

“MY HOUSE IS PROTECTED BY A DRAGON”

WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS, MAGIC AND SACRED SPACES IN POST-APARTHEID CAPE TOWN

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ABSTRACT

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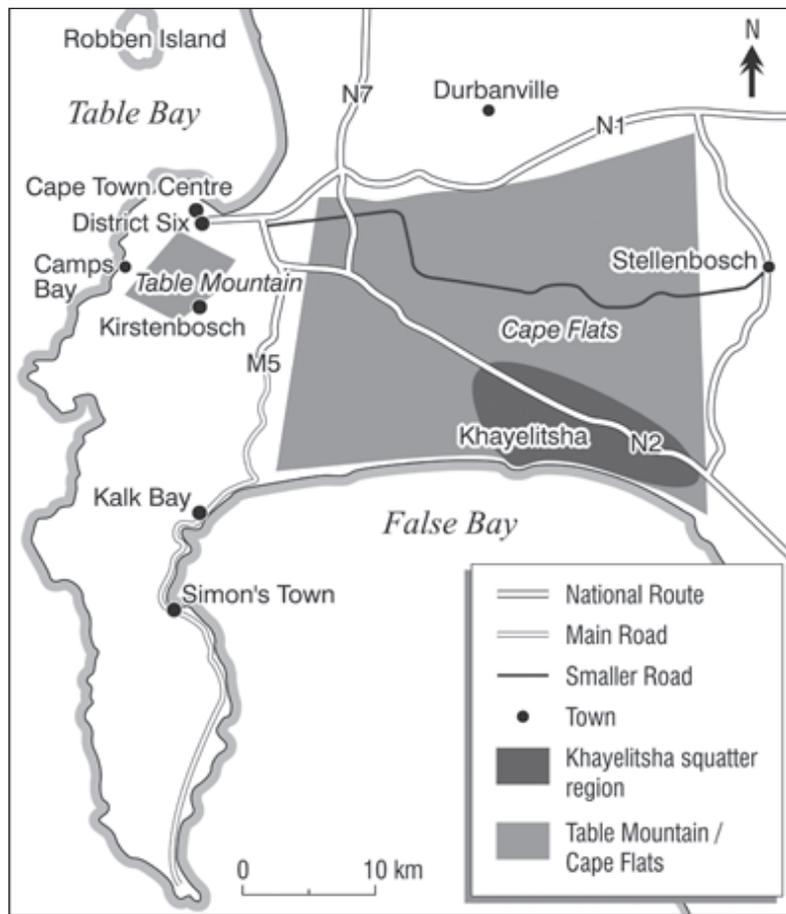
Until the end of apartheid, White South Africans were solely presented as Christians, with other religious practices all but forbidden to them. Since the negotiated revolution of 1994, the new liberal constitution has guaranteed religious freedom to all, with the global New Religious Movements gaining popularity. Tens of thousands of White South Africans have seized the opportunity to explore charismatic churches, New Age-practices as well as traditional African religions, while the popularity of traditional Christianity has dropped. The informants of this research are White South Africans from Cape Town, neopagans who practice Wiccan witchcraft and *sangomas* who practice traditional African religion. In South Africa, Whites are seldom regarded as practitioners of witchcraft or magic. Yet there are thousands of Whites who believe in and practice both, and create their own sacred spaces within the urban spaces which were previously subjected to rules and regulations of racialised social engineering. This article examines how witchcraft, magic and new global religions meet in the conjunctions of global and local, where new concerns arise and where new heterotopias and spatial practices are established as answers to White neopagans' anxieties about spiritual insecurity and racial boundaries. The places where these sacred urban spaces are created are at homes, in public spaces, and on the Internet.

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Keywords: African religion, Cape Town, magic, sacred spaces, post-apartheid urban space, White South Africans, Wicca, witchcraft

*Introduction*¹

The issues of space, race² and religion are seldom as profoundly entwined as in contemporary South Africa where the apartheid regime built itself on an ideological framework connecting and controlling the discourses on, and practices of, these issues. All three were also affected by the apartheid notion that there should be a racially segregated space and place for everything. During apartheid, the urban spaces were imagined, constructed and controlled as pure, Christian, White³ and religious spaces, while magic and witchcraft were regarded as superstitions that were inherently Black and rural. In this article, I turn to the New Religious Movements, in particular the White neopagans in Cape Town, to analyse the ways in which these former ideas on separateness still exert a considerable and persistent



Cape Town (map by Salla Jokela)

influence on today's religious life. Consequently, I examine the neopagans' attempts to make sense of their own places in post-apartheid urban spaces as well as their understandings and practices of space.

Since the first democratic election in 1994, South Africa has not only been open to forces of economic and cultural globalisation, but also to those of global religions. In the 1990s, the growth of the Internet spurred neopagan movements globally. In South Africa, this coincided with the end of apartheid and the establishment of a celebrated new constitution, which guarantees total religious freedom. While the popularity of international Pentecostal and charismatic congregations had already started escalating among White South Africans in the 1980s (Anderson 2005), interest in neopaganism and what can generally be best described as New Age practices followed in the 1990s. Not only have such global ideas gained momentum, but some Whites have also begun openly exploring the local, African traditional religion and its rituals and magical practices. At the same time, the repeal of the infamous Group Areas Act in 1991 discontinued the active segregation

of people in areas designated for their 'racial group'. Consequently, the spaces established for the 'separate development' of apartheid's imagined racial categories are being contested while its systems are slowly dismantled. In this new political situation, the desegregation of public spaces and crime-related urban fears have caused many Whites—utterly unused and unwilling to share their urban spaces with their Black or Coloured countrymen—to believe that their sociospatial position has changed from domination of the urban space to that of isolation. In fact, their control of urban, and especially suburban, spaces is still largely unchallenged in terms of ownership and access (Lemanski 2006: 798).

This article examines the transforming magical and religious landscape of White South African neopagans. It studies the establishment of sacred spaces in religious rituals and everyday practices, and the meanings that White South Africans affiliated with global neopagan religions attach to urban spaces. White neopagans, a marginal group per se, create heterotopias—extraordinary spaces of otherness—that “interrupt the apparent continuity and normality of ordinary everyday space” (De Caeter and Dehaene 2008: 4). The ways they make sense of their surrounding urban spaces, categorize, sacralise, protect or avoid them, and present these as the landscapes of identity also reveal and comment on the focal points of the spatio-social changes at the end of apartheid.

According to Edward Soja, socially produced spatiality is always open to contestations and transformations (1989: 17). This point can be applied to spaces established during apartheid—as Anna Bohlin did when she studied people subjected to the forced removals of apartheid in Kalk Bay fishing village in Cape Town. She found that those Coloured residents who were removed, remembered and constructed the past very differently from those who had been able to stay, thus reflecting their social position and personal histories, revealing Kalk Bay area as a contested landscape of difference and exclusion (Bohlin 2001: 285). I argue along similar lines that the spatiality that the neopagans have produced regarding the notions of sacred space reflects the tenacity of racial boundaries and the tension between racial categories in South Africa, while also reproducing them. The neopagans have established sacred spaces that mediate their relation with the surrounding, racially divided, urban spaces. These sacred spaces help them navigate perceived religious persecution, spiritual insecurity and racial fears in the post-apartheid city. These representations are examined against the historical background of Whites practising and/or believing in local magic and witchcraft. The construction of these spaces is scrutinized at specific levels—at homes, on the Internet and in public spaces—as they demonstrate the often-paradoxical ways in which contemporary White South Africans reproduce racial and spatial categories by integrating them into their ritual practices.

