestige that activists—principally, young men—once enjoyed in their local communities evaporated. The only thing that counted came to be money. And those without money to count no longer seemed to matter.

In the everyday politics of families and households the changes wrought in post-apartheid life bear particularly heavily upon men as they struggle to live up to established models of manhood. For the young guys on the street, the solidarity of poverty fosters an ethic of getting and sharing within a small circle of fraternity constantly vigilant against assault from others and severs them ever more decisively from a community with women. Fathers are hit even harder. For the status of Father is founded upon the ability to provide. These days, children are forever wondering why their fathers are such losers. I once asked the women at home, when they were grumbling about men one morning over breakfast, how many men in our street of thirty houses would qualify as adequate to the role of Head of the Household. They counted the tally, house by house. Seven, they concluded. The rest were either dead, gone or 'useless'. *Useless*: a capacious category of female contempt. It would be scant exaggeration to say that most women consider the fathers of their children to be useless, and bemoan the fact that their sons are taking after their fathers.

During the days of struggle, sons used to berate their fathers for political failures, for allowing the Boss to call them boy. These days fathers are deemed worthless mostly for financial reasons. For when children go hungry it is always said to result from some father's absence or failure to



provide. Few here would grant their father (and none of my female friends would grant the fathers of their children) the right to the sort of respect that men readily account themselves entitled to. In every case, whatever other failings he may have, it's the emptiness of his pockets that condemns a father; financial dependence upon women or his children deflates his manhood. He may be loved despite all. But love is poor sort of coin when the reckoning concerns respect to be accorded for duties fulfilled.

Life in the township can be tough on fathers. Mothers, of course, have their own special burdens. Yet, except in the case of infertility, it is unusual for a woman to be prevented from being a good Mother by forces beyond her control. Even when she goes away to work for months or years at a time leaving her children with their grandmother, her mother becomes their mother and she still remains a Mother. Even when the children are hungry, so long as she hasn't deliberately caused their suffering by shirking her duties, she remains a good mother. Indeed, suffering along with her children makes her seem a better mother. For mothers are meant to suffer. And everyone adores their mother because of it. There is, however, a form of suffering of women which is becoming more widespread and which is difficult to account for in the standard terms of the long-suffering mother: Depression. At the end of the decade the wards of local hospitals are being overwhelmed by depressed women seeking medication for afflictions bearing upon them directly from the world of poverty, violence, and disappointment in which they live.

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It's the emptiness of his pockets that condemns a father; financial dependence upon women or his children deflates his manhood. Love is poor sort of coin when the reckoning concerns respect to be accorded for duties fulfilled.

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Yet, even with the best of intentions, it is only the exceptional man in a place like Soweto who can possibly succeed in meeting the basic requirements of manhood in such a way that will deem him worthy of the title Father. For that status is premised upon continuing financial support of and mastery over women, children, and youths. Such a status is impossible without money which is not easily come by in a place where jobs are few and wages low. Every time they fail to provide for their women and children, every time they are unable to sanction a youth whose cash they desire, they find themselves, little by little, denying the very basis of their existence. And in this world of invidious comparisons they can never provide enough. As they grow older and their failures pile up, fathers resort to bluster, threat, and rages of violence, until their women depart or their sons grow old enough to say No more! Most of the grandfathers I know think they should be kings but are treated like ciphers. Yes, even with the best of intentions it's difficult to be a father, and the women say that men with such intentions are scarce these days. Most households are kept alive by the labours of women. Perhaps, then, the endemic violence has something to do with the failure of men to achieve Manhood.

Everyday violence, such as the sort I have been describing above, does

not necessarily occur every day. It is, rather, that eruption into the quotidian of an unlikely possibility that defines the shape of practice for every day to come; like the neighbour who, once robbed, inspires us all to lock our doors. The violence I have been seeking to anatomize here tends to take the form of quotidian eruptions, serving to remind us of the shape of power structures underlying everyday life, creating a framework within which relations between all parties are supposed to be conducted. One of the reasons why violence can be so effective in shaping everyday life, I would suggest, is because it exposes, and sometimes dramatically changes, the presumptions and presuppositions underpinning the unwritten, and mostly unspoken, rules shaping the ways in which life is lived. Thus it is that in a world of unlocked doors a single intrusion can shatter the presumption of security and establish a rule for all to lock their doors; in a world of locks and bars it is a reminder that no one is safe and that doors should be locked. And it is through the telling of stories about events and consequences of violence that these rules become established. On the other hand, violence can also serve to reveal the bankruptcy of established norms and rules governing everyday life. As Hannah Arendt long ago suggested, violence can signify the absence of power. Perhaps the ultimate significance of the ubiquitous sexual violence in Soweto signals the decline of male power—an attempt to impose rules and norms that no longer make sense?