

Poor White Satyrs and Nationalist Blueprints¹

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1 Satyrs and Civilisation

In this article I am exploring the burden of 'civilisation' with reference to the depiction of poor whites in two Afrikaans plays: *Hantie kom huis toe* (first published in 1933) by P.W.S. Schumann and *Siener in die suburbs* (first published in 1971) by P.G. du Plessis. I shall explore the depiction of these poor whites in terms of Nietzsche's (1956:59) concept of the chorus of satyrs in tragedy as

a chorus of natural beings who live ineradically, as it were, behind all civilization and remain eternally the same, despite the changes of generations and the history of nations

and Freud's discontents who embody an anxiety, a *malaise* or dissatisfaction with civilisation in so far as civilisation implies repression or the 'progressive renunciation of constitutional instincts, whose activation might afford the ego primary pleasure' (Freud 1985a:40).

Civilisation as a process of repression requires discipline which makes every individual virtually an 'enemy of civilization, though civilization is supposed to be an object of universal interest' (Freud 1985b:184).

The Afrikaner (as European-descended Africans, and the first group to embark on an African nationalist struggle) occupies an interesting position within the discourse on civilisation. In the late nineteenth century the Afrikaner has been seen as having 'degenerated into white savages' (Brantlinger 1988:193). Through a strong association with Africa, the Afrikaner embodied an image of regression. Afrikaner nationalism of the early twentieth century was in part a movement against this image. It is within this context that poor whites in the two texts are of interest, as they represent the potential of degeneration against the attempts of the nationalists

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to maintain an image of 'civilisation'. Material poverty was only one dimension of the poor-white problem. More on the surface was the dimension of uninhibited violence, sexuality and music, their satyr-like existences which linked them to barbarism.

When the characters in *Hantie kom huis toe* (Schumann 1955) are described as 'poor whites', they are seen mainly in socio-economic and political terms. The satyr element in the characters, their uninhibited sexuality and violence, are depicted as symptoms of poverty and the slum environment in which they live. In the second play, *Siener in die suburbs* (Du Plessis 1981), on the other hand, characters from the marginal suburbs re-enact savage tragedy: love, betrayal and death. Their bodies inscribed with the sexuality and violence of the suburbs seek, to no avail, to escape. They want to signify or belong to a significant class within the booming modern city—within 'civilisation'. One is not directly aware of a political message in this play. One suspects, though, that the author identifies, or even idealises, the sexuality and violence of the suburbs. He does not occupy any moral point of view concerning the situation or destruction of his characters.

2 Background

About 40 years separate the publication of *Hantie kom huis toe* in 1933 and *Siener in die suburbs* in 1971. *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955, eighth edition) was written in the 1930s: depression years—with poor whiteism a widespread social phenomenon (300 000 from a total population of 1 800 000 of whites in South Africa were very poor). This prompted the Carnegie Commission to investigate the poor white question in South Africa. A five-volume report, *The Poor White Problem in South Africa*, appeared in 1932 (vol. I by Grosskopf and vol. II by Wilcocks are used in this article). It was especially the nationalists who at this time mobilised around the issue of the poor whites and nationalist-inspired authors often used it as a theme. *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) is an example of a text written in the mode of a nationalist-inspired naturalism.

Naturalism was introduced into Afrikaans and adapted to the specific nationalist needs by J.F.W. Grosskopf in the 1920s. Grosskopf studied theatre and politics in Europe just before returning to South Africa in 1914 when he participated in the rebellion of nationalist Boer generals against the government of General Botha who supported the British in the First World War. Grosskopf was also one of the contributors to *The Poor White Problem in South Africa* (see vol. I *Rural Impoverishment and Rural Exodus* 1932). Naturalism was a perfect vehicle for expressing his nationalist concerns with the poor whites—especially using the insights of sociology as discipline (in which he was active).

