

The father in two Afrikaner nationalist plays by J.F.W. Grosskopf

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Summary

In this article I investigate the rôle of the father within nationalism by analysing two obscure plays, *Padbrekers* (1947) and *Legende* (1942) by J.F.W. Grosskopf. Through the use of psycho-analysis I have come to the conclusion that nationalism constitutes a melancholy-related guilt reaction to the death of the father. Synonymous with the death of the father is the experience of the apocalyptic downfall of the fatherland as a result of capitalist expansion and the concomitant materialism. Underlying this experience is the inability to form a libidinal relationship with the world (as object). The nationalist feels threatened by the materialist world-picture which implies an object-relationship with the world.

Opsomming

In die volgende artikel ondersoek ek die rol van die vader binne die nasionalisme deur gebruik te maak van twee minder bekende dramas, *Padbrekers* (1947) en *Legende* (1942) deur J.F.W. Grosskopf. Die nasionalisme word psigoanalities ontleed as 'n melancholie-verwante skuldreaksie op die dood van die vader. Sinoniem met die dood van die vader is die ervaring van die apokaliptiese ondergang van die vaderland as gevolg van kapitalistiese ekspansie en die meegaande materialisme. Onderliggend aan hierdie ervaring is die onvermoë om 'n libidinale verhouding met die wêreld – d.w.s. met die wêreld as objek – aan te gaan. Die nasionalis voel bedreig deur materialistiese denksisteme wat 'n objekverhouding met die wêreld veronderstel.

1 Introduction

In the following article I shall investigate the rôle of the father in two plays by J.F.W. Grosskopf, *Padbrekers* (*Road Workers*, 1947) and *Legende* (*Legend*, 1942), which are clearly embedded in nationalist ideology. I will approach the problem by making use of psycho-analysis. In this way I wish to bring to the attention of the reader the following:

- (a) The importance of Afrikaans literature for the study of Afrikaner nationalism.
- (b) Aspects of the nationalist ideology which have been ignored in historical studies on the subject.
- (c) The contribution that psycho-analysis can make to the study of ideology.

2 Grosskopf within the nationalist and Afrikaans literary context

J.F.W. Grosskopf (1885–1948), born to a German missionary family in Bloemfontein, had been involved with Afrikaner nationalism in a variety of ways: returning from his studies in Europe he took part in the nationalist inspired rebellion of 1914. He writes:

When our own Free State hero, Christiaan de Wet, and the Transvaler Christiaan Beyers (both of whom I knew personally) came into conflict with government policies, I saw, although without great optimism, it as my duty to stand by them. In this way I became a rebel with Jacques Pienaar and Jopie Fourie. After six adventurous weeks being chased and hunted in the bushveld I had nine months to come to my senses in the Pretoria prison.

(Nienaber, 1947: 147)

In the 1920s he was on the editorial board of the nationalist newspapers *Ons Vaderland*, (*Our Fatherland*) and *Die Volksblad* (*The People's Paper*). As a member of the Carnegie Commission he contributed to the investigation of the "Poor White" problem which accompanied the increasing urbanisation among Afrikaners. In 1932 his report *Plattelandsverarming en plaasverlating* (*Rural impoverishment and the desertion of the farms*) was published. He was professor in Political Science at the University of Stellenbosch (traditionally the intellectual home of Afrikaner nationalism) and the deputy chairman of the National Marketing Board in 1945. His literary activities formed an integral part of his nationalism. To him Afrikaans literature was inescapably bound to Afrikaner nationalism. To use Afrikaans as a literary medium, especially during the early part of the century, amounted to political propaganda or "sermonising":

Some of the brash (and therefore amusing) younger generation reproach the older Afrikaans authors because of that sermonising tendency. They are right. A touch of pedantry – or to state it more elegantly: didactic aims – accompanied it already, of its own accord. If you were an advocate of the Afrikaans language, you felt the call to write in it, even if it was not because of a creative urge. Use of Afrikaans itself already amounted to sermonising.

(Nienaber, 1947: 147)

The two plays, *Padbrekers* and *Legende*, were published towards the end of Grosskopf's life and are not as highly regarded as the earlier innovative play *As die tuig skawe* (*When the harness chafes*) (1926) which presents the stress and increasing poverty in the rural milieu of early-twentieth-century South Africa caused by the new capitalist economy. Although its incorporation in the Afrikaans literary canon depends on the relatively successful use it makes of the superficial elements of classical tragedy, it is essentially a realist play concerning itself with contemporary social problems.

