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Imagining the End of Whiteness

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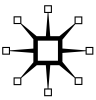

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Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
AWB	Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging/Afrikaner Resistance Movement
ECC	End Conscription Campaign
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
NGK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk/Dutch Reformed Church
NP	National Party
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAP	South African Police
SRA	Satanic Ritual Abuse
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Introduction: Dark Tales, White Wolves

On 15 November 1988, in a humid square near the centre of Pretoria, the legislative capital of South Africa, a 21-year-old white Afrikaans man named Barend Hendrik Strydom took out his pistol and began to shoot black people. He shot one man outside the State Theatre and a man and a woman on the corner of Church and Prinsloo Streets, and then continued down Struben Street, shooting every black person who crossed his path. By the time he was overpowered by a taxi driver named Simon Mukondoleli, Strydom had murdered eight people and seriously wounded sixteen. When questioned he claimed to be the head of a white supremacist group called the *Wit Wolwe*, the White Wolves, who were fighting a war for the survival of white civilisation. While some commentators believed that the *Wit Wolwe* were a product of Strydom's imagination, others claimed the group was real and had arisen in the 1970s (Welsh and Spence 2011, 53). In either case, the name was adopted by other far-right factions in the wake of Strydom's killings. The murders appalled South Africa and, as a metaphor for the barbarity of the apartheid system that had bred him, the world at large.

His trial took place in May 1989. Strydom was unrepentant, claiming his actions had been legitimate for a Christian and a *Boer* – an Afrikaner – working for the survival of his people. The trial offered a glimpse into an internal universe of patriarchal power, racial pseudoscience and the purifying powers of violence, shot through with racist Calvinism and the militaristic anti-communism that was taught to white, and particularly Afrikaans, South African children during the apartheid years. In Strydom's cosmology his *volk*, his people, were under threat by demonic forces and it was his duty as a white man to defend them against black South African nationalism, and most specifically against the African National Congress (ANC). He did not consider

black people to be properly human, and so despite his self-definition as Christian, the biblical injunction 'Thou shalt not kill' did not apply.

On 25 May 1989 Strydom was sentenced to 30 years in prison for the attempted murder of 25 people and the pointing of a firearm, and given the death penalty for the murders of another eight. The courtroom was packed with family and supporters, many dressed in the traditional clothing of *voortrekkers* and carrying insignia of the old Afrikaner republics.[1] In 1990 the apartheid government called a moratorium on capital punishment. In 1994 Strydom was granted amnesty by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and released. A 2008 interview reported that Strydom was living on a smallholding outside the city of Pretoria with his wife, an Afrikaans woman whom he had married while in prison, and their children (Chidester 1991, 1–20; Hook 2005b; Marsh n.d.; Smith 2008).

The *Wit Wolf* murders shook South Africa deeply. Unlike the narratives surrounding township unrest in the 1980s (which I discuss in Chapter 10) or fears of violent crime in the post-apartheid city, they were the opposite of arbitrary and meaningless.[2] David Chidester writes,

> Symbolically, Strydom conceived his actions on 15 November as redemptive. That is, he imagined that his dramatic mass murder of blacks in Strijdom Square would initiate the restoration of his country to the time of the beginning of apartheid, to that mythic, sacred time when the utopian (or dystopian) dream of an all-white nation was being implemented by the violent force of law in South Africa. (1991, 19)

Strydom's killings were not just acts of violent racism; they were also acts of mythology and of fantasy. They operated in the realm of the symbolic as well as the physical. Strydom invoked a malevolent enemy that threatened the foundations of white civilisation. His worldview, full of fantastic demonology and a destructive, macabre version of Christianity, gave the patriarchal white Afrikaner the right and responsibility to kill for his people. Strydom was the obscene endpoint of white South Africans' fear of black South Africans, in which only the complete destruction of black people could ensure white survival.

In a quote often repeated by leftist South African academics looking to explain the peculiar tensions of their national condition, Antonio Gramsci wrote in *The Prison Notebooks*, 'The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great deal of morbid symptoms appear' (1995, 276). Strydom's homicidal pathology was one of those

symptoms, and it was not alone. This book uses contemporary media material to investigate two symptoms that evinced similar symbolic content to the violent actions of the *Wit Wolf*. The first is the Satanism scare, a moral panic led by an increasingly strident coalition of media, politicians, evangelical Christians, teachers and police that fostered belief in an organised and international cult bent on the overthrow of Christianity and white South African civilisation. The second was the so-called epidemic of white family murder, in which an uncommonly high number of familial murder-suicides were narrativised by the press into a domestic plague that seemed to be both contagious and perpetrated exclusively by white Afrikaans men.

Strydom represented whiteness on the furthest edge, tipping over into a psychosis that was inscribed indiscriminately on the bodies of black bystanders. The Satanism scare and the family murder epidemic, although related, were something different. As I will show, both of these cultural panics contained the possibility of redemption within themselves and both enacted a looking-away from the sociopolitical realities of late apartheid South Africa, even while they operated within a distorted view of the world that foreshadowed Strydom's nightmare cosmology. In Strydom's perverse universe, the end had already come. Satanism and family murder, albeit imbued with some similar meanings, were part of white South Africa's response to the end as near, not as present.

Writing in the mid-1980s, Vincent Crapanzano said of white South Africans, 'To be dominant in a system is not to dominate a system. Both the dominant and the dominated are equally caught in it' (1985, 20). My primary purpose is to investigate these events not as isolated cultural oddities but rather as indications of what happened to certain parts of white society during the last years of apartheid. I consider how these panics manifested in the media, what they were understood to mean there and whether and how they were symptomatic of their time.

These episodes did not affect all white South Africans equally. They did not have the same influence on culture, policy or memory as other trends that characterised the 1980s: the small but creative dissent among white youth embodied in the End Conscription Campaign (ECC), the developing alliance between a white and black capitalist elite that viewed apartheid as bad for business, the emergence of a white far-right movement in the vein of Barend Strydom or the shift among ordinary Afrikaners away from the National Party and traditional nationalist churches (Conway 2012; van de Westhuizen 2007). Nonetheless, both the Satanism scare and the family murder 'epidemic' were covered

extensively in the popular press of the time and were discussed by politicians, commentators, police and other moral entrepreneurs. As such they reveal much about the pathologies and repressions that affected South African whitenesses during the late apartheid period.

There is a terminological, and perhaps even an ethical, difficulty with performing cultural studies on relics of apartheid South Africa, whose discursive regime appealed throughout its history to racialising notions of culture in order to legitimise its segregational laws. In 1951 the Bantu Authorities Act allocated just 13 per cent of South Africa's landmass to homelands, or Bantustans, allegedly semi-autonomous territories set aside by the apartheid government into which black South Africans were forcibly moved according to an often arbitrary and anthropologically contrived understanding of tribal groupings. The Bantustan system was ideologically justified as protecting nominal prelapsarian black 'cultures' from modernising pollutants; indeed, the very existence of the Bantustans showed how vitally important cultural and political identity were to Afrikanerdom (Steyn 2001, 39). Clifton Crais quotes an unnamed National Party official in a 1963 government document entitled 'Bantu Authorities: Their Aim and Object and the Place of the Chief or Headman in these Authorities' as saying, 'A nation without its culture is a nation without its soul. A nation who does not develop its culture will deteriorate and eventually die' (2002, 110). This applied as strongly to Afrikaner *kultuur* as to black tribal cultures: the need to protect Afrikaners from social miscegenation and the threat of 'poor-whiteism' was frequently stated as a motivation for apartheid legislation, as I discuss in Chapter 10. Some of the worst political violence in South Africa's history occurred in the early 1990s in clashes between the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the ANC, which credible evidence suggests was orchestrated by the state security apparatus. Despite ANC demands for a ban, the National Party (NP) government continued to allow IFP fighters' open carrying of 'cultural weapons': spears, ceremonial axes and small knives which the IFP argued were necessary tools of Zulu cultural identity but which often added to the escalation of violence ('Human Rights Developments South Africa' 2014). According to Crapanzano, white people in mid-1980s South Africa, sensitive to accusations of racism, referred to 'culture' and 'character' rather than to race (1985, 19), while Richard Ballard notes that in post-apartheid South Africa, 'culture is … replacing biology for those in search of a strategic basis for exclusion' (2002, 253). The field of cultural studies cannot, then, present itself as ideologically neutral; it is always

affected by the canonical inscriptions that accompany understandings of culture in South Africa (see Nuttall and Michael 2000).

But popular media and culture are also vital in South African life.[3] They 'explicate, argue, demonstrate, condemn or praise this or that event or social phenomenon … [they generate] political and cultural debates' (Freccero 1999, 1–2). Cultural studies allows that nothing is too quotidian for meaningful analysis (Hall 1980). Raymond Williams called culture 'a description of a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values, not only in art and learning, but in institutions and ordinary behaviour … [the analysis of culture] is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life' (quoted in Hall 1993, 351). Examining the media remnants of a self-referential culture allows us a way to consider that very ordinariness, the daily meanings and assumptions that informed the stories that white South Africans told themselves and were told about their country, their politics and their future. Both Satanism and family murder left traces in low-level popular culture that have been hitherto largely disregarded by scholars.

In 'Witches of Suburbia' Charles van Onselen examines the black peril panics that gripped the white Witwatersrand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These were 'periodic waves of collective sexual hysteria' centred around claims of black male rape of white women (1982, 45). He concludes, 'It is clear that the majority of such attacks of public hysteria coincided with periods of stress or acute tension within the political economy of the Witwatersrand as a whole' (1982, 51). The Satanism scare and the epidemic of family murder were not unique. Their patterns of flare up and response to social pressure echo the processes of the black peril panics. Following van Onselen, I use these moments to read the consequences of wider social and economic processes, aiming to politicise them in the tradition that Hall et al. initiated in their analysis of the moral panic around mugging (1978).

Throughout this book I treat the Satanism scare and media and social science responses to family murder as pathologies, a term chosen for the way it invokes medicalisation and the rhetoric of illness. Infection, sickness, disease, pathogenicity, corruption, hygiene and sanitation recur through these narratives, playing out familiar racist/colonial modalities of dirt and purity and recalling the imaginary architecture of other folk devils, in South Africa and elsewhere. The nation 'is represented as a body, the body politic. The body can be threatened from without but also by pollution, contamination, by the enemy within' (Pettman 1996, 50).

As I show, both Satanism and family murder in some sense displaced the threat posed by external enemies but in the process revealed the possibility of sickness within.

Whiteness and White Identity

As its title suggests, this book is centrally concerned with whiteness: like all racial identities, socially and historically rather than biologically constructed. My perspective on whiteness has been influenced by scholars like Richard Dyer (1997), Ruth Frankenberg (1993) and David Roediger (1991, 1998). However I do not locate this work within what has sometimes been called 'critical whiteness studies', a theoretical field used for analysing race that, as many before me have pointed out, is sometimes guilty of a blinkered ahistoricism. Writing on whiteness, says Sara Ahmed,

> needs to be framed as following from the earlier critique. Whiteness studies, that is, if it is to be more than 'about' whiteness, begins with the black critique of how whiteness works as a form of racial privilege, as well as the effects of that privilege on the bodies of those who are recognised as black. (2004, par. 2)

This is an important point for an analysis of South Africa, where for so long white people – albeit often those who self-defined as 'liberal' – maintained a monopoly over literature, scholarship and the media, with black voices often banned or exiled from the public domain. Black writers and activists like James Baldwin (1963), Audre Lorde (1984), Toni Morrison (1992) and particularly Steve Biko (1988) are vital for a nuanced understanding of race and racialised experience, although their works are seldom included in the canon of 'whiteness studies'. Barring Biko, these African American writers focus on the USA. As I argue in Chapter 10, the development of white privilege and identity in South Africa – and thus potentially in other locations in the global south – followed a different trajectory to that taken in the USA. As such Melissa Steyn's work on the recuperations and discursive formations of South African whiteness is important (Steyn 2001, 2004; Distiller and Steyn 2004; Steyn and Foster 2008).

Barbara Fields writes that race is 'profoundly and in its very essence ideological' (1982, 143). Being thought of as white *does something*. It is performative, moulding culture, history, society and economy. Whiteness affects people's lived experiences, their senses of themselves

and their opportunities in and engagements with the world, but it is neither consistent nor permanent. This is borne out by the fact that there are changes over time in who is considered white. As numerous studies have shown, both Jewish and Irish people acquired white identities in the early twentieth century (see, for example, Gilman 2001; McClintock 1995). Afrikaners, who are a pivotal part of this narrative, were not always considered white by their pre-apartheid colonial masters: the British Lord Kitchener once called the Boers 'uncivilised Afrikaner savages with a thin white veneer' (Nederveen Pieterse 1992, 104). Even a national identity that was tied so tightly to its whiteness, and that became globally symbolic of a despised white supremacist politics, was once considered suspect and thought not to meet the conditions of civilisation.

Whiteness does not exist in a vacuum. In the absence of alternate racial identities, with nothing to define itself against, whiteness (and race in general) becomes meaningless (Dalton 2002, 16). Steyn writes that whiteness is 'a modernist construction, central to the colonisation project, and achieved through the exorcism of everything "black", particularly African, from white identity' (2001, 150). In South Africa, as in so many other places, white and black are intertwined despite attempts by white discourses to reject any symbiosis with non-whiteness. As Baldwin wrote, 'The purer white the identity, the more dependent it is on its black other' (quoted in Steyn 2001, xxxv).

Much social, cultural and ideological work is involved in maintaining this homogenous idea of whiteness, and it remains vulnerable to stresses and pressures. The Satanism scare and the family murder epidemic in 1980s and 1990s South Africa are optimal sites for the analysis of these pressures. Both episodes reveal cracks in the construction of whiteness. In examining them we can uncover and locate the moments of weakness, paranoia, doubt, fear and loss that helped to undercut white South African identities that had in fact never been monolithic, despite political and colonial attempts to portray them as such.

State of the Nation

It would be impossible to grasp the relevance of Satanism and family murder without some sense of the context in which they occurred and of which they were symptomatic. Both panics loosely spanned the period of the mid-1980s, after the first in a series of township uprisings that significantly unsettled the apartheid government and the white electorate, to the mid-1990s, when Nelson Mandela was voted into

office. This was a time of growing unrest, state repression, militarisation, white fear and denial, economic crisis and social change.

Belinda Bozzoli and Peter Delius write of the 'euphoric belief among many [leftist intellectuals] that, in the early 1980s, [they] were witnessing the beginnings of a revolution' (1991, 222). However, this premature celebration soon gave way to the tensions of the State of Emergency and the early stages of what was beginning to seem like a civil war. In the decade before the 1994 elections, 'few people believed that democracy would arrive without a violent and prolonged revolution' (Crais 2002, 1). By the mid-1980s the United Democratic Front (UDF), a non-racial coalition of about 400 civic, church, student, women's and other groups, had made it clear that State President PW Botha's style of apartheid was as untenable as that of his predecessors. Christi van de Westhuizen writes, 'Black fury had grown beyond the NP's imagination … 1985 saw unprecedented levels of civilian unrest, ranging from strikes to school boycotts and attacks on government collaborators' (2007, 132). The National Party responded with increasingly heavy-handed aggression and emergency legislation even as it made noises in the direction of conciliation and the somewhat ephemeral notion of power-sharing.[4]

The long banning of the ANC meant that its presence in the white imagination was drawn from nationalist propaganda about a terrorist organisation bent on land appropriation and mass murder. Unrest and violence in townships across the country seemed to be endemic and uncontainable. The discourse surrounding this so called 'black-on-black' violence, discussed further in Chapter 10, allowed many white people to disavow the relevance of the legitimate political claims and appalling living conditions of black protestors, as well as the significant government provocations involved, in favour of assuming that violence was inherently racial and therefore that majority rule would lead to the sort of bloody war of independence that characterised the histories of neighbours like Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. Polls conducted at the time revealed the extent of white fear and resistance to mass rule: a survey taken in the late 1980s found that 57 per cent of English-speaking university students would emigrate if the ANC came to power, while 45 per cent of Afrikaans-speaking students would 'physically resist' (Conway 2012, 45).

During this period a powerful narrative of anti-communism, discussed further in Chapter 4, was employed to justify the continued militarisation of South Africa, which happened in schools and other institutions as well as through the mass conscription of young white men. These newly

trained soldiers were sent to fight covert wars designed to destabilise South Africa's Marxist and African Nationalist neighbours and root out ANC strongholds, or into townships inside the country itself to quell internal dissent from black South Africans. Before they were banned from doing so, international film crews and photographers enthusiastically documented the chaos in the townships, adding to popular condemnation from the world outside. Apartheid had become a *cause célèbre*. White South Africans were global pariahs.

Meanwhile the economy was increasingly hampered by international sanctions and by the restrictions that apartheid placed on the market. Businesspeople from all sectors of South Africa put increasing pressure on the NP government to centralise economic over ideological concerns (van de Westhuizen 2007). As the decade progressed the National Party state moved towards a more pragmatic approach. According to the left-wing journalist Allister Sparks, two strands of thought made up apartheid mentality: the concept of 'separate nations, to save the Afrikaner "nation" from being swamped and to protect its members from black economic competition', and the 'crudely racist belief in black genetic inferiority' (1990, 182). Compromises were made with regard to the latter, with Botha straying so far from established Afrikaner doctrine as to call blatant racism 'outdated and unnecessary' (Sparks 1990, 182). This was in line with the position taken by B.J. Vorster, prime minister from 1966 to 1978, who said, 'The cardinal principal of the NP is the retention, maintenance and immortalisation of Afrikaner identity within a sovereign white state. Apartheid and separate development is [*sic*] merely a method of bringing this about and making it permanent' (quoted in van de Westhuizen 2007, 86). The Immorality Act, banning interracial sexual relations, and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act were both repealed in 1985, but separate development – the policy governing the forced resettlement of blacks into the economically crippled homelands – remained on the government's agenda until late in the 1980s, ensuring the state-endorsed protection of white economic privilege, land ownership and monopoly of resources. Interracial couples were legalised but, due to the retention of the Group Areas Act, were still prohibited from living in the same places.

In the mid-1980s many commentators predicted that violent conflict was the only possible outcome, but after a stroke in early 1988 Botha resigned as the head of the NP. He was replaced by F.W. de Klerk, a pragmatic conservative who became the country's leader in September 1989 and helped to shepherd South Africa into democracy. His government was accused of treachery by many whites, while historians have

suggested that de Klerk and the NP attempted to derail the transition process, undermine the ANC and use diplomatic strategies to entrench white influence in the post-1994 government (Alden 1996; Beinart 2001; Baines and Vale 2008; Giliomee 1997; van de Westhuizen 2007).

Homi Bhabha writes of the approach of decolonisation, applicable to the end of other situations of racialised dominance:

> Such a threatened equilibrium leads to a phenomenological condition of nervous adjustment, narcissistic justification, and vain, even vainglorious, proclamations of progressive principles on the part of the colonial state; and it is these very psycho-affective symptoms that reveal the injustices and disequilibrium that haunts the colonial historical record. (2004, xxiii)

The NP state's self-aggrandising attempts at reform were accompanied by some of the most repressive legislation of the apartheid period as well as by hugely unpopular measures like sending white conscripts into townships. According to Peter Stewart, white men's negative experiences in the army were a significant cause of bitterness towards the NP government (2004, 3). By the late 1980s the country had been battered by three successive States of Emergency as Botha's government attempted to clamp down on popular resistance to apartheid.[5] Organisations and individuals were banned and exiled and legislation was instituted as needed to legitimate the NP's treatment of its opponents. The rule of law, once essential to a state that legislated even its most extreme acts of official racism, became shaky, almost unhinged, as security forces moved closer to the centre of government and counter-revolutionaries embarked on a campaign of 'dirty tricks' designed to discredit, destabilise and sometimes even destroy opposition movements and fighters (Potgieter 2007). The violence and insecurity that had long characterised black life began to creep into the consciousness of whites who had been protected by censorship, social homogeneity, a schooling system of Christian National Education (CNE), repressive policing and racial segregation. According to van de Westhuizen, 'While the apartheid state had always exhibited authoritarian overtones, Botha's imperial regime saw tyranny's claws sink ever deeper' (2007, 169).

This was a period with a particular temporal character, one that gestated Barend Strydom's bloodthirsty desire to return to the sacred moment of the nation's birth. A common understanding about the future of South Africa as a white nation was being eroded. Many white people literally could not see what was coming, either because

of powerful socially injuncted mechanisms of denial and disavowal that equated doubting white power to national betrayal, or because of an imaginative failure that found a state run on majority rule impossible to conceptualise: what NP minister Rina Venter later called 'the unthinkability of *not* fearing a black majority in power' (quoted in van de Westhuizen 2007, 299). According to Elleke Boehmer, 'There was a widespread perception of an imminent, incipient or ongoing disintegration in the order of things, but it was accompanied by … a refusal to even go as far as anticipating any ultimate end and therefore any possibility of a new beginning, a diffidence about registering any final collapse' (1998, 50).

Added to this were the doom-calling of the far right, the messianic fervour that surrounded Mandela (Nixon 1994), the ANC's naming of the 1980s as the decade of liberation, the growth of Pentecostalism and the millenarian religious fringe and the Afrikaans understanding of the *volk* as God's chosen people awaiting revelation. Many white people were living their everyday lives within these 'end times', when the future seemed be unknowable or frightening. Crapanzano writes that the act of waiting causes the loss of 'negative capability':

> The capability of negating their identity so as to be imaginatively open to the complex and never certain reality around them. Instead, they close off, they create a sort of psychological apartheid, an apartness, that in the case of South Africa is institutionally reinforced. In such circumstances there can be no real recognition of the other … He becomes at once a menial object to be manipulated and a mythic object to be feared. (1985, xxix)

The act of waiting itself caused white South Africans to stagnate, to be frozen in a moment in which they could not move forward into recognition of the other or of changes to the self.

Motivations

As a child growing up in Johannesburg during the last years of apartheid I was peripherally aware of the peculiarities that surrounded me: the tension that flooded the whites-only suburbs, the nervous conversations that characterised each poolside gathering, the working black people who you were expected to see but not really see. It is astonishing how much knowledge white South Africans managed to avoid. Peace activist Howard Clark, visiting the country in the late 1980s, said that

he 'had never encountered an elite more ignorant of the political realities surrounding them' (quoted in Conway 2012, 44). But plenty and anxiety made awkward bedfellows. As I grew older my sense of the oddness of my surroundings increased. There was something bizarre, almost staged, about the way we lived, with our imported soap operas, our 'maids' and 'garden boys' in their identikit uniforms, our middle-class black friends who were a world away from the people we saw on the streets. Growing up white in the Joburg northern suburbs was a strange and stunted thing, even for those of us whose parents had been arrested in the 1970s and who knew where Soweto was. Apartheid defined us. As Ruth Frankenburg writes, 'Any system of differentiation shapes those on whom it bestows privilege as well as those it oppresses' (2001, 519).

My early adolescence was heavily marked by the Satanism scare. My black clothes and fondness for tarot cards and heavy metal signified one thing only to the worried adults around me. I attended a private Jewish school, worlds away from the rural, economically challenged and socially conservative communities where the most powerful episodes of the scare took root. Nevertheless it was clear to teachers, parents and students alike that those of us who rebelled in this way were involved with Satanism. No one accused us of slaughtering cats or eating babies but our refusal to adopt the homogenising uniforms of late apartheid conformity allied us to the thing that people feared most. With our resentful gothic posturing, we suggested the possibility of infection, of polluting the healthy body of a school environment that was subject to stringent social control. Adults worried that we were dangerous but fellow students treated our apparent dalliance with the devil dismissively. 'Satanist' became a high school pejorative, a slur to throw at social misfits, the depressives and *dagga* (marijuana) smokers as much as the strident anti-racists. Satanists, like girls who got pregnant and kids who took drugs, were a common part of the landscape of high school, even for metropolitan English-speaking South Africans in the late 1980s.

My awareness of family murder too began with my experience of growing up white in Johannesburg. I was nine years old in 1986 when Margaret Essburger, our family's neighbour and my mother's employer and friend, was murdered by a jilted lover who then committed suicide outside her house in the suburb of Parkhurst. My 13-year-old brother and I heard the shots from our garden. My mother rushed to help but instead found herself cradling Margaret's head as she died. Margaret's death was my first encounter with the casual violence that saturated other parts of South Africa and it had a jolting effect on my understanding of how the world worked. Although I grew up during a period of intense political

conflict, I saw very little of this on the heavily censored television news and there was no immediate sense of anything threatening my own quiet (segregated) suburb. Violence was deferred, felt on the wind but always at a remove. But after Margaret's murder I began to think of extreme violence as something that could be attached to white as well as to black people, in contrast to the persistent narratives of black-on-black violence that were used to fuel white fear and justify state repression. Although her death does not fit the profile of family murder that I outline in Chapter 8, it nonetheless inaugurated into my own experience an understanding of violence as something that existed within the domestic realm and the hushed confines of the suburbs, within the world of white people, and more specifically white men.

Most of the material that appears in this book comes from newspapers and magazines, particularly the popular genre of family magazines, which have solidified so many white South Africans' preoccupations and cultural myths since the early twentieth century (see Hofmeyr 1987). These often operated as moral entrepreneurs themselves, driving as well as reporting on the panics. They called for action and vigilance and incited their readers to become involved, usually by harassing government officials into 'doing something': either banning Satanism or creating structures of support that would help to avoid family murder.

I have not isolated every instance of possible satanic panic or family murder that occurred in South Africa in this period. Rather I have accumulated an archive of those cases that attracted the most attention in the press. Both Satanism and family murder have their paradigmatic case. The first is the story of a young English-speaking girl named Charlotte who was 'lured' into Satanism and then 'redeemed' by being born again, published in *Personality* magazine on 8 August 1988 and discussed in Chapter 2. The second is white Afrikaans farmer Charles Henry Ochse's 1984 murder of his wife and five children, examined in detail in Chapter 8. Charlotte (whether or not she existed) and the five Ochse children were treated as victims of late apartheid malaise, themselves symptomatic of the pathologies of whiteness.

Much of my data has thus far been largely neglected by scholars. The South African press 'has been a sectional press throughout its history. Race – not language, religion or culture – has proved to be the dominant characteristic of this sectionalism' (Switzer and Switzer 1979, 7). Although I make some reference to the black press, in the main the sources I use here were aimed at a white readership and foregrounded white concerns. This is not to suggest that the white press was, or is, monolithic. English and Afrikaans newspapers often took different

perspectives on cultural and political issues, as did papers aimed at the metropole or the country as a whole when compared to local or regional press. In the case of the Satanism scare the paranoia, sensationalism or occasional scepticism with which stories were reported usually had less to do with whether the text was from the English or Afrikaans press than with the class or locality of the audience. Satanism was understood to be prevalent in both Afrikaans and English communities. As such Part I prioritises English language sources for ease of reading. Family murder, however, was deeply tied to questions of white ethnicity and to understandings of what it meant to be Afrikaans, and press responses show the difference between how the two language groups engaged with these killings, particularly the soul-searching introspection that appeared in many Afrikaans texts. Part II thus draws on both English and Afrikaans sources.

In an article published in 2003, Antoinette Errante wrote,

> Our postcolonial challenges to the myth of colonial omnipotence in Africa have been largely based upon uncovering the multiple experiences of Black Africans – those formerly known and essentialized as the colonized. Even when colonizing groups are included in these narratives, their portrayal remains flat and monolithic. We have not really challenged the reels of colonial narratives authored by White Europeans, as if their self-representations as all-powerful and omnipotent need no revision. (2003, 8–9)

Although it deals with a self-defining 'indigenous' white group rather than with the classic colonial situation, this book is part of the challenge that Errante suggests is necessary. I want to tell two stories that have largely been forgotten and to counter common understandings of apartheid-era whiteness as a non-differentiated mass.[6] I want to consider the consequences that apartheid's legislated injustice had for those who benefitted from it most.

This book is haunted by a double-ghost: first the ghoulish Satanist, black-clad, draped in knives and symbols, pockets dripping foreign pornography and drugs; and second, the white Afrikaans family murderer, his hollow eyes tracking the movements of his children across the kitchen and plotting ways to save them from the corruption of the modern world. These were figures that stalked my adolescence. They are harder to find these days, but their traces remain: in the pages of books, newspapers, pamphlets and magazines, and slumbering in the backs of libraries.

Part I
Satanism

1
Excavations

There is a brief passage in Frantz Fanon's 'Concerning Violence' in which he discusses the relevance of occult superstitions to the colonised native, describing them as mechanisms for disavowal of the coloniser's power, creating a narrative in which the subjugation of the colonised person is blamed on supernatural forces rather than on white domination. Occult beliefs, he says, contain and displace the native's murderous rage against colonial masters and are a method of communal identity creation. This world of magic is yet another restraint that the colonised subject must escape from:

> It has always happened in the struggle for freedom that such a people, formerly lost in an imaginary maze, a prey to unspeakable terrors yet happy to lose themselves in a dreamlike torment, such a people becomes unhinged, reorganizes itself, and in blood and tears gives birth to very real and immediate action. (Fanon 1963, 56)

Like the sense of inferiority that accompanies interactions with the settler's whiteness and the traumas of the 'native intellectual' who must discover the shared humanity beyond Enlightenment individualism, casting off the bonds of traditional magic and witchcraft is fundamental for the process of decolonisation. Eschewing a 'permanent confrontation on the phantasmic plane' that hinders the revolutionary process, Fanon says, the people must turn their attention to more pressing matters (ibid.). Witchcraft and occultism threaten to hold them back, to derail the progressive process. Magical beliefs are a hindrance to political action and to collective development.

In 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness' Fanon also suggests that one of the major risks for the project of decolonisation was that the

collapse of secularism could produce sectarianism and religious revival, with 'minor confraternities, local religions and maraboutic cults [showing] a new vitality' (1963, 160). This is characteristically prescient in the case of South Africa. The work of scholars like Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (1999), Clifton Crais (2002) and Isak Niehaus (2001, 2013) reveals the affective power of witchcraft beliefs and the resilience of indigenous knowledge systems in South Africa and the way in which the post-apartheid moment, rather than sloughing off these layers of meaning, has in fact entrenched South Africans' embeddedness in them. Fanon argues that the colonised subject's involvement with the supernatural is necessarily destructive and anti-modern, a perspective that can be problematic as it discounts the potential social and personal value of indigenous belief systems. This suggests his own entrenchment in a paradigm that abhors the mystical, the religious and the traditional as modes of oppression without acknowledging them as forms of knowledge and tools of social relationality.

However, Fanon's description of the occult as a dangerous point of slippage in the process of decolonisation has another application. Just as the colonised subject can become mired in the supernatural, so the dominant culture too can descend into a swamp of phobias and symbolism in the face of social change. Part I of this book considers the Satanism scare that appeared among white South Africans during the last years of apartheid, a moral panic that Chidester calls 'nothing more or less than a projection of white South Africa's inner demons' (1991, 61). This was a fear that took hold of media and public imaginations, condensing a host of pre-existing folk devils and real-life enemies into its orbit.

While it had many similarities to concurrent scares in Britain and the USA, apartheid South Africa's Satanist paranoia had its own particularities, through which we can read many of the pathologies that attend the end of whiteness, the symptoms of a society in shock: what Boehmer calls 'this parched place, a society of dead-ends, closures, multiple restrictions on speech and movement, blockages of every kind, spiritual and political' (1998, 52). South Africa never fell victim to Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, recovered memory, Multiple Personality Syndrome or alien abduction tales, the other modern epidemics that Elaine Showalter identifies as the descendants of hysteria, neurasthenia and shell shock (1997); so why Satanism? According to Jeffrey Victor, writing on the US Satanism scare, satanic tales 'arise as a response to widespread socio-economic stresses … The Satanic cult legend says, in symbolic form, that our moral values are threatened by evil forces

beyond our control, and that we have lost faith in the authorities to deal with the threat' (1991, 221).

Given the social and political climate in the mid- to late 1980s and the legitimate challenges to white dominance, the appearance of a satanic panic can seem a little ridiculous. But rather than being unrelated to the sociopolitical realities of the era, the scare was vigorously overdetermined and consequent upon contemporary factors. As an epiphenomenon that coalesced a range of social concerns, South Africa's satanic panic is a valuable tool for understanding a complex period.

Some Historical Context

Comaroff and Comaroff, in their work on occult economies in the South African postcolony, mention the extremes of the British Satanism scare at some length (1999, 282). Yet white South Africa's scare, although scaling similar heights of excess, is relegated to a footnote about white panic in the mid-1990s, an addendum to the black occult structures that concern them (1999, 299). This prioritisation is just one example of how the Satanism scare has become, in retrospect, subordinate to the rich corpus of analysis of the indigenous and postcolonial occult. Where it once merited front pages, pedagogic interventions, expert testimony and political pronouncements, white Satanism is largely ignored by a culture once haunted by it and, concurrently, by theorists of South Africa, the postcolony, the occult and whiteness.

The Satanism scare took hold towards the middle of the 1980s, fed by a minor media frenzy. Dunbar and Swart point to a series of small, localised satanic panics that affected white South Africa from the 1970s but agree that the scare that emerged in the late 1980s was significantly more widespread and consequent upon political events (2012). In 1993 psychologist Gavin Ivey pointed out the 'recent claims of … a wave of organised Satanic activity, aimed at overthrowing traditional Christian values and institutions' (1993, 180). Much of the fear surrounding Satanism was expressed in worries about foreign rock music, concerning to a nation that had until recently maintained strict censorship and a prohibitive attitude to American and European cultural products. Television, for example, was only broadcast after 1976, after decades of argument within the National Party about its potential for fostering social dissolution (Nixon 1994, 43–76).

Pentecostal preachers toured South African high schools giving dramatic lectures and evangelists like Rodney Seale, James van Zyl and David Nel published pamphlets on the consequences of exposure to

popular music. Foreign bands like Iron Maiden became indicative of the disaster befalling South Africa's youth. Crazed with lust, drugs and heavy metal, young people were said to be willingly surrendering themselves to the devil. Copied cassette tapes spread among white high school students, fostering a growing gothic and heavy metal subculture. There was an element of performativity to the sudden flourishing of satanic paraphernalia. For many teenagers Satanism opened up a space for irony, rebellion and the deliberate stoking of adult fears. Black t-shirts, long, dank hair, pentagram symbols and other physical affectations associated with the heavy metal scene became common and, read as markers of this new danger by anxious parents and teachers, served as a visual reminder that Satanists were out there.

The influence of Calvinist Christianity in creating the idea of the 'Afrikaner nation' and the institution of apartheid may go some way to explaining the far-reaching pull of this satanic panic. Where fundamentalist Christianity did play a part in similar scares in other countries, particularly the USA, these were mostly fuelled by psychiatrists, television talk shows and concerned parents. South Africa's version, on the other hand, was expressed almost entirely through religion. According to Leslie Witz, the notion of the production of history allows for a decoupling of our sense of history from the pronouncements of the academy in favour of a recognition that many producers use many methods to create history, and that these 'presentations of pastness … are not prior to history' but actively *are* history (2003, 7). As I discuss in detail in Chapter 9, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church/NGK), the main Afrikaner church, was a prolific and influential producer of South African history, helping, alongside the writers of textbooks, curators of language and other cultural entrepreneurs, to create a version of South Africa's national past that was less a separation from Europe than an anointing of the Afrikaner as the site of culture in Africa and the 'exclusive bearer of the South African nation' (Witz 2003, 13–14).

According to Bhabha, 'The national past is never simply an archaic assertion of ethnic or racial essentialism. The directionality of the past – its political destination as well as its designation of cultural identities – participates in fetishistic forms of social relations' (1994, 203). The word fetish suggests 'the artifice (*facticius*) present in virtually all forms of cultural representation' (Apter 1993, 2–3). To point to fetishistic forms of social relations is to point to the constructed nature of these relations, the way in which social contracts that define themselves as natural are in fact deeply embedded in the practices, ideological formulations and

mythologies that create the idea of the nation. William Pietz explains that the fetish, emerging at the moment of contact between European/Christian and African societies, points to a cross-cultural encounter (1985, 6–7). This fetishisation is evident throughout the development of white South African society, which was formed within the context of cross-cultural engagement. Afrikanerdom was a frontier culture. It was bounded on one side by the aggressive British colonial regime in the Cape and on the other by black tribes in the country's interior, both of whom it felt threatened by. Afrikaner traditions rested on homogenising myths of origin and the display of narratives of heroism through national spectacle as a way of emphasising the uniqueness of the culture despite its proximity to hostile others. These practices fostered resilient faith in Afrikaans gender archetypes: the strong, unflinching patriarch and the loyal mother of the nation were the building blocks on which white South African social relations were predicated.

The NGK enforced and popularised the myths that upheld the judicial maintenance of apartheid (L. Thompson 1985, 25–68). The church was intimately engaged in the work of nationalist creation, the adoption of a symbolic myth of origins that supported the tripartite structure of state–church–family, a configuration whose weakening framework became visible during the period in question. The church worked towards

> the more and more precise refinement of an ideology of apartheid, and to exercising pressure on successive governments to accept this ideology as the basis of race policy. It was the Church that did not rest content with the traditional *baaskap* principles on which South Africa had been run since 1652 – the simple pragmatic acceptance of the superiority of the white man to the 'natives' he dwelt among.[7] It [was] the Church that … insisted upon progressively sterner definitions of 'separateness'. (Ritner 1967, 17)

As late as the relatively secular 1980s religion remained a driving force behind the *volksgees* (folk spirit), the national feeling that defined Afrikanerdom, a culture 'based on belonging to the land and derived from a European lineage' (Witz 2003, 13). This was a dual identification that came with its own set of contradictions, as I discuss in Chapter 3.

The satanic panic occurred in a context of quotidian uncertainty, political turmoil and national identity threatened by modernising change. It was significantly related to the social and historical

importance of the Afrikaner Calvinist churches and to ideas about what white South African-ness meant. Both the determining factors of the scare and of its consequences went deep into the roots of the national imaginary.

Moral Panic and Its Limits

The sociological notion of moral panic, popularised in 1972 by Stanley Cohen, has often been cited in analyses of Satanism scares in other locations. While this concept is undoubtedly a useful one, it needs to be reconsidered somewhat in the case of Satanism in South Africa.

Cohen used the idea to analyse excessive and disproportionate social fears of the mods and rockers who were said to be involved in violent gang warfare in British seaside towns. His classic definition of moral panic is,

> A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interest; its nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. (1980, 9)

In their study of the hysteria surrounding mugging in 1970s Britain, a cultural formation that involved questions of race, class, nationhood, identity and the role of the media and control culture, Hall et al. extended the idea of moral panic to take in questions of power and hegemony. They say,

> When the official reaction to … a series of events is out of all proportion to the actual threat offered, when 'experts', in the form of police chiefs, the judiciary, politicians and editors perceive the threat in all but identical terms … when the media representations universally stress 'sudden and dramatic increases' … above and beyond what a sober, realistic appraisal could sustain, then we believe it is appropriate to speak of the beginnings of a 'moral panic'. (1978, 16)

Satanic panic in South Africa filled many of these criteria. Examples of proven satanic practice were limited to vandalism and bad behaviour,

but this did not inhibit the media from treating Satanism as a full-blown crime wave and serious threat to the nation. The November 1991 arrest of brothers William and Mark Koekemoer for desecrating graves in two Port Elizabeth cemeteries was described by the press as the 'biggest Satanism haul the city had ever seen' (*Eastern Province Herald*, 1 November) and as the court case that 'lifted the veil on deeds that shocked the country' (*You*, 14 November), although these minor misdemeanours were nowhere near the violent extremes that police and press claimed for Satanism. The increase in rebellious teenage subcultures was seen as another sign that Satanists were common. Official reaction ranged from ministers' pronouncements on Satanism as a menace to the security of the nation to informational texts produced for teachers on how to deal with Satanism in the classroom. The Transvaal Education Department's 'Satanism and Occultism: Guide for Teachers and Principles' states that the problem of Satanism has been exacerbated by the media and that not all rebellious children are Satanists (1992a, 1), but then goes on to warn, in terms almost as sensationalist as those it criticises, 'The growth of Satanism poses a considerable threat to our national Christian heritage' (Transvaal Education Department 1992a, 3).

Experts have always held a valued position in South Africa (Drewett 2008, 31) and the Satanism scare was no exception. As in Cohen's model of moral panic, testimony from moral entrepreneurs was prolific. This included 'recovered' Satanists, usually framed as born-again Christians (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4), policemen and preachers as well as judicial and governmental interventions. In 1987 the Minister for Education and Culture, Piet Clase, launched a 'top-level committee' to investigate Satanism after two Eastern Cape schoolgirls were said to be involved in the cult (*Pretoria News*, 16 August 1989). In 1990 Rina Venter, the Minister of National Health and Population Development, told a public meeting in the town of Amanzimtoti that the increasing involvement of the country's youth in Satanism, the 'existence of which could not be doubted', was 'causing grave concern' in government circles (*Citizen*, 31 October).

The popular magazine *Personality*, aimed at a working- to middle-class white English-speaking readership, ran a series of increasingly lurid features on the subject between 1987 and 1990. John Gardiner, *Personality*'s editor, went on to write *Satanism*: *The Seduction of South Africa's Youth* with his wife Helen in 1990, repeating many of the case studies and stories covered in the magazine. The book was consistently referenced as a credible source by other media, including the Transvaal Education

Department's guidelines (1992a, 1992b). The tone of these texts was in keeping with Hall et al.'s convention of 'sudden and dramatic increases', as in one article which claimed that the Brotherhood of the Ram, the name sometimes given to the South African branch of the global Satanist conspiracy, was 'growing faster than ever before' (28 March 1987). Press material about Satanism, however, does not bear this out, with reportage remaining fairly constant between 1987 and 1993.

The concept of moral panic is not without its problems. It can imply that the media is monolithic and can disregard the potential of resistant narratives. As David Garland points out (2008), Cohen's original definition allowed for a *condition or episode* to appear at the heart of the panic. By far the most common uses of the term, however, both academic and popular, have rested on the idea that the moral panic is invoked by a folk devil, a 'suitable enemy, the agent responsible for the threatening or damaging behaviour or condition' (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2009, 27). Goode and Ben-Yehuda's canonical text is one of those that centralises the folk devil and insists that related panics cannot be thought of in the same way.[8] But South Africa's Satanism scare differs from this understanding. Cohen's book rests on the fact that there were youngsters on the beaches of British seaside towns who could be fitted into the deviancy profile of mods and rockers. In Hall et al.'s analysis a number of robberies were narrativised after the fact to fit a growing discourse around the violence attributed to young black men. Similarly, the early twentieth-century Rhodesian 'black peril' panics that Jock McCulloch examines fed on the presence of actual black male bodies that were assumed to be sexually violent (2000). All of these moral panics depended on the availability of people who could embody the folk devil.

South Africa's Satanism scare occurred without the visible presence of a legitimate folk devil. As I illustrate in Chapter 2, Satanists as envisioned by the panicked public dialogue were never seen, encountered or arrested.[9] Getting hold of a 'real' Satanist was 'as easy as catching the wind' (Gardiner and Gardiner 1990, 19). Those who could be seen were rebellious or naïve young people who were believed to have been lured in by cult groups that were never apprehended by police, despite the expense and effort involved. In many satanic tales these young people were hapless victims who could be or had been rescued by the power of Christ. According to Goode and Ben-Yehuda, the folk devil is 'stripped of all favourable characteristics and imparted with exclusively negative ones' (2009, 27). However, as I argue in Chapter 4, the adolescent

Satanist generally retained the possibility of redemption through confession and Christ. In the British beachfront episodes that Cohen analyses and the trial that Hall et al. are concerned with, justice was seen to have been done when those 'responsible' were dealt with punitively. The US and UK terrorists, drug dealers, child molesters, leftist radicals and juvenile delinquents named by Goode and Ben-Yehuda as common folk devils (2009, 27) are themselves the threat. In South Africa, the public and legible profusion of adolescent bodies marked with the possible signifiers of satanic involvement only suggested the presence of the 'real' folk devil, the powerful global conspiracy of Satanists. Unlike the most common form of the moral panic model, in the case of South Africa's Satanists the real folk devil was conspicuous by its absence. As I suggest in Chapter 5, this meant that people caught up in the scare remained available to redemption; and, concurrently, to a twisted sort of hope.

Angela McRobbie and Sarah Thornton (1995) discuss how, in a multimodal world, people whom the mainstream media treat as folk devils have the capacity to speak back and resist that classification. This suggests another significant alteration in the notion of the moral panic: the assumption that it always serves hegemonic interests. As I show in Chapters 4 and 5, South Africa's satanic panic, while it did shore up apartheid categories and injunctions, also provided opportunities to resist the system, albeit in ways that could not be considered progressive. Rather than only serving hegemonic interests as in the standard moral panic model, the Satanism scare in some ways disturbed and unsettled the centres of power.

Nonetheless, though, the moral panic concept remains a valuable one for this analysis. It is a useful descriptor for the epidemiological qualities of the panic, the role of experts and the mass media in propagating satanic mythologies and the sudden disappearance of white Satanists in the mid-1990s. It provides a set of terms and definitions, a framework – albeit one that must be loosened somewhat – for placing Satanism within larger conversations and for usefully comparing the different, but critically related, appearances of Satanists and family murderers in the white South African media.

A Psychic Architecture

Fear of Satanists is replete with displacement, desire and anxiety and naturally lends itself to the language of psychoanalysis. The 'unprecedented violence' of the colonial encounter suggests that a psychological

register is appropriate (Hook 2005b, 479). We cannot properly think about the pathologies of the state and of white culture without recognising them as such. Derek Hook, citing Stephen Frosh, writes,

> While firm that a socio-political and often discursive account of racism is necessary – and that a psychological account should by no means act as a substitute for such a level of engagement – [Frosh] nonetheless insists that both such forms of analysis are vital. We need an approach that is able to properly engage the affective and psychological components of the political phenomenon of racism. (2005b, 485)

Hook cites Fanon, Bhabha and Biko as postcolonial writers who use the lexicon of psychology to understand their situations (he concurrently critiques the failure of critical social psychology to engage with postcolonial thinking). Following Hook, I use psychoanalysis as a tool to describe the characteristics of the late apartheid situation rather than using the colonial situation as a setting for an act of psychoanalysis, as Wulf Sachs does in *Black Hamlet* (1996).

Within Freud's conception of dreamwork, the psychic mechanism of displacement allows the emphasis on an idea to be detached from it and replaced onto another idea that was originally unconnected (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 121). Displacement has great relevance for considering the effects of race, and particularly whiteness, in South Africa. As apartheid began to crumble some white South Africans worried about their comfort and economic well-being, but many of the anxieties attached to the fear of majority rule were fantastic and excessive, even after the unbanning of the ANC and its adoption of less radical rhetoric (Manzo and McGowan 1992).

Signs of change were everywhere during the last years of white rule and it was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the fiction of a quiescent, non-citizen black majority living in 'independent' Bantustans that would fill white South Africa's labour requirements without being given rights. By the late 1980s 'many Afrikaners could no longer avoid the basic moral reprehensibility of a system applied in their name' (van de Westhuizen 2007, 180). The English and Afrikaans business and intellectual elites generally supported transformation. At the same time, though, many conservative and traditional white people found the idea of a peaceful shift to democracy quite literally unthinkable. For Afrikaners it was difficult to imagine the existence of God's 'chosen nation' under non-white rule, or a black leadership that would

not violently undermine the foundations of Afrikaans identity. Many long-held fears about the effects of black liberation remained under wraps, pressed to the back of the common consciousness in an attempt to believe that the impossible was not becoming increasingly likely. The prevalence of this willed unknowing meant that some members of the NP entered into the 1994 elections believing that the party would gain 25 per cent of the votes or more (van de Westhuizen 2007, 248).

The Satanism scare was a symptom of that repression. Freud writes that repressed material seldom stays stuck in the recesses of the mind, tending instead to return in new, compromised forms, often within dreams (1896, 169–71). The return of the repressed is a process by which 'what has been repressed – though never abolished by repression – tends to reappear … in a distorted fashion' (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 398). I argue that some of those repressed white South African fears of the future were displaced onto the distorted, phantasmic figure of the Satanist, finding their way out of a collective unconscious by attaching themselves to an alternate object, excessive enough to allow for the expression of possibly irrational anxieties but also coherent with the mythologies of national identity. The sense that South Africa was a Christian nation at war with a demonic enemy permitted the maintenance of colonial narratives of benevolent paternalism and moral guardianship that were challenged by increasing international depictions of South Africa as a rogue state, home to what Crais calls the politics of evil (2002).

