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The Masculine State in Crisis

State Response to War Resistance in Apartheid South Africa

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External and internal forces threatened the apartheid state in the 1980s. The refusal to perform compulsory military service by individual white men and the increasing number of white South Africans who criticized the role of the military and apartheid governance had the potential to destabilize the gendered binaries on which white social order and Nationalist rule rested. The state constituted itself as a heterosexual, masculine entity in crisis and deployed a number of gendered discourses in an effort to isolate and negate objectors to military service. The state articulated a nationalist discourse that defined the white community in virile, masculine, and heroic terms. Conversely, "feminine" weakness, cowardice, and compromise were scorned. Objectors, as "strangers" in the public realm, were most vulnerable to homophobic stigmatization from the state and its supporters.

Keywords: *apartheid; militarization; masculinity; homophobia; conscientious objection*

White men who refused to serve in the South African Defence Force (SADF) for political and moral reasons reflected fractures in the ruling elite and threatened to destabilize the masculine ideology that gave the apartheid state its legitimacy. The performance of compulsory military service was the primary constitutive act of masculinity and citizenship in white South African society. Conscription also served as a means by which intrawhite social and political cleavages could be moderated and a new white South African identity be forged. The SADF was a symbol of unity in white society at a time when Nationalist hegemony in the white electorate was under threat. For the apartheid state, objection to military service was an outrage that threatened its authority and very existence. The threat had to be countered if the state was to "win" the war it believed it was fighting. Objectors had an ambivalent subjectivity in the public realm, they were "strangers" (Bauman 1991, 54) who were neither the "insiders" of white South Africa nor the enemies of black liberation and foreign

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communism. For this reason, objectors were often difficult for the state to counter. This article investigates the gendered discourses that were deployed by the state and its supporters against objectors to military service and peace activists. Brittan writes that "the state is at its most vicious when the gender order is questioned" and that peace movements that criticize military rituals and hegemonic practices of masculinity, such as conscription, provoke this vicious response (1989, 132). Yet, as shall be argued, the state's disciplinary tactics were inconsistent and had varying success.

The South African state was a powerful actor in terms of creating and sustaining white hegemonic masculinity, but it was not the only actor, and the social, economic, and political divisions in the white population resulted in this hegemony being continually contested. The state's response to objectors ranged from the subtle and persuasive to the draconian and hysterical. The stigmatization of objectors' sexual identities was the most effective strategy from the perspective of the state and placed considerable strains on the peace movement. The use of homophobia as a stigmatizing discourse reveals the heteronormativity of the state and military service and the effectiveness of sexuality (and particularly homophobia) in policing gendered binaries. The article begins by establishing the historical context of South Africa's militarization and the growth of war resistance and then explores the concept of the state as a masculine institution in crisis. The discourses deployed against objectors and their supporters will then be outlined.

The Apartheid State in Crisis

The South African government experienced an urgent crisis of legitimacy and governability in the 1980s: resistance to apartheid rule exploded in townships across the Republic, the war on the South African controlled Namibian/Angolan border intensified, and there was unprecedented international hostility toward the apartheid regime. South African military and political elites concluded that they faced a "total onslaught" from world communism that aimed to destroy the very fabric of South African life. This onslaught, they believed, was military, economic, and psychological in nature. The total onslaught was constructed as a crisis in South African national life. The minister of defense, General Malan, wrote:

> In this physical and psychological battle, the enemy seeks to subvert our resolve, to overthrow the established order and to destroy the fabric of our society . . . in the fierce climate of the psychological war, extreme caution must be exercised to ensure that the morale of our Defence Force, and indeed of the nation as a whole, is not placed in jeopardy. (Malan 1985)

In response to the total onslaught, the government proposed a "total strategy," premised on the militarization of South African society. There had been a limited

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call-up since 1957, but by 1980 there was two years mandatory military service for all white men, followed by "camp duty" to be served on alternate years for fifteen years. As in other societies that implement the call-up, national service became a powerful rite of passage for white boys and was advocated as the primary performance of citizenship and masculinity. However, as Enloe notes, "militarization is a potent set of processes. But it is not the well-oiled, unstoppable development that it is frequently portrayed as being" (1988, 215). As the responsibilities of conscripts increased and South Africa's militarization became more pronounced, conscientious objectors citing political motives began to emerge.

In 1983, the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) was established to support objectors to military service and campaign for an end to conscription, as well as highlight the unjust nature of apartheid and the illegality of many of the SADF's activities. The ECC was an umbrella group established out of a number of white anti-apartheid organizations, church groups, student groups, and conscientious objector support groups. The ECC's main support was drawn from white, English-speaking university students. The ECC never became a mass movement, but relied on creative campaigns using music, art, protests, and political meetings and gained significant coverage in the South African press (ECC and Catholic Institute of International Affairs [CIIR] 1989; Phillips 2002; Anderson 1990). Weldes et. al. note, if we accept that "the production of insecurities requires considerable social work—of production, of reproduction, and possibly, of transformation," then it is possible to contest and reveal these constructions and thereby destabilize and deconstruct them (1999, 16). White men who opposed military service threatened to do just that. Men's willingness to object to conscription and the rise of the ECC were symptoms of apartheid's malaise but also of social and political fractures within white elites.

