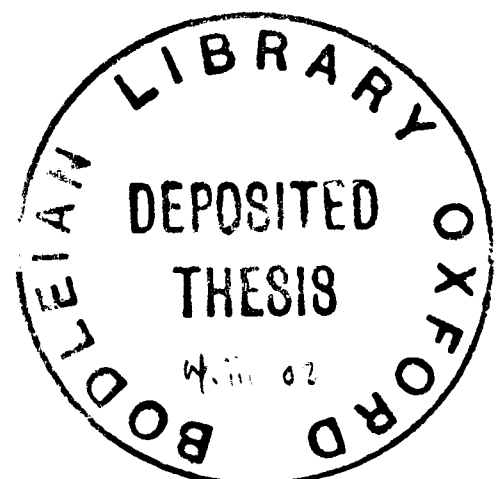

A 'Ware Afrikaner' – an examination of the role of Eugène Marais (1871-1936) in the making of Afrikaner identity.

Sandra Scott Swart
Magdalen College
Hillary, 2001

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Modern History, University of Oxford, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Supervised by Dr Stanley Trapido.

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This thesis investigates the creation of Afrikaner identity, more particularly the role of an individual in the shaping of public consciousness, in order to help comprehend how 'Afrikaner' identity was propagated. The focus is on Eugène Marais's career from 1890 to 1936, a period in which the Afrikaner language was standardised and changing socio-economic forces produced the conditions under which class and regional fragmentation yielded to pan-South African Afrikaner identity. This thesis does not retell the story of Marais's life. Neither does it give an overview of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism. Instead, it lies between these two poles. Marais represents two important foci of research: those who assisted in the self-conscious construction of Afrikanerdom and those who came to be seen as *ware Afrikaners* (true Afrikaners) and *volkshelde* (heroes of the people). This thesis tells a story woven from two contrapuntal narratives. The first speaks of an individual's life and work, the second, of a wider context of culture-brokers and the process of creating ethnic consciousness. The initial two chapters trace the workings of Afrikaner identity from the pre-South African War interaction between politics and those coming increasingly to define themselves as Afrikaners, to the interplay of ethnicity and language within the divided cultural elite. The discussion then turns to the use of popular science by this elite, in the making and propagation of an Afrikaner identity. The following two chapters consider the interaction of the Afrikaner with other groups, exploring cultural osmosis between ethnic communities and the image of another race in Afrikaans literature. Finally, the myth-making of the Afrikaner, particularly the creation of a *volksheld*, is considered, to examine the interplay of ethnicity, politics and memory.

Abstract

This thesis investigates the role of an individual in shaping public consciousness of ‘Afrikaner’ identity. The focus is on the career of Eugène Marais from 1890 to 1936, a period in changing socio-economic forces produced the conditions under which class and regional fragmentation yielded to pan-South African Afrikaner identity. This thesis does not retell the story of Marais’s life. Neither does it give an overview of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism. Instead, it lies between these two poles. Marais represents two important foci of research: those who assisted in the self-conscious construction of Afrikanerdom and those who came to be seen as *ware Afrikaners* (true Afrikaners) and *volkshelde* (heroes of the people). This thesis tells a story woven from two contrapuntal narratives. The first speaks of an individual’s life and work, the second, of a wider context of culture-brokers and the process of creating ethnic consciousness.

In times of transformation and redefinition, communities re-evaluate their cultural lynchpins, the figures and events that ‘define’ them. ‘Heroes’ and their social meanings receive re-appraisal.¹ It is often through a society’s heroes – they way in which they are imagined or constructed, who constructs them, how their significance changes over time – that an historian may reach an understanding of the society itself.² In this dissertation the Afrikaner icon, Eugène Marais, acts as such a lens to

¹ See, for example, Sidney Hook, *The hero in history, a study in limitation and possibility* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995) and Dixon Wecter, *The hero in America: a chronicle of hero-worship* (New York: Scribner, 1941, 1972).

facilitate our broader understanding of the changing nature of Afrikaner identity. This investigation of the creation of Afrikaner identity, more particularly Marais's role in the shaping of identity from c.1891 to 1936, is undertaken in order to help comprehend how and why an 'Afrikaner' identity was propagated. Marais is discussed as window into broader developments: his iconic status makes him an interesting – as a 'ware' or 'true' Afrikaner he both represents and was made to represent things about Afrikaner identity that are difficult to analyse in other ways. Secondly, his writing was eagerly solicited and distributed widely by Afrikaner intellectuals, and as a result the content and context of his work provide insights into the nature of the identity the intellectuals sought to promote. As part of the publishing establishment, albeit often at its periphery, he offers a window into the material structure and functioning of the cultural elite. The intra-movement dissension, often on a personal level, affords a more nuanced picture of, for example, the *Taalstryd*. Fourthly, Marais has survived as an icon for the seven decades following his death; the analysis of the changing nature of his social meaning offers insights in changing self-perception by both the cultural elite and the Afrikaner public.

Marais was born on a farm near Pretoria, on 9 July 1871. After a childhood in which he was moved between the Cape and the Orange Free State, he moved to the Transvaal and became a journalist. In 1891, after he and J. Roos purchased *Land en Volk*, he began supporting the campaign of General P.J. Joubert against President S.J.P. Kruger. In 1892, Roos left for the Cape, selling Marais his share in *Land en Volk*. Marais began to dabble in drugs, particularly morphine. In 1894, he married

² See, for example, Prys Morgan, 'From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period' in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*, p.85-86 and David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the

Aletta Beyers, who died in 1895 after giving birth to their son. In despair, Marais became increasingly addicted to morphine. In December of 1896, he transferred editorship of *Land en Volk* to J.Y. O'Brien and left for England to study law. At the outbreak of the South African War, he was placed on parole in London.³ In 1902 he received permission to leave the country and managed to join an expedition led by Dr C. Schultz, that was intent on taking arms, explosives and medicine to Beyers's commando via Moçambique. Marais was still incapacitated by malaria in Lourenço Marques, when he heard of the Treaty of Vereeniging. On his return to Pretoria, Marais re-opened *Land en Volk*, with Gustav Preller as editor. Marais assumed editorial control once again when Preller joined the staff of *De Volksstem*. With waning interest in *Land en Volk* after Preller's departure, Marais relinquished it in 1906, practising briefly as an advocate in Pretoria and Johannesburg, before leaving for the Waterberg, where he acted as Resident Justice of the Peace, prospected and practised medicine. In the Doringhoek mountains he studied a troop of baboons for three years, about which he published in the Afrikaans press and magazines. After an attack of fever, he returned to Pretoria, practising as an advocate when his health permitted. During the subsequent years he published widely in *Die Brandwag*, *Die Boerevrou*, *De Volksstem*, usually poems, critiques, popular science and historical stories. From 1921, he practised law in Erasmus for two years before relocating to Heidelberg in the Transvaal for four years. While at Heidelberg, Marais worked on notes he had made on white ants (termites) while in the Waterberg and published a series of articles on them in *Die Burger* from 1923 and *Die Huisgenoot* from 1925. There was a scandal when Marais accused the Nobel Prize winning Belgian author

'Invention of Tradition', c.1820-1977' in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*, p.134.

³ For details of his London activities, see E.N. Marais, 'London Diary', Sotheby Collection.

Maurice Maeterlinck of plagiarism. Maeterlinck was accused of having used Marais's concept of the 'organic unity' of the termitary in his 1926 book *La Vie des Termites* (*The Life of the White Ant*). Marais promoted his side of the story through the South African press and attempted an international lawsuit, but this was to prove financially impossible and the case was not pursued. In 1927, Marais was offered a job by Preller on *Ons Vaderland*, writing numerous short stories and popular science articles. In 1936, when Preller retired from *Die Vaderland*, Marais accompanied the Preller family. After becoming increasingly depressed, he killed himself on 29 March 1936.

* * *

The life and writing of Eugène Marais has been used as a window onto a wider vista and concentrating on him provides a unifying theme and overall coherence for the dissertation. The underlying theme of each chapter is Afrikaner identity: what it means to be an Afrikaner over time, and how the 'propaganda machine', created by the intellectual elite, disseminated information. A discussion of the role of Marais provides an insight into the understanding of conflicting personal loyalties and regional differences on a more confined, and subsequently more detailed, level. This thesis seeks not the overall picture, but the complexity of individuals' contributions; not the linear success story, but also the disappointments, frustrations, misdirections and dead-ends. For this reason, the methodological device of focussing on the individual, rather than the prevailing analysis of groups, is adopted.

There are large lacunae in the study of Marais. His potential as a window into understanding Afrikaner identity has been both neglected and misrepresented. There

has been no critical revisionist look at his role, and there has been almost solely biographical interest and attention to his poetry in the literature. There has been no analysis of his pre-Kruger journalism and no political context given to his post-war writing. A historical context of his scientific writing has never been provided. Little use has been made of potentially valuable sources.

At several key moments in the past century, a quest to build an Afrikaner nation has clouded perceptions of Marais. He has been re-imagined by contemporary Afrikaner nationalist culture-brokers and engineered for socio-political ends to fit an image of a 'good Afrikaner'. This image has come to predominate in the historiography and in popular understandings of the South African past. In more general works Marais's role is simplified to the point of crudity. The historiographical model of Marais has not been reviewed. The area warrants re-investigation for a number of reasons. It is significant that most published work on Marais post-dates 1936. The socio-political context that produced the bulk of work was therefore written in the wake of his death, in the immediate and emotional Great Trek centenary period, which used him as a form of political mobilisation for the Nationalist movement. Afrikaner historiography has remained rooted, from that era, in nationalist or neo-nationalist frameworks, infused with notions of 'unity', 'ethnicity', 'great leaders' and the 'triumph of Afrikanerdom'. These ideas are incompatible with the tenets of modern social history with its emphasis on class conflict and 'history from below' espoused more recently by the Revisionist school.⁴ There has been little attempt, however, by revisionist writers to tackle Afrikaner heroes and no revisionist interpretation of Marais's influence exists.

This dissertation is not an attempt to replace biographical works. Instead, a story is woven from two contrapuntal narratives. The first speaks of an individual's life and work, the second, of a wider context of culture-brokers and the process of creating ethnic consciousness. The thesis is organised thematically, around different questions of importance to Afrikaner identity, the theoretical side of which and literature review is addressed in Chapter One. At the same time the thesis is roughly chronological, following the course of Marais's life, from Chapters Two to Six, and tracing his image through successive decades in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Two, ' 'An irritating little stone in Kruger's shoe' – Eugène Marais's role in the Progressive Press in the South African Republic, 1891-1896', discusses Marais's controversial role in the pre-war South African Republic (ZAR). It is an analysis of his role in shaping public opinion on the ZAR political situation, through his editorial role in *Land en Volk*. The means by which he swayed opinion towards the faction that opposed Paul Kruger, and that was beginning to be labelled the 'Progressive' camp, are considered. The nature of Transvaal 'Progressivism' has itself received incomplete historiographical critique, it is often still written of as a concerted movement and its self-baptism as the 'Progressive' innovative sector of ZAR society is widely accepted.⁵ This is a methodological mistake that clouds the real nature of the movement, and which will be considered in this chapter, through a discussion of the Progressive movement's newspaper, which is particularly overdue.

⁴ Albert Grundlingh, 'Sosiale Geskiedenis en die Dilemma in Afrikanergeskiedskrywing', *South African Historical Journal*, 19 (1987) p.31.

⁵ C.T. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition to Kruger, 1890-1895* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1970).

Ethnic political unity has traditionally assured the Afrikaner political hegemony – hence the mystical *volkseenheid* (national unity), but the record shows not unity but factionalism. Studying Marais's role in the Language Movement in Chapter Three, 'An aspect of the roles of Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller in the Second Language Movement', helps facilitate an understanding of the historically contingent nature of identity and heterodoxy of opinion, which has bearing on contemporary issues. Chapter Three is a contribution to the overthrow of the image of the *taalstryd* as an absolute success story and the natural outcome of an organic language. Conventional portrayals of the *taalstryd* as a cultural victory cloaks both the complex struggle, characterised by dissension, and the highly constructed nature of the language. Even revisionists tacitly accept that the struggle ultimately delivered what the *taalstryders* desired. Where hostility to the *taalstryders*' objectives does receive limited attention, it refers to outside opposition from English-speakers in state positions and commerce, and a few figures in church circles, rather than any intra-movement dissidence. A discussion of the roles of Marais and Preller provides a window into the understanding of conflicting individual loyalties and regional feuds, particularly between the Cape and the Transvaal.

Generally, the study of nationalism within the context of the history of science has received only limited attention, suffering perhaps because of the presupposition of the universalism of science. This ethos holds that science is supranational because of the scientific method, science is considered to be supracultural, untrammelled by the conflicts of values to which all other expressions of culture are subjected. Chapter Four, 'The Ant of the White Soul: popular natural history and the politics of Afrikaner

identity, with particular reference to the entomological writings of Eugène Marais' addresses the role of Marais's works of popular science. Marais infused scientific knowledge with cultural values; writing natural history that would make the citizenry identify with and feel proud of their scientists and assert their independence from the metropole.

Chapter Five, '“Bushveld Magic’ and ‘Miracle Doctors’ – a discussion of Eugène Marais's and C. Louis Leipoldt's work based on their experiences in the Waterberg, c.1906-1917', challenges a common conception of Afrikaner identity. The socio-intellectual life of the Afrikaner, particularly in the rural communities, has been described predominately in terms of the inflexible Calvinism of their beliefs. Such accounts, chiefly from the Afrikaner Nationalist and Liberal historiographical traditions, contend that this faith was unadulterated and narrowly parochial respectively. Conventional wisdom has depicted Afrikaans rural communities as stagnant backwaters of segregation and bigotry in dour contrast to the progressive towns. This chapter contributes to the challenge to this historiographical construction of the rural socio-intellectual world of the Afrikaner. This is accomplished through an exploration of the Bushveld Boer living in the eastern and northern Transvaal, through the work of Marais and Christiaan Frederick Louis Leipoldt (1880-1947). Firstly, the very different outlooks of Marais and Leipoldt are contrasted in order to show the heterogeneity of Afrikaner experience and mind-set, to contest further the monolithic construction. Secondly, we consider the popular departure from a European *zeitgeist* rooted in Calvinist theology, towards an interest in African healing practices and public interest in the paranormal and European trends in psychology. This is in order to challenge the notion that there was 'in the Transvaal Boer a strong

suspicion of all novelty' and to demonstrate that the image of intellectual isolation has been exaggerated.⁶ This is of historiographical significance because, as Adam and Giliomee have shown, one of the most repeated explanations of the rise of Apartheid 'stresses the primitive Calvinism of backward Boers who, in an isolated corner of the world, missed the Enlightenment by being exposed only to the Old Testament rather than Voltaire.'⁷

Chapter Six, 'The Wandering Tales' – an exploration of the mythic Bushmen in popular Afrikaans literature, with particular reference to the *Dwaalstories* of Eugène Marais', concerns the prose-poems written by Marais, which he claimed to have heard from a travelling Bushman. The poems have had enduring success since their publication in 1921 in a prominent Afrikaans cultural magazine. Debate over the poems has previously been over their 'authenticity' (as to whether or not Old Hendrik really related them), but more useful for our purposes is the gap they fill in the analysis of western writing on Bushmen. There is, a conspicuous lacuna in descriptions of white writings on the Bushmen – the popular Afrikaans writings have been omitted, distorting the chronology and content of the historiography. This chapter is intended to contribute to the repairing of this fissure in the historiography. This is an important theme for the light it sheds on the rationale behind current policy issues. The Bushmen operate as a socio-political Rorschach test: representations of them reveal far more about those who view them, than about the Bushmen themselves. The tradition of the mythic Bushman will be contextualised and then

⁶ C.T. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition to Kruger, 1890-1895* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1970) p.7.

⁷ Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979).

explored, through Marais's *Wandering Tales*. His bushman poems were part of the literature of a dying rural order, filled with nostalgia for the past. They were poems for the generation that left the land, under various economic pressures, and their popularity reflects nostalgia for the childhood experience of bushman domestic help. As discussed in Chapter Four, the urbanising Afrikaner remembered the farm as a sacral place, and the poems conjured up those told in childhood – an element of the entwined themes of memory and identity.

Afrikaner cultural rituals have been investigated, yet heroes and their fluid and mutable socio-cultural meanings have not received similar attention, creating an analytical lacuna, which this thesis seeks to help fill. Chapter Seven deals with the historical invention and interpretations of the persona of Marais. Primarily, he is remembered as an Afrikaner hero. There are, however, divergent claims to his meaning as 'hero'. On the one hand, he is remembered as the 'father of Afrikaans poetry' and is one of the most lionised writers in the conventional nationalist canon. Yet, a second, and almost antithetical, historiographical tradition remembers him as a dissident iconoclast, an Afrikaner rebel. This chapter, 'The Enduring Apparition' – the making of Eugène Marais as an Afrikaner hero', seeks to show how these two understandings of Marais came to co-exist, and that the course of this rivalry of myths was bound up with the economic and socio-political history of South Africa. The methodology is to look at his memory at particular historical moments and analyse the changes that have occurred with reference to broader developments in South Africa. The hagiography of Marais by the Nationalist press, both during his life and after his death is explored, showing how the socio-political context of the *Taalstryd* was influential in the 1930s in shaping his image. This chapter then follows the

chronology of his representation in terms of the shifting self-image of the Afrikaner over the ensuing seven decades. The need for alternative heroes is considered in order to understand the splintered meaning of Marais today.

For anyone who, like me, calls him or herself an Afrikaner and wonders sometimes
about what that means.

Wildernis

Watter boom se bitter wortel,
watter beentjie van die tortel

sal die hart teen bose gees
beskerm en van eensaamheid genees?

sal die kranse en die wildepeer
tot sin en ewigheid besweer?

met die jare word die kamer
daaglik onherbergsamer

en buite kom 'n kilte
dieper uit die klip en stilte,

buite agter 'n mierhoop lê
die maer lyk van Eugène Marais.

D.J.Opperman, *Negester oor Ninevé*

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Acknowledgements

Flaubert once said that one does not choose one's subject matter; one submits to it. He neglected to add that one's subject matter then remains curiously quiet while you convince your supervisor, your internal and external examiners and your scholarship board to submit to it too. But my thesis is completed and some people deserve a damn good thanking.

I am grateful for the Emma Smith Overseas Scholarship, administered by the Scholarships Committee, University of Natal, which has supported me for the last three years. I am particularly grateful to Johann van den Berg for his help.

I have also benefited greatly from the Overseas Research Studentship, which I have received for the last two years.

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Magdalen College Porters for their practical help.

My parents – to my mother who believes I'm *capable* of anything and my father, who believes I'm capable of *anything*.

There have been repeated exhortations to study the historian before one even looks at his or her history. E.H. Carr urged one to fathom the background of the historian prior to reading their work. Wilhelm Dilthey noted that: 'The first condition of the possibility of historical science is that I myself am a historical being – that he who studies history is the same as he who makes history. Similarly, Tom Nairn once said that personal biography and life experience have been a major determinant of what and how nationalism gets studied. This inclination towards self-reflexivity has led historians to challenge their own objectivity and seek their own reflections in what they write. As an Afrikaner who favours tie-dyed clothes myself, I often am asked if through my work I seek out dissidence in Afrikanerdom. I try to remain constantly aware of my own preoccupations and passions and their emanation in my work, but there is no linear passage between creator and created. A particularly apposite anecdote (considering chapter four on Afrikaner science and white ants) is told by the British biologist J.B.S. Haldane, who was once asked by a group of theologians what one could conclude as to the nature of the Creator from a study of his creation. Haldane answered: 'An inordinate fondness for beetles'.

Sandra Scott Swart

Magdalen College,

Oxford

Trinity 2001.

Notes

The translations in Chapter Two are from Dutch unless otherwise specified.

The translations from Chapters Three to Eight are from Afrikaans unless otherwise specified.

Those Afrikaans words that have become accepted South African English are italicised but not translated.

Where the interpretation is open to debate or may be particularly interesting to the reader, I have included the original verbatim in a footnote.

Glossary

Afrikanderdom – usually used to convey the ethos of the Afrikaner people or to mean the Afrikaners collectively, in a nationalistic or political sense.

Broedertwis – fratricidal conflict.

Bywoner – one who lived on a farm under one of a variety of tenancy arrangements, without owning the land.

Eenheid – unity.

Eeufees – Centenary celebration (of the Great Trek).

Kultuurpolitiek – the politics of culture, the debates and institutions surrounding the propagation of Afrikaans language and ‘civilisation’.

Pers – press.

Platteland – rural areas.

Taal – the Afrikaans language.

Taalstryd – struggle for the existence of the Afrikaans language and language rights.

Verkrampste – conservative.

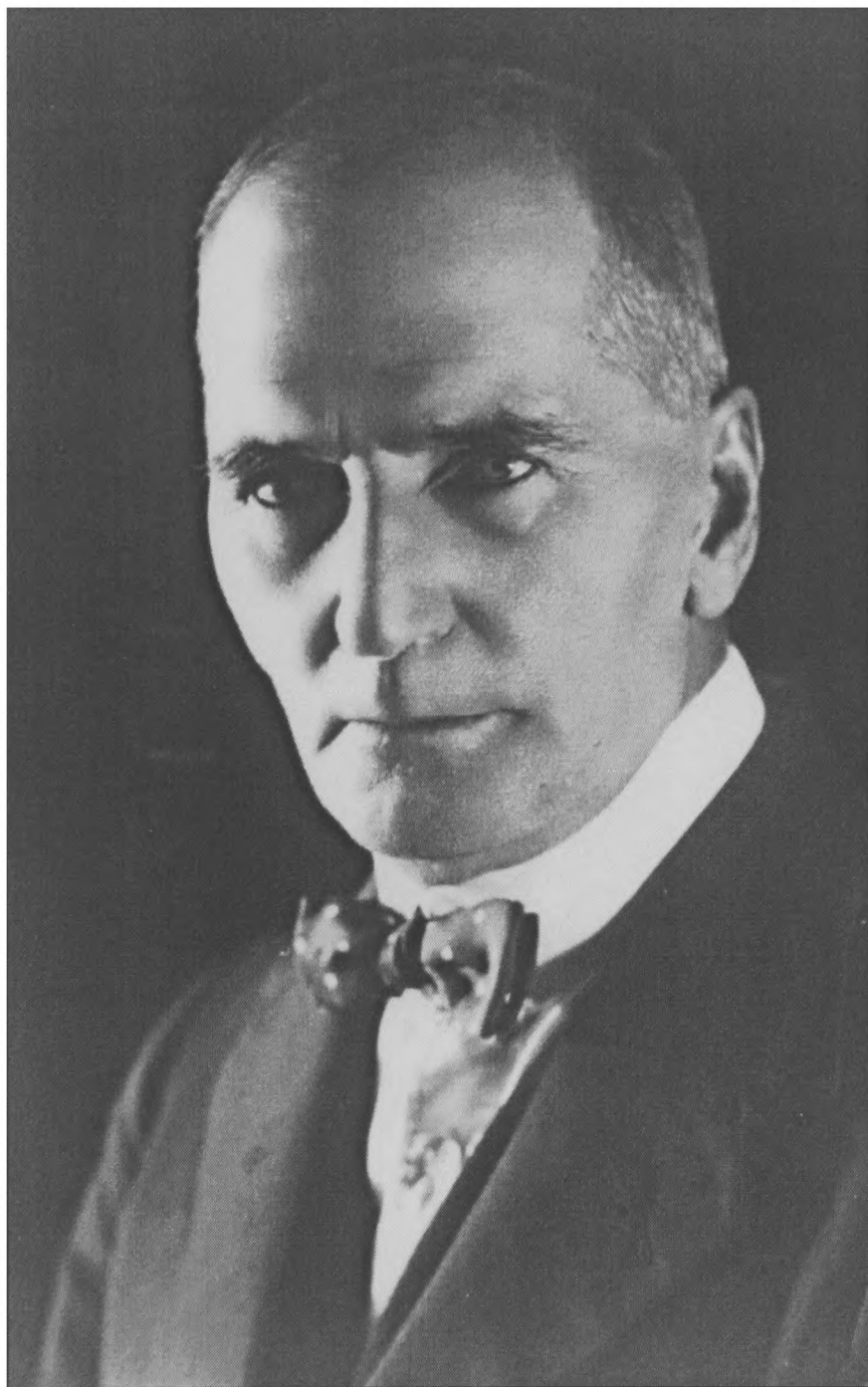
Verligte – enlightened.

Volkseenheid – national unity.

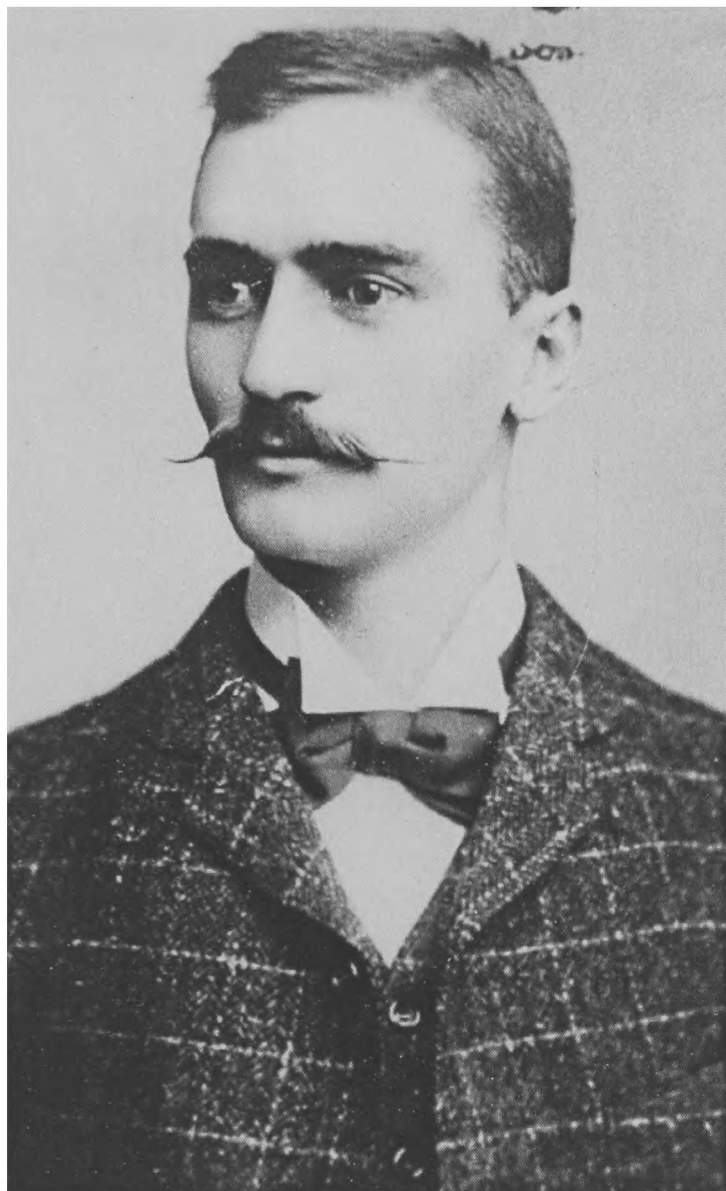
Volksheld – national hero.

Volksleier – populist leader.

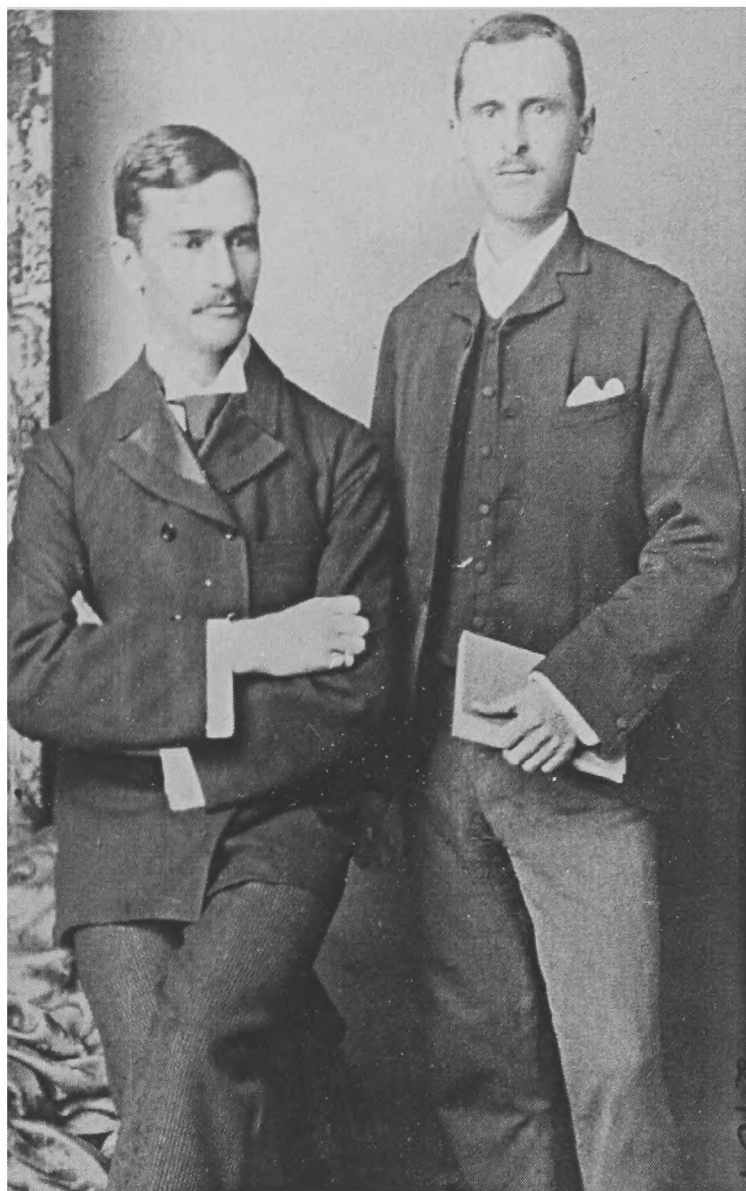
Ware Afrikaner – true or genuine Afrikaner.



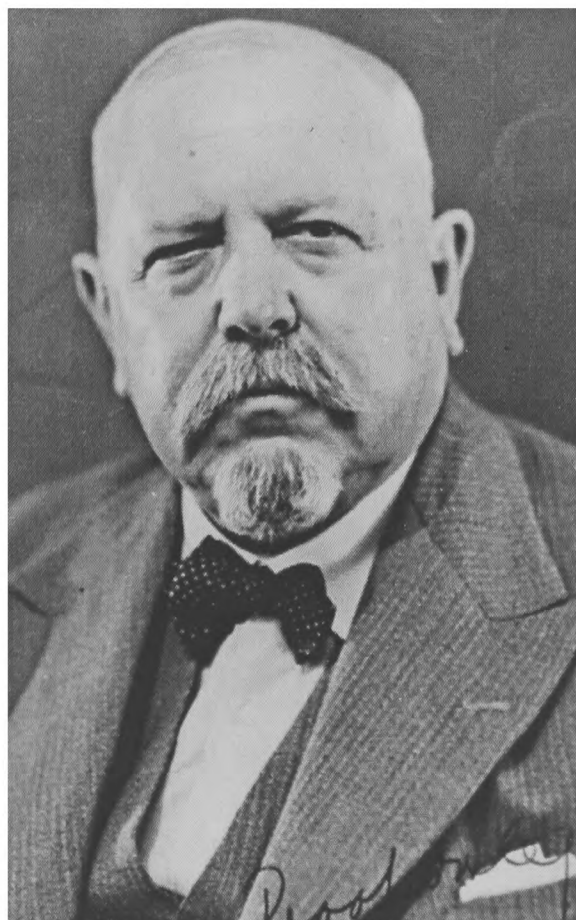
Eugene Marais (TAD 4944)



Eugène Marais, Transvaal (TAD 7935).



