

Design as a stabilising force:

An exploration of the visual rhetoric of objects in a South African German community with reference to narrative and cultural identity.

By

Heidel Dedekind

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Supervisor: Mr D Reyburn
Co-supervisor: Mrs N Louw

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Declaration

Student number: 26378282

I declare that *Design as a stabilising force* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Heidel Dedekind
20 November 2012

Summary

This study explores the role of design as a force that may stabilise cultural identity in a cultural climate of globalisation through the use of visual rhetoric and narrative. It focuses specifically on the heritage and face of a German culture in South Africa. Objects that are found amongst the South African German community are analysed in an attempt to uncover the rhetoric and narrative of the culture's heritage in a country far removed from their *Heimat*. The study deals with terms such as *Sehnsucht* and belonging, of maintaining a sense of cultural difference while being integrated and socially accepted. It uses visual rhetoric as a means to discover elements that may be used by design in order to adequately represent the Germanness of the South African German community in a way that it can be maintained in today's way of life.

Key terms: Design as a stabilising force; visual rhetoric; narrative; cultural identity; South African German community; Lutheranism; Germanness; sense of belonging; globalisation.

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Chapter One:

1.1 Introduction and background of study

Deborah Blankenship (2005:24) argues that globalisation forever attempts to unify people, dissolving various cultural differences and that an individual's sense of identity and belonging may become disarrayed. She asserts that traditions are often engulfed by the alluring (post)modern way of life perpetuated by the West (Blankenship 2005:24). The result is what Wade Davis (2008) calls "cultural genocide", where whole traditions and cultures are diluted and ultimately lost. However, John Storey (2003:112) notices that globalisation

is not simply the production of a homogenized American global village in which the particular is washed away by the universal. The process is much more contradictory and complex, involving the ebb and flow of both homogenizing and heterogenizing forces and the meeting and mingling of the 'local' and 'global'.

Bearing in mind the complexities of this dialectic of the local and global, it is still clear that modernist, postmodernist and neo-modernist designs adopt a passive apolitical unity of functionality and style, taking the status quo for granted by which all distinctions between individuals and groups are flattened (van Toorn 2010:50). To resist this flattening and to prevent the loss of traditions, Deborah Alden (2009:4) suggests that an effort to discover one's own heritage must be undertaken. Only by a deliberate effort to preserve the cultural significance of objects can a rich tapestry of cross-pollinating global cultures be ensured.

Jan Van Toorn (2010:48) states that communication designers in a global economy tend to produce a capitalist fast-food culture with a disregard to the consequences in social and symbolic reality. He assumes that designers have the ability to directly influence the shaping of cultures as they create and present visual objects from which society may choose to narrate their identities. This may be achieved through the conscious use of rhetoric being applied to the visual during the process of creation. According to Gui Bonsiepe (1965:26), the information presented through design is never "pure"; it is always infiltrated by rhetoric during the process of creation. Visual rhetoric is communicative visual data that primarily has the power to shape opinions, to determine

attitudes or to influence actions (Bonsiepe 1965:23; Foss 2005:141). Thus for designers visual rhetoric, accompanied by a cultural sensitivity and empathy, may become a powerful tool that can develop a local sense of design that stands in opposition to globally inspired design that may often be 'faceless' and impersonal. However, designers must be able to understand and appreciate other cultures if the unique traditions, value systems, legends and identities within these communities are to be preserved through their work.

Objects have a specific mediating rhetorical value in that they embody the stories of individuals who seek to communicate their identities to others (Buchanan 2001:10-11). That is, the designed objects narrate a specific cultural meaning through the use of symbols (Foss 2005:142&144). The action of designing can therefore be seen as a way to construct narratives and meaning through the use of visual rhetoric. Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh (2001:15) relate narrative to identity in that individual lives unfold as sequences in a narrative, where one experience or event influences the next. Narrative is therefore part of the makeup of everyday life and helps individuals to make better sense of their experiences (McKee 1999:13). This may be connected to design, which is at the core of what humans do and who they are. Not only are the things that people surround themselves with designed, but design also works to order events (Carroll 2002:17). In the above, it becomes obvious that design, rhetoric, narrative, identity and culture are therefore inextricably linked. One could therefore argue that the designer should keep this thread of thought running through their work in order to help preserve aspects of various cultures when designing.

For a designer living in a multicultural society such as South Africa the ability to see the world through a neighbouring culture's eyes becomes even more important. The question then becomes one of how the designer might gain an understanding of a culture in order to design objects suitable for the preservation rather than the eradication of its customs. With this question in mind, the purpose of this study is to explore how one particular culture's identity may be observed, internally understood and then visually represented by a designer in a way that is true and meaningful to the culture. In doing so, this study explores the possible ways that design might act as a stabilising force rather than merely as a tool for perpetuating the changes and fluxes perpetuated by globalisation.

In particular, this study identifies and draws attention to a specific heritage of a German community in Elandskraal, South Africa. The people of this community were born and have lived there from generation to generation since arriving on the sail ship *Kandaze* in the 1800s. In all rights they are South Africans, but among other South Africans these people are regarded as Germans. Moreover, when these communities travel to their *Heimat*,¹ they are not accepted as being truly German, but are rather perceived as being foreign – as being South African or coming “from Africa” (Kurt Eggers 2011/08/22). Storey (2005:80) explains that this phenomenon is the result of the way in which different contexts can affect and create different “dominant” identities. Certain circumstances may produce a different side to one’s personality or identity that is not as clear in other environments. Thus, being German and South African places this community in a unique position. Its culture is recognisably unique and utterly distinct, and thus is ideal for a study such as this.

1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 Aims

Bearing the above in mind, this study proposes to visually explore, describe and explain specific ‘objects’² of a particular South African German community in Elandskraal, KwaZulu Natal order to uncover and understand their specific narratives in a larger context. Examining the rhetoric of these objects is a means for understanding their role as stabilising forces that work to anchor and preserve this culture. This study aims to reveal how the cultural values, traditions and everyday norms of this community of South African Germans are articulated or represented concretely through the visual. The research is undertaken from a designer’s perspective with the focus being on how the visual rhetoric of objects contributes to the narrative of identity and belonging in a multicultural context.

¹The homeland of Germans. This term encompasses the idea of a state of mind or state of being related to one’s connection to the homeland.

²Objects include such things as family heirlooms, visual patterns, specific events, social gatherings and festivals (See below on Methodology).

1.2.2 Objectives

In order to achieve the main aim, certain objectives need to be achieved. Thus, this study seeks to do the following:

- Introduce the history of the Elandskraal German community in order to contextualise their distinct existence and worldview;
- Consider those elements that comprise the Germanness of this community, as well as factors that threaten this Germanness. This must be outlined in preparation for understanding the role of design and rhetoric as a stabilising force within this culture;
- Outline the theoretical framework of visual rhetoric in preparation for the analysis of the rhetoric of stability offered by designed objects in the Elandskraal community;
- Examine the visual rhetoric of the found German objects in the Natal German homes with reference to its function in stabilising and narrating the identity and wellbeing of the culture;
- And finally, discuss of the picturebook project's function as it relates to and reflects the collected information that is covered in this document.

1.3 Methodology

This study is interpretive in nature and answers option B within BKS 856, which comprises a design project with appropriate documentation. The documentation contains the problem statement together with its related theoretical and historical review, as well as a discussion of collected data that is visually explored and synthesised within the design project. Terry Rosenberg (2007:2) mentions the possibility of design practice moving ahead of theory instead of routinely following it in order to open up landscapes with possibilities that are until now “untheorised spaces”. In particular, the intended design project is undertaken as a further means for exploring the role of design as a stabilising force, leaving space for design praxis to have a direct impact on the theoretical discussion put forward by this study. A supporting relationship is formed

between the theory and project in that both share in the mutual goal of exploring the role of design as a possible stabilising force in terms of narrative and cultural identity.

A selection of about four families is made based on whether their German forefathers arrived at the coast of KwaZulu Natal in the sail ship *Kandaze* that was sent from Germany carrying outreach missionaries. Many of these families still reside mostly on farms in the KwaZulu Natal midland areas such as Elandskraal, Wartburg and Vryheid.

According to Alison Karasz and Theodore Singelis (2009:913), qualitative research methods are better suited to a study concerning culture such as this one. Fieldwork is useful in identifying cultural processes as they unfold over time and thus ethnography is chosen as an approach in researching the German South African community (Karasz & Singelis 2009:913). To compliment this, historical research, which refers to primary archival sources,³ is employed. Historical research presents an opportunity to interpret current trends and events from a specific perspective with an understanding that is gained from the knowledge of a historical context (Nieuwenhuis 2007:73). For this study, historical research is done in order to understand the past of the culture in question. This is then applied and compared to the fieldwork of the current trends of the German South African community.

One may conclude then that together with historical research, observational and interview methods produce descriptive data that may render a culture more “concrete and local” (Karasz & Singelis 2009:913). Jan Nieuwenhuis (2007:76) explains that ethnography describes communities by focusing on their social systems and cultural heritages. Since this research study involves culture in a community, ethnography is a suitable research method.⁴ Designed objects⁵ that are part of the lives of the community become the units of analyses to be understood. These include activities, annual German festivals as well as physical objects – useful or aesthetic – that are found in and around their homes. Physical objects found in the homes are photographed and in order to

³ These archival sources are found in the form of letters that contain the personal accounts of some German missionaries in South Africa as well as other supporting literary sources.

⁴ Nieuwenhuis (2007:77), however, warns of a pitfall in regard to ethnography where the researcher may become too emotionally involved with the community being researched that his judgment may be clouded. I have taken this warning into consideration, but have also recognised the value of subjective experience, especially with regard to addressing the aim and objectives of this particular study.

⁵The assumption here is that the term ‘object’ refers to any material artifact or cultural process that has been designed with a specific rhetorical function.

understand the significance of some of these objects within the family life, open-ended conversational questions were asked of the family members.

Ethnography may be understood as a form of storytelling by which the ethnographer observes, collects, asks questions and listens to conversations in order to collect as much data as possible from the environment and its people (Hammersley & Atkinson 1991:1). It should not merely observe but should seek to interpret and understand how and why activities are done in a participatory manner to bring depth of knowledge to the research (Button 2000:322; Davies 1999:72). To aid the communication and interpretation of the social, historical and current cultural trends of the German South Africans within the various designed objects, a visual rhetorical analysis is also undertaken. Visual rhetoric is concerned with the strategic use of various devices such as style in order to visually communicate and persuade an audience. Rhetoric is enmeshed in all mechanisms of communication such as the ideology, social interaction and social power of culture (Rampley 2005:135-137).

According to Richard Buchanan (2001:12), the designed product does not only represent the physical, but also becomes a tool of mediation in human relationships. In other words, designed objects have rhetorical value. Sonja Foss (2005:141) explains visual rhetoric as the way in which symbols are used strategically to influence another's thinking and behavior. Therefore, the study of symbols through rhetorical enquiry may result in a better understanding of the meaning of an object. Patrick Dillon and Tony Howe (2003) intensify this notion by exploring 'design as narrative', suggesting that all designed objects tell stories that negotiate meaning to and between humans. In this study the designed objects become the medium through which heritage and ideals are rhetorically communicated to an audience. According to Foss (2005:151), visual rhetoric draws attention to the need to understand how "the visual operates rhetorically in contemporary culture". Similarly, this study seeks to understand how objects communicate rhetorically in contemporary German South African culture.

1.4 Literature review and theoretical framework

A selection of literature is presented and grouped below according to relevance to the topics being dealt within this study. Selected literature dealing with themes of cultural

preservation, design, cultural heritage, multiculturalism, sense of belonging, identity, narrative, visual rhetoric, as well as visual wellbeing are outlined.

Sherry Blankenship (2005) and Deborah Alden (2009) are both involved in design education and have picked up on a concern for cultural survival in the midst of globalisation. Blankenship (2005:24) insists that sustainable, confident cultural identities that are relevant within a modern world must be created. Alden (2009:4) adds that understanding one's culture leads to the better understanding of one's own identity. This instills a sense of belonging through which traditions and cultural values may be revived and continued to be passed on to the next generation and not disappear. This preservation of culture in a meaningful way can be addressed by design. Terry Rosenberg (2007:9) describes design as being anticipatory in nature and constantly in a process of becoming. This runs adjacent to the character of culture that Sue Rath (2006:25) depicts as being "alive and extremely changeable" and links to the nature of identity as being something that is not fixed and coherent but in a constant state of becoming (Storey 2003:79). John Carroll (2002:17) joins Rosenberg (2007) and Rath (2006) by adding that design "lies right at the core of what humans do and what they are" thus further illustrating the deep connection between everyday traditions and culture with design. This connection can ensure the survival of sustainable cultural identities as well as a sense of belonging of people. Blankenship (2005:26) points out the possible pitfall of representing a repetition of hollow motifs that become superficial and disposable, thus contributing to the disappearance of a wealth of tradition. Therefore, it becomes important to research the history of the culture that is to be represented to understand the meaning of its motifs before applying them randomly and insensitively. The relationship between design and culture is explored in this study, using the South African German community as an example.

As a starting point, knowledge must be acquired of the culture's historical existence in South Africa. Numerous sources outline and give general accounts of the German missionary settlements in South Africa, including archival sources in the form of letters that were sent back to Germany that are still in the possession of various families. However, there are limited studies that deal with the specifics of the particular group of Lutheran missionary and cotton farming Germans in South Africa. Joachim Schubert and Walter Volker together have both done extensive research into the genealogy and

chronological records of the Natal Germans. Elizabeth de Kadt (2000 & 2002) has done quite extensive research on the subject of the rural Natal Germans, exploring the reason why their maintenance of the German language and “Germanness” has been retained for many centuries. She does not however cover any visual aspects of the Natal German culture and studies. De Kadt (2000:75&80) mentions on occasions in her study that she sensed that certain subjects were not spoken about or mentioned to her in detail because she was perceived by the Natal German group to be an “outsider”, thus creating possible gaps in her study. As a Natal German myself, I have been able to explore the Natal German community as an insider, having been raised with the ideologies and boundaries of a German-speaking cultural community. This does pose some difficulty in separating things that I perceive to be ‘normal’ for all South African society that are in actual fact quite unique. However, this uniquely subjective stance has also had its benefits. In particular, it has allowed me to present an understanding and appreciation for this culture to answer to de Kadt’s (2002:158) insistence upon the urgency of research in this distinct culture on account of the fact that the communities appear to be increasingly under threat.

De Kadt (2000 & 2002) and Hermann Oschadleus (1992) express dismay at the maintenance of the German culture and language within the foreign environment of South Africa over a time period of about 160 years. They have covered the historical account of the arrival of these Germans’ ancestors in South Africa and their adaptation as well as an overview of their culture today. However, even though Oschadleus (1992) sketches a few examples in which the German culture can physically be seen in the South African environment, there is little information about how the culture’s physical attributes may have evolved over time. Nor has a description of the possible worldview or German South African frame of mind been explored. To date, no studies have been done that explore the visual rhetoric of this culture in relation to design discourse. That is, no research precedes my own research here that examines how the objects and activities that these people surround themselves with have been designed specifically to stabilise their identity and sense of belonging.

On the topic of multiculturalism, Jensen (2003) touches on such notions as acculturation and biculturation. Xenia Chryssochoou (2004) elaborates on these concepts respectively as being changes within an original cultural pattern after repeatedly being in first hand

contact with different cultures (acculturation) as well as being a midpoint in a continuum during which a culture starts with maintaining their own customs but gradually adopts the majority culture (biculturation). These concepts are relevant in understanding the possible dynamics of the minority culture of the Germans among other cultures in South Africa.

John Storey (2003) deals with the topic of cultural identity and elaborates on this in terms of how routes, roots and memory negotiate identity. Storey (2003) also touches on a hybrid identity that according to him is molded by circumstances and environment, but acknowledges that people can and do communicate their identity through consumption. Luis Porter and Sergio Sotelo (2004), as well as Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001:8) relate narrative to identity in which narrative becomes the method through which (the rhetoric of) social and cultural life come into being. Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001:8, 15) regard narrative as an organising concept that arranges human experience in a form of sequences from the beginning to the end. According to Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001:15), "human identity can only exist as a narrative construction"; one could also say that human identity can only be communicated rhetorically through narrative. Jerome Bruner and David Kalmar (1998) discuss narrative and metanarrative in the construction of the self, and how difficult it is to define one's identity which seems to disappear whenever scrutinised. Because one's sense of self is so fleeting, Bruner and Kalmar suggest turning to the indicators as proof of one's self, which can be material objects or actions. They also explore identity as a product of narrative (Bruner & Kalmar 1998). Dillon and Howe (2003:290) state that all cultural identities in society be they at a local or global level are reflected by designed objects and that the rhetorical meaning can be elaborated, explained and understood within the framework of narrative. Narrative thus becomes the context in which rhetoric can function and be understood. Rhetoric is concerned with persuasion, whereas narrative is concerned with structuring that persuasion comprehensibly.

According to Kenneth Gergen and Mary Gergen (1988:18), the concept of the individual self is fundamentally problematic. In their exploration of narrative and identity, they state that by the end of one's story one shall find that "the individual self has all but vanished into the world of relationship". Nobody can exist in isolation, but must belong somewhere as part of a relationship or community. This highlights the importance of belonging and

community in the individual's sense of self. Gallagher, Martin and Ma (2001:31) also stress the importance of community and relationship in the wellbeing of individuals. They discuss the rhetorical concept of *eudaimonic* pleasure, referring to a sense of fulfillment, vitality and happiness, as well as the need to examine how objects might work to promote a "visual wellbeing" (Gallagher, Martin & Ma 2001:32). They relate concepts such as memory, cultural heritage and deeply held values to that which is visual to create a "rhetoric of stability" (Gallagher, Martin & Ma 2001:38-39). Objects then do not only instigate narratives which produce identity, they also trigger a rhetorical stability, wellbeing and belonging in a shared community.