The play by P.G. du Plessis, on the other hand, was published and performed in 1971, ten years after South Africa became a republic in 1961. Apartheid as policy was firmly established. It was before international boycotts became a reality. At this time poor whites have already become a hidden aspect of society: a marginal minority. It was a time when the rift existing between Afrikaans authors and the ruling National Party intensified due to the implementation of stricter censorship laws in 1963. The literary historian, J.C. Kannemeyer (1983), refers to the 'polarisation' in the sixties and seventies between the writers on the one hand and the authorities, the church and the literary 'establishment' on the other. He describes the authors of the sixties as a generation who broke away from the taboos and prejudices of traditional Afrikaner society and who changed the literary, moral, religious and political conventions. The emphasis on sexuality, the absence of nationalist politics and the sacrilege at the end of *Stener in die suburbs* forms part of the literary struggle against the 'establishment'.

3 *Hantie kom huis toe*

Hantie kom huis toe (1955) is a thoroughly political drama, more radical in its resolution of poor whiteism than the different blueprints produced by nationalist-inspired commissions and delegations. In its raw realism it inspired the avant-garde Afrikaans intellectuals (often with nationalist-socialist leanings) of the 1930s. A group of highly influential Afrikaners lived in Cape Town in this period: among them N.P. van Wyk Louw, considered by many as the greatest Afrikaans poet, his brother W.E.G. Louw—both of them acted in social realist plays such as Grosskopf's *As die tuig skawe* (1926) and both gave advice in the staging of *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955)—and the famous Afrikaans actress, Anna Neethling-Pohl who acted in the leading role in *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) when it was performed in the Cape for the first time.

Anna Neethling-Pohl studied at Stellenbosch University. Among her courses was economics with J.F.W. Grosskopf as lecturer. In Cape Town her theatrical career started with plays like *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955). Later she moved to Krugersdorp where she met P.W.S. Schumann, the author of *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955). She worked closely with Schumann's wife, a social worker in the Krugersdorp district, and encountered the type of circumstances from which the play developed. After Krugersdorp, Anna Neethling-Pohl moved to Pretoria where she was one of the founding members of the Volksteater (The People's Theatre) in 1935. One of the aims of the Volksteater was to promote the idea of a National Theatre Organisation. In 1938 she went to Europe. In Germany she was a spectator of the big Nazi festival. These became prototypes of the many historically-

inspired folk festivals in South Africa such as the Voortrekker Centenary of 1938 to which she contributed. She was instrumental in staging N.P. van Wyk Louw's *Die Dieper Reg* (1938) for this Centenary. During the Second World War her husband was interred for his participation in the activities of the Ossewabrandwag.

In her memoirs (Neethling-Pohl 1974) she describes her boredom in the 1930s with the refined and civilised theatre productions of the day until she discovered *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955): a play which immediately addressed her 'rebellious spirit'. She described it as a piece of realism, crude and raw, which was greatly applauded when performed, leading to the founding of the Cape Town Afrikaans Drama Society (Kapaastadse Afrikaanse Toneelvereniging).

4 *Hantie kom huis toe* and Naturalism

4.1 Decor

The decor of *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) as described in the text is realistic, although the prologue, in contrast to the other three acts, evokes a dream-like atmosphere of wealth: The front stoep of a house in a Boland town points to the 'good taste' (Schumann 1955:7) of the owners who conserved 'all the elements of Cape architecture' (Schumann 1955:7); 'a motor car arrives' (Schumann 1955:7) with its lights falling on the details: a couch, two chairs and pot plants on the stoep testifying to 'the moderate prosperity and good taste of the inhabitants' (Schumann 1955:7).

The dream-like atmosphere of the prologue relates to Hantie's statement on page 64 that her past was like a happy dream. The car lights and the meta-theatrical references of the prologue further emphasise this dream-like quality. Hantie and Jan in the prologue have just returned from a student performance of Langenhoven's allegorical and historical play *Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika*. Hantie still dressed in her costume resembling the idealised-woman-of-the-people covers of the *Kerkbode* (The Church Messenger) acts in the leading role as the 'Hope of South Africa'. This role also characterises Hantie as an example of someone who has transcended the limitations of class by being removed from her poor white environment, Wesselsdorp, where she was born and where she spent the first years of her life until her aunt took her away as a little girl.

The first act, in contrast to the prologue, introduces the hustle and bustle of the market at Wesselsdorp on a cold, windy and dusty morning. On the stage are bags and boxes of vegetables and fruit. A 'native crosses the stage with a bale of teff on his head and chewing on a straw' (Schumann 1955:22) among the shouting of auctioneers and the noise of workers and cars. It is the environment of the poor whites. The opening words by the

aristocratic Mrs. van Niekerk are: 'here you can see the bare truth of poor-whiteism' (Schumann 1955:22). These words embody the representational nature, the realism, of the play as a whole. Its representational form is utilitarian, it wants to teach about the social evils spawned by poor white surroundings.