'Jimmy' Roos and Marais (TAD27078).



Gustav Preller (TAD 4935)

Introduction and Literature Survey

‘How much does anyone need to know about Eugène Marais?’

‘Eugène Marais’ in *The Guest*.¹

‘Afrikaans is simply light,

with which songs to write.’

Eugène Marais²

In July 2000, the e-mail group ‘Boere, Afrikaner Volkstaat’ discussed the problem of Familial Hypercholesterolaemia (FH) – a genetic disease, which contributes significantly to the high annual death rate from heart attacks in South Africa.³ What makes this disease important to the Volkstaat group is that the incidence of FH in the white Afrikaner population is ten times higher than in the rest of the world.⁴ One subscriber declared that this presented a rebuttal to those ‘struggling’ over whether the Afrikaner was a ‘real being’ and those who maintain that the Afrikaner exists as a social, but not a biological, entity.⁵ Another contributor noted enthusiastically: ‘I am * so * pleased that they have finally discovered a gene for being Afrikaans’.⁶

¹ Athol Fugard, *The Guest- an episode in the life of Eugène Marais* (Johannesburg: Ad. Donker, 1977) p.11.

² ‘Afrikaans is net lig/ Daarin litjies te dig.’ *Land en Volk*, 10 November 1891.

³ VSTAAT@HOME.EASE.LSOFT.COM. This group shares the political ambition to have a separate state devoted exclusively to the Afrikaner people.

⁴ From studies done at Stellenbosch University; see *Die Tygerland*, 2000.

⁵ Boere, Afrikaner Volkstaat Poslys VSTAAT@HOME.EASE.LSOFT.COM, from Antonie Kotze, aak@GLOBAL.CO.ZA, 4 July 2000. ‘Baie mense ‘worstel’ nou nog met die vraag oor

This need for a validation of an organic identity reveals much of the predicament of those who lay claim to the Afrikaner label. Desperate efforts to find an innate Afrikaner essence – in this example, the very heart of the Afrikaner – reveal how, in the socio-political realm, the removal of the reins of power and economic hegemony has plummeted many Afrikaners into self-doubt and despair. Afrikaner homogeneity, an idea always invested with more political currency than truth, has become a discredited notion in a post-Apartheid South Africa. The Apartheid State provided jobs, education, security, political power and social status for this group and consequently the label ‘Afrikaner male’ was synonymous with status. First place in the power hierarchy was axiomatic. This identity suffered, however, under the rapid transition following the transformist endeavours initiated by the ruling National Party (NP) and the non-racial democratic dispensation in 1994. As cultural identity and political power remain inextricably linked in the experience of the Afrikaner, political shifts have been interpreted as cultural betrayal.⁷ A cornerstone of identity was threatened when Afrikaans became only one of eleven official languages. Similarly, changing use of nomenclature, incorporating the classification ‘Coloured’ (using Afrikaner as an umbrella term to include both ‘brown’ and ‘white’ Afrikaners) has, while yielding both negative and positive responses, precipitated further controversy.

wie die Afrikaner nou werklik is. Ons ken al die argumente van almal wat voor wil gee daar is nie eintlik iets soos ’n Afrikaner nie. Wel, hier is dit, geneties van aard ... al is dit ook ’n waarskuwing vir al ons Afrikanermans’.

⁶ Boere, Afrikaner Volkstaat Poslys VSTAAT@HOME.EASE.LSOFT.COM, from Friedwin@ARINIUS.CO.ZA, 4 July 2000. ‘Ek is * so * bly hulle het nou ’n geen vir Afrikaner-wees ontdek...’ There was general wry amusement at the information: one subscriber noted ironically that he thought politicians could use it to avoid ethnic classifications and accusations of racial exclusivity, they could simply address their constituencies: ‘Dear fellow heart attack candidates...’

⁷ There is a growth in interest in Afrikaner identity, typical of any group undergoing change. Marlene van Niekerk, ‘Afrikaner Woman and her ‘Prison’: Afrikaner Nationalism and

As Eric Hobsbawm has observed, it is at moments of most rapid and bewildering social change that ‘invented traditions’ are subjected to ‘the greatest degree of reinterpretation and reinvention’.⁸ In times of transformation and redefinition, communities re-evaluate their cultural lynchpins, the figures and events that ‘define’ them. ‘Heroes’ and their social meanings receive re-appraisal.⁹ It is often through a society’s heroes – the way in which they are imagined or constructed, who constructs them, how their significance changes over time – that an historian may reach an understanding of the society itself.¹⁰ In this dissertation the Afrikaner icon, Eugène Marais, acts as such a lens to facilitate our broader understanding of the changing nature of Afrikaner identity.

This investigation of the creation of Afrikaner identity, more particularly Marais’s role in the shaping of identity from c.1891 to 1936, is undertaken in order to help comprehend how and why an ‘Afrikaner’ identity was propagated. The first two decades of the twentieth century saw a period of debate and definition for Afrikaner nationalist discourse. Marais’s career from 1891 to 1936 reflects the period in which Afrikaner language was standardised and changing social and economic forces

Literature’, Afrikaans Literature: Recollection, Redefinition, Restitution, 7th Conference on South African Literature at the Protestant Academy, Bad Boll, 1996.

⁸ Eric Hobsbawm: ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’ in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983) pp.4-5.

⁹ See, for example, Sidney Hook, *The hero in history, a study in limitation and possibility* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995) and Dixon Wecter, *The hero in America: a chronicle of hero-worship* (New York: Scribner, 1941, 1972).

¹⁰ See, for example, Prys Morgan, ‘From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period’ in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*, p.85-86 and David Cannadine, ‘The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the

produced the conditions under which class and regional fragmentation yielded to pan-South African Afrikaner identity.¹¹ Marais is discussed as a lens or window into broader developments, rather than primarily as an engaging historical subject. His iconic status makes him an interesting – as a 'ware' or 'true' Afrikaner he both represents and was made to represent things about Afrikaner identity that are difficult to analyse in other ways. Secondly, his writing was eagerly solicited and distributed widely by Afrikaner intellectuals, and as a result the content and context of his work provide insights into the nature of the identity the intellectuals sought to promote. As part of the publishing establishment, albeit often at its periphery, he offers a window into the material structure and functioning of the cultural elite. The intra-movement dissension, often on a personal level, affords a more nuanced picture of, for example, the Taalstryd. Fourthly, Marais has survived as an icon for the six decades following his death; the analysis of the changing nature of his social meaning offers insights into changing self-perception by both the cultural elite and the Afrikaner public.

This dissertation does not retell the story of Marais's life. Neither does it give an overview of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism. Instead, it lies between these two poles. Marais represents two important foci of research: those who assisted in the self-conscious construction of Afrikanerdom and those who came to be seen as *ware Afrikaners* (true Afrikaners) and *volkshelde* (heroes of the people).

'Invention of Tradition', c.1820-1977' in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*, p.134.

¹¹ Afrikaner nationalist iconography began to be developed, as has been explored through, for example, discussions of the *Volksmoeder* icon. See Louise Vincent, 'Mothers, Women and the Afrikaner Nation: the changing image of the Volksmoeder in the discourse of Afrikaner Nationalism', MPhil. Oxford, 1993; Louise Vincent, 'The Mothers of Invention: Gender, Class and the ideology of the Volksmoeder in the making of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1918-1938', D.Phil., Oxford, 1997; Lou-Marie Kruger, 'Gender, community and identity of women

The Soul of Eugène Marais

As a writer of sometimes derivative poetry, addicted to Mother Bailey's Quieting Syrup for its opium content, a man who used his male friends, misused his female friends, ignored his own son, posed as a doctor and finally committed suicide, Eugène Marais may not have been a nice man. He was, however, a very interesting man. As *Die Brandwag* observed in 1937, Marais would always be a topic over which there would be 'endless theorising.'¹²

Marais was born on a farm near Pretoria, on 9 July 1871, the youngest of thirteen children, to parents originally from well-connected families in the Cape. He was first educated by a Dutch-speaking woman, then by an English-speaking clergyman. In 1881 he was sent to Boshof in the Orange Free State to live with his eldest brother, Charles Gerhardus Marais (an attorney, later a member of the Union House of Assembly, and subsequently a senator). In 1884 he went to live with his eldest sister in Paarl, attending the government school. Both at Boshof and Paarl he was educated in English, with a few weekly lessons in Dutch. He started publishing poems in English in the *Paarl District Advertiser* in 1885. After matriculating in 1887, he spent time in Boshof before travelling to Pretoria. After a brief period as a clerk in an attorney's office, during which time he wrote for the *Transvaal Advertiser* (on which his brother H.C. Marais worked), he became editor of the weekly Dutch-

and Afrikaner Nationalism in the Volksmoder discourse of *Die Boerevrou*, 1919-1931', MA, UCT, 1991.

¹² S. I. Mocke, 'Eugène Marais se verse in engelse gedaante', *Die Brandwag*, 27 February 1937. For a good biographical summary see the *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*, vol.7 (Cape Town: Nasou, 1972) and *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. I (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1987); for a longer discussion, which explores Marais's abuse of the generosity of his friends, see Leon Rousseau, *The Dark Stream – the story of Eugene Marais* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1982).

language newspaper *Land en Volk* in 1890 and assistant editor of the *Press*. In 1891, after he and J. Roos purchased *Land en Volk*, he began supporting the campaign of General P.J. Joubert against President S.J.P. Kruger. In 1892, Roos left for the Cape, selling Marais his share in *Land en Volk*. Marais began to dabble in drugs, particularly morphine. In 1894, he married Aletta Beyers, a second cousin of General C.F. Beyers. She died in 1895 after giving birth to their son. In despair, Marais became increasingly addicted to morphine.

At the request of Joubert, Marais mediated between the *Volksraad* and the Johannesburg Reform Committee after the Jameson Raid in 1896. In December of that year, he transferred editorship of *Land en Volk* to J.Y. O'Brien and left for England to study law. At the outbreak of the South African War, he was placed on parole in London.¹³ In 1902 he received permission to leave the country and managed to join an expedition, led by Dr C. Schultz, that was intent on taking arms, explosives and medicine to Beyers's commando via Moçambique. The expedition was still on the east coast, with Marais incapacitated by malaria in Lourenço Marques, when they heard of the Treaty of Vereeniging.

On his return to Pretoria, Marais re-opened *Land en Volk*, with Gustav Preller as editor. It was the first Dutch-language paper allowed to re-open after the war. Marais assumed editorial control once again when Preller joined the staff of *De Volksstem*. With waning interest in *Land en Volk* after Preller's departure, Marais relinquished it in 1906, and it closed in 1907. He practised briefly as an advocate in Pretoria and Johannesburg, before leaving for the farm Rietfontein in the Waterberg,

¹³ For details of his London activities, see E.N. Marais, 'London Diary', Sotheby Collection.

where he acted as Resident Justice of the Peace, prospected and practised medicine. His cures often relied on hypnotism and he won local renown as a 'wonder doctor'. In the Doringhoek mountains he studied a troop of baboons for three years, about which he published in the Afrikaans press and magazines.¹⁴ Recurrent bouts of malaria forced Marais to return to Rietfontein, where he rented part of the farm and tried his hand unsuccessfully at cattle farming. He conducted experiments into snake-bite poisoning, wrote on the effects of drought, and published in the *Agricultural Journal of the Union of South Africa* and through the Smithsonian Institution.¹⁵

His addiction to drugs was growing and he suffered from bouts of depression. After an attack of fever, he returned to Pretoria, practising as an advocate when his health permitted. During the subsequent years he published widely in *Die Brandwag*, *Die Boerevrou* and *De Volksstem*, usually poems, critiques, popular science and historical stories.¹⁶ From October 1921, he practised law in Erasmus (now Bronkhorstspuit) for two years before relocating to Heidelberg in the Transvaal for four years, where he became a close friend of Dr A.G. Visser, whom he encouraged in his poetry.¹⁷ His collected poems were published in 1925, with an introduction by Preller, who had encouraged his writing and compelled him to meet his deadlines since their friendship began in 1902. While at Heidelberg, Marais worked on notes he had made on white ants (termites) while in the Waterberg and published a series of

¹⁴ Collected as E. Marais, *Burgers van die berge* (Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik, 1971).

¹⁵ *The Agricultural Journal of the Union of South Africa*, VII, 1914.

¹⁶ For the establishment of *Die Brandwag* see G.S. Preller, 'Ons stig 'n tydskrif', *Die Huisgenoot*, 28 June 1940.

¹⁷ Andries Gerhardus Visser (18978-1929) is discussed by M.S.B. Kritzinger, *Letterkundige Kragte: beskouings oor 'Afrikaanse skrywers'* (Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik, 1932).

articles on them, particularly their ‘group mind’ or the ‘soul of the white ant’, in *Die Burger* from 1923 and *Die Huisgenoot* from 1925. There was a brief scandal when Marais accused the internationally famous, Nobel Prize winning Belgian author Maurice Maeterlinck of plagiarism. Maeterlinck was accused of having used Marais’s concept of the ‘organic unity’ of the termitary in his 1926 book *La Vie des Termites* (*The Life of the White Ant*). Supported by his coterie of Afrikaner Nationalist friends, Marais sought justice - promoting his side of the story through the South African press and attempting an international lawsuit. This was to prove financially impossible and the case was not pursued.

Depressed and indigent, Marais was offered a job by Preller on *Ons Vaderland* (later *Die Vaderland*), the National Party mouthpiece. He started work in 1927, moving in with the Preller family in Pretoria. He wrote numerous short stories and popular science articles on the ‘soul of baboons’, for *Die Vaderland*. His *Dwaalstories en ander vertellings* (The Wandering Tales and other stories) was published in 1927, and *Sketse uit die lewe van mens en dier* (Sketches from the lives of man and animals) was published the following year. From 1930 he wrote short stories that were published as *Die huis van die vier winde en ander verhale* (The House of Four Winds and other tales) (1934); *Die leeus van Magoeba en ander verhale* (Magoeba’s Lions and other stories) (1934); *Keurverhale van Eugène Marais* (Choice tales of Eugène Marais) (1948); *Spore in die sand* (Tracks in the sand) (1949) and *Laramie die wonderwerker* (Laramie the miracle worker) (1950); two plays, *Die swart verraad* (The black betrayal) (1933) and *Nag* (Night) (1937) and an anthology of poems *Versamelde gedigte* (Collected poems) (1933, republished in 1936).

In 1936, when Preller retired from *Die Vaderland*, to his farm Pelindaba, Marais accompanied the family. He killed himself on 29 March 1936, after borrowing Preller's shotgun. He was buried next to his wife in the Old Cemetery in Pretoria.

* * *

This thesis examines that which *Die Brandwag* called 'the endless theorising' about Marais, within a context of the social construction of Afrikaner identity. As Willem De Klerk observed: 'The Afrikaner is bursting out of his definitions of himself as well as those of others.'¹⁸ This has been coupled with an assault presented in the intellectual province by the constructionist school, which has in recent years undermined the foundations of self-understanding.¹⁹ It is the constructionist understanding of identity and concomitant theories of nationalism that this chapter sets out as theoretical background, before exploring the historiographical niche and significance of this dissertation as a whole.

Theories of identity may be divided into two broad camps: essentialist and constructionist. The former asserts that the characteristics are innate essences, and their studies find expression in various ways, from comparisons of physiognomy and intelligence to descriptions of culture based on 'inherent characteristics'. The second school, 'social-constructionist' or 'constructivist', considers identity (be it, for example, gender or ethnicity) to be not innate, but rather learned or constructed

¹⁸ Willem De Klerk is an academic and businessman, and brother of the former president, F.W. De Klerk.

¹⁹ The conjunction of the intellectual and political domains with respect to Afrikaner identity, is explored in, for example, Sandra Swart, 'Man, Gun and Horse – Hard Right Afrikaner

socially. This paradigm has gained prominence in the social sciences and it is now common to describe social identities as ‘produced’, ‘constructed’ or ‘imagined’.²⁰ Identity constructions are argued to be the result of intersecting historical, social and cultural factors at particular moments in time. This contention builds on work which suggests that selfhood/identity is not a static role, but rather a relational process which changes as power relations shift. What social science has done with identity as a whole, and ethnicity and gender in particular, bears a strong resemblance to what physics has done with particles. It has extracted the contradictions and ambiguities hidden in the once discrete certainties of traditional understandings of ethnicity. Considered at the equivalent of quantum level, ethnicities are exposed as fluid, equivocal and elusive – if not illusory.²¹

Ethnicity, if illusory, is nevertheless a dynamic force within nation-states.²² As Leroy Vail has observed, it is denounced by nation-builders for its retrogressive erosion of national unity, despised by development theorists for its obstruction to economic growth and resented by analysts on the Left for its barrier to class

masculine identity in post-Apartheid South Africa’ in Robert Morrell (ed.), *Changing Masculinities in a Changing Society: Men and Gender in Southern Africa* (Zed Press, 2001).

²⁰ The social constructionist paradigm is not without its critics. See, for example, Suke Wolton, ‘The Social Construction of Whiteness’, Racializing Class, Classifying Race – A Conference on Labour and Difference in Africa, USA and Britain, St. Anthony’s College, Oxford, 11-13 July 1997.

²¹ For other examples see Marek Kohn, in *The Race Gallery – the return of racial science* (London: Vintage, 1996) p.88.

²² There is a parallel with other identities that have received similar rearguard defence. Masculinity, for example, is often said to be in ‘crisis’ and there has been a sustained assault on the notion of a biologically innate masculine identity. There is a movement that maintains the opposite, arguing manhood is real intrinsic entity. (Farrell, 1993). Popular books based on essentialist understandings of masculinity, like Robert Bly's *Iron John* (1990) and Sam Keen's *Fire in the Belly* (1992), encourage men to get in touch with their male feelings.

awareness.²³ Yet, its rhetorical and mobilising power remains evident. Its dramatic effect upon the supposedly dominant nationalist paradigm of the 1950s and early 1960s in Africa, for example, made it clear that nationalism, intellectually framed solely by anti-colonialism and with little relevance to daily life, could not provide sufficiently convincing socio-political visions. Ethnic movements came to be seen as attractive alternatives to the ruling parties' agendas.

Ethnicity may be considered the consequence of uneven development within colonial territories, as will be discussed shortly. As certain factions did relatively well from uneven opportunities, a petit bourgeoisie developed that mobilised support along ethnic lines in order to maximise their access to power after independence. But ethnicity is not only an ideological mask, employed by the ambitious upwardly mobile groups as a way of papering over growing class divisions within their ethnic group, to secure their interests through demagoguery.²⁴ This model cannot provide a complete answer without confronting the question: why did ordinary men and women find ethnic mobilisation more appealing than national mobilisation?

A possible explanation has been sought in community psychology: as people who were disrupted by the political and socio-economic upheaval of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and saw their pre-capitalist and pre-colonial hierarchies undermined, they lost their socio-psychological security. This rendered them open to the invocation of a lost past – as a way of recreating a life of emotional

²³ Leroy Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989) p.1.

²⁴ An early examples of this school of thought was J.S. Coleman, *Nigeria: background to nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958) and a particularly influential one was Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: crisis and neo-nationalism* (London: NLB, 1977).

and often physical security.²⁵ Ethnic leaders thus represent the unity of the cultural group and ethnicity itself provides a sense of primordial brotherhood in an unsafe and socially atomised world.²⁶ This school assumes the perspective of an essential organic reality based on, for example, ethnicity or language of a group of subjects from which nationalism grows. This primordialist conception of identity – that it is a natural property of that person, exists as an objective reality – is typically offered by the protagonists of nationalist movements themselves.²⁷ It was the starting point for early analyses of nationalism, as in Hans Kohn's *The Idea of Nationalism* (1944), which called nationalism a 'state of mind', an 'act of consciousness'.²⁸ In this school, chapter titles like 'The Discovery of Afrikaans' are not uncommon.²⁹ The theory's strength lies in its emphasis on people's agency, and on the role of particular people, or groups of people, at specific historical times.

²⁵ A good example of this phenomenon in Afrikaner history is presented by the 1914 Boer Rebellion when socially dislocated poor whites, alienated from the state, were mobilised by a faction of wealthy *Herrenvolk* (who were not included in the government of the newly minted state). Their rhetoric was based on a nostalgic vision of the pre-capitalist state where 'all men were equal'. See Sandra Swart, 'Desperate men – Rebellion and the politics of poverty', *South African Historical Journal*, 42, May 2000, and Sandra Swart, 'A Boer and his gun and his wife are three things always together', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4 December 1998, pp.737-752.

²⁶ This romantic rejection of the modern positivism of the present may be considered a civil religion. For a sustained defence of this paradigm see T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom – Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

²⁷ For example, the Dutch Reformed Church maintained in 1947 that nationalism was the 'recognition of the existence of nations as separate units, fore-ordained by God', quoted in Herman Giliomee and Lawrence Schlemmer, *From Apartheid to Nation-Building* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1989) p.57.

²⁸ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1944) p11.

²⁹ See for example John Bond, *They were South Africans* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1956, 1960) p.138. This paradigm is still in use – a recent study by Liah Greenfeld, for example, used the notion of the causal primacy of the *idea* of nationalism. Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

Nevertheless, this model has practical flaws, as ‘ethnicity’ is seldom a cold-bloodedly articulated policy. Rigid application grants total omnipotence to the elite and complete gullibility to the oppressed. Even a sensitive application of the theory still begs several questions. How have vague cultural statements about language or a mutual history or a shared hero the power to mobilise people? And how has ethnicity, with its appeal based on tradition, the ability to embrace capitalist values and an eagerness to modernise? As Vail has it, this ‘Janus-faced’ phenomenon requires an explanation of how the psychological appeal of primordialism and the pragmatic concern for the daily interests of specific classes can co-exist.³⁰ This requires an historical investigation into the roots of specific ethnicities, to which this thesis attempts to contribute.

There are several possible analytic models available with which to replace or augment more primordial theories. There is little point in reiterating theories of nationalism in depth as several survey texts exist.³¹ A brief discussion will suffice to assist the explanation of the methodology used in this thesis.

Nationalism and Identity

Contemporary analysts, labelled the ‘modernists’, who contest the primordial paradigm, propose two further models of nationalism. The first of these views nationalism from the opposite pole to the primordialists, as the brainchild of small interest groups, the arbitrary political construct of self-selected agents. This school is

³⁰ Vail, *Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, p.6.

³¹ See, for example, C. Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997); Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Macmillan, 2000) and A.D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1998).

divided into two subsets, those who see money as the pivot (like Tom Nairn) and those who see power or politics as the fulcrum (like John Breuilly).³²

The third school, which synthesises portions of the primordialist and previous school, has constructed a model that attempts to overcome the polarisation of the first two paradigms by understanding nationalism not only as an expression of material reality, nor as solely an ideological invention. Instead, this school emphasises culture as crucial; this model interprets nationalism as a political movement in order to discover the conditions under which it becomes politically successful. The work of Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson does not seek the cause of nationalism; rather it seeks the contexts that favour the development of nationalism.³³ Gellner has argued that industrialisation of society creates a need for homogeneity, as a society becomes based on technology and the expectancy of sustained growth. This requires a mobile division of labour and organised communications between strangers involving a shared idiom to facilitate understanding.³⁴ This gave rise to modern national education – so the roots of nationalism lie in the structural requirements of an industrial society. The effect of the education system is the production of a standard culture and further results in the extension of political awareness. Nationalism gives ideological expression to the emergence of the standard culture and facilitates industrialisation. It may also operate as a weapon for those threatened by the growth of industrialisation and the rise of the new standard culture. Nationalism is thus not the ‘awakening’ of an old dormant force (although it purports to be). Anderson provides a materialist

³² Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: crisis and neo-nationalism* (London: NLB, 1977) and John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

³³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983, 1991) and Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

account of social consciousness. The boundaries created by a vernacular language, print culture, and of capitalism provide the basis for nationalist imaginings. The development of a system of capitalist production and the rise of mass technology and human linguistic diversity create the context for national consciousness.

This dissertation's methodology draws on textual analysis, particularly in Chapters Four, Six and Seven. Engagements with questions of representation and culture often utilise the 'linguistic approach', displacing the methodology used in social history.³⁵ Studies of identity, drawing on textual analyses and unpicking hegemonic discourses, are thus, as Crais has observed, often 'giddily awash' in a sea of signifiers and discourse.³⁶ The danger is that one becomes lost in a language game, where what is real – in this case, the lived experience and self-understanding of Afrikaners – becomes just another discourse, ignoring the role people play in changing the world in which they find themselves. Some historians have shown, however, that a 'beachhead can be secured between social history and the linguistic turn'.³⁷ This approach, adopted in these chapters, concedes to postmodernism that language does not faithfully reflect objective social reality, but insists that while discourse is constitutive, it is not determinative. Thus the creation of ethnicity as a cultural construct involves more than simply historical actors spinning webs of signification and discourse – it is rooted in material issues of economics and power.

³⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities* and Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp.33-35.

³⁵ John Toews, 'Intellectual history after the linguistic turn: the autonomy of meaning and the irreducibility of experience', *American Historical Review*, 92, October 1982.

³⁶ Clifton C. Crais, 'Representation and the politics of identity in South Africa: an eastern Cape example', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 25, no.1, 1992.

³⁷ Crais, 'Representation and the politics of identity in South Africa'.

This approach accepts that identities are also not mutually exclusive, that there is not a 'correct' identity nor one that establishes itself in perpetuity, but focuses rather on when and why one representation attains a certain – often fragile – ascendancy.³⁸

This thesis has two ambitions: firstly, to contribute to the broad investigation of the constructed nature of Afrikaner ethnic identity. Analyses of Afrikaner ethnic consciousness have been predominately concerned with its 'awakening' or 'origins'.³⁹ As Gellner has pointed out, the use of the concept 'awakening' implies that the nation was always there, slumbering, waiting merely for someone to rouse it.⁴⁰ This thesis opposes this contention, locating itself in the constructionist camp, represented in studies of the Afrikaner by, for example, Hofmeyr, Giliomee, Grundlingh and Sapiro, which argues that intellectuals acted to create and promote Afrikaner identity.⁴¹ There are, of course, porous borders between historiographical schools and this thesis is

³⁸ For the contingent and constructed nature of Afrikaans masculinity, see Albert Grundlingh, André Odendaal and BurrIDGE Spies, *Beyond the Tryline – Rugby and South African Society* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1995), particularly chapter five; Kobus du Pisan and Louis Grundlingh "Volkshelde": Afrikaner nationalist mobilisation and representations of the Boer warrior", Rethinking the South African War, UNISA Library Conference, 3-5 August 1998; Robert Morrell 'Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4 December 1998 and Sandra Swart, 'A Boer and his gun and his wife are three things always together', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4 December 1998.

³⁹ See, for example, F.A. van Jaarsveld, *The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1868 -1881* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1961).

⁴⁰ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983) p.47.

⁴¹ See, for example, H. Giliomee, 'The beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1870-1915', *South African Historical Journal*, 19, 1987; Albert Grundlingh and Hilary Sapiro, 'From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual? The Changing Fortunes of Great Trek Mythology in an Industrializing South Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, 21, 1989; Isabel Hofmeyr, 'Popularizing History: the case of Gustav Preller', *Journal of African History*, 29, 1988 and Isabel Hofmeyr, Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and 'ethnic identity', 1902-1924', in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London, Longman, 1987).

eclectic, drawing on the methodologies and preoccupations of various schools.⁴² This is a contribution to the ongoing investigation of the construction of ethnic and nationalist boundaries and political consciousness.⁴³ The understanding of Afrikaner political and cultural nationalism as an unthwartable progressive force destined to lead inexorably to the Afrikaner nation, may be compared to the 'Whig interpretation of history' espoused by some British historians. Herbert Butterfield wrote of this school: 'they stand at the summit of the twentieth century and organise their scheme of history from the point of view of their own day'.⁴⁴ Similarly, focusing more narrowly on analyses of Afrikaner cultural nationalism, we see that these accounts have depicted a steady and snowballing momentum behind the stimulation of a nationalist ethos among people beginning to consider themselves Afrikaners.⁴⁵ Afrikaner nationalism may have appeared unstoppable to historians of the middle and late twentieth century, but it is a mistake to impose this teleologically on the early movement. Historians from other historiographical schools are starting to show on a broad level that a linear model of the development of an Afrikaner identity, which naïvely accepts the claims of the nationalist culture-brokers, is not accurate.⁴⁶ A discontinuous model of ethnic consciousness is being explored. Historians have demonstrated that various factors, from regional and family sub-groupings under the parochial sway of field-cornets to

⁴² For a discussion of historiographical schools of southern African history see Christopher Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past: major historians on race and class* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988).

⁴³ As delineated in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (eds.), *The Politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth century South Africa* (Harlow: Longman, 1987).

⁴⁴ Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: Bell, 1931, 1965) p.13.

⁴⁵ See, for example, the influential Van Jaarsveld, *The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism*. As Balakrishnan points out that few can conceive of a future in which their language is not spoken, and 'more interestingly, because [it is] simply false, may have difficulty imagining a past in which their language did not exist.' Gopal Balakrishnan, 'The National Imagination' in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation* (London: Verso, 1999) p.208.

growing class distinctions between *bywoners* (white non-landowning tenant farmers, exchanging labour for a portion of the farm they could work on their own behalves, or ‘sharecroppers’) and *Herrenvolk* (wealthier Boer farmers), forced nationalist murmuring to wax and wane in fits and starts.⁴⁷ Its triumphalist portrayal as a cultural victory conceals the complex and nuanced struggle, characterised by in-fighting and dissension. This thesis contributes to the challenge to the depiction of the *taalstryd* (language struggle) as an absolute success story.

Secondly, the focus on Eugène Marais’s writing has been adopted to anchor a wider survey to a particular individual. Marais is a window onto a wider vista and concentrating on him provides a unifying theme and overall coherence for the dissertation. The underlying theme of each chapter is Afrikaner identity: what it means to be an Afrikaner over time, and how the ‘propaganda machine’, created by the intellectual elite, disseminated information. A discussion of the role of Marais provides an insight into the understanding of conflicting personal loyalties and regional differences on a more confined, and subsequently more detailed, level. This thesis seeks not the overall picture, but the complexity of individuals’ contributions; not the linear success story, but also the disappointments, frustrations, misdirections and dead-ends. For this reason, the methodological device of focussing on the individual, rather than the prevailing analysis of groups, is adopted. Dissension is an ongoing and important theme in Afrikaner history and present. As Marthinus Steyn,

⁴⁶ Giliomee, ‘The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism’.

⁴⁷ John Bottomley, ‘Public Policy and White Rural Policy’, PhD. Kingston: Queen’s University, 1991; Giliomee, ‘The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism’ and Timothy Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrialising South Africa: the Southern Highveld to 1914* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1986).

the last Free State president, once said: 'It's easier to drive a group of chickens from behind than it is to lead a group of Afrikaners in the field from the front.'⁴⁸

The 'Afrikaner' label has been historically contested from its roots in the 17th century Cape when the group that ultimately became known as Afrikaners were drawn from disparate elements, particularly from French, Dutch and German background, and, genealogists calculate, with 6-7% black contribution.⁴⁹ By 1870 there was a discernible group – with permeable boundaries – who shared a degree of racial endogamy, spoke Dutch and usually belonged to the Dutch Reformed church. A distinct Afrikaner ethnic consciousness had not yet developed, however. In 1872, for example, Reverend Cachet noted that there were 'four or five nations instead of one'.⁵⁰ The very term 'Afrikaner' was ambiguous. In the early eighteenth century it was used to describe slaves and ex-slaves of African descent.⁵¹ In 1830 a Dutch-language newspaper, the *Zuid-Afrikaan*, used it to mean those 'English or Dutch who inhabited the land and were bound by duty and interest to further the well-being of their country'.⁵² There also existed the term 'Boer', which usually referred to pastoral Dutch-speakers on farms in the interior. The 'Cape Dutch' was a label given to the better-educated and wealthier Dutch-speakers of the western Cape. 'Afrikaner' remained a contentious label in the twentieth century. J.B.M. Hertzog, for example,

⁴⁸ 'Cultural weapons of the new 'taalstryd'', *Mail and Guardian*, 19 May to 25 May 2000.

