

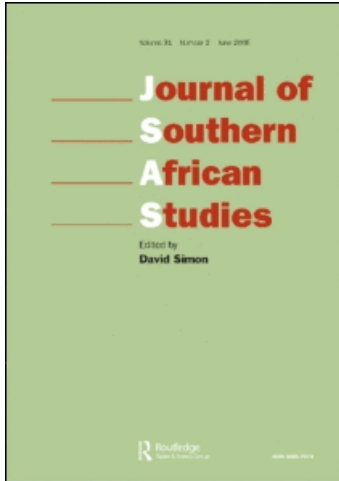
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'High Horses' – Horses, Class and Socio-Economic Change in South Africa*

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This article examines an aspect of the growth of an Afrikaner bourgeoisie in the platteland through the 'things' they desired. It discusses the introduction of the American Saddlebred horse from the USA, to the agrarian sectors of the then Cape Province and Orange Free State. Analysis of breed discourse affords us insights into the role of status symbols, the socio-economic context of their acquisition, and the cultural impetus for their rise in popularity and wide geographic diffusion in rapidly upwardly-mobile, predominately Afrikaans-speaking rural communities in South Africa. In addition to the material context, the article analyses the elite – and, to an extent, internationalist – rhetorical space the American Saddle horse inhabited, by contrasting it with the self-consciously egalitarian and ethnically unifying discourse surrounding another horse used by primarily Afrikaans-speakers, the Boerperd. This article seeks to contribute to an area that is perhaps neglected in southern African historiography: the 'cultural web of consumption', with an emphasis on 'things' and their meanings. Historians have shown how consumer items and sports, for example, were invested with ethnic identity. This article, however, explores another nuance – the role of class. Past historiography on the culture of national identity has largely focused on the ways in which shared understanding of 'history' was mobilised to produce group (ethnic/national) identity, but identity could also be predicated in part on the embrace of 'modernity' and consumerism. The comparison between the supporters of American Saddlers and Boerperde, both factions within the (largely male) Afrikaans-speaking society, and an analysis of their quite different discourses reflect two ways of conceptualising identity, especially in the way they mobilised consumer hunger. The Saddle horse discourse reflects the development of a new class, with manifestations of fresh desires and a need to demarcate class boundaries. It reflects a way of thinking about self-identity that is not the traditional view of Afrikaner identity politics: a confident, internationalist, pro-American, elite – above all, embracing of 'modernity', the future, and not invested in the past. Instead of 'Afrikanerising' the American horse, it became more prestigious to maintain a foreign link. Antithetically, the Boerperd discourse offered a demotic weltanschauung, and the Boerperd breeders contested the notion of a horse as an effete relic of a higher class, revelling instead in nativist history, classlessness, usefulness, and autochthony.

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Things are in the Saddle/and ride mankind.’¹

In the first half of the twentieth century, there was a seismic shift in the relationship between horses and humans in rural South Africa, as ‘horsepower’ came to mean 746 Watts rather than equine military-agricultural potential.² By the 1940s, the South African horse industry faced a crisis. An over-production of horses,³ exacerbated by restrictions imposed by the Second World War, had rendered export to international markets difficult.⁴ Vehicle numbers were doubling every decade.⁵ There were doomed attempts to slow down the inexorable mechanisation of state transport. As late as 1949, the Horse and Mule Breeders Association issued a desperate appeal to the Minister for Railways and Transport to use animal transport wherever possible.⁶ There were ill-fated efforts to re-orientate the industry towards slaughtering horses for ‘native consumption’, or sending chilled equine meat to Belgium.⁷ The Remount Services had been transferred to the Department of Agriculture, a significant bureaucratic step reflecting the final acknowledgement of equine superfluity to the modern military. The so-called ‘Cinderella of the livestock industry’ had to reinvent itself to survive.⁸

A new breed of horse thus entered the landscape of the *platteland*: the ‘American Saddlebred’.⁹ Unlike the horses that had preceded them, these creatures were *show* horses. The breed was noted for its showy action in all paces, its swanlike neck with ‘aristocratic arch’, and its uplifted tail. These horses could not be used for ordinary farm work; they were largely stable-based in the show season, taken out of their stalls only for exercise and shows. A saddler was the consummate leisure horse. It was the ‘ultimate showhorse’ – the ‘peacock of the showing’ – and a highly visible marker of disposable income.¹⁰

As a conspicuous signifier, the Saddlebred provides a useful method of tracing and understanding social change in a rapidly changing South Africa. This article offers an interpretation of the socio-cultural symbolic role of this animal in the South African *platteland* milieu. It explores the introduction of the Saddlebred to South Africa from the United States of America, and the rise of the Saddle horse ‘industry’, predominately in the Afrikaans-speaking, agrarian sectors of the then Cape Province and Orange Free State. Analysis of breed discourse provides insights into the role of status symbols, and the reasons for and manner of their acquisition, in upwardly-mobile Afrikaans-speaking rural communities in South Africa, particularly from the late 1940s and through the 1950s.¹¹

1 This is a line from Emerson’s poetic commentary on the rise of (American) consumerism, and seemed apposite. Ralph Waldo Emerson, ‘Ode, Inscribed to W.H. Channing’, *Poems*, (1847).

2 The term *horsepower* originated in the context of a growing obsolescence of horses in an industrialising world, with James Watt, who determined that a horse could do 33,000 foot-pounds of work a minute in drawing coal from a coal pit.

3 The Horse and Mule Breeders Association facilitated the export of 35,772 equines during the war, but post-war markets were restricted. ‘The Part Played by Middelburg Cape in the Development of the Riding Horse Industry in South Africa’, *Die Middellander*, 9 September 1983.

4 South African National Archives Repository (hereafter SAB) LON A173/13, W. Callender-Easby to P.J. Schreuder, 29 April 1946.

5 Vehicle numbers increased from 370,000 in 1940 to 1.3 million in 1960; W. Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 182.

6 SAB LON A 173/13, Minutes of the Horse and Mule Breeders Society of SA, 1 June 1949.

7 *Ibid.*

8 SAB LON A173/13, P.J. Schreuder to W. Callender-Easby, 23 April 1946.

9 The American Saddlebred in South Africa is now called the ‘SA Saddle horse’. Nomenclature adopted in this article tries to be chronologically rather than retroactively correct.

10 See ‘The Saddle Horse is Alive and Well in the Western Cape’, *Farmer’s Weekly*, 91,026, 29 June 2001, p. 38. The phrase is repeated in ‘American Saddlebreds Online’, *Farmer’s Weekly*, 30 August 2002, p. 45. P. Swift and J. Szymanowski, *The Sporting Horse in Southern Africa* (BoE Private Bank, 2001), p. 16.

11 This offers us a window into only one of the regnant rural paradigms. It is of course dangerous to homogenise rural life; analysts must be sensitive to the huge socio-economic variation that existed over time and area. In the South African context, for example, there were *houtkappers*, citrus growers, wine farmers, wool farmers and sugar cane farmers, to list but a few.

The discussion includes the material socio-economic context of their acquisition, and the cultural impetus for their rise in popularity and wide geographic diffusion. Oral history provides evidence in which Saddlebreds are conspicuous in the narratives of rural success,¹² as significant signifiers of status in a group of upwardly mobile rural whites, who were predominately male and Afrikaans-speaking.¹³ In addition to the material context, the elite – and, to an extent, internationalist – rhetorical space the American Saddle horse inhabited is analysed, by contrasting it with the self-consciously egalitarian and ethnically unifying discourse surrounding another horse also used by primarily Afrikaans-speakers, the Boerperd.¹⁴ This article seeks to contribute to an area that is perhaps neglected in southern African historiography: the ‘cultural web of consumption’, with an emphasis on ‘things’ and their meanings.

Just as Schlereth contended in his study of American rural consumption in the period of rapid capitalist transformation before the First World War, historians of rural life usually neglect material accumulation and, particularly, the display of that which Mumford called ‘the good life’.¹⁵ Insights drawn from international scholars of consumption patterns, particularly in their focus on consumption as a social category, are useful in exploring this part of South African history. All too often, and especially in studies on the rural sector, production is the sole analytical category. Lears argues that we should also remember that it is dangerous to see a linear, top-down model of cultural influences.¹⁶ Equally, it would be shortsighted to consider only one cause for consumption – ‘status striving’ – and ignore the multivalent forms of meanings inherent in the process of consumption.¹⁷ To do so would be ungenerous to the complexity of human desire, and our ability to appreciate new forms of beauty.

Creating the Community

One result of the historical shift from labour to consumption has been the reorganisation of human–animal relationships. While some have simply intensified, some new associations have developed as a result of structural societal changes. I explore one of these areas of change by tracing the development of a new breed of horse valued for its show form rather than for its productive capacity.

12 Oral interviews with Pieter Hugo, John Swart, Petro Botha. See also ‘Stiff Competition in American Saddler National Championships’, *The Farmer’s Weekly*, 19 March 1958, p. 29.

13 One should be wary of the fallacy of *cum hoc ergo propter hoc*, as correlation is not necessarily causation. Nonetheless there is ample evidence of the connection between upward mobility and the acquisition of saddlers as status symbols.

14 The Afrikaans plural – *Boerperde* – is usually preferred.

15 L. Mumford in *Technics and Civilization* (New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1934), p. 105; T.J. Schlereth, ‘Country Stores, County Fairs, and Mail-Order Catalogues – Consumption in Rural America’, in Simon Bronner (ed.), *Consuming Visions – Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880–1920* (New York, W.W. Norton and Co, 1989), pp. 339–75. The quotation is on p. 340. For an American perspective, see D. Blanke, *Sowing the American Dream: How Consumer Culture Took Root in the Rural Midwest* (Athens, OH, Ohio University Press, 2000); R.P. Kline, *Consumers in the Country: Technology and Social Change in Rural America* (Athens, OH, Ohio University Press, 2000); and T. Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi: Consumers, Poverty, and Culture 1830–1998* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1999). In South African historiography, see, for example, R. Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750–1870: A Tragedy of Manners* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999). Ross proposes a new method that seeks to constitute ‘a history of the markers of status’.