By the time of the forties when *Padbrekers* and *Legende* first appeared, Grosskopf had already been eclipsed by new authors and a new literary value system; the emphasis had shifted from texts blatantly propagating nationalist values (especially through historical themes and those praising the virtues of rural life and the unity of the family) to the more subtle use made of the aesthetics of the individual as an autonomous entity within the nationalist programme. In Afrikaans drama this shift was initiated in 1922 by Jan F.E. Celliers in his play *Reg bo reg* (*Justice above justice*). Celliers writes in the introduction:

Though to achieve what art should achieve, and has achieved elsewhere, we must have a broader outlook, and take man himself more as a subject – man, his character, passions, feelings; and the complications, conflict, and amusing and sad relations that come to the fore because of this – because man differs so much from man (1925: Introduction).

This new emphasis placed on the individual (although still as part of the nationalist programme) eventually led to the severing of the ties between literature and the nationalist ideology.

Padbrekers and *Legende* in being ideologically transparent (compare the foreword to *Legende* where Grosskopf announces):

This is a play for the common people; not for literary connoisseurs (p.5).

are anachronistic within this new context in which nationalism was made secondary to aesthetic individualism. Within the new normative framework, J.C. Kannemeyer, the Afrikaans literary historian, notes when comparing these two later plays with the earlier *As die tuig skawe* which complied more with the new literary taste:

In his later two dramas of magnitude, *Legende* and *Padbrekers* – both consisting of five acts – Grosskopf could not maintain this standard.
(Kannemeyer, 1978: 203)

Overshadowed by the literary products of the younger generation these two plays have disappeared into relative obscurity.

3 *Padbrekers* and *Legende*: Points of Intersection

The two plays differ to a large extent: *Legende* is the idyllic portrayal of pioneering life on the frontiers of nineteenth-century South Africa. The main character, Karel Veldcamp, was, according to the foreword, inspired by the former president of the Transvaal, Paul Kruger. Although Veldcamp eventually becomes the leader of the frontier community, he should not be seen as an exact replica (“portretgelykenis”) of the president. *Padbrekers*, situated in a non-temporal and non-specific space, on the other hand is:

a partly allegorical story of a people, who under the influence of an idealistic leader, rise up against a superior power and choose in this moment of crisis an honourable death above unconditional surrender.
(Kannemeyer, 1978: 203)

In its content one recognises historical parallels: it is an allegory of the rise of Hitler and German Nazism and its eventual destruction. Similarly the allegorical form is typical of late Nazi art. In the introduction Grosskopf writes:

The characters and background of this play are completely fictitious – actually allegorical. Therefore it demands an entirely formal and neutral scenery, with no indication of time and place. (p.5)

According to Berthold Hinz in his study, *Art in the Third Reich*, the unreal and non-temporal allegorical realm in which much of Nazi art is situated has the purpose of eliminating all “human consciousness about reality”. (1980: 163)

An interesting link with Nazi art is the cover of *Padbrekers*: it depicts a row of identical-looking, stylised figures all standing in the same semi-military pose, holding alternately a sword and a spade. In the centre is a figure holding a shield with a dripping heart as emblem. This relates to the theme of worker, farmer, and soldier which was a very common trilogity in Nazi art. The spade evokes the farmer and worker, and the sword the soldier. The worker in the military pose shows the worker-become-soldier. Hinz writes:

As a “soldier”, he has to “serve” without any claim to wages proportional to his contribution. He has lost the freedom to move about at will and to enter into contracts. (1980: 116)

Ferdinand Staeger’s painting from the Nazi period of spade-carrying uniformed workers, “We are the Work Soldiers”, makes the point clear. In *Padbrekers* the character Ebba emphasises (when Sarie pleads for a better position for her friend) that nobody should expect to be rewarded:

Nobody works here for remuneration (p.70).

In *Padbrekers* aspects of the recent World War, details from South African life, and different historical periods have been displaced on to the “non-temporal and non-spatial” structure of the play.

In spite of the differences in the time and space depicted in the two plays, they do overlap; a disconcerting displacement from *Legende* into *Padbrekers* opens up a dialogue between the two plays. This intersection occurs in *Padbrekers* where Oom Frederik reminisces about his father’s pioneering activities on the eastern frontier of the country:

My own father has given his life to break open a road for others. That was when our fathers made the first march to occupy the eastern part of our country. You cannot believe how wild everything still was. Between the shrubby gorges and cliffs, there were wide grassland strips as tough as reedbush, far above a man’s head. And the weed patches were as impenetrable as scrub... You needed a strong fearless man to break open the road for the troop of land seekers, a man with a great heart (p. 18).

The eastern frontier within the South African context refers to the area from which the Voortrekkers originally came, and is the same locality where Karel Veldcamp of *Legende* struggles against the Xhosa cattle thieves. The pioneering activities of Oom Frederik’s father on a symbolic level correlate with the taming of the wilderness by Karel Veldcamp. Karel Veldcamp resembles then, the father type described by Oom Frederik. Temporarily *Legende* represents the phase which preceded that depicted in *Padbrekers*: it shows

the space and time of the primal father, while Voorganger (meaning “precursor”) the leader of the nationalist movement in *Padbrekers*, acts as the son in the name of this primal father. Oom Frederik’s account of his father leads to the erection of a monument in his father’s honour which makes him the symbolic father of the nation. But this father also becomes merged with the geographical area that the nation occupies: the fatherland. The infantine emotions towards the father are displaced on to the land, while the death of the primal father and the symbolic “dying” (p. 15) of the fatherland lead to the same “eroticisation” of the dead, the same melancholia in which death becomes the ideal; this book is dedicated to:

all the unnamed ones of history who died for a belief in great thoughts and deeds of sacrifice (p. 9).