The decor of the second and third acts continues the representation of the poor white environment. The second act takes place on the stoep of old Abdool's shop. Abdool is the Indian shop owner who makes his living from selling items to poor whites. The didascalia indicates the realist detail:

The shop is an old building, with rather small windows. In front of the door on the stoep is a pile of rope, a case of paraffin and a plough which serve as seats for the buying public, with other stock-in-trade (Schumann 1955:43)

The third act moves to the home of Annie Oosthuizen in the squatter area, Lappiesdorp. The scene, lighted by a street lamp, reflects on Annie who 'made no effort to make the place presentable, although she knew that visitors were coming' (Schumann 1955:70).

A rusty old paraffin tin is placed on one side to catch the water from the roof-gutter. The couch, made of the left-overs of a motor car's front seat, is in a state of decay. Sheets hang inside the windows (Schumann 1955:70)

Inside 'the sound of a screeching old tin gramophone' (Schumann 1955:70) is heard.

4.2 The Social Worker

Like Schumann's wife, Hantie the main character, is a social worker 'called' to dedicate herself to the upliftment of the poor whites. The plot structure of the play is a variation (with many inversions) of that of the prodigal son from the Bible. A daughter, Hantie, returns to her lost poor-white family in the mining town of Wesselsdorp. She was brought up by a prosperous aunt in the Cape where she received her education and training as a social worker (at Stellenbosch University). It is the family that is lost, especially her real father whose identity becomes known at the end. The child, a daughter, returns, but she, through her education, has the power to intervene and to help them.

Hantie kom huis toe's (1955) appearance simultaneously with the Carnegie commission's report on *The Poor White Problem in South Africa* in 1932 points to a literature and social-science intertext. The main character, Hantie, the social worker, indicates a special power and knowledge configuration in the world, especially the world of the nationalist who is

ultimately concerned with the *structuring* and *planning* of social reality within an image of civilisation.

As social worker, Hantie represents the concern with the poor from a sociological and a nationalist point of view. The play with its sociological concerns, relates to the 'scientific outlook' promoted in the manifestos of nineteenth-century naturalism. Naturalism, as depicted in Zola's manifesto—the preface to *Therèse Raquin* (1867)—shares the optimism of science: through the depiction of social degradation one comes to an understanding of the forces which produce that degradation and on the basis of that understanding one could implement social programmes which would rectify the situation. Alfred Vizetelly (1904:184), Zola's biographer, refers to science as 'the greatest humanitarian agency' and to the 'man who experiments, the man who dissects' as one who increases and diffuses knowledge for 'the benefit of the world'. In the case of Schumann the aim was to produce an awareness of the poor-white problem amongst Afrikaner nationalists through naturalist theatre.

Naturalism as literary programme complemented the new disciplining social sciences of the nineteenth century: sociology, anthropology, criminology, psychology and genetics. Making 'manifest' 'the imperfections and lapses of collective and individual life that seemed ... to require remedying' (Vizetelly 1904:184), its aims were humanitarian and utilitarian. The programme of naturalism made it inevitably a political form of literature, to be adapted in various ways by both nationalism and socialism as various brands of social realism in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia show. However, the practice of naturalism by Zola himself, in his novels, never had an explicit political message and rather developed as a defence against claims that his works were pornographic. It emerged from late nineteenth century decadence and aestheticism.

Hantie, the university-trained social worker, comes from a poor white family: she is tied to them by blood. This tie, which links her subjectivity with the subjectivity of the poor whites, undermines the demand of objectivity and distance demanded by science. As social worker she is further also confronted with people outside reason's disciplining institutions, outside the dominant economy, outside civilisation: people ultimately with their roots in existence economies and therefore free. The poor white is made to resemble the 'baboon' (Schumann 1955:11) or 'those Bushman sculptures from the ethnographic section of the museum' (Schumann 1955:11f). These images point to Hantie and the author's fear of social regression, of the Afrikaner 'going native', of the distance which might emerge between the poor whites and the wealthy if they are not brought back into the fold of the nation. Her bond of blood with the poor whites represents the nationalist image of nation as a family and the need for intervention on the basis of family.

