

**Inverting sacrifice:  
An exploration of Wim Botha's *Premonition of War: Scapegoat* in  
relation to gender and nationalism**

**Colijn Strydom**

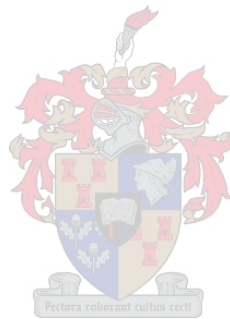


**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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at the University of Stellenbosch**

**Supervisor: V. van der Merwe  
March 2008**

# Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.



Signature.....

Date.....

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## Abstract

This investigation draws on theories of sacrifice to explore Wim Botha's sculpture *Premonition of War: Scapegoat* in relation to nationalist and patriarchal thought. Since the artist deals with myth, his approach is discussed in terms of Barthes' formulation of myth as a meta-language. It is maintained that Botha is using a meta-mythical language to deconstruct the narratives he deals with.

Sacrifice is seen as an act that binds communities together but that also separates them from threats (Nancy Jay 1992:17). It is argued that the crucifix has been used as symbol of sacrifice to denote immortality, and that this over-emphasis of continuity has been to the detriment of those that do not fall within the boundaries of the "same" as defined by white men. The incorporation and exclusion of the feminine into male structures are discussed, as well as the role that institutionalised religious thought has played in South African Nationalism.

An interpretation of *Scapegoat* using Freud and Žižek seems to point to the necessary compromise made by the Church with the dualisms it has created between its definitions of good and evil. Nietzsche's conception of sacrifice as a system of debt when applied to the Scapegoat also seems to point to a contradiction inherent within it, since Botha's inversion puts into question the idea of a gift given outside of a creditor/debtor system. The burnt appearance of the Scapegoat appears to indicate that the attempt to sacrifice the act of sacrifice is futile, since sacrifice eternally returns. However, the "pure gift", or *don pur* that Derrida writes of, seems to point to a way beyond dialectics, towards a morality freed from duty.

## Opsomming

Hierdie ondersoek maak gebruik van teorieë van opoffering om Wim Botha se *Premonition of War: Scapegoat* in verband met nasionalistiese en patriargale denke te verken. Die kunstenaar gaan om met die mite, en daarom word sy benadering bespreek met betrekking tot Barthes se konsep van mite as 'n metataal. Daar word volhou dat Botha gebruik maak van 'n meta-mitiese taal om die narratiewe waarmee hy werk te dekonstrueer.

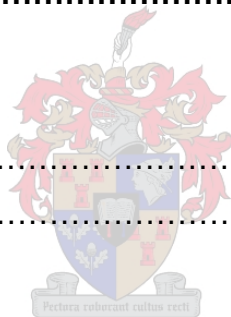
Opoffering word gesien as iets wat gemeenskappe bind, maar dit is terselfdertyd hierdie opoffering wat die gemeenskappe van bedreigings skei. Daar word beweer dat die kruis al gebruik is as 'n simbool van onsterflikheid en dat hierdie oorbeklemtoning van kontinuïteit tot die nadeel was van diegene wat nie binne die grense van 'dieselfde' val soos deur blanke mans gedefinieer nie. Die inkorporasie van, asook die uitsluiting van die vroulike na die manlike strukture word bespreek, asook die rol wat die denkwyses van religieuse instellings gespeel het in Suid-Afrikaanse nasionalisme.

'n Interpretasie van *Scapegoat* wat gebruik maak van Freud en Zizek blyk, te dui op die nodige kompromie wat deur die kerk geskep is ten opsigte van die dualistiese definisies van goed en kwaad. Wanneer Nietzsche se konsep van opoffering as 'n skuld-sisteem op *Scapegoat* toegepas word, blyk dit ook te dui op 'n inherente teenstelling, aangesien Botha se ommekeer die idee van 'n geskenk buite die krediteur/debiteur sisteem bevraagteken. Die verbrande voorkoms van *Scapegoat* wil aandui dat die poging om die opoffering op te offer vergeefs is, aangesien opoffering ewigdurend terugkeer. Die suiwer geskenk, of *don pur* waarvan Derrida skryf, blyk te dui op 'n weg verby dialektiek, na 'n moraliteit wat van plig bevry is.

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## List of Illustrations

Fig. 1. Wim Botha, *Scapegoat* (2005).

Eco-solvent inks on satin paper, burnt African hardwood, resin, gilt.

Sculpture 1880 x 1520 x 640 mm

Installation 2020 x 6350 x 640 mm

Fig. 2. Wim Botha, *Scapegoat* (2005).

Installation view, Durban Art Gallery



## Illustrations



Fig. 1

Wim Botha

*Scapegoat* 2005

Eco-solvent inks on satin paper, burnt African hardwood, resin, gilt

Sculpture 1880 x 1520 x 640 mm

Installation 2020 x 6350 x 640 mm

[http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/botha/cold\\_fusion/item12.htm](http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/botha/cold_fusion/item12.htm)

Accessed 31 October 2007





Fig. 2  
Wim Botha  
*Scapegoat* 2005  
Installation view, Durban Art Gallery

Accessed 21 October 2007, [www.artthrob.co.za/06feb/news/bestof.html](http://www.artthrob.co.za/06feb/news/bestof.html)

## Introduction

I am a white male from Pretoria who is interested in myth and art. Wim Botha is a white male from Pretoria who draws on Greco-Roman and Christian myth in his art. It seemed logical, at the start of my research, to investigate Wim Botha's work and the approach he takes, if only to illuminate my own processes. The reading I was doing on myth led to a discovery on the theories around sacrifice, and the sheer depth and variety on this topic I found intriguing. The dualisms and power struggles that inform the phenomenon of sacrifice were relevant not only to my own interests but seemed to clarify similar aspects of Botha's. I decided to focus on only one work of his, the *Scapegoat* from his *Premonition of War* installation, for the purpose of clarity, and to allow a freer discussion around the issues that form the context from which I made my own work.

*Scapegoat* is a massive sculptural piece, standing at the centre of Botha's 2005 *Premonition of War* installation. Made of burnt African hardwood it is a dark crucified figure with horns and cloven feet, half man, half goat, suggesting both the satyr referred to in another piece of the installation (*Bacchus and Satyr*) as well as popular renditions of the devil (van der Watt 2005:11). Christ seems to have been replaced with the demonic, an inhabitant of the realm of the other.

This thesis will use theories of sacrifice in a discussion of *Scapegoat* and the ideologies it refers to. Central to my argument will be Botha's interest in "power and the crude binaries that it spawns" (van der Watt 2005:5), since these binaries are essential to the process of identity formation (on an individual as well as communal level) as well as to the practice and representation of sacrifice. The sacrifice of the *Scapegoat* will be examined in relation to religion, gender and nationalism.

By using ideas from fields such as anthropology, feminism and psychoanalysis I do not claim to have any expertise the given fields and I will not attempt to criticise the theories being used themselves but rather regard them as entry points for discussion of Botha's works and their implications.

It is necessary however to define my use of the word "sacrifice". As is the case with many words used in inter-disciplinary contexts as well as colloquially, the range of meanings is vast and it could include: giving up a pleasurable activity for a friend, immolating children, suffocating kings, offering omelettes to the sun, pouring libations of beer, amputating fingers or slaughtering prisoners to appease a deity's bloodlust (Carter 2003:2). The etymology of the English word "sacrifice" comes from the Latin words "sacer", "holy" and "facere", "to make", which implies an action by which something is made holy. In contrast the German, "*Opfer*" probably comes from the Latin "*offere*", "to present", similarly to the Sanskrit word for Vedic sacrifice "*yajña*" derived from "*yaj*", also meaning to offer (Carter 2003:3). These roots reveal two ideas behind the practice, sanctification and gift-giving respectively, but they are still very vague. Just as any ritual cannot be understood without its cultural context, sacrifices are inextricably linked to the mythologies, values and beliefs of the communities where they are practiced<sup>1</sup>. To give just one example, the Aztecs believed their human sacrifices made the sun rise, but, in contrast, the Scythian human sacrifices re-enacted their creation myths (Lincoln in Carter, 2003:364). It seems almost futile to adequately define sacrifice, since the theories, practices and understandings of it are so varied.

For the purposes of this paper however, an abstract structure of sacrifice will be proposed, based on the one set out by Nancy Jay. She states that:

"Sacrifice joins people together in community, and, conversely, it separates them from defilement, disease, and other dangers. This opposition of joining and separating is so widespread that one of

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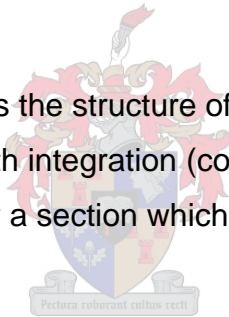
<sup>1</sup> Some authors maintain that "any explanation of sacrifice is, in fact, a theory of religion in miniature" (Smith in Carter 2003: 1).

the clearest indications that a ritual killing is properly sacrifice is that it is part of a religious system of this kind” (1992:17)

She writes that these two functions usually co-exist, citing the example of Greek sacrifice which united “participants in community ... [and] also separated them from foreigners, the defiled, and all those not entitled by descent or invitation to participate” (1992:17).

“Communion sacrifice unites worshipers in one moral community and at the same time differentiates that community from the rest of the world. Expiatory sacrifice integrates by getting rid of countless different moral and organic undesirable conditions: sin, disease, drought, divine wrath, famine, barrenness, spirit possession, armed invaders, blood guilt, incest, impurity of descent, pollution of childbirth or of corpses, and so on and on, all having in common only that they must be expiated” (1992:19).

I intend to use these functions as the structure of my main discussion: it will be divided into a section dealing with integration (community), another with separation (the other) and finally a section which attempts to look at their relationship.



Before the discussion of sacrifice specifically however, it seems necessary to outline what seems to be Botha’s methodology, and this forms the first chapter. The artist works primarily with myth, both Christian and Greco-Roman. Roland Barthes’ writings on myth as meta-language suggested to me that Botha is perhaps using a form of meta-myth, and that this enables the narratives to be displaced from their positions of authority.

The following chapter is the first dealing directly with sacrifice, and its themes are sameness and immortality. Of particular significance for this section is the theory of Nancy Jay, which states that sacrifice ensures male lines of succession. The ritual excludes women as men strive for immortality through socially constructed descent. With reference to Jay, the symbol of the crucifixion that *Scapegoat*

alludes to will be deconstructed as a patriarchal symbol of power and immortality. A brief discussion of the incorporation of the feminine into male religion is also necessary at this point, as the notion of immortality often has feminine qualities, since only women are able to physically give birth. Institutionalized religious thought will be linked to nationalism, particularly with regard to the role that Christian Nationalism has played in 20<sup>th</sup> century South African politics.

The next part deals with the othering that occurs in act of sacrifice. The *Scapegoat's* suggestions of Bacchus and the demonic will be discussed, first in terms of the myth of Dionysus, and then with reference to Georges Bataille's theory of sacrifice. His views on the realm of the "sacred" and the "profane" help illuminate the nature of sin in Christianity. This will be related back to the feminine nature of the Scapegoat and the othering of women in patriarchal religion. Lastly the role of fear of the other in forming the exclusive nature of nationalism, especially in South Africa, will be briefly discussed.

The final part of the exploration of the *Scapegoat* attempts to investigate the relationship between the two poles of the same/other dualism found in sacrifice and find a possible way beyond sacrificial thinking. A Freudian reading of the *Scapegoat* seems to raise the question of what it would mean if the Devil was in fact God. It could be said to refer to, on the one hand, the contemporary obsession with sexuality and decadence and, on the other, to point to a compromise within Christian doctrine, in that the demonisation of sensuality, women and the body seems to logically lead to the Gnostic Cathar conclusion that the Devil is the creator of the universe.

By depicting the sacrifice of the Devil, Botha might also be alluding to the necessity of finding a way out of the gift/debtor sacrificial economy. Through reference to Nietzsche's idea of sacrifice involving the repayment of debt and Derrida's conception of a "pure gift", it will be argued that Botha's inversion is a deconstruction of sacrifice. Botha's inversion and his choice of burnt wood for

material seem to indicate not only a deconstruction however but also an attempt at the destruction of the sacrificial mechanism. However, the attempt at the sacrifice of sacrifice repeats the act it means to destroy, and like the burnt sculpture, the form remains.

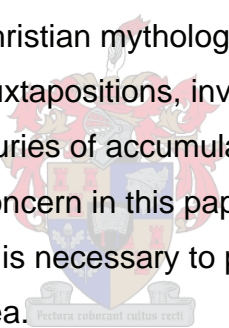
Lastly there is a brief discussion of my own work, in which the South African folk tales I have utilised are relayed and discussed in relation to my appropriations of them. Writings on sacrifice and the themes that Botha deals with are present in my own work and approach to the narratives, but it must be stated however that the relation of theory to my art practical work is a juxtapositional one, and so the research I have done is not directly apparent but rather acts in an informative capacity in what is an intuitive process.



# Chapter 1

## Botha's Mythical Representations

Liese van de Watt writes that “interpretation [of Botha's work] is challenged by a radical act of translation and displacement that typically removes content from context and renders his work strange, ambiguous and only vaguely familiar” (2005:5). In this chapter I wish to explore this estrangement of the viewer from the very familiar symbols in his lexicon by briefly looking at Botha's representation of sacrifice (e.g. crucifixions) in terms of Roland Barthes' explication of myth in his *Mythologies* (1974). My reason for this is that a semiological understanding of myth seems to illuminate Botha's methodology. The artist refers to Greek and Christian mythologies as well as political ideology as a form of myth. His unusual juxtapositions, inversions and choices of material play with, in his words, the “centuries of accumulated meaning” (Stevenson 2005:50). My main theoretical concern in this paper is the occurrence of sacrifice within the myths he quotes, so it is necessary to provide a larger context for the understanding of this specific idea.