Showalter defines the rash of British and American accusations of Satanists abusing children in the late 1980s as a modern hysterical epidemic of 'denial, projection, accusation and blame' (1997, x). Like classical hysteria, the sudden outbreak of fear of Satanism involved the repression of distressing knowledge and a consequent explosion of seemingly meaningless symptoms. One of the most common types of hysteria is, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, an illness 'in which the psychical conflict is expressed symbolically' (1988, 194). Witz writes, 'A major element in the emergence of the NP as a political force had been the invocation of a series of cultural symbols that established and constantly reaffirmed an Afrikaner identity as autochthonous, that is, of Africa and the land, and as white' (2003, 11). Afrikanerdom is an intensely symbolic national culture and one of the symptoms of the growing incoherence between people and state was a disease of symbolism, a set of signs that erupted across the skin of white South Africa. This quasi-somatic manifestation was unsurprising given the biopolitical excesses of apartheid (Crais 2002, 8). The expression of self by sign

would have made sense to Afrikaners, already accustomed to reading a preordained set of racial and cultural markers. It is important that in this case the symbolic virus was transmitted so easily between Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans, whose self-identification rests more on what they are not – black, Afrikaans – than on what they are (Salusbury and Foster 2004, 95). The meanings behind Satanism, if not its form, were expressive of the fears that affected all white groups. The symptom always stands in for something else.

Satanists, as everyone knew, were skilled at hiding in plain sight but used symbols and ciphers to identify themselves to each other. These were an outright challenge to the symbolic language that was vital to the maintenance of national myth. 'Real' Satanists could not be seen but satanic involvement was marked on the body, like a descendant of the 'racial epidermal schema' that Fanon feared (1970, 112). It was legible in the crossed-out A of the anarchy symbol, the lightning-strike SS insignia, the Egyptian ankh, the inverted cross, signs of boredom, contempt, creativity or anger that proliferated on pencil cases, school bags, notebooks and bedroom walls of teenagers across the country. It was there in the peace sign, the pentagram, the scarab beetle and other ephemera that appeared repeatedly not just in the self-expression of the youth but also in the lists of warning signs for parents that peopled the anti-Satanist crusade of popular periodicals.[10]

The satanic panic also recalls another psychic mechanism that Freud pinpointed, that of fetishist disavowal, a process that occurs when external reality threatens to intrude into a belief on which the ego is predicated. Disavowal 'constitutes the defence against those anxiety-provoking external perceptions that endanger the knowledge of reality we have hitherto had'. When disavowal occurs 'the meaning of the perceived is split and pre-existent meanings are … conserved' (Priel 1991, 21). In infantile sexuality this means the child's realisation that the mother does not have a penis, and his subsequent refusal to admit this (Freud 1927, 151–2).

Disavowal involves a knowledge and a concurrent refusal to know, the contradictory structure of 'Je sais bien mais quand même', 'I know very well but all the same' (Mannoni 1985, 9–30). In Freud's architecture of fetishism some other visible object – hair, fur, shoes – replaces the missing maternal phallus and becomes an object of sexual excitement. Late apartheid white South African culture, especially towards the end of the 1980s, similarly looked away from unsettling knowledge and towards a replacement object: 'I know but yet I do not know.' The apocryphal figure of the Satanist was one of the tools used to facilitate

this disavowal of the problem of futurity within late apartheid consciousness. Whereas sexual fetishism elevates the new object to the status of a sexual stimulator, this form of what we might call cultural fetishism confers the affect attached to the missing object – terror, anxiety, paranoia – onto the fetish itself, so the *cause* of the emotion can be disavowed even while it is itself expressed.

The cultural fetish, like the sexual one, is overvalued. The Satanist was a horror figure capable of destroying society, a supernatural menace whose excesses deferred the need to think about the threat it screened. According to Christian Metz,

> Because it attempts to disavow the evidence of the senses, the fetish is evidence that this evidence has indeed been recorded … The fetish has not been inaugurated because the child still believes its mother has a penis … for if it still believed it completely, as 'before', it would no longer need the fetish. It is inaugurated because the child now 'knows very well' that its mother has no penis. In other words, the fetish has not only disavowal value, but *knowledge value*. (1982, 76 italics in original)

The potency of the fetish actually points to the affective power of the truth/experience/object/person it seeks to mask. This act of revealing or uncovering the structures that hold the fetish in place, says Bill Schwarz, is one of the primary purposes of a postcolonial theory that questions master narratives and works to illustrate that cultures of modernity are actually defined by what they repress (1996, 11).

The cultural threat operating as fetish requires materiality. According to Pietz, 'The fetish is precisely not a material signifier referring beyond itself, but acts as a material space gathering an otherwise unconnected multiplicity into the unity of its enduring singularity' (1985, 15). It is not just a thing that substitutes for another thing, but is rather a thing within which many things – in this case many anxieties – cohere. There must be something that has thing-ness, that can be seen or encountered and that can draw disparate strands of affect together within itself. The actual Satanist may have remained hidden but Satanism itself was always highly visible. Its effects could be seen on the clean flesh of the next generation, scored out in teenage clothing and sometimes even skin, scrawled across walls and school hallways. This visibility of the Satanist recalls the compulsory hyper-visibility of the black person under the gaze of apartheid, the way in which the phobic object that threatened national identity was obsessively catalogued and looked at.

Crais points to the reams of legislation aimed at knowing about black people – censuses, statistics, ethnographies, anthropological studies – all helping to render 'the colonised a simplified category ever more legible to state rule' (2002, 8). This was a biopolitical imperative to mark, count and codify a population, to turn it into numbers on a page that could be more easily manipulated by the state's social scientific programme. Everything, in order to be managed, must be seen. Although the 'real' Satanist remained a cipher, the Satanist threat could still be seen within youth social practice and was still subject to the state's 'desire to know' (Crais 2002, 8).

The fetishised nature of the Satanist can also be discerned in the ambivalence it attracted. For all the fear this hostile figure inspired there was a concurrent fascination, a desire to pore over every lurid detail of the supposed practices and beliefs at stake here. Many of these focused on the body and on the physical and sexual nature of disgusting satanic rituals, echoing Julia Kristeva's understanding of the abject as both sacred and profane, simultaneously attractive and abhorrent (1982). Tales of drug-crazed orgies, mass rapes, sex with animals and the use of corpses, faeces and blood were common. One paradigmatic article trumpets 'chilling details of bizarre sexual, satanic rituals involving schoolchildren, human sacrifices, the slaying of animals and babies being bred for the altar'. It tells of children sodomised and forced to commit bestiality with dogs and goats, women giving up their babies for sacrifice, parents murdering their own offspring, orgies and teen prostitution (*Weekend Argus*, 19 May 1990). Police tales of the 'satanic dens' they claimed to uncover were full of horrible detail, from bedrooms rigged out for sacrifice and human skulls dotted around to black candles thought to be made from human fat (*Personality*, 14 May 1990). Showalter says, 'With all their thematic emphasis on incest, infanticide, forced breeding, cannibalism and conspiracy, these narratives touch on the deepest and most frightening taboos and fantasies of our culture' (1997, 174).

The Satanist operated almost as a screen memory, a seemingly unrelated or unimportant memory that masks the repressed retention of a significant one. 'Instead of the mnemic image which would have been justified by the original event, another is produced which has been to some degree associatively displaced from the former one' (Freud 1899, 307). Knowledge of the 'real' culprit was disavowed or invalidated – omitted, in Freud's terms, rather than forgotten – and the uncanny spectre of Christianity's other became the new object of fear (1899, 306). As Mary Douglas points out, ritual often utilises disgusting or

taboo objects that are repudiated in normal life but then help to create social boundaries and community behaviour (1984, 177–9). The abject Satanist with her interest in blood, rot and bodily fluids served a social purpose, allowing for group cohesion in a time of fracture.

Thus the psychic mechanisms of displacement and fetishism operated in the service of a localised cultural hysteria, a symbolic dis-ease that overtook some white South Africans in the 1980s and 1990s and was expressed through a variety of overblown symptoms. These symptoms facilitated a continued commitment to the myths of national identity, albeit one with its own set of internal contradictions.

Questions of identity are vital to understanding what Satanism meant and did. But before turning to these, I follow the process of the scare through the most significant traces it left: in the archives of newspapers and popular magazines.

2
Anatomy of a Moral Panic

Satanism was not restricted to South Africa. The scare began in the USA in the early 1980s, spread to the UK and appeared as far afield as Scandinavia, Turkey and even Egypt by the 1990s.[11] A number of lurid, confessional US publications appeared in which female authors 'recalled' memories of appalling mistreatment by satanic groups: first *Michelle Remembers* (M. Smith and Pazder 1981) and then *The Courage to Heal* (Bass and Davis 1988), *Satan's Underground* (Stratford 1988) and *Out of the Darkness* (Sackheim and Devine 1992).[12] This narrative was soon translated into satanic ritual abuse (SRA) and given its own acronym, specialists, survivors' networks, talk-show episodes, books and psychiatric experts. SRA caught the attention of the media and a series of scandalous cases ensued, featuring 'sensational investigations by well-meaning but overzealous police, doctors and social workers, who performed rectal and genital examinations on the children, invited them to demonstrate what happened with anatomically correct dolls, and asked leading questions' (Showalter 1997, 172).

According to the journalist Lawrence Wright, who wrote a book on one of America's best-known Satanist episodes,

> There certainly are Satanists, who sometimes commit crimes, although they are usually loners or small groups of disaffected teenagers. And without doubt there is child abuse on an appalling scale. But as for satanic ritual abuse as it has been defined … as multi-generational cults, within families, who use their daughters as breeders, who sacrifice infants on ceremonial altars, who belong to a widespread, all-powerful satanic conspiracy – there's simply no evidence that something like that exists. (1994, xiii)

Despite a few scattered examples of criminals who claimed satanic possession as a defence, no evidence has ever been found of a worldwide satanic conspiracy with members in the highest echelons of society. Outside of the 1992 Orso murder, in which a pair of homicidal teenagers blamed their butchery of the girl's mother on demonic possession (examined in detail later in this chapter), South African prosecutions relating to Satanism were limited to grave-robbery, vandalism, drug possession and other anti-social behaviours. In the USA and UK an embarrassing number of high-profile prosecutions relating to child abuse in day-care centres and nurseries collapsed for lack of evidence (Wright 1994; Showalter 1997). A 1994 report commissioned by the British government and chaired by anthropologist Jean LaFontaine found no evidence to support any accusations of Satanism or SRA (Showalter 1997, 173). In a 1987 interview with *Personality* magazine Reverend David Nel, one of the first of South Africa's prominent Satan-hunters, insisted that the country was 'under attack' from the 'biggest threat facing the world today' and estimated that there were more than 200,000 South Africans involved in the Brotherhood of the Ram (28 March 1987) – about 10 per cent of the white population. The fact that no bodies were ever found did not seem to perturb the Satan-hunters. No credible evidence has ever surfaced to support allegations of a widespread and influential satanic cult, in South Africa or elsewhere.

While South African Satanism was closely allied to concurrent scares in Britain and the US, there was much that was particular to the late apartheid period. In this chapter I give a history of South Africa's satanic panic using the popular daily and weekly press of the time. Newspapers and magazines were important to white South Africans, largely cut off from the cultural life of the West due to sanctions and censorship. The press reflected popular concerns as well as expressing varying degrees of allegiance to the state's national project and to racial or ethnic constructions. Afrikaner nationalism relied on 'notions of collective conformity' (Nuttall 2001, 130), and this 'conformist group discipline' (van de Westhuizen 2007, 293) was equally applied to other white groups. In 1948 JG Strijdom, then not yet prime minister, claimed that opposition to apartheid was as treasonable as refusing to defend one's country in a state of war (van de Westhuizen 2007, 83). Powerful social and cultural injunctions inculcated a climate of collusion in which the media was deeply complicit. Newspapers and magazines took a parochial tone, interpellating their readers as members of a familial community, expressing the metaphors of kinship inherent in apartheid-era political

life that are discussed in Chapter 7. Things that happened in the pages of the popular press contained valuable signals around social meanings and how to respond to them. By the period in question, however, these long-standing alignments were becoming fraught. According to Albert Grundlingh, 'During the late '80s the mainline Afrikaans press, which used to enjoy cordial relations with the government, became increasingly uneasy with the way in which an aging president PW Botha seemed to blunder from crisis to crisis.' The press began to report on divisive and rebellious issues as 'a way of asserting a modicum of independence from the government' (2004, 485).

White fear of occultism and the supernatural long predate the apartheid era. Indigenous religion and mystical practice were 'repugnant to the "civilising mission" of colonialism' (Hund 2004, 68). In South Africa this disgust was legislatively expressed in the National Party's 1957 Suppression of Witchcraft Act, designed to criminalise the people's courts where *sangomas*, practitioners of indigenous magic and medicine, arbitrated disputes involving witchcraft and witchcraft accusations. But white occultism never notably raised its head in southern Africa until the Satanism scares in the Anglophone west met the pressures of late apartheid and combined into a mass of parental paranoia and voter outrage.

The word 'Satanist' is common in many contexts in sub-Saharan Africa, not least in the narratives of Pentecostal groups like the United Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG), a Brazilian denomination that has been extraordinarily successful in Africa (Freston 2005, 46). Religious publishing across the continent is filled with tales of Satanists that draw on local mythologies. Ellis and ter Haar give the example of a tract written by a Congolese preacher named Evangelist Mukendi in which he speaks about being weaned by a mermaid and pledged to Satan by his father. Many of the stories he tells involve evil beings living under the water who create 'diabolic objects' like cars, television sets and money to lure in the unwary (1998). Mukendi's narrative also conflates witches and Satanists, using the terms to mean more or less the same thing.

In South Africa 'Satanist' has attained numerous meanings. Since the mid-1990s it has come to be applied within a larger occult schema and frequently appears in the sensationalist headlines of twenty-first-century tabloids like the *Daily Sun*, where it is used interchangeably with 'witch' and with other terms that refer to practitioners of township and rural magic.[13] The type of Satanism that characterised the scare that we are considering here, however, was intimately bound up

with white notions of culture and morality. Unlike African ideas about Satanism, it did not involve *muti* (traditional medicine and magic), was practised in order to further aims of a global conspiracy rather than an individual seeking power and was not interchangeable with other occult practices. Satanism as white South Africans understood it was a cult that was imported from Europe and used the iconography of European religion.

'Cult cops' (Crouch and Damphousse 1991), policemen who become heavily involved in investigating cult and ritual activity, were a generic feature of 1980s Satanism scares. Cult cops in South Africa were often evangelical Christians. The most high-profile of these was Kobus Jonker, also known as 'Donker Jonker' or 'Dark Jonker', originally of the Port Elizabeth Murder and Robbery Squad, who later headed up the South African Police's (SAP) dedicated Occult-Related Crimes Unit (ORCU). While he is no longer involved with the police, Jonker is, at the time of writing, still active in the hunt for Satan. On 30 May 2014 he held a 'Konferensie op Satanisme', a conference on Satanism, in Booysens, a suburb of Pretoria, open to 150 members of the public at R50 (about £2.50/$5) each. In a 30 July 2004 interview with the British *Financial Times* Jonker claimed that 'during his 23 years investigating Satanism in South Africa he has found plenty of evidence [of satanic activity] – a difference that he puts down to his country's violent culture and troubled recent history'. He continued, 'The ordinary guy cannot investigate occult crimes … You must be strong in faith to be in the occult unit.' This suggests that the investigator risked the same contagion that characterised the repressed, miscegenatory, blood-pollution fears of traditional white South Africa, and that only powerful patriarchal masculinity and faith in Jesus could maintain his purity. The possibility of his being corrupted or warped by exposure to Satanism were disavowed: the cult cop was 'strong in faith'. His borders were shut and his boundaries were secure. The physical and moral strength of the Satan-hunter also repudiated the possibilities of paternal failure that were implicit in family murder, the emerging sense that perhaps there was something unhealthy or pathological within the Afrikaans father, as discussed in Part II. Jonker and those like him were the opposite of the family murderer, embodying the ideal of benevolent white South African manhood protecting the weak, the female and the young. The way in which cult cops were portrayed in the media is similar to the adulatory discourse around the tough, Rambo-esque *grensvegters* (border fighters), South African Defence Force (SADF) soldiers who fought in Angola or Mozambique, 'the revered warriors defending the Republic's

borders against communist takeover' (Conway 2012, 66). Strong white men were needed to police national borders, both the geographical lines between South Africa and the frontline states and the metaphorical perimeters that kept the collective polity pure.

In suggesting that he was part of a moral elite that could withstand satanic infection, Jonker concurrently pointed out how much risk this posed for the rest of society who were not sufficiently strong in faith. While he manned the psychic boundaries of white South African life, weaker souls within the nation would not be faced with temptations. (As I show in Chapter 10, these contradictory ideas of the white electorate as both superior and in need of safeguarding have a long history in South Africa.) Like the glorification of army conscripts as boys on an ever-mobile border who fought off terrorist hordes to keep the electorate safe, the cult cops presented themselves as standing firm against threats of infection and corruption that could weaken the white nation. This suggests a disavowed awareness of just how vulnerable white South Africa was to this infection: the nation as both irreplaceably precious and dangerously weak.

Other notable features of the scare, which I consider in Chapter 4, include a conflation of Satanism with communism and youth culture, and a repeated alliance of Eastern religion and mysticism with satanic practice. Occult games like glassy-glassy, a makeshift Ouija board, were cited as gateways to full Satanist practice, as were various other harmless-seeming practices. Repeated lists of warning signs exhorted parents and teachers to keep a watchful eye out for the symbols of Satanism. The failure of the family, which signified a concurrent shift away from the unity and communality of the traditionally conservative South African nuclear unit, was often cited – although rarely directly blamed – as a cause of youth involvement in Satanism. This same failure informed the increasingly anxious tone of the narrative surrounding family murder in which this basic social construction, the model for the state itself (van de Westhuizen 2007, 293), became unhinged. Suggestions of dirt, infection, transmission, corruption, impurity, contamination and pollution recurred in the discussion around the satanic menace.

The Comforts of Faith

While Satanism scares in Britain and the USA did involve churches and preachers, religion generally performed a secondary role, as victims' refuge or investigators' moral incentive. The northern hemisphere's Satan hunts were largely a legal and psychiatric construct led by social

workers, child psychologists and parents. Showalter points out the role of therapists and child-care professionals in creating the 'hysterical contamination' that led to widespread belief in SRA in the USA and UK (1997, 173). In South Africa, however, the scare was largely managed by churches and Christian government functionaries and notable for the relative silence of the psychiatric profession. As I show in Part II, this is almost a direct inverse of the accretion of knowledge around occurrences of family murder, which leaned heavily on psychiatry. The introduction to the much-read and -reviewed book *Satanism: The Seduction of South Africa's Youth*, by former *Personality* editor John Gardiner and his wife Helen, includes the unambiguous statement, 'Satanism is not a psychological or psychiatric problem; it is a spiritual problem. We have never seen anyone who has been set free from Satanism by psychology or therapy' (1990, 9). Later the book asserts that a clinical diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia is an incontrovertible sign that the subject has been ritually abused (1990, 125).[14] Survivors' recovery testimony repeatedly referenced the idea that mental health professionals failed where exorcism succeeded.

In one 1986 episode a team of army psychiatrists admitted to being 'confounded' by the case of a conscript who they could not heal. The young man, known only as B, was admitted after a violent reaction to a friend's homosexual overture. Once in hospital he told detailed stories of his secretive upbringing within a Satanist cult. He was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder and eventually released to an unknown fate. Dr M.G.S. Pieridas, on staff at the notorious Military Hospital 1 (a clearing house for homosexuals, pacifists, the mentally ill and other undesirables of the militarised apartheid state), called him 'the loneliest and most frightened human being in the world', and said, 'I wonder whether the beginning should have begun [*sic*] not with psychiatry but with an exorcist.' His colleague Dr A.H. Potgieter agreed: 'We had reached the limits of psychotherapy. There was nothing we could do for him' (*Star*, 3 July 1986).

This testimony sees psychiatry turning its back on itself in favour of religion. The story was related at a conference on 'The Bible, The Church and Demonic Powers' held by the University of South Africa (Unisa), at that time a conservative institution whose concerns broadly reflected those of the National Party. The story pointed to a coherence of religion and the military that undermined the authoritative power of psychiatry, relegating it to a second-class, ineffectual status and creating the sense that psychiatry had a 'limit' that could be reached, after which religion became the default restorative and pastoral structure.

Foucault suggests that institutions help us to make sense of the world, that they 'act as grids for the perception and evaluation of things' (cited in Simons 1995, 56). Medicine and psychiatry commonly depict themselves as neutral and empirical, and that depiction fosters particular understandings of expertise, trustworthiness, truth and power. The case in question is interesting precisely in that it illustrates the influential conjunction between the apartheid hospital and the apparatus of state power, a relation that was contrary to the common discursive construction of medical space. Military Hospital 1 was as much a penal as a medical establishment, used to discipline those whose sexuality or morals were defined by the state as pathological. Its doctors were implicated in military torture. Homosexuality, while not a way out of military service, was defined as a security risk and classified as a *gedryfsafwyking*, a personality disorder, while those who refused to wear uniforms or perform certain tasks were labelled 'disturbed' by medical staff (M. van Zyl et al. 1999, 40–6). The links between medicine and power became clear as doctors performed the social segregation required by the state, excising citizens whose opinions or object choices were considered pathogenic to the mass of 'normal, healthy' white South African conscripts.

This story also illustrates the fluid role of institutions. In the context of the Satanism scare, the hospital was an atrium to the church, with medical staff suggesting exorcism and experts stating that psychiatry had failed where religion could succeed. However, hospitals, doctors and psychiatry made up a large part of the practical and discursive response to the panic around family murder. The university was implicated in both, but in different fields: discussion of Satanism was largely confined to theological departments whereas family murder involved psychologists, criminologists, sociologists and others.

In the USA and UK, SRA entered the discourse of psychiatry, acquiring, at least temporarily, the patina of scientific respectability, with its symptoms, methodologies, conferences and mental health professionals. In South Africa, Satanism remained the domain of priests and exorcists and SRA never entered the public parlance. Where British and American Satan-hunters investigated child abuse perpetrated within Satanist ritual, South Africa's satanic panic was in many cases quite literally a fear of the devil, featuring priests performing exorcisms rather than psychiatrists unearthing repressed memories of abuse. References to Satanism sceptics often served as warnings to parents and teachers of the dangers of not taking the threat seriously, creating a sense in the reporting that South Africans were ignoring these terrible events and sleepwalking into disaster.

Another attribute of the Satanism scare in South Africa was its racial specificity, an implicit whiteness that illustrates the collusion of the press with the dominant racial assumptions of the era. Reports of satanic activity involving whites seldom mentioned race, while those discussing non-whites almost always did so. Jonker himself pointed out the racial make-up of his suspects, mentioning by number the few coloured and even fewer black people he had encountered involved in Satanism (*The Star*, 20 April 1991).[15]

As Richard Dyer makes clear in *White* (1997), unconsidered whiteness in the West equates being white to being a person, being normal, being 'flesh'-coloured rather than coloured, an invisible state of being against which all other colours and races are measured. However, as Nuttall (2001) points out and as I discuss in Chapter 10, ideas about the invisibly of whiteness do not scan neatly onto the South African context, where minority whiteness has remained visible and has been classified as one of four potential racial designations. Nonetheless in the case of reporting on Satanism, whiteness was a raceless race. Both the judicial structures of homelands policy and the long-entrenched political narratives of apartheid meant that the term 'South African' was understood by whites to mean white South African. When the race of those implicated in satanic investigation was not stated, contemporary readers would have understood them to be white.

As the country's obsessively racialised boundaries came into question in the mid-1990s, the fear of Satanism spilled over into black and coloured communities, but this was Satanism rewritten, mixed with other, older beliefs to become part of an occult ontology that includes witches, *muti* murders, sangomas, *tokoloshes* and other supernatural beings. John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff relate how 'the most fabulous narratives were about Satanism … it became a popular [black] fixation in the mid-1990s' (1999, 286). The term remained but the connotations changed. Among black South Africans and the media aimed at them, 'Satanist' became another name for a generic supernatural figure, dangerous to individuals and communities rather than to society as a whole.

Throughout the media coverage, moral entrepreneurs bemoaned the fact that while evildoers could be punished for murder, rape, sexual abuse or animal cruelty, Satanism was not illegal because South Africa permitted religious freedom. This insistence on the liberal policies of one of the most repressive, anachronistic and racialised states the world has ever seen may seem dubious in hindsight but was in keeping with white South Africa's unrelenting self-representation as a Christian nation doing God's work by maintaining the holy doctrine of racial

separation. The apartheid state was, at least until its later days, in thrall to its idea of the law, as can be seen in its sometimes self-defeating determination to follow due legal process in eliminating awkward enemies. That those laws were unjust, corrupt, inept and often inhuman does not lessen the often surprising resolve to abide by them even when they led to embarrassments or inconveniences.

Afrikaans publications like *Beeld*, *Rapport*, *Hervormer* and *Die Kerkbode*, the NGK's official mouthpiece, carried articles on Satanism from the early 1980s, but the incidence of these increased by the mid-1980s, when English-language papers, traditionally less conservative and less religiously influenced, quickly began to catch up. There was extensive coverage in English and Afrikaans magazines including the influential *Huisgenoot*, established in 1916 for a market that 'typified the Afrikaans household, with the emphasis on women and family as the bearer of an Afrikaans identity' (Witz 2003, 80). The elite press, like the *Mail & Guardian* and *Business Day*, limited their reporting to governmental or official pronouncements, while the popular dailies – *The Star*, *The Argus*, *The Citizen* – afforded Satanism and the panic around it full newsworthy status, and local press gleefully plastered it across front pages. Moments of fear flared up, died down and were rekindled. The sometimes farcical nature of the scare is exemplified in a pamphlet written by an evangelical Satan-hunter named James van Zyl, who offered a comprehensive list of satanic symptoms:

> [Signs of possible satanic involvement include] interest in horoscopes, astrology, witch doctors, chain letters, hypnosis, colour therapy, yoga, karate, homeopathy, reflexology, acupuncture; taking marijuana, alcohol, LSD, sleeping pills; visits to the Dome of the Rock, to Hindu or Muslim ceremonies or cemeteries, to heathen temples in Mexico or Greece; watching *Exorcist*, *Rosemary's Baby* or *The Omen*; pornography; reading *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull* or books on cults like Mormonism or Buddhism; homosexuality, lesbianism, extra-marital sex, sexual fantasy, masturbation; feeling restlessness, fear, loneliness, anxiety, pride, depression, jealousy or any other persistent negative emotion. (1988, 29–30)

On 8 August 1988, *Personality* magazine published an article that it referred to as an 'investigation' under the headline 'The Awful Truth about Satanism in Our Schools'. Although it appeared after the scare had become common in the press, the article claimed to uncover horrifying facts about how far the cult had spread into the life of the

white South African teenager. Including quotes from evangelical Satan-hunters and the usual list of corrupting influences, it ended with a page-long confession from a recovering Satanist:

> It all started in Standard 7 [age 14–15], while I was at a convent boarding school. I was bored and looking for excitement. A group of girls decided to play glassy-glassy … I did not realise that my participation in the 'game' had allowed an evil spirit to take control of me. My behaviour began to change and I was asked to leave the school … I was not on drugs – at this stage … Later, I became attracted to 'alternative' music. When I played music by Nina Hagen (a known Satanist) and simultaneously did paintings, my hand was seized by a spirit. The paintings were diabolical, blasphemous, perverted and hellish. People recoiled in shock when they saw the paintings … I was treated by one of Natal's top psychologists, who could do nothing to help me. My problem was not mental but spiritual … I began to train young people in alternative nightclubs … I prostituted myself, began to take drugs, began to sleep with other women … In the end I was pathetic. The police were after me all the time, and I was a social outcast – a freak … If only I hadn't been so naïve about the reality of sprits and demons – if only! … Satanism is no joke. Christ is the only one who can set me entirely free, and I know He will.

Charlotte's story contains many of the elements with which we will become familiar. She suffered from adolescent boredom and was unaware of the dangers she faced in dabbling with the occult. She felt herself to be a victim of circumstance, passive and without agency: rather than rebelling against the conservative constraints of a repressive society, she experienced herself as a victim of an external power that forced her out of collective conformity and made her a 'freak', something unwholesome and contaminated. Understood as a consequence of demonic possession, her insubordinate teenage behaviour suggested a version of adolescence that precluded youthful parody, performance, dissatisfaction or intentional rebellion. This in turn countered the possibility that there could be something to rebel against, something sick at the heart of white South Africa. Rather this sickness was recast as a foreign invader, a pathogen.

Charlotte's story illustrates many of the imagined symptoms and causes of involvement with the satanic menace. She went to nightclubs, dabbled with drugs and homosexuality and was affected by foreign

music. Youth leisure practices, non-normative sexualities and corruption by amoral Western culture recur repeatedly in stories about what Satanists did and how teenagers were lured in. Charlotte is a paradigmatic example of an adolescent failed by psychiatry; medicalising the problem was useless and only the power of Christ could save her. She operated within a discursive mode of Christian rebirth and confession, discussed further in Chapter 4, which sought to redeem even while it denied complicity in evil or upheaval.

Was Charlotte a real teenager, vindicating her bad behaviour with cultural demonology? Was she a composite of stories told by Jonker and various 'recovering Satanists' to credible journalists? Was she an adolescent fantasist, or a cautionary tale cooked up by a Christian editor with a vested interested in Satan-hunting? Whatever the truth, Charlotte is a paradigm. She is like the youthful victims of family murder, her innocence an accusation against those who failed to halt the imminent degradation, corruption and collapse of white South African society.

Mapping the Occult Timeline

The first major incident involving public fear of Satanism in 1985 blew up over the fundraising student magazine of the conservative Afrikaans Potchefstroom University, which female students from a Christian hall of residence refused to sell on the basis that it promoted Satanism. The contentious issue was a series of photographs, one of a goat with human hands peering over a fence and the other a combination of the face of a woman and that of a cat. The magazine was also, in a common triple grouping, accused of promoting homosexuality and communism. A decision from the Students' Representative Council had the offending images removed. *The Citizen*'s coverage of the episode included quotes from Henk Stoker, the chairman of the student council, promising, 'At no stage has it been the intention of the editorial staff to further the cause of Satanism' (7 March).

A *Sunday Times* report, in contrast, took a cynical stance complete with puns on witches and witchery alongside quotes from the young female editor Mercia Schoeman (3 March). This dual perspective was unusual – most reporting on Satanism was uncritical – and suggested two competing poles of Afrikaans womanhood: the 1980s modernisers embodied by Schoeman and the female students who laid the complaint, conservative traditionalists who emphasised the role of women as *volksmoeders*, or mothers of the nation, a symbolic role which 'Afrikaner women were consigned to, and constrained by … A self-sacrificing wife and mother

who deferred to her husband and fulfilled her racial/national duty to reproduce and nurture the *volk*' (Klausen 2010, 43).

The next major episode in the scare involved the educational, criminal and legal authorities. In August 1985 a 16-year-old Bloemfontein schoolgirl was arrested for shooting her mother and brother and shooting at her father, prompting a spate of satanic speculation after an unnamed source claimed the cult was responsible. In response, the Free State Department of Education launched an investigation into the existence of a Satanist movement in schools, insisting it would 'fight Satanism with everything in its power' (*Argus*, 8 August). A police spokesman admitted that the department was investigating 'allegations of a Satanist cult movement following Press reports' (*Star*, 10 August 1985). No arrests were made or charges brought, although the aftermath led to Bloemfontein gaining the dubious honour of being dubbed the first of many 'SA Satanist headquarters'.

These rumours gained a new level of veracity in July that year, with the specialist conference on the issue held at Unisa. As well as the testimony from military psychiatrists about the mental health profession's failure where exorcism may have succeeded, detailed above, the conference featured discussions on how Pentecostals, in contrast to the NGK, believed that the threat from the devil was empirically real (*Star*, 4 July 1986). It received widespread coverage in white newspapers, illustrating the extent to which religious questions involving the occult had entered common national vocabulary.

Official discussions about Satanism continued that October, with the NGK synod expressing concern about the growing number of church members involved in mysticism and the occult. The horror films *The Exorcist* (1973) and *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) were singled out as causes for this behaviour, as well as 'exponents of Satanistic music … riddled with Eastern mysticism', specifically the foreign rock groups Deep Purple, Black Sabbath, Queen and KISS (*Argus*, 17 October 1986). This emphasis on the infectious potential of foreign cultural products was reiterated the following year when the President's Council launched a report titled 'The Youth of South Africa'. The report urged stronger censorship of television programmes 'bordering on the vulgar' in order to curb the pernicious effects of 'violence, sexual activities, drugs, alcohol and Satanism' on the nation's youth (*Business Day*, 18 June 1987). Here Satanism was classed as one of a list of high-risk consequences of South Africa's entry into modernity. By 1988 horrified clergymen were calling on the government to appoint a commission of enquiry into the 'epidemic of Satanism in the playground' (*Sunday Tribune*, 9 October 1988).

Even as these institutional responses gained force, minor incidents of supposed satanic activity began to crop up with increasing frequency. The cult was blamed for a mass desecration of graves in two Bloemfontein cemeteries (*Star*, 29 May 1988). Parishioners in East London were disgusted by the appearance of satanic pamphlets under their windshield wipers during a church service (*Daily Dispatch*, 11 February 1989). The conservative Afrikaans University of Stellenbosch's Science Fiction and Fantasy Society was the subject of an official investigation by the NGK after Christian students infiltrated a meeting and reported their concern that the material the sci-fi fans were reading was designed to lead them to the devil (*Sunday Times*, 17 September 1989). Satanism was increasingly being blamed for varied social ills and potential problems.

The Bathokwa 'Possession'

Despite being imagined as a white-led conspiracy, Satanism was so affectively powerful that it began to creep across racial borders and into the psychic life of non-white communities. On 22 March 1989 the *Pretoria News* printed the headline, 'Experts Study Claims of "Bewitched" Pupils'. The story reported that psychiatric experts from Weskoppies Hospital and officials from the Department of Education and Training (DET) as well as a doctor, faith-healer and clergyman had been called in to visit the Bathokwa Community School in Atteridgeville, a township to the west of Pretoria. The Minister of Education and Development Aid, Dr Gerrit Viljoen, told parliament that 'allegations of the pupils at the school being possessed by the devil' were being investigated after an episode earlier that year when two pupils had suffered epileptic fits on the same day and then 40 had followed suit the following day.

The report states, 'At the request of the Department of Education and Training's circuit inspector, a doctor had reported to a parents' meeting, attended by 577 parents, that he could find nothing wrong with the affected pupils.' The article does not directly quote or interview these parents, who are minor players in a drama starring the white medical, theological and educational hierarchies. Apartheid South Africa's townships had their own long-established occult beliefs. It is not unreasonable to think that black parents, had they been seeking a supernatural explanation for what had was happening to their children, may have been more likely to blame local witches than a satanic conspiracy that was plaguing white areas. But the possibility of belief in indigenous magic was denied by the white voices that hijacked the school's crisis.

It is notable, too, that these parents were addressed by a doctor rather than by a religious practitioner or government spokesperson. Parents' concerns about what had happened to their children was dealt with by medicalising the episode and treating it as an instance of sickness. The doctor in question could find nothing 'wrong' with the children; this means he could find no *physical* ailments, which suggests a pathology that required the intervention of psychiatry. The government sent a doctor rather than a priest to allay parents' fears because those in charge did not believe that the cure for the Bathokwa children's ills was spiritual or religious. Unlike white children in similar situations, they were not understood as being the victims of a supernatural evil, and exorcism was not called for.

The reporting on this incident is very different to how satanic episodes relating to white youth were dealt with. The quotation marks around the word 'bewitched' in the article's headline suggest that the presence of supernatural forces is by no means certain. These are repeated in the first paragraph of the article in reference to the '"bewitched" Bathokwa Community School', implicating the entire school, and by proxy the community that surrounded it, in the possible 'illness' that affected the 40 children involved. The psychiatric team, mentioned in the first, second and fourth paragraphs, receive far more prominence than the religious experts, relegated to a single mention in the fourth, in contrast to the constant appearance of pastors, exorcists and other religious figures in most reports on Satanism. This is one of the few instances when mental health professionals appear in a positive light in a case of possible possession. The quotation marks around the word 'bewitched' in the headline are repeated within the body of the text. The article says that the pupils 'were "involved in an incident of mass hysteria"', with the entire phrase in unattributed quote marks. In the next paragraph 'mass hysteria' is repeated without quote marks, now accepted as a legitimate part of the text. Alongside the importance of the doctor and psychiatric team and the sidelining of religious practitioners, the claim of hysteria denies the possibility of supernatural involvement and suggests instead that there is something wrong with those affected. The pathology here is internal not external. Additionally, the reader is told that 'allegations' of possession have been 'investigated' and 'action [will be] taken'. This criminological terminology serves to further implicate the story's ostensible victims in what has gone wrong, suggesting that they may be lawless as well as mentally unbalanced, both appellations that the white press casually attached to black South Africans.

This brief episode, nowhere near as widely reported as other 'possessions', reveals the extent to which the Satanism scare was racialised and repeated apartheid's embedded notions of race. In contrast to the Bathokwa incident, reporting on another Satanism-in-schools episode, that of a group of haunted schoolgirls in Rietfontein, near Upington – examined in detail later in this chapter – refused to ascribe hysterical causes. When white youngsters showed signs of possession, the possibility of hysteria was explicitly negated. Bathokwa's black young people, despite exhibiting similar symptoms, were immediately medicalised by the recourse to mental health professionals. Infection remained reserved for white people like the Rietfontein girls, 'legitimate' victims of Satanism whose blood and bodies were more easily sullied.

As well as retaining the affective power of the Satanism scare within white society, this narrative served to pathologise the young people of Atteridgeville, which had a reputation as a hotspot for political unrest and had been involved in the 1984 school boycotts. When NP securocrats enlisted American military theorist John J. McCuen to help manage their 'total strategy' in 1985, he classified Atteridgeville as one of 34 locations nationwide that would need to be taken by government forces before the country could be subdued (Sparks 1990, 357). Within the imaginary of white South Africa the youth of Atteridgeville already possessed troublesome, unsettling qualities and the medicalising discourse of mental illness attached to this satanic possession reinforced the sense that there was something wrong with them that required fixing, very different from the pastoral and religious care offered to white youngsters who experienced almost identical symptoms. Rather than a shocking example of supernatural evil, the apparent possession that afflicted the youth of Bathokwa became another symptom of the dysfunction that was seen by whites to attend upon this community.

Black youngsters who seemed to be possessed were understood by the white press to be doing so in inverted commas. Their victimhood was suspect and subverted to a paternalistic and judgemental discourse of psychiatry, hysteria, mental health and pathology. There were no names mentioned here except for that of the headmistress of the school, Mrs Kate Masilela; the children and parents involved did not merit individuation. Despite high levels of anxiety around the supernatural, when it came to the black youth of Bathokwa, mass hysteria was unhesitatingly blamed instead of Satanism. These children were not infected, they were defective. The metaphors of sanitation and disease that characterised the Satanism scare were not brought to bear in the case of Atteridgeville. The nationalist fear of pollution and contagion did

not apply to these young people, although they could be infected by modernity and the city. But that possibility had already been realised; it was embodied in the dangerous shifting borders that characterised a place like Atteridgeville, a dark spot on a map of what should, in high apartheid terms, have been entirely a 'white man's land' (Giliomee 2003, 279). The link between Satanism and sanitation was not made for the students of this black school because they were already, by virtue of race and urbanisation, beyond the possibilities of cultural hygiene. They contained the pollutant rather than being infected by it.

Cultural Contamination

The next major event in the Satanist timeline was an official response from government to the panic. In August 1989 the Minister of Education and Culture, Piet Clase, informed the public that a committee had been formed to investigate Satanism after reports that two Eastern Cape schoolchildren – now thankfully 'rehabilitated' – had been dabbling in the occult. Clase took a strong line, insisting that since education in South Africa was a Christian concern his department remained on the lookout for 'deviant phenomena such as Satanism' and was determined to stamp them out (*Pretoria News*, 16 August 1989). This emphasis on an aberrant strain of youth behaviour that needed to be eradicated was also common to narratives of conscription, in which political dissent and homosexuality were equally abnormal practices that could only be erased by the discipline of the army. Once they had been inducted into the military, boys who were drug users, 'deviants' or liberals were swiftly sent off to army psychiatrists to be 'cured' (M. van Zyl et al. 1999, 50).

That August the Satanism scare came head to head with the burgeoning world of Afrikaner protest. The Voëlvry tour, featuring Afrikaans rock musicians like Johannes Kerkorell, the Gereformeerde Blues Band, Bernoldus Niemand and Andre Letoit, had already experienced problems. With its anti-NP, anti-conscription and anti-apartheid message, the road show had been banned from most Afrikaans university campuses. As Albert Grundlingh explains, the Voëlvry musicians were a new threat to the status quo. Their expulsion from Stellenbosch campus showed the disruption that Afrikaner rock music could cause: 'While petitions, counter-petitions, and letters appeared in the newspapers, protesting students (both for and against) also made their voices heard on a campus more known for its political docility than activism' (2004, 491). This was a fight over Afrikaner identity, with the (relatively) young

musicians using their own language in a way that was not acceptable to the starched discipline of traditional NGK Afrikaners. Voëlvry's cause was less the liberation of blacks than the liberation of whites from the claustrophobic confines of Afrikaner culture.

Like Communism (as I discuss in Chapter 4), Afrikaans rebel rock was soon caught in the spreading affect of the Satanism scare, fast becoming a catch-all description for anything that seemed contrary to traditional South African morality. In an article in the NGK's *Die Kerkbode* magazine, Johannesburg priest Jannie Malan launched an attack on the album that accompanied the tour, claiming it used 'backmasking' to glorify Satanism and attack Christianity (*Financial Mail*, 7 August 1989).[16] Shifty Records, the Voëlvry bands' label, instituted legal proceedings against Malan and *Die Kerkbode* (*Sunday Times*, 8 October 1989). After this challenge the issue dropped quietly out of newspaper coverage.

By this time Jonker had become one of the driving forces keeping the scare alive in the press. In early 1990 he raised concerns about the approach of Walpurgisnacht on 30 April, allegedly the most important date in the satanic calendar, when worshippers celebrate with human sacrifices. He claimed that 'babies and children were usually used for this purpose. Their jugular veins were severed and ceremonial daggers were plunged into their chests' (*Eastern Province Herald*, 20 April 1990). Later Jonker announced he had pinpointed East London as the country's centre of Satanism (*Eastern Province Herald*, 10 May 1990) and revealed that he was investigating new leads, including the sodomy of a cat in the suburb of Newton Park (*Weekend Post*, 18 May 1990). But Satanism was not contained in the Eastern Cape: other centres, Jonker told the press, included Durban, Johannesburg and the East Rand (*Daily News*, 12 May 1990). Meanwhile, Satanism among children and teenagers in Port Elizabeth and the surrounding areas was 'growing at an alarming rate'; young people were lured in, then drugged, forced into demeaning sexual performances, photographed and blackmailed to keep them in the coven (*Evening Post*, 22 May 1990).

The *Weekend Argus*, under the headline 'Satanism Shocker as Devil Worship Spreads', reported Jonker's findings at the disused East London house he'd named as a satanic centre the previous August. These included a black cross hanging in the entrance hall with silver chains around it, rooms painted black, satanic symbols and slogans drawn on the walls, Egyptian statues adorning the kitchen, a deep grave in the back garden with a pentagram and swastika carved into it, a main bedroom with black bedding 'where the sacrifices were made', notes explaining how to hold a sacrifice and a beautiful black-clad 16-year-old

girl who said she had become involved in Satanism after watching *The Exorcist*, losing her virginity and selling her soul to the devil on the same night (19 May 1990). This tale was repeated across various media in slightly altered forms. It crops up in *Personality* magazine, in the Gardiners' book and in Jonker's pamphlets.

There were more recurring patterns to come as another high-profile cult cop, initiator of some of the most disturbing claims to emerge in this period, began to make public pronouncements. Captain Leonard Solms, a born-again Christian and head of Cape Town's child protection unit, made national headlines when he told an NGK conference that sexual abuse of boys by men was a huge problem in Cape Town, saying, 'If we don't do something we will have many homosexuals in the next generations.' Solms then discussed the concurrently rising incidence of sexual abuse of children within Satanist practice, linking the deviant and anti-Christian activities of Satanism and homosexuality (*Cape Times*, 18 May 1990).[17] This is also a rare case of South African Satanism being treated specifically as SRA. As his profile increased Solms seems to have become immersed in the prevalent discourse until his version of Satanism was coherent with Jonker's.

On 18 May that year Solms gave a press conference revealing some of the new facts that had come to light during his investigation of Satanism. These included, among others, details of 11 babies 'specially bred for sacrifice to the devil and ritually murdered by having their throats slit and their hearts cut out and eaten'; the presence of ten Satanist cells at Cape Peninsula high schools; the complicity of devil-worshipping parents who allowed their children to be sodomised and otherwise abused by fellow cult members; the presence of many high-ranking members of the community in the cult's upper echelons; and the now-common roll call of bestiality, animal abuse, mass orgies, drug-taking, secrecy and threats of death for disloyalty (*Cape Times*, 19 May 1990). Solms claimed his information came from interviews with Satanists, some of them children (*Weekend Argus*, 19 May 1990), but admitted that the parents of the 11 murdered babies had not been identified (*Sunday Times*, 20 May 1990). The baby murder claims led to a furious outcry and Cape Town police found themselves inundated with calls from a terrified public. A spokesman stated that 'nothing concrete had come to the fore'. Evidence was vague, no bodies had been found and no dockets opened (*Star*, 22 May 1990). When no progress had been made by June, Solms explained that prosecuting Satanist murders was difficult because of the 'code of secrecy, fear and the fact that you need a body' (*Sunday Times*, 3 June 1990).

Reports of baby murders are not unusual in Satanism claims. According to Valerie Sinason, a psychotherapist who was one of the primary propagators of SRA beliefs in the UK, 'Almost every survivor has claimed to witness the murder of babies' (1994, 5), but none of these claimants has ever produced a corpse. Murders without bodies were a significant part of the Satanism scare. Crime became divorced from empirical realities and returned to a metaphorical notion of evil. According to Zygmunt Bauman, evil is '*unknowable*: a space that eludes examination and resists discursive articulation … we cling to it as a last resort in our desperate search for an *explanation*' (2006, 55). In the absence of embodied sufferers and convincing examples of the victims of the cult, the whole of white society became the enemy's prey. Stories of Satanism were filled with orgies, drugs and other corporeal indulgences; its sacrificial objects, however, had no bodies. They were a gap at the centre of the panic that allowed for lurid and overdetermined communal imaginings. Victims were only seen if they were redeemed, their flesh rededicated to Christ.

Public outrage about the mistreatment of children was further stirred by a series of interviews with practising Satanists. On 20 May 1990 the *Sunday Star* carried a story about an anonymous man from Port Elizabeth who was trying to extricate himself from the cult because the high priest was demanding the sacrifice of his son. In one of the most widely reported journalistic coups of the scare André Barnard, initially known as 'Peter the Satanist', gave *Personality* magazine an interview in which he claimed to have eaten a human heart (14 May 1990). Weeks later, in the same pages, he found Jesus through the ministrations of Pastor Neville Goldman, the magazine's favourite anti-Satanist crusader (4 June 1990). His story was then reported in various other newspapers. Barnard later claimed he had returned to Christianity after realising that his devil-worshipping was affecting his son (*Eastern Province Herald*, 4 June 1990).

These stories and others like them, which were widely reported across the country, illustrate another feature of the threat. Whereas satanic scare stories often centred on sexual or other violence perpetrated on children, individual Satanists could atone for their criminality if their changes of heart revolved around children (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). All those 'recovered Satanists' who told their stories to the press knew that children were raped and murdered but none of them had ever done it. In many cases the protagonists claimed to have become involved as children and to have been the victims of this abuse. The association between witchcraft and children is extremely common and recurs around the world, whether as 'child abuse, child

prostitution, Satanism and child sacrifice, paedophilia, organ trading or death squads hunting down street kids' (de Boeck 2005, 205). The innocent child, at odds with the bored, dangerous, sexualised adolescent, was the centrepiece of both evil and redemption. As in the panic around family murder, children were metonymic of the purity of the nation, without agency or individuality.

Meanwhile, public and official pressure increased throughout 1990. Claims of satanic encroachment sparked a debate over school textbooks, with parents, teachers and religious figures objecting to literature that featured witches, skulls, ghosts, spiders, spell recipes and other occult references (*Weekend Post*, 26 May 1990). In another moment of institutional implication in the scare, the Transvaal Education Department's (TED) enquiry into Satanism revealed nine symptoms of adolescent involvement, including 'extreme rebellion', a tendency to wear black, an interest in sex and drugs and a taste for heavy metal music (*Pretoria News*, 13 June 1990). On 12 June Adriaan Vlok, the Minister of Law and Order, revealed that Commissioner of Police General Johan van der Merwe had been instructed to investigate the 'diabolic phenomenon' of Satanism in South Africa (*Cape Times*, 13 June 1990). On 31 October Rina Venter, the Minister of National Health and Population Development, told a public meeting that drug abuse and Satanism were rife among the youth of South Africa. Echoing Jonker and the TED, she pointed out a series of symptoms that suggested satanic involvement: black clothes, an aversion to Christianity, rebelliousness, musical taste (*Citizen*, 31 October 1990). At the end of 1990 the Gardiners' book *Satanism: The Seduction of South Africa's Youth* was reviewed nationally to mixed acclaim.