The play's recommendation for the upliftment of the poor whites, embodied in Hantie's subjection to her criminal father at the end, is implicitly different from the recommendations of the Carnegie commission. There is with Hantie an impatience with the 'congresses' (Schumann 1955:87), 'commissions of inquiry' (Schumann 1955:87), 'deputations' (Schumann 1955:87) and 'blueprints' (Schumann 1955:87) generated by the politicians.

Her work is the result of a calling to serve the poor amongst her people. This calling has a mystical and psychological cause as her mystical conversations with the Lord, her alter-ego father figure, show. The imaginary conversations with a father figure point to an experience of a lack of a father in her life. When she eventually meets her real father, the violent criminal, Hans Labuschagne, she finds him repulsive. God and evil become indistinct—the God she addresses in the following are blurred with the father:

Him?—Then I have his blood in my veins? My flesh from His, and my nerves, my constitution, my spirit derived from his? Not a part of my body, or of my soul without his imprint . . . My Creator and my Moulder, who saw me even before I was, who knew me before my birth—is it your will, was it really your intention with me? (Schumann 1955 91)

Hantie's idealism concerning the poor whites is contrasted with the poor whites's frivolous conception of the wealthy Afrikaners, embodied by the character, Jan, to whom she is engaged. The difference between Hantie and Jan is developed into two different interpretations of Afrikaner history. The wealthy Afrikaners romanticise, but at the same time belittle, this history. Jan, for instance, refers to the Afrikaner people in the diminutive as 'volkie'. The text describes some of Jan's nationalist utterances, such as the following, as 'overstatements':

Here are the people. Their ancestors were from long ago, from the trekking days which started in the time of the Dutch East India Company. They were not accustomed to the gathering of possessions or the pursuing of comfort or pleasure! Nature was their wealth, and freedom their only comfort and pleasure (Schumann 1955 85)

In another passage Jan assumes that the poor white, Oom Krisjan, was a 'bittereinder' in the Anglo-Boer war. Krisjan though does not even know what the word 'bittereinder' means. He states that only the insane would fight for Paul Kruger and then accuses President Kruger of corruption.

The non-heroic role of the poor whites during this war is also emphasised in the other characters. Hans, Hantie's poor-white father, was a hands upper in the war. Annie Oosthuizen who was in the concentration

camps with her mother and sister, is half Anglicised and her sister married a Tommy (British soldier). All these examples in the text try to indicate a class rift, try to show that the poor whites did not consider themselves to be part of the main narrative of Afrikaner history, or the Afrikaner nation as family.

One of the disillusioning lessons that Hantie has to learn is that she would not be able to approach the poor whites with preconceptions of the privileged class. They resist being objectified, labelled or patronised. Annie, the woman with whom her real father lives, rebukes her:

Look, Cousin, if you want to visit me then you must not call me 'sister'! I do not allow myself to be 'sistered'. Do you think you are the clergyman's wife ... (Schumann 1955:74)

and:

I'm no 'blinking street woman' and also not a 'poor white' (Schumann 1955:76)

and:

It is the 'charities' and the 'Distress' and the 'Mayor's Fund' and all those type of people who are trying to make 'poor whites' of us. My husband always said they are like the doctors who diagnosed a new ailment and now want everybody to suffer from it (Schumann 1955:76).

4.3 Satyrs in *Hantie kom huis toe*

The text, through the character of Annie Oosthuizen, states the difference between the 'poor whites', as diagnosed by the social scientists, and reality as experienced by those diagnosed as 'poor whites' ('I'm no "blinking street woman" and also not a "poor white"' Schumann 1955:76). An alternative interpretative metaphor for them would be that of the satyr. The satyr is not an economic category, like the 'poor white', but is an antagonist to 'civilisation'. To Nietzsche (1956:61) the satyr is half animal, instinctual and an image of 'sexual omnipotence'. The satyr as Other to reason is associated especially with alcohol and music (especially with the folk song in which 'language is strained to its utmost that it may imitate music') (Nietzsche 1956:53). Music goes beyond reason in that it does not need images and concepts, but passion, desire and madness. Alcohol similarly dulls civilised reason.