⁴⁹ See, for a brief discussion, the entry for 'Afrikaner', *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*, vol.1 (Cape Town: Nasou, 1972).

⁵⁰ Quoted in van Jaarveld, *Awakening*, p.123.

⁵¹ For example, in Lucie Duff-Gordon's *Letters from the Cape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1861, 1927) 'Afrikander' meant half-Dutch and half-Malay.

⁵² Quoted in Herman Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner ethnic consciousness, 1850 - 1915', in Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism*, p.22.

favoured it as a collective term for white South Africans of any language group who 'put South Africa first'.⁵³ Other Nationalists, like D.F. Malan, adopted it strictly for Afrikaans-speakers.

Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner ethnic consciousness have become inextricably entwined.⁵⁴ Here the 'nationalist movement' or 'nationalism' is more loosely defined as the development of a specifically Afrikaner political consciousness. Afrikaner nationalism is more akin to ethnicity than to calls for a nation-state, as it is wrapped up in socio-cultural, and not solely political, claims for identity. Nationalist mythology has been propagated by intellectuals or 'culture-brokers', composed of teachers, journalists, lawyers, clergymen and doctors, through an elaborate network of religious, educational and communication institutions. It has not only dominated the historical consciousness of most Afrikaners, but it has also often been imposed on the minds of other sections of the South African population, especially since the National Party won control of state machinery in 1948.

When Afrikaner nationalist historians focused on individuals there was a tendency towards hagiography.⁵⁵ The nationalist myth machine directed the process of

⁵³ C.M. van den Heever, *Generaal J.B.M. Hertzog* (Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers, 1944) p.45.

⁵⁴ A cautious nomenclature should make certain to refer to nationalism with a small 'n' as distinct from the Nationalist endeavours of the political party established by J.B.M. Hertzog, which, as a name, assumes a capital 'N'.

⁵⁵ The 're-discovery' of the Voortrekkers in the 1930s was promoted in works of popular history by Preller and Revd J.D. Kestell. Preller's biography of Piet Retief had already run into ten printings and 25 000 copies by 1930; his six volumes of edited voortrekker reminiscences and his edition of the diary of Louis Trichardt and biography of Andries Pretorius were very popular. Gustav Preller, *Piet Retief* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1930); *Voortrekkermense*, 6 vol (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1918-1938); *Dagboek van Louis*

inventing national heroes. Marais himself was co-opted to produce such articles as ‘Enige Merkwaardige Afrikaners’ (Certain Noteworthy Afrikaners) and ‘Twee Dapper Afrikaner meisies’ (Two Brave Afrikaans girls) and ‘Van Oudae en Oumense in Pretoria’ (About olden days and people in Pretoria) as tributaries to the hagiographical stream into which he was later swept.⁵⁶

Sources on Marais

There are large lacunae in the study of Marais. His potential as a window into understanding Afrikaner identity has been both neglected and misrepresented. There has been no critical revisionist look at his role, and there has been almost solely biographical interest and attention to his poetry in the literature. There has been no analysis of his pre-Kruger journalism and no political context given to his post-war writing. A historical context of his scientific writing has never been provided. Little use has been made of potentially valuable sources.

It was once observed that ‘getting history wrong’ is an important factor in the formation of a nation.⁵⁷ At several key moments in the past century, a quest to build an Afrikaner nation has clouded perceptions of Marais. He has been re-imagined by contemporary Afrikaner nationalist culture-brokers and engineered for socio-political ends to fit an image of a ‘good Afrikaner’. This image has come to predominate in the historiography and in popular understandings of the South African past. In more general works Marais’s role is simplified to the point of crudity. The historiographical

Trichardt (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1938) and *Andries Pretorius* (Johannesburg: Die Afrikaanse Pers, 1940).

⁵⁶ ‘Van Oudae en Oumense in Pretoria’, *Ons Vaderland*, 15 January 1930.

model of Marais has not been reviewed. The area warrants re-investigation for a number of reasons. It is significant that most published work on Marais post-dates 1936. The socio-political context that produced the bulk of work was therefore written in the wake of his death, in the immediate and emotional Great Trek centenary period, which used him as a form of political mobilisation for the Nationalist movement. As Grundlingh, for example, has noted, Afrikaner historiography has remained rooted, from that era, in nationalist or neo-nationalist frameworks, infused with notions of ‘unity’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘great leaders’ and the ‘triumph of Afrikanerdom’. These ideas are incompatible with the tenets of modern social history with its emphasis on class conflict and ‘history from below’ espoused more recently by the Revisionist school.⁵⁸

Revisionist literature, a body of work produced from about 1970 onwards, on a basis of a class interpretation of society, has begun tugging the beard of orthodoxy, with the use of class-based critiques and discourse-analysis.⁵⁹ There have been few attempts, however, by revisionist writers to tackle Afrikaner heroes and no revisionist interpretation of Marais’s influence exists. Perhaps one reason why Marais – and Afrikaner heroes in general – have been neglected was a reluctance to study Afrikaners. In a conflation of subject matter with political leanings, some historians wanted to distance themselves from the ruling class, and identify with the oppressed, so did not

⁵⁷ Ernest Renan. Quoted in J. Van Rooyen, *Hard Right - The New White Power in South Africa*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994) p.39.

⁵⁸ Albert Grundlingh, ‘Sosiale Geskiedenis en die Dilemma in Afrikanergeskiedskrywing’, *South African Historical Journal*, 19 (1987) p.31.

⁵⁹ See, for example, respectively: Dan O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, capital and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and Isabel Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and ‘ethnic identity’, 1902-1924’, in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (Harlow: Longman, 1987).

approach the topic at all. Many academics were wary of studying ethnicity, often for fear of supporting government ideological preoccupations with ethnic groups.⁶⁰ Others treated the topic for political reasons, with a know-the-enemy *raison d'etre*. Morrell has pointed out, for example, that the reason why a revisionist historian thought it was time to study Afrikaans farmers was in order to gain a better understanding of the impact of economic and political change on African peoples.⁶¹

Marais's own writing provides a useful source for this dissertation. He generated a vast body of literature: short stories, plays, historical sketches, poetry, popular science and a few stories that Preller called 'potboilers' for profit-hungry publishers.⁶² His personal papers are scattered and to be found in a variety of collections. This thesis is concerned with Marais in his wider context and not in his psyche, so it his interaction with intellectuals, rather than with his family, for example, that has provided the bulk of material. Although what Emily Hobhouse once called 'the Afrikaner powerlessness to write letters' appears to have affected Marais, the few letters that exist are a valuable source.⁶³ These are to be found mainly in the 282 volumes that make up the G.S. Preller Collection, in the Central Archive Bureau (SAB), Pretoria. Also useful are the Transvaal Archives (TAD) Tielman Roos Collection, Leyds Collection, Joubert Collection and Roos Papers.

⁶⁰ For a parallel development in the field of anthropology see W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect Interpreters – South Africa's Anthropologists, 1920-1990* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1997) pp. 4-5.

⁶¹ Robert Morrell. (ed.) *White But Poor* (Pretoria: UNISA, 1991) p.5. However, in *Rural Transformations in Industrialising South Africa: the Southern Highveld to 1914* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1986) Keegan did examine Afrikaner texts closely.

⁶² F.G.M. Du Toit, *Eugène Marais – sy bydrae tot die Afrikaanse letterkunde* (Amsterdam: N.V. Swets, 1940) p.ix.

Secondary sources are plentiful, but tend to be directed towards biography without context. Marais's *character* has proved a more popular subject choice than his role and influence. The biographical material on Marais is of varied quality and usefulness. The first comprehensive life history of Marais, in which his work was discussed, was F.G.M. Du Toit's MA thesis, *Eugène Marais – sy bydrae tot die Afrikaanse letterkunde* (Eugène Marais – his contribution to Afrikaans literature). This was based on interviews that took place at Preller's house in Blackwood Street, Pretoria in 1935, the year before Marais's death. Du Toit had worked on the staff of *Die Vaderland*, and was writing his MA thesis on Eugène Marais. These interviews with Marais produced a medley of lies and mistakes. His date of birth and his school matriculation date were incorrect. He falsely maintained that he 'took part in the Jameson Raid' and had been summoned by the 'President' (Kruger was entirely unaware of this Joubert-orchestrated mission). He noted fallaciously that he had resigned as Justice of the Peace in 1912, whereas he remained in office until 1917. The thesis itself is useful biographically, but with no contextualisation provided, as Marais as a person receives the bulk of attention. Preller's directing hand is evident, from his foreword to familiar phrases and sentiments within the thesis. There are obvious efforts to preserve Marais's status as Afrikaner hero: his drug addiction, for example, receives no mention.

After Marais's death there appeared a number of commemorative articles, especially by Preller and D.F. Malherbe. They were largely by those who knew him personally, to varying degrees. These fall into the Afrikaner Nationalist school of historiography. Biography was a favourite theme of the Afrikaner Nationalist

⁶³ Rykie van Reenen (ed.), *Emily Hobhouse – Boer War Letters* (Cape Town: Human and

historians, and there is a strong didactical trend in the work, to teach about the past struggles in order to promote nationalism and the ideal of republican freedom. As an historian of Afrikaner nationalism noted, 'the Afrikaner are a people who lean heavily on their past, and as it were, live in it.'⁶⁴ Through manipulation for political capital, distortions have occurred and events have been enshrined in a nationalist mystique. The rhetoric of the writing immediately after Marais's death, drew on feverish 1930s republican discourse and was in turn drawn on by later nationalist rhetoric, producing martyrs and *volkshelde*.⁶⁵ Preller, in particular, served to recreate Marais as a hero, writing self-consciously about him as 'an Afrikaner from the Afrikaner point of view and for Afrikaners'.⁶⁶ Preller did not believe in objectivity, contending:

It is not the unsavoury [and] the bad ... in people's [actions] that make others happier [therefore] I have simply left aside those things that ought not to be published ... to my mind we are under no obligation to give such unpleasant details as would be detrimental to our own people. I am attached to historical truth but may the hand that types these words rather wither than that I should go out of my way to abuse a fellow Afrikaner in history ... we are too much of a family.⁶⁷

His hagiographical account of Marais and his control of the immediate remembrances did much to shape Marais's legend – a process discussed in Chapter Seven, 'The Enduring Apparition – the making of Eugène Marais as an Afrikaner hero'.

Rousseau, 1984, 1999) p.437.

⁶⁴ Van Jaarsveld, *The Afrikaner's Interpretation*, p.47.

⁶⁵ T.R.H. Davenport, *A Modern History of South Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1977) p.272.

⁶⁶ See Van Jaarsveld, *The Afrikaner's Interpretation*, p.83 and Hofmeyr, 'Popularizing History'.

⁶⁷ Quoted by C.J. Uys, *Die Volksblad*, 8 November 1947.

Leon Rousseau has provided the most significant secondary source and contribution to the Marais *oeuvre*.⁶⁸ He dedicated twelve years of extensive archive research and secondary reading to building up a psycho-social profile of Marais, which he published as a popular biography, first in Afrikaans in 1974 and then in English in 1982. As Stephen Gray, the literary critic, has observed, when Rousseau's biography first came out twenty-seven years ago, it was 'hailed as masterly'.⁶⁹ It is a painstaking work, constructing a personality from various possible sources, passing references and a scanty supply of personal documents. His intention was to 'create a readable life-story', and there are, therefore, no sources, index or references, which Gray says renders it 'worthless as scholarship'. This criticism is too severe, particularly as Rousseau maintains a small archive of material, copied from the letters sold into obscurity by Sotheby's, which is available on application. Rousseau has recently published a discussion of the biographical process in *Die Dowwe Spoor van Eugène Marais*.⁷⁰ This dissertation is not an attempt to replace or even supplement such a magisterial biographical initiative.

Instead, this thesis tells a story woven from two contrapuntal narratives. The first speaks of an individual's life and work, the second, of a wider context of culture-brokers and the process of creating ethnic consciousness. The thesis is organised

⁶⁸ Leon Rousseau, *The Dark Stream – the story of Eugene Marais* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1982). Interviewed, Cape Town, November 1998.

⁶⁹ Stephen Gray, 'Review of *The Dark Stream: the story of Eugène Marais* by Leon Rousseau', *Mail & Guardian*, 25 June 1999.

⁷⁰ Leon Rousseau, *Die Dowwe Spoor van Eugène Marais* (Cape Town: Ibis, 1998) was published to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Eugène Marais Hospital in Wonderboompoort in a limited edition of 400 copies. Rousseau was able to photocopy some letters of Marais's prior to their sale by the auction house Sotheby's. He remains a generous source of information, and plans to leave the letters to his son. The letters between Marais and

thematically, around different questions of importance to Afrikaner identity. At the same time it is roughly chronological, following the course of Marais's life, from Chapters Two to Six, and tracing his image through successive decades in Chapter Seven. The chapters trace the workings of Afrikaner identity from the pre-South African War interaction between politics and those coming increasingly to define themselves as Afrikaners, to the interplay of ethnicity and language within the divided cultural elite. The discussion then turns to the use of popular science by this élite, in the making and propagation of an Afrikaner identity. The following two chapters consider the interaction of the Afrikaner with other groups, exploring cultural osmosis between ethnic communities and the image of another race in Afrikaans literature. Finally, the myth-making of the Afrikaner, particularly the creation of a *volksheld*, is considered, to examine the interplay of ethnicity, politics and memory.

Politics and ethnicity before the South African War

Chapter Two, ' 'An irritating little stone in Kruger's shoe' – Eugène Marais's role in the Progressive Press in the South African Republic, 1891-1896', discusses Marais's controversial role in the pre-war South African Republic (ZAR). It is an analysis of his role in shaping public opinion on the ZAR political situation, through the medium of *Land en Volk*, the newspaper he edited. The means by which he swayed opinion towards the faction that opposed Paul Kruger, and that was coming to be labelled the 'Progressive' camp, are considered. There is particular emphasis on the pivotal 1893 election, which *Land en Volk* forged in the public's imagination as a struggle between Dutch and Afrikaner hegemony.⁷¹

his son would prove a valuable source for future histories of Afrikaner masculinity and family life.

The nature of Transvaal 'Progressivism' has itself received incomplete historiographical critique; it is often still written of as a concerted movement and its self-baptism as the 'Progressive' innovative sector of ZAR society is widely accepted.⁷² This is a methodological mistake that clouds the real nature of the movement, and which will be considered in this chapter, through a discussion of the Progressive movement's newspaper, which is particularly overdue. Pre-1895 newspapers have generally received inadequate notice, either as historical resource or as creator of public opinion.⁷³ Where *Land en Volk* has been used by historians, it has been as a source for political events in the ZAR, not as a force in its own right, which helped shape the Progressive movement.

Language and identity

Another significant factor in re-opening the study of Marais is the psychology and dynamics of *broedertwis* (fratricidal conflict). Ethnic political unity has traditionally assured the Afrikaner political hegemony – hence the mystical *volkseenheid* (national unity), but the record shows not unity but factionalism.⁷⁴ Studying Marais's role in the Language Movement in Chapter Three, 'An aspect of

⁷¹ The 1893 election has received attention in J.A. Mouton, 'Generaal Piet Joubert in die Transvaalse geskiedenis', *Archive Year Book*, 20, I, Cape Town, 1957 and intensively, in J.M. Vivier, 'Die Presidentsverkiesing van 1893 in die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek', M.A., University of Potchefstroom, 1970, which does not investigate, or indeed mention, the role of Marais.

⁷² C.T. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition to Kruger, 1890-1895* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1970).

⁷³ J.M. Schoeman, 'Koerantberiggewing oor die krisisdae, 25 September tot 20 Oktober 1899: 'n kritiese metodologiese analise', MA thesis, University of Pretoria, 1973, p.vii.

⁷⁴ D. Welsh, 'South Africa's Ultra-Right', *Patterns of Prejudice*, xx, 11, 4, 1988, p.2.

the roles of Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller in the Second Language Movement', helps facilitate an understanding of the historically contingent nature of identity and heterodoxy of opinion, which has bearing on contemporary issues. Chapter Three is a contribution to the overthrow of the image of the *taalstryd* as an absolute success story and the natural outcome of an organic language. The Afrikaner nationalist school, anxious to promote the notion of Afrikanderdom as a unified nation, fails to recognise, as the revisionist O'Meara has noted, the shifting composition and discord of the Afrikaner nationalist movement.⁷⁵ As Van Jaarsveld contends 'we know that the Afrikaner people became a separate people in the 18th century, 'with their own identity and beliefs'.⁷⁶ This conventional portrayal of the *taalstryd* as a cultural victory cloaks both the complex struggle, characterised by dissension, and the highly constructed nature of the language. As the satirist Pieter-Dirk Uys dryly observed of the contrived nature of the *taal*: 'Afrikaans is the most beautiful language in the world ... to have been made up in 10 minutes.'

Even revisionists, like Isabel Hofmeyr in her nuanced analysis of the Second Language Movement, tacitly accept that the struggle ultimately delivered what the

⁷⁵ O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, p.7. There is also the danger of conflating state, party and ethnic group.

⁷⁶ F.A. van Jaarsveld, *The Afrikaner's Interpretation of South African History* (Cape Town: Simondium, 1964) p.5. Lazar and O'Meara argue that the Liberal school falls into the same trap of approaching Afrikanderdom as though it were a discrete and unified nation. J. Lazar, 'Conformity and Conflict: Afrikaner nationalist politics in South Africa 1948-1961', D.Phil., Oxford, 1987, p.15 and O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, p.7. This seems too condemnatory, as there are historians who may be defined as liberal historians, or at least drawing heavily on the liberal school, who delineate the complex cleavages in their analyses. See, for example, Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979); A.M. Grundlingh, *Die 'Hensoppers' en 'Joiners' - die rasionaal en verskynsel van verraad* (Pretoria and Cape Town, 1979), John Bottomley, 'Public Policy and White Rural Policy', PhD, Kingston: Queen's University, 1991). They have not, however, concentrated on the socio-intellectual world of the Afrikaner.

taalstryders desired.⁷⁷ Where hostility to the *taalstryders*' objectives does receive limited attention, it refers to outside opposition from English-speakers in state positions and commerce, and a few figures in church circles, rather than any intra-movement dissidence.⁷⁸ A discussion of the roles of Marais and Preller provides a window into the understanding of conflicting individual loyalties and regional feuds, particularly between the Cape and the Transvaal.

Popular Science and Ethnicity

Chapter Four, 'The Ant of the White Soul: popular natural history and the politics of Afrikaner identity, with particular reference to the entomological writings of Eugène Marais' addresses the role of Marais's works of popular science. Generally, the study of nationalism within the context of the history of science has received only limited attention, suffering perhaps because of the presupposition of the universalism of science. This ethos holds that science is supranational because of the scientific method: 'because of its objectivity, science is considered to be supracultural, untrammelled by the conflicts of values to which all other expressions of culture are dedicated.'⁷⁹ This position may be contested on two grounds. Firstly, the proposition is built on the questionable notion that science has a uniquely universal method – hotly contested by those who maintain that science is socially constructed.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Davenport simply preserves Marais and Preller in historiographical amber in their mid-thirties as 'northerners', who wanted to promote Afrikaans above Dutch. T.R.H. Davenport, *The Afrikaner Bond, 1880-1911* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1966) pp.264-265.

⁷⁸ Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and 'ethnic identity'', p.108.

⁷⁹ Jean-Jaques Salomon, 'The 'Internationale' of science', *Science Studies* 1, 1971, p.24.

⁸⁰ Karin Knorr-Cetina and Michael Mulkay (eds), *Science Observed: Perspectives on the social study of science* (London and Beverley Hills, 1983); Bruno Latour, *Science in Action* (Milton Keynes, 1987) particularly chapter 3; Ernst Mayr, *The Growth of Biological Thought*

Secondly, the contention merges two very separate entities: science as an abstract method for establishing universally valid knowledge and science as an activity and social institution. This chapter considers science in the second category: as a complex mixture of social ideology, conscious and unconscious, and empirical constraint; in this case, the ghost in the scientific machine was ethnicity.⁸¹

Similarly, general socio-political works on nationalism tend to neglect science, probably because scientists constitute the élite within their societies and have not been perceived as appealing to the bedrock of nationalist movements.⁸² Popular science writing thus provides the link, breaching the gap between the ivory tower and the platteland *stoep*. Marais operated in a time that was crucial for the creation of Afrikaner identity, a period in which the configuration of socio-economic forces aligned to provide the conditions under which regional and class divisions began to yield to a pan-South African Afrikaner nationalism. Marais infused scientific knowledge with cultural values; writing natural history that would make the citizenry identify with and feel proud of their scientists and assert their independence from the metropole.

(Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1982) p.5. Mayr makes the point that a wide range of different historians, but Marxist historians in particular, emphasise the social context of science.

⁸¹ Yet the assertion that science is merely an exercise in cultural relativism is convenient for academic humanists, ill-equipped to critique such findings. It is a parody of the work of historians of science who have worked against the myth of objectivity and inexorable scientific progress. As Budiansky observed: 'No one denies that culture influences scientific thought. But some things hold whether one believes in God, the Enlightenment, or Ronald Reagan.' Stephen Budiansky, *Nature's Keepers – the new science of nature management* (London: Orion, 1996) p.65.

⁸² E. Crawford, *Nationalism and Internationalism in Science, 1880-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). An exception to this rule is Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

A methodological difficulty lies in the attempt to reconstruct the development of the conceptual frameworks.⁸³ This consists in principle of the entire store of biological knowledge with which one's scientist may have been acquainted. One has recourse to tracing his references through oral history on what he was seen to be reading, extrapolations from certain key phrases imported from other sources, and his own given references. With Marais, for example, he was seen to read Darwin, he uses phraseology from William Morton Wheeler and quotes Haeckel, Fabre and others. This problem is exacerbated by the scientists' inconsistencies and eccentric or inaccurate readings of their own main sources.⁸⁴

Another danger lies in translating the individual and idiosyncratic into socio-historical generalisation.⁸⁵ Chapter Four thus consciously demonstrates and speculates on the wider motives for the dissemination and popular reception of the ideas, not just their inception in the field or the armchair. One more problem lies in the historian's tendency to simplify the scientist's findings. This does not, however, present much of a methodological pitfall for the historian of Marais's work as he was writing predominately for a popular audience, with few articles for the specialist.⁸⁶

⁸³ Ernst Mayr, *The Growth of Biological Thought- Diversity, Evolution, and Inheritance* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1982) p.15.

⁸⁴ Robert Maxwell Young, 'Malthus on Man' unpublished paper, Malthus, Medicine and Science, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 20 March 1998. Available on <http://www.shef.ac.uk/uni/projects/gpp/process.html#science>.

⁸⁵ Interested in the historical contingency and localised character of scientific practices, historians have displayed a renewed enthusiasm for biography. The aspirations of actors present 'scientific, philosophical, social and political ideas wrapped up in a single package'. Charles Rosenberg, 'Woods or Trees? Ideas and Actors in the History of Science', *Isis*, 79 (1988), 565-70. Thomas L. Hankins, 'In Defence of Biography: The Use of Biography in the History of Science', *History of Science*, 17 (1979), pp.1-16.

⁸⁶ A psychologist who works on chacma baboons, Peter Henzi, produced an annotated introduction. Henzi, pers.comm. It is a useful book for those interested in the correctness of

Ethnic stereotyping and cultural osmosis

Chapter Five, ‘‘Bushveld Magic’ and ‘Miracle Doctors’ – a discussion of Eugène Marais’s and C. Louis Leipoldt’s work based on their experiences in the Waterberg, c.1906-1917’, challenges a common conception of Afrikaner identity. The socio-intellectual life of the Afrikaner, particularly in the rural communities, has been described predominately in terms of the inflexible Calvinism of their beliefs. Such accounts, chiefly from the Afrikaner Nationalist and Liberal historiographical traditions, contend that this faith was unadulterated and narrowly parochial respectively. In a typical example, Patterson contends: ‘South African Calvinism grew out of the veld like an aloe, unmoved by the mellowing breezes of liberalism that blew from Europe.’⁸⁷ Conventional wisdom has depicted Afrikaans rural communities as stagnant backwaters of segregation and bigotry in dour contrast to the progressive towns.⁸⁸ This chapter contributes to the challenge to this historiographical

the science, but it still provides no context, drawing excessively on Ardrey. Reviewed by Alec Brown, ‘Marais: the Annotated Soul of the Ape’, *Social Dynamics*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1991.

⁸⁷ Sheila Patterson, *The Last Great Trek – A Study of the Boer People and the Afrikaner Nation* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957) p.178. See also David Harrison, *The White Tribe of Africa* (Ariel, 1985) p.25 – religious rituals integral to nation; G.H.L. Le May, *The Afrikaners – an historical interpretation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Graham Leach, *The Afrikaners – Their last Great Trek* (London: Macmillan, 1989) and W.A. de Klerk *The Puritans in Africa* (London: Rex Collings, 1975). This has been challenged to a degree by, for example, André Du Toit, ‘Captive to the Nationalist Paradigm: Professor F.A. Van Jaarsveld and the Historical Evidence for the Afrikaner’s ideas on his Calling and Mission’, *South African Historical Journal*, no. 16, November 1984.

⁸⁸ Lazar and O’Meara argue that the Liberal school falls into the same trap of approaching Afrikanerdom as though it were a discrete and unified nation. J. Lazar, ‘Conformity and Conflict: Afrikaner nationalist politics in South Africa 1948-1961’, D.Phil., Oxford, 1987, p.15 and Dan O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, capital, and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) p.7. This seems too condemnatory, as there are historians who may be defined as liberal historians, or at least drawing heavily on the liberal school, who delineate the complex cleavages in their analyses. See, for example, Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979); A.M. Grundlingh, *Die ‘Hensoppers’ en ‘Joiners’* (Pretoria and Cape Town, 1979), John Bottomley, ‘Public Policy and White Rural Policy’, PhD, Kingston: Queen’s University, 1991. They have not, however, concentrated on the socio-intellectual world of the rural Afrikaner communities.

construction of the rural socio-intellectual world of the Afrikaner. This is accomplished through an exploration of the Bushveld Boer living in the eastern and northern Transvaal, through the work of Marais and Christiaan Frederick Louis Leipoldt (1880-1947). Firstly, the very different outlooks of Marais and Leipoldt are contrasted in order to show the heterogeneity of Afrikaner experience and mind-set, to contest further the monolithic construction. Secondly, we consider the popular departure from a European *zeitgeist* rooted in Calvinist theology, towards an interest in African healing practices and public interest in the paranormal and European trends in psychology. This is in order to challenge the notion that there was ‘in the Transvaal Boer a strong suspicion of all novelty’ and to demonstrate that the image of intellectual isolation has been exaggerated.⁸⁹ This is of historiographical significance because, as Adam and Giliomee have shown, one of the most repeated explanations of the rise of Apartheid ‘stresses the primitive Calvinism of backward Boers who, in an isolated corner of the world, missed the Enlightenment by being exposed only to the Old Testament rather than Voltaire.’⁹⁰

Identity in relation to other groups

Chapter Six, ‘‘The Wandering Tales’ – an exploration of the mythic Bushmen in popular Afrikaans literature, with particular reference to the *Dwaalstories* of Eugène Marais’, concerns the prose-poems written by Marais, which he claimed to

⁸⁹ C.T. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition to Kruger, 1890-1895* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1970) p.7.

⁹⁰ Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979).

have heard from an itinerant Bushman.⁹¹ The poems, ‘Riet Alleen In Die Roerkuil’, ‘Die Lied Van Die Reën’, ‘Die Reënbul’ and ‘Die Vaal Koestertjie’ have had enduring success since their publication in 1921 in *Die Boerevrou* (The Boer woman/wife), a prominent Afrikaans cultural magazine.⁹² This chapter explores the content and context of Marais’s Bushman tales, revisiting the historical understandings of the *Dwaalstories* from their publication up to the present. Debate over the poems has previously been over their ‘authenticity’ (as to whether or not Old Hendrik really related them), but more useful for our purposes is the gap they fill in the analysis of western writing on Bushmen.⁹³

White settler images of the Bushmen in popular writings have received historiographical analysis. There is, however, a conspicuous lacuna in these descriptions of white writings on the Bushmen – the popular Afrikaans writings have been omitted, distorting the chronology and content of the historiography. This chapter is intended to contribute to the repairing of this fissure in the historiography. This is an important theme for the light it sheds on the rationale behind current policy issues.⁹⁴ The Bushmen operate as a socio-political Rorschach test: representations of them reveal far more about those who view them, than about the Bushmen

⁹¹ The identification ‘Bushman’ is used in preference to ‘Soaqua’ or ‘San’, which is discussed in Chapter Six. The specific (but in this case, unknown) dialect group would be preferable to either.

⁹² They ran from May to August, *Boerevrou*, 1921.

⁹³ For a textual analysis using the close-reading technique see W.S.H. Du Randt, *Eugène N. Marais as Prosaïst* (Cape Town: Nasou, Monografieë uit die Afrikaanse Letterkunde, 1969) p.23.

⁹⁴ For a discussion of the results of this tradition on current policy making, see Sandra Swart ‘The New Age of Stone – the Bushmen Soldiers of the South African Defence Force’, *Communities in the New Millennium*, University of Cork, Ireland, April 1998 and required reading for tutorial on Archaeological Ethics, ‘Use and Abuse in Ethnographic Archaeology’, Magdalen College, Oxford.

themselves. The tradition of the mythic Bushman will be contextualised and then explored, through Marais's *Wandering Tales*. His bushman poems were part of the literature of a dying rural order, filled with nostalgia for the past. They were poems for the generation that left the land, under various economic pressures, and their popularity reflects nostalgia for the childhood experience of bushman domestic help. As has been discussed in Chapter Four, the urbanising Afrikaner remembered the farm as a sacral place, and the poems conjured up those told in childhood – an element of the entwined themes of memory and identity.

Identity and Memory

Afrikaner cultural rituals have been investigated, yet heroes and their fluid and mutable socio-cultural meanings have not received similar attention, creating an analytical lacuna, which this thesis seeks to help fill.⁹⁵ Chapter Seven deals with the historical invention and interpretations of the persona of Marais. Primarily, he is remembered as an Afrikaner hero. There are, however, divergent claims to his meaning as 'hero'. On the one hand, he is remembered as the 'father of Afrikaans poetry' and is one of the most lionised writers in the conventional nationalist canon.⁹⁶ Yet, a second, and almost antithetical, historiographical tradition remembers him as a dissident iconoclast, an Afrikaner rebel. This chapter, 'The Enduring Apparition' – the making of Eugène Marais as an Afrikaner hero', seeks to show how these two

⁹⁵ See, for example, Albert Grundlingh and Hilary Sapire, 'From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual? The Changing Fortunes of Great Trek Mythology in an Industrializing South Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, 21, 1989 and T. Dunbar Moodie, 'Organization and Ideology – Developments on the Cultural Front, 1930-1938' in *The Rise of Afrikanerdom – Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) pp.146-174.