16 J. Lears, ‘Beyond Veblen – Rethinking Consumer Culture in America’, in Bronner (ed.), *Consuming Visions*, pp. 73–97.

17 Moreover, as Adorno noted, it is not helpful to rarefy (and thereby implicitly criticise) ‘display’, when most cultural practices and goods contain elements of display (and therefore in so doing assail ‘culture’ itself.) T. Adorno, ‘Veblen’s Attack on Culture’ (1941) reprinted in T. Adorno, *Prisms*, trsl. S. and S. Weber (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1981), pp. 73–94.

The training was complex and technical: most Saddlebreds are born with the usual equine gaits: the walk, trot and canter, and an inherent ability to learn the special gaits (stepping pace and 'rack'). To prepare the Saddlebreds for the showring, a specialised regimen of 'fetlock chains', 'side reins' and 'overchecks' had to be imposed. Highly technical corrective shoeing was often utilised to modify pacing, altering the geometry of equine form.¹⁸ They entailed considerable purchase costs and necessitated substantial financial investment and technical skill, a special farrier and a trainer (both for horse and rider). Tails were washed and underwent a monthly 'set'. But to initially 'set' the tail, the lateral ventral *sacrocaudal* muscle could be cut to create an arched, liberated tail. False tail wigs might also be added for show purposes.¹⁹

As will be demonstrated, stratification within the horse industry is reflected by the symbolic status (and symbolic 'identity') associated with different breeds of horse, with the differential value attached to breeds reflected by several economic markers (such as sales prices and stud fees), as well as the value attributed by different sectors of society. As Clatworthy has shown in the North American context, the Saddlebreds are valued for aesthetic reasons, with 26 per cent of respondents mentioning their 'love of beautiful horses' and only 3 per cent mentioning money or profit as their motivation.²⁰ They differ from racehorses – which are, of course, also symbols of affluence – as these are notionally an investment, and often generate income while even the best show saddlers do not 'make money' for their owners. The Saddlebreds are thus arguably used to *demonstrate* and *enjoy* wealth, rather than used in the acquisition thereof. A familiar joke circulates in saddler circles: 'How do you make a small fortune from these horses? ... Well, you start with a *large* fortune.'

The American Saddlebred horse can be traced to horses shipped to North America from the British Isles in the seventeenth century. By the time the first horse shows were held in Kentucky, Virginia and Missouri in the early 1800s, horses called 'American Saddlebreds' were being exhibited. In 1891, the American Saddle Horse Breeders' Association and a Saddle Horse registry were established. Horses became a major commercial commodity in Kentucky in the mid-nineteenth century, with 'Kentucky saddlers' shipped to the eastern market, throughout the south of the United States and, finally, the international market, including South Africa. The American Saddlebred Horse was first imported into South Africa in 1916 by Claude Orpen, an upwardly-mobile sheep farmer from Barclay East.²¹ Orpen became known as the father of the 'high class saddle horse breeders in this country'.²² Following Orpen, Stephanus Phillipus 'Fanie' Fouché of Constantia, Rouxville, became known as the other 'father of the Saddle horse' in South Africa,²³ importing his first stallion in 1934.²⁴ The Second World War temporarily halted the importation of horses.

18 The sole area of the hoof could be encased in a customised system of pads to alleviate concussion. 'Shoeing for trueness of gaits', *Farmer's Weekly*, 26 January 2001.

19 A switch (hairpiece made by hand) could be braided into the existing hairs to lengthen the sweep of the tail. Fieldwork, Show Stables, Robertson Agricultural Show, 2 October 2004. False tails were lined on pegs against the walls like models' hairpieces at a fashion show.

20 N. Clatworthy, 'Social-Class and Value Factors in Saddle-Horse Showing', *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology*, 9, 2 (November 1981), pp. 135–38.

21 L. Kaplan, *American Saddle Horses in South Africa* (1974), p. ix.

22 SAB LON A173/13, Minutes of the Foundation Meeting of the Registered Saddle Horse Breeders' Association of South Africa, 23 November 1942. 'Saddle Horses' are horses used for riding not draught.

23 'Fanie Fouché talks Horses but only if they are American Five-gaiters', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 12 June 1951. See 'A Brief History of SA Saddle Horses', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 8 August 2003, p. 12. Tradition has it that he was waiting to be connected by the operator while making a phone call when he purportedly glanced at a magazine photo of a Saddlebred and became intent on breeding them.

24 Fouché imported the first mares in 1947; thus for the first 36 years all Saddlebreds were halfbreeds, being bred from South African mares. SAB LON A173/13, P.J. Schreuder to N.W. Dimock, 1 August 1947.

After the war, however, a growing network of rural notables, connected by kin or by business, started to import American stock buying horses from each other. As one breeder argued, the 'purely working horse' was becoming 'something of the past'.²⁵ With the introduction of the car, a niche was necessary for a different kind of horse, suitable for showing rather than basic transportation and farm work.²⁶ Horse breeding would have to reinvent itself to stay financially viable in a mechanising world. Commentators argued that horse breeding could only be considered an economic proposition if it began to cater 'for the luxury and sporting market of the show ring'.²⁷ Equally, as horses were thus no longer utilitarian, they could be mobilised as status symbols. Certainly, the big studs appear to have become increasingly well known to the public.²⁸ When the imported horses arrived, excited rural crowds gathered.²⁹ In 1948, when Fouché imported the stallion, Edgeview King, an enthusiastic throng gathered at the railway station to see 'The King' arrive. For example, over the month after his arrival, Three hundred people visited the famous 'Edgeview King' and watched the training process.³⁰

Pioneers such as Fouché and Taillifer Retief imported even during the difficult years following the Second World War.³¹ Simply importing from America, as opposed to Europe and the United Kingdom, was evidence in itself of conspicuous consumption. For example, importing a horse from America cost one buyer £500, whereas thoroughbred stallions could be imported from England freight-free, in terms of a government agreement with the Union Castle Mail Steamship Company.³² There was much more bureaucracy involved in American imports, with strict disease control measures that relaxed only gradually.³³ From the late 1940s there was intense discussion in the rural press, precipitating what one observer dubbed the 'Cult of the Saddle horse'.³⁴ By 1947, generally high prices (progeny of imported American sires varied from £150 to £800, imports at £500–£2,000 for a stallion, £250–£1,000 for a mare)³⁵ and occasional a freakishly expensive horse (like Retief's £3,000 import)³⁶ won publicity at agricultural shows.³⁷ Early 1940s discourse on the Saddle horses

25 'National Futurity Shows Advocated for South Africa', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 18 June 1952, p. 13.

26 By 1918 there were 231 tractors, by 1930, there were 3,684 in use nationwide. S. Jones and A. Müller, *The South African Economy, 1910–90* (Johannesburg, Macmillan, 1992), p. 43. By the 1960s, private car ownership boomed, absorbing 9 per cent of total private consumption expenditure. See H.T. Andrews, F.A. Berill, F. De Guingand, J.E. Holloway, F. Meyer, H.J. van Eck and A.M. van Schoor, *South Africa in the Sixties: A Socio-economic Survey* (South Africa Foundation, 1962), p. 25. For a further brief note on mechanisation – an under-discussed phenomenon – see A. Jeeves and J. Crush (eds), *White Farms, Black Labor: the State and Agrarian Change in Southern Africa, 1910–1950* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1997), p. 12.

27 'The Boerperd', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 26 February 1958, p. 29.

28 'A Brief history of SA Saddle Horses', *Grow Supplement, The Farmer's Weekly*, 93,030, 8 August 2003, p. 12; SAB LON A173/13, P.J. Schreuder to C.J. Cronon, 28 November 1947.

29 SAB LON A173/13, S.P. Fouché to P.J. Schreuder, 1 December 1947.

30 SAB LON A173/13, S.P. Fouché to P.J. Schreuder, 3 January 1948.

31 SAB LDB 1038 R775 Volume 4, V.107/31. Director of Veterinary Services to the Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry, August 1945; SAB LDB 1038 R775 Volume 4, S.P. Fouché to the Director of Veterinary Services, 1 August 1945; SAB LDB 1038 R775 Volume 4, Secretary of Agriculture to P.T. Retief, 6 November 1945; SAB LDB 1038 R775 Volume 4, United States Department of Agriculture to Director of Veterinary Services, 2 November 1945.

32 SAB LDB 1038 R775 Volume 4, Office of the Minister of Native Affairs to Priv Sec of the Minister of Agriculture, 21 October 1946. Although the passage could be as low as £150 if managed correctly. SAB LON A173/13, P.J. Schreuder to P.J. Louw, 28 May 1946.

33 SAB LDB 1038 R775 Volume 4, Director of Veterinary Services to Secretary for Agriculture, 25 March 1947; SAB LDB 1038 R775 Volume 4, Minister of Agriculture to Oppenheimer and Son n.d. (1946); Minister of Agriculture to R. Barnett, n.d. (1946). V.H. Russ to Secretary of Agriculture, 29 October 1946.

34 'Cult of the Saddle Horse', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 27 March 1940, p. 123.

