

# Apartheid in Crisis: Lacan and a Contemporary Afrikaans Play

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The topic of this paper is Apartheid in crisis during the eighties as reflected in Pieter Fourie's play *Die koggelaar* (1988). As some commentators saw this play as a reflection of the so-called Afrikaner psyche, a Lacanian perspective on it seems an interesting avenue to explore<sup>1</sup>.

## Background

From a broad socio-historical perspective, the eighties was a rather dramatic time for South-Africa and for the Afrikaner specifically. These years started with a tremendous drought that scarred the country for years to come. As in a Greek tragedy this crisis in nature foreshadowed, as it were, the economic and socio-political predicaments that were to come.

During the mid-eighties it became clear that the South African state was on the verge of bankruptcy. Paramount were three causes: the cost of maintaining Apartheid, the war on, and within, the borders of Namibia and Angola, and the sanctions, embargoes and boycotts by the international community. This economic state of affairs led to the realisation by the leaders of the National Party that Apartheid was doomed to fail. Accordingly a paradigm shift became evident in their political rhetoric: they were beginning to sound more and more like their official opposition, the Progressive Federal Party and later the Democratic Party. The result of this shift drove the splitting and splintering of the National Party, then already

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under way, to a head. After forty years of monolithic rule, this party, serving mainly Afrikaner interests, was falling apart.

Socially and culturally this political crisis found its way into the family life and religious denominations of the Afrikaner. Strife broke out within the community of especially the NG-church, up to then one of the strongest cultural and political bonding mechanisms of the Afrikaner. Like the National Party it also became subject to scission from within. This fissure sometimes forked as far down as the basis of Afrikaner unity, the extended and domestic family. Political strife between family members led to alienation and the breaking off of family bonds. The aggression let loose within these families sometimes became pathological and ended in family murder and suicide. Noticeable about the newspaper reports covering these domestic tragedies was the fact that most of them happened within Afrikaner families.

The rending apart of Afrikaner politics and culture brought the Afrikaner's whole *weltanschauung* in crisis. The socio-psychological effects of this crisis were *inter alia* disorientation, uncertainty, anxiety and fear of the future. It is therefore not surprising that aspects of this critical stage in the history of the Afrikaner were reflected and refracted by some Afrikaans plays written and performed during those years, the most outstanding of them probably being Reza de Wet's *Diepe grond* (1986) and her *Nag, Generaal* (1988); D. Opperman's *Stille nag* (1989); Pieter Fourie's *ek, Anna van Wyk* (1986) and his *Die koggelaar* (1988).

The latter play was chosen because it dramatises most convincingly the trauma the racist Afrikaner psyche went through during the middle and late eighties.

The writing of this play was completed in 1986 and it was performed in all the major cultural centres of South Africa during 1987-1989. Within the context of the play, the word *koggelaar* means *inter alia* a person or personified figure who mocks, taunts, challenges, derides, provokes, etc. The scene is that of a Karoo farm in the grip of drought. The protagonist is Boet Cronjé, a typical Afrikaner *boer* (farmer). The antagonists are the drought, God and the racial other. The intermediaries are Boet's father Ben, his mother Beta, his wife Anna, their son Little Ben, the 'coloured' farm-hand Anker and Boet's breeding ram. The crisis dramatised by this play starts with the drought. It is a crisis of survival—of the farm, its people, animals and veld. This disaster soon becomes a family, a religious and a politico-cultural crisis. (Note the traces of the eighties here.)

The reception of *Die koggelaar* from 1987 to 1989 can be classified under three headings: rejection, ambivalence and acceptance.

## Rejection

The Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State cancelled a production of this play in 1987. After much infighting this institution allowed the play to be performed in 1989. In reaction to this performance representatives of the NG-church of Hospital Park, Bloemfontein, requested their members not to attend plays like *Die koggelaar*, their objection being the scene where Anna appears naked on stage and the 'misuse of the name of God' in the play. But as Professor S.A. Strauss (1989:10), theologian at the University of the Orange Free State, pointed out both aspects objected to were sensitively treated. One therefore suspects an ideological motive behind the surface argument: the confrontation of some Afrikaners by their mirror image was probably the real problem they had with this play.

Critics like Phil du Plessis (1987:20) may also be classified here. The heading he used for his article says it all: 'Slim het Sy Baas Gevang met te Veel Kopwerk'. (Cleverness Caught its Author with too Much Cerebration.)

## Acceptance

However, most commentators accepted *Die koggelaar* as an excellent play. I highlight some phrases: 'Afrikaans drama can captivate' (Elahi 1989:2); 'Koggelaar lean, but moving' (BM 1989:6); 'most outstanding ... in the corpus of recent Afrikaans dramas' (Mouton 1988:15); 'a richly nuanced text' (Hambidge 1988:11); 'Fourie's drama a masterpiece' (Hough 1988:44).

In 1986 and 1987 *Die koggelaar* was awarded two prestigious drama prizes: the SARUK and DALRO awards.

## Ambivalence

The ambivalent reception of *Die koggelaar* came in two forms: expressed and by implication.

Expressed: Here Ia van Zyl (1989:9) is representative. She finds the play one-sided in its 'lack of true Christian compassion' in the 'unmasking of the Afrikaner'. She shows her ideological hand when she quotes the Afrikaans poet N.P. van Wyk Louw: 'But within a small, endangered people the true nationalist must keep criticism and encouragement in a fine balance ...'.

By implication: Here we find those commentators who do not mention, or only indirectly indicate, the import of this play for the Afrikaner. Have we a form of denial here? S.A. Strauss (1989), Nushin Elahi (1989), B.M. (1985) and Koggelstok (1987) are representative of this group.

All of these reviews, with the exception of those ambivalent only by implication, reveal a noticeable pattern: they perceive *Die koggelaar* as a mirror of its time, that is, as a reflection of the politico-cultural crisis of the Afrikaner. Here are some phrases to that effect: 'Fourie unmasks Afrikaner'

(Van Zyl 1989:9); '*Die koggelaar* is an allegory of the historical position of the Afrikaner to-day; it provides an important entrance to the ideological transformation that is playing itself out around the Afrikaner ...' (Van Wyk 1989:17); 'This *boer's* soul, and by implication that of the Afrikaner, is opened up and the whole anatomy of his guilt is revealed' (Du Plessis 1987:20); 'the Afrikaner placed under a magnifying glass' (Mouton 1988:15); 'Boet Cronjé is like many Afrikaners ...' (Boekkooi 1989:31); 'an indictment against chauvinism and racism' (Hough 1988:44). Only Johan van Wyk (1989:17) in his '*Koggelaar* shows fatherless Afrikaner' points to a possible psychoanalytic reading of this play. I will take up where he left off.