Barthes sees myth as a language that speaks about language (1974:114), in that it uses already existing meanings to create further meanings. My contention will be that, if myth is a second order language, as also maintained by Claude Lévi-Strauss (Detienne 1977:2), Botha is in fact using a third order language, and that it is this that enables the viewer to engage with the images as displaced cultural constructions, since the myths have, to a certain extent, been demystified.

To define myth can be quite problematic, since the disciplines in which concepts of “myth” feature are very diverse and range from anthropology, to psychology and linguistics, writes Mathilda Slabbert (2006:10). The Reader's Digest Oxford Complete Wordfinder states that it is a “traditional narrative usually involving

supernatural or imaginary persons and embodying popular ideas on natural or social phenomena” (1993:1005), but how such a concept is seen depends on the discipline in which it is used. The classical philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle “evaluated the importance of myth and its relationship to narration” (Slabbert 2006:9) and later cultural anthropologists have looked to myth for new interpretations of value and belief systems (2006:10). Psychologists such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung have employed myth as a method for understanding the subconscious, with Freud drawing on the myth of Oedipus while Jung postulated the existence of universal “archetypes” which are expressed through mythological imagery (2006:11). Johan Degenaar writes “postmodernity exhibits a more relaxed view [than premodernity or modernity] for it sees myth as a schema of the imagination which can be used in a variety of ways to illuminate the human experience” (2006:10). Claude Lévi-Strauss applied a structural analysis to myth in order to demonstrate his theory that they make reference to “a system of axioms and postulates” and even suggested “unit[s] of myth” (1977:2) called “mythemes” (Detienne 1977:1 - 2). For the purposes of this thesis, “myth” will refer to traditional Greek and Christian narratives and also to the semiological model of Roland Barthes, which deconstructs contemporary political and social ideologies.

Barthes writes that “myth is a system of communication” (1974:109) where everything can become mythical depending on its “social usage” (1974:109) and the way the message is uttered. It cannot evolve from the “nature” of things but is necessarily historically based (1974:110). It is a “metalanguage” (1974:115), using already existing signs to build new meanings.

“[Mythology] is part both of semiology inasmuch as it is a formal science, and of ideology inasmuch as it is an historical science: it studies ideas-in-form” (1974:112).

According to Barthes’ semiology, there are three terms in semiology: the signifier, the signified and the sign. To use Barthes’ example of a romantic bunch of roses:



the actual roses are the signifiers, the signified adds the passion that one wishes to communicate and they combine to form the sign, the “passionified roses” (1974:113). In other words, the “sign...is the associative total of a concept and an image” (1974:114). In the transition from signified to sign the signifier becomes emptied of meaning and the sign becomes full, “it is a meaning” (1974:113).

1. Signifier	2. Signified (Concept)
3. Sign - meaning	

Barthes sees myth as “constructed from a semiological chain that existed before it: it is a second-order semiological chain” (1974:114). Myth speaks about language, hence Barthes term “metalanguage” (1974:115). The sign that the original semiological chain gave as its “result”, now becomes the initial term for the second level of signification.

A relevant example in the greater context of the thesis would be the image of a crucifix. On a signifier-signified-sign level, the image depicts a man hanging from a cross. What is actually being signified though is Christianity itself, or perhaps specifically the Church. The point is that one is “confronted with a greater semiological system” (1974:116).

Myth takes the sign of the first system then as its signifier. As the final term of the first system Barthes calls it the meaning, as the initial term of the second (the mythical system) he calls it the form. The mythical signified is known as the concept and the mythical sign is the signification (1974:117).

1. Signifier	2. Signified (Concept)
3. Sign – meaning I. SIGNIFIER ( FORM)	II. SIGNIFIED - CONCEPT
III. SIGN (SIGNIFICATION – MYTH)	

In the transition from the one level of signification to the next however, Barthes claims that the signifier, changing from meaning to form, empties itself (1974:117). As a meaning, the image of a man on a cross “has a sensory reality” (1974:117) but “the linguistic signifier... is purely mental” (1974:117).

“As a total of linguistic signs, the meaning of the myth has its own value, it belongs to a history, that of [the crucified man]: in the meaning, a signification is already built, and could very well be self-sufficient if myth did not take hold of it and turn it into an empty parasitical form. The meaning is already complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past...[w]hen it becomes form, the meaning leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains” (1974:117).



Despite this the meaning does not disappear. It remains, but at a distance, since:

[t]he meaning will be for the form like an instantaneous reserve of history, a tamed richness, which it is possible to call and dismiss in a sort of rapid alternation: the form must constantly be able to be rooted again in the meaning...[I]t is this constant game of hide and seek between the meaning and the form that defines myth” (1974:118).

That which now fills the form again, is not reality however, but “a certain knowledge of reality” (1974:119). The concept is not stable and pure but formless; it is held together by its correspondence to a function (1974:119). Barthes maintains that “there is no myth without motivated form” (1974:126). This motivation is not “natural”, but arises from history itself (1974:127).

According to Barthes the principle of myth is to transform history into nature (1974:129).

“Myth is experienced as innocent speech: not because its intentions are hidden - if they were hidden, they could not be efficacious – but because they are naturalised” (1974:131).

The Defence against Myth

1. Signifier	2. Signified (Concept)
3. Sign – meaning I. SIGNIFIER ( FORM)	II. SIGNIFIED - CONCEPT
III. SIGN (SIGNIFICATION – MYTH) <i>i Signifier</i>	<i>ii. Signified</i>
<i>iii. Signification</i>	

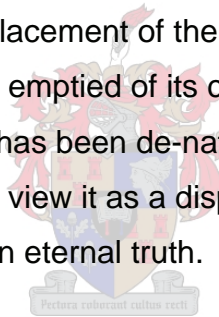


- 1. Language
- II. MYTH
- iii. *Meta- myth*

For the defence against myth, Barthes suggests that the best course of action would perhaps be to “mythify it in its turn” (1974:135). A possible strategy would need only to take the myth itself as the first term of a third semiological chain, and it would empty the myth in the same way that the myth emptied the sign of the first chain. This new meta-mythical signifier is then displaced from its mythical meaning, which hangs about it like a memory. If the purpose is not just to re-mythify it, there would exist no definite motivation with which to fill it, and this is in itself is the motivation. By depriving the meta-myth of a certain motivation, the mythical signification and meta-mythical signifier hover in the space where

mythical meaning appears and disappears, to be replaced with nothing but the knowledge of its naivety. This process is analogous to the one that occurs between the signifier and the form, which Barthes describes as “a sort of constantly moving turnstile which presents alternately the meaning of the signifier and its form, a language object and a metalanguage, a purely signifying and a purely imagining consciousness” (1974:123), except that in the meta-mythic case, the meta-myth does not fill it with anything (unless it intends to re-mythify it).

I suggest that this is in fact characteristic of Wim Botha’s use of mythic symbols and icons. His references to the crucifixes are clearly not crucifixes themselves but rather representations of them. Botha’s crucifix becomes the signifier for a new meaning, a meta-myth, whose purpose is apparently unknown, but whose motivation most likely is the displacement of the crucifix-myth to an unknown, secretive space where it may be emptied of its content but preserved in a dimmed form. Once the symbol has been de-naturalised and it stands without authority, it becomes possible to view it as a displaced, almost lost, cultural construction, and no longer as an eternal truth.



Tangentially, it seems that sacrifice underlies both Botha’s approach and his content, since, following Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva, language itself has sacrificial characteristics. This is an idea which has very recently developed around my research. Its theoretical complexity extends beyond the scope of this text, but nevertheless I feel it warrants mentioning. Lacan states: “The symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing<sup>2</sup>” (in Keenan 2004: 171). Kristeva writes that “taboo and sacrifice partake of the logic that sets up symbolic order” (1982:110), because they separate as well as unite. She makes a distinction between “the semiotic, understood as the ‘outside’ of language, and the symbolic, as language understood both synchronically and diachronically”

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<sup>2</sup> The “thing” being the “maternal Thing (*das Ding*), the incestuous Object of enjoyment (*jouissance*)” (Keenan 2004:171).

(Keltner 2004:97, 98). The symbolic is defined as “the social and sexual system of the Law of the Father” (Elliot 2002:145), whereas the semiotic is related to “libidinal energies and bodily rhythms experienced by the child during the pre-Oedipal relationship with the mother” (2002:145). They are the signifying and pre-signifying orders, respectively (Anderson 2000:219). The semiotic is closely identified with the maternal, since it originates “in a pre-patriarchal connection with the mother’s body hence the subversive or disruptive potential of the semiotic is closely interwoven with femininity” (Elliot 2002:146).

She argues that in the process of gaining subjectivity, the pre-Oedipal mother becomes for the infant “abject, an object of horror, distaste and fear... [which] the infant expels or abjects...in order to create a separate psychic space” (2002:147) because the infant fears the seemingly omnipotent mother. The infant starts to identify with the “father of personal pre-history” (2002:147) in order to break with the mother. “[F]or Kristeva a violent struggle with the abject (in hatred of the mother) ensues, until ultimately at the point of representation - at the threshold of the symbolic – the violence of sacrifice enacts matricide” (Reineke in Anderson 2000: 222). It seems that the process of accessing language itself is haunted by sacrifice.

“Sacrifice sets up the symbol and the symbolic order at the same time, and this ‘first’ symbol, the victim of a murder, merely represents the structural violence of language’s irruption as the murder of soma, the transformation of the body, the captation of drives” (Kristeva in Anderson 2000:225).

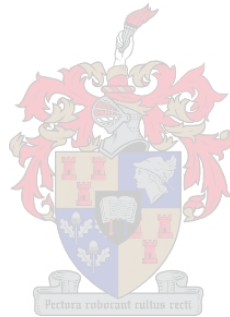
“[Sacrifice] indicates that all order is based on representation: what is violent is the irruption of the symbol, killing substance to make it signify” (Kristeva in Anderson 2000:225).

Anthony Elliot writes of Julia Kristeva’s literary criticism that:

“Kristeva makes much of the aesthetic structure of such poetic language, especially the shifting field of semiotic forces that unlinks

obvious meaning. Here Kristeva stresses that the energy of the pre-Oedipal semiotic ushers in a 'feminine articulation of pleasure', a realm of secret desires which defies patriarchal culture and language" (Elliot 2002:146).

The mythical form/strategy of the *Scapegoat* relies on a method of alternately shuttling the myths between their significations and the breakdown of meaning. It seems that by mythifying myth, by speaking in a third order language about second order language, language fails. The sacrifice inherent in patriarchal language becomes sacrificed again, overturning the certainty of the symbolic, and ushering in the defiance characteristic of the semiotic. Perhaps it is this that enables his work to put up its "hostility towards grand narratives" (van der Watt 2005:5).



## Chapter 2

### The scapegoat and gender sacrifice

“The only one who holds nothing sacred is the one who has not internalized the norms of any community” (Mary Douglas in Beers 1992:138)

#### Scapegoat

According to the *Reader's Digest Oxford Complete Wordfinder* (1993) the origin of the word “scapegoat” is Biblical, and originates from a passage in Leviticus 16 describing Moses' brother Aaron taking a goat before his god, placing the sins of the Israelites on it, and driving the goat into the wilderness. Since then “scapegoat” has been used to refer to a person who bears “the sins, shortcomings, etc. of others, especially as an expedient” (1993:1374).

Its function within sacrifice has been extensively theorised. Frazer writes that it is symbolic of the community's god, and that it rejuvenates that community (Carter 2003:78). In his *Myth and Cult among Primitive Peoples* Jensen maintains that killing is central to the human condition and that the sacrifice of a scapegoat re-enacts a primal killing and serves to restore order (in Carter 2003:177). Hubert and Mauss see the sacrifice as an act of mediation between a community's sacred and profane (Jay 1992:134) whereas J.Z. Smith is of the opinion that it is in fact an elaboration of domestication and also acts as a marker between the realms of nature and culture, and wild and domesticated (Carter 2003:327). Nancy Jay states: “Sacrifice joins people together in community, and, conversely, it separates them from defilement, disease, and other dangers” (1992:17). Despite the differences in the views it seems widely accepted that a scapegoat performs a communal function, and is not just an individual, but an individual

defined by the conventions of a community. As Michael Richardson writes about Bataille's theories: "Sacrifice also had a transgressive function: it represented a collective crime that bound the community together...[o]ne could therefore understand nothing about sacrifice if one looked only at it in terms of the individual victim (1998:61).

Bearing this in mind, it might be said that by depicting a scapegoat, Botha has sculpted a portrait of a community. The next two chapters are structured using Jay's formulation of the logic of sacrifice. According to her, one of the clearest signs that a ritual killing is actually sacrifice is that it performs the functions of: 1) joining in community, and, 2) separating from filth and unwanted elements. The aim of the following chapters is to investigate the characteristics of the community behind the murder of Botha's *Scapegoat*. There are two indications given to the viewer as to the identity of this community. They are, firstly, the method of expulsion chosen and secondly the appearance of the figure. The focus in this chapter will be on the former, which is in this case crucifixion. I intend investigating the possibility of the crucifix as functioning as a symbol of immortality. This would imply that the values associated with it are presented as eternal and thus represent the norm of the community. More importantly for this text though, is the act of excluding death from the norm. This chapter intends to examine the ways in which the cross has been used to affirm immortality and deny the presence of death. Although the fear of dying contributes immeasurably to social cohesion, its projection onto what is perceived as the other can lead to devastating consequences. That which a community wants to expel is indicative of their taboos and fears. An investigation into their views on evil or filth will result in a negative identification of the perpetrators, by which I mean they would be characterized by what they consider harmful or odious. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Jay and Beers write specifically on the patriarchal functions of sacrifice. The image of a sacrifice (crucifixion) would appear to communicate these same



masculine biases and I intend to explore along with these, the incorporation of feminine qualities into a patriarchal context. Of particular significance is the assimilation of metaphors of birth and motherhood, which sustains the theme of continuity (immortality) discussed in this chapter.