While White neopagans are a small minority, I argue that their responses to the current desegregation of urban spaces are emblematic of White South Africans in general, and thus represent their reactions to the present social situation. Instead of attempting to create commonly shared sacred spaces, a withdrawal from public spaces (with certain exceptions) is characteristic of neopagans' religious practices. Charlotte Lemanski has pointed out that withdrawal from the public space has been characteristic of White South Africans in general since the demise of apartheid (Lemanski 2004, 2007). In the enclaves they have built within private spaces, they can still control their world as they see fit. The neopagans add a twist to this tendency by fortifying these enclaves with religious beliefs and rituals that they have adopted from new, global religious movements.

In July–August 2005, in 2006 and in October–November 2007, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Cape Town, focussing on the production and reproduction of post-apartheid sacred spaces. This was preceded by four years of fieldwork in 1997–2001 in a suburb of Cape Town (Teppo 2004). During this latter series of field trips, I conducted participant observation and interviewed a total of 42 non-Christian White religious practitioners and two Coloured ones. My informants identified with different traditions ranging from eclectic solitary neopaganism, Asatru and different types of Wicca to indigenous African religion.

In 2005, the neopagans estimated that out of approximately three and half million inhabitants of Cape Town, the number of practicing neopagans varied between 500 and 5000.⁴ All the White neopagans I met in Cape Town were what South Africans would consider middle-class, although there were differences in their economic position. They lived throughout the metropolitan area, from Durbanville to Simonstown, establishing their own sacred spaces where they saw fit. English-speakers constituted the majority of the neopagans whom I met, but a remarkable third of my informants were Afrikaans-speaking or bilingual.⁵ There were also several Afrikaner coven-leaders, important personages in these circles. Of my informants, the majority—approximately two thirds—were female. Half a dozen were openly gay; wiccans perform marriage rites or ‘handfastings’ equally for gay and straight people. A similar number had immigrated, or their parents had emigrated from Western Europe. Many of my informants remained anonymous, but some were public figures in their own right. The most visible figure in Cape Town pagan circles was arch priestess Donna ‘Darkwolf’ Vos, whose coven is known under the name of Circle of the African Moon. She is a figure much loved, envied and feared, and seemed to represent the eye of the storm around whose character and actions personal and political passions run amok. Another rather public figure was arch priestess Andi Fisher, who is specifically known for her Internet presence, for example at witchvox.com, from which she ran her Temple Ubuntu, and her activity in the eclectic neopagan Correllian Nativist Church, which largely operates in the Internet as well.⁶ I also interviewed members of the two other Wiccan groups and several solitary practitioners. In addition, I spoke to some members of an Asatruan community, and to a dozen followers of African traditional religion. The members of these groups were almost exclusively White, but I did meet two Coloured Wiccans as well.

In order to find informants, I relied on snowballing. In Cape Town, neopagans had established good networks with one another via the Internet, and many also knew each other socially, so I was constantly being introduced to new people. While I never revealed whom I had interviewed, I often noticed that my informants knew this; the word spread rather rapidly. My participant observation consisted of participating in rituals or just spending time with my informants. A very typical White South African form of socializing is a dinner party, and I attended a good many, but I was also invited to *braais* (a South African barbeque), or we would just socialize in cafés or in people’s private homes chatting, listening to music and drinking tea.

The sacred city in the shadow of the mountain

The city of Cape Town, also known as the ‘Mother City’, inspires a sense of awe that could easily be translated as ‘holiness’. Table Mountain’s distinctive shape towers above the city bowl and the bay nestled below it—a mysterious and impressive sight. For White South Africans, the city has a special significance as the first colonial city in South Africa, and ‘the gateway to Africa’. Cape Town has an array of religious buildings, such as churches, mosques, temples and synagogues, and sacred sites such as sheik Yusuf’s tomb, that reflect its residents’ spectrum of religious affiliations and ethnic identities. The city has also accumulated numerous secular sites, such as public and natural spaces, that have taken on or been given a symbolic meaning that can be characterized as ‘sacred’.⁷ After the Europeans settled in 1652, sites in honour of the colonial state—such as the pompous Rhodes Memorial—were constructed within the city limits (Chidester 2001: 3–6).

Rowland Sherrill (1995: 325) has pointed out that a place’s sacredness can be established in multiple ways. Certain places, such as Table Mountain, can become sacred due to the landscape’s specific characteristics. The history of a place can also have this effect; during apartheid, the White minority rulers were keen on inventing sacred places, which they often linked to their martial history. Many isolated sacred places in Cape Town were also built to support religious nation building. A space can also become consecrated through the ritual actions or religious processes of a believer who chooses such a space, possibly feeling that the place’s numinousness has chosen him.

The apartheid government was aware that the symbolic value of urban spaces could be turned into a political benefit. A good example of this was the construction of the city centre of Cape Town as a place sacred to the White South African nation (Western 1996: 139–140, 401). Some of these sites also became symbols of the infinite injustices of apartheid, such as District Six, which had been the vibrant heart of Coloured Cape Town before it was proclaimed a White Group Area in 1966 and largely obliterated during the 1970s.⁸ These sacred sites also represent social divisions that, as Chidester (2001: 18) has rightly pointed out, reflect the history of the city, and tend to “remain inscribed in its urban landscapes”.

Post-apartheid Cape Town has private and public holy places on many levels and for many purposes. Some of these places carry explicit or implied political meanings, commenting on or aiming to influence the prevailing racial or ethnic relations. Some of these places have been built to encourage the dismantling of racial segregation, while some reproduce racial enclosures. A contemporary example of a historically produced, national sacred space in Cape Town is Robben Island—a place of banishment under Dutch colonial rule, a prison and a lepers’ colony under British colonial rule and high-security political prison under the apartheid regime. Since the end of apartheid, the island has become a shrine to those who suffered and died under apartheid, and a major tourist attraction, but also a powerful spatial testimony of the White oligarchy’s atrocities.

Whites and magic

Prior to the era of segregation (1910–1948) and particularly the era of apartheid (lit. separateness) (1948–1994), South Africa was a society of religious pluralism (Chidester 1992: 151). This was particularly visible in Cape Town, which had served as a melting pot for people and beliefs from three continents since the seventeenth century: European settlers with their Calvinist, Lutheran, Jewish and Anglican (to mention but a few) backgrounds, Africans with their indigenous faiths and the so-called Malays (in reality mostly from what is currently called Indonesia) practicing Islam. Through apartheid, this multiplicity was forced into the essentialised categories of White, African, Coloured and Asian, and their numerous sub-categories. Spatial and social segregation was implemented according to these perceived racial categories.⁹ In addition, religions were separated. The Afrikaner-dominated Dutch Reformed Church, which promoted the separateness of ‘races’, was a powerful instigator of apartheid’s Christian-national ideology (Chidester 1992: 200). Churches were conceived as communities’ spatial and spiritual centres, while some churches, such as those belonging to the Anglican Church, were politicized and became the loci of resistance against apartheid; well-known examples of this are the Anglican St George’s Cathedral in Cape Town and the Catholic Regina Mundi church in Soweto.