35 SAB LON A173/13, P.J. Schreuder, 'Important Importation of Saddlers ex USA', 31 July 1947.

36 SAB LON A173/13, P.J. Schreuder to C.E. Olivier, 31 August 1946.

37 SAB LON A173/13, P.J. Schreuder, 'Important Importation of Saddlers ex USA', 31 July 1947.

had still emphasised their ‘usefulness’ and ‘hardiness’.³⁸ But such qualifiers were rapidly abandoned, and by the late 1940s these horses came to represent a clear demarcation between ‘productive’ and purely ‘consumptive’ activities. Two opposing camps formed between largely Afrikaans-speaking male proponents and critics of the Saddler. Thus from the late 1940s there ensued a vigorous debate in the agricultural press, which offers a window into deeper currents of ideology.³⁹

In the early 1940s there had been a few breeders militating for state-controlled centralised horse breeding to take the process out of the hands of amateur farmer-breeders who experimented on ‘alchemistic’ lines. It was even suggested that punitive fines should be levied against owners of registered mares who bred from non-registered males.⁴⁰ But these went largely unheeded and programmes proceeded under the private control of a few wealthy farmers.⁴¹ By 1942, there were six (male Afrikaans-speaking) breeders who had pure registered American saddlers.⁴² This small but growing number of *aficionados*, reacting to critics, reiterated that importations were private and not publicly funded. As noted earlier, changes in the post-war horse breeding industry meant that breeding could only be considered an economic proposition when it supplied the ‘luxury’ market of the show ring.⁴³

In 1942, local notables established a (non-breed specific) society, the Saddle Horse Breeders Society of South Africa.⁴⁴ The Society was not intended to promote a particular breed,⁴⁵ but rather for ‘any European breeder or owner of high class saddle horses’.⁴⁶ The idea was to recover the ‘good name’ the South African Saddle horse ‘held 60 years ago in India and other Countries’ to boost the export industry.⁴⁷ With the enormous loss of equine life in the immediate aftermath of the war (a million horses died in France, three million in Russia, and one-and-a half million in Poland⁴⁸) the idea was not to promote show horses, but to capture a slice of the international draught, military and transport market.⁴⁹ The initial notion was to use government support, particularly the Department of Agriculture to smooth the bureaucratic path.⁵⁰ Government assistance in importation was militated for and received.⁵¹

The American Saddle Horse Breeders Society of South Africa, which formed seven years later in 1949, although a subsidiary of this committee, had quite a different motive and *modus*

38 E.C. Hugo, ‘In Defence of the Saddler’, *The Farmer’s Weekly*, 10 December 1947, p.63.

39 ‘Daily Rider’, ‘Qualities of the American Saddler’, *The Farmer’s Weekly*, 26 November 1947, p. 67.

40 ‘Alpha’, *Horse and Saddle in South Africa (a Vision)* (Cape Town, Maskew Miller, 1943), p. 23.

41 ‘In Defence of the American Saddler’, *The Farmer’s Weekly*, 12 November 1947; ‘Importation of Saddlers’, *The Farmer’s Weekly*, 26 November 1947, p. 67.

42 SAB LON A173/13, P.J. Schreuder to J.M. Ferreira, 24 November 1942.

43 C. Norden, ‘The Boerperd’, *The Farmer’s Weekly*, 26 February 1958, p.29. Norden was a Middelburg (Cape Province) breeder. For biography of this pioneering female equestrienne see P. Hugo, ‘To ride or not to ride ... what a stupid question!’, *South African Showhorse*, September 2004, pp. 133–39.

44 In a 1938 meeting of Orpen, Fouché, Louw, ‘Koosie’ Pansegrouw, and Jack Oosthuizen in Colesburg, Orpen donated £8 towards starting the society, which became a reality in 1942.

45 SAB LON A173/13, P.J. Schreuder to Chairman, Registered Saddle Horse Society of S.A., 15 April 1948.

46 SAB LON A173/13, Proposed Constitution of the Registered Saddle Horse Society of South Africa and Rhodesia.

47 SAB LON A173/13, Minutes of the Foundation Meeting of the Registered Saddle Horse Breeders Association of South Africa, 23 November 1942.

48 SAB LON A173/13, Newsletter Number 1, Horse and Mule Breeders Association of South Africa and the Registered Saddle Horse Breeders Association of South Africa and Rhodesias and Clydesdale Breeders Society of South Africa, June 1945.

49 SAB LON A173/13, Chairman’s Report of the Horse and Mule Breeders Association of South Africa and Registered Saddle Horse Breeders Association of South Africa and Rhodesias, 2 May 1944.

50 SAB LON A173/13, Chairman’s Report of the Registered Saddle Horse Breeders Association of South Africa and Rhodesias, 1 May 1945.

51 SAB LON A173/13, Minutes of the Registered Saddle Horse Breeders Association of South Africa, 21 February 1945.

operandi. Its members were from the wealthy rural elite, predominately wool farming Afrikaners, with a few of the English-speaking rural bourgeoisie, who formed the association to specifically promote this show breed.⁵² The society established inspectors, judges, horse shows and ultimately a ‘World Cup’, initially between South Africa and America. The committee also made gestures towards genteel philanthropy, setting up funds for sufferers of Polio and other ‘deserving’ causes.⁵³ They used individual capital investment to promote their cause. There was a drive towards an avoidance of state control towards strictly private ownership of the breeding process.⁵⁴ There was an initial attempt to form the society without affiliation to the state sanctioned Studbook Association (Act 22 of 1920).⁵⁵ In 1952, Philip Myburgh, after a six-month international tour to study saddle-horse breeding – the first South African farmer to go abroad for this purpose – suggested annual horse shows on American lines.⁵⁶ Central to his argument was the idea that America was ‘a century ahead of the rest of the world’, and South Africa was ‘the second greatest saddle-horse breeding country in the world’, while England had ‘low’ breeding standards. Myburgh maintained – and there was truth in what he said – that, post-Second World War, horse values plummeted; ‘pessimists raised the cry that the horse was a thing of the past’ and would soon vanish from the *platteland*. The declining interest in the horse during the next few years had resulted in ‘the disappearance of the mediocre and poorer class of horse, and there was a limited demand only for the very best the market could offer.’ As a result, only ‘top-line breeders’ could survive financially. Supporters agreed on the need for a centralised national annual show and wanted to let spectators and readers of the rural press in on ‘the intensity of the struggle between, say, the winner and the runner-up of the five-gaited championship . . . or that the third horse may have been the favourite of the crowds, drawing all the applause’.⁵⁷ In 1954, the first American Saddle Horse Championship was held at Middelburg in the Cape. The show attracted 7,000 spectators and an elite group of breeders and owners.⁵⁸

In this changing rural milieu, the first horse textbook for the South African market was published in 1949. The book was written by P.J. van der Schreuder and F.B. Wright, both in the division of Agricultural Education and Research.⁵⁹ A graduate of Cornell, Schreuder was

52 The minutes were taken in English and Afrikaans alternately. SAB LON A 173/13, Minutes of the Meeting of the American Saddle Horse Breeders Society of SA, 7 February 1950, 10 a.m. The committee included S.P. Fouché (chairman), J.S. Pansegrouw, J.H. van der Merwe, H.Z. Kock, W.P. van Notten, J.Z. Moolman, A.I. Moolman, E.L. Marais, J.P. Botha, P.J. Louw, B. Weyer-Henderson.

53 SAB LON A 173/13, Minutes of the Meeting of the American Saddle Horse Breeders Society of SA, 7 February 1950, 2:30 p.m.

54 *Ibid.*

55 It was proposed that they have their own inspectors. However this was vetoed by the state on the grounds that only the SASB could issue certificates of registration of pedigree (on pain of a fine of £500). SAB LON A 173/13, H.W. Turpin (Director of Agricultural Education and Research, Department of Agriculture) to American Saddle Horse Breeders Society of South Africa and Rhodesia, 25 March 1950. SAB LON A 173/13, H.W. Turpin (Director of Agricultural Education and Research, Department of Agriculture) to American Saddle Horse Breeders Society of South Africa and Rhodesia, 25 March 1950. 7 February 1950 in Bloemfontein, after Middelburg (15 October 1949). Pansegrouw’s motion that they only register with this society, and discouraged from registering with the SASB. SAB LON A 173/13, H.W. Turpin (Director of Agricultural Education and Research, Department of Agriculture) to American Saddle Horse Breeders Society of South Africa and Rhodesia, 25 March 1950.

56 ‘National Futurity Shows Advocated for South Africa’, *The Farmer’s Weekly*, 18 June 1952, pp. 12–13.

57 ‘National Futurity Shows Advocated for South Africa’, p. 13.

58 C. Norden, ‘The 1954 American Saddle Horse Championships of South Africa’, *The South African Saddle Horse and Other Breeds*, 2, 51 (April 1954); L. de Wet ‘A Brief history of SA Saddle Horses’, *Grow Supplement, Farmers’ Weekly*, 8 August 2003, p. 13.

59 ‘Union’s First Horse Textbook’, *The Farmer’s Weekly*, 19 January 1949, p.89. Schreuder was born in Boshoff district in 1885, graduated with a BA from Victoria College in 1910, then Leipzig University, after which followed a doctorate from Cornell on the ‘Cape Horse’ in 1915. He was then appointed to the Department of Agriculture, and spent time at Potchefstroom College of Agriculture. He organised the first four horse breed societies in South Africa.

a recognized expert, vocal in the discursive space provided by the rural press. As director of Agricultural Education and Research, he facilitated the importation process,⁶⁰ and actively promoted investment in American Saddlers, plugging both the American and show horse angle.⁶¹ It was Schreuder in particular, who urged showing horses as a solution to the crisis in the horse industry.⁶² He noted that it was 'quite obvious that a breed with such a high status in the livestock economy and the social and agricultural life of the great American nation can certainly contribute' [to the South African context].⁶³ He celebrated it as a 'distinct and exclusive American breed', with 'beauty, fineness, good manners'. Simultaneously he gave a cursory nod to the politics of autochthony by suggesting these horses' ancestor's blood flowed in the South African 'hantam', or 'Cape horse'. Schreuder further urged that 'The SA American Saddler Society' take advantage of the recent Pedigree Livestock Act to maintain breed purity.⁶⁴

'Localists' erupted, demanding to know why South Africans should simply be 'copy-cats' of America, and whether Dr Schreuder was 'employed by the Union government or by the government of the United States'.⁶⁵ The impassioned nativist defence contended that many unadulterated South African horses with 'not a drop of American blood' were five-paced [that is, exhibited the special 'show' gaits].⁶⁶ One critic even suggested that an 'indigenous' horse of his who had pacing ability had been owned previously by Claude Orpen and had covertly contributed to Orpen's purportedly 'pure' American Saddlers:

We had the riding blood in this country, but the Americans hypnotised us with motor cars in 1912, and while we were still under the effects of Uncle Sam built up, perfected and sold us an article, the ingredients of which we had had for years.⁶⁷

Sceptics dismissed these animals with their 'beautiful names' and specialised equipment in favour of local Boer stock.⁶⁸ A debate on gaits⁶⁹ ensued, with some critics contending that the fifth gait was 'nothing new', that riders of so-called *strykloopers* of the Sandveld area near Piquetberg (Piketberg) 'beat the American Saddlers at their own game'.⁷⁰ Others defended local horses by taking the entirely opposite tack, and damned the fifth gait as 'artificial and distinctly American'.⁷¹ Detractors likened saddlers to 'wooden toy horses seen in shop windows to amuse children' and their high tail action was compared to 'baboons' bottoms'. Localists asked: 'Why cannot we breed a South African saddle horse distinct from any other country?'⁷² 'A true South African type, South African bred and South African reared horse is the only horse for the future South Africa.'⁷³ They urged a shift away from

60 SAB LON A173/13, P.J. Schreuder to W.W. Dimock, University of Kentucky, 12 December 1946.

61 SAB LON A173/13 Schreuder to C.E. Olivier, 20 March 1946.

62 SAB LON A173/13, P.J. Schreuder, to W. Callender-Easby, 23 April 1946.

63 P.J. van der H. Schreuder, Reply, *The Farmer's Weekly*, 26 November 1947, p. 67.

64 P.J. van der H. Schreuder, 'The American Saddle Horse', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 10 September 1947, pp. 71–72.