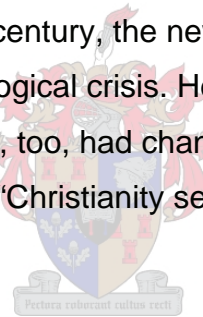
The conflation of church and immortality into the single symbol of a cross or a crucifix implies that the church is an eternal institution and its values are therefore divinely sanctioned and the societal moral goal. Within a South African context however, it is difficult to speak of the role of religion without referring to nationalism, especially Afrikaner Nationalism. Nationalism-as-religion will be looked at, with specific reference to the role Christian Nationalism has played in the formation of Afrikaner identity. By uniting church and nation, the same meanings are contributed to the nation i.e. it too becomes eternal, with the result that the ideologies of both religion and nation are presented as universal, and the absolute truths of the Afrikaner community.



### The Cross, Sacrifice and Immortality

David Lee Miller writes that “imaginary unities – nations...lineages – exist primarily in, and as, visual or verbal representations of themselves” (2002:1). I will approach the crucifix as a symbol of the Church and the Christian community, and by looking at studies of Christian iconography argue that crucifixes can be found to denote immortality on two levels: 1. through descriptions and representations of the cross as the “Tree of Life”, symbolizing everlasting life through the sacrifice of Christ and 2. by the representation of sacrifice. For the last point I will draw on Jay, who states that sacrifices exist to maintain lines of descent. I will reason that the cross merges the meanings of eternity and the Church, and in doing so not only suggests the Church’s divine nature, but also suggests that to die is to sin.

Immortality is derived from the word “mortal”, meaning a living being subject to death, and is derived from the Latin word for death, “mors” (Reader’s Digest Oxford Complete Wordfinder:990). As something transcending death and humanity, it implies godliness, and is also a synonym for “divine” and “superhuman” (p.748). But immortality also entails constancy, incorruptibility and immutability. For the Church to be eternal, it must stay the same. However, in order for it to stay the same there must be restrictions which define what is similar enough to be accepted and what is too different from the norm and must be expelled. Its system of conventions must be presented as eternal truths, beyond question, for if they are open to change the Church is no longer immortal, because by changing them, it would be seen to either be defying God, or revealing human interests and not Holy ones. Since the Church represents itself as the mouthpiece of God, this is not possible<sup>3</sup>. R. Scott Appleby (1999:40) writes that during the nineteenth century, the new investigations into the Bible as historical document led to a theological crisis. He writes that “Admitting the church had a history meant that it, too, had changed substantially, like other human societies” and as a result “Christianity seemed less and less distinctive and transcendent” (1999:40).



According to Appleby (1999:40) the great theological debate at the beginning of the twentieth century was between Alfred Loisy and Adolf von Harnack. What the French Catholic Loisy was defending was “the church’s claim that it governed the affairs of religion from the perspective of eternity, aloof from the vicissitudes of history” (1999:41). Harnack’s welcomed the critical investigations into the church’s history and the “quests for the ‘historical Jesus’ [that] sought to penetrate the layers of meaning and historically conditioned beliefs that were discovered in the four gospels” (1999:41). These inquiries strengthened his liberal Protestant conviction in the correctness of the Reformation, since it meant

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<sup>3</sup> There is an assumption that Divine Truth is absolute, unchanging and static. Richard Tarnas describes Christianity in comparison with Classical culture as “an emphatically monolithic system – one God, one Church, one Truth” (1999:119). He does however note that the “profound contraries rooted in the Christian vision... ensur[ed] its great historical dynamism (1999:170).

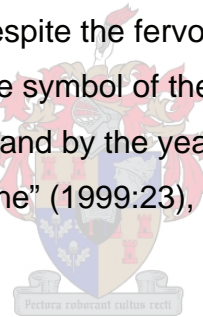
that the early Protestants had been right to condemn the Catholic augmentations to the scriptures and the “proliferation of sacraments, doctrines and ecclesiastical offices” (1999:41) justified by the popes. He compared the gospel to a kernel of corn and maintained that it was the historian’s duty to strip away the dead husk of tradition and dogma in order to reveal the essential apostolic truth. Appleby sees an error in this method however since Harnack’s proclamation of what the kernel of the gospel is revealed his 19<sup>th</sup> century Protestant biases, demonstrating the impossibility of escaping historical prejudice and interpretation. The presentation of interpretation as absolute “essential” truth makes Harnack identical to the Catholic commentators he opposes.

To counter von Harnack, Loisy used the metaphor of an oak tree. The seed is the gospel, the soil history, and the tree itself is the church which has adapted to its environment. The devotions to Mary, the sacraments and other Catholic practices whilst not “fully developed in the gospel ... are nonetheless present there as latent traits awaiting the proper time to flourish” (1999:41). Loisy’s argument was that “we know Christ only by the tradition, across the tradition, and in the tradition’ (1999:41). He saw history as “God’s ongoing work of redemption” and argued for an organic relationship between the gospel and the church. The church however “embraced an ahistorical notion of divine revelation and biblical inspiration, holding that revelation is extrinsic to human nature and historical agency” (1999:41) in order to defend belief in the supernatural and Loisy was excommunicated.

### The Tree of Life

Gertrud Schiller writes that “Christ’s Death on Golgotha is always seen as his defeat of death” (1972:165). In early Christianity however, there was, according to Nigel Spivey, a reluctance to depict the scene because of the shame associated with being crucified, which was reserved as a punishment for slaves

and traitors (1999:19). He states that it was “death deserved by the most unworthy of all unworthies; it was death with grim humiliation, ignominy and abasement” (1999:19). For the first evangelists this made it very difficult to spread their faith, since the image of a crucified man was generally met with derision and scorn. This aversion to the shameful death of their God resulted in the prominence of other images of Jesus such as the “Roman Christ”, a youthful shepherd carrying a sheep across his shoulders (1999:20). By the fifth and sixth centuries the associations of crucifixions were fading, and cautious images of the scene were appearing. There were nevertheless still no indications of physiological realities, and Christ was often depicted as “*Christus Triumphans* – Christ fully robed and patently alive and ruling from the cross” (1999:21). But in 692 a large assembly of Eastern Bishops of the Christian Church in Constantinople gave instructions for “the ubiquitous deployment of the Cross as a Christian symbol” (1999:22). Despite the fervour of the Iconoclasts from 726 to 843 who promoted only the simple symbol of the Cross and the destruction of all other images, imagery prevailed, and by the year 1000 Christ was represented as “no longer triumphantly Appoline” (1999:23), but rather all too human in his suffering.



The theme of the overcoming of death is most apparent in depictions of Jesus crucified on a vine. The symbol of the vine is derived from John 15:1-8, where Jesus refers to himself as the “true vine” and his followers as the branches (Finaldi 2000:42). The vine was also used by the early Church to mean eternal life, as well as suggesting the Eucharist and hence the blood of Christ (2000:42).

The vine was not the only representation of the cross though. The Tree of Life, or “*Arbor Vitae*”, as this image was called, was also shown as a palm tree and rose-tree, because of their associations with Paradise (Schiller 1972:136-137).

According to the legend of the Cross, the Cross was made from the wood of Paradise (1972:135). The Tree of Life was contrasted to the Tree of Death, as Jesus was to Adam. 1 Corinthians 15, 22 reads: “For as in Adam all die, even so

in Christ shall all be made alive". Schiller quotes from the *praefatio* of the Holy Cross (a prayer repeated before the Canon of the Mass): "Death came from a tree, life was to spring from a tree; he who conquered on the wood was also to be conquered on the wood" (1972:134). She states that "the Tree of Life acquires a eucharistic meaning; its fruits being the redemptive food of the faithful; but also those who have been redeemed by Christ's death are the fruits of the Tree" (1972:134). An unusual connection between the Trees of Life and Death are seen in pulpits of certain Belgian churches which are shown completely overgrown with a single tree, the bottom resembling the Tree of Death and having a serpent wound around it, the top bearing a crucifix above the pulpit, and being the Tree of Life (1972:136).

In some cases the tree was used to symbolise the church. In Nicola Pisano's Siena pulpit, there is a corner figure of Christ trampling on a lion and adder, with a branch growing out of his side. The branch has small people wrapped in leaves as its fruit, and, Schiller maintains, it "denotes the Church, communion with Christ" (1972:134). In the central panel of a Sienese triptych there is a depiction of the apostles in the tree and "it is evident from the apostles with the creed that it is intended as a symbol of the church" (1972:136).

The Cross and the Crucifixion denote both the church as well as eternal life, which the depiction of the Cross as the Tree of Life reaffirms. Christ is represented as the conqueror of death, ensuring eternal life after death and his juxtaposition with Adam contrasts the life of the spirit with earthly death. As a symbol the crucifix denotes Christianity and the Christian Church; to Christians, it also alludes to immortality.

## The Representation of Sacrifice

### Nancy Jay

Jay forms a generation theory of sacrifice, by starting with a discussion of the institution of marriage which “encodes mortality just as it does sexuality” (1992:31). Marriage is seen not as a relation between two individuals, but rather as functioning as a link between family groups, defined in terms of masculinity. The aim of marriage is to ensure a male line of descent, which “gives males an attenuated form of immortality in the institutionalized succession of fathers and sons” (1992:31). Jay contrasts the state of nature with that of patriarchal culture and argues that “the sexual promiscuity of the beasts is precisely the absence of the patrilineal family, and the male purity of the Golden Age is the ideal principle of that family carried to a level of absolute perfection” (1992:30). This involves however the exclusion of women since the ultimate goal of a patriarchal line is, according to Jay, the perfect and identical replication of father and son, where the son is the exact younger duplicate of the father, so attaining male immortality. By interrupting the family line, women, “who fail in such glaring ways to resemble the father” (1992:31) destroy male hopes for perfection and immortality. Jay writes: “Remember Pandora: because of a woman, men are mortal” (1992:31). Her theory is that, through sacrifice, male intergenerational structures can overcome the obstacle of being dependent on women’s reproductive abilities.

She quotes Fortes on the importance of lineage for the control of property and economic production<sup>4</sup>, themselves forms of continuity:

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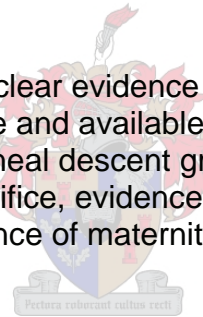
<sup>4</sup> It is beyond the scope of this text, but in a South African context a Weberian study could be very relevant concerning this point. Ernst Troeltsch writes: “The capitalist is always a steward of the gifts of God, whose duty it is to increase his capital and utilize it for the good of Society as a whole, retaining for himself only that amount which is necessary to provide for his own needs” (in Green 1959:25).

“I have several times remarked on the connection generally found between lineage structure and the ownership of the most valued productive property of the society, whether it be land, or cattle, or even the monopoly of a [c]raft like blacksmithing...A similar connection is found between lineage organization and control over reproductive resources and relations” (Fortes in Jay 1992:35)

Jay adds “[f]or ‘reproductive resources’, read ‘childbearing women’” (1992:35), and quotes Fortes again, who states that the “[r]ights over the reproductive powers of women are easily regulated by a descent group system” (Fortes in Jay 1992:35).

However, within patrilineal descent systems, birth alone is not proof of paternity. The biological father may very well not be the social father, but it is the social that matters for generational continuity.

“What is needed to provide clear evidence of social and religious paternity is an act as definite and available to the senses as birth. When membership in patrilineal descent groups is identified by rights of participation in blood sacrifice, evidence of ‘paternity’ is created which is as certain as evidence of maternity, but far more flexible” (1992:36).



Sacrificing maintains social and religious descent, but obviously cannot take the place of biological paternity. By the right to participate in the ritual, membership is created, and simultaneously excludes those who are not participating. Jay uses the following example:

“[T]he sacrifice of the Mass, offered by members of a formally instituted ‘lineage’, the apostolic succession of the clergy in the Roman church. This social organization is a truly perfect ‘eternal line of descent’, in which authority descends from father to father, through the one ‘Son made perfect forever’, in a line no longer directly dependent on women’s reproductive powers for continuity” (1992:37).

“Man born of woman may be destined to die, but man integrated into an ‘eternal’ social order to that degree transcends mortality” (1992:39). Participation in this

eternal community is a male privilege, since daughters marry out and mothers do not have full membership in the male lineage. The integration of a group can only be achieved by differentiation from others. Sacrifice integrates by participation in the ritual, and expiates by exclusion from participation.

“Sacrificially constituted descent, incorporating women’s mortal children into an ‘eternal’ (enduring generations) kin group, in which membership is recognized by participation in sacrificial ritual, not merely birth, enables a patrilineal group to transcend mortality in the same process in which it transcends birth. In this sense, sacrifice is doubly a remedy for having been born of woman” (1992:40).