The country’s Black majority had largely converted to Christianity in the nineteenth century, but simultaneously harboured a firm belief in magic and witchcraft.¹⁰ The powerful and pervasive role of witchcraft, sorcery and occult forces is still present in postcolonial Africa, notably in politics (Geschiere 2003: 159). The distinction between healing and witchcraft is of fundamental importance in this worldview. In the wrong hands, knowledge of invisible forces and *muti*, traditional medicines, can cause death and destruction, but in the hands of a benevolent healer, or a *sangoma*, this knowledge can cure illness and protect people from harm. Witchcraft holds no such ambivalence: it is always evil, an antithesis of everything sacred or commendable. A witch is any person who uses *muti* or his knowledge of the occult to harm others (Ashforth 2005: 133–134). The apartheid government tried, with little success, to control these practices with the Suppression of Witchcraft Act of 1957. Nevertheless, all South Africans, regardless of their race classification, were aware of the existence of witchcraft and magical practices. Religious apartheid guarded the external boundaries of racial categories and also those within the category of ‘White’. The emphasis on Christianity glossed over the fact that many Afrikaners had a very rich, and anything but Christian, belief world running parallel to their Christian beliefs. Water spirits or dwarfish, hairy, ill-mannered *tokoloshes* and other familiars of the African magical world were all included in Afrikaner folk legends, and still belong to the everyday belief world of many Christian Afrikaners (Niehaus 2001: 50–56, 192–193; Grobbelaar et al. 1977). These beliefs had a syncretistic origin, conceived in the long interaction between Afrikaners and Africans. In the post-apartheid era, racial categories continue to prevail in South Africans’ everyday thinking and life. Notions of purity and authenticity live on in the discussions on witchcraft. The new political elite leans on them, monopolises them and aims to regulate these discussions (Niehaus 2003: 95). Witchcraft/magic is portrayed as emblematically local and African, and the traditional healing practices are also a building block for a Black identity. Whites are largely excluded from the discourses on magic, healing and witchcraft, an arrangement they seldom care to challenge.

Interestingly, the vast anthropological discourse on African witchcraft and magic has seldom mentioned the role played by Whites, with only few recent exceptions (Niehaus 2001; Wreford 2005b; van Binsbergen 1999). However, during my earlier fieldwork in Cape Town and Stellenbosch in 1997–2001, it became fairly obvious that White South Africans are not only knowledgeable about magic, but used it before, during and after apartheid. I encountered Whites in Cape Town who depended on ‘Slamse’ magical experts to provide help with their problems; these witch doctors, medicine men and sorcerers originate from the Coloured Islamic ‘Malay’ population of the Cape Town area. They are best known for their ability to ‘Malay trick’ someone, in other words to put a spell on them. I also came upon White farmers who asserted that they could make rain, and White intellectuals who believed in the existence of supernatural powers, *magte*. In addition, I learned that the history of the Afrikaners knew many sorcerers (*towenaars*) and prophets who were said to control these powers, the most famous of these being the legendary Siener van Rensburg.

The old people were aware of the existence of certain ‘black’ arts such as sorcery. One whole branch of our family, all God-fearing people, believed in this sorcery. People could be bewitched, and so could animals and objects, yes, even entire farms. (Grobelaar et al. 1977: 58, my translation)¹¹

White South Africans, English and Afrikaans-speaking, have also long used the services of the Slamse ‘witch doctors’ who reside in Muslim communities, and those of *sangomas*. In Black communities, those with knowledge of the occult forces and *muthi* are either considered dangerous witches, or are *sangomas*, who are considered of key importance to people’s physical and spiritual well-being. They are medical and religious experts, healers, psychotherapists and diviners. Their many tasks include the prescription of traditional herbal medicines and the protection of people from the ever-threatening attacks of witches.

Traditionally, becoming a *sangoma* is dependent on a calling from the ancestral spirits, who are also the source of *sangomas*’ religious authority (Wreford 2005a: 3–4). Since the demise of apartheid, some White South Africans have transgressed the previous racial and religious categories by publicly turning to spiritual practices traditionally associated with Black South Africans, and even training as *sangomas*. Becoming a (White) *sangoma* is a long, costly and gruelling process, which has been portrayed in autobiographical and academic writings (Arden 1996; Hall 1994; Macallum 1993; van Binsbergen 1999; Wreford 2005b). South Africa’s total number of *sangomas* has been estimated at 200,000, and they are organised in approximately 150 or more associations (Pretorius 1999). In August 2005, a *sangoma* told me that he estimated that a whopping 400,000 South Africans have received *sangoma* training, but not all of them practice. In fact, there is no truly reliable data on the number of *sangomas* (Ashforth 2005: 51). White *sangomas* form a minute fraction of this number, but some of them have high hopes of playing a seminal role in creating long-needed co-operation between South African Whites and Blacks, for example, as translators between biomedical and traditional medical practice via forming medical partnerships in the fight against HIV/AIDS (Wreford 2007).

According to my informant’s accounts, the position of White *sangomas* does not differ from that of Black *sangomas*; they are also respected and welcomed in the townships. During these visits, they lead or attend rituals, create and uphold ritual spaces with other *sangomas*

by drumming and dancing. One of my informants, a White *sangoma*, described how unconstrained he is spatially and racially; he moves freely, and obviously with no fear between White suburbs and the townships, something which most Whites would prefer to avoid.

Chidester (1992: 1) points out that while African religion has often been called traditional, we should not regard traditional as something timeless and unchanging, but should aim to understand the changes that are included in tradition. Tradition should therefore rather be regarded as “an open set of cultural resources and strategies that can be mobilized in working out the meaning and power of a human world”. Bruce Kapferer argues along the same lines, noting that magic is always modern and outside the categories of tradition and modernity. He has pointed out that magic is powerfully and dynamically connected with the present, which it reproduces. It remains a step ahead of the here and now as it creates the logic of and for social processes. (Kapferer 2003b: 125–126.) In South Africa, *sangomas* are local, legitimate and historically rooted—even in the White consciousness, as we have seen. However, becoming a *sangoma* is considered somewhat transgressive or dangerous for a White person, and is frowned upon by some Blacks. Nevertheless, ‘sangomahood’ is familiar to everyone. Following Kapferer’s argument, the very existence of White *sangomas* makes magic’s omnipresence visible—it can be seen to be working in all possible ways and tenses. White *sangomas* therefore mediate between racial and spatial categories in ways that are effective and possible, if not always appropriate, in the minds of all South Africans. Thus, the present domain of local magic offers a space for the intermingling of racial categories.

But what if the magic is not particularly local, or not particularly interested in the mixing of racial categories? Some branches of the neopagan movement are a good example of this. According to all my informants, neopagan faiths were little practiced in South Africa during apartheid. An important voice, the Pagan Federation of South Africa, was established in 1996, two years after the end of apartheid. In 2005, some of my informants estimated that the number of neopagans in South Africa varies between 2,000 and 5,000, but pointed out that these estimates are rough and far from reliable, as the turnover in the scene is vast and the number of solitary practitioners unknown.