The National Party's (NP) political hegemony in the white population became increasingly contested as the 1980s progressed. The NP had been formed out of the humiliation of Afrikaner defeat at the hands of the British in the Boer War and its brand of (Afrikaner) Nationalism was molded by German National Socialism in the 1930s. The NP had narrowly won office in 1948 and social, economic, historical, and linguistic divisions between English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking whites meant that the establishment of Afrikaner political hegemony had rested on the articulation of a racist and authoritarian hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity (Du Pisani 2001; 2004). The NP's control of the political, economic, and social realm had always been a contested process, although by the 1960s, dissident whites had become increasingly marginalized. In the late 1970s, white society had undergone rapid social and economic change, and it was no longer possible for the National Party to rely on an exclusionary discourse that stigmatized British immigrants, Jews, and capitalists. Indeed, President P. W. Botha (South Africa's political leader from 1978 to 1989) remarked, "The idea of Afrikaner unity at the expense of South African unity is out" (Murray 1983, 17). Tropes of white hegemonic masculinity attempted to rejuvenate and embrace previously excluded identities by incorporating capitalism, consumerism

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and a broader white identity that included white English speakers. Even overt racism was shunned by this new, so-called, *verligte* (enlightened) form of Nationalism (Du Pisani 2001, 168). The SADF was the symbol and a catalyst for this social and political project. Military service was therefore not only a means to ensure the defense of South Africa; it served as a disciplinary institution that aimed to moderate intrawhite political cleavages and symbolize the unity of the white population in the face of a common threat (Seegers 1987, 160). The SADF was at pains to stress its multicultural credentials, welcoming Jewish, English, and Portuguese servicemen as well as regularly celebrating its British imperial heritage (*Paratus* 1980; Kleyn 1988; Janssen 1988; Wiener 1988). Participation as conscripts in the SADF afforded English speakers new claims of citizenship and the opportunity to move away from their previous marginalized status.

This *verligte* Nationalist project resulted in disunity and dissent in the ruling bloc. The NP government witnessed a collapse of its electoral support as the 1980s progressed. Nevertheless, NP victories in white-only elections remained secure because of the "First Past the Post" electoral system (Schrire 1991, 92). Despite initial support at the outset of his leadership, Botha faced unprecedented dissent from English-speaking and Afrikaans business interests, particularly after the collapse in the value of the Rand in 1986. Furthermore, by the later 1980s, criticism of apartheid emanated from such bastions of Nationalism as the Dutch Reformed Church, the *Broederbond* (a secretive and powerful Afrikaner men's group) and Stellenbosch University (Howe 1994, 491; Villa-Vicencio 1988, 45; Charney 1987, 23). The NP experienced an even greater threat from the extreme right: a split in the NP in 1982 led to the formation of the reactionary Conservative Party, who replaced the liberal Progressive Federal Party as official parliamentary opposition in 1987 and neofascist paramilitary groups such as the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* (AWB) gained up to 100,000 members by the late 1980s (Schrire 1991, 92; Charney 1987, 12). Anti-apartheid groups became increasingly active in white civil society and gained significant support from sections of the press. Conscientious objectors, therefore, highlighted and exacerbated political fractures within white elites (and the divisions between white men) and disrupted the ability of the state to portray the SADF as a symbol of white unity and masculine camaraderie. Indeed, Phillips believes that the greatest threat the ECC posed to the white regime was the threat to "the apartheid state's ideological hegemony, undermining and contradicting the threat based ideology with which the National Party attempted to maintain white unity" (2002, 22). As such, conscientious objection to military service undermined the normative foundations of the state and contested the accepted gender norms that white men were expected to follow in South Africa.

The ECC's and individual political objectors' challenge to military service was bound to provoke a considerable response from the apartheid state and its supporters. "When conscientious objectors refuse to obey the law," notes Burk, "questions are raised about their loyalty and commitment to larger society" and in times of war