In *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) the poor white characters are linked both to nature and the instinct, while they, like Bacchae, are also portrayed as nomadic. The Diedericks family lives in their hawker's wagon. They are described in terms of their Voortrekker ancestry:

Nature was their wealth and freedom their only convenience. They moved here and there with their stock and animals, to where there were the best opportunities

for survival. Just like their descendants today, move here then there, from the Rand to the diggings, and from the diggings to the settlements, wherever instinct leads them (Schumann 1955:85)

Alcohol and music are two recurrent motifs in *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955). Hans's criminal activities consist of selling liquor illegally to the blacks and he has been imprisoned twice for it. He is repeatedly described as a drunkard. In the opening scene of the last act his simple-minded stepson, Andrew, is half-drunk. He is also often referred to as playing the guitar. Tant Grieta imagines the following possible idyllic future with Hantie:

If only we had some music on the farm! Aunt Lettie wrote that Hantie can play the piano beautifully. Then Krisjan can play the concertina and when Andrew comes to visit, every now and again, he could bring his guitar and we could have a good time (Schumann 1955:54)

The gramophone player is a prominent part of the stage props in the last act. Annie describes the happiness of the poor whites:

Listen there (*the gramophone is playing a waltz, voices are heard*) You saw how drunk Hans is tonight. It is Grieta and him dancing there. And small Grieta is sitting on Andrew's lap and he is telling her how he cheeked the manager today And she admires his masculinity (Schumann 1955:81)

From the point of view of Hantie these poor whites are a people that is sinking, sinking until 'they are out of reach' (Schumann 1955:85). To Jan they represent a social disease (Schumann 1955:87). The text itself repeatedly states that they are happy the way they are: 'They are satisfied where they are, and the way they are. They cannot imagine that they are capable of anything better' (Schumann 1955:16). The concern is therefore not with these people's happiness, but with the image of racial regression that they represent. The poor white is described as looking like a 'baboon' (Schumann 1955:11) or like the 'Bushman sculpture' (Schumann 1955:11) in the ethnographic section of the museum. Mrs. Van Niekerk scolds tant Grieta for addressing her as 'Missus' because she is also 'a white person' (Schumann 1955:23). When the poor whites are slipping out of reach, they are slipping especially into a satyr-like existence of alcohol abuse, uninhibited sexuality and unthinking violence

5 Siener in die suburbs

5.1 The Reception of *Siener in die suburbs*

Siener in die Suburbs (1981) is one of the most popular and most performed Afrikaans plays. It was first performed in 1971 by PACT (The Performing

Arts Council of the Transvaal) at the Breytenbach Theatre in Pretoria. Country-wide performances followed in all the major cities of South Africa. In the next two decades it was sporadically performed at smaller venues all over South Africa. It was also toured by the coloured group Cosair who performed it at black universities in the late seventies. In 1973 it was made into a film which was shown on TV4 in 1986 and in 1988 on the M-Net channel.

At a symposium in 1973 on the Sestigers, P.G. du Plessis stated that he wrote the play with a popular audience in mind ('the ordinary and warm blooded people' Du Plessis 1973:88). In an interview, Du Plessis (*The Cape Times* 21/1/81) said:

I coloured the picture with the sadness and the exhilaration of the life I got to know during my teaching days in the suburbs—during the ducktail-era, when my pupils and I were young, and part of the town where we lived, old and rotten around us

The play in its early years was slated as 'gutter literature' (see review 'Siener uitgekryt as rioolliteratuur' TV editors of *Oosterlig* 22/7/86) and it is stated that

It was the first time that Afrikaners from the ghettos were depicted on stage and many were shocked: no such people were supposed to exist