A White-to-Black Contagion

By the following year the Satanism scare continued its progress across apartheid borders. In contrast to earlier suggestions that few non-whites were involved in Satanism, the pan-racial character of the scare began to be mentioned explicitly, with expert testimony warning parents of the dangers to their children.

Warrant Officer Emmie Nienauber, based in East London and a newly recurrent name in that city's persistent war with Satanism, warned that children 'of all races' were at risk from the devil's henchmen (*Daily Dispatch*, 19 April 1991). An unnamed East London businessman cautioned that it was not only the children of Christian families who were at risk: Muslim and Hindu parents also needed to be vigilant (*Weekend*

Post, 20 April 1991). Local clergy in the township of Merebank held a public meeting to address reports of increased satanic activity and form a plan of action to counteract it, despite assurances from police that there was nothing to warrant investigation (*Leader*, 22 June 1990). The vice president of the South African Students' Association, Soweto teacher Mrs M. Molapo, told a seminar of the National Council of African Women that the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was 'encouraging and promoting Satanism by showing comic strips depicting its practice'. The offending programmes included *Ghostbusters*, *Superman* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (*Sowetan*, 6 November 1991).

As the scare spread, so did media coverage aimed at different races. Under the full-page heading 'Satanism Hits the Townships', *City Press* – a newspaper with a largely black readership – told how Satanism was 'mushrooming in the black community'. The piece carries some information about the type of people involved, mentioning a group of black men from Zambia, what was then Zaire and Malawi. It includes a short interview with a Zambian who refused to give his name and claimed that a group of white Satanists had lured him into their circle when he first arrived as a migrant in Johannesburg (14 April 1991). Where white fears of Satan blamed a global conspiracy and foreign cultural products, black newspapers' reporting on Satanists as black people from outside South Africa conveyed a similar sense of external danger. Both Luise White (2000) and Clifton Crais (2002) point out the prevalence of the occult in migration narratives. White illustrates how colonial-era Africans equated European medicine and the taking of blood with vampires while Crais describes how colonial managers were understood to have stronger magic than black people did, which explained white dominance over labour and land. Satanism had begun to intersect with stories of migration. The conspiracy remained a white concern and occult powers were available to whites who used them to trap, ensnare and suck dry black migrants in the economic hub of Johannesburg.

The Satanism scare retained many features when translated from white to black areas, although it was subtly altered in the process. A similar mode of translation took place in the reporting on family murder, first a wholly white phenomenon and later seen to be 'spreading' to black communities. This was an unusual reversal of the common narrative of contagion in which unclean and infectious Africans were moved away from white areas so as to preserve the purity of whiteness, or in which Africans were segregated from whites so as to preserve their 'tribal cultures' from the influence of civilisation. Both of these privilege the culture of the coloniser, either in its eugenicised virtue or

in its seductive power. Within the racialised discourse of hygiene and sanitation it is seldom whites who 'infect' blacks, but both Satanism and family murder were understood as the spread of pathological practices from white to black culture.

City Press later reported that, 'Although very few blacks are known to be involved in the cult, it is now beginning to spread and is mostly practiced by other races in the Cape, Natal and the Transvaal.' This article was one of the first to conflate the iconography of white Satanism with indigenous versions of the occult. It features an interview with a Malawian woman, Maria Mabille, who inherited a spirit from her mother that had been inherited in turn from another ancestor, and found she could tell fortunes and use telepathy. Her powers vanished after she became a reborn Christian (21 April 1991). Possession and demonic power were common to both Satanism and South African magic but only the latter emphasised the role of ancestors. The transmission of witchcraft skills from parent to child was not a feature of white Satanist discourse but is common in African occult narratives in various locales, from the interviewee's native Malawi (van Dijk 2001, 103) to others like the Effutu of southern Ghana, for whom witchcraft skills are involuntary and often unwelcome (Wyllie 1973, 75). 'In understanding the dynamics of witchcraft affliction in African culture the role or meaning of the ancestral spirits is pivotal', says Hund (2004, 80). Satanism transferred across racial boundaries lost much of its European purity in favour of a bricolage of cross-cultural tendencies. The name remained the same but the constitutional make-up changed in line with existing beliefs about witches. This may have been the point where the white Satanists feared by the apartheid electorate began to bleed across borders, eventually becoming the township Satanist described by Comaroff and Comaroff (1999). White worries about Satanism did not negate earlier occults. Indeed, fear of Satanism gained prominence among whites at about the same time as *muti* murders and witchcraft killings appeared to be on the increase (Chidester 1991, 59; Crais 2002).

Following Jonker's lead, in the period from 1990 to 1991 police statements and expert testimony referred to 30 April, the old European festival of Walpurgisnacht, as one of the major events in the Satanists' calendar and a high-risk time for murders, sacrifices and abductions. Like Jonker, the aforementioned Warrant Officer Nienauber stressed that South African children who had famously gone missing, like Barbara Walker and Mariette O'Brien, had disappeared just before dates of importance to Satanists (*Daily Dispatch*, 19 April 1991). Under the headline 'Satanists Look for Kids to Sacrifice', *City Press* reported that

Walpurgisnacht is the most important day in the satanic calendar, when 'blood rituals and human sacrifice take place'. According to the journalist, former demon-worshippers from the area had admitted that in the run-up to the big day they stalked the streets looking for children and teens to abduct. Many young people, it was claimed, vanished from their homes around this time of year (21 April 1991).

As the day loomed closer, panic swept across cities. Reports began to spread of two attempted abductions in Port Elizabeth, both involving a white minibus. On 24 April two schools were completely empty and a number of others reported unusually high absentee figures after parents – some bearing knives and *pangas* (machetes) – stormed in and forcibly removed their children. Police attempted to reassure them that there had been no proof to back up the rumours, but school officials and local councillors warned parents to be vigilant and not to let children walk to school by themselves (*Evening Post*, 25 April 1991). Similar parent action affected schools in East London. Police announced that they would step up their patrols of school areas on the 30th. Schools and media outlets fielded calls from frantic parents desperate to shield their offspring from the upcoming 'satanic celebration' (*Natal Witness*, 30 April 1991). The panic spread as far as Durban and Maritzburg, with school attendance on the day in question dropping hugely (*Star*, 1 May 1991), and also hit Belville in Cape Town and schools in the Western Cape. By the end of April, 'police departments, newspaper offices, and school principals were inundated with phone calls seeking reassurance or confirmation of rumours, as well as purported sightings of Satanists kidnapping and abusing children at local malls' (Dunbar and Swart 2012, 617). A few days later, when 30 April had come and gone uneventfully, journalist Arthur Goldstuck wrote an article on an almost identical story from 1988 about a white minibus that stole children for sacrifice. In that case, however, the youngsters had been taken to the townships for *muti* murders (*Weekly Mail*, 3–9 May 1991).[18] The same urban legend was repeated with reference to indigenous and to European occult bogeymen, the slippage between them a precursor to the absorption of the Satanist into the larger world of the African occult.

Even before the Walpurgisnacht schools alarm there was some attempt to calm the panic. This did not affect the official response to Satanism: the Department of Home Affairs' 1991 annual report stated that 'programmes which positively portrayed possession or devil worship should not be shown on television'. These guidelines were accepted without question by the SABC and M-Net, the country's subscription television service (*Argus*, 17 April 1991). Nonetheless, official responses

in this later period played down reports of Satanism where possible. When a 15-year-old Pietermaritzburg girl was discovered tied up and gagged after a night in the bush, police were quick to dismiss rumours of satanic involvement (*Natal Witness*, 15 August 1990). Johannesburg police similarly refuted suggestions that there was a Satanist link to the disappearance of a number of schoolgirls across the country, later found to be victims of the paedophile Gert van Rooyen (*Star*, 22 August 1990). This did not stop *Personality* magazine from insisting that van Rooyen was a Satanist (30 July 1990). At the end of an article titled 'Satanists Meeting in City' that covered the spread of the cult to Kimberley, a municipality spokesperson insisted that recent graveyard vandalism was more likely down to 'people misbehaving' than to devil worship (*Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 27 August 1990). While churches in the Cape hamlet of Fish Hoek were convinced that a recent spate of graffiti was an indication of Satanist presence, a police statement reiterated that no allegations of Satanism had ever been proved (*Cape Times*, 1 November 1990). A report from the Child and Family Centre at the University of Natal suggested that reactions to Satanism were out of proportion to the reality of the threat, that normal teenage behaviour was being pathologised and that there were many possible explanations for adolescent activity that did not include the occult. The report warned against the dangers of religious enthusiasm and suggested common-sense strategies for parents and teachers to deal with troubled teens (*Natal Witness*, 1 November 1990), but failed to curb the media interest in Satanism.

In 1991, after years of rumour, anxiety and misinformation, the government attempted to arrest the panic's spread. Long after police claims about murdered babies, mass rape, forced drug addiction and related horrors had made their way into the public domain, the SAP gagged both Jonker and Solms. According to an official pronouncement, 'Members have been instructed not to make further statements regarding Satanism to the media as possible misconceptions may be made by members of the public.' An unnamed police source agreed, 'We haven't ever cracked a Satanism gang in this country. There's a lot of hearsay' (*Weekend Post*, 22 June 1991). The instruction outraged newspaper editors and contradicted public depiction of the cult cops as heroes operating on the frontline of a secret war.

Soon after the gagging, however, Jonker managed to uncover the 'biggest Satanism haul [Port Elizabeth] has ever seen', arresting an alleged priest and his younger brother who were running a coven – the Koekemoer brothers, mentioned above. Despite the claims of baroque criminality surrounding satanic practice, the two were only accused of

desecration of graves, theft from graves, possession of *dagga* (marijuana) and damage to property (*Eastern Province Herald*, 1 November 1991). Nonetheless the case was seen as a victory for the Satan-hunters. The gag was lifted and Jonker was transferred to Pretoria, where he took up a position leading the new Occult-Related Crimes Unit (*Eastern Province Herald*, 4 January 1992).

The 'Upington Slasher' and an Occult Defence

In the second half of 1992, two of the most peculiar stories in the scare hit the national press. In the first, five schoolgirls in the small town of Rietfontein, near Upington in the Kalahari, were victims of 'the Thing', otherwise known as the 'Rietfontein slasher', a supernatural force that tore their clothes, scratched their legs, pulled out their hair and otherwise abused them physically. Jonker was sent in to deal with their concerns after one of the girls' parents called the police. He investigated without assistance from psychiatrists or other medical professionals and soon reported the story to a scandal-hungry press, saying, 'This is a matter for Jesus Christ. There is nothing else the police can do. We have passed the matter on to local priests and pastors for them to exorcise the school' (*Star*, 12 August 1992).

The five girls primarily affected were named and interviewed by national newspapers, with *The Star* in Johannesburg and the *Sunday Tribune* in Natal carrying the most coverage. Religious and other experts quickly began to come forward with their suggestions. The school's principal, Neill Oppelt, demanded prayer and faith from his students as the only means of combating the supernatural (*Star*, 15 August 1992). Jonker promised to uncover the truth whatever the cost, the girls stuck to their story and their bewildered parents insisted that they were neither lying nor hysterical. Sources at the school claimed these attacks had been going on since the early 1980s but they had not attracted attention outside the community before Jonker's arrival. Jonker himself was the focus of much of the reporting, particularly at the start and end of the coverage: one of the last articles on the girls is titled 'SA Police's Occult Expert is Hot on Satan's Tracks' (*Sunday Star*, 16 August 1992).

But the episode of the Kalahari schoolgirls is interesting for other reasons. It provides an important contrast with the possessed schoolchildren in Atteridgeville, discussed above. Where hysteria, medicalisation and pathologisation attended black youth's experience of the occult, these white girls were treated with sympathy and respect by the press. This story gained far more coverage than the Atteridgeville event. The

girls were given individual names and histories, unlike the troubled and troubling mass of black adolescents in Atteridgeville who were never awarded the privilege of individuation. The reporting made no suggestion of lunacy or insanity; quite the opposite. When Reverend A. Julies, the local National Party MP and Minister of Health Services and Welfare, visited the afflicted school, he led the children in prayer, promised them a delivery of crucifixes and stated, 'Yes, Satan has come to Rietfontein. Mass hysteria is not happening here. We can only fight this with prayer and faith' (*Sunday Star*, 16 August 1992). Hysteria was blamed twice in the Atteridgeville piece but here it is specifically denied. The reader is told that there is something real to be afraid of, and that it comes from outside rather than from within the bodies of the affected youngsters.

Press treatment of the afflicted girls involved an idealised understanding of upright, morally incorruptible young Afrikaner womanhood. Tentative suggestions that they could be lying (in the absence of hysteria, this was the only possible cause offered for the attacks other than the supernatural) were forestalled immediately. Oppelt is reported as saying, 'I can't believe this is self-inflicted. They are all well-adjusted and attractive girls who have no reason to draw attention to themselves. They are also from poor families and I genuinely can't believe they would cut up the little clothing that they do have' (*Star*, 16 August 1992). 'Good' Afrikaans girls do not call attention to themselves, know their place and are presentable and respectful of the status quo. Oppelt's statement identified the girls by class as well as by race, ethnicity and gender. His emphasis on their wholesome, well-adjusted poverty calls to mind the injunctions placed on lower-class Afrikaners during the 1930s and 1940s to 'remain white and live white' (Giliomee 2003, 349), which I discuss in Chapter 10.

Descriptions of 'the Thing' emphasised its externality. The girls were 'in the grip of strange phenomena' (*Star*, 15 August 1992). Family members could tell when 'the thing was near' (*Sunday Tribune*, 15 August 1992). Not only was the possibility of hysteria excised from this account, the reports made a point of emphasising the outside-ness of the forces that affected these girls, who were passive rather than active. The episodes were described as an 'invasion' (*Star*, 16 August 1992), an example of the repetitive narrative of hygiene and parasitism that characterised the scare. These young women were infected by external forces rather than being the source of the disturbance themselves.

These articles contradict other responses to adolescence within the Satanism scare in which white teenagers were marked with guilt by their age, social practices and rebellious tendencies, and diverge from

a common response to Afrikaans girls. Susanne Klausen, in her article on the 1975 Abortion and Sterilisation Act, discusses the moral panic around white female promiscuity:

> The unmarried Afrikaner daughter represented sexual innocence. As the supposedly unsullied daughters of the Afrikaner nation, their sexuality was under the strict control of their fathers … By the early 1970s the regime was alarmed about what it perceived as the corruption of white female teenagers … At a visceral level the visibility of young women's sexuality provoked patriarchal anxiety about losing control over the white daughter. At an official level it was confirmation of what the regime already suspected: white society's morals were weakening. (2010, 43)

This paranoia about the laxity of Afrikaans girls' morals led to the drafting of a retrogressive abortion bill that ignored black women entirely and contained disturbing clauses, like the need to have rape verified by a magistrate (Klausen 2010, 50). And yet despite this sense that the white daughter was sliding out of control, the press' response to the Rietfontein girls was desexualised and supportive. They were metonymic of an idealised Afrikaner girlhood that fed directly into the icon of the *volksmoeder*, the nurturing and self-sacrificing mother of the nation. These girls, unlike many other white teenage Satanists who populated the landscape of the scare, never vocally rebelled or misbehaved; their unruliness was contained within the otherworldly and understood to be external. All the contradictions, threats and ambiguities that youth often suggested in late apartheid South Africa were disregarded in favour of an idealisation of incorruptible femininity. The sexuality of the Afrikaans daughter was concurrently repudiated and the wild young woman that Klausen cites as the impetus for the Abortion Bill became reconceptualised as inherently chaste and in keeping with nationalist notions of gendered behaviour.

The girls' mothers, also interviewed by *The Sunday Tribune*, echoed Oppelt's belief that the attacks must be genuine because of the damage done to their minimal wardrobes (16 August 1992). This implies the genteel poverty of those families who populated the border areas where few whites lived. The precarious spatiality of a liminal whiteness at risk from forces outside its control permeated these events. Rietfontein is close to the border with Namibia, which had been considered internal to South Africa until the reluctant granting of independence in 1990. This incident happened at a place in the imaginary landscape of white

South Africa that used to be safe but no longer was. Rietfontein was once just a point on a map, but with the loss of the so-called frontline states to Marxist and nationalist movements it was now worryingly close to black Africa. Jonker himself noted the unease of this discomforting border town, saying he planned to return for further investigations but would not stay long: 'That place is very strange. It is too desolate and lonely for me. When that wind blows there, it is no place to be' (*Sunday Star*, 16 August 1992).

The story of the haunted schoolgirls vanished from newspaper coverage fairly quickly, to be replaced by an even more sensational if ultimately equally unsatisfying event. In September 1992 Cape housewife Dawn Orso was found brutally murdered in her home and police were quick to point out the possibility of Satanist involvement in her death (*Cape Times*, 23 September 1992). The killers were soon revealed to be her teenage daughter Angelique and Angelique's 18-year-old boyfriend Lawrence van Blerk. Possibly reacting to the police statements and press coverage referring to the 'Satanist murder', the pair's defence rested on their demonic possession during the time of the killing. Van Blerk told the court he had been 'influenced by an unknown force, probably to do with Satanism', and had felt 'possessed by the devil inside' (*Cape Times*, 26 September 1992). The murder gained national attention, galvanising the public into sympathy for a pair of youngsters who seemed to be victims themselves. As the case progressed, however, it became clear that the so-called Satanist murder was a very different tale of a misfit young man manipulated by a charismatic young woman. The pair were eventually found guilty because, according to Mr Justice Williamson, their actions were too obviously goal-oriented to be involuntary. Crucially, however, Williamson made a point of stating that 'the court accepted that people could become possessed by demons', but was not convinced *in this particular case* (*Citizen*, 1 March 1994). Although their defence was rejected, belief in Satanism was strong enough that the judiciary explicitly stated the possibility of possession.

When compared to another South African legal case, the Orso trial exemplifies the different weight given by white South African legislators to black and to white magic. In the 1933 case *Rex v. Mbombela*, which appears in disguise in Wulf Sach's *Black Hamlet* (1996) and is also mentioned by Isak Niehaus (2001, 190), Dhumi Mbombela, a rural Xhosa man of about 20 years old, was put on trial for the murder of a small child who he had mistaken for a *tokolosh*, a malicious supernatural being. The prosecution's case rested on the fact that Mbombela's strongly held belief in the *tokolosh* and concurrent genuine fear were

not 'reasonable', reason being the legal requirement for acquittal. But the colonial administration's definition of reason was inherently flawed.

By colonial law majority beliefs were considered reasonable, yet when this statue came up against the apparent unreason of the colonial subject's own occult economy, numbers became irrelevant and the discourse was shut down. As Adam Sitze illustrates, the state's defence of its unreasonable valorisation of an inconsistent idea of reason prevented the law from signifying, and disregarded anyone whose version of reason did not match its own: 'Colonial law's desire to maintain its jurisdiction forced it to violate the very principle of reason that presumably conferred upon it its imperial supremacy and sovereign right' (2007a, 24). The judge, Etienne de Villiers, stated that only 'one standard of reasonableness' could exist and it was not one that could permit belief in African spirits, and that the notion of magic divorced from religion was inconceivable (in Sitze 2007b, 59). It is not unlikely that Judge Williamson in the Orso case would have been aware of this precedent: *Rex v. Mbombela* has been cited at appellate level more than 40 times in South African legal history (Sitze 2007a, 53). Even while defining African supernatural beliefs as unreasonable superstition, *Rex v. Mbombela* implicitly acknowledged that European magic could exist and was 'reasonable' within the precepts of the colonial law upon which the modern South African legal system is based, just as Judge Williamson did by stating that possession had been a possibility in the Orso murder. Satanism had a legal legitimacy that was denied to its indigenous equivalents. The racial dynamics that characterised the mythology and legislative structure of apartheid – that whites were reasonable, civilised and moral and that blacks were not – were brought into the courtroom by the Satanism scare, as they had been by the Mbombela case, and officially validated.

Meanwhile reporting on Satanism continued, replete with the same stock phrases and iconography, although alleged incidents of satanic practice became increasingly rare. Police found *dagga* pipes and 'disgusting drawings' in a filthy 'satanic den' in a house in Malvern, near Durban (*Daily News*, 2 December 1992). Four people were arrested after being found engaging in suspect dancing around a pentagram in an abandoned mansion in Hout Bay, Cape Town (*Cape Times*, 21 September 1992). Cape police launched a special task force to target Satanism in the coloured township of Tygerberg after an evangelical preacher reported that involvement was increasing (*Cape Times*, 10 September 1992). A Johannesburg psychologist who specialised in troubled teens revealed that at least three covens were active in the city's affluent northern suburbs (*Star*, 18 September 1992).

Jonker linked 19 murders, six rapes and four robberies in the previous five years to Satanism, saying that 500 cases had been investigated and 114 arrests made. However, 'how many of these have made it to court, and on what charges, [was] not stated by the statistics the unit provided' (*Cape Times*, 18 January 1994). He also claimed that 45 Satanists in the past three years had been convicted in cases ranging from sodomy to rape (*Sunday Tribune*, 10 July 1994) and that he had smashed a teenage Satanist cell in a wealthy Pretoria suburb and another in Bloemfontein. The Pretoria group involved the children of high-ranking state officials and church ministers, most of whom were recruited at malls and nightclubs (*Citizen*, 7 September 1994). In Bloemfontein he claimed to have found a candle made of human fat but admitted there was no body to link it to (*Star*, 12 September 1994).

As the period progressed these stories dropped in frequency, the gaps between them widening, until eventually the Satanist threat slipped from the front pages of white newspapers altogether, leaving in its wake only these uncanny traces of a forgotten epidemic.

What Demons Do

This is a snapshot of South Africa's satanic panic: from disturbing rumours at schools and universities to judicial acknowledgment of the power of possession, from concerns about inappropriate literature to supernatural attacks on schoolgirls, from parental phobias to the confident pronouncements of politicians, priests and police officers.

Satanism was a moral panic centred on a threat so phantasmic that no proof of its existence has ever been recorded. While some troubled adolescents and adults self-identified as Satanists, the cultic and criminal aspects and thus the danger to the (already weakened) hegemonic status of white Christian South Africa remained uncorroborated. In this fraught time the figure of the Satanist provided an object for the displacement of anxiety and the concurrent cohesion of nationalistic sentiment. That cohesion was selective, coming as it did at the price of a traumatic intergenerational fissure that I discuss in Chapter 4.

The scare was radically overdetermined and tapped into a number of cultural anxieties. This is not to make the overly simplistic suggestion that Satanists took over the imaginary position previously filled by black people, but rather, in the same way that Anglophobia was still rampant during the years of high apartheid, the old enemy remained and a new one was created alongside it, feeding off its energy, utilising its terminology. Anxiety about revolution, Satanism and Marxist onslaught coexisted in a hotbed of generalised paranoia.

The Satanist is a figure of excess, surplus and overspill, a proto-mythical threat that embodies the worst imaginable crime of its age, be it fornication with demons in the 1700s or child abuse in the 1990s (Medway 2001, 4). Whether the far-reaching conspiracy existed or not, whether teenagers in black clothes were the public embodiment of an international ring of devil-worshipping child pornographers or not, the *idea* of this signifier of evil, one that encompassed so many different forms of social risk, retained a pervasive power over the imagination of late apartheid white South Africa. Truth, says Foucault, 'isn't outside power, or lacking in power … truth isn't the reward of free spirits … Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power' (1980, 131). The Satanism scare was an effect of the shifting, mobile relations of power that surrounded it; its truth was produced by power and reveals the ways in which power was obstructed, obfuscated and challenged in the late apartheid period.

3
History and Identity

In this chapter I discuss Afrikaans nationalism and, concurrently, some characteristics of white identity found in South Africa. As I suggested in the Introduction, the Satanism scare manifested among both English and Afrikaans white South Africans, as well as among more marginal white groupings like my own Johannesburg Jewish community. Not all white South Africans were Afrikaner nationalists. However, by the 1980s the National Party's long tenure in power had significantly influenced political discourse, social practice and lived experience for most white people. NP rule fostered an inward-looking mentality, played on white fears of black dominance and utilised a Cold War/colonial narrative of benevolent paternalism that suggested that black people were uncivilised and in need of white protectionism to stop them being led astray by communist agitators who were plotting the nation's downfall (van de Westhuizen 2007). In order to understand how fear of Satanism became so normalised, it is necessary to examine how Afrikaner nationalism developed and constructed more general white South African ideas about whiteness, blackness and racial purity.

Nationalisms are created in the mind. In Benedict Anderson's influential formulation a nation is an imagined political community in which 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (2006, 6–7). Anderson suggests that the European nationalisms that followed the collapse of great pan-national religious states use many of the same mechanisms of power and operations of inclusiveness and unity to bind their members together. For a nationalism to perpetuate itself it must contain a sense that there is more to it than space: a spirit, an idea of self, an imagined

communal body. Nationalisms utilise, more than anything else, the idea of naturalness, the idea that the nation is *not* constructed, *not* imagined, that it is as inherent an attribute as one's sex. In everything natural there is something unchosen, Anderson says, something familial, domestic and native that becomes the object of national identification (quoted in Bhabha 1994, 205). This naturalness, this obviousness, came to characterise the casual quotidian racism of the white South African state, the common assumption that the status quo was as it was because it was *right*. Whites were 'convinced that they were living in a country that was theirs alone – a white country – in which only they were fully entitled to citizenship' (van de Westhuizen 2007, 92).

According to Stuart Hall,

> Identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside, that the 'positive' meaning of any term – and thus its 'identity' – can be understood. (1996, 4)

Any identity, in order to constitute itself as natural and fundamental, requires an outside, the creation of a group that does not fit within the borders of the national self, an exception to prove the rule. We are defined by what we are not as much as by what we are. The creation and definition of an other, whether she is gendered, racialised, marked by language, class, lifestyle or any other communalising factor, allows the concurrent creation and definition of the self. This mirrors Julia Kristeva's account of the formulation of the self by the act of excluding an abjected outside, what McAfee explains as 'the state of abjecting or rejecting what is other to oneself – and thereby creating the borders of an always tenuous "I"' (2004, 45). The abject, says Kristeva, has 'only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to *I*' (1982, 1). It exists to be otherwise to the I, the centre, the self, the whole.[19] Like the self, national or ethnic identity is fragile, uncertain and imaginary, always in need of the reinforcement provided by the constant externalising of the other. The 'minoritisation' of a people, writes Bhabha, 'must be seen for what it is: the "other side" of the phantasy of the national "people-as-one" which disturbs the democratic dream' (1994, 204). For the community to be imagined it must also imagine something outside itself.

T.D. Moodie writes,

> The divine agent of the Afrikaner civil faith is Christian and Calvinist – an active sovereign God, who calls the elect, who promises and punishes, who brings forth life from death in the course of history. The object of his saving activity – the Afrikaner people – is not a church, a community of the saved, however; it is a whole nation with its distinct language and culture and its own history and special identity. (1975, ix)

To briefly summarise the Afrikaans civil religion, between 1835 and 1854 Cape Afrikaners moved en masse towards the country's interior, fleeing the rule of the British and seeking new, allegedly empty land. They engaged in a series of wars with various indigenous groups and eventually established two independent Boer republics, the South African Republic and the Orange Free State. This Great Trek was later mythologised as one of the cornerstones of the Afrikaner nation, 'transformed into a "political myth" that was foundational for Afrikaner identity construction and white minority rule' (Petzold 2007, 116). According to Carli Coetzee, within these myths

> the emigrants are credited with viewing themselves as a Chosen people, travelling out of what they regarded as Egypt to the Promised Land. In this reading of the Trek group solidarity is stressed, since the emigrants are said to have entered collectively into a 'covenant' with God, through which ownership of the land was and is legitimated. Identity, in this account, is God-given and therefore unchanging, and all members of the community are described as having equal access to this group identity, and through it to the land. (1993, 130)

This version of the past functioned as a legitimating device in the present, positing the Afrikaner 'nation' as the divine keepers of the land and of a biblically ordained doctrine of racial separation, as well as emphasising the naturalness of race and of racial difference.

'No hard evidence exists of a coherent ideology among the trekkers of a Calvinist calling or of being a chosen people' (van de Westhuizen 2007, 54). These myths were developed later, in the service of an emerging nationalism. The original population of *voortrekker*-farmers was stubborn and individualistic, tied to ownership of the land and to patriarchal dominance within each man's realm. But various factors combined to subsume this independence into a national and ethnic consciousness that went beyond the borders of the homestead. These include the tireless efforts of journalist and linguist Gustav Preller,

among others, to rewrite the Great Trek as a nationalist trope (Petzold 2007, 117) – the term itself only coming into use in the 1880s (Hofmeyr 1987, 109) – and the language movement that sprang up around Revd S.J. du Toit's landmark 1877 text *Die Geskienedis van ons Land in die Taal van ons Volk* (*The History of Our Country in the Language of Our People*). According to Giliomee, 'The fact that the Afrikaner people as a distinctive ethnic group has survived during the past century has less to do with political cunning or armed force than with the huge intellectual effort that went into a small nation developing Afrikaans as a high-culture language' (1997, 122). Historical events like Blood River and the Slagtersnek episode of 1815–16 were mythologised to create this new nationalism (L. Thompson 1985).

These factors created 'a single pan-Afrikaner blood brotherhood … a sense that they were all members of a single nation that had been historically wronged' (Sparks 1990, 117–18). The nationalist movement 'turned a community of undisciplined individuals into a cohesive national unit that baffled the world with its obduracy' (ibid., 46). In reality Afrikaner unity was largely illusory, a construction that defined nationalistic feeling but did not bear up to serious scrutiny (Marks and Trapido 1987, 15–25; Bonner, Delius, and Posel 1993, 3; Hyslop 2003). Nonetheless it was an important and often-repeated trope of self-identity. As I argue in Part II, the patriarchal family and a strict hierarchy of gender roles were also crucial to the development of the Afrikaner myth. The *volksmoeder* helped to unite the disparate groups of Afrikaners into a single ethnic consciousness. Witz says, 'Coupling ethnic and gender identities through the idealised "mother in the house" as a universal category provided the bonding to shore up the imagined community of white Afrikaners' (2003, 122). Apartheid's techniques were so effective that by the 1960s many white people had largely internalised this ideology (Greenberg 1987, 390).

Afrikaner identity developed initially in response to British rule and the fear of Anglicisation. By the time apartheid officially came into being in 1948, Afrikaner nationalism was more concerned with keeping South Africa racially 'pure' and maintaining a compliant black labour force. Identity, Hall says, is subject to history and constantly changing (1996, 4); and the constitutive outside of that identity can change too. The threat of Satanism emerged at a time when Afrikaner identity, never as secure as the makers of apartheid claimed, was undergoing enormous stress. From the mid-1970s the middle classes began to grow and were increasingly influenced by consumerism. 'Their social aspirations changed in ways which made them want to distance themselves from

working-class Afrikaners. Communal identification declined' (Hyslop 2003, 229). At the same time conservative religious Afrikanerdom, resistant to the changes being wrought by economic modernisation and NP reform, was in desperate need of cohesion. Other white groups were under similar strain: while some of the strongest voices for reform came from the neo-liberal English business elite, many working-class English speakers were equally afraid of the negative effects of liberalisation on their protected communities.

Satanism provided a convenient new other, one that emphasised 'renouncing Christ, desecration of Christian symbols, demon worship, sexual orgies, the ritual sacrifice of young children and the drinking of human blood in a blasphemous parody of the Eucharist' (Ivey 1993, 181). Its emergence provided traditional Afrikanerdom and the conservative core of English culture with a vortex around which to reconstitute. 'Identifications belong to the imaginary,' says James Souter; 'they are phantasmic efforts of alignment, loyalty, ambiguous and cross-corporeal inhabitations, they unsettle the I' (quoted in Hall 1996, 16). It is not surprising that one of the mechanisms that developed to resettle white identity in late apartheid South Africa was itself imaginary, phantasmic and cross-corporeal.

Satanism enhanced cohesion among traditional sectors of white society, allowing them to lament this danger to civilisation and use the letters pages of popular magazines to call for communal responsibility. These missives are frequent, in the vein of 'Horrified Parent', who wrote to *Personality*, 'Everyone has a duty to act on this matter immediately. People must write in the strongest possible terms to our MPs until this evil practice is banned' (27 August 1990). But at the same time as providing an impetus for an enhanced sense of self and other, this elusive folk devil was also an agent of identity fragmentation: its mythologies drove schisms between young and old, causing generational trauma that both fed and was fed by the burgeoning fear of unruly youth whose identification with traditional white South African morality seemed to be lacking.

On Racial Purity

Race, too, is constructed as natural and as necessary for the national, in both white South African and other nationalisms. Foucault writes that racism is 'the break between what must live and what must die' (1997, 254) – again, the separation of an inside and an outside, one of which is needed to define the other but remains abjected from its

centrality. Racism is the other of nationalism, the necessary condition for its rationality. According to Bhabha,

> The nation's pedagogical claim to a naturalistic beginning with the unchosen things of territory, gender and parentage – *amor patriae* – turns into those anxious, ferocious moments of metonymic displacement that mark the fetishes of national discrimination and minoritisation … the 'chosen' fixated objects of a projective paranoia that reveal, through their alien 'outsideness', the fragile, indeterminate boundaries of the 'People-As-One'. (1994, 208)

As Deborah Posel shows, apartheid's day-to-day legislative racialisation was closely tied to class and lifestyle, rather than depending on biology, as might be expected. Nevertheless, 'In the experience of most white South Africans, race was socially constructed in ways that drew heavily on the myths of racial science. The idea of an objective biological basis for racial difference had popular currency as a self-evident truth' (2001, 88–9). The authentic and unadulterated nature of race was a central tenet of apartheid, taken to a perverse conclusion by the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, the Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 and the Black Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970. As discussed above, these formalised the work of separating black South Africans from white by allocating a small percentage of the country's land to 'bantustans', isolated homelands in which black people could be sequestered and forced into nominal citizenship rather than belonging to South Africa itself. Black people were grouped into simplified tribal units, each with a government-endorsed stamp of original racial purity: Xhosa, Tswana, Venda, Shangaan, Swazi, Ndebele, Zulu and Northern and Southern Sotho. The system was predicated on the wishful assumption that separation would make these cultural ethnicities *more* natural, that they would 'grow towards greater authenticity' (Nixon 1994, 5). The state's violent attempts to force people into tribal purity had some of the most disastrous effects of apartheid policy.

There was more to the strategy than faith. The Afrikaner civil religion, with its dictum that difference is sacred and the preservation of distinct nations its Christian duty, utilised the separation of racial groups to facilitate white political and economic dominance of the land and resources of South Africa. 'The heart of apartheid was not just about political exclusion and inclusion, but also about determining the terms on which ethnically defined sections of the population could participate in the economy' (van de Westhuizen 2007, 66). While the state's

judicial structures maintained white rule, the casual paternalistic racism of the Afrikaner civil religion kept the system alive from day to day. This was an effective tool of South Africa's racialising regime, which, says Hook, produced '"race" as an obvious, natural and seemingly spontaneous feature of social life' (2007, 217).

The most pressing fear of the grand apartheid regime was *gelykstelling*, equalisation, because this would bring on the 'mishmash cohabitation' and eventual *bloedvermenging*, blood-mixing, that threatened the purity of the race (Sparks 1990, 179). During the run-up to the 1938 election the NP campaigned on the argument that the United Party's policy of allowing mixed marriages would cause mass miscegenation and, in the words of party ideologue N.J. van de Merwe, 'mixing of the blood and the ruin of the white race' (Moodie 1975, 246). In the 1970s Afrikaans genealogist J.A. Heese uncovered records of over 1200 European men in South Africa marrying non-white women between 1652 and 1800, by which he determined that approximately 7.2 per cent of Afrikaner heritage is non-white (1971). This complicated history was not admissible within the apartheid imaginary.

The existence of other races is essential, Foucault says, to safeguard the stainlessness of our own:

> Racism makes it possible to establish a relationship between my life and the death of the other … The fact that the other dies does not mean simply that I live in the sense that his death guarantees my safety; the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer. (1997, 255)

The idea of purity suggests that there is an unadulterated, genuine, originary race that must be protected. The unpolluted populace must not be infected or otherwise sullied by contact with lesser races. Evocative terminology like *bloedvermenging* suggests this abomination. Illness, weakening, dilution; the discourse of racial purity is full of suggestive terms implying the pathologisation and medicalisation of the body politic. White South Africa was not, of course, alone in its belief in racial purity. In the colonial situation 'the racialised person is seen as a threat, an infection, a symptom of social decline' (Bhabha 2004, xx).

Disease was a powerful tool in the ideological arsenal of South African segregationists. Posel (2001) suggests that the day-to-day bureaucratic implementation of apartheid racial classifications owed more to common sense – what Bill Nichols calls the 'obviousness' that ideology

suggests (1981, 2) – than to appeals to blood and ancestry. Nonetheless the mythology of racial difference, if not the methods by which it was implemented, utilised a discourse of infection and dirt that depends on the possibility of pure blood. Non-whites, like Jews and Hottentots, have always been considered 'ugly' in the European mindset, which suggests disease and ill-health (Gilman 2001, 201).

According to Maynard Swanson, fears of the spread of bubonic and later plagues in the urban slums were a useful justification for the Cape Colony to initiate segregation and forced removals, a process of moral, social and economic injustice in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth that aimed to remove Africans from within the city environs without jeopardising the labour requirements of white farmers and industrialists. When black city-dwellers were first ejected from Cape Town and forced onto the now-notorious Cape Flats, this was done in response to fears of the 'medical menace' of plague (Swanson 1977, 393).[20] Epidemiology and sanitation became catch-all excuses for segregation. The imperative to separate African slum-dwellers from colonists was stated in extreme terms, with 'infected' urban Africans demonised as a threat to civilisation in the Cape, the 'degenerate poor' a danger to the health and stability of the 'imperial race' (Swanson 1977, 390). According to Megan Vaughan, Africans living in urban areas were seen as being partly modernised, neither true to their tribal roots nor capable of proper civilisation. They were 'maladjusted' and thus susceptible to disease, which could be spread to the colonists (1991, 12). This powerful medicalising discourse remained in force after Union and later, its pathologisation of the poor black body a constant refrain in the moral and social justification for apartheid even while the state classified people into racial groups based on hair curl, economic status, language and other common-sense attributes (Posel 2001, 106).

The requirement to maintain racial purity was applied to blacks as well as to whites. While nineteenth-century colonial engineering had aimed to break the power of the chiefs, by the twentieth century these tribal authorities had become an important pole in the state's management of the black population (Crais 2002, 27). The homelands system attempted to sequester Africans in an imagined pre-industrial tribal past, keeping them away from the cities and the influence of modernity. This retribalisation policy was couched in the language of culture and nation but was in fact a deeply cynical exercise in which hybrid or even invented pseudo-ethnic identities were forced upon people for the purpose of controlling their movement, labour and lives. Officials 'were

well aware of the artificiality of their ethnic engineering'. In some cases, in areas where chieftainships did not exist, government functionaries would simply make them up, creating a new 'traditional' lineage and installing a client chief who would keep his subjects in the subdued state that apartheid required of its labour force (Crais 2002, 150).

All of these acts of social engineering were written within the language of hygiene, citing the need to protect apparently original tribal cultures from polluting contact with modernity (and, of course, all the benefits for social health, life expectancy, political power and the rest that modernity can bring). A particularly baroque statement from then cabinet minister Albert Hertzog, made in 1964, gives a sense of the corrupting effects that Western culture was thought to have on the 'primitive' African and the dangers this presented for white society:

> It is afternoon and the Bantu house-boy is in the living room cleaning the carpet. Someone has left the television set on. The house-boy looks up at the screen, sees a chorus line of white girls in scanty costumes. Suddenly, seized by lust, he runs upstairs and rapes the madam. (quoted in Nixon 1994, 52)

The discourse surrounding both the importance of Afrikaans as the medium of government and education and the fear of Anglophone influence included suggestions of illness, pollution, dirt, corruption and sickness that characterise the language of racial purity and the quarantined body politic. An idiom of pathogenicity and disease became common to white South Africa. As Douglas illustrates, dirt, pollution and taboo are cultural constraints and metaphors that serve to police boundaries. 'Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter' (1984, 36). Apartheid was nothing if not systematic, a bureaucratic behemoth that attempted to classify people into easily managed categories so as to maintain the tenuous margins of whiteness. Blacks were superfluous to the nation, existing only as labour potential, figured as dirty and diseased and therefore excluded from the citizenry to protect the health and purity of the state's primary subjects.

This same medicalising discourse operated in the public conversation around Satanism and Satanists. The phantasmic threat contained accusations of dirt, pollution and illness, of infection and parasitism, of something impure threatening and entering into the realm of the hygienic. The Satanist posed a similar danger to the health of the nation as the non-white person who was 'out of place'.

Forms of Magic

The Satanist mimicked the racial other in her attachment to tropes of pollution and dirt. Concurrently, though, she also *avoided* conflation with the racial other. Rather than becoming Africanised, she maintained an ideational cohesion with European forms of culture that located the white South African within a larger discursive framework of the global north. The Satanism scare was, as I have said, iconographically similar to moral panics elsewhere. Its symbolic language drew on a long European tradition and its signifiers and practices recalled the witchcraft of the Middle Ages in their relationship to European Christianity.

And yet South Africa has its own witchcraft, its own practices of *muti* and history of *sangomas*. Early European settlers were appalled at this indigenous occult tradition, seeing in it echoes of the witchcraft that had been violently expunged from their own cultures. Despite their best efforts and those of their descendants, African magic proved impossible to erase and remained remarkably resilient to contact with colonial religion. Nonetheless the Satanism scare relied on European rather than local magic, disregarding this powerful indigenous occult tradition. Hulme writes,

> Boundaries of community are often created by accusing those outside the boundary of the very practice on which the integrity of that community is founded. This is at one and the same time both a psychic process – involving repression and projection – and an ideological process – whereby the success of the projection confirms the need for the community to defend itself. (1986, 85)

The cosmology of the white Satanist, like that of the white Christian, depended on a belief in God and the Devil. *Muti* and the indigenous supernatural were treated as irrelevant superstitions, like Dhumi Mbombela's 'unreasonable' belief in the *tokolosh* in *Rex v. Mbombela*, discussed in the previous chapter. Southern African mystical or spiritual philosophies and knowledge systems generally do not correlate with European traditions about what a religion is and does. Indigenous magic does not depend on the idea of Satan, nor does it necessitate guilt. This magic can be used for both good and ill; there is no God or Devil, only different forces and people with the skill to use or misuse them (Crais 2002, 128).

The influence of Christianity inculcated an increased Manichaeism and a hybrid version of monotheism but did nothing to remove affect from this belief in the mutable power of magic. Sparks says, 'Properly viewed in its own cultural context, [African witchcraft] is less of a religious aberration than a psychosocial control mechanism' (1990, 19). Douglas quotes Robertson Smith on 'primitive', which is to say non-Western, non-literate and/or polytheistic, religion: 'Religion did not exist for the saving of souls but for the preservation and welfare of society … [It was] part of the social order' (1984, 20). Satan is frightening – as well as useful – precisely because he threatens Christ (although we know, as in all good adventure stories, that Christ will win in the end). There was nothing in these everyday indigenous faiths that suggested a dramatic global war between good and evil.

African magic as unsuited for the modern world was not a new idea. South African novelist Sarah Gertrude Millin's *The Wizard Bird* relates the tale of Chibisa Mantati, sent to England to be educated, groomed to take over the leadership of his newly independent African country but fatally corrupted by his experience of cutting out the eyes of a living white man and sucking their juices during a Mau Mau initiation in Kenya (1962). The novel is full of cannibalism, murder and brutality. Much like European witchcraft, African magic can be replete with abject symbolism. However there is a crucial difference between them. Whereas the white Satanist aims to secure power for herself and her co-conspirators, Chibisa's relation to the occult renders him unfit for power and denies him entry into the modern world.

In this, as in so many other features of apartheid South Africa, black people were pushed to the sidelines and footnoted to make way for a mode of thinking that privileged Europeans. A crucial element of the maintenance of Afrikaner political mythology was the belief that Bantu tribes and white settlers arrived on the land at more or less the same time. As Biko wrote in 1978, 'Everyone has come to accept that the history of South Africa starts in 1652' (1988, 76). This myth of the empty lands is common in colonial situations. In early Virginia the mobile pattern of living of the Algonquian inhabitants 'became in the discourse of colonialism an aimless, nomadic wandering that, by extension, left the land empty and virgin' (Hulme 1986, 157). In South Africa this myth persisted long after the colonial era. Along with other half-truths, prevarications and outright lies, it was perpetuated by the textbooks used to produce South African history from the start of the education system until after the fall of apartheid. One 1932 textbook on the origins of

the Republic began with 13 pages devoted to whites, then gave three about the slaves (who outnumbered their masters), six lines to free blacks and just over a page to the indigenous Khoikhoi and San. A 1969 version completely ignored the presence of the slaves. A 1965 study by F.E. Auerbach found that nearly all textbooks perpetuated 'errors which historians [had] corrected by diligent research twenty and more years ago' (in L. Thompson 1985, 58–9). Hegemonic systematisation in education and public discourse consistently denied any agency or historical role to black South Africans other than as impediments or accessories to white progress, or as anthropologically interesting tribal groupings with quaint customs: stuffed inhabitants of the dioramas that dotted apartheid's museums.

This is not the only arena in which black people have been consistently written out of South Africa's past. The rise of black nationalist consciousness was often ascribed to the meddling of whites, either via the missionary school system that educated Nelson Mandela and his generation of activists or by the influence of European communism. The struggle was blamed on the agency of whites rather than blacks who, in the logic of apartheid, were thought of as the easily corrupted followers of white agitators. During the Pondoland revolt of the late 1950s and early 1960s, officials refused to believe that local people had organised themselves and assumed that the ANC, backed by white Europeans, had been 'stirring up trouble' (Crais 2002, 207). According to a history textbook given to Standard 7 pupils in 1984,

> Even before the start of the Malan administration, communist agitators had begun inciting dissatisfaction among the Non-Whites … A legal ban on communism did not mean that the danger disappeared, however. It was merely driven underground and continued to undermine, particularly making use of the 'African National Congress' (ANC). (Quoted in van de Westhuizen 2007, 134)

African magic, on the other hand, largely evaded the control of white South Africa. This discounted it from playing a central role in whites' imaginary landscape and left it characterised as primitive and uncivilised, in contrast to the dangerous, European-influenced global sophistication of Satanism.

Like the self-regarding rewriting of historical narrative, the European iconography of Satanism equates to a white turning away from Africa and Africanness. When indigenous magic could theoretically suffice as an object upon which to displace irrational fears, the import of a

phenomenon that utilised foreign content constituted a refusal to look towards black Africa, as well as a furthering of one of apartheid's most vital driving principles: the doctrine of racial and ethnic separateness was adhered to even in the midst of a moral panic. If there were to be white Satanists then there could not be black Satanists, at least in the heart of the threat. Not even a despised, debased cult could permit the *gelykstelling*, the feared equalisation, brought about by racial mingling.

There is a paradoxical irony in operation here. Despite its determination to avoid pollution by the decadent West, white South African culture chose Western imagery over African in every necessary instance. The repressed, phantasmic fears unleashed by the imminent end of apartheid required a central object upon which to displace themselves, and this could not be solely African: a centralising of black culture or history was anathema to apartheid, and so an alternate object appeared. The symptom, like the fetish, stood in for something else.

This illustrates the splitting at the heart of white, and particularly Afrikaans, South Africa. The construction of Afrikaner identity revolved around a sense of this community as African indigene with as much claim to the land as those black people who, the ideology insisted, had arrived upon it at more or less the same time. And yet this same Africanness was consistently turned aside in favour of an affinity with Europe and the 'civilisation' it is metonymic of. Afrikaans culture was doubled at its heart, torn between two identifications, both of which were essential to its sense of self: it could not veer too far in the direction of the indigenous, for then it risked a stronger association with blackness than with whiteness.

The Satanist was an *internal* threat. There were few black Satanists; the mythic figure was almost always white, almost always 'like us', to the point where black or coloured Satanists merited special mention in the pronouncements of the cult cops. This illustrates, firstly, the astounding solipsism of white South Africa, its illogical insistence on the primacy of race. It is reasonable to assume that a violent group dedicated to the destruction of the civilised white world would have recruited from both white and black communities rather than replicating the racialising separation that characterised the society it was thought to be attempting to destroy. If Satanists aimed to overthrow the natural order of things then they would probably have appealed to the black revolutionaries who, a concurrent discourse claimed, had been co-opted by radical communism. But more than this, more even than the uncanny familiarity of the Satanist – *unheimlich*, in Freud's term, the 'class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' (1990, 340) – the Satanist's constant

depiction as white changed the nature of the threat she or he embodied. The Satanist was both inside and outside, simultaneously other and not-other, a terrifying challenge to the status quo but nonetheless one that was made safe (or at least safer) by its inclusion in the categories of nationhood. The Satanist was a *necessary* enemy, dangerous but also manageable and explicable. Press material constantly repeated the belief that finding Christ would free those claimed by the devil and that damaged outsiders could be reabsorbed into legitimate white culture if they would commit to its laws and structures. Even as the ultimate evil, the Satanist could be redeemed through Christ. However frightening this threat was, it was nowhere near the rupture of a racial revolution, the catastrophic end time inhabited by Barend Strydom. The very whiteness of the Satanist was a racist act, a white self-othering that permitted the displaced gaze to continue to overlook Africans.