## Setting the stage

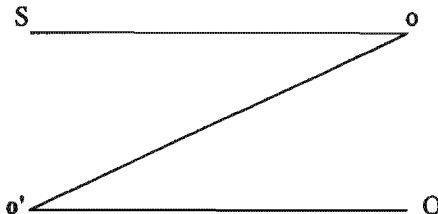
### Why Lacan?

Probably like no other psychoanalytic theoretician, Lacan's thought explores the relation between the psychical and the cultural. This fact is attested to by the writings of authors of the calibre of Kaja Silverman (1992), Judith Butler (1992), Elizabeth Grosz (1990), Linda Kintz (1992), Juliet MacCannell (1986), Shoshana Felman (1987) to name but a few. Indeed:

For Lacan the hour has come for 'discourse' to take hold of his work and retransmit it. His thought has become prey to partiality, something to be threshed, to be turned this way and that, to be distilled in the general consciousness; a thought refracted by multi-faceted intelligences motivated by many divergent currents of thought (Lemaire 1977:251).

Against the background already given, Lacanian concepts like the imaginary, the symbolic, the real and the Name-of-the-Father resonate meaning. From a Lacanian perspective the eighties can be seen as a time of crisis within the symbolic and imaginary worlds of Afrikaner politics and culture. *Die koggelaar* reflects this predicament in the psyche of the protagonist Boet Cronjé.

My point of departure is Lacan's (1980:193) 'Schema L'. Here it is:



Muller and Richardson (1988:71) are of the opinion that this diagram is 'the most fundamental of all Lacan's schemata'. According to Boothby (1991:

114) this 'diagram maps the dynamic field in which the human subject is constituted'. Lacan (1980:194) himself states that the subject is

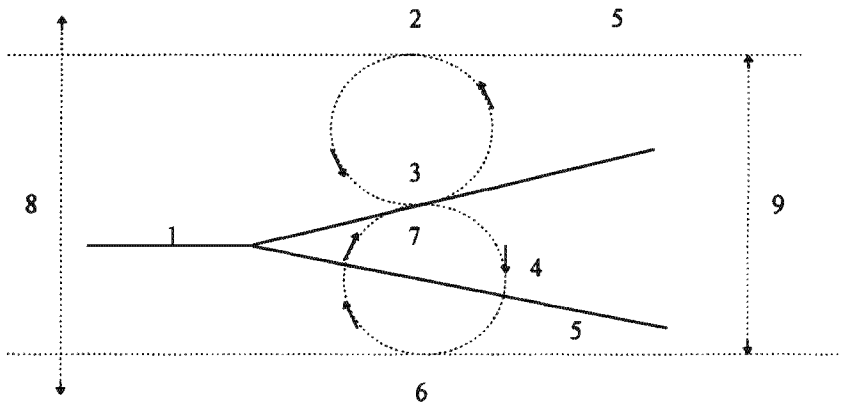
stretched over the four corners of the schema, namely, S, his ineffable, stupid existence,  $\sigma$ , his objects,  $\sigma'$ , his ego, that is, that which is reflected of his form in his objects, and O, the locus from which the question of his existence may be presented to him.

Following Lacan's lead in his periodic transformation of his own schemata, algorithms and concepts, I have taken the liberty to do so with his Schema L in order to—

- accommodate more of his (and Freud's) major concepts applicable to this discussion;
- bring out the underlying dynamics of the psychic field it suggests, a dynamics which will prove to be important for our analysis;
- reflect my reading of Lacan and some of his commentators;
- correlate some of his concepts and insights dispersed throughout his translated writings and seminars.

### Schema L transformed

'thou art the thing itself, unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal'—King Lear.



As will be seen soon, all the positions represented by numbers on the diagram are 'overdetermined' (Freud 1958:306-308) because of the dynamic nature of the psyche.

## 1 The Level of the Neonate

Position 1 represents the first few months after birth. The prematurity of human birth brings with it a lack of co-ordination and unity (Lacan 1980:18f). The neonate is but a bundle of somatic impulses and energies, a *corps morcelé* (Lacan 1980:4,11). More abstractly 1 represents the level of unrepresented libido and drives. Part of it therefore corresponds to S on Lacan's Schema L.

## 2 External Reality

Position 2 designates the domain of the object: that is to say, people, things and places. External reality is the realm of the other, the mother usually being the first other. Recognition by the mother's gaze and the bodily mirror image of himself come to the infant from this dimension.

## 3 The Imaginary Register

Number three represents the field of internalisation. Here, some of that which is externally perceived becomes internalised. On this level the libido is represented by and invested in internalised objects. One could speak here of *objected libido* (cf. the *abject* under 5). This is the area of bound energies and co-ordination in contrast to the inco-ordination of stage 1. It is this boundness which makes the principles of *gestalt*—and therefore object perception and recognition—possible (Lacan 1988b:94).

Most importantly, from a Lacanian point of view, the imaginary register is also the level of narcissism (Lacan 1980:19-24). Between six and eighteen months the infant internalises and identifies with his image in the mirror: the self is captured by its specular reflection and by its own narcissistic gaze. In conjunction with the mother's confirming gaze, this mirror reflection constitutes the so-called 'ideal ego' (Lacan 1980:2). One could formalise this relation as follows:

ego = mirror image  
 ego = (m)other  
 Lacan's o = 'o' on Schema L.

Once this relation has been established, 'that which is reflected of his form in his objects' (Lacan 1980:194) will be imaginary.

But, as the word 'imaginary' suggests, an ego based on fantasies of ideal unity, identity, pure presence, full being, power and omnipotence is in reality fictive, a 'theatre of images' (Boothby 1991:64). Because this self is inauthentic, there lies at the heart of the mirror stage a basic misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of the self by itself (Lacan 1980:15-20).

The imaginary is also the agent of primary repression. Here we find the death drive in service of the imaginary in its efforts to negate and occlude the unrepresented, the unrealised and the dangerously inchoate.

#### 4 The Primordial Fissure

As a result of primary repression a part of the self is forked off from itself resulting in an alienation of the self from itself (Lacan 1980:2-4). Like Lear, Lacan finds at the heart of man the wound of a primeval castration which results in an enduring psychic tension between the imaginary and the real.

#### 5 The Real

The real is indicated by S on Lacan's diagram. The real (Lacan 1980:180-187)—which should not be confused with 'reality'—refers to the level of the primordially repressed. It is the locus of Freud's Id (1961:2-66), Kristeva's *objet* (1982), the rejected, excluded, remaindered, the always outstanding. In some respects it could be imagined as a reservoir of psychic and somatic energies not imaged in the imaginary or symbolised by the symbolic. This is the arena of inchoate libido in search of discharge and representation.