William Beers agrees with Nancy Jay’s theory and states that the ritual of sacrifice excludes women and takes away the power and value of descent from the mother and gives it to the father (1992:146). He writes: “Men envy the perceived power of women and create ritual actions of blood and rebirth in order to have equivalent power and control over life and death” (1992:146). The bonding of men, according to Beers, can be a very positive experience, giving the participants self-validation, self-respect and various skills, but it also does further remove them from their maternal self-objects (1992:145). He draws on D’Andrade and Bruno Bettelheim who discuss male envy, and writes that “while male bonding attempts to separate the men from the women, the separation conceals a male desire for identification with and acquisition of the power of the maternal self object” (1992:146). In male initiation rites “the need for the initiate to prove his manhood by bearing extreme fatigue and pain [as though in birthing labor and childbirth] appears to indicate some uncertainty in sex identity” (D’Andrade in Beers 1992:146). D’Andrade also writes that “the initiation is often culturally perceived as a rebirth ritual in which the men take a child and bring about his birth by magical techniques stolen long ago from women” (in Beers 1992:146).



Dennis King Keenan maintains that Luce Irigaray's discussion of the Eucharist in *Women, the Sacred, Money* (1987) anticipates Jay's argument. He describes it as follows:

"Within this particular symbolic economy [the Eucharist] - which is characterised by God the Father and (within Catholicism) "Father"(that is, the priest) - woman is perceived as mother. 'In effect, the women in attendance [at the sacrifice of the Eucharist] must be mothers, mothers of sons, whereas *the other*, the woman lover, is kept away from the scene'. Not only is woman perceived in this (limiting) role as mother, but also her natural fertility is sacrificed by the socially constructed fertility of the sacrificial culture of the Father" (2004:168).

This leads Irigaray to ask "Could it be that the sacrifice of natural fertility is the original sacrifice?" (in Keenan 2004:169). She maintains that socially constructed male fertility sacrifices biological female fertility and that beneath the sacrifice of the son, lies the matricide upon which "our entire Western culture is founded" (Irigaray in Smart 2000:385).

In terms of function, the cross acts as a symbol of birth into immortality: through Christ into paradise, through sacrifice into an eternal male community – the Mother Church.

### Church as Mother

"If we do the will of God our Father, we shall be of the first Church, that is spiritual, that hath been created before the sun and the moon...The male is Christ, the female is the Church. And the Books and the Apostles *plainly declare* that the Church is not of the present, but from the beginning. For she was spiritual, as our Jesus also was" (Clement of Alexandria, in Engelsman 1979:134).

The analogy of church as mother is explored by Joan Chamberlain Engelsman in *The Feminine Dimension of the Divine* (1979). She refers to early Christian writers such as Tertullian, who "insists that the word pater implies the presence

of mater” (1979:136) as well as Methodius and Clement of Alexandria, who also use maternal imagery. She quotes Paul in Galatians 4:26: “But the Jerusalem above [the church] is free, and she is our mother” (1979:137).

The reproductive and nurturing associations of the feminine are evident in the naming of churches as well; Leonard Shlain writes that more than a hundred churches and eighty cathedrals were named after Mary in France alone, and that the four most famous (at Chartres, Amiens, Reims and Paris) are all called “Notre Dame” – Our Lady (1998:265).

Engelsman links the maternal church to implications of fruitfulness, in that it gives birth to Christians. An excerpt from Cyprian in his discussion of virgins reads:

The glorious fruitfulness of Mother church rejoices by their means, and in them abundantly flourishes; and in proportion as a copious virginity is added to her number, so much the more it increases the joy of the Mother” (Engelsman 1979:137).

Perhaps the discussions above can best be summarised by referring to Emile Durkheim’s sociological view of religion and society. His idea of the soul is a belief in the continuing power of society:

“the individual is mortal [but] the life of society is a continuous process. The man dies, but his clan survives, and it is this survival that he translates back into his own consciousness and believes that his own soul, partaking of the survival power of the group, is also immortal. One believes in the immortality of the soul because it makes intelligible the continuity of the collective life” (in Bierstedt: 202).

According to Durkheim, the emblem of a group (totem) is representative of that group, and as such, it is sacred. If the society is seen as immortal, these connotations must be associated with its symbol. Robert Bierstedt maintains that according to Durkheim “Collective representations are the result of an immense

co-operation, which stretches out not only into space but into time as well” (1966:196).

The symbol of the cross seems saturated with references to eternity: the direct reference to the resurrected god, the cross as the tree of life, by the representation of a sacrifice, and by association with the church, which it has been argued, is often viewed as a fruitful mother. It distinguishes the sacred from the profane, and by being seen as immortal it makes immortality sacred and sacredness immortal.

### **Nationalism**

Conceptually, the relationship between church, state, culture and art is implicit, rather than explicit, in the work of Botha, and also relates to my own theoretical and artistic concerns.

Bearing in mind the identification of the Afrikaner people with the Dutch Reformed Churches (DRC) during apartheid (Bloomberg 1990: xvii) it seems that Botha addresses not only religious thought but nationalism and the formation of national identity as well. The religious character of Afrikaner identity will be discussed in order to fully contextualise *Scapegoat* and demonstrate the interconnectedness of nationalist and religious logic within apartheid South Africa. The unity that existed between church and nation resulted in, as Hayes put it, “a mission of salvation and an ideal of immortality “(1960:165) being bestowed upon the holy national state.

At the end of *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* Emile Durkheim writes that “[I]t may be said that nearly all the great social institutions have been born in religion” (in Bierstedt 1966:204). Within a South African context, G.B.A. Gerdener echoes the sentiment when he writes that “it is doubtful whether any single factor mentioned in our (the Afrikaners) history contributed more to our civilization and

culture than the Dutch Reformed Church” (in P. G. J. Meiring 1975:56). It is the aim of this section to examine the church’s role within nationalism and the effect that religious thought has on forming a national identity. Nationalism will be discussed as a type of religious thought, with specific reference to the role of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa.

It is necessary at this point to forward a definition of the word “nationalism”. Carlton J.H. Hayes in *Nationalism: A Religion*, defines it as a “fusion of patriotism with a consciousness of nationality” (1960:2). Nationality is defined in turn as “a cultural group of people who speak a common language (or closely related dialects) and who possess a community of historical traditions (religious, territorial, political, military, economic, artistic and intellectual)” (1960:5). He puts the possession of a common language foremost, since this links all the people who speak it, irrespective of their social position. It also acts as a link between generations. Hayes writes that “[o]f every nationality, language bespeaks both the solidarity and the continuity of a people” (1960:3). Second in importance he places historical traditions, since these “comprise an accumulation of remembered or imagined experiences of the past, an accumulation differing in context and emphasis from one linguistic group to another (1960:4). Although the word “nationalism” is derived from the Latin “*natio*” which implies a common racial descent, he disregards it, because “few, if any, modern nationalities consist of a distinct ‘race’ in the biological sense” (1960:2).

Patriotism, Hayes writes, is “‘love of country’... [a]s ‘love’, it is an emotion, involving fondness, sympathy, fidelity, loyalty” (1960:9). While some of these emotions occur spontaneously, such as loyalty to family or a love of a familiar place, others need to be consciously instilled, such as attachments to places in a country which a person has never been to, or loyalty to countrymen s/he has never met. In short, Hayes maintains that “[t]he cultural bases of nationality...are a common language and common historical traditions. When these by some

process of education become the objects of popular emotional patriotism, the result is nationalism” (1960:10).

Similarly to Hayes, Adrian Hastings also sees language and shared cultural identity as essential to the formation of a nation, but he states that a nation may be “[f]ormed from one or more ethnicities, and normally identified by a literature of its own” (1997:3) and that it “possesses or claims the right to political identity and autonomy as a people, together with the control of specific territory, comparable to that of biblical Israel and of other independent entities in a world thought of as one of nation-states” (1997:3). When defining nationalism he differentiates between the theory (“that each ‘nation’ should have its own ‘state’” (1997:3)) and practice: “the belief that one’s own ethnic or national tradition is especially valuable and needs to be defended at almost any cost through creation or extension of its own nation state” (1997:4).

J.J. Degenaar quotes Hans Kohn and K. H. Silvert’s definitions of the concept, and, relying mostly on Silvert, divides it into three parts: legality, emotion and reason (ideology) (1982:10). He writes that his use of the word “nationalism” refers “firstly to the political situation in which the state functions as the final arbiter of disputes, and secondly to the sentiment associated with the sense of self-identity of a nation – a state of mind which recognises nationality as the source of all cultural life, and, more strictly, as referring thirdly to a political ideology in which the supreme loyalty of the citizen is due to the nation (nation-state)” (1982:10). For the purposes of this paper, the term nationalism will refer to all three of these, but emphasis will be placed on its cultural aspect, since my focus is specifically on the role of religion in the forming of cultural identity.

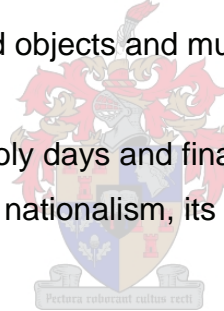
Hayes writes that “[s]ince its advent in western Europe, modern nationalism has partaken of the nature of a religion” (1960:164). He continues:

“Nationalism, like any religion, calls into play not simply the will, but the intellect, the imagination, and the emotions. The intellect

constructs a speculative theology or mythology of nationalism. The imagination builds an unseen world around the eternal past and the everlasting future of one's nationality. The emotions arouse a joy and ecstasy in the contemplation of the national god who is all-good and all-protecting, a longing for his benefits, a fear of offending him, and feelings of awe and reverence at the immensity of his power and wisdom; they express themselves naturally in worship, both private and public" (1960:164).

He maintains that the nation is seen as everlasting, and that "[t]o the national state, as to universal Church, is attributable a mission of salvation and an ideal of immortality" (1960:165). The life of the citizen he compares to that of the pious believer, finding similarities between:

1. Registration of birth and baptism
  2. Compulsory financial maintenance and tithes
  3. Compulsory membership to the church or state
  4. The observance of the sacred objects and music i.e. the flag and the national anthem
  5. Participation in the national holy days and finally
  6. Pilgrimages to the temples of nationalism, its soldiers' tombs and monuments
- (1960:166, 167).



Hastings looks specifically at Christianity and identifies seven ways in which Christianity helps shape national identity. They are:

"[F]irst, sanctifying the starting point; second, the mythologisation<sup>5</sup> and commemoration of great threats to national identity; third, the social role of the clergy; fourth, the production of a vernacular literature; fifth, the provision of a biblical model for the nation; sixth, the autocephalous national church; seventh, the discovery of a unique national destiny" (1999:187, 188).

These points will be used as a structure within which to discuss the role of the Dutch Reformed Church in the forming of Afrikaner identity.

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<sup>5</sup> By "mythologisation", Hastings is referring to the creation of mythical constructs.

## 1. Sanctifying the starting point

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1961, at the time of the inauguration of the Republic of South Africa, the Transvaler read: “Our republic is the inevitable fulfilment of God’s plan for our people...a plan formed in 1652 when Jan van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape...for which the defeat of our Republics in 1902 was a necessary step” (in Bloomberg 1990: xxi). This type of statement originates in the articulation by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Trekkers of “an informal Dutch colonial folk tradition which, stretching back to 1652, bequeathed a potent mythic legacy to their twentieth-century Afrikaner descendants” (Bloomberg 1990:4).

The former head of the South African Broadcasting Corporation and chairman of the Rand Afrikaans University, Dr P.J. Meyer, viewed Afrikaners as “an ‘army of God’ whose ancestors concluded a ‘Covenant with the Almighty’” (1990:2).

Bloomberg writes that

“Meyer’s brand of Christianity claims to be rooted in the past, in the seventeenth century origins of the Afrikaners and their nineteenth century covenant with God...Their nineteenth-century descendants married race and religion, proclaiming Afrikaners as a chosen nation with a sacred mission” (1990:3).

The development of a national consciousness based on historical consciousness is traced by Degenaar to the nineteenth century, with the publication of the first Afrikaans history book, “Die Geskiedenis van ons Land in die Taal van ons Volk” (1877), which included the Great Trek and the formation of the Republics, and was widely read (1982:43). Historical events acquired meaning, with freedom as a recurring theme. They felt that “[g]enuine history should express the true ‘Afrikaans spirit’ by describing what the *volk* had to suffer in their search for freedom and self-determination” (1982:47).

## 2. The mythologisation and commemoration of great threats to national identity

Hastings writes that “[t]here is nearly always a traitor in the story [i.e. the account of a threat to the nation]...and this sharpens up the sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’, the absolute duty of loyalty to the horizontal fellowship of ‘us’, and the moral gap separating us from the other, from the threat to our ‘freedom, religion and laws’ that they constitute” (1999:190 - 191). He points out that events have meaning written into them when they become part of public memory. When an event becomes ritualised (on certain memorial days), “it is to ensure that each subsequent generation is socialised into a certain view of the world, a view at once nationalist and religious” (1999:191).

Van Jaarsveld (in Degenaar 1982:44) claims that the growth of Afrikaner nationalism was in large part due to the reaction against British Imperialism. Degenaar writes that they “defined themselves in terms of opposition to the British, and Pretorius referred to them as a ‘nation born free’, which was an allusion to the time before the British had arrived at the Cape” (1982:42). The divided Afrikaner groups in the Cape, Free State and Transvaal began to express themselves in terms such as “Afrikaansche volk” and “Afrikaansche natie”, and Van Jaarsveld mentions the characteristics of injustice, the urge towards self-preservation and love for the nation’s past as leading toward an encouragement of nationalist spirit (in Degenaar 1982:44). Degenaar writes that the defeat of the Boers in the Anglo-Boer war provided them with “memories of experiences which could be utilised as symbols for national consciousness, for example, the grandeur of military successes and the misery of the concentration camps” (1982:44).