The term ‘neopagan’ covers several distinct new religious movements that differ in their beliefs and practices, but share some common traits. Neopagan movements often claim connections with pre-Christian pagan religions, which they sometimes aim to revive. They are syncretistic and eclectic, practice ritual magic and absorb deities from different religions and ancient mythologies. These examples follow the previously mentioned omnipresent logic of magic, but the manifestations of this logic differ crucially from the previously discussed ones. Wiccan witchcraft, originating in the US and UK, is most probably the most common form of neopaganism today. Wicca is a flexible and heterogeneous faith with several different branches that vary greatly, but share some common qualities and beliefs, such as being nature-oriented, revering ancient Germanic or Celtic holidays, and holding a belief in the law of threefold returns (anything that anyone does may be returned to them threefold). Its spread has been especially effective by means of the Internet. Drawing its influences from Victorian interest in occultism and magic, Wicca is one of the profoundly Western-centred “inventions of post-enlightenment secularism” (Kapferer 2003a: 13). These products have also reached previous colonial regions where they have met indigenous faiths and produced unforeseen religious forms (see, for example, Brendbekken 2003). The impact

of neopaganism or Wicca in South Africa has not yet been thoroughly studied, and the forms its magical practices take in the local context are still largely uncharted. While some South African neopagans have recently written accounts of their faith (see Vos 2002; Groen 2001), a body of thorough academic work on the topic is yet to be written. In South Africa, neopagan faiths also manifest themselves in various ways, such as through Asatru, druidism and Wicca, the most popular by far. The majority of my informants were therefore Wiccans, but I also studied those who subscribed to parallel neopagan traditions, or did not identify with any, nevertheless considering themselves neopagans.

In the United States, conservative Christians perceive neopagans as a “close-to-home example of Satan’s resistance to the armies of God” (Pike 2001: 87). In South Africa, Wicca is still little known among the majority of Whites, who tend to regard it as a form of devil worshipping. South African Whites are well known for their religious conservatism, tending towards right-wing fundamentalism, which leaves little room for other faiths (Chidester 1992: 216). The Calvinist Afrikaner-run Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), which helped to justify the racial segregation of apartheid, is a stronghold of this conservatism. The DRC’s pervasive influence means that the devil and devil-worshippers are still generally feared—to the extent that South Africa is still the only country in the world that has an Occult-Related Crime Unit (OCRU) in their police force.¹² While my informants report good relations with the police at present, many of them had experienced problems with them earlier when the difference between neopagan practices and devil worship had not yet become clear to the authorities. One of my informants had been in considerable trouble during his high school years when he, as “a reader of strange books and all of fifteen”, was suspected of occult activities. In the ensuing police hearings, these accusations were proven to be a teenage prank. However, the allegations of dark, diabolic practices in a privileged beachfront suburb caused a media frenzy, and by the time the misunderstanding was corrected, my informant had earned a reputation as the ‘Camps Bay Satanist’.

Many Wiccans prefer to call themselves ‘witches’, which has been a root of confusion and misinterpretations, and has divided them into two different camps in the United States (Adler 1986: 42). In South Africa, the term is even more controversial. In most of the African cultures, a witch is a malevolent character, truly feared. Among Black South Africans, witchcraft means something irrevocably evil and horrifying. This perspective also prevailed for centuries in Europe and the United States, where being a Wiccan is still rather marginal despite Wicca’s recent popularity. It is thus quite difficult to justify Black witches as being evil, but White witches as being good. In the African systems of belief, a ‘good witch’ does not exist. Small wonder then that not only Blacks but all Africans of other religious persuasions tend to confuse Wiccans with evil witches. This misunderstanding is partly due to the terminology used. Despite the specific South African use and connotations of the word, several White Wiccans told me that they insist on their right to call themselves witches—while at the same time pointing out to me that the word was irreversibly appropriated by the colonizers of Africa to exclusively signify those who employ black magic to harm others. This dilemma has led to some Wiccans fiercely defending their right to define the content of the word ‘witch’ themselves, regardless of the African concept (Leff, Fontleve and Martin 2008), while others make a strong statement against its use (PPA 2007). At present, there are several organisations seeking the right to use the neopagans’ collective voice on this issue. The PPA (Progressive Pagan Alliance) supports

abandonment of the use of the word witch, and claims to stand in direct opposition to the SAPC (South African Pagan Council) and SAPRA (South African Pagan Rights Alliance), which defend its use.

The term they (Black South Africans) use is quite different to the way we would apply it. I have seen people accused of witchcraft on the news and they have been stoned and burned and things like that, hey, but they are not Wiccan. You could probably say they are pagan, but it is not in the same genre of witchcraft that we are doing. I think we are more like the traditional *sangoma* or something. (Male, 41)

One of the big barriers between Africans and Wiccans is our terminology. In Wiccan terms witches are light-workers, terms that we are proud to use (...) However, our neighbours in this same country, the traditional African pagans, use the same terms in a very, very different, horrible connotation. A witch is often the person that all sorts of misfortunes are ascribed to... It is most unlikely that we are going to change the Black man's perception (...) it is too deeply ingrained in the language, you cannot take it back any more... The White witches of this country, who are proud of the term, are also not prepared to give up these terms. (Female, 37)

All of this has led to the neopagans regarding themselves as a misunderstood religious minority—a phenomenon similar to the one Pike noted in the United States. Being deprived of the use of the term 'witch' is presented as a form of persecution, and the South African Pagan Council has initiated "project Hypatia" to "eradicate misinformation".¹³ The Western, recently re-invented and rehabilitated concept of witch is thus asserted against the local, older and much more common understanding of the term. This is provocative in many directions: it certainly alienates Wiccans from Blacks, but also works as a counter-discourse against the Christian traditions of South African whiteness. The insistence on the use of the term can also be perceived as part of some Whites' attempts to re-evaluate past ideas that were produced to uphold colonial power. Lastly, devotion to the term can be regarded as a sign of affiliation with the global community of Wiccan witches, which largely exists on the Internet.

Dale Wallace (2007) has also discussed the problems related to the use of the word witch. She points out that the neopagans in South Africa "often find that they are required to negotiate and debate their religious identities on issues quite unrelated to their personal and community beliefs and practices" (2007: 12). Nevertheless, politically active neopagans have also noticed the unique opportunities that the new constitution offers them. Some Wiccans have grasped this opportunity to promote the rights of Wiccans to the same level as those of religious majorities, such as the legal right to marry people and to provide counselling, for example, in the army or prisons.

We've got the constitution, you can't get better than that. We have to test those rights—like the marriage act. My lawyers and I have been working on the marriage act and the law commission for the last six years. For six years we have been drawing up petitions... we have been lobbying. Every year we send Home Affairs three letters. We will get there but it takes time. (Donna Vos, Circle of the African Moon)

We are out there, and we are very public. People know who we are. (Gail, Witches Unite)

And the point... is that we want acceptance and we want to educate. I want people to ask me questions. (Lucille Reynolds, Witches Unite)

The promotion of political rights is not, however, on the agenda of all neopagans, as they nurture a variety of opinions and are individualistic to the point of avoiding any group activity in their religious practice. A 'solitary pagan' is someone who practices alone. They do not ask others to join their rituals, nor are they willing to give detailed descriptions of their own practices. They are wary of pagan circles, as they fear that some individuals might want to benefit from them financially, or might want to involve them in power struggles—a phenomenon globally connected with neopagan movements and known as "witch wars" (Berger [ed.] 2006: 30). Some of my informants divulged that they were or had previously been solitaires simply because they found 'pagan politics' too difficult in Cape Town. My informants' unanimous opinion was that organized neopagan groups or covens are prone to squabbling—which can be both fierce and malicious. I could seldom conduct an interview without the issue of 'pagan politics' surfacing. Those working in covens were also aware of the dangers involved and wanted to avoid them.