The real, as signifier, also indicates the absent place of the primordial lost object, Lacan's *objet petit a*, source of utter plenitude, presence, wholeness, being, the essential self (Lacan 1980:179-221). The absence of the essential self results in a want-of-being, a *manque à être* (Lacan 1988b:223). The real is therefore always only the potential for true being. It is from this only-in-potential that desire originates. This is a desire to be, a desire to overcome lack, absence and primary repression, a desire for *objet a* itself (Lacan 1980:292-325).

The source of existential guilt is also found in the realm of the real: that is to say, guilt about the primordial incompleteness—the fallenness—of the self.

However, the real is also that part of reality that cannot be symbolised or imagined, the always only potential reality.

The real is one of Lacan's least developed concepts, probably because he believes that it cannot be grasped by the symbolic (Lacan 1977:280).

#### 6 The Symbolic Register

This position represents Lacan's O, that is the Other, on his schema. The symbolic register is the domain of *representation*, of the signifier, the signifying chain and the network of signifiers—in short: the field of language (Lacan 1980:30-113). As such this level is subject to the nature of language, that is, to the fact that language is always diacritic. This diacriticalness of

language makes it systematisable, but also ever open-ended. Derrida's *différance*, Jacobson's metonymy and metaphor and Freud's displacement and condensation all signify in their own way the diacritic openness of language.

Even the unconscious is to Lacan part of the symbolic register as it 'is structured like a language' (Lacan 1977:149), which means that it also functions according to the diacritic processes of configuration, substitution, displacement, difference, deferment, supplementation, condensation, etc.

Most important for our discussion of *Die koggelaar* is the fact that this register is also the domain where the formation of culture takes place. It is here where the cultural conventions, norms and laws of a society, that is to say, its symbolic order, is constituted. Within a patriarchal society the linchpin of the symbolic order is the Name-of-the-Father and by extension, the Law-of-the-Father (Lacan 1980:179-225). This symbolic position functions among others as the moral, epistemological and ontological authority on which a society builds and defends its social order, its 'reality'.

The symbolic register is also the locus of the phallic signifier, that is to say, the signifier which amongst others represents *objet a* to desire. But this signifier of wholeness, being, plenitude and power is, like all signifiers within the symbolic, also subject to the law of language. Therefore nobody can *be* or *have* the phallus (Lacan 1980:281-291)—the penis being only an imaginary fixation of the phallus.

Because desire can only emerge sublimated in the signifier, it is diminished. The capture of desire by the signifier therefore means a second alienation, a splitting off of the self from itself (Lacan 1980:79-80), even an *aphanisis* of the subject (Lacan 1977:216-229). It is for this reason that the Oedipal crisis is to Lacan the crisis of the subject's entry into language (Boothby 1991:151-152). The symbolic system of the father/Father, as a third mediating term, demands the sublimation of desire by way of the symbolic *and* the transcendence of the imaginary relation of the ego to the (m)other. In this way the superego and social guilt are constituted, the latter being guilt feelings about not realising the ego ideal of the symbolic order (Dews 1990:238). In this sense the superego partakes of the death drive and as such it is part of the symbolic order's drive to power.

And finally, it is from this locus of the Other that the real may present 'the question of his existence' to the self (Lacan 1980:194).

## 7 The Death Drive

The death drive (Lacan 1988a:149; Freud 1955c:7-64) functions as the negation of the imaginary's negation. As such it is a force of aggression directed at the narcissistic self-image. It is energised by a desire for an energy discharge of the repressed, remaindered, unrepresented libido and the



unrealised potentialities of the self. The death drive may be sublimated in the signifier and in the command of the superego to transmute the imaginary self.

The death drive may lead to a deconstruction and transformation of existing imaginary formations. These changes are usually experienced by the ego on a fantasy level as bodily violation, fragmentation, castration—as a drive towards the death of the ego. In this conflict between the death drive and the imaginary self, something of the real emerges by way of sublimation in the signifier. Position seven therefore represents the place where the real, desire and the unconscious speak by means of discontinuity, condensation, reconfiguration, metonymy and metaphor, resulting in a new meaning that borders on sense and non-sense (*pas-de-sens*; cf. Lacan 1977:250-252). This meaning shatters the stereotypical and reified meanings of the imaginary.

The death drive is also instrumental in the repetition of trauma *symbolised*. Here images and signifiers of fragmentation are used by the death drive as vehicles of attack against the formations of the imaginary ego.

## 2<sup>2</sup> Reality as a Function of the Interactions of the Real, Symbolic and the Imaginary

Position 2 represents external reality *and* psychicalised reality. It is seen as reality psychicalised by the interactions between the Real, Symbolic and the Imaginary. This is the level of defensive externalisation and projection of the attack by the death drive on the imaginary. Forms of this defence are substitution, scapegoating and the enacted, or fantasised, dismemberment of the other. In some cases, these defences are unconscious equivalents of self-image violation, a defence *and* destruction of the ego by proxy (Lacan 1980:8-29). This is the level of sadism.

Within this psychicalised reality we also find the externalisation and objectification of *objet a*, usually in the form of a fetish: an object is found in reality—e.g. the penis or any other phallic object—and is substituted for the lost *objet a*.

The reification of the symbolic order is also found here, that is the fixation of the law of the signifier and Father by the imaginary. This is the domain where Fascistic ideologies like Apartheid imprisons the signifier within their fixed and unchanging signifieds and stereotypes.

Position two also indicates the scene where the death drive emerges in reality. Here it takes the form of the uncanny, Freud's *Unheimlich* (1955b:219-256), which may be interpreted as the death drive *not* symbolised, the death drive emerging unmediated in objects as something present that is simultaneously absent. From here it is but a short step to fully

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<sup>2</sup> The numbering in the diagram indicates *positions* and not numerical order.

hallucinated objects. The figure of the father as castrator is also one of the forms the death drive may take when externalised.

More positively we find here the symbolic register externalised in its creative diacriticalness and openness and also the symbolic sublimation of desire and the death drive in personal and social life.

### 3 The Internalisation of Psychicalised Reality

Position 3 is the domain of psychicalised reality internalised.

Among others, the following are introjected:

- the symbolic register positively externalised;
- the sublimation of desire and death by way of the signifier;
- the Law-of-the-Father not reified;
- the superego's ego ideal contra the ideal ego of the imaginary, the former being subject to the symbolic register, that is, open to complexity and internal differentiation;
- the gaze of the Other negating the narcissistic look in the mirror;
- and, more negatively, the reified symbolic.

On this level we also find the introjection of the externalised death drive. Here the death drive is again directed against the narcissistic ego: sadism becomes masochism, murder, suicide. This attack is fantasised by the imaginary ego as the body in bits and pieces (*corps morcelé*). These fantasies generate castration anxiety. Traumatic events are likewise experienced on this level as a shattering of the imaginary ego.

As reaction formation against the anxiety generated by the above-mentioned attacks, the narcissistic self may use a series of defence mechanisms, e.g.