## 3. The social role of the clergy

Hastings stresses the importance of the clergy’s role in education, since, he claims, they “mediate identity between rulers and the ruled” (1999:191). He



maintains that it was the clergy, who, because of their contact with “the landed and the peasantry, fostered a sense of shared local, provincial or national identity” (1999: 192). In South Africa:G.J. Meiring writes, education was for 200 years the responsibility of the church (1975:61). The University of Cape Town developed out of the “Zuid-Afrikaansche Atheneum”, founded in 1829 by Rev. A Faure, and similarly, the University of Stellenbosch developed out of the Theological Seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church<sup>6</sup> (DRC) (1975:61). According to Meiring, “Christeljk Nationale Onderwijs” was started by Dutch ministers after the Anglo-Boer war, in a reaction against the English educational system (1975:61).

Apart from education however, the Afrikaans churches were also involved in the alleviation of poverty, caring for orphans and the maintenance of health (Meiring 1975:61). In the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer war the church helped build schools and orphanages, and started labour colonies for the poor; during the 1930’s the programme for the alleviation of Afrikaner poverty, the “Kongres oor die Armblanke vraagstuk” was started under the auspices of the Afrikaans churches (Meiring 1975:61).



#### 4. The production of a vernacular literature

“If only all our ministers would use nothing but Dutch<sup>7</sup> from their pulpits, victory would be ours”, professor of theology at the Stellenbosch seminary, N.J. Hofmeyer, claimed (in Meiring 1975:61). As early as 1873, the church printed its own set of Dutch-Afrikaans books for use in instruction, and it has remained a champion of the Afrikaans language. Meiring writes that when “the struggle for Afrikaans flared up both in parliament and press in the 1880’s, it reached its

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<sup>6</sup> “The DRC is divided into three sections: the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), the Nederduitse Hervormeerde Kerk (NHK) and the Gereformeerde Kerk (GK). All subscribe to the same creed: the canons of Dort, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Netherlands Confession. The vast majority of Afrikaners are members. The Afrikaans churches are the oldest and probably the most powerful of all Afrikaner institutions” (Bloomberg 1990:48).

<sup>7</sup> “Dutch was later understood to mean Afrikaans” (Meiring 1975:61)

culmination in the founding of the 'Zuid-Afrikaans Taalbond', the heart and soul of which were a group of ministers in the DRC" (1975:60), and that when the Afrikaans translation of the Bible came out in 1933 "the future of Afrikaans for generations to come was considered ensured" (1975:60).

##### 5. The production of a biblical model for the nation

The Old Testament seems to provide seminal examples of nationhood: "For thou art an Holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord has chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, out of all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deuteronomy 14:2 in Degenaar 1982:23). Where the New Testament refers to a multiplicity of nations with the church itself being the New Israel, the Old, according to Hastings, "provided a detailed picture of what a God-centred nation would look like and of the way God would treat it if it was faithless" (1999:195).

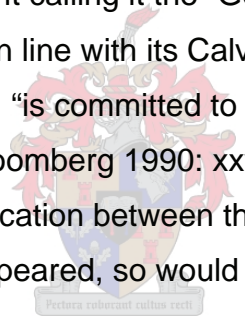
Nationalists described the Afrikaner in these terms, calling the Afrikaner nation the "Israel of Africa" (Degenaar 1982:24) and comparing the Great Trek to "an exodus to the Promised Land" (1982:24). Meiring states that the Voortrekkers fully identified with Israel, and saw themselves as "the people of the Lord threatened and attacked from all sides by the heathen" (1975:57). In the writing of their history the will and guidance of God are seen as apparent, but they rejected the "Cape History" because "no 'national pride' could result from it" (1975:47). "Slagtersnek, the Great Trek (particularly Blood River), the wars of independence, the concentration camps and the death of Jopie Fourie represented a 'sacred' history in which God had repeatedly shown Himself to the Afrikaners as a chosen people" (Giliomee in Degenaar 1982:47 - 48). Degenaar quotes D.F. Malan:

"The history of the Afrikaner reveals a determination and a definiteness of purpose which make[s] one feel that Afrikanerdom is not the work of man, but a creation of God. We have a divine

right to be Afrikaners. Our history is the highest work of art of the Architect of the centuries” (1982:24).

## 6. The autocephalous National Church

The importance of an ecclesiastically autonomous national church lies in that “it vastly stimulates the urge to tie all that is strongest in God’s Old Testament predilection for one nation and New Testament predilection for one church contemporaneously to one’s own church and people” (Hastings 1999:196). In South Africa the DRC, according to Meiring, “always took pride in being an indigenous church” (1975:60). Bloomberg maintains that the church is “practically coterminous with the Afrikaner people, claiming as members more than 80 per cent of Afrikaners” (1990: xxvii). Despite its official independence from the state (although Meiring cites critics of it calling it the “Government’s Department of Religion” (1975:64)), the DRC, in line with its Calvinist belief of involvement in the world as opposed to withdrawal, “is committed to preserving the Afrikaner’s tongue and cultural identity” (Bloomberg 1990: xxvii). Bloomberg asserts that the reason for this is that the identification between the Afrikaners and the DRC is so close that “if the Afrikaner disappeared, so would the Church” (1990: xxvi).



## 7. The discovery of a unique national destiny

“Once a Christian history has been constructed for a nation from the baptism of a first king and on through great deliverances, a history of a people’s faith and divine providence, once the Bible is meditated upon in one’s own language with all the immediacy this could bring, once one’s own church is fully independent of any other and identified in extent with that of the nation, the more it seems easy to go the final step and claim to be a chosen people, a holy nation, with some special divine mission to fulfil. The Old Testament provided the paradigm. Nation after nation applied it to themselves, reinforcing their identity in the process” (Hastings 1999:196).

The terms Afrikaner nationalists used to describe themselves such as “the Israel of Africa” (in Degenaar 1982:24), already discussed in this text, indicate the

presence of what Degenaar calls “the myth of the chosen people” (1982:23) in Afrikaner mythography. A statement by the Afrikaner Broederbond make clear just how deeply this was felt: “The Afrikaner Broederbond is born out of a deep conviction that the Afrikaner nation has been planted in this country by the Hand of God, destined to survive as a separate nation with its own calling” (O’Meara in Degenaar 1982:49).

The influence of Abraham Kuyper (1837 – 1920), the charismatic Calvinist theologian, editor, professor and leader of the Dutch ARP (Anti-Revolutionary Party) on Afrikaner intellectuals was, according to Bloomberg, very significant (1990:5,6). According to Kuyper, Calvinists “did not need to shun the sinful world; they should go out and rescue it” (1990:6) and he believed that both the church and state were divinely created. Bloomberg writes that “[h]e maintained that Calvinists had a positive duty to let their influence be felt everywhere as the salvationist and fertilising core of the nation” (1990:7). He adds that this willingness to be involved in worldly affairs “made possible Calvinism’s alliance with Nationalism” (1990:10). Furthermore, the Afrikaner nationalists felt that:

“Just as Calvinists founded the Dutch nation, so they founded the Afrikaner nation in 1652. They are custodians of the nation as a Christian entity and must ensure its continued fidelity to Christian norms, the illumination of God’s word over everything, and the Bible as the source of truth for all political life.” (Bloomberg 1990:10,11).

Two aspects of Calvinist thought can be seen in the Afrikaner nationalist understanding of history: “divine determination and the manifestation of God’s will in history” (1990:26). Meiring writes:

The Afrikaner traditionally has had an unshakeable belief in the sovereignty of God, the Almighty, who is at work through the ages, completing his plan for mankind, for individuals as well as for nations. Whatever happened to the Voortrekkers, even afflictions and defeat, were accepted as God’s will for them. And they were absolutely convinced of this one thing: God has a special calling for the Afrikaner

nation, a special task to fulfil. If not so, what were they doing in Africa?" (1975:62).

According to this view, God was responsible for Boer victories, with special tribute being paid to the "Day of the Covenant", the celebration of the battle of Blood River, where a major Boer victory over the Zulus took place. Afrikaner history is seen as sacred, and "the past is therefore guarantee for the future" (Bloomberg 1990:27).

As God's chosen nation, the Afrikaners also felt that they had a duty to spread the word of God in the darkness of Africa. The NGK's Federal Council made the following statement in 1935:

"The church is deeply convinced of the fact that God, in His wise counsel, so ordained it that the first European inhabitants of this southern corner of darkest Africa should be men and women of firm religious convictions, so that they and their posterity could become the bearers of the light of the Gospel to the heathen races of this continent, and therefore considers it the special privilege and responsibility of the DRC in particular to proclaim the Gospel to the heathen of this country" (Bloomberg 1990:27).



To conclude this section, the desire to live beyond a lifetime seems to inform both religious as well as nationalist thinking (especially Afrikaner Nationalism, which is excessively religious in nature). Immortality seems to be a goal as well as a promise within patriarchal structures, which are based on ideas of rationality, linearity and continuity. The incorporation of the feminine only extends to using metaphors of birth, which through sacrifice becomes a male ritual. The emphasis on eternity, which implies an unchanging system, seems to find a parallel in emphasis on "the same". Those in power seem to find a safety in similarity with regards to both their view of the other and their intended

experience of time. The exclusion of change/chaos results in a system of stasis – ironically death itself.

Through these aspirations and beliefs, South African ideology and culture propagated a mythological construct that has left an immeasurable legacy of divisiveness.



## Chapter 3

### Dionysus and the Sacred

Through reference to Bataille, this section seeks to identify the victim of the sacrifice, i.e. to identify the qualities of the Scapegoat. The Scapegoat is antithetical to Christian norms, and seems representative specifically of Bataille's writings on the sacred and death, and, as a result, that which has been categorized with death – eroticism, play, and the abject female mother (as opposed to the fruitful male mother of the first section). Fear of being overwhelmed by the maternal figure plays a large role in sacrifice according to William Beers, and I will attempt to relate this with the strategies of othering employed by Christian Nationalism. Although Dionysus is a male god, as the “effeminate god of madness” (Shlain 1998:141) and “the master magician of pleasure and pain, beauty and cruelty, ecstasy and terror, and creativity and madness” (Shlain 1998:142) he seems intimately linked to the feminine qualities rejected by patriarchal and nationalist thinking.

#### Dionysus

The *Scapegoat* can be read as being a satyr or Dionysus himself, (as well as the Christian Devil), since all appear in goat form according to Frazer (464). Either reading though would point to an association with the vine-god, since satyrs are amongst the god's followers (Zimmerman 1964:234). P.M.C. Forbes Irving discusses Dionysus's status as an outsider amongst the Olympian gods, of whom he is nevertheless a part. The god is a shape-shifter and often presented as effeminate and sometimes dressed in women's clothes (1990:193). In addition Irving writes “he is above all the god of the weak and oppressed, especially women, and an opponent of the established order” (1990:193).

J. E. Zimmerman describes Bacchus as the Roman god of wine, and notes that “Bacchus” is the Roman name for Dionysus (1964:40). He is the son of Zeus and Semele and features in many works written by classical authors, amongst them Euripides, Herodotus and Ovid. In “*The Golden Bough*”, Frazer also states that he was the god of trees and notes his “ecstatic worship, characterized by wild dances, thrilling music and tipsy excess” (1959:386). The cult of Dionysus also re-enacted the death, suffering and resurrection of the god in their sacrifices to him, where the victim was in certain parts of Greece a child, but later a goat and more popularly in Cynaetha a live bull which would be torn to pieces by the participants’ teeth (1959:390). Despite Dionysus’ apparently carefree nature, he wreaks terrible punishments upon those who violate his worship. In Euripides’ *Bacchae* Pentheus persecutes the god and his followers with gruesome consequences: Dionysus lays a spell upon the eyes of Pentheus’ mother, Agave, who in a wild Bacchanalian frenzy tears off her son’s arm before Pentheus is completely dismembered by the rest of Bacchus’ followers (Schwab 1946:66).

The Satyrs are the followers of Bacchus, half-men and half-goats who enjoyed orgies and general lasciviousness and were representative of nature (Zimmerman 1964:234). Frazer notes that they were more specifically wood-spirits, and their goat form appears to be common amongst those creatures associated with the woods (1959:464), which also explains Dionysus’ occasional appearance as a goat (as opposed to a bull, another representation of him). Amongst the Satyrs, the most dedicated to him was Silenus who according to Zimmerman nursed, taught and also followed the god (1964:241).

If the *Scapegoat* is in fact Dionysus, the Greek god forms a striking parallel to Jesus in that Dionysus is also, according to myth, killed and then resurrected. Frazer recounts a few differing versions of the myth but they run along the same lines: soon after his birth the “horned infant” (1959:388) either mounts Zeus’ throne or is appointed to reign in Zeus’s absence. But he is not long on the throne before being attacked by the Titans and finally, although he tries to defend

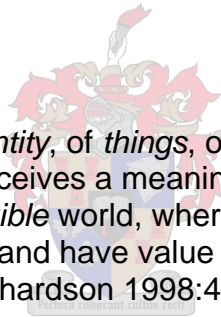


himself by changing shape, killed. There are various accounts of his resurrection, amongst them being pieced together by his mother or having his heart swallowed by Zeus and being born again through Semele.

## Bataille

Similarly to Durkheim, Georges Bataille also saw the world as divided into the realms of the sacred and the profane, but felt that the overwhelming presence of the profane in contemporary society was detrimental to human nature. He put this predominance of the profane which seeks to conquer nature and deny the sacred down to historical forces but especially Christianity, which he felt was in league with the profane (Richardson 1998:39).

He defined the profane as:



“the world of *reason*, of *identity*, of *things*, of duration and calculation. Each thing, in this world, receives a meaning in a durable relation with an other; such is the *intelligible* world, where *perceptible* elements are reduced to operating signs and have value only in view of ulterior possibilities” (Bataille in Richardson 1998:40 – italics in original).