Siener in die suburbs, though had many predecessors. Many plays focusing on poor whites were produced in Afrikaans in the first few decades of the twentieth century. P.W.S. Schumann's *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) is the one usually mentioned. J.C. Kannemeyer (1983), the major Afrikaans literary historian, makes this clear in his discussion of *Siener in die suburbs*. He states that the play belongs to the tradition of Grosskopf, Fagan and Schumann (authors who were active in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s). According to Kannemeyer (1983:440), the link with Schumann's depiction of the 'degenerate, and urbanised Afrikaner' is especially strong. Like Tjokkie in *Siener in die suburbs* (1981), the character, Gertjie in *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955), has premonitions of the future. *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955), though, portrays many different outdoor settings: the Boland house, the market at Wesselsdorp, the veranda of the Indian shop and Lappiesdorp. *Siener in die suburbs* (1981) on the other hand is limited to the claustrophobic space of a backyard in the southern suburbs of Johannesburg. There are also more deep-rooted differences: *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) is explicitly political and ties in strongly with the historical discourse of poor whiteism in the 1930s. *Siener in die suburbs* (1981) is only very indirectly political: and if it is political, then the message is opposite to that of *Hantie*

kom huis toe (1955). There is no message of upliftment in *Siener in die suburbs* (1981). Instead, one senses a degree of identification with these marginal people and their futile attempts to signify within the broader urban and modern world. They are embodiments of love and the hurt and betrayal which accompany love. The choice of the poor white theme has to do with Du Plessis's concern with what he considers as 'real' people in contrast to the hypocrisy, boredom and material wealth of the Afrikaner establishment.

In the early 1970s when the play was produced, South African Literature was dominated by themes of race and Apartheid (as represented by authors such as Breyten Breytenbach and André P. Brink.). P.G. du Plessis consciously reacted against this trend. In his contribution to the symposium on the Sestigers in 1973 he argued, in reaction to the demand for a politically-involved literature, for the search of a 'deeper reality' (Polley 1973:83), 'fundamental patterns' (Polley 1973:83) which would lead authors beyond the politics of a particular time to the universal in the deeper chaos and the great myths of death, exile and love (Polley 1973:84). He wanted to move beyond 'the showing and the knowing' to the 'unconscious' (Polley 1973:87). The political is conceived by him as part of conformism, the droning of the literary and academic establishment (Polley 1973:89).

5.2 *Siener in die suburbs* as Tragedy

The representation of contemporary life in the New Attic Comedy of Euripides, according to Nietzsche, meant the death of Greek tragedy. Through Euripides

the everyday man forced his way from the spectator's seat onto the stage, the mirror in which formerly only grand and bold traits were represented now showed the painful fidelity that conscientiously reproduces even the botched outlines of nature (Nietzsche 1956:77).

Looking at it from this point of view (and also ironically when Du Plessis's pleading for the 'universal' is considered), *Siener in die suburbs* (1981) does not qualify as tragedy in the Nietzschean sense. The characters seem to be representatives of contemporary South African life, although outcasts living in the southern Johannesburg suburbs. The decor, too, is realistic in the greatest detail.

All the acts take place in the backyard of Ma's semi-detached house. On the right-hand side of the stage is the kitchen door, a small veranda, the kitchen window and a wall closing in the backyard. Against the wall is an old hen-coop which acts as a storing-place of wood and coal. There is a washing line with a few bits of washing. On the left-hand side there is a garage with decaying wooden doors showing green paint of years ago. In the

open garage is a jacked-up 1948 Buick without wheels. From the beam just behind the door hangs a pulley with which the engine was removed earlier. Against the wall is the oil-drenched work-bench with the disassembled engine of the Buick on it.

The title of *Siener in die suburbs* (1981) refers to Tjokkie who was born with the caul and therefore has the ability to see/dream the future. He introduces the supernatural into the apparently naturalist play. His psychic powers is a 'talent'—an ability to have access to the future—something inexplicable by scientific naturalism.

Tjokkie is also a dreamer in another sense—he dreams of living on the other side of the railway line, of having a better life. His anger at Giel for sleeping with his mother without being married to her and his anger at his sister's unwanted pregnancy, point to his highly moral character. He resists the sexuality which keeps his family, and the people of the suburbs, entrapped in their impoverished circumstances. Giel describes Tjokkie as being without love. Tjokkie, therefore, embodies a wish, dream and repression combination.

The antagonist in the play is the ducktail, Jakes. Jakes brings the alcohol and marijuana, 'the drug of the truth', (Du Plessis 1981:36) onto the stage. To him, life is about 'juice and love' (Du Plessis 1981:31). On an allegorical level, Tjokkie and Jakes could be seen as naturalist transpositions (or masks) of the Nietzschean opposites of the dream and intoxication central to tragedy. Tjokkie's 'crucifixion' by block-and-tackle in the car's engine space, and his death under the car make him a reincarnation of the Dionysian god being torn apart. Jakes on the other hand is the voice which seeks 'justice' (Du Plessis 1981:54), and ultimately embodies Dionysian justice:

Tiemie: Go away, Jakes. What do you want here?