4
Older Anxieties

Writing about what she calls contemporary 'hysterical epidemics', Elaine Showalter says, 'In the interaction between … millennial panic, new psychotherapies, religious fundamentalism and American political paranoia, we can see the crucible of virulent hysterias in our own time … As the panic reaches epidemic proportions, hysteria seeks out scapegoats and enemies' (1997, 5). This is similar to the way in which moral panics, in Hall et al.'s formulation, condense or articulate a range of anxieties (1978). As well as consolidating social signs of a feared moral collapse of white South Africa, the Satanism scare also drew upon a number of figures that were contingent upon apartheid's separatist and conformist urges. The first of these was, of course, the black African man or woman, whose fight for equality was the most meaningful threat to the continued dominance of white people over political and economic processes. But other anxieties haunted the apartheid imaginary, sometimes standing in as displacements for black South Africans. In this chapter I discuss the communist, the foreigner and the adolescent. As well as examining the way in which the fear of unruly youth fed into the Satanism scare, I consider how young people felt about the panic and the potency it had as a means for expressing both distain and dissent.

Better Dead Than Red

The satanic panic was in part a product of South Africa's place within the powerfully symbolic global political system of the Cold War (Drewett 2008, 22). Its primary signifier carried familiar signs of otherness that were attached to the idea of the communist, which recurred in cultural production about white conscripts' experiences during the

Border War.[21] Killing the communist was often seen as a rite of passage for the *bosbefok* (bush-fucked) conscript, but it never left him unscarred.

White South Africa's antipathy to communism is well documented. American rhetoric served apartheid well, with both communism and anti-communism providing polarised structures for the opposing factions to pin their flags to. The NP had fused the 'black peril' and the 'red menace' in its propaganda since the 1930s. The conflation of black people with communists can be seen in the text of a lecture on insurgency delivered to children at a compulsory *veldskool* (bush school) in the late 1970s:

> The so-called freedom fighters on our borders are not fighting for freedom, but for communism. This can be seen in urban terrorism. In Soweto there are hundreds of terrorists. You must be aware of them – speak to your servant, she will tell you. If you notice something strange about her don't be afraid to tell the police. We must make use of our superior knowledge to outwit the communists … We must be spiritually prepared. We must be like David against the Philistine Goliath, and South Africa will triumph against the Red Onslaught. (quoted in Graaf et al. 1988, 3)

The threat from godless communists felt very real to people living within a Calvinist national mythology. The *swart gevaar*, the black danger, was matched by an equivalent red peril in the popular imagination. For Afrikaners, 'the Communist disregard for racial differences was a thrust at the very heart of their ethnic existence' (Moodie 1975, 251), while communist rejection of Christianity was a challenge to the legitimacy of the apartheid state, which justified itself by a Calvinist mandate. Communism was seen to be encroaching on South Africa to ever-increasing degrees: 'Since 1975 [South Africa's] neighbours had been Marxist governments friendly to the Soviet Union and willing to provide sanctuaries and training facilities for the exiled African National Congress' (Meredith 2005, 425–6). The ANC had long been allied to the South African Communist Party (SACP) and by the time of Mandela's presidency the SACP remained the only significant communist party left in the world.

Communism was a useful tool for the NP government, both inside and outside South Africa.

> By clothing repression in the language of a battle against the *rooi gevaar* (red peril), black resistance against apartheid iniquity was … expediently reinterpreted as communism and terrorism. *Rooi gevaar*

> and *swart gevaar* (black peril) became the watchwords that obscured the legitimate demands of blacks for basic rights as citizens. (Van de Westhuizen 2007, 123)

The Cold War climate elsewhere in the world was used to justify many of the state's most brutal extra-territorial actions. The covert wars conducted in Angola and Mozambique in the early 1980s were fed by changes in Cold War discourse in the USA, where the desire to counter Soviet influence eclipsed anti-apartheid feeling during the latter part of the Carter administration. South Africa 'felt it had a green light for the use of force' (Minter 1994, 40), which it transmitted to its client groups Unita, in Angola, and Renamo, in Mozambique. Civilian casualties in these covert wars were significant, even after the NP lost power in 1994. Those not-so-secret apartheid-sponsored border wars, combined with NP rhetoric about 'total onslaught' and 'total strategy', meant that the communist remained a powerful imaginary threat to white South Africans.

Communism was an all-purpose description for anti-apartheid sentiment, with the National Party relying 'upon anticommunism as its most versatile justification for all manner of domestic repression and regional imperialism' (Nixon 1994, 226). The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 suggests some of the erratic uses to which the term was put: the Act allowed prosecution of any individual or organisation that sought to bring about 'any political, industrial, social or economic changes within the Union by the promotion of disturbance or disorder, by unlawful acts of omission, or by means which include the promotion of disturbance or disorder, or such acts or omissions of threat' (quoted in Nixon 1994, 226). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, media, government and white social narratives claimed that communists and terrorists were attacking South Africa. In a 1971 survey of white elites only nine per cent named black nationalism as the greatest threat to the country's stability, compared to 73 per cent who chose international communism (Giliomee 2003, 548). In the mid-1980s the Apostolic Faith Mission preached that opposition to apartheid was a communist plot aimed at destroying Christianity (Meiring 2001, 109). In his statement to the TRC, former Minister of Defence Magnus Malan explained the state's political outlook:

> It is difficult to appreciate the threat that Communism posed to the free world, and to South Africa in particular … The threat was the expansion of Marxism by fomenting revolution in Southern Africa.

> Its aim was perceived to be, first, the overthrow of the white regimes in southern Africa so that the militant African bloc could realise its aspirations with regard to the destruction of so-called colonialism and racism and the establishment of Pan-Africanism … Marxism's second aim was seen to be the striving after an indirect strategy in order to release revolutionary warfare in southern Africa and, by means of isolation, to force the RSA to change its domestic policy in favour of Pan-Africanism. These are not my ex post facto interpretations or perceptions. These sentiments have been repeatedly stated over the years. (Quoted in Feldman 2003, 263)

Communism 'emerged on one side of South African racial lines as a demonic, satanic evil, in fact, as the single designation for an entire symbolism of evil' (Chidester 1991, 66). The opposition between communism and Christianity was so vehement that by the 1990s anti-apartheid campaigner and activist Alan Boesak urged the ANC to cut its ties with the SACP so as not to alienate Christian voters (Nixon 1994, 221). The apartheid government also, ironically, suspected an alliance between the Soviets and the 'decadent' West whereby the twin enemies of communism and monopoly capitalism united to abet 'imperialist internationalism' and flood South African markets with their cultural detritus, weakening the white state (Nixon 1994, 60).

When the satanic panic erupted many of the characteristics associated with communism reappeared. As was common in scares elsewhere, a supposed link between Satanism and communism was often made explicit.[22] In 1990 the Minister for Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, told a youth group that Satanism, a 'crime against humankind', and communism, an ideology that stands 'totally opposed to religion and the church', were the major pitfalls facing the nation's young people (*Natal Mercury*, 2 July). As I discussed in Chapter 2, preachers and politicians linked Satanism, communism and homosexuality in speeches and pamphlets.

The communist and Satanist resembled each other in many ways, as well as being scapegoats for other threats to the apartheid power structure. Both were against Christianity. Both endangered the nuclear family. The communist rejected that structure in favour of a state 'family' headed by the party while the Satanist turned children against their parents and incited parents to rape and murder their children. Both were shady international conspiracies led by white people from 'overseas'. When black people became involved, which happened more significantly in the first instance than in the second, it was because

of the corrupting influence of white puppet-masters. Both targeted impressionable youth, luring young people away from their families. Both used popular culture to infiltrate society and were not afraid of exercising extreme violence, though in different registers, to achieve their aims.

Satanism and communism were located within similar discourses. As the *veldskool* quote above shows, communists, like Satanists, were thought to be infectious. They could sneak in anywhere and corrupt the nation. They had to be kept at bay with constant hygiene/vigilance; it was everyone's responsibility to be aware of the possibility of contagion and to make sure that nothing impure was allowed to enter South Africa. Every maid, garden boy and workman could be a communist. Within the militarised paranoias of the state, white people were compelled to be aware of the perils of infection. Like Satanists, communists were impossible to spot (although easily recognisable to each other), and the germ-like damage they did was never noticed until it was too late. The sanitation syndrome, the need to keep white areas 'clean' of disease and danger, applied as strongly to communists as it did to Satanists. In an imaginary sense the two had multiple equivalences, offering the same threat to the stability of white South Africa. The iconographic concurrence between them powerfully suggests the way in which concurrent moral panics can layer one atop the other, with new myths drawing details, affect and influence from stories that already have social currency to create an all-encompassing and ever-more frightening suggestion of a significant threat to society.

Foreign Devils

Apartheid identity depended on divisions, with the denial of pan-humanism a crucial element in the maintenance of the system. There were more constitutive outsides for the white South African consciousness to define itself against than just the traditional figures of colonising British and uncivilised African. The world outside the spatially elastic but ideologically inflexible borders of the state was populated with morally suspect foreigners whose influence threatened the sanctity of the white South African home and family. These dangers too were drawn into the Satanism scare.

'Is karate en joga van die duiwel?' ('Are karate and yoga of the devil?') asked a headline in *Husigenoot* magazine on 10 July 1986, early in the satanic panic. The piece quoted F.J.M. Potgieter, a professor at Stellenbosch University, from a series of three articles on the occult in

Die Kerkbode earlier that year. These practices, he claimed, depended on Eastern mysticism for their power. It was the mystical quality of 'chi' that gave Kung Fu masters their 'krag en spoed' ('power and speed'). Potgieter claimed that the meditative state necessary for achieving true success in karate and yoga opened the mind to the influence of demons, who crowded around awaiting their opportunity to enter a healthy white Christian host.

The article also contained a carefully worded rebuttal from a Mr Piet le Roux, trainer of the Orange Free State University and provincial karate teams. Calling himself a Christian and an Afrikaner, Le Roux explained that, although karate had its roots in the profane world of Buddhist monks, it was perfectly possible for Christians to practise it as a sport, as the 'ki-aki!' sound emitted by karate practitioners might have had occult content when shouted by Buddhists but became meaningless in the mouths of Christians. Yoga instructor Manny Finger told the magazine that his practice was so divorced from its religious origins that it presented no threat to the Christian enthusiast. These denials recall the judgement given in the 'Satanist murder' of Dawn Orso, discussed in Chapter 2. In that case the judge stated that, although those particular murderers had not been possessed, such supernatural occurrences were possible. In the *Huisgenoot* article neither expert suggested that these foreign practices were not dangerous. Rather, both said that *in their particular cases* karate and yoga could be practised without opening oneself up to possession. The only defence offered here was that 'good Christians' did not need to fear contamination from foreign practices.

Potgieter's article was probably not the first to link 'Oriental' pastimes with Satanism. It did, however, delineate many of the forms this association was to take. The recurring metaphors of permeability, penetrability, infection and dis-ease characterised public warnings about the dangers of dabbling with the East. These seemingly harmless hobbies contained the seeds of corruption.

In 1988 a row blew up at a high school in Greytown after pastors circulated a pamphlet linking yoga, karate, acupuncture, meditation and 'other Eastern religions' with occult practice (*Daily News*, 12 October 1988). *Personality* magazine's list of tell-tale signs for parents to watch out for warned, 'Many forms of Eastern mysticism open people up to spiritual and demonic attack' (15 August 1988). A Durban evangelist claimed in a pamphlet, 'Things of the East, ie yoga, Eastern literature, Buddha, Eastern ornaments, etcetera, are satanic. Yoga is the first step into Eastern doctrine which is definitely not of god' (*Natal Post*, 20 October 1990). In a 2005 biography the satanic 'high priest' Phil Botha (otherwise known

as 'Magus-Thor'Rauna') claimed that an evil spirit took over his body and used it to teach yoga and Buddhism (B. 2005, 209). In their book on Satanism John and Helen Gardiner stated, 'To a Christian, objects used in other religions constitute idols.' They advised getting rid of Persian rugs and Buddha statues, which invite Satan into the home (1990, 111). Jonker also linked Satanism and 'the East' in a pamphlet: 'South Africa has never before experienced such an intense interest in the Oriental religions, devil worship and occultism' (1992, 29). Even the Transvaal Education Department's guidelines on dealing with Satanism implicate the Orient:

> Because Hinduism is a syncretistic religion, the occult plays a big role in it. Christians who participate in yoga and other meditation-related practices may, apart from the physical benefits gained, possibly be laying themselves open to the influence of occultic forces. Some scholars would go further and assert that this would render them vulnerable to domination by occult forces. (1992a, 19)

Edward Said, in *Orientalism* (2003), explains that representations have purposes, and that the depiction of an exotic 'East' is never politically neutral. For white South Africa, Eastern practice was laden with the same preconceptions that characterise descriptions of the Orient in other Western nations: cunning and sly rather than intelligent; eternal and unchanging; 'seductive, mysterious, fecund, devious, and vulnerable' (Prakash 1995, 209). In South Africa these qualities made 'the Oriental' a phobic object whose otherness/difference marked it as threatening and dangerous to the coherence of the national whole.

Importantly, the anti-Satanist discourse around Eastern religion did not implicate actual Orientals. There was no sense that the conspiracy was being driven by 'Oriental' people who lived in South Africa. Press coverage did not blame people of Asian origin or name particular mosques or temples as Satanist locations. The emphasis was on practice, on unsuspecting white people becoming involved with the artefacts or rituals of other religions and inadvertently opening themselves up to demonic possession. This is notable because there was a large population of 'Orientals' in South Africa. The South African Chinese community is mostly descended from migrant mine workers who flocked to the country until immigration was banned by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1904 (van Onselen 1982, 10). They were classified under the 1950 Population Registration Act as 'coloured', the designation for mixed race, or as 'Indian', a category more generally used for Asian South

Africans who are the descendants of migrant traders or indentured labourers brought into the country by the British in the mid-nineteenth century (Beinart 2001).

These so-called coloureds and Indians were as much a part of the day-to-day apartheid landscape as black people. While different and, of course, separate, they did not acquire the patina of exoticism that white South Africans attached to the 'authentically' Oriental other. Rather they were overlooked in the same way as all non-whites, peripheral to the white-centric discourse that apartheid engaged in. Their unfamiliar religious and social practices were disregarded, like the indigenous magic of the African population, until they crossed the racial boundary and became popularised among whites. But even then, common understanding generally had it that interest in Eastern mysticism was inspired by the New Age movement, which stems from Europe and America rather than from within non-white South Africa. If Orientals were implicated here they were not 'ours' but 'theirs'. Foreignness rather than race became the marker of complicity. Again this shows a turning away from the possibility of a powerful occult force emanating from inside non-white South Africa. Orientals, like black people, remained powerless, their culture and iconography denuded of risk – unless they came from outside.[23]

The Temptations of Culture

Orientals were not the only foreign threats to white South Africa. As suggested above with reference to the NP's refusal to allow television into South Africa until 1976 (Nixon 1994), a sense of the fragile moral purity of the electorate and the need for impermeable borders inculcated an endemic distrust of the foreign cultural exports. Censorship decisions in South Africa were moral as well as political. However, with the dawn of P.W. Botha's 'enlightened' new take on apartheid politics, the powers of South Africa's censors were curtailed, although the Publications Board did continue to ban anything that was solely to do with sexual gratification well into the 1990s (Retief 1994, 100). The combination of a television in every home and an ideological imperative to counter international perception of South Africa as anachronistic and unsophisticated ensured a relaxation in the stringency of censorship, with many 'immoral' books and films being unbanned.

Some commentators suggested that this new permissiveness had a political purpose. Mike Kirkwood, director of the radical publishing house Ravan Press, and Mothobi Mutloatse, chair of the African Writers

Association and editor of an anthology that had just been removed from the banned list, told the Canadian *Globe and Mail* of 4 May 1982 that the easing of censorship laws with regards to sex was a trick designed to distract people from the censors' continued stranglehold over political material. Mutloatse told the paper, 'The white public is falling for it. They think that because they can see *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the Government is being more considerate. But they haven't checked the [*Government*] *Gazette* every Friday morning to see how many books are banned. All those films have nothing to do with serious matters' (quoted in Burns 2012, 2). Nonetheless, children and adolescents growing up in the 1980s had more awareness of and were more influenced by international popular culture than any previous generation of South Africans had been. We watched *Dallas* and *Dynasty* and *Knight Rider*, chose our favourite Miss World contestants and covered our walls with posters of Michael Jackson and Madonna. Our parents saved up to see Boney-M at Sun City and chose a favourite Premier League football side, even though no South African team had been allowed near major international sporting events since the sport and cultural boycott gathered steam in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The minimised enforcing of censorship meant that horror films like *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Exorcist*, while still banned, made their way from adolescent to adolescent on pirated video tapes and cropped up repeatedly in the warnings of the Satan-hunters. Like glassy-glassy and Eastern mystical practice, they were perceived as gateways, seemingly harmless entertainments that opened the youth to demonic possession. The music that led young people into danger was also imported. Priests, cult cops, exorcists and educationalists warned parents that an interest in heavy metal was one of the signs of falling into Satanism. Kobus Jonker self-published numerous pamphlets on Satanism – among them *Satanisme en die Tiener* (*Satanism and the Teenager*) in 1990, *Satanisme, 'n realitiet* (*Satanism: A Reality*) in 1991 and 1992's *Satanism Exposed* – and each one discussed the spiritual risks that came with enjoying rock music. Another pastor argued, 'The power of Satanism is evident in the arts today. Increasing numbers of movies have satanic themes and music lyrics with satanic recruiting efforts' (Bruning 1991, 6). Pop music was reviled by adults of all political types in South Africa. It was the devil's tool, but was also tarred with the brush of communism, as well as being largely American and therefore morally corrupt (Popescu 2008, 52). The anti-Satanist Rodney Seale published an entire book on the dangers of popular music, citing performers from Bette Midler to Meatloaf as examples of the moral dangers awaiting the unprepared (1988).

Within the discourse of the Satanism scare, it seemed as though the fears that had been used to justify apartheid's censorship laws were being realised. Loosening the borders to admit foreign popular culture had indeed fostered the spread of corruption, weakness and dirt, and this moral collapse was targeting the future of the white South African national-ethnic identity: the changeable, malleable, destructible youth.

Teenage Kicks

No moral panic can run without visual reminders of the menace it seeks to contain. Historian George Mosse says that visibility 'is the key mode of national identity formation … It is how citizens *see* themselves and how they *see* those against whom they define themselves that determines national self-perception' (quoted in Jeffords 1993, 6). My own memories of growing up in Johannesburg in the 1980s and 1990s are shot through with an awareness of the lurking presence of a Satanist threat, mostly contained in the lanky-haired boys who liked heavy metal and drank beer in Hillbrow bars. In my teens I joined other obvious outsiders in wearing black and listening to Metallica. Read as outriders of the satanic cult by increasingly concerned parents and teachers, teenagers like me became the public face and a visible reminder of the threat. I was not a Satanist and nor was anyone else I knew. Some of the teenagers in Johannesburg's gothic subculture experimented with drugs and sex. Some got tattoos. A few cut or starved themselves. Some performed invented rituals or sat around in graveyards late at night. Most, however, drank beer and listened to loud music. No one murdered babies, had been lured into orgies or blackmailed into performing shocking acts. I do not recall how clearly I believed in the existence of those 'real' Satanists but I do know that my social world was not concerned with them. Like many youth subcultures, the people I spent my early teens with were gleefully aware of the frightening effect they were having on adults.

Part of what makes the Satanism scare so interesting is this possibility of countercultural revolution. White South African subcultures often shied away from anti-establishment motivations. According to Katie Mooney (1998), the 'ducktails', anti-social motorbike-riding white boys and men who populated the outer regions of Johannesburg in the 1950s, were rebellious, hedonistic and apolitical; but rather than resisting them, they actually replicated the racial and gendered structures of mainstream South African culture. As Grundlingh explains in context of the Voëlvry musicians, 'It took about twenty years after oppositional

youth movements in the West for roughly comparable developments among Afrikaner youth to gain some traction' (2004, 484). In a society that maintained a vice-like grip on the habits of the youth, with its indoctrinating schooling and emphasis on discipline and obedience, the heavy metal scene suggested that the control culture was failing in its homogenising duty. Participation in sport, in particular, was tied to both militarism and to 'true' white South African masculinity (Conway 2004, 208). These pale figures were deeply incongruous in their land of constant sunshine, in a nation that emphasised muscularity and physical prowess, with tanned healthy bodies the sign of success and social inclusion.

Fear of youth and youth culture was, as I have shown, a recurrent theme in reporting and commentary on Satanism. As is common in youth-related moral panics, boredom was understood to play a large part: Satanism flourished because young people were 'tired of drugs, disco music and the fashions of the nineties' (*The Citizen*, 22 May 1990). Hysterical histories often featured young people who enlisted in Satanism in nightclubs and discos, hotbeds of adolescent sexuality and parental paranoia. Satan, parents were told by one pamphleteer, 'uses extreme physical activities to lead people into passivity, eg the deafening noise and "goings on" at a disco' (J. van Zyl 1988, 25–6). Drugs were frequently mentioned, either as an incentive for becoming involved with a coven or as a poison secretly slipped to a teenager in order to entice her into corrupt practices with which she could later be blackmailed. As one alleged Satanist gloats in the Gardiner book, 'We get them younger and younger. We get the girls easily at discos and clubs. Give them a few drugs and then we've got them' (1990, 18). Teenage social, sexual and cultural habits became part of a supernatural menace that threatened to overturn society.

This fear of youthful misbehaviour is borne out in South Africans' memories of Satanism. Janie Swanepoel is an Afrikaans researcher who grew up in Bloemfontein at the tail end of the scare. She recalls,

> I went to a school called Christelike and Nasionale Oranje Meisieskool [Christian and National Orange Girls School] which as you might assume was very religious. Thus, any behaviour that was just slightly non-Christian (smoking, drinking, going to clubs) was very often quickly condemned as *sondig* [sinful]. Satanism was expressed in the same breath as drugs. The story went that 'they' could seduce you on every corner and one could never be too cautious. Satan's-kind was the one who smokes, drinks goes out to parties, etc. … We were

> caught smoking and apparently a group of mothers and teachers formed a praying group for us so that we don't fall deeper into the *gat* [hole]. There is a saying in Afrikaans, *dis Satan se dinge* [it's Satan's things], which refers to all non-Christian things too dark and sinister for the conservative Afrikaans Bloemfontein people. Growing up, *Satan se dinge* was profoundly bad and evil. I think Satanism in the school was more of a method to install moral discipline than an actual reality. (2012)

The lists of warning signs of susceptibility to or involvement in Satanism often included a litany of adolescent signifiers, from wearing black to feeling strong emotion: 'restlessness, fear, loneliness, anxiety, pride, depression, jealousy' (J. van Zyl 1988, 15). Every adolescent, but most of all those who failed to display the heavily prescribed normativity attached to South African youth, could be marked with the signs of satanic involvement. Youth itself became suspect. Jonker writes in one of his many pamphlets, 'Adolescents can be very deceptive. Don't let their tears and tantrums make you oversympathise with them, especially when the child being questioned is a Satanist not a victim' (1992, 47). This phobic response to unruly adolescence is the opposite to that seen in the case of the Rietfontein girls, when gender and class combined to turn a group of young people into idealised victims and to divorce them from complicity in or guilt for their own apparent possession. Rather than being metonymic of the imagined community and thus strengthening a white South African identity under threat, the manipulative teenagers that Jonker describes actually came close to embodying the folk devil, even while they remained a signifier for the 'real' Satanists who ran the cult. As is the case with the mods and rockers that Cohen (1980) discusses, this was a self-fulfilling prophecy: public and media fear of Satanism among the youth engendered the spread of rebellious social practices that borrowed heavily from the iconography and ritual of the moral panic. Thus nationalistic coherence created intergenerational trauma, further splintering the notion of white South African identity even as it reached for an imagined ideal of unity in the face of social change.

It must be emphasised again that there is no evidence of large-scale practice of witchcraft among the gothic and heavy metal teen subcultures, notwithstanding the minor popularity of occult or 'alternative' clothing, music and paraphernalia, and some isolated exceptions of teenagers self-identifying as Satanists. Ivey points out a common tendency:

> White adolescents who, sensitive to the cultural paranoia surrounding Satanism, rebel against authority figures by professing loose allegiance to diluted Satanic ideology and engage in behaviour that conservative authorities misconstrue as Satanic … [exhibit a] naïve understanding of Satanism, lack of organised expression and general anti-establishment motive of gaining identity by rebelling against traditional norms. (1993, 183)

'Robbie Vorster' is a 43-year-old gay Afrikaans actor who grew up in a small town in the Eastern Cape, and as an adolescent felt like an outcast because of his sexual orientation. He found his friends on the social fringes among those who also failed to conform. When I asked him whether he had any memories of Satanism, he laughed and said,

> *Ja*, my best friend was a Satanist or she tried to be at least. She wore so much make-up and really *vrot* [horrible] clothes and she was always trying to do spells. She smoked *zol* [marijuana] all the time and thought she was so evil. The funny thing is we mostly knew about Satanists from Christians who came to the schools and gave us talks about Satan and she'd listen to what they said Satanists do and then go do it. Not the killings and sex obviously but the other bits, she'd cut her arms and write stuff on the walls in the blood. It was kind of disgusting but more funny because she was trying so hard. All the Satanists at our school were like that, trying to make everyone think they were so bad. (2012)

This category of disaffected teens provides another layer for the overdetermined creation of the satanic panic: that of Satanist identification as a site of resistance, parody, satire, disdain and rage. Young people sometimes used the persistence of the fear of Satanism in South Africa to reject the homogeneity prescribed for compliant members of the apartheid polis and to do so both playfully and performatively. White teenagers in the 1980s, whose access to space and sense of freedom were curtailed by terrorist threats and states of emergency, were often angry in ways that their parents failed to understand.

In a discussion of two American novels, Pamela Thurschwell examines the adolescent as a creature 'out of time', 'associated with narrative rupture and chronological refusal', 'anachronistic, or ahead of his or her time, or running out of time – perhaps already nostalgic for the childhood and adolescence he or she is simultaneously eager to leave behind'. The teenager, she says, is often pictured 'aghast at what appears

to be a monolithic adult social order; often he or she, or the narrative that he or she occupies, tries to take evasive action' (2008, 1). Temporal strangeness is a generic feature of adolescence that became even more pronounced in the strange times at the end of apartheid.

The teenager in late apartheid South Africa faced a potentially apocalyptic chronology. Her sense of time was stunted and altered both by her adolescent state, a truncated moment in which past and future coexist uneasily within the developing self, and by the almost messianic time brought on by the end of apartheid. Elleke Boehmer calls this 'cusp time', the time-out-of-time that characterised late apartheid literary production, with its impossibility of seeing beyond the seismic change on the horizon, a 'history' without future, a closing down of possibility, where what lies beyond the longed-for liberation is only 'a gap, the space of which it was impossible to imagine' (1998, 45). For Crapanzano this is the way in which whites were waiting, 'oriented in time in a special way … directed towards the future – not an expansive future, however, but a constricted one that always closes in on the present' (1985, 45). This moment was parenthesised, a shattering and fragmentation of the narrative that went before it. Within this twisted temporality the teenager had to locate herself in relation to a white social and political establishment that seemed to be in crisis.[24] Some of those adolescent 'refusals of conventional narrative' (Thurschwell 2008, 1) took the form of angry, humorous or parodic satanic identification.

'James Andrews' is in his mid-30s and works in advertising. Underneath the clothes he wears for work are a number of tattoos that he had done in his teens as part of his identification with the gothic subculture. James attended an expensive private English-speaking boarding school in what was then Natal province. Despite strict discipline, the school had a notorious drug problem. He recalls,

> Me and my buddies hated school. The teachers were bastards. They made you do cadets, PE, all this stupid shit. The only way to get respect was rugby but you had to be a *doos* [idiot] and hang out with other *dooses*. There were always drugs around, we were doing acid and spliffs [marijuana] and buttons [Mandrax] all the time. If you were Afrikaans or Jewish or shit at rugby or you didn't do the school spirit thing or whatever then you had two choices. Be quiet, hope no one noticed you which never worked, you'd get caned [corporal punishment] or jacked [beaten up] all the time, or cause shit and people would leave you alone. We were the school Satanists even

> though no one was an actual Satanist, we used to listen to Sepultura and write band names on our bags and all that *kak* [rubbish]. It all felt like a massive joke we were pulling on the school because they all believed we were into this stuff that we actually didn't care about, we just wanted to be *goefed* [high]. (2012)

As much as the fear of corruption of the body politic and the destruction of the moral potential of the youth fuelled satanic fears in the population at large, so the desire to resist the pressures of conformity informed many South African adolescents' active willingness to become associated with this phobic object, which, in a predictably repetitive pattern, led to increased panic from schools, parents and newspapers about the spread of Satanism. This was not a resistance to the political actualities of apartheid. The system created many young activists, but those who dressed and acted in a way that was easily associated with Satanism were not engaging in political action. Their rebellion was aimed at the constricting and homogenising society they had been born into rather than at the political structures that held up that society and were built on racist inequalities. Sarcastic black-clad teenagers were responding to the way apartheid affected *them*, to the claustrophobic, repressive, boring and conservative society that was the cost of white privilege. This inward-looking resistance was not unique to young people self-identifying as Satanists. Voëlvry musicians

> were aware of … developments [in black protest music] and some moved in the same social circles as certain black artists. One member used to play in a multiracial band … This does not imply, however, that their music incorporated elements of township music or that their lyrics reflected the specific concerns of black people. Their music spoke to a young(ish) white audience and the nature of the issues differed accordingly. (Grundlingh 2004, 487)

Confession as a Mode of Politics

The angry adolescent wearing her social exclusion in her choice of clothing is only half of the story of youth engagement with Satanism. There is little contemporary record of the responses of Satanist-identified youth outside of the threatening letters sent to public figures like Jonker, often used in articles or pamphlets to illustrate the depravity of cult members (and, of course, these may not have been genuine). However, the confessional literature of 'recovered' Satanists is common

throughout the pages of daily newspapers and family magazines. The young English girl known as Charlotte and André Barnard, otherwise called 'Peter the Satanist', both mentioned in Chapter 2, are examples of a trend in which former Satanists came forward after their conversions to evangelical Christianity and offered their stories as cautionary tales to the unwary. These were either related in first-person narrative or retold by agents of the control culture: parents, preachers, police. After speaking at the Unisa conference on The Bible, The Church and Demonic Powers, students Jannie van der Bijl and Esther King were interviewed in *Huisgenoot* about their conversions from Satanism to born-again Christianity (3 July 1986). In their book John and Helen Gardiner quote 'Sarah', who was given an abortion and forced to eat her own baby (1990, 11–12), repeating almost verbatim the tales of Charlotte and Petrus Fourie that had already appeared in *Personality* (1990, 21–25). Jonker quotes, among many others, a young man from Port Elizabeth who approached him and pastor Neville Goldman for help (1991, 9) and an air force conscript brought to him in 1990 with nightmares (1991, 123). Frank Bruning relates the case of 'Rob', 'a typical recruit' who was drawn in by his love of horror films and devilish rock music (1991, 3). Janie Swanepoel says,

> I can't really remember exactly [how we were told about the risks of Satanism], but I think it was usually combined with Christianity. If you do not pray/believe etc. you will *val in* [fall into] Satanism/drugs. Youth Christian groups were quite a regular feature at school: opening *saal* [hall] on Mondays was usually accompanied with them – some pseudo-hip looking people with Christian rock music and they always had some hectic story of conversion and I remember one or two was about a Satanist returning to the word of God and all the horrible things she (since it was a girl school it was never a he) went through (I can't really remember what these things were, I think the details were never shared but they were nonetheless sinister). (2012)

Whether related by the Satan-hunters or by the former Satanists themselves, what these stories have in common is their confessional tone and admission of involvement, a *mea culpa* that is almost instantly mediated by an immersion in Christianity and a concurrent absolution of responsibility, an insistence that the faceless cult was to blame for all wrong-doing: in effect, an easy slippage from perpetrator to victim. Foucault, discussing the importance of the truth-producing ritual of confession in western society, writes,

> The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship … a ritual in which the expression alone … produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems and purifies him: it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him and promises him salvation. (1984, 61–2)

The inward-focused nature of the confession is coherent with the repetitive self-regard of white South African culture. The act of confessing is performative, a tool of release. The *Personality* article on Petrus Fourie is an excellent example, with its large-type headline reading, 'Thank God I'm Free!' atop a piece detailing involvement in human sacrifice, cannibalism, drug abuse, self-mutilation and sexual deviance, accompanied by a full-page photograph of Fourie sporting a beatific grin and a cast on his arm, the consequence of an attack by vengeful cult members (3 September 1990).

This trend was not, to my knowledge, a common feature of the Satanism scares in other Anglophone nations, whose confessional impulses remained the preserve of victims, as in the apocryphal tales of Michelle Smith (1981). But Foucauldian confession was a key trope in South Africa's Satanism scare. It was, as Sitze notes, a purifying feature of the TRC hearings (2007a, 199), and recurs in occult episodes elsewhere in Africa. Misty Bastian points out the frequency of lurid and detailed confessions by *ogbaanje*, young female witches, in Nigerian Pentecostal churches, performed 'under the pressure of a new fashion, "born again" Christianity' (2001, 82), and Rijk van Dijk describes how young Malawian boys' admissions of the hideous deeds they performed at the behest of witches are greeted with scepticism and laughter (2001, 108).

Just as adolescent identification with Satanism showed a resistance to the homogenising interpellations of apartheid policy and the relatively weak position of a voiceless, aggressively militarised youth within the architecture of the state, confessional narratives can be a form of power for the powerless. R.W. Wyllie, discussing the confessional urge among Effutu 'witches' in Ghana, describes 'peripheral possession', the possession of 'deprived and socially subordinate persons', usually women whose positions are unstable and who have little social or economic agency, and 'introspective' witchcraft, where self-accusation and confession precede external accusers. The experience of possession, he says, can thus be 'an indirect strategy of "mystical attack" whereby persons who are politically impotent seek to manipulate and exact support from those in dominant positions … Little or no blame can be attached to the

person concerned' (1973, 77). This recalls the appearance of the born-again youthful white Satanist in the South Africa media. The powerlessness of the teenager's position in a repressive society at a time of extreme sociopolitical tension was mediated by her admission of former satanic involvement even as she absolved herself of blame. The confessional is a form of 'ritual rebellion' (Wyllie 1973, 77) in which the confessor demands a centralising of her marginal position within the hegemonic system, both that of the state and that of the family.

Another frequently repeated trope in confessional narratives was parental neglect, the sense that the white South African family was collapsing due to the distraction of adults, the same collapse that became so frightening within the national narrative surrounding family murder. An additional factor that these redemptive stories have in common is born-again Christianity, the former Satanist's rehabilitation within the structures of the church, although, crucially, this was always a Pentecostal or evangelical branch of Christianity that performed exorcisms and was informal and emotive, unlike the stern demeanour of the NGK and the traditional Afrikaans family that remained within it.

Confession thus performed various functions for the 'recovering' Satanist. It allowed her to move from margin to centre, from invisibly voiceless to publically heard, even while it permitted her to disavow complicity in Satanism. By confessing, by being born again, she rewrote herself as acted upon rather than actor, as a victim with no responsibility for whatever horrors she may have partaken in (where this left her own alleged victims is another question altogether). It is easy to see the powerful appeal of such identifications when formerly dominant ideas of white South African personhood were being brought into question. Guilt was averted, new social networks were established and a fresh identity that rested on religiosity rather than on the narrow confines of white ethnic consciousness was created. In a way, Satanist confessions actually pre-empted the TRC, providing a public space where white people could apologise for their previous actions while at the same time distancing themselves, disavowing their own histories by reinventing themselves as victims as well as perpetrators.

This experience of redemption does not stand outside its time. Rather it is another facet of the almost biblical discursive strain, the shift toward a dual apocalyptic and messianic consciousness, that can be read throughout much white experience in this period: this recalls Boehmer's 'cusp time' (1998, 45), similar to Giorgio Agamben's notion of messianic time, the time at the end of all things (1998).[25] Although pre-millennial paranoias and fears of catastrophe ran high, the hope of deliverance

remained. This belief in the power of Christian rebirth suggested a possibility of salvation, a sense that impending disaster – this moral one masking the political version – could be averted by faith in god, the nation, civilisation, even whiteness itself. The reconfigured identity granted to the recovered Satanist by the act of being born again mirrors the potential of release by the saviour, of a Christlike intervention, an eleventh-hour deliverance that would 'rescue' white South Africa from race war and communist insurgency. Unlike the actions of Barend Strydom, the Satanism scare retained within itself the idea that things could be repaired even as disaster loomed.

This revelatory religiosity can be seen, too, as a turning away from hitherto dominant notions of Afrikaner identity as fundamentally related to land and ethnicity in favour of a return to an older religious consciousness that predated the orthodoxies of the NGK, emphasising the need to Christianise all people over later theological practice that stressed the individuality of the Afrikaner nation and the maintenance of sacred difference (Moodie 1975, 63). The confessional narrative of the recovered adolescent offered a vision of possibility for the rehabilitation or rescue of the white South African that was, in its messianic radiance, radically different to the solution posited by NP reforms. This severance of mass belief from government aims, explored further in the next chapter, joined the antisocial identification of the wilfully 'satanic' teenager in establishing the scare as a site of resistance to the realities of the possible end of apartheid and of the practical and emotional demands being made by the increasingly beleaguered state.

5
Resistance and (Bio)Power

'Culture itself is, in the last analysis, an ideology', writes Roland Barthes (1993, 81). South Africa's Satanism scare had ideological effects as well as ideological causes, and these too influenced the lived experience of some conservative white South Africans in the early years of the 1990s. As I argue above, there was a provocative, if unconscious, element to the scare. The motivations of the media and community leaders who threw their full weight behind it were to some degree politicised or politically influenced, albeit unconsciously. According to Foucault,

> Relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State … the State, for all the omniscience of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the basis of other, existing power relations. (1980, 122)

This chapter considers some of the ways in which relations of social power that developed around the fear of white Satanism worked to undermine the state and the NP as the end of apartheid loomed.

'When people lose faith in their authorities', Victor says, 'they will regard bizarre and frightening rumours as plausible because it seems dangerous to disregard them' (1991, 222). Certain white South Africans during the collapse of apartheid were experiencing precisely this lack of faith in government. The founding of the Conservative Party (CP) in 1982, in response to the idea of 'power-sharing' with coloured and Indian South Africans, shattered the NP's dominance of Afrikaner politics and forced the party to aggressively court other white groups. The CP 'provided psychological security, a familiar group consciousness and

the conviction that the dream of white Afrikaner self-determination was, notwithstanding, defensible and viable' (van de Westhuizen 2007, 176). By the 1987 election, 42 per cent of NP support came from English speakers (Giliomee 2003, 130). In some quarters confidence in the NP was at an all-time low, as evinced by the increasing popularity of far-right spin-offs like the Herstigte Nasionale Party (Reconstituted National Party, or HNP).[26]

The change in the NP's reputation from champion of the *volk* to object of suspicion, deserted by the rank and file and left to white elites and the emerging black middle class, is illustrated in Marlene van Niekerk's 1999 novel *Triomf*. Pop, Mol, Treppie and Lambert Benade live in the suburb of Triomf that was built on the ashes of the razed township Sophiatown. An ironic example of the Afrikaner underclass that apartheid was designed to shelter, they live in moral and physical squalor, their family psychosis mirroring the increasingly hysterical tone of white South African discourse as the first multiracial elections approach. When educated young Afrikaners from the NP attempt to canvas Triomf for votes, the Benades scathingly call them 'the NPs' and throw rocks at them. Treppie says, 'They thought they could come here with their crap again', and bemoans how different the 'new' NP is from the strong party of earlier years (1999, 325).

In the USA, Victor explains, the New Agers and neo-pagans targeted by the Satanism scare were only proxies for fundamentalist Christianity's real enemy: 'Satanic cult stories are ideological weapons in a conflict among Christians, traditionalists versus modernists' (1991, 234). Similarly in the South African context it is useful to ask whose interests these scare stories served. In suggesting that the reformist NP government and NGK churches were incapable of protecting the population from Satanists, the press and community leaders who fuelled the panic removed a degree of credibility from the existing state power structure. In this sense the Satanism scare was an effective ideological tool for separating the state from an increasingly divided white electorate.

By the 1980s religious fragmentation had become a significant factor in the stresses affecting Afrikaner identity. The Dutch Reformed churches had held off the threat of evangelism and Pentecostalism, at least in part because of their strong ties to the state and the social programmes that aimed to uplift Afrikaners, but the breakdown of ethnic populism spelled the end of these loyalties. For many poor Afrikaners, pride in their language and history 'was coupled with a desire to distance oneself from Afrikaner political leaders and institutions. This was notably manifested in the accelerating defections in the

1980s and 1990s from the Dutch Reformed churches to other strands of Christianity' (Hyslop 2003, 131).

This trend was visible in the way in which both recovered Satanists and Satan-hunters blamed traditional churches, drawing power away from the NGK and toward the charismatics that were less involved with politics and state ideology and more attuned towards mysticism and a sense of white destiny. The crusading pastors and exorcists who 'rescued' Satanists from demonic possession almost always ran their own ministries and published their own tracts and pamphlets. Jonker and the other cult cops who worked with him were invariably born-again Christians. As early as 1986 a Unisa theologian, Dr Jacques Theron, warned the university's devil conference that established churches that did not offer deliverance from demons were driving congregants to charismatic groups and even to other faiths (*Star*, 3 July). At the same conference a Pentecostal theologian, Dr F.P. Moller, stated that his church was 'realistic enough' to accept the reality of possession and demonic influence, implying that the NGK was lacking in such realism (*Star*, 4 July 1986).

A 1988 newspaper article about the demonic experiences of an NGK pastor's family was published under the headline '"Devil Exorcised" from Minister's Own Family'. The use of quote marks around the first two words was unusual in reporting on Satanism, which tended to avoid doubt. The choice of the word minister rather than pastor or other terms used for Satan-hunters indicates the differential status of NGK churchmen. The article continues, 'It is unusual for an NGK minister to make such a statement as the NGK does not as a rule perform exorcism or deliver from demons' (*Star*, 7 April). Here the boundaries between the state church and those who were able to fight satanic power were evident. An article in the *Eastern Province Herald* cited certain churches' growth in youth membership to suggest that youngsters were moving towards Christ as much as they were towards Satan. The writer did include an NGK church in the list, but that took up just nine lines and did not mention Satanism, referring instead to the value of Christianity in 'the uncertain times experienced in our country'. This is in contrast to the other examples: a Pastor Chris Venter of the East London Christian Centre, Mrs Vorster of the non-denominational group Concerned Christian Women and the cricketer-turned-evangelist Trevor Goddard. Each of these merits almost a third of the double-page article and each specifically mentions the appeal of Christ over Satan (3 August 1989).

The dramatic discourse of the Satan-hunters was appealing to a sensationalist media. When the Chief Superintendent of Teaching in

Kimberley denounced claims of Satanism in schools as 'just rumours', his opinion was briefly reported alongside a significantly longer interview with a 'religious counsellor' who insisted that Satanists were everywhere in the town (*Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 21 August 1989). *Personality* magazine's 'Peter the Satanist' proudly explained, 'We Satanists laugh at the theologians who deny the existence of Satan … Someone who denies the existence of Satan is a very easy target' (14 May 1990). By 1990 spokespeople for the most established churches, Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian, agreed publicly that the Satanist menace was out of control and in need of government action. In the same article, however, an NGK moderator and reverend both counselled caution, with the reverend insisting that it was better for the church to stay out of state business given its historical involvement with laws like the Immorality Act (*Star*, 22 May 1990). This was a significant change from the intimate communion of church and state that characterised high apartheid, examined in more detail in Part II, and a very different position from that of the charismatic churches, which continued to call for an official banning of Satanism long after the habit of banning anything that unsettled state control had fallen from fashion.

Foucault understood the biopower of the modern state as operating in every sphere of the citizen's life, from birth to death, the 'growing inclusion of man's natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of power' (Agamben 1998, 119). This has two poles: the first is discipline, an 'anatamo-politics of the human body', which sees the body as a machine to be regulated and requires armies, schools, institutions and population control. The second, focusing on the 'species body', requires 'regulatory controls: a bio-politics of the population' (Foucault 1991, 262). Every aspect of life is regulated, accounted for, made statistical and/or medicalised. This understanding of power is extremely useful for an analysis of apartheid South Africa: 'more than a racial order, apartheid was also an essentialising process of state control and regulation' of the everyday lives of its subjects (Elder 1995, 58). I say subjects rather than citizens advisedly; those who attracted the most control were precisely those whom the state wished to strip of citizenship, to remove from the nomos of political and social belonging and reconstitute in a series of fragmentary, imaginary and doomed 'tribal' enclaves. Apartheid was the work of biopower writ large, driven by the desire to control, count and manage the black labour force (and, in other ways, the white electorate). It was the 'culmination of colonial social engineering and bureaucratic authoritarianism in a unique political

marriage of undemocratic rule with ideas of scientific management and technical control' (Crais 2002, 27). South Africa's laws

> set specific limits to racial contact in almost every aspect of life – in housing, education, employment, entertainment, sport, public amenities and personal relations. They gave legal force to apartheid on park benches, in buses, taxis, and railway waiting rooms, in theatres and concert halls and even the ocean. (Sparks 1990, 189)

From the personal to the public, the sexual to the cultural, every aspect of life was manipulated and legislated by the state in its attempt to control the freer flow of people, ideas and status that was stimulated by modernity and industrial capital. The state frequently made its commitment to a biopolitical strategy of management explicit. The 1977 Defence White Paper demanded 'interdependent and co-ordinated action in all fields – military, psychological, economic, political, sociological, technological, diplomatic, ideological, cultural, etc' (quoted in Chidester 1991, 91). These excessive machinations tended to take on farcical, Orwellian tones. According to Giliomee, 'To prosecute under the Immorality Act the police used binoculars, tape recorders and cameras, burst into bedrooms and instructed district surgeons to examine the genitals of suspects' (2003, 505). At its most absurd, apartheid plunged headlong into intimate areas of people's bodies and lives.

A Foucauldian understanding of the operations of power entails a combination of both macropolitics, associated with the judicial and administrative structures of state power, and micropolitics, governance of the self, community, family and workplace, smaller structures that often work in conjunction with, enhance and extend the biopower of the state. What once functioned as the religious pastorate, concerned with the individual's spiritual journey, has reconvened itself in late modernity as a variety of structures of care, from the work of teachers and doctors to that of philanthropists and state welfare apparatuses (Hook 2007, 239).

The Satanism scare reflected a broad historical process in which some of these structures became detached from the biopolitical aims of the state and the grudging process of reform that it had initiated. Within the panic, communal and religious leaders and the popular press focused on a quasi-mythological threat to the community, while the secular pastorate, instead of operating alongside the state's structures of care, worried about a new threat that bypassed NP capacities to tend to the populace. As one concerned letter writer to *Personality* put it,

'The country can't hope for a political peace while this evil is allowed and isn't banned' (27 August 1990). The frequently repeated trope that Satanism was not illegal and that the state had a duty to ban it was used to suggest government failure.

In Foucauldian terms, 'oppressive measures are in fact productive, giving rise to new forms of behaviour rather than simply closing down or censoring forms of behaviour' (Mills 2003, 34). The satanic panic was a productive consequence of oppressive power, caused in part by the state's attempt at repression of white dissent. It established a destructive discourse of fear, horror and terror that countered the de Klerk government's newly acquired democratic credentials, infused with the language of hope, in what Nixon calls 'ideological cross-dressing' (1994, 223). The apocalyptic rhetoric of the Satanism scare also ran distinctly counter to the messianic fervour that surrounded Mandela in the international press, both before and immediately after his release (Nixon 1994, 175–92), even as narratives of redemption proliferated in the testimony of born-again former Satanists. The satanic panic that swept white South Africa was thus both symptomatic of the millennial fears that characterised the collapse of apartheid and indicative of the increased visibility and political potency of the schisms within Afrikaner and other white identities.