The realm of the profane emphasises continuity, longevity and use: “When, for example, a worker works, he is only concerned about the future, while eroticism [the sacred] is concerned with the present” (1998:220). However necessary the profane may be for the building and maintenance of a society, Bataille felt that its over-emphasis was damaging at the least:

“We no longer seek exaltation or intoxication, but security and comfort. We would like to live as if death no longer existed, as if we could limit the world to useful work and commodities. We are distanced from poetry and its icy violence upsets us. We are reduced to ferment in secret a fear that we no longer dominate, but which remains within us shamefully like a continually upset stomach. Contemptuous of the stakes, witches once sought the terrors of the Sabbaths. They preferred their mad exultation to an assured and

tranquil life. We now prefer calm duration. In the end we have neither” (1998:47).

The essence of the profane is reason, and it is for this reason that Bataille felt it was “the thing which is absolutely external to us, which is absolutely external to what we are when we are alive, when we plunge into the depths of ourselves” (1998:43).

The sacred is “from the first *completely other*...essentially *communion*, communication of dangerous, contagious forces set loose, against which it is necessary to protect the world of useful and reasonable mechanisms of life” (1998:40). It is associated with the erotic, transgression and death. The profane separates humankind from the world by allowing it to control and manipulate it; by the reduction of objects, animals and people to utilitarian things. The sacred allows for immanence with the world:

“The divine was initially grasped in terms of intimacy (of violence, of the scream, of being in eruption, blind and unintelligible, of the dark and malefic *sacred*); if it was transcendent, this was in a provisional way, for the man who acted in the real order but was ritually restored to the intimate order. This secondary transcendence was profoundly different from that of the intelligible world, which remains *forever* separated from the world of the senses” (1998:43).

Sacrifice is a way of mediating between the realms of the profane and sacred. It restores divinity to profane objects. Only that which is useful serves as a sacrificial victim: “What is important is to pass from a lasting order, in which all consumption of resources is subordinated to the need for duration, to the violence of an unconditional consumption; what is important is to leave the world of real things, whose reality derives from a long term operation and never resides in the moment – a world that creates and preserves...[s]acrifice is the antithesis of production”(Bataille, *Theory of Religion* 1992:49). According to Bataille, to sacrifice is to return a thing to a divine, intimate immanence; “[s]acrifice is,

etymologically, merely the production of *sacred* things” (Bataille in Richardson 1998:70).

### The Expiated Body

The representation of the burnt corpse of a wine god, still seeming half-aroused: what can oppose Immortality, Purity and Reason more violently? Death, the body, the senses, madness and sexuality all coalesce in an image of calculated otherness – that which must be expiated. The associations of unbridled libidos and dark sexual acts are part of the identities of the satyr and the demonic, and this is reflected in the appearance of the Scapegoat, who appears entirely naked, unlike the carefully robed Jesus. His sexual nature is flaunted and opposes the chaste Christian work ethic. The half human, half animal appearance speaks of an ease of transgression, inimical to the restrictions and laws governed by the taboos of society. Featherstone discusses Jean Michel Oughourlian’s contention that the demonic is a “monstrous spirit conjured by the other in order to control or possess the self” (307). He states the advantages of this were that such a view could project otherness “beyond the boundary of human sociability towards the exceptional state of super-nature” (307).

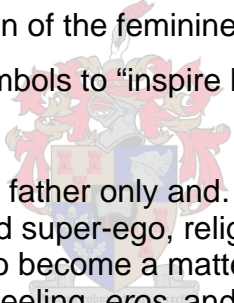
“[B]ecause religious thought sought to define humanity through reference to the sovereign position governed by God, it was seen as acceptable to extend this super-natural sphere and associate aberrant self / other relations with the intrusion of Satanic influence” (308).

### The Imagery of the Feminine within Patriarchal Religion

“If God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him” (F.M.A. Voltaire in Ratcliffe 2006:194)

Joan Chamberlain Engelsman writes in *The Feminine Dimension of the Divine* (1979) on the repression of the feminine within Christianity. Repression is defined by her, in line with Freud's formulation, as "the tendency to 'forget' or screen from memory unpleasant experiences and subsequently to avoid situations and persons that recall those unpleasant memories" (1979:32). It is not a conscious decision, but a "thoughtless reaction" (1979:32). It can affect the growth negatively or be used acceptably. However, the repressed does tend to return to consciousness, since instinctual needs cannot be completely cut off: "Because the normal outlets are closed, the repressed returns in disguised and distorted forms which are totally cut off from conscious control" (1979:32). She adds that "Individuals are not alone subject to this process; whole cultures or peoples can become involved in repression" (1979:33).

She maintains that the repression of the feminine within patriarchal religion leads to divisiveness and offers no symbols to "inspire human wholeness" (1979:40).



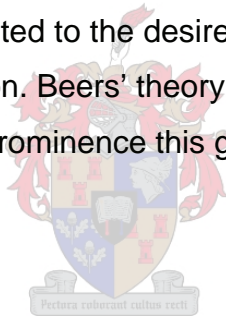
Where the god is male and father only and...is associated with law, order, civilization, *logos* and super-ego, religion – and the pattern of life it encourages – tends to become a matter of these only, to the neglect of nature, instinct, feeling, *eros*, and what Freud called the 'id'. Such a religion, so far from 'binding together' and integrating, may all too easily become an instrument of repression, and so of individual and social disintegration" (Victor White in Engelsman 1979:40).

The view that women are secondary seems to have resulted in, within patriarchal religion, a strong relation between women and evil. Erich Neumann goes so far as to state that "patriarchal culture is founded on matricide and that its basic sacrifice is the slain mother" (Neumann in Engelsman 1979:35). This murder is expressed as the need to "negate, exclude, devalue, and repress the 'maternal-feminine' world which represents the unconscious" (Neumann in Engelsman 1979:35). The associations of nature and the body with the feminine lead to them being seen as sources of sin as well. "The undeniable fact that all persons are born of women is explained as a 'pollution brought about by...original sin and the

blame for this evil is shifted to the maternal feminine' "(Neumann in Engelsman 1979:35). Women are seen as seducers, leading men into sin and alienating them from God the Father. They are "burdened with the curse of Eve" (1979:39) and are frequently described as witches. Their sexual power over men makes them objects of fear.

Whereas the manifestations of such dichotomies are radically evident, the complex antagonisms that lie disconcertingly close beneath the surface of culture are open to infinite interpretation.

The fear of the other leads to a need to separate from it. The sacrifice theory of William Beers places emphasis on sacrifice as a male activity, and the relations men form to maternal figures. He sees in the activity both an attraction and repulsion; the former seems related to the desire for wholeness where the latter is caused by fear of disintegration. Beers' theory will be discussed in relation to Afrikaner Nationalism, and the prominence this gave to splitting the Afrikaner from non-Afrikaner.



### William Beers

Beers uses the self-psychology of Heinz Kohut to form a gendered theory of sacrifice. He states that "sacrifice embodies male and male-identified anxiety and men's efforts to control and acquire the experienced power of women" (in Carter 2003:386). Similarly to most writers on sacrifice, he maintains that it performs the functions of joining as well as separating. His focus is specifically on men, since he sees sacrifice as a male dominated activity, and throughout his focus is on the (male) subject and his relation to the "maternal self-object" (the mother).

Beers writes that men are more likely to suffer from anxiety resulting from a threat to self-esteem than women, because their experience of the "maternal self-object" is that of an other, whereas women see this figure as an extension of

themselves (1992:138). He goes so far as to say that when threatened, women respond with the statement “I am not helpless because I am connected” (1992:139), but a male response is typically “I am not threatened because I am the most powerful” (1992:139). When confronted by marginality – that is “the states of ambiguity that exist amidst all social structures” (1992:138, 139) – women seem able to deal more effectively, with a sense of *communitas* being one of the results (1992:140). The dread men experience when confronted by marginality Beers defines with reference to Søren Kierkegaard (1813 – 1855). He writes that it involves both desire and disgust, and is, in fact, the destruction of subject and object. The threat of self-disintegration, which comes with the blurring of distinctions offered by marginality, “creates both the desire for and disgust of merger, as well as desire for and disgust of the self as separate” (1992:139).

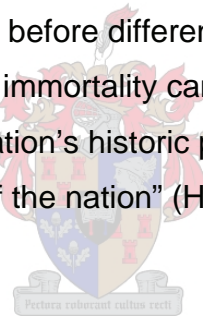
Within this framework, Beers sees four expressive functions of sacrifice. The first three will be discussed in relation to nationalism, since the fourth has already been mentioned in the previous section:

1. The “desire for merger with the idealized self-object” (1992:140) - alimentary or joining sacrifice.
2. The “dread of such a merger through the act of separation” (1992:140) – expiatory sacrifice.
3. The “rage and violence surrounding the disappointment in the merger with and separation from the self-object” (1992:140, 141).
4. The “symbolic transfer and transformation of omnipotence from the maternal self-object to the grandiose male self” (1992:141), which is seen in the male envy of the ability to give birth, and the creation of ritual to fulfill this need.

### 1. The desire for merger

Beers refers to Lévi-Strauss, who writes that sacrifice brings “two symbolic orders or domains into the same symbolic proximity” (1992:141). He compares the realms of the profane and the sacred to that of the self and the maternal (omnipotent) self-object respectively. The attempt to merge the divine with the human is mirrored by the self-object function of connecting the self with its omnipotent self-object. As classifications become less distinct, they become more connected. By bringing these two domains into the same proximity, power can be transferred from the divine to the human through the mediation of a victim (1992:142).

The emphasis on life and maternal imagery discussed in the previous chapter seem evident here. The immortality sought after is a return to the immanence of one-ness with the mother, a state before differentiation and the awareness of death. The desire for merger and immortality can also be seen in the way nationalism “relates man to his nation’s historic past and identifies him and his descendants with the future life of the nation” (Hayes 1960:16).



## 2. The dread of merger

There exists also a fear of merging because the self fears its own dedifferentiation and fragmentation into nothing, which “can be expressed as the fear of loss of power, control, autonomy and/or meaning” (Beers 1992:142). The fear of the self-object, in this case, leads to its being seen as dangerous or polluting, and the anxiety the self experiences leads to a need to separate. “The sacrifice then functions as a means of splitting off ‘not-me’ parts from idealized reality” (1992:143). According to Beers, these “not-me” parts are killed or scapegoated in expiation sacrifices. “Because men presumably classify reality, the split off parts almost invariably include those experiences having to do with women, sex and childbirth” (1992:143).

### 3. Rage and violence

The violence found in sacrifice is due to the feelings of rage and disappointment because of the failure to identify with the self-object. Beers notes though that although maternal identification may not be adequately confirmed, attempts to identify with paternal figures most likely will. Nevertheless, “what is internalized through the male self-objects includes the self-objects’ own internalized experience of failed identification with the maternal self-objects” (1992:144). Similarly to Jay, Beers finds that the complex ritual violence that is found in sacrifice and performed by men, “is a way for men to identify with each other as men, and to separate from women” (1992:144).

### Nationalism and Fear

Shin and Schwartz write that “collective identity in all forms, and patriotism in particular, requires the constant fabrication of concepts of ‘self’ and ‘other’” (2003:420). The formation of a collective awareness involves the contrasting of characteristics of “us” with “them”, in order to highlight the traits that belong to the self / same. In the case of Afrikaner nationalism, fear that the other could fragment the self has played a large role (Degenaar 1982:51).

The fear of dedifferentiation or fragmentation Beers writes of seems particularly relevant to the approach of the Afrikaner to identity formation. Degenaar discusses a “siege culture” which “refers to the Afrikaner’s feeling of being threatened, and his fear of domination results in the continual withdrawal into a laager to protect his identity” (1982:51). He continues:

“The ‘frontier mentality’ thesis holds that the continued conflict with an ethnically distinct group on the frontier over a long period of time is likely to lead to a ‘frontier fear’ which becomes part of the culture of that group. This fear of other groups manifested itself in the Afrikaner group’s feeling threatened, originally by indigenous races and by the British government, later by the



concept of a broadly based white South African nation, and today by the presence of Coloureds, Asians and the numerically superior Africans. This resulted in the Afrikaner's realisation that in order to keep his separate identity intact he had to keep a safe distance between himself and those who threatened his identity" (1982:51).

Part of this process of separation was the ideology expounded by Christian Nationalism, which Bloomberg writes, was a "theological defence of Afrikaner Nationalism, and of Afrikaner hegemony in politics" (1990:1). It combined the idea of the "Chosen Nation" with "the Right's stress on authority, hierarchy, discipline, privilege and elitist leadership, as well as glorification of God, nation, family, blood and the cult of force...[and]...couples this with a rejection of liberalism, Marxism, 'sickly sentimental humanism' and the equality of humankind regardless of race" (1990:1). God was viewed as "'Hammadibil', the original divider or separator of things" (1990:13) and a number of texts were frequently quoted from the Bible in support. According to Bloomberg, probably the most key was the account of the erection of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, where God divides the one existing language into many, and then scatters the people across the earth to form new nations (1990:14). This was presented as divine sanction for the existence of nations and by implication, ethnic groups. Bloomberg quotes F.J.M. Potgieter: "God according to the Scriptures, mercifully intervened, with the Babelist confusion of tongues, and revealed that His will for this dispensation was pluriformity...in the ethnic field" (1990:15).

The Tomlinson Commission (1955), which first outlined the plans for "tribal homelands" (1990:29), stated that Europeans must

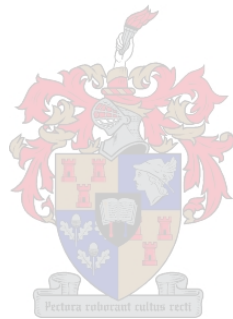
"remain in Africa as the principal bearers of the Christian religion and Christian civilisation. The European *must* be here for the sake of the aborigines as well...in consequence of the principles of the Christian religion and Ethics it is the duty of peoples who stand on a higher level, to watch over the interests of underdeveloped peoples. Christian guardianship rests on biblical grounds" (in Bloomberg 1990:29).