Chapter Two:

2.1 Historical considerations and background of the German South African community

In order to understand the *Springbock Deutsche* (as the German South Africans have nicknamed themselves) culture through the rhetoric of its cultural objects, it is first necessary to understand the historical context of the culture. Exploring any cultural object severed from its natural and historical context will result in misunderstanding its intended meaning. However, understanding the history of a culture leads to a perceived value and better understanding of the people involved as well as their objects. One can better see how these objects may function rhetorically as forces of stability in some way in their lives. To have empathy with and appreciate the way objects of a culture can bind a community together; one needs to understand the historical context and consequent current relevance of the objects. During her German / South African studies, Hella Pfannkuch lived by this motto: "He, who does not know where he comes from, also does not know where he is going" (in Grünewald 1993:3). Storey (2005:80) echoes this by stating that even though identities are about 'who we think we are' they are also affected by 'where we think we come from' and an idea of 'where we are going'. Gergen and Gergen (1988:19) state that fundamentally one's view of self is nonsensical if not linked in some way with one's own past. Therefore, to understand and make sense of the present-day and future trends of a community, one needs the light of historical knowledge concerning the specific group.

This chapter takes into consideration the Natal German Elandskraal community within their South African environment as well as the environment of their ancestors. This is done so that the rhetoric of the visual culture can be explored and compared to a historical knowledge of traditions. This chapter explains and comments on the different sections that constitute this culture after portraying a brief historical overview of the German ancestors' immigration to South Africa.

2.2 The arrival and settlement in South Africa 1840

The story of how the Germans in South Africa came to be is one that many of the older generation Springbock Deutsche proudly recall. De Kadt (2000:83) refers to this perception of the past as being the “heroic period” in which the heroes tend towards Louis Harms (the pastor of the Hermannsburg Mission in Germany and instigator of the mission work in KwaZulu Natal) and the first German missionaries to pioneer South Africa. The descendants of these missionaries gather regularly to commemorate the anniversary of when the bearer of the family name entered South Africa (de Kadt 2000:83). That said, the historical story proceeds as follows: most of the Springbock Deutsche in KwaZulu Natal came to South Africa on one of two ships. They voyaged to South Africa from Germany around the same time but with different motivations and goals. Both groups arrived with their own specific expectations, adapting when unexpected situations were encountered. These two groups of Germans merged to form one culture known as the Natal Germans.

The first sail ship to arrive in Durban was the Beta in 1848. The Germans carried by this ship arrived in South Africa wanting to receive a small piece of land promised to them in exchange for working a much larger piece of land producing cotton for the Natal Cotton Company in Westville. This group of Germans consisted of 31 married couples, 35 unmarried men, 18 unmarried woman and 75 children. They originated from Osnabrueck, North Germany, and most were of peasant and handworker stock (de Kadt 2000:84). They agreed to immigrate to South Africa because of the dire conditions in Germany. As a result of industrialisation, the Weber family, who were weavers, like many among other handcrafters, found themselves destitute because the work they had done by hand had now been mechanised. Additionally, the potato pest plague that had come to Germany from Ireland threatened an unbearable winter and possible death if they did not leave their homeland (Grünewald 1993:64). Disappointingly, when they arrived in South Africa to their designated land, they soon discovered that it was unsuitable for the growing of cotton. After the Natal Cotton Company disintegrated, the

immigrants stayed in South Africa and decided to settle as farmers in the nearby areas (Grünwald 1993:66).

After 110 days at sea, the second group of settlers arrived as missionaries on a sail ship called the *Kandaze*⁶ that was built by the Lutheran Hermannsburger Mission in Germany for the sole purpose of dispersing missionaries to propagate Christianity to unbelievers.⁷ The ship was originally meant for Ethiopia, but was denied access to the shore by the predominantly Muslim region. Consequently, the missionaries decided to disembark on the shore of KwaZulu Natal. In 1854 the first trip of the *Kandaze* carried eight missionaries, six of whom were ordained pastors. Also on board were eight mission colonists who were farmers and artisans and could build and supply the essentials for the settlements (Grünwald 1993:67). Unmarried and with few personal possessions, they settled into KwaZulu Natal and learnt the Zulu language in order to better communicate with the locals. They bought a farm called Perseverance close to Pietermaritzburg and founded the little town of New Hermannsburg (Grünwald 1993:68). Hereafter, the missionaries spread out to their allocated rural mission stations. These mission stations were established from New Hermannsburg into Zululand and included schools for the Zulu youth. Here the Zulus were taught about Christianity in their own language while simultaneously learning to read and write Zulu. Subsequently, they could choose to be baptised and convert to Christianity before receiving some responsibility at the mission such as helping to teach the remaining learners (Dedekind [sa]:61). With “patience and perseverance” the missionaries baptised about three to four Zulus a year (Müller 2010:46).⁸

The *Kandaze* returned again numerous times within a time span of twenty years, completing two to three return trips to Africa each year. The Germans that came with the *Kandaze* settled in the regions of northern and southern KwaZulu Natal, Greytown, Hermannsburg, the Midlands (Wartburg), Elandskraal, Uelzen, Lüneburg and Vryheid.

⁶The *Kandaze* was named after the Queen of Ethiopia according to the story in Acts 8:26. In this story Philip is prompted by an angel of the Lord into meeting an important official in charge of the treasury of the Queen Candace who was busy reading Isaiah in his chariot on his way home. After asking the eunuch if he understood what he was reading the official replied “How can I, unless someone explains it to me?”. Philip ends up telling him about the gospel and baptises him. This is the story that inspired Louis Harms in the endeavor of sending missionaries to Ethiopia to teach the people the gospel in their own language and baptise them.

⁷The Lutheran Hermannsburg Mission was founded in 1849 by Pastor Louis Harms in the Lüneburge Heide. This is in the North of Germany, in Niedersachsen.

⁸ All translation from German to English in this dissertation is done by the author.

One of the missionaries to arrive with the first trip of the Kandaze was Johann Heinrich Müller. He was one of the few missionaries granted permission to establish a mission in Zululand after long negotiations, involving the skills of the missionary team, with King Umpanda (Oschadleus 1992:33). According to Erich Müller (2010:46), Missionary Müller soon became a great friend of Prince Cetshwayo (King Umpanda's son), who allowed him to spread the word of God to the Zulus. Missionary Dedekind, who arrived on one of the following trips of the Kandaze, established a mission near Zululand called Ehlohlomolo a few years later in 1869 (Dedekind 1970-1910:3).

In the period of 1871 to 1873, conflict mounted between the missionaries and the newly ordained King Cetshwayo, who was under the influence of John Dunn (Oschadleus 1992:33). Dunn, a Scotsman known as the "white chief", became a close advisor of the King Cetshwayo concerning his relationship with the British. The missionaries duly fled Zululand. Missionary Müller, followed by Missionary Dedekind a few years later in 1880, settled respectively in the vicinities of Pomeroy and Elandskraal (Müller 2010:46). Their obedience to the king may be an indication of their sole objective of spreading the message of the Christian scriptures to the Zulus without resorting to force or getting involved in politics. Obedience and discipline together with an esteemed sense of right and wrong is still valued in the descendants of the German Missionaries. Although the Zulus were different to them in culture, they considered them as equals.⁹

These German missionaries lived in close proximity with the Zulus and their lives were shared with them on many levels through droughts, famines, wars and other hardships. The Zulu and German integration of culture is noticeable in the homes of the Natal Germans in Elandskraal today. One may argue that these Zulu articles have become embedded in this unique German culture in South Africa and refer to the rural settlement of their forefathers among the Zulus which is still the case today with the descendants. The knowledge of Zulu traditions and their ways of describing and understanding life has left its mark on these Natal Germans and has become engrained in them and their worldview through heritage and experience. The culture of this group of people has been

⁹Hella Pfannkuch, a German academic to whom South Africa had become her second home, researched all traces she could find about the Germans in South Africa. She felt like a bridge builder between Europe and Africa. In 1969, Mothzega, lecturer of Education at the University of Limpopo, motivated Pfannkuch further in her pursuit when he explained to her that the Zulus feel suspicious toward the British and the Boers as they felt they were used as pawns in a game turning them against each other. However he explained that they believed that only the Germans had their true interests at heart and really wanted to help them (Grünwald 1993:4).

uniquely designed and shaped by their history into what one experiences and observes today. It is as if the visual German traces in their community are not only a constant reminder of their *Heimat* but actually embody their *Heimat* in Africa. The designed objects become visual reminders to them of the values and ideals inherited from the first Germans settlers. They hold onto these principles and traditions even though their homeland (Germany) has and still undergoes constant change. It is in the general context set out above that allows us to understand the specifics of the background of the Elandskraal Germans, and it is to this that this study now turns.

2.3 Elandskraal

Until 2000, the Elandskraal area mainly consisted of Dedekind descendants all farming side by side and attending the local Lutheran Verden church. What follows here is a brief background of the Dedekind family's existence in South Africa, based largely on Missionary Christoph Dedekind's correspondence with the Hermannsburg mission in Germany (1870-1910).

Christoph Heinrich Dedekind was the first Dedekind to arrive in South Africa on board the *Kandaze* as a missionary in 1866, and the first missionary to settle in the Elandskraal Rorke's Drift area. His bride Dorothea Dittmer was sent on board the *Kandaze* in time for Christmas 1868. His marriage to her took place the following summer in January. He was sent to serve at his first mission station in Ehlomohlomo on the border of Zululand for about 12 years where the couple lived in complete isolation from fellow mission stations. His colleague Missionary Müller lived three days away in Zululand. The closest doctor was four or five days away. Thus, the tradition of relying on herbs for medicinal purposes was intensified. Homeopathy remains a popular choice among the Natal German communities.

As mentioned above, all missionaries living in Zululand had been instructed to leave by King Cetshwayo, but Missionary Dedekind stayed in Ehlomohlomo a few years longer. Eventually, however, owing to increasing Zulu-British unrest and Christoph's bad health, he moved with his family to the farm Elandskraal in 1880 and founded the Nazareth¹⁰

¹⁰A fellow missionary advised Christoph to name the place Ematyeni meaning 'here in the stones' because of the rocky, hard earth. However, he retained the name Nazareth. One may speculate that just as Nazareth was the place where Jesus grew up and learnt from his father, so did the Missionary Dedekind hope to

mission station there. In 1891 he eventually finished building the first *Kirchlein* (little church) on Nazareth that he had longed to build since arriving there (Dedekind 1870-1910:61). Extra funding for the building of the church had to be requested from Pastor Harms in Germany. The monthly subsidy that they received from Germany was considerably less than that of the Scottish and Danish mission stations. Consequently, the missionaries and their families learnt to manage with little money. This contributed to their culture and traditions of self-sufficiency and hard work.

Living within the heart of KwaZulu Natal, the Dedekind family witnessed the effects and survived many of the South African wars in that area, including the Anglo-Zulu battles at Isandhlwana¹¹ and Rorke's Drift as well as the Anglo-Boer War. However, it seems that they stayed as neutral as possible, fleeing when the circumstances became threatening and returning again to their mission station in order to fulfill their work as best they could during this turbulent time. However, there are accounts of some Germans volunteering for service helping either the English or the Boers during the war which created certain strife between some families, although most Germans generally remained politically neutral, always aiming to refrain from adding more strife to the already unsettling times (Oschadleus 1992:35).

This was a trying time for the mission stations as many of the settlements were repeatedly destroyed by both the British and the Zulus during the unrest. According to Oschadleus (1992:35), the greatest test for survival of the German community was still to come during the First and Second World Wars particularly in Natal. Owing to the increasing anti-German sentiment during this time, many German pastors and missionaries were interned and restricted in their vocation, especially because they lacked South African citizenship (Oschadleus 1992:35). As a result, many stations were

teach and raise children of God, again demonstrating his mission as a worker of the gospel and not of earthly soil.

¹¹ The missionary Dedekind's descendents remember him narrating his experience with the Isandhlwana battle. The Tuesday before the battle they received a message that they should all flee as the Zulu Impis were on their way to fight the British forces. However, the warriors stole and drove all their cattle including the oxen that were used to pull the wagon over the Buffalo River. The Dedekinds could hear the gun shots of the battle at Rorke's Drift. The day after the Battle, the Zulu Impis investigated at Nazareth surprising the Missionary Dedekind and his eldest son, Wilhelm (11 years old). They expected an attack but instead as the whole army approached the house with shields and spears the head Impi of the warriors ordered them to crouch down and he came to talk to Christoph Dedekind. Thereafter they moved on without inflicting any harm. Fortunately, the Dedekinds were able to recover some of their cattle, including the oxen, and were able to flee to Helpmekaar where they waited for three months for the aftermath of the war to settle before returning to their farm. It seems that even though the Missionary had white skin – just as the British, the Zulus made a distinction between them.

left understaffed and no missionaries were permitted to leave Germany and enter the South African mission field. This resulted in the decimation of smaller mission communities (Oschadleus 1992:35). However, the desire of Christoph Dedekind and numerous other German missionaries to stay constant in remembrance of their mission sustained their perseverance.

This perseverance and dedication was often reflected in the vocation of the missionaries' children. Christoph Dedekind and his wife Dorothea had nine children. The names of only seven of them are known: Wilhelm, Theodore, Karl, Anna, Hermann, Heinrich and Otto. When Christoph retired in 1910 owing to illness and old age, his son Otto replaced him as missionary in Nazareth. Two of Christoph's sons, Theodore and Otto, followed in Christoph's footsteps and returned to Germany for a short while to study there before returning to Elandskraal in an effort to maintain the vision of their father. Today, German individuals that wish to become pastors still proceed to study in Germany for five years in order to gain deeper insights into the Lutheran faith. Wilhelm, the eldest, founded the Elandskraal store which is currently owned and managed by his great grandson Heinz Udo Dedekind and his wife Monica Habermann. Today, Heinz Dedekind is still undertaking a continued effort in mission work.

The Elandskraal store is still known among the local Zulus as "kwa-Wilhelm" (the shop belonging to Wilhelm), and is part of a typical missionary station set-up similar to that of many other rural German South African communities. It has a church, a school (Elandsheim, now a retreat where visitors can stay), a post office and a diesel pump. These support and serve the surrounding farmers and other local inhabitants as well as having become a battlefield's route tourist stop. The Elandskraal store sells general groceries and necessities as well as bartering and selling traditional and cultural crafts made by the Zulu who live in the area. The shop has an old mill where the locals grind their local harvest of maize in exchange for giving a part of the maize to the store which is then sold. The Elandskraal store is considerably smaller than it was when Heinz's father Udo Dedekind owned it. It used to include a butchery, a food take away and a sewing room where many local women sat and sewed clothes to sell. Udo Dedekind died tragically in 1998 after being paralysed for a few months following a robbery in his store during which he was shot. Owing to this same sort of violence as well as numerous land claims, many German farmers, including most of the Dedekinds of Christoph's descendants, have been dispersed to other places or have emigrated. Only two

Dedekind families remain farming in Elandskraal today. Despite this, a German presence prevails in the valleys of Elandskraal maintained by the annual Elandskraal bazaar.

2.4 Germanness

De Kadt (2000:79; 2002:153) uses the term *Germanness* to describe certain aspects of the Natal Germans that make them unique in their particular culture. The word *Germanness* comes from the German word *Deutschstämmigkeit*, which reflects a folk-genetics of being German that takes generations to develop and can neither be acquired nor lost (de Kadt 2000:79). For clarification's sake, the Springbock Deutsche discussed here are the descendents of those missionaries and cotton farmers mentioned above.¹² The missionary families have lived in South Africa for about 160 years.

This study proceeds to investigate how the Natal Germans have been able to maintain this unique Germanness or “tradition of the forefathers” within a South African landscape even after many decades (de Kadt 2000:70). It looks at the objects that they surround themselves with as visual anchors that stabilise and root their sense of culture. These objects are persuasive devices that become a narrative of their past and their identity within a larger story. In other words, design objects give these people a sense of belonging. A discussion of the visual rhetoric and narrative of these objects is elaborated upon below.

This Germanness may be investigated by considering the four “legs” of the Natal German culture observed by de Kadt (2002:150). The four factors that contribute to the survival of the Natal German ethnic group are firstly language, then religion, cultural mores and values (de Kadt 2002:150). Heidrun Friese (2001:68) also states that the elements that comprise the *Volksgeist* (spirit of the people) are language, closely linked by religion, poetry, customs, daily life, occupations and family life. For the descendants of the first German settlers in KwaZulu Natal, the German language, Lutheran faith, culture and values are all inextricably linked. According to de Kadt (2000:76-78; 2002:153), these values have been maintained from the original values of the German

¹² The later German immigrants to South Africa (after the two World Wars) that mainly settle in the urban areas are not the focus of this study (de Kadt 2000:85).

settlers in the 1800s. The Natal Germans remain family-orientated, faithful, disciplined, punctual, conscientious, diligent, honest, frugal and rooted in the soil (de Kadt 2000:76 & 2002:150). What follows here is an overview of the remaining factors of language, religion and of the cultural mores and general lifestyle of this unique culture.

2.4.1 Language

Language is probably the most immediate and visible indicator of an ethnic identity that is strongly reinforced by boundaries of religion, customs and values (de Kadt 2000:86). It can constrain access to participation in activities and has a differentiating factor that constructs boundaries between “us and others” (de Kadt 2000:72-73). Since both of the core German settler groups originate from North Germany, the German dialect spoken in KwaZulu Natal stems from the Niedersachsen dialect spoken in the Lüneburge Heide (Schubert). This Natal German dialect is different to the High German dialect that is mostly spoken in Germany and taught at the German schools in the urban areas. One of the most obvious differences is that instead of pronouncing all s sounds as *sh* sounds when an s is followed by a consonant, the Natal Germans pronounce the words as they are written. That is *Stuhl* (chair) will be pronounced as *Stuhl* in Natal dialect and not as *Schtuhl*. So by language it is easy to differentiate between the urban South African Germans that immigrated to South Africa in later years and the first settler Germans that originate from the rural areas in eastern South Africa. De Kadt (2000:85) notes the increasing gap perceived by the more recently immigrated urban Germans to South Africa in comparison to the local Natal Germans who descended from the early settlers.

Many of the older generations in South Africa still speak *Plattdeutsch*. *Platt schnacken*¹³ (as it is referred to) is a colloquial form of German that originated among the rural communities in Germany and is surprisingly similar to Afrikaans¹⁴. However, the colloquial language is becoming less frequently heard and only the older generations still *schneck Platt* among each other. Elandskraal was one of the last places where *Plattdeutsch* could still be heard at its purist until the 1950s. It continued to exist longer

¹³ *Platt schnacken* basically means *to chat* in Plattdeutsch. I use the Plattdeutsch form for ‘chat’ because even when speaking High German, one refers to the speaking of Plattdeutsch as *schneck*.