- *denial* of the Other, the different;
- *resistance* against becoming;
- *fetish formation* by way of the internalisation of an object standing in for *objet a*—e.g. the penis as imaginary phallus—in order to cover up primary and secondary castrations;
- *symptom formation* as an ambivalent compromise formation between the death drive and the imaginary which formation functions as both protection and destruction of the narcissistic ego;
- *repetition of trauma* by which the imaginary obsessively scans the traumatising event in an effort to contain and repair the fractured ego contra the attack by the death drive which uses signifiers representing the splintering of the ego by the traumatic event;
- *foreclosure* (Lacan 1980:217-221) on desire, sublimation and the Name-of-the-Father when the death drive is turned by the imaginary against semioses.

Should some of these defences fail, the specular imago of the self will become unhinged resulting in repression being lifted.

## 8 The Field of Subjectivity

The diagram as a whole represents Lacan's idea of the so-called 'decentered subject' (Lacan 1980:194). In contrast to the logocentric subject of traditional philosophy and ego-psychology, the Lacanian subject is spread dynamically across all four registers and levels.

## 9 The Dimension of Psychic Time

In my diagram I use the figure of the Möbius-strip as a metaphor for the movement of the psyche, individual and collective, in time. It is a time where the external becomes the internal and *vice versa* in a continuous circuit lasting the lifetime of an individual or collective. This movement and change is what the imaginary tries to stop in its effort to fixate time, space and meaning. (Cf. Lacan's use of the Möbius-strip, Marini 1992:186,197-198.)

Since language is to Lacan pre-eminently a psychic phenomenon, the Möbius-strip may also be used as a metaphor for the movement of language in time; especially as it is capable of representing the unending possibilities of semioses quite well. On this circuit the signifier finds its object, its signified, and conversely the signified finds its signifier, and inversely the signified becomes the signifier and the latter the signified, and so on and on  
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## The Action

### 1 Limbo, or the Theatre of the Psyche (pp. 1-4)

The first scene of *Die koggelaar* positions the audience immediately as attending the dramatisation of an inner world, a theatre of the mind. This world of the psyche is indexed by signifiers like:

- Boet Cronjé, the protagonist, makes his first appearance as a corpse;
- Boet's 'resurrection' soon afterwards, although Knaplat, his stud-ram (of all things) tells him: 'You are dead, Boet' (p. 3);
- Boet's realisation that he is in fact dead;
- the a-chronological and associative recall of past events dramatised as mental pictures and figures on stage;
- a sheep-ram that is simultaneously a black farm-hand (Knaplat) and a plant which is at the same time a reptile (the Koggelmandervoet);
- the metonymic decor where for instance a piece of circular white cloth represents not only a farm dam, but also Apartheid's fixation with the colour white;

- mimetic actions;
- spotlights evoking images out of a nebulous past and background.

Within the first two spoken sentences of *Die koggelaar*, the problem at the heart of this play is indicated as being Boet's transgression of the law of the symbolic order, the law of the Koggelmandervoet which 'will trample you' should you disobey it (p. 1). The fatal Oedipal wound in Boet's head is the castrative mark of the price he paid for his violation of this order.

Narcissism and selfishness is suggested by Knaplat as being the root cause of Boet's transgressions against the symbolic order: 'You may be dead, but your selfishness is still there' (p. 3). The compass of his egotism is indicated moments later when he appropriates even God as 'my God' (p. 4). This statement is immediately questioned by Knaplat: 'Yóur God?' Boet explains that as a farmer his God is different from the God of the townspeople: that He is like a business partner in relation to him and the farm. In this way God, the symbolic signifier of the Name-of-the-Father, is here reified and internalised by Boet in the form of his own imaginary image.

And yet the symbolic speaks when Boet tells Anker and Knaplat that he *owes* it to them to explain his end and that which led up to it (p. 4). Do we find traces of guilt and the desire to realise some of the repressed and denied aspects of the self here?

## 2 Boet's Marriage, or the Narcissistic Ego (pp. 5-6)

In this scene Boet brings his bride Anna to the family farm in the same way his father and grandfather did their brides. He therefore seems part of, and fully integrated in, the symbolic system of this patriarchal society.

Yet, there are signs of his egotism disturbing this system: he married Anna in spite of her parent's wishes by means of a court order against them, thereby using the symbolic order against itself. Ironically this narcissistic ego is admired by Anna: 'This is what I admire in you. Your strength. Your relentless pride' (p. 5). To this he adds hubristically: 'And my belief. That nobody breaks.' And again he puts himself on equal footing with God, that is to say, the Name-of-the-Father, by stating that he took God in as a partner and that this is the reason, the source, of his farm's fertility. A fertility he impetuously assumes would be theirs also.

## 3 The Birth of Little Ben, or Singing the Praise of the Phallus (pp. 7-8)

In this scene Little Ben's penis becomes the reified phallic signifier, the object standing in for *objet a*. Everybody, with the exception of Anna, commends only on the nature of his male member. Other characteristics of this baby are completely ignored. All the words this family uses to

characterise his penis, connote potency, power and virility. He is in fact reduced to his male organ which is marked by the following expressions: *spogknaters* (swanky balls); *disselboompie en wiele* (thill and wheels); *ramkat* (a combination of *ram* and *tomcat*); and *knapsak* (potent scrotum). It is therefore clear that Little Ben represents the 'one who has the phallus'—remember: an imaginary construction according to Lacan (1980:281-291).

Little Ben's seeming possession of the phallus poses a danger to the imaginary *and* symbolic positions of both fathers (Boet and Ben) in the play. This danger is indicated by Betta when she jokingly likens them to two *bokkapaters*, that is, to two castrated goats. But at this stage of the drama her words do not even leave a ripple on the imaginary self-sameness of grandfather, father and son.

#### 4 The Drought, or Castration in the Offing (pp. 9-15)

Significantly, a great drought now follows the birth of Little Ben. This external event is taken by Boet as an act of God, as an attack on his and the farm's very existence. 'God whipped us, tested us and left us', is how Boet puts it (p. 9). The imaginary identification of himself with God is here shifting towards a more symbolic experience of God, that is to say, God as the Other; and an aggressive Other at that, who is attacking him/them. But in spite of this attack, he remains 'strong' in his 'belief' in God.

This belief is tested by his neighbour who lost his faith and farm as a result of the drought. He tells Boet that the bank manager has taken away his 'tassel of keys' representing his 'whole life'—clearly here a form of symbolic castration (p. 10). He profanes God by stating that 'The Lord God is either not, or He wipes His arse on us' (p. 10). He also attacks Boet's faith in God: 'You will yet choke on your faith' (p. 11). This attack and the story of the bunch of keys are experienced by Boet as a castrative assault on his own integrity. He defends himself by physically attacking his neighbour. As his neighbour leaves, he thanks God for not having taken away his tassel of keys—that is for not castrating him.