Unfortunately, Annika, in witchcraft and in paganism, when a person gets to a certain rank, it starts to become a power play. That is why we promised ourselves in this group it will never happen, because everybody will be an equal. (Lucille Reynolds, *Witches Unite*)

That is why they call it [Wiccan witchcraft] a bitchcraft. (Male, 33)

I often came across the term 'psychic attack', which was strikingly reminiscent of the African concept of witchcraft. One coven leader also refused a request for a research interview as I had spoken to someone whom she considered her enemy. She told me that she knew I had been polluted by this contact, and it would thus be pointless and even harmful to talk to me. Adam Ashforth encountered a similar fear of pollution, which he calls "spiritual insecurity", in Soweto. He considers the fear of pollution and malicious occult attacks to be a major element of witchcraft (Ashforth 2005: xxx). For Wiccans, spiritual insecurity arose from many sources. Not only was there crime to be feared, but also the malice of other witches.

There were several thematic similarities in the neopagans' accounts. Firstly, they described how they experienced their external circumstances—low general acceptance at the local level and the overriding influence that the global neopagan movement exerts—and how these had affected them. Secondly, there was the theme of spiritual insecurity. There were great variations in its manifestation as well as between individuals, but the insecurity was almost always there. Finally, they faced a thorny issue with practical implications: how to find a balance between the racial exclusivity of whiteness and the experienced fear of Blacks and Coloureds. Almost all global pagan belief systems state egalitarian aims and a tendency towards a non-racial approach, even idealizing indigenous people, and their knowledge. For South African Whites, this has a different twist: how can one put on a pedestal those whom one has been taught to rule, fear or avoid?

These themes and predicaments were visible in the ways White neopagans choose those with whom they want to practice, their choice of suitable spaces and terminologies for their practices, the ways they are organized and the magical practices they carry out around those spaces that they have come to think of as their own.

Consecrating White spaces

As pointed out earlier, a sacred space is made in a ritual action or religious process. The element of exclusion is fundamental to making sacred spaces—some may enter and others may not (Chidester and Linenthal 1995: 8). Which practices, then, are included in these rituals, what are suitable places for these processes, and who can join in this act of making sacred spaces? Neopagan covens and groups choose whom they want to receive in their ritual spaces. This monitoring of participants is considered essential in a country where religious tolerance and intolerance live side by side, crime is high, and the income differences remain vast.¹⁴ Some groups welcome people from all racial categories, some do not.

People have said that they have met different kinds of groups, but they have never met a group like us before because we accepted them with open arms. We never judge the skin colour, we never judge who they are, where they are from, the way they have been judged before. (Lucille Reynolds, *Witches Unite*)

Of all the Wiccan groups that I encountered in Cape Town, a coven known as Temple Ubuntu took the idea of combining African spirituality and Wicca furthest by envisaging an equal synthesis in their plans.

The cornerstone of this temple is rooted in a futuristic idealism to marry and integrate aspects of African pagan paths' tradition with those of the current practice of Wicca. Everyone who joins our temple knows that they should not join the temple if they do not prescribe to the idea. (Andi Fisher, *Temple of Ubuntu*)

Many South African Whites have done an inspiring job regarding the deconstruction of racial segregation—sometimes at remarkable personal costs—but there are those who will never discard the heritage of apartheid. The ideas of irreversible human differences, separation and racial segregation live on in some neopagans' accounts that reject the surrounding otherness completely.

Q: Do you know any people who visit these African *sangomas*?

A: I feel that it is wrong. It is as bad as Christianity. That means adopting something that does not honour your own ancestors and the gods of your ancestors. If you go and establish connections with the African gods and their ancestors, I think you are intruding somewhere where you are not wanted, and at the same time you are cutting off the flow to your own path and own ancestry. (Male, 32)

Cultural differences were also presented as a reason for staying away from African traditional religions. When I asked if they would like to attend a ritual in townships sometime in future, some told me that animal sacrifice disgusted them, some politely said that going to one is “such a good idea”, which was clearly meant to humour the foreign researcher with her strange ideas. Some pointed out that Africans have their own gods and their own tradition, while some thought that it would be important to find out more about African gods.

I would love to find out about African stuff (...) now I follow the Hindu deities. Shiva and Kali are my deities. In our inner circle, none of us have been led to African deities yet. (Female, 43)

In the end, none of my neopagan informants told me that they were planning to go to the Black townships to attend a ritual there. It seems contradictory that the ostensible willingness in these groups and individuals to accommodate different cultural influences is generally so high and yet has led to so little. But there is, in fact, no contradiction: the logic of this accommodation is just very selective. Pike (2001: 127–128) has pointed out that the neopagans in the US are keen on accommodating Native-American perceptions of magic and rituals. A range of cultural appropriation practices occurs in Cape Town as well. Some borrow their symbols and rituals from the very same cultures, Celtic, Nordic, even Native-American, to which the US neopagans often turn. They utilize Northern European maypoles or Native-American peace pipes in their rituals. They also apply African methods of divination such as the ‘throwing of the bones’, or draw a parallel to traditional Afrikaner herbal healing. Very few have, in fact, ever looked for local Black teachers, while several refer to Celtic or Native-American tradition as their ‘own path’. These observations are in line with Pike’s (2001: 128) observation that neopagans seek authenticity from those cultures they *want* to follow.

In South Africa, this selectivity allows White neopagans to remain in their privileged and relatively safe communities, do imaginary (and rather escapist) travelling to other cultures and simultaneously keep aliens outside. Even when and if members of colour are accepted to a coven, social life, teachings and rituals take place according to the Whites’ terms and desires.

When I go overseas, people want me to bring them African tales... but it just does not work that way. None of us have been inspired. We have been looking for links, but we cannot find Black people who are eloquent enough to give us those links (...) Let me be very frank. We had one guy, he came to a couple of our festivals and things, and he could not visualize. He could not sit down and find himself on a beach. That was conceptually out of his reach where he was at that moment. I am not saying that he will not get there. But that was his background (...) I am waiting for the more academic Black, who is at ‘varsity now, to contact us. (Female, 43)

In the narratives of most of my informants, ‘low class’ or lack of cultural capital—the eloquence, ability to visualize and academic background mentioned above—are the salient obstacles to joining a Wiccan coven. This may not be the whole story, however, as references to ‘race’ are highly politically incorrect in today’s South Africa and are consequently repressed. Only a very few made a downright racist statement and said that they would not feel comfortable practicing neopagan rituals with people of colour; two of the covens actually had Coloured members.

