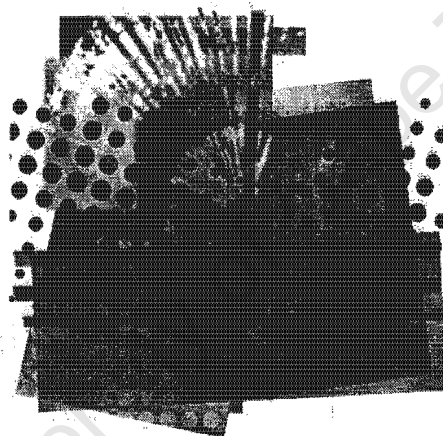


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Afrikanerdom?

**Negotiating Afrikaner identity
in post-apartheid South Africa.**



Submitted by
Mads Vestergaard
for a
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Department of Social Anthropology
University of Cape Town, South Africa
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Supervisor: Dr. Owen B. Sichone

UT 570 VEST

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University of Cape Town

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Abstract

The apartheid regime monopolised Afrikanerdom and institutionalised a specific Christian-nationalist Afrikaner identity. In post-apartheid South Africa this identity is no longer sanctioned by the state, and central elements of the identity have become illegitimate - most importantly the racial aspect. It is now up to the individual Afrikaner to negotiate this new space of identifications opened up by the end of apartheid order. Through different kinds of post-structuralist theory this thesis investigates some of the ways in which white Afrikaans-speakers position themselves in this new context. For some the new South Africa means exciting new possibilities but others experience it as a loss of freedom. The analysis pivots around the separatist 'volkstaat town' of Orania, where we find some of the central problems facing Afrikaners in general in terms of identity formation. It is argued that although Orania is radical in its claims, it is nonetheless one of the actors in the discursive battles of redefining Afrikaner identity. However, in the context of radical change and indecision, it is but one among many other attempts of redefining Afrikanerdom, many competing voices are heard and boundaries of identity are constantly contested and redrawn.

Abbreviations:

AB	Afrikaner Broederbond (since 1994 the Afrikaner Bond)
ANC	African National Congress
APK	Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk
CP	Conservative Party
CVO	Christelike Volkseie Onderweis (Christian 'People own' Education)
DP	Democratic Party
FAK	Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurorganisasies (Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Organisations)
FF	Freedom Front (Vryheidsfront)
G/NP	Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party (Purified National Party)
NP	National Party
NNP	New National Party (since 1998)
NGK	Dutch Reformed Church (Nederlanse Gereformerte Kerk)
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SABRA	South African Bureau of Racial Affairs
SAIRR	South African Institute for Race Relations
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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Monsters and saints - A personal preface

A summer day in Denmark in the end of the 1980's, my father and I were on our way home from a family gathering, everything being peaceful and quiet. My father noted that the car needed petrol, and further down the road a petrol station conveniently showed up. There was only one problem; it was a *Shell* station. For my dad that was not a problem at all, but for me however it was very problematic indeed; at the time I was supporting the boycott of Shell Oil for breaking the trade sanctions against apartheid South Africa. My father viewed me as hysterical when I insisted that we could not use the station; in his opinion petrol was petrol. I managed to talk him out of buying their petrol, but it was a close call. I felt like a revolutionary. I was 16 years old.

Shell had become the symbol of capitalist collaboration with the apartheid regime, and supporting them meant supporting that regime. Being young in Denmark, we could not directly fight the regime in South Africa, but at least we could fight Shell Oil. Oh yes, we were part of the Struggle those days in Denmark. Some even took it to extremes, by burning down petrol stations, painting 'burn to hell Shell!' on walls, or assaulting the people working at the stations.

The issue of apartheid has been important for many of my generation in Denmark. Ever since I started following the media and the public debate as a teenager, South Africa has been on the agenda. In a sense it became a symbol of evil itself, of unequivocal oppression. I recall listening to songs by U2, Peter Gabriel, Simple Minds and other rock stars who sang about the horror of white oppression in South Africa, and I clearly remember going to school dances, listening to the album 'United Artists Against Apartheid', with the hit song 'I ain't gonna play in Sun City'. A 'Free Nelson Mandela' concert was held in London, and the slogan itself circulated among the youth, alongside with 'save the whales' and 'no to nuclear power'. In those formative years I read books like 'Biko' by Donald Woods and speeches by Mandela.

Growing up in a complex world, it was somehow nice to have conflicts like the South African one, which appeared simple, uncomplicated and clear-cut. It was easy to distinguish between the good and the bad guys, who were easily recognisable by the colour of their

skin: the whites were the oppressors and blacks the oppressed. Injustice was indisputable, obvious to everyone. Furthermore, it was a far-away conflict, which meant taking a stand did not have any personal costs.

I remembered hearing about the Afrikaners, a group of people particularly evil, similar only to the Nazis. Later I learned of some good whites in South Africa, and those being the English speakers. That was also fairly simple; the good whites spoke English, and the bad whites spoke Afrikaans.

The anti-apartheid movement and the ANC insisted that the enemy was the *system* of apartheid, not a specific population group. However, the impression I obtained through the international media, and general opinion in Denmark, was far simpler.

South Africa became a mythical place, a place of unbelievable evil and violence, a place of courageous endurance and humanity; a place populated by monsters and saints.

In 1993 I had the chance to go to South Africa working for the human rights organisation Black Sash at one of their advice offices. Before departure I felt great suspense knowing I finally would experience first hand this mythical, distant country, with its epic battle between good and evil. South Africa was no longer isolated by boycotts and Mandela had been released, but free democratic elections were still to be held. What I experienced of course, was neither monsters nor saints, but ordinary people trying to live their lives in a meaningful way. After an 8 months stay it was clear to me that the situation in South Africa was not as simple as it had looked from Europe, both regarding the past and the present situation of transformation.

After the elections in 1994 I went back to Denmark to start my anthropological studies. During my university years I knew that I had to come back to South Africa, equipped with a set of theoretical tools enabling me to unfold some of the issues I encountered during my first stay in the country.

One of the issues that caught my interest was the Afrikaners; how did *they* see the situation in South Africa, these intensely vilified people? How could they live with the burden of historical responsibility for a system that had been branded 'a crime against humanity' by the UN? What place could such a group of people have in the new South Af-

rica? Why did they support such an evil regime? Or did all of them? How did they, as a group of South Africans, come to grips with the radical political changes, and the consequential changes in official 'truth', values and societal organisation? It was a fascination with a group of people whose story I felt I had never really heard. More generally, I have been driven by an urge to take people seriously in their effort to make sense of their lives, and hence not reduce anyone to just being racist, reactionary, or evil.

On my second visit to South Africa in early 1998, I quickly discovered there was indeed something going on with the group 'the Afrikaners'. Their place in the post-apartheid South Africa was highly debated, and Afrikaner identity appeared to be an *issue*, both among South Africans in general but particularly among Afrikaners themselves.

That briefly is me, that is where I come from: a white middle class boy from Denmark, with liberal and leftist convictions, searching for stories about South Africa that were more complicated than the simplistic master narrative I was told in my youth by politicians and the media. With a strong urge to understand this complicated society and how people live in it, but with no urge to necessarily defend what I encountered.

This thesis is the result of an effort to tell a different story about the Afrikaners and their place in post-apartheid South Africa. A story which is made up of several different stories, one of which is about monsters turning into humans.

1. Introduction

During the CODESA-negotiations in the World Trade Centre in Johannesburg in 1993 over the terms of the transition from white minority rule to majority democracy, the negotiating parties had come close to finalising the interim constitution. Suddenly the meeting was disrupted by the sound of splintering glass. A military vehicle crashed through the glass facade and into the conference room. Out jumped Eugene Terreblanche, followed by his men from the Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB). With his big beard, khaki uniform and military boots he marched around the room and demanded in brute Afrikaans that the negotiations should be stopped immediately. Not only did he look like a caricature of a Trek-Boer put into an American *Operation Desert Storm* outfit, the act itself made him look like a dinosaur from the apartheid past who could not accept that the days of white supremacy were over. At the same time he could not express his frustration in other ways than by the use of simple force.

The Afrikaners are probably the most stereotyped group of people in South African politics and popular culture today. When people talk about 'the Afrikaner' he is often wearing khaki-shorts and looks like Terreblanche. It is as if everyone who is an Afrikaner thinks and acts the way the stereotypical Trek-Boer did 150 years ago (maybe with the only difference that in the current version of the stereotype he is a beer drinking rugby fanatic), is an overt white supremacist, a stout Calvinist, and so on.

Few group-identities in South Africa seem to so discussed and contested as the Afrikaner-identity; it seems to be very much an *issue* in different contexts and for different reasons. There are many indications of this: it is the only group of people where

some members are arguing for an independent country¹, and which has got a myriad of cultural and ethnic organisations. It is also the only grouping where more or less obscure right-wing groupings are ready to take up arms in a violent attempt of a reversal of the political changes.

Another indication is that there was a special debate in early 1999 in the South African parliament about the 'Afrikaner problem'; the worries and concerns of the Afrikaners, particularly regarding the perceived threat to their language and their future as a minority in South Africa. During this debate, as well as during other debates, one could see Afrikaners from all sides of the political spectrum fiercely argue about who represents the Afrikaners, what an Afrikaner is.

The stereotypical picture of 'the Afrikaner' is contradicted by the many different voices that claim to represent the Afrikaners, and individuals who actively distance themselves from the stereotype. The Freedom Front (FF) claims to be 'the political home of the Afrikaners' but was only supported by an estimated 10% of the Afrikaner electorate at the 1999 national elections, whereas the traditionally English Democratic Party has turned out to be the favoured party among Afrikaners.² The old ruling party and traditional guardian of Afrikaner interests, the National Party (NP), seems increasingly to be losing its Afrikaner support base altogether.

The FF has as its ultimate goal the establishment of a 'volkstaat'³, a self-governing area for the Afrikaners. Although radically different from the brute show of force by the AWB, the underlying message seems to be somewhat the same; a frustration over the transformation of the country's political system and a feeling that there is no room for the Afrikaners in the new South Africa. What the majority has called 'free at last',

¹ The Zulu nationalist party Inkatha used to hold a similar position. They have now accepted that Zulus are *subjects* of the Zulu king and at the same time *citizens* of South Africa (see Mamdani 1996). The Afrikaner separatists reject South African citizenship.

² Sunday Independent, 6. July 1999.

³ Directly translated the word means 'people state'. I will throughout this thesis use the Afrikaans word 'volkstaat', since its translation would result in a loss of the specific meaning it contains, which is related to another Afrikaans word I have chosen to use un-translated; 'volk'. Furthermore, it would be misguid-

many Afrikaners have described as a loss of freedom. A freedom which, according to some, only can be regained once a volkstaat is established.

At the same time both Thabo Mbeki and Nelson Mandela have in speeches repeatedly addressed the Afrikaners directly, and insisted that South Africa needs the Afrikaners.

In the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) there has been a special focus on the Afrikaners as a population group. Many Afrikaners feel that the TRC has been nothing but a witch-hunt for Afrikaners, which the TRC repeatedly has denied.

What all this indicates is that the position of the Afrikaners is still being negotiated in South Africa today, by the official system, by Afrikaners themselves as well as South Africans in general.

In many people's perception the Afrikaners are intimately linked to apartheid, which is why they as a group are problematic in post-apartheid South Africa. But there is a need for caution when looking at the Afrikaners. First of all, the symbolic arsenal of this nationalism is at least 60 years old, and is not an up-to date manifestation of Afrikaner identity. A lot of things are different and the prime players in the Afrikaner nationalist movement have changed or are currently undergoing significant change. If for nothing else, the context in which they find themselves has changed dramatically, and even old symbols which seem to be exactly the same as 60 years ago, get a new meaning in the new context. A too narrow focus on continuity is misleading and will prevent us from seeing what is going on in South Africa today. Secondly, one needs to distinguish between that minority of people who actually resemble the stereotype more or less, and the rest who do not. (Most of my informants thought that Terreblanche was a blatant fool.) In the same vein, one needs to distinguish between on the one side the discourse of Afrikaner nationalism and the institutions and organisations

ing to use the word 'homeland' since it has strong connotations with the 'Bantustans' during Apartheid. The idea of the 'volksstaat' is a new historical construct (Norval 1996: 283).

which became a vehicle for it, and on the other side the individuals whom that discourse tried to interpellate into a specific identity.

But the nationalist movement and apartheid is part of the history of the social category 'the Afrikaners', and is therefore something with which every single member of the group has to relate to in one way or another. Some might resent it and try to undermine those very values on which the discourse was built, and some might subscribe to them and dogmatically pull them with them into post-apartheid South Africa. And then of course there are those who do not relate to it directly; not actively either for or against what is perceived as the Afrikaner tradition and values.

My material points towards the fact, that especially the third option has become increasingly possible, since the government no longer represents the Afrikaners. New options for identification have become possible and, maybe more accurately, have become less problematic⁴. This does of course not mean that this last position is not affected by the past. No one can fully escape his/her past. Even if it is not dealt with directly it will still to a certain extent influence the production of meaning of the Afrikaner; the way he/she interprets the social (past, present, and future) and it will be part of how other people view the Afrikaners.

It is my argument that the apartheid regime constructed and monopolised a very specific Afrikaner identity. What happens then with this identity, when this regime crumbles? How do Afrikaners negotiate the new space opened up by the advent of the new political order?

My research question can be formulated as follows: **How do Afrikaners relate to Afrikanerdom, and how do they create a position for themselves in post-apartheid South Africa?**

⁴ It should be mentioned that this is not only a possibility but in certain situations a necessity in order to be accepted in the new political/social context.

Theoretical introduction

Analytical level

There are a number of theoretical implications of this question that I need to clarify. Firstly, one needs to problematise the concept 'the Afrikaner'. Hitherto I have used the term in a rather unproblematic way, the way it is used in everyday discourse. Most people would not question that there is a specific group of people called 'the Afrikaners' who come from South Africa. But why are there are so many different people speaking as, and on behalf of, 'the Afrikaners'? What defines that group? What are its properties? Who belongs to it?

The discussion takes us straight into the question of *identity* as such. Even though identity has an everyday use, like in the case of 'the Afrikaners', which seems unambiguous and straight forward, in contemporary social theory it is a very complex concept, to which the enormous, greatly varied body of literature bears testimony. There has been a discursive explosion in recent years around the concept as expressed in 'identity politics', at the same time as it has been severely problematised within the social sciences. Identity is probably one of the most ambiguous and problematic terms (similar to 'culture' and 'society') and at the same time one of the widest used concepts in social science. As a response to the critique of the concept some have even suggested that the term should be scrapped from the social scientific analytical vocabulary altogether.⁵

This thesis is based on some of the contemporary theories about the construction of identity which are not directly anthropological in the narrow sense of the word (the

⁵ See Hall 1996 for a discussion of the problems of the concept of identity and whether to keep it or not. He himself chooses to keep it because 'certain questions cannot be thought without it', but at the same time it cannot be used in the old essentialist way (2). See also van Beek (1996) as an example of a departure from the analytical use of 'identity' and the advocacy for using the concept of 'identification' instead.

authors do not hold the title of anthropologists) but rather, come from the field of political theory. It is my opinion that these theories can be used within the field of anthropology, together with established anthropological insights. The theoretical backbone of this thesis is *discourse analysis*, mainly inspired by the work of Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and Slavoj Žižek. These new theories of discourse confront us with challenges, since they, to some extent, seem to dissolve our traditional objects of study: the cultural group, the ethnic community, the nation. By doing that, they open up a range of interesting questions about how these objects are constructed discursively.

It is by now widely accepted within the social sciences that identity is not a stable, given core of people's life, but on the contrary, it is *constructed* and ever changing. This does not preclude that identities often *appear* solid and unchanging. An identity can only be constructed by *excluding* what it is not, through the production of *Others*. Only then can a sense of *self* be attained, which is the kernel of any identity. Because an identity relies on the opposition to other identities it is per definition *relational*. Identities are not free-floating and one must therefore look at identity within a specific *context*, that being social, cultural, or political, all of which are historically specific. The context determines the meaning of the elements within it. Since all social meaning, thereby also identities, do not have any objective determining factors it can occur only within *discourse*.

By 'discourse' I understand a more or less coherent framework of meaning which constructs the social world in a certain way by enabling one to talk about things (topics, experiences, values) and at the same time excludes other ways of viewing the world. Since nothing has a given, objective meaning it needs to be given meaning within discourse. A discourse therefore both creates and excludes meaning at the same time; events, objects; *anything* could potentially mean something else. In order

to mean something, the other possible meanings need to be excluded.⁶ Hence all meaning is discursive. This argument does not question the existence of material objects or the occurrences of events, but simply that the *significance* of these objects and events are never given beforehand, but must be articulated retrospectively.

The function I attribute to 'discourse' is often given to the concept of *ideology*. In classical Marxism, as well as structural-Marxism, ideology was closely linked with the notion of 'false consciousness'; behind the ideological mask there was the True state of things, the exploitative nature of capitalism (Barrett 1991: 5 & Laclau 1990: 89f.). The idea of the Truth lying behind the ideological surface has been severely criticised. We now find ourselves to a large extent in a condition of what could be termed *post-objectivism* ('objectivism disappeared as an epistemological obstacle', Laclau 1996a: 46), instead of the largely misused, and increasingly problematic term, 'post-modernism'. The concept of ideology itself has had many contradictory uses, even by Marx himself (see Barrett 1991 for a thorough discussion of the history of the concept of ideology).

In order to avoid misunderstandings and the strong connotations of 'false consciousness', I will use the notion of 'discourse' as the basic category in my analysis. I will nevertheless combine it with the Gramscian distinction between ideology and *hegemony*, as outlined by Jean and John Comaroff. They place the two concepts as the two extremes of a continuum (Comaroff 1991: 28). If we place the notion of discourse on this continuum we can say that a discourse which is dominating in such a way as to be more or less 'natural', taken for granted, as a 'common sense' is hegemonic. It follows that a discourse, which is discussed and not taken for granted, is ideological. The model is dynamic and different discourses, or just parts of discourses, can slide to either side on the continuum, competing for hegemony. Something which was considered to be True might all of a sudden appear ideological, and recognisable as just one of several competing ways of viewing the world, and vice versa. It is important to

⁶ This is the reason why Foucault saw power as being creative. According to him, discourse is a combination of power and knowledge (Foucault 1980: 116ff.).

remember that the two concepts are *extremes* on the continuum and the discursive battle takes place in the contested terrain between the two. The hegemony of a discourse is precarious and never complete. It can be dragged to the other side of the continuum, and therefore continuously has to defend its position. Therefore, we have competing discourses, which might be qualitatively the same but which have been naturalised to different degrees. 'Hegemony' and 'ideology' are in this way not used as nouns but as adjectives.

Whereas all meaning is constructed discursively, one can talk about discourses on different levels. Narrow discourses are embedded in broader, more encompassing ones, which in turn are embedded in other larger discourses, and so forth.⁷ At the end of this line of wider and wider discourses we find what Norval calls *social myths* (Norval 1996: 61). These are discourses, which represent a vision of how the social world should be ordered. Different myths compete over interpreting the world and thereby giving it a specific social order. In this competition *history* is a necessary resource which myths can use in order to create a sense of continuity and legitimacy. The successful one becomes *hegemonic* and establishes itself as a *social imaginary*; a framework for ordering the world, which appears natural, and commonsensical. A social imaginary is the background for the existence of for example identity discourses, of which some are rendered more likely than others. It becomes the surface of inscription of meaning.⁸ In the situation of *dislocation* of an existing order, i.e. where the social imaginary no longer can interpret and explain events within its frame of logic, a space is opened up in which different social myths compete over closing that space again and thereby constituting a new social imaginary.

⁷ It is important to remember that discourses are analytical constructions made in order to conceptualise the construction of social meaning. One cannot observe any definite determining relations between discourses.

⁸ As I will show later, apartheid was a social imaginary that created a specific identity discourse for the Afrikaners in particular.

The construction of an identity requires the establishment of *difference* from other identities, in order to stand out as a separate identity. Identity is therefore a question of formulating boundaries establishing that difference. If a group of people share an identity, it implies that they are somehow identical with each other and different from other people, who otherwise would belong to the same group. Hence, any identity must in this way establish both sameness and difference at the same time (Laclau 1996b: 38). Since no identity has got any objective constitutive factors, these boundaries are symbolically formulated within discourse. In this way a collective identity is a discourse in itself, which is engaged in the discursive work of articulating difference. The discourse of an identity represents it symbolically, and the identity exists only within that *representation*. Identities are therefore not only constructed; they need to be constantly *re-constructed*. Identity should accordingly be understood as a *process* rather than a thing.

Because the formulation of identity requires the simultaneous formulation of difference, *exclusion* is a necessity. Hence any identity discourse creates a *constitutive outside* to consolidate it (Hall 1996: 3). This constitutive outside needs, just as the identity itself or the 'inside', to be constructed and is therefore also a *constituted* outside.

In this way identity discourses are instrumental in creating different *subject positions* into which they try to *interpellate* individuals. In other words, individuals have to be convinced into being (i.e. making them *feel* as) 'Afrikaner', 'South African', 'Xhosa', 'feminist', 'socialist', or whatever, thereby realising that that is 'what they really are'.⁹ But identity is not about people acting as puppets in the game of discourse, because it necessarily involves the investment on the part of the subject in the discourse and its subject positions. It is captured well by Stuart Hall when he states:

I use identity to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and prac-

⁹ These identity positions are of different orders but their discursive construction function in the same manner.

tices trying to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subject of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus *temporary attachment* to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us. (Hall 1996: 5f. -my italics)

When I in my research question asked how Afrikaners create a position for themselves, it is exactly this: how do they *identify* in the discursive context of post-apartheid South Africa, characterised by the dislocation of apartheid as social imaginary?

Collective identities are by definition social phenomena and do therefore build on a need for a certain degree of *recognition* by others. But it also involves *ascription* both by other people in terms of expectations, stigmatisation, prejudices, and structurally for example in the categorisation of citizens in state bureaucracy. The social field in which identity formation takes place is enmeshed in power relations, which are decisive in which identities are recognised as acceptable, and how ascription takes place.¹⁰

Identities are contextual and cannot be thought of completely autonomously from the historically specific social context. When one identifies with a certain identity one at the same time identifies that *social context* in which this identity is meaningful. A person's understanding of what he/she is is therefore also an interpretation of the social context in which the person finds him/herself. Identity discourses do therefore also contain an interpretation of social reality, making possible a variety of subject positions within that reality. This is why, when speaking about identity, important information lies in the informant's understanding of the social context which he/she finds herself in, which includes other groups, individuals, institutions, events, happenings, and values. Social meaning is only possible within discourse, which renders certain ways of understanding the social possible and excludes other ways. In this way a landscape of meaning is created and within that social identities.

Reification/essentialisation of identity:

Social categories, and identity par excellence, have a tendency to become *reified*; i.e. to be attributed a solid core of meaning. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, language has a tendency to reify, due to the banal fact that there is a need for an agreement of what a word means, so different people positioned differently, can use the same word and understand each other. People do not necessarily mean the same when they use social categories, but we *assume* we mean the same (unless it is openly contested). Meaning can only occur insofar as it is recognised inter-subjectively (Zizek 1989: 93).

Secondly, the notion of collective identity implies, logically speaking, a claim that the people who share an identity are in one way or another *identical with each other*. But it is very difficult to establish this *identicalness*. It is obvious that two people are not identical with each other as such, if they were they would not be two different individuals. But there has to be *something* they share as identical. If one starts searching for this something, it would be possible, like with an onion, to peel off layer after layer until there is nothing left; no matter what one would find, the two persons would not be identical. But again, there has to be something that is identical, otherwise the notion of identity would not make sense. And there is actually something left, and that is the *notion itself* of that identity: the idea of for example *Afrikanerness*. That is the *essence* of everyone who belongs to the category 'Afrikaner'. This essence has not got any concrete, substantial, material manifestations, but exists only as an imagination, as Herder's *volksgeist*, or, in the case of the Afrikaners, the notion of *volkseie*.¹¹ This 'impossible object' is what Zizek calls 'our thing', or in the

¹⁰ During apartheid collective identities were legally imposed and policed for the whole South African society. In this way the power structures of the day enforced very specific rules for the formation of identities.

¹¹ A direct translation seems inaccurate, but it would amount to something like 'the people's own'. I will return to the issue of *volkseie* later in the analysis of Afrikaner nationalism.

case of national identity, the 'nation thing'. This *thing* does, according to Žižek, only exist as long as the subjects of the nation believe in its existence (Žižek 1992: 195).¹² The forging of a collective identity involves, as mentioned earlier, the creation of Otherness. The division of the world into *us* and *them* is the clearest example of this. There is nothing that unites as much as a common enemy. Because of the above-mentioned lack of a positive centre in identity, it can only be formulated up against those who do not share that identity; we can be identical in our opposition to the Other.¹³ Through focus on this enemy, a sense of complete identity can be reached. The achievement of this ideal state of being is what in particular totalitarian ideologies and millenarian movements are promising. This is nevertheless an illusion since we, as mentioned, never had this kernel of our identity; we never had 'our thing', only our belief in it.¹⁴ To use psychoanalytical vocabulary: 'castration is original' (Žižek 1992: 197). This is equally true for individual identity as for collective identities. Because this gap in every identity is experienced (most often not consciously) as traumatic we strive to bridge it; we desperately want to believe that we have the 'thing'.¹⁵ Different discourses try to *suture* the gaping wound in every identity. In the form of *social fantasies*, discourses construct objects, which supposedly can fill our inner void. This is what Žižek call the 'sublime object of ideology', the Lacanian *objet petit a*. (Žižek 1989: 158). This object can be a person (leader; pop-idol; the 'one-

¹² An analogy that could illustrate this logic, is the story about the emperor's new clothes. The king exists only as a product of the relation his subjects have to him; the fact that they see him as a king *makes* him a king. The power he holds is the power he has been given by his subjects. This is nevertheless forgotten and this misrecognition is what makes the king possible. The minute people realise that the king is nothing without them, he would lose his power; the emperor would become naked.

¹³ Hence the relationship to the Other is ambivalent: they are at the same time a threat and a prerequisite to our identity. This is also true because they remind us about the contingency of our own identity. Furthermore, the Other can also define us through ascription as mentioned earlier.

¹⁴ The consequence of this Lacanian argument is that the category of the subject cannot be reduced to the subject positions, since before subjectification the subject is the 'subject of a lack' (Žižek 1990: 250).

¹⁵ The gap is in the final instance unbridgeable which is the reason why, in the words of Hall quoted above, identity will always be a *temporary* attachment to identity positions; the latter will never be completely fulfilling for the individual. The difference between this argument and the Marxian notion of false consciousness is that Žižek does not claim that there is something more real behind the belief in the 'thing'. Žižek nevertheless retains the notion of 'misrecognition' but inverts it: it is not the misrecognition of the positive essence (as in Marxism) but of the precarious nature of any positivity, the impossibility of ultimate fixation of identity.

and-only love') or it can be a thing or a project (political projects like the nation, or quest for independence).¹⁶ Identity discourses also create fantasies about the Other; they do not have access to 'our thing' (such as 'volkseie'), but, especially in totalitarian discourses (such as National Socialism, fascism, communism, apartheid, and different forms of racism) they at the same time paradoxically represent a danger to it. It is *they* who stand in the way of our full self-realisation. If we are not happy, fully content with life and living in harmony with our kinsmen, it is often said to be because of *them*. As Žizek puts it with regard to anti-Semitism:

[...] the anti-Semitic idea of Jew has nothing to do with Jews; the ideological figure of a Jew is a way to stitch up the inconsistency of our own ideological system. (Žizek 1989: 48)¹⁷

The problem is of course, that the hole cannot be filled, since it is that void which constitutes the subject (Laclau 1990: xiv). It is this urge which different discourses appeal to and which creates the constant need for the identification with subject positions (Žizek 1990: 254). The power of collective identities is that we through them can find a sense of completeness because collectives have the ability to compensate for our incompleteness and existential restlessness. This is done through the collective opposition to what is excluded from the identity in question.

The function of the Other once again brings home the point about the fundamentally relational character of identity; the Other is an integral part of the collective Self; the logic of the Hegelian dialectic.

The impossibility of identity

The point about the lack of a positive essence in identities leads to Laclau's radical claim, that identity is impossible (Laclau 1994). In theory people cannot be people in

¹⁶ Advertisements appeal to this need by telling us that if we buy a certain product we will be happy. Although we have seen through it and have an ironic distance to it, we nevertheless still have that need.

¹⁷ This does of course not make the gas chambers disappear, but the argument is that the anti-Semitic idea of Jews has its root in our own construction of self-ness rather than in some objectively observable characteristics of Jews.

plural and share an identity, because any identity would entail a difference between the members of the group, but at the same time a cancellation of that difference in order to belong to the group. Any member has to express the particularity of the individual-identity and the universality of the group-identity at the same time. This paradox is inherent not only in all identities, but in all 'units of signification' as such, i.e. all meaning. This lack of a unifying centre is why identities cannot be stable or complete. As Aletta Norval puts it 'the ultimate impossibility of ever attaining a full identity [...] points to the ever present need for identification for the subject' (Norval 1996: 65). Hence, identity is like a journey that never reaches its destination.¹⁸

To claim that identity is impossible is of course a very theoretical statement, because in a very real sense identity *is* possible. It is possible through performing and *living* it, because the *notion* of identity is reified and tends to attain a life of its own, independently of our construction of it. This is what Martijn van Beek in a different context has called 'identity fetishism' (van Beek 1996).¹⁹ It is this misrecognition of the constructed character of all identity that makes it possible in practice (like the power a king holds over his subjects). It is well known that identities can become important material, political forces in certain contexts, mobilising people as in the case of nationalism. Identity appears very real in those situations because it is exactly produced and reproduced through action; by going into war we are truly Danes, by deporting Jews we are truly Germans, by joining the police force we are truly Afrikaners. It is those very actions done in the name of a certain identity, which create that identity.

¹⁸ Laclau & Mouffe state that society does not exist but the social exists as an effort to create that impossible object (1985: 112).

¹⁹ van Beek builds on Marx's notion of 'commodity fetishism', which denotes the situation where social relations are reduced to relations between things, because labour and means of production are controlled by money; people are a valuable resource which can be traded on the capitalist market. Life, soul, and autonomy from social relations are transferred to things (commodities), and the value of commodities in turn becomes what gives social relations meaning. Commodities can then no longer be thought of as an autonomous element of the market, but becomes the force that creates the market instead of the other way around (Taussig 1980: 30f.). van Beek's argues that the public discourse is increasingly identity-based (operating with essentialised absolute identities), which he relates to bureaucratic practices and the states' classification of their citizens (van Beek 1996).

As identity does not have any material substance, it has to be performed through actions mentioned above, but also through the commemoration of holidays and the exercise of rituals.²⁰ The dominant discourse is what decides exactly how an identity can be talked about, performed, imagined and symbolised at a given historical time. Identity is in other words possible as an idea, as opposition to other identities, and as action, but not as a complete, self-enclosed entity with a positive substance.

To sum up: the formation of collective identity will include at least the following elements:

1. both *identification* with, and *interpellation* by, identity discourses.
2. both a certain degree of *ascription* and the need for *recognition* by other people.
3. the simultaneous formulation of *sameness* within the identity and *difference* from other identities.

Epistemological level

I intend to focus on subjects who, due to the historical context, fall under the category 'Afrikaner'. When I in my research question asked how Afrikaners relate to *Afrikanerdom*, I meant exactly that: how they relate to the historical and contemporary 'baggage' that is carried by that category. The term 'Afrikaner' here implies that I am not looking at how English speaking whites, blacks, or other South Africans look at *Afrikanerdom*, but the people who are part of it themselves²¹. In a sense it is, to put it simply, a focus on attitudes from the *inside* of a constituted identity, rather than from the outside.

²⁰ Identity can nevertheless manifest itself through material things, which come to symbolise it.

²¹ The group I am interested in is the one that is generally known as Afrikaners: 'Afrikaans-speaking whites'. (The question of how of 'whiteness' is defined is of course not unproblematic, but here I will refer to the commonsensical usage in South Africa today, referring to the app. 5 mill. people who were categorised as 'white' under apartheid.) As I will show later, there are other possible definitions of who the Afrikaners are.

In a sense I will look at how people *identify*, rather than at their *identity*. If the starting point analysis is the identity of people, one evidently fails to explain what really needs to be analysed, namely why and how people construct a certain identity. This does not mean that I will not talk about 'Afrikaner identity', but that when I do so, it is in the sense of an *imagination* of such a thing. An imagination which nevertheless is very real to people, but is imagined in very different ways.