¹⁴ Afrikaans is an official South African language that has its roots in the Dutch language which was brought to South Africa via the first Dutch settlements along the Cape coast.

than in other places because of Elandskraal's isolated location and little interaction with other speaking cultures at the time (Grünewald 1993:70).

However, as time evolved, the Natal Germans, including the ones in Elandskraal, were exposed to other languages to the extent that their use of language evolved accordingly. Some characteristics of the Natal German language became unique because of its Afrikaans and Zulu influence (de Kadt 2002:156). Most rural Natal German communities, such as the one in Elandskraal are multilingual and are usually fluent in German, English, Afrikaans and Zulu.¹⁵ Thus, many words that are typically Afrikaans or Zulu have been appropriated into the South African German language and are made to sound German. However, since the German language is mostly restricted to and spoken in the family, church and during social activities the knowledge of vocabulary is generally limited to that which has relevance to the domestic scenery. Professional jargon concerning the work industry, for example, is usually only known in English.

Letters written back to Pastor Louis Harms in Germany during the first few years of German settlement in South Africa complained about the language use of the German settlers in South Africa. One of the brothers had written that the *Plattdeutsche Muttersprache* (a local dialect of German spoken in the North) seems to be "going to the grave". He believes that the language will be completely disintegrated by the Dutch in three years time or that the language will consist merely of an unpolished slang and Dutch jargon (*Kauderwelsch*). These, he suggests, are unendurable. He explains that they are speaking in a way that Plattdeutsch, Dutch, English and Zulu are all thrown in together. He further explains that they are all taking it quite lightly, arguing that as long as they understand each other it should be acceptable for communicating around day-to-day activities (Grünewald 1993:69).

Louis Harms declared that it is a common bad habit among Germans and bad manners to "dispose of one's identity and language when one converses with foreigners" (Grünewald 1993:69, translation by author). This could explain why the missionaries and mission colonists in South Africa were sent proper German woman to be their wives and

¹⁵The Natal German inhabitants of Elandskraal enjoy telling the story of themselves when they were children and went to visit the children of an Afrikaner farm neighbour. Since the one child could only understand and speak German and Zulu, and the other child only Afrikaans and Zulu, it was inevitable that the children played together communicating in the Zulu language.

raise German children. It seems that Harms felt obligated to nurture the Germanness even in a foreign country. Harms' reprimand acted as a reminder for the now South African Germans and instigated a certain pride of their German heritage. They realised that if not actively conserved, their German language and culture would quickly disintegrate. Consequently, the conscious maintenance of their Germanness even today becomes an act that stabilises their culture. It can be suggested that the influence of Harms in regard to the German culture came hand in hand with his encouragement in the mission field and thereupon it seems that the German faith and language have become intertwined. Theodor Harms replaced his father Louis Harms as head of the Hermannsburg mission when he died, and furthered the same viewpoint as his father concerning the German culture and Lutheran religion. In 1857 Theodore Harms wrote to the missionaries:

Never forget that you are Lutheran missionaries and have undertaken to teach according to the Lutheran confession and using pure Lutheran sacraments. Also never forget that you are Germans and must cling to German language and tradition as a jewel given to you by God. And as Hermannsburg missionaries you may never become lords but must remain servants (in Oschadleus 1992:27).

The German churches, especially the Freikirche¹⁶ Lutheran branch which is perceived as distinctly more conservative than the NT-Kirche Lutheran branch, still make an active effort to maintain any Germanness they can. Here an overlap between the religious institution and the German language exists which is difficult to separate. The missionary heritage and consequent churches unify this particular group of Springbock Deutsche to become a steadfast centre of the German language and inherited traditions (Grünwald 1993:69). The dependency of the Germanness of the Natal Germans on the Lutheran belief system becomes increasingly apparent and since the two can not be separated, the Lutheran religion is viewed from a generous viewpoint in this study as part of the German culture in South Africa. According to de Kadt (2000:75), the German language would have died out long ago if not for the central role of the Lutheran church.

At present, however, there are some cracks that are starting to undermine this seemingly steady base of the German culture. At a recent (2011) Lutheran *Freikirche*

¹⁶ A split in the Lutheran synod in 1892-1893 due to slight theological differences resulted in the two branches of the Lutheran church in South Africa, the Freikirche (FELSISA) and NT-Kirche (ELKSA). The Freikirche is viewed to be much more conservative and is also more committed to the maintenance of the "German way of life" (de Kadt 2000:76).

church meeting regarding the increased request of other-speaking groups to join the Lutheran church, many congregation members voiced their concern for the survival of the German language. However, the Pastor Ahlers (also a descendant of German missionaries) explained that as long as there are people who still have German as their *Denksprache* – the language in which one thinks and understands – he will still offer services in the German mother tongue. Consequently, there should continue to be a strong link between the Lutheran Church and the German culture. What is ironic, however, is that many of the forefathers of the South African Germans specifically came to South Africa as “fishers of men”,¹⁷ but now their fear of losing their German heritage and identity is becoming a hindrance for many in fulfilling their original intention to evangelise. Some comment that this is paradoxical, because Jesus says that “whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39). In order to be able to evangelise and continue the tradition of their forefathers, the diminishing German Lutheran congregations will need to let go of their fear of losing themselves – of their identity – in order to reach out to others. In other words, if the German Lutheran community believes that one can not serve two masters (Matthew 6:24), their perceived value of their Germanness should not become more valuable than their responsibility as Christians. This is an uncomfortable issue, a source of tension in the Springbock Deutsche communities that will need to deal with in the near future.

The current pastor of the German Verden congregation in Elandskraal, Werner Harms (2011) – a direct descendant of Louis Harms – has a slightly different perspective on the issue of retaining one’s German traditions in terms of the community’s responsibility to evangelise. In contrast to some Natal Germans, he suggests that “one should instead share the rich German culture with others and use it as a tool to bring people to God instead of guarding it selfishly”. Many German traditions carried out by the Natal Germans have underlying religious significances that Harms argues may help continue the goal of the ancestral mission. In this way, the German traditions of South African Germans may be prolonged and maintained by using them as tools in the mission field.¹⁸

¹⁷ This is a phrase used in the Bible to describe the collection of souls for the Kingdom of God in the book of Mark 1:17.

¹⁸ It is not the point of this study to venture into the area of discourse concerning colonialism. This may be of interest for future research. The others that are mentioned here that stand outside the South African German heritage and want to be part of the Lutheran faith out of their free will, have a high regard of the German traditions. Thus, it is not the case of forcefully imposing the cultural customs onto others. Also note that many South Africans actually do have ancestral ties to the German settlers and thus take an interest in the South African German culture.

The German traditions may then be adjusted to fulfill the needs of the religious discourse instead of disintegrating owing to stubborn, sentimental viewpoints. However, a constant stretching of the boundaries of the culture to include all who want to be part of it without a *Deutschstämigkeit* (folk-genetics) may render it unrecognisable as being German.

The appropriation and adjustment of the German language and culture within the South African landscape demonstrates the very first step of what Xenia Chrysochoou (2004:xxiv) terms “acculturation”. Acculturation refers to what happens when different cultural groups come into continuous first-hand contact with each other resulting in changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both cultures. This may end with the minority group rejecting its own culture and adopting the culture of the majority. It is clear from the history that has been discussed above that the German settlers in KwaZulu Natal started making adjustments to their culture. A certain amount of adaptability is necessary for coping within a new environment. Therefore, to some extent, acculturation is necessary for any immigrant in order to communicate and manage day to day challenges. However, the complex issue arises of where the boundaries of integration should exist to avoid losing one’s own inherited culture and identity.

One may argue that because South Africa does not have one dominant culture, the process of acculturation is slowed down significantly, creating more favourable conditions for the upkeep of many different cultures side by side. It may also be that the fixation on ethnicity during the apartheid rule may have contributed to the retention of Germanness in South Africa (de Kadt 2000:70). Nonetheless, de Kadt (2000:70) asserts that the resistance to a shift in language and Germanness of these Springbock Deutsche happened before the apartheid’s influence. Still, advancing technologies and western ideals have to a great extent become the dominant culture that threaten many indigenous cultures in the world. This results in more diluted and faceless identities which are in turn reflected in homes. By personal observation, the homes of the younger generations of South African Germans seem to be increasingly furnished and accessorised according to global ideals, reflecting progressively less of the culture they were born into in exchange for a culture that is everywhere and nowhere at the same time. This is also reflected in the increasingly other-cultured names that are chosen for the children of this generation instead of German ones.

To summarise, it is understandable from the discussion above that language is essential in stabilising the cultural identity of this community as part of the *Volksgeist* (spirit of the people). What also becomes clear is the definite link between the Natal German's language and their religion. These two are tied together and work together to perpetuate a rhetoric of stability in the remembrance of their specific heritage. One can hardly be surprised by the dominant role the Lutheran religion plays in stabilising this culture seeing as the very existence of the Natal German community is owed to the missionary outreach in the mid 1800s. One example of this connection between the two may be found in the fact that many Bible verses or poems are written in German in a traditional German Black letter typeface such as Fraktur, which are prevalent in the homes of the Natal German (See Chapter Four). Since this culture is embedded in the Lutheran religion, the German South Africans face a great difficulty in being able to separate their Germanness from their faith. There generally seem to be few boundaries between the German folklore and the German Lutheran tradition. These are fused to contribute towards the construction of the Springbock Deutsche identity.

2.4.2 Religion, the Lutheran faith

The German immigrants of the mid 1800s are unusual when compared with other early settlers in South Africa in that, despite being only a small part of the white minority in South Africa, they have managed to maintain their German culture and language over many generations (de Kadt 2002:148). From the time that they first settled in South Africa, the Germans distanced themselves from other settlements. They built their own churches and schools in order to maintain a strong self-sufficient German community (de Kadt 2002:153).

This grouping of German churches and schools further perpetuated the link between the German language and the Lutheran faith. It is clear that German individuals, with access to German Lutheran church services and interaction with other German speakers, tend to maintain their Germanness for a longer time period than those who live in places where no German Lutheran communities exist. The German Lutheran church seems to act for many as a net connecting the South African German community together in faith,

values, language and cultural traditions. The church then becomes one of the designed objects that play a role in stabilising the German Culture in South Africa.

In order to raise funds for the church, the community and congregation turn to their handwork and food making traditions which are then sold at the annual bazaars, such as the Elandskraal bazaar (de Kadt 2000:76). In this way various German customs are kept alive by opportunity and necessity of practice. Therefore, the Lutheran not only maintains the language of this culture, but also plays a role in maintaining German traditions and customs. However, as more of the Germans are intermarrying with other cultures, which never was the case in the past, the churches, out of necessity to their members, are offering an increase in English or Afrikaans services (de Kadt 2000; Müller 2010:50).

As a result, some individuals, out of fear of losing their Germanness, become very conservative and protective with regard to their German heritage (an aspect of this issue has been introduced above in connection with the German *Muttersprache* being used in church services). In most instances when a German marries an outsider, the newcomer would be expected to learn German – as many South African Germans are unwilling to speak English for the sake of one newcomer (de Kadt 2000:80). According to interviews conducted by de Kadt (2000:80), most parents would strongly prefer their children to marry German-speakers. The desire to vigorously defend the areas in which German is still spoken such as in the home and church results in a bitter-sweet effect (de Kadt 2000:80). The Natal German families want to be able to welcome a new brother or sister in-law into the family, but the longing to converse in one's own childhood language remains. This in turn has caused and still causes much pain in German South African families, since the frequent result is conflict and division in families. In an increasing number of cases, families that have members from other cultures adapt their language usage. The *Muttersprache* is then slowly decreased or replaced by a language that is understood by all. Conflict arises when the German members of the family feel uncomfortable speaking a language other than their mother tongue to their parents or siblings in consideration of those who do not understand German. The home is one of the few places left where Springbock Deutsche can converse using their *Muttersprache* and when this right is denied it results in negative feelings in both the Springbock Deutsche and the newcomer to the family. In many cases, the Springbock Deutsche that

marry into another culture end up joining another church that the spouse can also understand which contributes to the diminishing number of German Lutheran congregations. A factor that further contributes to the decrease in German members in the rural communities is the increased number of young people that reside in the cities after their studies have been completed instead of returning to the country to commence the tradition of farming. The next section discusses a more detailed account of the typical lifestyle of the Springbock Deutsche that still reside in a rural farming environment in KwaZulu Natal.

2.4.3 Cultural mores, traditions and lifestyle

As ancestors of peasant and handworker stock, the Natal Germans in South Africa naturally seem to turn to creating crafts and preparing food. In addition they also tend to have a keen knowledge of the soil, nature and of livestock (many Germans in these rural communities are farmers themselves or have family that farm). In the home meals are enjoyed in close community, with everyone seated at a table. Conservative gender roles are allocated throughout the Natal German community. Each sex has a more or less specific duty when it comes to meals. The *Tischgebet* (grace) is usually spoken by the head of the household, the father of the family. The meals are usually prepared by the women in the household, with the exception of cutting up a roast for instance. *Brotzeit* meals are very popular among Springbock Deutsche. The *Brotzeit* is a simple meal that may consist of freshly home made bread with butter, *Quark* (home made cottage cheese), *Schinken* (smoked pork), *Mettwurst* (other cold meats), cheese and various home-made jams as well as fresh vegetables. The meal is accompanied by freshly brewed tea or home made lemonade.

Such meals are reminiscent of living off the land and of being self-sufficient – an indication of maintaining a perspective of how their missionary forefathers lived. The tradition of bread-making is taught from daughter to daughter, and the types and consistencies of breads vary from family to family. This act too becomes a stabilising force in the upkeep of the Natal German culture. Often one can distinguish who made the bread just by looking at it. Every woman seems to have her own distinctive signature of bread baking even though the ingredients are usually the same. Many German cakes

are regularly baked of which a favourite is *Butterkuchen*, which is usually found on any coffee time table in the rural German communities. *Sirupskuchen*, *Lebkuchen* and other German Christmas cookies are also made annually in every German home in the community.

The historic Elandskraal bazaar, which started in 1923, takes place every year in June. It is an event that started out with only a few cattle to sell and a small table of baked goods, and has been continuous every year for 88 years. Today it would have diminished in size again compared to what it must have been like when all the German farmers still farmed there side by side. However, it still works today to secure the community in ongoing German activities. Visitors come from far and wide to eat traditional German specialties like *Lebkuchenherzen* (a type of gingerbread) personalised with names iced onto them and attached to a string to hang around one's neck. A main attraction at the Elandskraal bazaar is the fresh meat sale¹⁹ that opens at precisely one o'clock every year. Various sausages and meats such as *Mettwurst*, *Knackwurst* and *Bratwurst* are made by the men of the German communities, usually from livestock (cattle, sheep and pigs) contributed by the community's farmers. This is where many people stock up on as many of these traditional meats as possible. The bazaar has a *Kaffeestueblein* where one may enjoy fresh coffee or tea and an assortment of German cakes. Later in the evening people gather around the bonfire for warmth and South African *braais*²⁰ consisting of German sausages are enjoyed with a beer from the *Biergarten* or a cup of *Glühwein* and a piece of cheese. Thus, a sense of Germanness is enjoyed within a rural South African landscape of veld and flatcrown acacia trees.

The proceeds of the bazaar go towards sustaining the small Verden church community in Elandskraal. In this way, these German traditions become useful and survive many generations out of necessity to subsidise the local church. These practices become meaningful and keep from becoming "superficial and disposable" (Blakenship 2005:27).

¹⁹This meat is very popular as the cattle are free roaming and are not sent to an abattoir to be slaughtered, but are actually quietly stalked by the local farmers and are shot while restfully grazing in the fields. This ensures that the cattle are not in adrenaline filled panic that results in tough and bland meat. A triad construction is then set up there in the field where the dead cattle are immediately hung up and cut into pieces which are then processed into an array of meats and sausages by the community and is available to be bought at the bazaar.

²⁰ A *braai* is part of South African culture where meat is cooked on a grid on top of a fire or hot coals. The result is a somewhat charred and smoked *braaivleis*.

Working towards and preparing for the bazaar starts early in the year and helps to ensure an until now unwavering Natal German culture. The bazaar and all the activities that lead up to and take place on the day are designed objects that rhetorically work as stabilising devices.

Music is an extremely important part of the Springbock Deutsche culture that accompanies many activities (de Kadt 2000:76&82). Music, melody and lyrics become the poetry of this culture that, according to Friese (2012:68), constitutes part of the *Volksgeist*. The youth of the Lutheran church socialise to popular current German music at their annual parties (*Oeffnungsparty*, *Osterparty*, *Weihnachtsparty*). At braais held privately, friends typically may start singing old traditional German *Volkslieder* (folksongs) with a beer in hand. These *Volkslieder* come from the 1700s and are still popular among the Springbock Deutsche communities that stem from the first settlers in South Africa. Very prominent themes of the *Vaterland* (fatherland), of *Wald und Heide* (forest and heath), *Wanderslust* (the desire to travel and be in nature), Jagen (hunting) and love are at the heart of these *Volkslieder*. According to de Kadt (2000:84) the criticism of German nationalism and consequent change in German values following on Nazism seems barely to have reached these German communities in South Africa. Not being directly involved by World War Two, the Springbock Deutsche felt no need to abolish some of these old *Volkslieder* as the Germans in Germany had done. Springbock Deutsche that have emigrated back to Germany are saddened by the fact that the *Volkslieder* that they grew up with in South Africa are reminiscent of the Third Reich in Germany and are thus not sung spontaneously as in South Africa (Kurt Eggers 2011/08/22). This demonstrates the extent to which the German descendants have established their own kind of culture in South Africa. The Springbock Deutsche keep singing these songs in a way to strengthen their unity and their Germanness. To some extent one may perceive this as nostalgia in the sense of a longing to their roots, but one must also remember that most Springbock Deutsche have never been to Germany. Their knowledge of being German is instilled in them by their surroundings, families and upbringing. While their sense of being German reflects Germany in many aspects, it is rooted primarily in their environment in South Africa.