When the South African Studbook Association was founded at the beginning of the 20th Century, English speakers were in the majority and it took some urging from agricultural extension workers and breed society staff to get significant numbers of Afrikaans speaking breeders to adopt the paperwork of pedigree. F. Van der Merwe, Pers. Comm.

65 'The fifth Gait', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 19 November 1947, p. 66.

66 'South African Riding Horses', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 3 July 1946, p. 1,433.

67 *Ibid.*

68 'Good South African Breeds', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 24 March 1948, p. 67.

69 'Four Paces Only', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 17 December 1947, p. 57.

70 'The Fifth Gait', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 19 November 1947, p. 66.

71 'Artificial Action', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 10 December 1947, p. 63.

72 B. van der Meulen, 'Saddle Horse Types in South Africa', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 25 December 1946, p. 81. He eccentrically maintained that French imported Percherons crossed with local horses would offer the 'true South African stamp'.

73 'Types for South Africa', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 8 October 1947.

expensive American importations and a return to public interest in the 'indigenous' 'Hantam' [from the Hantam region] breed which 'could be created into a distinct South African breed', using the ways of our 'forefathers'.⁷⁴

Antithetically, the opposing clique emphasised both internationalism and modernity, defending the 'proud' American saddler for the 'modern horseman'.⁷⁵ Promoters argued that 'America lives today in an age of mechanisation, of radar and television, of jet propulsion and the atom bomb, but in spite of that the pet interest of the average American is still the horse'.⁷⁶ Breeding horses and embracing modernity were thus, they argued, compatible ideals. They defended the 'world-famous breed' from base attack by the 'ignorant' and uncultured.⁷⁷ Moreover, to escape the *parvenu* stigma, this group eschewed the vulgarity of mere usefulness. Aficionados affirmed that it was 'undoubtedly a pleasure horse for the rich man',⁷⁸ and because a 'show-horse is not a work-horse', (Figures 1 and 2) what was required was a 'perfection of paces, not hardiness'.⁷⁹ Supporters mooted the idea of ambitious breeding schemes.⁸⁰ They celebrated that for 'sheer spectacle no other breed touches it',⁸¹ that it was 'flashy',⁸² that it was, in fact, an equine 'film star'.⁸³ Others described it as the 'epitome of elegance and refinement ... it displays breeding and brilliance in every line'.⁸⁴ This was also summed up in the metaphor of carriages: 'Having owned [other breeds], the difference between them and the American Saddler ... is almost the same as that between a springless Scotch-cart and a light rubber-wheeled well-sprung buggy'.⁸⁵

The Cult of the Saddle Horse

By the early 1950s, saddlers had won 'tremendous popularity in South Africa',⁸⁶ with public followings for famous saddlers.⁸⁷ They were popular crowd pleasers in pageants and parades.⁸⁸ By 1956, South Africa was the largest importer of American Saddlers.⁸⁹ Prices soared.⁹⁰ As noted, breeders and owners had established a Registered Saddle Horse Breeders Society of South Africa and Rhodesia and by the late 1950s there was a widening dispersion of saddler blood in South African riding horses.⁹¹ There were requests in the press for recommended literature on judging and training American Saddlers.⁹² Reflective of this new focus on equine theatre, farmers were being advised by the rural press on how to show their

74 M. Du Plessis, 'Hantam and Saddler', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 26 November 1947, p. 67.

75 B. Weyer-Henderson, 'In Defence of the American Saddler', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 12 November 1947.

76 'National Futurity Shows Advocated for South Africa', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 18 June 1952, p. 15.

77 'Ryperd', 'Saddlers and Experts', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 3 December 1947.

78 P.A. Myburgh, 'Achievements of Five-gaiters', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 27 August 1952, p. 19.

79 C. Norden, 'Pre-Show Training for Riding classes', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 4 April 1956, p. 21.

80 W.J. Van der Merwe, 'In Defence of the American Saddler', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 12 November 1947.

81 'The Showy and Versatile American Saddler', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 2 March 1960, p. 23.

82 'Our American Saddlers Make Hit with Kentucky Expert', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 25 April 1956, p. 21.

83 'The Showy and Versatile American Saddler', p. 22.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

85 'In Defence of the Saddler', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 10 December 1947, p. 63.

86 'Our American Saddlers make Hit with Kentucky Expert', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 25 April 1956, p. 21.

87 For an example, see 'Stiff Competition in American Saddler National Championships', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 19 March 1958, p. 29.

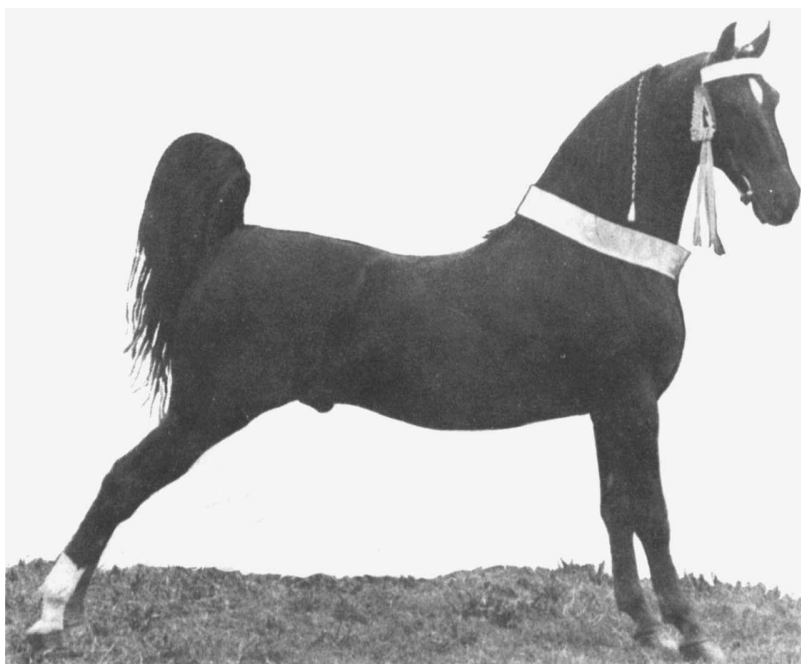
88 'Standard of South African Mounts', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 25 January 1950.

89 'Our American Saddlers Make Hit with Kentucky Expert', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 25 April 1956, p. 21.

90 See *Farmer's Weekly*, 12 February 1958, p. 53. In 1952, Fouché's horses were going for £300 upwards. 'The Trials, Tripples and Tributes of Isak Strauss', *South African Show Horse*, September 2004, p. 55.

91 R.W. Cloete, 'Virtues of the American Saddler', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 8 April 1959, p. 45.

92 See, for example, *The Farmer's Weekly*, 28 September 1955, p. 21.



Figures 1 and 2. A 'show-horse is not a work-horse'. Source: Kaplan, *American Saddle Horses in South Africa*, pp. 8 and 4.

horses, and how to ‘take better horse photographs’ rather than on mundane issues of draught or transport.⁹³

This notion of display had been discussed by Veblen, who was among the first to recognize (and offer social satire on) both the consumptive ethic and the social transformation in which the symbolism attached to consumption began to take centre stage. He noted that in the United States, Saddle horses ‘at their best serve the purpose of wasteful display’,⁹⁴ and described the importance of acquiring the ‘correct’ taste as this ‘taste is a taste for the reputedly correct, not for the aesthetically true.’ This explains the need for trainers and inspectors to teach (and then patrol) that which was ‘reputedly true’. The trainers and judges, set up by the Society, worked directly with the farmers to teach them to appreciate this new equine aesthetic, that which in the American context Veblen dubbed, sardonically, the ‘pecuniary canon of beauty’.⁹⁵ The correct form – for both horse and rider – had not only to be taught but moreover, had to be taught to be *appreciated*. As Veblen noted in another context, ‘the canons of taste have been colored by the canons of pecuniary reputability’.⁹⁶ The saddle horse suited this aim: the slow-gait and rack, for example, could take a horse over two years to master, under guidance from a trainer.⁹⁷ In similar vein, films like ‘The Horse America made’ and ‘The American Horse’, were shown at Farmers Association and by the American Saddle Horse Breeders Association.⁹⁸ *Platteland* eyes needed to be schooled in the appreciation of a new form of equine beauty and to be taught to read this new morphological language.

Gaited Communities?

The simple explanation for the ‘cult of the saddlehorse’ was the wider availability of greater disposable income. This however, offers us a simple facilitatory model: they did it because they *could* do it. However, there were secondary causes, which warrant attention. The ‘Wool Boom’ of the 1950s, triggered by the Korean War, when wool sold for ‘a £ for a pound’, had two significant effects in this context.⁹⁹ Firstly, it led to the accelerated creation of a rural Afrikaner bourgeoisie. Per capita income amongst Afrikaners was less than 50 per cent of English-speakers in 1946, but rose to 80 per cent by the late 1970s, and the gross value of all farm products rose by 67 per cent in the decades between the 1935 and the 1960s.¹⁰⁰

93 ‘How to Take Better Horse Photographs’, *The Farmer’s Weekly*, 22 January 1958, p. 19. The breeders’ letters also make reference to desire for ‘kiekies’ [snaps] and portraits of horses. SAB LON A173/13, Taillifer Retief to P.J. Schreuder, 26 February 1946.