To say that identity is an imagination, a construction, is only half of the story. It is all very interesting to deconstruct an identity claim but it is not enough. We need to ask, 'if identities are constructed, how come that they often appear as solid, unchanging entities? How are they imagined? Why is the identity claimed? How are they stabilised and maintained?' One could say that identities are constructed, but that the constructions are *real*. John Comaroff puts it eloquently:

To borrow an aesthetic metaphor from Marx: before it is built, a building exists purely in the imagination of its designer (always an architect, remember, never a bee!). But once erected, it takes on a real materiality, an objective, lived-in quality - notwithstanding that it can be deconstructed. Our task as social scientists, it follows, is to establish how the reality of any identity is realized, how its essence is essentialized, how its objective qualities come to be objectified (1996: 166).

The task is therefore twofold: firstly a deconstruction of the identity in question and secondly an analysis of how the identity is being constructed and reproduced in different ways; how it is lived. One needs in other words to take identities seriously, but at the same time appreciate it as a project which is in constant movement, despite any essentialist, primordial claims invoked by the people making the identity claim.

I stated that there is no objectively given meaning and hence that all meaning is constructed. This is necessarily also true for this thesis. The analysis of my data is not value-free, but neither was the collection and description of it. Any description of the social is an attribution of meaning to the described, stemming from the fact that the

describer always is positioned in relation to the described, and thereby 'underdetermined' by the data. Put differently, it would not be possible to describe all aspects of something and a selection of the aspects which one finds important is therefore necessary. Any description of 'reality' is therefore a construction of that reality, and it cannot be neutral or complete. It also means that the object of ones knowledge does not exist independently of oneself (Inden 1990: 34f).

'Identity fetishism' is a consequence of not acknowledging this attribution of meaning; the data appears to have meaning in itself, independent of the anthropologist. (If this were true, one would effectively claim that the world has an objective meaning.) In everyday use, the concept of 'identity' is mostly unproblematic, but when 'identity' is used as an analytical category (as mentioned in section 1.2) it is a different matter. The problem is twofold: firstly, the analysis takes the wrong departure by assuming a priori what actually needs explanation, namely the *construction* of identity, and secondly, our analytical categories get the real agency because the essences which are found become the determining principles for people's behaviour. The latter would mean, in relation with my field of study, that people do something *because* they are Afrikaners, and thereby it is in a sense 'Afrikanerness' pulling the strings. In the analysis of apartheid, if we start off with the a priori of an existing Afrikaner ethnicity the result could very well be that it is an Afrikaner who is doing something and not an individual agent. Thereby the analytical category of identity becomes what Inden has called a 'substantialised agent' (Inden 1990: 22f).

If any analysis contributes meaning to the object of study, and essentially is *subjective*, is the consequence not a total relativism, where 'anything goes'? Paul Rabinow deals in his essay 'Representation are social facts: modernity and post-modernity in anthropology' (1996) with the production of knowledge under the epistemological conditions described above. He uses Ian Hacking's notion of 'styles of reasoning' and says that knowledge and truth might be relative but it is still possible to talk about different 'truths'. This does not necessarily mean 'one-man-one-truth', but that a level of *inter-subjectivity* can be established, in as far as it takes place within an agreed upon

system of values, by which the presentation or analysis can be validated. As Hacking puts it:

By reasoning I do not mean logic. I mean the very opposite, for logic is the preservation of truth, while a style of reasoning is what brings in the possibility of truth or falsehood [...] styles of reasoning create the possibility of truth or falsehood. Deduction and induction merely preserves it. (cited from Rabinow 1996: 31)

This means that my analysis in this thesis cannot be 'correct' or True (with capital 't'), the only thing I can strive for is *validity* within the context of a western empirical scientific 'style of reasoning'. It was already pointed out by Weber in 1904 (1949) in his 'The methodology of the social sciences', that since all humans contribute meaning to the world, so does the social scientist. This means that one has to position oneself (which I tried in the preface), make the analysis transparent and explicate what theory is used, what the focus is, and what the purpose of the study is (Weber 1949: 58).

Limiting the scope

Another important point made by Weber was that one cannot make an all-encompassing analysis of a given society. Hence one has to limit the study to the problem which one set out to analyse (Weber 1949: 64). Hence a few words about what I intend to do and what I do *not* intend to do.

It is, as mentioned, problematic to talk about *the* Afrikaner. Just like *the* Englishman or *the* Zulu, he does not exist (save for the idea of him). This means that I do *not* claim to be saying anything about all 3 million white Afrikaans-speakers, or in any way to exhaust all the possible ways of being Afrikaner (or not being Afrikaner) in post-apartheid South Africa. What I *do* claim is that it is possible to map out certain trends which I have observed through interviews among selected groups of white Afrikaans-speakers and in the media, and which I will construct as positions in the landscape of identification in which these people move. These positions will purely be my

own analytical constructions, made in an effort to understand how people create meaning in the world, a world which is already inhabited by meaning.

A statement on attitude towards the analysis of right-wingers

Part of my research deals with people who are regarded as belonging to the far right side of the political spectrum, some of which were actively involved in the apartheid regime. Academically this is an interesting object of study, since there seems to be an unwritten rule that anthropology shall have an emancipatory potential, by empowering vulnerable minority groups. Whereas there is nothing wrong in doing that, it is limiting for the discipline if that can be the only object of study. Dealing with an (old) elite, a stigmatised 'politically incorrect' group of people, brings special problems with it.

It is my impression that the analysis of right-wing Afrikaner nationalists has tended to build a consensus that has shone through most accounts. It is the basic conviction that these nationalists are 'wrong', that their view on life is an illegitimate, distorted one, that can only be described as a pathological lack of ability to cope with the modern world. In that way, the people described will inevitably appear as arcane, as dinosaurs that should be extinct or who maybe are just plain ridiculous. And because we all agree on the wrong-ness of their opinion, we very easily end up making simple generalisations, which are not critically challenged because they build on the consensus. One of these examples is John Sharp when he in a concluding remark in a recent article states about the volkstaaters and Inkatha:

'...the fact that their protestations of primordial unity, and of fundamental difference from others, are utterly unreflexive'. (Sharp 1996: 103)

As I will show, the people supporting a volkstaat are not 'utterly unreflexive', but on the contrary highly articulate and conscious about what they are doing. Furthermore,

their arguments might operate with the assumption of fundamental differences but they are not based on simple primordialism.

It is in my opinion a kind of Othering: these Others are not worthy of the empowerment and careful treatment that has become a hallmark of our discipline since the influence of the post-colonial scholars, the 'writing culture-debate' and the crisis of representation. In academic writings right-wingers are seldom given basic rights as human agents in the text, they are not given a voice. I am well aware that there are different criteria for the production of knowledge, due to the historical context and established truths within which one is writing - and with good reason. It is namely necessary to be very careful. One can easily end up delivering arguments for, for example in the German context, revisionist historians claiming the concentration camps did not exist. Or, in the South African context, people claiming that 'apartheid was not that bad', and thereby negating the crimes of the nationalist regime. But, when one deals with an informant who thinks that apartheid was a good thing, what is interesting academically is why this person holds that opinion, neither defending, nor condemning him/her. It is of course one's right to condemn, but I will argue that the consequence is that one excludes oneself from understanding the reasoning and workings of that kind of view on life. If one really wants to understand phenomena such as racism, fascism, and exclusive nationalism one has to take people seriously, also if the political goal is to fight against these evils.²²

I do not claim that one can do a-political anthropology, since all analyses of the social world have a political dimension, as they construct the world in a specific manner. Neither academia nor the political field can be isolated as autonomous fields (Vincent 1990). But what I do claim is, that it might be fruitful to remember the Weberian distinction between *normative*- and *existential knowledge* (Weber 1949: 51). Although

²² Another aspect of the problem is that what is labelled 'racist', 'fascist' or 'right-wing' is not determined by objective criteria, but will always rest on the political drawing of boundaries. I will return to this problematic later in this thesis, during the discussion of the labelling of 'racists'.

this distinction cannot be upheld completely, due to the interconnectedness of politics and science, it is nevertheless important to be aware that personal opinions at times can get in the way of understanding aspects which one's convictions do not allow for, and one can *strive* towards not being normative.

What I intent to do in this study is to follow the banal *a priori* assumption that 'right-wing nationalist are also humans'. I will insist on taking their arguments seriously, not as a threat against 'civilised humanity', but as human beings trying to make sense of the world they encounter. I will strive towards not being normative when I ask 'why do these people choose this strategy instead of others?' 'What makes it appealing to them and not to others?' I will try to identify with them, to de-exoticise them. Basically I have a strong urge to understand them, and the reasoning inherent in their worldview. This is no different from my approach to other groups among my informants.

That I fundamentally disagree with the people who support a *volkstaat*, especially the right side of the spectrum, makes it all the more challenging. I also realised that it was a lot easier for me to identify with especially the young Afrikaners I met elsewhere. This needs to be taken into account.

Methodology and field sites

Sites

I did fieldwork in 3 main geographical areas: in Orania in the Northern Cape, in Observatory, and Parow/Northern Suburbs, the latter two areas were in Cape Town. The choice of field sites was due to my interest of study; different ways of being Afrikaner in post-apartheid South Africa. All in all the fieldwork was between August 1998 and January 1999.

Orania was chosen because it was a perfect example of the separatist position, and because of its 'island-quality', with its location in the middle of nowhere in the Karoo - the perfect Malinowskian field site. Hence there are two aspects of the material from Orania. Firstly, it is an expression of a general political position in South Africa, and secondly, it has its own specificity, a community which can be studied in its own right, and which gives the universal notion of separatism a particular expression.

Observatory was the place I lived myself and where I met many young Afrikaners. It is a suburb that is known to be 'liberal'; relatively integrated with whites, coloureds and blacks. It is a place known for its concentration of artists and other 'progressive' people. My focus was concentrated on the cartoon magazine Bitterkornix, and the people around it, but also other young Afrikaners. The overall category of Afrikaners I wanted to find here were those who, as opposed to the Oranians, wanted to be part of the 'New South Africa', in one way or another.

Parow was chosen because it is known as an Afrikaner suburb, behind the so-called 'boerewors-curtain'; the big suburbs north of Cape Town forming an enclave of white Afrikaans-speakers. Here I wanted to investigate the suburban Afrikaners' perspective on things. A high school was my entry into the community, and I used that as a platform talk to teachers, pupils and the pupils' parents.

Furthermore, I conducted interviews with individuals from political parties, organisations, the police, and churches in and around Cape Town.

It is obvious that there is a problem of comparability between field sites. Orania and Parow are mainly defined geographically whereas Bitterkornix is not (which is the main focus, not Observatory). Orania and Bitterkornix can be defined as explicit political positions, whereas Parow cannot; the people I spoke to in connection with Bitterkornix and in Orania respectively, can be linked by a common political position, whereas my informants in Parow represented many different positions. Lastly, the interviews done around Cape Town cannot be put into the above-mentioned 3 geo-

graphical boxes, and were chosen due to the organisational affiliation of the persons, rather than his/her place of residence. Nevertheless, the variety of sites can be used as the basis for a qualitative analysis of different aspects of 'negotiations of Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa'.

There are other important places one could go in order to investigate Afrikaner identity. The obvious place to go to would be the northern part of the country, to cities like Pretoria and towns like the AWB stronghold Ventersdorp, areas where the concentration of Afrikaners is high. Another important place of inquiry would be the farms, since a lot of the farmers are Afrikaners and farming has played an important role in the self-perception of many Afrikaners. Due to the obvious limitations of an MA-thesis, timeframe and economic capacity, I had to narrow down my focus. Hence, the specificity of my enquiry should be remembered, although I hope to be able to map out trends that can be applied more generally to Afrikaners in South Africa today. This is, nevertheless, largely up to the reader.

Methods

I concentrated on doing in-depth, **semi-structured interviews**, ranging from 1 to 3 hours duration. I made app. 60 of these, most of which were recorded. For me this was the most suitable way to find out how people discursively constructed and interpreted themselves and their reality, which was my main interest. The interviews had the character of conversations, which gave room for my informants to formulate, with their own words, their perception of notions of identity, values, and understanding of society in general; issues which are difficult to grasp within more structured kinds of inquiry like questionnaires.

Participant observation was rarely used, although I did do some especially in Orania, where I joined braais (South African barbecues), rugby watching and other social

events. In Parow it was limited to classes at the high school and dinners with families, and in Observatory it simply consisted in socialising.

In Orania I handed out **questionnaires** to the oldest children in the two schools and got written responses to questions like 'what is an Afrikaner?' and 'give 5 characteristics of South Africa'. In Parow I had **discussion groups** with the pupils at the school.

Apart from the interviews I followed the **debates** in the media, as well as parliamentary debates and speeches on the issue of 'Afrikaner identity', in order to see how it was spoken about publicly and officially. Living in South Africa for 1.5 years has in general informed my study as such.

In my research I also include **published material** such as speeches and official documents and most notably the Afrikaans cartoon magazine Bitterkomix.

Positioning myself

As a Dane I was an outsider to the South African context, a fact I experienced as being a positive thing. It gave me sense of impartiality, a neutral position to speak from, and ask questions about groupings, since I did not belong to any of them. Being from 'over-seas' meant I could not easily be categorised into the highly politicised context of South Africa. Informants at times told me that 'you would not understand it, because you are not from here', but predominantly it was productive. It allowed me to ask 'stupid questions' about issues that seemed obvious, taken for granted for many South Africans - the advantage of foreign ignorance.

As a **white male** I had obvious advantages doing the fieldwork I did. Especially in Orania it would have been very difficult, or even impossible, to work had I been black. Due to the colossal importance of skin colour in South Africa this would probably have been the same if I were to do field work among another group. And then again, the special significance of black skin among many Afrikaners suggests that it is of special importance. Since skin colour is so important in demarcating social and

cultural groups, it was of importance that I potentially was 'one of them'. In Orania I was told that I could become an Afrikaner if I really wanted to, which also is connected with me being from 'over-seas' (it would have been different had I been an English speaking South African). Furthermore, a common ancestry could be established with some of my informants, since one of my forefathers apparently was a French Huguenot, just like many of the first European immigrants to South Africa. This common ground is important when people have to share inner feelings and thoughts, when a situation of trust has to be established.

All my interviews were conducted in English, without the use of a translator. As a Danish-speaker, English is not my first language, just as it is not for the Afrikaans-speakers. This fact made English possible as a neutral language, a common second language. Had my mother tongue been English I am quite sure it would have been a different matter, because of the precarious current situation where some feel Afrikaans is being threatened as a consequence of the growing use of English. I knew sufficient Afrikaans to understand when my informants at times shifted to Afrikaans, and enough to introduce myself and present my interest, which was particularly important in Orania. I also read some Afrikaans.

On the negative side it is evident that there are limitations when using a second language, as opposed to the informants' first language; people express themselves more freely in their mother tongue. Hence, I cannot rule out that some things might have been simplified more than they would have if expressed in Afrikaans. Nevertheless, all but a few of my informants were fluent in English and seemed to be able to express themselves sufficiently for the purpose of my interviews.

The structure of the thesis

Through this thesis I will oscillate between analyses based on my own empirical data and written sources, and theoretical considerations and discussions. The latter will be

expansions of the theoretical arguments outlined earlier in this introduction, and will be dealt with along the way when they become relevant in connection with my analyses. These theoretical accounts will subsequently form part of the theoretical frame of reference for the remaining thesis.

2. The emergence of Christian-nationalism

The purposes of this historical chapter are several. I wish to historicise Afrikaner identity and show the elements making up the Christian-nationalist identity since these are still of major importance today. Through a deconstruction of the identity I will show its constructed, quilted nature. It serves to de-naturalise, de-reify and open up for the understanding of the negotiations and battles over meaning involved in the production and maintenance of collective Afrikaner identity today. Finally I will show how a specific Afrikaner identity was institutionalised, and how that specific identity later went into a crisis.

The theoretical sections in the historical chapter will include the issues of symbols and collective identity; discourse and historical context; and the dislocation of social order and the institutionalisation of a new order.

3. Post- apartheid South Africa

After having established the historical context for discussing Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa, the context of the present will be dealt with. This will be done with a narrow focus on the position of Afrikaner identity in this context and the position of the nationalist Afrikaner organisations. The issue of the dislocation of social order will also be discussed here but in terms of the consequences of the dislocation of the apartheid regime and Christian-nationalist discourse. The discourse of non-racialism as a new social imaginary will be dealt with, and the issue of racism and racialisation will be analysed. In this connection I expand the notion of systemic, discursive meaning; the logic of exclusion; and introduce the concept of 'empty signifiers'.

4. Orania

Orania serves as my main case as an example of an identity strategy or position within the new context, outlined in chapter 3. I will focus on the way the Oranians view South Africa, and how symbols and rituals are used in forging an alternative identity. I will also focus on the diversity of positions within Orania. Finally I will analyse the meaning of the concept of 'freedom' and the role it plays in the discourse of the separatists. The theoretical considerations include the construction of a 'national' identity, the construction and workings of a constitutive outside, a discussion and application of Bourdieu's notions of heterodox and orthodox positions

5. Epilogue

In this final chapter I will introduce another voice of Afrikanerdom namely the cartoon magazine *Bitterkomix*. I will compare the position of the people behind the magazine with the Oranian one and through that make concluding remarks. This discussion will be expanded to the level of Afrikaner identity formation in general.

2. The emergence of Christian-nationalism

An archaeology of Afrikaner identity

“Today South Africa belongs to us once more,” exulted Malan in his victory speech in May 1948. He had squeaked in by a hairsbreadth margin of eight seats in a result that took the whole country by surprise. Smuts stood at the height of his international reputation and everyone had expected him to win in a repeat of his 1943 landslide. Malan’s victory was like a bolt from the blue, himself included. Once again as at Blood River and Majuba, the Boers saw the hand of Providence in the upset victory. For the new nationalists it was an exhilarating moment of joy and anticipation. They had their country back and now they could make sure that they never lost it again. It was theirs for posterity. It was theirs to begin reshaping according to their vision of the ideal society, a new land of many nations that they were called by God to create. A sublime moment. (Sparks 1990: 183)

The victory of Malan’s *Purified* National Party (later to be renamed National Party) might have been a sublime moment for the nationalists, it was at the same time a fatal moment for South Africa. It was to change the face of South African society forever, as the nationalists set out ‘reshape it’ as Sparks puts it in the above quote. 1948 was going to be the beginning of an entrenchment and radicalisation of racial practices well known throughout the Western world. But as Europe, and only later the USA, were leaving overt racism behind, it got institutionalised in South Africa - 3 years after the Second World War. The NP was, as we know, able to stay in power for almost half a century.

The system of apartheid has had such an impact on South African society, that it now is impossible to talk about the present, the future, or the past of the country without taking apartheid into account. This is particularly true when it comes to the Afrikaners,

which are viewed through the prism of apartheid. But one should not limit the understanding of Afrikaner identity to apartheid. The latter was the culmination of an Afrikaner Christian-nationalist movement, as this movement gained control over the South African state. I wish to look at the time prior to apartheid for suggestions why it was possible. It is also here we will find the roots of the discourse that later created the identity known as 'Afrikaners' today. Apartheid will hence be seen as one important aspect among other aspects of the formation of Afrikaner identity.

As my interest is Afrikaner identity, I will not deal with the tragic consequences apartheid had for non-whites, but rather limit myself to look at the Afrikaners and what it meant for their collective identity.

As argued in the last chapter, collective identities have a tendency to become reified over time, giving the impression that they have objective, timeless properties. If one wish to 'open up' the category and understand the struggles taking place around Afrikaner identity in South Africa today, one has to appreciate the category's historical specificity and development. It is my suggestion that by looking at the ways in which the specific Christian-nationalist discourse was constructed, we will be better equipped to understand the historical context of the people who are regarded as 'Afrikaners', by themselves and others, in present day South Africa. Collective identities have a history that needs to be negotiated in the present. That history can both be a resource and a burden. One could argue that for Afrikaner identity the historical is particularly heavy, compared to other collective identities in South Africa today. This is evident in the way elements from the past play a central role in the identity formations taking place at present. As I will show later in this thesis, different identity discourses relate more or less directly to the same historical framework, although in very different ways.

New discourses and historical context

Before I move into the investigation of the discourse that created the collective Afrikaner identity, I need to expand the theoretical argument outlined in the introduction and establish my position regarding the relationship between discourses and historical context.

If social meaning does not have any objective, necessary character, it means that when looking at the emergence of discourses, one cannot find some 'objective conditions' for its emergence. This is exactly the critique of orthodox Marxist accounts of ideology, as in Norval's critique of O'Meara's (1983) analysis of the reasons and preconditions for the emergence and success of the apartheid ideology. According to his classical Marxist argument, the ideology merely reflected the deeper economic conditions and can be uncovered by acknowledging its true class basis (Norval 1996: 26).

New economic conditions (or for that matter any other historic condition) do therefore not automatically give rise to new discursive formations. Historical experience never carries its own symbolisation (Žižek 1989: 97), but needs to be interpreted, and thereby be given meaning, and only *then* will historical experience appear 'objective' to the people involved (Norval 1996: 178). Here 'objective' refers to the situation where historical experiences are articulated and interpreted in a certain way which has become hegemonic; the commonsensical and 'obvious' way to understand it. In other words, when looking at the conditions which resulted in emergence of discourses, one is actually starting the analysis the wrong place. It is the other way around; discourses create 'conditions' from experience, and the extent to which these appear as being 'objective conditions' is the extent to which discourses manage to make their interpretations hegemonic.

This is the radical understanding of social discourses stemming from the premise that all social meaning is contingent. Historical occurrences can give rise to new discourses if the dominant discourses, or social imaginaries, at the time are unable to 'domesticate' them; to interpret them and bring them into their frame of reasoning. When such an *organic crisis* occurs, space is opened up for interpretations or myths, either more or less new ones or ones that until that point in time had been subordinated and precluded by a specific social imaginary (Norval 1996: 66). So whereas socio-economic conditions can create the *possibility* for new myths, these myths are not *determined* by these conditions.

We are therefore neither dealing with a 'top-down' or a 'bottom-up' relationship between ideas and experiences, but rather more a dialectical relationship. As Dubow writes:

At any one moment there are an infinite numbers of ideas or thought structures in formation. Whether these are picked up and made fashionable by intellectuals, cultural entrepreneurs or politicians is largely determined by the extent to which they may resonate with wider social concerns (Dubow 1995: 8).

A myth is successful in as far as it manages to combine sentiments and potential sentiments from experiences and prior discourses within one frame of understanding, which makes it meaningful in that specific historical context. There are therefore certain elements present in any historical context that a myth can, and must, utilise in some way. The elements chosen in an identity discourse are, in order for the discourse to be successful, the ones that resonates with the 'wider social concern' (as mentioned above by Dubow) of the group of people the discourse tries to interpellate. But I will go further than Dubow, and argue that discourses at the same time engage in an effort to articulate those very 'concerns', and thereby in a certain sense create them.

One should therefore identify the elements used in a discourse (older discourses, including values and norms, historical narratives, and everyday experiences) and the context in which they appear. This is what I intend to do in the remaining of this chapter.

Initial appearances

The first time the term 'Afrikaner' was used to has been traced to 1707, when a young man, in a clash with a magistrate in Stellenbosch, shouted "I am an Afrikaner, even if the landdrost flogged me to death... I will not be silent" (Sparks 1990: 44). It is not clear whether the man, who was born in the Cape, meant that he was a native of Africa, compared to those born in Europe, or whether it had other implications (Giliomee 1975: 9). The use of the term itself was only established in the end of the 18th century, and even then it was not referring to a specified group of whites. In Cape Town for example people widely regarded themselves as 'Kaapenaars', as opposed to the whites living at the border of the colony,

whom they referred to as 'Afrikaners'. Others called themselves 'Boers' or 'Hollanders' (Giliomee 1975: 10).

For many years the term 'Afrikaner' did not have any specific content as such, and was only one out of several identities, such as 'Free-Stater', 'Transvaaler' as well as the above-mentioned. Even though this identity had been established and with time gained substance, it was only to become an important political identity around the end of the 19th century, where a project of sharpening the boundaries of the group and giving substance to the identity, a definition of 'Afrikaner-ness', was undertaken.

After the arrival of the British around the end of the 18th century, there was a distinction between whites of English and non-English descent, but the non-English descendants were not perceived as one unified group. One could say, that although the English/non-English distinction was recognised, it had not yet become the central distinction in the formation of an Afrikaner identity. Rather, 'Afrikaner' simply seemed to indicate that the person was born in Africa (the term itself literally means 'an African'), and this white person could be of British descent, speaking English, although this section of whites predominantly spoke Dutch. The first Cape settlers, who came from different European countries, adopted Dutch as a common language (Giliomee 1975: 2). In this way the Afrikaner identity was a loosely defined over-identity, which could be combined with being 'English', 'Dutch', or 'Transvaaler', indicating a sense of belonging to Africa, as opposed to Europe.

The anti-English sentiments.

Many of the original settlers welcomed the British and accepted that English became the official language. With time, though, the sense of belonging to a fundamentally different group than the British arose. This has been argued to have its roots in the considerable discrimination against non-English speakers, in terms of jobs and funding to Dutch speaking schools, which created a sense of social marginalisation among non-English speakers (Hofmeyr 1987: 97). But also the egalitarian policy of the British toward the natives (such as the granting of equality before law to the Khoi in 1828 and the emancipation of slaves in

1838) created animosity because it violated the way in which the free-burghers²³ at the Eastern frontier had ordered their world (which I will return to shortly). The British policy moved white Afrikaans-speakers effectively down the social ladder and the threat of *gelykstelling*²⁴ became a great concern to intellectuals.

It is important to note that the hardship felt by the non-English-speakers did not in itself result in a sense of belonging to a different group - i.e. it did not automatically lead to any necessary identity-formation. But it created good potential for articulating an identity along the English / non-English lines or even anti-English lines.

It took some time before the nationalists could appeal to a pan-South African Afrikaner identity. In the Orange Free State the government sought to promote their own inclusive national identity. This is expressed in a keynote speech at the inauguration of the new government in 1875: 'may there no longer be talk of German or Englishman, or Hollander or Afrikaner, but may they all be Free Staters, with one interest and one aim, all one people and one aim' (cited in Sparks 1990: 115). In the Transvaal Krüger propagated his own nationalism, but along much more anti-English lines. These identity projects, and the fact that many in the Cape felt it was imperative to be unified with the English (Giliomee 1975: 18), stood in the way of creating a unified Afrikaner-identity. It does not mean that those living in the Cape did not feel 'Afrikaner', only that the identity had not yet been defined as a national identity, and even less as having clearly defined properties and borders.

Some historical 'events' were to become important in the formation of Afrikanerdom in opposition to the English-speakers, and to make it possible to appeal to a sense of common belonging to the same group, whether the individuals lived in Transvaal or the Cape. The turning point came in 1895, when English mining interests tried to overturn the Krüger government in Transvaal in a coup d'état (the so-called 'Jameson Raid') which failed. Krüger argued that 'God's chosen people had been attacked by 'the beast', namely

²³ The free-burghers were those whites who did not work for the English colonial administration, i.e. largely the non-English speakers. These people were the ones to expand the colony in search for new agricultural land, and were the ones later to become the Afrikaner subjects.

²⁴ The notion of *gelykstelling*, which means 'equality', was to become a central notion in Afrikaner nationalism. It expresses the fear of being on the same low level as blacks socio-economically, but also of losing cultural uniqueness and European civilisation.

the English (Giliomee 1975: 17). The attempted coup had quite an impact, and gave substance to anti-English rhetoric that seemed to have resonated among Afrikaans-speakers in the Cape, and many were shocked by the aggression (Moody 1975: 4, Giliomee 1975: 17). An impression of the impact it had in the Cape can be seen in this quote of Kowie Marries, former Member of Parliament for the Progressive opposition:

(...) my father used to write his love letters for my mother in English. It was the smart thing to do for middle-class Afrikaners. After the Jameson Raid he never allowed English to be spoken in the house again. (cited in Harrison 1981: 23)

The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) added significantly to the anti-English sentiments and strengthened and renewed old family ties between the north and south. Although in retrospect it has come to stand as a very clear case of 'Afrikaner against Brits', it was not the case at the time. There were other alliances at play, as some white Afrikaans-speakers from the Cape fought on the British side, and in the Transvaal some Afrikaans-speaking *bywoners* (squatting farmworkers) and Afrikaans-speaking farm owners fought on opposite sides in what appeared to have been a class division (Sparks 1990: 126). It was nevertheless going to be a central event in the cultivation of anti-English sentiments.

The importance of whiteness

Not even the sense of being 'white' has always been an important element in the future 'Afrikaner's' self-perception. The Cape colony was officially ordered according to religious faith (Christian/heathen) and socio-economic status, and not along colour lines, and a Christian free-black enjoyed the same privileges as a white person. Black and white often attended the same schools and churches. According to Hermann Giliomee two factors changed this: growing numbers of non-whites in the colony which meant increased competition over jobs, and the expansion of the colony brought the free-burghers into conflicts with blacks, especially on the eastern border, which created a strong awareness of colour. By the middle of the 18th century the division between blacks and whites had been clearly drawn for the frontiersmen and two chains of equivalence dichotomised the social world (Giliomee 1975: 5):

1. Whites = civilised = Christians = Europeans = People
2. Blacks = uncivilised = heathens = Natives = creatures

After the Great Trek the Boere-republics were established. Probably due to the above-mentioned experiences in the colony, and encounters with blacks during the trek, the legislation in the colonies was based on racial difference, as opposed to the more egalitarian English one. In the constitution of Transvaal (1844) it was stated that no person of mixed blood to the tenth generation might take a seat in the Volksraad, and in OFS non-whites were categorically denied citizenship (Giliomee 1975: 14).

Blacks were to become the most important Other for the Afrikaner Self. This view on blacks, as being opposed to the whites' Christianity and civilisation, was of course not exceptional. It was found among all the Europeans venturing abroad to explore the world outside Europe and to establish colonies. But one could suggest that the role of blacks has been special for the Afrikaners, since they were the ones living most closely with the blacks. They did not have a home country to fall back on like the English-speakers; they were white Africans. Since many Afrikaner intellectuals saw themselves as bearers of Christianity and civilisation in Africa, the distance to blacks was of utmost importance.

There is of course much more to say about the strained relationship of official Afrikanerdom towards blacks, but this will suffice to illustrate some of the aspects of the importance of blackness. As we know, this was later to be utilised as one of the main rallying points of Christian-nationalism.

Emergence of the Afrikaner volk

The notion of the Afrikaner volk, of an ethnic Afrikaner, as being a racial, linguistic and religious group with its own distinct *volksgeist* (using Herder's term), is a relatively recent invention. It can be traced to the formation of the Genootskab van Regte Afrikaners in Paarl in 1875, but only really got under way in the formulation by new *organic intellectuals* in the years after the Boer War in 1901 under the banner of Christian-nationalism. This na-

tionalist movement started to generate specific Afrikaner capital in opposition to the British dominated financial institutions. It most notably established companies such as the publishing house Nasionale Pers in 1914 (which started to publish 'De Burger' in 1915), the insurance companies Sanlam and Santam. Furthermore it started organisations such as the Afrikaner Broederbond (AB), which was formed in 1918 (Which in 1929 established its cultural, public arm FAK (Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigen), die Rapport Ryers, and others (O'Meara 1983: 98).

Hertzog, who formed the National Party in 1914, had an inclusive, non-ethnic definition of what it meant to be an Afrikaner; it was all white South Africans who viewed South Africa as their sole homeland, no matter if they spoke Afrikaans or English (O'Meara 1983: 68). This was a definition that fitted well into the Fusion Government, consisting of Hertzog's NP and Smuts' South African Party, and its Segregationist policy. But especially the AB was against this definition, as it lacked ethnic consciousness and displayed an ideological slackness (in its acceptance of class divisions). Together with the other players of the nationalist movement (including the Dutch Reformed Church), the AB went out to raise an ethnic consciousness among white Afrikaans speakers, excluding the English speakers as 'foreign elements' (O'Meara 1983: 69). Before the 1930s ethnic Afrikaner identity had mainly been an intellectual project, but the end of the 1930s they had proven to be successful in the wider public. This was largely because of the Christian-nationalist movement's control over Afrikaner cultural organisations, -through the FAK (O'Meara 1983: 73). Dunbar Moodie puts it this way:

Certainly by 1938, the ordinary Afrikaner had made the main themes of the civil religion part of his own emotional identity. [...] Indeed, for most of them, their identity as Afrikaners was crucial to their personal integration, overriding their loyalty to the wider South African state. (Moodie 1975: 21)

The exclusive notion of the Afrikaner volk was adapted by Malan and his Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party (G/NP), and became a pivotal part of the discourse of 'apartheid', which was his election slogan in the 1940's. Through the new nationalist cultural organisations and businesses the nationalist discourse finally managed to interpellate white Afrikaans speakers into an ethnic Afrikaner-identity discourse, and thereby create the identity as such. With the victory of the NP, Christian-nationalism and its hardened exclusive notion of Afrikanerdom finally became institutionalised. As former Prime Minister B.J. Vorster accurately

put it: 'The nationalist Party has established Afrikaans and Afrikanerdom' (Giliomee 1975: 25).