The logic of exclusion can also be examined in terms of neopagans’ spatial practices. For the purposes of my argument concerning White South Africans and their response to the desegregation of urban spaces, where things do *not* take place is more important than where they do. Neopagans generally seek to create sacred spaces in nature. These can vary from temporary circles of fire to permanent sanctuaries and can be important for an individual or a collective. In the US, outdoor spaces are typical of and central to neopagans’ important rituals that aim to create a break “with the practices of the religions they grew

up in” (Pike 2001: 49). The Cape Town area seems ideally suited for this type of sacred space, as it is exceptionally beautiful and has many beaches, mountain slopes and forests that are quiet and relatively accessible—excellent scenes for rituals. However, these are not the only considerations when having to choose a space suitable for ritual or sacred purposes. In a city with towering crime figures, the most important concern affecting the choice of any space is safety. Cape Town has been called ‘the murder capital of the world’. The South African Police Service’s annual statistics show that in South Africa, around 18,000 murders are committed every year. Of these, around 1,800 are committed in the greater Cape Town area—a number that has stayed reasonably static in recent years (Gie and Haskins 2007). The perceived safety is very low overall (Pharoah 2008: 7). Capetonians consider going out at night, not to mention to secluded spaces such as beaches or forests, very dangerous.

Many people will tell you they love forests. Forests are dangerous. Very dangerous. Tokai forest, as romantic as it sounds, is dangerous. The beaches are dangerous. And that’s just silly. And I am very serious about this. If you are going to have public rituals... you are risking the people who trust you. (Female, 35)

This perception, which partly draws from imaginary racist apartheid discourse and the general fear of otherness, is also partly based on the realities of a crime-prone and segregated society with huge income differences. The commonality of becoming a crime victim is also reflected in the fact that according to police statistics, 22 per cent of South Africans were crime victims in 2007. However, the real figure is likely to be at least twice as high, seeing that these numbers only apply on the offences that were actually reported (Pharoah 2008: 3). Nevertheless, poverty and all the ensuing problems are still concentrated in Black and Coloured areas. Black and Coloured Capetonians are most likely to be attacked in their suburbs, but in 1998, 79.2 per cent of victimised White South Africans were assailed outside their residential areas. Consequently, Blacks and Coloureds experience more fear inside their areas, while Whites experience fear outside their suburbs (Spinks 2001: 23).

White South Africans have, in fact, withdrawn from many public spaces since the demise of apartheid. Gated communities have sprung up around Cape Town, a development that tends to reproduce the spatial and social divisions produced during apartheid. Charlotte Lemanski (2004) suggests that the fear of crime is thus also being used as a justification for a predominantly racist fear of difference. This, as explained above, is aggravated by the society’s general high level of violence. Consequently, urban fears and divisions make it tricky for neopagans to find suitable outdoor places for their collective rituals. This leads to most Capetonian neopagans mainly practicing their faiths in private spaces that can be divided into private spaces (homes), cyberspaces and public spaces.

i. Homes

Some neopagans create a permanent place for rituals inside their homes or in their gardens, but bigger spaces needed for collective rituals are often created on an ad hoc basis.

The Ostara spring ritual was held in the garage of Lara’s house in an upmarket white suburb. I was surprised to see how artistically this profane space was transferred into a temporary temple with

patterned pieces of material hanging from the ceiling, multiple candles, bowls of sand and water and flowers. When the bleak fluorescent light was turned off, incense spread all over. Everyone entering the ritual space were first smudged and then anointed, and suddenly the drills and wire-cutters hanging neatly on the walls no longer mattered. The garage felt like a haven or an island out of time in some other dimension. I felt a real sense of loss when the space was stripped back to a garage after the ritual. (Author's field diary 2.8.2005.)

The consecration of domestic space increases the meaning attached to a home. A home was primarily and often described as a sacred space.

My house is my sacred space... everything in my house. We create things together... they have meaning. My books have meaning. My plants in the house, they all have meaning. This is our little space. We don't just invite anybody in. And we come here to hide away from the world. This is our shell. (Female, 26)

Pagan homes tend to hold layer upon layer of sacred meanings for their inhabitants. For example, every proper pagan home has an altar that is built and nurtured with love and devotion. An aesthetic arrangement of flowers, stones and candles, possibly incense, or small statues and photographs can be found on this altar. Gardens can have their own sacred spots, a tree or plant that its owner considers sacred. Different parts of the house, such as the front door, can also be subject to magical rituals or consecrated in some way.

Part of neopagans' magical practices is to seek to communicate and travel outside the domain of the senses, in the spirit world. This spirit world or astral level can be reached in meditation or rituals, and there they can complete interactions and practice magic. My informants emphasized that not only they, but also their houses can exist at this magical level and be vulnerable to attack. With the skilful use of magic, or spells and amulets they can be protected against intrusion. My informants described these measures in various terms.

Obviously, because I explore things on a magical level, this house for me also exists in the astral. If I don't build my space in the astral, it is not strong (...) My house is protected by a dragon who lives at the astral level. It is perched above my house, the tips of its wings touch the ground on both sides of my house. (Female, 26)

I visualize my home inside an aura of light. Nothing evil can penetrate that shield. (Male, 31)

I have protected my home and my car with herbs/runes/magical instruments. (Female, 41)

We all do protection magic every day. What we try to do is to strengthen our auras, to focus on our energy and just block off all negative energy. (Female, 33)

All my informants told me how they use magic to protect their homes, persons and belongings. The fear of attack is not only focused on earthly burglars and robbers, but also against the magic of other pagans who might have malevolent intentions. Some of my informants also told me that they had experienced what they interpreted as a 'psychic attack', a feeling of a malicious power assaulting them either in their sleep or during meditation. The perpetrators of these attacks can only be those who are knowledgeable about magic, but can be prevented by casting a binding, harm-preventing spell. Protection

rituals are also performed against pollution and disease. My informant described how a ritual was performed in her yard to protect one of the attendants, a White nurse, from contracting HIV/AIDS while working with Black patients. In everyday White lives, HIV/AIDS is still largely understood as a disease that afflicts Africans. In addition to this, the existence of African magic is acknowledged as a possible source of danger. Some of my informants told me how they had met the 'local spirits' on their astral journeys. These spirits were feared and revered.

I have started exploring the astral Cape Town, and I must say we European people are not very welcome here. We are not welcome here at all. (Female, 26)

The urban fears of White South Africans thus even reach the landscapes visualised in altered states of consciousness such as trances. These states and magical rituals are employed to protect and affect spaces in both the real and magical domains, and alleviate the fears caused by the surrounding violent society. One of my informants aptly called these rituals "crisis magic". He pointed out to me that the practices of magic in the service of protection of home spaces reflect the insecurity that has come to dominate White South Africans after the end of apartheid. While this explanation carries within itself more than a whiff of reductive functionalism, it illuminates one important aspect behind these rituals. In addition, it underlines the earth-shattering change that has taken place in the lives of White South Africans since 1994.

ii. Internet

The Internet has been celebrated as a new Utopian space where self can lose its boundaries and find a new, omnipotent existence. However, the online world primarily exists in relation to the offline world, which it also reflects (Robins 1996: 153–154; Miller and Slater 2001: 82). Whether we regard the Internet as a domain of freedom or a mirror of reality, it is an important medium for neopagans everywhere. This is true of South Africa. As one of my informants put it: "We are all on the Internet all the time". An over-generalization it might be, but this statement reveals the significance of the Internet, the importance of which is best understood by its multiple applications. The Internet is often the only place where neopagans can both safely and anonymously communicate and network with like-minded people—no small bonus in a country of rampant crime and regular Satanism panics. It also offers tools for learning about rituals and ways to practice as a pagan: some of my informants were, for example, enrolled in an open virtual school, *witchschool.com*, where they studied for their different Wicca degrees.