From terrorists, communists and foreigners to violent black people, evil rock bands and unruly youth, all the menaces that threatened the sanctity of white nationhood were condensed and codified into the never-seen satanic folk devil. The Satanist was a paradoxical figure of both hatred and unity, providing a necessary point of coherence for white South African identification but concurrently inaugurating intergenerational and inter-structural schisms within a series of ethnic identities under immense stress, during a historical moment that proved to be the foretaste to the seismic social change of democratisation.

The Satanism scare was a moment of displacement in which collective concerns about the end of white dominance could be repressed in favour of a phantasmic threat that, despite its horrifying potential and the disgusting acts associated with it, still allowed white people to remain central in the white imagination. Satanism was also a double node of resistance: the media and moral entrepreneurs who drove the scare engaged it, whether consciously or not, to avoid or undermine the realities of the reformist project, while white adolescents used it as a means of expressing apolitical dissent within a grindingly conformist system. White Satanism in South Africa was a codification of the traumatised imaginary landscape of the mass of white people, who had lived within, consented to and

benefitted from apartheid's racist, paranoid and aggressive structures, and for whom a future without them seemed unimaginable.

And then, with the realities of transition, the collective exorcism of the TRC hearings and the disillusionment that has characterised the years since the euphoria of the Mandela period ended, those white Satanists withdrew, passing from the communal memory to be replaced on the front pages of a new breed of sensationalist tabloid by *sangomas*, *muti* and other signifiers of a more indigenous witchcraft. Having filled their role as the object of affectively disengaged ethnic terrors and displaced fears of the future, white Satanists faded away, leaving their failed conspiracies behind them, just a slowly filled gap in the evolving cultural landscape of a rebaptised South Africa.

Part II
Family Murder

6
A Death in the Family

Barend Strydom's bloodthirsty journey through the Pretoria streets and the sensational reporting on his subsequent trial held a distorted mirror up to white South African society, revealing obscene deformations of its biblical mythologies. Many white people were shocked at the ease with which the Wit Wolf equated the duties of white masculinity with the incitement to murder. Shocked, but perhaps not entirely surprised; Strydom's killings were not the first episode to associate white South African men with instrumental violence. Robert Morrell explains the way in which the discursive joining of the two spans national history across black, Boer and British lines (2001, 12), while Daniel Conway shows that 'violence, racism, dominance and control' were all part of how white masculinity was historically constructed (2004, 214). The TRC considered white masculinities to be 'a critical factor in the legitimation of apartheid rule and its brutal hold on power' (1998, 251). By 1988 media consumers were becoming accustomed to a growing discourse that linked white masculinity and murder, as in the accusatory article in *You* magazine of 23 June that same year titled 'Family Murder: Spot the Next Man To Do It'. Unlike the histories described by Morrell and Conway, the Strijdom Square massacre and this 'outbreak' of family murder had in common a modality of violence that was not considered ideologically legitimate within the national project and could not be justified as necessary for shoring up white rule. Like Satanism, this blot on white South Africa was understood to be an ever-increasing threat, and like Satanism it provides a nexus from which to read the fears, preoccupations and symbolic life of late apartheid white society. Both were heavily invested in discourses of hygiene and sanitation; both provided opportunities for isolating resistance to the state project; and both reveal the weaknesses in a social contract that had been shielded from

overt critique by powerful taboos, repressions and conformist injunctions that equated white uncertainty about apartheid with treason.

Part II of this book probes the discursive disjunctures and connections between violence and whiteness and asks what familial violence meant within the cultural landscape of white South Africa. It is a horrible truth that an unusual number of murders within families did occur among South Africans in this period. The mythology surrounding the issue suggests that these sorts of crimes were exclusive to white Afrikaans South Africans, although, as I show, the way in which knowledge about these deaths was gathered had an important impact on what we know about them. Neither the reality of a satanic conspiracy nor the Afrikaans character of an apparently murderous epidemic were ever proven. Both, however, suggested that the major threats to white society were internal rather than external, that both illicit witchcraft and illegitimate violence originated within the world of white people.

In many ways, the notion of moral panic is also useful for an analysis of family murder. These events were stylised and typified by the media, generated a class of experts and cultural coping mechanisms, were seen as a constantly increasing threat to the moral order and the stability of society and created a reaction that was disproportionate or misplaced: while the rates of family killings seem to have been unusually high, they never reached epidemic levels, nor were they restricted to Afrikaans families. Nonetheless the media contention was that 'we are all at risk' and that all Afrikaans fathers had the potential to become killers. However, the most common moral panic model fails for the same reason as it does with food contamination or health epidemics (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2009): there is no recognisable folk devil here. As with the Satanism scare, the centrality of the folk devil to this sort of epidemiological panic needs to be reconsidered. One of the notable features of the coverage of family murders, discussed in Chapter 8, is the almost uniform sympathy shown by the press to both victims and perpetrators of family murder.[27] Early in the 'epidemic', *Huisgenoot* magazine (2 August 1984) speculated that most family murders sprang from marital problems and would not have happened if the killers had had anyone to listen to them. Referring to a paradigmatic family murder, also detailed in Chapter 8, the *Sunday Tribune* suggested that it was not adultery but love and fear for his family's future that drove farmer Charles Ochse to kill them and then himself (12 May 1985). An editorial on family murder in the conservative paper *Die Vaderland* was titled 'Gemeenskap het skuld' ('The Community is Guilty', 19 November 1985). These responses placed killers and the killed within a shared

category of family tragedy and passed complicity onto society, rather than isolating the murderous father, who generally remained an object of pity rather than disgust.

Crime and Society

Like the Satanism scare, this 'outbreak' of family murder has not been the object of extensive critical engagement to date. Much valuable work has been done on the sexual and domestic violence that have been shockingly common in pre- and post-apartheid South Africa (see, for example, Rasool et al. 2003). However, an understanding of the murderous act as being within the family is rarely a primary consideration of the literature on domestic violence. The killing of a wife, husband, partner or a lover is not the same as the killing of a family. According to criminologist Elliot Leyton, all multiple murders reflect the tensions, conflicts and frustrations that are particular to their setting (1986). Family murders were not just more violent acts appearing in a violent society. There was something circumstantial and reactive about how they were understood, something particular to their context, just as Satanism scares took on different qualities in different locations.

These types of killings are not, of course, unique to South Africa, despite the contemporary press' repeated claims that they were a national characteristic. Margo Wilson and Martin Daly, who published a number of articles on the subject in the 1990s, searched Canadian and British crime archives for their source material and found 109 such incidents (1995). America in particular has a long history of family murders. One classic study found that relatives constituted almost a quarter of all murder victims in Philadelphia (Wolfgang 1958). A series of interventions in a panel held in 2010 following a spike in stories about familicide found 408 recent cases across the USA. Those experts named gun laws, possessive paternal personalities, economic woes and jealousy as primary causes (Auchter 2010), elements that also appear throughout South African narratives of family murder. Their main point of focus, however, was previous domestic violence, whether reported or not, as a precursor to killing. This emphasis on established masculine violence is largely absent from South Africa's family murder stories. Prior domestic abuse almost never appeared in the reporting on these incidents, which usually emphasised the loving character of the troubled white husband/father.

Daniel Cohen relates that during the first six decades of the American republic's existence, a number of such murders took place across a wide

geographic area and in varied social settings. The killers were all fathers, ranging in age from their mid-20s to their 50s, and seemed to represent a cross-section of republican men. Cohen argues that these family killers 'were profoundly traumatised by the radical new "conditions of freedom" experienced by common Americans in the early republic, particularly the new geographic mobility, economic instability, and religious liberty … When such crimes do occur, they are frequently triggered by tensions endemic to their social setting' (1995, 726). White South African family murders, like these early American killings, were often understood by contemporary writers as a pathological response to social change. There is one important difference though. Cohen suggests that those father-killers reacted violently to a new and, for some, frightening and overwhelming freedom that had been imposed on them: 'Their experience with American freedom was not simply incidental to their tragedies but created a matrix of social insecurity and psychological stress that is crucial to any adequate explanation of their crimes' (1995, 747). Many responses to South African family murder, on the other hand, blamed white fear of changes that were still to come. In these analyses white family murderers, rather than responding to social change that had already happened, pre-empted the chaos that many believed would come with majority rule, the violence, darkness and death that made up white South Africans' 'racial demonology' (Hugo 1988).

When I mentioned to a journalist friend in Cape Town that I was interested in researching family murder he laughed and called it 'our national pastime'. Further questioning revealed that he had been a school friend of one of the sons of Wally Dowling, killed by his father's crossbow (the case is examined in Chapter 8). Similar conversations with other acquaintances revealed that many had had some contact with a family murder, either through school or through another extended network. Given how common family murder narratives are in South Africa, however, they have engendered a relative paucity of critical and artistic responses. Graham Leach, in *The Afrikaners: Their Last Great Trek*, refers to these killings at the start of a chapter called 'Inside the Pressure Cooker' that attempts to explain the lived experience of Afrikaners during the late apartheid period. Leach quotes a psychologist named Lloyd Vogelman and a theologian called Jan de Jongh van Arkel, experts who appeared continually throughout the press coverage and who agreed to varying extents that the conditions of apartheid were responsible for the outbreak of family murder (1990, 41). Leonhard Praeg, meanwhile, examines these deaths alongside necklacing and

genocide as part of a larger attempt to theorise violence in Africa. He compares the act of family murder performed by the white father and the violent birth of the western state, suggesting that, rather than being a sign of social breakdown, these murders suggest that patriarchy was violently replicating itself (2007, 123). I argue against Praeg's problematic thesis in Chapter 10.

These two aside, the majority of consideration of the issue is psychological, sociological and criminological. Most of these texts were written within the same time period as the 'epidemic' and most analyse family murder as a specifically South African phenomenon, even when they make discursive attempts to distance the motivation for these killings from their social and political context. A number of short papers on the subject appeared in the late 1980s, for example Louise Olivier's 'Family Murder as a Socio-Psychological Phenomenon in the Republic of South Africa' (1998) and A.E. van de Hoven's 'Social Factors Conducive to Family Violence' (1988), while S.I. du Toit contributed a chapter on family murder to the book *People and Violence in South Africa* (1990). The first of these is psychological, the second criminological, the third sociological.

In 1991 a major report on *The Phenomenon of Family Murder in South Africa* was published by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), written by Olivier and others. The theologian van Arkel is one of those authors, although the work he published individually reached very different conclusions. Where van Arkel pointed to the reactive nature of family murder as influenced by the conditions of apartheid, Afrikaner culture and the church, the HSRC report insisted that context was irrelevant to family murder. Van Arkel's phrases 'murder-suicide' and 'extended suicide' do appear in the report but his more politicised theories are absent. The report was seen as the definitive document on the issue and was repeatedly cited in press and other interventions on the subject. However, its genesis is problematic. The HSRC was set up by the Human Sciences Research Act 23 in 1968, which states,

> The council shall have charge of all such matters in regard to research and development in the field of the human sciences and the council may, at the request of the Minister [for National Education], or… of its own accord or at the request of any other person or any authority, promote. (HSRC 1968)

The HSRC's uses of social science discourse were often coherent with government aims, as when it conducted research concluding that the

majority of coloured people supported Botha's problematic tricameral parliament. As I show in Chapter 8, the report repeatedly tried to detach the notion of family murder from the white Afrikaans father, suggesting an ideological project. This attempt was only partially successful; although its conclusions were obediently repeated by the press, they failed to dislodge the powerful image of the Afrikaans family murderer.

Also that year Eric Harper and Mark Tomlinson published a psychoanalytically influenced paper on the issue in *Psychology in Society* (1991), and criminologist R.R. Graser published 'Family Murder in South Africa: Exploratory Notes' (1991). Graser followed this with *A Study of Selected Cases of Family Murder in South Africa* (1992), also published by the HSRC, although not commissioned by the government as the Olivier report had been. Two special issues of *Geneeskunde*, a magazine for practitioners of family medicine, were dedicated to family murder and featured contributions from J.L. Roos and D. Beyers, M.C. Marchetti, C.P. Haasbroek, van Arkel and Olivier, all medical or psychological professionals who were repeatedly cited by each other and by the press (1992, 1992). The discourse was still active the following year when van Arkel published a paper called 'Generating and Reviewing Theories on Family Murder' (1993).

The tendency in these works is either to use press stories as primary material, to create a list of eight or nine case studies as in the Graser and Olivier reports or to reuse the studies in those more extensive reports as sources for further analysis. There is thus a strong trend of inter-referentiality in the sociological and criminological writing on the subject, in which a small pool of authors responded to each other's theories and cited each other's research.

I take a different perspective, treating these professional interventions as a set of texts that merit a critical reading rather than as an empirically supportable canon of work on family murder. The writings of these professionals are as ideologically influenced and as much a part of the evolving narrative of family murder as the more sensational offerings of their journalistic colleagues, which are also vital to my analysis. The purpose of this investigation is not to come to a final understanding of *why* family murders happened – a task that I believe would be impossible – but to analyse their interpretations. As such these official and criminological texts are only part of my material; the rest has been drawn, as in my analysis of Satanism, largely from the popular press.

Means and Motives

What, then, is family murder? The Olivier report contains an extensive list of the terminology and types of violent crimes that occur within families: homicide-suicide, suicide pacts, family violence, pedicide, filicide, infanticide, fratricide and parricide. None of these quite matches the concept of family murder. The idea of familicide comes closest, although this necessitates the killing of every member of the family (Olivier et al. 1991a, 6–9). Van de Hoven laments that the killing of family members is so common but does not state what kind of murders this entails (1988, 34). Graser states that for an act to be considered family murder the family must be destroyed to the point where it no longer functions as a system (1991, 54). Harper and Tomlinson do not explain what they mean by family murder but assume a common understanding of the term that leads to a Jungian analysis of the pathologies involved (1991). Graser, in his later work, separates the motivations for these cases into 'murder-suicide' and 'extended suicide', terms originally suggested by van Arkel, but states of both, 'One member of the family kills or attempts to kill a parent and one or more of the children and subsequently commits suicide' (1992, 13). The HSRC report defines family murder as 'the deliberate extermination of the existing (family) system by a member of the family or the intention to exterminate the system' (Olivier et al. 1991b, 23).

Although I am critical of this report I find its definition of family murder, along with Graser's, to be the most useful, which is to say that for a crime to be considered a family murder it must be aimed *at the family*. For the purpose of this study, family murder refers to the deliberate extermination or attempted extermination of the existing family system by a parent of that system. This often, although not always, involves a suicide or attempted suicide and necessitates the involvement of one or more children or other dependent relations. The common understanding of domestic violence does not fit within this definition, nor does the 'crime of passion' in which one lover kills another: that sort of murder revolves around a couple and consequences for the offspring are secondary. Murders of parents or siblings by children also operate in a different symbolic modality. Those killings are often about the relational ties between individual murderer and victim rather than about the larger network of the family. (The Orso killing examined in Part I cannot be called a family murder even though it happened within a family; it was the murder of a parent rather than an attempt to wipe

out the family.) Family murders almost always involve young children or children who still live within the home. The family murder is a strike against a *system*, an organisational principle of domestic relations rather than an individual or set of individuals.

Anthropologists from Lewis Henry Morgan to Claude Lévi-Strauss and beyond have stressed the importance of kinship relations. Rosa de Jorio traces the changes within anthropological discourse, relating how thinkers like David Schneider, Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern complicated this emphasis on kinship, bringing western family systems into the analysis and illustrating how anthropologists' own experiences coloured their understandings of the 'primitive' societies they were writing about. She says, 'Kinship phenomena do not stand in a vacuum; instead they simultaneously reflect and effect wider societal trends. Kinship is a privileged site for societal reproduction and the construction of local, ethnic, and national identities' (n.d.). The way that anthropology thinks about kinship has changed but the importance it gives to kinship as an index of society has not. These relations remain one of the most useful ways we have of thinking about how human systems function. Kinship's social function as a buttress for society is assumed in common-sense knowledge as well as in scholarly discourse. As a strike against the structures of kinship, the family murder is also a strike against the larger society that kinship underpins. As I show in Chapter 8, family murder was sometimes understood as an act of rebellion, a withdrawal of the self and the familial micro-system from the larger polis.

In her critique of structural anthropology, Gayle Rubin points out that Lévi-Strauss's understanding of kinship modes fails to interrogate the basic economy of woman as object of exchange, presupposing instead a sort of biologised naturalness to this gendered view of social relations (2004). The responses to family murder enact a similar blindness. The paternalistic tendency for men to claim ownership over their wives is often cited as a cause for family murder, but despite this, the nuclear nature of the family itself is never interrogated. Certain – mostly Afrikaans – families are seen to be ill or damaged but the importance of the traditional family and the effects of that centrality on South African social and political life are left unquestioned.

There are parallels between the apparent epidemic of family murder and the Satanism scare, but also important differences. No proof of a satanic conspiracy was ever recorded or convincingly uncovered. Satanism remains in the realms of cultural hysteria: a strange artefact of a period of violence, social change and political renegotiation. Fears

around family murder cannot be dismissed in the same way. Whether or not South Africa had the highest rate of family murder in the world, whether or not this tendency was particular to white Afrikaners, an unusually large number of South Africans did, in this period, kill or attempt to kill their spouses, a child or children and themselves. Unlike the Satanism scare, this is not a panic without an object. There is no missing phantasm at the heart of this discourse but rather a horribly real and bloody list of bodies. There are, nonetheless, striking similarities between the way the two played out in the cultural imaginary, not least in the way in which both were characterised within a biomedical discourse that emphasised sickness, infection and contagion.

It is important to reiterate that I am not trying to understand *why* individual family murders happened. As Graser (1991) and other contemporary researchers found, uncovering the motivations for a violent crime is almost impossible when the perpetrator has also died, especially given that family murders were generally stigmatised by the relatives and communities affected, who refused to discuss them. Alongside the problems of performing this primary research so many years after the deaths in question is the fact that understanding each specific murder would not necessarily lead to any greater knowledge about what family murder as a category entailed.

I am examining not those desperate and pathological acts of liberation, revenge, terror, love or loathing, but rather the discourses surrounding them, the way in which they were consumed by cultural dialogue, co-opted by both the left and the right and used by the popular media as a way of explaining white South Africa to itself. Michael Wade, in his analysis of the 1949 murder of white socialite Bubbles Schroeder, writes,

> The whites' need to believe in the Apollonian virtues of 'their' society is intensified by the insecurity they feel. It is a form of necessary misunderstanding. It would be impossible to sustain the distortions and internal contradictions of that society without either a powerful ideological framework – derived in any event from myth – or an effective structure of myth that functions as a defence. The Bubbles Schroeder case threatened the white perceptual system in a critical area – the area of the illusion of control. (1993, 53)

The Schroeder murder occurred at a moment when apartheid was new and the permanent legislation of white dominance seemed possible. Nevertheless her death unsettled the way that white society understood

itself and the extent to which it believed that social control could be maintained. By the 1980s the mythic ideological framework that Wade isolates had been weakened to its core, the illusion of control faltering with every act of defiance. We cannot know whether family murders began to occur because of this ideological fragility or whether that context meant that family murder as a trope took on the timbre of an epidemic. We cannot know whether there was any real link between politics and domestic death, and if so we cannot know which was causative and which was reactive. What we can do is attempt to understand what family murder meant within a larger South African context.

The Bubbles Schroeder case had contemporary resonance because it briefly revealed the weak foundations on which white society's self-perceptions were based, showing the illusory nature of the excessive social control under which white people assumed they lived, an illusion 'propped up, or reinforced by, a highly repressive system of personal relations within the white community – a system that continually breeds its own contradictions, thus impelling the continual need for stronger reinforcement' (Wade 1993, 53).

Family murder, similarly, revealed something that required protracted public negotiation. According to Jonathan Hyslop,

> the notion of Afrikaner identity propounded by the apartheid regime was always highly contrived and fragile, and … it was becoming more and more so as that apartheid system unravelled. It relied on imposing absolute racial and ethnic distinctions on a complex social world, which could not be contained within such arbitrary categories. And the idea of Afrikaner unity (or of white unity) was particularly vulnerable to the problem of managing the social consequences of intra-'white' economic inequality. (2003, 227)

This stress placed upon the myth of unitary Afrikaner identity is an important part of the prevalence of the family murder panic, which ushered into public dialogue a hitherto largely taboo conversation about whether something was wrong with the Afrikaner and with the Afrikaans family. The stories that were created around these killings stirred a popular discussion that initiated a questioning of the moral and philosophical justifications for apartheid that had formerly been restricted to the elite and intelligentsia. The soul-searching work of trying to find out what family murder meant gave these events a politicised and affective power that makes them valuable markers for reading

the troubled effects of the era on a white consciousness that had not, thanks to strict censorship and efficient national mythologies, had to question itself too publicly before this period, despite the fractured and divisive effects that language, class and history had had on the possibility of a homogenous South African whiteness.

7
The Afrikaans Family Romance

When discussing family murders, it is helpful to return to the psychoanalytic register that is so fruitful for analysing the overdetermined imaginary landscapes of the late apartheid period. The family romance is a fantasy structure full of narrative. To summarise Freud's account, in his early years the child's most intense wish is to emulate the parent of the same sex. He then encounters other parents, compares them to his own and realises that his are neither unique nor perfect. Criticism of the parents begins and the child creates a fantastic narrative whereby he imagines himself to be adopted or a foundling, the offspring of people whose noble qualities equal the omnipotence he originally saw in his real parents. This Freudian family romance is a consequence of Oedipal urges and like Oedipal urges it fades as normal development continues. The neurotic, however, never quite lets go of these fantasies, which can lead to estrangement from the parents and misaligned development (Freud 2001, 237–40).

The system that exists within the imaginary white South African family does not exactly mirror the neurotic family romance. In Freud's conceptual architecture Oedipal urges are mono-directional, going only from child to parent, meaning that despite the terminology the Freudian family romance is about a particular child–parent relation rather than implicating the family system as a whole. Freud's conceptual framework depends on the centrality of the narcissistic childhood ego around which the family is experienced as revolving, rather than on the culturally developed notion that each member has a particular role and duty within the family formation. That said, there are symbolic resonances to be found between the concept of the family romance and the idea of the white South African family, largely in the coalescing of family and fantastic narrative, the way that family and allegorical

archetype run together in the cultural imaginary, the almost biblical myth of origins that permits the self-definition of both child and white family. Persistent and convincing myths of the family romance were one of the pillars of national faith that inculcated a belief in Afrikaner political and social entitlement.

The Oedipal child imagines itself to be adopted, a fairy-tale protagonist whose true lineage will be revealed one day. The mythic underpinnings of white South Africa involve a similar denial of origin in favour of something more romantic. Notions of Afrikanerdom are firmly attached to the idea of being chosen, of a divine nomination that anointed these people and appointed them bearers of the light of European civilisation within the darkest end of the darkest continent. This desire for improved origins could also be seen among English-speaking white South Africans who enacted imperial and colonial rituals and emphasised their connection to a traditionalised idea of Britain, thereby refusing an identity that was too South African or, indeed, too African.

The tale of the Battle of Blood River is one of the foundational myths of Afrikaner chosen-ness. Briefly, a *voortrekker* leader named Piet Retief and his party, which included 185 children, were murdered by warriors under the command of the Zulu king Dingaan, who had lulled them into false security by promising to cede them some land in what was later called Natal. After hearing of the murders, a Cape farmer named Andries Pretorius set off with 60 followers to strike in revenge. The story runs that before going into battle the Boers pledged to build a church and commemorate the date of 16 December like a Sabbath if they succeeded. The battle at Ncome River, renamed Blood River, saw 3000 Zulu warriors killed and their headquarters deserted. Granted victory by God, the people recalled their covenant and vowed to uphold his law.

Despite the enduring popularity of this story, 'no hard evidence exists of a coherent ideology among the trekkers of a Calvinist calling or of being a chosen people' (van de Westhuizen 2007, 54). According to Leach, the Blood River story, which was a standard feature of the Christian Nation Education system, was bastardised to fit ideological purposes. He says, 'Generations of Afrikaner schoolchildren may have had their heads filled with an entirely erroneous view of history, one which has deliberately been nurtured to further the aims of Afrikaner domination … and, since 1948, of the ruling National Party' (1990, 9). He cites the research of revisionist Afrikaans historians Ben Liebenberg and F.A. van Jaarsveld, both of whom initiated the work of reconsidering Blood River, and concluded that the Retief party's deaths, the battle

itself and the vow had very little effect on contemporary thinking and even less on the historical process that led to the establishment of the two Boer republics (Leach 1990, 9–13). The Blood River story and subsequent enshrining of the Day of the Vow as a national holiday were added to the Afrikaner mythos many years after they happened by NP ideologues who utilised the stories to further entrench ethnic pride and identity in Afrikaans South Africa in the run-up to the creation of the apartheid state. Numerous other historical episodes were also subjected to nationalist rewriting, like the Slagtersnek rebellion of 1813, in which the rebels' alliance with Xhosa tribes actually contradicted ideals of racial purity. Similarly the Commando system of the early twentieth century was remembered as a testing ground for white masculinity and a great social leveller, although in reality non-white people were often commandeered and the composition of the force was largely determined by class (Swart 1998, 739).

Afrikaner consciousness had not always operated within the belief of chosen-ness. This sense of entitlement and national destiny, even the possibility of national cohesion, was created by politicians and intellectuals. As I showed in Chapter 3, the ethnic identity created by the NP's brand of Afrikaner nationalism was heavily symbolic and relied on a set of communal codes to create a larger sense of social and kinship convergence among its varied members (Witz 2003, 11). Blood River was one of these symbols. Its rehabilitation of the national myth of origins complemented the way in which the language movement created a canon of literature and a set of rules to lift the *taal*, the mother tongue, out of its debased origins as a kitchen patois spoken by slaves. Nineteenth-century Afrikaans was a language for 'servants, workers and farm labourers', who along with '"the poor", were rapidly accumulating in jumbled racial communities' (Hofmeyr 1987, 96). These origins of linguistic miscegenation contradicted the uses to which the nationalists wished to put Afrikaans. The language movement raised the *taal* from a literal embodiment of fears of racial mixing to a symbol of the success of the newly imagined Afrikaner nation.

Endemic colonial racism and a rigid belief in white superiority had characterised white settlement in South Africa since its earliest days, but apartheid was more than institutionalised racial segregation: it stemmed from a persecutory fantasy that required unwieldy legislation to protect the Afrikaner from harm, both economic and physical. The Afrikaner nation was less than secure in its identity after the upheaval of the war with the British. Both Afrikaans republics had been annexed for their mineral wealth. Johannesburg was perceived to be in the grip

of Anglo-Jewish capital, pilloried in the press as 'Hoggenheimer', a porcine satire on the mine-owning Oppenheimer family, both British and Jewish, drawn by cartoonist D.C. Boonzaier (Moodie 1975, 15). Facing poverty and a lack of land, rural Afrikaners made their way into the cities where they found themselves competing for work and jostling for space with black Africans, many of whom were better educated and more highly skilled. As I examine in detail in Chapter 10, the 'poor white' problem threatened to overcome traditional boundaries between races. The Afrikaans intelligentsia, fearing that their infant nation would be subsumed in a multi-ethnic swamp, initiated tight labour control to protect white incomes and living standards (Bonner, Delius and Posel 1993, 20). Afrikaners felt threatened by 'alien capitalism and an equally alien communism' (Marks and Trapido 1987, 18).

The seeds of apartheid nationalism flourished in this climate of racial insecurity, and in the face of threats from every side – poverty, black economic competition, class failure, British monopolisation of industry, politics and education – historical episodes like Blood River were elevated into a national mythology that would give Afrikaners a status and an ethnic unity that were crucial for lifting them out of their precarious position.

According to Noël Mostert, the landscape and climate of the Eastern Cape, where the Afrikaner nation was gestated, 'heightened [inhabitants'] perception of themselves as people of exceptional circumstances whose lives were dominated and enlarged by the multitudinous symbols of fate and fortune' (1992, xxv). Within the growing nationalist dream of Afrikaner consciousness in the years before 1948, these humble beginnings were overwritten with something more powerful. Like the Oedipal child who invents a more interesting and worthy paternity for itself, the keepers of Afrikanerdom rewrote their history, creating a myth of origins that was grandiose and sweeping. Uninspiring parentage was made monumental by the adoption of the Blood River covenant as the moment when God revealed the Afrikaners' ordained duty of maintaining divine separation between the races. This historical reconfiguration lifted the ancestral origin of the Afrikaner 'tribe' to a different level, one in which humble parents had been chosen for greatness by God.

This myth of origin is important for an understanding of the Afrikaner family and its place within the national landscape. For almost 40 years the South African political world was manipulated by a shadowy organisation called the Broederbond (Band of Brothers). The Bond influenced the workings of power from the early days of apartheid onwards while

maintaining an enviable degree of secrecy into its reach and even existence. All apartheid-era South African presidents were members, as were most high-ranking members of cabinet (Wilkins and Strydom 1980). According to one article written in 1980,

> Considerable power is exerted by the Bond in areas other than national politics. It is represented strongly in commerce, industry, the Afrikaans press, education, the Afrikaans churches, and especially in the bureaucracies of the South African State, in defence, police, broadcasting, and transport. Yet the all embracing influence cannot simply be measured in terms of its operations at the highest national level … Its most significant influence is probably exerted on other levels such as town and village councils, schools and parent committees, agricultural bodies, church councils, hospital boards and committees of the National Party. (Pirie, Rogerson and Beavon 1980, 98)

This power base only began to shift in the early 1980s when P.W. Botha slowly edged the Bond away from the centre of government in favour of technocrats from the military, police and security establishments whose often violent repudiations of political process failed to stem the tide of resistance that eventually toppled apartheid. Despite this late-onset change, though, white South African understandings of how the nation operated were predicated on a persistent colonial configuration that maintained the powerful father-avatar at the head of the structure. Both those directly involved in the Broederbond and those aware of its existence saw nothing sinister in a white male-only power base; indeed, this paternalistic organisational structure was actively desirable. 'Puritan Afrikaners', writes Kobus du Pisani, 'viewed the male-headed family as the cornerstone of a healthy society' (2001, 163), and the state followed this family model.

The Broederbond and the National Party it spawned did not emerge from an urge for individual power. Initiated by intellectuals, they aimed to rescue Afrikaners from the social and economic slide they experienced after the end of the war with the British. The more thuggish element of Afrikaner populism was drawn to organisations like the Ossewabrandwag, the Ox Wagon Guard, a far-right group that anticipated Eugene Terre Blanche's AWB (Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging/Afrikaner Resistance Movement) by almost 70 years. The Broederbond developed out of a sense of ethnic duty and held an unshakeable belief in white racial superiority. Its aims were to care for and improve the lot of the average Afrikaner so that white people would continue to identify

and behave as white people and the purity of the *volk* would not become muddied. The NP's slogan for the 1948 election was 'Apartheid and Guardianship' (Leach 1990, 33). This guardianship referred not only to the 'uncivilised' black South Africans who made up most of the population but also to white Afrikaners who required censorship, economic protectionism, ethnically motivated schooling and reams of propaganda so that their idealised and stilted way of communal life could be maintained in the face of modernity.

This should not be confused with ethnic altruism. The Broederbond was not concerned with the well-being of individual Afrikaners or families but rather worked towards a national project in which all Afrikaners lived appropriately. Its emphasis on the kinship model did not always translate into state support for actual families. Individual needs were often subsumed into the rapacious desires of apartheid. By the 1970s and 1980s many white South Africans felt that conscription and the Border War had a profoundly harmful effect on their families, causing disintegration and trauma and in some cases destroying the family groupings that held people together (Draper 2001). In her work on power relations within the largely white civil service, Posel shows that protected employment for non-elite Afrikaners gave the state a way to ensure the complicity of working-class whites rather than inculcating a sense of ethnic unity. Within the civil service

> the 'wages of whiteness' were double-edged, since 'the status and privileges' attached to whiteness could themselves be the source of some indignity and humiliation in the workplace and beyond. White Afrikaner civil servants who were publicly perceived to be the beneficiaries of 'sheltered employment' … were demeaned and stigmatized. (1999, 101)

The elite's social engineering kept poor Afrikaners in work and separate from poor black people but also exacerbated class divisions between different types of white South Africans.

This sense of responsibility required belief in a mandate. Notwithstanding the corruption that had spread through government by the 1970s, the NP's historical ethos was predicated on the idea that it had a duty to protect the interests of ordinary Afrikaners. 'Until the final decade of its rule the NP leadership continued to believe that conceptually apartheid was an ethically justifiable system that enabled all the "nations" in South Africa to survive' (Giliomee 2003, 124). As Leach illustrates, tales like Blood River were manipulated to suit the aims of

the party, but this does not preclude the fact that the internal discourse of apartheid claimed that the state was doing what had to be done in order to protect the *volk*.

According to McClintock, 'A racial and gendered division of national creation prevailed [among Afrikaners] whereby men were seen to embody the political and economic agency of the *volk* and women were the (unpaid) keepers of tradition and the *volk*'s moral and spiritual mission' (1995, 337). Paternalism was paramount and the omnipotent father remained in control at all times. The correlation of political and paternal power was not restricted to Afrikaners; political culture in South Africa has long manifested a relation to the structures and language of the traditional family. According to McClintock, 'One witnesses in the colonies the reinvention of the tradition of fatherhood, displaced onto the colonial bureaucracy as a surrogate, restored authority. The colony became the last opportunity for restoring the political authority of fatherhood' (1995, 240). Crais writes of British colonial officers in the 1920s, 'Magistrates revelled in their paternalism. They imagined themselves as fathers of the people they ruled, tutoring them in the civilisation the Africans lacked' (2002, 99). Wealthy English-speaking whites, as much as their Afrikaans counterparts, spoke about their black employees in terms more suited to an intellectually challenged child, with men and women of all ages referred to as 'boys' and 'girls' once they entered the domestic spaces of whiteness (Ginsburg 2011).

This lexicography of kinship became ever more potent with the growth of Afrikaner nationalism. Symbols of masculinity and femininity were manipulated to uphold a patriarchy that was justified in terms of the Bible (du Pisani 2001, 163). In conservative white South Africa the family structure mirrored that of the state: the father's authority over wife and family was a macrocosmic echo of the party's control over the nation. The leader of the party had the same status as the leader of the family. The NP's '*hoofleier* or chief leader could make major decisions on his own when it came to those fundamentally affecting Afrikaner political survival' (Giliomee 2003, 630). This privilege was invoked when Hertzog made a coalition with Smuts in 1933 without informing cabinet, when Verwoerd announced the homelands policy and the removal of black representation in parliament in 1959, when Botha met with Mandela in July 1989 and even at the tail end of apartheid, when de Klerk lifted the ban on the ANC and other parties without informing his party caucus. The leader of the party and the state retained the paternal right to circumvent due process and make autocratic decisions. Father always knew best.

Long before the rise of the various twentieth-century movements that created the modern Afrikaner identity, the families who made up the population of the two Boer republics were fiercely patriarchal in their composition. In the first decades of the twentieth century these structures were cemented to counter the potentially destabilising effects of modernity. Ideological posturing by the language movement and political elite and the creation of nationalist events like the 1938 Great Trek centenary celebration consciously narrativised the Afrikaner past. McClintock says, 'Not only was the folk memory and sentimental culture of the Trek fostered through family, but its centralising iconography and the epic social unit was familial' (1995, 377). The religious and political establishments shunned the influence of modernisation, retaining a conservative traditionalism in family and gender relations long after social change in Europe and the USA had altered these. 'Feminism never really gained a foothold in Afrikaner society because of the strong grip of patriarchy, puritanism and authoritarianism' (du Pisani 2001, 168). This compulsion to stay static included an imperative to remain loyal to the state and the party. As well as rewriting the paternity of the Afrikaners from prosaic to blessed, the Blood River legend bolstered the family structure in a mould that echoed and inspired the totalitarianism of the state.

By the 1980s, though, that comforting tale of family romance was facing potential dissolution due to a number of factors. The so-called Information Scandal of the late 1970s had shaken belief in the moral stamina of government. Also known as 'Muldergate' after one its chief protagonists, then-Minister of Information Dr Connie Mulder, the scandal occurred when two journalists from the left-wing English newspaper *Rand Daily Mail* revealed that John Vorster's government had been laundering state funds and using them to fight a covert propaganda war to improve South Africa's image. Vorster, Mulder and Dr Eschel Roodie, secretary of the Department of Information, were implicated in the plans to use an illicit R64 million, shifted from the defence budget where it was protected from public scrutiny, to bribe international news agencies, buy newspapers including the *Washington Star* and establish a local rival to the *Rand Daily Mail* called *The Citizen*, ostensibly owned by Afrikaans millionaire Louis Luyt but actually a government mouthpiece.[28] The scandal sent shockwaves through South African society, causing Vorster and his co-conspirators' fall from power and denting national belief in the moral mandate of the NP, long an article of faith in the Afrikaner civil religion (Rees and Day 1980).

Institutional corruption was endemic, as detailed extensively by 'state assassin' Eugene de Kock. De Kock ran Vlakplaas, a farm west of Pretoria where the security establishment planned and sometimes carried out the murders of dissidents, opponents and pawns of the system who had outlived their use. In his book *A Long Night's Damage*, an attempt to identify those who directed him and thus to reconfigure himself as a loyalist following orders rather than the racist psychopath described by prosecutors at his trial, de Kock makes frequent reference to the security forces' 'special fund' which relied on falsified claims and invoices to support everything from paying for arms to personal enrichment (1998).

The moral collapse of the leadership was only one factor putting strain on white South Africa's self-perception. The public justification for apartheid had always been that it was *not* racist, that the state's benign paternalism and careful policing of racial boundaries were in everyone's interests. By the last ten years of white rule it was becoming increasingly clear that this was not the case. Even considering the strict censorship that forbade depictions of township violence and banned most news outlets from the townships entirely, it was difficult for whites to escape the knowledge that the black population of South Africa was not content. Although NP propagandists continually blamed the unrest on communist agitation, the amount and extent of protest were a powerful argument against apartheid's claims of moral superiority. Each new instance of corruption, brutality, murder or violence that was revealed put further strain on the idea that the NP and the system it maintained were interested in all citizens' well-being. The notion that apartheid was about compassionate guardianship and allowing black people to develop their own civilisations at their own pace was compromised by these stories of greed and cruelty, which made it clear that what was at stake here was white privilege and the material comfort of the ruling class. A system predicated on the benevolent leadership of decent white men began to seem precarious and untrustworthy. The moral authority of the state was in question, and with it the moral authority of the model of dominant father/submissive spouse and offspring that underpinned classic understandings of what the upright Afrikaner family meant.

In addition to this, the youth were rebelling. ECC campaigns were increasingly aimed at inciting young white men to question their own situations. They highlighted cases like that of Ivan Toms, a doctor who, having worked in Crossroads township since finishing his national service, refused to take part in compulsory annual military camps and became a conscientious objector (Conway 2004, 222). The

1987 trial of objector Philip Wilkinson 'made effective use of the law to contest the state – another objector gave public testimony that was widely reported and explained white racist masculinity as a cause for many of the ills of the 80s and much of the resistance that was emerging' (Conway 2012, 98). As discussed in Chapter 2, young Afrikaners across the country defied the parents and educators who had banned the Voëlvry tour from university campuses and went to see these dissident musicians play at venues outside institutions. Popular magazines bewailed this new musical direction and offered advice to distraught parents, as in the *Sarie* article entitled 'My kind is a boere-punk. Wat moet ek doen?' ('My child is an Afrikaner punk. What do I do?'; 8 February 1989). As Conway (2004, 2008, 2012) and Drewett (2008) show with reference to the ECC and social narratives around the Border War respectively, formerly stratified gender roles came into question as the tide of modernity crashed upon white South Africa's self-involved shores. The white Afrikaans family found the moral authority of the father and the disciplined silence of wife and children under threat at the same time.

This is not to suggest that individual white Afrikaans men necessarily had their authority questioned in the home. Rather, all this change affected the *idea* of the family, the imaginary domestic hierarchy that underwrote apartheid. The end of apartheid also heralded the dissolution of the family romance, the moment when the narrative failed, the plot faltered and everything that seemed to be unquestionable about the family was thrown into doubt. Within this troubling uncertainty, the discourse of family murder questioned what change to the family meant, and what these deaths said about the state of South Africa and the white people who had long believed they had a natural entitlement to power.

8
A 'Bloody Epidemic'

It is impossible to know exactly how many family murders occurred in South Africa during the late apartheid period. Police records did not separate these killings from other incidents of murder and domestic violence and the term 'family murder' was sometimes used by the press for other domestic crimes. Although there was a general conception that South Africa had the highest incidence of family murder in the world, this cannot be substantiated as there are no global figures for these crimes.[29] It is true, though, that cases of this kind do seem to have been unusually common.

Contemporary estimates vary across media outlets. *The Star* claimed 30 deaths in eight months in 1983 and 32 over six months in 1984 (27 August 1983/21 July 1984). 1984 also saw, variously, 15 incidents (*Transvaler*, 7 November), 55 deaths (*Weekend Argus*, 10 November; *Beeld*, 20 November), and 102 deaths in 18 months (*Vaderland*, 17 January 1985; *Natal Mercury*, 2 April 1985). The *Sunday Tribune* claimed 62 deaths in two years (12 May 1985), *The Star* 150 deaths in three years (21 November 1985) and the *Natal Mercury* 60 deaths in 20 cases in a year (21 June 1986). According to *Huisgenoot* 44 children were killed by their parents in two years (27 August 1987), while *The Star* claimed 12 children died at their mothers' hands in the subsequent year (29 March 1988). There were either 200 or 218 between 1983 and 1987 (*Rapport*, 20 September; *Cape Times*, 21 September 1987).

Although rare before 1980, there were 27 cases of family murder in 1986 alone, according to the *Argus* (31 June 1988), while *You* said incidents had increased by 30 per cent since 1983 (23 June 1988). There were ten cases in 1983, 13 in 1984, 17 in 1985, 27 in 1986 and 50 in 1987 (*Burger*, 6 August 1988; *Weekend Argus*, 17 September 1988). *The Star* cited 43 deaths in 19 incidents in six months in the Transvaal, making

a total of 176 deaths since 1983 (6 August 1988), while the *Sunday Tribune* suggested 200 in the five years from 1984 (4 December 1988). According to *Beeld*, 36 adults and 16 children died in family murders in the Transvaal in 1988 (31 January 1989). *The Citizen* said cases increased by 70 per cent between 1983 and 1985 (8 February 1989). *Femina* cited 300 deaths between 1985 and 1989 (May 1989) while *Tempo* counted 55 in 1984, 40 in 1988 and 19 in 1989 (22–28 September 1989). *Huisgenoot* stated an increase of 30 per cent every year since 1983, with 100 deaths since 1984 (8 March 1990). *Sarie* claimed 40 family murders took place in 1988 (21 March 1990), while the *Sunday Times* said 500 died in family murders in the five years up to 1991 (28 April 1991). These figures changed according to the pronouncements of whichever expert had editors' attention. Although police and government functionaries did comment on the prevalence of and social crisis suggested by family murder, no official statistics were released and there was no institutional scaremongering that could be compared to the sensational pronouncements of the cult cops who drove the Satanism scare.

In my own research, which focused on the cases that gathered the most press attention, I found reports of 53 cases of family murder between 1983 and 1994, with a total of 176 people involved, of whom fewer than five per cent survived. The vast majority of murderers attempted or completed suicide. Just 16 of these 53 homicidal parents were female, and just 15 of them had surnames that would generally be considered English. While clearly excessive, these numbers are significantly lower than most newspapers' and magazines' count.

In this chapter I examine some of the press coverage of family murder, considering specific cases and tracing how the testimony of experts altered the timbre of the reports across the period, as well as how fears about what family murder meant for the white South African polis recurred despite these interventions.

The term 'family murder/*gesinsmoord*' only came into frequent use in the early 1980s. Murders within families had happened before, but they were not defined in this way. There was, for example, the case of a Johannesburg woman named Freda Clack who killed herself and her five children on 8 January 1966. These deaths were reported as tragic killings within a family but not as 'family murders' and were no more symptomatic of a larger social pathology than any other violent domestic crime. The term's affective modality was dependent upon the period. Family murder as an epidemic, phenomenon, tragedy and configuration of events that included but also exceeded the deaths of small family groupings was particular to the late apartheid era. The idea of

family murder developed when it did because it had meaning outside of itself. In 1983 *The Star* was still referring to 'family suicide-murders' (27 August), but by 1984 had begun to speak of 'family murders, suicides' (21 July), with the two possibilities separated and the words 'family' and 'murder' now linked as one concrete object.

By 1984, amid burgeoning cultural awareness of a national 'problem' of family murder, the term was sufficiently entrenched to merit a three-page article in *Huisgenoot* magazine, often a social barometer (Hofmeyr 1987). This considered three recent murders, of Aurica Costin, Mirian (*sic*) Swanepoel and Talitha Hamman, all killed by estranged spouses who subsequently committed suicide. None of these cases fits into the bracket of family murder that I outlined above. Nonetheless *Huisgenoot* referred to them as 'gesinstragedies' ('family tragedies') and to the killers as 'gesinsmoordenaars' ('family murderers'). The term family murder had become common currency before attaining the full meaning that it would later acquire. The magazine called the deaths a 'bloedige epidemie' ('bloody epidemic'). Readers were told that there are always signs that a family murder is to come, and that these crimes are a social problem, often motivated by events in the killer's childhood. Public responsibility was stated with the injunction, 'Kenners glo that ons elkeen sy deel moet doen om daardie mens met sigbare gemoedsversteuring aan die hand te vat en met meelewing te lei na professionele hulp' ('Experts believe that we must each do our part and, with gentle care, take those people by the hand and assist them to get professional help', 2 August).

This was part of an emergent repertoire of representation about family murder that included the exhortation for the public to watch out for the warning signs listed in the pages of popular publications, as in the Satanism scare. There was a paranoid panopticism at work here: if the family murderer was always white, male and Afrikaans, then it followed that each white, male and Afrikaans person could have the seeds of murder within him. The injunction to watch each other potentially pathologised all people who fitted into this mould. Like satanic teenagers, all white Afrikaans men could be marked with the possibility of evil and it became everyone's duty to observe them.

Huisgenoot also reported, '[Gesinsmoord is] 'n Teken van 'n siek gemeenskap, meen sielkundiges' ('[Family murder is] a sign of a sick society, say psychologists', ibid.). From the outset psychiatry took a central position in the narrative of family murder. Where reporting on Satanism tended to defer to religious practitioners and frequently repeated ideas about the failure of psychiatry, press responses to family murder turned to psychiatry and medicalisation early on. The notion of

expanded blame – that someone other than just the killer was responsible for these deaths – also came to the forefront. Similarly, family murder was marked as a signifier of larger ills. In an article on South Africa's 'new brutality', the right-wing *Aida Parker Newsletter*, secretly sponsored by intelligence divisions within the SAP, classified family murder alongside child abuse and other social ills as the consequence of a 'sick society', one newly filled with pornography, 'enlightened' churches that preached politics instead of religious obedience, high divorce rates, 'trendy' sex across the colour line and newly 'liberal' attitudes towards abortion, homosexuality and lesbianism, all contrary to the rights of the majority who wished to 'live in an ordered, humane, civilised society' (16 August 1984).

On 4 November 1984 Gert Botha, 38, shot and killed his ex-wife Mariet, 35, their daughter Madeleine, 15, and himself. Although there had been two similar cases the previous month, this one garnered far more press coverage, presumably because Madeleine had been a beauty queen, winning *Huisgenoot*'s recent Miss Teen competition. Madeleine's healthy normalcy was repeatedly emphasised. With her appropriate Afrikaans boyfriend, promising career as a model and upcoming school prefectship, she embodied the functional youth behaviour that was lacking in young people implicated in the Satanism scare (*Argus*, 5 November). Like the Rietfontein girls attacked by 'the Thing' and unlike the Afrikaans daughters whose unruly sexuality motivated the 1975 Abortion Bill (Klausen 2010), Madeleine's gender and ethnicity combined to create an idealised victim. This was in contrast to parental dysfunction: Gert and Mariet fought constantly (*Argus*, 5 November; *Burger*, 6 November; *Sunday Tribune*, 11 November), which, it was suggested, should have alerted their families to the looming tragedy.

This discourse of warning signs was part of the medicalisation of the family murder, the belief that there was a visible and symptomatic pathology that could be spotted and avoided, just as the signs of Satanism could be noted early enough to save a troubled adolescent. Where family murder utilised psychiatry as the mechanism of awareness, spotting symptoms before they embedded, Satanism used religion and largely discarded psychiatry. Both of these methodologies insinuated that the unwary were to blame for disaster. The *Sunday Tribune* went as far as to use the standfirst 'Family ignored danger signs – and paid with their loved ones' lives' (11 November 1984). Complacency and lack of communal care were blamed for the destruction of white South African youth. Society was failing to protect the young from dangers that could have been anticipated.