In this way the development of Afrikaner identity came to a contemporary conclusion; from being an inclusive category designating whites not born in Europe, it had become an exclusive, ethnic identity:

To Afrikanerdom belong only those by virtue of blood, soil, culture, tradition, belief, calling form an organic unitary society. This nation is by nature an organic wearer of authority with the patriarchal leader as chief bearer of authority of the nation, and with the members of the nation as active and co-operative workers. The national Afrikaner state is in this sense also a medium of Afrikanerdom to protect and promote its own fulfilment of calling. (Piet Meyer of the Afrikaner Broederbond, quoted in de Klerk 1975: 214)

The writing of history

Christian-nationalism developed into what Moodie in the above quote called a 'civil religion' (Moodie 1975). A pivotal part of it was the construction of the 'sacred history' of the Afrikaners. This history was a series events, one leading to the other, making up a narrative telling the story about suffering, injustice and how the Afrikaner *volk* was elected by God (Moodie 1975: 10). One of these events was the Battle of Blood River, where God supposedly showed himself to the Afrikaners by giving them victory over a numerically far superior Zulu army. After the battle the Afrikaners apparently signed a covenant with God, promising to serve him for eternity (Sparks 1990: 112). The Great Trek was another important event, which was said to be an expression that the Afrikaners at the time felt like God's chosen people, called to find the Promised Land in the interior. All in all, the national history of the told the story of a people who were done wrong by both blacks and the British (again the two Others of the Afrikaners) while they were trying to serve the will of God.²⁵ The idea of what at the time was referred to as 'the century of wrong' (Moodie 1975: 11) has been of major importance in the nationalist discourse.²⁶

²⁵ Covenants with God modelled on Old Testament are also part of the myths of victimhood of minorities like the Igbo in Nigeria and the Tutsi in Rwanda. Their national agendas thereby become divine.

²⁶ The injustice committed against the Afrikaners still seems to be prominent in the self-perception of many Afrikaner today. In the debate on the TRC report in early 1999, the leader of the NNP Marthinus van Schalkwyk said that the Afrikaners were particularly able to identify with the suffering of the blacks. This he said was due to the fact that they themselves had experienced suffering.

As mentioned earlier, in the words of Žižek, 'historical events never carry their own symbolisation'. They need to be interpreted and represented as 'events'. In this process historical happenings are constructed as historical experiences by attributing meaning retroactively. A good example is the aforementioned Boer War, which came to be an illustration of a clear-cut Afrikaner vs. English conflict. But also the Great Trek was interpreted in a specific way that diverted from how it supposedly was experienced at the time. According to André du Toit (1983) the group of people who left the Cape to go inland did not see themselves as a group chosen by God to establish an Afrikaner republic. Rather they were a diverse group of people with more mundane motivations such as the search for farming land and the escape from British colonialism.²⁷ This is also a good example of how certain conditions can explain (not determine) the emergence of a group discourse.

By the end of the 1930's a specific interpretation of this sacred history by C.J. Langehoven had become semi-official (Moodie 1975: 11). Through the range of nationalist organisations mentioned above the new discourse and its sacred history was reproduced. As Moodie puts it:

Constant repetition of the civil theological themes and images on innumerable ritual occasions made the emotional logic of the civil faith personal to ordinary men and women. (Moodie 1975: 18)

A range of Afrikaner national symbols was created such as the Women's Monument in Bloemfontein and the Voortrekker monument outside Pretoria and holidays, all commemorating the history of the Afrikaner people and thereby lending substance to that collective identity in the present.

People who use certain discourses have to establish a sense of continuity with older discourses and hence blend new and old, creating a vision of the presence and the future with the legitimacy of the past.

²⁷ There is nothing extraordinary about the way Afrikaner national history was constructed compared to other national histories. According to Jonathan Friedman (1994) history is always an imprint of the present onto the past, and hence, all history is mythology. A series of events are chosen and ordered in such a way as to create a narrative which ends at where the subjects of the history want to see themselves in the present (118).

Language

A part of the new Afrikaner nationalism, like with most nationalisms, was the construction of a national language. The language issue to a high degree became the vehicle for a specific Afrikaner nationalism, and therefore the prime defining element of the identity. It became instrumental in creating a pan-South African alliance, bridging both geographical and political differences. The nationalists to a large extent formed the Afrikaner identity around the language, thereby effectively excluding the English speakers. The language issue became the meeting point for people with different nationalist agendas (groups such as teachers, clerics, and journalists).

The initial settlers adopted, as mentioned earlier, Dutch as a common language. After some time, part of the 'Dutch linguistic cluster' had creolised. It picked up elements from German, French, Southern Nguni and a lot of English. The variety of this cluster was great with big regional- and class differences. The variations of Dutch spoken can be seen as ranging from 'High Dutch' spoken by the upper class, to 'Afrikaans', mainly spoken by servants and farmworkers (Hofmeyr 1987: 97). It was this creolised form of Dutch that was sought standardised and turned into the national language of the Afrikaners.

The standardisation of Afrikaans was due to the effort of several people. Most important was a group of unsatisfied teachers and clerics in Paarl who were fed up with the continuous harassment of non-English speakers and the lack of funding for Dutch schools. In the 1870's they founded the organisation *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (Society of true Afrikaners). They argued for the use of the 'Afrikaans' variant of Dutch in all spheres of life and started to publish the newspaper *Die Afrikaanse Patriot*, the first publication which used 'Afrikaans' systematically (Hofmeyr 1987: 97). Initially the language issue seems to have arisen from English suppression of Dutch, as English became a criterion for getting a job in the civil service and the only language spoken in parliament in the Cape colony (Sparks 1990: 116).

An important part of the construction of a nationally standardised Afrikaans was to 'clean' it from the strong associations of poverty, but also, more importantly, 'colouredness'. This was done by stressing the Dutch roots and by arguing it was a European, 'white man's' language (Hofmeyr 1987: 104f.).

We know from Benedict Anderson that printed media is important in the construction of a national identity, since it creates a sense of belonging to a collective of readers (reading the same paper as oneself, at the same time) (Anderson 1991: 33f.). It is also important because it forces a standardisation of language, since it is impossible to print in all dialects spoken. In the case of Afrikaner nationalism it was important because magazines like *Huisgenoot* from Nasionale Pers not only wrote in Afrikaans, but also started to redefine people's everyday lives as being 'Afrikaans'. According to Hofmeyr (1987) a brief list of phenomena which were 'repacked' as "Afrikaans" would include food, architecture, interior, decoration, dress, etiquette, health, humour, landscape, monuments, the plastic arts, music, handicraft, transports, agriculture, nature study and so on (Hofmeyr 1987: 111). What had hitherto been 'furniture' now was referred to as 'Afrikaans furniture', 'humour' became 'Afrikaans humour' and so forth.

Afrikaans is, in other words, a very young language, and it only became an official language in 1925, after long a political battle (Hofmeyr 1987: 108). The issue of the Afrikaans language and mother tongue education was a central issue in Christian-nationalism and later in apartheid.

In order to understand why Christian-nationalism and its exclusive definition of Afrikaner identity based on strong anti-black and anti-English sentiments was successful, one needs to look at the historical context. This is what I intend in the subsequent section.

Social change -

New space for Afrikaner nationalism

No more was it a slow meditative life of kraal and stoep, of ancestors in their graves and the Bible in the parlour, with the dignity and security of advancing years surrounding by a large extended family. Now it was a new life in a city slum surrounded by strangers where there was no security and even

less dignity. [...] The nineteenth century had caught up with the seventeenth - with a vengeance. (Sparks 1990: 119)

There seems to be agreement that the nationalist movement roughly happened in two phases; one before and one after the Boer War (1899-1902). Both in the context of great social change and the uprooting of established ways of living.

In 1867 diamonds were discovered in Kimberly and in 1886 gold was discovered at the Witwatersrand. Because technology could be imported from Europe, the country was thrown into the industrial revolution far quicker than the European countries. The new opportunities in the cities, combined with a period of severe drought, cattle- and locust plagues, and the subdivision of land between Afrikaner sons, turning farms into un-economic units, created an unprecedented influx of Afrikaners into the cities (Sparks 1990: 121). The young Afrikaners who came into the cities were suddenly in a position to question the traditional authority of their fathers. This was done by deserting the NGK and by starting to enjoy such profane pleasures as sport, liquor, and popular entertainment (Hofmeyr 1987: 100).

The above-mentioned factors changed the social organisation and shook established perceptions of authority, values and identity. It sent the Afrikaners into unprecedented social change and the social imaginary got dislocated. In this context new discourses about identity and society could be formulated.

◦ The success of Christian-nationalism

Christian-nationalism was a new discourse that appeared as the second phase of Afrikaner nationalism, later to be institutionalised in 'apartheid'. As mentioned above it was successful in constructing a more narrow, ethnic definition of Afrikaner identity, captured in the notion of the *volk*. How can we understand this success? In her brilliant book 'Deconstructing apartheid discourse' (1996) Aletta Norval argues that the reason why apartheid succeeded in replacing Segregation as a social imaginary was, that the latter had gone into an organic crisis, due to the social changes mentioned above (Norval 1996: 35).

It is often argued that apartheid was a simple continuation of Segregation as a way of ordering society, with only a quantitative difference in levels of oppression.²⁸ But according to Norval, there is a *qualitative* difference in the principle by which society was ordered in the two discourses. Segregation was built on the principle of a basic division between 'whites' and 'natives' and by effect an idea of 'white unity'. But the white Afrikaans-speakers had a very different experience when they came into the cities during the rapid urbanisation especially in the 1920-30s. Here they encountered a reality where the English were in a socially and economically superior position and they found themselves competing against black workers over jobs, like the free-burghers did in the late years of the colony. The situation made the aforementioned fear of *gelykstelling* with the blacks relevant once again, this time combined with the fear of *verbastering* (miscegenation).

Hence, when Christian-nationalism, and later apartheid, established a qualitative ethnic division between the Afrikaners and the English, they could target the uplifting of the Afrikaners specifically and create a sense of pride around that identity. The new organising principle was exactly this ethnic element, expressed in the notion of *volksgeit* (Norval 1996: 67).²⁹ The consequence of this was that apartheid regime operated with a division of blacks into different peoples, rather than treating them as one group of natives. Despite the introduction of ethnic categorisation whiteness nevertheless remained an important legal aspect of apartheid.

Whereas I agree with Norval, I would like to add an aspect to the analysis. I will argue that it is important to note that Christian-nationalism managed to reinterpret and combine *already existing* sentiments with new ideas, in a *bricolage* within one discourse. In the beginning of this chapter I discussed the two most important ones, namely antagonistic experiences from encounters with both the English and blacks. The strong sense of religion was another element already present in some form or another. Dubow expresses the point this way, with regards to the relationship with blacks:

Ideological racism may be an intellectual response to, or formulation of, popular racist sentiments. It may at the same time help to construct and maintain such attitudes. *In the case of apartheid, racist ideology both reflected and grew out of already existing notions of human difference.* But in helping to systematise and ra-

²⁸ See Nigel Worden (1995) for an example.

²⁹ Means 'people's own' and resembles Herders romantic notion of *volksgeist*.

rationalise such assumptions, it also worked to entrench them legislatively and ideologically. (Dubow 1991: 2 – my italics)

The Christian-nationalists delivered an interpretation of society that appealed to the situation of many Afrikaners in the beginning of the century. It established a historical narrative which turned defeat into victory, suffering into blessing and a group of newly urbanised low class people into the elect of God, pre-destined to success and prosperity. But the nationalist organisations were also concerned with the 'poor-white problem', and considerable effort was put into uplifting the new Afrikaner proletariat through social schemes and the generation of Afrikaner capital (O'Meara 1983).

In the following I will theorise over the relationship between history, groups, discourse, and the articulation of collective identity

The historical formation of collective identity

As mentioned above, the Afrikaners were in the beginning of the last century not yet a political group, i.e. they were not represented as a group and accepted as such (neither internally nor externally), apart from being a loosely demarcated linguistic group. Rather, there was a group of people who potentially *could* become a group with a sense of collective identity, a potential that would grow during the following 100 years. They were what Bourdieu (1991) has called a 'probable class' or a 'class on paper'.³⁰ He describes the concept in this way:

On the basis of knowledge of the space of positions, one can carve out classes in the logical sense of the word, i.e. sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and submitted to similar types of conditioning, have every chance of having similar disposition and interests, and thus of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances. (Bourdieu 1991: 231)

³⁰ 'Class' should here not be understood in the narrow Marxist way, but as an open classificatory concept, which could be ethnic, cultural, social, or any other group of people.

Bourdieu's notion of the social as a 'space of positions' or 'space of relations' involves a break with Marxist tradition. In the latter tradition the identified 'probable class' was made equal with the 'real objective class'. In other words, it was misrecognised that the group actually was a construct created by the analyst.³¹ And when the distinction was made, as in the differentiation between 'class-in-itself' and 'class-for-itself', the movement from the former to the latter was described as being an objective necessity, resulting in class consciousness, a true recognition of the relations of exploitations (Bourdieu 1992: 233). But, as Bourdieu writes, just because a section of people occupy similar positions in a given social field (i.e. is a probable class), it is not inevitable or necessary in any way that they form an alliance. On the other hand, it is not impossible that agents who do not form a probable class can group together in an alliance (Bourdieu 1992: 232).³²

I find Bourdieu helpful as a mediator between the determinist position of Marxism and other more or less positivist theories, and social constructionism, which in different guises of post-theories have tried to challenge the determinism and consequential essentialism inherent in most older theories.³³ The consequence of the battle against the evils of objectivist epistemology, has been, as in Laclau & Mouffe³⁴, the formulation of a theory that claims that all meaning is contingent (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 3 & 93-145). Although Laclau talks about contingency in different social contexts with different kinds of restrictions and power relations, the point about contingency seems to be somewhat over-theorised, or maybe more correctly; the situations where the construction of identities are *not-so-*

³¹ This is an example of 'identity fetishism', mentioned in the introduction.

³² Although Bourdieu makes a very important point he, in my reading, seems to lack considerations about important aspects of group formation: what about the multitude of probable groups within the same social context? And what about the variety of ways the same probable group can be articulated and mobilised? The same probable group can, in other words, have very different appearances and in effect different political, 'real' groups can be created out of the same probable group. But the issue of context seems to be the biggest problem; what about the construction of that very context, as a consequence of the formation of a group, and not only the other way around? There seems to be an aspect of the dialectics between identity claims and the construction of context that he is missing. Because, as Laclau puts it: 'I cannot assert a differential identity without distinguishing it from a context; and in the process of making the distinction, I am asserting the context at the same time' (Laclau 1996a: 51). This argument links with my point about the discursive construction of 'historical facts' mentioned earlier in this chapter.

³³ These theories are pretty much the whole anthropological canon, from Durkheim to Radcliffe-Brown and Levi-Strauss, and from Boas to Geertz, in different ways and to varying degrees. All shared a natural scientific epistemology and the belief in the production of objective, true knowledge about the social.

³⁴ The importance of this aspect of the theory is expressed in the label 'anti-essentialism', which is what they call their position.

contingent is under-theorised.³⁵ Maybe the reason is that we often see Laclau as arguing in the extreme, almost like a social mathematician he takes the full logical consequences of his arguments and to some extent leaves the reader out there in the realm of higher conceptual logic.³⁶ I appreciate that the radical consequence of the social constructionist discourse theory is the contingency of meaning, but for me it seems important to strike a balance between the two positions, because total contingency in all situations just does not make sense (not that Laclau necessary claims that). One has to look at the historical context that made certain identities more likely to occur than others. But the point about anti-essentialism is an important one to remember; just because certain identities and interpretations of the social world are more likely than others at a given time, does not mean that they are necessary and given, due to some objective historical facts.³⁷

If we discard the determinism mentioned in the beginning of this section, we can say that the Afrikaners were 'a group-in-itself', and only through interpellation by intellectuals and a certain identity discourse did they become a 'group-for-itself', i.e. got a self-awareness of themselves as a group (Althusser 1971: 174). In hindsight it is relatively easy to rule out some explanations and we can now see that certain historical factors moulded the Afrikaners into a probable class. They thereby created the possibility for the appearance of the Afrikaners as a group, although they in no way determined the formation of the group.

According to Althusser, the individual has no resistance to the interpellation into specific subject positions, because of the immense power of the 'ideological state apparatus', which is always promoting the capitalist ideology (Althusser 1971: 174). There are a number of problems with this. Firstly, there was not only one ideology, which forced peo-

³⁵ It is important to note that Laclau and Mouffe (1985) stresses that meaning and identity always has a necessary, and non-contingent character *within* a given discourse, due to the relational nature of all meaning (106). My argument here is, that what they are not very concerned with why certain discourses become dominant instead of others, i.e. the historical conditions which make one discourse more likely to be successful than another. In her brilliant analysis, Aletta Norval (1996) implements the discourse analytical framework in the analysis of the rise and fall of Apartheid discourse. Even though she shows decisive historical factors in the discursive development, she in my opinion also fails to theorise the not-so-contingent aspect of the historical context of discourses.

³⁶ This is evident in all Laclau's works. See the analysis of the social production of empty signifiers (Laclau 1996b) as a good example, consider the following formulation as an expression of his way of working: "But the operation of the logic of exclusionary limits has a series of necessary effects [...] (37).

³⁷ Again, the very distinction between 'historical facts' and identity discourses is not unproblematic, since the latter to a high degree takes part in interpreting and thereby to a certain extent in creating those 'facts'.

ple into being Afrikaners in a specific way, but several competing discourses, promoting different ways of being Afrikaner as well as other identities. Secondly, the different discourses were not in the last instance determined by the economy, but on the contrary, the economy had to order itself within the orders of the dominant discourse (Norval 1996: 95). We cannot say that 'these specific historical events led to the formation of a specific ethnic awareness amongst the Afrikaners', but we can say that certain historical factors made a certain kind of interpellation possible and created the circumstances for its success. It was then up to the political forces of the day to articulate and mobilise the group within that context. Thirdly, Althusser's theory is problematic with regards to agency, which is practically stripped off the individuals, who are reduced to ideological subjects with a false consciousness. But as mentioned in the introduction, identity formation is not a one way process, where people become puppets who are given identities without any say. It is a combination of *interpellation* by the discourse and *identification* with the subject position by the individual. In other words, identity discourses cannot interpellate people into totally arbitrary identity positions, but have to offer something which makes sense to the target individuals, i.e. they must answer questions, accommodate fears and uncertainty, give comfort and a feeling of security, and create a sense of belonging. In order to understand the success of the Christian-nationalist discourse in interpellating Afrikaans-speakers into an ethnic subject position, one needs to identify the historical context in which it took place, what elements the discourse was made of, and why it made sense to 'buy into' that identity.

Symbols and collective identity: Apartheid and Afrikaners.

The culmination of Christian-nationalism was in 1948, where the nationalists gained control over the South African state institutions. I will in this section deal with the consequence for the collective Afrikaner identity, and once again touch on the theoretical framework outlined in the introduction.

Benedict Anderson (1991) argues for the importance of national symbols in the process of imagining the nation. These include a flag, an anthem, holidays, monuments, and museums. There are at least two main reasons for this. Firstly, the symbols must signal 'nationality', in order for other nations to recognise the nation as being a nation in its own right. This is

necessary for political reasons (these have to follow the rules of the discourse of the system of nation states, including the principle of sovereignty). Secondly, they are necessary as points of identification by the people within the nation. In other words, national symbols are re-presentations of the nation, both externally and internally. Whereas this is perfectly true, we need to go further than Anderson does. There is another level one needs to grasp if wanting to understand the workings of national symbols: there is not any empirical or positively observable national identity as such (Calhoun 1997: 5), there is only the symbolisation of it. In other words, it does not exist as something lying outside or behind the symbols, as something more real of which the symbols are a mere reflection of, but it exists only in as far as it is being symbolised; it exists only *through* representation (Hall 1996: 4).

Following my main theoretical arguments this must be the case for all kinds of collective identity. Collective identity needs not only to be imagined as a way of reflecting something that is already there, but the identity as such exists only through imagination. But to say that it is imagined is not to claim that it does not exist, but that it exists only through the process of symbolisation. Some symbols prove to be extremely durable and are reproduced over a long time, whereby they appear to be constant and natural, although this is not the case (Hertzfeld 1992: 10). Collective identities need to be constantly re-imagined, re-created. In the case of national identity it is done through rituals, holidays, and other events - a re-creation which takes place within the inter-national discourse and the firmly institutionalised ways of representing nations (such as sports events and the United Nations). In this way a world of nations comes into being, constituted by the symbolisation of it, through the retroactivity of naming (Zizek 1989: 95).

The re-presentation and performance of collective identity takes place with the use of symbols. The symbols change over time in terms of usage and importance, according to the shifting historical context. What happened when the NP won in 1948 was that the Christian-nationalists obtained new means of producing identity symbols. Control over the means of production of symbols and meaning is vital in creating and sustaining a hegemonic social order (Comaroff 1991: 25). This was exactly the case when the nationalists got to control the educational system, the political and judicial systems and communication. Through the state apparatus the Christian-nationalist way of ordering society and its idea of Afrikaner identity was reproduced and sedimented in the habitus of people. Through ritu-

als Afrikaners celebrated the apartheid state and themselves. These 'state spectacles' included opening of parliament, different kinds of historical commemorations, school rituals, and sport events.³⁸ The Afrikaner symbols, mentioned earlier, which were used to reproduce a certain Afrikaner identity were also the national symbols of apartheid South Africa: The Day of the Vow commemorated the covenant made with God after the victory over the Zulus in the Battle of Blood River and; the Voortrekker Monument outside Pretoria the Great Trek; the language monument in Paarl Afrikaans; and the Huguenot monument also in Paarl celebrated the ancestry of the Afrikaners. The streets got to carry the names of heroes from the nationalist Afrikaner history and airports and dams were named after Afrikaner politicians. In a way all organs of state, most notably the police, and state power itself became symbols of Afrikaner identity. This identity was reproduced through the symbols of apartheid and the two in that sense merged: the symbols of apartheid were the symbols of the Afrikaners and vice versa.

The institutionalised Afrikaner identity

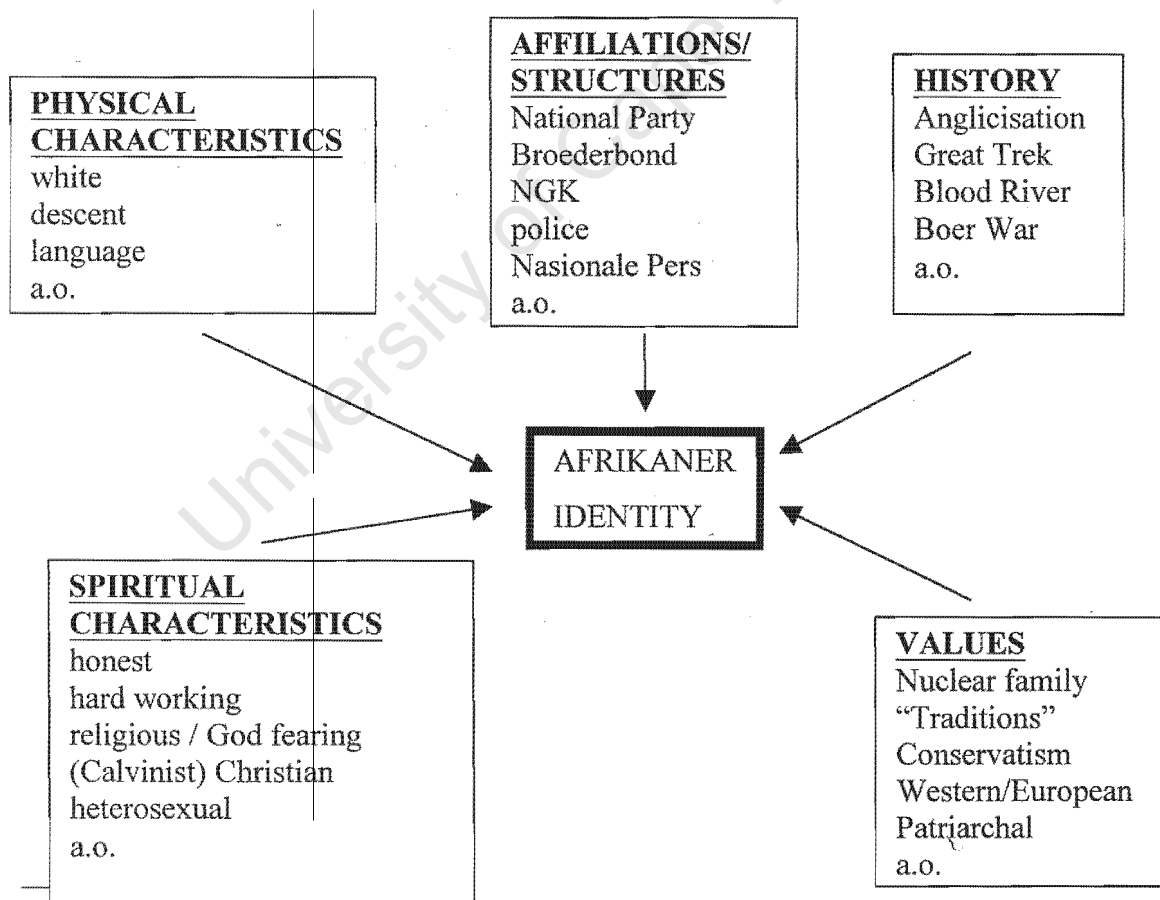
Christian-nationalism became the dominant discourse of the Afrikaners and came to constitute a social imaginary. Generation after generation of Afrikaners in schools, in churches, in cultural organisations, in politics, in the police, in sport clubs and in the big national companies, learned about the sacred history of the Afrikaners. They learned about genuine importance of the language and mother tongue education, the importance of paternal authority, of Calvinism, of antagonism towards blacks and English-speakers, and so on. The Christian-nationalist discourse managed through state power to define almost every aspect of the Afrikaner's lives, and the ways in which one should behave and what values one should identify with in order to be an Afrikaner was clearly defined. Norval (1996) puts it this way:

³⁸ According to Mach (1993) a ritual is a symbolic text which expresses a certain symbolic ordering of the word. This order is acted out and embodied in the ritual, which thereby contributes to the sustenance of the social order (77).

[...] as the apartheid project crystallized and penetrated into more and more areas of everyday life, it became increasingly difficult to question its parameters. One either engaged in 'loyal resistance' or became a traitor to the Afrikaner cause. (Norval 1996: 300)

A certain vision of South African society got institutionalised, as well as a specific Afrikaner identity. The latter became a state-bound concept as it was monopolised by state institutions and the nationalist organisations and companies. Membership of these nationalist structures itself became a way of being a good Afrikaner, much like membership of the Communist Party in the former Soviet Union was a way to be a good citizen.³⁹ To sum up the different elements that went into defining the Christian-nationalist identity it can be illustrated this way:

Figure 1.



³⁹ These organisations did far from agree on all matters and the Afrikaner nationalist movement has been characterised by internal strife and factional groupings. But one can still argue, that these disputes took place with a more or less limited frame of discussion, keeping intact a certain version of Afrikanerness.

The *creation* of an identity means the *exclusion* of other possible identities, and hence a closure. This is most evident when the identity in question is an *absolute* identity, such as the identity of the Afrikaner *volk*. Under the guise of objective and God-given characteristics the nationalist organisation reproduced a specific way of being Afrikaner and de-legitimised other ways.

Increased pressure on the boundaries of identity

From the mid-1970's the pressure on the apartheid regime increased considerably as resistance arose both domestically and outside South Africa. 'Adapt or die' PW Botha told his constituency in 1979 (O'Meara 1996: 255), and a series of efforts to transform the system was initiated. In brief, the reaction from the regime was twofold: internally it tried to shift from narrow Afrikaner nationalism to the idea of white unity together with the English-speakers, and externally it opted for alliances among non-whites but on the terms of the regime. The best example of the strategy of broadening the support base was probably the opening of the tri-cameral parliament in 1984, which attempted to co-opt coloureds and Indians into the regime promising them a limited power sharing (Norval 1996: 207). The political boundaries of social organisation (the principle for inclusion and exclusion and political alliances), and hence of identity, were sought transformed in a way that would enable apartheid to live on in the face of crisis. This was unsuccessful and the regime had to employ ever more brutal force in order to keep the system in order.

An important aspect of the death cramps of apartheid was *Total Strategy*, which has been defined in a government white paper from 1977 this way:

Total Strategy is (...) a complex subject. It can perhaps be described as the comprehensive plan to utilize all the means available to a state according to an integrated framework of the specific policies. A total national strategy is, therefore, not

confined to a particular sphere, but is applicable at all levels and to all functions of the state structure.⁴⁰

As we can see, this counter-insurgency policy involves all activities of the state and gives the latter a broad mandate to 'utilize all means available' and to deal with the threat in any way it sees fit. The *securitization* of the state resulted in what Norval has called a 'security psychosis' (Norval 1996: 203ff), where it became increasingly easy to be labelled a 'communist' and a 'traitor', whereby one effectively was excluded. According to the new discourse the South African conflict was not a racial conflict, but a conflict between 'the powers of chaos, Marxism and destruction' on the one hand, and 'the powers of order and Christian civilisations' on the other (PW Botha, quoted from O'Meara 1996: 265). In this discursive redrawing of political boundaries the chains of equivalence ensured that if one did not support the government, i.e. the powers of order, one would automatically be defined as part of the enemy.

Compliance with what the government perceived to be the norm was enforced, the official acceptance of dissidence minimised as the *securocrats* took over and still wider areas of people's lives were considered to fall within the area of 'national security'. Consider another excerpt from the white paper as a clear illustration:

The aspects of national security which require attention on an interdepartmental basis are the following:

- Political action
- Military / para military action
- Economic action
- Psychological action
- Scientific and technological action
- Religious-cultural action
- Manpower services
- Intelligence services
- Security services
- National supplies, resources and production services
- Transport and distribution services
- Financial services
- Community services
- Telecommunication services

Together the above fields cover the whole spectrum of national security. (Ibid.)

⁴⁰ White Paper On Defence And Armaments Supply, Department of Defence, Pretoria, 1977: 5.

Total Strategy in other words gave the apartheid state mandate to control practically every aspect of people's life; a truly totalitarian set-up. Botha's survival strategy might have consisted in shifting focus more toward the idea of white unity instead of a narrow Afrikaner nationalism (O'Meara 1996: 265), but the concern with Afrikaner identity within that 'white alliance' prevailed. Even though the vocabulary of 'volkskism' was scrapped from the official discourse, 'proper whiteness' for Afrikaners was largely still defined according to Christian-nationalist principles as defined by the NP. In terms of party politics, the *verkerampte* broke away from the NP and formed under Treurnicht the CP in 1982 and the NP carried on the *verligte* strategy of reforming the existing political framework (See Giliomee 1987). Both positions were nevertheless building on the basic premises of apartheid⁴¹ and until de Klerk became president in 1989 there was no real political alternative in established Afrikaner politics.

The crisis of the apartheid policy is a good example of a hegemonic discourse in crisis; the consent-part of domination was fading, which created the need for increased use of overt force. In the 1980's South Africa saw a series of states of emergency and the use of violence was increased on both sides of the struggle.

Despite the efforts of the regime, a significant discursive space had opened up within which white Afrikaans-speakers started asking critical questions about the existing political order. Boundaries, which had attained a certain naturalness now, started to appear ideological and arbitrary, and the space could not be *sutured* again. The unity of the Afrikaners seemed an increasingly difficult illusion to maintain. There was an increased resistance from inside Afrikaner ranks on both the left and right side of the NP (intellectuals, religious leaders and organisations such as 'End Conscription Campaign' (which was mainly English) and even the Afrikaner Broederbond, - all with their own agendas). At the same time black resistance and international condemnation intensified. This meant that an increasing number of people started to question the apartheid order and the Afrikaner identity defined by that order.

⁴¹ Segregation of the population according to racial classification and to some extent the supremacy of whites.

Totalitarian discourses try to close the social space totally, which means fewer possibilities of negotiation of meaning and less acceptance of ambivalence. We know now that the apartheid regime never managed to close the discursive space again; the stitches would not stay and the bleeding only got worse the more the regime tried to suture the wound of apartheid.