In this scene we also see how the drought is progressively internalised by Boet, his father Ben and Anker. About them Boet's mother Betta says: 'They live closer to the drought. Almost within him' (p. 12). By way of this internalisation Boet's imaginary God (*my* God) becomes more and more the symbolic Other. Denial and repression of the Lord as the not reified Other are here starting to crumble, as can be seen from Boet's growing uncertainty about God. This man who proclaimed that he would always stand steadfast *next* to his God, now asks whether God is taunting them (p. 13).

And for the first time in this play God as symbolic Other displaces the reified God of the imaginary when Anker, Boet and Ben pray sincerely for

rain. The psychic positivity of this movement away from the imaginary is externalised by the windmill which, as if in answer to their prayer, miraculously churns out a stream of water (p. 15).

### 5 Around the Bore-hole, or the Moment of Castration (pp. 15-23)

In this scene the Cronjé family and Anker gather festively around a bore-hole in expectation of the final breakthrough to the underground water they discovered and need so desperately.

This potential water is internalised by Ben as symbolic of God's mercy (p. 16). Also symbolic is the initiation of Little Ben—now on the verge of puberty—as 'a man' by allowing him to drink brandy 'with the men'. This rite is described by his grandfather as 'a type of communion' (p. 20) and the drinking of the brandy itself as a traditional ritual to ward off evil.

But there are signs of the imaginary resisting the symbolic. According to Ben they are acting against tradition by drinking their brandy before the bore-hole is opened up (p. 19). And during Little Ben's initiation we again find the reification of him as phallic object. As on his birth, his penis is again made into a reified *objet a* (pp. 20,22). As the one who is supposed to possess the phallus, he is chosen to start the bore-machine in order to 'baptise' the water when it breaks through.

The tension between the symbolic and the imaginary is likewise manifested in the signifiers of castration and death that crop up during this scene. Right at the beginning of the action, grandfather Ben throws away his walking stick thereby divesting himself of one of his phallic signifiers. It is also he who tells Little Ben that should the others forget to bring the brandy, there would be a funeral that day (p. 16). This statement he repeats later on. About the small Karoo shrub called *koolganna* he says to Little Ben: 'In reality he is not a shrub, but a tree .... But the dry heaven, the arid earth caused his inability to hold his own as a manly tree' (p. 17). The paradoxical nature of the symbolic order conjugated to the death drive as Law-of-the-Father—Ben being the 'grand' father in this play—is metaphorised beautifully when he shows Little Ben the *koolganna* and says: 'You could say that this is, as it were, death with life in it' (p. 17).

At the end of this scene there is a moment when the real shatters the imaginary with all the violence characteristic of the death drive: Little Ben—the phallic object of his father, his grandfather and grandmother, the phallus who would have guaranteed the continuation of their pure 'bloodline'—is killed. His scarf is caught in the slipping drive-belt of the bore-machine and his neck is violently broken (pp. 22-23). Boet, the father who imagined himself as possessing the phallus by virtue of his son as *objet a*—the object

representing wholeness, fullness, plenitude and power—is here castrated psychically by this traumatic event. It is this castration that Boet denies and fights against for the duration of the rest of the play.

## 6 The Five Years after Little Ben's Death, or the Exorcism of Lack (pp. 23-24)

This period of Boet's life plays itself out under the sign of Little Ben's death. This traumatic event leaves a wound in the imaginary surety of his world. He who thought he had the phallus, lost it. In an effort to procreate a substitute for Little Ben, he tries to make his wife pregnant again. But all his efforts come to nought: he fails to suture his castrative wound. In denial of this, he blames his wife: she is sterile—an *uitskot-ooi* (a barren ewe). He also refuses the suggestions by Anna to have his sperm-count tested. But the symbolic keeps on addressing him by way of reality: the drought continues and becomes a metaphor of his own procreative and spiritual sterility.

As a reaction formation against his inadequacy he subjects Knaplat, the stud-ram of the farm, to obsessive sperm extraction—to the point of making him impotent ('You have deprived me of everything I am', p. 3). By way of artificial insemination Boet now wants to become a *meesterteler* (a master breeder).

The extraction of Knaplat's sperm is done by means of an electric shock applied to his genitals. This action Nushin Elahi (1989:2) finds 'upsetting' in its 'graphic particularity'. Phil du Plessis (1987:20) also mentions the aggressive cruelty of this scene<sup>3</sup>. The obsessive and sadistic nature of this action signifies an attempt by Boet to exorcise, by means of Knaplat's virility, his own phallic lack, his own primordial castration.

The fact that Knaplat is presented as a condensation of Merino-ram and black farm labourer, suggests that as a black worker he also suffers the sadistic aggressiveness of Boet's compensatory drive against his own impotence. This suggestion points to the master-slave relation inherent in Apartheid. For the white master to be the master of the black slave and to be in a position to exploit him, the latter must recognise the master's phallic position. The word *baas* (master) is an enunciation of this recognition by the enslaved black and coloured other.

However, as Lacan shows by way of Hegel (1977:219-221), the master-slave relation is an imaginary construction: ironically the master needs the slave's recognition in order to possess mastery—he cannot have it unmediated in itself. To be the master is therefore an imaginary formation

<sup>3</sup> The fact that Pieter Fourie expunged the extraction of Knaplat's seed in the published text of the play is discussed in another paper (see Vermeulen 1992:28).

against the primeval lack of mastery at the heart of all racists, but also at the heart of every human being.

**7 In the Pub, or the Bar of Racism (pp. 24-32)**

This scene stages an incident when Boet was still a young student during the regime of Verwoerd and his henchman Vorster. Boet bribes Anker, the so-called coloured farm-hand who is very light of skin, with a month's salary (five pounds!) to pose as a white man in front of his friend who declared that a *hotnot* will never be allowed to cross the threshold of his father's bar.

Enacted here we find how the principle of difference belonging to the symbolic register is reified by Apartheid by marking, on the basis of skin colour difference, the other as negative, inferior, bad, abject, dirty, stupid, in a word: as less human. (All these negative markers are condensed in the abusive term *hotnot*.)

The function of this negative marking of the other is to reinforce the imaginary ego of racists like Boet as superior, clean, good, intelligent, more complete: as more human. From a Lacanian perspective this reinforcement is a defence against Boet's own primary and secondary incompleteness as a human being; that is a defence against the lack, hole and abject in himself and his own subjection to the symbolic. It is against this primordial wound that Apartheid's fetishisation of skin colour must protect Boet and racists like him.