There was a belief that although some nations were inherently superior or inferior to others, each had a divine mission. Dr (later Prof) G. Eloff wrote that “non-highly civilized persons” had to be society’s drawers of water and hewers of wood” (1990:17). Conversely, the vocation of the Afrikaner was “to rule, to Christianise, to civilize” (L.J. du Plessis in Bloomberg 1990:17). Bloomberg maintains that inter-marriage, cosmopolitanism, internationalism and the like were seen as anti-Christian and as sinful steps towards a “pre-Babelist unity” (1990:17).

It would appear that the need for “white unity vis-à-vis the ‘black peril’” (Degenaar 1982:67) has at least some basis in fear of the other. Although this fear was perhaps not originally pathological but rather a reaction to real instances of threat, it may be said to have over time become part of the culture, perhaps similarly to Beers’ description of identification with a father figure resulting in the internalization of the father figure’s failed identification with the mother. The consequences of such a fear led to a theological defence of an ideology which “magnifies disparities, boundaries, divisions and barriers, thereby rejecting all doctrines of humankind’s solidarity or unity” (Bloomberg 1990:30).

The focus in this chapter has been on the appearance of the Scapegoat itself, and what this implies. The “feminine” characteristics of Dionysus, such as the body, nature and the present oppose rational patriarchal systems of perpetuation and within a dualist mode of thinking, are associated with death. The fear of other, which seems linked to fear of self-fragmentation and loss of identity (the other as death) results in a need to separate from it. Within a patriarchal framework this results in an association of women with sin and pollution. Similarly, the Christian Nationalist labels anything not identical to the white Afrikaner as a threat to his identity. David Bakan puts it succinctly: “When

separations are made and parts denied, diabolical qualities are attributed to the denied parts, rather than to the separation itself” (in Engelsman 1979:39).



## Chapter 4

### Impossible Gifts

The aim of this section is to investigate two possible readings of Botha's *Scapegoat*, using the distinctions made between life (the cross, immortality, reason) and death (Dionysus, the present/atemporality, the body) in the preceding chapters. It seems that Botha's act of inversion offers both a view of the contradictions within a sacrificial worldview, as well as a possible way of moving beyond it. For the former, Freud's idea of sacrifice put forward in *Totem and Taboo* seems to point to the compromise that Christianity has to make with its own demonisation of the body. The latter was explored using Nietzsche's writing in *The Genealogy of Morals*, but expanded upon by referring to Derrida's notion of a "pure gift". The "pure gift" refers to the im/possibility of moving beyond the sacrificial economy, towards a giving without debt. However, for this to occur, a sacrifice must be made of sacrifice, and in the move to destroy it, it is recreated.

#### Freud

Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) forms a theory of sacrifice based on patricide. In *Totem and Taboo* he writes that in the earliest state of society "there is a violent and jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up" (1986:141). He recounts a primal narrative where, together, the sons took revenge on their father by killing and eating him: "[t]he violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength" (1986:142). However the subsequent guilt experienced by

the sons resulted in them treasuring the father and his wishes. The clan totem acted now as a substitute for the father and there was a ban on killing it, as well as a ban on intercourse with the freed women. He writes that “They thus created out of their filial guilt the two fundamental taboos of totemism which for that very reason inevitably corresponded to the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex” (1986:143).

Freud maintains “The totemic system was, as it were, a covenant with the father, in which he promised them everything that a childish imagination may expect from a father – protection, care and indulgence – while on their side they undertook to respect his life, that is to say, not to repeat the deed which had brought destruction on their real father” (1986:144). He sees filial guilt and the attempts at appeasing the father as the source of all religion. (1986:145).

Sacrifice stems from the ambivalence of the emotions of remorse and triumph over the father. “Thus it became a duty to repeat the crime of the parricide again and again in the sacrifice of the totem animal, whenever, as a result of the changing conditions of life, the cherished fruit of the crime – appropriation of the paternal attributes – threatened to disappear” (1986:145). The father figure appears in sacrifice as both the god and the sacrificial victim. (1986:147). “The importance which is ascribed to sacrifice lies in the fact that it offers satisfaction to the father for the outrage inflicted on him in the same act in which that deed is commemorated” (1986:150).

Freud states that the self-sacrifice of the son in Christian myth points to the need to expiate murder specifically writing that “self-sacrifice points back to blood guilt”. However,

“the very deed in which the son offered the greatest possible atonement to the father brought him at the same time to the attainment of his wishes *against* the father. He himself became God,

beside, or, more correctly, in place of, the father. A son-religion replaced the father-religion" (1986:154).

It is worth noting that Freud makes only males responsible for the creation of religion. "Relations with women are the opposite of the social order" writes Jay in response to *Totem and Taboo*. If the associations of chaos and the feminine with Dionysus discussed previously are correct, then Botha is perhaps implying that this is what is sacrificed - reading along with Freud – to itself. The contemporary god is in fact sexuality and chaos, but that in a conservative society this remains hypocritically the sacrificial victim. The Scapegoat is perhaps representative of the inner desires of society, those which are most subversive to its structure and continuity, and so that which must be expiated. At the same time it could be said to be the goal of society, as exemplified by the images of sexuality and consumption propagated by the mass media. The fulfillment of desire drives contemporary society, but the very thing it aims towards is taboo.

If in the act of sacrificing himself the son resembles, in fact becomes, his father, perhaps the work also implies that by resembling a demonic Dionysus, the creator of the universe is also the creator of death. Slavoj Žižek asks the question: "Is it that Christ had to sacrifice himself to pay for the sins of his father who created such an imperfect world?" (2001:6). He relates the beliefs of a group of Gnostics called the Cathars, who saw the Devil as the creator of the material universe and God as infinitely good but unable to create anything. According to them:

"The Devil is able to create, but is a sterile creator; this sterility is confirmed by the fact that the Devil succeeded in producing a wretched universe in which, despite all his efforts, he never contrived anything lasting. Man is thus a divided creature: as an entity of flesh and blood, he is a creation of the Devil. However, the Devil was not able to create spiritual Life, so he was supposed to have asked the good God for help; in his bounty, God agreed to assist the Devil, this depressingly sterile creator, by breathing a soul into the body of lifeless clay. The Devil succeeded in perverting this spiritual flame by causing the Fall, i.e. by drawing

the first couple into the carnal union which consummated their position as the creatures of matter” (2001:7).

The subsequent massacre of the Cathars by The Catholic Church was not, according to Žižek, because of their “radical Otherness(the dualist belief in the Devil as the counter-agent to the good God; the condemnation of every procreation and fornication, i.e. the disgust at Life in its cycle of generation and corruption), but because these ‘strange’ beliefs which seemed so shocking to the Catholic orthodoxy ‘were precisely those that had the appearance of stemming logically stemming from orthodox contemporary doctrine’” (2001:7,8 – capitals in original). The Cathars extended the Catholic notion of sexual relations as sinful, of marriage being “ultimately a compromise with human weakness” (2001:8) to its reasonable conclusion, and by so doing exposed the inherent compromise with the original message that the Church had made (2001:8).

The *Scapegoat* seems to interrogate this compromise and question the changes in doctrine Christianity has had to adopt in order to survive. Žižek writes that “in order for an ideological edifice to occupy the hegemonic place and legitimise the existing power relations, it HAS to compromise its founding radical message – and the ultimate ‘heretics’ are simply those who reject this compromise, sticking to its original message” (2001:8 – capitals in original).

### Debt and the Impossible Gift

In *The Genealogy of Morals* (2003) Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) criticizes what he calls the “bad conscience” of Christianity. He links the development of the “bad conscience” with the repression of the natural and instinctual in humankind as a result of the advent of social organization (2003:57). He describes it as “the suffering of men from the disease called man, as the result of a violent breaking from his animal past, the result, as it were, of a spasmodic plunge into a new environment and new conditions of existence, the result of a

declaration of war against the old instincts, which up to that time had been the staple of his power, his joy, his formidableness” (2003:57). In this newly acquired state of organization, each generation believed that it was only because of the previous generation that it existed, and hence a sense of obligation and owing of a debt to the ancestors was created (especially “towards the earliest, which founded the family”)(2003:60). Nietzsche maintains that the more powerful a race became, the greater the debt was felt towards the ancestors, that “the ancestors of the most powerful races must, through the growing fear that they exercise on the imaginations, grow themselves into monstrous dimensions, and become relegated to the gloom of a divine mystery that transcends imagination – the ancestor becomes at last necessarily transfigured into a *god*” (2003:60 – italics in original). Similarly, the feeling of owing or debt to a deity has grown in accordance with the growth in belief and worship of a god (2003:61).

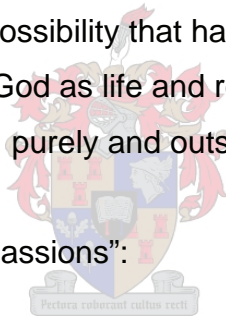
In the Christian “economy of salvation” (Caputo 1997:216) the system of exchange reaches a frenetic point where the sins, debts and guilt of humankind are “so infinite, so bottomless that only God himself can pay it off, and all this under the beautiful name of ‘gift’ (*gratia*)” (Caputo 1997:216). Nietzsche describes this as “that stroke of genius called Christianity” (2003:62) and describes it as follows:

God personally immolating himself for the debt of man, God paying himself personally out of a pound of his own flesh, God as the one being who can deliver man from what man had become unable to deliver himself – the creditor playing scapegoat for his debtor, from *love* (can you believe it), from love of his debtor!...(2003:62).

In light of this, the inversion occurring in “Scapegoat” raises an idea beyond that of sacrificing the diabolical for the sake of what is perceived “holy”. If sacrificing God pays off the debt to God, then sacrificing the Devil might pay off a debt to the Devil. But what can be owed to the Devil?



In the preceding chapters, emphasis has been placed on the continuing, immortal qualities attributed to God, and the ephemeral, momentary and death-bringing associations of evil. Within a Christian framework, death and evil could even perhaps be said to be synonymous, whereas God has been conceptualized as identical with life and continuity. Debt however requires the presence of time; debt is incurred in the past, owed in the present and perhaps repaid in the future. But if evil is defined as chaotic, a-temporal and outside of time, a creditor/debtor sacrificial economy cannot exist with it. Satan is then sacrificed for *nothing* and his sacrifice to himself is a wholly pure gift, removed from any economy, notion of exchange or idea of perpetuity. If the Christian conception of God and Satan's relations to time were as simple as that, the implications of the work would be quite radical: the rational God appears as a merciless enslaver, and the intuitive Devil as the being capable of pure morality. Both's inversion shows that it is not an inversion at all, but rather a possibility that has been obscured by the shadow of sacrifice, i.e. a conception of God as life and reason only limits the potential for being able to give unreasonably, purely and outside of dialectics.



Caputo quotes from Derrida's "Passions":

"A gesture remains a-moral if it falls short of affirmation of an unlimited, incalculable or uncalculating giving, without any possible reappropriation, by which one must measure the ethicity or morality of ethics), if it was accomplished out of *duty* in the sense of 'duty of restitution', out of duty which would come down to the discharge of a debt...Pure morality must exceed all calculation" (1997:221).

He extends this idea and writes that

"Doing should be (*doit*) giving, if it is to be duly responsible. The idea would be to get to responsibility or duty that is released from the economy of debt, which is enslaving, self-serving, insulting, and ultimately self-destructive" (1997:221).

Botha's work seems to point to a way beyond the "bad conscience" and infinite guilt of Christianity, towards the "pure gift" of Derrida:

"the gift without exchange, without return, outside the dialectical circle, which makes a holocaust of its holocaust, burns its gift-giving behind it and disappears as a gift. The pure gift, *don pur*, would be perfectly consumed in the sacrificial fire (*pyr*), in perfect purification, pyr-ification, which would make a sacrifice even of sacrifice" (Caputo1997:360).

Botha's work addresses the attempt at a sacrifice of sacrifice, the sculpture itself having been made from burnt wood, as if the Scapegoat has been set alight. It would appear though that the attempt is self-defeating, since the action imitates exactly what it means to destroy. Dennis King Keenan discusses the impossibility of this gesture, postulating that it eternally repeats itself:

"The truth is eternally postponed in a *necessary* sacrificial gesture that can only repeat itself, thereby rendering itself *useless*. In the attempt to move beyond nihilism, that is, in the attempt to negate (or sacrifice) nihilism, one repeats the negation characteristic of nihilism" (2003:183).

It seems that the challenge of stepping outside of a sacrificial framework "produces an interminable step/not beyond, an incessant step beyond that eternally returns" (2003:183). In the moment of escaping the system, a new identical system is created, and so the moment of emancipation is also the moment of re-enslavement. Even though the "Scapegoat" is burnt, it is not destroyed, the form still holds and the sacrifice is still apparent. The very idea of sacrifice itself is flawed and perhaps, eternal.

## Chapter 5

### My own work

I used three stories set in South Africa as a departure point for my own work, which is mainly concerned with gender and identity construction. I attempted to explore where I stand in relation to concepts of white South African masculinity and, in the process, a personal mythography was formed featuring the characters in these stories as my alter egos.

The first of the narratives is the internationally known legend of the Flying Dutchman, and the second and third are Afrikaner folk tales I was told as a child: the stories of Racheltjie de Beer and Wolraad Woltemade. My alter egos are the Flying Dutchman, the brother of Racheltjie de Beer and Wolraad Woltemade. I am a white South African male and this led to the choice of characters: they are all white and male, and the tales all take place in South Africa.