⁹⁶ René Marais, 'Die Kanonisering van Eugène N. Marais as digter', *Afrikaanse Letterkundevereniging*, 1:1, March 1993, p.11. Also pers. comm.

understandings of Marais came to co-exist, and that the course of this rivalry of myths was bound up with the economic and socio-political history of South Africa.⁹⁷ The methodology is to look at his memory at particular historical moments and analyse the changes that have occurred with reference to broader developments in South Africa. The hagiography of Marais by the Nationalist press, both during his life and after his death is explored, showing how the socio-political context of the *Taalstryd* was influential in the 1930s in shaping his image. This chapter then follows the chronology of his representation in terms of the shifting self-image of the Afrikaner over the ensuing seven decades. The need for alternative heroes is considered in order to understand the splintered meaning of Marais today.⁹⁸

The idea that national traditions are often the invention of intellectuals seeking to create national unity, has been widely accepted and applied. An unfortunate side effect of this with methodological repercussions is a tendency to assume that if an account of history can be proven to be invented it no longer *matters*.⁹⁹ This chapter seeks to show that it matters enormously as it reflects the changing socio-political

⁹⁷ The explicit refutation of myths is a powerful tradition within South African historiography, visible in the works of both liberal Africanists – for example, perhaps the apogee of the Liberal school, M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford History of South Africa*, (Oxford, 1969) was deliberately designed to counter historical myths and revisionists. It has been harder in the Afrikaner historiography to counter such myths. When, for example, the Afrikaans historian F.A. Van Jaarsveld dared to challenge traditional interpretations of the Day of the Vow, he was tarred and feathered by the AWB, on the grounds of desecrating ‘everything that is sacred to the Afrikaners.’ *Sunday Times*, 1 April 1979.

⁹⁸ His work on animal behaviour is important not only for those interested in the South African chronicle, but for historians of ethology because, as Henzi has it, he is a ‘missing link in the chain of ideas stretching from the *Descent of Man* to the present.’ Peter Henzi, pers. comm.

⁹⁹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (London: Canto, 1983, 1997) p.1. For a discussion of this point, see the critique by Justin Willis, ‘Whose Shaka? A review of Carolyn Hamilton’s *Terrific Majesty*’, *Times Literary Supplement*, April 16 1999, No. 5011.

milieu and as such can be a window into understanding different trends in public opinion, the politics of unofficial discourse in South Africa. The politics of official discourse may be systematically analysed through published government material – unofficial discourse is harder to capture, and one way is through the heroes.¹⁰⁰ In *The Guest*, Fugard has Marais ask: ‘How much does anyone need to know about Eugene Marais?’¹⁰¹ The answer is: as much as one needs until one can ascertain from his portrayal, who is telling the story.

¹⁰⁰ For an example of an analysis of the official discourse see Adam Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

¹⁰¹ Athol Fugard, *The – an episode in the life of Eugène Marais* (Johannesburg: Ad.Donker, 1977) p.11.

‘An irritating little stone in Kruger’s shoe’ – Eugène Marais’s role in the Progressive Press in the South African Republic, 1891-1896.¹

‘Bravo *Land en Volk*! Bravo editor of that newspaper!’
Letter writer, *Land en Volk*, 28 March 1895.

‘For the publication of a newspaper, more is required than a little bit of school learning and a lot of shamelessness.’
Dr Engelenburg, editor of *De Volksstem*.²

Celebrated as an investigative journalist exposing a corrupt regime, dismissed as a political hack or damned as a litigious self-promoter in charge of a vulgar gossip sheet, Eugène Marais played a controversial role in the pre-war South African Republic (ZAR).³ This chapter explores his role in shaping public opinion on the ZAR political situation, through the medium of *Land en Volk*, the newspaper he edited. It discusses his participation in the faction that opposed Paul Kruger, and that came to be labelled the ‘Progressive’ camp, and examines his motives and techniques in swaying opinion towards the opposition faction, with particular emphasis on the pivotal 1893 election, which saw a transformation in national politics.

¹ W.E.G. Louw observed that Marais was widely known as such, *Huisgenoot*, 9 August 1940, and Nienaber-Luitingh notes that Marais was so labelled, M. Nienaber-Luitingh, *Eugène Marais* (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 1962). This chapter was presented in the seminar series on ‘The South African War: its causes, course and consequences’, Rhodes House, Trinity, 1999.

² ‘Vir die publikasie van ’n koerant is meer nodig as n klein bietjie oppervlakkige skoolkennis en een heel groote lot onbeschaamdheid.’ C.J. Mieny, *Leipoldt en Marais – onwaarskynlike vriende* (Pretoria: J. Lötter Publikasies, 1988) p.29.

³ For the first opinion, see Jack Cope, *The Adversary Within – Dissident writers in Afrikaans* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1982) p.99. This understanding of Marais as hero is further discussed in Chapter Seven. The editor of *De Volksstem*, called him a ‘litigation fanatic’, 11 November 1896.

Before discussing Marais's role, it is necessary to outline what is meant by Progressivism and the role *Land en Volk* played in the newspaper landscape, because, like Marais himself, the nature of Transvaal 'Progressivism' has itself received insufficient historiographical analysis, and is mentioned merely as a foil to Kruger's politics. Despite evidence to the contrary, the Progressive movement is still written of today as a unified movement and its own appellation as the 'Progressive' innovative sector of ZAR society is often taken at face value.⁴ This is a methodological error that obscures the real nature of the movement, and which will be discussed in this chapter.⁵ The contemporary figure, J.A. Hobson observed the pivotal political role of South African newspapers, calling them 'the great factory of public opinion'.⁶ Yet, as Schoeman observed, South African newspapers have still not secured sufficient attention, either as historical resource or as creator of public opinion.⁷ In general pre-1895 newspapers have received inadequate attention. Specifically, a discussion of the Progressive movement's mouthpiece is particularly overdue. Where *Land en Volk* has been used by historians, it has been simply as a source for political events in the ZAR, not as an agent, shaping the Progressive movement. Nor has the role of Marais as its editor been analysed.

Land en Volk's founding is thus discussed in the light of existing ZAR newspapers. There is a chronological assessment of the development and influence of

⁴ C.T. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition to Kruger, 1890-1895* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1970).

⁵ It is discussed under the sub-heading '1893 Election and the Vocabulary of Power'.

⁶ J.A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa: its causes and effects* (London: J. Nisbet, 1900) p.206.

⁷ J.M. Schoeman, 'Koerantberiggewing oor die krisisdag, 25 September tot 20 Oktober 1899: 'n kritiese metodoliese analise', MA, University of Pretoria, 1973, p.vii.

the 'Progressive' newspaper under the editorship of Marais from 1891 to the 1893 election, and until Marais ended his editorship in 1896.⁸ These years encompass the flash points of Marais's litigation, his flirtation with the use of Afrikaans as a medium in 1891, the 1893 election and the Jameson Raid of 1895. This is intended to contribute to the understanding of both the ontology of 'Transvaal Progressivism' and Marais's role in its creation and promotion.

* * *

Marais began work on the *Transvaal Advertiser* at a time when the ZAR was undergoing a period of rapid change, precipitated by the discovery of gold in 1886. Despite this upheaval, politics in the ZAR remained organised along traditionally individual lines, with no formally organised political parties. Although republican ideology was much alluded to in the political realm, it is hard to know to what extent burghers insisted on or were even cognisant of their republican prerogatives. Literate men kept abreast of Volksraad action through the press. Although there was an emphasis on participatory *volkswil* (people's will) and regular elections, the practical working of this republican democracy was circumscribed by inherent contradictions, like the devotion to strong leaders and a tendency to rely on the hereditary principle.⁹ Yet up until the election of 1893, the rhetoric of populism allowed Kruger to maintain

⁸ There have been discussions of the press in the immediate preamble to war. See, for example, S. Strauss, 'Beriggewing in *De Volksstem* en *The Star* gedurende die tydperk 1896-1899 oor gebeurtenisse wat gelei het tot die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog 1899-1902', MA, University of Pretoria, 1964. J.M. Schoeman, 'Koerantberiggewing oor die krisisdag, 25 September tot 20 oktober 1899: n kritiese metodoliese analise', MA, University of Pretoria, 1973 and D. Prinsloo, 'Die beoordeling in die Britse pers van sake in Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, 1896-1899', MA, Rand Afrikaans University, 1970. Few, however, have discussed events pre-1895 and not one has focussed on *Land en Volk*.

⁹ For example, Commandant-General Andries Hendrik Potgieter (1792 – 1852) was replaced upon his death by his son, Pieter Johannes (1822 – 1854) and Commandant-General Andries Pretorius (1798 – 1853) was succeeded by his son, Marthinus Wessel (1819 – 1901).

that he held the *volkswil* to be sovereign, which meant petitions and armed demonstrations received his Volksraad's attention, but his government was not prepared for individual attacks by a free press. Marais produced a political commentary column 'Glimpses from the Hoekie' in the *Transvaal Advertiser*.¹⁰ In 1889, Marais had his first interaction with Kruger when he reported on a conversation he had overheard in a Volksraad recess: two members of the committee conspiring to silence Jan Celliers, a Volksraad member who had been vocal in his opposition to a particular concession granted by Kruger. The following day, Kruger himself moved to disallow Marais right of entry to the press table. Marais wrote in response:

I had never thought the Chairman, that religious man,... whose every word is oiled with the grace of God, whose every phrase is mingled with biblical allusion, - I had never thought, I say that this man could utter anything he would blush to see published.¹¹

Thereafter relegated to the public benches, Marais continued to report on the Volksraad - the only change was that his column title was simply altered to 'Glimpses from the benches'.

***Land en Volk* – and the Progressive Faction**

The term 'progressive' has been adopted by various movements within South Africa. The Progressive Party in the Cape formed in the late 1890s, becoming the Union Party in 1908.¹² Just prior to Union in 1910, the Progressive Association of the Transvaal represented wealthier English-speakers.¹³ In 1891, however, what was

¹⁰ The 'Hoekie' was the press-corner.

¹¹ *Transvaal Advertiser*, 5 June 1889.

¹² In the 1898 election there were for the first time two well-defined political parties; after the election the Cape Progressives formed the opposition, lead by Sir Gordon Sprigg.

coming to be called the 'Progressive movement' was an association of individuals, who shared a common antipathy towards Kruger's regime rather than a cohesive policy to oppose him or an organised party structure. These men, an amalgam of Volksraad members and prominent citizens, began to consolidate as a political entity, seeking platforms of opposition to bridge the fissures created by their differing objectives.¹⁴

This shifting alliance of men needed a mouthpiece, preferably a Dutch-language paper, to counter the pro-Kruger *Pers* and the *Weekly Press*. The two papers both began publishing from 1889 under the editorship of Leo Weinthal.¹⁵ Another Dutch-language paper, *De Volksstem* under Frans Vredenrijk Engelenburg, although ostensibly unaligned, was also pro-government.¹⁶ The only independent Dutch-language paper, *Land en Volk*, belonged to T.J. Meyer. O.T. de Villiers had founded this Pretoria paper in October 1886, and it had been largely ignored.¹⁷ Meyer, after

¹³ Two generations later, in 1959, a group of United Party members of parliament broke away to form what they also called the Progressive Party.

¹⁴ For example, R.K. Loveday, a very vocal member of the Volksraad, strongly opposed all concessions and monopolies. Ewald Esselen, who entered political life in 1890, after serving as a High Court judge, was opposed to the high proportion of Hollanders in power and financial policy of the government. Lukas Meyer felt that personal liberties were being infringed upon, and he was hostile to monopolies, particularly the railway concession. Schalk Burger was a critic of government financial policy. J.F. Celliers was against concessions and monopolies. Some issues were shared points of concern. Kruger's Dynamite policy, for example, united Loveday, Meyer, and Burger in opposition to Kruger. Similarly, Loveday, Esselen and Celliers were all interested in the reform of the franchise policy. Gordon, *Growth of Boer Opposition*, p.194.

¹⁵ Weinthal (1865 – 1930) was born in Graaff-Reinet to a family of German-Jewish origin.

¹⁶ *De Volksstem* was founded on 8 August 1873.

¹⁷ G.R. von Wielligh, 'Die Tydperk tussen die Eerste en Tweede Taalbeweging', *Die Huisgenoot*, January 1922.

suffering both a lawsuit and a challenge to a duel by rival editors, tended to favour toothless editorials.¹⁸

By 1889, Marais had already begun to demonstrate his anti-Kruger credentials and was therefore approached by a Progressive Party consortium and offered the editorship of *Land en Volk*.¹⁹ Under Marais's control, *Land en Volk* introduced a new kind of journalism, a break from the staid Anglo-Dutch journalistic tradition, and a shift toward the muckraking of the American yellow press.²⁰ *Land en Volk* became the vehicle for the polemics and diatribes from the young Turks of the Progressive faction. Matters of the day were discussed in regular columns, like 'Sonder Reserf' (Without holding back) and 'Hans se Brief' (Hans's letter). Marais also created a column devoted entirely to political abuse called 'Swart Piletjies' (Little Black Pills), and as a contemporary observed, he started making a name for himself as the *enfant terrible* of South African journalism.²¹

¹⁸ Meyer was sued by Gluckstein of the *Pers* and challenged to a duel by Engelenburg of *De Volksstem* and was subsequently unenthusiastic about controversy. Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.49.

¹⁹ Marais filled a complex role as editor of *Land en Volk*, assistant editor of the daily *The Press* and the weekly *De Pers*, and assistant editor of the daily *The Observer*.

²⁰ Interestingly both *Land en Volk* and *De Volksstem* used American equipment in typing and printing. E. De Waal, 'The part played by Americans on the Witwatersrand during the period 1886-1899', MA, UNISA, 1971, p.169.

²¹ For evidence of Marais's growing reputation see, for example, the contemporary observations of J.H. Viljoen, *'n Joernalis vertel* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1953) p.44.

Marais entered into partnership with Jacob ‘Jimmy’ Roos (1869-1940) of the Johannesburg *Star*.²² In July 1891, Marais went from editor to owner when he and Roos bought *Land en Volk* for £500. They promised to:

expose corruption to the Volk, as the voice of the volk was the voice of righteousness;... on the political front: on the side of all Afrikaners, and especially on the side of the ZAR, and thus expected the support of every burgher in the ZAR.²³

Although there were repeated affirmations of political neutrality, the paper was increasingly pro-Joubert.²⁴ There were even public accusations that *Land en Volk* was owned by Joubert, which Marais and Roos vehemently denied upon his request, insisting that their aim was ‘support for the Afrikaner cause.’²⁵

At first this ‘cause’ took the form of abusing the president. Kruger was attacked for his ‘autocracy’, his tolerance of corruption, ‘his servitude to Dr Leyds’, his ‘love of Catholics, Jews and Hollanders’ and his ‘loyal help and support for Rhodes’.²⁶ This began to awaken public interest. As the Afrikaans fiction writer and Marais’s contemporary, G.R.Von Wielligh noted, *Land en Volk* only started to attract attention under Marais.²⁷ Roos and Marais promised to:

²² Roos had worked for the Argus Company’s director Francis Dormer on *The Cape Argus* and on the Johannesburg *Star* since 1889. In August 1890 he relocated to Pretoria, writing the *Star*’s column ‘Pretoria day by day’. See W.J. de Kock, *Jacob de Villiers Roos, 1869-1940, Lewenskets van ’n veelsydige Afrikaner* (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1958) p.16.

²³ *Land en Volk*, 7 July 1891.

²⁴ *Land en Volk*, 26 April 1892.

²⁵ *Land en Volk*, 23 June 1892, *Land en Volk*, 7 July 1891.

²⁶ *Land en Volk*, 12 April 1891; 19 January 1892; 22 March 1892; 12 May 1892, and 26 December 1892.

²⁷ Von Wielligh, ‘Die Tydperk tussen die Eerste en Tweede Taalbeweging’.

change the whole tone of the newspaper...to bring wrongdoing and iniquity under the judgement of the volk, because the voice of the volk was the voice of righteousness. ...[The paper] would be partisan, partisan towards all Afrikaners, and primarily on the side of the South African Republic....²⁸

There was an appeal to all readers to let their friends and neighbours know of *Land en Volk* and offers of a free first copy to boost readership and ensure subscribers. By April 1892, Marais and Roos celebrated the fact that circulation had doubled.²⁹ Marais had adopted a strategy similar to that used by Joseph Pulitzer – using sensational stories, like the attacks on Kruger and exposés of state corruption, to win a larger circulation, then having won an audience, propagating politics through the editorial columns.³⁰

Early in 1892, *Land en Volk* published an account of the dismissal of a civil servant Gert Ribbink for theft. Ribbink sued the paper, and Marais lost.³¹ In defence, Marais maintained that the policy of *Land en Volk* was to protect Afrikaner interests and that one of its principles was that Afrikaners could run the country as well as the Hollanders monopolizing the positions of power. It was thus necessary to draw comparisons between Afrikaans and Dutch officials and Marais was careful to couch the Ribbink case in terms of the Afrikaner-Hollander dichotomy that became a

²⁸ *Land en Volk*, 7 July 1891.

²⁹ *Land en Volk*, 26 April 1892.

³⁰ Michael Emery et al. *The Press and America – an interpretive history of the mass media* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1954, 2000) p.175. For example, Marais began by investigating corruption in the Selati railroad concession – members of parliament were purportedly bribed with spider-carts. Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.52. He noted that the incident had resulted in such government embarrassment that ‘...if anyone mentions the word ‘Spider’, he is the Republic’s enemy’. *Land en Volk*, 12 May 1891.

³¹ *Land en Volk*, 23 June 1892.

recurrent refrain in *Land en Volk*. The prosecution noted disparagingly that ‘it was no compliment for Afrikaners to be protected by such a rag’.³²



W.A. Schröder's cartoon of *Land en Volk*'s humiliation.³³

Conservative versus Progressive Press

As Piet Joubert remarked: ‘the [papers] tell you all the news, sometimes a bit confused or twisted but still ultimately the news’.³⁴ Both the pro-government press and the opposition press purported to be independent. Certainly, there exists some evidence of pro-government papers challenging particular policies of the state.³⁵ Engelenburg, editor of *De Volksstem* from 1889, insisted on press freedom, at least in

³² *Land en Volk*, 23 June 1892.

³³ W.A. Schröder's cartoon of Judge Kotze giving *Land en Volk* a thrashing with twigs labelled ‘£10 with costs’, had the caption ‘Welverdiend’ (Well deserved) in the *Pers* and ‘The Joys of Journalism (The Libel Case of the Week)’ in the *Press*, 25 June 1892. A787 184, Preller Collection, p.79, incorrectly dated to 1895.

³⁴ Translated from Afrikaans. Transvaal Archives (TAD) P Joubert, Joubert Papers, Uitgaande Stukke, II, A/1-A/3, (Archives vol.17) letter to J.S. Joubert, his son, 18 April 1893.

³⁵ See, for example the *Press*, 4 May 1891.

principle.³⁶ Particular papers, however, won the bulk of state subsidies and preferential placement of government advertisements, for which a sum of £6000 was allocated annually.³⁷ Kruger noted frankly that it would be simply suicidal to support the opposition press too.³⁸ The private backing of newspapers played an important role in lobbying popular opinion. As Lionel Philips observed, popular opinion in the ZAR was a ‘toss up’ and was open to being captured and capitalized upon.³⁹

Inter-paper rivalry occupied much editorial space. The Krugerites purchased *De Volksstem* from Jan Celliers, and appointed a Hollander, Dr Frans Engelenburg, as its editor.⁴⁰ Marais made enemies of the editors of *De Volksstem*, or ‘Volkssmet’ (blemish of the people) as Marais nicknamed it, early in 1892, and of the *Pers* (dubbed the *Pest* by Marais⁴¹) – calling them respectively ‘the newly arrived

³⁶ Gordon, *Growth of Boer Opposition*, p.x. For histories of other newspapers see P.G. Badenhorst, ‘Die geskiedenis van die *De Volksstem* 1873-1900’, MA, UNISA, 1944; M.E. van Zyl, ‘Die geskiedenis van *Het Westen* en *Die Volksblad*, 1904-1925’, MA, UOFS, 1978. For a broad overview see J.H.O. Du Plessis, ‘Die Afrikaanse Pers’, PhD, University of Stellenbosch, 1943.

³⁷ This was increased to £7 000 in 1895.

³⁸ *Land en Volk*, 21 July 1892, Notulen, Eerste Volksraad, 1892, art 855, *Land en Volk*, 12 January 1893. Kruger was quoted in the *Weekly Press*, 5 October 1895.

³⁹ Letter from Lionel Philips to A. Beit, 26 November 1892, in Maryna Fraser and Alan Jeeves (eds) *All that Glittered - Selected Correspondence of Lionel Philips, 1890-1924* (Oxford University Press, 1977) p.64. Rhodes, for example, achieved a hold on the *Star*’s editorial comment with his financial support, and the *Standard and Diggers’ News* joined forces with Kruger in anti-capitalist rhetoric against the mining houses. For criticism of the National Union and support of the Kruger regime see, for example, *Standard and Diggers News*, 3 November 1893. *The Critic* actually called it ‘Mr Kruger’s organ’, 22 February 1896. Jeeves has also shown how this trend continued up until the late 1890s, Alan Jeeves, ‘The Rand Capitalists and the Coming of the South African War, 1896-1899’, *Canadian Historical Papers*, 1973, p.61.

⁴⁰ This rankled because Jan Celliers, father of the poet, was an old family friend of the Marais family and part of the increasingly tight-knit coterie in Pretoria.

⁴¹ *Land en Volk*, 12 April 1892.

Hollander, Engelenburg' and the 'lying Jew, Weinthal'.⁴² *Land en Volk* kept up the chorus that all the pro-Kruger papers were edited by Hollanders,⁴³ and dismissed Engelenburg as just a 'government hireling'.⁴⁴ Much copy was made and sold out of the accusations of *Land en Volk* and the dyspeptic mutterings of *De Volksstem*.

The 'Progressive' nature of *Land en Volk* has to be understood in terms of a tussle over nomenclature against the changing background of the state. The difference between 'conservative' and 'progressive' press cannot be understood as a simple continuum, with the latter holding 'more enlightened' views in contemporary terms. Instead a gamut of opinion existed, reflected in idiosyncratic and vacillating editorial comment on issues as varied as racism and xenophobia.

The subtlety of Marais's private understanding of race was not manifest in the stark racism of *Land en Volk*.⁴⁵ Editorial comment was, for example, violently anti-Indian.⁴⁶ The 'Native Question' was discussed in the same tones as the conservative press adopted, with discussions of how to maintain the black labour reserves.⁴⁷ The Progressive faction was not *less* racist than the conservative. For example, the Progressive Schalk Burger opposed civil marriages between blacks – *for* which the President had argued.⁴⁸ Although highly prejudiced against Hollanders, *Land en Volk*

⁴² *Land en Volk*, 12 April 1892 and 6 July 1893.

⁴³ *Land en Volk*, 23 February 1892.

⁴⁴ *Land en Volk*, 11 June 1896.

⁴⁵ See Chapter Six and Chapter Seven.

⁴⁶ *Land en Volk*, 24 March 1891, 12 January 1893, 27 September 1894.

⁴⁷ *Weekly Press*, 12 October 1895; *De Volksstem*, 17 February 1894.

was more supportive than the government press of the rights of Uitlanders. No simple model may be constructed to demonstrate more ‘enlightened’ views held by Progressives on xenophobia.

The build up to the 1893 election and the Vocabulary of Power

The history of the pre-war ZAR under Kruger has been analysed until recently in terms of the situation promoted by the politicians *of the time*. This compels the historian to analyse in terms of a left and right continuum that did not exist. Political vocabulary is flexible and mutable.⁴⁹ Words like ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ serve as organising concepts and provide people with their basic categories of thought. Yet the words contain no fixed, diachronic meaning. The reification of labels (the infusion of abstractions with material existence) is never permanent, as politics is an ongoing power struggle and the competition over who defines the political terms is constantly renewed. For the historian to grant the politicians their self-adopted classification, is to allow them (even in a critical context) to transmit their own intellectual definitions and perpetuate their own definitions of the situation. The historian needs to transform the labels from analytical categories into political data and re-examine the political role such vocabulary played, moving as Green has it, from the ‘custodianship’ to the ‘critical analysis’ of language.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Press*, 5 June 1895. Also in the First Volksraad Debate 11-12 August 1897, the conservative faction argued for a distinction between civilised and heathen natives, while the Progressive J. de Beer countered that a ‘kaffir was a kaffir, whether educated or not’.

⁴⁹ The struggle for the progressive label has been chartered in other contexts. After 1895 the term ‘progressive’ would be the most popular self-designation of American politics. In America in the mid-1890s, people referred to themselves as conservatives and their opposition as radicals, within a decade the ‘good’ label was progressive, the ‘bad’ label was ‘conservative’. See David Green, *The Language of Politics in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987) p.1.

⁵⁰ Green, *The Language of Politics in America*, p. 267.

Through the process of reification, political vocabularies encapsulate definitions of political situations. The transmission to the voters is crucial, and it is also important in transmitting to the opposition. The transmission is particularly important when those under attack hold positions of power. As Green observes, the critic may dissent from the goals and values of those in power, yet if his own vocabulary reinforces the information selectively dispensed by the powerful, the criticism is undermined. The definition of the situation espoused by those in power becomes concealed in the vocabulary of those in opposition and the perspective of the powerful is reinforced as the critic is inadvertently co-opted by linguistic means.⁵¹

In *Land en Volk*, Marais used these linguistic encroachments to establish party lines. He promoted the Joubert faction's own vocabulary. The Progressive faction needed to focus attention on their opposition's record because they did not have one of their own to lean upon. Their strategy thus had to be negative rather than positive self-definition and they therefore defined themselves in terms of what they were *against*. The vocabulary of success for them was wrapped up in part, in the power of rhetorical confusion.⁵² They were able to establish a great discordance between language and political behaviour, and there was no necessary correlation between label and action.

The very assumption of a unifying label implied that the Joubert faction was a movement and disguised that they were in reality just a changing collection of anti-

⁵¹ See Green, *The Language of Politics in America*, p.16.

⁵² A recent parallel may be found in Ronald Reagan's enthusiastic adoption of F.D. Roosevelt's 'progressive' rhetoric in the 1980 election, which was designed not to clarify but to confuse. Green, *The Language of Politics in America*, p.55.

Krugerites. It indicated cohesion, a set of policies and a clear plan for the future. ‘Progressive’ was a metaphor built on the elements of movement and stability: forward movement without loss of stability.⁵³ It suggested modernity, a readiness to be an up-to-date industrialising power, without being radical or calling for revolution. It promoted the psychological and ideological distancing from the historical grip of foreign powers, particularly Holland. The antithetical ‘conservative’ label it forced (by linguistic implication) upon the rival faction insinuated a pejorative ‘reactionary’ outmoded identity, and served to camouflage Kruger’s innovations and deny his improvements. There is no easy way to quantify the effect of words upon voters.⁵⁴ The electoral results that are to be discussed, however, are astonishing. In effect, Marais helped render the Joubert faction the custodians of a powerful and vote-attracting label.

Caricaturing Kruger

The ‘Oom Paul’ of the popular imagination was a dour intransigent old man, against progress *qua* progress, and intent on dragging his fiefdom back into the eighteenth century, as he feathered the nests of his friends and relations. He is imagined, even in recent historiography, as the leader of a kleptocratic, backward government resisting modernization and unable to provide the economic infrastructure for the gold mines.⁵⁵ This bleak caricature of the real Kruger – routinely

⁵³ Green *The Language of Politics in America*, p.55. Interestingly, the ‘progressive’ label was hotly contested and fought over in America in 1912, as newspaper editor Walter Hines Page noted: ‘[We] now have Progressives, Halting-Progressives, Ultra-Progressives, Progressive Conservatives, Conservative Progressives and [Teddy Roosevelt].’ See Green, *The Language of Politics in America*, p.64.

⁵⁴ This issue is explored in a wider study of how significant language and rhetoric is in electoral campaigns. See Green *The Language of Politics in America*.

portrayed in the British press – was established, at least in part, and vigorously promoted by Marais.⁵⁶

Historians like Charles Van Onselen, for example, have demonstrated that what was argued by critics to be conservative often made sound political sense.⁵⁷ Prior to 1892, Kruger was perceived by contemporaries as a modernising force. The *Press* called him a moderate, converting the burghers from old-fashioned prejudices.⁵⁸ *De Volksstem* noted that pre-1891, Kruger was ‘the enlightened leader, the father of various new and liberal laws, the mediator between the Progressive public and the conservative Chamber of Representatives’.⁵⁹ He started industrialising as early as 1881.⁶⁰ He was tolerant of Jews and Catholics and was comparatively liberal in his relations with black people.⁶¹ Even Francis Dormer, of the anti-Kruger *Star*, conceded

⁵⁵ J.S. Marais, *The Fall of Kruger's Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961) and Gordon, *Growth of Boer Opposition*, are two significant examples of this trend, as Harries has argued. Patrick Harries, ‘Capital, State and Labour on the Nineteenth Century Witwatersrand: A Reassessment’, *South African Historical Journal*, 18, 1986.

⁵⁶ Dionè Prinsloo, ‘Die Beoordeling in die Britse Pers van sake in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, 1896-1899’, MA, Rand Afrikaans University, 1970, p.44. *Punch* caricatured him routinely as a hippopotamus, warthog, and other animals. The *Times*, which carried no cartoons at that time, achieved a similar effect through word portraits. But this stereotype was extended to the Boer population at large. On the day the first news of the Jameson Raid broke, for example, the *Times* carried an article on the Transvaal Boer: the illiterate Boer hiding his money under his bed and separating the wheat from the chaff by throwing it into the wind. *Times*, 1 January 1896. The *Times* did not, however, portray the Afrikaner in a consistently negative light, carrying articles from the *Standard and Diggers News*, for example. *Times*, 7 March 1899.

⁵⁷ Kruger was, for example, dubbed reactionary for refusing to replace the animal-powered tramway with an electric one – but the former system won him much electoral support from those supplied thereby with a market for draught animals and fodder. Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914* (London: Longman, 1982) p.115.

⁵⁸ *Press*, 15 February 1892.

⁵⁹ *De Volksstem*, 12 February 1891.

⁶⁰ Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History*, vol. 1, p.6.

that Kruger ‘does not want the Republic to lag behind the rest of South Africa in any matter that relates either to material progress or individual liberty’.⁶² In the political realm, Kruger could be flexible, as is demonstrated by his decision to create a Second Volksraad.⁶³ The historiography is divided on the Marais-Kruger relationship. The nationalist W.E.G. Louw said in 1940 that, although it has been said that Marais was ‘an irritating little stone in Kruger’s shoe’, he maintained he was far more: ‘a manly opponent of corruption and played a valuable part in maintaining the integrity of the Republic. The open letters he sent reveal admiration for Kruger despite their polemical tone.’⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Marais had a deep-rooted antipathy to Kruger. In fact, the Marais family enjoyed telling the story that when Kruger – then Commandant-General of the Republic – once dropped by, Mrs Marais, having no idea who the visitor was, asked him to wait on the *stoep* until her husband returned. Indeed, as one of the Marais sisters later recounted: ‘[Mother] wouldn’t put a quilt on his bed.’⁶⁵

From 1892, Marais initiated his campaign against Kruger through *Land en Volk*. Earlier he had attempted to reform the President with constructive criticism, even conceding that Kruger was the best statesman that the people of the ZAR could ever

⁶¹ *De Volksstem*, 31 July 1890. Many Progressive members were far more racist, particularly R.K. Loveday. Kruger, on the other hand, called for social but not legal distinction between black and white and, attempting to distinguish between educated and uneducated blacks, wished to exempt the former from stringent pass laws.

⁶² Francis J. Dormer, *Vengeance as a Policy in Afrikanerland: a plea for a new departure* (London: J. Nisbet, 1901), p.193, p.152.

⁶³ There is also external evidence to suggest that the President was not the obdurate enemy of progress. Indeed, Merriman, 3 August 1898, declared that Rhodes had pushed the Raid because he feared just such a reforming Republic. *Weekly Press*, 6 August 1898.