Two moments in this scene demonstrate the above statements. During the enactment in the bar a moment arises when Boet manipulates Anker into making a racist attack on himself thereby forcing him to negate his very personhood (p. 30):

Boet: (*To Anker playing white, Anker being the 'new one' to whom Boet refers*)

We have a new one—there on the farm. And would you believe me, Anker, old chap, the blackguard dares to call me 'mister'! (*Unobserved by Danny, he elbows Anker*) What would you have done?

Anker: I would've kicked his arse!

The second moment, which is also the climax of this scene and the end of the first act of this two-act play, enacts the imaginary ideology of racism as animalising and castrative—ironically of both the victim and the persecutor (pp. 31-32). It is this irony which reflects Lacan's contention that the sadistic projection of one's own lack and castration onto a negativised other is an unconscious equivalent of self-image violation: a defence *and* destruction of the imaginary ego by proxy (Lacan 1980:8-29).

Boet: You might as well cough up your twenty pounds.

Danny: Says who?



Boet: Says me. (*To Anker*) Come on, *hotnot*, you've played a white gentleman long enough now. Go sit in the back of the truck.

Anker: (*A moment of hesitation*) Right, master. (*to Danny*) Good evening, master. (*Moves to go*)

Danny: Wait, wait! You must be joking? (*Boet holds Anker back*) Come, stand here. (*Anker stands stiffly against the bar-counter*) Blue eyes, curly hair?

Boet: Sleeker than yours.

Danny: Yóú, a *hotnot*?

Anker: Yes, master.

Boet: You can see it only in one thing.

Danny: In what?

Boet: His gums.

Danny: Are you two taking me for a ride?

Boet: See for yourself. (*to Anker*) Open your jaws and show teeth to the master. (*Anker complies*)

Danny: (Looks at his gums the way one would inspect the maw of an animal) Hell! You've got me. (*Anker's mouth stays open*) Come on, shut your maw. (It is as if Anker tries to shut his mouth, but is unable to. His head starts to jerk and he vomits soundlessly all over the bar-counter. The stage darkens. The curtain comes down.)

(Cf. Freud 1955a:3-152, for the connection between teeth and castration.)

## 8 The Sun-ritual, or the Magic Supplement (pp. 33-40)

In this scene we find a displacement from Knaplat to Anna of Boet's defensive exorcism of his loss of the phallic object. In an effort to contain and repair his fractured ego, he reverts to magical action. He persuades Anna to put on her wedding dress. (She is 40 years old now). According to Boet the wedding dress will bring them luck again, as it did on their wedding night when Little Ben was conceived. He takes her out into the scorching heat of the Karoo veld where he forces her to undress so as to enable the sun to 'heighten her fertility' (p. 37). This fertility enhancement by the sun is a 'primordial secret' (p. 37) he is revealing to her. He leaves her in the 40 degrees Celsius of the veld with the instruction to call him when she is ready for 'fertilisation'.

The fact that Boet here uses the sun as a phallic supplement to himself, indicates an unconscious acknowledgement that by himself he has not the potency to impregnate her. Anna gives voice to this unconscious notion by proposing that he should have his sperm strengthened. He reacts defensively by stating: 'I don't masturbate like a child. And that on top of it in a test tube' (p. 37). Her ironic 'Says yóú: master breeder' points to the contradiction in his psyche, to the split between his narcissism and the symbolic. As representative of the symbolic in this scene Anna urges him to accept Little Ben's death, that is, his symbolic castration, by opening up the

bore-hole where his son died. This bore-hole is the only one with water on the farm, hardly a metre away. This 'water is life' (p. 37), she states. Indeed: literally it means life to the soil, plants and animals on the farm and symbolically a broader psychic life to Boet. Alas, he keeps on blocking and repressing the claims of the symbolic by refusing to open the bore-hole, even should all his sheep die of thirst. The reason for his refusal is that there is 'a curse on that water' (p. 37). In this way the unopened bore-hole functions ironically as both signifier of his castration and his denial of it. Like in the case of the repetition of trauma (Freud 1955c:32-33), the bore-hole represents an attack by the death drive whilst simultaneously forming a defensive fetish against it. This means that as a signifier it is reinforced by both the symbolic and the imaginary. No wonder he is unable to open it up, not even when everything is dying around him.

Boet's defence against his own lack also takes the form of projection, ironically just after he admits it within his own denial. He says to Anna: 'Yóur shame? It's mine. People are laughing ... the world laughs at me. But it is you! You can't give me a child!' (p. 38). His narcissistic image as a virile master breeder must at all cost be maintained. (Cf. Freud 1961:235-239, for the acknowledgement within the denial of, 'It's not my mother'.)

The final attack on his already brittle self-image comes in the conclusion of this scene. Anker finds Anna naked in the burning sun. He helps her to rub goat fat on her blistered skin and covers her with a corn sack. For a moment she lays her head against his chest. This action upsets Boet who exclaims emotionally: 'No! No! That she never would have done! Not Anna. Not *my* Anna' (p. 40). Knaplat interprets his reaction as shock caused by Anker's 'bloodline'—him being a coloured, a person of 'mixed blood', that is to say of 'impure blood', this being a signifier of pollution, of the death drive, against which the image of the white racist as 'pure of blood' must be protected at all cost. Here Anker becomes the dangerous Other addressing Boet's imaginary conception of himself and his 'race' under Apartheid.

## **9 In the Church, or Attacking the Name-of-the-Father (pp. 41-44)**

In the previous scene Boet says to Anna: 'The Lord is cruel towards us' (p. 36). He also declares that God is mocking them. In other words: the Lord God whom he has put on equal footing with himself—this imaginary God of his—here falls back into the symbolic and from there becomes the aggressive Other who is attacking him. Seen in this light, God becomes a symbol of his own death drive directed against his imaginary ego.

In this scene Boet externalises the destructiveness of the death drive by shooting rather impotently at some clouds with his once-phallic .303 rifle.

This action is seen by his mother, speaking from the perspective of the symbolic order, as his mocking of God. From his egotistic point of view it is of course he who is mocked by God. He therefore confronts God in the church of his community, one of the most sanctified places of the symbolic order. In front of the congregation he addresses God—the most important signifier for the Name-of-the-Father in his culture—about the drought and His attitude towards him, Boet. The tone, manner and content of his ‘prayer’ show from the start that it is more of an aggressive negation of God than a prayer to God (p. 42). The way he addresses God puts Him again on an equal footing with him: he reproaches and reprimands God as if He were his ‘bank manager’ who has done him a wrong. He also tries to invert the symbolic and the imaginary in a breathtaking transgression of the Law-of-the-Father when he declares: ‘I am here to give You a last chance’ (p. 42). Here the son is usurping the place of the Father. This megalomaniac attempt must be seen in its duality: firstly as an indication of the pathological swollenness of Boet’s ego, but also as his defence against the death drive in the guise of God and the drought.