Storey (2003:80) mentions that identities are as a result of conditions and circumstances that “are rarely of our own making”. However, Jerome Bruner and David Kalmer

(1998:309) argue that the sense of self is also constructed and is the product of “self-generated meaning making”. They also warn that the continuation of this vision of self should not be taken for granted thus needing active upkeep (Bruner & Kalmer 1998:309). It seems that the Springbock Deutsche have purposely created certain conditions in which a traditional German culture may prevail. These conditions rely heavily on memory, which according to Storey (2003:81) is the very core of identity. Storey (2003:81) also claims that memory relies as much on the individual as on the collective, since memories are usually fragmented; a person could become whole by incorporating the memories of others who had the same experience. Thus, identity can not be created and sustained only by the individual, but relies on the cultural “collective identity” of the togetherness of communities, where traditions can be passed onto the next generation. This forms a new memory of a similar experience and therefore prolongs the life of traditions (Friese 2012:67). This idea of togetherness and the positive feelings associated to belonging, of being different while part of a group, relates to the idea of a visual wellbeing which is unpacked in Chapter Three (Friese 2001:67).

During the German Lutheran church services, the familiar melodies of liturgy and hymns are sung that date back to the 1500s. Some of these hymns were written by Martin Luther.²¹ The annual *Possaunenfest* (brass festival) and *Sängerfest* (singing festival) are attended by most Lutheran Springbock Deutsche. The individual church choirs and brass bands practice for months before in order to partake in the event. Throughout the Natal German culture there is a strong sense of genderedness and the same applies when it comes to the playing of instruments. Most boys learn to play a brass instrument from an early age, and when they are ready they join the congregation’s brass band performance after every church service. Most girls learn how to play the recorder and usually go on to learn how to play other instruments such as the flute, clarinet, piano or the violin. Generally the boys are encouraged to make loud noises with their overbearing brass instruments whereas the supposedly gentle-natured girls are assigned to the more delicate instruments.

In accordance with the conservative sense of gender associations, a mother that is at home to nurture and raise her children becomes highly esteemed (de Kadt 2002:153). Many idealise the image of raising their children in the country. The father is viewed as

²¹ Such as *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* (Our God is a steadfast castle), written by Martin Luther in 1528.

the head of the household and breadwinner who has a responsibility for the physical and spiritual wellbeing as well as the discipline of his family. The Natal German community is still largely conservative in their sense of gender associations and roles.

Jugendtag (youth day) is usually held together with *Posaunenfest* on the same weekend. On youth day the different youth groups of the various Lutheran congregations compete in sports such as volleyball, medicine ball and *Tauziehn*. Here again the genderdness of the culture is visible as the men play the rougher sports such as medicine ball and *Tauziehn* while the women play volleyball. Each youth group is identifiable by different coloured traditional clothing (*Trachten*) which represents their particular congregation. Traditional dances are also performed called *Reigen*. These events are colourful with many people catching up with each other. These events contribute to the rhetoric of stability. The preparation and dedication that goes towards creating these events as well as *Passionszeit*, *Ostern*, *Advent* and *Weihnachten* create the 'face' of this community. This is an example of how a community can construct a specific condition in which a unique sense of identity may grow.

According to my own experience, Germans visiting from Germany are astonished when they see how the local South African Germans hold on to their heritage in this manner. They reason that the public displays of the social gatherings and bazaars are an indication of clinging to their identity as a result of being in a *Bedrängnislager* (a state of distress or feeling threatened) (de Kadt 2000:84). This observation suggests that since there are a number of factors that endanger the Springbock Deutsche culture – some of which are examined above, such as cultural intermarriage and a shrinking gene pool,²² advancing cultural integration, politics of Africanisation, hyperindividualism and globalisation – there seems to be an increased need to defend and respond to these challenges in order to keep their German identity (de Kadt 2000:84).

According to Joyce Osland and Allan Bird (2000:68) context is vital to the study of a culture, and it is for this reason that I have discussed the context of the Springbock Deutsche customs and practices. In the same way, one can not expect to gain much insight into the significance of designed objects if the context that they are found in is not

²² Some eligible men of the Natal German community have started travelling to Namibia to find German women to which they are not related and bringing them home to KwaZulu Natal where they are married.

considered. Together with their context, the narrative of the designed objects makes more sense and holds more meaning than if viewed as being disconnected from their environmental and historical considerations.

Now that the general and specific historical background of the Natal Germans have been briefly described, this study turns to explore the designed objects that are found in the homes of the Natal Germans in Elandskraal through the theoretical framework of visual rhetoric. The concern of how this culture is kept stable despite its seemingly hybridised state of being is inspected by looking at the role played by designed objects. The following chapter also highlights the responsibility of the designer within culture. It is argued that if designed objects can act as stabilising forces, it logically follows that designers can then potentially act as agents for cultural sustainability.

Chapter Three:

3.1 Design as stabilising force: an interpretation of the rhetoric of found designed objects in relation to narrative and cultural identity

This chapter seeks to unlock the narratives that are often unseen or overlooked in designed objects that one chooses to surround oneself with. These objects may narrate stories that persuade others and confirm their own sense of identity. This chapter explores the visual rhetoric of material objects found in and around the Natal German's homes in Elandskraal. It turns to visual rhetorical theories of Buchanan (1985), Foss (2004 & 2005), Hill (2004) and Dixon (1971) to make sense of how and why things hold meaning and what role they may play in stabilising identities in relation to the unity of a community. Material objects can serve as reminders of that which is otherwise unspoken and can create a sense of belonging to those who find their historical roots affirmed by those objects. As the following attests, these objects may also encourage a greater understanding and appreciation of a person's cultural community.

3.2 An overview of a designed object and its significance in communication

According to Marguerite Helmers and Charles Hill (2004:1), people identify themselves as individuals and part of communities by seeing themselves reflected in the visual, by "transporting themselves into images". Cultural concerns and meanings are communicated through objects. For the Natal Germans and other cultural groups (such as the Indians, Portuguese, Italians and Greeks) who settled in South Africa in the mid-1800s, cultural objects reflect a tension between rootedness and change. In other words, there is stability even in the balance between these opposites. These objects therefore serve as persuasive devices not only of their cultural heritage but also of their present context.

Richard Buchanan (1985:15) explains that objects are not persuasive because of a special substance or emotional appeal; instead they persuade because they speak in “familiar voices”. In other words, the objects resonate or echo an aspect of the viewer’s identity. They may seem familiar even though they may not have been encountered by the viewer before. The familiar voices that Buchanan (1985) writes about may relate different meanings according to specific personal circumstances, but each voice remains familiar and offers comfort and stability in a changing environment. Designed objects tell stories that are not necessarily collated in a chronologically unfolding sequence. Leslie Atzmon (2007:3) refers to the idea of a “constellation of meanings” that is anchored in the objects. He further explains that these meanings are extracted to be assembled and repeatedly re-assembled by their users over time (Atzmon 2007:3). Thus, the embodied core narrative of a designed object remains the same, but it connects different meanings to different people as they assemble the various facets of the object in conversation with their situations. Atzmon (2007:2) points out that the narration of designed objects does not have a clear beginning, middle or end and that a constant reinterpretation thereof becomes of concern to people. However, Sonja Foss (2004:310) points out that this sometimes vague nature of rhetoric can be positive. She explains that visual rhetoric, like human experience, is not always “clear, well organised and rational”, but reflects these experiences adequately where they are “messy, emotional, fragmented, silly, serious and disorganized” (Foss 2004:310).

On a similar note, Gretchen Barbatsis (2005:330) refers to “narrative logic” which refers to the way narrative makes sense of disordered raw experiences. Thus by explaining the significance of an object through telling a story, thought processes are structured and the material at hand is arranged, connected and unified with past experiences and memories (Barbatsis 2005:330). In other words these objects may trigger memories, which often being fragmented and incomplete can be solidified by “being made to speak” (Barbatsis 2005:83). According to Barbatsis (2005:83), the past can tell many different stories in different voices. It is not the facts of the past that matter in as much as how the facts are interpreted. Barbatis (2005:83) explains that the meaning of an experience in the past is not fixed, but is always “articulated, rehearsed, and elaborated in the context of the present”. Consequently, the cultural voices that an object may convey to its audience will change from time to time according to the state of the culture, its context

and its memory, but they will remain connected. Inevitably, the objects serve as a platform that by triggering memories create opportunities in which cultural worldviews may be continually revisited, reviewed and adapted in accordance with current conditions.

Thus, human experiences are lived through the lens of culture, which binds the encoding activity of the designer together with the decoding activity of the specific audience. That is, although visual rhetoric is “scarcely deterministic” (Kostelnick 2004:239), it can be ensured that a similar understanding of the visual is attained through a visual language that is embedded in a specific community by making use of the culture’s conventional design codes to embody values and norms. In this way “culturally shared values and assumptions” may be viewed as persuasive communication within the realm of the visual (Hill 2004:26). Even though cultural conventions and similar worldviews become a foundation that ensures some correlation between the designer’s intentions and the audience’s interpretation, each individual still has his or her own unique experiences rooted in his or her own cultural framework. Thus, individual interpretations may vary under the umbrella of cultural beliefs and values according to the “specific situational context” (Kolstenick 2004:239). However, Atzmon (2007:2) asserts that the messages of the objects are programmed into various cultural beliefs on a deep level. Therefore, as explained above, the messages and meanings connected to the objects are flexible and fluid within the realm of any particular collective cultural belief. The fluidity of meaning-making relies on and is limited by the cultural context and worldview of an individual. A specific interpretation of an individual regarding a certain object may be unique but it would still fit into the realm of accepted interpretations according to a specific cultural worldview. According to Friese (2001:67), the notion of identity is associated with structures of things that remain stable and have an “unchangeable essence across time”. Thus, the umbrella of consistency and sameness that keeps the general worldviews of a cultural community together is important if a sense of identity is to be achieved. The individual needs to be affiliated with a larger community in order to result in a sense of belonging and identification of self. A specific interpretation may become one of many possible strands of interpretation that are woven together into a larger whole. In other words, affirmation and agreement of others is needed for something to be interpreted as being true. However, if the larger meaning of an object seems to be

understood, it does not mean that the internal workings of the culture will be understood as well by all.

Schleiermacher warns that understanding cultures is not something that one can take for granted and that one must be open to the idea that what may “seem rational and true may cover something deeply unfamiliar” (in Ramberg & Gjesdal 2005). For this reason, and in order to understand and study a culture, it is arguably better if the researcher is either already part of or willing to become part of the particular culture. In other words, it can be argued that the researcher’s knowledge is deepened by being engrained in the internal belief system of a particular culture. But in order to recognise what is strange to others, one also needs to be able to distance oneself somewhat from the familiarity of the culture. Thus the researcher, to adequately uncover various workings of a specific culture needs to combine the *Dasein* (being-there) and the *Mitsein* (being-part-of or being-with) into a *Mitdasein* which refers to being-there and part-of the perceived Other (Friese 2001:74). In other words, one needs to have enough distance to just be-there and observe objectively, as well as needing to be-part-of, participating in the community. In order to better understand culture, it is better to be part of it as well as apart of it. This brings into play notions of the general and the particular, of distance and proximity, belonging and difference in identity (Friese 2001:63). One needs to be “enmeshed in ‘alien’ occurrences” all the while maintaining a distance to be able to “judge in an ‘unprejudiced’ way” (Friese 2001:66).²³

However, as culture is flexible, always moving and changing, one can never pin down exactly where it is heading even when a direction is implied, whether one is inside or outside the culture. Here one could once again bring in the concept of acculturation as being on a constant continuum between the minority culture and the dominant culture, or being in a state of “biculturalisation”, meaning the embodiment of two cultures (Chrysoschoou 2004:xxiv). This biculturalisation suggests that one could, to some extent, understand and be understood by everyone, even while fundamental differences

²³ As an example of this, I remember having my English-speaking friends visiting me at my home when I was a child and feeling very embarrassed about our daily German Lutheran tradition of *Hausandacht*. I suddenly viewed our traditions that constituted my identity through their eyes and realised the strangeness of it all. I realised the ‘otherness’ of these seemingly natural occurrences of my everyday life and in that moment felt a confused wavering of self and sense of belonging. I also recall similar feelings when it came to eating my very different looking brown German home-made bread compared to the other children’s soft white shop-bought bread for lunch at school. These feelings completely vanished when my sense of identity was confirmed in the familiarity of my German South African friend’s own strange-looking home-made sandwich. Thus, it is often within strangeness that familiarity is found.

regarding one's cultural beliefs remain engrained. Therefore, a cultural object that encapsulates a "constellation of meanings" and is not yet sequential may be interpreted by different people and cultures in different ways. In other words, with different interpretations, it is impossible to fully sum up the essence of the culture. In the end, there is no 'essence' but only interpretations of possible essences.

Dillon and Howe (2003:293) provide a checklist for "questioning a design object" that is helpful for interrogating these possible essences. They believe that by answering certain questions about an object in a specific order, one may more easily enter into the narrative of an object. Moreover, by piecing the answers to the questionnaire together, the significance and role of the object within its cultural context may be better attained and various visual rhetorical perspectives may be integrated (Dillon & Howe 2003:293). Instead of being completely objective, they think that the reader's own personal feelings, sentiments and subjective views should be accommodated. This implies that one can not understand the visual rhetoric of an object by merely looking at the formal qualities without knowledge of the symbolic historical context and background of the object (Foss 2004:304). Foss (2004:306) states that the key to a rhetorical perspective on visual artifacts is to "focus on the rhetorical response to the artifact instead of an aesthetic one".

However, Kostelnick (2004:234) argues that the aesthetic is a form of cultural knowledge that which is embedded in visual language. He explains that aesthetics seeps into all design and "leaves a trail of cultural tracks" (Kostelnick 2004:234). Thus, one may argue that the aesthetic response to a designed artifact is just as important as the rhetorical response. This may be explained as the object speaking in a "familiar voice" as Buchanan (1985) refers to it. Foss (2004:306) defines a rhetorical response as the fusing of accumulative past experiences with "the evidence on the canvas" to construct a meaning. The 'evidence on the canvas' may be understood as the formal elements of a design that emanate a sense of the visual order of things to a particular viewer. The viewer, then, together with his or her cultural knowledge and experiences, interprets the meaning of the object. One can then conclude that a perceived aesthetic together with cultural knowledge results in a rhetorical response by which meaning is constructed. *Wahrnehmen* is the German word for *perceive* and can be directly translated as *to take as being true*. This highlights the idea that perception is not necessarily an issue of

absolute or objective truth, but rather an issue of what is individually accepted to be true. Therefore, through culturally learned conventions, we take things we acknowledge to be beautiful as being true and good. In other words, it is when things resonate with something in our consciousness that we adopt them as being meaningful.

However, one may never fully understand the full significance of a culture through a designed object. This is owed to the fact that not only is an object merely one piece of a whole culture, but each person's interpretations may be different as I have already explained. Moreover, each designed object tells only part of the story of a culture and thus leaves certain aspects of the culture out. That said, what follows is my own attempt to understand the rhetoric of stability that reflects a larger cultural whole. This is done bearing in mind those concerns and suggestions for gaining understanding of the significance of objects within their culture and society that have been outlined above. The following section looks into visual rhetoric and how it specifically may apply to the study at hand.

3.3 Visual rhetoric

The previous section explained the importance of cultural knowledge, background and context together with aesthetic responses and the necessity of rhetorical responses for gaining meaning. These components are briefly integrated into the exploration of the different principles of visual rhetoric.

Bonsiepe (1965:23) states that the aim of rhetoric is fundamentally to “shape opinions, to determine the attitude of other people or to influence their actions”. According to Foss (2005:144) visual data becomes communicative and can be studied as rhetoric if three characteristics are evident. Firstly, the artifact must have symbolic action. It must use arbitrary symbols to indirectly connect to its referent in order to communicate. Secondly, it must involve human intervention. This involves the process of creating an image that includes conscious strategic choices to communicate or any other process of interpretation. Lastly, the visual artifact must be communicative to an audience. The audience can either be real or ideal; the creator himself may also act as the audience to the visual artifact.

Bonsiepe (1965:23) divides rhetoric into two categories: the kind that is concerned with the use of persuasive means and the other that is concerned with description and analysis. Foss (2005:145) introduces visual rhetoric as a theoretical perspective which describes the rhetorical category of description and analysis. In other words a “rhetorical perspective on visual imagery” becomes a tool for approaching and analysing visual data and emphasises its communicative dimensions (Foss 2005:145). This approach is employed in this study and characteristically pays attention to one or more aspects of visual images, namely their nature, function and evaluation. The nature of an image refers to the distinguishing features of the artifact. It includes “presented elements and suggested elements” (Foss 2005:146). Presented elements involve naming the physical features of a visual artifact whereas suggested elements refer to the concepts, ideas, themes, memories or suggestions that a viewer is likely to conclude from the presented physical elements. According to Foss (2005:146), an analysis of the presented and suggested elements results in the understanding of the primary communicative elements of an image and develops a meaning that the image is likely to have for an audience.

The function of visual imagery from a rhetorical perspective is the action it communicates (Foss 2005:147). The function of the visual object is not reliant on the intended purpose of the creator. However, from the creator’s point of view and that of classical rhetoric, function may represent the extent to which the audience is persuaded and shares the intended meaning of the creator. Aristotle (2005:5) clarifies that function is “not simply to succeed in persuading”, but rather concerns discovering the means that result in a near success of persuasion. With a visual artifact though, because the creator is no longer present after conception, the artifact stands independent from its creator’s intention and the concern of function lies with the viewer (Foss 2005:147). The viewer then, or in the case of this study the designer, forms an opinion about what function a visual imagery communicates through the use of visual rhetoric.

Evaluation, according to Foss (2005:147) may be concerned with whether a particular visual accomplishes the functions it in its nature suggests. It also considers whether the image harmonises with a particular ethical system or theme in a discerning manner. In the case of this study, for instance, the evaluation refers to whether the function of the object relating to the presented and suggested elements results in a harmony with the Springbock Deutsche culture and ideals. Furthermore, Foss (2005:147) asserts that in

studies from a rhetorical perspective, one of two forms is assumed while focusing on nature, function or evaluation, namely the deductive or inductive application of the rhetorical to the visual. A deductive rhetoric-based approach begins with and is based on rhetorical theory. The theory that is accepted to be true is applied and connected to visual data, which in turn elaborates and develops existing rhetorical theory. The inductive rhetorical approach starts with the characteristics of an image and builds rhetorical theory based on these characteristics. This approach opens up new areas for the expansion of rhetorical theory.