⁶⁴ *Die Huisgenoot*, 9 August 1940.

have chosen.⁶⁶ But from 1892 he abandoned reform for replacement. *Land en Volk* had helped to attach the label ‘Progressive’ to the nebulous notions of the members opposed to Kruger, and he therefore had to define Kruger as a conservative. Criticism was thus consistently couched in anti-conservatism terms, from legislative to personal acts.⁶⁷ *Land en Volk* did indulge in more absurd suggestions: that Kruger and Rhodes were in league.⁶⁸ *De Volksstem* criticised the ‘Americanized methods’ of the Joubert supporters, particularly the ‘foul personal attacks’ on individuals, which was an innovation in media technique.⁶⁹ A letter writer ‘Klein Joggum’ (almost certainly Marais himself) put forth in doggerel Afrikaans, as a parody of Kruger’s own speech:

I’m for Concessions, Monopolies etc
 I’m for Mansvelt’s school policy – ban English!
 I’m for appointing two financial ministers (they have to be Hollanders),
 The Volksraad has to be satisfied with my will, and must not dare think
 Or I’ll threaten to resign.⁷⁰

The antipathy was not one-sided. In 1893, Marais as sole editor (Roos left for the Cape Legislative Assembly in October 1892, selling his half to Marais⁷¹) found himself arrested by ZARPs, the state police, on the grounds of criminal libel. A *Land en Volk* article had claimed that Kruger, in spite of his £7 000 annual salary, had

⁶⁵ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.9; pers. comm.

⁶⁶ *Land en Volk*, 5 May 1891.

⁶⁷ Marais even attacked Kruger for being a Dopper, of the Gereformeerde Kerk, instead of a member of the Nederduitsch Hervormde (as was Joubert). *Land en Volk*, 12 January 1892. This was perhaps the height of hypocrisy for a self-professed pantheist like Marais.

⁶⁸ *Land en Volk*, 26 December 1892.

⁶⁹ *De Volksstem*, 1 November 1892.

⁷⁰ *Land en Volk*, 26 April 1892.

⁷¹ Roos entered the service of the Cape House of Assembly as committee clerk, and qualifying for the bar in 1896, relocated to Pretoria. He worked as a Reuters correspondent during the South African war. He was one of the earliest members of Gustav Preller’s Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap and provided financial support for *Die Brandwag* (The Sentry).

submitted two different accounts for travelling expenses for a visit to Colesberg – when in fact he had been a guest of the Cape government. Rumours began to circulate that the government wanted to close down *Land en Volk*. Young Progressive supporters took up arms and defended the press offices against a further ZARP (police) raid. Marais was also arrested in the Volksraad on the grounds of high treason, defended by Esselen, and found not guilty. The *Volkstem* called him a ‘litigation fanatic’.⁷² Preller records that Marais and his newspaper were not totally pro-Joubert, but utterly anti-Kruger.⁷³ In 1894, Marais announced his ambition to sue Kruger himself – intending to claim £10 000 damages for defamatory statements made against *Land en Volk*. Marais did, however, abandon this claim.⁷⁴

The Hagiography of Pious Piet

In addition to attacking its ‘enemies’, *Land en Volk* championed various individuals whose opinions were in line with editorial policy. R.K. Loveday, for example, was much quoted and lauded. Marais admired Lukas Meyer and Louis Botha for injecting life into the Progressive movement – Meyer in particular was held to have had an amazing influence on young Afrikaners. The Progressives’ leader, Piet Joubert, received a great deal of commendatory editorial opinion. Research on the role of Joubert within the Progressive movement has revealed his leadership as nominal. With his high piping voice and hesitant manner, he was not physically as imposing as Kruger. Joubert’s personal records reveal no input or role in controlling the Progressive press.⁷⁵ On public policy, he remained inarticulate – indeed often

⁷² *De Volkstem*, 11 November 1896.

⁷³ G.S. Preller, ‘Vroeë herinneringe aan E.N. Marais’, *Ons Tydskrif*, May 1936.

⁷⁴ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.92.

incoherent. He refused to clarify his platform, announcing that he would never ‘ask for a single vote’.⁷⁶ Joubert was an old man ‘made giddy with the idea of presidency’, as Polk said of Zachary Taylor.⁷⁷ The men behind his selection were Ewald Esselen and Lukas Meyer, who – Marais noted – had heralded a ‘new dawn’ for the faction.⁷⁸

Joubert was ambiguous on social policy and opaque on the Franchise Question. It is not clear whether Joubert was able to maintain his persona of ‘Pious Piet’ at a time when it was frowned upon to canvass, by having *Land en Volk* to do his promoting or whether *Land en Volk* was co-opted and encouraged because of Joubert’s recalcitrance. Perhaps they were of equal significance and were certainly mutually reinforcing. At the time when a political party was considered slightly disreputable, Joubert could distance himself from the election committees and *Land en Volk*’s partisan electioneering, maintaining his air of pious respectability, while the younger men, Meyer and Esselen, worked behind him to promote his candidacy.⁷⁹

Afrikaans Language in the press

Progressive opinion tended to oppose government education policy, because of the language issue.⁸⁰ From 1891, as Superintendent of Education, Dr Mansvelt began to implement the policy that had remained unenforced under his predecessor, S.J. du

⁷⁵ Joubert Papers.

⁷⁶ Joubert Papers, *Uitgaande Stukke*, II A, vol. 17, 4 March 1892.

⁷⁷ James Polk, *The Diary of James K. Polk*, 21 November 1846.

⁷⁸ Marais to Preller, 11 May 1923, quoted in Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p. 55.

⁷⁹ For evidence that political parties were viewed as disreputable see Gordon, *Growth of Boer Opposition*, p.259.

⁸⁰ *De Volksstem*, 10 August 1895 and see *Notulen Eerste Volksraad 1895*, art. 866.

Toit, that Dutch be the sole medium of instruction.⁸¹ This meant the withdrawal of state aid to schools at which this was not the case, which infuriated the English-speaking Uitlander parents. A proviso in the law, which allowed the use of English in English-speaking areas, provided Dutch was spoken for a set period each week (which varied) - provoked the ire of conservative members. The Progressive faction voted to have more English taught⁸², because, although there was resentment at seeing *landzoonen* (sons of the country/soil) debarred from civil service and replaced by Hollanders and Cape Afrikaners, there was an awareness of the commercial necessity of a proficiency in English.⁸³ *Land en Volk* assumed a slightly different position: pointing out that, while purporting to agree with Mansvelt, Kruger's elite tended to send their children to the Cape for their education.⁸⁴ *Land en Volk* feared that in trying to avoid turning their children into little Englishmen the parents that insisted on Dutch-medium might inadvertently turn them into Hollanders.⁸⁵

At least in part, this concern over language use by his readership led to a brief flirtation with publishing in Afrikaans in 1891. It is hard to estimate the demographics of *Land en Volk*'s readership.⁸⁶ An analysis of readers' letters is methodologically

⁸¹ Mansvelt, from Stellenbosch, was born in Holland and had taught for seventeen years in the Cape.

⁸² Notulen, Eerste Volksraad 1893, art. 991.

⁸³ See Notulen Eerste Volksraad 1892, art. 300.

⁸⁴ *Land en Volk*, 6 December 1894.

⁸⁵ *Land en Volk*, 2 May 1895.

⁸⁶ By contrast, the *Standard and Diggers' News* had a daily circulation of 6 000 by 1894. Similarly, the *De Volksstem*'s readership was approximately 5000, based mainly the platteland Preller Collection, 135, p.49. President T.F. Burgers started *De Volksstem*, manifesting an early awareness of a friendly newspaper's importance in a political career. S.P. Engelbrecht, *Thomas Francois Burger*, p.131. Financial problems meant circulation was

flawed as so many were simply written by the editors as appears to have been common at that time. The English-speaking politician, Percy Fitzpatrick, referred to it as 'the leading Dutch paper', but it struggled for readership and tottered on the brink of bankruptcy at times.⁸⁷ However significant their role, newspapers in the ZAR often faced financial difficulty. *De Volksstem*, for example, had been compelled to warn their subscribers:

Our ideal is to lead a God-fearing life, and we foster the hope that thereby we may inherit the eternal Kingdom. We should like to meet all our subscribers there, which will not be possible unless ... they forward their subscriptions. He who fail to do this... may have the life-blood sucked out of him by thousands of fleas as he is now sapping us ... We know a subscriber who regularly pays for his paper in advance...He has no corns; has never suffered from toothache, and his children never cry in the night.⁸⁸

Similarly, in 1892, it would appear that Roos and Marais faced formidable financial problems. Marais drew on the precedent set by S.J. Du Toit, the founder member of the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (Society of Real Afrikaners), who had started writing his Paarl newspaper, *Di Patriot*, in Afrikaans. Du Toit's paper began with 50 subscribers in 1875, and by 1881 there were 3 000.⁸⁹ Hoping to boost

limited to Pretoria. In the early 1870s, Piet Joubert, however, gathered funds and subscribers and prevented the newspaper's bankruptcy. J. Ploeger and H. Orban, *Besonderhede in verband met 'De Volksstem' en Wallach's Drukkers en Uitgewers Maatskappy Beperkt (1873-1960)*, p.10. From 1890, the ZAR government held 1125 of the 15000 shares. Ploeger and Orban, *Besonderhede*, p.13.

⁸⁷ Percy Fitzpatrick, *The Transvaal from Within: a private record of public affairs* (London: Heinemann, 1900) p.72.

⁸⁸ *De Volksstem*, 21 February 1874.

⁸⁹ In 1875, S.J. Du Toit established the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* and the 'Afrikaner Bond' in 1880. In 1878 'Onze Jan' Hofmeyr started the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Boeren Beschermings Vereniging*. Du Toit's group was populist, with middling and small farmers composing its supporters, while Hofmeyr's BBV and the Afrikaner Bond were composed of businessmen and large commercial farmers. The Bond presented a populist programme, which promoted economic support of Dutch-speakers, using the *Patriot* to promote Afrikaans. The BBV's mouthpiece the *Zuid-Afrikaan* disdainfully noted that brandy and the *Patriot* were the 'common enemies of civilisation'. The two groups merged, and Hofmeyr gained the ascendancy and the Bond turned its attention to the pragmatic advancement of Dutch-

Land en Volk's circulation, the decision was taken to start printing certain articles in Afrikaans. The introduction of Afrikaans language into the ZAR press by Marais illustrates how ostensibly nationalist developments often had an economic imperative behind them.⁹⁰

Marais made much mention of the 'opregte taal' (righteous language) and 'di ware Suid Afrikaanse taal' (the true South African language) was a recurring theme in letters and editorials.⁹¹ In order to stimulate the 'taal' he offered prizes for poetry and a short story about the Voortrekkers.⁹² Occasionally, Marais waxed polemical on those who opposed his use of Afrikaans: 'It's just people trying to be clever who hate their own language and people and embrace all strangers'.⁹³ After the 14 July 1891, however, there were no more main articles in Afrikaans, and there were only a few pieces and letters of 'Magoa' and the column 'Dokkies', and poems from *Di Patriot*. Towards the end of 1891 the use of Afrikaans ceased and *Land en Volk* was once again written largely in Dutch. This may have been in order for Marais to distance himself from S.J. Du Toit's political policy, which was becoming supportive of Rhodes.⁹⁴

speakers' interests within the British Empire, like securing property rights. See T.R.H. Davenport, *The Afrikaner Bond, 1880-1911* (Oxford, 1966).

⁹⁰ This conforms to Anderson's contention that capitalism had a 'vernacularizing thrust'. He gives the example of the Bible saturating the market of those who could read Latin, by the mid-seventeenth century, and publishers turning to peddling cheap vernacular editions. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983, 1991) p.39.

⁹¹ See *Land en Volk*, 17 March 1891 and *Land en Volk*, 6 January 1891, 20 January 1891, 31 March 1891.

⁹² *Land en Volk*, 23 September 1891.

⁹³ 'Dis maar net mense wat hulle slim hou, wat hulle ei'e taal en land en volk haat, en alle vreemdelinge tot sig neem.' *Land en Volk*, 3 February 1891.

Afrikanus Junior

A new gambit was required when the Volksraad imposed a draconian censorship law, Law 11 of 1893, and faultfinding newspapers faced the loss of the government subsidy. One way to circumvent both the libel law and the government's wrath was to couch criticism in the form of correspondents' letters rather than editorials. One letter-writer, who called himself 'Afrikanus Junior', was particularly vituperative. He purported to be a *landzoon*, a war veteran of the older generation, who was increasingly alienated by Kruger's regime. He began with an 'Open Letter to the Honourable President Paul Kruger', protesting the preponderance of Hollanders in government.⁹⁵ The Concessions Policy came under attack, as did the preponderance of Hollanders in the state bureaucracy. A particularly vitriolic letter was aimed at Dr Leyds, with the use of the offensively personal 'gij' instead of 'u'.⁹⁶ His last letter was advertised in *Land en Volk* the week before it appeared – the editors claimed they had received the letter too late and would have to publish it the following week, but did announce that it dealt with the latest governmental scandal. The letter duly appeared addressed to Kruger and was heavily critical.⁹⁷ J.P. Meyer, J.J. Burger, Piet Roos and J.J. Malan, candidates standing for the Volksraad, also had their personal failings enumerated.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Irrespective of Du Toit's defection, Marais still welcomed *Ons Klyntji*, the first magazine in Afrikaans. *Land en Volk*, 26 March 1896. The relation between the Cape and the ZAR was complex see M. Tamarkin, *Cecil Rhodes and the Cape Afrikaners – the Imperial Colossus and the Colonial Parish Pump* (London: Frank Cass, 1996).

⁹⁵ *Land en Volk*, 5 May 1891.

⁹⁶ *Land en Volk*, October 1894.

⁹⁷ *Land en Volk*, 3 October 1895.

⁹⁸ *Land en Volk*, 7 February 1895.

There was much speculation over the true identity of ‘Afrikanus Junior’ – particularly by those who had been his subject matter. J.P. Meyer, for example, demanded to know the letter-writer’s identity.⁹⁹ Afrikanus Junior became something of a household name – so that one advertiser even used it to draw attention to his tobacco and maize.¹⁰⁰ There was speculation that Jan Celliers or even Piet Joubert was the perpetrator – but the former died before the letters stopped and the second’s usual rhetoric was entirely removed from the style of the writer.¹⁰¹ It was neither Carl Jeppe nor Loveday as Marais himself tantalizingly conceded, saying that he had known the letter-writer long before those two men and that his name was linked to ‘great services to his country’.¹⁰²

‘Afrikanus Junior’ was almost certainly Marais himself. He admitted that he was the author in an interview shortly before his death, with F.G.M. Du Toit.¹⁰³ Government attempts to find the damned elusive ‘Afrikanus Junior’ miscarried. Marais was warned by his typesetter that a civil servant had offered him £120 for the name and handwriting sample of the man behind the pseudonym, £50 for the name alone. Marais then set up a scheme to embarrass the government. He told his typesetter to deliver a false name, that of a ‘Mr J. de V. Smit of the Waterberg’, which the civil servant duly paid for. In the next edition, Marais revealed the story – donating the money to a hospital and embarrassing the government.¹⁰⁴ Using

⁹⁹ *Land en Volk*, 14 February 1895.

¹⁰⁰ *Land en Volk*, 2 May 1895.

¹⁰¹ Some believed it was Joubert, see Memorials to First Volksraad 13 June 1895.

¹⁰² *Land en Volk*, 21 February 1895.

¹⁰³ DuToit, *Eugène Marais*, p.55.

Afrikanus Junior, Marais was free even under the censorship laws to utilise the ‘Americanized’ methods of personal attack.

Kruger’s Hollanders

There was a joke popular in Pretoria in the 1890’s: ‘Two Dutchmen meet and the first says to the second: ‘Do you want to tell me you’ve been in the country for six hours and you have not yet been given a position in the civil service?’’¹⁰⁵ There was growing resentment over the apparent Dutch infiltration of the machinery of society - in the railways, education and public service.¹⁰⁶ It was felt that once in office, they tended to appoint other Dutchmen.¹⁰⁷ The second most important position in the government went to a Hollander. Dr W.J. Leyds became state attorney of the ZAR in 1884 at the age of 25, after finishing his legal studies in Amsterdam. Four years later, the *volksraad* elected him to the post of state secretary, essentially the primary political office after the presidency. The *Kapenaars*, or Cape-educated men, like Chief Justice J.G. Kotzé, Ewald Esselen and Marais himself, provided vocal opposition to Leyds. *Land en Volk* commented repeatedly on Kruger’s ‘servitude to Leyds’.¹⁰⁸ In self-defence, Leyds conjectured about the political unreliability of the *Kapenaars*, noting indignantly:

¹⁰⁴ In a tragicomic postscript, Marais told Du Toit that shortly afterwards a little-known civil servant from the Northern Transvaal named Smit arrived at the newspaper offices saying that his job was threatened by lingering governmental belief in his culpability. Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p.55.

¹⁰⁵ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.36.

¹⁰⁶ See P.J. Van Winter, *Onder Kruger se Hollanders*, 1937-8, volume I, chapter two.

¹⁰⁷ This sort of national nepotism was obviously not limited to the Dutch sector. For example, Germans were hired extensively in the Department of Mines, which was under the German J. Klimke in the 1890s.

¹⁰⁸ *Land en Volk*, 22 March 1892.

I look upon them in general as enemies (though disguised enemies) of our independence... They ... want English supremacy... The *Kapenaars*, and our young Boers hate the Hollanders, hate them more than the English... According to them it is the Hollanders who are the intruders.¹⁰⁹

De Volksstem urged that Hollanders be appointed over Cape Afrikaners who would be more likely to be pro-English.¹¹⁰ The Hollander issue was a constant concern within *Land en Volk*. It was raised in the major political crises, particularly during those over the Railway Concessions and Dynamite Concessions. Much emphasis was laid on the fact that Hollanders received 65% of the votes in the newly established railway company and that a Hollander, S. Wierda had been appointed head of the Department of Public Works. Marais had a steady refrain: Kruger prefers Hollanders and Jews, 'who encircle him like vultures', to 'loyal sons of the soil'.¹¹¹

A statistical analysis of officials made by the *Weekly Press* in 1897, however, revealed that only 15% of civil servants were Dutch¹¹², the majority of whom had 15 to 20 years experience and were enfranchised citizens.¹¹³ As even the Progressive Carl Jeppe conceded: 'With the exception of Dr Leyds, no Hollander had any important part in shaping Mr. Kruger's views.'¹¹⁴ It must be remembered, however, that Hollanders occupied the higher ranks of the civil service, with the Dutch elite

¹⁰⁹ W.J. Leyds, *Onze Eerste Jaren in Zuid-Afrika*, 1939, quoted in Marais, *Fall of Kruger's Republic*, p.16.

¹¹⁰ *De Volksstem*, 20 February 1890.

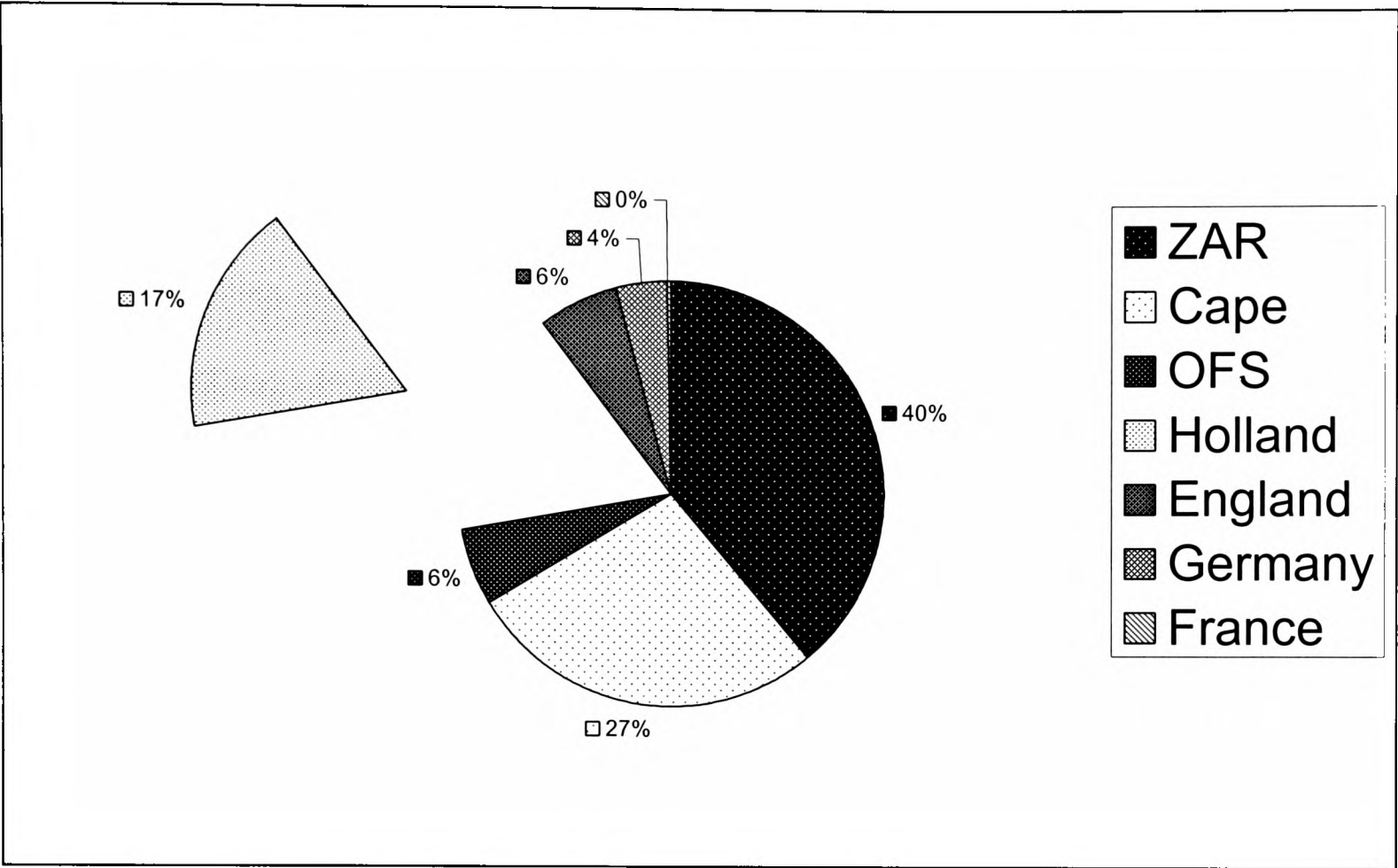
¹¹¹ *Land en Volk*, 29 December 1892. See also *Land en Volk*, 12 May 1892, 13 October 1892.

¹¹² *Weekly Press*, 10 July 1897.

¹¹³ *Weekly Press*, 4 July 1896.

¹¹⁴ Carl Jeppe, *The Kaleidoscope Transvaal* (London: Chapman, 1906) p.177.

controlling the Railway Concession and the Education Department, while Afrikaners found positions in the lower levels in the civil service, like the police force.¹¹⁵



Nationalities of Civil Servants

The Hollander Question is significant on two grounds. Firstly, Marais, like many of his colleagues, defined himself as an Afrikaner, not only as opposed to the English, but also as opposed to the Dutch. Calling oneself an Afrikaner and creating a coterie of fellow Afrikaners, was a reaction, not only against the Anglo-faction, but also against the Hollanders’ power bloc. A sense of ethnic identity, or ‘Afrikanerdom’, required not only the existence of a community with a distinct set of institutions and a separate language, but also a community consciousness of these entities, an awareness of a set of needs and desires in conflict with those of other

¹¹⁵ Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, vol. 2, *New Nineveh* (London: Longman, 1982) p.113.

groups.¹¹⁶ *Land en Volk* helped in the creation of this awareness through the articulation of an enemy, relying on xenophobia and anti-Semitism, and creating a composite figure from 'the Jew', the 'foreign capitalist' and the 'Uitlander'.

The popularisation of xenophobia was wrapped up in issues surrounding land and landlessness. It was at this period, the end of the nineteenth century, that landlessness was becoming a factor in the process of class differentiation in Boer society.¹¹⁷ Prior to that, whether or not land was owned made less difference to one's status as adult Boer male.¹¹⁸ With these material changes, an ideology of the land was created in the press. The names adopted by the community, 'Boer', and 'Afrikaner' were themselves loaded with imagery of the land and with farming. Although Cape-educated, Marais referred to himself as a '*landszoon*' and made much of the right of '*landszoonen*' to participate in the government of the ZAR, investing them with the rights of autochthony.¹¹⁹ Marais, like others on the Progressive front, wrapped up this land ideology in the rhetoric of anti-foreign capitalists.

¹¹⁶ Jeffrey Butler, 'Afrikaner Women and the Creation of Ethnicity in a Small South African Town, 1902-1950' in Leroy Vail, (ed.) *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989) p.55.

¹¹⁷ See Timothy Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa: the Southern Highveld to 1914* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1986).

¹¹⁸ With approximately half of the white rural families being non-landowners in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, *bywoner* was not a pejorative term. With industrialisation and modernisation, the *bywoner* ceased being an asset and became an albatross around the neck of wealthier farmers.

¹¹⁹ It is interesting to compare this with the notion that Africans were 'naturally part of the land' as Saul Dubow has noted, with the cities being regarded as an alien environment. The 1923 Urban Areas Act was couched in these rhetorical terms, as a protective measure to assist the African in an alien environment. Saul Dubow, 'Race, civilisation and culture: the elaboration of segregationist discourse in the inter-war years' in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in twentieth century South Africa* (Harlow: Longman, 1987).

The second significant point of the Hollander Question was the power of the Progressive press to distort the issue until it loomed alarmingly in the public perception, a method that was used to great political effect in the run-up to the 1893 election. *Land en Volk* was able to shape the Hollander Question in such a way as to make this essentially urban phenomenon important to the rural constituency. Then Marais staunchly maintained that once Joubert assumed office the Hollanders' domination would cease.¹²⁰ *Land en Volk* even demanded the dismissal of W.E. Bok as minute keeper of the Executive Council, asking 'Is the Afrikaans nation so poor and weak that we must always run to Uitlanders for assistance? The Volksraad must show the world that we can rule ourselves.'¹²¹ The Progressive members of the Volksraad joined the assault on Bok, and a Landszoon was appointed in his stead.

The 1893 Election

Prior to 1893 the elections proceeded with little public interest. A dramatic change occurred in 1893, and one of the reasons for this change was the influence of Marais's *Land en Volk*. It was the first time that there were two main camps, 'Progressive' and 'Conservative', indeed the first time an election campaign had been organised, which started a year prior to the campaign itself, with a propaganda war.¹²² Prior to 1893, the presidential elections in the Z.A.R. were routine: as no distinct and separate political parties existed, the candidates simply appeared to answer questions

¹²⁰ *Land en Volk*, 29 September 1892.

¹²¹ *Land en Volk*, 10 May 1892.

¹²² The 1893 election has received some attention in J.A. Mouton, 'Generaal Piet Joubert in die Transvaalse geskiedenis', *Archive Year Book*, 20, I, Cape Town, 1957 and intensively, in J.M. Vivier, 'Die Presidentsverkiesing van 1893 in die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek', MA, University of Potchefstroom, 1970.

addressed to them at small public meetings.¹²³ The candidates ran as *volksleiers* (popular local leaders) rather than political leaders, with personality rather than party platform being pivotal to their success. The 1893 election was different. As *The Transvaal Advertiser* observed:

never in the history of this country has there been so powerful a stirring up of the people – except in the case of a war, or an impending outbreak of hostilities – as has taken place during the first two months of this year.¹²⁴

By 1893, Kruger had already spent a decade serving two terms of office, with a broad ambition to maintain economic and political independence, but his annual *rondreis* (election tour of the outlying districts) of 1892 had revealed much discontent.¹²⁵ In the run-up to the election, questions were raised by rural constituencies as to when an Afrikaner would replace Leyds as State Secretary.¹²⁶ The *rondreis* brought many awkward questions for Kruger.¹²⁷

Election committees were established and, although Marais contended that the one in opposition to Kruger was merely a ‘volk’s congress’ to monitor Kruger’s committee, there is evidence to suggest that it was the Joubert faction who first initiated the committee.¹²⁸ Esselen, the chairperson of Joubert’s electoral committee,

¹²³ J.S. Du Plessis, ‘Die Onstaan en ontwikkeling van die amp van die staatspresident in die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (1858-1902)’, I. *Archive Year Book*, 18, 1955, p.141.

¹²⁴ *The Transvaal Advertiser*, 20 February 1893.

¹²⁵ According to law 1858, art.78 the president was expected to travel the towns and villages in the Republic wherever there was a government office, in order to give voice to individuals concerns.

¹²⁶ *Land en Volk*, 23 February 1892. Leyds had already been replaced by one as Railway Commissioner.

¹²⁷ The campaigning saw little violence, aside from occasional reports of bad language and drunkenness. *Land en Volk*, 23 February 1893.

¹²⁸ *Land en Volk*, 25 May 1893, yet the Joubert committee was already active by August 1892. See *De Volksstem*, 30 August 1892.

appointed Marais and Roos members of the central committee for Pretoria. *Land en Volk* provided a series of questions for its readership to pose to Kruger:

Why was Dr Leyds re-appointed? Why not a competent Afrikaner?
Why is our country the only one in the world where a foreigner holds the reins?
Why did the first 75 miles of the Hollander Railway Company cost 20 000 a mile, whereas the Concession lays down 9 500 pounds?
Why were we told that the Delagoa Bay Railway must be built by a Hollander company to free us from dependence on England, and now we find ourselves dangerously in debt to England?¹²⁹

There was for the first time immense public interest in the election. This was a new phenomenon, as *De Volksstem* maintained disapprovingly: there had never been anything like this before.¹³⁰ It may be argued that this was at least in part the result of the appearance of the opposition press: *Land en Volk* helped to create the movement by consistently articulating the ideas and views of a group of disparate personalities. An inter-newspaper war erupted, with allegations of crass methods directed particularly towards *Land en Volk*, and accusations of simony and concealment aimed at the press supportive of the government.¹³¹ Joubert had to deny connections with the National Union, in an advertisement in *Land en Volk*.¹³² The *Transvaal Advertiser* also supported Joubert, but to a lesser extent. For example, H.C. Marais, the sub-editor and Marais's brother, accused Kruger of using state coffers to promote his campaign.¹³³

¹²⁹ *Land en Volk*, 13 October 1892.

¹³⁰ *De Volksstem*, 19 November 1892. The *Press* echoed this sentiment, 9 March 1893.

¹³¹ *Land en Volk*, 28 February, 16 March 1893; 2 March 1893; *De Volksstem*, 26 January 1893, 25 January 1893; *Press* 16 January 1893.

¹³² *Land en Volk*, 12 January 1893.

Land en Volk published letters, both serious and satiric (some from Afrikanus Junior)¹³⁴, poems, manifestos and advertisements, like ‘Citizens of the Transvaal! Don’t sleep, vote for PIET JOUBERT, the hero of Amajuba, the man of honour, beloved of his volk. Don’t be fooled by clever talk.’¹³⁵ The 1893 election was shaped in the public’s imagination as a struggle between Dutch and Afrikaner hegemony – between Kruger and Pious Piet’s anti-Hollander campaign (as the *Press* dubbed it).¹³⁶ This was the natural extension of the rhetoric evident in *Land en Volk* from 1891, visible, for example in the Ribbink case and anti-Leyds campaign. A Marais editorial insisted: ‘The choice between these two gentlemen is plainly and only the choice between Afrikaner and Hollander’.¹³⁷ The third candidate, Chief Justice Kotze, was largely ignored by the press. Kruger won the election, but Joubert managed to win a large number of votes. *Land en Volk* made no class-based appeals to vote for Joubert. Local, rather than regional, differences in popularity played an important role in winning Kruger 7 881, Joubert 7 009 and Kotzé 81 votes.¹³⁸ The manipulation by the Progressive faction of this Afrikaner-Hollander dichotomy was thus probably important in winning Joubert his significant electoral support.¹³⁹ *Land en Volk* offered its readers a post-election orgy of sour grapes.¹⁴⁰ Editorial opinion maintained that the

¹³³ *Transvaal Advertiser*, 23 January 1893.