But the symbolic answers Boet: Anna appears dressed in her wedding dress, now significantly dyed black. That Boet experiences this appearance of Anna as a renewed attack by the symbolic on his ego, is reflected in his reaction: she *and* God are mocking him now (p. 43). However, suddenly a moment of becoming breaks through his defences. In his words, ‘Lord God, oh, Lord God ... help me! Help me!’ (p. 43) we find an acknowledgement of his weakness, his lack, and an acceptance of his subordination and dependence on the symbolic order, the Name-of-the-Father.

The scene concludes with Anna’s prayer which is an answer to Boet’s: his impious negation of the Name-of-the-Father is answered by her pious acceptance of the symbolic name of the Other.

## 10 At the Bore-hole, or Hovering between the Imaginary and the Symbolic (pp. 44-46)

The action centres around the bore-hole where Little Ben died. (Note the resonances between this hole and the ‘hole’, or gap, opened up by the primordial and symbolic splitting of the psyche.)

Anker requests Boet twice to breach the bore-hole. Here Anker speaks from the position of reality *and* the symbolic: in reality the farm now needs the water from this hole desperately and on a psychic level Boet needs to access the ‘life giving waters’ (Boekkooi 1989:31) of the symbolic.

About the church scene that morning Boet acknowledges to Anker his transgression and intransigence: ‘I am raw inside. Humiliated in myself. In pieces in my daily dealings with my wife and family’ (p. 45). It is therefore

clear that his moment of becoming in the church is continuing here, the imaginary is giving way to the symbolic. (Cf. the traces of the *corps morcelé* in his words.)

Out of all this Boet comes to a sudden decision: 'I will bore through to the underground vein' (p. 45). Like Anker's, his words also signify on a literal and metaphoric level. Metaphorically, he is now ready to release the healing waters of the symbolic in himself. It therefore seems that Boet is on the verge of accepting his primordial and symbolic castration as signified by the death of Little Ben at the bore-hole. As Anker leaves him, he addresses Little Ben—speaking to the dead so to speak—and again acknowledges his shortcomings and wrong-headedness (p. 46). He also tells Little Ben that he is going to open the bore-hole and that he has decided to have his sperm strengthened as Anna requested him to do.

Up to this point of the action it seems as if Boet's moment of becoming is enduring. But, at this critical moment, at this moment of potential becoming, Little Ben appears and utters these words: 'Dad, you must remember: there is blood in the water' (p. 46)—this blood being a signifier of Boet's castration on that day the real took his phallic object away from him. By way of hallucination which conjures up the uncanny appearance of Little Ben, the imaginary captures the death drive and turns it against Boet's primeval and symbolic lack *and* his desire for becoming, his *manque à être*. Here Boet's sanity is on knife-edge.

### 11 At Home (almost), or the Negation of the Symbolic by the Imaginary (pp. 46-52)

Around the kitchen table a distraught Boet tells Anna, Ben, Betta and Anker about the appearance of Little Ben at the very moment he 'made peace' with God and himself (p. 47). He now feels that he dares not breach the bore-hole. Clearly Boet finds himself here at the point of intersection of the demand of the imaginary and his desire to overcome his alienation by way of the symbolic.

It is this desire which motivates Boet to ask Anker—remember: the negative racial other—to protect Anna against him, and himself against himself, should he become 'strange' again (pp. 49-50). This reconciliatory action heals the broken relationship between Anna and Boet to such an extent that they make love again, 'freely, unplanned, without calculation' (p. 51).

But again the death drive is defensively turned by the imaginary against semioses. The spectre of Little Ben appears a second time, significantly just after Boet and his wife made love. (There are shades of Freud's primal scene here; cf. Freud 1961:119f; 250f). Little Ben speaks to Boet 'not like a child, but like a man' (p. 51). This indicates that it is Boet's imaginary ego in the guise of his ghostly son which is addressing him.

Again Little Ben reminds Boet of his symbolic castration by mentioning the bloody waters of the bore-hole. He also subverts the position of the superego by *commanding* Boet never to breach the vein of underground water and by *ordering* him to challenge God: ‘... you must accost, challenge God’ (p. 52). The negation of the symbolic order by the imaginary should be clear here. It is an inversion of the father-son-relation: here the son is placed in a commanding position from which he instructs a submissive father.

The upshot of this visitation by Little Ben is that Boet rushes into the veld where he again starts shooting at the clouds whilst screaming: ‘It’s here! Here where You must have the rain fall’ (p. 52). At this moment Boet is sucked into the imaginary to the point of becoming psychotic.

## 12 At the Gate, or Forcing the Gaze of the Other (pp. 53-57)

In a prelude to this scene, Little Ben again speaks to Boet at the bore-hole. This time only his voice is heard. After complaining to Little Ben that God does not want to take notice of their suffering, Little Ben gives his father this instruction: ‘Then you must make him see’ (p. 53). It is clear that the inversion of the father-son-relation is still in place here.

Boet executes Little Ben’s demand in a rather singular manner. He forces Anker to tie a beggar’s tin and a sheet of iron to the gate of his farm. On this sheet he paints: ‘I am collecting to buy God glasses’ (p. 55). To God he declares: ‘If You don’t want to listen, I will make You séé’ (p. 54).

In these actions of Boet we find his megalomaniacal attempt to force the gaze of the Other (Lacan 1977:67-105) into recognition of his imaginary self. In this connection Anker states: ‘Everything, everybody mocks you, seemingly. But you ... you are the great mocker! You want to play God’ (p. 55). (Note: the word ‘play’ indicates Boet’s entrapment in the imaginary.)

The symbolic continues to speak through Anker as he addresses the imaginary dimension of Boet’s irreverent actions. He points out that Boet’s problem is really his own narcissism: the drought is in Boet himself, not only outside in nature. Boet’s psychic drought is a type of inner dying (p. 54). Boet should therefore ‘open the gates’ of his imaginary world to the signifiers of the Other. (The Other being manifested in the play as nature, God, his family, the symbolic order of his community and even farm-hands and animals like Anker and Knaplat.) Against this voice of the Other Boet defends himself by physically assaulting Anker.

Boet leaves the scene momentarily and Ben, the representative of the Name-of-the-Father, approaches. He is shocked by the inscription on the iron sheet and he takes it down. He also wants to call in the help of the *dominee* (clergyman) and the police, they being important representatives of the

symbolic order. But Boet returns. He orders his father to tie the iron sheet back on to the gate and forces him at gunpoint to place his donation for God's glasses in the beggar's tin. Here we again find an inversion of the father-son-relation where the narcissistic son usurps the position of the father. The imaginary nature of this usurpation is apparent in that Boet's relation to his father Ben is a *precise reflection* of Little Ben's relation to him as father (Boet:Ben = Little Ben:Boet). This equation and inversion of roles are symptomatic of the symbolic order in crisis.