Jakes: Justice

Tiemie: Justice! Was it justice when you wanted to bring me into trouble on purpose? You never had any feelings for me

Jakes: I had love. Lots of love (Du Plessis 1981:53).

A Nietzschean reading of the play would demand that these characters on an archetypal level become equated with the 'demigods' and 'drunken satyrs' as against the 'everyday' persons of the New Attic Comedy. The 'everyday' person of the New Attic Theatre was one of reason; one who wanted to comprehend the seemingly irrational notion of justice embodied in traditional tragedy: the 'unequal' 'distribution of good and bad fortune' (Nietzsche 1956:80). The principle according to which Euripides operated was Socratic and its dictum, 'knowledge is virtue' or 'to be beautiful everything must be intelligible' (Nietzsche 1956:83). Nietzsche refers to the 'audacious reasonableness' (Nietzsche 1956:83) of Euripides and states that 'Euripides

as a poet is essentially an echo of his own conscious knowledge' (Nietzsche 1956:85).

Siener in die suburbs (1981) is not a moral play, it does not dramatise an intelligible world of effects with intelligible causes. The whole play centres around a vision. Tjokkie's talent to see the future is in itself something inexplicable. On the bases of this vision the character Giel bets, against all odds, his life's savings on the outsider horse, Natty Tatty. Tiemie makes love to the ducktail, Jakes, although she despises the idea of a life with him in the suburbs. People act contrary to what they consciously want. Central to this absurd world is the motif of love: love for others, self love, self interest and sexuality, is what drives people, and inscribed in this love is blood, pain and betrayal. Ma summarises this when she says:

I'm sitting between the kinds (of love), it seems to me Where the one type hurts, the other makes good, where the one pleases, the other pains (Du Plessis 1981:42)

and she warns against too much love: too much leads to hurt.

Jakes refers to himself as 'a goat for love' (Du Plessis 1981:31) and it is on the basis of love that he demands his place within this family. When Ma asks him what he knows about love, he answers.

Because I jump the iron and because I'm a bit with-it the old lady thinks I do not know those things? My outsides are not nice to the old lady, but in my insides there are things working. Love is love (Du Plessis 1981:45)

He points to the fact that the love coming from the insides is working a bit on the strong side in his and the old lady's case (Du Plessis 1981:46).

Tiemie points out to him that his so-called love for her was nothing other than a selfish search to have a child with a mother of class. Love is irrational, its reasons may be construed from Jakes's need for a family, for respect, whatever. The point is, there is nothing that can be done to prevent the violence and hurt of love.

The last scenes are central to the reading of this play as tragedy. While the seven-single 'Sugar-Sugar' is playing, Tiemie is killed by Jakes inside the house and Tjokkie kills himself underneath the car. Jakes appears with a bloody altar cloth which he throws in Ma's face muttering: 'There is your bloody love' (Du Plessis 1981:56). Ma then says to herself: 'There is blood on it ... there is always blood on it' (Du Plessis 1981:56). The words on the altar cloth 'God is Love' (Du Plessis 1981:30) and the violence indicated by the blood, signify God's (and by implication Reason's) absence in the world, but also on a deeper level, God's presence in what is beyond reason. It states the deeper reality of Dionysian ecstasy. Blood and love, death and sexuality,

are the intertwined instincts through which the amoral 'artist-god' expresses 'in the good and in the bad, his own joy and glory' (Nietzsche 1956:22). It points to the triumph of pessimist laughter, the mindless omnipotence of the dramatist who tears his characters apart through Jakes, the character who is seeking justice. The blood on his hands and the altar cloth is the answer to his search. 'God is love' (Du Plessis 1981:30) and 'there is always blood on God's love' (my reformulation of Du Plessis 1981:56) are statements of universality. It is this universality, the *always* in Ma's words, which makes this play an example of a ritual rather than a depiction of a particular historical and sociological reality as one finds in earlier Afrikaans naturalist drama.