The re-opening of the social

There is today, after the instalment of the new government, a sense of relief from what some of the people I have talked to have described as, a suffocating situation. A lot of Afrikaners agree with the words of Mandela when he said that it is not only the blacks who have been liberated but also the whites. Even though there have always been Afrikaners who went against the official version of Afrikanerdom, it is nevertheless a lot easier to do so now, in as far as there still is an official version left. As mentioned, the NP government and the rest of the *volksbeweging* to a large extent managed to monopolise Afrikanerdom and to present themselves as *the* true representatives of the Afrikaners, thereby closing the social space for alternative identifications. If someone voiced opposition to the government's policies they were at the same time acting against the will of the *volk*. As Hermann Giliomee once put it:

For its part, the Nationalist Party strove to convince all Afrikaners that the party was the nation and the nation the party. Dr. Verwoerd maintained that the Nationalist Party was no ordinary political party but a nation in motion. (Giliomee 1975: 25)

The big difference now is that the official state sanctioned version of Afrikanerdom has disappeared together with the NP's state power, so one can more freely choose one's sympathies.⁴² Earlier it was often with great personal sacrifice that one went against the government's viewpoint, which people Afrikaner critics of apartheid like Bram Fischer and Beyers Naudé are good examples of. As a consequence they were turned into evil strangers,

⁴² This is not to say that there are not any social sanctions and pressure for compliance to a certain set of norms within structures such as the family, the church, the workplace, and the local community. Even though this goes for everyone, Afrikaner or not, I still think one can talk about different levels of sanctions in different communities. An indication of this is that Afrikaners generally are viewed but more interestingly also view themselves as being 'conservative'.

into Others which had to be expelled from the group so it could retain its narrow self-understanding.

So we have moved from dislocation to dislocation, and state sanctioned Afrikaner identity has been discredited together with the social imaginary of apartheid. For some Afrikaners this has led to an extreme sense of loss, while for others it has felt like an emancipation. But for all, the ties of identification imposed by Christian-nationalism have been loosened and all Afrikaners must forge a new social space for themselves. This new situation of dislocation will be the subject of the following chapter.

University of Cape Town

3. Post-apartheid South Africa

We now have one of the answers to the question posed in the beginning of this thesis: how come Afrikaner identity is so debated, contested, and represented by such a multitude of different voices in post-apartheid South Africa? The answer is: the dislocation of the discourse of apartheid and Christian-nationalism and hence of the Afrikaner identity constituted by that discourse. Collective Afrikaner identity is now out of joint, so to speak; it has lost its defined character and is open for new interpretations. One could say that 'Afrikaner' has become a *floating signifier*, i.e. a signifier whose link with its signified has been loosened to such an extent that the link's arbitrary character has become apparent.⁴³ It is no longer hegemonic what the word 'Afrikaner' contains; exactly who it denotes, what connotations it has, and what values are associated with it. Although the signifier still carries its old meaning it does so in a new context (thereby attaining a different significance), and this meaning is increasingly being re-negotiated and contested.

The dislocation of apartheid discourse has of course affected South Africans in general, who all have to identify within a new context. I would argue though, that Afrikaner identity is especially affected; I showed in the previous chapter how the symbols of apartheid also were the ones used to reproduce Afrikaner identity. In a society defining itself as being *post-apartheid*, these symbols are obviously no longer legitimate. Recalling the vital importance of symbols in the construction and maintenance of collective identities, it is clear that this has a radical influence on the established collective Afrikaner identity, which becomes unsustainable.

Another answer to the question is that some of the elements that were central in the definition of the institutionalised Afrikaner identity to a large extent have become problematic. These elements, which I illustrated in Figure 1. in the previous chapter, include:

Race:

Because South Africa today is defining itself as being 'non-racial', this is the most problematic element. Any overt reference to race, especially if you are white, has become illegitimate due to the history of white oppression.

History:

The 'sacred history' of the Afrikaners has to a large extent become problematic, especially in the context of reconciliation. It was made up of a series of events of victory, mainly over black South Africans, and this national chauvinistic history is not acceptable to blacks today. If these events are to be used in post-apartheid South Africa they need to be re-articulated in a way not offensive to others. The legend about the Afrikaners being 'God's chosen people' is another example of what might be offensive.

Language:

Afrikaans has been severely tainted by the past, and is for many the language of oppression. The coloured Afrikaans-speaking poet Adam Small once said that 'Afrikaans has got the habit of hell into it' (cited from Jensen & Turner 1996: 161). Language is nevertheless the most legitimate criteria for group membership. But Afrikaans cannot be used as an exclusive criterion anymore, since it has become difficult to claim monopoly over the language. Language as the sole defining element, without the now illegitimate racial criteria, automatically includes the coloureds, something that severely compromises the Christian-nationalist Afrikaner identity.

Religion:

Due to the close connection between Afrikaner nationalism, apartheid and religion, this element is not unproblematic either. For a very long time the biggest Afrikaner church, the NGK, delivered the theological justification for apartheid. Although the NGK officially has apologised and declared apartheid a sin, membership is still potentially suspect to many South Africans.

⁴³ According to Norval (1996) floating signifiers occur exactly when a social imaginary is dislocated due to an organic crisis (271).

has apologised and declared apartheid a sin, membership is still potentially suspect to many South Africans.

Patriarchal authority:

The strong sense of patriarchal authority in Christian-nationalism has also become challenged. According to the new constitution (1996) post-apartheid South Africa is not only 'non-racial', but also 'non-sexist'. An increasing number of women now claim equal rights and possibilities as their male kin and the hitherto largely unquestioned system of patriarchy is being threatened. Discrimination on the basis of gender nevertheless remains a major problem in South Africa.

Values:

Due to the end of state monopolised Afrikaner identity, an increasing number of voices today claim to be for example liberal, homosexual, feminist, and at the same time to be Afrikaners. And since the state institutions and the nationalist movements no longer have the authority to de-legitimise the claims, they inevitably challenge the old definition of Afrikanerdom. At the end of this chapter I will return to the issue of new Afrikaner voices.

All in all it is safe to say, that collective Afrikaner identity today is undergoing major changes and challenges. In the space opened up after the dislocation of the apartheid order, *non-racialism* is in the process of becoming the new social imaginary. Because it has not constituted itself as such yet, there is a lot of uncertainty in the country about identity and societal organisation - the country is still in transition. This has, as argued above, affected the Afrikaners in particular. The old definition is of course not scrapped completely from the minds and hearts of Afrikaners, but the official sanction of it has by and large dissolved. A good indication of this state of flux can be found if one looks at the members of the old nationalist movement, those structures which used to be instrumental in the reproduction of the narrow ethnic, religious and political definition. Their membership criteria is in itself a definition of 'the Afrikaner', since they still present themselves as 'Afrikaner organisations', and those eligible for membership therefore must be 'Afrikaners'. In the following section I will deal with some of the most important organisations.

The repositioning of Afrikaner organisations

The definition of what an Afrikaner is has never been cast in stone, but earlier the different definitions stayed within the same discursive framework, as illustrated in Figure 1. The reproduction of the Christian-nationalist Afrikaner identity was due to the effort of the myriad of cultural, religious, and political organisations. These organisations are now busy repositioning themselves in post-apartheid South Africa.⁴⁴

The Afrikaner Broederbond is now called the *Afrikaner Bond*. The new name indicates that membership now is open to women, but also that it is an organisation which tries to distance itself from its past. Dr. Pieter Bingle, a prominent NGK minister and personal friend of former president de Klerk, has been a prominent member of the AB since 1966 and member of the executive since 1990. He told me that the AB now is a non-racial, open organisation, which has members of colour. This change happened at a national congress in 1993. After the implementation of the new statute a lot of members left (about 45%, from app. 16.000 to 8.500). According to the minister, the reason was mainly that with the new transparency other people would know that they were members of the AB, and in the new political situation it might not be a good thing to be a member and people were afraid of losing their jobs. Secondly, some of them didn't like the new inclusiveness and thirdly because of a general uncertainty with the whole situation.

The AB's goal is to promote the 'culture of the Afrikaners'. When asked about how the Afrikaners are defined, I was told that

[...] an Afrikaner is everyone who identifies him/herself with Afrikaans as language. And even though AB is a Christian organisation, you can still be an Afrikaner even though you are not Christian, there are also atheists who are Afrikaners.

One of my other informants who was a member of the AB, was also a leading member of the United Democratic Movement (UDM).⁴⁵ This would have been impossible some years

⁴⁴ I will limit myself to look at Afrikaner organisations and not state institutions. Following my argument in the prior chapter, it could also have been interesting to include an analysis of the changes in these institutions, for example in the police. In the latter, one of the changes is that English officially has substituted Afrikaans as the language of command.

⁴⁵ UDM was formed by Roelf Meyer, the NPs chief negotiator in the CODESA negotiations and former crown prince of the party, and Bantu Holomisa, former leader of Transkei and prominent member of the

ago, since the UDF mainly is a black party, and by no means a 'volks-party'. His membership of both organisations is an indication of the changes that have occurred within the AB, and the increased acceptance of diverse political affiliation. Although it is accepted officially, individual members of the AB have nevertheless called him a traitor.

I mentioned above that a lot of members left the AB after the changes in 1993. Another informant, who had worked for Nasionale Pers for 36 years, told me that the role of AB has changed within the Afrikaner community in the sense that before it was an honour for a man to be invited to join. Now most young people are not interested. Earlier it was even necessary to join in order to advance in one's career, that had also changed. Nowadays most people working at Nasionale Pers are not *broeders*, a thing unheard of in the past.⁴⁶

The FAK, the highly influential federation of cultural organisations, consists of 18 organisations (including the Afrikaner Bond). They have together 3-400 000 members. Their mainly co-ordinate the different organisations, but also have their own initiatives such as an Afrikaans songbook, the protection of national [Afrikaner] symbols, and different celebrations, -anniversary of the Great Trek, the Anglo-Boer War. The last 5 years it has been open to people of colour, and has non-whites on the regional management board of the Western Cape.⁴⁷ The national secretary Piet Badenhorst told me in an interview that the FAK now operates with a very inclusive definition of who an Afrikaner is; it is a question of language, and 'culture'. Even though the FAK is a Christian organisation, Christianity is not a criterion for membership. In this way, the FAK officially has only language and 'culture' as criteria. This is exactly the same as the AB, apart from the fact that the latter maintain Christianity as membership criteria.

ANC. In the beginning the two shared the leadership of the party but then Holomisa got the leadership. Roelf Meyer has recently resigned from the party.

⁴⁶ According to him Nasionale Pers, now formally called 'Naspers' was also busy transforming. The main Afrikaans newspaper 'De Burger' already has a readership of 50% coloureds, and 100.000 copies of the weekly magazine 'Rapport' are sold to coloureds. They publish many titles in English so it is not only an Afrikaans enterprise. Even though they, according to him, still have an obligation to represent Afrikaner interest.

⁴⁷ One of the member organisations is the coloured cultural organisation 'Goie Hoop Kultuurvereniging'.

Apart from the big organisations mentioned above, there are a multitude of smaller cultural organisations. One of these is the **Rapport Ryers**, which was founded around 1946 as an alternative to the AB, which was seen as being too exclusive and secretive.⁴⁸ According to an executive member in the Western Cape the first non-white members came about 10 years ago, then with opposition from the NP government. Today there are about 50 non-whites on a national level, out of about 600-700 members. There are also a few female members. They arrange cultural activities, go on trips and lobby and write letters to the newspapers about the status of Afrikaans, the standard of the schools and for the death penalty. It is based on 'Christian values' and the importance of the family. If someone gets a divorce or commits a crime (which apparently is viewed as being the same) he or she is excluded from the organisation.

The NP is probably one of the organisations that most actively tries to broaden its constituency and thereby also the definition of 'the Afrikaners'. In the end of 1998 they, like the AB, adopted a new name, now calling themselves the *New National Party*. This was obviously also an effort to distance themselves from the past and to indicate that changes had taken place in the party. The leader of the NNP Marthinus van Schalkwyk started his speech in parliament during the debate on 'the Afrikaner question' on March 24 1999 with the following words:

Madam Speaker, definitions of the Afrikaner are multiple. For decades ideologues spent their time trying to define the Afrikaner. Seminars were held on the topic: *who are the Afrikaner and who qualifies to be an Afrikaner*. Definitions very often were characterised by colour and political affiliation; and I vividly remember a debate on the topic: Is Braam Fisher an Afrikaner?

We in the New NP say there are no colour or political requirements to be an Afrikaner. *It is an inclusive concept based on only one criterion: language*. Although the New NP represents the majority of the Afrikaners in the country, we recognise that Afrikaners are also present in other parties. In the same way that we have a Jenny Malan, Abé Williams and Cobus Dowry, we respect the fact the Koos van der Merwe opted to be in the IFP. We respect the fact that Corne Mulder sits in the

⁴⁸ According to Sparks (1990) the AB itself formed it as an 'Afrikaner Rotary' (176).

Freedom Front and that Willie Hofmeyer has opted for the ANC. Not only is it their right to do so, but if we want to succeed with democracy based on values and convictions it is healthy and necessary that it is so. (my italics)

I have quoted van Schalkwyk in some length because he presents several interesting points. Firstly, it is interesting that he starts off a debate on the Afrikaners by discussing how that group is defined. It shows the awareness of the contested character of the category and the importance in the past to define the Afrikaners. Secondly, the quote shows that the NNP not only sheds the religious and ethnic criteria for Afrikanerness, but also political affiliation.

I mentioned earlier on that the question of who is an Afrikaner to a large extent has to deal with the relationships with the coloureds. Without saying it directly, it is clear that the NNP consciously tries to include the coloureds. Consider his reference to historical events:

The Afrikaner that we see today has been formed by different experiences and in different parts of the country. It was Bloukrans, Bloedrivier, the concentration camp at Irene, the Peace of Vereeniging, District Six and on these parliamentary grounds. The Afrikaners fought many battles on this soil. Some it lost, some it won. Opponents of the past are now allies and friends.

This quotation is particularly interesting because we see that within the list of historical events which have major importance for the Afrikaner nationalist history, van Schalkwyk mentions 'District 6', an event which is distinctively a piece of 'coloured history'.⁴⁹ Both 'Blood River' and 'District 6' are central historical myth for the white- and the coloured Afrikaans-speakers respectively. In this way he tries to re-shuffle the established view on history and to tell a (hi)story of 'the *new* Afrikaners in the *new* South Africa'. This reshuffling is necessary not only in order to bring the coloureds aboard, but also due to the necessity of a re-articulation of history in such a way to make it legitimate in the new political context, as pointed out in the beginning of this chapter. As a matter of political survival it

⁴⁹ The clearance of the 'coloured area' District 6 happened between 1966-1981. 66.000 people were either forcefully removed, or moved voluntarily, to the Cape Flats outside Cape Town (Swilling 1991). The

is important for the NNP to widen its support base to include 'brown Afrikaners'. This is due to the facts that they are losing much of their traditional constituency and that the party needs to gain legitimacy as non-racial party.

All the main Afrikaner organisations, as well as the NGK, are busy repositioning themselves in the new context. They are thereby taking part in the change of the social space in which the individual Afrikaner has to identify. If for nothing else, they have become a less prominent factor in this space. They all seem to agree on the redefinition of 'the Afrikaner' along linguistic lines, thereby including the coloureds. To this is added Christianity to varying degree and at times the ambiguous element of a specific 'culture'.

Non-racialism

We saw above, that the context in which Afrikaners have to make sense of themselves and their identity has changed dramatically. The old identity discourse has been dislocated and a new social order is in the making. This new order is the social myth of 'non-racialism' which tries to suture the space left open by the collapse of apartheid; it tries to re-order South African society along different lines than before. By setting new standards for legitimacy and social order, this new discourse is instrumental in the above-mentioned changes. I will here briefly outline what non-racialism entails for the Afrikaners.

The biggest consequence for the Afrikaners is that references to whiteness as a defining criterion for being an Afrikaner has been de-legitimised. In the words of Aletta Norval:

[...] the ANC has attempted to eliminate *race* as a defining feature from the political terrain, while keeping open the space for expression of *cultural* – rather than racial or ethnic – *diversity*. (Norval 1996: 294 – my italics).

Hence, a new way of talking about identity and difference is being instituted. But it is more complicated than it might appear. Firstly, the effort to establish a post-apartheid order

event still has a major importance in the collective memory of many coloureds today (Jensen & Turner 1996: chapter 3).

involves the creation of a new South African national identity bridging old divisions. This universalistic project stands in an uneasy relationship with the particularistic group identities, as the two move in opposite directions. It is the new government's job to negotiate a balance between the two. Recently President Mbeki put it this way in a statement to the AB:

While we pay tribute to people's cultures and languages as their own and worthy of the utmost respect and protection, a right which our constitution takes very seriously, in order to enhance these cultures and languages, we must also build bridges that connect one with the other, and thus create the basis for mutual understanding, instead of the walls that for centuries have kept us apart and prevented our full flowering as one people (my italics).

The government has been reluctant to accommodate these identity claims and demands in practice. This is clear when one looks at the 'Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities', the structure described in the constitution to guard the rights of particularistic identity claims and group rights.⁵⁰ By the end of the first 5-year period of the new government in 1999 it had not yet been established, as the only one of the commissions outlined in the constitution. Despite the government's reluctance, there is still this space open where one can talk about difference between collective identities in linguistic, religious and cultural terms. It is exactly this space the above-mentioned organisations engage in.

And secondly, race has *not* lost its use as classificatory principle, not even in the official discourse. In the subsequent section I will analyse the position of 'race' in the new non-racial South Africa and its relationship with racism. Both are of vital importance for the situation of the Afrikaners.

The grammar of racialisation

I mentioned in the beginning of this thesis, that there is a tendency to talk about Afrikaners in general to be racists, especially the separatists. At the same time I never met anyone in South Africa who wanted to call him/herself a racist. What is special about the notion of racism? What function has the concept in the non-racial discourse? It is definitely highly

⁵⁰ Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996: chapter 9, section 185.

emotional and is often considered to be a very important issue for different reasons in different contexts, although it is seldom explicated exactly what it means. But two things seem clear: The racists are always someone else and the word carries a potentially negative connotation.

In order to advance our understanding of the issue I find it necessary to distinguish between the concepts of 'racialism' and 'racism', although perhaps they can only be divided theoretically. As I will show, this distinction is an important one to make.

Racialism

Racialism is basically the classification of the human world according to race as the classificatory principle. In theory, it does not have hierarchical implications; i.e. it does not imply statements of race-superiority. In practice though, it is another matter. Difference as mere difference, as equally levelled units, cannot exist in a social context, there will always to a certain extent appear a hierarchy. This is due to the power relations that all social life is embedded in, and the fact that any creation of identity involves a process of exclusion of what the identity is not (Laclau 1996a: 50f). Identity involves therefore a simultaneous creation of difference. But the idea of difference as difference, of absolute, self-evident identities, ignores the exercising of power that is involved in exclusion.⁵¹ One needs furthermore to ask, different from what? In other words, when making a claim of difference one has to, at the same time, evoke a system of differences within which one's difference is meaningful (Laclau 1996b: 38). The notion of race is such a system.

Race as a classificatory principle is essentially primordial, non-transitive, in-voluntary, and non-changeable. Race can be used solely to describe physical characteristics and not behaviour, but as soon as it enters the sphere of social process, it takes on a determining role over people's behaviour. Because of its properties, race creates definite, absolute differences between people, differences that are put outside history and political discussion, because it is nature. People do what they are; they are not what they do. This comes from an essentialist epistemology and the assumption is that there are certain objective facts that lie

outside the realm of the social construction of meaning. In relation to the above-mentioned logic of exclusion, the construction of absolute racial identities creates absolute differences and therefore a radical exclusion.

But even though it is being disguised in the objective character of the naturalness of 'race', it still has to be established what 'race' actually implies, what racial groups there are and what features they have. In other words, the racial groups have to be constructed. This is why group classification is entangled in power struggles and why it will appear hierarchical. (On the 'Ideology of race' see Taylor 1996: 3). Furthermore, this is the reason why the above-mentioned properties of 'race' look rather different in practice as shown in the case of apartheid, where racial belonging had to be established bureaucratically and actually was negotiable.⁵² If 'race' had the objective meaning it seems to indicate, this would not have been possible.

It is of course important to note the specificity of context in which racial classification is used, and thereby the different meanings it carries. In the case of 'affirmative action' it is clear that the racial categories used, in order to address the social and material inequalities caused by apartheid, are not considered to be deterministic and absolute for the people who are classified as Black, Coloured, or White. It is nevertheless, a racialisation of society, and a reproduction of apartheid categories, albeit in a new context.⁵³

One of many examples of racialisation is found in Thabo Mbeki's speech on nation building and reconciliation where he states:

⁵¹ An example of this is the notion of 'separate development' under Apartheid, which systematically ignored the question of power involved and only stressed difference. It claimed that people were 'separate, but equal'.

⁵² I am here especially thinking of the infamous office in Pretoria, where people who for some reason were difficult to classify were sent to, and had a pen pulled through their hair to establish their blackness by the extent their hair was curly. It is also well known that every year a number of people 'changed colour' by reclassification. In 1986 alone the number was 1102 (West 1988).

⁵³ Once again, it is important to remember the highly contextual character of concepts and categories, because it is clear that the categories are deployed in a radical different manner than by the former regime, and thereby are given new content. One can argue though, that the fact that the categories are used in the official discourse makes them important and legitimises them as a way of ordering society. It is one of the tasks for the government, for the new non-racial discourse to succeed while they at the same time are enforcing affirmative action, to ensure that the racial categories are emptied out of their meaning they still carry with them from the old context. They must become exclusively limited to a way of identifying segments of population, which are disadvantaged. Because of Apartheid these segments largely fall along racial lines. Race is therefore not used because it matters in itself, but as a strategy for redistribution.

A major component part of the issue of reconciliation and nation building is defined by and derives from the material conditions in our society which have divided our country into two nations, the one black and the other white.

We therefore make bold to say that South Africa is a country of two nations.

One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure.

(...)

The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, with the worst affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled.⁵⁴

(my italics)

It is, in other words, not extraordinary to use racial classification in South Africa, most people do so, even the president of the country.

Racialism can be seen as constituting a horizon of meaning that is dominant in South Africa, as a consequence of decades of institutionalised racial classification. A horizon of how the construction of social meaning takes place. Actions are based on how the world is understood, how it is interpreted, how meaning is attributed to it. The actions generate responses that feed back and confirm the horizon. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This is the working of hegemony. The discourse of 'race' has become hegemonic and therefore delivers some of the forms by which we speak about the social and how the social speaks back to us. It has been internalised and reproduced until it has become self-evident, it is common sense. 'Race' as a principle for social classification is, as mentioned, perceived as being objective and value-free. It has become truly hegemonic in the sense that it has sunk into the forms people use and those forms evade scrutiny. People often discuss what content the forms have, i.e. what characterises blacks or whites, but most often it is not questioned that the categories 'black' and 'white' are self-evident, meaningful

⁵⁴Statement by deputy president Thabo Mbeki at the opening of the debate in the National Assembly, on "Reconciliation and nation building", National Assembly, Cape Town, 29 May 1998.

ways ordering the world (Calhoun 1994: 21).⁵⁵ The tricky thing is that as long as people use the racial principle for ordering the world it will remain meaningful.

But it is at the same time clear that one can racialise without being regarded as a 'racist' by others. What is it then that sometimes makes racial classification 'racist'?

Racism

When someone is placing him/herself at the top of the racial hierarchy by making a statement implying that the racial category attributed to someone else has got a lower status than his/her own, the person is often labelled 'racist'. Racism is as a rule always something you accuse someone else for. It is an accusation that the 'racist' has broken the 'rules' for racialising the social, whereby there supposedly is no hierarchy, and all differences are equal.⁵⁶ But as I have pointed out, this egalitarian ideal is problematic both in theory and in practice, especially when it comes to racialisation.⁵⁷

If a person succeeds in labelling someone a racist, the person in that situation holds a position of power – the 'power of naming' (to use the words of Bourdieu (1991)). It is generally acknowledged that the act of racism is an act of power, but what is not recognised is the fact that this is equally true about the act of labelling someone a racist.

Examples of this lack of attention are Rupert Taylor and Don Foster (1997) when they write about the concept of non-racialism in South Africa. They quite correctly state, that race often has been constructed as a way of creating Others in an exclusionary, negative fashion (Taylor 1997: 3). But what they miss is that, especially within the discourse of non-racialism, labelling a person a racist is just as much an act of power, an act of exclusion and Othering, because it effectively de-legitimises any claims that the person makes.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ This was also the case in connection with the verligte-verkrampde battle within the NP, as mentioned in the previous chapter. The debate never went beyond the basic premises of apartheid, the importance of racial classification.

⁵⁶ These 'rules' stem from the American Declaration of Independence, but was made topical with relation to race after the 2. World War.

⁵⁷ The problem with the egalitarian ideal in western societies is, according to Louis Dumont (1986), that equality is being confused with sameness. This makes us incapable of thinking difference between people as a matter of degree, but will interpret it as a difference in substance; a qualitative rather than quantitative difference.

⁵⁸ In this way it also offers a possibility of resistance for minorities who feel oppressed.

The accusation of 'racism'

You are not a racist as such; it is something that is attributed to you. As I tried to argue above, the two concepts of 'racialism' and 'racism' are so closely interlinked, that everyone who accepts race as a principle for classification is potentially being racist, depending on the context and the person or grouping making to accusation of racism. It will most likely be a contested claim and is part of a political context of power struggles and strategies. A good example of this is the issue of affirmative action mentioned above. Some people criticise it by arguing that it is a racist undertaking, and thereby tries to undermine its legitimacy.

There are of course different levels of 'racism', some are subtler and others more explicit. One could look at it as a continuum:

Fig. 2



There is a tendency to slip from right to left, towards higher levels of hierarchisation, of exclusion. When someone is labelled a 'racist' the person is accused to be on the wrong side of the continuum by the one who makes the claim of racism. Whether the accuser succeeds in publicly labelling someone a racist depends on the position of power that he/she is speaking from. In the case of affirmative action the accusers like the leader of the FF Constand Viljoen do not at present hold power enough to effectively undermine the moral basis of the policy.

'Racism' as an empty signifier

To take our understanding of the significance of the label 'racist' further, I suggest we think of it as an *empty signifier*, as defined by, among others, Laclau (see in particular: 1996b). This is in my opinion a somewhat ambiguous term, which has several conceptual pitfalls. The term could be mistaken, judging by its name, to have no importance and no real consequences. But this is far from the case. If we consult the work done by Laclau, we learn that an empty signifier seems to mean everything, and yet nothing.

Allow me to break down the apparently paradoxical term to an understanding I believe is fruitful for this analysis. First we need to revisit some of the points made earlier about the systemic construction of meaning, and relate it to this term. I argued that all social meaning is relational, and the different signifiers (such as 'black' and 'coloured') are only intelligible in relation to other signifiers (such as 'white'). Meaning can only occur within a system of signification (such as the discourse of 'race'). For a signifier to be part of a system of signification it must perform a dual function; it must establish its difference from other signifiers of the system, and at the same time cancel that difference. In order to be part of the system, it must have an equivalence or identity with the other signifiers (Laclau 1996b: 38). Any system of signification is therefore purely relational and is kept in place by the sum of elements, all expressing both difference and identity at the same time.

An empty signifier can be created if the differential meaning of a signifier is so downplayed that it appears to be all identity, or all system. In this way it can get to signify the system as such, and thereby become part of a frame for formulating differences and what can be said within the discourse. It comes to signify the universal of the system and is thereby lifted above the other particularities of that system (Laclau 1996a). It is in a way what makes it possible for other signifiers not to be *floating*, as it creates a momentary surface for inscription.

With the breakdown of the apartheid system, the social has to a certain extent been opened up to re-interpretation and to a reformulation of social order. Several discourses are competing about delivering this formulation and create a new social order, a new imaginary (Norval 1996: 271). The non-racialism of the ANC is the dominant one of these, others include what one could call the 'tribalism' or ethnic nationalism of the Inkatha Freedom Party and the Freedom Front and the more identificatory based group-ideology of the National Party (Norval 1996: 276ff).

One could view these discourses as systems of signification, or different horizons of intelligibility, each interpreting the social in a different way, with different consequences. Excluding what it is not constitutes all systems of signification. The self is constructed

against the Other.⁵⁹ Exclusion in some way or another is a necessity. The radical consequence of this is that identity cannot be positive but must be constructed against the negativity of the excluded. This 'constitutive outside'⁶⁰ is therefore also a constituted outside, in as far as it is necessary for the existence of the system and must therefore be constructed alongside it.

The system can only be constituted, be a totality (although not with defined borders) through the production of empty signifiers. As mentioned above, these empty signifiers are the ones which constitute the being of the system, but they are also necessary to constitute the outside, to signify the excluded and thereby in effect to exclude. One could therefore talk about empty signifier for both the inside (system, totality, identity, good) and the outside (chaos, negativity, evil). The various categories or elements which are excluded must form a chain of equivalence, through which their individual differences are cancelled and the chain comes to signify one totality of pure threat, pure negativity (Laclau 1996b: 38f). This totality does not, just as the system of signification, have any substantial properties, but exists only as the excluded. In order to construct this 'outside' one needs to signify it by key elements that come to express the excluded as such. I will argue that 'racism' is such a category. Empty signifiers are in a way signposts, marking borders between different orders, and through them we can at times get a momentarily glimpse of the contours of the order (included or excluded) which they signify.⁶¹

As indicated above, no social categories or systems of signification have a necessary, objective character, they are always constructed. Evidently there are therefore power struggles about what should function as empty signifiers, as anything in theory could incarnate this universal function (Laclau 1996b: 42f.). In this way different discourses fight for the naturalisation of a specific social order, so that it appears as a necessary, objective order. In

⁵⁹ See Veena Das on the constitution of European self-identity. Rationality needed irrationality, and central to the Enlightenment project of Reason was the distancing from an un-enlightened, irrational *other*; the Subject of the West turned the rest into objects (Das 1995: 136). This is also the main point in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1985).

⁶⁰ See Henry Staten (1985) in the introduction to his book on Wittgenstein and Derrida.

⁶¹ In the case of 'Apartheid' a good example of an empty signifier is the forced removal of District 6. One can say, that its significance has become bigger than the specific event itself; it has transgressed its own particularity, and has become significant for both 'the struggle' and 'the oppression', and enables one to talk about these things and thereby create them. This phenomenon bares a resemblance to what Terence Ranger recently called 'stereotypical tales', at a seminar at Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cape Town.

this struggle for hegemony, empty signifiers are central elements. One could say, that an empty signifier is by definition a signifier where the meaning is hegemonic, and therefore cease to appear as ideological; in its extreme it becomes common sense and escapes contestation.⁶²

Exclusion and Constitution

I will argue that the identification of 'the racist' has an important function in present day South Africa in order to constitute the non-racial imaginary. This importance stems from a number of interlinked aspects. First of all, it is often compared with the function of the human immune defence; it identifies the alien element in the body and rejects it in order to restore the balance of the body. The 'racists' must be identified in order for them to be rejected from the 'non-racial body'.⁶³

Identifying 'them' allows one to *exorcise* sentiments of racism present in almost all spheres of South African society (due to the extent of racialisation mentioned above), and thereby create a self-sense of 'non-racism', which exceeds the actual level of which this ideal is accomplished.⁶⁴ It can be argued that - like the mandate of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to focus on gross human rights violations, directs attention to the exceptions and away from the banalities of evil (Villa-Vicencio 1997) - the focus on overt racists, for example the AWPB, functions to divert attention away from the silent everyday practices of exclusion, chauvinism, and prejudice; the banality of 'racism'.

Another analogy could be René Girard's notion of the scapegoat (1986), as used by Marks (1994) when she writes how the spotlight on apartheid South Africa was a convenient scapegoat for the Western world in order to avoid confrontation with their own social inequalities (Marks 1994: 1).

⁶² My understanding of empty signifiers as being inherently hegemonic follows Laclau, but is somewhat different from the way it is used by Aletta Norval. She sees empty signifiers as being signs open for interpretation, i.e. exactly the opposite as hegemonic; their meaning appear ideological (Norval 1994: 135, note 22). (There seems to be a discrepancy between her definition in the note and her use of the notion in the text (see p. 120)). This is what Laclau calls a 'floating signifier' (Laclau 1996: 36).

⁶³ Whereas this is a good example it also dangerous to use. If one stays within the metaphor of the body, one tends to forget that classification is exactly not biological/natural, but a political process.

⁶⁴ The notion of exorcism is borrowed from Jensen & Turner (1997)

A different example of the constitution of Others, which also can be explained by use of the body metaphor, and which is even more problematic, is the new antagonism towards migrant workers from other African countries. It appears that to a certain extent they are the ones who are perceived to be the reason that South Africa has not become a harmonious, crime-free, non-violent society with full employment. 'They keep us from reaching utopia. It is not because of us, it is because of them.' A very good example of this was when I talked to a mayor from Gauteng about crime in the Johannesburg area. She stated without hesitation, that foreigners brought all crime into South Africa and if we could only get a stricter regulation on immigration, the crime problem would be solved. In Special Assignment on SABC on xenophobia, foreign Africans were accused of everything from child abuse to the introduction of AK-47s.