94 His investigation appears to be as much satire as analysis, but he provided much of the original vocabulary of subsequent analyses, and has the distinction of commenting directly on Saddle horses themselves. See *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York, Macmillan, 1902). For a discussion of his contribution and limitations see R. Mason, *Conspicuous Consumption – A Study of Exceptional Consumer Behaviour* (Farnborough, Hampshire, Gower, 1981).

95 There are various show classes for the Saddle Horse with their own canons of beauty: for example, the ‘Three Gaited horse’ performs walk, trot and collected canter, and the horse should show ‘beauty, brilliance, elegance, refinement, expression and high action’. The ‘Five Gaited classes’ have long flowing mane and tails and show both ways of the show ring at walk, trot, canter, slow gait and the rack.

96 T.B. Veblen, Chapter Six, ‘Pecuniary Canons of Taste’, in *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York, Macmillan, 1902).

97 Swift and Szymanowski, *Sporting Horse in Southern Africa*, p. 16.

98 SAB LON A173/13, PJS (Department of Agriculture and Forestry) to Philip Myburgh, 10 September 1948; SAB LON A173/13, G.P. Steyn to P.J. Schreuder, 1 April 1948.

99 S. Jones, ‘An Agricultural Revolution 1950–1970: A Rejoinder’, *South African Journal of Economic History*, 15, 1&2 (September 2000), pp. 180–86. For a lead up to this economic change see also, for an overview, N. Natrass, ‘Economic Growth and Transformation in the 1940s’, in S. Dubow and A. Jeeves (eds), *South Africa’s 1940s – Worlds of Possibilities* (Cape Town, Double Storey, 2005) pp. 20–43.

100 Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, p. 181. See *Handbook of Agricultural Statistics, 1904–1950* (Pretoria, Department of Agriculture, 1961), Tables 35, 52 & 70.

And secondly, it turned some elite Afrikaner eyes to the United States (in that country's role of Britain's replacement on the world stage), as part of their consumer revolution. Dubow and others have described how – although there was perhaps a Malanite nationalist narrowing of outlook – there was in the same period, among other sectors, a sense of internationalism, of a more confident looking outward.¹⁰¹ As O'Meara points out, with Smuts signing the United Nations Charter in San Francisco, 'many white South Africans felt an almost American sense of boundless possibilities in 1945'.¹⁰² As Professor F.E.J. Malherbe, professor of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch, noted: 'The city Afrikaners have taken off their *velskoens* [sic] for good ... and take their fashion cue from London and New York – even Paris'.¹⁰³ One observer noted: '... Afrikaners have become a hamburger-eating and cola-imbibing people';¹⁰⁴ '... we are already four-square in the American era in South Africa. ... In some ways the most shameless habits, first popularized in America, are slavishly followed by South Africans, and no less by Afrikaners ... South Africa, previously culturally attached to Western Europe, is becoming more and more a protégé of America'.¹⁰⁵ In the post-war landscape, the United States had adopted the new symbolic role of world leadership,¹⁰⁶ and the realm of the everyday in some South African circles was becoming Americanised:

When a former President of the United States, Mr Harry Truman, had himself photographed in a gaudy picture shirt ... it did not take long to be become *de rigueur* in the country of the Voortrekkers. Every day we see Afrikaans children with these piccanin shirts, abounding with American place names or pictures, which seem to familiarize the wearers more with these names than with the names of places, plants and animals of their own country.¹⁰⁷

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the 'countryside' was arguably more a state of mind than a place; and it could be bought. In a series of *Huisgenoot* articles, Wim Hartman depicted the 'new [urban] Afrikaner', with only a thin connection through nostalgia to *platteland* life.¹⁰⁸ Afrikaners involved in agricultural occupations dropped from about 30 per cent in 1946 to only 8 per cent in 1977, while those in white collar employment increased from 29 to 65 per cent.¹⁰⁹ This process of urbanisation, often equated contemporaneously with modernisation, was ameliorated by shrouding it in traditionalism, a nostalgic *ubi sunt* motif.¹¹⁰ While the urbanised poor struggled to sustain their identification with a rural golden age, the more affluent could simply purchase a reconnection with the land.¹¹¹

For those still connected (either emotionally or materially) to farming, the popular rural press was growing and facilitating an expanding communication network. The *Farmer's*

101 As Dubow has successfully shown, the 1940s presented a plethora of possibilities: a place of rival imaginings, fluidity and socio-economic change. See S. Dubow, 'Introduction: South Africa's 1940s', in Dubow and Jeeves, *South Africa's 1940s*, p. 17.

102 D. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948–1994* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1996), p. 21.

103 Quoted in 'Jan Burger', *The Gulf Between*, (Cape Town, Howard Timmins, 1960), p. 70.

104 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 82. See also J.T. Campbell, 'The Americanization of South Africa', in A. Offenburger, S. Rosenberg and C. Saunders (eds), *A South African and American Comparative Reader: The Best of Safundi and Other Selected Articles* (Nashville, TN, Safundi, 2002), pp. 29–32.

106 D.W.J. Wijnholds, *Geld, Goud en Goedere – 'n Uiteensetting van hedendaagse ekonomiese vraagstukke wat Suid-Afrika in die besonder raak* (Pretoria, Akademie Pers, 1953), p. 99.

107 'Jan Burger', *Gulf Between*, p. 82.

108 See K. Du Pisani, 'Puritanism Transformed: Afrikaner Masculinities in the Apartheid and Post-Apartheid Period', in R. Morrell (ed.), *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (UNP, Zed Press, 2001), pp. 157–75.

109 By 1910, 29 per cent of Afrikaners were urbanised; by 1936, 50 per cent and by 1960, 75 per cent. H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2003), p. 405.

110 O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, pp. 165–6.

111 During the 1920s and 1930s writers such as C.M. van der Heever, celebrated the 'Boer' as the autochthonous figure in *plaasromans* (farm novels); J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing* (New Haven, CT, Yale University, 1988), p. 83.

Weekly (started in 1911) and *Landbouweekblad* (started in 1919) created a virtual community and helped disseminate the idea that the American Saddle horses were symbols of cosmopolitanism, living emblems of a newly arrived class.¹¹² Moreover, regular shows and the show circuit itself acted as an agency of change, much as they did – although far earlier – in rural America in the last decades of the nineteenth century. For example, in 1938 and in 1940, the Colesberg agricultural show was used as an occasion for breeders to come together. These agricultural shows certainly afforded opportunities for commercial exchange, but additionally they created both a sense of a ‘community’ and the space for spectacle. The district show became the major event of the year in rural areas, with the horse displays perhaps the greatest attraction for spectators.¹¹³ Shows provided this opportunity for theatre and thus for public self-aggrandisement, which created in turn, a market for status symbols that was pivotal in the production of desire.

A brief demographic analysis of key members of the ‘Saddle bred community’ reveals the inter-connectedness and profile of the community, which explains why the trend successfully reached the tipping point. The core elite were mainly Afrikaans-speaking wool farmers, men of influence, and upwardly mobile. There is some indication that many were United Party supporters and they were open to the inclusion of a few wealthy English-speaking neighbours.¹¹⁴ There was a close relationship between the coterie of early breeders, with most – individuals such as Orpen, Fouché, Retief – engaged in large-scale sheep farming. Such men usually had some local influence. Claude Orpen from Barkly East, for example, whom we have already met as a key figure and opinion-shaper in the early process of American Saddle Horse acquisitions, was also a member of the International Wool Secretariat and chairman of the Cape Woolgrowers Association. William Maré ‘Pouerra’ Moolman (from Somerset East) was a member of the executive committee of the Somerset East/Cradock Agricultural Shows. One can also trace the intimate web of linkages between these notables: ‘Fanie’ Fouché (from Rouxville, south eastern Orange Free State) knew Orpen and noticed his horses while moving sheep through his land. Johannes Hendrikus Viljoen van der Merwe (from Richmond in the Cape) used Orpen and Fouché stock. Taillefer Retief (from De Aar on the Richmond Road) knew of Fouché’s stock and first bought stock from Orpen. Bert Wyer Henderson bought stock from Fouché. P.J.A. Van der Merwe (from Richmond) bought stock from Fouché and Retief. Retief purchased from Fouché, and then imported from the USA. J.H. Van der Merwe (West Front, Britstown, who from 1944 onwards bought from Fouché, used a dam bred from stock owned by Claude Orpen.¹¹⁵

Little serious attempt had been made by these affluent men to revive ‘traditional’ pre-industrial Afrikaner sports and leisure pursuits.¹¹⁶ For this wealthy sub-group, the saddler movement provided a space where man, horse and power formed an axis, which pivoted on display, predicated on upward mobility and competitiveness. In recreational activities identified with male social status, it afforded an arena for the display of power of individuals, while remaining reliant on elite networks and kinship patterns and the rural ‘virtual community’. Women were arguably equally competitive but, in a gender-stratified society,

112 See Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 374 and C.F.J. Muller, *Sonop in die Suide: geboorte en groei van die Nasionale Pers 1915–1948* (Cape Town, Nasionale Boekhandel., 1990).

113 See, for example, N. Hamman, ‘Interesting Townsmen in the Saddle-Horse’, *The Farmer’s Weekly*, 1 May 1940, p. 535 and ‘National Futurity Shows Advocated for South Africa’, *The Farmer’s Weekly*, 18 June 1952, pp. 12–13.

114 SAB LDB 1038 R775, Volume 4, Office of the Minister of Native Affairs to Priv Sec of the Minister of Agriculture, 21 October 1946. Oral testimony John Swart, Stellenbosch, 5 January 2006.

115 See L. de Wet, ‘A Legendary breeder’, *Farmer’s Weekly*, 28 November 2003, p. 8 and C. van Rooyen, ‘Dekades oue teelbeleid werk’, *Landbouweekblad*, 27 September 2002.