This study has a more deductive approach. It starts with the history of the Springbock Deutsche and with existing rhetorical theory that is accepted as being true, then builds and develops the meaning of the visual data through its symbols from a rhetorical perspective. This results in the knowledge formation of the communication of the visual data and its perceived meaning. That is, because the theory is acknowledged as being true, the conclusion of that which is studied by the use of that theory may also be accepted as being true. So the study may substantiate and verify the rhetoric theory through application. In this section, I explore how the principles of classical rhetoric may be applied to visual rhetoric. Since this study aims to decode meanings of designed objects, these principles are explained primarily as they pertain to the viewer's perspective. This can then be applied when analysing the Springbock Deutsche designed objects in the next chapter. When one is presented with a designed artifact, there are numerous situational factors that influence the decoding of the object's meaning and thus its visual rhetoric. This rhetorical situation can be broken up into exigency, location, communicator, audience, method, purpose and timing. Each of these is examined briefly below.

3.3.1 Exigency

Exigency within this study refers to the reason that a particular viewpoint is presented to an audience. In this case the research and its associated rhetoric were catalysed by a concern for cultural survival and a desire to understand the possible significance of culturally designed objects in terms of how they may communicate a culture and its heritage. This study addresses the need of individuals to feel a sense of belonging and identity and the need to remember one's cultural heritage. However, I am not the creator

of the objects that are analysed and thus my own concerns may not be equal to the intentions or concerns of the creator of the objects. In other words, in the rhetorical analysis of the objects the exigency of the maker is unknown, and the visual artifact “stands independent of its creator’s intention” (Foss 2005:147). Therefore, from a rhetorical perspective, the perceived intention of the object relies on the viewer’s field of knowledge and worldview instead of that of the creator’s. However, the historical research already done ought to contribute towards my attempts to uncover the exigency of the objects analysed.

3.3.2 Location

Location refers to the physical place or context that the designed object is found in. The meaning of an object may be perceived differently if found in different contexts. For example, a typically German object may be interpreted in one way in a German curio shop in Berlin and in a different way in a home in South Africa. The meaning also changes according to whom the object belongs to. The main idea here is that objects are not intrinsically meaningful, but rather that they imply different meanings depending on their relationships to people and places. Dixon (1971:2) refers to rhetoric as being a complex enterprise of communication that connects the communicator to his audience through an “intricate network of relationships”. This “intricate network of relationships” includes relationships of shared contextual background knowledge on which an argument may be built to make sense to the audience.

3.3.3 Communicator

The third aspect of the rhetorical situation is the communicator. In classical rhetoric the communicator refers to the person communicating the message. In visual rhetoric, the communicator may be understood as the designer or maker of an object. However, once an object has been created and distributed to others, it stands apart from the influence of the integrity of its maker or his intended meanings (Foss 2004:308). This does not mean that it is void of any meaning. Instead, its meaning becomes more dependant on other aspects of the rhetorical situation. On the other hand, Foss (2004:308) refers to the cultural memory that is embedded in an object because of the symbolic visual elements

put there by the creator. This functions to “recall past moments and suggest future possibilities” (Foss 2004:308). So then, even in the absence of the maker of an object, the object still communicates meaning by its symbolic visual attributes. If the viewer of the object is from the same cultural background as the creator, this shared cultural knowledge may be recognised in the object. That is, the specific purpose of a cultural object might not be known to a person from another culture, whereas a person who shares the culture of the object will immediately have a better sense of its meaning.

According to Dixon (1971:25), every aspect of a communication can reveal character. This is to say that various visual aspects of an object can reveal the character of the creator of the object and / or the character of the person who possesses the object. If people are judged and apprehended because of their possessions, they essentially become the communicators that use these objects consciously or unconsciously as a language to communicate identity. In other words, a person comes across a certain object and decodes its presented and suggested elements according to her worldview. The person may decide to acquire the object as it gives her a familiarity and secures her in who she perceives herself to be. When this object is viewed by others, it serves to inform them about aspects of the new owner’s life. In this way, the owner of an object and not the creator of the object becomes the communicator. In classical rhetoric, language may be described as “the dress of thought” (Dixon 1971:19). In the same way visual language may reveal and “dress” certain aspects about character and personality that are otherwise invisible.

3.3.4 Audience

The fourth element of the rhetorical situation is the audience. Visual imagery can only work rhetorically if it communicates to an audience and without an audience the function of an object can not be realised. In other words, the visual artifact may be deemed to be useless if there is no audience to be affected by it. The audience includes those that are exposed to the object. Thus, even the communicator is an audience to his or her own work (Foss 2005:144). As discussed in the previous section, the meaning of a culturally designed object may change when viewed by someone within the same culture to someone who is rooted in another culture’s belief system. This again is linked with the

location and the communicator. If an object is created within the realm of a cultural knowledge and is viewed within a setting that supports that cultural worldview, the message may arguably be clearer to a viewer from that culture than to one who is of another culture.

3.3.5 Method

The method of the rhetorical situation refers to the manner in which the communicator forms the visual rhetorical argument. This includes the formal stylistic devices that are evident on or in the object such as such as colours, textures, shapes, patterns, materials, repetition and so on, since these are all deliberately and strategically chosen by the communicator (Foss 2005:144). In the Springbock Deutsche cultural objects, red and green colours, natural fauna, flora and materials and textures together with a certain repetitive pattern can be observed and is further discussed in Chapter Four. Through the choice of specific stylistic devices, the communicator allows the object to evoke meaning by associations he or she makes with the stylistic devices according to cultural knowledge, context and worldview. The stylistic devices and elements become symbols forming part of the visual language that embodies aesthetics as a form of cultural knowledge (Kolstenick 2004:234).²⁴ Therefore, the aesthetic response to an object can reveal whether or not the audience identifies with the object. Certain patterns and colour combinations may seem normal and appeal to some people, but may not necessarily appeal to others. The aesthetic response may grow into a rhetorical response where the visual elements function to trigger certain memories through which the object becomes alluring and familiar.

Method also refers to the five canons of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memorability and delivery. Invention can be equated to the conceptualisation stage when designing an object and is comprised of procedures, commonplaces and proof. It uses familiar procedures in the act of constructing a message and may include commonplaces that are shared between the designer and the audience. Cultural knowledge and memories may be seen as a commonplace that could be built upon to facilitate communication. The proof of the conceptualisation stage refers to the actual

²⁴The perceived aesthetic becomes a vehicle of meaning and does not necessarily mean that the object is considered beautiful.

object and how it functions and appeals to persuade its audience. Proof is comprised of the three rhetorical appeals namely *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*.

Buchanan (1985:9) refers to *logos* in design as being a technological reasoning in that an object becomes persuasive if it physically meets needs in a reasonable and practical way. Thus, *logos* measures the way that an object can facilitate life. *Logos* may also refer to how people make sense of and understand their place in life and the universe. In classical rhetoric, *ethos* refers to the character of the speaker. Buchanan (1998:14), however, explains that objects themselves have character because they reflect their maker as is previously mentioned in the above section (under Character). In other words, the knowledge, experience and worldview of the maker are to some extent captured or reflected in the object. This reflected character may resonate with the character of a viewer who is then persuaded to acquire the object and use its attributes to facilitate and solidify who he thinks he is or should be. The character of an object may be influenced by the character of its owner or even be affected by the atmosphere and character of the environmental setting that it is placed in. It is often said of an object that it has character, which usually indicates that the object, a wooden table for instance, has been part of many experiences which are visible on the wood in the form of scratches and dents, each of which humanise the table to some extent and give it a history and a perceived character. A table such as this for instance would communicate a different character of its owner than a shiny glass table would convey.

Then, *pathos* is equated to emotion. Emotion enters into the persuasive argument of the object when it unites with the user to become emotionally desirable in his or her life. Buchanan (1985:15) explains that *pathos* seeks connections and relationships with objects and people around it. It serves to accentuate certain aspects around it which may trigger memories and result in an emotional appeal. Thus, if one has emotional connections to the owner of an object or to the place that it is situated in, the object will carry that emotion within it evoking certain feelings and memories associated with it. According to Hill (2004:35), certain visual texts may draw emotion because the viewer recognises aspects of his or her belief system and values in the visual text which are tied to cultural constructs and thus cause emotions. Thus the presence of emotion is a response that is culturally determined (Hill 2004:35).

Arrangement and style coincide with the stylistic devices that are discussed above. They determine what aspects of a chosen visual language are arranged in what manner forming a visual hierarchy which plays a role in helping the communication of an intended message or meaning to the viewer. Memorability is the fourth rhetorical canon of visual rhetoric. In classical rhetoric, the fourth canon is memory, referring to the ability of the speaker to deliver his speech from memory (Dixon 1971:31). However in the context of this study, memorability of an object will depend on the emotional, ethical and logical impact made by the object's visual rhetoric. In other words, the rhetoric is remembered by the audience instead of the author or creator. Arguably, the more powerful the aesthetic and rhetorical response is toward the object the better the object will be remembered.

The last canon of visual rhetoric deals with the delivery of the persuasion or presentation. According to Dixon (1971:31) the impact of a speech in classical rhetoric relies ultimately on the delivery. In visual rhetoric the holistic impact of a visual text relies on how it may resonate with, appeal and make sense to the audience. In this context the delivery may refer to the narrative associated with the entire object as a whole. The message of an object depends on how the viewer makes sense of the object's individual attributes through narrative. Blair (2004:43) states: "the narrative we formulate for ourselves from visual images can easily shape our attitudes". Therefore, the ultimate meaning or overall delivery of an object to its viewer depends on his or her worldview and cultural context.

3.3.6 Purpose

Purpose refers to the aim of the object and answers to the question of what the designed object accomplishes. It considers the way in which the object persuades and what its message ultimately is. In this study, one may ask what effect a specific object has on people who are exposed to it, who owns it and what role it plays in their lives.

3.3.7 Timing

In classical rhetoric, timing refers to when something is said to create a maximum impact on the audience. However, objects themselves are timeless in the sense that they continue to exist in chronological time even after numerous and a variety of meanings are interchangeably attached to them by audiences from different eras. Dixon (1972:19) explains that in classical rhetoric some things remain unaltered despite being put forward in different ways. That is to say that the meanings of objects change according to who views them at what point in their lives and with which personal experiences, worldviews and cultural backgrounds, but the object itself and its stylistic attributes remain constant. The object stands still, offering a flexible number of interpretations within the boundaries of its cultural context as explained above. This observation points to a distinction between two kinds of time in rhetorical theory, namely *chronos* and *kairos*.

Chronos is quantitative, chronological and refers to the actual age of an object, artifact or person (Smith 2002:47). *Kairos* refers to the “qualitative character of time”; it is the perfect time or high-time when things and events intersect to create a specific meaning and understanding at an appropriate time (Smith 2002:47). According to John Smith (2002:47), *kairos* is particularly relevant to the interpretation of history with reference to its significance and purpose. Thus, during a person’s lifetime or chronological lifespan, different things may become important at different times owing to the collaboration of layered events, experiences and worldviews. This may result in the perfect time or *kairos* in which a concept may be revealed and understood. The visual object may be looked at a thousand times until one day, because of what someone said and or an accumulation of events, the objects takes on a different, more significant meaning. *Kairos* is that which describes this event, which alters the opinions and actions of the audience. It may be that the object through visual rhetoric becomes a reminder of events and family or heritage which may instigate a sense of belonging, rootedness and stability. The visual rhetoric of an object may then act as a source of visual wellbeing and belonging.

3.4 Visual wellbeing

Arguably, there are many people who are not aware of the history and meaning that may be communicated through the objects that surround them. These objects can be reminders of things that are intangible and can thus sometimes be forgotten or overlooked. Victoria Gallagher, Kelly Martin and Madgy Ma (2011:27) argue that “both rhetoric and the visual arts work to bring to life that which is absent”. In the case of the Natal Germans, one may argue that the designed objects within their living spaces act as rhetorical devices that bring the stability of their *Heimat* to life in a South African context.

One may also argue that these objects become their *Heimat* in a new country and act as coping mechanisms that help to keep them anchored to their traditional beliefs. Through this, it seems that they have a sense of belonging and identity. The cultural objects therefore become a source of wellbeing. As the objects are looked at, horizons may fuse between the viewer and the symbolism of the object in *kairos*, where meanings can be created through various rhetorical principles and appeals that have a reaffirming effect. Gallagher, Martin and Ma (2011:32) define visual wellbeing as a “state of feeling healthy, happy and content, of sensing vitality and prosperity, recognised precisely in one’s experience of objects through the visual sense”. Visual wellbeing is differentiated from visual pleasure in that it does not refer to bodily pleasure, self-interest, consumption, greed, individualism and constructs such as the male gaze. Rather, visual wellbeing is associated with sense-making and self-realisation within a community. It values culture, which is seen as sustainable instead of fleeting.

Visual wellbeing, through its components of *enargeia* and *eudaimonia*, which are elaborated below, provides another way in which designers may investigate design challenges especially those that are rooted in self-realisation and culture as opposed to bodily pleasure and self-interest (Gallagher, Martin & Ma 2011:40). This is also opposed to the global trend of ‘hyperindividualism’ that results in the fragmentation of collective

actions and modes of belonging; and rests on a society of fashion, wherein ephemerality, novelty and permanent seduction prevail (Longhurst 2007:26).

Design objects can provide visual wellbeing through *enargeia* (vividness) and *eudaimonia* (flourishment). According to Gallagher, Martin and Ma (2011:31) *energia* brings into presence, sight and mind that which is absent. It is the vivid depiction of experience and conveys invisible significance through visual depiction evoking a sense of wonder. *Enargeia* does not merely speak but also demonstrates. It suggests that intangible emotions may be conveyed through images that are not instantly possible through words. Hill (2004:30) reaffirms this by referring to vividness in the visual that brings forth more emotional responses than text, which elicits an analytical reaction. He goes on to say that “vividness, emotional response and persuasion have been shown to correlate with each other”. Thus, if emotional responses happen as a result of cultural constructs (Hill 2004:35), then persuasion and perceived vividness must also be culture specific.

According to Gallagher, Martin and Ma (2011:31), one can feel unpleasantly overwhelmed by images owing to visual pollution or one may experience moments of “pleasurable looking” that are not connected to consumption or greed. One largely ignores other people’s conversations and only looks up when a familiar voice is recognised. The voices of those with whom one has no connection are forgotten, but a voice that carries a shared history receives keen attention. In terms of the visual, it can be argued that one may experience this type of ‘pleasurable looking’ when the object that is being looked at has a deeper meaning and resonance with the viewer that exceeds monetary value (Gallagher, Martin & Ma 2011:31).

Eudemonia is a rhetorical concept that is associated to feelings of fulfillment and satisfaction. It focuses on meaning-making and is inherently culturally rooted. In rhetoric as well as design, the essential goal is towards creating a better life or the achievement of goodness. According to Gallagher, Martin and Ma (2011:31) rhetorical theory throws an emphasis on the good as being a communal experience during which a unity of values are realised. They conclude that *eudaimonia* is the “experience of enriching activities, of vitality, in people who live in groups” (Gallagher, Martin & Ma 2011:31). The unity of values and worldview owed to the communal experience of the Natal

German communities may produce *eudaimonic* feelings that encourage the communities to keep their status quo by nurturing their traditions and cultural heritage. The rhetorical device of *eudaimonia*, together with other visual rhetorical devices, possibly persuades the German South African community to prolong these good feelings of shared memories, nostalgia and arguably even a romanticised image of the past. Through visual rhetoric, a sense of visual wellbeing is triggered that connects to positive experiences associated to an aspect of the object. *Eudemonia* may thus contribute to the reason why some objects are kept while others are discarded.

At this point in the research, the historical and cultural context of the Natal Germans has been narrated. The use of rhetorical devices, principles and appeals discussed in this chapter help to foster an increased understanding of why and how a particular object may resonate with its user and its environment. Also, according to the outcome of the rhetorical analysis and description, one may assume that a designer holds a fairly important responsibility with regard to cultural survival. The accompanying picturebook, discussed in more detail further on, may serve as a visual persuasive device that speaks in a familiar voice and resonates with the viewer. It serves to bring into presence that which is absent, a remembrance of a heritage and promotes a sense of wonder and wellbeing. Bearing this in mind, this study now turns to a more concrete application of the theory discussed in this chapter to the visual objects of the Natal Germans. Thus, the physical and theoretical contexts covered in this and the previous chapters are brought into dialogue in the following chapter.

Chapter Four:

4.1 Discussion of rhetoric of found German objects

Being interpretive in nature, this exploration of objects is described and analysed taking into consideration my own worldview as a Natal German. The exploratory narrative of the Springbock Deutsch identity, while rooted in the research already done, it is also connected with my own experiences and personal knowledge of the rhetoric of objects. This is to say that the objects are analysed through a framework of familiarity, remembrance and identity. Kenney (2002:67) explains that visual communication creates a “chain of reaction” with the viewer’s stored memories and this recalls “entire experiences”. Thus, the visual becomes a “frame” through which the viewer makes sense of the world and his or her belonging within it (Featherstone 1999:119). This highlights the fact that rhetoric and rhetorical analysis are bound to subjective processes and should therefore be treated as such.

The same may be said of the nature of narrative. According to Riessman (1994:22), the ideologies and interests of the narrator (creator) are inscribed into their tales. The process of creating something can be quite a personal activity reflecting many biases of the creator. Of course, the creator might have a particular audience in mind for which he / she could be creating something, but his / her presence can never be completely objective. He / she creates using his / her unique frame through which he / she views and understands the world, and it is through this frame of knowledge that he / she shapes and narrates his creation. The creation then stands independently with its cultural memory intact (Foss 2004:308). An audience may then recognise the cultural memory as a suggestion of meanings on the basis of which their own variant of the narrative can be created as a reflection of their worldview. Thus, the way the audience or viewer decodes the symbolic visual elements through narrative reflects their own subjectivity and individualism within the realm of the object’s cultural memory and their own cultural worldview. Subjectivity is necessarily involved in the creation of an object, the analysis thereof as well as in its appeal to its audience. The objects analysed here serve to illustrate some aspects of the ‘legs’ of Germanness as explained in Chapter

Two that have helped stabilise a Springbock Deutsche culture. The visual rhetorical analysis is thematic, where the festivals and physical objects are grouped accordingly.