An editorial entitled 'Kommerwekend' ('Worrisome') speculated that deaths like the Bothas' were part of a national crime problem and the result of a society that was too violent, with firearms too easily available (*Transvaler*, 7 November 1984). The *Weekend Argus* called the deaths part of a 'frightening chronicle' of killings and printed a list of possible causes agreed upon by several unnamed psychologists: 'unemployment, stress, sex, the availability of firearms, misplaced religious beliefs, immaturity, alcohol, fears about the future and "hot weather"' (10 November 1984). This symptomatic listing avoided the largest and most influential factor in how white South African society operated: save from fear of the future, the effects or even existence of apartheid were given no place in a consideration of why family murders happened, although notions of Afrikanerness and gendered cultural identity crept in in the form of religion, immaturity and sexual issues. Other experts, notably the psychiatrist Lloyd Vogelman, later enacted a different causal model for family murder that implicated apartheid as a primary cause.

Marita Grobler of the South African Women's Federation advised women to permit their husbands to cry and express their feelings and to empathise with the low self-esteem they experienced as a consequence of failing to embody the ideals of Afrikaner manliness (*Rapport*, 11 November 1984). An unnamed psychologist listed the traits of a family murderer so that loved ones could recognise him: withdrawn, insecure, emotionally stunted, requiring gentle care (*Rapport*, 11 November 1984). Although family murders committed by mothers were reported with great horror, the archetypal construction of the murderer as white and male was sufficiently powerful that almost every expert or journalistic attempt at profiling the type operated on the assumption of a masculine killer.

At this point the first of many experts was named. Sam Bloomberg ran a group called Suicides Anonymous that offered a telephone helpline to the public (no other claims of specialist knowledge or training were made). His understanding of family murder featured a highly sexualised vision of spousal behaviour and denial that was never adopted by other experts. It occurs usually at night, he said, and is a man's response to sexual rejection from his wife. Unemployed or concerned about money, he has been drinking and wants intimacy. Her refusal and contempt push him over the edge and lead to violence (*Beeld*, 20 November 1984).[30] It was dangerous, Bloomberg said, to 'play with the emotions' of such a man, obliquely suggesting female complicity: that a woman's failure to correctly respond to masculinity was a form of sexual deviance that could be punished with death.

Ochse: A Murderous Paradigm

In November that year South Africa was appalled by the Ochse murders, soon to be the benchmark of national family murder narratives. Wealthy Western Cape wine farmer Charles Ochse, 43, murdered his wife Paula, 38, and five children Daneel, 13, Pauline, 11, Hennie, 9, Heloise, 7, and Angela, 5. The children had comprised a significant proportion of the local school's population and the family seemed to be a model of Afrikaner success. Paula worked outside the home, but the initial reportage took pains to point out that she was attractive and feminine and that her business was in the appropriately wifely area of catering. Although he had hosted a 'lovely braai [barbecue]' for friends and family the Sunday before, Ochse had also been 'moody and withdrawn' and had lost weight before the murders. These dichotomous statements suggest concurrently that the community had had no reason to suspect a family murderer in their midst, and that there had been warning signs that could have been spotted. Communal responsibility was both stated and deferred. Adding to the mystery, Ochse left no note and a nephew insisted there had been 'no financial problems' (*Argus*, 29 November). What made this case so shocking was that Ochse had a beautiful wife, numerous offspring, a successful farm with many workers and a prominent role in the church and local community. His was the idealised life on the land of the Afrikaner patriarch, blending traditional structures with successful modernity.

The *Cape Times* (30 November) reported that the family members died from a single bullet wound to the head each – Ochse was 'a good marksman', as a traditional Afrikaans father is expected to be – and that he shot himself while looking into a mirror. A Cape Town psychiatrist told the paper that family murder happens when an 'extremely depressed person thinks there is no future for himself or his family', and Ochse's own doctor revealed that he had a 'valid reason' for what was now being called his depression. This conflation of expert opinion legitimised the idea that depression was the cause of the murders, putting them in a biomedical frame. The doctor's statement hinted that Ochse had good reason for thinking there was no hope for his future. This impression is heightened by interviews with neighbours who emphasised his adoration of his children and his success as a father. In this analytical strategy (by no means the only one that manifested in South Africa's family murder stories) the patriarchal killer was imagined to murder out of love, duty and/or fear for his family's future: the very qualities that made him a good father.

Paula did not receive as gentle a treatment. The *Cape Times* article mentioned her habit of going away without the family and tied this to anecdotes about Ochse 'becoming quiet' and losing weight, obliquely suggesting that his depression was related to her inappropriate absences from the domestic realm. It concluded on a somewhat discordant note with an incongruous story about Paula putting the children in a 'borrowed sports car', a profligate image that is at odds with the idealised Afrikaner wife suggested in the *Argus* report above. The *Cape Times*' initial coverage is a template for the mythologising of the male family murderer, in which his violence was a consequence of love and hopelessness, a tendency that was not attributed to the murdered wife/mother. *The Star* also centred its coverage on Paula's social habits, stating that she had recently returned from a two-week holiday in Europe and that she was accustomed to travelling alone (30 November 1984). In a series of articles that repeatedly mention the horror and surprise of those acquainted with the murderer, these statements about the murdered woman's independence imply culpability. Included alongside (and easily compared to) numerous quotes about Ochse's impeccable fatherhood, these revelations about Paula's life outside the home create a sense that, in the absence of other causes, her failings were part of what caused Ochse's violent spree. Rather than initiating an interrogation of masculinity and the patriarchal system within which white Afrikaans men were expected to operate, these early responses to family murder turned a critical eye on a woman who had failed to embody the *volksmoeder* ideal.

Later articles quoted those who knew the family describing Ochse as an upright man, pillar of the community, loving husband and father and the last person one would have suspected of having psychological problems (*Huisgenoot*, 13 December 1984; *Transvaler*, 20 December 1984; *Natal Mercury*, 2 April 1985; *Sarie*, 22 May 1985). The case galvanised white South Africa into panicked soul-searching about how and why these tragedies strike and was referenced throughout the period as the paradigmatic family murder, the case that all other cases were judged by.

By the start of 1985 pundits had begun to speculate on the possible causes of this spate of murders. On 17 January *Die Vaderland* ran a headline reading, 'Seks, geld en drank bly grootste oorsaak vir gesinsmoorde' ('Sex, money and alcohol the greatest causes of family murder') above an article mentioning the economy, marital problems and fear of the future as causes. The same paper also blamed increased materialism and the failure of churches that should spend more time attending to their

flocks and less time preaching politics, a common accusation levelled at church involvement in the liberation struggle (22 July 1985). Brigadier J.G. Jonker, head of the Prison Service's psychological arm, blamed the erosion of the extended family, growing emphasis on the importance of the individual and violent television and videos: in short, the national move towards modernity and away from traditional Afrikaner culture (*Star*, 6 March 1985; *Transvaler,* 6 March 1985). The government had a duty to help the victims of the recession, said *Die Vaderland*. Unemployment was high, credit too easily awarded, rents unmanageable. Materialism and the focus on money had spilled over from families into society (7 March 1985). Again, this suggested that the social shift away from protectionist traditionalism was responsible for these deaths.

A Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) symposium on violence in South Africa concluded that gun laws needed to be strengthened (*Star*, 22 March 1985) and blamed financial problems, jealousy, sexual problems, revenge and the father's desire to take the family with him, as well as unrealistic Western notions about romantic love (*Beeld*, 22 March 1985). While the psychologist making this statement used it as a means to emphasise the importance of marital communication, it can also be read as another indictment of modernity as opposed to traditional social behaviour, which stressed marriage as a duty to the state and the *volk* rather than as a site of personal fulfilment. The *Natal Mercury* used the term 'family suicide', suggesting that the family really was a single entity (2 April 1985). Unisa Professor T. van Heerden stated that South Africans now saw violence as a sort of 'deadly commodity' that would allow them to 'grab what they want from life', and that this general trend of violence had spilled over into the home sphere with horrendous results (*Star*, 1 May 1985). In a country where money was considered the answer to all problems, poverty could equal death for the unemployed parent (*Sarie*, 22 May 1985). *Die Vaderland* pointed to political and economic uncertainty, changes in traditional values, hopelessness and familial isolation, but insisted the failure was society's too; these desperate people were ignored and had no one to talk to (19 November 1985).

By 1985 the national discourse around family murder had developed a causative symptomatology that explained both why these events happened and how society was responsible for them. Possible causes for the epidemic, repeatedly cited by the press, included the social shift away from traditional values, the isolation of the nuclear family, the patriarchal structures of Afrikaans marriage and the emotionally constricting position of men within them, sexual and personal problems, the

involvement of churches with liberation politics, the effects of the recession, high unemployment, a culture of violence, the relaxation of censorship, a new materialism more in line with the decadent West than with traditional South Africa and a social failure to care about those in need.

Many commentators and journalists theorised that the causes lay in both despair and altruism. Despair involved a loss of hope in an increasingly unknown future contingent on the political situation within and outside of the country, alongside a financial crisis brought on by recession, sanctions, mass action and the mismanagement of a state that was becoming increasingly corrupt. The altruistic motivation had become known as extended suicide, a term popularised by Jan de Jongh van Arkel, the NGK *dominee* and academic theologian who was one of the first to write seriously on family murder. It posited the idea that the murder of family members was imagined as a loving act of saving them from the cruel world and from having to survive without the support of the suicidal (generally male) parent. These speculations continued to increase with each new example of family murder, alongside growing calls for official action. By 1986 Roland Graser, from the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NICRO), had begun to appear in press reports and was working on the first serious full-length study of family murder in South Africa.

On 17 June 1986 Petrus Grobler, 29, an out-of-work builder, shot and killed his wife Maria Magdalena, 24, and sons Pieter, 7, and Johan, 5. He then attempted suicide but misfired, succeeding only in injuring himself slightly in the neck before turning himself over to police in a state of shock. This case garnered much national attention, probably because Grobler was left alive to explain his actions. He told a tragic story of love, loyalty and desperation. On the evening of the deaths Grobler had had a phone call informing him that he'd lost out on a work contract and, realising that the family would lose their house, television and *bakkie*, had decided that suicide was the only option.[31] He'd informed his wife of his plan and, heartbroken, she had insisted on dying with him, as had the couple's two children. With no father and no income they would have no hope. Grobler had agreed that the only way forward was for him to 'send them to Jesus', and so he kissed them all goodbye and then performed the deed he knew was the only solution to their difficulties (*Burger*, 18 July 1986; *Huisgenoot*, 21 July 1986). At the time *Huisgenoot* contextualised the murders within a list of other well-known 'suicide pacts'. However, according to a *Femina* article in May 1989 that reconsidered the case, Grobler had altered the narrative twice. He first said that his wife and sons had changed their

minds and withdrawn permission but that he had gone ahead anyway, knowing that death was the right choice for them all. Later a more realistic version of events emerged in which he and his wife had argued, she'd accused him of being unfaithful, his sons had verbally attacked him and insulted his manhood, and he had killed them out of rage and humiliation. He was given prison instead of the death sentence but later hanged himself in his cell.

The remarkable thing about these murders is that press coverage at the time did not question whether a five-year-old and a seven-year-old could choose to be shot to death by their father, or the likelihood of a mother sacrificing her children to her husband's suicide. The case was reported as domestic tragedy rather than domestic violence with Grobler's plea for the death penalty seen as a sign of sadness not of guilt. This suggests the enormous power of the idea of the family as an extension of the father, even as this notion was consistently interrogated and not infrequently blamed for family murder. Grobler himself, those who knew his family and the reporters writing on the case all emphasised that the family loved each other very deeply, as though this love was a reasonable explanation for the trauma that ensued. 'Ons vier het mekaar baie lief gehad en het saam besluit dat dit vir my vrou en kinders onmoontlik sou wees om sonder my te lewe' ('We four loved each other so much and decided together that it would be impossible for my wife and children to live without me', *Burger*, 18 July 1986). Without the father, the family was doomed. The system had failed and those who existed within it could no longer function.

Grobler's original story recalled the way in which the Ochse murders were reported, in which the father's success as a patriarch was precisely what led him to murder. His love for his family and duty to make decisions for them led him to the realisation that there was no hope for them without him. The qualities that made a good father also made a murderer. Grobler imposed this story upon his own actions, and was believed, for a while at least. This illustrates an unanticipated consequence of apartheid's obsessions. Legislating for race actually created space for transgressions around race. Affective and culturally embedded notions about whiteness were easily abused. In narrativising the enormous love that led him to kill, Grobler used the powerful myth of the white father to *excuse* murder, twisting this archetype obscenely to disguise a more prosaic type of gendered violence. The fact that he was believed by a popular press that veered between the panicked and the hysterical in its reporting on family murder reveals how much the white South African imaginary needed these murders to mean something:

even if the deaths themselves could never be forgiven, there had to be some reason behind them.

This idea of the father as redeemable, as killing out of love and duty, was not of course the only analysis applied to family murderers. Many experts critiqued the white Afrikaans patriarchal persona as rigid, aggressive and emotionally stunted. The crucial difference between the two approaches is in their application. Critical swipes at Afrikaans masculinity usually came in general articles on the family murder 'epidemic', whereas reporting on individual cases – with some notable exceptions – generally took the former tone, of empathy for the misguided love of the damaged father.

Grobler's original story referred to the powerful idea that family murderers committed these crimes because of an excess of altruism and responsibility. This recalls one of the most common justifications for the apartheid state, which claimed to be duty-bound to exert guardianship over its non-white charges and to be suffering not from being a violent regime but from failing to appropriately perform its role of pastoral care. This ideological position was encapsulated by Malan confidante Paul Sauer in a 1960 television interview, when he spoke of 'barbarous and semi-barbarous' black people and 'the responsibility of the [the white man's] duty towards these underdeveloped people not capable of governing themselves and who would fall apart if we did not look after them' (quoted in van de Westhuizen 2007, 54). The NP both created and was created by ideas of Afrikaner ethnicity in which state and nation were indivisible, like the father and the family in the narrative that Grobler wove around himself. Both were dangerous parents whose crises consumed their offspring.

Meanwhile, the developing discourse continued to align family murder with white Afrikaans men. A young Indian woman doused herself with petrol and set herself alight while her husband and two sons were in the house. The *Sunday Star*'s reporting highlighted the indignities and helplessness of non-white poverty under apartheid but never mentioned the term family murder (27 July 1986). The highbrow Afrikaans magazine *De Kat* ran an article entitled 'Gesinsmoorde: 'n Afrikaner-siekte?' ('Family murder: an Afrikaans disease?') quoting Vogelman's assertion that family murder was a consequence of the stresses created by living under apartheid, alongside Bloomberg's statements about wifely provocation and sexual dysfunction, van Arkel's findings that the root of the problem lay in Afrikaans culture and Grobler saying, 'Ons het mekaar as gesin so gelief gehad dat ons soos een mens was' ('We loved each other so much as a family that we were like one person'; October 1986). Family murder was treated as an epidemic that implicated the entire

nation and concurrently assumed that that nation was solely composed of whites. Neither family murder among black people nor the effects of these stress factors on other communities was considered at this point. Violence involving black people, as we will see in Chapter 10, was treated very differently in the public narrative.

Although van Arkel's understanding of family murder tentatively suggested that the 'Afrikaner character' and family structure may have something to do with the deaths, it was Vogelman who first politicised these incidents. Under a headline reading, 'Apartheid "Major Factor" in Record Family Murders', *The Star* reported his claim that apartheid was 'incompatible with mental health' and the 'primary cause for violence' in the country (18 August 1987). Vogelman's explanation of family murder suggested that a system designed to benefit whites was actually harming them. His strategy was similar to the ECC's use of issues 'which struck at the heart of white society and were of concern to whites who had never had reason to question apartheid before' (Conway 2012, 49). This viewpoint drew incensed criticism from the right wing. *Die Patriot*, for example, wrote, 'Arme apartheid, feitlik alles is sy skuld' ('Poor apartheid, everything is its fault'), in a furious editorial criticising ideas about inherent Afrikaner violence (2 September 1988).

The Crossbow Killings

The idea that all family murderers were Afrikaans was challenged in 1987 by a set of killings that used a particularly brutal method. In August that year Wally Dowling, a 45-year-old Johannesburg businessman, killed his wife Joanne, 40, and sons Robert, 16, and Paul, 12, with a crossbow, then set their house alight before shooting himself in the head. The family was in serious financial difficulties: reports mention that Dowling's prized Mercedes had been repossessed the day before (*Burger*, 8 August 1987; *Cape Times*, 8 August 1987). As in the other cases of family murder related above, and despite the possible financial motivation, those who knew the victims were 'baffled' by the crime. Dowling's wife had appeared happy the day before and he was very attached to his family (*Cape Times*, 8 August 1987). Although the Dowling family was English-speaking, subsequent coverage utilised the deaths to repeat the trope that there was some predisposition toward family murder in the Afrikaner family or culture (*Vaderland*, 19 August 1987). *Huisgenoot*, in an 'Album van die dood' ('Album of the dead') that contained images of 44 children killed by their parents in the previous two years, called family murder an Afrikaner plague that

left a cloud over South Africa (12 August 1987). The Dowling murders inspired another spate of symptomatology that attempted to isolate possible causes: psychosis and mental health issues, misunderstandings of religion, Afrikaner Calvinist paternalism (despite the fact the killer and victims were English-speaking), sexual dysfunction, pressure on the father, the breakdown of marriage and gender roles, familial isolation, financial problems, wider social violence, fear of asking for help and gun ownership. Despite the frequent use of firearms in cases of family murder, however, calls for tighter gun control were sporadic. White South African masculinity was conceptually linked to the right to gun ownership, which spoke to a militarised gender identity and the ritualised experiences of socialisation involving cadets, school and the SADF that most white South African men underwent (Cock 2001).[32]

Perhaps because of the unusually brutal nature of the crime or the financial motivation behind it, Dowling was not narrativised in the same ideal-father-gone-wrong manner as Ochse and other paternal killers had been. According to one report, 'Mr Dowling may have had an insanely possessive nature. He could have seen his family as possessions and decided to take them with him to the grave, especially his wife.' People who performed homicide-suicides were usually 'far more psychotic' than the average suicide (*Star*, 12 August 1987). Where many other family murderers were seen as killing out of love and duty, Dowling, in this article's view, killed out of a distorted sense of ownership. One inspired pity, the other disgust, but they were in fact very similar. In both cases the discourse understood the father as one who possesses the family, the difference being in whether that was experienced as a portentous duty of guardianship or as a petulant sense of possession. According to a later article that recalled the case,

> Dowling het die lewe van 'n rykman gelei – wat hy nie was nie … Hy wou sy gesin die skande spaar … Hy het bankrot and werkloos geraak – maar voortegaan met sy spandabelrige lewe. Die gesien het feitlik geen vriende gehad nie. Dowling het teruggetrokke and geïsoleerd geword. (Dowling lived the life of a rich man – but he wasn't one … He wanted to spare his family the shame … He was bankrupt and unemployed – but continued with his spendthrift lifestyle. The family had no friends. Dowling was reclusive and isolated; *Rapport*, 14 July 1991).

The Dowling murders were understood as the consequence of the father's failure to care for the family rather than his desire to do so.

The sense that the family could not properly exist without a strong father at its head seems to have been reserved for episodes which were more clearly suited to a rhetoric that attempted to ascribe meaning to these murders.

In August 1987 Casper Schmidt, an ex-patriot Afrikaans psychiatrist and self-proclaimed expert on South African pathologies, wrote an open letter to P.W. Botha explaining how family murder could be curbed with the creation of an appropriate infrastructure. Schmidt also pointed out the conjunction between traumatised family and traumatised country. South Africa had been expelled from the community of nations, he said, was isolated and alone, hopeless, helpless and powerless, which led to small problems becoming overblown and seemingly insurmountable. Like the state, the family murderer felt himself to be rejected by society, incapable of dealing rationally with crises and full of shame (*Beeld*, 28 August). This sense of white South African shame was not commonly expressed in mainstream media at the time, although it came to prominence during the TRC hearings. Rather, letters pages and popular journalism often exhibited righteous indignation at South African isolation, complaining that western nations' racism was repressed and hidden whereas 'at least' South Africa's was honest. *Huisgenoot*, for example, often gleefully published articles about incendiary racial issues in the USA and UK as a way of suggesting that criticism of South Africa was hypocritical.

In September 1987, after 49-year-old Gerhardus Reynecke killed his lover Leonora Davis, 39, and her children Jana, 17, and Desmond, 9, in Rustenburg (*Star*, 15 September), van Arkel appeared on an episode of the television talk show *Vra Wat Pla* and was subsequently quoted extensively in a number of newspapers. He discussed the role of NGK priests in making people feel detached from life (considered in detail in the next chapter), the prevalence of violent solutions in politics and the urgent need for society to intervene (*Rapport*, 20 September 1987). Authoritarian and possessive fathers within close-knit families often killed out of love and hopelessness, van Arkel said, and the murders were usually well planned to avoid suffering, which meant signs could be spotted by a concerned community (*Cape Times*, 21 September; *Star*, 23 September).

Afrikaner notions of manhood were implicated in this understanding of family murder. These kinds of men respected leaders and authority, followed rules, had a self-image of moral superiority, a predisposition to place people in categories of otherness, a proud military tradition, a tendency to subsume individual needs to the group and a dislike of

individual thinking. There was, for them, 'only one way of correctly thinking and behaving' (du Pisani 2001, 165). The idea that the father always kills out of love had two sides: while linking this kind of masculinity to murder, it also buoyed up a subtle idealisation of the white father in which his motives were noble even if his actions were insane. This idea was used in the fantastic narrative that Petrus Grobler created for himself, in which his centrality to the family, and thus his success as a father, actually caused their deaths. Van Arkel's opinion as offered here isolated certain types of men, manhood and masculine myth as pathological without going as far as to interrogate the patriarchy that was essential to white South African social and political identity. This disavowal of the gender of the imagined father killer in favour of critiquing his ethnicity and cultural construction – the white Afrikaans male rather than *the male* – echoes the discourse's elision of whiteness within ethnic categories, which I examine in detail in Chapter 10.

Van Arkel further politicised his position with the explanation that colonial paternalism in South Africa meant society had become accustomed to the notion of one small group making decisions for a larger group, thus obliquely accusing the apartheid system of complicity in the murders. However, he tempered this by saying that violence was seen as a legitimate means of problem-solving by both government and liberation movements, and that top-down decision-making was as common in black communities as it was in the white-run state (*Sunday Star*, 27 September). Even as he implicated apartheid's effects on white people in family murder, van Arkel brought black people into the equation with the assertion that they too suffered from the cultural disease that could lead to these killings. There is a degree of obfuscation here: van Arkel took a bolder stance than many other commentators by associating family murder with apartheid but still shied away from too harsh a criticism, characterising what was largely understood to be a sickness in white society as symptomatic of South Africa *as a whole*. These two examples illustrate the difficult line that white and particularly Afrikaans experts found themselves treading during the family murder epidemic, whereby their desire to understand was mediated by powerful social injunctions that viewed criticism of apartheid as race betrayal. Belief in the morality of the Afrikaner nation suffused van Arkel's interventions; he repeated nationalist myths even as he attempted to deconstruct them.

According to Dr Danie Louw, a theologian at a Stellenbosch religious seminary, families had become islands. The middle classes were too isolated and the importance of status, position and money were an

intolerable burden, especially for a people that was historically more spiritual than materialistic (30 September 1987). Modernity, urbanisation and the dislocation of the Afrikaner from the land were to blame. *Die Kerkblad* called family murder a symptom of the South African malaise (7 October 1987). Dr Dolores Luiz, of the University of Port Elizabeth's psychology department, cited the increased stresses of the age: financial worries, the pace of life, the fact that South Africa 'was becoming an increasingly competitive society', suggesting again that the new modernity was to blame in contrast to traditional social models (*Weekend Post*, 9 January 1988).

The *Sunday Star* quoted Louise Olivier on recent HSRC research on the subject, insisting that black families were more at risk than white (17 January 1988). This assertion would be repeated throughout the HSRC's official output on the subject although the evidence offered was sparse. News outlets reporting on Olivier et al.'s conclusions repeated the claim that family murder was not just an Afrikaans tendency but seldom agreed that black families were a higher-risk group. Theologian Professor J.H. van Wyk insisted the phenomenon was too complex to understand but was certain that faith, hope and love of God were the solutions (*Transvaler*, 21 February 1988), while the *Cape Times* called for proper gun control (21 February 1988) and the *Star* quoted an unnamed clinical psychologist who was unsurprised at the rate of family murder given the country's state of 'extreme crisis and conflict' (29 March 1988). The writer Willem de Klerk, in *De Kat*, called family murder cowardly, suggesting that it must happen because of something within Afrikaner culture, with its paternalism, violence and parental sense of always being right (March 1988).

A conference on family murder was held at the University of Pretoria in June 1988. The *Pretoria News* called family murder the 'symptom of a sickness in society' and quoted the university's Professor S.I. du Toit, the author of a later book chapter on the subject (1990), blaming Afrikaners' belief in their right to determine the lives of others. Du Toit's understanding of the political contours was less critical than van Arkel's and illustrated the long-standing Afrikaner perception of apartheid as a religiously mandated obligation to maintain a paternalistic duty of care over South Africa's non-white inhabitants. Du Toit's explanation for family murder cited the guilt that came with a failure of good guardianship (13 June 1988). Apartheid's failure to fulfil its always spurious promise of separate-but-equal was blamed for Afrikaans pathology.

Other experts at the conference attempted to list the symptoms of family murder so that communities could recognise and prevent it.

Professor H. Viljoen of the Medical University of South Africa pointed out the tendencies of authoritarian, rigid, paranoid Afrikaner patriarchs and questioned the lack of knowledge about black family murder. Professor J.B. Schoeman called the family the brick of society, suggesting that if the family is unwell so is society. Van Arkel asked for increased support for families (*Beeld*, 13 June 1988). The conference repeated and codified several unsubstantiated but persistent ideas about family murder: that 70 per cent of them happened in Afrikaans homes, that they rarely occurred in other countries and that they were a consequence of the rigid paternalism of Afrikaans fatherhood. *The Citizen* led its coverage with the uncompromising headline 'Afrikaans Family Murders Reflect Political Role' (14 June 1988).

Family murder, for these readers, was not just a national concern but a specifically Afrikaans one. The terminology had been altered to create a new phrase that implicated one sector of white society above any other, even though, as in the Dowling crossbow murders, high-profile cases involving English families did occur. This suggests that there was an ideological impetus to consider family murder as the distinct preserve of the Afrikaans, possibly in the way in which it opened up legitimate pathways for self-reflection. The idea of the Afrikaans family murderer, tortured by duty, responsibility and guardianship, had meaning outside of itself in late apartheid South Africa. This reflects one of the ways in which English-speaking South Africans, despite their privilege, financial power and support for the state, were often written out of apartheid narratives in a move that both exculpated their complicity in the political system and denied them a role in the imaginary structures of South Africa. Family murders committed by non-Afrikaans white people, like family murders committed by women, did not fit within the discourse of guilt, shame and pathology, and so they were largely ignored in favour of a more potent set of metaphors.

Du Toit, meanwhile, was cited extensively in the coverage airing his theories about paternalism and the transfer of habits from macro to micropolitical levels, stating, 'It is as if the power of determination became legitimised and found its way into family life' (*Star*, 14 June 1988). Du Toit made his metonymic understanding of these events clear when he said, 'I can't explain how that which has happened at a national level, became transferred to the family level … I only noticed that a situation created at national level is similar to the situation we find in family murder' (*Pretoria News*, 14 June 1988). This reading made explicit the common understanding of family as nation and nation as family and the possibility of porous transference between them.

Beeld, in a soul-searching editorial response to the conference, wrote,

> 'n Mens wil nie nóg sout in die wonder vryf in 'n tyd dat die Afrikaner van links en regs verguis and gekasty word nie, maar die ongemaklike gewaarwording van herkenning in gister se berig oor die Afrikaner en gesinsmoorde, verg 'n hand in eie boesem steek. Die feit dat gesinsmoorder meestal onder Afrikaners voorkom, is verklaar deur stellings soos dat die Afrikaner beskikkingsreg op himself need, dat hy 'n outoritêre persoonlikheid het, dat hy rigied in denke is, met 'n paranoïese vrees vir eksterne bedreigings en dat hy nie sy verse en frustrasies kan verwerk nie. (You don't want to rub salt in the wounds during a time when the Afrikaner is being vilified and castigated from all sides, but the uncomfortable awareness of recognition in yesterday's article about the Afrikaner and family murders demands self-examination. The fact that family murders occur mostly among Afrikaners is explained by statements like the Afrikaners claim an inherent right of decision [for other races], that they have an authoritarian personality, that they are rigid in their thoughts with a paranoid fear of external threats, and that they cannot deal with their own fears and frustrations; 14 June 1988)

An alternate politicisation in the wake of the conference came from Jan Groenewald of the AWB, who blamed inter-racial competition, economic uncertainty and Afrikaners' lack of self-determination for the rates of family murder (*Star*, 14 June 1988). While Vogelman used family murder to attack the state from the left, claiming that apartheid damaged those who benefitted from it as much as those who didn't, Groenewald performed a similar action from the right, using family murder to attack what the AWB saw as an overly conciliatory National Party.

To Die as Well as to Kill

Two family murders later that year seemed to validate the conference's spotlight on Afrikaner tendencies. On 21 June, in Secunda in the eastern Transvaal, Petro Pretorius, her three-year-old son Jonathan, boyfriend Carel and brother Kobus were gunned down by her former husband Poena de Wet, who then shot himself in the mouth in Jonathan's bedroom. 'Mense wat die familie geken het, het gister gesê mnr. De Wet se "brandende liefde" vir sy gewese vrou kon tot die treurspel gelei het' ('People who knew the family said yesterday that Mr De Wet's "burning

love" for his estranged wife might have caused the tragedy'). On 22 June Derrick Stoltz shot and killed his two daughters Elsie-Elisabeth, 2, and Heila-Hermien, 3, in a car parked on a Pietersburg street. A passer-by intervened to save his third child, a son, after which Stoltz shot himself too. The previous day he had been ordered by a court to refrain from harassing his former wife and the children (*Burger*, 23 June 1988).

In his response to these killings Professor du Toit characterised the generic male Afrikaans personality as 'quick to feel humiliated, inhibited, suspicious … egocentric in the sense of a sickly self-pity in his soul … a potential family murderer' (*Star*, 23 June 1988). This description of emotional immaturity and weakness is unrecognisable when compared to historical understandings of Afrikaner masculinity as stoic, upright, invulnerable, tough and moral (Morrell 1998; du Pisani 2001; Swart 1998). In du Toit's terms every Afrikaans man could be a murderer and every family a site of tragedy: family murder was almost homogenised. Psychology professor Deon van Wyk blamed desperation, the feeling that killing one's family was the only way to retain any control over the world; this appeared under the unambiguous headline 'Family Killings: An Afrikaner Phenomenon' (*Weekend Argus*, 25 June 1988). *The Star* asked, 'Would You Recognise a Family Killer?', and then offered a list of symptoms, the first being that these people were usually 'Afrikaans speakers' (26 June 1988). *Beeld* asked, 'Gesins moord: 'n siekte van die Afrikaner?' ('Family murder: an Afrikaans disease?') above a list of eight incidents that had happened that year (28 June 1988), two of which involved murderous mothers. Despite these atypical cases, the frequent lists of symptoms and warning signs continued to insist that the potential family murderer was male. Family murder had become inextricably linked to critical ideas about Afrikanerdom centred on rigidity, patriarchy and ownership; and, concurrently, to apartheid, although this was seldom stated explicitly.

Die Afrikaner, questioning why these men would want to die rather than the more commonly considered issue of why they kill, speculated that they were in an impossible position:

> Die rede waarom die man sy eie lewe wil neem – die primere oorweging – bly dan nog buite gesprek … Die vraag is of sy optrede nie gemotiveer word deur die feit dat hy voor 'n onhanteerbare situasie te staan gekom het en besef dat as hy dit nie kan hanteer nie, sy gesin sonder hom dit nog minder sal kan hanteer – veral as hulle nog sy selfmoord moet verduur en verwerk … Daar was deurgaans propaganda dat die tye verander het en dat daar verandering in

> Suid-Afrika moet kom. Maar op stuk van sake het almal geweet dat dit die Afrikaners is wat derhalwe hulle opvattings, ideale, waardes en tradisies moet laat vaar … Waneer daar dan gepraat oor gesinsmoorde onder Afrikaners, moet die oorsprong van die verskynsel gesoek word in die doelbewuste politieke destabilisering van die Afrikanervolk en die daaruit voorspruitende sosialse en ekonomiese misstande wat vandag onder Afrikaners heers. (The reason why a man would want to take his own life – the primary consideration – has still not been uncovered. The question is whether his actions are motivated by being faced with a situation he can't handle, and, when he realises that he can't handle it, also realises that his family would have even less chance of coping without him – especially if they have to cope with and process his suicide … There is constant propaganda that times are changing and that change must happen in South Africa, but at the end of the day everyone knows that it's the Afrikaners who will have to let go of their worldviews, ideals, morals and traditions … When speaking about family murder among Afrikaners, the origin of the phenomenon has to be sought in the intentional political destabilisation of the Afrikaner nation and the consequent social and economic misunderstandings that are rife for the Afrikaners today; 6 July 1988)

Political change, in this understanding, was forcing cultural change. Afrikaners were expected to acknowledge that the foundations of their culture were fundamentally wrong and to accept insecurity and racial equalisation with equanimity. The article also made the now-familiar appeal to traditional values, blaming the presence of television in the home for social decay.

On 31 August 1988 Gert Gouws, his wife Marcia and their children Gerhard, 15, and Melanie, 6, were caught in a mysterious explosion in their house near Port Elizabeth. *Die Burger*'s front page coverage featured two photographs, one of a widely smiling Gouws standing next to his wife and holding his daughter, the other of the wreckage of the house (1 September 1988). A bottle similar to a petrol bomb was found on the lawn after the explosion (*Cape Times*, 1 September 1988) but none of the reporting connected this to the increasing violence in South Africa's townships. Petrol bombs did not have the same meaning in the context of a white suburb. The family was later found to have died of gunshot wounds rather than in the fire.

The Gouws murders coincided with announcements about the first in-depth study on family murder, conducted by criminologist Roland

Graser from the University of Durban-Westville. This eventually became *A Study of Selected Cases of Family Murder* (1992) but appeared first as a call to the public for information (*Natal Mercury*, 7 September 1988; *Rapport*, 11 September 1988; *Herald Times*, 30 September 1988). Graser's civic plea for assistance implicated the entire polis, its placement in newspapers with different readerships and languages suggesting that all segments of (white) South African society had something to offer. The entire (white) nation was involved. Family murder was everyone's failure and everyone's business.

Other publications, in the wake of the Gouws deaths, listed all that year's high-profile cases: the de Wet and Stoltz murders as well as Jacobus Reynder, found gassed in his car with his four-year-old daughter Monique; Isabel Cordier, who shot her son Andries, 11, and daughter Liza, 15, and then killed herself; and Nolene Vermaak, who shot her children Janine, 10, and Morne, 14, and then herself. These latter cases inspired some discussion of how mother-love could turn murderous but the women were analysed in terms of their gender rather than their Afrikaans-ness. The understanding of family murder as an Afrikaans trait was reserved for father-killers. The *Weekend Argus* published a box-out containing details of the abovementioned cases, two out of five of which involved maternal murder, alongside a piece entitled 'Father Power Gets the Blame for Murders' (17 September 1988).

By late 1988 reporting on family murder tended to relate the deaths to the political situation, whether overtly or not, pointing to either apartheid's culture of violence and domination or to fear of the future and uncertainty about the Afrikaner's role in it. Van Arkel, who had recently published a paper on the subject, was again quoted extensively. *Die Transvaler*, calling South Africa a 'skisofreniese gemeenskap' ('schizophrenic society'), lamented the fact that South Africans at the end of the twentieth century were a lost people, unhinged from their traditions, suffering with familicide, drug use and other social ills, and that 'even' blacks, with a foot in the west and a foot in Africa, were affected by this crisis (15 November 1988). Afrikaners were overcome with insecurity about the future but had nowhere else to go, and this closing down of possibility led them to redemptory murder. The idea of Afrikaners being trapped in South Africa while white English-speakers had a way out contributed to Afrikaans antagonism towards the English as well as to the Afrikanerisation of the family murderer. According to S.I. du Toit, 'apartheid and family murders have the same root: an extended sense of responsibility' (*Star*, 18 November 1988). Van Arkel wrote that 'the effect of a political environment on the way people

think' could explain the country's high rate of family murder (*Weekend Argus*, 3 December 1988), and this could decline after a change of government to a less violent system (*Sunday Tribune*, 4 December 1988; *Burger*, 28 December 1988).

Many news outlets announced the formation of an HSRC team to probe the issue. The group would be led by Dr Louise Olivier and would involve social workers, police, religious practitioners, psychiatrists and other medical professionals. The HSRC would also set up a temporary helpline and other practical measures to halt incidences of family murder (*Beeld,* 31 January 1989; *Rapport*, 5 February 1989; *Transvaler*, 10 February 1989; *Cape Times*, 16 February 1989; *Kerbode*, 17 February 1989). From the outset Olivier questioned the assumption that family murder and Afrikaners were interlinked. She was not alone: in an article in the *South African Medical Journal* (*SAMJ*) the University of Pretoria's Dr J.L. Roos and Dr W. Bodemeyer speculated that claims about Afrikaners and family murder were a consequence of basing research on press reports only, because similar murders in 'remote areas' – remote suggesting rural and probably non-white – may not have been recorded as such (*Citizen*, 8 February 1989). *Beeld* also reported the possibility that rampant black family murders could have been going unnoticed by the press (9 February 1989).

The Ideology of Death

As the decade progressed and family murder entered the communal cultural lexicon of white South Africa, it became a contested object in the tug between right and left. In an inversion of the family murder-as-politics theory set out by Vogelman and van Arkel, *Die Patriot* newspaper, under the headline 'Doodswens?' ('Death wish?') responded to news of the HSRC team's mission by demanding that the researchers turn their investigative eye on Afrikaners who supported reform as part of their work into the pathologies plaguing the nation. This was, the paper said, a political version of family murder, the violent destruction of the familial or communal whole from the inside: 'n Volk wat hom nie self wil regeer nie, is die politieke verlengstuk van die gesinshoof wat diegene wat op sy beskerming staatmaak, brutal om die lewe te bring' ('A nation that doesn't want to govern itself is the political extension of the phenomenon where the head of the home brutally murders people who depend on him for protection'; 21 April 1989). This editorial replicated the familiar theme of mandated guardianship. The head of the home killing those who depended on him was often understood

in terms of the Afrikaans state and father believing they had a duty of responsibility for others. *Die Patriot*'s version of this idea excised the oppressed majority. The enemy were white people who were willing to give up their dominant position, not black people who fought for self-rule. As in the Satanism scare, this foregrounding of an internal over an external threat centralised whiteness while repudiating the importance of blackness.

This was an important moment in the discussion of family murder. Although it was a marginal publication with a strident pro-apartheid bias, *Die Patriot* elaborated the way in which the South African 'epidemic' of family murder was more a symptom of the national condition than a series of crimes influenced by the political situation. Here the latent structure that underlay the panic about family murder was revealed: there was something about the act of family murder that had resonances in the South African context beyond the individual deaths that occurred. For *Die Patriot* these echoed ideas of race suicide that have long permeated the discourse of whiteness.[33] The family murderer became a metaphor for what the right viewed as a deadly impulse towards reform and *gelykstelling*, weakening the Afrikaner power base and imperilling the existence of the *volk*. In *Die Patriot*'s metaphoric landscape, the epidemic of these killings was not just about death but also about internal betrayal. On the same day that *Die Patriot*'s article came out *Rapport*, further left on the political spectrum, reviewed *Om die son in pers te groet*, a novel about the 'crisis in Afrikanerdom' that dealt with family murder. Under the headline, 'Afrikaner volk van monsters?' ('Afrikaners, a people of monsters?', 21 May 1989), the article suggested that there was something fundamentally wrong with the *volk* and thus, implicitly, with the political system that upheld the dominance of the *volk*. In these oppositional uses of family murder the monstrousness was inherent either to all Afrikaners or to traitorous white people who threatened the future of Afrikaners. In either case the threat was an internal one.

The HSRC's attempt at rewriting the myths of family murder began almost immediately after the project was announced. S.I. du Toit, speaking as one of the project members, countered the ideas that these events were most common in October, only happened in South Africa, took place mostly in the home and involved male Afrikaners in the majority of cases (*Tempo*, 22–28 September 1989). Du Toit did not provide substantiation for this alteration in the discourse but merely stated that these were myths that had accrued to family murder. Much of the coverage up to this point was equally unsubstantiated and the newspapers

exhibited a clear bias in terms of reporting stories. Nonetheless, whatever the truth of his assertions, it is telling that du Toit stated the HSRC's most ideologically important conclusion – that family murder was not specific to South Africa, or to Afrikaans men – well before the study was properly underway. Repeating these assertions, he also suggested that the public assumed the families involved were Afrikaans, when many families with Afrikaans surnames were actually English speakers (*Transvaler*, 2 October 1989). The reporting on du Toit's public statements reflected the HSRC's project of rehabilitating the image of the Afrikaner. *Pretoria News* wrote, 'The popular Press has placed whites firmly in the dock as far as family murders are concerned', a position that, it suggested, was not borne out by the early stages of HSRC research (30 November 1989).

This discursive renegotiation was continued by Roos, whose findings on pan-racial murder were reported under the unambiguous headline 'Family Killings Not Exclusively White' (*Natal Mercury*, 30 September 1989). Roos used the example, sourced from Weskoppies hospital, of a 39-year-old Shangaan woman who attempted to burn herself and her three children to death in her hut when her husband decided to take a new wife. This case seems to be the same one mentioned by Roos in his *SAMJ* article co-written with Bodemeyer. It also corresponds to one of the histories related in the HSRC report. While it is entirely possible that unreported family murders occurred among non-whites during this period, the same case is used twice by Roos and once by the HSRC to debunk the myth of the white male Afrikaans family murderer. It's unlikely that, if non-white family killings were as common as the HSRC group suggested, it would have been necessary to recycle a single case of a black female family murderer in three different locations within the literature. Family murders may indeed have been happening in non-white communities but the HSRC lexicon's excessive attempts to make this claim suggest a politicised purpose. It is clear that the discourse around family murder developed an attachment to the idea of the white male Afrikaans killer despite examples to the contrary. It is also true, however, that the HSRC report's attempt to break this causal chain was clearly overdetermined.

By 1990 the HSRC report's initial conclusions, drawn partly from an exploratory study in 1986, appeared continually in the media. These claimed that 1.4 per cent of whites, Asians and coloureds and 3.7 per cent of urban blacks said that the idea of family murder 'had occurred to them' (Olivier et al. 1991b, 24). Rural black people were not included in the study although they made up a major percentage of the national

demographic. It is possible that this was due to the difficulty of collecting data, but the oversight also illustrates the HSRC's ideological bias. These statistics, drawn from a questionnaire, suggest that rates of family murder would have been unusually high among black people who lived in townships rather than in the homelands and had access to metropolitan networks of established religion, gossip, legality, social discourse and academic study. Yet next to no such murders were reported. This omission could have been a consequence of the racialised bias of the white press, but black media outlets like *Drum* and *The Sowetan* also failed to pick up the apparent epidemic of black family murder.

Nonetheless the HSRC continued to popularise the new truth that family murder was not an Afrikaans problem. Olivier insisted that a 'number of black family murders occurred', although she did admit that most cases involved whites, and repeated du Toit's assertion that one couldn't be sure of the Afrikaner bias because 'one often found an English-speaking family with an Afrikaans surname' (*Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 26 February 1990). This rewriting of the discourse was not entirely successful. *Huisgenoot* published statistics suggesting family murder was not connected to Afrikaners but continued to discuss the nature and character of the Afrikaans patriarch (8 March 1990). The attachment of the idea of family murder to white male Afrikaners was clearly too entrenched to be dislodged so easily. *Sarie*, however, reported Olivier's statements on the misconceptions about Afrikaner men alongside a claim that 40 family murders involving various races had happened in 1988. Olivier's understanding of family murder was laid out in detail in this article: the murders had everything to do with the individual and nothing to do with gender, race, ethnicity or social context (21 March 1990).

Unlike the work of Vogelman and van Arkel this perspective depoliticised family murder, claiming that it was not a consequence of the South African situation. Olivier insisted on the individuality of each case and the complexity of each murderer. While this would have been a useful clinical perspective for the pathologist, it ignored one of the major stress factors in the lives of white South Africans. She also claimed that because a small number of similar murders happened elsewhere in the world, South African-ness was not relevant, and that the relentless violence of the late apartheid era had no bearing on the violence of men and women who used weapons or car exhausts to remove themselves and their children from the world.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, in Freud's architecture of fetishism, the formulation of disavowal, the 'I know but I do not know' construction that permits the subject to avoid disconcerting or threatening

knowledge of the outside world, is 'a primal defence mechanism for dealing with external reality' (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 119). Freud says of the fetishist, 'We see that the perception has persisted, and that a *very energetic action* has been undertaken to maintain the disavowal' (1927, 154, my emphasis). We can see the signs of the repressed in the energy of the denial. As a functionary of and sometime social science apologist for the apartheid government, the HSRC occupied a complicated political position. Its energetic and often excessive attempts at rehabilitation, rewriting the discourse of family murder by trying to excise its links to ideas of Afrikanerdom and whiteness, illustrate the depth of the anxiety that this connection bred.

Another perspective suggested that these acts were suddenly becoming more common among black people. Under the headline 'Black Family Killings: A New and Increasing Trend in SA', *The Star* cited eight cases involving black victims and murderers. Of these, four were more properly crimes of passion in which jealous husbands killed their wives. The remaining cases involved a domestic worker and two policemen, all unnamed, and the particularly shocking case of James Williams of Port Elizabeth, who drowned three of his five children by flinging them off a pier and then following them himself. The paper reported, 'While incidents of family murder and resultant suicides in white South African families, particularly Afrikaans families, are known to be the highest in the world, black society has been traditionally free of these killings', and quoted Vogelman suggesting that the culture of violence and increase in crime may be to blame (17 July 1990). The use of the word 'traditional' plays on the racist notion that rural black life was 'purer' than black lives lived in urban areas where they could be polluted by modernity. Similarly to the way in which Satanism was seen to spread like a disease from white to black, this description saw black life veering away from healthy tradition and toward the infectious social crises that characterised the mixed-up, traumatising, multi-racial and -cultural confusions of the metropolis.

At the end of that year *Oosterlig*, an Afrikaans paper published in the town of Port Elizabeth, reported on two cases involving non-white families. Keith Moody, likely Indian by his surname, set himself and his two daughters alight in Durban, and farmworker April Madia hanged his two daughters. None of the children was named. The newspaper reflected on the tragedy of the deaths but also suggested that they were caused by depression rather than ethnicity. However, this article also states that South Africans of all types viewed violence as a legitimate solution, thus linking the murders to the political situation even while separating them from Afrikaner culture (20 December 1990). Rather than a 'sickness' in

the earlier sense that was applied to the Afrikaans family, the idea that depression was to blame reconfigured family murder as a legitimate illness that could be treated.

Olivier, in a slight but important alteration to her position, agreed that many South Africans were aggressive and depressive and that these tendencies impacted on the rates of family murder (*Beeld*, 29 October 1991). Contrary to her previous suggestion that context had no effect, this allowed that the South African condition was an element in family murders. The day before that article was printed, journalist Gordon van de Merwe had shot and killed his wife Janet and children Diana, 21, and Neville, 18. Newly unemployed and unable to maintain the family's home in an exclusive suburb of Johannesburg, van de Merwe left a note saying he could not allow his wife and children to 'face a bleak future in the new South Africa' (*Citizen*, 29 January 1991; *Beeld*, 29 January 1991; *Star*, 29 January 1991). These murders were a reflection of white fear of the future, a paternal pathology that aimed to save the family from a world in which apartheid no longer maintained the borders and Calvinist discipline that many whites had come to regard as indispensable to civilisation and even to physical safety. Both the left-wing *Weekly Mail* (7 February 1991) and the ideologically opposed *Die Patriot* (22 February 1991) called the family 'victims of the new South Africa' ('slagoffers van die "Nuwe SA"'). Political uncertainty was seen as the cause of family murder on both sides of the spectrum.

Despite its failure to change beliefs about the extent of the family murder 'epidemic', the HSRC's work remained in the public eye with reports on the depression and trauma suffered by the team who were investigating the phenomenon (*Sunday Times*, 28 March 1991). Other perspectives also remained popular. Bloomberg, for example, was still interviewed as an expert in 1991 and continued to espouse his theory about sexual naivety and dysfunction, this time calling the perpetrator an 'adult sissy'. Bloomberg continued to refer to the killer as male even though the article in question begins with a snapshot of him telephonically counselling a young mother who was considering family murder (*Sunday Star*, 23 June 1991). The myth of the murderous (white Afrikaans) father was so strong as to remain intact even in the face of obvious evidence to the contrary.