The death drive is further elaborated in a passage which contrasts Voorganger’s nationalism with the capitalist Simon’s materialism. The aim is to illustrate that there is in death something more sublime than animal existence. Voorganger quotes the Roman moralist Cato:

“Sweet and honourable the dying for your fatherland!” (p. 41)

and:

“Vivere non necesse!” (p. 41) (It is not necessary to live)

4 The death of the father

The words from *Padbrekers*:

My own father has given his life to break open a road for others (p. 18).

and:

In that time when it first looked as if our fatherland was dying through its own inner dissention and decay (p. 15).

imply what Freud saw as the Original Sin: the killing of the primal father as well as the guilt feelings that accompany the act. In *Padbrekers*, though, the idea of the contribution of the descendants to the death of the father is repressed. It is a rhinoceros with its phallic nosehorn which kills the father:

And suddenly a moody rhinoceros came storming from the front through the undergrowth; lightly, as if it was a mere oat-field. He impaled my father with his pointed horn; and enraged trampled his body flat. We crawled like mice into the undergrowth. With Father’s hunting-spear, which I had to carry, I wanted still to attack the rhinoceros but he escaped with ease on the road that my father made (p. 19).

(This passage correlates with *Legende* where the father’s loyal servant, Dans-ter, is killed by a rhinoceros during a hunting trip.)

The contribution to the father's death is unconsciously recognised in that they perceive it not merely as a chance event, but as a sacrifice: he gave his life for "others". In recognising in these "others" themselves they are obliged to feel guilty. They imagine that they owe their lives to his death. They must in turn be willing to die for the fatherland. ("Sweet and honourable the dying for your fatherland". (p. 41)

The reluctance to accept "objective" death runs parallel to the view that Freud took from anthropology concerning the people of earlier times who draw no distinction between murder and natural death (the same phenomenon still occurs in melancholia): a man who has died a natural death is a man murdered by evil wishes. The father's accidental death is sacrifice, suicide for their sake, it is murder by them (i.e. by the aggressive wishes they harboured against him when he was alive).

Ritual develops around the death of the father: ritual with the purpose of invoking the power of the dead by projecting on the figure of the dead father omnipotence. By erecting a stone monument they seek to gain the power of influencing the dead father according to their wishes. Therefore the monument has the double function of magic:

1. to protect them against their enemies in the developing war; and
2. to evoke the superhuman power of the father.

The rhinoceros and the father become identical in the shape and form of the monument:

And on the grave we will erect a high, rough rock pillar, that will point upward like a stone thumb. (p. 19)

In the "rough" surface of the rock and the protruding "thumb", aspects of the rhinoceros and the father are combined. In this identification of the father with the animal that killed him, and in the implied "stone" quality associated with him, one senses the hostility felt towards the primal father. Because the death of the father demands further sacrifice, he is at the same time the one that kills. The road that the father made, the one on which the rhinoceros escapes, also leads to their destruction:

But the road broke us. (p. 116)

Extravagant burial rituals also develop around the death of those who, like the father, gave their lives for the national cause. The first "martyr" buried in this way is the activist Rudolf who was killed by opposition groups. He is buried with great ceremony at the foot of a hillock which becomes the heroes' acre. Thousands of people from the city, the neighbouring towns and farms, "Kommando on Kommando" (p. 34), are organised to take part in the funeral procession. A procession in which the women are also granted the right to partake:

I felt that in this procession to Rudolf's grave the women and the daughters

should not be absent. I have organised for a thousand to fifteen hundred of them to attend. (p. 47)

A smaller group of young girls clothed in white takes part, while the “mothers clothed in dark colours” (p. 47) form long rows. The planning of the burial ceremony shows the origin of a typical obsessive action (which Freud described in connection with religious and neurotic people (vol. 13, 1985: 31)) on a mass scale: similar is the methodical arrangement and “the turning of what is apparently the most trivial matter into something of the utmost importance” (vol. 13, 1985: 40). A further example of this concern with trivia is the great interest Voorganger shows in the arrival of the one man whose horse stumbled while bringing the message of the nationalist election victory:

That man, as soon as he arrives, you must bring him to me – him alone. I want to shake his hand. His left hand. (p. 68)

The image of the dead father introduces us to the important problem area of the rôle of the father and masculinity in nationalist ideology. The dead and therefore transcendent father is central in the strong patriarchal world which *Padbrekers* portrays. (It is not patriarchal in the sense of a living father who dominates.) Masculinity is all-important. Women play at most a supportive role:

We make warm jackets, knit socks, we fluff out the bandages. We do the work that frees the man to concentrate on his kommando duties. I bake ovens full of rusks and prepare the salted meat for our men. – Some girls nurse the wounded as well. (Sarie in *Padbrekers*, p. 89)

They cannot participate in male conversation and are intellectually inferior:

You talk . . . either too learnedly, or too much about the art of stock-farming. But my life has been such that I am ignorant of both. (Ebba in *Padbrekers*, p. 32)

And Sarie cannot help with the production of propaganda because she is too “stupid”. (p. 32)

The function of the women is to look after domestic affairs and to bring children into the world. As Karel Veldcamp’s son, Koenraad, says to his future wife in *Legende*:

In this house, in domestic affairs, my mother was always the boss. In our house you will be the same. But in matters of state, on the farm, on the yard, my word comes first. (p. 39)

When Karel Veldcamp’s wife, Eva, complains:

As your wife I have sometimes been sad because it seemed that you actually appreciated in me only the mother of your children. (p. 39)

he replies:

an exemplary mother and housewife; – Eva, is there anything better for a man to honour? (p. 39)

These instances support Wilhelm Reich's assertion that patriarchal social structures are embedded in repressive ideologies such as nationalism. It is around the idea of the omnipotent, transcendent father that taboos are to be maintained. The new and alien capitalist social order with the accompanying perception of the world as object – devoid of the all-pervading presences which the reactionary character perceives in everything – produces helplessness, "a fearful sense of guilt" (Freud, vol 13, 1985: 125) as if the fatherland, their omnipotent, transcendent support is dying.

They react through organisation:

Everywhere in the country small groups which wanted to make an end to the disgrace found one another. (p. 15)

This helplessness is experienced, not because of economic deprivation, but because of ideological deprivation; the economic deprivation is interpreted as the consequence of the death of the father, of cultural degeneration, of ideological impoverishment. The aim then is to heal – not economically by destroying exploitation in the Marxist sense. They want to heal the nation through an anti-materialist programme: they want to deprive the nation of pleasure – the "sweets" of capitalism. When the capitalist Simon offers his cooperation, Voorganger rejects it by saying:

It is precisely these alms to our people – sweets now and then to keep the children well-behaved – to which we want to make an end. We want to heal the foundation of the national life itself; make it possible for our people to be brave, of one mind, and industrious . . . The joy of mutual dependence. (p. 40)

The image of the "father"-land that is dying, the concomitant erasure of traditional values – the helplessness experienced in the face of this – and the perception that it will lead to fateful punishment make Chasseguet-Smirgel's assumption that nationalism is a consequence of the abandonment of the super-ego and the complete "erasure of the father and the parental universe" (1985: 362) questionable. The dead father seems to control fate absolutely.

The internalised father which dominates the ego as critical agency forces the subject to renunciation. Voorganger and Ebba that sacrifice their sexuality, love¹ and life is of primary significance in *Padbrekers*. A further proof of nationalist ethics is the emphasis that is placed on honour – honour that becomes more important than life itself. On different occasions Voorganger resists the temptation to capture Leo, the visiting leader of the "Holy League", the enemy nations, because it does not comply with his concept of ethical behaviour. Voorganger himself later prefers dying in battle to being captured and exhibited:

in a cage, behind bars, everywhere in their countries like a carnival lion to the rabble (p. 113)

and he saves Ebba from being disgraced by "waggon drivers and cooks" (p. 112) by thrusting a dagger into her heart.

5 Identification with the father as foundation of the Nationalist conscience

Instead of denying the nationalist a conscience and a super-ego, his behaviour should be seen in the light of identification. In nationalism, identification with the father (a symbol which encompasses the shared language, history, traditions, geography, and fauna and flora) is all-consuming: it denies to all these things autonomy or objective existence. A relationship with the world as object (in the Freudian sense) as reality, is impossible: such a relationship to the world fills the nationalist with aversion: it is the animal relation to the world.² It is also the relation of the women – who does not partake in the transcendent realm – to the world.³ It is the capitalist's relation⁴ and the relation of the masses to the world.⁵

The process of identification leads to the perception of the fatherland as a unity, the volk which constitutes the fatherland as "one"

(CHORUS: One volk! One! One! One! (p. 25))

Everything different and indifferent to this incestuous "One" is perceived with distrust, fear, and hatred; while everything that is considered part of it is overvalued. Even the melodies of the indigenous birds have special significance for Voorganger because they are indigenous and therefore part of his narcissism.⁶