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and crisis these questions are raised, "in the sharpest terms [making] it difficult for others to view them as responsible members of the community" (1995, 512). The state considered whites who challenged hegemonic perceptions of the "onslaught" as being part of that onslaught, but there was a distinction between the *enemies* of South Africa, such as the African National Congress (ANC), South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and the Soviet Union, and whites who opposed military service and/or apartheid. Apartheid social organization rested on a number of binaries that identified insiders and outsiders (or "friends" and "enemies"), and the existence of ambivalent actors in the public realm (or "strangers") threatened the operation of these binaries (Bauman 1991, 54). The binary of friends and enemies/insiders and outsiders is defined by what the other is not. The identities of the friends are thus bound to the identity of the enemies (Bauman 1991, 53). "Strangers" in the public realm threaten the maintenance of the binary. For the Nationalist government, the "myth" of the enemy had to remain intact if its policies were to be perceived as legitimate and consent for its rule were to be maintained in the white community. How, then, were whites who opposed the fundamental tenets of this paradigm to be dealt with? Were they to be the "enemies" within? The dilemma for the state in this situation was that:

> Unlike other, "straightforward" enemies, he [the stranger] is not kept at a secure distance, nor on the other side of the battle-line. Worse still, he claims the right to be an object of *responsibility*—the well known attribute of the *friend* . . . he is a constant threat to the world's order. (Bauman 1991, 59–60)

It was this threat to the militarized paradigm of white society, resting as it did on a number of binaries and a structure of cultural mythology (Barthes 1972), that necessitated swift and seemingly disproportionately punitive sanctions and abuse directed at the ECC and objectors. It was intolerable for the state that groups other than the SADF or Nationalist government define South Africa's security and question the total onslaught paradigm. It was also shocking and potentially disastrous for white men to refuse the masculine privilege and duty of military service.

The apartheid state had considerable institutional, legal, discursive and material advantages when tackling the ECC and objectors. White social order was arranged around a pervasive cultural mythology that created "common sense" assumptions about the normality of militarization and apartheid rule. Conscription in South Africa was a powerful social means for managing the white community by engendering and policing militarized, gendered norms. The South African state had exclusive control over the broadcast media, considerable power to intimidate and influence the press, and had designed the education system to prepare and condition white boys for military service (Evans 1989; Frederickse 1986; Graaf et al. 1988; Omond 1986; Posel 1989).

Indeed, ECC leader Laurie Nathan conceded that most whites considered the ECC to be "irrelevant and subversive" (Nathan 1989, 310). Considerable opinion

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poll evidence exists suggesting that the majority of the white population accepted the government's perception of threat and the need for military service (Cawthra 1986, 42; Gagiano cited in Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC] 1998, 222–223; Geldenhuys 1982). However, the conclusion that the state was indifferent to objectors and confident of maintaining the white population's complicity in militarization is a highly disingenuous one, as can be demonstrated by the severity of its response to objectors. White attitudes toward military service also began to change as the state struggled to cope with external and internal circumstances. South African Military Intelligence was alarmed by the existence of the ECC and sought to, in its words, "destroy" the ECC (Stiff 2001, 282–283). Furthermore, the vilification, harassment, and punitive legal measures taken against individual objectors and the men and women who supported the ECC revealed the state's perception that objectors were a profound threat and their argument could not merely be met with counter-argument, but that they had to be expelled from the public realm.

The Masculine State

The apartheid state's response to objectors drew from constructions of hegemonic white masculinity in South Africa and from powerful cultural discourses that defined white nationalism in virile, militaristic and defiant terms. "Make no mistake," warned President P. W. Botha in an interview with *Le Figaro*, "we have guts. South Africa is a valuable jewel defended by determined men" (cited in Uys 1987, 14). Nationalist projects are often mutually constitutive of hegemonic constructions of masculinity (Nagel 1998) and this was certainly the case in South Africa (Morrell 2001; Du Pisani 2004). P. W. Botha, in particular, combined traditional Afrikaner Nationalist ideology with Cold War rhetoric and sought to portray South Africa as fighting for its very survival against internal and external enemies. Botha invoked historical *Voortrekker* and British settler themes of strength over adversity and defiance in the face of threat, and effectively reinstituted the mythology of the *laager*, whereby whites pulled together in a united, defensive formation (Frankel 1984, 69). President Botha defined the white population as proud, stoic and steadfast. "The country has been tamed and developed by men and women who had the perseverance, courage and faith of pioneers," the President told a large public gathering in Cape Town (*SA Digest* 1983, 3). This appeal to the supposed innate courage and perseverance of white people was a perennial one in Nationalist discourse. In 1961, Prime Minister Verwoerd told whites to "stand like granite" in the face of international outrage at the Sharpeville massacre; in the 1980s, South Africa's foreign minister echoed this appeal when he called for the white electorate to "stand like a rock against the waves of the ocean until the tide ebbs and then lift up one's head again" (Botha cited in Barber and Barratt 1990, 203). These "brittle" (Morrell 2001, 18) conceptions of masculinity—demonstrating the need for Nationalist elites to discipline

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the fractious white community and define the white nation in heroic, masculine terms—were particularly suited to aid militarization, but also made white elites suspicious of, and defensive about, dissent or challenge.