One of the consequences of viewing the label 'racist' as an empty signifier is, that it never can be neutral but must be defined politically. This is of course true with all signifiers, but the empty ones are so much more important because they are the ones which allow us to grasp the excluded and indeed to exclude, and therefore also to construct the included, the totality and unity. This does not of course mean that one should be indifferent to the actions and articulations that are being labelled racist, but it means that one should not think of it as a substantial category with essential, fixed properties. It is an empty signifier that works as a forceful tool of exclusion, especially in the discourse of 'non-racialism'. This again does not mean that some people should not be excluded, this is absolutely essential for the constitution of a political framework, and in this lies the basic constitutional logic of any system of values; the exclusion of what the system is not.

The case of the Afrikaners

The analysis of the process of signification is important, because how the social is constructed, how the borders are drawn, and how exclusion takes place, has real significance in for people's lives. Aletta Norval writes,

Paradoxically, a post-apartheid society will then only be radically beyond apartheid in as far as apartheid itself is present in it as its other (1990: 157).

What Norval writes in general terms might have concrete implications for the individual Afrikaner. The problem is, that there is a danger that Afrikaners are being linked with apartheid through a chain of equivalence, in such a way that the individual Afrikaner ceases to have differential significance, so to speak, and in a sense becomes one with 'apartheid' and 'racism'. This stems from the fact that the people who implemented apartheid established a chain of equivalence between the National Party, the Afrikaner Volk, and the discourse of Christian nationalism. And, as argued earlier, the symbols of Afrikanerdom were also the symbols of apartheid. One could say that Afrikaners today to some extent carry what Ervin Goffman calls a 'tribal stigma'. He writes: 'these being stigma that can be transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family' (Goffman 1963: 14). This means, that as far as the chain of equivalence between the excluded categories is linked with the category 'Afrikaners' they will be the Others of non-racial South Africa.⁶⁵

New possibilities

The analysis above might paint a very gloomy picture of the situation for the Afrikaners in post-apartheid South Africa. And this is of course only part of the picture. There has also opened up new possibilities of being Afrikaner, and both Mbeki and Mandela has repeatedly tried to include the Afrikaner community in the new South Africa. In the above-mentioned statement to the AB Mbeki said that 'Afrikaners are Africans' and talked about 'our endeavour to accept our shared legacy and our inextricably bound destiny'. In this way the highly undecided situation for the Afrikaners are characterised by both tendencies to acceptance and rejection, to inclusion and exclusion, in relation to wider society. Though Afrikaners are offered a chance to be an accepted part of the new South Africa, *as* Afrikaners, the situation is precarious: due to the historical shadow cast by apartheid Afrikaners as a group are 'guilty at charge', the acceptance of them is temporarily and retractable. To a

⁶⁵ Afrikaners as a group were the main beneficiaries of apartheid (the English-speaking whites to a slightly less degree), whether they actively supported it or not. This of course is also very likely to be the cause of some animosity.

certain extent they therefore have to prove their loyalty to the new South Africa, and this in a very different way than any other South African. And of course, the way they will be accepted as Afrikaners is if they manage to negotiate the problematic elements that have made up Afrikaner identity so far.

Afrikaners 'internally' borders of identity and social organisation are also being redrawn. As one of my informants, who was a policeman, told me:

[...] there is more fresh air now, society has opened up. There is not the same political propaganda. It is possible to disagree without being ostracised. I am not forced to be a Boer [...] there is no-one pressurising me to be member of the church or different organisations [...] *The system of acceptance has fractured*, and now there are smaller groups with differing membership criteria and values - e.g. a group of enlightened academics won't accept a conservative racist.

Below I will analyse an example of how these changes open up for the articulation of Afrikaner identity in new ways, and how this articulation takes place in practice.

ANC member and Afrikaner

During the debate in the national assembly on the TRC report in 1999, Melanie Verwoerd, wife of one of Hendrik Verwoerd's grand children, opened her speech by saying: *'Today I want to speak in my mother tongue as a proud young Afrikaner, as well as a very proud member of the ANC'*. I suggest that we will find a good example of some of the struggles going on around Afrikaner identity in South Africa today, if we scrutinise this statement. I will divide my analysis into two levels, the *content* and the *context*.

Firstly the **content**. Most importantly Verwoerd talks about two identities or more accurately, two *subject positions*: 'Afrikaner' and 'member of the ANC'. During apartheid, these two positions were incompatible and even mutually exclusive; they were privileged signifiers on separate sides of an *us and them* construction; ANC was the Other who was threatening the existence of the Afrikaner Self. That these two identities now can be combined is, in my opinion, a distinct feature of the situation of the Afrikaners in post-apartheid South Africa: new possibilities have opened up and established boundaries can be crossed and

redefined. But the situation is new and still precarious. The fact that she makes the statement in the first place, could very well be an expression of her awareness that the identity she claims, by combining the subject positions of 'Afrikaner' and 'ANC member', is not naturalised in the sense of being 'completely normal' and accepted. That the link between the two is possible still needs articulation.

By linking these two subject positions she takes part in the denaturalisation of the chain of equivalence which the NP created between itself and 'the volk'. (As shown in the historical chapter.) One cannot say that she tries to forge a new chain of equivalence between the ANC and Afrikaner identity, since she in no way claims that membership of the ANC is a prerequisite for being an Afrikaner. On the contrary she, later in her speech, acknowledges that party political affiliation has nothing to do with being Afrikaner.

Secondly the **context**. She addressed the House of Assembly during a debate on the TRC report. One of the worries expressed was that Afrikaners were being victimised in the new South Africa, importantly that Afrikaans was threatened as a language. By claiming Afrikaans as her mother tongue and by speaking it in parliament in the first place, as a member of the ANC, she challenged the argument that the ANC government wants to rid South Africa of Afrikaans. Furthermore, by using the word 'proud' she did two things: Firstly, she contested the argument that a *real* Afrikaner is proud of who he/she is, meaning proud of the subject position set up by the apartheid regime and its notion of the *regte* Afrikaner. Verwoerd claimed that she was not ashamed of what she is, but on the contrary, she was proud of being both Afrikaner and ANC member. By doing this she also challenged the Afrikaner parties, NP and FF⁶⁶, as true representatives of the Afrikaners, as keepers of the holy grail of Afrikanerdom. And secondly, bearing the context of the debate about the TRC report in mind, I suggest that she could refer to the issue of collective guilt. There is no longer an apartheid government which is acting in the name of the Afrikaners, which is why she *today* can stand as a proud Afrikaner, despite atrocities committed by the regime past.

⁶⁶ These were the two parties that were represented in parliament at the time, which claim to represent Afrikaner interests. Other Afrikaner parties include CP and G/NP. It is arguable that the main addressee here is the FF, since they represent the separatists among the Afrikaner electorate and see themselves as the only 'Afrikaner party' in parliament.

This points to the last aspect of the statement that I wish to analyse, namely who the possible addressees were. Without knowing the intentions she had, I will argue that one could see the statement as having an internal and external message. The former is the one mentioned above, challenging the legitimacy of 'Afrikaner parties' and addressing white Afrikaans-speakers in general. But also telling fellow Afrikaners that there is room for Afrikaners in the new order, Afrikaners who do not have to reject their language and 'culture' but can be *proud* of who they are. The external message is related to the former, and challenges the stereotypical picture other South Africans might have of the Afrikaner as a right-wing, conservative, reactionary, racist – due to the construction of racists analysed above. By stressing that she is a *young* Afrikaner she furthermore puts a distance to the apartheid past and its established identity positions. A past that, in many people's eyes, lives on in the old Afrikaner males.

Thus, Melanie Verwoerd claims an identity by combining two identity positions, 'Afrikaner' and 'ANC member'. That it is possible to make this identity claim in the first place is characteristic of the new situation for Afrikaners in post-apartheid South Africa. To remind ourselves where the Afrikaners came from, consider this quote by Allister Sparks:

Since the goals of apartheid were in accordance with the will of God, it followed that any action taken to implement them was justified. By the same token opposition to apartheid was invested with an aura of evil, justifying ruthless measures to deal with it. And because apartheid was in accordance with the laws of God, sanctified by the church, it was expected of all Afrikaners that they should support it. Any who did not were regarded as ethnic traitors, to be expelled and ostracised as *volksverraiers*. (Sparks 1990: 191 – italics in original)

Now 'the system of acceptance has fractured' as the policeman put it above. The post-apartheid order is still in the making and new boundaries and identities are being articulated. The analysis above was aimed at giving one example of how this takes place in practice in the highly undecided terrain of social identification of the Afrikaners.

To sum up: As the consequence of the collapse of apartheid and the dislocation of Christian-nationalist discourse, there is no longer one master narrative about the Afrikaners. New possibilities and new restrictions have been set up, and it is up to the individual Afri-

kaners to negotiate this new space and establish new links of identification, to create a position for themselves in post-Apartheid South Africa. This involves the question of what to do with the aspects of Afrikanerdom that has become problematic in post-Apartheid South Africa. There are several strategies of doing this. In the following chapter I will analyse a separatist position, as a conspicuous example of one of these strategies.

University of Cape Town

4. Orania

I had been driving for more than 10 hours on the desolate roads of the Karoo desert. I first took the N1 from Cape Town until '3 Sisters', then turned up north towards Kimberley. The last 2 hours I did not meet a single car on the way, steadily rolling like a bullet into an unknown body. In Hope Town, about 50 km. from Kimberley I turned right, and after another hour's drive I arrived in Orania. I got out of my car and stretched my legs, looked up at the biggest blanket of stars I had ever seen, while the cool Karoo wind hit my face. It was dead quiet, even though it was only 8 o'clock at night. I stood there with a very clear sense of the remoteness of the place, how it was *outside* the South Africa I had known so far. It was clearly not a place you would just end up by chance, you have to really want to go there, either to built a volkstaat or, I suppose, to do fieldwork.

Orania lies in the middle of the arid Karoo semi-desert, on the road between the two small towns Hope Town and Petrusville, close to the Orange River, in the Northern Cape bordering to the Orange Free State.

It is like a normal town in many respects. There is a supermarket, two schools with 96 pupils, 30 children who are being home schooled, 1 church and 4 denominations, a café, a petrol station, a swimming pool, post office, supermarket, take-away shop, museum, hotel, clinic, real estate agent, lawyer, town hall, and an industrial area with a few workshops. The population is app. 600, with an average age of 35 years, living in 142 houses and 47 farms or smallholdings. The houses are cheap pre-fabricated houses, initially bought for R30. -40.000. The value of the houses has doubled since and new houses are being built.

But Orania is not a normal town. When you leave the road and go into one of the sections of the town you will see a sign saying 'strictly private' in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. It is a private town that is run like a company, with the residents as shareholders. A board of directors functions as the town council, which decides who can move into Orania, just like a company decides whom it wants to employ. Everyone who moves to Orania has to go before a selection committee under the auspices of the town council. If

they are accepted, they sign a statement that they will adhere to the constitution of Orania.

Orania is envisioned as a growing point for a future volkstaat for Afrikaners. Only white Afrikaans-speakers live in Orania, one only hears Afrikaans spoken, and does not see any non-whites at all, save for the odd few coloured farmworkers using the café in the outskirts of town. Many seem to believe that such a 'volkstaat town' would be an old-fashioned, backward community, but this is far from the truth. The little town has a big high-tech dairy farm with 1000 cows, South Africa's biggest production of pecan nuts, and bio-dynamic grape farming for overseas export. One of the schools is fully computerised with all the pupils having their own computer from grade 1, and an internet server is planned to deliver hassle-free internet access for the Oranians.

Background

Orania was deserted in 1979, after having housed the workers employed at the construction of the Vanderkloof Dam on the Orange River. After 10 years it was bought by a private person, who in 1991 sold it to *Avstig*, in the form of Orania Management Committee, for R1,5 mill.⁶⁷

Buying the town was part of the project of establishing a volkstaat in the Northern Cape. Since the mid-1970's, when the system of apartheid went into an escalating crisis, there had been a debate within the ranks of the NP about the future policies for the country. The debate was about how, or whether, apartheid should be reformed, should be intensified according to older principles, or if it should be scrapped altogether. One of the axes on which the differences in the debate were spelt out was the notion of 'practical apartheid' as opposed to 'idealistic apartheid', as originally envisioned by Hendrik Verwoerd. The former argument, represented by farmers and businessmen, advocated for an increased integration of African labour into the white economy in order to get a higher growth rate. Denying Africans any political or economical rights should protect the supremacy of whites. The latter argument held that the use of black labour and at the same

⁶⁷ Avstig was formed in 1989, where it put forward the first concrete plan for a volkstaat, with a suggestion where it should be, namely in the Northern Cape. Avstig sees itself as a shadow government that will govern when a volkstaat is established. It has, according to an informant in Orania, always tried not to be right-wing and not to be associated with any party on either wing. Orania Bestuursdien-

time denying blacks political rights was immoral and unsustainable in the long run. Hence they argued for a radical implementation of the homeland system and an increase in the funding of them in order to make them a realistic economic and political alternative for Africans. The goal was complete geographical apartheid (Giliomee 1987: 366).

It is in this latter tradition of thought within Afrikaner nationalism the project of Orania has its roots. The 'idealistic' position was spearheaded by a group of intellectuals from Stellenbosch who in 1949 formed the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (SABRA). The intelligentsia in Orania has a long involvement in SABRA, which is represented in town by Carel Boshoff (iv).⁶⁸ There is a need for a radical geographical segregation, the argument still goes, but the roles are somewhat reversed. Now they want to put themselves into a self-defined homeland, leaving the rest of South Africa to the Africans. Only then will the Afrikaners be able to survive as a people, since otherwise the great number of Africans will swamp them.

In this way one of the core principles in the project of Orania is that all work should be done by Afrikaners and not by 'foreigners'. Hence, that little *dorp* in the middle of the Karoo is one of the few places in South Africa where you do not see any black housemaids or construction workers. It is perhaps the only place in South Africa where the manual work is done by whites, and you can see the rare sight of a pack of white road workers with shovel in hand and dirt in the face. The principle is so important that it is mentioned in the constitution of Orania, which everyone has to sign before they can move in. It states: 'We undertake to use the volk's own labour only, and to advance self-sufficient labour within and outside Orania.'⁶⁹ A man explained importance of the work-issue to me this way:

When you work you sweat, and when that sweat drips down on the ground you want that land to belong to you. That's why we have to work for ourselves, we must not commit the same mistake as in the past, we have learned from that mistake.

ste started a share company called 'Vluytjes Kraal' (the area used to belong to a farm of that name). The latter started to sell out share block to people who wanted to move to Orania.

⁶⁸ Orania is the brain child of Carel Boshoff's (iv) father, professor Carel Boshoff, who was a prominent leader in the NGK and former chairman of the AB. SABRA was formed by the AB as a think-tank dealing with racial issues, and is the conservative Afrikaner alternative to the liberal English SAIRR (South African Institute for Race Relations). The Boshoffs will be mentioned by name in this thesis, since they are official representatives for Orania. All other informants will be anonymous.

⁶⁹ Ons onderneem om slegs van volkseie arbeid gebruik te maak en selfwerkzaamheid binne en buite ORANIA te bevorder.

The Afrikaners had become lazy, I was told, and now they had to learn to work for themselves again. 'You might not think it's a big thing, but that's because you come from Europe. Here in South Africa it's very unusual for whites to do their own work', I was told.

The past

'We do our own work'

In the quote above the informant says that 'we must not commit the same mistake as in the past'. What does that mean? What mistake was that? In my mind there is no doubt that what is referred to is the development of apartheid from Verwoerd's vision of geographical apartheid, with total segregation and 'separate development', to the acceptance of a permanent urban black population. It started in 1979 and was negotiated through the beginning of the 1980's, culminating in 1985 when the government accepted that the homeland policy was a failure and that it would restore citizenship to all blacks permanently residing in 'white' areas (Norval 1996: 245). The consequence of this was radical for the apartheid regime, since it undermined one of its basic principles, that of the division between 'white South Africa' and the 'black homelands'. The existence of the latter was used as a justification for white minority rule in South Africa, since the blacks had their own areas and were hence not actually South Africans.⁷⁰ During an interview with Corné Mulder, MP for the FF and former CP member, we talked about the issue of freedom and how the FF argued against the Afrikaners who wanted to make a violent uprising instead of taking part in the elections, and the issue from 1985 came up:

The most important issue during the run up to the '94 election was, we got to take up arms, because with this election, we will be loosing our freedom. And our argument was, no you're wrong, yes, *we've already lost our freedom, long time ago [...]* It happened in 1985, when the then National party, took a decision at their conference, 1 October '85, they took a conference as policy to say they accept South Africa as one country,

⁷⁰ Of course I do not suggest that it was this decision in itself which created the crisis, rather it was a symptom of an escalating *organic crisis*, which would in the end make it impossible for the Apartheid discourse to reproduce itself. In other words, the internal logic in the system of Apartheid was compromised and increasingly unable to sustain itself.

they accept the colonial boundary of 1910 and that all people residing within that boundary, should have full and equal political rights and voting rights. The moment they accepted that, from the next moment on, the Afrikaner people were a minority of seven percent. And then from '85 until '94, the P W Botha regime, tried to hang onto power with all kinds of tricks and rubbish, which the Truth Commission are now investigating. From that moment on, they accepted a minority dominating a majority.

Interestingly we here see that the decision taken by the NP in 1985 to grant citizenship to blacks (although not with the same privileges as whites) is considered a loss of freedom for the Afrikaners, and that only *then* did they become a minority in South Africa. I will return to the issue of 'freedom' and the central role it plays in the thinking of the volkstaaters at the end of this chapter. It is sufficient to say here that the reason why the Afrikaners lost their freedom was, according to the above-mentioned argument, because they no longer were capable of deciding over own matters (and other's, one could add) without interference from non-Afrikaners.

We can now answer the question posed above: what 'mistake in the past' is it that was committed? It was the fact that white South Africa became dependant on black workers, who in time wanted rights as citizens, and in the end the government had to grant it to them. By doing that they finally departed from Verwoerd's vision of a South Africa divided into homelands according to ethnic groups or 'nationality', and effectively accepted a multi-ethnic country.

The line of argument by Mulder is perfectly in line with the conservative position within the old NP, the CP, and the 'idealistic' view on apartheid of SABRA mentioned earlier in this chapter. In the case of Orania this means that in order to keep 'foreigners' out and to retain a pure Afrikaner community where Afrikaners govern Afrikaners, they have to do all work themselves. This way Orania will not end up like the rest of South Africa, and get swamped by the large numbers of blacks and become a minority once again.

The legacy of Verwoerd

All over South Africa official places are being renamed, and stadiums, dams, airports, streets, named after people like Botha, Vorster, Verwoerd, are re-baptised with names which do not represent the apartheid past. But in Orania you can see a statue of the late prime minister Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, standing on a hill overlooking the town. Before Verwoerd was stabbed to death by a messenger in parliament in 1966, he became

the father of the homeland system for Africans, through the implementation of the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, which removed all representation of blacks (direct and indirect) in parliament in 1959.⁷¹ He banned the ANC and PAC in 1960 after the Sharpeville massacre; and he turned South Africa into a republic in 1961; he implemented the infamous Sabotage Act in 1964 (which made provisions for long detentions without trial); and finally under him Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, and other members of ANC's armed wing Umkhonto weSizwe were sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964 (Schrire 1994: 301). No wonder Verwoerd is an unpopular character in post-apartheid South Africa, where many see him as the chief architect of apartheid and some even compare him with Hitler. But in Orania his legacy is alive and well, and most inhabitants see him, especially the intelligentsia, as a great philosopher, statesman, and leader. Their view is that his intentions were noble and visionary and any thing that people might agree was wrong during apartheid was due to the fact that he was killed and was never able to fulfil his vision for the country. After his death, others took over and they either perverted the original idea or were just not men of his calibre and could not carry out the plans laid down by Verwoerd.

It is as if the nationalist movement has been divided into the two camps ever since the death of Verwoerd. When the NP was split, with the formation of the Herstigte Nasionale Party in 1969, and later the CP in 1982, it was, according to these splinter parties, because the government had diverted from the original 'idealistic' vision of apartheid (Norval 1996: 188).⁷²

In a sense the Orania / FF philosophy⁷³ falls within the idealistic camp, even though they parted from the CP when the FF decided to contest the 1994 elections which the CP boycotted. According to Carel Boshoff the CP 'is stuck in pre-1994 rhetoric' because

⁷¹ Even though Verwoerd is seen as the father of the homeland policy, he was actually against the recommendation made by the Tomlinson Report in 1955 to consolidate the old reserves for blacks in order to turn them into self-sustainable political units. But soon after he went from the Ministry for Native Affairs to being prime minister he changed his mind, and became a strong proponent of the homeland policy (Christopher 1994: 71f; Giliomee 1987: 366).

⁷² This debate within the NP is often labelled the 'verligte - verkrampte debate' (the 'enlightened - cramped debate'), mentioned in the historical chapter, where the latter position contains the 'idealistic position' mentioned above, and was furthermore advocating for white supremacy and against white unity (and for the narrow Afrikaner *volkism*). Even though the *verligte*, (who won the leadership within the NP) wanted to transform the Apartheid system, they never questioned the premise of segregation of population groups according to racial classification (Giliomee 1987: 377).

⁷³ In my opinion it is often difficult to distinguish between the two positions, which, with a few exceptions, seem to overlap. Prof. Boshoff was the leader of the FF in the Northern Cape and Carel Boshoff is political advisor for the FF, furthermore the FF was the only party to have an office in Orania.

they still believe in white supremacy and that they shall rule the country again one day. They are therefore opposed to the idea of a volkstaat and they do not accept the legitimacy of the ANC government. One could say that intelligentsia in Orania re-reads Verwoerd into the new political context, without the strains of white supremacy. Acknowledging the present political situation, and their own limited political power in it, they do not demand homelands for the blacks and the remaining land for the whites, but turn it upside down; a homeland for themselves and the remaining land for the blacks.⁷⁴

Apart from the ideological and philosophical connection with Verwoerd, there is also a personal one. Betsie Verwoerd, Verwoerd's widow, lives in Orania, and so does their daughter, who is married to professor Boshoff. Some of their children (Verwoerd's grandchildren) also live in Orania, among them Carel Boshoff (iv). All in all the Boshoffs and the Verwoerds seem to have a very close relationship that goes back in time, and they comprise an important part of the political elite in Orania.

In Orania you can often find opinions which divert from the official one, when you talk to people not belonging to the above-mentioned elite. In this way I heard people say that the Verwoerd statue is a monument for a grandfather, erected by the family, and not for a common leader. Apparently someone once turned over the statue of Verwoerd, and they were not from outside Orania. I heard people did not like Verwoerd because he had become a symbol for what was called the 'Avstig regime' (I will return to this beneath, when discussing the different groupings in town). But also because he in the last part of his time as prime minister advocated for 'white unity' with the English-speakers and the republic he proclaimed was a 'white' republic and not an Afrikaner republic.

TRC

When asked about the TRC and whether they felt any guilt because of apartheid, the response was always the same: apartheid was not as bad as it is being made out to be. And if it was bad after all, it was due to the leaders who came after Verwoerd and who perverted the original idea. And in line with what Mulder says above: the larger part of the atrocities that came before the TRC were committed in the 1980's, when the conser-

⁷⁴ This is the official opinion in Orania, but, as I will show later, not everyone in Orania accepts the legitimacy of the ANC government.

vatives were in opposition. Here are two examples of responses I got when I asked about human rights violations committed during apartheid:

Ok, I want to say unequivocally that I don't agree with that and I think it was very wrong, but to ascribe that to apartheid philosophy would be equally wrong in the sense that people interpreted the philosophy to suit their own means. [...] and I think that if you go to the father of the idea, Dr. Verwoerd, he didn't mean that, he didn't want to oppress people, and people who did that changed his philosophy for their own aims.

I think apartheid was murdered I think in 1967, when Dr Verwoerd was killed. There is nothing wrong with what he intended, separate development. Apartheid was this monster that maybe the world created, or made up, or hanged around the Afrikaners neck. There is nothing wrong with separate development. But when he was killed, and I think he was killed because that thing would have worked. From then and what came after Verwoerd... that you can call apartheid, before that it was separate development. Every nation should have its own place, etc. Look at what the people after him were doing, what kind of people they were - that's not typical Afrikaner nation. All the murders that allegedly were committed, that's not typical Afrikaans, I think it's criminal elements. And I think I might be talking too much, but maybe the NP was in power for too long. I'm sure that if Verwoerd could have fulfilled his goals it would have been a better situation for everyone today.⁷⁵

In Orania I did not find anyone who expressed any sense of guilt for past events, whatsoever. Most maintained that apartheid was better than the present political system in South Africa, and when pressed, they said that they did not support apartheid in the form it took after the death of Verwoerd, so in actual fact they were in opposition. This is well expressed by this woman who, when talking about the TRC, stated:

So but I don't know of nothing, of nobody here who was involved so as I say our people wasn't in the government. I don't want to take a part because as I say my leaders in the past wasn't part of the government and wasn't part of the ruling government. We were opposed to the way in which they rule the country. And I don't want to be part of it.

⁷⁵ It is a well-known conspiracy theory that Verwoerd killed was because apartheid would have 'worked' and thereby would have threatened the interests of the Soviet Union or the New World Order led by the USA. According to the official version a deranged messenger working in parliament killed him.

The attitude I met everywhere in Orania toward the TRC was largely the same: it is one-sided, ANC biased; it was a 'witch hunt' for Afrikaners; it created more division than reconciliation; it was simply an unimportant, unnecessary institution.

Philosophical framework

Communitarism

In the eyes of Carel Boshoff the philosophy of Orania is based on communitarian principles, rather than liberal, individualistic values. This is linked to how he argues that the volkstaat philosophy is not right-wing, as most people would think, but on the contrary a left-wing, post-colonial position. In his opinion right-wing, conservatism is defined by the effort to protect vested interests as the main political goal. As an illustration he mentions Afrikaner nationalism which according to him was socialist in the beginning and only later became right-wing when the power base was secured and the social movement got turned into conserving the obtained privileges. In public opinion there is no doubt that the FF is situated on the far right side of the political spectrum, but according to Boshoff the DP is the most right-wing party in the country. He says:

[...] that is why so many conservative Afrikaners are joining the Democratic Party. [...] individualism, fundamental human rights, representative government, free market, that rhetoric is the vehicle for conservatism in the modern world, and by conservatism I mean those who have something to conserve, standing together, those with vested interests, they stand together and they find it more useful to argue in terms of individual rights or for example the right to private ownership than to put it forward as a kind of divine right of being the master up against the slave or something like that and that's the lingo, that's for privileges that they use.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ As mentioned in the introduction, recent opinion polls interestingly show that the DP now is the most favoured party among the Afrikaner electorate, where as it hitherto has been seen as the 'liberal English party'.

Opposed to this he sees his own and Orania's position as being that of a socially responsible, communitarian, and basically non-right-wing (more than directly left-wing) one. He continues to describe the position this way:

Okay and the project of which I'm part, is not so much individualistic or liberal, it's closer to the communitarian tradition and in that sense, *closer to the African tradition* and that's why there are definite links to be developed between our traditions, our intellectual or academic traditions and that of other African thinkers. We say [...], *you become a person through the eyes of other people*, you live in the final instance within community with other people and not as a free-flying individual and your identity is not so much an individual question of adhering to this or that, it's much more a negotiation of alignment with forces and people and parties and traditions and all that but it's negotiated, it's inter-subjective activity. So we are more to that side, say in a certain sense communitarian with a definite sensitivity for what it takes to be locally inclined, to be interested in your local traditions and than world wide terms.

Boshoff links his thinking with *African tradition* and describes a view on humans that amounts to the much-celebrated notion of 'ubuntu' or African humanism. 'Ubuntu' is one of the most positive words in the new South Africa and one of the key signifiers of the new nation's self-perception, it's the spirit of post-apartheid South Africa, or at least seen as an ideal.⁷⁷ In the game of political legitimacy, which the people behind Orania are well aware the importance of, claiming affinity to African tradition and 'ubuntu' is very effectual, since it goes to the core of the new nation and Mbeki's talk about an 'African renaissance'. Opposing himself to the 'socially indifferent liberals' with 'no sense of community and people, only of money' Boshoff can construct his own position in a way which gives it the moral high-ground and gives it legitimacy.

⁷⁷ One of the numerous places where the use of the concept of 'ubuntu' has been central was in the TRC. In the TRC report it reads: 'AS far as traditional African values are concerned, the fundamental importance of *ubuntu* must be highlighted. *Ubuntu*, generally translated as "humanness", expresses itself metaphorically in *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* - "people are people though other people". In the words of the constitutional Court Justice Makgoro: "Its spirit emphasises respect for human dignity, making a shift from confrontation to conciliation". Constitutional Justice Langa has said: *During violent conflicts and time when violent crime is rife, distraught members of society decry the loss of ubuntu. Thus, heinous crimes are the antithesis of ubuntu. Treatment that is cruel, inhuman or degrading is bereft of ubuntu*' (italics in original). TRC of South Africa Report: Vol. 1, chapter 5: Concepts and principles, *Ubuntu: Promoting restorative justice*, p. 126) And in the submission by Commissioner Wynand Malan, he writes: 'This is part of restorative justice. This is part of the spirit of ubuntu. It is part of the restoration of the organism that is our new nation South Africa'. (Vol. 5, p. 443). There are many other examples, but the central point is, that everything that is bad (crime, violence, corruption, social disintegration, etc.) is seen as a negation of ubuntu, which hence become an *empty signifier*, representing the essence of goodness in society, and that which is missing when conflicts arise.

'Community' becomes an *empty signifier* which, similar to 'ubuntu', stands for 'the good life', 'social values' or simply 'humanity'. 'Community' is the place of wholeness, of complete identity, of harmony. It is also a term that to a very wide extent is used in South Africa today, both as the solution to the problems of the country and as a way to claim legitimacy, as when politicians and others refer to what 'the community thinks' or 'the community wants'. The notion is empty because it is not necessary to specify what it contains; *what* or *who* is the community exactly? How is it constituted and demarcated? On the contrary, by avoiding to specify the concrete community in question, the idea of community as such retains its effectual capacity.

Difference

This way of thinking community, as the highest form of being, correlates perfectly with the perception of the world as being made up of distinct groups with non-compatible, un-reconcilable absolute differences, as many of my informants in Orania expressed. Boshoff in no way views it that simple though, but on the contrary argues that the concept of identity as being fixed and unchanging is something which belongs to the past and which is no longer viable. In accordance with this line of thinking one can at the homepage of Orania⁷⁸, find the '30 statements by Prof. Boshoff' (Boshoff senior). Here it is stated that '*A volk does not exist by grace of a complete and definable identity, but because people decide in terms of their shared existence and their future to identify with one another*'. This clearly puts a distance to the old apartheid notion of the volk being a divine group of people, chosen by God to reign South Africa. As opposed to this *vulgar primordialism* the Boshoffs suggests a view on identity which focuses on the wilful act of identification, a view which suits the political context of post-apartheid South Africa better than *Blut und Boden* rhetoric.

The language of identification and conscious association is nevertheless based on what one could call *primordial logic*, in the sense that it is believed that there are certain identifications that are natural, non-historic. This becomes evident in the article 'The socio-political conditions for democratic nation building: an Afrikaner point of view' by Boshoff senior and junior (1994). Here they argue, that 'Fraternité in the final instance is

⁷⁸ <http://www.orania.org.za>

the pre-condition to democracy, and not a manipulated post-condition', and that 'It is rather a question of common destiny, recognised by those who share it and actualised by ways to institutionalise this community.' (Boshoff & Boshoff 1994: 161) These natural communities, which are seen as existing prior to any political formulation and to have a given spirit of *fraternité*, are juxtaposed to 'social engineering' which becomes that which violates the unfolding of natural differences, and their harmonious co-existence. There seems no doubt that by 'social engineering' is meant the government's effort to construct a pan-South African identity along universalist lines, compromising the particularist identity claims of ethnic groups. In an ironic twist, the ANC (The eternal 'communist enemy' in Afrikaner nationalism, -a view I heard expressed by many of my informants in Orania) becomes the proponents of the free market when the Boshoffs conclude their article by stating:

It is only this multitude of forces, the multitude of self-reliant communities that could stand up against the single authoritarian ideology of consumerism (Boshoff & Boshoff 1994: 166).