Within this unity nothing is coincidental, everything is interrelated and determined by the dead father's omnipotence. No object-relationship with the world – a relationship which perceives things as existing independently of the father's will – is tolerated. Everything becomes subject. The attachment of the ego to the collective narcissism is absolute, while the individual libidinal relationship with the world (as object) becomes impossible. Through this inability to accept the objective essence of the world (determined by physical laws and not the transcendent father's will) the incest and sexual repression of the nationalist is manifested. Incest and sexuality have been written about in psycho-analysis as if they are the same thing, as if the repression of incest is identical to the repression of sexuality.⁷

The nationalist, in contrast to the materialist, encourages incest in its less extreme forms: it promotes marriages between people from the same geographical area, speaking the same language, of the same nationality, and sharing the same values. The ideology is constructed around the incestuous image of the nation as one family.⁸

The incestuous aspect of the ideology is manifested in scenes between Willem and Ebba where the actual conscious repression of these impulses is portrayed. Ebba, whose main desire is to have a son by Voorganger, says to Willem (whom she at the end adopts as her spiritual son):

... for me, Willem, it feels as if you are my big son. (Quickly): I will thank God one day if I could raise a son like you. (pp. 86–87)

Willem then expresses his repressed love for her (the elision represents the repressed wish to marry her):

If I was a few years older – and the Voorganger remained so slow – I would really like myself to . . . (p. 87)

Within the incestuous family, the nation, there is no room for an individual conscience which might come in conflict with the countless obsessive rituals and ceremonies which are instituted around the image of the transcendent father:

OOM FRE.: This is what pleases me so much about you: the respect shown for the deeds and customs of your ancestors. (p. 18)

The nationalist conscience is the product of superstition rather than the objective and questioning ethics of the scientific era. Strict censorship under the reign of nationalism has the function of inhibiting the development of an individual conscience and rational questioning of the ethical foundations of the ideology. The individual conscience, in contrast to the nationalist conscience, develops independently and in conflict with the father-determined value system; it is a product of the scientific era and the experience of the world as object.⁹

The individual conscience which developed out of the scientific era is an expression of the civilising activities of Eros:

Civilization is a process in the service of Eros, whose purpose is to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples, and nations, into one great unity, the unity of mankind.

(Freud, vol. 12, 1985: 313)

Nationalism in contrast absolutises the interests of a specific group at the expense of all others. It represents the lawlessness of a small segment of a population:

which behaves like a violent individual toward others, and perhaps more numerous, collections of people.

(Freud, vol. 12, 1985: 284)

This hindering of the civilising process is depicted in *Padbrekers* in the conflict between Voorganger's nationalist movement and the "Holy League", the combined countries which universalises the world economy. Voorganger, in opposition to them, prefers the isolation of his country's economy even if it means material impoverishment.¹⁰

6 The distorted perception of the father

Voorganger acts in the name of the transcendent father. But a comparison between *Padbrekers* and *Legende* illustrates how the perception of the father as the object of Voorganger's guilt is distorted in accordance with Freud's remark that

the original severity of the super-ego does not – or does not so much – represent

the severity which one has experienced from it (the object), or which one attributes to it; it represents rather one's own aggressiveness towards it. (vol. 12, 1985: 322)

The primal father in *Legende*, Karel Veldcamp, represents a relationship with the world which is very different from that of his descendants in *Padbrekers*. He experiences the world in its immediacy. There is no transcendental world, no renunciation of the instincts; no need for sacrifices or retaining memories of the past.

The reader is prepared on the different tone of *Legende* in the introduction of this play:

the author wants to make a humble confession of his sincere hope that the judges of the following conversations of his characters will not find one poetic or literary word. (p. 6)

The absence of the poetical, the sentimental, and the rhetorical in *Legende* denote the anti-intellectual, anti-metaphysical discourse of power, brute force, will, and the unrenounced instincts. In contrast to Voorganger's movement in *Padbrekers*, Karel Veldcamp needs no transcendental legitimisation for imposing his will on the world. In this he is very near to nature itself. There is no effort to reduce nature to intellectual or moral categories. The bond between him and nature is expressed in his love for living in the veld:

No, you cannot understand it; you can only feel it. Look: when I sit there in the evenings next to my fire, even if it is without the company of any white people, then my heart feels so calm, then my heart feels so satisfied. (pp. 29–30)

On the other hand in *Padbrekers*, Voorganger is completely alienated from nature; nature remains for him an unattainable object of the future; he will know it not by feeling at one with it but by studying it; that is, by maintaining a removed (transcendent) relationship to it.¹¹

This alienation, and narcissistic pride in reducing nature, are further emphasised by Willem who sees man's potential to renounce the instincts as a peculiarly human project:

Do we fight against a ruthless law of nature? Must we continue to try to exploit and exterminate one another like the animals of the bushveld and plains? (p. 30)

Karel Veldcamp on the other hand is immersed in nature. In contrast to the characters in *Padbrekers* who overestimate the power of mental activity, he represents the omnipotence of the body, of the will and of the unrenounced instincts: he is immune to pain (compare his nonchalant attitude when injured by a red-hot iron in the first act) and indifferent to love (when he tries to elope with Liesbet, who rejects him, he tramples on the ring he bought her and leaves, never to see her again). He is described as a real man, who:

seems to be able to do anything, and everything, better than we other people (p. 9)

He tames wild horses with ease, is dominated by a desire to escape from the confines of society and family (he goes on long hunting trips). As a pioneer he lives outside any law. He is a law unto himself. It is the law of unreasoning force. In this world cold-blooded murder becomes reasonable. In this regard the uncompromising and unsentimental depiction of death and murder in the conflicts with cattle thieves is illuminating.