¹³⁴ *Land en Volk*, 29 March 1892.

¹³⁵ ‘Burgers van Transvaal! Slaapt niet en stemt voor PIET JOUBERT, den held van Amajuba, den Behouder van zijn Eed, den lieveling van zijn Volk. Laat u niet verleiden door slimme praatjes.’ *Land en Volk*, 2 February 1893.

¹³⁶ Gordon, *Growth of Boer Opposition*, p137.

¹³⁷ *Land en Volk*, 23 February 1892.

¹³⁸ *Buitengewone Staatscourant der Z.A.R.*, 14 April 1893.

¹³⁹ Gordon, *Growth of Boer Opposition*, p.138.

elections had not been honestly conducted, and the Progressives were the victims of wholesale fraud.¹⁴¹ This escalated to revolutionary talk, with bombastic threats of violence if a recount was refused.¹⁴² There appear to have been electoral irregularities.¹⁴³ There was an official objection by Joubert's camp and an investigation.¹⁴⁴ Joubert appealed cautiously for patriotic calm in an open letter in the *Volksstem*.¹⁴⁵ *Land en Volk*, however, passionately decried the election, noting that those who had protested had been treated as 'as if they were Hottentots or dogs'.¹⁴⁶ The new Volksraad, however, decided the election had been legal.

¹⁴⁰ Gordon has discussed the slight regional differences that did occur, but he concedes these are minimal. *Growth of Boer Opposition*, p.209.

¹⁴¹ *Land en Volk*, 28 February 1893. Certainly 14 971 votes out of an electoral list of 17 574, with only 2 603 voters abstaining appeared unlikely.

¹⁴² *Land en Volk*, 2 March 1893.

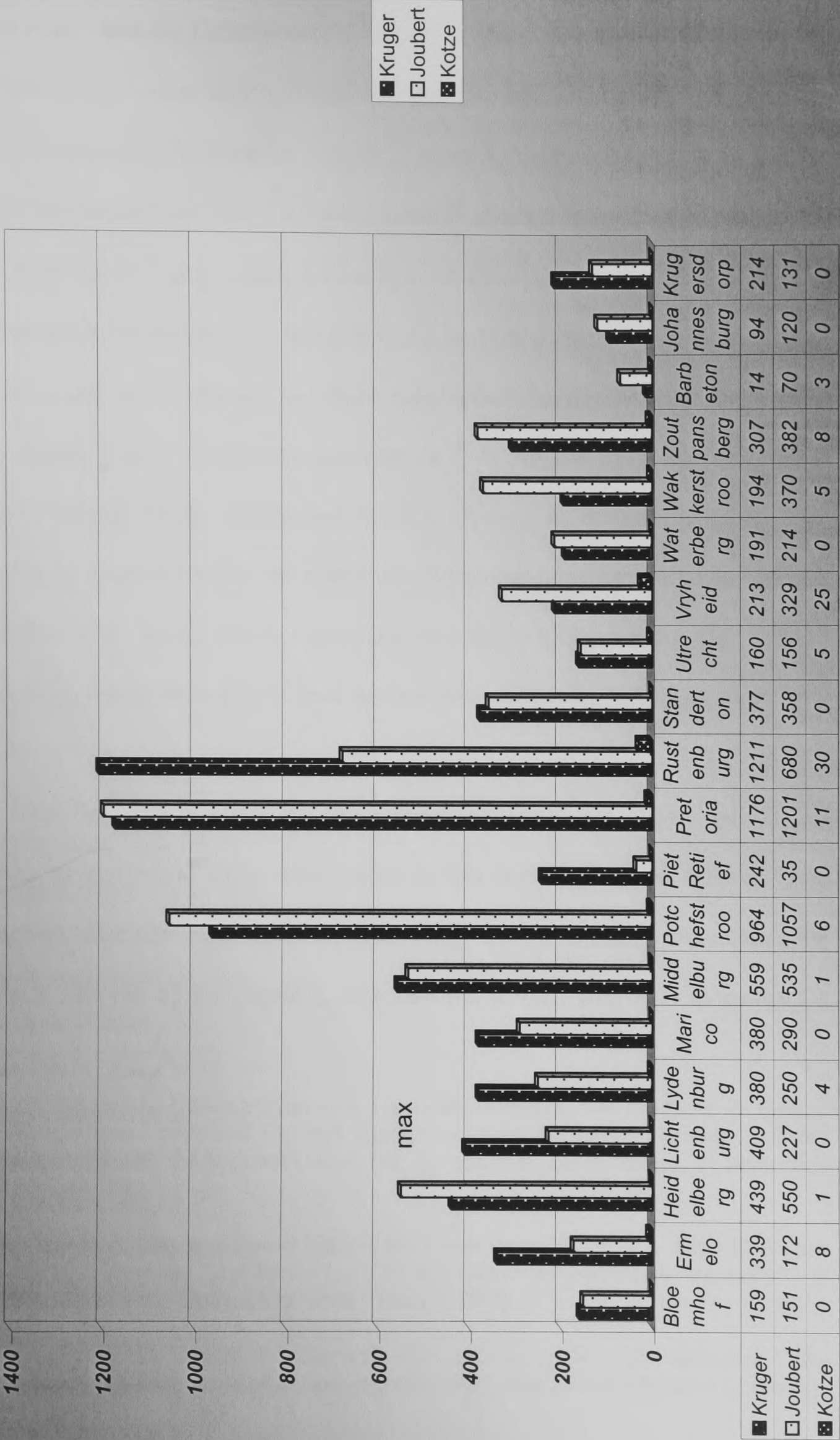
¹⁴³ Detailed by Gordon, *Growth of Boer Opposition*, p.210.

¹⁴⁴ *Land en Volk*, 20 April.

¹⁴⁵ *De Volksstem*, 22 April 1893.

¹⁴⁶ *Land en Volk*, 20 April 1893. *Land en Volk* also published a copy of Joubert's letter, 20 April 1893.

1893 Election Results, from data from the Volksstem, 21 February 1893



Land en Volk – and the Uitlanders

Before 1893, there had been tacit co-operation but no formal alliance between the Progressives and the National Union.¹⁴⁷ Among the Progressives, only Esselen openly allied himself with the National Union.¹⁴⁸ Esselen introduced Marais to the Reform Committee¹⁴⁹ and Charles Leonard, a Johannesburg lawyer and President of the Transvaal National Union, noted that *Land en Volk* presented the views of men like Esselen and other ‘younger and more enlightened’ burgers who pointed out the dangers arising from the autocratic government.¹⁵⁰ In August 1893, a representative from the National Union approached Marais, offering to buttress *Land en Volk* financially, in return for which its stance would become more pro-Uitlander. Marais sold *Land en Volk*, for £2 500 to a company founded by Uitlanders for this purpose, undertaking to remain editor for at least another two years, at a monthly salary of £50.

After the 1893 election, the Progressives were still not quite a party. Carl Jeppe was an ineffectual whip, while Lukas Meyer assumed a more dominant role than Joubert after the 1893 election. The Progressive’s working committee, the *Volksmacht* (Power of the People), was devoted to lobbying to nationalise the

¹⁴⁷ August 1892 saw the Uitlanders form the Transvaal National Union to agitate for reform. The pro-Kruger press circulated rumours trying to convey the impression that Joubert’s faction were allied with the National Union. See, for example, *De Volksstem*, 21 September 1892, 14 January 1893.

¹⁴⁸ Esselen was in contact with Lionel Philips, see Letter from Philips to A. Beit, 12 August 1894, in Maryna Fraser and Alan Jeeves (eds) *All that Glittered- Selected Correspondence of Lionel Philips, 1890-1924* (Oxford University Press, 1977) p.82.

¹⁴⁹ Mieny, *Leipoldt en Marais – onwaarskynlike vriende*, p.34. C.L. Grimbeek, ‘Die wederydse beoordeling van Boer en Uitlander, 1886-1899’, MA, Rand Afrikaans University, 1969.

¹⁵⁰ C. Leonard, *Statement of Charles Leonard on the position of the Uitlanders in the Transvaal with history of the franchise* (London: 1896) and Ellis Bartlett and Charles

Nederlandsch Zuid Afrikaansche Spoorweg Maatschappij (NZASM). With the late 1893 formation of the 'Volksvereniging van der Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek' (People's Organisation of the ZAR), party-politics took new shape, coalescing over a 'potpourri of liberal concerns', like the concessions policy, monopolies, selection of landdrosts and the franchise question.¹⁵¹ Kruger countered this step with the establishment of the 'Burgermag' (Citizen Force) in April 1894. Rhodes' intrigues increasingly drew the Progressives and Conservatives together in 1894. The evidence of a coming crisis, Gordon argues, caused Kruger to work towards national unity, and, as a conciliatory gesture, he appointed Esselen as State Attorney.¹⁵² J.S. Marais in *The Fall of Kruger's Republic*, has shown how a growing flirtation between Progressives and Uitlanders led Kruger to try to woo back the Progressives.¹⁵³ A movement towards *toenadering* (rapprochement) was made between Esselen and Koos Smit, chairman of Kruger's election committee, to forge a group to maintain 'the independence of the country, to support the government in all measures which are just and in accordance with the constitution and to pass conciliatory laws in regards to the Uitlanders'. Kruger's Burgermag and Joubert's Volksvereniging agreed to come together in the interests of Boer unity. Almost immediately, however, the joint political union fell apart over whether to admit Uitlanders.¹⁵⁴ The fracture of this

Leonard, *The Transvaal Crisis: the case for the British (Uitlander) residents* (Westminster, 1896).

¹⁵¹ Preller, *Historiese Opstelle*, p.191.

¹⁵² Gordon, *Growth of Boer Opposition*, p.180.

¹⁵³ Marais, *Fall of Krugers Republic*, p.58.

¹⁵⁴ The members of the conservative Burgermag wanted to admit only burghers, while the Progressive Volksvereniging delegates wanted anyone who had lived in the ZAR for at least three years. *Land en Volk*, 15 November 1894.

group into its component parts was a clear sign that political parties were becoming defined and entrenched.¹⁵⁵

The Jameson Raid

At the end of 1895 there was rumour of revolution on the streets of Johannesburg.¹⁵⁶ In a special edition of *Land en Volk*, 30 December 1895, the facts of the Raid were given and the manifesto of the National Union was published. From testimony given by Marais at the trial of the Reform Committee, it appears that Joubert received a telegram from the *landdrost* of Marico and then sent Marais and his son-in-law, Abraham Malan, to Johannesburg to hold talks with the Uitlanders in order to gauge the seriousness of the situation. Marais and Malan met Charles Leonard and Abe Bailey in the Rand Club, the latter both maintaining their peaceful intentions and their lack of involvement with Jameson. Marais suggested that they open channels of communication with the government to assert this position. After hearing Marais and Malan report back, the Executive committee agreed to send the two emissaries back to hold a covert meeting – Marais was chosen for his command of English and rapport with the Uitlanders. From the Uitlander perspective, he was known as a ‘liberal-minded Dutchman who sympathised with the Uitlanders’.¹⁵⁷ Marais tried to convince the anxious members of the Reform Committee of the hopelessness of their ambition and that the government would be just if negotiations

¹⁵⁵ *De Volksstem*, 14 November 1894.

¹⁵⁶ There is a vast literature on the Jameson Raid. There are many contemporary works whose authors run the gamut of bias from the historiographical Christopher Saunders, ‘Historians and the Jameson Raid’, *South African Historical Journal*, 36, 1997 to the partisan. Charles Thomas, whose *Johannesburg in Arms 1895-96* (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1896) dedicated to Rhodes as a ‘slight token of admiration for his policy and genius’, recounts the daily events while Jameson made his ‘daring endeavour’ to overthrow the ‘yoke of Boer dominion’.

were opened.¹⁵⁸ Joubert was accused of acting without consultation in selecting and sending Malan and Marais, and his resignation was called for, to which Joubert responded by instituting action for libel.¹⁵⁹

The Raid boosted Kruger's popularity and served to halt the advances made by the Progressives.¹⁶⁰ Marais had to break off his links with Uitlanders and the Johannesburg subsidy for *Land en Volk* came to an end. He had to resort to commercial print jobs and increase the advertising in each edition of *Land en Volk* to unhealthy proportions. Circulation dropped, especially after the 1893 Press Act number 11, was replaced by the new Press Act of 1896, law 26 or the 'Hou-Jou-Bek Wet' (shut-your-trap law), as Marais called it, which imposed heavier censorship clauses on the press.¹⁶¹ 'Afrikanus Junior' had to go into forced retirement as the Act banned the use of pseudonyms in letters to the press. The law stated that 'Liberty of the press is permitted, saving the liability of the printer and publisher for all articles amounting to libel, insult, or attack upon anyone's character', every newspaper, periodical or magazine had to contain the name and address of printer, publisher and editor. Articles of a political or personal nature had to be signed by the author who was obliged to provide his full name and address. It was also enacted that in the event of an indictable offence the editor, whether the author or not, would be punished as the offender – the penalty being a fine not exceeding £50 or a prison sentence not

¹⁵⁷ Ian Colvin, *The Life of Jameson* (London: Edward Arnold, 1922) vol. II p.95.

¹⁵⁸ Marais's testimony, State Attorney Archives. S.P. Vol. 99: Sworn Statement by Marais, 10 January 1896. See also *Land en Volk*, 6, 13 February 1896, *Transvaal Advertiser* 5 February 1896.

¹⁵⁹ *Land en Volk*, 6 February 1896.

¹⁶⁰ The election outcome for 1898 was: Kruger 12 858; Schalk Burger 3 750, Joubert 2 001.

exceeding six months. The State President was given the power of prohibiting the distribution of any printed matter, which in his opinion was contrary to good morals or dangerous to the peace and order of the state. Violation incurred a fine not exceeding £250 or imprisonment not exceeding one year.

In 1896 with his freedom of speech curtailed, his newspaper circulation dropping, his subsidy lost, and his political ambitions hard hit, Marais suffered a great personal loss when his wife died in labour.¹⁶² In the state of shock and uncertainty that followed, he was urged by Esselen to study law in London. On the 3 December 1896, Marais transferred the editorship of *Land en Volk* to J.Y. O'Brien, former editor of the *Press*, with the understanding that Marais would continue to steer the political course.¹⁶³ Indeed *De Volksstem* suggested he planned to avoid the press restrictions by writing from abroad.¹⁶⁴ Marais continued to write to the *Daily Mail*, also wrote a long letter 'Onder de Rooinekken' (Among the English), advocating pan-Afrikaner union with the Cape.¹⁶⁵ Aged twenty-five, the first part of his career behind him, Marais travelled to London, where he remained for five years, studying law at the Inner Temple. Little is known of Marais' reaction to the outbreak of war or his communication with Boer leaders. It is possible, however, to deduce the strength of

¹⁶¹ *Land en Volk*, 13 February 1896.

¹⁶² See *Transvaal Advertiser*, 18 June 1895 and the *Press*, 19 July 1895. This paragraph is drawn from oral evidence collected by Du Toit before Marais' death. While Marais' tendency to exaggerate is known, his biographer accepts much of it as true, although documentary evidence is scant. As this material is intended to round off the interval before the South African War and does not affect the main arguments presented, it is included. Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*.

¹⁶³ *De Volksstem*, 2 December 1896.

¹⁶⁴ *De Volksstem*, 28 November 1896.

¹⁶⁵ *Land en Volk*, 5 January 1898.

his pro-Boer feelings from the scheme he helped concoct in 1902, to smuggle arms to General Beyers, the uncle of his late wife. In 1902, informing the British authorities of a trip to Belgium, Marais joined an expedition in Antwerp to convey medicine and ammunition to Beyers' beleaguered commando. They hoped to dupe the English and Portuguese authorities by purporting to be a scientific expedition and to travel along the Sabie, then follow the Limpopo to Zoutpansberg.¹⁶⁶ Delayed by unexpected setbacks and malaria, the expedition had only reached Beira when they had news of the Treaty of Vereeniging – the war was over.

Conclusion

The discussion of Marais's *Land en Volk* contributes to the understanding both of the Progressive movement and of the role of the individual in its creation and promotion. From 1890 to 1895, there was a rise among the ZAR boers in opposition to Kruger, for reasons varying from hostility towards his perceived corruption and inefficiency, to disagreement with his policies on concessions, education and the franchise. A small clique of critics gathered together and utilised the press as a mouthpiece. *Land en Volk* gave a lead and focus to the Progressive Movement, contributing to the construction of the movement by consistently articulating the ideas and views of a group of disparate personalities. Marais used his newspaper as a powerful agency for Progressive advocacy in its own right, helping to entrench public understanding of socio-political relations. Through his editorial polemic and diatribe, he helped shape popular opinion in favour of the Progressive faction. In the labels 'progressive' and 'conservative' there was a disjunction between nomenclature and practice, but Marais helped capture the label, caricaturing Kruger as a regressive

force. The spectre of Hollander domination was largely the creation of the Progressive press, a bogey that haunted Kruger in the run-up to the 1893 election and refashioned the election in the public mind as a clash between Hollander and Boer, foreigner and *landszoon*.

Marais was able bring official maladministration and government policy under scrutiny, stimulating the reorganisation of public life. He introduced sensationalised, ‘American’ methods of reporting, arousing both acrimony and public interest in formerly narrowly parochial concerns. As a critical and watchful eye on the government’s policies, *Land en Volk* contributed to the greater scrutiny of the public service. The unsayable managed to be said through anonymous letters, particularly the vehicle of ‘Afrikanus Junior’.

From 1893, for the first time in the ZAR, the ‘party system’ was introduced – albeit still largely in terms of the cult of the personality. There was the dawning of a rudimentary public political consciousness based on the ideology of parties. Marais played a significant role in contributing to the process of building this political consciousness. As Lionel Philips observed, popular opinion in the ZAR was a ‘toss up’ and was open to being captured and capitalized upon.¹⁶⁷ Marais helped call the toss and, in so doing, helped change the face of ZAR politics.

¹⁶⁶ The Sabie is now called the Save River.

¹⁶⁷ Letter from Lionel Philips to A. Beit, 26 November 1892, in Maryna Fraser and Alan Jeeves (eds) *All that Glittered – Selected Correspondence of Lionel Philips, 1890-1924* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) p.64.

An aspect of the roles of Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller in the Second Language Movement, c.1905 – 1927.

A Boer guerilla fighter, Denys Reitz, described the defeated Boer commandos drifting into the camps in 1902, as a rabble of ‘starving, ragged men, clad in skins or sacking, their bodies covered with sores, from lack of salt and food ... their appearance was a great shock to us who came from the better-conditioned forces in the Cape.’¹ The Afrikaner seemed defeated – family farms were destroyed and 26 000 women and children were dead in the concentration camps.² In the post-war education system, Afrikaans children were believed by many to be threatened with anglicisation. A common – if apocryphal or exaggerated – story told by Afrikaners was that those children who spoke more than the three hours of ‘Dutch-Afrikaans’ permitted at school had to wear a placard that read ‘I’m a donkey, I spoke Dutch’.

A mere generation later, however, the ragged army was in power. By 1933 the Afrikaans language had been entrenched by the Second Language Movement, the Afrikaner had political control and a greater measure of economic autonomy. The Language Movement was a loosely associated, predominately male group, working after the South African War to foster a sense of Afrikaner identity, chiefly through the

¹ Denys Reitz, *Commando – A Boer journal of the Boer War* (London: Faber and Faber, 1929, 1983) p.320.

² There is a vast amount of literature on the South African war; for firsthand descriptions of the camps see, for example, Rykie van Reenen (ed.), *Emily Hobhouse – Boer War Letters* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1984, 1999) and for a good general description of the

promotion of the entrenchment of Afrikaans as an official language. Analysts have shown that the standardisation and consolidation of the Afrikaans language by the Language Movement was crucial to the construction of an Afrikaner identity.³ The establishment of Afrikaans as an ‘official language’ in government, science and education has been delineated.⁴ These descriptions of the *taalstryd* (language struggle) – both those that are objective and those that are vehemently partisan – usually concentrate on the accomplishments of the *taalstryders* (those who struggled to entrench the Afrikaans language). For constructionist historians, these people are middle-class culture-brokers consolidating the vernacular in order to manufacture a workable identity and assimilate the lower classes; for Afrikaner nationalists these people are heroes.⁵ Both Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller have been depicted as examples of such heroes – as life-long campaigners for the Afrikaans language.⁶



Perhaps because of the rapidity of the rise from ‘ragged army’ to ‘nation’, complete with its own language and political control, there has been a consistent focus

war’s effects on white Afrikaans speakers, see F. Pretorious, *The Anglo-Boer War, 1899 – 1902* (Cape Town: 1985).

³ The penetrating analysis by Isabel Hofmeyr is the best source. Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and ‘ethnic identity’, 1902-1924’, in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (Harlow: Longman, 1987).

⁴ Dan O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, capital, and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934-1948* (Cambridge, 1983) and Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words’.

⁵ For a discussion of the first school, the ‘constructionists’, see Chapter One and, for an in depth discussion, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983, 1991); for the second school see, for example, the influential F.A. Van Jaarsveld, *The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1868 – 1881* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1961).

⁶ F.G.M. Du Toit, *Eugene Marais – Sy Bydrae tot die Afrikaanse Letterkunde* (Amsterdam: N.V. Swets, 1940) p.235. There are a legion of triumphalist accounts: R. Antonissen, *Die Afrikaanse Letterkunde van Aanvang tot Hede* (Johannesburg, n.d.), E.C. Pienaar, *Taal en*

on the ‘achievements’ of this transition. Attention has been paid to events like the creation of the Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap (Afrikaans Language Association) (1905), the Afrikaanse Taal Vereeniging (Afrikaans Language Union) (1906), the founding of the S.A. Academy (1909), and the recognition of Afrikaans by provincial councils in 1914, and by parliament in 1925. Titles like M.S. Du Buisson’s *Die wonder van Afrikaans; bydraes oor die ontstaan en groei van Afrikaans tot volwaardige wêreldtaal* (The wonder of Afrikaans – contributions on the development and growth of Afrikaans to a fully-fledged world language), T.J. Haarhoff’s *The Achievement of Afrikaans* and E.C. Pienaar’s *Die Triomf van Afrikaans* (The Triumph of Afrikaans) epitomise the manner in which the story of the *taalstryd* has been told.⁷ Even Hofmeyr, in her nuanced analysis of the Second Language Movement, has tacitly accepted that the struggle ultimately delivered what the *taalstryders* desired.⁸ Where opposition to the aims of the *taalstryders* does receive rare mention, it refers to outside hostility from English-speakers in state positions and commerce, and a few figures in church circles, rather than any intra-movement dissidence.⁹ In the popular

Poësie van die Tweede Afrikaanse Taalbeweging (Cape Town, 1926), P.C. Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging* (Pretoria, 1922).

⁷ M.S. du Buisson, *Die wonder van Afrikaans; bydraes oor die ontstaan en groei van Afrikaans tot volwaardige wêreldtaal* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers, 1959), Theodore Johannes, *The Achievement of Afrikaans* (South Africa: C.N.A., 1934) and E.C. Pienaar, *Die Triomf van Afrikaans* (Cape Town, 1943).

⁸ Davenport simply preserves Marais and Preller in historiographical amber in their mid-thirties as ‘northerners’, who wanted to promote Afrikaans above Dutch. T.R.H. Davenport, *The Afrikaner Bond, 1880 -1911* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1966) pp.264-265.

⁹ Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and ‘ethnic identity’’, p.108. Similarly, a recent analysis by Gouws and Ponelis records that there was opposition solely from ‘clergymen’ and intellectuals with ‘strong ties to the Netherlands’. R.H. Gouws and F.A. Ponelis, ‘The Development of Afrikaans and the Lexicographical Tradition’ in Ladislav Zgusta (ed.) *History, Languages, and Lexicographers* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1992) p.77.

historical imagination, the *taalstryd* remains a great success story, the victory of a shared vision of like-minded men (and even some women).

Yet people intimately involved in the process did not always agree with this roseate picture. This chapter presents an aspect of the roles of two *taalstryders*, Marais and Preller. The discussion follows their roles from the immediate post-war milieu in 1902, following the trajectory of their involvement in developments within the Language Movement until roughly 1927, when they abandoned the movement. The focus is on their growing disillusionment with the movement they had helped initiate, in order to provide a window into the understanding of the intra-movement conflict, precipitated by personal idiosyncrasies and regional differences, particularly between the Cape and the Transvaal (already hinted at in Reitz's description).

Language and the making of National Identity

Language is central to the activity of historians. Literary or documentary evidence is perhaps the most complete and explicit kind of historical evidence. As Corfield has it, 'language cannot evade history, nor historians language'.¹⁰ The importance of language in understanding nationalism has been asserted from the eighteenth-century German Romantic notion of a 'Herderian community of language', to discourse theorists of today.¹¹ As Breuilly has contended, the idea that language is a basis for making political distinctions is a modern notion.¹² Different temporal and

¹⁰ Penelope Corfield, *Language, History and Class* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) p.29.

¹¹ Johann Gottfried Herder (1744 – 1803) maintained that each language promoted a different 'mode of thought' and each community had a different language and, therefore, a unique mode of thought. Discussed by John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) pp.56-64.

geographical examples demonstrate the importance of language in the formation of national identity. In Africa, languages were – and are – central items to the assemblages that make up different ‘tribal’ cultures.¹³ Often a determination to replace a European language as the medium of state bureaucracy added momentum to the nationalist cause. Sometimes it was hegemony of other ‘tribal’ languages that was resented: for example, in Swaziland in the 1960s, IsiZulu was challenged with SiSwati, which proved pivotal to the Swazi nationalist agenda.¹⁴ In Asia, as Seton-Watson has shown, the ‘literary upliftment’ of vernacular speech was a decisive stage in the formation of national consciousness.¹⁵ In the late eighteenth century, for example, Ukrainian (or ‘Little Russian’) was scornfully tolerated as a language of yokels, but as Ukrainian-medium poetry, prose and texts on grammar were produced in the early nineteenth century, a national consciousness coalesced around them and by 1846 the first nationalist organisation was founded. Similarly, in India, as Chatterjee has demonstrated, the crucial moment for the development of modern Bengali came in the mid-nineteenth century, when the bilingual elite sought to provide their ‘mother tongue’ with the linguistic equipment to enable it to function as a tool in modern bureaucracy. A network of presses, magazines, newspapers and literary societies was created outside the purview of the state, through which the new

¹² John Breuilly, ‘Approaches to Nationalism’, in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation* (London: Verso, 1999) p.152. Of course, as Balakrishnan has argued, there are ways in which nations are not conceived in languages. Many nations, for example, share the same language. Balakrishnan, ‘The National Imagination,’ p.207.

¹³ Leroy Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989) p.11.

¹⁴ Hugh MacMillan, ‘A Nation Divided? The Swazi in Swaziland and the Transvaal, 1865-1986’, in Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, p.303.

¹⁵ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: an enquiry into the origins of nations and the politics of nationalism* (Boulder: Westview 1977) p.187.

language was consolidated.¹⁶ The current ebullition of nationalist movements represents the same ambitions that mobilised the nationalist agendas of a hundred years ago. Once again, linguistic demands have surfaced, especially in the territories of the former Soviet Union. Hroch has observed this phenomenon in Estonia, for example, where under the Soviet Union, Russian had been decreed the language of public life and where now knowledge of Estonian is a precondition of civil rights. Similarly, the Institute of Slovak Literature has promoted a linguistic argument for national independence in Slovakia.¹⁷ Another recent example is provided by the Roma people, a floating population of twelve million, who want recognition as a ‘non-territorial’ nation based on their shared language.¹⁸

Language is intimately connected to one’s sense of self. In addition, as Anderson has shown, the very palpability of language generates the idea of a definable shared community.¹⁹ He has argued that the expansion of a framework of ‘public opinion’ – expressed in popular newspapers and magazines, and often linked to the growing importance of elected assemblies in the running of government – made the standardisation of language important.²⁰ In similar vein but specific to Afrikaner identity, Hofmeyr has shown that the vernacularising thrust of the Afrikaans language

¹⁶ See for example, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New “Indian” Art* (Cambridge, 1992) and Partha Chatterjee, ‘Whose Imagined Community?’ in Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation*, p.218.

¹⁷ Miroslav Hroch, ‘From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation’ in Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation*, p.90. He does note that the linguistic movement operates in conjunction with the political, and seldom (if ever) in isolation.

¹⁸ ‘Europe’s Gypsies lobby for nation status’, *The Guardian*, 28 July 2000.

¹⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983, 1991).

²⁰ As has been discussed in Chapter One, Anderson has shown that capitalism and more specifically, print-capitalism, has helped create the vernacular movements.

associations, established in 1905 and 1906, spawned a succession of interconnected organisations which began to link teachers, clerics, small farmers, student organisations, lawyers and journalists into a constituency. In 1914 provincial councils passed a ruling that permitted the teaching of Afrikaans up to Standard IV, which necessitated printers, linguists, publishers and distributors to produce the teaching materials.²¹ Afrikaner women's organisations, which had arisen during and immediately after the South African War, worked particularly among the poor, ethnicising poverty and in so doing, incorporating poor whites into the Afrikaner nation.²² Post-Union politics also contributed to the objectives of the language lobby. Union had not meant unity and many disaffected groups existed, which J.B.M. Hertzog was able to mobilise behind him when he broke away from the ruling South African Party (SAP) in 1914 to form the National Party (NP) that same year. The SAP appeared to attract the support of wealthier farmers and mining interests, alienating urban workers and small farmers, who were drawn to the NP. The language lobby received much support from the NP: Hertzog provided a political home for many 'language men', as Hofmeyr records, 'from whence they could continue with their work of forging a language'.²³ The 1914 Boer Rebellion lent impetus to the movement, particularly afterwards with the establishment of the *Helpmekaar* (Co-

²¹ Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and 'ethnic identity'', pp. 106–110.

²² The role of women in defending ethnic identity through women's institutions has been examined by, for example, Jeffrey Butler, 'Afrikaner Women and the Creation of Ethnicity in a Small South African Town, 1902-1950' in Leroy Vail, (ed.) *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989); Lou-Marie Kruger, 'Gender, community and identity of women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the Volksmoeder discourse of *Die Boerevrou*, 1919-1931', MA, UCT, 1991 and Louise Vincent, 'The Mothers of Invention: Gender, Class and the ideology of the Volksmoeder in the making of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1918-1938', D.Phil., Oxford, 1997.

²³ Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and 'ethnic identity'', p.107.

operation) movement which paid rebels' fines (ensuring material reward for having behaved as 'Afrikaners') and funded cultural organisations. In 1918, Afrikaans became a subject in two universities and won status as a third language when it was legislated that the word 'Dutch' in the constitution included Afrikaans for official purposes outside the House. The Nationalist coalition victory in 1924 saw legislation conferring full official status to Afrikaans in May 1925.

Second Language Movement

While the First Movement to promote Afrikaans was restricted to the Western Cape, revolving chiefly around the group the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (The Association of True Afrikaners), the newspaper *Di Patriot* (The Patriot) and the figure of S.J. Du Toit,²⁴ the Second Language Movement was more extensive and heterogeneous, ranging across the provinces and represented by many different personalities. It was a reaction to what was perceived as Alfred Milner's anglicisation policy, which was intended to transform the republican Afrikaners into English-speaking colonists, intending to 'Wipe out the last trace of Africanderism and damn the consequences'.²⁵ Milner had made it clear in his infamous letter of December 1900 to Major Hanbury Williams, that he meant to use the Republics' defeat to extend English culture and restrict Dutch.²⁶ English was therefore made the sole official

²⁴ Discussed briefly in Chapter Two and extensively in T.R.H. Davenport, *The Afrikaner Bond, 1880-1911* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1966).