### 13 Family Murder, or Foreclosing on the Name-of-the-Father (pp. 58-59)

Here we find Boet eavesdropping on Ben and Anker. He hears that Anker, this coloured farm labourer, is in fact the son of Ben—therefore his half-brother. He reacts by vomiting silently just like Anker did during the racial castration scene in the bar.

Boet's reaction shows that this revelation is experienced by him as the ultimate attack on his ideal identity, his 'pure substance' as a white Afrikaner. It comes as a negation of all his imaginary negations, as an aggressive attack on his narcissistic self-image, as a drive towards the death of his imaginary ego. On the level of fantasy his vomiting signifies that the true status of Anker is experienced by him as a bodily violation, as a pollution. On the level of Apartheid and the real, the remaindered, the excluded, the abjected other breaks through the resistances and repressions of the imaginary and shows itself as part of the self. Thus the reified Law-of-the-Father—in this case the reification of differences by the ideology of Apartheid—is here unhinged. The fact that he who has represented the Name-of-the-Father, he who should have guarded the reified symbolic order against the abject coloured other, dirtied himself with one of them, this fact makes him now a castrating father.

In the light of the foregoing it should be clear that this moment of revelation is also, in the classic tradition of Greek tragedy, a moment of recognition (*anagnorisis*)—even if only fleetingly. Here Boet is made to recognise that his world was an imaginary one—a theatre of inauthentic images—and that he was subject to a basic misrecognition (*méconnaissance*, Lacan 1980:15-20) of himself. With this realisation lack, absence, that is to say, the real in the guise of the Other, stares him in the face. And it is from the locus of the real that 'the question of his existence' (Lacan 1980:194) is now posed to Boet.

All of the above generates tremendous castration anxiety which leads to massive defence measures by Boet. He inverts the attack on his ideal ego by substituting the *image* of Little Ben in the position of the reified superego

vacated by his father, thus turning the attack back on the Other. He also forecloses on the Name-of-the-Father by externalising the death drive against his narcissistic ego: he murders his family, all of them now representing the bad and dangerous Other. Ironically this murder is, on the level of the unconscious, equivalent to self-image destruction by proxy. All these defences are dramatised thus (p. 59):

(Little Ben appears for the last time)

Little Ben: Dad, now you must finish it all. You were and are mocked. Our family our whole family tree .... Finish it, Dad. It's your duty. Our family tree ... our family tree is soiled.

Boet: (*breathes heavily*) All of them should now be in the house; Mother, Anna and ... (*He battles to get the word over his lips*) Father.

Boet leaves the barn. Shots are fired. Knaplat accounts for everyone of them:

Shot: 'His father'. Shot: 'His mother'. Shot: 'Anna'.

Ironically Anker escapes this killing.

#### 14 Suicide, or the Shattering of the Imago (pp. 60-61)

The scene is an empty dam on Boet's farm. In attendance: Boet, Knaplat and Anker. As a last ditch stand against the death drives of the symbolic and the real, Boet paints the dry bottom of this dam white whilst addressing God, the ultimate representative of the Name-of-the-Father in his culture: 'White! White I will paint its bottom, so that You can see it's empty .... White! White like me! ... Do You hear me? White like me!' (p. 60). By means of his actions and words he attempts again to force the gaze of the Other to acknowledge his narcissistic racial imago. Ironically he is answered by his unconscious in the very words he uses: his racially based whiteness is as empty as the dam he paints.

Picking up his revolver, Boet addresses God the Father again: 'Are You satisfied now? Do You see what You have done? Do You see? (*Pause*) You ... Yóu, God ... You are as deaf as You are blind. You, You mocker! (*He listens for an answer*)' (p. 60).

Again his unconscious speaks from within the symbolic: every word he utters here really applies to him as the whole play up to this point makes clear. His accusations are but defensive projections of his own guilt—the more so, coming after his murderous destruction of his family.

When no answer is forthcoming, he asks: 'Why so silent? Why?' The silence becomes an ironic answer in itself and this brings Boet to the brink of his second moment of recognition: 'Is it me then? Am I the drought?' (p. 60).

As if answering himself, he puts his revolver to his head. Anker and Knaplat now repeatedly demand of him to pull the trigger. Eventually he does so.

In this scene we find the introjection of the externalised death drive of the previous scene: sadism becomes masochism—murder, suicide. This aggression towards the narcissistic self-image is energised by punitive libidinal drives. These drives are symbolised by Anker and Knaplat demanding his suicide. They represent desire for the discharge of the repressed and denied in conjunction with the command of Boet's superego to transmute his imaginary self.

As the suicide itself indicates, this transformation is always linked to a process of bodily violation—whether in reality or in fantasy. It is in the light of this process of destruction and transmutation that we are able to read Boet's desire: it is a desire which was all along subliminally at work in all his irrational decisions and actions to protect and enhance his narcissistic ego. What Boet *wanted*—an intact, unassailable God-like self-image and an unchangeable symbolic regime—was not what he desired. All along he desired the destruction of his imprisoning ego and the transformation of himself. This view accounts for all the self-defeating irrationalities of his decisions and actions. (Cf. Clément 1983:131, for desiring that which is not wanted.)

At the end of the play there is a moment where desire speaks by way of discontinuity, displacement and condensation: Knaplat transfers his ram-like mask from his head to Boet's and he and Anker carry Boet's corpse mockingly from the stage. Here we find Lacan's *pas-de-sens*, the emergence of a *new* meaning that borders on sense and non-sense: a meaning that shatters the stereotypical and reified meanings of the imaginary. This incident, together with the rain, the 'music of joy and liberation' (p. 61) and the joyful dancing of Knaplat and Anker, *just after Boet's suicide*, indicate that the specular imago of Boet is now shattered, that repression is lifted. Lacan's *jouissance* (1977:281) is experienced. *Jouissance*: a union and 'coming' of life beyond the structures and strictures of image and word. *Jouissance*: when after years of excruciating Karoo drought, it rains.

## Denouement

*Die koggelaar* and most of the reviews of it—including this paper of mine—seems to me to be a castrative attack on the racist Afrikaner psyche. One wonders though if these attacks in the grip of the death drive directed at this image of the Afrikaner by way of the 'violence of the letter' (Derrida 1976:101) are not projections and exorcisms of the South African intellectual's guilt feelings about Apartheid. Do we not in this process create a new negative (racial!) other to stand in for our guilt and our own primordial lack and symbolic alienation?



The flip side of the coin is of course that these castrative writings—these pulsions of the death drive—are in themselves attempts within the symbolic register to transform and renew the race-bound psyche of the Afrikaner. The success of these attempts may be judged in the light of the democratisation of South Africa by the co-operation of Afrikaners and their once racial others during the early nineties.

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