His rejection of the metaphysical is illustrated by his indifference to his wife's clairvoyant activities:

But I have never concerned myself with Eva's visions. I prefer things that one can get a grip on. I think one must hold one's own – as well as one can – against whatever might happen. It weakens the will, if you imagine that you know what is awaiting you in the future.

In this he contrasts with the characters in *Padbrekers* who emphasises the metaphysical, the transcendental, and the "soul". In them one discerns the "overestimation of the influence which our mental acts can exercise in altering the external world" (Freud, vol. 13 1985: 360). On the other hand Karel Veldcamp in *Legende* represents:

the lower physical activity which had direct perceptions . . . as its contents (Freud, vol. 13, 1985: 360).

The characters in *Padbrekers* relate to the new intellectuality in which ideas, memories, and inferences become decisive.
(Freud, vol. 13, 1985: 360).

and in which

Things become less important than ideas of things.
(Freud, vol. 13, 1985: 142)

The discrepancy between "things" and the "ideas of things" has already been pointed out in connection with the compatible conception of the father in *Padbrekers* in relation to the actual father as he is portrayed in *Legende*. In a similar way the sublime "idea" of the nation in *Padbrekers* seems to be contradicted by the aversion felt when the actual people, which constitute the nation, are referred to:

People are like sheep . . . There are those that are wellbred but then there are those who are not . . . When I look at my own people – so many of them that cannot think; that blindly worship Mammon. (p. 22)

The "nation" and the "people" are abstract ideas which go beyond the reality of these entities. In consequence, these abstractions provoke confused and paternalistic response to economic crises and the exploited. Campaigns for the poor consequently idealise sacrifice and material renunciation:

If you can teach a people to make sacrifices for the wellbeing of the community, then the bond between them is so much stronger than when you give them wealth and prosperity. (p. 17)

Voorganger's objection to materialism becomes clear in his critique of Leo's people:

But you have become too timid to raise your children properly; you wanted to live at ease; leave behind rich and lazy children. (p. 102)

Because of their materialism Voorganger sees Leo's people as a nation consumed by decay. He says:

Your Volk! They will in any case perish of decay, like a nation ill with leprosy: smelling and rotting away, piece by piece. (p. 104)

Although the ideal of the "volk-state" is anti-capitalist it cannot represent the material interests of the poor. The point that it is not inherently a people's ideal is made clear when Sarie refers to it as "Voorganger's cause" (p. 70). Its anti-capitalist sentiments¹² are misleading and it is not surprising that the urban proletariat puts up the strongest resistance to it. They constitute the crowd ("the roughest and rowdiest lot from the shanty-town" (p. 11)) who broke up the nationalist meeting in the first act. They are described as "little skunks" or with offensive physical attributes:

a pimpled, red-headed, spindle-legged store mongrel. (p. 13)

and their behaviour is related to unemployment rather than economic exploitation:

a group of weak street strollers, and pale, unemployed young girls and boys. (p. 30)

Nationalism then typifies an ambivalent and paternalistic attitude towards the people who make up the nation. It is not a people's movement as such.

The inconsistency between the ideas of things and the things themselves are a product of a "mental omnipotence" which is divorced from reality. In this it is an excellent example of an ideology in the original Marxist sense of the word. That is, as an expression of false consciousness; of the irrational and the superstitious. It is a modern mutation of religion and animism. This introduces Freud and Reich's divergent views on intellectuality and rationality. Freudian intellectuality has its source in the patriarchal overthrow of matriarchal social structures:

But this turning from the mother to the father points in addition to a victory of intellectuality over sensuality – that is, an advance in civilisation, since maternity is proved by the evidence of the senses while paternity is a hypothesis, based on inference and a premise. Taking sides in this way with a thought-process in preference to a sense perception was proved to be a momentous step.