²⁵ M.A. Basson, *Die voertaalvraagstuk in die Transvaalse skoolwese* (Pretoria, 1944) p.46.

²⁶ The policy was not as chauvinistically pro-English as was imagined. Denoon has, for example, shown that the Director of Education, appointed by Milner, had sympathy for Afrikaans and regretted the lack of literature available in it. The reason why he was opposed to Dutch-medium education was that Afrikaans children grew up speaking Afrikaans rather than Dutch, experiencing difficulty in the latter and that higher education in Dutch necessitated relocation to Holland. Donald Denoon, *A Grand Illusion* (London, 1973) p.76.

language after the war and the medium of instruction in the schools. The teaching of Dutch had been guaranteed in the peace treaty, but the number of hours was restricted to three. The Cape also abandoned obligatory knowledge of Dutch as a prerequisite for entry into the civil service. English was already pervasive: for example, during the war the Boer generals had often written their dispatches in it. Both Preller and Marais expressed themselves less comfortably in Afrikaans – both thought in English and often switched to English in serious discussion.²⁷

Marais and Preller

Marais had returned to Pretoria immediately after the Treaty of Vereeniging in 1902. Martial Law was in force, and an Afrikaans-Dutch newspaper could only exist on condition of neutrality, with leading articles pre-submitted to the Colonial Secretary for approval. Approached by the Director of the State Press, Marais accepted the conditions and received permission to re-open *Land en Volk*, subsidised by the colonial regime at £500 a quarter. Dr Frans Engelenburg, whose pre-war role has been discussed in Chapter Two, was perceived as a fervent Krugerite, and had not received permission to restart a newspaper after the war.²⁸ Debilitated by malaria and is growing addiction to morphine, Marais needed an editor to shoulder much of the work. He chose Gustav Schoeman Preller, a 27 year-old articled clerk, who had worked in the Department of Mines, acted as war correspondent for *De Volksstem* and *De Zoutpansberg Wachter*, and who had been deported as a prisoner-of-war to

²⁷ There was much linguistic diversity in ‘home languages’ of Afrikaners: for example, Leipoldt and J.D. Kestell spoke English at home, whereas Engelenburg and Levi used Dutch. J.H. Viljoen, *’n Joernalis vertel* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1953) p.43 and Du Toit, *Eugene Marais*, pp.237–238. Hertzog corresponded with his fiancée in English, while he was a student. D.F. Malan used English when writing letters. At Stellenbosch University the students used English in debates and journals. Moodie, *Rise of Afrikanerdom*, p.40.

India.²⁹ Immediately after the war, he had attempted to reclaim his previous job in the Department of Mines.³⁰ The Mines had offered Preller only a temporary job for two months at £20 per month, and he was incensed that Milner's assurances to the 'new British citizens' apparently meant nothing.³¹ Preller had intended to emigrate to Argentina with a party of *bittereinders* (those who fought to the 'bitter end' of the South African War), but was recommended to Marais by a mutual friend, P. van Hoogenhout Tulleken.³² Marais urged Preller to stay in order to help rescue his *volk* (nation) from adversity and degradation.³³ In a postscript Marais added that the offer was contingent on their 'getting along with each other'.³⁴ Their friendship, however, developed quickly and lasted for the rest of their lives.³⁵ So for the *volk*'s moral good and £25 a month, Preller became editor of *Land en Volk*.³⁶

²⁸ He received permission to restart *De Volkstem* in 1903.

²⁹ A 787 Preller Collection, Vol. 23, F.V. Engelenburg to Preller, 4 October 1899.

³⁰ A 787 Preller Collection, Band 237: Preller to Mynwese, 2 September 1902.

³¹ A 787 Preller Collection, Vol. 237: Preller to Mine, 26 October 1902.

³² Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller', p.100. Marais and Preller had first come into contact with one another in 1891, when, while working as sub-editor of *The Press*, Marais had rejected a short story of Preller's adding that it was not wholly without merit. G.S. Preller, 'Vroeë herinneringe aan E.N. Marais', *Ons Tydskrif*, May 1936.

³³ A 787 Preller Collection, Vol.182, Marais to Preller, 15 September 1902.

³⁴ Leon Rousseau, *Die Groot Verlange*, p.161.

³⁵ Preller's biographer maintains that they were 'soulmates', based on their shared love of their nation and land, literature, culture and science. Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller', p.101.

³⁶ The paper was subsidised by the government and received revenue from government notices. Colonial Secretary, 1078, 072/02. W.E. Davidson to Milner, 19 January 1903.

Land en Volk appears to have been the first and, until 1903, the only Afrikaans-language newspaper to re-open.³⁷ Although its publication was sanctioned and it even received government funding, it was not permitted to discuss politics.³⁸ On 20 September 1902, four months after the Treaty of Vereeniging, the first post-war edition of *Land en Volk* appeared and continued in the investigative vein Marais had forged in the pre-war Transvaal, discussed in the previous chapter, exposing administrative scandals in the Milner regime.³⁹

Milner urged Marais to teach English-language skills through *Land en Volk*.⁴⁰ Marais refused, but in the politically charged situation, initially kept silent on the language issue. Others were not as quiet: in reaction to what was perceived as Milner's anglicisation attempts, 'Christian National Education', which promoted Dutch as mother language, was initiated and Taalbond members like Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr, began to promote the use of Dutch publicly. There appears not to have been much initial opposition by the general public to the use of English in the schools.⁴¹ It

³⁷ After the war, Izaak Wallach sought to reopen *De Volksstem*, but the authorities refused permission fearing alliance between *Land en Volk* and *De Volksstem*. C.S.076/02. A subsequent request was granted and it reopened in March 1903.

³⁸ W. van Heerden, 'Preller die joernalis', *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, December 1975, p.269. Why it was allowed to re-open is open to speculation: perhaps Marais's opposition to Kruger was considered a positive factor. Possibly it was simply that Marais and Preller posed little threat – they were two young men, one suffering from malaria, and Preller knew few people of influence.

³⁹ W. Van Heerden, 'Gustav S. Preller', *Die Huisgenoot*, 29 May 1931, p.45. They published a letter written by Milner to Chamberlain, concerning the replacement of Afrikaans farmers by English colonists. He contended that the farmers were in debt to the government and when they fell behind in their payments, their farms could be purchased cheaply and distributed to English colonists. *Land en Volk*, first post-war edition.

⁴⁰ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.176. Denoon, *Grand Illusion*, p.90. See also Milner to Major Hanbury Williams, 27 December 1900, in C. Headlam (ed.) *Milner Papers*, quoted by Marks and Trapido, 'A White Man's Country', p.17.

⁴¹ Denoon, *Grand Illusion*, p.90.

did rankle with those who were becoming the new Afrikaner elite; but, initially, they proved unsuccessful in attracting pupils to the Christian National Dutch-language schools that they were starting to establish.⁴² Stellenbosch professors, like W.J. Viljoen, sought the solution in the Vereenvoudigde Nederlandse Spelling (V.N.S.) movement, which was an attempt to render Dutch easier for Afrikaners, while keeping its basic form and vocabulary.⁴³ In 1903 Hofmeyr and a group of Western Cape Afrikaners revived the Zuid-Afrikaansche Taalbond, dormant during the war, to develop knowledge of Afrikaans, set exams in Dutch grammar and South African history and promote the publication of Dutch textbooks. Hofmeyr wanted to use Dutch rather than Afrikaans, because of the rich Dutch literary tradition, but also advocated the simplification of the Dutch spelling to make the language more accessible. Two years after the Taalbond was revived, on 6 March 1905, Hofmeyr gave a lecture entitled 'Is 't ons ernst?' (Are we in earnest?), in which he warned of the dangers of anglicisation, and asked whether the Afrikaner was serious about Dutch being taught in the schools or whether they were content to let language equality be a mere fiction.

Marais and Preller reacted immediately. Marais had long been concerned over the domination of Dutch bureaucrats in the ZAR, as we have seen in the previous chapter, and both he and Preller were enthused by the new *taalstryd*. In a series of articles called 'Laat't ons Toch Ernst Wezen!' (Do let us be in earnest!), Preller took the cause up in *De Volkstem*, publishing the first in a series of articles which was to

⁴² Denoon has shown how the DRC schools were initiated. Denoon, *Grand Illusion*, p.90. The competition for the educational control of the youth has been discussed elsewhere, see M.A. Basson, 'Die Britse Invloed in die Transvaalse Onderwys, 1836-1907', *Archives Yearbook*, 1956. Sandra Swart, *The Rebels of 1914: Masculinity, Republicanism and the Social Forces that shaped the Boer Rebellion*, MA, University of Natal, 1997, pp.61-62.

become the manifesto of the Language Movement, calling not only for the preservation of Dutch, but for the establishment of Afrikaans.⁴⁴ The fight against English was open, direct – the battle with Dutch far more intimate: as André Brink observed ‘English was a material and political threat, but Dutch jeopardized the very *raison d’être* of Afrikaans by humiliating it as a ‘kitchen language’.⁴⁵

Preller and Marais contested this view, demanding complete schism between Afrikaans and Dutch and contending that ‘ideally Afrikaners should speak and write Afrikaans, learn Dutch and read both’. A combined campaign ran in the two newspapers, *De Volkstem* and *Land en Volk*, from March to June 1905, in which Preller and Marais advocated the adoption of Afrikaans as a professional, written discourse. They argued that Afrikaans was the ‘true language’ of the people; that Dutch and Afrikaans should be kept distinct from one another and – if Afrikaans had no literature – it was ‘up to the people to put this right’.⁴⁶

⁴³ Viljoen travelled to Holland to consult Dutch linguists on how to effect simplification.

⁴⁴ The articles ran in *De Volkstem* from 19 April to 14 June 1905, and shortly afterwards they were collected and printed as a pamphlet ‘Gedachten over de aanvaarding ener Afrikaanse schrijftaal’ (Thoughts on the acceptance of an Afrikaans written language). On the 30 March 1905 (three weeks after Hofmeyr’s lecture and three weeks before his first article in *De Volkstem*) there was correspondence between Preller and Du Toit on the issue Afrikaans as *skryftaal* GKA, SJT – 3/1. Preller to Du Toit, 30 March, 15 April 1905. (Argief gereformeerde kerke in Suid-Afrika) S.J. Du Toit Collection. Preller did not publicly associate himself with Du Toit, perhaps because of J.H.H. De Waal’s antipathy towards Du Toit. Quoted in V.E. D’Assonville, *S.J. du Toit van die Paarl, 1847-1911* (Weltevredenpark: Marnix, 1999) p.335. The overlapping of the two Language Movements is discussed by G.S. Nienaber and P.J. Nienaber, *Die Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Beweging* (Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik, 1941) pp. 105 –110.

⁴⁵ André Brink, *Mapmakers – writing in a state of siege* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983) p.97.

⁴⁶ Preller, ‘Laat’t ons Toch Enst Wezen’, reprinted in Daniël Jacobus Conradie Geldenhuys, *Pannevis en Preller met hul pleidooie* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers, 1967) pp.80-81 and *Hertzog-Annale*, October 1952, pp.14-50.

Isabel Hofmeyr has shown that there were good economic reasons for promoting Afrikaans. Just as Marais had experimented with the use of Afrikaans to boost sales of *Land en Volk* in 1891, Preller suggested that there was a market of Afrikaans-speakers waiting out there, a 'mute nation' requiring a voice.⁴⁷ He contended that circulation figures could be boosted by printing in the vernacular. This conforms to Anderson's model of nationalism in which he contends that capitalism had a 'vernacularizing thrust'. He gives the example of the Bible saturating the market of those who could read Latin, by the mid-seventeenth century, and publishers turning to peddling cheap vernacular editions.⁴⁸

The culture-brokers began to revise the vernacular and establish a sanitized standardised Afrikaans, purged of coloured and lower class connections. From the beginning Afrikaans literature had a strong political component. The 'vernacularizing thrust' was not solely intended to sell newspapers and magazines. The cultural elite used the vernacularizing movement to promote the fusion of nation and language, to assimilate the newly proletarianised and the *bywoner* into their middle-class- driven nationalist venture. As Milner observed in 1905, distinguishing between the bulk of the 'Boer people' and the 'political Boers, the Afrikaner party':

[T]he Afrikaner doctrine emanates essentially from the towns and the nonagricultural middle class, and is 'pumped into' the country Boers... It is quite certain that, but for the influence of parsons, doctors, attorneys, law agents, journalists, and the more educated and town-frequenting of their own class, the country Boers as a body would not be irreconcilable.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Preller, 'Laat't ons Toch Enst Wezen', pp.80-81. Marais's experimentation with the use of Afrikaans has been discussed in Chapter Two, p.55.

⁴⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.39.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Herman Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner ethnic consciousness, 1850 – 1915', in Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, p.47.

In 1905, a group of Transvaal intellectuals established the *Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap* (A.T.G.) (Language Association) to foster the objectives of the Afrikaans language. Preller, Izak van Heerden, Dr H.M. Hoogenhout and Klasie de Wet met often, occasionally joined by Marais, to establish this *Taalgenootskap*.⁵⁰ The A.T.G. upset the Cape Taalbonders, particularly F.S. Malan, who felt that Dutch should receive the focus of attention. J.H.H. De Waal established the *Afrikaanse Taalvereniging* (Afrikaans Language Union) (A.T.V.) in 1906, which was welcomed by the originators of the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* and soon eclipsed the A.T.G. in importance. Davenport has shown how antagonism between the latter and the *Taalbond* was defused by a common decision to support the 1909 formation of the Akademie voor Taal, Letteren en Kunst (Academy for Language, Literature and Art).⁵¹ For the supporters of Afrikaans the imperatives were to give it a technical and professional vocabulary, and strengthen its Dutch inheritance, in order to link it to its European and Graeco-Roman heritage.

Dutch versus Afrikaans, Transvaal versus Cape

The debate over language was fissured by the rupture between the Cape and the Transvaal – a rupture visible in 1905 after Hofmeyr’s ‘Is ’t ons ernst?’ speech. The younger Western Cape intellectuals agreed with Hofmeyr’s call for language rights, but did not share his support for Dutch. Instead they entertained a growing enthusiasm for Afrikaans. In a trend discernible from the late 1880s and 1890s there was a belief among clergy and teachers that to demand Dutch as their educational

⁵⁰ A 787 Preller Collection, vol. 10, p.384. See also E.C. Pienaar Collection, 48/9/70, Hoogenhout to Preller, 28 July 1905. G.S. Nienaber and P.J. Nienaber, *Die Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Beweging* (Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik, 1941).

⁵¹ Davenport, *Afrikaner Bond*, p.265.

instrument would mean the alienation of the lower class of Dutch-Afrikaners who could not master the language.⁵² They now contended that Afrikaans should be raised to the level of a respectable, spoken and written language, by using simplified Dutch spelling (rather than the phonetic spelling of the G.R.A.). As Malan observed in 1908: 'Raise the Afrikaans language to a written language, let it become the vehicle for our culture ... and you will also raise the people who speak it.'⁵³ In founding the South African Academy for Arts and Sciences in 1909, their leaders compromised by promoting both Dutch and Afrikaans.

By 1920, the Academy was 'stagnant', as Engelenburg observed in a letter to Preller.⁵⁴ Preller was relatively active – but working on the Historical Commission rather than on *taal* issues directly – while Marais remained uninvolved in committee work. In 1920 the announcement of the new spelling rules by the Academy catapulted them into controversy again. In 1923 Preller was elected secretary and became involved in the compiling of the Afrikaans dictionary and Afrikaans spelling issues. C.J. Langenhoven, as part of the Cape Commission on Language, wished to replace Dutch entirely with Afrikaans, believing it powerful enough to survive alone.⁵⁵ In 1914 when Langenhoven had proposed to teach Afrikaans in Cape schools he had received Preller's support. Moreover, Preller had said: 'We want to go even further

⁵² Herman Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner ethnic consciousness, 1850 -1915', in Leroy Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989) p.43.

⁵³ S.W. Pienaar, *Glo in U Volk: Dr D.F. Malan as Redenaar* (Cape Town, 1964) p.175.

⁵⁴ Akademie archive, vol.7/1922, item 81, Engelenburg to Preller, 8 May 1922.

⁵⁵ Akademie-archive, Correspondence 1927, 'Extract from report of Superintendent-General of Education', Cape Province, 31 December 1919, chapter VI.

than Langenhoven!’⁵⁶ In the 1920s, however, Preller and Marais wanted to preserve the Dutch link, in a stance diametrically opposite to the one they had held as young men. Their argument was that, as Afrikaans had merely forty years’ worth of literature, the young language needed the richness and heritage of the older language.⁵⁷ Preller contended that to ignore the Dutch literary heritage would be to ‘chop down the stem, which provides our lifeblood’.⁵⁸ They used *Ons Vaderland* to promote their pro-Dutch language use position.⁵⁹

The Academy decided to maintain ‘Dutch links’, which meant little in practice. Already only a reading knowledge of Dutch – rather than a speaking and writing knowledge – was being taught at the schools.⁶⁰ Preller accepted this compromise, although Langenhoven bitterly resented it.⁶¹ In a newspaper war, Preller blamed Langenhoven for the ‘onooglike stompstêrt’ Afrikaans (unsightly, docked-tail Afrikaans) learnt by schoolchildren, because his antipathy to Dutch resulted in anglicisms.⁶² Predictably, in 1926, Preller attempted reconciliation with Langenhoven,

⁵⁶ ‘Ons wil verd gaan als Langenhoven!’ A787 Preller Collection, vol. 205, Preller to W. Postma, 13 May 1914. Ironically, in 1912 Langenhoven had supported the retention of the past imperfect, *Die Brandwag*, 15 May 1912, and by the 1920s denounced it. Langenhoven attacked those who preferred Dutch because, he contended, the more one clung to Dutch the more people would be driven towards English, as Dutch was a dead language in South Africa.

⁵⁷ Although Preller wanted this to be combined with active attempts to increase the amount of literature available in Afrikaans. For example, translations of classics like those of Emil Zola. A.787 Preller Collection, vol. 241, Preller to Grosskopf, 6 February 1918.

⁵⁸ ‘Ons kap die stam, waaruit ons levenssap trek, af.’ *Die Burger*, 9 December 1925.

⁵⁹ J.S. Gericke Library, Langenhoven Collection, vol. 202, Preller to Langenhoven, 11 April 1926.

⁶⁰ *Die Burger*, 2 August 1927.

⁶¹ Langenhoven Collection, vol. 202, Preller to Langenhoven, 11 April 1926, *Die Burger*, 1 February 1926.

⁶² *Ons Vaderland*, 17 February 1926.

maintaining: 'We need each other too much in our little world in which we are surrounded by enemies of our language and our entire cultural struggle'.⁶³ He suggested that Dutch operate for Afrikaans as Latin operates for English – to provide a term or an expression if one does not exist.

Preller and Marais wished to retain an arguably more intellectual form, not in common use. Although criticised for their taste for the linguistically 'exotic and pedantic', Preller and Marais began to agitate strongly for the use of the imperfect tense.⁶⁴ Preller, in particular, perceived this tense to represent an example of the pronounced and acceptable differences between Cape and Transvaal patois. He also tried to replace 'moet' with the Transvaal's 'met' and incorporate the Transvaal's use of 'k' rather than the Cape's 'j' sound (for example, the Transvaal's 'manneki' versus the Cape's 'mannetje').⁶⁵ Similarly, Marais persisted in writing the Afrikaans that he heard in the '*volksmond*' (people's mouth), and agreed with Preller over the necessity for a Dutch infusion.⁶⁶ Preller was coming to regret his own polemic power and the 1905 publicity campaign he had waged to entrench Afrikaans. He noted in *Ons Vaderland*:

⁶³ 'Ons het mekaar te seer nodig in die kleine ou wereldjie, waarin ons aan alle kante omring is van vyande van ons taal en ons ganse kultuurstryd.' Langenhoven Collection, vol. 202, Preller to Langenhoven, 11 April 1926.

⁶⁴ Akademie archive, vol. 9, 1924, item 68, file 4/2, PC. Schonees to Preller, 15 September 1924. Preller also believed 'ek' should replace 'ik'. Akademie archive, correspondence, Preller to chairman of Spelling Commission, 27 September 1926. Marais was using 'ek' as early as 1891 – but returned to using 'ik' after 1902. Du Toit, p.241. Preller adopted this form. Pienaar, *Taal en Poësie* (Cape Town, 1931) p.169. The 1921 Academy spelling rules saw the end of the 'ik-form' and after 1923 Marais reverted to the 'ek' form (though occasionally regressing to 'ik' in letters to Preller.)

⁶⁵ Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p.239.

⁶⁶ G.S. Preller, S.P. Engelbrecht and J. Van Bruggen, 'Afrikaans en di Akademie', published in *Ons Vaderland*, 12, 16, 19 and 23 October 1928.

Our language is being permeated by English, like a gold ring pervaded with quicksilver (mercury), so that it becomes worthless. If we learn no Dutch then we shall lose within a few years the ability to say what is genuine Afrikaans and what is foreign ... not just in diction, but especially in sentence construction, word construction and idiom.’⁶⁷

Regretting the revolution

By 1927, Preller and Marais rued the fact that the reforms they had advocated in their passionate 1905 polemics had actually been instituted.⁶⁸ Preller openly lamented that *Die Volksblad* had managed to raise £5000 for the translation of the Bible into Afrikaans. He argued that it would be a ‘blessing’ if the Bible were to be read in Dutch for another fifty years and that ‘rushing Afrikaans resulted in crude and inappropriate spelling and vocabulary’.⁶⁹ He even went so far as to denounce the new status of Afrikaans as an official language.⁷⁰

In June 1927, Preller openly voiced his view that there was too great a ‘Cape influence’ in the written language and that ‘Transvaal Afrikaans’ was being marginalised.⁷¹ He contended that the powerful figures in the Academy were from the Cape and their influence meant that ‘the whole Union has to write Afrikaans as one

⁶⁷ ‘Ons taal word deurtrek van Engels net soos ’n goue ring deur die kwiksilwer, sodat dit bros en nikswêrd word nie. As ons g’n Hollands leer nie, dan verloor ons binne enkele jare die vermoë om te sê wat ons taal – eige is en wat vreemd is, ... nie in woordekeus alleen nie, maar veral in die sinsbou, woordvorming en idioom.’

⁶⁸ *Ons Vaderland*, 14 June 1927. This has parallels with other Language Movements. The development of Yiddish, for example, saw much intra-movement opposition, on the grounds that it was an impoverished tongue with no literature of its own. Emanuel Goldsmith, *Architects of Yiddishism at the beginning of the Twentieth Century* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1976) p.37.

⁶⁹ The Afrikaans Bible was available by 1933 – it was delayed over debates over whether to translate from the Dutch or from Greek, and financial obstacles.

⁷⁰ *Ons Vaderland*, 26 November 1926.

⁷¹ *Ons Vaderland*, 27 September 1927.

province speaks it'.⁷² Preller wanted a move towards the 'skryf-soos-jy-praat' (write-as-you-speak) approach – adopted in 1875.⁷³ For a month before a crucial meeting of the Academy, Preller and Marais published a series of articles – ostensibly by Marais alone – called 'Afrikaans op die Kruispad' (Afrikaans at the crossroads) in *Ons Vaderland*.⁷⁴ The articles were a polemical defence of Dutch links, citing, for example, the voortrekker Louis Trichardt's penchant for the past imperfect and mourning the fact that Afrikaans would be the only civilised language in the world lacking a past imperfect. The articles emphasised their continued support for the use of the past imperfect and the increased amalgamation of Dutch into Afrikaans. They were a limited success as Preller was elected – along with Jochem van Bruggen and S.P. Engelbrecht – to investigate uncertainty in language structure and make recommendations to the Spelling Commission of the Academy.⁷⁵ Preller's report emphasised the dangers of dialect – it contended that there were four distinct patois: (i) Bosveld (Rustenberg, Zoutpansberg, Waterberg); (ii) Hoëveld (Transvaal, Northern Orange Free State), (iii) Namaqualand, Eastern Province and Southern Free State and (iv) Western Province. They were concerned at the fissures within Afrikaans, and the thin line that separated a 'language' from a 'kombuistaal' (kitchen patois). Yet Preller warned against historical variety being overwhelmed by 'radical particularism'. This was a reference to the 'Cape influence' – as Preller correctly observed, the Spelling Commission members came from the Western Province. The report urged that the Transvaal-Orange Free State tradition not be treated as 'if it had

⁷² *Ons Vaderland*, 31 December 1926.

⁷³ *Ons Vaderland*, 5 July 1927.

⁷⁴ It appears more likely that these articles, which parroted verbatim much of Preller's earlier polemics, were a joint project.

never existed'. Reference was made to the vacuum left by the absence of Dutch, which could be filled by anglicisms. Preller made another impassioned plea – like Cato asking yet again that Carthage be destroyed – that the past imperfect be retained. Almost a quarter of the report was devoted to the past imperfect. Preller used Marais as a witness to the value of the 'imperfektum', citing Marais's theory that the ancient Egyptian language had become extinct because they had 'no indication of time by conjugation' and thus could not compete with the versatile Greek language, with its many verb tenses.⁷⁶ He argued that the Egyptian extinction was the result of the lack of this conjugation: when the Egyptian language was confronted by the Greek, people tried to keep Egyptian alive, but Greek was more complex and capable of nuance and thereby was able to defeat and replace the six thousand year old language within a mere hundred years.⁷⁷ Both Preller and Marais reiterated the need for a stronger link with Dutch than did their colleagues in the Cape. They both feared anglicisation more than those in the south. Both felt that spoken Afrikaans did not have to be identical to written Afrikaans. Preller claimed to have had to revert entirely to Dutch forms – out of desperation and 'pure hopelessness'.⁷⁸ The Preller Report was summarised by a two-man commission, E.C. Pienaar and D.B. Bosman, who – while conceding that some imperfect forms, like 'dog' (was thinking), 'kon' (could have), 'sou' (would have) would linger on – accepted that, for the most part, the past imperfect could not be restored. The Spelling Commission, while agreeing *pro forma* that anglicisms

⁷⁵ Akademie archive, correspondence, 1927-1928, 'Verslag van die Academy- Kommissie insake die taalvorm', 18 April 1928.

⁷⁶ 'geen tydsbepaaling deur vervoeging gehad het nie'.

⁷⁷ Akademie archive, correspondence, 1927-1928, 'Verslag van die Academy- Kommissie insake die taalvorm', 18 April 1928.

⁷⁸ Du Toit, *Eugene Marais*, p.254, interview by Du Toit.

posed a danger, accepted the Pienaar-Bosman Report.⁷⁹ The Academy also refused to publish the Preller Report so that his recommendations had to remain mediated through the Pienaar-Bosman Report.⁸⁰ Preller resigned, citing Cape intellectuals who, he contended, ignored the struggle of the Transvaal and Orange Free State.⁸¹

Conclusion

The conventional portrayal of the *taalstryd* as a cultural victory cloaks both the complex struggle, characterised by dissension, and the highly constructed nature of the language. A discussion of the roles of Marais and Preller provides a window into the understanding of conflicting individual loyalties and regional feuds, particularly between the Cape and the Transvaal. Marais and Preller believed the revolution had happened too soon. They had helped fire the kiln when the Afrikaans language was malleable, and resented the way it had cooled, forged by *kapenaars* (Capetonians) and debased with anglicisms. The early post-war pro-Afrikaans polemics of Marais and Preller came to be replaced with disillusionment over what they saw to be the marginalisation of the Transvaal and Free State versions of Afrikaans in favour of the Western Cape's. Their active opposition to the aims of other *taalstryders* reveals the intra-organisational fissures in the Language Movement that is too often portrayed as uniform and seamless.

⁷⁹ Aanbevelinge van raadskommissie insake rapport van taalvormkommissie, *Tydskrif vir Wetenskap en Kuns*, September 1928.

⁸⁰ *Die Volksblad*, 29 September 1928. Engelbrecht and Van Bruggen did not resign but did refuse to attend the next meeting.

⁸¹ *De Volksblad*, 29 September 1928, *De Burger*, 1 October 1928. In Afrikaans today 'kon', 'moes', 'sou', 'wou', and 'was' live on, dag/dog is used infrequently, 'wis' is used by only an older generation or in attempts to represent archaic speech, 'had' and 'mog' are very seldom heard, 'brag/brog', 'kog' and 'begon/begos' are no longer used. See, for example, J. du P. Scholtz, *Taalhistoriese Opstelle* (Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik, 1963) pp.38-39.

The Ant of the White Soul: popular natural history and the politics of Afrikaner identity, with particular reference to the entomological writings of Eugène Marais.¹

There was an international scandal in 1927, when a little known South African amateur naturalist, with an unfortunate predilection for morphine, accused the internationally famous, Nobel Prize winning Belgian author Maurice Maeterlinck of plagiarism.² Maeterlinck was accused by Eugène Marais, who was sporadically practising law and writing articles for the popular press, sunken in a semi-permanent state of drug addiction, of having used Marais's concept of the 'organic unity' of the termitary in his 1926 book *La Vie des Termites* (*The Life of the White Ant*). Marais had published his ideas on the termitary in the South African Afrikaans language press, *Die Burger*, in January 1923 and in *Die Huisgenoot*, which featured a series of articles on termites under the title 'Die Siel van die Mier' (*The Soul of the Ant*), from 1925 to 1926.³ Supported by his coterie of Afrikaner Nationalist friends, Marais

¹ This chapter was presented at a conference on 'African Environments Past and Present', St Antony's College, Oxford 5-8 July 1999 and at the seminar series Southern African History and Politics, 18 October 1999, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford. Many thanks to William Beinart, Dave and Meg Cummings, Andrew Dale, Johan Decavele, Saul Dubow, Albert Grundlingh, Andy Loveridge, Eugène Marais, of the Entomology division of the National Museum of Namibia, Leon Rousseau, Adrian Ryan, Stanley Trapido, the Plant Protection Research Institute (Agricultural Research Council) and David Van Reybrouck for their suggestions.

² Maurice Maeterlinck (1862 – 1949) was born in Ghent, but lived most of his life in France. He won the 1911 Nobel Prize for literature for his dramatic works, like *The Blue Bird*.

³ The collection of articles appeared in book form as *Die Siel van die Mier* in 1934 and by 1948 had undergone four reprints. Translations appeared in French (1938) and Dutch (1958). This chapter uses Eugène Marais, *The Soul of the White Ant* (London: Penguin, 1937, 1973)

sought justice – promoting his side of the story through the South African press and attempting an international lawsuit. This was to prove financially impossible and the case was not pursued.

The incident is highly revealing of Marais' scientific work. It was a mixture of serious academic findings, scandal and the incorporation of that which he saw to be his martyrdom, by a powerful foreign figure, into the Nationalist Myth that was made of his life, both by himself and the nationalist intellectuals. At the time of the scandal Marais asked: 'I wonder whether he blushes when he reads such things [critical acclaim], and whether he gives a thought to the injustice he does to the unknown Boer worker?'⁴ This paper seeks to explore the context of Marais's writing on termites, why the Afrikaans press disseminated it and the manner in which his popular science was used to promote an Afrikaner nationalist agenda.⁵

'Everyone cares about ants'

Entomology was widely used within theoretical discussions of natural history, with disparate socio-cultural implications. From the nineteenth century, the social insects provided scientists and social commentators with analogues to social concerns.

and Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Life of the White Ant* (London: George Allen, 1927, 1928 trans. Alfred Sutro).

⁴ Quoted in F.G.M. Du Toit, *Eugène Marais – Sy bydrae tot die Afrikaanse letterkunde* (Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1940) p.184.