116 Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, p. 185.

sought to impress in other networks, particularly through the transformation of the domestic realm.¹¹⁷ Thus, conspicuous leisure was effective as a social strategy in small, highly personalised reference groups such as the rural communities described here. They converged at nodal events such as district shows and in sharing an imagined community created by the rural press.¹¹⁸

‘History’ versus ‘Modernity’

The upsurge in this kind of spending by upwardly-mobile Afrikaners was arguably driven by the need to clarify social difference. As Wrightman Fox and Lears have shown, consumer culture is more than the ‘leisure ethic’: it is an ‘ethic, a standard of living, and a power structure’.¹¹⁹ Oral history shows that saddlers were seen, popularly from the 1950s, as a mark of success, of having ‘arrived’. As Giliomee noted, ‘[i]f Afrikaners were beginning to capture capitalism, capitalism was also capturing more and more Afrikaners’.¹²⁰ Identity was shifting with the changing material context, and was to manifest two distinct ideological approaches to ‘history’ as opposed to ‘modernity’, which are discussed below.

By the 1930s, Afrikaners were still predominantly working class, with very few wealthy business men.¹²¹ By 1935, Afrikaner income was only 60 per cent of that of English-speaking whites, and there was not yet a robust middle class.¹²² In this context, the *petit bourgeois* culture-brokers wished to win workers away from the incipient left wing and incorporate them into the *volk*, to mitigate dangers of international labour solidarity.¹²³ There had long been economic differentiation in the Boer population, yet there was a strong sense of community predicated on what O’Meara dubbed a ‘Calvinist, petty-commodity-producer *Weltanschauung*’.¹²⁴ Growing socio-economic differentiation could be papered over by nostalgic affirmation of a shared rural past, which was, as O’Meara and others point out, validated by appeals to the symbols of this ‘shared’ history.¹²⁵ There was consequently an intensification of a long-standing trend from the 1930s onwards towards embracing history in order to validate identity.¹²⁶ Giliomee has described this as ‘the return of history’.¹²⁷

117 Two famous exceptions were Cecily Norden and Louise De Wet who were both regular contributors to *The Farmer’s Weekly*.

118 The magazine *Skouring* (Showring), devoted exclusively to saddle breeds, appeared from 1963 until the 1970s.

119 R. Wrightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears (eds), *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880–1980* (New York, Pantheon, 1983), p. xii.

120 Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 544. Giliomee relates an illustrative tale published in *Die Burger* in 1952 – the Devil wants to eradicate his enemy’s nation in Africa: the devil tries to obliterate it by putting it under foreign rule, destroying its republics, sending it into rebellion and two global wars. The Devil concludes by saying: ‘Only one thing remains: I shall make them prosperous and see if they can survive that.’ Quoted in Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 542.

121 *Ibid.*, p. 402. As late as 1939, there was no ‘Afrikaans’ commercial bank, no major finance house, no large industrial undertaking.

122 See T. Steenekamp, ‘Discrimination and the economic position of the Afrikaner’, *SA Journal of Economic History*, 5, 1 (1990).

123 *Die Blanke Werker*, for example, was the mouthpiece of the *Blanke Werkers Beskermingsbond*, established 1944, and disseminated nostalgic myths about earlier days when there were no class divisions, and blamed capitalists for intra-Afrikaner dissent.

124 See D. O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme – Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism 1834–48* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983), p. 54.

125 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

126 See, for example, D.F. Malan (University of Stellenbosch Library, 1933, D.F. Malan Collection, Malan to Eric Louw-Malan, correspondence 1/1/1014), quoted in Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 405.

127 Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 432. ‘Braais’, for example, became popular as re-enactment of voortrekker cuisine. See Moodie, *Rise of Afrikanerdom*, pp. 180–81.

Analyses of the culture of (Afrikaner and other) nationalism has largely focused on this more familiar process, on the ways in which memory and 'history' constructed community/ethnic/national identity.¹²⁸ Yet, as illustrated by the American Saddler aficionados, identity could also be focused on 'modernity' and consumerism. Identity could be as coupled to current gratification and future dreams, as it could be rooted in recollections of the past.¹²⁹ This was because 'modernity' made the quest for 'quality of life' a central one for the new *bourgeoisie*. As Firat and Dholakia, writing on the nature of consumption, have contended, in many ways, the 'modernist project was a marketing project'.¹³⁰ On a larger, national scale, modernity came to be judged by the productive capabilities of a nation.¹³¹ Just as in the USA, after the Second World War, the middle class were the backbone of this consumer revolution and household durables and consumable items improved in quality and exploded in variety, with household success represented by amassing these products – and more than success, 'identity'.¹³² Just as Marcuse noted of the rising elite in the American context, '[t]he people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split level home, kitchen equipment'.¹³³ Consumerism revolutionised desire and brought new cultural influences. Although the US was not South Africa's chief trading partner or source of investment capital, post-war American consumer icons had growing appeal to South Africans of various classes and ethnic groups. White children played 'cowboys and Indians' (rather than 'Boers and Zulus'), and country and western styles percolated into local Afrikaans music.¹³⁴ '[A]lmost every Afrikaans magazine ... found it indispensable to incorporate a film column, largely devoted to the caprices of Hollywood stars'.¹³⁵ Even the agricultural press was saturated with advertisements for brands like Electrolux, Chevrolet, Ford; Hollywood gossip¹³⁶ and trips to America for trade or pleasure.¹³⁷

Consumptive patterns in the developing Afrikaner middle-class were in transition, and the changing social order meant new theatres for consumption. Conventionally, commerce had been seen as unsavoury – the realm either of the low-status *smous* [travelling trader]¹³⁸ or of the exploitative 'Hoggenheimer'¹³⁹ and social commentators, like those on the Carnegie Commission, had noted – and even lamented – the widespread lack of 'acquisitive spirit'

128 See, for example, O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme* p. 54. In the horse breeding world this was very evident in the discourse surrounding the Boerperd, which is discussed later in this article.

129 See for a comparative case-study in South Korea, L. Nelson, *Measured Excess – Status, Gender, and Consumer Nationalism in South Korea* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2000).

130 A.F. Firat and N. Dholakia, *Consuming People – From Political Economy to Theaters of Consumption* (London, Routledge, 1998), p. 21.

131 Firat and Dholakia, *Consuming People*, p. 43.

132 See R. Lynes, *The Tastemakers: The Shaping of American Popular Taste* (New York, Dover, 1980); and M. Lamont, *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and American Upper-Middle Class* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992).

133 H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1964).

134 Cited in Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, p. 183.

135 'Jan Burger', *The Gulf Between*, p. 78. See also *Die Huisgenoot*, 7 May 1965, pp. 42–3.

136 For an example, see *The Farmer's Weekly*, 5 November 1958, p. 88.

137 *Farmer's Weekly*, 26 February 1958, p. 129.

138 See J.L. Sadie, 'Die ekonomiese faktor in die Afrikanergemeenskap', in H.W. van der Merwe (ed.), *Identiteit en verandering* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 1974), p. 92. See also: J.L. Sadie, *The Fall and Rise of Afrikaner Capitalism* (Stellenbosch, US Annale, 2002); E.P. du Plessis, 'n *Volk Staam Op* (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 1964). In the 1930s, workers made up the bulk of Afrikaners, but as Giliomee has shown they did not dominate organised labour leadership, at least in part because of reservations about capitalism itself, individualism and greed. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 423.

139 For discussion of this caricature see T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom – Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (University of California Press, 1975), pp. 15, 90, 136, 168. On the residual legacy of this stereotype, see M. Shain, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), p. 55 and p. 94.

shown by Afrikaner farmers in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁴⁰ Now, however, there was a revolutionary transformation in public mentality: *consumption is good*. Just as in America, consumption became linked to the notion of ‘freedom’.¹⁴¹ Van Onselen has shown that the boom of 1939 to 1949 precipitated changes in the Afrikaner ‘economic metabolism’, manifested in a more aggressive political stance when farmers who had been dependent on ‘English’ banks, grain traders and property speculators found ‘themselves able to transcend the constraints of populist politics and in a position to embrace a new and far more ambitious vision of Afrikaner nationalism’.¹⁴² This psychological change, a new appreciation of commerce, was so palpable that within decades the Afrikaans press commented on the new generation of Afrikaner *Hoggenheimers*.¹⁴³ Increasing links with the international business world during the emergence of Afrikaner capitalism provided the major globalising impetus in Afrikaner society in this era,¹⁴⁴ and, as Du Pisani has argued, the mood of sectors of Afrikaner elite capitalism had turned from its early impetus of saving the *volk*, towards the consumer pleasures of individual success.¹⁴⁵ With increasing political dominance and economic might, anti-capitalist elements of nationalist rhetoric were increasingly discarded. One critic noted bluntly: ‘... [Afrikaners] tend to be snobbish as soon as material wealth is accumulated...’¹⁴⁶ and ‘I am noticing that the inferiority complex which bedeviled Afrikaner actions for so long is fast disappearing’.¹⁴⁷

Evidence of the pervasive and revolutionary nature of this injection of materialism may be found in widespread discussion of the nature of luxury and whether consumerism compromised the national character with its seductive appeal. There was much soul-searching in magazines like *Die Huisgenoot* by *Sedebewakers* (supporters of traditional values) into the social implications of prosperity for Afrikaner identity, with jeremiads against consumerism: ‘Word ons Afrikaners te Ryk?’ (Are we Afrikaners becoming too rich?).¹⁴⁸ One commentator noted, hyperbolically, of the 1950s, ‘The farmer plays billiards, “does” Europe on a Cook’s tour, buys a new car when the ash-tray of the old one is full, goes deep-sea fishing and puts stinkwood parquet flooring in his shearing pen. There is the barbarism of super-duper parsonages, the expensive, vulgar modern church buildings in a beautiful *platteland dorp*, the struggle to surpass last year’s tithes with another thousand.’¹⁴⁹

140 On the lack of active materialism see, for example, Carnegie Commission, *The Poor White Problem in South Africa, Volume I* (Stellenbosch, 1932), p. 116. For a more extended discussion see S. Schirmer, ‘White Farmers and Development in South Africa’, *South African Historical Journal*, 52 (2005), pp. 82–101.

141 Firat and Dholakia, *Consuming People*, p. 49.

142 See C. van Onselen, ‘Paternalism and Violence on the Maize Farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900–1950’, in A. Jeeves and J. Crush (eds), *White Farms, Black Labor: The State and Agrarian Change in Southern Africa, 1910–1950* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1997), p. 210.