4.2 Designed objects in a global context

As explained in Chapter Two, the Natal German language, culture and religion are intertwined and therefore can not be considered independently. Therefore, one may find that many of these cultural objects may have a combination of meanings referring to the Lutheran belief and tradition, the Natal German language and their customs. The delivery of the analysis of the objects below is explained through narrative, linking meaning from the stylistic devices through the cultural background to construct the object's purpose and its role in the community's wellbeing at this time. According to Riessmann (1994:18), "events become meaningful because of their placement in a narrative". In the same way, objects also acquire meaning through narrative. This places any rhetorical analysis in a precarious position: it reads that which was created in a particular context in a different context and considers one narrative from the position of another. There is a disconnection between the world of the author and the world of the viewer. However, as explained above, it is the world of the viewer that is the primary focus of visual rhetorical theory. Thus, it is to this world that I now turn.

It has been noted that at the time of writing, these objects are being viewed in an era of increasing globalisation. People are progressively replacing cultural objects in their homes which are often viewed as being 'old-fashioned' with new things that lack a connection to their unique heritage and simply conform to what is globally accepted. Rees refers to this as an "invented human culture" that did not evolve naturally (in Coghlan 2009).²⁵ Cultural objects are usually perceived as being beautiful and good because they are viewed through that cultural worldview as noted above. One may then speculate that the growing preference for new 'trendy' goods may be ascribed to the fact that anyone, regardless of their cultural background, can relate to and desire these objects in some way precisely because they are 'faceless'. In this regard, one's accumulated objects may then be coveted by a neighbor or friend regardless of their cultural background. Thus, in order to be able to boast of one's material wealth as is

²⁵ For example, according to Rees, America was left with idle arms factories and unemployed soldiers after the World War Two, and it was decided to revive economic activity by encouraging a culture of accumulation and "show-off material wealth" to the point that it defined their self-image and worth (in Coghlan 2009).

encouraged, the recipient will need to be able to receive the boasting unhindered by his unique cultural worldview. In this way, new consumer objects are more easily appreciated by all people and as a result slowly replace the cultural objects that need a different worldview sieve to be appreciated. Indirectly the having and wanting of faceless 'trendy' goods may reflect a need for constant approval by others in society. Victor Lebow (1955:3) comments on the need to consume and boast in his article on price competition:

Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction and our ego satisfaction in consumption [...] We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced and discarded at an ever-increasing rate. We need to have people eat, drink, dress, ride, live with ever more complicated and, therefore, constantly more expensive consumption.

Objects become easily disposable with no mention of their value in stabilising a culture. Clive Hamilton (2003:3-4) describes contemporary societies' strange fetish with worshipping inanimate objects for their apparent magical powers and promises of bliss. In addition, Rob Horning (2009) refers to a culture of "limitless desire" that is spurred by advertising and connects the emotional to the act of consuming. One may argue that it could be that this constant river of accumulating and discarding creates some sense of habitual stability. However, instead of feeling liberation and a sense of worth, Horning (2009) describes opposite feelings of anxious restlessness and emptiness. There seems to be an addiction to want things, but at the same time "the moment of acquisition is the death of desire", and therewith the dreams of becoming or feeling or of approval disappear once a specific object has been acquired (Horning 2009). It is a constant cycle of "hope followed by disappointment followed by hope" of attaining a sense of wellbeing that fuels the act of consuming (Hamilton 2003:23). As CS Lewis (1975:289) writes, "our best havings are wantings", suggesting that it is the desire itself that seems to be valuable even if it can never be attained. New disposable objects reflect an unattainable desire, and carefully crafted cultural objects that are part of a rich heritage become unattainable.²⁶ For Lewis (1975:289), 'wantings' however, can have a positive effect if the 'wanting' is not to have more 'havings', but instead to have the 'havings' create 'wantings'. This would break out of the consumerist cycle of hope and disappointment by

²⁶ Ultimately the accumulation of no object, old or new can make a person feel fulfilled, satisfied or happy. The object can however serve as a reminder of something intangible that may alter one's view of life or mood.

becoming desires to help others, to carry out a particular vision or change one's perspective on one's life.

Many German objects that serve to stabilise a culture work through *Sehnsucht*,²⁷ a continued, almost obsessive longing for something that can never quite be attained. In particular, the objects present a longing for the *Lüneburge Heide* where most Springbock Deutsche have never been, a place where the Springbock Deutsche children imagine the inhabitants to be permanently wearing the traditional German *Tracht*. They also present a *Sehnsucht* to become courageous and filled with faith to live as the first German missionaries in a time that has past. As such, this *Sehnsucht* becomes the antithesis of globalisation and consumerism in that it looks back in order to move forward, while globalisation prefers only to look forward. Thus, *Sehnsucht* serves to connect individuals in a community with history and culture that provides some stability in a postmodern society that revolves around flux and changing fashions. The primary difference between disposable, mass produced objects and cultural artifacts is how they may contribute to the wellbeing of an individual and also a community. The question becomes whether or not the object reflects a sustainable meaning or the fostering of some sense of belonging. Moreover, one may ask whether or not an object is valued only for its novelty or if it carries some deeper meaning. It is my contention that some objects may embody both novelty and meaning, and yet different contexts render certain objects more disposable and others more stable in the meanings that they represent.

So, with change comes the need to find anchorage and stability to step onto while moving forward. Change and stability work together in a concert where stability supports change and change needs to build on stability. However, if there is too much change without any stabilising forces in place, there is nothing to build upon or stand upon. This may cause problems, like a running a marathon on an empty stomach. Here, the problem arises when technology changes so quickly, exacerbating consumerism and globalisation so that culture, heritage and history can not adapt quickly enough to integrate these changes and as a consequence culture falls away. This may render people without a sense of identity or belonging and community, where change itself is mistaken for identity.

²⁷ Directly translated *Sehnsucht* can be understood as *sehnen* (to yearn) but also *sehen* (to see) and *sucht* (addiction). Thus *Sehnsucht* is the never ending addiction to yearning - an inability to stop yearning for the ability to see or realise.

Rhetoric, according to Kelley (2002:67), is the “act of discovering or creating common interests that make persuasion possible”. The following section discusses some objects that seem to rest on the common interests and beliefs of a German community that help stabilise their culture of *Sehnsucht* within ever-changing environment.

4.2.1 Found designed objects

As noted above, visual rhetoric works to connect and persuade on the commonplace of shared experiences and heritage that are signified in the object instead of appealing solely to the physical attributes of the object. In other words, the experiences, feelings, memories and faith as things that are absent or intangible are brought into the presence through the designed objects (Gallgher, Martin & Ma 2011:27). To begin with, most Natal German houses have wooden board objects in their homes that are dissections of tree stems, smoothly polished and etched into (Figure 1). Bible verses are burnt or etched onto the lighter grain of the middle of the wooden board in old angular German Blackletter typefaces such as Textur, Schwabacher and Fraktur. These typefaces are repeated on many German objects throughout the Natal German homes. Type is one of the central aspects of the South African German culture to be rhetorically analysed in this study. It points to the fact that the later typographical developments in Germany of the Bauhaus and Ulm schools were not followed by the Natal Germans, emphasising the preservation of a particular period in the German cultural history.



Figure 1: One example of a wooden verse boards, KwaZulu Natal, 2011.
Photograph by author.

A typeface can be an instant indication of the age of these boards or of the century from where the tradition has evolved into present day. The German Blackletter typefaces mostly date from the sixteenth to eighteenth century. It was during the mid nineteenth century that the Hermannsburg missionaries came to South Africa. Later, owing to World War Two, these German typefaces became associated with the Third Reich and thus any Blackletter typeface was considered to be “Nazi Type” and perceived as being “ugly and hard to read” (see Figure 2) (Heller 1998:118).

However Yvonne Schwener-Scheddin (1998:50) expresses another point of view when she describes the German Blackletter as being sensual and as being connected to the “hand, eye (image) and ear (sound)”. According to Schwener-Scheddin (1998:52), Fraktur, for example, idealistically embodies the “sound and word structure of the German language” in a pictorial way in which German people identify themselves. The language that one hears is mimicked and connected in what one sees in the typographic design.



Figure 2: Weekly NSDAP slogan, 1938. Poster 35 x 25 cm

Since the Germans in South Africa had no direct part in World War Two, few or no negative associations are made with Blackletter type. As a result, it is visible throughout the Natal German homes. Blackletter typefaces serve as reminders of the first German settlers in South Africa and relate back to Louis Harms as well as the sister church in Germany (SELK) of the Lutheran South African synod. According to Schwener-Scheddin (1998:52), the typefaces of Schwabacher and Fraktur could otherwise be known as the typefaces of Martin Luther and Albrecht Dürer, as these typefaces were “the typefaces of the German Renaissance and Protestant Reformation”.²⁸ Reproduced versions of *The Praying Hands* of Dürer (Figure 3) seem to be quite prevalent in many German South African homes. These hands are generally not associated with the artist, Dürer. In fact many of the Natal Germans are not familiar with him at all despite owning one of these replicas. Instead, it appears that the praying hands act as a reminder to pray. They seem

²⁸ Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation in Europe in opposition of certain teachings of the Catholic Church that he had believed had veered especially from the message of Jesus and the theology of the apostle Paul. He also translated the Bible from Latin to German so that all people had direct access to the teachings of the Bible, which was locally called the *Volksbuch* (a book for the people) (Mullett 2004:153).

to indicate the importance of prayer in the Lutheran faith. According to Luther just as a shoemaker makes a shoe and a dressmaker a dress, so should the handcraft of a Christian be prayer (Huber & Diessen 1990:9). Many German South Africans also live under Luther's motto: "Pray as if working wouldn't help and work as if praying wouldn't help" (de Kadt 2000:76). This also serves to reflect the values of Germanness that this culture upholds.



Figure 3: Albrecht Dürer, *Betende Haende*, 1508. Reproductions of the original work in brass relief and wood etching, 29, 1 x 19, 7 cm. KwaZulu Natal. Photograph by the author.

Even though there are some discrepancies in academia as to whether or not Dürer converted to Lutheranism, it is evident from Luther and Dürer's correspondences that he was indeed influenced and moved by the reformation and was a close friend of Luther (Dürer, Silver & Smith 2010:1; Price 2003:228). According to Andrew Pettegree (2000:462), Dürer left clear evidence of his personal conversion and commitment to the new faith which was almost as dramatic Luther's. However the Reformation movement took place late in Dürer's life so that the evidence of his alleged new religious belief is in small proportion to the rest of his career (Pettegree 2000:462).²⁹ This does not change the fact that the Natal Germans at large are not very familiar with Dürer. However, it serves to clarify the German origin of this common object in their homes and its connection to Germanness and their Lutheran Faith. It also clarifies the reason why Schwener-Scheddin (1998:52) refers to the German Blackletter typefaces as being

²⁹ Albrecht Dürer died before the publication of the Augsburg Confession by Martin Luther in 1530 (Price 2003:6).

reminiscent of both Luther and Dürer in the context of the German Renaissance and Protestant Reformation.

Therefore, the typeface, which was developed from the Gutenberg Bible typeface, refers to the roots of the Natal German Lutheran faith. In addition Andre Lefevere (1977:7) states that Luther “sounds the theme of the German nation and the German language”. Indirectly, the German Blackletter typeface communicates a visual connection between the message of the Bible and the German Lutheran tradition – a connection that has arguably helped to sustain certain religious aspects of the culture. Schwener-Scheddin (1998:52) is convinced that the Blackletter typeface reflected how deeply the soul was moved by faith, as well as a sincere struggle for truth, knowledge and social justice.

This serves to show just how far removed the significance of the Blackletter typeface is from that which has been assigned to it by its associations with the Third Reich. According to Schwener-Scheddin (1998:55), a shift in understanding of the Blackletter typeface has occurred in the general global public from it representing a “religious faith and attachment to the soil of the Lutheran period” to a “psychoticised expression” of the twentieth century. Therefore, the German Blackletter type as viewed through the South African German context brings forth an aspect of its meaning that undermines the ethic of the Nazism with which it has become associated.

Most of the verses written on the boards in the homes of the Natal Germans are words of encouragement and comfort that would be relevant in the early days of the missionary settlers but are also still relevant to the Springbock Deutsche today, such as “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:41). Among the verses are also some that refer to the type of family structure of the Springbock Deutsche such as: “But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15) which is a verse that echoes the patriarchal values held by the Lutheran tradition. It also reflects a stability of faith that should be maintained by the head of the family in the household which may be beyond his control in the greater society. Within the Lutheran tradition, the house-father “represents the law” (Troeltsch 2001:546).

Usually, etchings or burnt engravings illustrating images of flowers are found next to the verses. Thus, the wooden boards with the flower etchings instill a sense of nature that is

reminiscent of deep silent woods. Together with the Bible verses they recall to mind the German Romantic period where nature was believed to be a revelation of God and where the landscape is elevated as a “vehicle for the expression of a personal intimation of God” (Finke 1974:24). Kristia van Prooyen (2004:4) termed one of the characteristics of Romanticism, specifically in regard to the work of the painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), as being “the struggle to produce a spiritual anchor for modern culture”. In particular, Friedrich is an example of one renowned German artist who grew up in a strict Lutheran home and depicted emotionally charged paintings signifying God's presence in nature (Figure 4) (Wolfe 2009:1,17). His paintings worked to create a sense of stability after the upheaval of the Enlightenment that emphasised ‘rational’ thought and fostered an enmity against Christianity (van Prooyen 2004:3&4).

With World War Two, Friedrich’s paintings were considered to be part of the Nazi nationalist pride promoted by notions such as *Blut und Boden* (Blood and soil) (Amsterdam 2008:1). However, the message in these paintings, without being dehistoricised and tainted by the post-Romantic context of the War, resonates strongly with worldviews of the South African Germans. The early nineteenth century, during which Friedrich painted, is about the same time that the first German missionaries sailed to South Africa on board the *Kandaze*. According to Hans-Jürgen Oschadleus (1992:28), it was also during this time that a German national identity began emerging owing to the convergence of German nationalism with ideals of German classicism, romanticism and the patriotism of the post-Napoleonic era. Founder of the Hermannsburg Mission in Germany and father of Louis Harms, Ludwig Harms (1808-1865) was an intellectual and village preacher in Hanover “who strangely commingled romanticism, evangelical favour and chiliastic expectations” (Oschadleus 1992:31). Furthermore, de Kadt (2000:77) states that the three fundamental influences in the German mission tradition are Lutheran theology, Pietism and Romanticism. Thus, the link of this Romantic melancholic solemnity depicted in Friedrich’s paintings is very much carried through into the Lutheran Natal German’s faith today through the Hermannsburg mission.



Figure 4: Caspar David Friedrich, Winterlandschaft mit Kirche, 1811.
Oil on canvas, 45 x 33.5 cm. Schloss Charlottenburg.

In alignment with Friedrich's ideals and by living on farms in the countryside, Springbock Deutsche communities realise their powerlessness against nature. This fostered a sense of the need and importance of faith in everyday life (van Prooyen 2004:1). The German ancestors of the Natal Germans are of peasantry and rural descent and, according to Oschadleus (1992:37), carry a sense of this lineage to this day. Consequently, this theme of God in nature is repeated throughout many objects in their homes as a reflection of the Lutheran tradition and the Hermannsburger Mission that originate in Northern Germany in the *Lüneburge Heide*. Mary Ireland (1900:v), who translated the memoirs of Theodore Harm's on his brother Louis Harms into English, explains that it is necessary to introduce the readers to the *Lüneburge Heide* as a background to the mission at hand. "Fields of thin grass, clumps of trees, sandy soil ploughed lightly in narrow furrows" could easily describe a South African rural landscape (Ireland 1900:7). She describes how sometimes paths lead into a wood that again open to stretches of purple heath meadow with a clear stream winding and expresses feelings that are commonly thought of as being of a northern constitution: "There is not a sound, yet it is not lonely, but solemn and still; with a sense of almost personal companionship, and a touch of the joy and mystery of nature, which the broad, free, silent spaces bring" (Ireland 1900:7).

These above-mentioned German wooden boards found in the Natal German homes connect the scenery of woodlands to a Lutheran faith set in the Romantic period. Many Lutheran German South Africans in the Panbult and Wittenberg areas farm with trees and as such the forestries reminisce the *Wälde* (forests and woodlands) described by Ireland (1900:7) above. According to Oschadleus (1992:32), the German settlers in KwaZulu Natal, in an attempt to recreate their homeland in Africa, imported the idea of planting groves of trees around their missionary buildings. There are many *Landesgemeinden* where the old plantations of trees around the church buildings still stand. In addition, the majority of German Volkslieder that are sung by these communities commemorate themes of *Wald* and *Heide* (Andersen 1955). It can be argued that it is this recreation of the *Heimat* in South Africa that has become the Germany that the Natal Germans know. This could also explain why it seems that the contemplation, solitude and quiet that are reflected in the works of Friedrich are so familiar to and connect with the Lutheran Natal Germans (Finke 1974:25).

This illustrates that despite facing the enormous change of leaving their Germany, the missionary settlers continued a tradition rooted in their faith and culture. This tradition seems to have stabilised and supported their sense of belonging. Through these objects, the Natal German families communicate their Christian belief simultaneously with their German heritage to anyone who visits their homes. That which is displayed in the home is associated to the characters of the family who live there. Therefore, the object becomes a reflection of identity. The Elandskraal bazaar presents one such opportunity in that the Natal Germans recreate their *Heimat* on South African soil. In Figure 5, the tall trees shelter the quaint wooden German style houses that are permanent structures in Elandskraal. The wooden houses represent distinctive architectural details that mimic the *Lüneburge Heide* in Germany such as the horse headed gables (Oschadleus 1992:32). The wooden bell tower visible in the photograph on the left of Figure 5 signifies a custom that was introduced by Harms at Hermannsburg in Germany, that each day at sunrise, sunset and at midday, the church-bell is rung for a few minutes. While it rings all men, woman and children stop their work wherever they are and offer a silent prayer (Brian 1899:4). Nowadays, the church-bell rings every Saturday evening as a reminder and calling to church the next morning. The same bell is rung when a death occurs in the community.