The Internet also serves as a space where pagan identities can be constructed. In relation to collective pagan identities, the interactions on the Internet produce and reproduce local social structures, and connect them with the global neopagan communities where it is possible to create completely new social structures and to contest the previously set boundaries. It is also possible to create anew or reinforce one's experienced individual identity on the Internet, and create new communities and spaces for those identities (Miller and Slater 2001: 10–11). Furthermore, the Internet provides a space for ritual

interactions. During my fieldwork, I was presented with several examples of how the members of virtual communities can conduct rituals or do magical workings on the Internet: a ritual can, for example, be physically performed in two different places simultaneously with the attendants being virtually connected. Or a group of practitioners can take on a joint task, such as predefined 'dream work'¹⁵ or duties at the astral level, the results of which they will then report and discuss on the Net. Some of my informants practiced their faith mainly through the Internet, which thus also offers White South Africans another means of avoiding urban spaces. When all the spaces experienced as meaningful are created at home or in virtual reality, there is even less time or reason to go out to public spaces.

iii. Public spaces

Since the Cape Town neopagans mostly practice and gather in their homes and in cyberspace, it is hardly surprising that the public, urban spaces of Cape Town are the least important ones for their religious functions. The city is nevertheless experienced as sacred in many ways, and the idea that many Cape Town spaces are sacred surfaced regularly. This applied particularly to Table Mountain, although only very few ever conducted rituals there. Although Cape Town urban space was thus a strong presence in the minds and narratives of neopagans, it was less important in their ritual practices.

Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden is an important place in Cape Town, mainly frequented by tourists and White South Africans. It holds many symbolic meanings: this is where the last remaining part of Jan van Riebeeck's infamous bitter-almond hedge, designed to separate White South Africans from Blacks, still grows. Situated at the foot of Table Mountain's eastern slopes some ten kilometres south of the City Bowl, it is one of the few spaces in the city where the neopagans feel they can move around in a reasonably carefree manner, have a picnic, or just sit and meditate. This is largely because access is restricted and an entrance fee is required. These spaces also serve as important markers of identity, and a visit there can fortify a feeling of belonging to the land and the city.

I go to Kirstenbosch Garden sometimes and I have symbolic acts—there is the Lady Anne Barnard's bath for me, it is one of the most sacred spaces in Cape Town. The Dutch even knew that this is a very sacred space. They put in a little birdbath in the shape of a bird.¹⁶ It's got a sandy bottom, and the water bubbles up and there are these big tadpoles. And there is a long fence [around the birdbath]. You are not supposed to go there, but every time I am there, I quickly climb over, and I take the water, and I drink it. 'Cause for me, that is my connection—I am a Capetonian. I was born here, my family has been here for 350 years. I am a South African—my identity is here. I can't go and live in Namibia, I can't go and live in Swellendam. I am a Capetonian, this is my area. (Female, 26)

Many Cape Town spaces are often *interpreted* as sacred for religious purposes, but are seldom *used* as such. Only the most adventurous of my interviewees would dare conduct ritual work in public urban spaces without considerable security arrangements or at night. An element of transgressing the boundaries of the safe, the profane and the acceptable characterized my informants' descriptions of those ventures.

At night, sometimes, when we come from clubbing we think, fine, now it is a good time to perform a ritual. Then we go to this amazing place at Table Mountain. (Female, 28)

Mariaan is a solitary practitioner living in a gated community next to a Black township. On a Friday night, I could clearly hear the sounds of people celebrating there. Yet, the township was a place utterly unknown to Mariaan—she had never even been there. She does, however, travel around her neighbourhood at the astral level, and considers many sites in the neighbourhood as sacred. In her mind, the spirit beings magically created by the extinct Khoisan¹⁷ still roam around, forgotten, but nevertheless powerful.

There is this old Bushman cave, and when I went there in astral [in a state of trance] I saw this mighty creature guarding its mouth. It had six feet and a huge insectoid body. It was guarding the entrance to the cave, but it was lonely and forgotten... No one knows how to worship them, their people are not there any more, their people do not know how to talk to them. Their people now just know guns and drugs and that spirituality is gone... The people in the township, they are of no consequence. (Female, 26)

In the accounts of White neopagans, the ancient holiness of the land is often mentioned as growing from the sacred meanings that the land had for the long-gone Khoisan. Coloureds are barely mentioned, and present-day Blacks, despite their rich magical tradition, are not allowed similar spiritual standing. Only the Khoisan—largely an imaginary construction—are interpreted as the *real* indigenous people, which sanctifies them for elevation by the neopagans. Equally, Chidester points out how Black South Africans use the “genocide of the Khoisan” for nation-building and thus use the dead to bring sacred meanings to urban space (Chidester 2001: 22). The belief in the holiness and the alleged perceived absence of the Khoisan thus connects South Africans of all colours, reflecting their inherited memories of the land. In White minds and visions, Khoisan spirits therefore also inhabit the sacred landscape of Cape Town.

The landscapes of the sacred

For White neopagans in post-apartheid society, magical practices are accompanied by a plethora of spatial choices. Neopagans can create their heterotopias and sacred spaces individually and collectively. The spaces can be ritually consecrated, returning to their profane use or remain sacred even when the users have left them. Sacred spaces can be established anywhere: in the mind as astral spaces are, on the Internet, at homes, in gardens or public spaces. The rituals involved in this beget new forms of spatiality, which is telling of the glocal interplay of religions. My informants often pointed out on one hand the pressure they experienced as South African neopagans within their own country, and on the other hand, the difficulty of adapting to a global system of belief. The global neopagan community produces and leans on Internet instructions and texts, which are then appropriated in local rituals. South African neopagans expressed a strong need to belong to the global neopagan communities, while at the same time trying to fit their own cultural backgrounds and beliefs to these; a tug-of-war well illustrated by the symbolically central argument regarding the use of the term ‘witch’. It can therefore be argued that also when

encountering South African spiritual insecurities and racial relations, these magical practices produce unexpected forms. Here, the practice of magic produces society while simultaneously constructing itself within each fleeting moment. And yet, as Bruce Kapferer has pointed out in his writings about sorcery—a magical practice per se—its paradox lies in its very essence, which can never be confined to one moment, as it has already moved a step beyond it (Kapferer 2003b: 126). Therefore, the important questions turn out to be *how* magic is generated, and how the ensuing social spatiality reproduces the social order. Two issues affected the magical spatial practices most: racial relations and spiritual insecurity.