At some point between the two events that I have mentioned there was another which shows the most affinity to what we are investigating in the history of religion. Human beings found themselves obliged in general to recognise intellectual [*geistige*] forces – forces, that is, which cannot be grasped by the senses (particularly by sight) but which none the less produce undoubted and indeed

extremely powerful effects. If we may rely upon the evidence of language, it was movement of the air that provided the prototype of intellectuality [*Geistigkeit*], for intellect [*Geist*] derives its name from a breath of wind – ‘animus’, ‘spiritus’, and the Hebrew *rauch* (breath). This too led to the discovery of the mind [*Seele* (soul)] as that of the intellectual [*geistigen*] principle in individual human beings. (Freud, vol. 13, 1985: 361)

This discovery of subjectivity which transcends the senses did not *only* lead to “rationality” – but to the imaginary and illusory “incestuous” forms of patriarchal thinking which denotes the inability to experience the world as object, as sensual entity. Reich in opposition to this postulates a positive relationship between intellectuality and the objective and sensual world as foundation of rationality. Rationality contradicts types of “thought and action” which “are inconsistent with the economic situation” (1978: 53), that do not respond to material exploitation and suppression and that find comfort in a world beyond.

The irrational and passive acceptance of exploitation can be ascribed as one of the products of the Freudian patriarchal soul. With the assumption of the omnipotent “soul” the body on which hunger and exploitation act becomes secondary and unimportant. Voorganger says:

The soul is more than the body. (p. 42)

and:

There is something higher than mere animal existence. (p. 41)

The soul is the product of instinctual renunciation, especially sexual repression.¹³ It is thought that is “felt” with intensity (dammed up libidinal energy). The absence of the “soul” in *Legende* suggests its absence in pre-social and pre-repressive conditions. The emergence of the “soul” implies the end of unrestrained man. The “soul” is a necessary category for social existence: within the nationalist context the deified primal father, Karel Veldcamp, the man without a soul, would not be tolerated. To have social order individual impulses must be repressed while the state monopolises control over them and channels the aggressive instincts into war. The people must become of “one mind”. The omnipotence repressed in this way is transferred to the transcendent primal father who becomes the keeper of the “soul”.

The renunciation of individuality, as well as the concomitant repression of the instincts demanded by the nationalists, are depicted in the chorus of Voorganger’s followers who have sunk to a “position of blind allegiance” (Reich, 1978: 97):

One people! One. One. One – honour above wealth, honour above life! Honour with peace. Honour for our past! Noble aim; noble life! One people; one people! One. One. One. Honourable labour for everyone – Unity. Unity. Unity. (p. 43)

Voorganger’s relationship with the masses resembles the hypnotic relation-

ship of the leader to the primal horde which Freud describes (after Le Bon) as:

the condition of an individual in a group as being actually hypnotic. (vol. 12, 1985: 193)

and, Freud emphasises:

the sense of omnipotence; the notion of impossibility disappears for the individual in the group. (vol. 12, 1985: 104)

Voorganger becomes the “master” (p. 16) who, by inspiring (“*besiel*”) his followers, leads them to victory against overwhelming forces:

Now we know that – with Voorganger’s spirit – one man is equal to two of them. (p. 86)

His voice evokes the monotonous tone of the hypnotist. His voice is described as “rhythmic” and “with calm inspiration” (p. 40). And when Voorganger and Ebba listen to the chorus of followers they stand motionless as if listening to a prayer. The faceless crowds of followers and their rituals evoke images of intense narcissism and omnipotence. After initial victory the crowds fill the streets with torches, at which Sarie says:

... it is so impressive! It makes even us youths realise how important is the time in which we are living. (p. 95)

The loss of individuality in the crowd is made good by the postulation of a national soul:

Yes, Willem! I believe in the whole nation’s soul. It is only that which gives me courage and trust in the future. (p. 31)

This soul has as its source “mystical feelings” (Reich, 1978: 163): the “national feeling” which must be “activated by soul” (“*besiel*”, p. 21) in *Padbrekers*.

This experience of a national soul correlates with what Freud described as the “oceanic feeling” (vol. 12, 1985: 252). He describes this feeling as a “sensation of ‘eternity’” (vol. 12, 1985: 251) as something “limitless” (vol. 12, 1985: 251) and “unbounded” (vol. 12, 1985: 251).

VOORGANGER: The soul is more than the body. I believe in what looks foolish and unattainable today; and the eternity of aspiring. (p. 42)

and:

Ideals are immortal. They revive, like the phoenix, always again out of the fire. (p. 101)

It is, according to Freud:

a feeling of an indissoluble bond of being one with the external world as a whole (vol. 12, 1985: 252)

In the case of nationalism this bond refers to the already-discussed experience of the nation as “one”. Underlying this experience – as in the case with religious mysticism – is the regression to a phase when the boundary-line between the ego and the external world is uncertain. Before the ego is constituted as an autonomous unity, the infant does not distinguish his ego from the external world:

He gradually learns to do so, in response to various promptings. He must be very strongly impressed by the fact that some sources of excitation, which he will later recognise as his own bodily organs, can provide him with sensations at any moment, whereas other sources evade him from time to time – and only reappear as a result of his screaming for help. (Freud, vol. 12, 1985: 254)