While Jakes slaughters a screaming Tiemie in the last act the popular seven single of the sixties 'Sugar, sugar' is playing. Music, especially folk music, represents 'in the highest degree a universal language' (Nietzsche 1956:101). The music in *Siener in die suburbs* precedes the last words: 'There is always blood on it' (Du Plessis 1981:56) which formulates the universal condition.

In *Siener in die suburbs*, Tjokkie and his half-sister, Tiemie, reject their suburbs environment, which implies a repression of the 'urges' of 'nature'. Tiemie, who does not know who her father is, is described as beautiful and intelligent. She was always in the A class at school. She therefore has the qualities to escape from the suburbs. She is repeating her own tragic history though in falling pregnant with the child of Jakes:

Tiemie: Little Brother, if I have this child now it would be the same as me. I do not want it like that ... I ... I didn't want it. I hated Mother too much about myself when they discovered the truth at school (Du Plessis 1981:24)

And:

Tiemie: Ma, I cannot marry Jakes. I do not want to live here. I do not want this life, also not the men, Ma. I do not want a husband who comes home drunk ... if he comes home ... being abused with little ones. I do not want to be old before my time. Ma, you know, they do not know about us ... at work, they think we do not exist ... they laugh when they hear of us, or they do not know where to look when they hear where I live. They are embarrassed about us—us. They do not know about us. They do not know how we live or what we feel. They do not know. I want to be known, Ma, I do not want to die like a dog. I want to be known. I so desperately wanted to be known (Du Plessis 1981:26).

Tiemie is driven by the desire to be, to be representable, to be part of a class and a life where she would signify. She wants to transcend her 'annihilation' as 'individual'. She embodies the struggle between nature and civilisation. Jakes formulates this struggle in Tiemie:

You are ashamed of your ducktail, but that is not all You do not have the guts
You do not have the guts to say that you are crazy about a low class bastard You
do not have the guts to admit how you grabbed your ducktail on those Saturday
nights (Du Plessis 1981:52f).

Jakes also wants to enter the realm of representation: he wants a class mother for his child. Tiemie is that class mother. The way in which he is looked down upon by Tjokkie and Tiemie motivates his vengeance on this family. Tjokkie calls him a 'nobody' and 'low class'. It is against this background that he is searching for justice.

At the root of signification is the presence of the father. Tiemie's search for meaning relates to the absence of a father: 'Little brother I don't know who my father is' (Du Plessis 1981:24). Jakes never felt that he had a father: 'I was never my father's son' (Du Plessis 1981:49). He feels he will get the recognition he desires through a son: 'He looks up to you' (Du Plessis 1981:48). The hawker and gambler, Giel who lives with Ma in sin, exploits the social need for father figures by selling proverbs such as 'What is a house without a father' (Du Plessis 1981:15).

The father ultimately, though, signifies fate and death. In his vision, Tjokkie sees a man at the gate, a man with a uniform, looking half-familiar. He sees himself leaving with this man and inviting Tiemie to join them. This vision indicates his wish to re-unite with the dead father. It translates in his own and Tiemie's death: he commits suicide underneath the car and Tiemie is killed by Jakes. The escape from the suburbs is ultimately an escape into death.

The only character who benefits from Tjokkie's vision is the gambler, Giel. He placed all his money on the race-horse Natty Tatty, the grey outsider with not much of a chance to win—the ash-coloured duck of Tjokkie's dream. This points to the role of fate in the lives of the characters. It is fate rather than naturalist determinism which is decisive. According to Nietzsche, Moira (fate) is 'enthroned above gods and men as eternal justice' (Du Plessis 1981:69).

Tjokkie explicitly refers to this fate and its relation to his 'talent' to see the future:

One cannot play around with this Just when you are trying to force the future in a direction, it will turn against you (Du Plessis 1981:20)

The quest for clarity about the future amongst the different characters leads to greater uncertainty, and the eventual complete destruction of the family. Tjokkie and Tiemie are punished because they thought they were better than their surroundings, Ma and Jakes are punished because they loved too intensely. But ultimately the hubris and destruction are a universal condition

God is love and love is blood. Sexuality and death underwrite the imaginary world of life. It is this realisation, this pessimism, which makes *Siener in die suburbs* (1981) different from *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955).

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