143 See *Rapport*, 17 February 1974. J.L. Sadie, ‘Die ekonomiese faktor in die Afrikanergemeenskap’, in H.W. van der Merwe (ed.), *Identiteit en verandering* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 1974), p. 96.

144 See K. Du Pisani, ‘Puritanism Transformed: Afrikaner Masculinities in the Apartheid and Post-Apartheid Period’, in Morrell (ed), *Changing Men*, p. 160.

145 See Du Pisani, ‘Puritanism Transformed’, p. 161.

146 ‘Jan Burger’, *Gulf Between*, p. 38.

147 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

148 See also *Huisgenoot*, 12 July 1968; ‘Stand en Klas by die Afrikaners’ (Standing and Class among Afrikaners), *Die Huisgenoot*, 10 November 1961 and 17 November 1961; *Die Huisgenoot*, 9 October 1959, p. 24 and 8 January 1965, p. 50. It is a recurring concern, particularly over loss of central cultural control and Americanisation, with the two usually linked: see, for example, Henning Viljoen, ‘Raka en Mammon in ons Kraal’, *De Kat*, 3 May 1988, p. 116. Editorial ‘Onheilighede’, *Beeld*, 11 December 1989 and C.F.C. Coetzee, ‘Beoordeling van die vryheidstryd van die Afrikanervolk’, *Die Patriot*, 7 May 1998 in loss of religious underpinnings. See B. Taylor, ‘Geld is alles vir die Afrikaner’, *Beeld*, 22 November 1989. Erika Reynolds presented a sociological analysis showing Afrikaners as the ‘most materialist’ of the language groups. G. Bester, ‘Afrikaners moet oordrewe materialisme los, sê Mulder’, *Beeld*, 18 December 1995. P. Mulder, of the Freedom Front, abandons 1838 vows and adopts snobbish materialistic superficial life-styles. ‘Gawie’, ‘Vryheid!’, *Afrikaner*, 25 August 2005: sold birthright in 1994 in order to make more money.

149 ‘Jan Burger’, *The Gulf Between*, pp. 37–8.

Beinart postulates a growing consumer secularism, predicated on sport, leisure, travel, and increasingly fractured Afrikaner ethnic unity.¹⁵⁰ The papering over the cracks between the classes and the deliberate cross-class mobilisation evident in the 1930s (through events like the *Eeufees* [centenary festival], for example¹⁵¹) had changed. Developments (like the saddler movement) provide evidence of the way identity could be predicated on class, not to include but rather to exclude.¹⁵² While many culture brokers reclaimed the poor whites for the *volk* – others distanced themselves.¹⁵³ Thus, an upsurge in consumption was arguably driven by the need to clarify definitively uncertain social status by the accumulation and display of material things.¹⁵⁴

This fits a Veblenian model of the need of the leisure class to spend money in a way that ‘serves the purpose of a favorable invidious comparison with other consumers’ – that is, to spend money in a way that makes other people feel poor. This ‘growth of punctilious discrimination’ as to ‘qualitative excellence’,¹⁵⁵ shows off not only capital accumulation but also is designed to demonstrate knowledge, discrimination and taste. There is a fine but significant distinction between feeling *rich* and feeling *upper class*. The ‘specialised consumption of goods’ as an evidence of ‘pecuniary strength’ had begun to work out in a more or less elaborate system, ‘[s]ince the consumption of these more excellent goods is an evidence of wealth, it becomes honorific; and conversely, the failure to consume in due quantity and quality becomes a mark of inferiority and demerit’. Simply put: status and money were connoted by close proximity.

Money and modernity met in a nexus of this new identity. South Africa could enter the competitive realm of an imagined America acting as metonym for modernity. In the 1956 National American Saddle Horse championship in Beaufort West, it was widely reported that a visiting American judge said: ‘emphatically and persistently that the American Saddlers in South Africa could hold their heads high in the company of the best which America could put on show’.¹⁵⁶ Local observers argued that ‘horse-breeding was not only of agricultural but also cultural value; it is not only a national industry but a link of international relationship’ and ‘can often succeed where diplomats and politicians fail’.¹⁵⁷ As Firat and Dholakia have argued, an important part of the symbolism of consumption was to signify success in furthering the aims of the modernising project. In other words, consumption could be used as a yardstick for the ‘modern’ nation’s success; it represented the reality that the nation

150 Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, p. 187.

151 The 1938 *Eeufees*, for example, mobilised popular energies (of which horses were an integral part, symbolically part of the ‘return of history’). On the *Eeufees* see A. Grundlingh, ‘The Politics of the Past and of Popular Pursuits in the Construction of Everyday Afrikaner Nationalism, 1938–1948’, in Du Bow and Jeeves (eds), *South Africa’s 1940s*, p. 194.

152 Equally, racial intrusions into the sport were patrolled. Evidence of exclusion is found anecdotally: in 1976, Gerrit van Schalkwyk, for example, wanted his senior groom, Willem Tieties, to ride a particularly spirited horse at the Tulbagh Show. Tieties was asked by the organisers to leave the ring as no Coloured exhibitors were allowed. Van Schalkwyk’s daughter records, with irony, that the ‘fact that hand classes [in which horses led rather than were ridden] were almost always showed by “Coloured” exhibitors seemed not to register.’ S. van Schalkwyk, ‘Gerrit van Schalkwyk’, *South African Show Horse*, Championship Edition, April 2005. For the racial dimension of horse breeding see S. Swart, ‘Race’ Horses – A Discussion of Horses and Social Dynamics in Post-Apartheid Southern Africa’, in N. Distiller and M. Steyn (eds), *Under Construction: Race and Identity in South Africa Today* (Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 2004), pp. 13–24.

153 Grundlingh, ‘The Politics of the Past and of Popular Pursuits’, p. 195.

154 The Saddler even had its own equivalent of *Burke’s* or *Debrett’s Peerage* in Lee Kaplan’s magisterial tome, in which she sought to trace the lineage of every saddler in South Africa, listing show record and ancestry. Kaplan, *American Saddle Horses in South Africa*.

155 From T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York, Macmillan, 1902), pp. 68–101.

156 ‘Our American Saddlers make hit with Kentucky Expert’, *The Farmer’s Weekly*, 25 April 1956, p. 21.

157 ‘Alpha’, *Horse and Saddle in South Africa (a Vision)* (Cape Town, Maskew Miller, 1943), pp. 56–7.

had attained greater control over its fate by improving productivity.¹⁵⁸ This is vividly demonstrated in the saddle horse *milieu* by inviting Americans to judge shows, and to devote a great deal of press space to their affirming commentary on South Africa's own domestic-bred horses, as validation. There was particular emphasis on celebrating that 'our' horses are 'as good' as America's and, later, much celebration at actually being able to export American saddle horses to America itself.

Horses for Dis/courses

It was precisely against this 'Americanisation' that a very different group of Afrikaner breeders initially reacted.¹⁵⁹ As Grundlingh has shown, the realm of 'everyday life' provides evidence of popular nationalist politics, where 'ordinary pursuits' were given a 'distinctly ethnic character'.¹⁶⁰ Localists started asking 'Nevertheless ... if the American nation were able to create [the Saddler] out of the basic Oriental and thoroughbred blood ... why should [South Africa] ... not be able to create an equally magnificent South African horse – the Boerperd?'¹⁶¹ There was an assertion of the need for breed status: 'Is the name [Boerperd] only the *nom de plume* used for all horses that cannot be called American Saddlers, Arabians, Thoroughbreds or Hackneys? Are the Boerperd classes at agricultural shows meant to contain all the part-bred American Saddlers who fear they may be outclassed in their own division...[?]'¹⁶² For the first time from the 1940s, gathering momentum, the 'boerperd' (literally either 'farm horse' or farmer's horse or 'horse of the Boers [or Afrikaans-speakers]', a significant but lost etymological distinction) was not seen as simply a category for any animal rejected from other breeds. There was a new desire to use a 'breeding policy' to fix the 'conformation and stamina' which made the 'boerhorse' renowned during the South African War. So, in 1949, a year after the Nationalist victory, a decision was made to create breed societies and centralise of breed management.¹⁶³ The Saddle Horse Breeders Society of South Africa and Rhodesia used the term 'Boerperd' to mean simply 'Farmhorse' or even the 'cross-bred section', but at other times discuss it as a 'breed' (although not a 'pure' breed) in its own right.¹⁶⁴ The first Boerperd trials were held from 1955 and the movement gained momentum. In 1973, the Boerperd Society was formed, codifying for the first time the 'breed standard' of the heterogeneous mixture of breeds, mingled over three centuries: 'Javanese' (Sumbawan) stock, American stock, Arabians, Persians, Barbs and English thoroughbreds that had shaped the 'Boerperd' over time. Programmes were initiated to cross the affordable 'Boerperd' with the expensive American Saddler (in particular the showy five-gaited Saddlers from Kentucky and Tennessee).

158 Firat and Dholakia, *Consuming People*, p. 45.

159 Just as the *petit bourgeoisie* culture-brokers had reacted against 'Englishness' in the previous decades, O'Meara has shown that by the 1930s, economic pressures had alienated the *petit bourgeoisie*. Afrikaner urbanisation affected the clientele of lawyers and traders, the rural clergy felt the loss of members to urban apostolic churches and the secular labour movement; and capitalism required mastery of English: so the affirmation of both language and culture symbolised the struggle against imperialist power structures.

160 Grundlingh, 'The Politics of the Past and of Popular Pursuits'.

161 C. Norden, 'The Boerperd', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 26 February 1958, p. 29.

162 Norden, 'The Boerperd', p.29.

163 W. Callender-Easby, T.R. Vimpany, A.S. Van Wyk, J.Z. Moolman, P. v.d. Merwe and M.H. Wessels. Under the title: 'The National Horse Breeders Society of SA and the Rhod. Affiliated to the Registered Saddle Horse Breeders Society of S.A. and Rhod.', SAB LON A 173/13, Minutes of the Registered Saddle Horse Breeders Society of SA and Rhod., 22 September 1949.