Figure 5: Elandsdraal bazaar setup. Elandsheim, 2011. Photographs by the author.

Many of the German missionary settlers, like Friedrich, are of Northern Germany origin. Ferdinand Schmidt (1922:120) describes Northern Germans as being “heavy-blooded” and having a “Northern German melancholy and a depth”, as opposed to the southern Germans who instead are perceived to view life more lightly and joyously.³⁰ Obviously, this is not to say that the Northern Germans are without humour or that the Southern Germans have no depth of character. However, Germans have been known to have an “inwardness” or culture of introspection “for the salvation and justification of one’s life” (Bruford 2010:vii). This follows Luther’s intimation that “the [exterior] political world is of no consequence” (in Bruford 2010:vii). This worldview is reflected in the Lutheran tradition to “endure existing conditions humbly and patiently”, which also explains the Natal Germans’ ethic of neutrality during the wars in South Africa (Troeltsch 2001:573). Bearing the above in mind, some German objects found have a distinct ‘Northern’ constitution, usually with religious undertones, whereas others are more fun and lighthearted and reflect a more ‘Southern’ outlook on life.

A group of objects that is also prevalent in the homes of the Natal Germans are candles that display text (Figure 6). Usually made for religious events such as baptisms,

³⁰

marriages and confirmations, they are traditionally lit on the event's anniversary as a remembrance of the event and its significance. The candles are displayed on cabinets in living areas. They are usually white or cream and contain no other colour except for some dried flowers under a layer of wax accompanying the text.



Figure 6: Religious candle, KwaZulu Natal, 2011. Photograph by the author.

In narrating what the everyday German homes of the early seventeenth and eighteenth century Germans looked like Berthold Haendke (1907:20,28) on numerous occasions mentions the delicate but simple carvings and cuttings into wood. Wood carvings are still popular among the Springbock Deutsche today. *Holzhandwerk* originating from the peasant ancestry background the attraction to handcrafted objects and the act of creating still seems to run in the blood of the Natal Germans (Figure 7). According to the *Berchtesgarden Handwerkskunst* website, *Holz* and *Handwerk* sprung out of peasant poverty between the seventeenth and nineteenth century. It gave the German peasants an extra income and suitably became known as *Nothandwerk*, meaning need or distress handwork. Today it is part of the *Heimatskunst* heritage that identifies a rural Germany (Blackbourn & Retalck 2007:61). It may point to the act of making something out of nothing, building a home and a life in a land far away from that which is familiar and comfortable. Creating something out of nothing also has religious connotations of God making all things out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), and also reflects the Lutheran belief that nothing good can be done without God. Thus it seems that for the Natal Germans

everyday life and endeavors can not be removed from faith. According to Wilhelm Bodenstern “the most powerful factor in the cultural life of the Germans in Natal is the Lutheran Church” (in Oschadleus 1992:28). Thus the Lutheran tradition becomes a significant force of stability in regard to the ongoing preservation of South African German’s culture.



Figure 7: Wood carvings, KwaZulu Natal, 2011. Photograph by author.

Handcrafted objects reflect the Natal Germans’ stress on the value of hard work. Objects carved out of wood adorn the walls and are hung up on doors or displayed on cabinets. The wood stays true to itself and refers to that which is naturally from the earth. There generally seems to be a tendency to favour natural organic materials in these homes. This inclination may originate from the Lutheran Natal German’s ancestors’ rural environment in the *Lüneburge Heide* while simultaneously being a reflection of their own rural farm life. Haendcke (1907:50) refers to this phenomenon as a *Naturfreude*, which is the anticipation to experience the cheerful and warm springtime in “unleashed nature” during winter. The preference of natural materials signifies the above-mentioned values of honesty and humility. In Lutheran tradition, the fruitfulness of nature is to be accepted humbly and gratefully as a direct gift from God (Troeltsch 2001:555).



Figure 8: Unser täglich Brot wooden plates. Elandskraal, 2011. Photograph by author.

Objects that directly portray the Lutheran tradition of humble thanksgiving are wooden carved plates which are usually found near the dinner table (Figure 8). They are inscribed with the *Tischgebet* (grace), “Give us today our daily bread”. The plates portray connections between faith, hard work and thankful gathering and present an element of rootedness in the soil of the South African German culture. The first plate on the left displays a farmer working his field with his horses. This illustrates an aspect of the Lutheran tradition where the house-father is expected to be the breadwinner as well as the pastor of his household (Troeltsch 2001:546). According to Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman (2000:41), the masculine form of *Heimat* refers to the soil and represents manhood; hence the image portrayed on the plate of the man working the soil is a representation of masculinity and the responsibilities that accompany it. In terms of the feminine *Heimat*, womanhood is signified through “handicrafts, making bread, babies and lace” (Boa & Palfreyman 2000:41). Thus the patriarchal system of the Lutheran tradition among the German South Africans is reinforced.

The repetitive depiction of wheat on the plates not only refers to a bread baking tradition, but it is also symbolic of a number of religious concepts that are perceived to be important in the Lutheran faith. In the parable told by Jesus in Matthew 13, the wheat and weeds are left to grow alongside each other in a field until judgment day when they are to be separated. Another chapter in the Bible refers to a farmer who tries to store up as much wheat as he can in his sheds in order to feel secure for the years to come, but he perishes, making his hoarding futile (Matthew 6:9). Thus, the wheat symbolises the value of “grateful frugality” which is highly esteemed by the South African Germans (Troeltsch 2001:555).

Having said that, the value of living sparingly is supported by a shopping list that has a folk rhyme on it (Figure 9). The rhyme translates as follows: “The largest treasure of any man is a wife that can save”. World War One left in its wake a Germany “impoverished

beyond description” and so many were unable to support the mission work in Africa (Oschadleus 1992:35). Soon afterwards, Adolf Hitler placed restrictions on foreign exchange during the 1930s, again making it “virtually impossible to get money out of Germany” (Oschadleus 1992:35). As a result, the Lutheran missionary stations in South Africa learnt to find ways in which to fund their own mission work. After the Second World War, various German churches withdrew direct responsibility for the African missions leaving total control to the South African Lutheran synods and organizations (Oschadleus 1992:36). When viewed in this light, the rhyme becomes a reflection of the situation among the South African Germans during this time as well as in their Motherland. This object, which compliments this patriarchal society, points to the responsibility of woman in running the home. The words underneath the rhyme read “Do not forget!” This could refer to the items that urgently need to be bought, or it could refer to the message above, reminding the women to spend as little money as possible if they want to be cherished by their husbands. Thus it works to stabilise each gender in a hierarchy according to the patriarchal Lutheran German tradition as well as highlighting the value of living sparingly. The German Blackletter type used on this piece further serves to stabilise the sense of Germanness within the home.



Figure 9: Don't forget to save' shopping list. Elandskraal, 2011. Photograph by author.

A distinctly German object found in almost all Natal German homes is the *Kuckucksuhr* (Figure 10). The *Kuckucksuhr*, with its hourly cuckoo call and swinging pendulum, gives the home a distinctly German atmosphere. The carved birds, animals and plants refer to *Naturfreude* as well as being connected to the *Jagd* (hunting), which is also very much part of a South African culture. Some very well-known *Volkslieder* are about the

Kuckuck im Wald (cuckoo in the woods). These clocks originate from the *Schwarzwald* or Blackforest in southern Germany. They serve to create positive feelings of a quiet pride in being German. The *Kuckucksuhr* can be described as being a more conventional German object when compared to the wooden boards described above. The wooden boards are perceived to be more Springbock Deutsch and seem to be more familiar in a sense as they better fulfill both the South African and German identities within a larger cultural history and heritage. This could also be ascribed to the fact that many of the wooden boards, while portraying a Germanness, are handcrafted in South Africa. Drawing on Schimdt's (1922:120) description of Southern Germans, it is in originating in the south of Germany that lends the *Kuckucksuhr* to having a more cheerful and light-hearted character. The object works to create a pleasurable atmosphere of belonging within a rapidly changing world. It is no accident, then, that this symbolism is connected with a medium that marks the passing of time.



Figure 10: German wall clock, KwaZulu Natal, 2011. Photograph by the author.

Around the face of the clock in the middle is a *Waldhorn*, one of the typical brass instruments favored and desired by the Springbock Deutsche. The *Waldhorn* (forest horn) perfectly suits the German woods and hunting scene depicted by the *Kuckucksuhr*. The playing of brass instruments is in the forefront of the Springbock Deutsche culture

and is connected to the Lutheran tradition that was carried through into South Africa by the Hermannsburg missionaries.

According to Müller (2010:45), when the missionaries arrived at the natural Durban harbour in the mid-eighteen hundreds, they allegedly played old religious music on their brass instruments. Those Germans in the nearby vicinity of New Germany heard the music, recognised the familiar tune and rushed to meet the new missionaries welcoming them into their settlement in New Germany. The tradition of brass music of the Springbock Deutsche brings with it a tradition of old and familiar melodies. It was through the music that the German settlers in South Africa recognised each other and on the basis of this commonality that a trust was immediately established. So the music persuasively works through the brass instruments to indicate to others that of being of German descent with a specific religious affiliation.



Figure 11: Posaunfest blasen, Kirchdorf, 2010. Photographs by Ute Johannes.

Men of all ages join in the *Posaunfest* Brass festival ranging from young children of the age of 11 to the experienced age of 70 (Figure 11). A few ladies also join the festival, playing clarinets instead of brass instruments. Medallions are awarded every year to those having taken part in the brass choir in multiples of five years.



Figure 12: Wittenberg brass band, Mpumalanga, 1912.

As a glimpse into the history of the South African German brass band culture, Deon Böhmer (2010:18) explains that the early rehearsals of the brass bands (Figure 12), took place under difficult situations regarding commuting. This was the case of many if not all of the *Landesgemeinden* (country congregations). Many men walked ten kilometers or more after a long day's work, with their brass instrument under the arm, in order to get to the regular brass practices often being surprised by a thunderstorm. All the different kinds of brass instruments that are still played among the Springbock Deutsche are clearly visible in the old photograph above (Figure 12). Böhmer (2010:19) also mentions the fact that the German brass band from Wittenberg was invited to play at the Dingaansday in 1934. Thus, the Springbock Deutsche's ties to the Zulu are again illustrated as in Chapter Two.

To move on, the next object to be discussed involves the shape of a heart. The heart shape, which has been used among the Germans for many centuries, is a form that is commonly seen in the objects of the Natal German culture (Figure 13). Haendcke (1907:30) describes a wood carved heart-shaped pattern that was commonly found among the early German communities in Germany. Among the Springbock Deutsche, one speaks of a *herzlichkeit*, a genuine kindness that comes from the heart. The phrase "*herzlich willkommen*" is used a great deal and means to be welcomed wholeheartedly.

So the image of the heart becomes an invitation to feel at home and part of the family. Various *Volkslieder* are about the heart and love or about one's heart being in Germany, reflecting the *Sehnsucht* to that which is German. The fat, friendly heart shape refers to an approachable openness and caring nature of the Natal Germans. The phrase 'home is where the heart is' resonates with this German culture whose *Heimat* is in South Africa rather than in Germany. According to Boa and Palfreyman (2000:34), the *Heimat* refers to longings for wholeness and community. As such, the heart becomes a symbol that helps to bind the Springbock Deutsche people together as a community, giving them a place to belong and a sense of wellbeing.



Figure 13: The heart theme, Elandskraal, KwaZulu Natal, 2011. Photograph by the author.

Bauernmalerei (farm or peasant art) as seen on the hearts in the image on the right of Figure 13, is a form of folk art that originated in Bavaria Germany, Austrian Alps and the Swiss Apenzell (Artzan 2011). *Lebkuchenherzen* (Figure 13) are sold at South African German Bazaars as noted in Chapter Two. The heart is used repeatedly at the Elandskraal bazaar as for example on the aprons worn by the Natal German community hosting the event. The colour combination of green and red seems to be distinctly German. Arguably, the green may represent nature and forests whereas the red becomes representative as life-blood. This invokes the image of hunting in German forests for deer. According to various *Volkslieder*, green refers to the career as *Jäger* (hunter); whereas the redness of a lovely maiden's lips (*rote lippen*) connected to a red heart and love are often heard and sang about (Andersen 1955). The colours may also signify a notion of *Blut und Boden*, blood and earth, in the sense that a farmer and his soil – or man and nature – are connected in an integral way, each being dependant on the other for its existence (Brüggemeier, Cioc & Zeller 2005:206).³¹ This perspective of

³¹ Nazi propoganda distorted the meaning of *Blut und Boden* as well as the meaning of the lives of the German peasant farmers to fulfill Nazi ideological ends (Tubach & Tubach 2011:110).

the balance between nature and man is influenced by the antirationalist Romanticism of the early nineteenth century (Brüggemeier, Cioc & Zeller 2005:206).



Figure 14: Tirolerhut, Elandskraal, KwaZulu Natal, 2011. Photograph by the author.

While on the topic of the *Jäger* in the woods, it would be suitable to introduce the *Tirolerhut* (Figure 14), which is present in many Springbock Deutsche homes. The *Tirolerhut* has a *Volkslied* dedicated to it, and is worn on numerous German occasions such as the Elandskraal bazaar and *Jugendtag*. Some Springbock Deutsche wear the hat to church on Sundays connecting secular German culture with the Lutheran tradition.



Figure 15: Jugendtag Reigen, KwaZulu Natal, 2011. Photograph by Heike Reinstorf.

The *Jugentag* games are opened each year by the *Reigen* dance (Figure 15). This is a circular dance that originates in the *Schwarzwald* from the mid fifteenth century (Mullally 2011:36, Strohm 2001:175). The different coloured *Tracht* (traditional dress) worn by the South African Germans represents the regional congregation that they belong to. The dancers link arms or dance hand in hand twisting, twirling and weaving among each other in a circular, chain-like fashion. This is done to the beat of traditional German music. The dance of the ladies and men holding hands represents the courtship between the Springbock Deutsche *Jugend*.

Events such as these are intended to create the opportunity for Springbock Deutsche to meet and build relationships with each other. Being like-minded people, they accompany and support each other through their life's journeys. Individuals tend to maintain contact with friends of their youth throughout the years and support each other by maintaining their worldview towards marriage and raising children. They usually still attend the *Jugendtag* as spectators after they are married with their children in tow. In this way, the environments of *Jugendtag*, as well as *Possaunfest* and *Sängerfest* become familiar to children as they grow up and so these events seem as a natural a part of life. These events become an opportunity to actively express the Springbock Deutsche *Heimat* which is described by Boa and Plafreyman (2000:44) as being the social space and physical place of childhood in the life of an individual in addition to suggesting rural roots. This becomes an example of Gallagher, Martin and Ma's (2011:31) explanation of Eudaimonia, which according to them is the experience of enriching activities and vitality within groups of people. They also serve to create a common cultural context in order to sustain a common worldview. However, as intimated throughout this study, sustaining a common worldview does not mean that new objects with rhetorical significance can not be introduced. It is my own offering of such an object, an illustrated picturebook, that this study now briefly discusses.

Chapter Five:

5.1 The picturebook narrative as stabilising force

The accompanying picturebook is a narrative that references the history, festivals, objects and traditions of the Springbock Deutsche community that has helped to stabilise the German Lutheran tradition in South Africa until the present time. The purpose of the picture book is to contribute towards the very culture that inspired its creation and to work towards “the emergence and integration of local aesthetics” among the Springbock Deutsche (Blankenship 2005:25). The children’s books that the Springbock Deutsche children are exposed to are all imported from Germany.³² Thus, the focus remains on external influences for the affirmation of a cultural identity. In addition, a European German aesthetic is learned through these books and one may therefore argue that local Springbock Deutsche picturebooks may be necessary in order to instill a sense of belonging among the German children in a South African context. One may argue that it is precisely because there is a flow of cultural objects directly from Germany that the Germanness of the Springbock Deutsche is sustained. However, it can also be contended that the South African landscape that the Springbock Deutsche reside in needs to be reaffirmed.

That said, the twenty-first century Germany has discarded many traditions that have still continued among the Springbock Deutsche until now. Therefore, to an extent, the prewar Germany that is imagined as the *Heimat* by the Springbock Deutsche no longer exists in Germany. Instead, their *Heimat* has been recreated through various objects, festivals and gatherings in a South African setting. Typical activities and games of young German-speaking children in South Africa differ considerably from the experiences and upbringings of those in Germany. One factor that influences this is the role that the weather plays. In South Africa rain is appreciated and enjoyed while hot Summer

³² Books include *Struwelpeter* (1845) by Heinrich Hoffman and *Die Struweliese* (1950) by Charly Greifoner; the *Pixibücher* range (est 1954) with various authors published by the Carlsen Verlag; *Max und Moritz* (1865) by Wilhelm Busch; *Grimms Märchen* (1812) especially *Tischlein deck dich!*, *Frau Holle*, *Rotkäppchen*, *Aschenputtel*, *Schneewittchen*, *Der Wolf und die sieben jungen Geisslein*, *Hänsel und Gretel* and *Von dem Fischer und seine Frau* among other tales. Books illustrated by Swedish Elsa Beskow (1974 – 1953), Else Wenz-Viëtor (1882 – 1973), Sibylle Von Olfers (1881 – 1916), Ernst Kutzer (1880 – 1965) as well as Fritz Baumgarten (1883 – 1966) are very common on the South African German bookshelf. Also included in the list of books would be a German song and rhyme book with familiar German rhymes and songs such as *Backe, backe Kuchen* and *Eine kleine Dickmadam*.

Christmases are spent outdoors. Conversely, rainy weather in Germany is considered to be miserable weather and Christmas is associated with staying indoors and keeping warm.