As much as Nationalist white identity was construed as virile and strong, it was codependent on a fear of being weak, compromising, and "feminine." "We are not a nation of weaklings," said President Botha. "We face adversity from a position of strength" (Van Deventer and Cohen 1987, 24). "I detest weaklings in public life," P. W. Botha remarked on another occasion (cited in Uys 1987, 17). This discourse of "weakness" was ever-present and directly informed how objectors were addressed by the state. As the 1980s progressed and South Africa's internal and external fortunes became more precarious, the state appeared beleaguered. Botha's appeals to white South Africans' sense of threatened masculinity became more urgent. Speaking on South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) TV the evening the national State of Emergency was declared in 1986, Botha said:

> It must be very clear in future that South Africans will not allow themselves to be humiliated in order to prevent sanctions. If we have to be dependent only on our Creator and our own ability, then I say: Let it be . . . South Africa will not crawl before anyone to prevent it. (*SA Digest* 1986)

The threat of "humiliation" by compromising with internal or international critics became an obsession for Botha. As international outrage at Botha's intransigence in 1986 led to a collapse of the Rand and the flight of numerous international corporations from the Republic, Botha responded that it would be "better to be poor than to yield" (cited in Krog 1999, 403). Krog considers Botha's fear of being perceived to be "weak," and thus "humiliated," as the result of his subjectivity in an Afrikaner discourse based on notions of "honor" and "shame": to compromise would bring shame on Botha and the collective white nation (1999, 397). Indeed, international hostility toward South Africa was interpreted by Botha as a sign of the world's weakness in the face of South African might. Weldes, writing about the cultural production of crisis in cold war America, concludes that the United States was "not only masculinist but aggressively macho." This was certainly applicable to apartheid South Africa, and inherent in this "macho" posture was the "fear of appearing weak—whether of arms or of will—loomed large because such a feminine characteristic would excite not the desired respect, but only contempt" (Weldes 1999, 46). For P. W. Botha, this appeal to inner reserves of strength served as a disciplinary warning: whites who refused the call would be lesser citizens, lesser men, and traitors; they would be perceived to be "crawling" to South Africa's enemies, exhibiting weakness and femininity.

The extent of the threat the government believed South Africa faced meant that political and military leaders represented the South African polity in bodily terms. South Africa, therefore, could be killed and destroyed. The safety and continued life of South Africa was constructed as something that was the responsibility of individual

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whites. Demonstrating "weakness" could lead to the "death" of the body politic, but in particular, Botha and other Nationalists stressed the potential of South Africa to commit "suicide" by failing to stand firm. Shortly after assuming office, Botha had warned the white population, "We have to be prepared to adapt our policy . . . otherwise we die" (cited in Schrire 1991, 29). However, the new prime minister also warned, "I am not prepared to cut my own throat for the sake of world opinion" (cited in Uys 1987, 44). Botha defined himself as the guardian of this bodily entity and as he melodramatically declared, "I am not prepared to lead White South Africans and other minority groups on a road to abdication and suicide. Destroy White South Africa and our influence, and this country will drift into faction, strife, chaos and poverty" (cited in Schrire 1991, 29). The threat of white South Africa's "suicide," which would effectively lead to the death of the nation as a whole, was something that the state used to justify its use of the military and it was a spectre the state invoked when dealing with whites who opposed conscription. As a government-sponsored leaflet attacking the objector Ivan Toms remarked, "Dr. Ivan Toms and the ECC are conspiring to have South Africa commit national suicide. They have in mind the revolutionary overthrow of the existing order with nary a thought to what will follow" ("Veterans for Victory: Special report" n.d.). Whites themselves were responsible for the survival of the body politic; therefore, they were capable of provoking its "suicide." The death of the body politic was something that men who refused to serve in the army could supposedly provoke and it served as a justification for the repressive and punitive response of the state. As President Botha warned upon the declaration of the national State of Emergency, he was not prepared to allow South Africa to be placed "on the altar of chaos and decay." Consequently, the police, army and legal system would be used to suppress dissent in all quarters (*Paratus* 1986, 32). If whites who opposed military service were allowed to undermine the authority of the state, they could not only destabilize the body politic—they could kill it.