The project of Boshoff appears to be careful reformulation of thinking identity within the boundaries of traditional volks-thinking, embodied in the *volkekunde* tradition in the Afrikaner educational system.⁷⁹ Their view on identity goes along the lines of what the leader of the FF, General Viljoen, says when he argues that Afrikaners are a people in their own right, and therefore can claim self-governance in a volkstaat:

[...] given the *objective features* of the Afrikaner people of language, culture, ethnic consolidation, etc., and given the *subjective criteria* of a perception of a common history, a sense of corporate cohesion, and of the will to survive as a people, there will [not] be serious doubts as to whether the Afrikaners constitute a people or not. (cited from Norval 1998: 100 -my italics)

But not all Afrikaners support the FF and their demand for a volkstaat. In response to this problem the FF, according to Norval, does two things: it stresses the subjective criteria and the central aspect of identification ('the answer to the problem of definition is to accept the principle of voluntary association, i.e. self-perception of being an Afrikaner' (Viljoen cited from Norval 1998: 100)). Secondly, it purifies the ranks of the Afrikaner with a distinction between 'Boere-Afrikaners' and 'Afrikanses', where the former are the

⁷⁹ An old style anthropology, which focuses on distinct peoples and their ethnicity and culture, rather than on social processes and complexity and hybrids; a focus on the particular rather than the universal.

true Afrikaners according to FF criteria, i.e. supporters of a volkstaat, and the latter are all Afrikaans-speakers (Norval 1998: 101).

As we have seen, Boshoff also stresses the identificatory aspect of identity and, as shall be shown underneath, the use of labels is used to exclude people who are unwanted as part of the Oranians' group.

Boshoff's idea of identity is met with scepticism in some quarters in Orania. I was for example told that

The identity that Orania wants... some people have very articulated ideas about the Afrikaners, but some of the people... like Carel maybe, has not gone a very strong idea about it... an Afrikaner is anyone who wants to be an Afrikaner - and I agree with that in a sense, but *truly* wants to be an Afrikaner.

Here we are still within the framework of understanding identity as being closely linked with the act of identification, but we see a hardening of the criteria for being an Afrikaner; one *truly* has to want to be an Afrikaner. This implies that there is some way by which one can measure the sincerity with which someone identifies with the Afrikaner identity, that this can be decided by someone external to the individual in case. Following this must be the idea of objective characteristics for Afrikaner identity, in order to be able to talk about what exactly it is that people truly must identify with. This resonates with the old apartheid pastime of trying to purify the *volk*, in an effort to define *die rechte Afrikaner*; the true or real Afrikaner. As mentioned earlier, the qualification for being accepted as a *real* Afrikaner has been defined politically by the Christian-nationalist discourse and later institutionalised with the victory of the NP in 1948. But the old official definition is, as discussed in the former chapter, under radical change, as the structures that maintained it are redefining the identity. Where does that leave the Oranians?

The Boere-Afrikaners

This leads us straight into one of the key issues at stake; how is Afrikaner identity defined and understood by the people living in Orania? In order to answer this question we will have to address a series of interlinked and overlapping issues. They include the relationship between white- and blackness; how other Afrikaners, who do not share the vision of

a volkstaat, are viewed; and the view on South Africa before and now (roughly pre- and post-1994).

According to Norval the purification of the Afrikaner ranks are used by the FF to exclude Afrikaners who do not support a volkstaat, as mentioned above. In my interviews I found it utilised slightly differently in Orania. Firstly, the people in Orania prefer to call themselves 'Boere-Afrikaners', although they also regard themselves as simply 'Afrikaners', when we in interviews talked about 'Afrikaner culture' and 'Afrikaner identity'. But the purification was mainly about excluding non-white Afrikaans-speakers and not white Afrikaans-speakers who disagree politically. The latter were regarded as belonging to the same group but were often talked about as 'Afrikaners who are not conscious about their own culture' or 'who will learn, with time, that the only solution for them is a volkstaat'. I rarely heard it questioned that for example members of the ANC were Afrikaners because of their political affiliation, just that they were not very good Afrikaners - and that takes us back to the subjective criteria for being a *real* Afrikaner.

Even though coloureds can make solid claims to Dutch cultural roots and has Afrikaans as their mother tongue non-white Afrikaans-speakers were, in my experience, not regarded as being Afrikaners at all. But due to the awareness that some of them claim that identity, and that most of the traditional Afrikaner establishment is widening its definition of Afrikaner identity to include the non-whites, the Oranians take on the label of 'Boere-Afrikaner'. This label effectually sets them apart from this larger group in the making. In other words, they regard themselves as Afrikaners and 'Afrikaner culture' to be their culture, but at the same time some feel that their identity is threatened by people making identity claims to Afrikanerness. As this young man put it to me:

I think they have a crisis. I am proud of being an Afrikaner, proud of being a Boer, and if they are not proud of being blacks, it's not my problem, why do they have to take on my nationality?

Apart from the exclusionary effect of the label 'Boere-Afrikaner' it could also very well be seen as a reference to the mythico-historical past of the Afrikaners and the perception of the Afrikaners as being 'sons of the soil'.⁸⁰ In the former century the larger part of the Afrikaners lived in the countryside, but even long after the main part of the white Afrikaans-speakers were urbanised, it remained an important aspect of the Afrikaners collec-

⁸⁰ Boer literally means 'farmer'.

tive self-perception. The reference to the farmer-past invokes a claim of historical continuity, and in a sense pure Afrikanerness, before the Afrikaners were taken from their right element and ended up in the cities as a proletariat competing with non-whites over jobs.

The term 'Boer' has attained a meaning in South Africa that far exceeds the original one. For example at the Cape Flats outside Cape Town all policemen, no matter their colour of skin or language, are called 'Boers'. It is widely used as a short hand term for The Enemy, The System, or The Oppressor (which the police in certain areas still is seen as representing). It is also used similarly to 'hillbilly'; simply a derogatory term for people from the countryside. The two terms 'Boer' and 'Afrikaner' are often used interchangeably,⁸¹ but Boer has got an old fashioned sound to it at best, and a derogatory one at worst. The effect of using the label can be manifold, but it surely is not anything a non-white would call him/herself, and it signals an insistence on taking on an identity which is not *in* in the new South Africa. Bearing the mainly negative connotations in mind in wider South African society, there is a sense of defiance in the way they put up big signs in Orania saying 'n Boere-Afrikaner is trots daarop!' (A Boer-Afrikaner is proud of [being] it!).

The use of the label 'Boere-Afrikaner' is mainly used to exclude non-whites, but also, as in the following interview, white Afrikaans-speakers who disagree politically.⁸² I am talking here to a former computer scientist from University of Stellenbosch, now living in Orania, about his worries concerning post-1994 South Africa:

Q: but there seems to be a serious effort to integrate everyone, and the whites haven't been driven into the sea...

A: my experience has been, and I think that if you look at it closely you will find that, that that is the public viewpoint, but *there are 3 ways in which the Afrikaners, and more generally the western point of view is eradicated.*

⁸¹In Europe many people are more familiar with the term Boer than Afrikaner, when talking about white Afrikaans-speakers.

⁸²The term 'Boer' is also rejected by white Afrikaans-speakers who regard themselves as being 'liberal'. An instructor at the police academy in Paarl said 'Well according to me the term "Boer" refers to a group of white Afrikaners who are particularly conservative and discriminatory in their views and actions. Some of these people are actual farmers, while others occupy many different jobs in society, many of which are in the police. These "Boere" also have a naive desire for self-determination and above all self-preservation. They view themselves typically as part of God's chosen nation who is supposed to "civilise" Africa and its indigenous people. Consequently they have a misplaced sense of religion and attempt to interpret the bible in such a manners as to portray them as being "on the right side"'.

- 1) people are denied jobs. This whole philosophy of affirmative action, in fact they are removed from their work. That means that a lot of people with experience and knowledge are driven out of the country, they are emigrating, and they are not a factor anymore here.
- 2) with the crime people are killed, farmers are killed, people in the cities have to live in prisons
- 3) the last one is more subtle, and that is a kind of brainwash going on, via the television and radio, change people's points of view, to coincide with the ANC's point of view. There is nothing that you can put your finger on but in subtle ways, like the way Afrikaans singers are denied to appear, with the kind of things which are allowed to be said, with the slant that is put on the news e.g. a farmer has been killed but a black worker has been murdered, things like that [...] *in that way people's minds are changed so that they in effect are not Afrikaners anymore they become ANC followers.* You see what I mean?

Q: and you can't be both ANC supporter and Afrikaner?

A: [...] there are people who say that they are... I have come to the stage where I don't regard myself really as Afrikaner anymore because *everybody calls themselves Afrikaners*, I call myself a *Boer*, which I think is a select group of Afrikaners, who thinks the way that we are doing...

In a situation where Afrikaner identity is being redefined to include both non-whites and ANC members like Melanie Verwoerd - who claims that she is 'a proud Afrikaner' - the Oranians withdraw and, in appreciation of the lack of power they have in present South Africa to define the criteria for being 'Afrikaner identity', they take on the name 'Boere-Afrikaner'.⁸³

Blacks

When talking about Afrikaner identity, the issue of blacks keeps on coming to the fore. As mentioned, the Oranians insist that they are not supremacists or racists, they do not feel that they are better than other population groups. But the issue of colour keeps on being relevant to them. As argued in the chapter on post-apartheid South Africa, it has become very difficult to legitimise identity claims with reference to racial categories. Therefore Orania, together with the FF, engages in what Norval (1998) has called the 'reinvention of the politics of cultural recognition'. Difference must be formulated along cultural- instead of racial lines. In other words, Orania and the future volkstaat cannot be

⁸³ It is interesting that when people without real political power are exclusive, they actually only exclude themselves!

legitimised on the grounds of creating a place for whites, but only for a specific *cultural group*. But the fact that skin colour indeed *was* important in Orania became apparent quite quickly. Often my informants would start off by solely talking about cultural survival and then along the way the issue of skin colour would come out. Consider this as an example of the difficulty some people in Orania had avoiding the black/white distinction:

A: "You have to treasure that safety is seen to, so if these people are walking with no... just walking around you have to sort of mention it to the right people. One of the problems apparently is the new wine house, there at the Herberg. Your coloured people like to buy wine and they love to drink the wine, and the wine house is obviously at the wrong place, it's not in the international zone, rather move it to the international part.⁸⁴

Q: international zone?

A: "yes, we have got international zones, there where the café and the garage is, and where the supermarket is, that means that everybody can go there, *but not everybody can come and visit me at home...*

Q: who can't come and visit you at home?

A: "I am not allowed to be visited... when we moved here we asked whether we can use any company to bring us stuff and they said no... so we prefer to have white guys helping us, so they probably feel that only white people can visit us.

Q: who are 'they', the Dorpsraad?

A: "yes. I think what they are trying to do is that only that people stay and work in Orania.

Q: but what has that got to do with non-whites coming to visit?

A: "because it's a volkstaat... [she answered very softly and instantaneously]. *It's a volkstaat and its for whites...*

Q: but if they don't live here, they just visit...

A: "they can come and visit as long as they don't sleep here, they have to sleep in the international zones.

Q: are those rules written down?

A: "not really, its just sort of a common little thing... you respect their... its... you don't get a paper when you move to Orania saying what you are allowed to do or not, its

⁸⁴ The concept of 'international zones' comes from the Apartheid era, where hotels of more than 3 stars were allowed to declare itself an 'international zone'. This had the advantage that they would be able to service non-white foreign business men.

just... they just tell you nicely. They are probably allowed to visit us, but I don't know anybody so it doesn't matter...

Q: why do you think it is a problem if people sleep over, what consequences would it have, what harm could they do?

A: "they will not do any harm but immediately... the thing is... *it's a volkstaat this, for Afrikaans people, ach for the Afrika... white Afrika... not Afrikaner people, not necessarily only speaking Afrikaans, okay... [...]* but if somebody wants to sleep here it means that they also wants to work here...

Q: what if he just sleeps over, maybe he lives in Cape Town...

A: "they will probably arrange it, but then they will probably ask him to sleep in the international zones, not in your home..."

Q: why, I mean it's your home...

A: "yes, but I only have shares..."

Q: and if they are friends?

A: "*I think we probably wouldn't have moved if we had that many friends in coloured areas, because then you would have stayed that side... I think rather ask oom Carel⁸⁵ that question... haven't lived here long enough to answer those political questions...*"

We can see how the principle that Afrikaners must do all work in Orania, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, is interpreted as it can be done by whites, and not only Afrikaners, as long as it is not a non-white person. There is also a slide from this argument about doing own work, to not allowing non-whites inside Orania. The latter is sought argued for by the former, but the connection is problematic, since the line of argument is not logically congruent.

Very often people would start off by saying to me that they had nothing against blacks, but then it would come out later that there was indeed a very problematic relationship with blacks. In order to understand what is at stake, I will look at what the skin colour means.

⁸⁵ She here refers to Professor Boshoff. 'Oom' is Afrikaans for 'uncle' and is used as title in order to show respect for older people.

The signification of skin colour

When people say 'It is not about skin colour' and then later on say that other whites are welcome here and not the blacks or coloureds, it is maybe because skin colour is one of the important signifiers that demarcate a boundary, also between Europe and Africa. Because in a sense it is not the skin-colour itself which is important, but what it *signifies*. And this signified has to be appreciated as a historical product, the production of Afrikaner (and white in general?) identity and the parallel production of *Others*. Black skin is probably the most important signifier of this Otherness, which was already established at the Eastern Frontier before the Great Trek (see historical chapter).

This phenomenon is of course not limited to South Africa. Here Stuart Hall talks from an English context:

Black is not a question of pigmentation. The black I'm talking about is a historical category, a political category, a cultural category... Their histories as in the past, are inscribed in their skins. But it is not because of their skins that they are black in their heads (Quoted in Marks 1994: 2).

But one could also turn it around and say that the Afrikaner's history is inscribed as much in the skins of the black as in their own white skin.⁸⁶ A *chain of equivalence* has linked the signifier 'black skin' to 'blackness', which is linked with different elements such as 'laziness', 'barbarism', 'violence', 'lack of intelligence', and 'no family values'. This idea of blackness has been the Other in the Christian-nationalist Afrikaner self-perception. It is my argument that this self-understanding is very much alive in a place like Orania. Consider this comment made by a man in Orania when explaining why he did not have to lock his back door at night:

The reason why I can come into my house at half past 8 in the evening, walking though the back, is mainly because there is no blacks in town. Not because there is no criminals, cause there are criminals...

And later, when I asked him about why there is this strong animosity against black skin, he states: 'It is not against the black skin...' and his wife finished the sentence, 'it is about nations, differences.' When I then asked, that if it was about differences between nations, how come people in Orania did not mind if a white English person comes here, she re-

⁸⁶ Because 'a negative which is part of the determination of a positive content is integral part of the latter' (Laclau 1996a: 53).

sponded: 'that is because they are not at war with our nation. They were in the past but now it is the situation with the blacks'.

It is when people talk about blackness on this level, that the differences between 'coloureds', 'Indian', and 'blacks' or 'Africans' fades and they all are referred to as 'black'.⁸⁷ This does not mean that one cannot, in a different context, make a distinction between the different categories.

The same goes to some extent for the *inside* of the identity construction: sometimes my informants would distinguish between themselves and the English-speakers and the next minute they would talk about whites in general.⁸⁸ There is no doubt that the idea of 'whiteness' (and therefore also its counterpart 'blackness') still is an important part in Oranians understanding of themselves. At the end of an interview a woman told me:

I cannot understand why other volks people are so interested in other volke like the Afrikaner-volk [...] it is so difficult to argue out of this situation, the Afrikaner are here in the south of *Africa*. We are in Africa, we don't become kaffirs, we are willing to become Africans, because we are. We are not black Africans, if we were black it would be alright, but we are not black, we don't think the way blacks think, in generalised view point, although we think a lot of things the same, *basically we are different and we want to be different.*

The blacks (meaning all non-whites) have always been the Other for the official Afrikaner identity as argued above, and they keep on having this function for the identity of the Oranians. This is problematic in post-apartheid South Africa, which is why they argue in culturalist terms instead. The real test would be if they regarded themselves as being just as different from the English-speaking South African as the Xhosa-speakers, but this is obviously not the case. This is not to say that they do not feel different from the English-speakers, because they do, but it is not a radical difference like the one mentioned in the quote above. It also came to show in the way my informants would shift back and forth between talking about themselves as being 'Afrikaner' and being 'white', including the English-speakers. When it boils down to an 'us and them' ordering of the world, the

⁸⁷ As Sander Gilman puts it: 'The very concept of colour is a quality of Otherness, not of reality. For not only are blacks black in this amorphous world of projection, so too are Jews.' (Quoted in Marks 1994: 2).

⁸⁸ This is similar to what Norval calls (1996) 'undecidability' which was inherent in the Apartheid principle for social categorisation; sometimes it would be 'ethnicity', other times 'culture', 'volke', white/black, etc. But undecidability is also a general condition for all identity construction, due to the non-closure of all meaning.

English becomes part of the Afrikaner 'us', due to the importance of whiteness. One could say, that they sit between two chairs: on the one hand they on the official level operate with a concept of identity based on identification and culture, and on the other hand blacks are still the Others, which contradicts the culturalist arguments.

According to Norval (1998) the discourse of culturalism adopted by the FF (and by Orania) does not rule out that identity can be forged along racial lines. The focus on cultural values, protecting a way of life, operating with absolute identities, does not attack other groups directly, but only as a consequence of it. It is a more indirect Othering, which allows them to be exclusive without appearing racist.⁸⁹ But it allows 'racist effects' to occur alongside arguments denying the relevance of the issue of colour in politics (Norval 1998: 102). This fits my experience quite well, as I was always told things like 'we only want to be left alone', 'we just want to do our thing', and 'we are only trying to keep our way of life'.

Historically, the blacks have not only been the Others on an abstract level, but also very concretely, as a threat to the state and white civilisation as such. In this following excerpt from an interview with a man in Orania this is clear, as well as the importance of whiteness as opposed to narrow Afrikaner ethnicity:

A: Now there is a black government. So now the police and all these institutions are actually seen by most Afrikaners as foreign and oppressive, although it is not, but it is perceived as that. Some of the Afrikaners are liberal, they like the new Rainbow Nation, but a lot of people do not conform to that idea. So the fact that they are in power now doesn't make them less the enemy, makes them even maybe a bigger enemy. So in Orania... that we have one Danish guy is no problem. [he explains how the French Huguenots became Afrikaners] If 20 Russian families would come to Orania, we would be glad', 'if they have a Protestant belief', -his wife adds.

Q: But I thought it was about Afrikaner identity, but what about the 20 Russian families, they are totally alien to Afrikaners? -and the coloureds even share the same language?

A: 'But the 20 Russians will be 20 Russians... especially if they wanted to be Afrikaners. For 2 years we had an American family, they spoke Afrikaans they wanted to become Afrikaners. They have moved to another town now. The kids will probably go in town as little Afrikaners... They wanted to be Afrikaners, they identified themselves with our history... [...] I don't know of any blacks who want to be an Afrikaner, maybe there are some, but I don't know them. So if you have 20 blacks coming to Orania they don't want to become Afrikaners... the Russians, in two generations their kids will be Afrikaners. But if 20 black guys come to Orania, regardless of their job, probably their kids would

⁸⁹ See my discussion of racism in chapter 3.

marry other blacks and not Afrikaners, so by the end of the next generation there will be 40 kids with new wives, none of them Afrikaners. And the black lives normally in enlarged families, so the guy who comes to Orania, his grandmother and grandfather will come and the 20 families will be 100 people plus the kids. So a quarter of the population would be foreign and wanting to stay foreign. That's part of the problem. So actually it is not that we are against the blacks, it is because they are so near and [they] don't want to be assimilated. So if they come to Orania they come either for the money, or for some subversive action. But not to become Afrikaners... [...] we want a tenth of the country for a tenth of the people. But if 90% of the population come here before we have started it, it will collapse.'

Again the threat of being swallowed up by the black African hordes is evident, and as an example of the importance of colour over culture, the acceptance of the 20 Russians is a case in point.⁹⁰

Orania and South Africa

Orania is a prime example of a separatist strategy in South Africa. This is practically done by moving out into the desert and putting up 'private property' signs. But it also happens on the discursive level, the way people talk about South Africa and Orania, and on the level of collective symbols.

When the people I spoke to in Orania talked about South Africa and their place in it, they constantly used terms like 'out there', 'on the other side', and they talked about *exporting* goods to South Africa. One of the strongest expressions was to my mind the fact that they in Orania operated with 'international zones' (as mentioned in an interview in the section 'The signification of skin colour'). These examples are indications of the Oranians perception of being 'a growing point for a future volkstaat', a volkstaat which is already in the making. If we look at Orania from that perspective, we can identify what amounts to *nation-building*. As discussed in an earlier chapter⁹¹, collective identities need to be symbolised, to be performed, to be spoken; and, with Benedict Anderson's (1991)

⁹⁰ Another aspect of the issue of the Russians is the fact that European settlers in Africa are citizens but not subjects under a king or chief. After independence Africans become citizens but they remained subjects (Mamdani 1996). Citizens from other countries can therefore potentially become Afrikaner subjects, whereas Africans cannot.

⁹¹ See 'Symbols and collective identity' in chapter 2.

word, to be *imagined*. I will argue here that the identity of Orania is first and foremost constructed in an *opposition* to South Africa.

Symbols

While staying in Orania I quickly noticed a clear dissociation from all things symbolising the South African nation-state. It happened in different ways, both officially and unofficially. Officially it was expressed in the usage of the volkstaat-flag instead of the new South African one, which I did not see anywhere at all. In the same vein the holidays celebrated in Orania are different from the official South African ones. An example is the 'Taaldag', celebrated on the 31st. of May⁹² and the old 'Republic Day' on the 14th. of August, whereas holidays like the International Women's Day and Freedom Day are not celebrated.

Similarly the new South African anthem Nkosi Sikelel iAfrica is not recognised as the national anthem. This I witnessed expressed in practice during the final of the rugby Tri-nations Cup between South Africa and Australia. In Orania there is very bad TV-reception and you have to have a satellite dish in order to see any TV-stations at all. At the guesthouse in Orania there is a satellite dish and a big TV, so people gather there to follow important events, such as rugby matches. We were about 40 people present that afternoon, the spirit was high and there was a feeling of excitement. As the camera followed the players from the dressing room to the field the people present expressed delight when their favourite player came onto the screen. The players lined up and got ready to sing the dual national anthem.⁹³ Then the music started and after a few tunes the sound went off the TV; someone had pressed the mute-button. So there we were, watching the Springboks move their lips to Nkosi without hearing a sound. It was dead-quiet and no-one made any remarks about the muting of the TV - as if it was always done in that way. Then, half-way through the dual anthem, the sound was switched on again and they all sang along with Die Stem.

⁹² The day is a commemoration of the recognition of Afrikaans as official language. The day was celebrated when I was in Orania. Early in the morning people gathered around the Verwoerd statue, some in traditional Voortrekker clothes. Songs were song, sketches and a puppet show were performed and there were readings from the Bible. In the evening there was reading of poetry.

⁹³ As a symbol of national reconciliation the anthem consists of a combination of the old national anthem Die Stem, and the 'anthem' from the struggle Nkosi Sikelel iAfrica.

I noticed that next to me, during the match, there was a 7 year-old boy who had a new Springbok jersey on, with the South African flag removed.⁹⁴

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Orania has a statue of Verwoerd. The statue functions as a symbolisation of the values around which the identity of Orania is tried to be forged, just like countries have national monuments. One could add that it also signals exclusion from the new South Africa, due to the negative legacy of Verwoerd in the latter.

An institution which is important in the 'nation-building' of Orania is the arts council, where children and adults can learn to play musical instruments, do glass painting and learn the history of arts, be taught writing (poetry, journalism, fiction, plays).⁹⁵ When I asked the leader of the arts council, Nico Jansen van Rensburg, who has a degree in music from Germany, about the function of the council in Orania, he answered:

... if you are busy with volkstaat building like we are doing, it is not good to have only money making businesses going but you don't cater for the people's needs to interact with each other. And I think... in a normal society, you know yourself in Europe it would be absolutely unthinkable to have no music teaching. Here in Africa it's different, eh... it's not so unthinkable. So therefore we have to cater for that. We also have to prove to the world we are a normal community, we try to create a normal community, a normal way of life.

The above elements correspond with what Anderson identifies as being prerequisites for being able to imagine the nation: a 'national' anthem (in this case it is the old South African anthem), a flag, holidays and monuments, a museum, where the history of the Oranian people is being told, and a *culture*, which is nurtured at the arts council. Because collective identity (an all identity as such), does not exist in itself, in any substantial sense, it must constantly be reproduced, or to use Anderson's term, *re-imagined*. The Oranians try to build a volkstaat and thereby enter the *discourse of national differences*, where certain criteria must be fulfilled in order to gain recognition. And recognition is the defining principle

⁹⁴ It is interesting how the rugby players still can be *their* team and at the same time play on the national team for South Africa.

⁹⁵ While I was in Orania there was a prize giving as the culmination of a writing contest, where the children performed different pieces they had written, the winners received classical CDs and the local brass band played.

for national identity; you can only be a nation if other nations recognise you as being a nation. According to Orvar Löfgren (1989) a 'check-list' developed in the former century of things that were necessary for a nation to have in order to be recognised (Löfgren 1989: 9). This list consists exactly of those things mentioned here. The symbols and structures mentioned above hence has a dual purpose: to symbolise the identity of the Oranians in order for them to be able to imagine it, and to make a claim of 'national identity' externally.

In Orania we thus find a distancing to South Africa and what it stands for, and at the same time an effort to identify with alternative symbols and thereby establish an alternative identity. As mentioned in the theoretical introduction, all identity discourses need a constitutive outside to consolidate them, in Orania this seemed particularly important.

The discursive construction of South Africa

In the following section I will look at how South Africa is constructed as the constitutive outside for Orania and the self-perception of the inhabitants. This construction evolved around specific key elements, which were central in the way people talked about South Africa.

In all accounts South Africa was characterised by disorder, crime, and a general decline of standards and moral values, or simply the 'disintegration of everything possible' as one man put it.

Apart from the worry about crime in general, the *killing of farmers* in particular was one of the issues which most people mentioned as an illustration of how bad things were going in South Africa. A range of different points were made from it: crime is on the rise; the government is unable, or maybe even unwilling, to protect its (Afrikaner) citizens; there was a political ploy to drive the Afrikaners off the land (it was unquestionable that the killings were politically motivated and that they were escalating).

Together with the farm killings and crime, the decline of *educational standards* was very important in the minds of the Oranians. There were several reasons for the educational crisis, including the government's lacking ability to run schools; the new curricu-

lum and way of teaching; or as quoted here, the inclusion of blacks into the school system:

The standards of the schools is lower so that they can fit it, now I must lower my standards so that they can fit in, keep it two schools, then I could keep mine and they could keep their standard, rather let them build up their standard if they could, in their own time, but now the whites must suffer because they must catch up. I am quite lucky that I finished just before... a year after I was finished there came 10 blacks in the school, I finished college and the year after there came blacks into that college, so I was just ahead. But its... you can't really believe how they really do it... like you have this guy, he's 16 but he sits in a standard 5, maybe in a couple of years maybe, a few hundred maybe, then the standard will be the same. But for me at this moment they are just doing it too quick, swinging things around. Like this guy he has not got any education, he is 16 and sits in standard 5, that would never happen in our schools.

I was told that the problem was on all educational levels, also on tertiary level. One of the consequences was that South African university degrees no longer were recognised internationally, and research was declining rapidly. 'Remember, the man who conducted the first heart transplant in the world was from South Africa, he was an Afrikaner', as someone expressed it.

Affirmative action was another element in the discourse about South Africa, which was mentioned over and over again. It was used as a cause for the declining economy and educational standards, but mainly it was an argument for the lack of place for the Afrikaners in the new South Africa. 'We built this country and now our children can't get any work', was a typical comment I heard. Often people told me that it was a 'severe discrimination against whites'. So even if they wanted to be part of the new nation they would not be accepted on their own terms. Carel Boshoff compared it with the Jews in Germany before the WW2, they wanted to be a part of the society but were not allowed to. When asked how he would respond to Mandela's continuous statements that SA needs the Afrikaners, the answer was

Yes, they need us on their own terms, and only if we accept the Rainbow Nation (affirmative action, redistribution). There is a difference between what they think we deserve and what we think we need (e.g. mother tongue education). We are being driven out of more and more

places in SA. [...] The danger of genocide against the Afrikaners cannot be ruled out.

He did, in other words, not think that it was just empty words, but he contested the conditions for inclusion.

Lastly, *the declining value of the Rand* was a prominent concern, and the government's inability to control a modern economy like the South African. And *the new government* was itself seen as the main problem and threat - it was supposedly both incompetent, corrupt, racist towards whites, and communist. I was among other things told that:

the government has no control whatsoever, I mean, most of them were in jail themselves. Where else in the world do you have a president who has been in prison for wanting to commit murder, planning bombings and terrorism, its so... I mean it's ridiculous. [...] The government is not strong enough... I mean everything is collapsing. They drive in big cars, but the police force they cannot control. Earlier this year I went to Pretoria, there they shot 2 people on the street at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, its crazy! People living there are getting used to it. We cannot live with that, we are not used to that. The Afrikaners is not a violent people, we are normal, hardworking, people going about their own business.

The above-mentioned were key elements in the way people spoke about South Africa in Orania. These elements were interlinked within the logic of a discourse that constructed South Africa as a society on the way to chaos. The bad economy was explained by the declining educational standards, which often was explained by the bad economy and affirmative action; crime and affirmative action were the reasons why education was going down and why whites left the country, which in turn resulted in a declining economy. Both crime and educational crisis were explained by referring to the weak government. In this way the mentioned elements created a tautological reasoning, or a self-referential system, with the problem of the new government functioning as the over-arching principle, as the root cause of the country's problems.

Adding to the fundamental problem with the new government as an 'master explanation' for the ruin of South Africa, was the basic assumption that the people in South Africa just were too different. Following *primordial logic* of 'absolute identities', cultural groups were seen as being like billiard balls; sealed entities bumping into each other and

pushing each other away. There is no chance of finding a common ground, and the future prospect of an integrated South Africa is therefore rather apocalyptic.⁹⁶

South Africa clearly functioned as the *constitutive outside* for Orania. It was constructed as a place in chaos and negativity. This enabled Orania to construct itself as the absolute opposite to the above mentioned: social order; high standards of education; no crime ('we leave the keys in the cars and never lock our houses'); and a preservation of values, moral and cultural traditions. And to this can be added community spirit as opposed to individualist indifference, as Boshoff put it above. For many it was also a question of South Africa was on the way to become 'another African country', with no culture, order, or, in short, civilisation. Implicitly they here saw themselves as the bearer of civilisation in Africa.

I also need to add that I experienced a clear sense of *alienation* among some of the Oranians when we talked about South Africa. I was told by a couple that 'the SABC doesn't show good programmes anymore, it is all black culture and music. It is like being in a foreign country and then turning on the TV, it is alien to us'. A feeling of marginalisation and exclusion was also experienced politically, because majority democracy had undermined Afrikaner ethnic political power. It was as if 'foreigners' had stolen their country and were now mismanaging it:

A few years you would say that South Africa is the best country in the world, that its your country, but now you can't really say that, you have your doubts, because you don't agree with the government or anything that is happening here. And now the nature is falling away, its still the same, but you don't see it with the same eyes anymore, you don't have that proud feeling in your heart anymore, because it is not anymore your country.

Just as other social identities do not have a substance neither does the South African or the Oranian. Hence the need for symbols, both to be able to attack South Africa and to create an alternative position.⁹⁷ Because it has not got a substance it is open to negotiation and power struggles about how it should be understood. When a version of the world is repeated enough times, and it has the power to be so, it can become self-evident,

⁹⁶ A view similar to the one of Huntington in his 'Clash of civilizations' (1996).

⁹⁷ To recapture: the constitutive outside is also always to some extent the *constituted* outside. By formulating what one *is*, one also has to access what one is *not*. This is similar to the atheist who has to construct an image of God that he/she does not believe in.

to appear as the 'objective', value-free account of how things 'really are'. It becomes common sense and therefore seems incontestable; it becomes *hegemonic*.

This was what I experienced in Orania: everyone spoke about South Africa in the same terms, central themes and examples. Everyone subscribed to the same account of South Africa and it appeared self-evident as 'something we all know'. (I was actually happy to see that Cape Town had not burned down by the time I returned from Orania!). This hegemonic discourse fitted the experiences of the people living there well, and it constructed South Africa as a constitutive outside, which was central to the self-perception of Orania. In this way Orania could stand as a positive project, representing hope for a better world and 'the solution to all problems'.