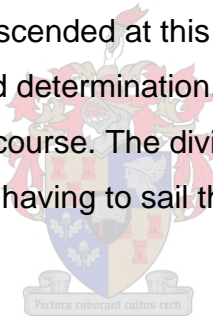


All the tales deal with death in one way or another: the Dutchman shoots a man then attempts to kill an angel; Racheltjie dies so her brother may live and Wolraad drowns whilst saving passengers on a sinking ship. These narratives were roughly divided into an inferno, purgatory and paradise structure using the type of death as my reasoning. The Dutchman kills, Racheltjie's brother watches her kill herself and Wolraad is killed. The importance of sacrifice to identity formation of individuals and communities has helped to frame my thoughts on the theme of death running through all the narratives. I am interested in the power structures formed by patriarchal logic, but more specifically in what needs to be sacrificed in order to maintain it, with the sacrifice of the feminine being of particular significance.

## The narratives

### 1. The Flying Dutchman

The Flying Dutchman is generally believed to have been a Captain van der Decken, who in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century set sail around the Cape of Good Hope. His ship encountered a terrible storm and the passengers begged him to turn around. The Captain however refused and retreated to his cabin where he drank and smoked. Upon hearing a commotion outside the Dutchman discovered that there was a mutiny aboard and he, without hesitation, shot the leader of the uprising. According to legend an angel descended at this point, and the angel ordered the Captain to turn around. With mad determination, the Dutchman shot at the angel, fully resolved to continue on his course. The divinity could obviously not be killed, and it cursed the Dutchman with having to sail the seas of the world without rest till Doomsday.



In the drawings he has been approached as a kind of perverse Nietzschean superman, but also as an authoritarian, identifiable with state/father. The distinguishing characteristic of his narrative is his insistence on following his desired plan, despite the consequences. I have associated him with negative action: his sacrifices are all of compassionate values, generally regarded as feminine, for an abstract and probably economic goal. They are expiatory, since he sacrifices that which is other to him. It seems that his identity is so bound up with his predetermined intentions that anything which diverts from them becomes a threat to his identity. His rejection of feminine values is accompanied by an over-rigid assertion of his autonomy. The fear of being overwhelmed by the mother and the accompanying rage that William Beers writes of seems to be especially relevant here.

The Dutchman is generally recognisable by his facial hair, which was originally drawn as a beard but which later became a moustache. I also used Rayban sunglasses, military insignia and erections to signify his presence.

## 2. Racheltjie de Beer

The story of Racheltjie de Beer takes place in the Western Cape, near Ceres, where one terribly cold winter Racheltjie and her little brother were out looking for a lost sheep. Despite their efforts the sheep could not be found, and it soon grew quite dark. The siblings decided to return home, but realised in time that they were actually completely lost. It was snowing however, and it seemed that if they did not reach cover soon, they would both die. Racheltjie found an anthill, and hollowed it out to make a shelter, but the anthill was unfortunately just large enough to fit her little brother. The girl decided to sacrifice herself for her brother's sake and dressed him in her clothes, put him in the anthill and lay, now naked, in front of it in the snow to block the wind. The story relates how she sang songs until she eventually died. In the morning a rescue party found her brother still alive.

Even as a child I recall having suspicions about the presentation of this story, which always showed Racheltjie as a beautiful martyr. For this body of work I decided to approach her sacrifice not as an act of heroism but rather as an act of murder by the dominant ideologies. It seemed unnatural that a child would be so willing, even eager to die, and the fact that she dies in order for her brother to live points to a well-instilled patriarchal logic. Nancy Jay's generation theory of sacrifice was particularly influential on my reading of this tale, since not only does the daughter die for the son, but the son ends up dressed in woman's clothes: it seemed an almost literal depiction of male reproductive envy. The pre-eminence of social continuity over biological continuity is clear but quite ironic, since Racheltjie's name is well known but her brother has remained anonymous.

The brother was used as an alter ego and his main trait seemed to be that of passivity. The character is complex however, since although he apathetically watches his sister freeze to death, he is also very young and innocent. I imagined him to be sensitive but paralysed with fear and incomprehension. He seems to be in limbo on two levels: as a naïve child but also a responsible person; and as a boy dressed as a girl. By being smothered in her clothes he is completely surrounded by her presence, but this will paradoxically lead to her absence. In contrast to the Flying Dutchman, he kills her by embracing her. He is an apathetic murderer, but also a paralysed innocent. In the drawings he appears either swamped in clothes, or as the “Penis de Milo”, an armless smirking infant.

### 3. Wolraad Woltemade

Also set in 17<sup>th</sup> century Cape, this legend tells of how Wolraad Woltemade was bringing his son lunch, when he saw his son standing with a crowd on the shore watching a ship sink. Appalled by the apathy of the onlookers, Wolraad urged his horse on into the sea towards the ship. He made it to the ship and back six times, each time rescuing two to three people. On his seventh trip however, he was dragged down by an overwhelming mass of frightened people and was drowned with his horse.

Wolraad appears to be a hero and the obvious contrast to the Dutchman. He is committed to action as well as compassion and I have attempted to picture him as the potential of a resolution. My creative process is often quite intuitive and it seems that I do not in fact identify with him, but rather with the hope of the crowd for an unimagined answer. I have used his relation to the drowning crowd as an entry point, in that he does not exist in a relation of fear or desire to them, unlike the other two characters. He gives freely outside of a sacrificial economy. Unfortunately the crowd is not able to reciprocate.

The hell/ purgatory/ heaven structure did help me to clarify the separate threads, but as the drawings developed the characters started to inhabit each other's spaces. At this time I became interested in the theories of René Girard, which state that mimesis is critical to identity formation and the phenomenon of sacrifice.

### Girard

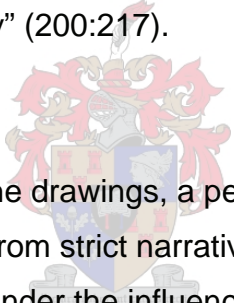
According to Girard's theory, all human behaviour is learned and "all learning is based on imitation" (1987:7). Identity is formed by the subject miming the other and so "if human beings suddenly ceased imitating, all forms of culture would vanish" (1987:7). Crucial to Girard's model is the understanding that the while the subject desires the other or to be like the other, the other is also in a state of desire, attempting to model itself too.

"Rivalry does not arise because of the fortuitous convergence of two desires on a single object; rather *the subject desires the object because the rival desires it*. In desiring an object the rival alerts the subject to the desirability of the object. The rival, then, serves as a model for the subject, not only in secondary matters such as style and opinions but also, and more essentially, in regard to desires." (Girard 1977:145)

The antagonists involved in the rivalry become gradually more fascinated with each other and the object is forgotten. As the rivalry intensifies, the rivals become doubles of each other and "a desperate struggle for recognition and mastery begins" (Featherstone 2001:307). According to Carter, this tension cannot be sustained and it will inevitably lead to violence (2003:240), which is exorcised from the community by means of a scapegoat.

Pamela Sue Anderson traces the influence of Girard on Julia Kristeva's model of subject formation, and finds that Kristeva too sees that "the primary identification of the child is not with an object but with what offers itself to the child as a model"

(2000:221). The emergence into subjectivity confronts the child with “a radical emptiness of being” (2000:221) as the child learns that the father-figure does not want it but another. The break with the pre-linguistic in Kristeva’s view is founded on a murder, specifically matricide, as the mother becomes the abject. According to Anderson, Girard does not look into sexual differences since he sees “sexuality as orientated towards difference, while mimetic desire is directed towards sameness” (2000:223). Despite Girard and Kristeva’s differences on this point however, they both seem insistent that mimesis and sacrifice underlies the foundation of human consciousness. According to Stacy Keltner Kristeva sees in the subject gaining access to language and therefore sociability within the structure of a contract “a constitutive violence that Kristeva terms sacrifice” (102). Anderson states that “just as violence lies at the origins of collective identity, violence according to Kristeva [and by implication Girard] lies in the nascent subject’s emergence into society” (200:217).



During the process of creating the drawings, a personal mythography developed and that there was a departure from strict narrative interpretations. The blending of “character spaces” became, under the influence of Girard and my interest in the production of desire and identity (as well as my sense of humour), a blending of the characters themselves. The interaction of characters soon led to imitation and impersonation as well as the doubling of certain characters. It became evident that limiting the connotations and values to a specific one would perhaps be restrictive, and that by being playful, I would be more successful in my explorations of identity formation.

This approach extended to one of the main concerns of the work, which is the sacrifice of the feminine. The feminine manifested itself as an idiosyncratic form of Jung’s anima which sometimes appears as a bird, at other times as a ghost. In the tale of the Flying Dutchman it is the angel he kills, in the story of Racheltjie it is Racheltjie herself as well as her brother, and in Wolraad’s story it is manifested



as birds or as an attack of tulips. None of these is meant literally or analogically since the aim is to be evocative rather than didactic.

The personal mythography from which the drawings are derived is obviously quite idiosyncratic and often contradictory. The structure and separations which have been discussed above are not conceptualised therefore in as clear terms when I am working, and although it might seem that there is a sense of progression or linearity to the works, they are intended to form a cross-referencing organic unit, rather than a journey from a to b.

Ultimately the relationship between the theory/theories, the written and spoken narratives, and the creative impulses which yielded my drawings is not direct, but juxtapositional. The drawings were conceived intuitively rather than academically or methodologically.

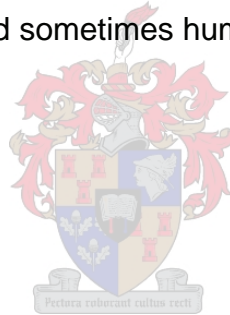
### Materials and methods

I decided on drawing since I felt most comfortable in this medium and the immediacy of it allows for the realisation of spontaneous impulses. The large drawings (those measuring roughly 1.5m x 1m) are done in charcoal and oil paint on paper. When it came to working on a smaller scale however, the physical size of the charcoal sticks did not allow for the mark I was looking for, and ink and monoprints were used instead.

The role of destruction in the creative process fascinates me, and I reached a point where I wanted to sacrifice the drawings themselves. Although theoretically this would not be practical since the work would then have to be utterly destroyed as well as undocumented, creating the signs of a sacrifice of a drawing seemed possible. This led to the first “car-prints”, where a Mazda 323 was used as a printing press. Woodcuts were made and half-finished drawings were soaked and driven over. Although the initial impulse was destructive, the idea also arose

out of a search for new marks and a frustration and fascination with the surface of the paper. The woodcuts were also quite decorative, and there is an enjoyable ambivalence of something “pretty” arising from a damaging and seemingly devaluing process.

As the drawing and creative process itself developed, a cross-fertilisation process took place with the theory. Although I did not want a too literal relationship between the practical and the theory, it seems as if the latter did enable a certain “sacrificial way of thinking” to permeate the work. My own mythography blends the narratives and invents protagonists and it is representative of my own voice within the established version of the tales. Through the license I have taken with them I have aimed to add a layer of self-awareness, critical reflection and sometimes humour to my personal and cultural exploration.



## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

The aim of this text has been to look at the possibilities and meanings opened up by using theories of sacrifice from diverse fields and applying them to Botha's iconic inversion. Through the discussion of issues raised, I hoped to create a context for approaching my practical work, as opposed to an "explanation" of it. The intention was to let the theory inform the practice, but not limit it. I decided not to include illustrations of my own work since the work is intuitive in nature and not strictly derived from a particular theoretical framework.

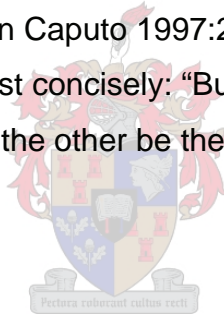
The text itself is an exploration of ideas that stimulate and interest me, and because of this, there was no initial intention of arriving at a definitive conclusion or "final word". Despite this however, all the themes seemed related, sometimes quite intimately: Schüssler Fiorenza states that "Nationalism, gender, and religion are not separate, distinct discourses: they inform and construct each other" (2005:111). She continues:

Nationalist religious movements are basically political movements that use cultural and religious traditions as symbolic border guards. Gender symbols, control of wo/men, the well-being of the heterosexual patriarchal family, appeals to religious scripture and laws, specific cultural codes of dress and behaviour - all these become central to the maintenance of traditional values and the construction of national identity. Such national/religious identity is rhetorically constructed and often in the interest of hegemony and the control of wo/men" (2005:112).

Botha's sculpture interrogates grand narratives, and by his act of inversion, questions how the other comes to be defined as "the other", and what such a separation entails. His methodology of using a kind of "meta-myth" distances the

viewer from narratives that present themselves as truths. This reflexivity and awareness of cultural construct is evident again in the depiction of the *Scapegoat* as burnt – sacrificed, but still present. As the title *Premonition of War* indicates, the sacrifice remains. One cannot separate from the act of separation without repeating it.

Perhaps a tentative solution lies in, instead of sacrificing/giving in order to separate, rather, giving without expectation. Caputo writes that according to Derrida “[w]e owe the other something but it goes against the grain of his analysis to say that what we owe the other is in duty bound, like a Kantian imperative” (1997:220). To reuse a quote of Derrida: “A gesture remains a-moral...if it was accomplished out of *duty* in the sense of ‘duty of restitution’, out of duty which would come down to the discharge of a debt...Pure morality must exceed all calculation” (Derrida in Caputo 1997:221). Ultimately, perhaps Caputo's question phrases it most concisely: “But to let me give, to let me give to the other in such a way as to let the other be the other: is that not love?” (1997:221).



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