"Purging Strangers": The State Response to Objectors

Conscientious objectors entered the public realm critiquing the state's perception of threat and the state's legitimacy, and refused to participate in the practices by which white men gained full citizenship and masculinity. The very presence of such critics in public discourse threatened the cultural binaries of apartheid and militarization. Therefore, to ensure that the "strangers" of the ECC were expelled (or "purged"; Bauman 1991, 24) from the public realm and that the gendered, militarized binary prevailed, the state had to publicly highlight and deride objectors' personal as well as political subjectivities. As Bauman argues, the means for this "purging" are the attachment of "stigma" to the identity of strangers—that is, the strangers are not ignored by the state, but brought to public attention in a way that attaches "a visible sign of hidden flaw, iniquity or moral turpitude. An otherwise

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innocuous trait becomes a blemish, a sign of affliction, a cause of shame" (Bauman 1991, 67). Attacking the personal identity of strangers is an appropriate response, because the state's discourse and perception of threat is so heavily invested in the identity of the "friends." The success of the state's attack rests on maintaining the control and coherence of hegemonic modes of identity. The South African government drew on a number of stigmatizing discourses, all of which were embedded in the conception of South Africa as a masculine state in crisis. The primary discourses for attacking and stigmatizing the ECC can be broadly arranged as follows:

1. The ECC was part of the total onslaught against South Africa and, as such, the ECC and objectors were traitors and enemies.

P. W. Botha dubbed the first objectors citing political motives as signs of "a new phase in the total onslaught . . . manifested in the malevolent efforts to question the very essence of military service" (cited in Cawthra 1986, 49). The ECC and objectors faced increasingly punitive legal penalties because of this assumption. In 1983, the sentence for objection was raised to six years imprisonment, the longest sentence for objection in the world. During the 1986 State of Emergency, the state severely restricted the discursive space within which the ECC could operate. Emergency regulations stipulated that any "subversive statement" which "discredited or undermined" the "system of compulsory military service" would be punished with a heavy prison sentence and/or a substantial fine (ECC and CIIR 1989, 112). University administrators warned campus ECC groups that they would need to tread very carefully in this new ominous legal framework. Many of their previous campaign slogans and messages were now illegal (Grogan 1987). In the Western Cape, the ECC was banned from making "any utterance" at all and meetings of the ECC were banned in the Eastern Cape (Phillips 2002, 87). Dozens of ECC activists were arrested, some held in detention for months and a number of objectors were tried and given maximum sentences.

In 1987, General Malan branded the ECC "a direct enemy of the South African Defence Force" (SABC Comment 1987). In 1988 he said the ECC was, "at the vanguard of those forces that are intent on wrecking the present dispensation and its renewal" (*The Star* 1988). Days later, the ECC was banned outright. Minister for Law and Order Adriaan Vlok justified the banning, claiming, "ECC is part of the so-called national liberation struggle" (*Cape Argus* 1988).

In this conception, the ECC and objectors were presented as the enemy and were indivisible from the myth of the "folk devils" of the ANC and world communism. This strategy of attack did not recognize ECC and objectors as strangers and it was problematic as a result. The restrictions and harassment imposed by the State of Emergency had an undoubtedly devastating effect on the ECC, but it did not counter the phenomenon of individual political objection and, if anything, it increased press and political support for objectors. The government's acts appeared draconian and hysterical. This was because the representation of the ECC's largely middle-class,

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English-speaking students, intellectuals, and young professionals as the "enemy" was not credible to many of the 40 percent of white South Africans who were English speakers. For example, the arrest and detention of ECC activist Janet Cherry prompted opposition Member of Parliament Helen Suzman to ask the minister for law and order that if "people like Janet Cherry are held in detention . . . tell me how we differ from a police state?" (ECC 1987). "People like Janet Cherry" were not interpreted as enemies by significant sections of the white South African public. The reaction to the objector trials also demonstrates this: the SADF, the state prosecutors, and even sometimes the magistrates, appeared uneasy at prosecuting and sentencing objectors to imprisonment. Indeed, the objector Dr. Ivan Toms was sentenced to imprisonment with the words, "You are not a criminal. Our jails are there for people who are a menace to society, you are not a menace to society. In fact you are just the opposite" (Kotze 1988, 230). The wider English-speaking press became increasingly appalled at the spectacle of the trials. Presenting the ECC and objectors as the enemy failed to purge them from the public realm and, if anything, it gave power and justification to their message.

2. Objectors and the ECC were naïve "useful idiots/dupes" unconsciously fulfilling and advancing the ANC's plans for revolution and chaos in South Africa.

This typology recognized objectors as strangers rather than enemies and attached stigma to them as individuals. This strategy of attack drew from cultural myths of communism operating through naïve, "useful dupes" who even work against their own interests in unwittingly aiding communist plots. President Botha remarked in 1987 that "the ANC is laughing up their sleeves at the naivety of useful idiots who, as Lenin put it, can be used to further the aims of the first phase of the Revolution" (cited in Uys 1987, 80). The stigmatization of objectors using this discourse drew from masculinist understandings of rationality, reason, responsibility, and maturity (Jones 1996). It posited rationality on the state and constructed the objector and ECC supporter as irrational, naive, immature, and foolish; the objector was thus feminized. Even the leader of the official liberal parliamentary opposition, Dr. Frederick van zyl Slabbert, branded the aims of the ECC as "dangerously naïve, romantic, simplistic and counter productive" (*The Star* 1985). More than half of the ECC's activists were women, many were university students and men who had not served in the military and had refused to perform a key practice of white hegemonic masculinity; the stigma of feminine irrationality and naivety was thus easily deployed against the ECC. As Graaf et. al. noted, in this strain of state discourse, "members of the ECC are seen to be victims of forces beyond their control, of an evil invisible power which knows no bounds" (1988, 50). This "evil" power was world communism, which supposedly also had the ANC, black people, and many churches in its thrall. The minister for law and order, Adrian Vlok, justified the state's restrictions on the ECC by saying that the ECC was "used by the ANC to achieve the ANC's evil goals in South Africa" (*Daily News* 1985). ECC