Compare the concerns of the Oranians with the general concern of South Africans below: In this Idasa survey (Idasa, Opinion'99, 13. November 1998) the question that was asked was what the most important problems facing SA that government ought to address were (national level in percentage):

	Sept-Oct 1994	Sept-Nov 1995	June-July 1997	September 1998
Job creation	67	74	68	73
Crime / security	6	32	58	64
Education	34	20	20	24
Housing	46	54	44	22
General economy	21	10	8	18
Health	2	7	10	13
Poverty	9	6	3	9
Violence	49	32	8	8
Corruption	0	2	6	7
Water	0	5	4	6
Discrimination	19	4	2	2
Political violence	7	6	1	0

There is clearly a difference between the concerns of my informants in Orania and the national survey when it comes to the issue of corruption, and political violence (farm killings). There is a general concern with crime and the issue of personal security, and

that it is not limited to the white section of the population, which some of my informants seemed to indicate.⁹⁸

If one contrasts the prime concerns of the Oranians with some national statistics we find that farm killings has gone down 30% from 1995 to 1997⁹⁹; unemployment has dropped from 5.5% in 1995 to 4.6% in 1996 for whites in general, whereas blacks in the same period has experienced an increase of 36.9% to 42.5%.¹⁰⁰ My informants' concern about crime is on the other hand well backed by the statistics: In the period from 1974 to 1997 assault has increased by 69%, murder by 184%, rape by 252%, and robbery by 252%.¹⁰¹

Groupings in Orania

Whereas the consent about South Africa seemed to be rather unproblematic, consent about the vision for Orania, on the other hand, seemed forged only with great difficulty. In that sense the consent regarding the former was extremely useful, if not absolutely vital, in formulating a common identity. Although it might look homogenous on the surface, going a little bit deeper one will find a variety of opinion and political attitude. It is possible to see the local political terrain in Orania as being split up into different positions and groups.

Liberalism / Conservatism in Orania

The main division seems to be between the 'liberals' and the 'conservatives'. This distinction is not only based on my own analysis while being in Orania, but was also used by the

⁹⁸ Idasa states in their press release that there is a national consensus despite race, class, wealth or gender about the most pressing problems of South Africa. There are, nevertheless, important differences that are not visible in this survey. With regards the issue of education people with limited educational access are concerned about getting the privilege of education, whereas the people who already have easy access are afraid of loosing that privilege. In the former instance it is a concern with getting education as such, in the latter it is a concern with falling standards. Both would, nonetheless, fall under the category 'concern with education'. In the case of employment, the people who already have a job are probably more concerned with loosing it than with the creation of new jobs. Again, it is a matter of privileges: some people are concerned with job creation in order to get a job, others in order not to lose the one they have.

⁹⁹ SAAIR: South African Survey 1997-98: 32.

¹⁰⁰ SAAIR: South African Survey 1997-98: 55 & Statistics South Africa: census in brief 1996.

¹⁰¹ SAAIR: South African Survey 1997-98: 29. It must be noted that the figures prior to 1994 did not include the former 'homelands', which explains a radical increase in 1994 of incidents.

Oranians themselves. In the case of Orania the *liberals* roughly meant the ones who invited non-whites to Orania (as was the case last year when students from Rand Afrikaans University came on a visit), and who acknowledged the ANC government. In turn, the *conservatives* seemed to operate with a more primordial concept of identity and to find traditionality important; to be reluctant to accept the new political reality and hence to make compromises and seek the acknowledgement of the government and media.

The two positions to a large extent found expression through the different organisational structures. The liberal position was associated with the Spansaam organisations (Avstig - the shadow cabinet of the future volkstaat; SABRA (South African Bureau for a Race Affairs) - the academic arm; Volkswag - the cultural arm), the NGK (Dutch Reformed Church) and the Volkskool (a very progressive school in its use of computers). The conservative position was associated with the town council, APK (Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk)¹⁰² and the CVO (Christelike Volkseie Onderweis) School.

The above mentioned does not refer to two neatly distinct groups, but I would suggest that they rather are regarded as positions in the political terrain of Orania which people can move between. There were many cross-alliances and people who for example were members of the APK and active in Volkswag. And people express both, often in the course of one interview. It must furthermore be stressed that the terms 'liberal' and 'conservative' are highly contextual and relative, and many South Africans regard the positions, as they are being expressed in the context of Orania, as both being very conservative.

As mentioned earlier, Carel Boshoff argued that the volkstaat concept is left-wing and not right-wing as most people would think. To him, right-wing meant people who protected vested interests, and it included people who refused to see the reality of South Africa, with its change of power. In that way the concept of the volkstaat is not right-wing. Boshoff explicitly wanted to dissociate it from the right-wing and sees himself as

¹⁰² The APK was formed in the beginning of the 1990's after the NGK declared Apartheid to be a sin and asked for forgiveness for its involvement. The APK, which is the biggest church in Orania, still claims that it is God's will that the different peoples must live separately, an argument that was the central theological argument for the Apartheid policy. It seeks its biblical reference in the story about the Tower of Babel, where God dispersed the people of the earth. One shall not try to unite what God has divided. [and one shall not divide what God has united (the Volk)] (Dubow 1995: 263).

being left-wing in his effort to create a new beginning, a (post-colonial) revolution.¹⁰³ The volkstaat concept could, according to him, become right-wing if it became exclusive and people wanted to move people who are not part of the *Volk*.¹⁰⁴ Even though the argument is leftist, he admitted that it attracts a lot of right-wing people, especially when they are disillusioned because of affirmative action. This does nevertheless, according to him, not corrupt the idea.

We come here to another major division within Orania, one that largely fell along the liberal/conservative division. There seemed to be a division between what one could, in lack of better terms, call the *elite* and the *people*, and what they envision for the town. The former would be the Spansaam organisations, which I also heard called the 'Avstig regime'. Those are the people who started the project and are in the leading positions in town. All the Boshoffs are centrally placed in these organisations. Furthermore, Anna Boshoff, Verwoerd's daughter and the wife of Professor Boshoff, was the principal for the Volksskool. I was furthermore told that 'Some people don't like that the Spansaam people all are members of the 'left wing liberal church - the NGK', which is not considered to be loyal enough to the volks-cause'. One man, who was a member of the conservative structures, explained the distance between the Spansaam-people and 'the people' this way:

Avstig is not in touch with the people, the town council is. E.g. there are blacks using the liqueur store, drinking and making a mess outside. And Avstig does not even know that! So what happens is what happened last Saturday, when someone went to them and said: "take your things and leave", and then they [the blacks] went over to the supermarket, and so they went back to them and said: "I told you, we don't want you here. You take your things and go, otherwise we take you." So in that situation it is the town council which has to come up with a solution. Avstig says: "we are not racists, we are an open town, everybody is welcome". Like the visit Mandela made to Orania in the beginning of 1996, there was a rebellion in this town. There were more than 300 gun men brought in to town by helicopters and *caspirs* to protect the president. Behind every bush there was a security police man. But the town didn't want it. There was a big show by Avstig, and even the town council at that stage. But the town didn't want it.

¹⁰³ In the Afrikaans magazine Rapport he said that he was not a right-winger, where after some youngsters asked him 'but if you are not right-wing, how can you live here?'

¹⁰⁴ which many people actually do want, and to me it seems to be a paradox; an 'inclusive volkstaat'?

Here we clearly see that Avstig is regarded as being liberal (as defined above) and that there is a feeling of distance between them and the inhabitants of Orania. The story about when some black students came to Orania further explains the point:

A: 'they [Boshoffs/Avstig] are trying to keep face with the SA government and the outside world, and the people in Orania feel it is at their cost. Last year we had a special meeting, on whether we would allow a group of political science students from Rand Afrikaans University to Orania. We put it on the agenda because probably there will be black students in the group also. A 3 day study tour, something like Mads. Now is Mads welcome, of course Mads is welcome. Would Mads be welcome if he was a Ghanaian student, then Mads wouldn't be welcome. Now, why not? Because half of the town has lost people to murder from black guys. So we wouldn't like to force a Ghanaian guy... nobody has ill feelings about Denmark. [...]

Q: But even though he's from Ghana and not South Africa, which means that he has nothing to do with...

A: 'he has nothing to do with it, but he is black guy. So there are certain emotions. So Boshoff says "he can come, he can even come if he is South African, we have to adult and open minded about this. So when the students in the end came there were 7, of whom 5 were black. Now what was said in Orania was: "they had not asked to come here, they were invited, by these power structures to show this town. It was mid summer. Luckily that week it was a bit windy, they didn't wanna swim, but they visited the swimming pool, but nobody swam. One of the guys said: "I tell you, if they are going to swim I am going to kill them in the swimming pool. And it will be your blood, on your hands [the Boshoffs]". Then the Boshoffs said "we'll leave it for everyone to decide how they are going to handle it". But if you don't do it the Avstig way then you are a naughty guy, and sort of "we don't think there is a place in town for radical racists"'.
 University of Cape Town

Apart from seeing another example of how animosity towards blacks is explained, we see that the man quoted above sees the 'power structures' as being too liberal and thereby out of touch with what goes on on the ground (implicitly stating that the majority is conservative). It is difficult to tell exactly how widespread this perception is, and how big the gap between the 'elite' and 'the people' is, but it is undoubtedly a fact that there is some kind of division. Even Carel Boshoff seems to acknowledge this when he says that the town attracts right-wing people, and when he told me that he actually had greater difficulty selling his ideas about identity and culture to his own people than to outsiders.

Heterodoxy/orthodoxy

In the subsequent section I will establish another way of talking about differences in approach to the present situation of the Afrikaners within Orania, but one which can be expanded to talk about Orania's position in the wider South African context. I will show that the internal differences within Orania can also be read from the position of the overall project in this wider national context.

A woman in her late 40's told me about how she saw the situation in South Africa. She insisted that the Oranians wanted to be part of SA, and even that they are proud to be so. Like so many others in Orania it was important for her to stress that she was not running away from something, but rather *towards* something; the project of Orania was indeed *pro-active* rather than *re-active*. But at the same time, she talked a lot about that 'things are getting mixed outside' and that the Afrikaners have experienced a 'loss of freedom'. Here is an example:

Look, things are getting very much entangled and mixed outside. The schools, as I say... the main thing, my God is now placed on the same pedestal as other Gods. In every school the State gives money to. And that's not good for me. And very much different languages and things is in the same school and outlook on things, outlook on history, outlook on the future. So that is, I can't be free in that. My children isn't free that I can bring them up the way I want to bring them up. That's clashing, I think it is a recipe for an unstable country. There is so much different backgrounds and the way you think about things and how to order things, it is culturally different and then you can't understand each other very well.

It is interesting that she insists that she is not running away from anything, and at the same time claims that everything is wrong with South Africa (using the discourse of South Africa as constitutive outside). What she depicts as being problematic and resulting in a loss of freedom, is what other Afrikaners regard as something good, as I shall discuss later.

A good way of expanding an understanding of the situation of dislocation of an old order and where it leaves the people who inhabited the order, is with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of fields of discursivity and symbolic order. According to him, any symbolic order (a system of values, norms, accepted forms of practices) tends to naturalise its own arbi-

trariness and thereby appears as being value-free, objective, imposing limitations on what subjects can do and think, by giving them a sense of these limits (Bourdieu 1977: 164). This state is what Bourdieu calls 'doxa'; the total naturalisation of limits or order, and by consequence, the taken-for-grantedness of it. It evades discussion and criticism because it is 'common sense'. It is the uncontested common ground on which social interaction takes place, built on a convergence between external order and people's habitus, the internalisation of this order. What is interesting for me here are the tools Bourdieu offers us to think the situation of the break-down of doxa. He talks about two main positions that are possible after the de-naturalisation of a symbolic order, or in my words, a social imaginary; he calls them 'orthodoxy' and 'heterodoxy'. Both imply an awareness of the opening up of the possibilities for competing discourses, but in opposing ways; whereas the latter champions the new openness, the former tries to restore the primal state of doxa, to re-close the field. This is never entirely successful; the Fall is irreversible, innocence is lost (Bourdieu 1977: 169).

I think Bourdieu offers us an interesting theoretical perspective, but I have a problem accepting the whole package for my purpose. My reservations concern the concept of doxa and its application in an analysis of the South African situation. The following quote shows the problems. Speaking about the situation of crisis where the doxic has been articulated and therefore become challengable in the discursive field:

... the arbitrary principles of classification of the prevailing classification can appear as such and it therefore becomes necessary to undertake the work of conscious systematisation and express rationalisation, which marks the passage from doxa to orthodoxy. (Bourdieu 1977: 169)

The proponents of apartheid were from the beginning engaged in a extensive ideological labour systematising the Christian-nationalist discourse and trying to perpetuate that specific social order by constantly validating it according to different rationales, most notably history, theology, and anthropology (Dubow 1995).

Apartheid as such was never taken totally for granted as an uncontested way of ordering the world; the social order was not doxic, apartheid reality was never *innocent*. Of course Bourdieu developed his theory in the society of the Kabyls in Algiers, and he has not claimed that it could be used in the analyses of a complex society like South Africa. But then again, certain things under apartheid *were* taken for granted, to a certain extent any-

way. But it seems as if the taken-for-grantedness was only forged with more difficulty than in Bourdieu's theory about unquestioned reproduction of doxa. The different structures engaged in sustaining the apartheid regime tried to naturalise the order and to limit the space of criticism and discussion. Was apartheid, put in these terms, orthodox right from the beginning? This does not make sense, since, according to my reading of Bourdieu, orthodoxy and heterodoxy is defined by their relation to something that was previously taken for granted.

When talking about the institutionalisation of the apartheid order I would therefore rather use the Gramscian concept of *hegemony*, which Bourdieu's *doxa* in some respects bears a strong resemblance with, which the following quote quite clearly shows:

The dominated classes have an interest in pushing back the limits of doxa and exposing the arbitrariness of the taken for granted; the dominant classes have an interest in defending the integrity of doxa or, short of this, of establishing in its place the necessarily imperfect substitute, orthodoxy. (Bourdieu 1977: 169)

The theory of hegemony was for Gramsci exactly a way of understanding how the dominant groups in society could retain their powerful position, and therefore how the subordinated should go about overturning that power. Gramsci pointed out that the question of power could not be restricted to the political sphere, but needed to include all aspects of social life since the power was held in place by the whole structure of society.¹⁰⁵

The concept of hegemony offers possibilities for talking about the processual character of creating a social order in a more flexible way. Aletta Norval suggests that we think hegemony as resting on a combination of the forging of consent, and if failing that, the exercising of domination.¹⁰⁶ That domination must also be justified within the hege-

¹⁰⁵ Because Gramsci wrote about hegemony in a fragmented form with a significant lack of stringiness and congruity, it has allowed scholars to use his concept and insights in a wide variety of ways (Barrett 1991: 52). One understanding of hegemony is that which resembles Bourdieu's doxa. It implies that hegemony is total and that a social order is *either* hegemonic *or* it is not. It understands hegemony as being purely a question of silent consensus, of people not knowing that they are being exploited due to their false consciousness. Through self-regulation they reproduce and perpetuate the ideas and values of the ruling class, thereby cementing their position of power and their own subordination. This classic Marxist, quite widespread view is to be found among people like Louis Althusser (1971), who were one of Bourdieu's teachers, and Dick Hebdige (1979). This use of *hegemony* has the same problems as doxa.

¹⁰⁶ It was never clear whether Gramsci used the concept to talk about the situation of consent where no force was necessary to uphold the order, or whether he also used it to describe a power kept in place by the use of physical force (Barrett 1991: 54). See also Gramsci himself: 'Selections from the prison notebooks' (1971), -especially the chapter on 'Italian Risorgimento'.

monic discourse. (Both forging of consent and domination are acts of power). In the case of apartheid consent was to a large extent forged among the 'insiders' (whites in general, Afrikaners in particular) and brute domination was applied to the 'outsiders' (Norval 1996: 4).¹⁰⁷

This way the apartheid regime created a social order of values and subject positions which was reproduced for over 50 years, kept in place by a combination of consent and domination. A certain order was created, which Afrikaners not necessarily took for granted, but which nevertheless seemed unquestionable, i.e. there was a limited discursive space where only very specific questions could be raised. People might have felt that there were other ways of arranging society but, apart from benefiting materially as a consequence of the system, stepping out of line often meant heavy social sanctioning. A certain order was hegemonised, not turning totally invisible and commonsensical, but for many ordinary Afrikaners *incontestable*. There was no discursive space to question the order, and alternatives seemed too radical to many. This was of course a clear strategy of the regime; to construct all alternatives to apartheid as being terrorist, communist, and against the Afrikaner *volk*. It appears, that the lack of space for questioning the regime resulted in a situation where most whites in a sense were neither for nor against the system –they *were* the system.¹⁰⁸

After the dislocation of the order of apartheid a new space has opened up, and social order in general has become contestable. It is in this space, post-apartheid South Africa, one can talk about heterodox and orthodox position.

Even though the woman quoted above engages as a player in the new space, she at the same time finds it threatening that her values are now contestable; only one of many possible sets of values. Even though she says that she did not support the apartheid government, the latter worshipped the same God as her.

¹⁰⁷ A very important factor in forging the consent of the insiders was the simple fact that they reaped the benefits of the system and therefore obviously had a greater interest in sustaining it than non-whites in South Africa.

¹⁰⁸ Many of my informants told me that they did not support Apartheid, although they were in the middle of it (as one man I spoke to who was in the presidential council under Vorster, Botha and de Klerk). Another possibility is of course that they know that I would not be sympathetic towards them if they said that they supported Apartheid. Before it could have been formulated positively as in 'separate development' but now the hegemonic post-Apartheid understanding is 'crime against humanity', -and who wants to support that?

The woman's position fitted the general feeling I got in Orania. They do not try to re-establish apartheid order (re-close), but to take the old values (such as Calvinism, national myths and the notion of race (although couched in culturalist language it is still relevant due to role of blacks as *others*), and ordering of the world into the new context. One could distinguish between two levels: *internal* (intra Afrikanerdom) and *external* (in SA as a whole). The Oranians want to enforce an orthodox closure with regards to Afrikanerdom, but not externally because they are only too aware that they do not hold the power to do so, - even if they wanted to. This calls for a new strategy and not a return to an old order. Orania is therefore in a sense both; old values are sought preserved in the new context, but this context (loss of power, discourse of non-racialism and majority democracy) effectively sets up a new set of rules of how this can be done. It is therefore necessarily 'the old' in a *new* way.¹⁰⁹ This could explain why they see themselves as being pioneers and not conservatives. This is where it in a sense becomes paradoxical. The real orthodox Afrikaners are the ones who do not actively engage in the new space but just long for the return to the 'good old days' through a reversal of the political changes. And people engaged in projects like Orania have a heterodox approach, since some of them might wish themselves back, but they at the same time realise that the 'good old days' can only lie in the future. They engage in the new social space opened up by the crisis of apartheid and become one of the players positioned therein. This shows in the insistence that the idea behind Orania is pro-active, constructive and not simply re-actionary. It is exactly these new possibilities now available which make a project like Orania possible; the principle of self-determination, cultural rights, freedom of association, and freedom of movement. The idea of Orania is therefore in a sense heterodox and orthodox at the same time.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Norval reminds us that the concept of a volkstaat must be seen as a 'new historical object' (Norval 1996: 283)

¹¹⁰ If we return to the groupings in Orania we can see the fact that Orania as a project can be said to be both heterodox and orthodox is reflected in the differences between the aforementioned two positions; the 'conservatives' and the 'liberals'. There is no doubt that liberals like Carel Boshoff are more heterodox in their approach to the current situation in South Africa than the conservatives in town, who are reluctant or directly opposed to negotiate with the new government. Like with liberalism and conservatism this is nevertheless also relative and, as I will show in the following chapter, there are other Afrikaners whom I spoke with who are far more heterodox than Boshoff.

Freedom

I have so far mentioned the issue of 'freedom' several times, as it keeps on coming up in the conversations I had with people in Orania. It is very important in the imaginary of the volkstaat-supporters, as the name of the party representing the position in parliament also indicates; the *Freedom Front*. This section will look into the role the notion of 'freedom' plays in the discourse of the volkstaaters, and link it with the issues of liberalism versus conservatism and heterodoxy versus orthodoxy. It will furthermore function as a bridge to the subsequent chapter about other identity positions than the Oranian one.

The genealogy of the concept

The word 'freedom' has undoubtedly a potently positive connotation. It is one of these words that we all seem to agree on the meaning of, which is the reference to something universally humane. The freedom *from* something, the freedom *to do* something. It is, as I will show, nevertheless not as unambiguous a term as it might appear. In trying to understand what is at stake when the volkstaaters and the Oranians refer to 'freedom' I suggest at least two different explanations.

The first explanation takes us into the genealogy of the concept of freedom. The current dominant western meaning can to a large extent be traced to the Enlightenment and the project of freeing people from the bonds of the dark middle age; from serfdom, from religion, from superstition, from tyrants and kings. One of the most important aspects of the philosophical revolution was the modern perception of the subject as being essentially self-defined, as opposed to previous views where it was determined by a cosmic order (Taylor 1975: 6). It was the unrestrained unfolding of this new subjectivity which was the Enlightenment ideal of freedom; independence of the individually self-defining subject (Taylor 1975: 22).

There was soon came a reaction to the universality, rationality and individuality of the Enlightenment, which started with the so-called 'Sturm und Drang' period in Germany and later more widely labelled 'romanticism'. This is important in this connection, because these thinkers operated with a different notion of freedom, based on a different idea of the subject. Without getting into too much detail, it is necessary to touch on this different notion of subjectivity in order to understand the conjunctive different notion of freedom.

J. G. Herder, who was one of the main characters in this new generation of thinkers, wanted to look at humans holistically, without the Enlightenment division into body, soul, thinking, feelings, nature and culture. The new idea was the notion of *self-realisation*; it was every man's moral responsibility to develop his own unique essence through expression and living (a shift from *logos* to *poesis*). Stressing particularism rather than universalism, made people essentially different, and this difference defined the unique form of our humanity we were called upon to realise. This self-realisation was defined not in relation to an ideal outer order (as in the Enlightenment) but to something from within (Taylor 1975: 17). This did not result in radical individualism, but on the contrary, it came to stress the importance of communion between groups of people. The reason being, that in trying to overcome the dichotomies of the Enlightenment, man was made a part of nature again, and therefore his subjectivity could not stop by the borders of the body. In order to realise the full inner potential, man had to engage in the larger streams of life in a communion with other men. Since man now was an expressive, meaning-creating creature, language received a privileged position, and, as a consequence, language-groups became of prime importance. All peoples were seen to have a distinct language, and a distinct essence of humanity, which it was their duty to live out. The highest aspiration for man was therefore realised through living it out with his own people (Taylor 1975: 20). As formulated by Charles Taylor, these new thinkers were

[...] seek[ing] for a deeper bond of felt unity which will unite sympathy between men with their highest self-feeling, in which men's highest concerns are shared and woven into community life rather than remaining the reserve of individual. (Taylor 1975: 28)

Freedom was for Herder the possibility of living out this unique humanness. In this way it was both a question of getting clarity of who one really is, through self-realisation, and being able to live it out together with others sharing it, through an organic, holistic community life of people 'belonging' together primordially. The lack of freedom was therefore not being able to do just that. This way of thinking makes the primordial assumption that the world consists of objectively distinct groups of people.

Two notions of freedom

The reason why I spend time digging into the history of philosophy is that these two notions are precisely the two notions we encounter today, which is one of the reasons why different people can talk about different kinds of freedom. The notion still plays a very important role today, and is central in the UN's Human Rights Declaration and in all bills of rights in democratic constitutions. In the South African Constitution of 1996 it is stated in the first paragraph in the bill of rights:

This Bill of Rights is a cornerstone in the democracy of South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and *freedom*. (Chapt. 2, 7. (1) -my italics)

Throughout the Bill different *kinds of freedoms* are mentioned, creating the skeleton of the bill: 'Freedom and security of the person' (Chapt. 2, 12), 'Freedom of religion, belief and opinion' (Chapt. 2, 15), 'Freedom of expression' (Chapt. 2, 16), 'Freedom of association' (Chapt. 2, 18), 'Freedom of movement and residence' (Chapt. 2, 21), 'Freedom of trade, occupation and profession' (Chapt. 2, 22).

The 'freedom' spoken about here is the 'Enlightenment freedom', which to a large extent has monopolised the idea of freedom. This is the first explanation I suggest: *the freedom talked about among the volkstaaters/Oranians is the 'romantic freedom', the freedom to live 'on your own, with your own people', without interference from others, the classic nationalist demand.*¹¹¹ If we for a moment revisit the quote from Corné Mulder of the FF in the section 'We do our own work': it makes sense that he claims that Afrikaners lost their freedom when they accepted minority status. Being a minority in a democratic country is not reconcilable with the romantic notion of freedom.

That is why the constitutional 'freedoms' mentioned above are not enough. They are universal freedoms, but what the volkstaaters want is a particular, self-defined freedom. For the ANC 'freedom' is a 'one man one vote democracy', following the universal, individual ideal of freedom from the Enlightenment.

¹¹¹ The slogan for the celebration of the 150 years anniversary of the Great Trek was 'Afrikaners, op trek na ons eie' ('Afrikaners, on the way to our own'). The slogan can be found in the offices of the Saamspan organisations in Orania. Note that the slogan does *not* say 'on the way to our own country or land', but uses the abstract notion of the *volkeie*; the romantic notion of *volksgeist*.

Freedom as an empty signifier

The other explanation I suggest is on a slightly different level of abstraction, although it is linkable to the above-mentioned point and is complementary. There is a central difference between the 'freedom' mentioned in the first paragraph in the bill of rights and the ones in the following paragraphs. The difference is, that the latter ones are *specific* freedoms, whereas the former is the *notion* of freedom as such. The notion of 'freedom' has no content in itself but exists only in the different forms it is realised, as in the different forms of freedom mentioned above. In this general sense 'freedom' functions as an *empty signifier*, capable of meaning almost anything and yet keeping the connotation of a fundamental right, as something which appeals to our deepest humanity and with which we can all identify. This is why the woman quoted in the former section and other people supporting the volkstaat can claim that they have lost their freedom, despite all the freedoms they have a constitutional right to. They do not have the right kind of freedom, the ultimate freedom; *the freedom*. As Corné Mulder from the Freedom Front told me in an interview:

[...] some of the first anti-colonial wars, against the British, so we've got this very, the Afrikaner has got this very, very strong sense of freedom, it might sound strange, sense of freedom, of being your own man, taking your own decisions of being free. Look at these, everywhere they went, they formed a new republic, a group moves to that area, they found a republic, another republic, so part of their way of life, is what they perceive to be free, and so many of our discussions with the ANC, and Mr Mbeki said that in his reply to my speech last week, 'what is this struggle for freedom that I'm talking about, what does it mean?' From his perspective, we are free, I can vote, but I'm not free, I'm not free. [...] the notion [freedom] plays a very important role, I think, in the psychic of the Afrikaner people and they are very much aware, that they have lost their freedom. (my italics)

Apart from the fact that we here have the two different notions of freedom colliding, there is something else at stake. In the situation of an experienced absence or loss of freedom, as the volkstaat supporters argue is the case for the Afrikaners in post-apartheid South Africa, 'freedom' effectively comes to signify that which is lacking. And because it is an empty signifier, different political groupings try to give it content and present their objectives as being the ones that will fill the lack (Laclau 1996: 44). Through a *chain of equivalence* it is linked to the groupings' specific objectives. In this way the volk-

staaters' 'freedom' equals a volkstaat (no volkstaat = no freedom).¹¹² It is subsequently important that South Africa is represented as a place where there can be no freedom for Afrikaners, so moving to a volkstaat becomes the only solution to people's problems, in which they will be free, they will be *whole*.¹¹³ If the volkstaaters succeed in linking themselves to 'freedom' in the general debate, their project gains the moral high ground, because you cannot deny people their freedom. But that is not easy for the volkstaaters to do, as the above quote shows. Mbeki's response is 'but you have freedom, therefore the volkstaat is not about gaining freedom, it is about something else'. Recognising that the volkstaat will bring freedom to the people who went there would have several serious implications for the new government. Firstly, it will mean a moral recognition, and secondly, it will mean that the ANC did not bring freedom to all the people in South Africa, as they have claimed, and the non-racial South Africa will get a serious moral blow. All parties want to represent themselves as being the champions of freedom, but with the difference that the Freedom Front only claim to deliver to a very specific group. Freedom lies in different places among the different parties: for example for the DP it lies in liberalism, for the PAC in Africanisation, and for the IFP in federalism.

The freedom at stake here is not guaranteed in the constitution at all, because it is linked to the issue of 'order' and the above-mentioned are exactly things which destroys the old order and brings anxiety and insecurity to some, -hence the loss of freedom. In this sense the freedoms in the bill of rights is not enough, on the contrary they are part of the problem, since they are expressions of this new (lack of) order.¹¹⁴

It is in this connection that one can experience a strange nostalgia for the apartheid era, even coming from people who otherwise claim that they did not support the former regime. It is as if the loss of the old order has resulted in the *loss of order as such*. You can hear people say 'apartheid might have had its flaws, but at least you had a strong state, police and army, there was system, there was order'. The idea of 'order' feeds on the concept of lack of order or *chaos*. And chaotic is exactly the word the people who experi-

¹¹² But there are other links, such as the free market, Calvinism, segregation of population groups, the reinstatement of the death penalty, -to mention some, which individuals to a different extent find intrinsically linked to 'freedom'. What these things seem to have in common is that they relate to the old order in one way or another.

¹¹³ One could say, with the words of Žižek, that the volkstaat becomes the 'object petit a', that which promises to overcome all problems and difficulties and to fill out the gap in our identity and being, in short; make us complete (Žižek 1989: 158).

ence a loss of freedom use to describe South Africa today. The experience of a lack of order is the experience of a lack of security. The lack of security, or maybe 'ontological security'¹¹⁵, to put it more precisely, ultimately leads to fear, and fear compromises freedom. One must bear in mind that a crucial element in the apartheid system's technique of forging consent and unity was the use of fear in different variants. Most notably the 'rooi gevaar' ('red danger'- referring to the threat from the communists), the 'swart gevaar' ('black danger'- referring to the threat towards white civilisation) and in general the veritable security psychosis resulting from the notion of the 'total onslaught' under PW Botha. All of these huddling people together in a 'laager of fear'. Remembering the discursive construction of South Africa, it can be argued that the people living in Orania are united in a *laager of fear* surrounded by a chaotic, hostile South Africa. In this way the prophecy of the apartheid priests has become fulfilled in the minds of these people; the order of civilisation has been defeated and now the barbaric communists are busy degrading the country to the level of Africa, chaos is looming. There is no freedom under those circumstances, since Africa is threatening to swallow up the European presence, everything that is of value, everything there is to believe in.

As we shall see in the next chapter, there are other radically different perceptions of what freedom is among Afrikaners, and thereby also of the post-apartheid order.

¹¹⁴ paradoxically, it is exactly these constitutional rights which make a project like Orania possible.

¹¹⁵ Giddens (1991) defines ontological security as 'a sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual' (243).

5. Epilogue:

Challenging Afrikanerdom

Orania represents one of the more radical ways of being Afrikaner in post-apartheid South Africa. The separatists are a minority - 'how do they imagine that volkstaat? There is not a volk to go there, I am definitely not part of that volk!' was a typical remark I heard from many Afrikaners in Cape Town. New ways of identifying are being explored, instead of identifying first and foremost as 'Afrikaners' people increasingly define themselves for example according to profession, geographical place, or simply as South Africans. This does not mean that they do not relate to being Afrikaners at all, but this is most often not part of an explicit political project, as is the case with Orania. Many of the people I met while doing fieldwork in the suburb of Parow outside Cape Town saw themselves as being 'normal Afrikaners', people who had nothing against 'being Afrikaners' without this being the most important point of identification. All the people I spoke to in Parow wanted to be part of the new South Africa, and did not see a volkstaat as an option at all. Many were nevertheless worried about where South Africa was going in general. Afrikaner cultural survival was not articulated as the main concern, but more profane issues such as the standards of schools, health care and public service, and escalating crime. Most of the people I met during my fieldwork in the suburb insisted on looking forward into the future instead of engaging with the past and the history of Afrikanerdom. When asked about the atrocities committed by the apartheid system, virtually no one expressed any guilt. A man in his late 40's told me:

It is not difficult to be Afrikaner today, only if you have a guilt complex - which I don't have. I am not a criminal and neither was my father... I was not a part of the struggle either

Many seemed to insist that the category 'Afrikaner' could be used in an almost ahistorical manner, without dealing with the now problematic elements that have constituted that identity so far.

I will argue that we can map out at least 3 ways of being Afrikaner in post-apartheid South Africa. The one is the above-mentioned, which downplays the historically created properties of the identity. The strongest expression of this position is the claim simply to be 'South African', but also includes people who subscribe to a loosely defined Afrikaner identity that includes non-white Afrikaans-speakers. The second position is the one represented by Orania. This position is characterised by the insistence on being Afrikaners and an effort to define and fix the boundaries of that identity. A third position, which will be my main interest in this final chapter, will briefly be presented below. It is represented by the Afrikaans cartoon magazine *Bitterkomix*, which like the Oranians insists on the importance of Afrikaner identity. But whereas the Oranian project is to naturalise a specific vision of Afrikaner identity, *Bitterkomix* tries to deconstruct the identity. The magazine is important because it is an exponent of a new radical way of thinking about Afrikaner identity in South Africa.