The spiritual insecurity of the neopagans is reflected in the ways the spaces outside the ritual spaces are experienced as threatening, inhabited by robbers and burglars or unhappy spirits. The neopagans frequently performed home protection rituals, for example, or rituals to protect a person from pollution. Tense relations between neopagans but also urban fears come into play here: a large part of these rituals is designed to keep Others, Africans and Coloureds away from White spaces, homes and cars, and from harming White bodies. In these rituals, the image of threatening Blacks is renewed, and the exclusive White space is reconstructed again and again. The use of this new magic constantly produces new symbolic, spatially elaborated expressions of racial relations. It is noteworthy that the democratic principles ingrained in global neopagan ideas could be used to establish a fertile ground for racial desegregation and mediation between racial groups in South Africa, especially if the neopagan propensity to borrow from native religions is taken into account. But this seems to be a task that has mostly been taken on by White *sangomas* who often mediate between racial and spatial differences. Neopagans are more prone to isolate themselves from the surrounding harsh realities and the insecurities of the present South African society. The local contradictions thus become most visible in the ways White neopagans are rapidly indigenizing global neopagan faiths and practices to a glocal form in which the previously constructed local spaces and racial categories come to dominate them. While some neopagans reflect very critically on those categories, they are nevertheless structurally reproduced in ways that makes transgressing them difficult even for those who desire to do so. When suitable, neopagans amalgamate local magical practices—such as the throwing of the bones, or the reverence for ancestors—into their beliefs in a sanitized form, but this always occurs in a way that does not force the practitioners to look for magical knowledge outside their own sacred spaces—or comfort zones. What might at first sight seem like a denial of a traditional conservative Christian view of being White in South Africa still clings to the privileges and superiority of whiteness. Many Cape Town neopagan groupings accept people from all racial categories if they are willing to follow their code of behaviour, or belong to an acceptable social class, but only some White neopagans wish to create a working and equal dialogue between their faith and traditional African religion. Even when arguing the opposite, these neopagans are more involved in drawing and upholding racial boundaries than shattering them. These boundaries are expressed spatially at every level of their religious practice, whether they take place in their minds, homes, on the Internet, or in public spaces. Without a concentrated attempt to reach out from the cocooning White suburbs, it will be difficult to transform a sacred landscape full of religious enclosures and racial boundaries.

NOTES

¹ This work was funded by the grants from the Academy of Finland, the Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth Foundation, Institut Francais d'Afrique du Sud (IFAS) and the Oskar Öflund Foundation. I also thank my research assistant Sarah Meder and my proofreader Ilse Evertse for their invaluable contributions.

² I use the term 'race' to refer to a social construction lacking scientific validity to explain human cultural difference, but nevertheless a powerful category in the South African mindset (while not limited to it).

³ In this paper, I will use Black or African, White and Coloured to refer to these population groups as they still define and identify themselves. I also prefer capital letters, as they suitably express the importance that an individual's 'race' has in South Africans' social differentiation categories.

⁴ South African Pagan Rights Alliance estimates the number of neopagans in South Africa at 45–50 thousand <<http://www.paganrightsalliance.org>> (retrieved 19.2.2009). This is an unofficial estimate—official figures do not exist.

⁵ For Afrikaners, Christian-nationalist Calvinist Christianity was a part of traditional Afrikaner identity and a crucially important marker of their ethnicity (Kinghorn 1994: 394; Schutte 1989: 220).

⁶ <www.astralight.org/Correllian/Elders/Andi.html> (retrieved 18.2.2009).

⁷ On sacred as a social notion, see Eliade 1961, Durkheim 2001 [1912]; on boundary drawing, see Douglas 1966. Sacred spaces are always linked with power. They are produced as ritual spaces or significant spaces for interpretation, and these spaces are contested in negotiations regarding power relations (Chidester and Linenthal 1995: 9–15).

⁸ The symbolic significance of these eradicated areas is condensed in the 1987 verses of poet/gangster/community activist Don Mattera: "Gone/Buried/Covered by the dust of defeat—/Or so the conquerors believed./But there is nothing that can/be hidden from the mind./ Nothing that memory cannot/reach or touch or call back."

⁹ According to the Population Registration Act of 1950, every person was a member of a racial group; White, Black or Coloured. Among others, the Coloured category included the subcategories Indian and Asian. The grounds for this classification were related to appearance and behaviour. For a thorough explanation of racial categories, see Christopher 1994: 103–105. Around Cape Town, Coloureds form 50 per cent of the population. They tend to be Christians, although some of them, the so-called Cape Malays, are Moslem.

¹⁰ Magic is somewhat slippery and fuzzy concept, as well as a classic but contested anthropological keyword. According to the general definition, the user of magic aims to control occult forces or causal relations between seemingly unconnected phenomena or events. The distinction between magic and religion is rather tricky and not really feasible. Here, I lean on the definition that generally regards magic as a part of religion. (Middleton 2005: 5562.) Lately, magic has been reinterpreted in relation to modernity, and has once again become a subject to debate in anthropology (Pels 2003).

¹¹ "*Die ou mense was goed bewus van die bestaan van sekere 'swart' kunste soos toordery. Een hele tak van ons familie, godvresende mense, het almal aan dié toorkuns geglo. Mense kon getoor wees, selfs diere en voorwerpe, ja selfs plase.*"

¹² On their web page they define an occult related crime to mean "any human conduct that constitutes any legally recognized crime, the modus operandi of which relates to or emanates primarily from any belief or seeming belief in the occult, witchcraft, satanism, mysticism, magic, esotericism and the like. Included in the scope of occult-related crime are ritual muti/medicine murders, witch purging, witchcraft-related violence and sect-related practices that pose a threat to the safety and security of the Republic of South Africa and/or its inhabitants." <www.saps.gov.za/youth_desk/occult/occult.htm> (retrieved 22.7.2006.)

¹³ <www.pagancouncil.co.za/node/9> (Retrieved 6.2.2009).

¹⁴ South Africa's Gini coefficient (an index measuring inequality of income distribution) in 2005 was 0.72—one of the highest in the world (Armstrong, Lekezwa and Siebrits 2008: 5). For poverty and unequal income distribution in South Africa, see also Schwabe 2004.

¹⁵ The participants take part in controlled dreaming, or lucid dreaming. They decide on the aims together,

then collectively create themselves the same dream (not necessarily at the same moment though). Later, they can discuss the occurrences in the dream via the Internet.

¹⁶ In fact, the birdbath was installed by the British Colonel Christopher Bird in approximately 1811.

¹⁷ Mariaan was referring to the popular apartheid lore of the ‘first people’ or Khoisan, who according to myths either assimilated with local Coloureds or lost their lives to violence and disease as a result of colonisation. In fact, the whole idea of the ‘Khoisan’ is a very recent one. There was no neatly defined population called that, but a vast diversity of small populations of herder/hunters and hunter-gatherers who populated the country, moving about all the time in search of grazing and water for their stock (herders) and water, vegetable matter and animals to hunt (hunter-gatherers). There were many distinct languages spoken—not simply dialects of one language. They were enserfed and enslaved and, together with the many imported slaves and their descendants with whom the local people had intermarried, etc., were redefined as ‘Coloured’, not as Africans (Black; Native; Bantu). This was also the fate of the offspring of marriages and relations between European settlers and locals as well as those between settlers and imported slaves. (The author thanks Professor Andrew “Mugsy” Spiegel of the University of Cape Town for this note.)

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