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activist Sarah Hills was told by Special Branch that her fifteen day detention would "teach me a lesson—not to be involved in something bigger than me" (ECC 1987). Hills was treated as if she were a naughty schoolgirl, involved in things she did not understand. Whites who opposed military service were irrationally undermining their own security by criticizing conscription and the SADF: "I want to warn young people who lend their ears to radicals and who play around with the music from Lusaka [location of the ANC's headquarters]," said P. W. Botha. "They will end up inside the bear's fur coat, but they will no longer be able to live" (cited in Uys 1987, 79). As such, ECC members and objectors could be classified as part of the total onslaught, but unwitting participants in it. The state could evoke the myth of the communist revolutionary plot to seize and destroy South Africa without representing ECC members as enemies themselves. In this stigmatizing discourse, the state branded ECC activists as feminized, naïve, and foolish.

3. ECC activists were not naïve in their motives: they were concealing their more "sinister" plans for South Africa, attempting to fool well-meaning objectors and the wider population in the process (especially the "impressionable" youth).

This was a variation of the "useful dupe" stigma. However, it posited a conscious awareness of their motives onto the members of ECC. In 1987, the ECC itself noticed that the state's strategy was changing and that "more ominously, ECC is being used to smear other organizations," by being linked by the state to them (ECC 1987). In this discourse, objectors were separated from the ECC, and the ECC did not embody naivety, but was a sinister front for the Soviet Union. "The ECC is one of the many threads in the web of international deceit," concluded Veterans for Victory ("Veterans for Victory update: A question of credibility" n.d.).[1] "There are many sinister organizations whose masterly manipulations of facts and the ordinary word constitute a real threat to the established Christian, democratic and free enterprise system" ("Veterans for Victory update: The rape of peace" n.d.). A complicated flow diagram drawn by the SADF and military intelligence, and distributed in various guises, linked the ECC directly to the USSR, ANC, UN Anti-Apartheid Committee, the World Council of Churches, and a host of other "sinister fronts" for Soviet expansionism. In this conception, it was not the ECC who were naïve, but individual objectors themselves and sections of the wider white public. Objector Douglas Torr remembers that his father believed that Torr was "being a puppet of other people, the ECC in particular, which is quite hurtful. But that's what he believed, he just couldn't see that it was me making the stand".[2] Torr's father clearly accepted the cultural representation of the malevolent ECC fooling well-meaning souls. The projecting of sinister machinations onto individual objectors became problematic precisely because of the iconic, moral nature of objectors' public stands. Objectors like Dr. Ivan Toms, a Christian, army officer, and community medic, were more difficult for the state to crudely stigmatize as willing accomplices in Soviet

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plans (although Toms' gay identity was certainly seized on by elements of the pro-conscription lobby as a stigmatizing discourse). The state had to rely on discursive strategies to smear the ECC while presenting otherwise "good" objectors as naïve.

A mass-produced military intelligence leaflet about Ivan Toms demonstrated this strategy. Toms' Christian, professional, and compassionate identities were acknowledged by the leaflet, which went on to say:

> Picture a South Africa without the competent Defence Force it proudly boasts today. Imagine if the SADF couldn't handle the chaos in the townships. It is frankly difficult to imagine gifted people like Dr. Toms willingly pursuing paths that would lead to such a scenario in South Africa. We can only hope that they are misguided—that they are blinded by their emotions and their desire to see a more equitable situation emerging in our country. If that is their objective, then we have no quarrel with it. In fact we endorse it whole-heartedly. What concerns this organization and all reasonable, peace loving South Africans, is the means they choose to use in trying to see their objectives realized ("Veterans for Victory: Special report" n.d.)