Rewriting the Script

When the HSRC group's findings were first released in July 1991 they were reported from a variety of angles. Under the headline 'Family

Killings "In All Groups"', *The Star*'s coverage focused on the multi-racial nature of these events, leading with the now apparently solid information that depression and marital problems were to blame and that there was no basis for the cultural ties that had been assumed between these killings and white Afrikaners. In another article on the same day it reported that the findings were 'surprising' and that people needed to be taught to ask for help when help was required (10 July 1991). The same paper later ran a piece of critical analysis suggesting that the stress of living in South Africa's newly competitive society could lead to burnout and family murder (15 July 1991). Even as the HSRC attempted to divorce family murder from context, individual journalists and media outlets continually redrew the links between them. In the latter case the idea of the 'newly competitive' society was a continuation of the repeated trope that the modern world, to which the Afrikaner was unsuited, was to blame for family murder. Competition suggests both globalised, urban modernity and black people's entry into an employment market that had up till then aggressively prioritised whites. This was equivalent to blaming the disintegration of apartheid, rather than apartheid's existence, for family murder.

Die Transvaler led with the 'recipe' for a family killer, reporting the HSRC's profile of the standard killer and mentioning that politics, religion and the media had no effect on these events (10 July 1991). *Beeld*, similarly, reported that politics and violence were now said to have no effect on rates of family murder and that there was no causal link to Afrikaans culture (10 July 1991). *The Citizen* highlighted the claim that depression and marital problems were to blame (10 July 1991). *Rapport* focused on depression and marital problems as opposed to the influence of politics and a culture of violence (14 July 1991).

Die Transvaler, in an editorial entitled 'Kry hulp' ('Get help'), exhorted South Africans to seek medical help for what was now taking on the appearance of a national problem of depression, even as it was framed by the report's writers as having no provable relation to the South African situation. In a second article on the report, alongside a list of HSRC recommendations for dealing with the problem, *Beeld* indignantly wrote that some families had indeed sought help, which was not forthcoming or not useful. Medical, legal and other professionals had to be better trained and more aware so they could assist those in need (7 July 1991). These perspectives illustrate very different attitudes to the mental health establishment. Contrary to the traditionalist Afrikaans perspective that would have characterised its readership, the first insisted that psychiatry could be a saviour. The second, from a

more liberal publication, implicated psychiatry in the national failings that made the entire country guilty of creating the climate that led to family murder.

The number of articles on family murder began to tail off after the 1991 release of the HSRC report, although this remained a primary text for journalists, coming back into common circulation after its official publication. *The Argus* quoted it extensively in a 1992 piece titled 'Why Reliable Family People Turn to Killing' (5 May). The *Sunday Times* called it a 'fascinating profile of the family murderer', focusing on its narratological functions (31 May 1992). *Beeld* emphasised the division between 'extended suicide' and 'murder-suicide' (20 November 1992). The *Sunday Times* attempted to dispel 'the myths' associated with family murder, listing these – peculiarity to whites and Afrikaners, relation to the NGK, drug or alcohol abuse, lack of pre-planning – and then debunking them with reference to the 'new' facts of family murder as explained by the HSRC (14 November 1993).

Reports on specific incidents also lessened, either because there were fewer of these cases or because the social and ideological climate was no longer as receptive to reading these deaths epidemiologically. In August Martin Capito, a karate expert in the Cape, killed his wife Merle and three children Jo-Anne, 19, Ronald, 10, and Mario, 5, and then himself, apparently because of money troubles. The family were about to be evicted from their rented home and had nowhere else to go (*Burger*, 25 August 1992). The *Cape Times* editorialised that 'the state of the economy killed the Capito family … as surely as any murder weapon', using the piece to demand that the government do something about the country's financial straits (26 August 1992). There is no sense in the *Cape Times*' position of Capito's guilt; rather the state was implicated in yet another failure of guardianship.

This echoes the notion of dangerous paternalism presented by van Arkel and other experts who suggested that the murderous father was incubated by the white state's belief that it had the right and duty to make decisions for other lives and races, that murder was a consequence of living 'in a society where a person or persons has the right (and feels responsible) to make decisions on behalf of others' (van Arkel 1993, 26). The father who killed his family did so because he believed he had the right and duty to determine their future, but he failed to act responsibility and to merit the control he had over those who depended on him. Similarly, the disastrous condition of the economy was seen as the state's failure: an apparently omnipotent patriarchal body that believed in its right to absolute determinism but could not maintain a situation

in which its dependants could survive. Family murder was the failure of guardianship, both the father's of his family and the state's of the father.

The cessation in high-profile cases of family murder was not to last. In December 1993 Sakkie Horn, a former national boxing champion who was well known and kindly remembered, shot and killed his two sons and then himself in their Brakpan home (*Sunday Star*, 5 December 1993; *Star*, 22 December 1993). As a boxer, Horn fitted the stereotype profile perfectly: white, Afrikaans, a sportsman in a traditionally masculine area, the sort of man – ostensibly at least – on whom white South African ideals were built, and whose paternal failure implicated both the Afrikaner nation and the apartheid system.

However, three killings the following year, all involving non-white families, again complicated the relation between Afrikaans men and family murder. In June 1994 Keith Jantjies, a police detective in Beaufort West, shot and killed his estranged wife and seriously injured his daughter before killing himself (*Cape Times*, 27 June). In October Mark Martin was brought before a court, accused of murdering his mother- and father-in-law, his wife and their baby daughter (*Star*, 21 October 1994). In December Solomon de Klerk, vice principal of a school in Springbok, shot and killed his wife Jennifer, seriously wounded their son and then killed himself (*Argus*, 27 December 1994). While the ethnicities of those involved in these cases are not specified, they can easily be guessed. In the cases of Jantjies and de Klerk the murders were reported in an article on criminal activities involving non-whites in Delft, Grassy Park, Guguletu, Diep Rivier and other township and Cape Flats areas notorious for gang violence. The murder of white families would not have been so casually bundled up with crime reports involving blacks. In the case of Martin, the names of his wife and in-laws and the location of their home in Lenasia indicate a classification of Indian. Location is crucial in all cases: one of the persistent legacies of the Group Areas Act was to make South Africans' homes a marker for reading their histories. These non-white murders did not spur an equivalent drive into understanding their perpetrators' psyches or creating a killer's profile. They were treated as horrible crimes but left out of the larger discursive framework of family murder as a marker of something specifically wrong with South Africa.

Murder and Meaning

We cannot know how prevalent the occurrence was of a parent killing or attempting to kill one or more of their children, possibly their spouse

and possibly themselves before the 1980s, or after the 'new' South Africa was initiated with ANC victory in 1994. What we can know, however, is that the idea of 'family murder', a notion that was most often attached to white male Afrikaners and Afrikaans families or was explicitly, discursively detached from them, came to peak prominence in this period. This suggests that the repressed content of family murder events was meaningful in the late apartheid period, that they incited or permitted a reading of the traumatising social and political situation that had enough affective force to remain within the public narrative for over ten years.

Perhaps family murderers lost their homicidal urges after the change in regime made it clear that white South Africans' more paranoid fears of the future were unjustified, and that neither race war nor mass nationalisation was imminent. Or perhaps the understanding of family murder that I have discussed here, the discourse and terminology attached to an uncommon series of tragic and fatal events, was specific to white South Africa's confused rewriting of itself and its meanings in the late apartheid period. In either case, this supposed epidemic of deaths was concurrent to the collapse of apartheid and to the social and mythological change that that engendered. In the following chapters I argue for the consequences of this discourse on imaginings of the church, the family and of whiteness itself, as well as for white people's increased capacity and freedom to interrogate the nature and effects of apartheid.

9
The Righteous Path

As discussed in Chapter 4, the Satanism scare was both a mask and a marker for a range of threats that fed into white South African fear. The discourses attached to communists, rebellious youth and demonic foreigners all bolstered the narrative of Satanism. The apparent epidemic of family murder operated in a similar manner, pulling a whole plethora of issues into its axis. Family murder became a space of contested meanings where white South Africans from all sides of the political spectrum argued over aspects of their society.

As illustrated above, a catalogue of social and political factors were put in the dock by the various journalists, psychologists, criminologists and social scientists who appointed themselves experts in understanding family murder. These ranged from proto-Freudian ideas about parental childhood trauma (*Huisgenoot*, 2 August 1984) to arguments between spouses (*Cape Times*, 3 December 1986), Afrikaners' 'desperate desire to determine the lives of others' (*Weekend Argus*, 25 June 1988), hopelessness (*Femina*, May 1989), the South African tendency towards depression (*Oosterlig*, 20 December 1990) and even sleeping problems (*Transvaler*, 29 October 1991). There was, however, another potential scapegoat for the rate of family murder. Some moral entrepreneurs blamed the NGK for creating the type of men who performed these acts, again implicating white Afrikaners as the sole perpetrators of family killings and mounting a powerful attack on the church's moral standing and role in public life.

Criticising the NGK for brutalising its own community into a state in which family murder seemed legitimate extended anti-apartheid accusations against the church, making its complicity with the system's violence towards black people secondary to its effects on its own members. Just as ECC campaigns against conscription emphasised the army's

damaging effect on white rather than on black youth (Conway 2012; Nathan 1989, 311) and some of the conversation around family murder considered it a consequence of the violent society that apartheid had engendered, so blaming the church for creating the patriarchy that led to these killings refocused the spotlight of criticism of the NGK from black to white people.

The patriarchal family, as we have seen, was one of the main structural metaphors for white South African government and society. The Dutch Reformed Church was another, a primary pole for the justification, moral theorising and social organisation of apartheid culture. Christianity has had enormous reach in South Africa – 76.6 per cent of the population identified as Christian in the 1980 census (Chidester 1991, ix), while 79.77 per cent did so in 2001 (Statistics South Africa 2013) – and powerful connections existed between the apartheid state and the NGK. For years the church was known as the 'National Party at prayer' (Crapanzano 1985, 104). These links only began to be severed in the latter half of the 1980s, and then only under intense internal and international pressure. From the start of the nationalist movement, Afrikaner rule had been framed in terms of religion. Chidester writes, 'The NP legitimated its political power, capital accumulations and programmes for social engineering in the specifically ethnic, racial and religious terms of a Christian Afrikaner nationalism … Racial discrimination, domination and exclusion were invested with an aggressive religious legitimation by both the state and the [NGK]' (1991, xv).

The NGK was historically an anachronistic space where social change, with its suggestions of racial equalisation and ethnic dilution, was staunchly and sometimes aggressively rejected. Twelve years before apartheid became inaugurated into national legislation, the church's 1935 missionary policy set out an unambiguous statement of its theological and social justification for the permanent segregation of racial groups. The document states,

> The traditional fear of the Afrikaner of *gelyksktelling* between black and white has its origin in his antipathy to the idea of racial fusion. The Church declares itself unequivocally opposed to this fusion and to all that would give rise to it, but, on the other hand, as little begrudges the Native and Coloured a social status as honourable as he can reach. Every nation has the right to be itself and to endeavour to develop and elevate itself. While the church thus declares itself to be opposed to social equality in the sense of ignoring differences of race or colour between black and white in daily life, it favours the

> encouragement and development of social differentiation and intellectual or cultural segregation, to the advantage of both sections. The policy of trusteeship … must gradually develop into a policy of complete independence and self-determination for the Coloured and Native in his own community, school and church. The [NGK] considers all differential treatments as a means of enhancing life and independence. (Quoted in Sparks 1990, 161)

Segregation was framed as a natural consequence of a justifiable and common-sense concern about miscegenation. 'The Afrikaner's struggle to survive in a harsh environment, to preserve his identity in the face of racial and cultural extinction … was understood as a means of preserving God's kingdom on earth' (Crapanzano 1985, 104). Like the state that it helped to inaugurate and the white people whose language it influenced, the NGK privileged a rhetoric of nationalism over one of racism, referring instead to guardianship and the need to protect all 'cultures' and 'nations' (Kinghorn 1997, 145).

The church as a metonym for both white family and white state was closely bound up with Afrikaner identity and possessed enormous social and political power. The accretion of the family-murder discourse around the NGK and its implication in the most anti-social acts imaginable to a culture embedded in kinship are exemplary of the important concerns that these killings embodied and of the layers of panic, denial, disavowal and fear that the late apartheid period inculcated in the white electorate.

The Church Under Fire

The first role of religion within the narrative of family murder was pastoral, as seen in an editorial in *Die Transvaler* on 7 November 1984, which posited that hopeless people failed to confide in their church leaders and then committed these appalling acts when they found they could no longer cope. *Rapport* similarly advised those considering desperate acts during the stressful Christmas period to speak to someone from their church (11 November 1984). *Vaderland* bemoaned the fact that people were failing to take advantage of church facilities in their hour of need (7 March 1985). *De Kat* considered the possible role of the church in stemming the 'epidemic' (October 1986). These and many similar responses shared an understanding of the church as a politically neutral place of support and spiritual healing.

From early on in the 1980s family murder was read as a particularly Afrikaans problem, a nationalised pathology, but the Afrikaner church

that played a critical role in shaping policy and society was exempted from this stigma. The Afrikaner father and family were classified as potentially diseased but the Afrikaner religious and political establishments that were so intertwined with the family, the macro-political shapings that both echoed and informed the micro-political content of the (possibly pathological) family, were not allied to the corrosive possibilities of family murder.

As the story around family murder progressed, however, the reasoning for why these events happened began to change. Speculation about recession, sexual and marital problems and national characteristics developed and the debate was increasingly framed in political terms. Van Arkel was the first of the media's preferred experts to draw links between church practice and family murder. In a 30 September 1987 interview with *Die Kerkbode* he was uncompromisingly critical of the theological doctrine and social practice of the church. He castigated first the canonical principle of venerating the afterlife in a way that could suggest that life on earth was less important than life in the hereafter: 'Die kerk moet daarteen waak dat hy nie bydra tot 'n "romantiese prentjie" van die dood nie' ('The church must beware not to paint a "romantic picture" of death'). This, he suggested, contributed to fathers' loving desire to 'save' their families from physical life. On the subject of pastoral care, van Arkel condemned the cold and prescriptive manner in which the church operated, saying, 'Alles is miskien te … formeel. Ons het wel die masjinerie binne die kerk, maar die vraag is of ons werklik mense se nood raaksien en egte begrip het vir hulle en hulle probleme' ('Everything is perhaps too … formal. We do have the machinery within the church, but the question is whether we truly see people's needs and have a real grip on them and their problems').

With its critique of doctrine and its repudiation of the forbidding manner in which the NGK operated, this perspective aimed to cast doubt on the socialised structures of Afrikanerdom. Like the family with its inviolable father and the state with its authoritative head, the church operated in a top-down manner. *Dominees* (priests) wielded an unqualified authority over their flock. Where earlier responses to family murder called on the individual to approach the church for aid, van Arkel's understanding questioned whether the church was in fact approachable. There was a sense here that the church had failed the people. The fact of family murder thus permitted a questioning of the way in which the church operated that was linked to a similar questioning of family and state, and the commonalities of all three.

The Afrikaner notion of personhood 'comes through group membership … To be a person is to be "encrusted" … with national, racial and ethnic affiliation, with party membership, religious belief and cultural tradition' (Crapanzano 1985, 38). The historical equation of church and *volk* helped to uphold a unified, monolithic idea of Afrikanerdom, albeit one that was clearly not the case in daily life. Van Arkel criticised the church precisely because it was *too* structured, *too* hierarchical, emphasising an ethnic hyper-nationalism in which survival of the whole was all that counted. The call for a gentler church that was capable of listening to the needs of individuals was also a call for a shift in organisation away from autocracy and conservatism.

Questioning the primary structures of Afrikanerdom in the wake of a series of brutal family murders did not carry the same connotations of racial betrayal as questioning apartheid in response to the growing demands of the black population.[34] This was a soliloquy of doubt, internalised, self-directed. As with the Satanism scare, in which the whiteness of the imaginary enemy permitted the black other to be cast further adrift from the centre of discourse and national concern, so the self-analysis that accompanied reporting on family murder permitted a formerly taboo examination of the spiritual health of the Afrikaner polis without ever really having to engage with the non-white population whose existence was boxed in by apartheid. Family murder allowed Afrikaners to think about what was wrong with Afrikaners without having to think too carefully about black people, who remained, yet again, a supplement to the national conversation.

Broadsides from Stellenbosch

The year 1988 saw the strongest condemnation yet of the NGK's alleged complicity in creating a culture that fostered family murder. In a symposium on violence in South Africa held at the Institute of Clinical Psychology at the University of Stellenbosch on 4 August, psychology lecturer Derek (spelled Derik by certain papers) Momberg stated that church leaders and the autocratic nature of the white family were largely to blame for the number of family murders that had occurred since 1983, his date for the start of the epidemic. This claim was reported across the media, taking in the majority of the political spectrum. The conservative *Die Vaderland* reported Momberg's position under the headline 'Kerke "het skuld" aan gesinsmoorde' ('Churches "have guilt" for family murder', 5 August 1988). The more modernising

Die Burger also reported his comments uncritically under a headline that stated that the church and politics were to blame for family murder (6 August 1988). *The Star*, a relatively left-leaning English-language paper, reported extensively on the symposium:

> [Momberg] agreed that church and the state – acting as models for the Afrikaner family – 'maintain the pathology' … The authoritarian power structure of the Afrikaner family often placed the husband under enormous pressure and in a position to abuse his power, he said. This traditional family structure stemmed from the financial dependence of the wife upon the husband and this 'is upheld by the scriptural view of the reformed church' … Mr Momberg added: 'The existence of this structure is sanctioned and maintained by church tradition … this power structure within the Afrikaner family leads to a sick authoritarianism.' Because church leaders were influential opinion-makers and held in high esteem, 'blame for this sick system must be laid at their door'. (6 August 1988)

Momberg tied state, church and family together but, unlike van Arkel, was less interested in the NGK's pastoral model than in the authoritarian power structures that characterised these three poles of Afrikaner culture.

This critique implicated the *volksmoeder*, the woman who upholds 'the fetish signs of national difference and visibly [embodies] the iconography of race and gender purity' (McClintock 1995, 377). Momberg suggested that domesticity, assumptions about male rights to determination and the privileging of the valorised family space, with the mother confined to the home, could lead to the eventual bloody dissolution of that same family. According to Elleke Boehmer, men are metonymic of the nation as a whole where women are symbolic, reproducers and transmitters of culture, signifiers of national difference: woman 'is the strength or virtue of the nation incarnate, its fecund first matriarch, but it is a role which excludes her from the sphere of public national life' (1991, 6). As Magda, the desiccated Afrikaans daughter in J.M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*, says, 'If I am an emblem then I am an emblem. I am incomplete … I signify something, I do not know what' (1982, 29). If the structures that kept women within the domestic realm were to blame for family murder then the symbolic signifier of Afrikaner culture was itself pathological – and family murder, rather than being an aberration, was innate. Momberg seemed to be castigating the NGK's role as the chief inquisitor of the modern and

claiming that this backward-looking emphasis on tradition actually led to the violent disruption of the historically stable construction of the Afrikaner family.

Momberg's critique did not go unanswered. In an extensive article in *Die Vaderland* on 8 August 1988 NGK members spoke in support of the Afrikaner family. Andries Gous, a priest and psychologist, insisted that the church's message of peace and love had stopped many violent deeds from happening. While not questioning the assumption that most family murders occurred among Afrikaners, he condemned the notion that this was to do with a national pathology, referring instead to the way in which many people respond violently when they are under threat. This argument reimagined a political causation for family murder but from the opposite standpoint: it was not a consequence of the destructive paternalism of apartheid as much as it was to do with threats to Afrikaner existence. Attacks on the racist system rather than that system itself were to blame. In the same article, *dominee*'s wife Gabs Malan repeated the now-common understanding that traumatised men sometimes decided it was better to take their families with them to the next world than to leave them to the deprivations of this one. Malan blamed the difficulties of surviving in the city for paternal desolation: 'Die vereensaming van die Afrikaner in the stad kan tot vanhoop bydra' ('The loneliness of the Afrikaner in the city can turn to despair'). In contrast to Momberg's condemnation of the church's anachronistic stance, she returned to an earlier position of blaming modernity for Afrikaner madness. The claim that the city breeds loneliness refers to the idealised rural past of the frontier states, a sacred history believed to hold the key to national happiness and self-reliance even though the move to cities had actually been beneficial to Afrikaans social interests: the pressures of urbanisation in the 1930s inspired the creation of Afrikaans banks and businesses that were started with the express purpose of uplifting the *volk* and improving their economic condition (Giliomee 2003, 438).

Theology professor and marriage counsellor Murray Janson, meanwhile, told the same interviewer that Momberg's perspective was incorrect because it assumed that all Afrikaner families were the same: 'Daar bestaan byna nie meer iets soos 'n tipies Afrikaanse gesin' ('There is no longer such thing as a typical Afrikaans family'). This was a significant change in the depiction of Afrikaner culture. 'The Afrikaans family' was a normative social structure that defined the way in which many individual Afrikaners related to their own families as well as how their conformist culture dictated that families should look. This archetype was repeated

throughout political myth, the offspring of the 'generic Voortrekker, wife and family who, as an entity, were presented as enabling the process of pure breeding to continue' (Witz 2003, 97). The idea that all Afrikaner families were different suggested a shift in traditionalist notions of how families worked and how people lived within them.

These responses to Momberg's attack on the NGK illustrate some of the recurring thematic concerns that characterise the arguments around family murder: the stability of the family as a metaphorical object, fear of modernity and of the city, society's responsibility to be aware of families' well-being, the pressure on fathers and the negative effects of social and economic forces on the Afrikaner.

Death and Resistance

I must here return to the notion of biopower, the Foucauldian understanding of power as something that operates in every sphere of life, not just the political but the social, the personal, the physical, a 'proliferation of political technologies … investing the body, health, modes of subsistence and habitation, living conditions, the whole space of existence' (1991, 265). According to Homi Bhabha, 'It is the peculiarity of regimes of racial oppression that they make immediately visible and vivid the more mediated and abstract practices of power such as class division, the exploitation of labour and social hierarchies of status' (2004, xx). Apartheid was the enactment of biopower writ large.

Foucault isolates two superimposed forms of power – disciplinary, relating to bodies, docility and individualisation, and regulatory, relating to population and elimination of random events – but insists that these can co-exist despite the dichotomy between state and institutions, between the macropolitical bodies that form the core of the state and the micropolitical bodies that act towards regulation and the care of the self (1997, 249–50). Responses to family murder illustrate one of the many ways in which the discrepancy between macro- and micropolitical structures can become fragmentary and divisive. The stance of writers like Momberg signifies resistance to the monolithic might of the NGK and NP government. By undermining the moral standing of the church and casting doubt upon its paternalistic structure and the dour, authoritarian tone it utilised to keep its flock in order, these theologians unsettled the church's motivations at the same time as interrogating its doctrinal position. Questioning the spiritual validity of church and family, the micro- and macropolitical bodies that mimicked, informed, supported and sustained the state, allowed them to utilise the unease around

family murder to critique Afrikaans and concurrently white South African society by focusing fears on the effect of the status quo on whites rather than non-whites, who had less affective weight in the white social imaginary. The division between macro- and micropolitics was exploited to further withdraw legitimacy from the existing system of power. The public narrative that centred on the apparent epidemic of white family murder became a privileged locale where hitherto taboo responses to the modalities of the apartheid state could be voiced across the media spectrum.

But this was not the only form of resistance that family murder engendered. In its vehement attack on the new immorality of the nation, mentioned in Chapter 8, the *Aida Parker Newsletter* lumped family murder in with inter-racial sex, pornography, *Cosmopolitan* magazine, rising divorce rates, child abuse, abortion, homosexuality, lesbianism, transvestism and drug use as one of the signs of the imminent collapse of the Christian nation. A veritable rogue's gallery of modernisers was to blame for the most serious calamity imaginable, the 'collapse of the SA family', from the dissident writer André Brink to those who were dismantling the architecture of censorship. Also to blame, though, were the churches:

> Many, far too many, of our 'liberal', 'enlightened' clerics are dedicating themselves to grandiose political pronouncements, rather than tackling the great moral and social crises whiteanting [*sic*] away at the fabric of their flocks. So busy are these men in promoting 'humanistic' beliefs that they have seemingly forgotten their main task and the moral obligations of their calling. What SA (and the West) needs above all right now is a reversion to some good old 'Christian gunmen', to 'thunder sermons'. The fact that certain evangelical and fundamentalist preachers are pulling in such huge congregations is proof enough that many Christians feel the same way. (16 August 1984)

This writer's attitude recalls the types of resistance we encountered in Chapter 5. The Satanism scare provided a space where conservative, anti-modernisation whites could express their discomfort with the Botha government and Dutch Reformed churches' shift away from the exigencies of high apartheid. By investing their religious and social faith in alternate churches that performed exorcisms, disgruntled Afrikaners queried the mandate of the state and the church that enhanced its standing. They too drew a wedge between the macropolitics of the government and the micropolitics of the institutions devoted to individual

and family life, just as the right-wing response to church complicity with family murder blamed mainstream churches for becoming involved with the non-racial politics of justice, thus minimising their influence over Afrikaans people. The churches' change of heart was equated to a betrayal. This may not be the sort of resistance that garners a charge of ethical approval from the contemporary reader but nonetheless it is exemplary of a hitherto compliant white electorate contesting and opposing the ruling class; the detachment of micropolitical approval and support from the macropolitical motions of the larger system.

Family murder became a thoroughly contested site of meaning where accepted truths about what it meant to be white, male and Afrikaans could be discussed from all points of view, and where the monoliths of white South African life were placed in an uncharacteristic position of negotiation. Politicised questioning of the NGK sat alongside right-wing condemnation and Christian self-definition in keeping with the sweeping changes of the late apartheid period. As the body count left by these acts of familial violence increased, so the space of discussion they created was enlarged, leaving the once-uncontested truths of white privilege, white power, white religion and, unconsciously, perhaps even the meaning of whiteness itself, open to both considered criticism and angry protectionism.

10
The Whitest White

According to the majority of the contemporary press the family murderer was white, male, Afrikaans, conservative and traditionally South African. This characterisation was subject to revision as well as repetition, but the articles and papers that questioned it framed their scepticism in terms of a reconsideration of the idea of the white male Afrikaans family killer, thus entrenching a stereotype that was largely disseminated by media attempts to explain increasing statistics of family murder. Even the HSRC report, which specifically referred to the 'myth' that family murder was a white Afrikaans trait, failed to dislodge it (Olivier et al. 1991a). In this chapter I consider some peculiarities of apartheid-era South African whiteness and how it related to national understandings of violence, contextualised within the discourse of these killings.

The whiteness discussed here had not yet gone through the TRC hearings, when white South Africans' solipsism and self-pity were forced into sharp relief by revelations of the abuse perpetrated by the state. Liese van de Watt, in an article on the work of two white South African artists, points to the discomfited introspection of 'generational responsibility' that became part of whiteness for a period after the end of apartheid (2005). This is not to suggest that the TRC and the end of NP rule led to an awareness of history and social justice among all white people; rather, new strategies and means of defending whiteness have developed in the post-apartheid era (see, for example Falkof 2012; Steyn and Foster 2008; Steyn 2004).

In his influential 1997 book *White*, the film theorist Richard Dyer unpacks the cultural invisibility of whiteness. To be white, he says, is to be 'normal'. Whiteness is unremarkable and goes uncommented on because it is the standard colour by which non-white people are marked

as other. To be white is to be a person; to be anything else is to be a black, brown or yellow person, coloured first and human second. 'As long as race is something applied only to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people' (1997, 1). Dyer's argument is valuable but is not as universal as is often claimed by scholars who locate themselves within a disciplinary frame that can be called critical whiteness studies. He does not address the vital point that whiteness is not invisible to non-white people; indeed, the discourse around the question runs the risk of privileging a white reader. As Sara Ahmed points out, 'Of course whiteness is only invisible for those who inhabit it. For those who don't, it is hard not to see whiteness; it even seems everywhere' (2004, 1).

Claims of white invisibility become weak when applied to South Africa. It is difficult for a condition to remain the norm or standard when it is visibly *not* how the average person looks. In apartheid South Africa, as in many countries that had been colonised by Europeans, this created a certain performativity in which whiteness, rather than being taken for granted, had to be spoken and reasserted. The necessity for this colonial visibility and spoken-ness created a subtle doubling; as we shall see, whiteness in South Africa was both visible and invisible, seen and not-seen, both a category and a quality that went beyond categorisation, what Ross Chambers calls 'invisible and indivisible' (1997, 192).

Whiteness in colonial and apartheid South Africa was constantly pointed out. The Population Registration Act of 1950 dictated every child's access to healthcare, education, employment, housing and the rights of citizenship. South Africans who were classified black, coloured or Indian/Asian found their life possibilities severely curtailed, where those classified white were, in theory at least, able to access the state's best resources. These experiences were profoundly different but had the act of taxonomy in common. White was actively called white and vocalised as one of four possible racial potentials; it was visible, raced, named and seen.

Origins, Armies and Entropy

A few brief historical examples provide a sense of how explicitly whiteness has been stated within the South African political imaginary. Although definitions of and membership in the category of whiteness were mutable and changed significantly between the dawn of colonial rule and the mid-1990s, the appearance of the term has been fairly

consistent throughout South Africa's history. In the early Boer republics the reformed churches adopted the 'thousand-generation covenant', whereby white children were considered part of the congregation by virtue of their race but non-whites had to undergo conversion. Christianity and the European civilisation it symbolised thus became synonymous with whiteness: something passed down by blood, an inherited privilege (Gastner 1997, 20–7). Christian identity became 'political identity … [and] Christianity [functioned] as justification for European dominance' (Giliomee 2003, 41).

In a colonial context situated within an Africa read as red in tooth and claw, whiteness was too much at risk to be able to retain its invisibility. In order to be protected it had to be brought into racial discourse. Colonising settlers in Africa constantly reasserted the value of their whiteness, stating that civilisation was white and that whiteness required fortification, which was everyone's duty. In the sixteenth century, Luso-Africans' language, religion and architecture 'were all indicative of Afro-Portuguese assimilation … But later, with the expansion of Dutch, French and English influence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, racialized European ethnic categories became established and Luso-Africans increasingly stressed that they were "white", Catholic and Portuguese' (Spear 2003, 22). In Mozambique in the first half of the twentieth century, 'cultural Whiteness … conflated the myth of colonial omnipotence with European national identities. Colonial schools were critical institutions for transmitting cultural Whiteness and thus reproducing White European privilege and hegemony' to both white and non-white children (Errante 2003, 10).

In these ways whiteness in the colonies became both a privilege and a responsibility that had to be maintained rather than a deracinated primary state of being, what Chambers calls 'unexamined', something 'situated outside the paradigm it defines' (1997, 189). Dyer suggests that when we talk of race we actually talk only of non-whites (1997, 1); but in apartheid South Africa, as in much of colonial African history, constant discussion about the ever-present race question referred as much to the problem of whites living in Africa as it did to the state's attempts to retain control over blacks.

The visibility of whiteness can also be seen in what came to be known as the poor white problem, one of the primary justifications for many of apartheid's most inequitable economic and land policies. From 1886 the Boer republic of the ZAR was irreparably altered by the Johannesburg gold rush, becoming host to a huge number of speculators as well as the morally ambiguous industries that served them. British-Jewish capital

quickly gained control of many of the mines, much to the chagrin of the Afrikaner establishment. By the end of the century Witwatersrand mines were producing as much as a quarter of the world's gold supply (Ally 1994, 1–28). Coupled with rural land shortages, Boer resistance to modern agricultural methods and Lord Milner's notorious scorched earth policies during the South African War of 1899 to 1902, this caused a swift urbanisation of Afrikaners, from six per cent in 1904 to 44 per cent in 1936 (Welsh 1969, 265), and the development of a white urban underclass. The mass migration of Afrikaners into Johannesburg meant that they were forced to compete with black city-dwellers for employment and to live side-by-side with them in the morass of *gelykstelling*, equalisation.

In the late 1920s the Carnegie Foundation's Commission of Investigation into the Poor White Question, an American philanthropic mission examining the 'problem' of 'poor whiteism' in South Africa, estimated that of a population of less than two million Europeans, 300,000 could be classified as poor whites. According to a contemporary report in the *British Medical Journal*, the tone of which suggests the disdain with which many British viewed Afrikaners, 'Their economic decline has been caused principally by inadequate adjustment to modern economic conditions. This has occurred especially among the older Dutch-speaking portion of the population, which has been severed from European progress and development for many generations' (1933, 297). Uneducated and unprepared for urban life, these Afrikaners threatened to slip permanently into a ghettoised state of racial and moral intemperance. It is hardly surprising that the Carnegie Commission 'found echoes in eugenist fears held by groups within both [the US and South Africa] that white "civilisation" could decline' (Bell 2000, 489). For the founders of apartheid, Hyslop writes, 'the "poor white" was an anomaly whose very existence put a question mark over the assumption that whites were inherently destined for dominance. Moreover, poor white living conditions threatened to dissolve the social boundaries between the races' (2003, 226).

The defeat of Jan Smuts's South African Party in 1924 was widely attributed to its lack of sensitivity with respect to the poor white issue, while Smuts's successor J.B.M. Hertzog, a vociferous advocate of Afrikaner rights and culture, once remarked that he advanced his so-called segregation policy in order to deal with poor whiteism (Giliomee 2003, 326–36). The poor white problem was described by one contemporary social scientist as 'a menace to the self-preservation and prestige of our White people, living as we do in the midst of the native

population which outnumbers us five to one' (Malherbe 1981, 119). This racialised scaremongering had a clear political purpose: 'In seeking to prevent the "ultimate nightmare" of a class movement that would unify the poor across racial lines, [investigations into poor whiteism] served to heighten "race" as opposed to class difference as the significant social category in policy discourse' (Bell 2000, 493).

During the 1930s Malan 'drummed up hysteria about the lack of racial segregation in housing in some poor white areas, and around Smuts and Hertzog's "failure" to stop inter-racial marriage', promising that under nationalist rule 'there would be massive state intervention to improve the social and economic conditions of the Afrikaner poor and workers' (Hyslop 2003, 228). The notion of the poor white, of whiteness under threat and in need of protection, was critical to the development of early apartheid policy and rhetoric. At the 1938 Great Trek centenary celebrations, Malan said, 'South Africa expects of its poor whites that they remain white and live white' (Giliomee 2003, 349). However, many poor whites in this pre-apartheid era did not 'act white'. Rather than rallying around the Afrikaner Nationalist cause they were influenced by trade unions that had leftist or non-nationalist leadership, and voted for the non-nationalist Labour Party or the more moderate Hertzog and Smuts (Hyslop 2003, 228).

The bureaucratic monster that apartheid became was initiated not just to maintain certain types of privilege and to keep the labour force in a subordinate position but also quite literally to safeguard whiteness, to ensure that no white people would fall so far from the civilised ideal that they became indistinguishable from non-whites. Until the end of the apartheid era (and beyond it), fears about poor whiteism and about blacks living in 'white areas' revolved around the idea that whites would become 'unable to act out civilisation' (Stewart 2004, 54).

This tendency to vocally valorise whiteness remained in place until the last days of the apartheid regime. One encounters it in the post-millennial spate of memoirs and collections of anonymous confessionals about conscripts' experiences in the South African Defence Force in the 1970s and 1980s (Batley 2007; Blake 2009; Korff 2009; Ramsden 2009; J.H. Thompson 2006). These writers are often concerned to illustrate the brutality of their army instructors, both verbally and physically. They list the relentless insults and aggressions meted out by Permanent Force members to hapless conscripts dragged, willingly or not, into the National Party's aggressive foreign policy. One of the most distressing injunctions, one that crops up repeatedly in accounts of SADF experience, happened when a conscript could not perform the physical duties

demanded of him and his instructor angrily responded by calling him a 'waste of a white skin'. This insult was experienced by many as a deindividuating, emasculating moment, undermining the very quality that permitted a white male South African to situate himself within the hierarchical structures of his society. Whiteness was explicitly prized in the army context and equated with success, functionality, manhood, strength and potency. By failing to perform the often irrational tasks demanded by his trainers, a conscript symbolically, if temporarily, sacrificed his whiteness, his right to enter into the order he was being forced to fight and possibly die to defend. Like the injunction placed on poor people to 'act white', the phrase 'waste of a white skin' illustrates how clearly the link between white and right was stated in apartheid South Africa, that whiteness was both an entry into power and a privilege that had to be actively maintained. And where white boys were conscripted and trained to embody a certain version of masculinity, white girls were placed under a different injunction, interpellated as the embodiment of Afrikaner purity. Like the *volksmoeder*, the sexually virtuous daughter had a duty to the race, as shown by the 1975 Abortion and Sterilisation Bill, which aimed at containing the sexuality of white girls and women (Klausen 2010, 43).

These examples, of the Population Registration Act, the conditions for entering a Christian congregation, the colonial equation of whiteness and civilisation, the poor white problem and the militarised discourse of whiteness as obligation, combine to show that whiteness in racialised South Africa was far from invisible. It was a powerful ideological tool that reminded white South Africans of their responsibilities to their race, an imperative that masked the hidden injunction of accountability and the maintenance of the balance of power. As the state became increasingly involved in the preservation and care of whiteness, responsibilities toward whiteness became inextricable from loyalty to the NP. This loyalty only began to falter when the party moved away from the diktats of high apartheid. Nonetheless, as I will illustrate, the visibility of whiteness could only be seen from certain angles. So forceful are the invisible/indivisible qualities of whiteness that even within this fraught context it remained to some degree unseeable, hidden by veils of ethnicity and nationality.

A White Man's Malady

As I showed in Chapter 2, the moral panic surrounding Satanism extended its narrative from black to white in a manner that suggested

the spread of a disease from one population to another. Reporting on family murder often took a similar tone. According to an article in *The Star* on 19 July 1987, family murder was 'almost unknown' in black communities, but there had been four instances in recent months. Three years later, under the headline 'Black Family Killings: A New and Increasing Trend in SA', the same paper reported, 'While incidents of family murder and resultant suicides in white South African families, particularly Afrikaans families, are known to be the highest in the world, black society has been traditionally free of these killings.' That article also lists eight cases of apparent non-white family murder – four of which involve domestic violence within a couple rather than a family system – but names only three of the protagonists (17 July 1990). Articles like this described family murder as a white problem that had crossed boundaries and was now plaguing black communities too, an infectious epidemic that spread from one 'population group' to another. Unlike the cross-racial proliferation of Satanism, though, these episodes remained relatively rare.

Meanwhile social science and civil sources attempted to inculcate the belief that family murder may have been prevalent in black communities but was underreported, suggesting in contrast to the prevailing belief that these murderers were not necessarily white at all. The *Sunday Star* quoted Louise Olivier suggesting that blacks were far more at risk of family murder than whites and that 148 out of 1000 'could be murdered by their families' (17 January 1988). A group of psychiatrists pointed out the 'black hole' in knowledge about black family murder (*Beeld*, 13 June 1988). *Beeld* conveyed the *SAMJ*'s speculation that family murder among blacks just didn't get reported (9 February 1989). Psychologist Dr Casper Schmidt claimed that family murder must be rife but unnoticed among blacks, and said, 'Die idee dat dit slegs onder wit Afrikaners plaasvind, het dus to doen met fantasie en skuldegevoelens oor ons politieke bestel' ('The idea that it only happens among white Afrikaners has to do with fantasy and with guilt about our political situation', *Insig*, 28 February 1989).

The HSRC report was based on answers to a postcard questionnaire sent to 12,000 professionals – ministers, social workers, teachers, police officers and medical people, largely white – and ten case studies sourced from SAP information. All the killers referred to in the questionnaire responses were white, and most were Afrikaans and Protestant, although as the report pointed out, most of those surveyed would probably have had contact with whites only and could not be expected to have information about family murders among other races (Olivier et al. 1991a, 32).

The case studies were sourced after requests to the SAP to categorise family murder differently to other murders and involved six white, three black and one coloured family (Olivier et al. 1991a, 39). The presence of three black families on this list was offered as proof that family murder was not a white concern and many newspapers duly reported the apparent shattering of this myth. Neither the report itself nor subsequent writings on it pointed out the disparity these numbers had in context of the demographics of the country, of which whites made up around 10 per cent rather than 60 per cent. A special issue of *Geneeskunde* magazine included a paper on family murder within a black South African family, written by some of the authors behind the HSRC report, and stated that it aimed to counter press suggestions that these incidents only happened to whites 'functioning in a patriarchal family system' (Roos, Haasbroek and Marchetti 1992, 31). Here a single example was offered as proof of what was claimed to be a common trend.

Despite these attempts at rewriting family murder as a pan-racial concern and severing it from its attachment to whiteness, press reports on black family murders generally treated them as novel, like the *Star* piece quoted above. Family murder remained a largely white phenomenon within the South African imaginary. Contemporary responses did not avoid the unpleasant work of interrogating the cultural causes of these events. Van de Hoven cited a list of factors ranging from 'a rigidly patriarchal attitude to sex roles' and 'violent communication techniques' to a paternal belief in 'absolute rights and power over his wife and children' (1988, 34–5). According to van Arkel, family murder 'takes place in a violent community in which violent deeds with noble causes' are acceptable and one person feels the right to make all relevant decisions for another (1993, 26). Du Toit named both the 'structural violence of society' and the 'Afrikaner national character' as causes (1990, 190). Vogelman referred to family murder as a symptom of the stress caused by living under apartheid (*De Kat*, October 1986) and stated that apartheid was 'incompatible with mental health' and the 'primary cause for violence' in the country (*The Star,* 18 August 1987). These ideas of Afrikaner-ness, a culture of violence, oppressive patriarchy, guardianship and the effects of apartheid were repeated in the press reports that detailed the opinions of these and other experts. Understood as largely performed by white men, these were irreparably white murders and required thought about whiteness. The continuous act of questioning interrogated not just South Africa but specifically *white* South Africa. White culture was probed, examined and found to contain the possible causes of family murder.

And yet, despite the argument I have made above about the overt nature of whiteness in the South African context, it remained to some extent obscured. Whiteness was both visible and invisible, considered and contested within the framework of family murder but in another sense denied. Whiteness hid behind a screen of ethnicity, of Afrikanerness or of specifically white South African-ness. Experts and media outlets asked questions about what was wrong with *these* white people, not what was wrong with white people as a category. Whiteness itself was never truly probed. It remained the thing that cannot be looked at, the object in the corner of the eye over which the gaze slides, never settling. Even as it was spoken aloud, even as the word white was constantly utilised within racial discourse, whiteness became an adjective, a descriptor for the 'real' culprit that was South African or, more often, Afrikaans. Classifying the white person as nationalised permitted whiteness to remain an originary category. *Huisgenoot* called family murder an Afrikaner plague (27 August 1987). *De Kat* speculated, 'Dit moet tog iets in the Afrikaners wees' ('It must be something within Afrikaners', March 1988). *Rapport* asked, 'Afrikaner volk van monsters?' ('Afrikaners: a people of monsters?', 21 May 1989). But no one ever asked what was wrong with *white people*.

Family murder in the South African imaginary was white violence but was nonetheless separated from a discomforting specificity to whiteness by the fact that it was also fundamentally *South African*. Violence in these terms was not a function of whiteness but rather one of location or nation. There is no sense in the literature that these sorts of crimes were endemic to white people in other countries or that whiteness divorced from context could harbour the killer urge, even though a few writers cited family murders elsewhere in the world to counter the apparent myth that they were inherently South African (Beyers, Marchetti and Visser 1992, 4). Soul-searching questions were asked about whether these killings could be blamed on Afrikaans culture, the church or the effects of apartheid on white people, but the answers were never sought within the realm of whiteness itself. Whiteness may have been a feature of violence but violence was not attached to whiteness, only to certain clearly delineated types of white people.

Racial Violence and the Violence of Race

This avoidance of white violence is in contrast to contemporary understandings of black violence that were consistently and damagingly racialised. The phrase 'black-on-black violence' recurred repeatedly in

media and government communications. It suggested that the internecine township unrest that led to so many deaths was a black-only concern and that the white state had no responsibility for the lives of these citizens or the rage, frustration and atrocious conditions that led to these outbreaks of low-level warfare. According to Chidester, this 'makes as much sense as calling the First World War "white on white" violence. It describes nothing real or human' (1991, 15). The phrase 'black-on-black violence', with its doubled darknesses, illustrates a forcible shift inward of the non-white world, expelled from universality or humanity, where not only violence but also meaning was directed back into the self; it referred only to itself, was understandable only by itself. The phrase permitted the white world to turn away from this violence, neither implicated nor involved. It was a closed circle and communicated only with itself.[35]

The phrase 'family murder', in contrast, implicated the entire nation. Although this was a nation that was tacitly assumed to be white, the construction of a familial 'we' that privileged a white reader still avoided the explicitly racialising divisions encoded within the opposite phrase. Black-on-black violence was fundamentally exclusionary, placing those deaths in parentheses where they were relevant only to themselves; family murder, however, was radically inclusionary. Even though the questions being asked related specifically to white families, the potential pathologisation or infection of the family system was relevant to all South Africans, even those seldom implicated in the acts themselves. These killings, the media dialogue said, affect *us all*. Experts suggested that every South African had a responsibility to watch for signs and symptoms and that part of the cause of these murders was a lack of communal care that was everyone's duty to rectify. 'The community must learn to recognise the symptoms of someone preparing to commit family murder and act appropriately and immediately' (*You*, 23 June 1988). These calls to communality were never couched in racial language. The community in this case may have been a white one but the recourse to communal terminology suggests that it could apply equally to all. Unlike black-on-black violence, the threat to the family was everyone's business.

Where most instances of white family murder merited at least a few paragraphs of press coverage and included the names of the dead, township conflict was reported statistically, with lists of numbers. During the height of the unrest the left-leaning *Cape Times* featured a daily map of South Africa with casualties illustrated by colours. Even in the liberal press black deaths were faceless and nameless, a case of numbers not

people. This repeated depiction of the black crowd is important: many white South Africans in the 1980s spoke in terms of being 'drowned' in a 'sea of blacks', classifying themselves as an 'island of white humanity' within that sea (Chidester 1991, 91). Before State of Emergency regulations increased censorship, SABC television news coverage depicted township rioters as purposeless, leaderless and apolitical. Violence was spoken of as 'breaking out' or 'erupting', a force without a motive, like the fires that were one of the visual symbols of unrest on South African television news. The wildness of the crowds, always depicted en masse, was in contrast to the ordered lines of the SAP and SADF, generally shown standing still rather than moving and in close up, their faces creating a sense of individual humanity absent in longer shots of the black crowds (Posel 1989, 268–71). When reporting on political issues the SABC generally referred to white people by their names, where black people were most often nameless and the terms 'ANC' and 'terrorist' were used interchangeably (Graaf et al. 1988, 28).

This differentiation in depictions of white and black violence went further than the number of column inches and amount of detail given to white deaths when compared with black deaths. Necklace murders of alleged collaborators by gangs of black youths were common during this period. Township residents were burned alive in their homes and subjected to aggressive coercion from the warring political factions, with supporters of the ANC, IFP and other liberation movements resorting to violence within their own communities. These occurrences were reported in the white press and, to a lesser degree, on television, but very differently to the deaths of whites killed by whites, which led to opinion pieces, lists of symptoms, expert interventions and questioning of why these things happened. Editorials like one in the *Natal Post* titled 'Family Killings: A Blot on Society' were common (15 May 1993). Township violence, although it claimed a far higher toll of lives and was far more widespread, did not inspire such careful consideration: these deaths had already been explained within the phrase 'black-on-black violence'. A consistent political narrative ascribed the unrest to ANC and communist agitators but this emphasised who was to blame for the violence rather than *why* it happened. These events were understood as a consequence of those 'unassimilable' qualities of race that had long characterised white South African thinking (L. Thompson 1985, 102). Black-on-black violence was terminologically conceptualised as an attribute of the fundamental biologism of race; white-on-white violence was interrogated, questioned, unpicked and considered. Most examples of this form of killing were examined as individual events caused by

larger forces. Even when they were politicised, white family murders were not only about politics but also about people.

White South Africans experienced surprisingly little exposure to township violence. Television viewers in the rest of the world were assaulted nightly with images of damaged bodies and army vehicles, at least until the government made it illegal for press organisations to enter conflict areas, but news segments on the SABC were tightly controlled. Internal television coverage of township riots in the 1980s had had a huge effect on public confidence and its banning did much to restore faith in the security services (Graaf et al. 1988, 5). Whites were not forced to face the ugly realities of what was going on around them, although censorship did little to curb increasing white fears. Family murder, in contrast, was reported in distressing detail by newspapers that often took a sensationalist tone. Where black violence could be explained as the work of communist masterminds or other foreign agents, each act of family murder spurred a fresh round of analysis or a repetition of expert opinions that had been previously aired.