By introducing the position of *Bitterkomix* and contrasting it with the other positions I intend to sum up the main arguments made earlier in this thesis, and to make some general suggestions about Afrikaner identity and identifications in South Africa today.

Bitterkomix

The first issue of *Bitterkomix* was published in 1992. Its two founders were the then 25 year old Anton Kannemeyer (alias Joe Dog) and 23 year old Conrad Botes. They had met in the late 1980's while studying graphic design at University of Stellenbosch. In 1989 they made their first comic together. It was an anti-conscription story about a guy with long hair playing rock music who gets caught by the police and put into a mental ward. He gets brainwashed and after 5 years he comes out and says: 'I was a terrorist but now I am cured', after which he then he joins the army. The comic is a highly satirical and critical depiction of the apartheid system and what it did to young people. The authors both said no to military service. Since the launch in 1992 the two have published 9 issues of *Bitterkomix* (since the 3rd issue together with Mark Kannemeyer (alias Lorcan White)); a

'best of Bitterkomix' in English; two other magazines, one of which was banned in 1994 due to its explicit sexual content; and illustrations for a book of poems by the singer Koos Kombuis. They have exhibited in several galleries and are today acknowledged artists in South Africa, as they continue making Bitterkomix. Several guest artists have contributed to the different issues of Bitterkomix. It has become an institution within Afrikaner youth culture and has a devoted readership. Together with a host of rock bands and other artists they form part of what has been labelled by the press as 'alternative Afrikaners'.

According to Conrad Botes the magazine has a very distinctive goal. This main goal is to undermine and criticise authority, especially the patriarchal authority of the father, the priest, and the principal. These have, according to Botes, been representatives and reproducers of an oppressive structure that was experienced in every aspect of the Afrikaner's life during apartheid. This system of authority made no space for independent thinking and questioning - people simply had to comply. This was according to him both mentally and sexually suppressive. He also mentioned that many Afrikaners were angry now because they had been part of the apartheid system, and now they feel misinformed and cheated by the authorities.¹¹⁶ Part of Bitterkomix's goal was to give a voice to this anger. The project of Bitterkomix is mainly to deconstruct, to criticise, and to subvert. It is to bring about change, to open up so that there can be growth, life, as he puts it. This anti-authoritarian agenda is evident in the wildly anarchistic content of Bitterkomix, obviously made to provoke and challenge its readers. There do not seem to be any holy cows that cannot be slaughtered, and one can find everything from explicit sex and violence to incest and blasphemy in the magazine. I will illustrate this below and suggest how one can understand the artists' radical way of expression.

Bitterkomix as a heterodox position

If one were to compare Bitterkomix to Orania within the *heterodox/orthodox framework*, as outlined in chapter 4 on Orania, we get a good explanation as to why the content in

¹¹⁶ This is similar to my argument in the last chapter that people to a certain extent were neither for nor against the system; they *were* the system.

Bitterkomix is the way it is. The project described by Botes is an example of a heterodox position *par excellence*. Instead of clinging onto the old order, or elements of it, they on the contrary try to widen the new space opened up by the dislocation of that order. They attack the remnants of the order, make fun of it, and expose it as ridiculous, but also as being oppressing, violent and inhumane. All the values that the people in Orania adhere to are being ridiculed and turned upside-down by Bitterkomix: The family, religion, the military, Afrikaner national history, 'tradition', 'law and order', and so on.

When I asked Botes and Mark Kannemeyer about this link to the values of the separatists they both said that it was not an intentional part of their project to subvert political projects such as Orania. Botes said they were 'a pitiful, dying race which no-one takes seriously', and added that he did not know much about them and that they were not an important factor anyway. In his opinion they were 'obviously misguided' because 'the Afrikaners don't want to exclude themselves'. Kannemeyer was far more aggressive in his attitude towards the volkstaaters. According to him they were worse than the Nazis and they 'should be shot the lot of them!'. Alternatively he suggested that they should have their 'bloody volkstaat', which should be fenced in by barbed wire to keep them there. They both maintained that in Bitterkomix they were basically writing about themselves, on the basis of their own experiences of being Afrikaners.

Botes expressed the somewhat paradoxical view that I also have met among ANC politicians with regard to the FF; he said that he hated everything the volkstaaters stood for, but he respected them for their honesty. This was not the case with the NNP, which he intensely disliked due to its 'lack of sincerity and their hidden agendas'. What in an absurd way unites Bitterkomix and Orania is that both projects relate directly to the historical properties of Afrikanerdom. They of course do this in directly opposite ways. Botes summed it up when he said: 'they are proud of where they come from, I am not'. Whereas Orania wants to preserve elements from Christian-nationalism, Bitterkomix confronts them. So when Bitterkomix criticises the artists' own background and as a consequence appears subversive of the values of the Oranians it is because they as Afrikaners to a large extent share the same personal experiences; they have a common background in Afrikanerdom. In an almost cathartic manner Bitterkomix insists on displaying what they perceive as the worst side of Afrikanerdom. Botes expressed it nicely

when he said: 'I am an Afrikaner, though I hate the Afrikaners'. Anton Kannemeyer makes the following comment which illustrates the rather uneasy relationship the artists have toward their 'own people':



Fig. 3: Excerpt from *Best of Bitterkomix, Vol. 1*

©Bitterkomix Pulp 1998

Bitterkomix and freedom

If we turn to the issue of *freedom*, it is not surprising that the Bitterkomix group regards the collapse of the old order as the achievement of a new freedom. What in the minds of the volkstaaters is regarded as a threat, they regard as being new possibilities. Whereas the woman cited in the Orania chapter held that the old order was synonymous with stability, security and hence freedom, Kannemeyer and Botes saw the apartheid order as being the opposite; as robbing peoples' freedom by inhibiting their thoughts and actions. For them post-apartheid South Africa offers freedom to do new things without the heavy social sanctions and moral codex of the past. A very concrete example of this freedom is the fact that they are allowed to publish Bitterkomix at all. Not too long ago they would probably have been fined, sentenced to prison, or just have their work banned altogether. In their view Afrikaners are not under threat of extinction in post-apartheid South Africa, on the contrary they are more alive than ever due to the many changes taking place. 'It is a very exciting time to be an Afrikaner', Botes told me. Regarding the Afrikaans language he said that it used to be the language of the oppressor, but now it was rid of the burden. Hence it

had become less political and easier to use for new ends. In this way post-apartheid South Africa according to him also offered a freedom to use his mother tongue in new ways.

The main goal of *Bitterkomix* can be summed up as an effort to expose the structures of oppression enshrined in values, moral, and taboos of the Afrikaners. It is to make visible what has been an unquestioned, taken-for-granted set of values - in other words, to make ideological what has been hegemonic. The Christian-nationalist order lives on in the perceptions, values and traditions of the Afrikaners. Hence the need to eradicate these remnants, to widen the new space further, and bring about more freedom for Afrikaners. They want to 'change things' by undermining the existing structures of meaning, structures which according to them restrict human growth and development.¹¹⁸ Below I will show some examples of how *Bitterkomix* tries to reach this goal.

History

A recurring theme in *Bitterkomix* is the retelling of historical events. Of the three artists Botes is the one who engages in this the most. When I asked him about why he found it important to tell these stories, he said that it was great to show the irony. For instance when Afrikaners say that blacks are violent, history actually shows that Afrikaners themselves have a very violent background. A good example of this is the story of Blood River. According to the common version the Voortrekkers were wrongfully attacked after having signed an agreement with the Zulus in good faith. When they were forced to defend themselves they fought so bravely and wisely that they were able to defy the enormous Zulu army. In Botes' version it looks a bit different. Here is the first page of the story:

¹¹⁸ When I told Botes that their project sounded much like subcultures in Europe and USA, he replied that in his opinion the difference was that they were basically criticising themselves, the group they identified with themselves. Subcultures are nevertheless part of mainstream culture and to that extent self-critical and subversive from within (Hebdige 1979).



Figure 4: Excerpt from *Best of Bitterkomix*, vol. 1.

© Bitterkomix Pulp 1998

We see that the Boers wanted to force the Zulus to sign another treaty, giving away Zulu territory. In other words, the Boers are attributed the first aggression. (Note also the Voortrekker man fondling an angry-looking Zulu woman in the background.) In the subsequent pages Botes does not try to negate the brutality by which the Voortrekkers were killed, but depicts it in detail. Later when the next battle takes place he depicts in

equally violent pictures how the Boers, under the command of Andries Pretorius, defeat the Zulu army. After the story is told Botes' alter-ego steps in, now in present time, and tells us the following:



Fig. 5: Excerpt from *Best of Bitterkomix, vol. 1*.

© Bitterkomix Pulp 1998

After this Botes takes us on a trip to hell. Here we see Andries Pretorius once again. This time he is lying in a river of boiling blood, which we are told is the fate for those who

sinned intentionally and used violence to their own advantage. In the last pictures we see Pretorius trying to escape. When he gets caught he says 'Hey listen man, I don't belong here. I struck a deal with the big guy...'. The guard is not impressed and shoots him down.

In retelling the story of Blood River, probably the holiest event in the sacred history of Christian-nationalism, in this way he turns it up-side down. In his version the Boers initiate the aggression themselves, and they achieve their goal with the use of violence. Their victory was not 'glorious', but cruel and violent. He puts the event into its political context, and shows how the battle was used in the nationalist politician's rhetoric. And how absurd he finds it. Instead of being a treaty with God, the battle of Blood River is a one-way ticket to hell for Pretorius, the hero of the battle and one of the biggest historical icons in Christian-nationalism. (As an indication, the capital of South Africa Pretoria is named after him.) In the end he mocks the nationalist's belief that the Afrikaners have 'struck a deal with the big guy', that they should be God's chosen people. All in all clearly a blasphemous handling of the holiest event in the sacred history of Christian-nationalism.

In an interview with Botes we talked about the issue of guilt. His clear opinion was that all whites should accept that they were part of apartheid, even if they did not support it. Their wealth and education were direct benefits of apartheid. In this way he, as opposed to most other Afrikaners I met, expressed a feeling of guilt. This was one of the reasons he drew the historical tales; in an act of acceptance of guilt he wanted to show the wrong done by Afrikaners, instead of trying to forget it. According to him this feeling of guilt should be used constructively and people should engage themselves in bettering the lives of the people who got exploited by the system of apartheid.

Sex and the father

One of the most eye-catching features of *Bitterkomix* is its explicit sexual content. Its character is shocking to most South Africans, including young people. As mentioned, one of their publications was banned in 1994. This preoccupation with sex appears to serve two purposes: firstly it has the effect of shock, of upsetting the established values and moral of the Afrikaner community, of challenging them by showing that they are not afraid of depicting these things. Secondly, and more importantly, it is linked with the structures of

oppression which Bitterkomix has set out to undermine. In one of his stories Anton Kannemeyer has his alter ego make the following statement regarding the sexual content:

I hate being told that my depictions of sex are “offensive and unrealistic.” If anything, my depictions are realistic. I mean, being caned on the “bottom” by an old man is to my mind an unnatural sexual act. Furthermore, within our social and religious structures, sex remains an unnatural “deed”. Sticking your “erect organ” into someone else, moving forwards and backwards (normally not talking at the same time) is actually unnatural and sometimes even embarrassing!¹¹⁹

Christian-nationalism and apartheid was based on dogmatic Calvinism, hence it preached a strict sexual moral code. Sex was only allowed between married couples behind closed doors. Homosexuality was a big taboo and seen as being abnormal and incompatible with being an Afrikaner. Consider as an illustration the leader of the NNP Marthinus van Schalkwyk who in 1998 responded to allegations that he had had a sexual relationship to his gardener with the words: ‘I have never in my life had homosexual relations, I am Boer-son!’. It is hence not surprising that we see examples of homosexuality in Bitterkomix. But we also see depictions of two of the other big taboos, namely incest and sex between black men and white women.

Bitterkomix wants to criticise white, Afrikaans-speaking males, touch on their fears, and undermine their sense of security and authority. One of the ways of doing this is by exposing the twisted and violent sense of sexuality that the patriarchal order breeds. Anton Kannemeyer once again has his alter ego making a statement:

Dogmatic and conservative thinkers believe that talk about sex belongs exclusively in the bedroom. It’s as if they don’t want to admit any connection between e.g. violence and sex, or repression and abnormal sexual behaviour, or couldn’t comprehend any such connection.¹²⁰

They also talk about things like small penises, premature ejaculation, and women who are demanding and self-conscious and through that try to threaten male self-perception.

¹¹⁹ Best of Bitterkomix, vol.1 1998: 39. (Formatting in original).

¹²⁰ Best of Bitterkomix, vol. 1 1998: 35.

According to the artists a lot of people did not understand this, and could not see the need for the depiction of sex - some even thought it was male-chauvinistic.

The most important aspect of the sexual content remains to form part of the project of undermining the patriarchal authority that was perceived to be one of the overbearing elements of apartheid and Christian-nationalism. This authority was, as Botes mentioned earlier, represented by the father, the priest, the principal, and finally God. Bitterkomix tells us stories about families where the father's authority is undermined by depictions of incest, wife battering, and other things not supposed to take place in the idyllic nuclear family as envisioned in Christian-nationalism. This agenda of patricide is shown with great clarity on the cover of one of their recent publications:

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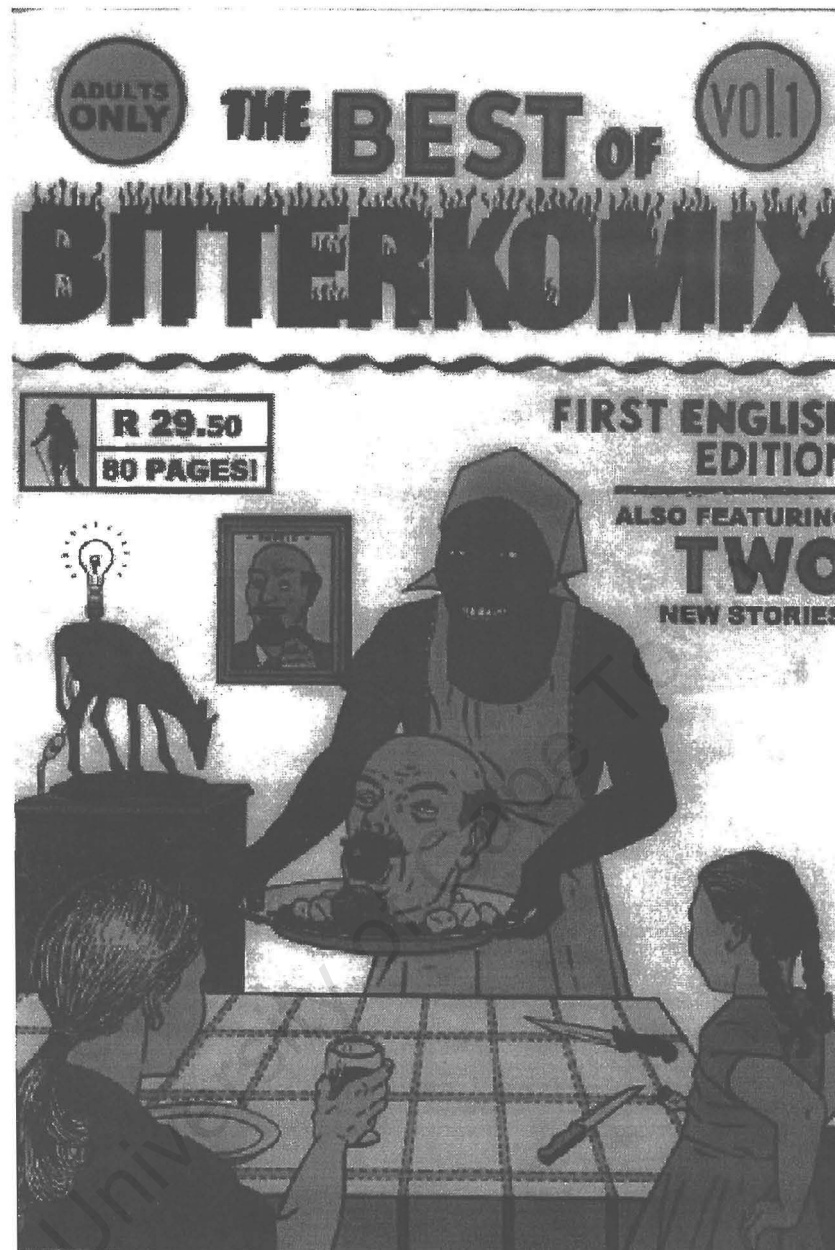


Fig. 6: Best of Bitterkomix, vol. 1.

©Bitterkomix Pulp 1998

The race-question

Another thing Orania and Bitterkomix have in common, apart from their engagement with Afrikanerdom, is that they both take for granted that an Afrikaner is a white person.¹²¹ In

¹²¹ The Oranians do, as mentioned, also use the term 'Boere-Afrikaner' for the exclusively white definition of Afrikaner identity.

other words, they do not subscribe to the redefinition of Afrikaner identity as being a multi-racial *linguistic* community, as described in chapter 3, but they both retain the racial aspect of the identity. Trying to redefine it as being anything else can, according to Botes, only be an expression of 'political correctness', of failing to acknowledge the troublesome history of the identity. I observed an interesting phenomenon, which suggests he could be right. Every time I heard a white Afrikaans-speaker, either during a personal interview or in parliament, insist that an Afrikaner is solely defined as 'someone who speaks Afrikaans' (thereby including non-whites) the context or content of their conversation indicated that the Afrikaner they talked about was without any doubt a *white* Afrikaans speaker. There was, in other words, a discrepancy between the explicit and implicit definitions.

The speech by van Schalkwyk referred to in chapter 3 is no exception. After the initial words quoted in that chapter, where he says that the only criteria to be an Afrikaner is the language, he goes on to say that the NNP does not support a 'volkstaat for the Afrikaners'. This is not because there is no room for coloureds in the proposed volkstaat¹²², but because they do not want 'the Afrikaners to isolate themselves'. This is clearly a reference to white separatists like the Oranians. He continues to say that the NNP is fighting a battle '[...] to convince Afrikaners that there is no salvation in the Ian Smith option of mobilising whites on the basis of their anger and their fear.' Furthermore, affirmative action is one of the key arguments of the volkstaaters for the need to isolate themselves in order to survive, and coloureds are exactly a 'designated group' supposed to be benefiting from affirmative action.

Whereas it is plausible that Botes is right that these sliding definitions show that van Schalkwyk and others are not earnest in the effort to redefine Afrikaner identity, I will nevertheless suggest another explanation. This explanation has to do with the function of blacks in the construction of Christian-nationalist identity.

¹²² As mentioned earlier, the term 'volk' has a very narrow ethnic quality to it, which is why one never hears anyone talk about the 'Afrikaner volk' when it is meant to include the coloureds.

The Other

If we compare the difficulties the *new* nationalist organisations have in their redefinition of Afrikaner identity with my analysis of Orania we will see an interesting parallel. In the section on the relationship towards blacks I showed that the Oranians had difficulties retaining the culturalist discourse when talking about human differences. The issue of race kept on popping up. This, I will argue, is the same phenomenon as the slide from explicit to implicit definitions mentioned above.

I suggest that the reason for this is the fact that blacks have been the most important Other in the construction of an Afrikaner Self. As the former has been constitutive of the latter, it keeps coming to the fore. Put differently, the opposition to blacks is such an integral part of collective Afrikaner identity, as created by Christian-nationalism, that it is difficult to maintain the identity if one removes that opposition. Race is in other words one of the main pillars on which this Afrikaner identity rests; remove it and it collapses.¹²³

Following this, another explanation could be that the people who slide in their definitions actually want to make the identity more inclusive and non-racial. This is nevertheless only done with great difficulty, since the old definition is so deeply entrenched that it comes out when they do not intellectualise about the definition.¹²⁴ Trying to expand the existing identity is very difficult due to the central opposition to blacks, which has become illegitimate in post-apartheid South Africa.

Bitterkomix has a different agenda. When dealing with blacks it is in a manner that plays on the function of blacks as Others. In the example below (fig. 7), we see a black man with a white woman, it might even be his maid. The man is successful; he is well dressed and next to his plate we see the keys from a BMW. He reads the old Afrikaner nationalist newspaper

¹²³ The racial element could in principle be retained at some level: by forging an identity around the Afrikaans language it transgresses the white-coloured divide but still excludes the black population.

¹²⁴ This is the difference between 'practical knowledge' and 'theoretical knowledge' in Bourdieu. It is possible to be conscious about certain things and at the same time do something completely different in practice, without it appears paradoxical to the person (Bourdieu 1977: 6). Another aspect of the problem is the fact that the government's affirmative action programme places coloured and white Afrikaans-speakers in two separate groups, a separation, which contributes to make the redefinition difficult.

Die Burger, which has the headline 'the Rand is rising'. The text reads: "Bitterkomix 7 presents: direction/guidance in the crisis".



Fig. 7: Excerpt from Bitterkomix 7.

©Bitterkomix Pulp1997

It appears that Bitterkomix here makes a sarcastic comment on the 'worried Afrikaners', such as the volkstaaters and the people mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. They suggest that when Afrikaners talk about 'the crisis of South Africa', in terms of issues like education, health care, the economy, and crime, what they really worry about is blacks taking away their 'way of life' - *die swart gevaar* - grounded in deeply entrenched racialised fears. The black man in the drawing has conquered the domain of the Afrikaners - the worst nightmare for the Christian-nationalists. But this Afrikaners today cannot say, due to the danger of being labelled racists.

On the other hand Bitterkomix is, to my knowledge, not being labelled racist. And this even though the artists operate with a definition of Afrikaner identity along racial lines. I would argue it is because they do not try to 'put old wine on new bottles'. On the contrary, they deconstruct the identity and problematise the whiteness of the identity. Or, to expand the image used above; they insist on showing that 'the wine is old and sour' and should be discarded.

Deconstructing and claiming identity

We can thus see Bitterkomix as an apparently ambivalent position, which can be summed up in the formulation of Botes mentioned above: 'I am an Afrikaner, though I hate the Afrikaners'. The artists insist that they are Afrikaners: that they belong to a group with a certain history, colour of skin, and language. They write in that language, for other Afrikaners. They nevertheless hate everything that is being associated with that collective identity. They stereotype the Afrikaners, they make fun of their values, morals, and so on.

In the introduction I mentioned that one should make a distinction between the discourse of Christian-nationalism and the individuals who were interpellated into being specific Afrikaner subjects by it. This distinction is central to remember if we want to understand the project of Bitterkomix. Christian-nationalism gained monopoly over Afrikanerdom and thereby silenced other Afrikaner voices. There seems to be a lot of creative energy stemming from the feeling that for the first time there is space for other Afrikaner voices, and that they can do whatever they like in this space.¹²⁵ Even though the artists are very conscious about being Afrikaners, they do not suggest exactly what that entails for them. What they say is simply 'we are Afrikaners, but we are not Christian-nationalist Afrikaners'. When I asked Botes whether there was anything left one could call 'Afrikaner culture' if one took away those things they attack in Bitterkomix he said that he did not know, 'but

¹²⁵ In general there is a very progressive Afrikaner art scene in South Africa, which might be due to this fact. I heard several Afrikaner artists say that English-speaking whites were not as radical and progressive because they never had been up against the same oppression as the Afrikaners.

probably not'. Together with Mark Kannemeyer he nevertheless resented the option of saying 'I am a South African' and just forget about the differences. If you ignore these differences you, according to Botes, become a 'non-person'. A distinct feature of the Afrikaner identity that Bitterkomix claims is that it is very individualistic. They seem to suggest that it be up to every individual Afrikaner to be Afrikaner in their own way. This sets their project apart from Orania in particular, but also the nationalist organisations mentioned above.

Even though they write in Afrikaans there is a distinctive element of cosmopolitanism in their work. Their style of drawing is heavily influenced by European cartoon artists, and they quote people like Fjodor Dostoevsky and the American punk icon Jello Biafra from the Dead Kennedys. By making this claim to cosmopolitanism they create a platform from where they can deconstruct Afrikaner identity. In effect they furthermore break the link between Afrikaner identity and the soil, a link which has been of vital importance in Christian-nationalism (as in most other nationalisms).

Bitterkomix is in this way an active participant in the discursive battle presently taking place in South Africa about what it means to be Afrikaner. Just like the intended redefinition by the nationalist organisations, just like the project of Orania is it, and just like the multitude of political parties and organisations, painters, drama writers, authors and poets, journalists, institutions like schools and universities, and so on. It would be impossible to single out and define the factors involved in this process since it takes place on every level of social-, political-, and cultural life. As mentioned earlier, the situation is characterised by flux, undecidability and change for the Afrikaners.¹²⁶ Recapturing one of my earlier theoretical points: this situation of change does not have one single, uniform significance for people who experience it. On the contrary they can be interpreted in very different ways. What the people in Orania called 'a big mess', young Afrikaners in Observatory called 'new possibilities'; whereas the former called it a threatening situation for the Afrikaners, Botes said that it was an exciting time to be Afrikaner.

¹²⁶ Another example of the changes taking place and the new possibilities which open up: the internet company '24.com' hosts a page about Bitterkomix - 24.com is financed by Nasionale Pers, the old nationalist publishing house.

Social change, identification, and democracy.

We have now arrived at the final section of this thesis. I will begin with the aforementioned difference in attitude towards the situation of social change. I have chosen not to make the socio-economic factor part of my analysis in this thesis so far. It is nevertheless arguable that people who feel economically secure would more readily embrace the changes occurring in South Africa in a positive way, and the less well off would be more pessimistic. Compared to English-speaking whites, Afrikaners as a group might have a reason to feel a certain degree of economic uncertainty. This is due to the fact that they to a high degree are employed by the state and in the large national companies, whereas the English-speaking whites traditionally have been employed in the private sector. This fact makes the latter less likely to be affected by the affirmative action programme than the Afrikaners. But as shown above we also see Afrikaners who are very positive towards the changes occurring, and the differences in attitude cannot be reduced to the socio-economic factor. If we take the people I met in Orania, who were the most critical toward the present situation; those I spoke to had not been in an economically insecure situation prior to moving to Orania and none of them had lost their job due to affirmative action (although most said they knew someone who had). Many of the people in Orania had a tertiary education and had good jobs where they lived before. After having moved to Orania these people got a considerably lower income and moved from expensive houses to cheap pre-fabricated houses. One cannot understand their interpretation of South Africa simply due to economical factors, just as little as those factors will suffice in explaining why they promote an ethnic identity and other Afrikaners do not.¹²⁷ One has to take the ethnic and cultural arguments seriously in their own right. It is an established way of ordering the world, a way that has its own logic. Following this logic of essential, pure identities, the situation in South Africa looks rather gloomy with the official effort to integrate the

¹²⁷ It has been argued that ethnicity only becomes important to people in situations where they can use it for material gain (See E. E. Roosens 1989 for a good example).

different population groups. A man in Orania with great clarity sums up the most dominant Oranian way of ordering the world:

Reporters and students only come here to find out that we are racists, that's all they want. But I am not a racist, I am a race-purist. I don't want to be part of that mess out there. I will challenge any man on that.

My claim that race remains an important feature in the way the Oranians and many other Afrikaners order their social world is not intended to discredit their cultural claims. Cultural differences have always been associated with race in South Africa, and perceived as being fundamental non-negotiable differences. Although race remains a deeply entrenched factor in South Africa in general, these differences now have to be articulated in the language of 'culture'. This goes especially for whites - and Afrikaners in particular - although this stricture on articulation applies to all groupings in South African society.

The general concern among many Afrikaners could, as mentioned, be explained by the prospect of economical deprivation. But a number of indicators contradict this argument. Afrikaners are repeatedly politically offered a place in South Africa by Mbeki and Mandela. A recent survey has shown that Afrikaners and not black businessmen have made most gains on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange since 1994, hence they have clearly benefited economically from the changes in the country.¹²⁸ In general Afrikaner business is booming and agriculture is doing well after the droughts of the last two decades and end of boycotts. The public sector has so far proven not to be as insecure as one could expect, because the skills gap until now has secured the position of the public servants. Afrikaans universities are the most secure in terms of student enrolments and funding, black universities are worst and English ones are struggling, especially smaller ones like Rhodes in Grahamstown. In short many fears indeed appear baseless and are disproved by experience.

This leads us to a conclusion: If Afrikaners are not threatened as individuals in post-apartheid South Africa, how come so many nevertheless experience a great sense of insecurity and concern? It is because they *are* threatened, but only in as far as they identify

¹²⁸ Sunday Times, January 30, 2000.

as a Christian-nationalist Afrikaner subject. Returning to the question posed in the title of this thesis: yes, Afrikanerdom is doomed in South Africa after apartheid, but only the Christian-nationalist version of it. In this way there it is not without reason that the people in Orania fear for their survival in terms of identity and culture, because they exactly subscribe to this version. And when the people behind Bitterkomix do not experience any sense of loss or threat in post-apartheid South Africa it is exactly because they do not identify with Christian-nationalist Afrikanerdom.

Since the Christian-nationalist discourse to such a large extent managed to 'create' the Afrikaner as we know him, the question one could ask is: what is 'an Afrikaner' then, if the Christian-nationalist definition of the identity is discarded? The answer to this question is exactly what is being explored and debated in South Africa today – and there is a very good chance that there never again will be only one answer to that question.

Whereas the Afrikaners I met in Parow saw Orania as being 'exotic', and distanced themselves to the project, I will argue that they have more in common than might appear on the surface. They also have to deal with the fact that the established Afrikaner identity has become problematic in post-apartheid South Africa. As shown in the beginning of this chapter they express the same worries as the Oranians about South Africa (save for the concern with cultural survival). The perceptions of differences between population groups as being absolute and of essential importance are also evident among the Capetonians. The reason for this could be related to my argument about blacks being the Others in the old Afrikaner identity. I would argue that the active distancing to Orania partly serves the purpose of reducing the risk of being labelled a racist, by pointing fingers at 'the radicals'.

An illustration of the dominant perception of difference as absolute, natural and in kind, rather than in degree, was brought home to me during fieldwork: one day I was in a standard 9 class in a high school in Parow. The teacher had shown the class an issue of Drum Magazine that had a picture of a black man and a white woman together on the cover. I noticed that the children were uneasy about the picture and I asked them what was wrong with it. 'Its... its like putting an elephant and a giraffe together!' a boy burst out.

The boy's statement above leads me to my concluding point. In illustrating why it was strange to see a white woman and black man together he used a metaphor from nature.

The differences between blacks and whites are hence articulated as a difference between two distinct species. This serves as an illustration of the fact that the apartheid notion of human differences as being natural, essential differences to some extent lives on in the new generation of Afrikaners. As long as identity discourses are based on this notion they remain problematic projects. The premise of essential differences creates arguments that are based outside history, as objectively given facts that in principle cannot be debated. In failing to acknowledge the flexible identifications of everyday life, people are stripped of agency and reduced to bearers of a certain culture, race or ethnicity. This is problematic due to the fact that these categories are constructed in a social space embedded in relations of power. These power struggles become invisible behind the surface of 'natural' identities and differences. It is not only a question of developing new categories untainted by the past, but of breaking what I have called the 'grammar of racialisation' - the logic of essential identities. If 'culture' and 'identity' in general is thought of according to this grammar they will remain just as problematic as 'race'. I therefore fully agree with Chantal Mouffe in her call for a new democratic approach:

A democratic approach which, thanks to the insights of deconstruction, is able to acknowledge the real nature of its frontiers and recognises the forms of exclusion that they embody, instead of trying to disguise them under the veil of rationality and morality, can help us to fight against the dangers of complacency. Since it is aware of the fact that difference is the condition of the possibility of constituting unity and totality at the same time that it provides its essential limits, such an approach can contribute to subverting the ever-present temptation that exists in democratic societies to naturalise their frontiers and essentialize their identities. (Mouffe 1996: 10)

Bitterkomix and Orania are examples of groups that both position themselves in post-apartheid South Africa as Afrikaners, but in two different ways: Orania argues along the lines of naturally given, essential differences and hence attempts a closure and a fixation of meaning. The people from Bitterkomix engage in the opposite; the de-naturalisation of boundaries of identity through deconstruction. The latter is therefore an example of the possibility of claiming a collective identity, without naturalising its borders and properties.

The fact that the present fragmentation of perceptions of Afrikanerdom takes place at all is significant for the future of political and social life in South Africa: because

competing and very diverse visions of an Afrikaner identification occur simultaneously, the argument for the racial content of the category 'Afrikaners' severely questioned. There is no given natural category of 'Afrikaners'. The fact that people are prepared to discuss the issue of Afrikanerdom at all goes to show that the category is not internalised in a fixed way in the minds of Afrikaners but is dependent on continuing negotiation over content and definition. Afrikaners, like everybody else in South Africa, are subjects – some would say victims – of history. Hopefully in the future this fundamental condition for constructing Afrikanerdom and other collective identifications will gain significance in the continuing process of reconciliation and democratisation in South Africa.

University of Cape Town

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