The state acknowledged objectors' higher motives, like those of Toms, and even claimed to share their aims of creating a more "equitable" situation. However, the state sought to warn of these objectors' naivety in the hands of a sinister and wily enemy, one well-established in the white South African body politic: that of communism. The columnist and military commentator Willem Steenkamp wrote in the *Cape Times*, "I doubt if its [the ECC's] hardcore worries very much about conscientious objectors (whatever its many sincerely concerned members might think). It is basically a political front organization aimed at destroying the SADF" (Steenkamp 1987). Many ECC members and objectors were "useful dupes" in this scenario, but the ECC's elite were knowingly malignant in their intentions toward South Africa. Rationality and reason were vested in the state, who had the ability to discover what the ANC/Soviet axis were planning and present it in a scientific and detailed manner. Jones (1996) notes that conceptions of masculine authority inherently feminize the citizenry as a whole; it is therefore the responsibility of the state to protect the vulnerable populace and to purge strangers from the public realm. It was the wider South African public that could fall prey to the concealed ECC's machinations: "The ECC will convince well intentioned souls such as the clergy—who become duped by idealistic rhetoric cleverly based on the manipulation of the scriptures—that they are in no way connected with the communist sponsored World Peace Council" ("Veterans for Victory: Special report" n.d.).

4. Objectors' political message was the result of sexual deviance and cowardice, not genuinely held convictions.

Posel's analysis of broadcast news in South Africa found that white opponents of apartheid were presented as embodying socially "deviant" identities that were pathologically

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flawed (1989, 272). The fact that objectors were questioning military service, a fundamental signifier of masculinity, increased the fact that the gender and sexual identities of objectors and their supporters were used as a means to stigmatize them in prostate discourse. This stigma took on the form of crude homophobia and more subtle innuendo. The subordination of objectors' masculinity by the charge of cowardice and the innuendo of homosexuality acutely stigmatized objectors and destabilized their right to political agency in the public realm. This strategy fed off wider homophobic discourses present in South African national life and formed part of a greater "moral panic" about the rise of "permissiveness" and the decline of hegemonic modes of life (namely the heterosexual nuclear family; Cock 1993, 56; President's Council: Republic of South Africa 1987). The rise of antiapartheid activism and perceived social disintegration of South Africa led the President's Council [apartheid South Africa's Upper House of Assembly] to conduct an inquiry into youth and "good citizenship." The subsequent report in 1987 identified the ECC as a body whose successes should "not be underestimated" and who were intent on "undermining authority" (1987, 16). The report was particularly concerned about the rise in white divorce rates and childbirth out of wedlock, and identified homosexuality as a cause of social breakdown and an impediment to good citizenship (President's Council: Republic of South Africa 1987, 48). As Du Pisani notes, "Liberalism and homosexuality were two primary manifestations of masculine "deviance" in Afrikaner society during the apartheid years" (2001, 167). Phelan argues that homophobic discourse aims to stigmatize gays and lesbians as "strangers" and thus deny them "acknowledgement" as citizens (2001, 26–27). The attachment of stigma is necessary because the polity is constructed in heteronormative, masculine/phallic terms and the presence of gays and lesbians threaten these norms.

In South Africa, militarized hegemonic masculinity was heterosexual and the body politic was formed around the concept of the nuclear family. Military intelligence files show that the SADF took a great interest in the development of gay liberation politics among white South Africans and linked it to wider political and social developments, such as the growth of the ECC. Among the recently released intelligence files, otherwise filled with data on the ECC and news cuttings relating to the military, was a *Cape Argus* article claiming that most "homosexuals won't volunteer for AIDS test" in South Africa (Galloway 1987). Sexuality and, in particular, the growth of the gay liberation movement, was directly linked to the growth of white anti-apartheid and anti-conscription politics. One military intelligence report from a social event held by the ECC claimed that most of the participants were members of the University of Cape Town's Gay and Lesbian Alliance and that the evening had ended with "lesbians getting at each other with no shame at all" ("Feedback report: ECC culture committee" 1987). Another report claimed that an ECC committee member was "an active homosexual although sometimes bi-sexual," and listed his recent sexual partners (who were all members of the ECC; "Summary report" 1986). The use of homophobia as a discursive tactic against objectors and the

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ECC was one of the primary discourses used to "smear" the organization. Gay objector Ivan Toms was vilified in an ad hoc and localized campaign that used homophobic stigma (Toms 1994). The use of sexuality in this way points to the fact that military service constituted hegemonic norms of sexual citizenship as well as gendered citizenship. Men and women who opposed conscription were vulnerable to homophobic stigma, whether they were gay or not.

The Veterans for Victory group often used crude homophobia in its anti-ECC literature, which was disseminated in schools, university campuses, and in the media. "Many people have no idea just how dangerous this bunch of fairy farts can be," it claimed of the ECC in one of its early leaflets. "Never have I known any nation anytime to produce brave, loyal or even trustworthy pacifists or anti-conscription or for that matter conscientious objectors, it cannot happen it is a contradiction in itself" (Veterans for Victory newsletter n.d.). In another newsletter, Veterans for Victory explained:

> ECC; Our version: E-motional, C-owardly, C-hickenhearted. Now let's expose these E-motional, C-owardly, C-hickenhearted Wets, Wooftahs and Waverers for what they really are. . . . Unlike the Tweetie-pies of the ECC, with their predictable flutter of yellow feathers, must good men stand idle, while murderers, rapists and arsonists rome [sic] the Black townships? (Veterans for Victory newsletter n.d.)