This illustrates not only the very different values that black and white lives had during this period but also the way in which 'white violence' was never a comfortable category. Although family murder was intricately bound up with white people, each fresh example had to be dissected and questioned because illegitimate violence and whiteness did not sit easily together as violence and blackness did.[36] White people were individual, specific and human, in contrast to the faceless, nameless mass of black people, whose deaths went unrecorded by anything but numbers. This difference in individuation was a standard feature of apartheid South African racial discourse but also characterises representation of whiteness outside South Africa. Chambers says, 'To pluralise the other is to produce one's own singularity' (1997, 190). The indivisibility of whiteness is in contrast to the eternal divisibility of the non-white object. Fanon describes the colonial vocabulary: '[The settler speaks of] breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawn … Those hordes of vital statistics, those hysterical masses, those faces bereft of all humanity, those distended bodies which are like nothing on earth, that mob without beginning or end' (1963, 42–3).

Unlike family murder, then, black-on-black violence did not mean anything in the apartheid imaginary in the sense that it did not mean anything *other than itself*. It was only violence, perpetrated by violent people on invisible (and potentially violent) victims, because blackness had long been classed as barbaric. Township chaos was another illustration of the white claim that blacks and violence went together, that blackness spelled brutality and was a threat to civilisation.

According to Giliomee,

> The Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, the mass evacuation of French settlers from Algeria, and the chaotic Belgian retreat from the Congo were all deeply unsettling to whites in South Africa. Afrikaans newspapers provided full and often lurid accounts of these traumatic events. Fear of an equally violent catastrophe lay close to the core of Afrikaner thought. (2003, 120)[37]

As late as 1991, 85 per cent of whites surveyed about the consequences of eventual black rule believed that white women would be molested and that 'tribal violence' would increase, meaning that only white rule was keeping brutal chaos at bay (Manzo and McGowan 1992, 16). Much white South African fear rested (and, in some cases, still rests) on the belief that 'civilised' black behaviour was only a veneer and that death always lurked moments away: the *swart gevaar*, the black peril, the gardener with his fatal shears, the maid turned murderer or houseboy turned rapist by the pernicious influence of television. White people, however, were not so easily equated with violence by other whites.

Whiteness, says Nuttall, 'is not only a matter of how one perceives oneself, but also of how one is perceived by others' (2001, 133). Many black people's experiences of whites were very different. As Derek Cohen explains, 'South African life was infected with the "native question". While whites raised the question as a problem, few of them were able or willing to see that to the blacks, the overwhelming majority of the population, there was a "white problem"' (2010, 545). According to Biko,

> In South Africa whiteness has always been associated with police brutality and intimidation, early morning pass raids, general harassment … The claim by whites of a monopoly on comfort and security has always been so exclusive that blacks see whites as the major obstacle in their progress towards peace, prosperity and a sane society … Whiteness has thus been soiled beyond recognition. At best blacks see whiteness as a concept that warrants being despised, hated, destroyed and replaced. (1988, 84)

In his memoir *My Traitor's Heart* the Afrikaans journalist Rian Malan relates a story of getting lost in a township. He goes into a school and the headmaster delegates a small boy to help the white *baas* (boss) find his way out. The child sits in Malan's car in a state of terror, refusing to meet his

eyes. 'I told him not to be frightened, but he didn't really understand English, so I reached across and tried to put a reassuring arm across his shoulders. He cried out in fear and cringed into his corner' (1991, 274). ECC organiser Laurie Nathan cites a number of contemporary surveys illustrating that blacks in the townships felt overwhelmingly threatened rather than protected by the largely white security forces, in contrast to white perceptions (1989, 71). For many black South Africans whiteness, divested of the purposeless specificities of Afrikaans or English, symbolised violence in and of itself.

Apartheid's separating regime was so efficient that two racialised groups in a single country developed vastly contrasting notions of each other, with the white population largely unaware of what they symbolised for blacks. Black understandings of whiteness as violent, abusive, dangerous, unjust and unreasonable never instigated a process of white questioning of whiteness. Family murder, however, as white-on-white violence, did. This un-ignorable relation of whiteness to senseless, illogical deaths initiated a schism in media understandings of white identity, allowing, perhaps for the first time on such a public scale, for a vocal examination of what it meant to be white in the country of apartheid. Each new act of family murder permitted white South Africans to ask themselves the forbidden question, Was there something wrong with white South Africa? And, hence, Was there something wrong with apartheid? Family murders were understood as a symptom of a cultural disease, in which, according to the *Pretoria News*, it was a 'racial trait of Afrikaans-speaking South Africans to believe they [had] the right and duty to determine the lives of other races, and with this went an over-developed sense of responsibility' leading to the dangerous urge to exterminate the family and rescue them from the cruel world (13 June 1988). A public perspective centred on moral superiority and a long-standing culture of enforced conformity was slowly being infected with doubt as both English and Afrikaans press increasing drew the link, whether objectively true or not, between white people living within apartheid and the violent, pathological destruction of the family.

Thus even as the white right-wing and traditionalist Afrikaners withdrew their support from the National Party in protest against its reformist direction, many other moderate or non-politicised white South Africans encountered a way to voice thoughts that had previously been equated to national betrayal or race suicide. Even these small doubts created by the swell of analysis in the wake of family murders indicate a change in how white South Africa operated and the increasing vulnerability of its homogenising political myths.

The Murderous Act of Will

As I argued at the end of the last chapter, both belief in Satanism and anger at NGK 'complicity' in family murder can be understood as subversive refusals to accept the macropolitical injunctions of a no longer trustworthy state. It is tempting to read family murders in the same way, as acts of defiance and entrenchments of the threatened status quo. This reading is consistent with that of Leonhard Praeg, one of the few non-criminological or psychological writers to engage with South African family murder. Praeg's viewpoint is, however, flawed: the interpellations attendant upon the privilege of whiteness dismiss the possibility of family murder operating as an act of foundational resistance. His methodology is also problematic and illustrates why I choose to write not about family murder as such but about responses to family murder. He makes extensive use of newspaper articles and the HSRC report as sources of neutral data but operates on the assumption that the family murderer is white, male and Afrikaans, a construction that the report tries to counter. Female and non-white killers are left out of this account in an uncanny iteration of the writing of much white South African history.

News reporting on the van de Merwe murders in January 1991 zealously catalogued the portion of Gordon van de Merwe's letter that explained that he would not leave his family to face a 'bleak future in the new South Africa'. The note, which was thrown over the wall of the family's neighbours' garden, ended with the words, 'God forgive me for what I am about to do' (*Weekly Mail*, 1–7 February 1991). The press emphasis on this reference to the 'new' South Africa and on van de Merwe's remorse in the face of insuperable odds suggest that the deaths were narrativised as an act of resistance against the path the country was taking under the NP. The Capito murders in August 1992 were similarly understood as being the consequence of the white father's loss of security, status, economic stability and pride.

Praeg argues that this means that life, owned by the omnipotent patriarch, was used as a weapon and turned back against the larger system. The father claimed ownership of his wife and children and thus the right to end their lives. Family murder in this understanding was a continuation of the structures of high apartheid. The National Party had become (at least on the surface) conciliatory and was led by necessity rather than biblical edict, but the family murderer retained the original white South African system whereby the father was the law. The family had been physically destroyed but it *remained a family* under patriarchal control, consistent with the original edicts of Afrikaner

political mythology. The family murderer could not just remove himself from the world because, in a perverted volte-face of the African idea of *ubuntu* – a person is a person through other people – he was constituted through his relations and so he must obliterate them in order to annihilate himself (Praeg 2007, 127). In this understanding, the act of murder actually served to protect against race suicide: in death, more specifically in death as a group, the ethnic purity of the collective remained intact. Miscegenation, *gelykstelling* and loss of white power would never threaten the race.

Family murder can also be read as an attempt to re-inaugurate structures older than apartheid. Foucault suggests that biopower equates to an act of regularisation, the power to make live and make die, in which death becomes hidden and taboo rather than public and spectacular (1997, 247). In these terms the father's act of enforcing death on the family could be seen as a reclamation of power from the system that holds it, a violent statement that power over the family is his not the state's, that he alone holds the 'right of death and power over life' (Foucault 1991). This analysis would claim that the white male Afrikaans family murderer took back power over life from the state, returning to a pre-modern condition in which each patriarch also functioned as sovereign and countered the state's metonymic potential to be the father of the nation. The micropolitical *replaced* the macropolitical. The father asserted himself as sovereign through the medium of gun, knife, gas, crossbow, noose.

But this notion of family murder as subversive and responsive to threats to patriarchal dominance also poses significant problems. First, it attempts to interrogate family murder *as an act*, which assumes that each similar performance of similar killings has a similar causation and meaning, but this cannot be known without access to the motivations or at the very least the biographies of the killers. Second, this imaging of white patriarchy as willing to perform any act of violence or social destruction necessary to perpetuate itself is unconvincing: even the dominant hegemony must justify itself within its own discursive frame. The apartheid system repeatedly validated its injustices with recourse to ever more unwieldy laws and acts, with ever more contradictory names, what Bethlehem calls the apparent dignifying of the 'textual articulations of forced displacements', the state's 'dislocations of signification' (2006, 12).[38] As the outcry at the murders committed at Vlakplaas and the inquest after Steve Biko's death showed, the state was itself bound by the rule of law, albeit one that was easily altered for ideological purposes. There are rules attendant upon white dominance. Whiteness,

though often unseeable, has its own set of moral codings and interpellations. Cultural depictions of whiteness relate to purity, light, goodness and morality. In order to retain access to these notions the bearer of whiteness has a certain responsibility: one must not become a 'waste of a white skin'. While family murder can be read as a responsive act of will to the threat of change in the polis, Praeg's understanding of these killings as sacrifices aimed at re-inaugurating the patriarchal order forgets that there are injunctions that come with whiteness, ways of behaving that entrench imperial and modern understandings of what white is, and that the family murderer, rather than being a purified form, is a perversion of these.

Darkness Falls

Rather than a replay of foundational violence, family murder was in fact a *failure* of whiteness. According to Bill Schwarz, race is a powerful symbolic force and whiteness is set up as civilised both through 'formations of modernity and through fantasy/desire' (1996, 11). Whiteness connotes civilisation and civilisation requires the conquering of urges. The imperial mission was justified by the understanding that white European society was better than whatever it encountered elsewhere in the world, and 'the white man was a metonym which simultaneously denoted a male of European ancestry and the advanced civilisation of which he was a member' (Bederman 1995, 50). Far from being restricted to the colonial era this white pride was still endemic during apartheid, as it continues to be today. There is a moral-symbolic code at play in the naming of whites as white, elevating these cultures to a higher plane than that of the non-whites whose otherness is always implied by the centrality of whiteness (Dyer 1997). But, importantly, this ascendancy is premised on the belief that whiteness is not at the mercy of instinctual behaviours and is built on Enlightenment reason. White people, the discourse suggests, can control their urges. They experience the same desires as other races but do not give in to them. Their ethical and intellectual superiority is premised on the constraints they impose on the biological and the personal.

Gail Bederman illustrates the connections between whiteness, manliness and the idea of civilisation in late nineteenth-century America, saying, 'By gaining the manly strength to control himself, a man gained the authority, as well as the duty, to protect those less manly than himself – whether his wife, his children, his employees or his racial "inferiors"' (1995, 48). This has significant resonance for how twentieth-century

South African manhood operated: the notion of mandate, discussed above, was again vital. The white man had to retain the moral responsibility that allowed him to remain the supreme patriarch of the family or state. He had to operate *within the confines of whiteness* in order to feel that his authority was justified and to continue enhancing the rickety structure of the dominant fiction that only white men could run South Africa/only strong fathers could run families. Apartheid was predicated on a myth of guardianship and an idea that whites had a religious duty to bring civilisation to Africa, which necessitated faith in the moral authority of those doing the civilising.

The family murderer, thus, fulfilled that disturbing military designation, becoming truly a waste of a white skin. Particularly when male and also subject to the interpellations of patriarchal dominance, the family murderer evinced a shocking failure of whiteness. In the act of killing he released primitive urges, relinquished control, ejected reason and sense and was no longer bound by the constraints of civilisation. These acts made it clear that the white family murderer was every bit as murderous as the black killer within whom, white cultural myth suggested, violence was always-already lurking. One of the crucial distinctions between black and white had been withdrawn: whites no longer possessed control over themselves. How could the religiously avowed mandate of protectionism, by which the white person had a duty to care for the 'less advanced' black person, be valid when the white person could not control the violence within? Civilisation then became only a feature of power rather than the *right* to power, maintained by guns and bombs and tanks rather than by moral authority. This change in the maintenance of white domination was visible throughout the 1980s when the NP government sent conscripts into the townships, moving 'The Border' away from the outer edge of South West Africa/Namibia, into the heart of the nation and close to comfortable white lives, making it increasingly difficult to retain the fiction that whites ruled by right rather than by violence.

In its senselessness, its viciousness, its extremity – there are few things more disturbing than the killing of children – family murder illustrated whiteness gone wrong, loosened from the constraints that should bind it. The reams of press material generated by these killings were a response to this failure. The family murder was a destructive act against the communal self. Like the Bubbles Schroeder killing that revealed the fragility of white middle-class English-speaking society (Wade 1993), this decline of whiteness affected everybody, implicated everybody, because it revealed the paucity of racial myths, which in turn suggested

the possibility of loss of power and the threats to white security that was imagined to entail.

This failure of whiteness was dealt with in the white press using strategies ranging from denial to analysis. According to the Afrikaans women's magazine *Rooi Rose*, 'Navorsing het bewys dat gesinsmoorde onder swartes uit organiese of liggaamlike probleme spruit. Gesinsmoorde onder blankes het hul oorsprong meer in psigiatriese siektes en sosiaal-ekonomiese problem' ('Research has shown that family murders performed by blacks stem from organic or physical problems. Family murders by whites have their origin more in psychiatric problems and socio-economic problems', 17 August 1988). The veracity of this unsubstantiated and uncited research is questionable to say the least. What it does do, though, is illustrate how differently white and black violence were recognised.

Even when the act was the same, the causes and motivations for it were understood to be different. White South Africa could not understand black violence in the same way as white violence because that would allow for a concurrence, a similarity, a *gelykstelling* of white and black. There is no suggestion in the literature that black family murders were a consequence of apartheid. This biologising, essentialising construction fully pathologised black men, in a discourse drawn from the black-peril panics around unruly or violent black male sexuality that characterised the early twentieth century in southern Africa (McCulloch 2000; van Onselen 1982): like their urge to rape white women, their urge to murder was organic and physical, resting within their bodies. There was some cellular reason that the black family murderer destroyed his children. Like his race and the ways of being that it entailed, his urge to murder was part of his body, deeper than skin, rather than a consequence of circumstance. The phrase 'organic or physical problems' places the killing urge firmly within the embodied self, out of the reach of logic or reason or the other civilising factors that could attempt to understand and to halt these actions. Like black-on-black violence, the organic/physical violence of the black family murderer was part of his body, a consequence of biology.

The white killer, on the other hand, was motivated by psychological issues – a concrete and potentially treatable problem, an illness that was separate from whiteness, something actively wrong with the murderous individual rather than endemic to body and being – or by social or financial constraints. These were 'real' problems, real issues. The black family murderer's motivation remained unrecognised and unconsidered, biologised in the same way that racial pseudo-sciences have long

biologised the non-white subject. The white family murderer's fatal impulse stemmed from something external, a problem that could be solved or cured. Even though family murder was a failure of whiteness, the white killer, like the white Satanist, still retained the possibility of redemption or cure if he was stopped in time. There is a no categorical slippage here. Even the failure, the apostate, disgusting, repudiated, abject miscarriage of whiteness, did not perform violence like black men did, as a thing inherent and indivisible from the self. The white person entering into the seemingly black mode of illegitimate violence remained white even while becoming a travesty of what whiteness was supposed to entail; the notion of unassimilable races was so entrenched that separation was maintained even in the annals of murder.

White and black killing were kept apart, avoiding in death the *gelykstelling* that horrified white South Africans. The greatest threat came from inside not outside, was white not black. This recentring of whiteness is another exercise in the Freudian uncanny, the way in which '*unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich*' (1990, 347), that which is distressing and frightening comes at its deepest point from the thing we know best. The most horrifying, disgusting crime emerged from within the sanctum of whiteness and was both recognised and unrecognisable. This emphasis on whiteness recalls the powerful Black Consciousness critique in which even the apparently noble impulses of the white person actually cement whiteness back at the centre of things. Biko described the progressive South African agenda as fundamentally about whites not about blacks, about whether 'A is more of a liberal than B' (1988, 22). Similarly, Ahmed points out, 'feeling bad about racism or white privilege can function as a form of self-centeredness, which returns the white subject "back into" itself, as the one whose feelings matter' (2004, 32). This echoes too the self-othering that characterised the Satanism scare, a white solipsism so advanced that the ultimate enemy always, in the final analysis, came from within. Thus conversation about threats to whiteness remained about whiteness, repudiating yet again the possibility of black action and agency. Even at the edges, even at the extremes, the symbolic power of South African whiteness kept it firmly at the heart of the national conversation.

The panic around family murder had varied consequences. At the same time as it opened up a space for a public questioning of the effects of apartheid, it also fostered repetitions of mythologies about 'the Afrikaner' and damaging beliefs about the racial qualities of violence. The apparent epidemic allowed for an interrogation of the family, the church and the state that sometimes equated to a damning indictment

of Afrikaners themselves. This offered an uncanny premonition of the soul-searching some Afrikaners would go through during the TRC hearings. Antjie Krog writes,

> Was apartheid the product of some horrific shortcoming in Afrikaner culture? Could one find the key in Afrikaner songs and literature, in beer and *braaivleis*? How do I live with the fact that all the words used to humiliate, all the orders given to kill, belonged to the language of my heart? (1998, 238)

Like the ritual scarification of the TRC, family murder allowed for a questioning of what it meant to be white and South African and how these identities were implicated in and affected by the legislated injustice of apartheid. At the same time, though, the press and social science discourse surrounding these deaths repeated and strengthened the vicious polarities that accrued to the ideas that white people had of whiteness and of blackness.

Family murder, then, is important for understanding the connotations and consequences of whiteness in apartheid South Africa. In the contrast to receptions of black violence, in the injunctions attendant upon white people's status, in the ethnicised assumptions about race, purity and civilisation, the reporting on this so-called epidemic reveals many of the ways in which whiteness was constructed and maintained by white South African culture and society, a category of both privilege and responsibility that held the social and political culture of the era violently in its thrall.

From Afrikaans sexual naivety to the demanding privilege of bearing whiteness, from a pressing economic crisis to post-imperial paternalistic entitlement, from the contested role of the church to endemic fear of modernity, the 'epidemic' of family murder that swept across the South African landscape in the last years of apartheid encapsulates many of the power conflicts, structural crises and cultural fears that accompanied this laborious moment of social change. We cannot know how many of these acts involved families that did not fit the murderous white Afrikaans archetype; we cannot know how closely tied these deaths were to their South African-ness; we cannot know how many South Africans still lose their loved ones in this way. We can, however, know that the public understanding of 'family murder' became for a while a space wherein white South Africans could interrogate their whiteness, their society, their positions within it and the state that acted in their names, without entering into the ideological and identificatory

maelstrom of actual politics. The family and the church, those micro- and macro-cosmic systems that informed, mirrored, supported and were equated with the Afrikaner nationalist state, became embroiled in the discourse of family murder, both praised and vilified. Where the Satanism scare permitted an airing of the many threats to the sanctity of white dominance, the dialogue around family murder was not a response to the fear of what black political enfranchisement could mean for whites. Rather the demon that was disavowed was the white father, the metonym for white rule and the state itself. Just as it engendered an insecurity around church and family so the family killing threatened the sanctity of whiteness, an uncanny danger that would come from within not from without. This sense of the possibly pathological displacement of being white in Africa underwrote the horror of contemporary responses to these tragic and desperate acts.

Conclusion: The End of Whiteness

According to David Chidester, during his 1989 murder trial Barend Strydom told the court, '"I did not commit murder, but merely exercised my rights as a son of the Boerevolk." Strydom claimed that his human identity and rights were based not merely on race, but more importantly and specifically on an Afrikaner identity' (1991, 11). Strydom's murderous impulse came from a belief not only in white supremacy but in a particular social, cultural and ethnic modality, a cosmology that placed the white Afrikaans South African male in the epicentre of the land and gave the *volk* a religious and moral mandate to maintain white power and racial separation.

Strydom was an anomaly. He represents the furthest point on a spectrum of white pathologies, one that assumed there was no possible future for South Africa other than a race war which he had determined to initiate. But his ideas about communist conspiracy, civilisation, the white man's duty and whiteness under threat were common not only to less homicidal Afrikaners but also within other white South African groups, whose experiences of the late apartheid period were often translated into 'garrison statehood' and disproportionate senses of fear, threat and looming catastrophe, and whose 'perception of reality was profoundly influenced by militarisation and the … [NP's] construction of threat' (Conway 2012, 42).

As I have shown, both the Satanism scare and the family murder panic exhibited similar symptoms to Strydom's post hoc narrating of his murderous saunter through Pretoria's streets. But unlike the Strydom killings, the appearances of Satanism and family murder in the white press involved a pathological turn inwards, a privileging of whiteness as the greatest threat to whiteness in which the enemy, either the misguided satanic teenager or the murderous Afrikaans

father, came from within and remained available to the possibility of redemption, either through Christ or through community intervention. This was a hegemonic recentring of identity that denied the import of enormous and evident social change even as those self-same media outlets debated and considered the political situation on a daily basis. It also denied the possibility of white powerlessness inherent in the democratisation of South Africa by insisting that white society could save those who threatened it and bring them back into the fold. The Satanist could become a born-again Christian and offer public repentance or confession in the press while the family murderer could use the loving care of church, community or psychological professionals to find healthier solutions to his problematic urges. In this narrative of rescue and redemption white people and white culture retained agency and remained in charge of their own destinies. As well as their specific attributes, then, Satanism and family murder illustrate how self-referential South African whiteness became during apartheid, and how white identities retained a hope of redemption rather than descending into the dark apocalypse inhabited by Strydom. This book thus adds to a greater understanding of how hegemonic cultural systems and identities respond to perceived threats to their authority or survival, and particularly the way in which those hegemonies retain dominance, even if only imaginatively, by maintaining their positions at the centre of social discourse and cultural power.

Satanism and family murder were both objects of significant media and government attention in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Neither is commonly considered an important element of what happened in South Africa during the end of apartheid and both have largely been absent from scholarly understandings of the period. But as I have argued, these moments of late apartheid panic and paranoia were not random or inconsequent, but were important symptoms of popular white responses to social and political upheaval. For white people, the potential dissolution of apartheid did not threaten just the loss of political power and privileged access to jobs and education. It also came with imaginary and ideological consequences that unsettled the foundations of identity. This is the 'end of whiteness' with which I have been concerned, the threatened destruction of a racialised paradigm that had shaped the development of South Africa and of white South Africans to the point of inseparability. The coherence between the ideas of whiteness and South African-ness, for many white people, meant that the change beginning in the late 1980s and beyond affected internal worlds and shifted personal meanings. While they may not have had

the long-term social and economic effects of other events occurring in this period, Satanism and family murder show how deeply these consequences ran within the psychic life of certain white people and the press that served them as both talking cure and hysterical repository. This book is a significant addition to the literature on whiteness in the global south and raises important questions about how these phobic responses manifest in other situations.

Components of Whiteness

Chidester writes, 'Although cloaked in racism, apartheid has not been essentially about race, but about the horrible logics of purity and power' (1991, 10). A persistent public sentiment about infection, pathogenicity, disease and cleanliness permeated these stories of Satanism and family murder and carried with it the old horror of *bloedvermenging*, blood-mixing, the dilution of 'civilised' European stock with the taint of nativism. Even at the tail end of apartheid, when nineteenth-century racial science had largely been rejected, the most basic biological fears of the colonial state were expressed in a phantasmic form. The duty to preserve white society from the stigma of bad or inappropriate blood informed much of the panic around the spread of these so-called epidemics.

By this point P.W. Botha's compromised programme of resentful reform was in full swing and the most obviously offensive and biopolitically engineered statutes had been removed from the law books. Apartheid's aggressive distaste for racial mixing had been replaced by a new pragmatism that placed the maintenance of white rule above purely ideological considerations. However, the reappearance of this rhetorical 'sanitation syndrome' (Swanson 1977) within both Satanism and family murder, as well as its continued importance to anti-communist politicking, shows that the legislative changes made by Botha and the apparently reborn NP were not powerful enough to dislodge the long-standing importance of biological purity to white society. Like the potential for resistance that I discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to Satanism and in Chapter 7 with regards to family murder, the persistence of this biopolitical discourse was a signifier for the NP's increasing loss of control over the mythic and imaginary architecture of white South Africa. Whiteness had never been homogenous and Afrikaners had never been unified; but during this period even the appearances of homogeneity and unity became fractured and open to both negotiation and redemption.

As well as relying on historical notions of infection and hygiene, these narratives were multi-directional. As I showed in Chapters 2 and 8, both Satanism and family murder spread from white society to black, mirroring the corrupting influences of modernity on Africans that white social engineers had used to justify urban segregation and the Group Areas Act. These understandings of the epidemic quality of the modern and the risk it posed to 'pure' black life were also in contrast to the NP's developing rhetoric. Both the party and the English and Afrikaans business elite supported the development of a black middle class that could be co-opted into a version of South Africa that was coherent with continued white dominance (van de Westhuizen 2007). This continued popular emphasis on the permeable infectability of black communities, seen (still) to be weak and in need of guardianship, contradicted state aims and showed a further disjuncture between macro- and micropolitics. The popular conceptualisations of both Satanism and family murder revealed the gulf between the ideological rhetoric of state attempts at self-serving modernisation and the potent affective power of the racial and political mythologies that underlay white South African identity.

According to Melissa Steyn, whiteness is 'an ideologically supported social positionality that has accrued to people of European descent as a consequence of the economic and political advantage gained during and subsequent to European colonial expansion' (2005, 121). But apartheid-era South African whiteness was, as I have shown, not only a passport to privilege. It was also a set of behavioural injunctions, a moral blueprint, an interpellation, an order and a closing down of possibility. Whiteness came with enormous and inequitable social and economic benefit but was also burdened with attachments to violence, retrogressive ideas about gender and morality and political generation and misuse of white fear. The 'cyclical reinforcement of white fear [was] one of the vital ingredients for keeping the NP in power' (van de Westhuizen 2007, 163). Being white during apartheid required a devil's deal. Undeserved privilege was accompanied by strict behavioural constraints and critical thought could be equated to national or racial treachery. The cultural pathologies of Satanism and family murder were responses not only to the coming of democratisation but also to the state's increasing loss of control over conformist white social and ethnic mythologies and behaviours.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of this investigation is its illustration of the effect that the system of domination had on white people. Rather than resituating white people as victims of apartheid, my

conclusions echo the arguments made by left-leaning moral entrepreneurs about family murder and by the ECC about conscription (Conway 2012; Nathan 1989): where appeals to social justice fail, structural inequalities can be challenged by illustrating the detrimental effect they have on the groups that they claim to benefit. This research thus has important significance for work beyond South Africa, adding to the body of knowledge on how *all* those entangled with structures of racial and other injustices suffer under them.

I have argued that whiteness was intimately bound up with the abuses of the state. Post-apartheid claims of white ignorance and attempts to blame NP censorship for white inaction are not legitimate. As van de Westhuizen writes,

> The white leadership and their supporters did not want to talk. In post-apartheid South Africa, it is said that they were blind and deaf – they did not hear the appeals of black people. Strange, then, how quick whites were to silence the appeals they ostensibly could not hear. They supported the intensification of state repression to silence these 'inaudible' appeals. (2007, 107)

Claims of white victimhood are not legitimate; rather, this investigation into Satanism and family murder has revealed the flaws in whiteness, the vast disjuncture between its self-portrayal as an ethically and intellectually superior race and the actuality of a paranoid, reactive and often delusional social construction.

As well as these weaknesses in whiteness, the category itself was under negotiation during this period. As I showed in Chapter 10, whiteness had always been visible in the context of South Africa, but in the late apartheid period it became anguished and anxious. Discussion about the meanings of being white, for so long restricted by conformist injunctions, became common in newspapers and magazines even as right-wing political groupings sprang to an often violent defence of white rule. The question of what it meant to be white in a South Africa that no longer conformed to a model of white dominance and supposedly benevolent paternalism was traumatically and, as in Strydom's case, even homicidally expressed. Ordinary white people found themselves confronted with the types of uncertainty that had formerly been kept at bay by apartheid's rigid social structures. Both the Afrikaans family murderer and the secretive Satanist were understood to have emerged from within white groups. Public discussion on how to deal with these threats would have been impossible without an acknowledgement,

however tacit, that something was not right within white communities. The lurid and despairing press coverage of Satanism and family murder respectively created a sense in the popular media that there was something wrong with white society. For many this uncertainty about the meaning of whiteness manifested in repression, overdetermination and anxiety, an unwillingness or incapacity to see a future or a truncated, millennial sense of time that could not imagine the possibility of a world beyond the apartheid state.

Structural Damages

White South African society was ordered so as to minimise dissent. The combination of censorship, militarisation, Christian National Education, economic protectionism, segregation, nationalist propaganda and relentless fear-mongering was generally effective in keeping the white electorate in check. As I showed in Chapter 10, responses to the so-called poor white problem in the 1930s stigmatised and pathologised white people who failed to 'act white' and thus threatened to reveal the tenuous constructions of racial identity. These same people were the objects of the legislative and philanthropic energies of high-status whites both in and outside South Africa who were determined to police those boundaries. White people who did rebel often did so within racialised and gendered confines that mimicked the society within which they lived (Mooney 1998). By the 1980s the militarised status quo was maintained by an 'education system that actively prepared white boys for military service, the government who celebrated soldiers and the SADF and propagated fear of a threatening black and communist enemy, [and] the media who left such definitions largely unchallenged and insulated white south Africans from reality' (Conway 2012, 3). Conway calls conscription 'a disciplinary mechanism for a white population whose unity was by no means assured' (2012, 4).

But as the end of apartheid drew nearer, in a contradictory historical process that seemed unimaginable to many whites and inevitable to many blacks, the powerful structures that underwrote the system were failing. Many white people, both Afrikaans and otherwise, deserted traditional churches for the millennial possibilities of the growing Pentecostal movement or for Christian groups that maintained a religious emphasis on apartheid; in 1986 20,000 members left the NGK to form the Afrikaanse Protestante-Kerk in protest against the NGK rejecting racial discrimination as a sin (Lubbe 2001, 46). At the same time many abandoned the National Party for farther-right groups

that promised a retention of white power, white privilege and racial separation, no matter how apocryphal these aims had become. Some young people began to rebel, both through the medium of popular culture and as a response to the threat of conscription or their experiences in the SADF. This increase in visible youth agitation destabilised the traditional construction of the white family, which suddenly, like the state, was no longer the unquestioned domain of a dominant patriarch.

The media responses to and stories surrounding Satanism and family murder reveal them to be thick nodes of interconnectedness for important social trends: movement to the political left or right, weakening of the traditional structures of apartheid, increasing possibilities for dissent or self-critique, a growing awareness of the injustice of the system coupled with ever more potent racial demonology and senses of risk and fear. Anxiety about the failures of family, church and state or the urge to shore them up or supersede them with invigorated structures informed many of the responses to these events.

South African life, for people of all races, has always been tied to strict gender roles. Idealised ideas about Afrikaner masculinity were based on '"pure" New Testament principles, and rigid austerity and strictness in conduct and morals' (du Pisani 2001, 158). White manhood of various types frequently manifested in violence, domination and control, the use of weapons, cultural and social arrogance and a belief in the religiously or morally mandated right of white men to rule Africa. White men ran the state, church and family while white women were intimately bound up with the work of maintaining apartheid, interpellated into roles that emphasised sacrifice, nurturing, acceptance and loyalty. Anne McClintock writes, 'The icon of the *volksmoeder* is paradoxical. On the one hand, it recognises the power of (white) motherhood; on the other hand, it is a retrospective iconography of gender containment, containing women's mutinous power within an iconography of domestic service' (1995, 172). Dissent was not accepted from either men or women, and white women were equally complicit in the stability of apartheid. Yet by the period in question some of these convictions had become less concrete. Just as the modernisation of the Afrikaner housewife and ECC campaigns aimed at white women influenced the public narrative around femininity, the murderous white father altered the way in which people discussed masculinity and the rebellious satanic teen suggested familial failure and disintegration. The certainties of what it meant to be a white man or a white woman within a family were no longer entirely fixed. Even the most seemingly stable poles of

white identity, those relating to always-powerful modes of kinship and gender, became insecure as the late apartheid period progressed.

The panics around Satanism and family murder reveal the disruptions that happened within the landscape of whiteness during late apartheid, so very different from the NP's over-confident claims to reformist, modernising progress. This is a discussion that merits being taken forward into other situations of dominance and control: How does the culture of the coloniser respond to the end of the colonial situation? Do these paranoid, occultic responses characterise the loss of power elsewhere? What are the folk devils and internal enemies that appear when a national identity is forced to renegotiate its myths? How has whiteness elsewhere in the global south reacted to the loss of formal control and political power?

Endings and New Beginnings

In early 2012, after four years of living in Cape Town and 13 in the UK, I returned to Johannesburg to take up a research fellowship. The city I moved back to was almost unrecognisable. Joburg in my adolescence had felt like Boehmer's description of South Africa, a 'parched place' (1998, 52). In the intervening years it has become a pulsing metropolis, 'a truly global city … composed not only of flows of money, skills, knowledge, security, machinery, and technology, but also of ideas, people, images, and imaginaries – a cultural economy' (Mbembe and Nuttall 2008, 3). Experiencing this huge, confusing, loud, dangerous, thrilling, frustrating city, it is difficult to credit quite how potent white fear of the end of apartheid was and quite how lurid white scenarios of the future could be. South Africa no longer feels isolated from the continent and beyond. Its entry into global networks of production, consumption, tourism and cultural exchange have shifted many of the self-regarding solipsisms of whiteness. Much twenty-first-century writing on whiteness considers this playfulness, in the work of *Bittercomix* artists Conrad Botes (Barnard 2004), the popularity of rave culture in the late 1990s (Marlin-Curiel 2001) or my own research on the band Die Antwoord (Falkof 2012).

As with most stories, though, this is not the whole picture. At a workshop she attended in the mid-1990s, Melissa Steyn encountered a group of white people who 'had been damaged, ironically, by socio-political structures that had been designed to protect us, deeply humbled by the historical outcome of an arrogant system originally intended to entrench our white superiority and entitlement' (2001, x). Steyn also,

however, discusses the ways in which post-apartheid 'white talk', the discourses white people surround themselves with, aims to legitimise and justify the benefits that accrued to white people during apartheid, often repeating racist and reductive ideas about black failure, inferiority and incapacity for self-government (Steyn and Foster 2008; Steyn 2004). While some whites acknowledge the damage that apartheid did to them, others have embarked on what Steyn calls rehabilitation, restating recurring themes around white guardianship and black corruption or ineptitude that play out constantly in the contemporary media.

According to Christi van de Westhuizen, during the period of the TRC, 'guilt and confusion overcame many Afrikaners as the forces of remembering momentarily overpowered the forces of forgetting, blowing apart the house of cards built from the justifications for apartheid' (2007, 3); however, 'the heady fluidity of thought and expression after the first democratic election had by the early 2000s been worn down to resentment and self-pity among many Afrikaners. The TRC revelations had led many to retreat into wilful amnesia' (2007, 6). These claims can equally refer to many English-speaking white South Africans, whose moment of potential openness at the point of the TRC swiftly backpedalled into complacency, a continued refusal of either guilt or shame and a consistent claim that only white Afrikaners were culpable for South Africa's racial inequities. 'It has been easy for [English-speaking South Africans] to conceive of themselves as marginalised and their opinions overlooked, in the past implying that there was little commonality between Afrikaner politics and their own' (Salusbury and Foster 2004, 94). English speakers too have developed numerous strategies for refusing complicity in their own unearned privilege.

As any trip to a restaurant in Johannesburg, a tavern in the Eastern Cape, a beach in Durban or a game farm in Mpumalanga will show, segregation in South Africa did not end when the ANC won the 1994 election. The idea of *apart-heid*, of separate-ness, has not been excised from South African life. For every desirable public school in a city suburb where the children of working-class black policemen study alongside the children of wealthy white liberals, there is another in the town of Boksburg, where the ubiquitous blondeness of the Afrikaans students is a window onto an older world, or one further north in rural Limpopo, where six-year-old learners face the possibility of drowning in unprotected pit toilets (*City Press*, 22 January 2014). But despite these retrogressive retentions and the way in which many people, both black and white, live behind bars and in shopping malls where reality is always an armed guard away, 'race' in South Africa has indeed changed. Blackness

is no longer judicially constrained by a repressive list of denials and has access to both modernity and to traditional and reimagined versions of its own history. Coloured identity is spoken and acknowledged in new and often empowering ways, or at the very least problematised rather than ignored (Erasmus 2001).

Despite the near-hysterical fears of some elements of the white electorate, the end of apartheid did not lead to the end of whiteness. Many white identities have recovered from the internalised traumas inculcated by the fall of apartheid, becoming creative and even hybridised. White cultures seem far less prone to the sorts of group pathologies embodied in Satanism and family murder than they once did. The powerful injunctions to conformity have fallen away, allowing for a flourishing of selves that, despite the conservatism of many white people, has allowed some to participate in imaginative acts of nation-building and restitution.

In other cases, though, the unbroken continuation of white social and economic privilege has allowed whiteness to remain relatively unexamined in its comfort. Rather than an end, whiteness has undergone a rebirth. Loss of political power has led to neither bloodshed nor significant economic hardship. Angry white people who claim they do not have a voice in contemporary South Africa appear frequently on the radio, on television, in newspapers and on online message boards bemoaning the corruption and injustice of the ANC and its Black Economic Empowerment programme, but these commentators and moral entrepreneurs seldom acknowledge the relevance of the recent past to the current national situation, preferring instead to reiterate a self-serving and simplistic position that insists that the past has no bearing on the present, and that acknowledging the scars of history is not only irrelevant but also illegitimate. This is whiteness deaf and dumb, rejecting its own involvement in social construction, just as it did during the darkest days of the violence that shook South Africa in the early 1990s.

Perhaps the most important parts of the Satanism scare and the panic around family murder are their revelations about the destructive effects of power, about the way in which dominance, privilege and control can warp and damage a culture, making it paranoid and reactive, morally and imaginatively inflexible, incapable of progress, endemically violent and permanently in denial. This was one of the most pervasive and iniquitous effects of apartheid on white culture and it has left indelible traces on the South Africa we have built today. Inward-looking, resistant whitenesses still mired in disavowed racism exist alongside the more

malleable forms of white life that have developed in the past decades, and remain, still, protected.

The end of apartheid did not result in a bloody and violent end to whiteness in South Africa. Whiteness persists, as does white privilege. But it is not without its own signs of history. The murderous madness of the Afrikaans father-killer, plotting his family's disintegration from within their domestic sanctuary, and the wild-eyed, drug-crazed Satanist laying her plans for the destruction of the youth were part of the ruin of the temporary and always conditional certainty that apartheid attempted to bestow upon whiteness. These double monsters, both fantastic and real, helped to disembowel the clarities of whiteness even as they were born out of threats to it. Deep within its self-regarding modernity and renegotiation of identity, contemporary white South Africa still wears those scars of cultural pathology.

Notes

1. *Voortrekkers* were groups of nineteenth-century Afrikaners who migrated north from the Cape colony into the South African interior to escape British rule.
2. 'Township' is the name given by colonial and later apartheid authorities to underdeveloped, badly resourced urban living areas, usually on the outskirts of white towns and cities, which were set aside for the black workforce.
3. See, for example, Liz Gunner on Zulu radio drama since 1941 (2000), David Coplan on township music and theatre (1985) and Isabel Hofmeyr on the long-established Afrikaans magazine *Huisgenoot* (1987).
4. In 1984 the NP launched what it called a 'tricameral' parliament, a flawed and divisive attempt at reforming the political system. After a referendum among white voters it gave limited political representation to people classified as coloured and Indian, although black South Africans remained completely excluded. Opposition to the system came from both the left and right and voting rates among non-whites remained extremely low, in a show of disapproval of what many viewed as puppet MPs.
5. The State of Emergency was declared in 1985 in 36 magisterial districts. It was extended across the whole country in 1986 and given an extra year to run in 1989. New measures brought in included the notorious 90-day law, in which suspects could be held without trial for 90 days, after which many were released and then re-arrested as they left the prison.
6. According to André Brink, 'The widespread notion of "traditional Afrikaner unity" is based on a false reading of history: strife and division within Afrikanerdom has been much more in evidence than unity during the first three centuries of white South African history' (1983, 17).
7. The Afrikaans portmanteau *baaskap* literally means boss-hood or boss-ness, the idea that whites should naturally be in control of blacks.
8. Goode and Ben-Yehuda suggest that food scares, for example, cannot properly be called moral panics since they do not involve an easily recognisable folk devil. However, this argument does not take into account the fears of infection/pollution from outside or the deep-seated technophobias (Falkof 2010) that often lie at the heart of these panics, both of which suggest the possibility of an *imagined* external enemy, however ephemeral.
9. People arrested for alleged Satanism were anti-social loners like the Koekemoer brothers, mentioned above and discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. No arrests were ever made of people who could be proven to be related to the widespread 'cult' of Satanism.
10. Lists of satanic symbols appear in *Personality* magazine on 15 August 1988, in the *Sunday Tribune* on 2 October 1988 and in pamphlets by the evangelist Rodney Seale (1991, 19–40) and the police sergeant Kobus Jonker (1997, 9).
11. During Egypt's '"heavy metal scare" of 1997 … dozens of fans were arrested by State Security forces, and accused of involvement in satanic rituals as

well as the proliferation of drugs, sexual deviance, animal sacrifices, and defaming heavenly religions, among other allegations' (*Egypt Independent*, 5 September 2012).

12. Both Michelle Smith and Lauren Stratford's books were later discredited by investigative journalists (Allen and Midwinter 1990; Passantino, Passantino and Trott 1999).
13. On 10 April 2012, for example, the *Daily Sun*'s front page had the headline 'Cops Raid Theta FM Over Satanism Claims!', about a 'community radio station that sparked a violent Satanism controversy'. The Satanism discussed here was largely indistinguishable from the newspaper's description of witchcraft.
14. The American psychiatrist James Hunter had a number of patients who 'remembered' histories of SRA in the wake of the publication of *Michelle Remembers*. All of them had previously had diagnoses of multiple personality disorder (1998, 249).
15. The term 'coloured' in South Africa is a complicated one. Briefly, it refers to people of mixed race, often with San and Malay heritage, and suggests a particular spatial, linguistic and cultural history. It was one of the apartheid government's four terms of racial designation and remains in common use today (see, for example, Erasmus 2001).
16. Backmasking is a technique of recording phrases backwards in popular songs. It has often been cited in episodes of moral panic as it is believed to send hidden messages subliminally to the listener's brain without conscious mediation.
17. Gareth Medway includes Solms in a list of over-zealous Satan-hunters whose actions most resembled the template of the witch hunt (2001, 259). Solms was also involved in a number of swoops on gay clubs in Cape Town, claiming to be cracking down on child abuse 'gangs' (Retief 1994, 105).
18. The minibus kidnap story has remarkable staying power in southern Africa. A 2012 Satanism scare at a school in Mufakose, in Harare, Zimbabwe, featured schoolchildren being 'abducted' in a white minibus in order to take part in satanic rituals (*The Herald*, 6 March 2012).
19. This correlation between Satanist and abject can only go so far. Kristeva says that that which causes abjection is 'what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules' (1982, 4). Despite disgusting rituals and base criminality, the Satanist, in her compulsory whiteness, was an obedient respecter of the borders of apartheid South Africa.
20. Swanson also gives the example of how this 'sanitation syndrome' worked in Dakar, where segregation was rationalised as medical quarantine (1977, 398).
21. See, for example, Mike Nicol's novel *The Ibis Tapestry* (1999), Etienne van Heerden's short story 'My Kubaan' (1987) and Darrel Roodt's film *The Stick* (1988).
22. See, for example, Medway (2001), Newton (1987) and Richardson, Best and Bromley (1991).
23. There is another 'Oriental' menace implied here. Both Showalter (1997, 175) and Victor (1991, 232) point out the debt that satanic iconography owes to the blood libel, a myth that accuses Jews of stealing and murdering Christian babies in order to drink their blood, and which has been responsible for

countless acts of anti-Semitic violence across the centuries. It is likely that fear of Satanism in South Africa drew at least some of its affect from a repudiated nationalist anti-Semitism that had its roots in long-standing economic resentment and Afrikaner ideologues' covert support for Nazism (Giliomee 2003, 417–42; Dubow 1992; Marks 2004).

24. This temporal crisis/failure of futurity was radically rewritten in the rhetoric of the TRC, which had to confront the 'relationship between the truth of an abominable past and the possibility of a properly democratic future' (Dawes 1997, 2).
25. The late apartheid period was laden with temporal significance for many South Africans. Chidester observes that for the ANC too this was a 'sacred time, a time outside of ordinary time, in which the crucial moment had arrived' (1991, 147).
26. The HNP was formed in 1969 as a response to a perceived easing of apartheid within the NP. It advocated white socialism, total racial segregation and formalising Afrikaans as the only official language. Its heyday came in the late 1980s but by the 1990s it had become a marginal force (M. du Toit 2003, 38–46). The HNP is still active in South Africa today, aiming for 'die herstel van die Afrikanervolk se vryheid in sy vaderland Suid-Afrika, vir die uitbouing van Afrikaner-nasionalisme en vir die belange van die Blankes in Suid-Afrika in die algemeen' ('reparation of the Afrikaner nation's freedom in its fatherland South Africa, for the expansion of Afrikaner-nationalism and for the interests of Whites in general in South Africa'; Herstigte Nasionale Party n.d.).
27. One exception is the commentator Sam Bloomberg, discussed in Chapter 8. Bloomberg's commentary on family murderers was consistently critical and blamed fathers' immaturity and sexual problems (e.g. *Sunday Star*, 17 January 1988).
28. Despite these dubious beginnings and its status as the only national English-language newspaper that was generally favourable to the apartheid regime, *The Citizen* still exists today.
29. Sources repeating South Africa's apparent monopoly on family murder include *The Star* (19 July 1987), *Cape Times* (21 September 1987), *Weekend Argus* (3 December 1988) and *Femina* (March 1989).
30. Megan Vaughan points to frequent cases that could be called 'family murder' in the early colonial courts of central Africa, many of which involved similar tales of impotence and extreme violence meted out in mitigation for sexual failure (1991, 104–5).
31. *Bakkie* is Afrikaans slang for an open-backed pick-up truck. It is also a metonym for a certain type of cultural identification: like *braais* and rugby, *bakkie* ownership is a sign of Afrikaner manhood.
32. American researchers working on family murder have also suggested that the availability of firearms may have a lot to do with high rates of these sorts of killings (Auchter 2010).
33. This term was coined by sociologist Edward A. Ross in 1901. It came into common currency after it was used by Edward Roosevelt to suggest that women who insisted on working instead of having children were imperilling the existence of the white American 'race': 'Refusing to bear children was the same sort of racial crime as refusing to fight for racial advancement' (Bederman 1995, 202).

34. The NGK did produce theologians who took powerful anti-apartheid stands. Notable dissenters included B.B. Keet and Ben Marais, both of whom questioned the doctrinal validity of the religious justification of apartheid, as well as Beyers Naudé, who was involved in organising the 1960 World Council of Churches conference in Cottesloe, Johannesburg. The Cottesloe statement against racism, spurred by the Sharpeville massacre, was condemned by apartheid theologians and rejected by the NGK (Chidester 1991).
35. Van de Watt points to this white disavowal of township violence in her analysis of Minnette Vari's 1997 sculpture *Firestone*, a rubber tyre moulded in white porcelain that recalled the tyres that were emblematic of both anti-government protest and necklace murders. The work, she says, 'speaks succinctly of white complicity in what was regarded and publicised as black-on-black violence in the black townships' (2005, 30).
36. 'Legitimate' violence, on the other hand, was socially permissible for white men: they were militarised from an early age by *veldskools* and the rhetoric of anti-communism, conscripted into an active army, given access to firearms and raised in a culture that viewed sanctioned violence as a signifier of strength.
37. After a 1978 incident in Kolwezi, Zaire, when the French army mounted an airborne operation to rescue European and Zairian hostages held by Katangese rebels, *The Citizen* printed an editorial reading, 'The Zaire drama should be a warning to … liberals in this country. They assume far too easily, and incorrectly, that because the Republic is a western democracy, Africa conforms to the same democratic rules. The continent in fact is still possessed of an inherent savagery' (quoted in Hugo 1988, 574).
38. The 1959 Extension of University Education Act, for example, did the opposite of extending education. One consequence of the Act was a government takeover of Fort Hare University, the country's most respected institution for black students, which was then placed within the substandard 'bantu education' system.

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