Another factor contributing to the difference in upbringing of Springbock Deutsche children is the multiculturalism with which they are surrounded on a daily basis that affects their worldview. One may argue that in order to sustain the unique dynamics of a German culture in South Africa, picturebooks should reflect the German cultural values, faith, language, heritage and traditions as rooted in South Africa. According to Boa and Palfreyman (2000:44), the German *Heimat* is not limited geographically, but is also affected by time. That is, the *Sehnsucht* to one's sense of *Heimat* may vary, being affected by cyclic time, day, night and seasonal changes. It can be affected by one's personal life-time phases or by epochal time which is shaped by historical change (Boa & Palfreyman 2000:44). Thus, the seasons and climate of South Africa and the Lutheran Missionary heritage of the Springbock Deutsche change their *Sehnsucht* and sense of *Heimat* when compared to that of the European Germans.

According to Blankenship (2005:24), design can be an active force in sustaining local culture by reflecting and representing the specific people. Design can then be dispersed to all local areas and peoples instead of assuming that its relevance is bound to Western globalisation. It may be suggested that through the German imported books and objects the more globalised Germany may be infiltrating into the Springbock Deutsche culture whose traditional mores and beliefs rather stem from the prewar Germany. Of course, there are many other influences that work to progressively westernise any culture, but while the Springbock Deutsche culture thinks that it is being sustained through importing 'genuine' German objects from Germany, Germany is far removed from the *Heimat* they feel connected to. Blankenship (2005:25) speaks of not only opposing the effects of globalisation, but of creating alternatives to it that are still relevant today. She points out that although there are aspects of western-style capitalism to be envied and enjoyed, enjoyment should ideally not be at the expense of traditions and folklore that are based on a rich heritage (Blankenship 2005:26).

Since a culture is very complex, flexible and difficult to pin-down, it may be impossible to represent its actual essence. However a holistic understanding may be achieved in the

viewer by representing even only certain facets of a culture. The cultural community, recognising the symbolism in these facets, may be able to fill in the gaps that can not be visually presented by the use of their common cultural knowledge and context. Thus, through “correlating selected graphic devices”, design can bind those things that are unseen to the visuals, bringing together what is absent with what is present on the basis of some common ground (Ehshes1989:192). Kenney (2002:58) explains that images “work” if the creator and audience share cultural symbols. Kenney (2002:66) asserts that humans assign meaning to stimuli and that this meaning influences their behavior. This is further elaborated in the study of visual rhetoric, which considers how people use symbols where there is a congruency of values to change perceptions or reinforce and channel their beliefs. It also contemplates how actions may be initiated and maintained (Kenney 2002:66; Gallagher, Martin & Ma 2011:31). Therefore, a familiar visual stimulus through narrative, which connects the visual to that which is unseen, can persuade people in their consequent actions and beliefs.

Narrative becomes an integral part of persuasion and rhetoric. According to Altman (2008:1), narrative meaning exists independently from the media that gives it concrete form, but in many cases it needs to be associated to or represented by something visual in order to be remembered. A simple example being that a concept, thought or memory might in time be forgotten if it is not immediately transcribed into something visual that one can again be reminded by. By knowing what graphic devices to correlate, the designer may form something that by possible associations through narrative may connect memories and meanings. In order to be able to do this, the designer needs to have the common ground of a shared cultural knowledge with his or her audience. In this way then the designer can create in his or her work that which is collectively true and relevant in the audience’s views. According to Storey (2003:82), identity is formed through both individual and collective memories that work together to create a perceived truth of the past. Therefore, the designer or narrator can not claim to be revealing actual truths as may actually have happened, but is instead revealing his or her own truth of what has been experienced (Riessman 1994:22). If this experience can be affirmed and shared by others through the same worldview, then the message can collectively be perceived as being true. According to Storey (2004:83), ‘facts’ by themselves do not signify, but it is in the way these ‘facts’ are interpreted and articulated that determines their meaning in the present. He states that meaning is not fixed in the past but is

constantly appropriated into the present (Storey 2004:83). This again links to Blankenship (2005:24) who accentuates the importance of design in being able to influence the perceived relevance of cultural identities in the present.

Design is able to attach to the visual an indication of that which is absent. Storey (2003:86) contends that “the roots of our identities are both present and absent, existing both inside our heads and outside in culture”. The absent may refer to the *Sehnsucht*, *Heimat* and evasive memories that seem forever intangible, whereas that which is tangible may be a reflection of a culture organising its heritage to be applicable in their current lives. Thus through narrative images like those in a picturebook, the memories and histories that may have been forgotten by individuals may be brought back into presence. According to Benedetto Croce, where there is no narrative, a sense of history is easily lost (in Altman 2008:1). Conversely, one may say that where there are no visuals, which are the expressions of a particular narrative, history is just as easily lost. The absence of images allows for the collective memory of history to fade. Even so, narratives concretised in images may not be representing the ultimate truth of what really happened, as everyone perceives the truth in a different way.

So designs or picturebooks created by Springbock Deutsche designers for the South African German community that reflect some sense of everyday living may be more reaffirming than globally inspired designs. Their shared experiences of similar upbringings, cultural knowledge and beliefs create a unified worldview. This results in familiar experiences being narrated through a selection of symbols in objects, whose narrative-aided meanings are perceived to be true. In other words, narrative is used to code and decode messages and only if there is a common ground between the coder and the decoder, regarding the specificity of those messages, does the meaning stay the same.

In the accompanying picturebook the narrative centres around a conversation between a Springbock Deutsche grandmother and her granddaughter in a rural farm setting. It represents the knowledge of the older generation being passed on to the younger generation for the purpose of preserving the culture. The grandmother also represents anyone who when reading the picturebook is familiar with the history of the culture and identifies with the grandmother’s cultural knowledge, whereas the granddaughter’s

character may reflect those who have been ignorant to the cultural knowledge surrounding them. This picturebook does not by any means claim to encompass the gross heritage with its signifiers and meanings as they are embedded in the fluid ever-moving Springbock Deutsche culture. After all, this study is interpretive and done from my point of view as part of the Springbock Deutsche community. Instead, its purpose is simply to contribute in a small way through design, illustration and narrative, to the rhetoric of stability already present in this culture.



Figure 16: Heidel Dedekind, Grandmother with broken vase, 2011. Watercolour and ink on paper.

In the accompanying narrative, which uses images and text in order to communicate, the Springbock Deutsche grandmother breaks an old vase and is saddened by this. When her granddaughter asks her why she does not simply replace it, the grandmother begins to explain to her why the vase is important to her and what it means and reminds her of.



Figure 17: Heidel Dedekind, Girl with wooden inscribed board, 2011. Watercolour and ink on paper.

The story carries on from there with the grandmother narrating the history of their identity, where they come from and why their forefathers came to South Africa. Together with touching on some Springbock Deutsch objects such as the wooden boards (Figure 14) and *Kuckucksuhr* (Figure 15) that are described above, the picturebook continues to visually narrate some important annual events such as Christmas and Easter that are also central events in the calendar of the Natal Germans. A number of the elements discussed in this research are also brought into the story. In the end, the picturebook serves to contribute to the rhetoric of stability by providing a celebration of the rich meanings found in a unique culture. Now, having addressed each of the objectives stated in Chapter One, I can now conclude with a summary of the findings of this research.



Figure 18: Heidel Dedekind, The Kuckucksuhr story, 2011. Watercolour and ink on paper.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1. Brief summary of chapters

In this study, it becomes clear that through narrative and communal memory a visual rhetoric of stability contributes to a sense of a cultural identity and belonging. An ethnic cultural identity needs its history and heritage to be contextualised in order to inspire reasons to maintain a culture. The Springbock Deutsche communities take great pride in their ancestral “heroic period” and have carried this narrative of their roots or routes of *Deutschstämmigkeit* into what constitutes their cultural identity today. Gerhard Mare (1992) suggests that “an ethnic identity is similar to a story, a way of dealing with the present through a sense of identity rooted in the past” (in de Kadt 2000:72). Therefore, this study commenced with an overview of the history of the Springbock Deutsche and Natal Germans in Chapter Two in order to be able to contextualise, deal with and understand the influences that have sustained the culture until today. What has also been unveiled is the prominence of the religious aspect of this culture that is owed to the early German missionaries. Ironically, this rootedness in the Lutheran church has also become part of that which threatens their existence. The elements of language, values, traditions, customs and poetry are heavily reliant upon (*abhängig*) religion that all together constitute the Springbock Deutsche *Volksgeist* (Friese 2001:68).

The ‘legs’ of Germanness or elements that constitute the *Volksgeist* of the unique Springbock Deutsche have been covered in Chapter Two. The various factors that cause tension or threaten the Germanness in all areas where it is still seen and heard namely the home, church and schools were also discussed. The Germanness visible in the homes is being replaced by a hyperindividualism that is universally understood and approved of as being ‘trendy’. The German *Muttersprache* spoken in the home is being threatened by the need to accommodate other-speaking family members owing to the intermarriage with other cultures, in part pushed by the shrinking gene pool of the Lutheran Springbock Deutsche community. A complex tension exists between the responsibility of the Lutheran congregations to reach out in an act following the example by their forefathers and the desire to protect the boundaries that ensure a sense of

belonging and identity. The reality of land claims, farm murders and lack of support for farmers has become a threat to the existence of rural Springbock Deutsche farming communities, which are rapidly diminishing as more Natal Germans either move to the cities to find work or emigrate.

However, apart from the factors that threaten the Natal German culture, the discussion of the make up of Germanness helps to shed light on the significance of several of the common German artifacts. These elements become indicators for possible visual symbols that can help a designer to use visual rhetoric in a way that considers culture in a way that is sensitive and accountable to that culture. By introducing these symbols into their work, a designer can feed a sense of ongoing stability of the Springbock Deutsche community that is relevant in a postmodern society. In other words, with reference to the roots of this culture, design can create objects that still inspire the same values on which this Germanness is based in a way that moves the culture forward in response to the changing environment instead of clinging to the rigid Germanness of a slowly fading tradition.

Arguably, the Springbock Deutsche do have to move forward in some way. But since there is little identification or solidarity with Germany as it is today, there is no need for the Springbock Deutsche culture to follow in the footsteps of contemporary Germany. Instead, the Springbock Deutsche have the opportunity to keep their perceivably untainted heritage intact, being hardly affected by criticisms of German nationalism owed to Nazism. The communal memory of the *Vaterland*, which is evident in the objects explored above, has been enough to inspire and sustain the stability of the Springbock Deutsche culture until now. However, owing to the challenges this culture is now facing, it may be necessary to adjust and reapply the Germanness to the current changes in their environment in order to maintain their rhetoric of stability. Van Toorn's (2010:46) plea to designers is "not to lose contact with social reality" and to maintain an open eye and a critical mind for the circumstances in which they produce and the effect their work has on its recipients.

According to Buchanan (1985), objects and all things visible work to persuade and influence identities which together form cultural communities. Designers therefore influence audiences in society through their work which moves "deeply into the domain

of rhetoric” (Buchanan 1985:4). Chapter Three deals with interpreting classical rhetoric in a way that it may be applied to the visual. This gives the designer a further tool for influencing the path taken by a culture. Typically, visual rhetorical theory affects the understanding of the artifact, but the artifact does little to affect the nature of theory (Foss 2005:148). However, what an artifact can and does affect is the society that surrounds it. This becomes very valuable when faced with the realities of fading traditions and cultural genocide. Design, then, through the use of visual rhetoric and narrative, can create a sense of belonging and wellbeing within communities.

The links to an 1800 Germany and heritage of the Springbock Deutsche communities become clear through the narrative and visual rhetoric in the designed objects discussed in Chapter Four. The silent voices of the objects communicate on the owner’s behalf, so to speak. A community is created between individuals through the objects they own and through which they communicate. These objects become sites of communal memory and narrative that instill a common purpose within the community. They instill a *Sehnsucht* and an endless desire to continue the character traits and the purpose of the ancestors. They present a way forward because they present the past. These “mnemonic artifacts” bring the past into the context of the present, where they can remain meaningful (Storey 2004:84). They bring stability to the relationship between rootedness and change. The objects illustrate their current appreciation and worth that they place on their *Deutschstämmigkeit* which motivate them to uphold their status quo. Thus, the visual rhetoric in these objects has continually contributed to the stability and security of the descendents of those first German missionaries.

It is in the visual therefore that one can feel reflected and “hear familiar voices” (Buchanan 1985). According to Helmers and Hill (2004:1), one learns who one is as an individual and public citizen largely by seeing oneself reflected in images. In other words the possibility of who we can become lies in seeing ourselves reflected in and transported into images. Chapter Five discusses the picturebook project, which interprets the information uncovered within this research and has synthesised a visual narrative, using design, illustration and narrative. The visual format representing the ‘heroic period’ and Germanness found in the South African communities makes this information easier and faster to comprehend and access than scattered archival

material. This picturebook thus contributes in a small way to the rhetoric of stability in the Springbock Deutsche culture.

6.2. Contribution of study and suggestions for further research

Blankenship (2005:26) voices her concern for the motifs of cultures being used by design in a way that is ignorant of their significance resulting in hollow repetition that is superficial. This study demonstrates how a greater understanding of the significance of the visual rhetoric of a culture's various motifs can be gained by researching the history and what constitutes the identity of the specific culture through visual ethnography and interviews. The knowledge of origin of various motifs can help to clarify and contextualise their significance and inform the suitable application of them to various design constructs. This background knowledge of the end-user's or target audience's cultural worldview may also help to some extent bridge the gap between designer and audience (Carrol 2002:11). Awareness of the problems in social reality and of the affect the designer's work may have in it may be better recognised (Van Toorn 2010:46). Thus, this study serves to demonstrate the responsibility of designers and their ability through cultural knowledge to challenge the facelessness of some current design trends and dilution of culture. It assumes that it is possible for design to serve more than just economic, consumerist aims.

According to my literature review, there are very few sources that cover the particularities and physical appearance of the German culture in South Africa with mission or cotton farming origin. De Kadt (2002:158) expresses the urgency with which this particular culture needs to be researched, especially since it is threatened by a multitude of factors. Thus, this study serves to record and document the face of this culture as it is today for posterity. It also raises some awareness regarding how this particular Springbock Deutsche culture is quite different from the culture in contemporary Germany from a design perspective. It highlights the importance of one's culture and community and suggests an interest into the roots of other minority cultures. In order to maintain a rich as possible cultural diversity in South Africa and a sense of belonging for many, minority cultures need to be maintained and celebrated in a meaningful way that is relevant in today's society.

Galangher, Martin and Ma (2001:32) ask how objects create a sense of unity between individuals within a community. According to Storey (2004:85) collective memories are embodied in “mnemonic artifacts” or “sites of memory” which include anything where a memory or collective memory can become anchored. The objects and events explained above in chapter seven become “sites of memory” for the Natal German culture. From my experience, when I walk into a home and see these types of objects, a feeling of familiarity is instilled within me so that a connection and trust is formed with the owners of the objects on the basis of commonality. Through communal memory and narrative, the visual rhetoric of objects works to maintain a specific worldview and sense of identity.

Owing to the limited time-frame and distance between me and the community being researched some conversational interviews were conducted as well as some email correspondences. However, a suggestion for future research of this culture would be to get insights in the form of questionnaires from the Natal Germans still living on their farms compared to Natal Germans that have moved to the urban areas. A study could also be conducted surveying the areas in the everyday lives of the people of this culture and identify where design could play an active role in maintaining the relevance of their Germanness well into the future. Product and furniture design could be inspired and informed by research into the roots of culture in order to provide routes on which a particular culture such as this one can move forward. It has been suggested that stability does not mean stagnation. It is possible, as suggested by my own picturebook, to present something new without merely trying to replicate historical artifacts.

The Springbock Deutsche culture may be explored by comparing its German attributes to those which are found in the old traditional German children’s books that most Springbock Deutsche homes possess. These German childrens’ books may have played a role in the upkeep of the sense of German identity that has been prevalent among these people until now, many of whom have never been to Germany in their lives.

6.3 Concluding remarks

Throughout this study it is clear that culture is the “making and communication of meanings in contexts” (Storey 2004:111), and also that various artifacts, objects and events speak of specific cultures and can influence others through visual rhetoric devices. Storey (2004:112) asserts that commodities do not equal culture. This study realises that commodities do not by themselves feign to encompass the complexities of culture, but they most certainly reflect characteristics, values and history of cultural communities and have the ability to communicate through their visual rhetoric. In other words, artifacts, as signposts of memory, hold many connotations and possible interpretations that can become powerful persuasive tools among peoples in societies. Artifacts contribute to sustaining worldviews, togetherness and wellbeing.

Society moves and is constantly adapting to environmental, political and technological factors, and it would only make sense that cultures can not be expected to remain as they were centuries ago. However it is important to integrate culture into (post)modern life in a way that it is relevant and helpful to individual wellbeing. Tradition and cultural mores that seemed ordinary can now be recognised as extraordinary when considering the pressures of globalisation. According to Storey (2004:115) the progression of a global sameness provokes the “articulation of difference”. Being aware of diminishing cultural differences, designers have the ability to create in a way that recognises respects and intensifies individual cultural differences through their work. According to Blankenship (2005:24), inadequate and crude cultural interpretive frameworks that contribute to the furthering of globalisation can be addressed by designers with more helpful solutions and frameworks that allow for individual cultures to be represented more accurately.

In a multicultural South African society, it becomes important that individuals are not only affirmed in their own cultural ‘routes’ and ‘roots’, but there needs to be a more detailed understanding of other cultures as well. Instead of creating mish-mash designs that try to reflect all South African cultures at once, it would be more suitable to create culture-specific designs where possible that become mirrors for some and windows for others. According to Huber-Kriegler, Lazar and Strange (2003:9), it is important that one understands the cultures that interlock and surround one’s own culture and the

relationships that arise; that “you should first look in the mirror at your own culture, and then out of the window at other cultures you are interested in or want to interact with”.

Designers then, by first researching their own and surrounding cultures intimately can proceed to work in the interest of cultural perseverance and understanding between different cultures by creating ‘window’ designs. This can be done by using cultural stylistic devices in a rhetorical manner through narrative to persuade and communicate to others of a specific cultural lifestyle. In this way, the unique heritages of minority cultures such as the Natal German may continue to envelope individuals into a place of identity and belonging and effectively contribute to the rich cultural tapestry in South Africa.

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