Homophobic stigma is clearly attached to objectors and the ECC in this discourse and it is used to discount any political principles that may be held by the objectors themselves. Objectors are also contrasted with the "good men" of the SADF. This contrast was discerned in a semiotic study of "Vets" literature and cartoons:

> The soldier, the warrior, the redeemer; find his juxtaposition in the "Other," in this case the "Other" is the ECC member who refuses to answer the call up and take up arms: the marginalizing of this "Other" is given added emphasis by the threatening of "his" sexual identity. In stark contrast to the potency of the warrior, the ECC member is stripped of his virility and manhood and made into a member. The ECC member is a nerd, a *moffie* [derogatory term for gay male], a queer. (Graaf et al. 1988, 49)

The objector, refusing to do military service, was deviant, effeminate, subversive, impotent, untrustworthy, disloyal, and a dangerous conduit for communist domination. General Malan described members of the ECC as "Mommy's little boys" (cited in Cock 1993, 73). An anonymous poster campaign in Cape Town carried slogans such as, "ECC Does It From Behind" and "The ECC Believes in Fairy Tales." Later, more sophisticated Veterans for Victory literature carried a cover page emblazoned with "Queer Birds These War Resisters." Underneath the slogan was a cartoon of an ostrich with its head buried in the ground, a reference to the ECC's naivety. Behind the ostrich were slightly obscured newspaper articles referring to the rise of the gay liberation movement in South Africa, other articles referred to "groups" active in school playgrounds. The leaflet clearly played on the moral fears of gay liberation,

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the ANC targeting schoolchildren and deeper fears of gay paedophilia. The use of homophobia against objectors and their supporters was a vicious, yet particularly effective, means of stigmatizing the personal identities of the participants and thereby obscuring their political message and questioning their right to exist in the public realm as political actors.

Conclusion

The legacy of conscription for white South African society and indeed, the activities of the End Conscription Campaign, have not been extensively researched or documented. The case study of the apartheid state in crisis is significant when analyzing any authoritarian or militarized society that is facing external or internal challenge. It reveals that policing the ruling class is as much a state project as the defense against a supposed enemy and that the primary means for this disciplinary project is the buttressing of a heteronormative gender binary. Practices of citizenship and masculinity, such as compulsory military service, can also serve as a vital mechanism for mediating intraelite cleavages and can form a central plank of nationalist political projects. It is for this reason that objectors to military service pose such a threat. Conscientious objectors are "strangers" in the public realm who challenge the state's ability not only to exclusively define external threats and the response to them, but also to control norms of gender and citizenship. Objectors in apartheid South Africa exposed dissent within the ruling elite and threatened to destabilize white-minority, National Party rule. The state responded to this threat by drawing on a well-developed cultural discourse that defined the white nation (and the Nationalist state) in virile, manly, and militaristic terms. Critics of the regime from within the white community were interpreted as weak, cowardly, and capitulating to South Africa's enemies.

However, objectors' dissidence as "strangers" in the public realm made Nationalist elites insecure about the potential impact of objectors and other peace activists' transgressive message. The state often struggled to adequately or coherently represent objectors to the rest of the white population, but the state's use of homophobia acutely stigmatized objectors and peace activists. Homophobia also reveals the inherent heteronormativity of the public performance of military service (regardless of whether participants in the military are heterosexual), and objectors and members of the ECC were subject to homophobic stigmatization because they opposed service in the military, not because they were actually gay or lesbian. The efficacy of homophobic discourse was evident in the response of objectors and their supporters to it. As the 1980s progressed, homophobic attacks increasingly influenced and constrained the performance of objection and created controversy for women activists and gay objectors, such as Ivan Toms, who were pressurized to conduct their campaigns from a heteronormative and "respectable" premise (see Conway 2004; Toms 1994). Further research needs to be undertaken to explore the ideological implications

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of the interconnections between sexuality, gender, and conscientious objection to adequately assess the impact of the strategic decisions objectors take in such circumstances. For the apartheid state, conscientious objectors threatened the gendered binaries on which social, political, and militarized norms rested. The state's vicious response was also a reflection of the crisis in which it was increasingly mired.

Notes

1. Veterans for Victory was a proconscription group covertly funded by South African Military Intelligence and headed by Sergeant Rob Brown. Its primary aim was to gather information on and disseminate hostile literature against the ECC and objectors. Brown paid informers within the ECC and also individuals willing to disrupt ECC meetings and tear down posters. Veterans for Victory also produced a regular newsletter, placed advertisements in the press, and displayed posters on university campuses (Stiff 2001).

2. Interview with Rev. Douglas Torr, conducted December 5, 2002.

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