164 SAB LON A 173/13, Registered Saddle Horse Breeders Society of SA and Rhod., October 1949. SAB LON A 173/13, Minutes of the Registered Saddle Horse Breeders Society of SA and Rhod., Middelburg, 19 May 1948 and 1 June 1949, Bloemfontein.

However, in 1973, a faction, uneasy about adding more American blood, initiated schism, and started breeding 'pure horses like those introduced into the two Boer Republics by the Great Trek'.¹⁶⁵ These 'Historical Boerperde' breeders insisted on breed purity and emphasised the quality of indigeneity. Consequently, in 1977, the society renamed the breed the 'Historical Boerperd'.¹⁶⁶ Meanwhile, a splinter-group made a case for the use of more American Saddle blood, developing what came to be known as the Cape Boerperd. In 1996, the Department of Agriculture formally accepted the Historical Boerperd (with approximately 2,000 registered horses). Thus boerperd with a small 'b' became Boerperd with a capital letter, because of a particular kind of identity politics.

Several themes were emphasised in the definition and marketing of the Boerperd. First, history and nativist heritage are underscored (with, for example, assertions that General De Wet's famous grey Arab was a 'Boerperd'; and slogans like 'The Horse from the Past for the Future'); they included the idea of an organic, ethnically essentialist notion that the 'Boers were good and natural horseman'. This included efforts towards establishing the boer commando riding style as a judgeable event for shows. Afrikaans horse names, military victories, generals' horses' names are often used; the phrases used in marketing these horses include: 'their ancestors carried the Voortrekkers' and they provide a link to 'white' civilisation' ('The SA Boerperd is as old as civilisation in South Africa').¹⁶⁷ Secondly, there was an elite group patrolling the borders of the breed, an aristocracy (like the Burgers, Conradies, Grimbeecks) acting as breeders, judges, inspectors – often in overlapping roles.¹⁶⁸ Thirdly, there are six distinct pure bloodlines, and the register has been closed to 'outside' horses. Fourthly, the horses were promoted as autochthonous and 'authentic', with the slogan: 'Geselekteer en Aangepas vir Afrika' (Selected for and Adapted to Africa). The second and third traits contain a measure of irony as they are at odds with the fifth trait, the simultaneous insistence on the hardiness, ordinariness, the everyday quality, and the naturalness of the Boerperd's ancestry – the antithesis of a horse kept chiefly for showing, like the saddle. Even the breed standard stated that the Boerperd had to be able to 'survive on the veld'.

This antagonism to class stratification is illustrated by the example of a breeder/inspector who had a book printed at his own expense and recorded with relish every time a Boerperd beat a Saddle at a show.¹⁶⁹ It was the discourse of the foreign, effete aristocrat being defeated by the local, indigenous breed. He observed in his notes to the breed standard, that the Boerperd is a 'racially pure horse that holds its head high'. He further notes that as a judge and inspector, one must look 'first and foremost for racial purity' [translated]. Clearly there is identification anxiety and resultant compensation, as he goes on to say: 'The Boerperd is just as genuinely South African as we are ourselves, because his ancestors also date back to the seventeenth century and like us grew famous for his hardiness, utility and independence. This is the heritage our ancestors left us.'¹⁷⁰

It is also significant that Eugène Ney Terre'Blanche – who established the right-wing commando-based *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* (Afrikaner Resistance Movement) at the same time as the Boerperd Breeders broke away – has used the Boerperd as a symbol not only of power, but of the equine-oriented Boer *volksgeeskiedenis* (people's past) and organic

165 <http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/horses/boer/> See also Kaapse / Cape Boerperd Breeders Society, http://www.capeboerperd.co.za/boerperd_breeders.htm and SA Boerperd, <http://studbook.co.za/society/boerperd/boer.html>

166 Renamed 'The South African Boerperd' in 1988, in keeping with a discourse of nation-building

167 <http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/horses/boer/index.htm>

168 For a useful précis of the Cape Boerperd's lineage see E. Marais, 'Kaapse Boerperd/Cape Boerperd', *South African Show Horse*, April 2005.

169 D. Jordaan, *Perdeteelt in Suid-Afrika* (Self-published, Pretoria, 1997).

170 The Boerperd Society was sponsored by Volkskas and Kwikfit tyre and exhaust in Ermelo.

masculine Afrikaner horsemanship.¹⁷¹ In a letter he wrote to the author of this article, he noted that the horses of General De La Rey and Manie Maritz's (heroes of the South African War and both rebel leaders in the 1914 Boer Rebellion) were both Boerperde. He also noted that he did not really fall from his horse (a much televised shot of his horse slipping as he led an AWB march), contending that the SABC had simply used it as propaganda, knowing that to ridicule his horsemanship was to undermine his masculine and ethnic power.¹⁷² He – and the breeders, inspectors – emphasise the accessibility of the Boerperd. Not only has it shared an intimate history with the Afrikaner, but it can be afforded by every Afrikaner: it needs no trainer, no special farrier, no special knowledge – it can be ridden using the old Boer riding style.¹⁷³

From the Horse's Mouth

The story of the American saddler is more than the story of a horse. It is the chronicle of desire for a standard of living representative of a newly arrived Afrikaans-speaking bourgeoisie. By the 1940s, South African horse breeders faced a crisis and the industry had to reinvent itself to endure. In a time of mechanisation, when the utility horse was becoming obsolete and the horse breeding industry had to be redesigned or face collapse, the American saddle horse filled a new commercial niche.¹⁷⁴ But more than that: the Saddler filled a niche in the imagination of a people who were coming to conceive of themselves differently. The Saddlers were symbols of a newly desired cosmopolitanism – particularly Americanism – modernity, taste, skill and wealth. Significant expense – on the *right things* – established a conspicuous *imprimatur* of class.

The increase in discretionary income in this sub-sector of Afrikaner mainly male networks was pivotal, but there were also secondary factors. The expanding communication network played a role, with the popular rural press assisting in the creation of an imagined community.¹⁷⁵ Regular agricultural shows afforded opportunities for spectacle (and, of course, provided entertainment to entice customers to this arena of countryside commercial exchange) both vital elements in the process of competition, of which the saddle bred was simultaneously icon and subject. Equally, shows were helpful in reflecting a hierarchy of expertise in an (initially) masculine rural art form.

Historians have shown how consumer items and sports, for example, were invested with ethnic identity; the 'cult of the saddler' reflects the role of class. Past historiography on the culture of national identity has largely focused on the ways in which shared understanding of 'history' was mobilised to produce group (ethnic/national) identity, but identity could also be predicated in part on the embrace of 'modernity' and consumerism.

The comparison between the supporters of Saddlers and Boerperde, both factions within Afrikaans-speaking society, and an analysis of their quite different discourses reflect two ways of conceptualising identity, especially in the way they mobilised consumer hunger.

171 Eugène Terre'Blanche, Pers. Comm. Letter to author, Rooigrond, 4 December 2003.

172 Eugène Terre'Blanche, Pers. Comm.

173 This is particularly resonant as De Wet famously maintained that a 'Boer without a horse is only half a man'. Horse-based commando mythology has saturated the politico-cultural realm. For example, 'Opsaal' or 'Saddle up! The Republic is coming' was NP slogan for their campaign for the Republic.

174 G. Falk, 'The Saddle Horse on the Modern Farm', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 7 January 1953, p. 31.

175 Members of the Society were debited for their subscription to *Farmer's Weekly*, J.D. Prinsloo, 'Saddle Horses: AGM sets guidelines', *The Farmer's Weekly*, 29 December 2000, p. 29. The community has grown with the globally-accessible, American-based webpage www.saddlebred.com. J. Lewis 'American Saddlebreds online', *Farmer's Weekly*, 30 August 2002.

Genetically, the horses were close, separated by lineages, training regimes, diet, usage, and by the imagination. The ways in which they were imagined were tempered by changes over time, various political currents, various agents of change, and different commercial niches. The Saddle horse discourse reflects the development of a new class, with fresh manifestations of desire and a need to demarcate social boundaries. Moreover, it indicates a different way of thinking about Afrikaner self-identity: confident, internationalist, pro-American, elite – above all, embracing of ‘modernity’, the future, and not invested in the past. There is some evidence to suggest that Saddler breeders were largely United Party supporters and they were clearly open to the inclusion of a few wealthy English-speaking neighbours in the project. Instead of ‘Afrikanerising’ the American horse, it remained more prestigious to maintain a foreign link. Saddler representations distanced themselves from history – both Afrikaner and South African – with a focus on modernity, internationalism, display and spectacle, whereas Boerperd breeders revelled in history, classlessness, usefulness, and autochthony. Boerperd discourse offered a demotic *weltanschauung*, and the Boerperd breeders refuted the notion of a horse as a fainéant relic of a higher class. Instead they represented an animal that was vigorous, robust, useful, ordinary, and egalitarian (within ethnic parameters). Ethnic nationalism was a good marketing tool and the Boerperd was invested with the politics of ‘everyday nationalism’, with a distinctly ethnic character that pivoted on cohesive, inclusive – and often nostalgic – ethnicity. Antithetically, the American Saddle horse movement was used historically not to bind the *volk* closer, but (quite conversely) to designate difference; to underscore not only wealth, but exclusivity. Identity needed to be packaged just like any other commodity; and, in turn, it was used to package other commodities – in this case, horses. The chronology of breed recognition was significant: the recognition of the Boerperd *followed* that of the Saddler, rather than preceding it. The Boerperd movement and its celebration of nativism from the early 1970s was a particular intra-ethnic class-based reaction to the elite dynamics displayed by the Saddler movement. The Boerperd, which required a much diminished financial outlay than Saddlers, was embraced by the economic class who championed an explicitly unifying and self-consciously classless ethnic nationalism. This suited the vision propagated by the *pétit bourgeois* culture-brokers. They had promoted the idea of a seamless rural Afrikaner identity unfissured by class distinction. This was resisted by some in the rising elite, who (quite literally) ‘got on their high horses’.

Finally, there was an undeniably visceral side to the Saddle horse movement that should be recognized. Oral narratives evoke the remembered pleasure generated by the learned appreciation of the horses’ movement, by the physical and mental skill required to ride them correctly, and by the sheer beauty of the horses.

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