The differentiation between internal and external is produced on the crux of the difference between experiencing satisfaction and unpleasure: the external is associated with a feeling of lack and unpleasure. This lack is a component part of reality; it is the basis on which the perception of reality is formed. Nationalism emerges precisely in situations when the lack is felt intensely, for instance, during periods of economic collapse. But instead of leading to “realism” it leads to illusion.¹⁴

The production of illusion becomes an important aspect of political manipulation because it is inextricably bound up with mass narcissism and wish-fulfilment. This is especially evident in nationalism where economic deprivation is confused with ideological disintegration and inferiority feelings are manipulated by the feeding of mass narcissism with illusions of omnipotence:

EBBA: The earnestness of life I have known since my youth. From father I learnt of the sorrowful humiliation of our people, and the feeling of duty to help heal the decay, especially that fatal and spiritless attitude. (pp. 24–25)

The pain which Ebba experiences in this situation is not the consequence of the actual material deprivation of the people, but to the feeling of humiliation. In contrast Sarie and the capitalist, Simon, experienced real material poverty in their youth:

SIMON: I myself have been a poor boy. (p. 42)

Sarie describes her father as a weakling. It is her mother that kept things in order (p. 70). The result is that they, in contrast with the nationalists, are far more concerned with the threat of material collapse. To them narcissism is secondary, while to Ebba it comes first.

Freud described narcissism as a means to divert the suppressed classes' attention from their own misery:

The narcissistic satisfaction provided by the cultural ideal is also among the forces which are successful in combating the hostility to culture within the cultural unit.

This satisfaction can be shared in not only by the favoured classes. . . . but also by the suppressed ones, since the right to despise the people outside [their culture] it compensates them for the wrongs they suffer within their own (vol. 12, 1985: 192–193)

and Reich (1978: 97) formulates it as follows:

The wretchedness of his material and sexual situation is so overshadowed by the exalted idea of belonging to a master-race and having a brilliant Führer that, as time goes on, he ceases to realise how completely he has sunk to a position of insignificant, blind allegiance.

In *Padbrekers* the feelings of elevation which accompany the material renunciation, the self-sacrifice, as well as the experience of omnipotence in inspired crowds and mass processions brings to the fore the narcissistic aspect of nationalism.

7 Conclusion

In the above article I have shown that nationalism constitutes a peculiar type of guilt reaction to the death of the father and the disintegration of a patriarchal social order in the face of materialist and capitalist expansion. The nationalist experiences the materialist concept of the world as a threat prefiguring an immanent apocalypse.

Notes

1. VOORGANGER: Yes! When Mammon reigns, and when the poor are exploited and deafened by morally corruptive gifts – then the whole nation demands all our love and concern. For those who feel this – conjugal bliss is selfish” (25).
2. “There is something higher than plain animal existence” (41).
3. Sarie who elopes with the capitalist, Leo, because “I’ve heard too much: I don’t want to die young!” (105).
4. “SIMON: I congratulate myself today that I can do much more useful work than when as a priest I distributed words instead of bread” (41).
5. “The stupid zealots who will take up any battle-cry; – there are too many that are only concerned with their own honour and gain” (21).
6. “If ever there will be a time again when I am not rushed I should like to research the habits and melodies of our birds” (41).
7. Wilhelm Reich hinted at the incompatibility between incest and sexuality: “it is the original biological tie of the child to the mother and also the mother to the child that forms the barricade to sexual reality and leads to an indissoluble sexual fixation and to an incapacity to enter into other relations” (1978: 90).
8. “Over here stands a father of our people! here . . . the wife of our people; here the brave youth of our people” (78).
9. “The scientific phase” emerges when the individual has “adjusted himself to reality and turned to the external world for the object of his desires” (Freud, vol. 13, 1985: 148).
10. “EBBA: Voorganger! They will most probably harass us without end. They will try to isolate us; want to have nothing to do with us.

VOORGANGER: Let it be! We can still do without their silk, their tea, and wines... Then, precisely, we become mutually dependent. Then our nation becomes one big family that works together – hard work and plain living” (62–63).

11. “If ever there will be a time again when I am not rushed I would like to research the habits and melodies of our birds. For me they are so human. – As a volk we must come nearer to nature again (41).
12. “Your principles state that the honest profit of the merchants and industrialists will be cut. Also my nation has an interest here in trade and industry. – You want to make the state the only buyer of the minerals mined here. – You want to make the employer responsible for the maintenance of the worker and his children. – Many enterprises you want to expropriate to the state . . . also those that enterprising businessmen have developed here. Must they accept it with a smile? (79).
13. *The creed of the ‘soul’ and its ‘purity’ is the creed of asexuality, of ‘sexual purity’.* Basically it is a symptom of the sexual repression and sexual shyness brought about by a patriarchal authoritarian society (Reich, 1978: 118).
14. “We call a belief an illusion when a wish-fulfilment is a prominent factor in its motivation, and in doing so we disregard its relations to reality.” (Freud, vol. 12, 1985: 213).

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