⁵ For recent work on the interaction of South African science and ideology, see Saul Dubow, *Illicit Union - Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press with Cambridge University Press, 1995) and W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect Interpreters, South Africa's Anthropologists* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press, 1997). See also, Special Issue on the Politics of Conservation in Southern Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, January 1998 and Jane Carruthers, 'Towards an Environmental History of Southern Africa: Some Perspectives, ' *South African Historical Journal*, 23, 1990.

Ants and termites were used interchangeably, because of their similar size and habits. White ants, as termites are commonly but incorrectly called, are not ants at all, but Isopterans, and not white, but earth coloured – resembling as Maeterlinck had it, ‘a badly drawn ant.’⁶

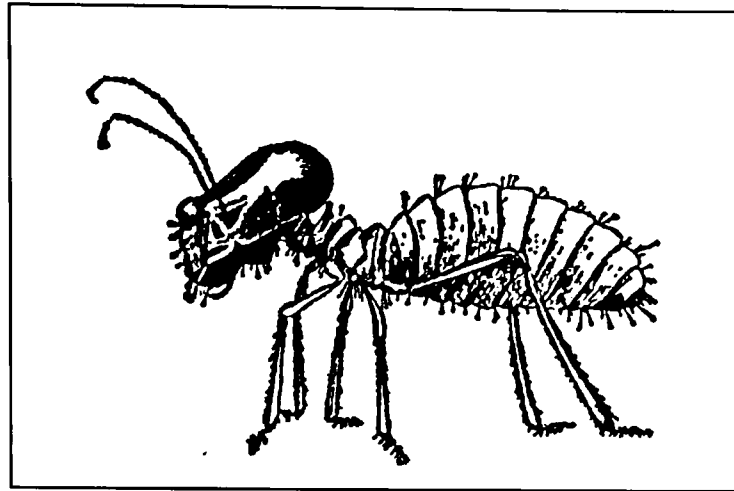


Figure 1. Marais's termite.⁷

Once nineteenth century naturalists had accepted that the distinction between the mental capacities of ants and men was of degree and not of kind, ants were used as the minima of sentient organisms in the early nineteenth century. Although Fabre famously said ‘The insect has no morality’, ants and bees were powerful polemical tools and their social organisations were invested with a variety of socio-cultural meanings.⁸ In 1861, Darwin noted: ‘every one cares about ants – more notice has been taken about slave-ants in the *Origin* than of any other passage.’⁹ In the *Origin*, Darwin evoked ‘slave-making’ ants as an example of the modification of instinct by natural

⁶ Maeterlinck, *The Life of the White Ant*, p.23.

⁷ Marais’s sketch of a termite. Marais, *Soul of the White Ant*, p.113.

⁸ Maeterlinck, *The Life of the White Ant*, p.156.

⁹ Charles Darwin to H.W. Bates, 25 September 1861, in Darwin, *More Letters* (40), ii.pp.196-97.

selection.¹⁰ The social implications were even more explicit in others like Ludwig Buchner who accorded slavery pre-eminence in his anthropomorphic study of ants.¹¹ Ant slavery, husbandry and gender were three examples of the nineteenth century mixture of nature and culture. As Clark observes, the ambiguity of the word ‘social’ in the appellation ‘social insect’ encapsulated the tension within literature on ants and bees.¹² Natural theologians, social evolutionists and neo-Darwinists all applied varying degrees of anthropocentric and anthropomorphic attributes to these insects.¹³ In the wake of the *Origin*, biology carried intellectual authority and it was thus from this discipline that social theorists amassed evidence to support their programmes. The general interest in ants seeped into popular fiction. In 1904, H.G. Wells (1866-1946), whom Marais met in London and whose writing Marais admired, wrote a short story called ‘The Empire of the Ants’, about the journey of a gunboat to a remote Amazonian village besieged by ants of human intelligence.¹⁴ In Maeterlinck’s work there is a ‘grim suggestiveness’ of the parallels between man and termite, which

¹⁰ He contrasted the different dependence on ‘slaves’ in *Polyergus rufescens* and *Formica sanguinea* to construct a developmental framework.

¹¹ John Clark, ‘Science, Secularization, and Social Change: the Metamorphosis of Entomology in Nineteenth-Century England’, D.Phil., University of Oxford, 1994, p.134.

¹² Clark, ‘Science, Secularization, and Social Change’, p.142.

¹³ John Lubbock, ‘On the Habits of Ants’. *The Fortnightly Review*, new series, 27 (1 March 1877); John Lubbock, *Ants, Bees, and Wasps: A Record of Observations on the Habits of the Social Hymenoptera* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner, 1915).

¹⁴ The ants wore military uniform and walked upright – they were, the protagonist observes, ‘intelligent ants. Just think what that means!’ After a display of humankind’s impotence before nature, when a gunboat fires a series of pointless rounds, the protagonist retreats with the certainty that the ants will reach Europe by the 1960s. Interestingly, Marais was an admirer of Wells, see Du Toit, *Eugène Marais – Sy Bydrae tot die Afrikaanse Letterkunde* (Amsterdam: N.V. Swets and Zeitlinger, 1940). For a contextual analysis of Wells’s story see David Hughes, ‘H.G. Wells: Ronic Romancer’, *Extrapolation*, 6 (1965), pp.32-38.

makes the latter ‘almost our brothers’.¹⁵ In his text no animal is so ‘pitiably, so wonderfully, so fraternally human’ as the termite.¹⁶ Clearly, the social insects had a special significance for those using biology to make socio-political points. The question remains, however, why did the Afrikaner nationalist press solicit Marais’s articles, why was he besieged with requests for more in the same vein – why did the people who were working to define themselves as Afrikaners ‘care about ants’?

South African Entomology

As the nineteenth century passed, the ‘science of exploration’ came to be replaced by the ‘science of settling’. This latter science dealt with the ecological boundaries of development, like tropical medicine, veterinary science, agriculture and entomology.¹⁷ Amateur scientific endeavour came to be replaced by Ministries, and the rhetoric of development was adopted.¹⁸ Government entomology circa Marais’s writing concentrated predominately on pest eradication and, to a lesser extent, taxonomic classification.¹⁹ Members of the public were encouraged to post unusual insect samples to the Department of Agriculture and Forestry.²⁰ Several pest eradication procedures were first devised in South Africa.²¹ The anti-termite campaigns were an important part of this department’s work. In 1928, for example,

¹⁵ *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 July 1927.

¹⁶ Maeterlinck, *The Life of the White Ant*, p.22.

¹⁷ William Beinart, ‘Vets and Environmental Change in South Africa, 1880s-1930s’, *Paideuma*, 43, 1997.

¹⁸ For a narrative of the early days of entomology in South Africa see C.P. Lounsbury, ‘The Pioneer Period of Economic Entomology in South Africa’. *Journal of the Entomological Society of Southern Africa*, 2 (September 1940).

¹⁹ See SAB (Central Archives Bureau, Pretoria), CEN, 1064, Vol.1.

²⁰ SAB, CEN, 725, vol. 10.

the shortage of entomologists was a subject of concern and it was mooted that a full time officer for termite control was needed.²² From 1910 there were government-funded experiments on termites at an experimental farm in Potchefstroom, and the twenties saw a great deal of interest in eradicating and resisting termites.²³ Marais was aware of the work of government entomologists, like Claude Fuller, with whom he was well acquainted, and did make use of the Department's facilities, but appears to have entertained great suspicion for them. In a letter to Preller, Marais enclosed some termite specimens, asking Preller to have these classified by the Department without mentioning Marais's name.²⁴

The nationalist magazines, in which Marais was to publish, were an attempt to create a distinct Afrikaans cultural identity, to establish and then maintain standards of *Taal* purity. As an advertising slogan in *Die Burger* read, c.1918: 'Through literature, the nation becomes great'.²⁵ They were also an attempt to uplift and educate the growing underclass of Poor Whites, although widespread illiteracy impeded this project. *Die Huisgenoot*, which articulated the aspirations of the Second Language Movement, carried much educational material and was known as 'the poor man's university'.²⁶ Celliers noted that the national writer must not concentrate on the urban

²¹ S.H. Skaife, *A Naturalist Remembers* (Cape Town: Longmans, 1963) p.25.

²² SAB, CEN, 770, Ex 2/120.

²³ TAD (Transvaal Archives Bureau) 639 G2870/43. See also SAB, CEN, Entomology Memoir 2 'White Ant Experiments: Tests of the Resistancy of Timbers', pp.81 – 104; SAB CEN, 930.

²⁴ TAD A.787, Preller Collection, p. 95, Marais to Preller, 28 March 1927. Marais may have had a personal feud with a member of the Department, or may have wished to preserve the image of originality in his research.

²⁵ 'Deur die letterkunde word 'n volk groot'. This is ambiguous: it could also mean 'Through literature, the nation reaches maturity.'

reader and merely leave the rural communities to their own devices: ‘ferret out every single Afrikaner, find him a school, a teacher, a book that he can understand and which uplifts and educates him.’ Preller noted that the population was deteriorating to an ignorant proletariat and it was to ‘these people that we wish to speak through books, newspapers and magazines’.²⁷ *Volkskunde* (folklore studies) were used to promote *leeslus* (love of reading). By the mid-1920s *Die Huisgenoot* was claimed to be the most popular magazine in South Africa.²⁸ Nasionale (initially ‘Burger’) Boekhandel was set up in 1917 and over 23 years, produced 1 100 books or 3 274 581 copies. *Die Brandwag* was devoted to education and upliftment, designed also to reach those in the platteland who were beyond urban resources.²⁹ Its publishers, *Nasionale Pers*, promoted the idea that it had been established by a ‘number of fervent nation-feeling Afrikaners’ from ‘all classes’ who wanted not to make a profit but rather to ‘see better provision being made for the supply of Afrikaans reading material to the Afrikaans volk.’³⁰ The magazine distanced itself explicitly from party-politics, to be a ‘companion’ in every Afrikaner household.³¹ The writers of the

²⁶ Isabel Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and ‘ethnic identity’, 1902-1924’, in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (New York, 1987) p.113.

²⁷ Celliers and Preller quoted in Hofmeyr, ‘Building a nation’, p.112.

²⁸ ‘Huisgenoot’ entry in *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa* (Cape Town, 1972). *Die Brandwag*, however, folded in 1922.

²⁹ G.S. Preller, ‘Ons stig ’n tydskrif’, *Die Huisgenoot*, 28 June 1940.

³⁰ ‘Waarde vir U geld’, *Die Huisgenoot*, July 1921.

³¹ Its precursor, *Ons Moedertaal*, was published from 1914 under the auspices of the Afrikaanse Taal Vereniging (A.T.V.). This was failing by 1916, when the publishers *Nasionale Pers* received the 640-name subscriber list from the A.T.V. and created *Die Huisgenoot*. De Nasionale Pers was established 12 May 1915, becoming Die Nasionale Pers on 28 July 1921. *Die Huisgenoot* was founded in May 1916 and edited by J.J. Smith, C.L.J. Ruijsch van Dugteren (1916-1923), Dr H.G. Viljoen (1924-1931), J.M.H. Viljoen (1931-1949). Initially it was a monthly publication, but from November 1923 it was published weekly.

Second Language Movement – Jan F.E. Celliers, Totius, C. Louis Leipoldt, D.F. Malherbe and Sangiro – all contributed to it. From 1916 to the 1930s, *Die Huisgenoot* expanded in size and readership – after four years it could be found in every province and was mailed to Afrikaners abroad.³² In 1925 it reached 23 500 homes, 30 000 in 1928, 40 000 by 1930. Certainly rural dwellers were buying the magazines.³³ By 1921 *Die Huisgenoot* called itself ‘’n Tydskrif vir Afrikaners’ (a magazine for Afrikaners), and dealt explicitly with problems of nationalism – defining nationalism as the decision of a group to share the same circumstances and to control their own affairs exclusively.’³⁴ It was used as a teaching-aide in Afrikaans schools. Initially, the magazine focussed on language concerns, technical notes on spelling and grammar, but it broadened into more general questions of culture, such as the nature of Afrikaner art, and included Afrikaner social questions, like the poor white issue. It is this concern with wider cultural issues that produced the series of termite articles. As Dr D.F. Malan noted: ‘A healthy national feeling can only be rooted in ethnic [volk] art and science...’³⁵

Go to the Ant...consider her ways, and be wise³⁶

Marais’s work on ants is part of this ‘ethnic science’, being structured on two tenets. Firstly, he maintains that the work is cutting-edge science and attributes a

³² Vincent, ‘Mothers, Women’, p.47.

³³ See correspondence, *Die Boerevrou*, August 1919.

³⁴ *Die Huisgenoot*, July 1921.

³⁵ Cited in T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975, 1980) p.47.

³⁶ *Proverbs*, vi, 6. This was quoted in a review of Marais’s book by M.S.B. Kritzinger, *Die Volkstem*, 4 April 1936.

sophisticated knowledge of arcane scientific academic debates to his rural audience. Secondly, he employs another *leitmotif*, the recurring theme that the Afrikaner is invested with a traditional knowledge of the land. Both tenets reinforce the idea of Afrikaner unity – both as ‘sons of the soil’, inheritors of traditional knowledge, and as a developing nation at the cutting edge of science. Both served to stimulate unity and bolster the national ego. The Afrikaans popular press enthusiastically received his contributions; his entomological formulations served their nationalist agenda.

Firstly, he ascribes to his readership a familiarity with the latest scientific debates to foster the image of the Afrikaner as a progressive citizen and to raise the tone of the articles to that befitting the ‘poor man’s university’.³⁷ Marais had read widely and was part of the late Victorian entomological milieu. He makes casual and unelucidated mention of De Vries; Henri Fabre; an unnamed Japanese naturalist; Metchnikoff; Dr Durand de Gos; Jean Finot; Grassi; Dr Bugnion; Auguste Forel; Barthellier; Ghesguiere; Wilhelm Bosche; Henri Bergson and Ernst Haeckel.³⁸ Marais thereby promoted the image of Afrikaners as a nation capable of advanced research, part of the international scientific community.³⁹ Simultaneously, he persistently

³⁷ It may also be argued that with his references to recent academic debates, Marais displays the autodidact’s claim to scientific legitimacy.

³⁸ Marais would have had access to the Transvaal Museum library, which contained a wide range of entomological texts. Some of his sources may be traced: Jean-Henri Fabre (1823-1915) wrote many entomological texts, like the eleven volume *Souvenirs d'un entomologiste* (Paris: Balland, 1986); Elie Metchnikoff 1845-1916) *The nature of man; studies in optimistic philosophy* (London: Watts, 1938); Jean Finot, *Modern saints and seers* (London: W. Rider, 1920); Édouard Bugnion (1845-1939) *The origin of instinct: a study of the war between the ants and the termites* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1927) originally written as an appendix to pt. IV of Forel's *The Social world of ants.*; Auguste Forel (1848-1931), *The Senses of Insects* (London: Methuen, 1908); the many works by the philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), *The evolution of man: a popular scientific study* (London: Watts, 1910).

³⁹ Van Reybrouck and Grundlingh have also suggested that this antipathy towards European scholars suggest his ambivalence as an amateur naturalist on the periphery, in the former

undermines European expertise, criticising Fabre, Bugnion, Forel and European scientists in general.⁴⁰

His second tenet had a long legacy. As a journalist in the pre-war ZAR, Marais had a xenophobic editorial policy. As part of the Opposition camp, Marais was heavily critical of Kruger's purported favouritism of Hollanders over those born in the Transvaal. His articles for the Progressive press were saturated with the promotion of the *Landszoonen* (sons of the soil) as autochthonous and genuine. The popularisation of xenophobia was thus wrapped up in issues surrounding land and landlessness. It was at this period, the end of the nineteenth century, that landlessness was becoming a factor in the process of class differentiation in Boer society.⁴¹ As approximately half of the white rural families were non-landowners in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, *bywoner* was not a pejorative term. As a result of industrialisation and modernisation, the *bywoner* ceased being an asset and became an albatross around the neck of wealthier farmers. Following these material changes, an ideology of the land was created in the media. The names adopted by the community, 'Boer', and 'Afrikaner' were themselves loaded with imagery of the land and with farming.

colonies where the evidence is at hand, while European scholars received the credit and maintained their control of mainstream scientific debate. A recent book on S.J. Du Toit has a special section on 'Buitelanders raap Afrikaners se eer weg' (Foreigners steal Afrikaners' glory), mentions the Marais-Maeterlinck case, D'Assonville, V. E. *S.J. du Toit van die Paarl, 1847-1911* (Weltevredenpark: Marnix, 1999) p.254. Van Reybruck further suggests that claiming a better familiarity with the material, while at the same time criticising the theoretical constructs of European experts was integral to the emancipation of South African natural history. Pers. Comm. Certainly, Marais sets up a direct comparison between the so-called experts whose works 'would fill a library', who fail to ask questions Marais finds pivotal, and his friend, Jan Wessel Wessels (to whom Marais once lent a horse so that he could join the 1914 Boer Rebellion) whom he calls 'one of the finest of practical naturalists'. pp.131-133.

⁴⁰ See Marais, *Soul of the White Ant*, p.59, p. 112, p.120, p.131.

⁴¹ Timothy Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrialising South Africa: the Southern Highveld to 1914* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1986).

Although Cape-educated, Marais referred to himself as a *landszoon* and made much of the right of *landszoonen* to participate in the government of the ZAR, investing them with the rights of autochthony. Marais, like others on the Progressive front, wrapped up this land ideology with the rhetoric of opposition to foreign capitalists. The insistence on the Afrikaners' instinctive knowledge of the veld is an extension of this earlier trajectory. This is made explicit in the *plaasroman* (farm novel) writer C.M. Van den Heever's essay 'The form of the Afrikaner's Civilization and Culture', when he asserts that 'the slumbering might of the culture of every people' has its basis in 'the bondedness of man to the earth'. The earth is the 'soil of generation' of national culture.⁴² The Afrikaans 'colonialisation' of the landscape is part of an insistence on the natural right to belong. (It is, however, belied by Marais's true opinion on the matter. When there was talk of a German translation of *Die Siel van die Mier*, Marais noted revealingly: 'With reference to the proposed publication in Germany I shall without question have to revise and recast the articles. They were written primarily for people who knew nothing about these things. I was continuously influenced (while writing them) by the 'unconscious idea' that I was writing for children.'⁴³ This is at odds with scattered references to the wealth of South African knowledge about nature that are to be found in his work.⁴⁴ This could reflect the class-consciousness that Marais experienced from his parents and older siblings. Although Eugène was born in Pretoria, his family were originally from the Cape and retained

⁴² C.M. van den Heever, *Die Afrikaanse gedagte* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1935), p.16, 52-53, quoted in J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing – on the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) p.87.

⁴³ Du Toit *Eugène Marais*, p.170.

⁴⁴ A typical phrase is, for example, 'As a result of that biological knowledge which is almost the heritage of those living in a land so teeming with animal life...', Marais, *My Friends*, p.108.

disdain for the uneducated Transvaler, the *takhare* (hicks, hayseeds) and particularly for *doppers*, the members of the very conservative Reformed Church.

This ‘unconscious’ idea of writing for children contributed to an anthropomorphic tone: for all its scientific terminology, it is the story of the queen, how her ‘small neat body’ becomes an ‘unsightly wormlike bag of adiposity’, while ‘to heighten the tragedy’ her mate remains as ‘active and young as he was on his wedding night’. The reader feels quite pleased that, although she becomes an ‘immovable disgusting worm’ and a ‘loathsome mass of fat’, her ‘husband’ retains his attachment to her, providing a ‘wonderful example of married love and fidelity.’⁴⁵ His rarefied description of termite life and its foreignness to the farmer’s everyday experience of its destructive powers was satirised by Herman Charles Bosman:

‘All the same, they are very wonderful little creatures, those little white ants’, the schoolmaster remarked. ‘Among the books I brought here into the Marico, to read in my spare time, is a book called *The Soul of the White Ant*. Actually, of course, the white ant is not a true ant at all. The right name for the white ant is isoptera.’ Jurie Steyn had another, and shorter name for the white ant right on the tip of his tongue. And he started saying it too. Only, he remembered his wife’s presence in time, and so he changed the word to something else. ...

The schoolmaster argued: ‘The white ant belonged to the insect world, which was really very highly civilised....The insect had the same blood in his veins as a white man...[Gysbert van Tonder interjected worriedly] ‘He said that once you start making allowances for the white ant, that way, the next thing the white ant would want was to vote. And *he* wouldn’t go into a polling booth alongside of an ant, to vote, Gysbert van Tonder said, even if that ant was *white*.’⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Marais, *Soul of the White Ant*, p.27, p.28.

⁴⁶ H.C. Bosman, *Jurie Steyn’s Post Office* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1971) p.30. For evidence of contemporary reports of the termites’ destructive power and importance in farming communities, see Patrick Guilbride, ‘Pawpaw Picnic’, Rhodes House Library, Mss Afr.s.1315.

A deeper reading of the text, however, reveals an insistence on Afrikaners' 'special knowledge'. Marais opened with a discussion of an article published in one of the South African journals by a Dr Hesse, the result of observations in America and Europe - none of which was, he maintained, relevant to 'our South African termites'.⁴⁷ He contended that he wished to present the facts so that South African knowledge could be used by the readers to test European theories.⁴⁸ He insisted, with simple national pride, that 'the life-history of most of our South African ants and termites is in every respect just as wonderful and interesting as anything discovered in South America.'⁴⁹

Also worth noting is the fact that in the English translation the text reads: 'The ordinary use of light by the glow-worm and firefly is well known to dwellers in South Africa.'; 'What South African child has never seen the *toktokkie* and heard him make his knock?' and 'our dear little *toktokkie*'.⁵⁰ In the original, however, Marais used the word 'Afrikaner' instead of 'South African'. He emphasised 'which most Afrikaners know', 'there are many Afrikaners who know', 'well-known to all Afrikaners', 'Which Afrikaner child has never seen a *toktokkie*?'⁵¹ He observes how many new admirers of 'our' nature the Afrikaans renaissance had created.⁵² This was in line with the trend, which Hofmeyr has dubbed the 'redefinition of everyday life': the pages of

⁴⁷ Marais, *Soul of the White Ant*, p.21. This is almost certainly a reference to the article by Dr A.J. Hesse, 'Iets Omtrent Miere' (Something about ants), *Die Huisgenoot*, 18 September 1925.

⁴⁸ E. Marais, *Die Siel van die Mier* (Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik, 1938) p.24.

⁴⁹ Marais, *The Soul of the White Ant*, p.21.

⁵⁰ Marais, *The Soul of the White Ant*, p.56, p.33 and p.33.

⁵¹ Translated from Afrikaans. Marais, *Siel van die Mier*, pp.12, 14, 54, 25.

Afrikaans magazines featured articles and advertisements that used every available aspect of people's lives and repackaged these as 'Afrikaans'. What had previously been 'furniture' became 'Afrikaans furniture' and what had previously been the natural world became the 'Afrikaners' natural world'.

Marais had originally intended his first ant article as simply a single item, but significantly the editor of *Die Huisgenoot* asked for more.⁵³ Indeed, the editor endured Marais's broken promises and missed deadlines in order to print more in the same vein.⁵⁴ Newspapers and publishers went to unprecedented and even unethical lengths to get hold of Marais's work. It was rumoured that the publisher Van Schaik manipulated Marais's morphine addiction to extort contracts from him.⁵⁵ Marais's articles lent themselves to the nationalist project in the way that other social organism theories lent themselves to political agendas. A scientist who inspired both Marais and Maeterlinck was Ernst Haeckel, whose theory of 'monism', for example, was directly absorbed by National Socialism.⁵⁶ His pupils were political agitators who used his ideas of holism in societal contexts.⁵⁷ Maeterlinck extended his own hypothesis in the political context, applying it to the corporate state of Portuguese president Salazar.⁵⁸

⁵² Translated from Afrikaans. Marais, *Siel van die Mier*, pp.25.

⁵³ Revealed by S.J. Du Toit in *Ons Eie Boek*, April-June 1938.

⁵⁴ J.H. Viljoen, *'n Joernalis vertel* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1953).

⁵⁵ Leon Rousseau, *The Dark Stream - the story of Eugene Marais* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1982) p.484.

⁵⁶ Daniel Gasman, *The Scientific origins of National Socialism: Ernst Haeckel and the Monist League* (New York: Elsevier, 1971).

⁵⁷ Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) p.88-91.

There was no similar uninterrupted link between Marais' writing and social policy. His work had, however, obvious potential for the Afrikaner nationalist program. It was simultaneously able to claim autochthony and progressiveness for the Afrikaner. The two poles of Marais's ideology served to mirror the twin poles of nationalism itself, the containment of tradition and development within a single ideology. This simultaneous containment of oxymoronic conditions was also reflected in the rhetoric surrounding the language movement. On the one hand, Afrikaans was the authentic, unique language of South Africa, on the other it had a long traceable lineage to the great Graeco-Roman traditions, as D.F. Malan maintained.⁵⁹

Another and more self-evident reason for the termite articles was the everyday experience of the readership. While the role of the middle-class editors as nationalism's motor is undeniable, it may also be argued that the content was partially dictated by the subject. The rural Afrikaner suffered an almost biblical profusion of plagues: ticks, scabs, locusts and termites. From August 1924, *Die Huisgenoot* made calls for greater popular participation, maintaining that the magazine was not the possession of Die Nasionale Pers nor of the editors, but could only function if 'every reader feels that he or she is personally a part of it.... We want it to be a paper of the *volk*'.⁶⁰ This was part of the project to create an image of the Afrikaner that could

⁵⁸ Maurice Maeterlinck, *Le Président Salazar* (Luik: Dynamo, 1969). This was intended to demonstrate his disdain for democracy, contending that individuals amount to only the honour and glory of the corporate community – whether in a termite nest or a corporate state.

⁵⁹ P.C. Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging* (Pretoria: J.H. De Bussy, 1939) p.13. The insistence on antiquity is part of the ideology of many nations, as Hobsbawm observed: 'We should not be misled by a curious, but understandable paradox: modern nations...generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity.' Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (London: Canto, 1983, 1997) p.14.

⁶⁰ 'Somaar gesels met ons lesers oor *Die Huisgenoot*', *Die Huisgenoot*, 15 August 1924.

transcend the particularities of geography, class and even age and gender to create a unified *volk*.

A Return to the Land

Key amongst the concerns of the culture-brokers, in their quest to mask factions and promote commonalties, were the poor whites. This group was feared increasingly lost to an urban culture – in 1900, 10 % of Afrikaners lived in urban areas, by 1926 this had risen to 41%.⁶¹ There was much concern over the break down of traditional rural authority structures and family life.⁶² Attempts to reform the poor whites repeatedly took the form of plans to return them to the rural areas.⁶³ An understanding of this anxiety helps explain why articles on nature and the value of the countryside were solicited and published in the popular magazines. This phenomenon has found reflection in other communities. Morgan has observed that as the Welsh became more and more industrialised, so they came to cherish the image of the Welshman as ‘a sturdy tough hillman, free as mountain air’.⁶⁴

⁶¹ H. Adam and H. Giliomee, *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979) p.147.

⁶² See the discussion by Louise Vincent, ‘Mothers of Invention – Gender, Class and the Ideology of the Volksmoeder in the Making of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1918 to 1938’, D.Phil. Oxford, 1997, p.12.

⁶³ See, for example, Central Archives Bureau, Pretoria, A.787. G.S. Preller Collection, Vol. 177, Algemeen Rapport Betreffende Het Arme Blanke Vraagstukke, 25 February 1916, see also John Bottomley, *Public Policy and White Rural Policy* (Kingston: Queen’s University, 1991); Robert Morrell. (ed.) *White But Poor* (Pretoria: UNISA, 1991) and Timothy Keegan, ‘The restructuring of agrarian class relations in a colonial economy: the Orange River Colony, 1902-1910’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5, 2 (1979).

⁶⁴ Prys Morgan, ‘From a Death to a View: the Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period’ in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, p.89.

National feeling focused increasingly on the poor white question.⁶⁵ The post-war Relief Works Department was established to provide employment for indigent burghers and to establish irrigation projects. There was widespread feeling against entering such relief projects because it meant sacrificing all rights to the land. Farming was more than merely a livelihood. A Boer's identity was wrapped up in his profession.⁶⁶ The very semantic meaning of his label was 'farmer'. C. Louis Leipoldt, who toured the platteland extensively at the time, observed:

what remains of the traditional conception of farming, a conception that modern civilization is rapidly blotting out. They are there for man's fundamental work, to gain from the soil a livelihood for himself and his family.⁶⁷

The capitalisation and commercialisation of farming affected more than the livelihood of the *bywoner* - his sense of identity was challenged. Even those men who had not owned land before felt their identities under threat.⁶⁸ The trek to the cities was a journey to the mines, railways and factories, where Afrikaners saw themselves working at unfamiliar jobs, living in squalid conditions adjacent to black shanty towns, and having to speak a foreign language - English - like a defeated race.⁶⁹ The stigma of poverty was attached to

⁶⁵ UG 14-1926, *Economic and Wage Commission*, 1925. For secondary sources see Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, p.20, Stanley Trapido, 'Reflections on land, office and wealth in the South African Republic, 1850-1900' in Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore (eds), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987) p.359.

⁶⁶ An illustrative parallel may be made with late nineteenth century England, when the industrialisation of traditional work-shop trades not only made earnings precarious, it also destroyed the father's ability to endow his son with a craft or a job and was resented because of it. Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (New York, 1993).

⁶⁷ C. Louis Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor* (Braamfontein, Lowry 1980) p.17.

⁶⁸ Although the complete egalitarianism of Boer society was a myth, there had been rhetoric of equality, the form of republican *gelykheid* [equality] between white adult men, purportedly unaffected by class. *Volkseenheid* was a teleological imposition, born out of the need for political unity at specific times. Quite the opposite of this mystical unity existed: the group was historically prone to factionalism, divided on lines of class, region, province, ideology, and personal ambition.

the Afrikaans family with English social discourse portraying the Afrikaner male as the backward railway worker and the illiterate policeman.⁷⁰ The notion of the *achteruitgang* (regression) of the Afrikaner relative to English-speakers and blacks was variously a grim prophecy, a social evil and a routine method of drawing an angry crowd in any rural constituency. To replace this image, Afrikaners had to build a new identity, a new image of themselves. The ideology of the land wrapped up in a nostalgic motif of rural utopia was behind the nationalists' repeated attempts to restore the urban poor whites to the land right up until the 1930s. Marais's work proved particularly apposite in that it promoted the notion that Afrikaners were invested with an understanding and love of nature. On the basis of an idealised and nostalgically reinvented past, the Afrikaner was conceived as a son of the soil, with a natural affinity for nature.⁷¹ The icon of the autochthonous Boer had its success in its timeousness. The image was not static, and its power lay in its ability to be re-invented with changing times, indeed the iconography had a long heritage, with its roots in Marais' editorial writing in the pre-war ZAR, as explored in chapter two. This dichotomous definition was now re-deployed by Marais as a definition against the English and the blacks, in securing the borders of an imagined community.

Similarly, the National Parks Act in 1926 was passed at a time of increasing Afrikaner Nationalist fervor – the resurgence of republican rhetoric, adoption of

⁶⁹ Bottomley makes this point well in his analysis of public policy *Public Policy and White Rural Poverty*, p.250.

⁷⁰ Bottomley, *Public Policy and White Rural Polic* p250. The stereotypes persist today in jokes about ignorant, naive 'Van der Merwe'.

⁷¹ A favourite image is the 'veld as classroom'. Anthropologist P.J.J. Schoeman liked to maintain 'my skoolkamer was die veld' – my schoolroom was the veld. Jan Smuts famously 'lived close to the soil', growing up with the 'animals, the birds, the flowers in the fields', F.S. Crafford, *Jan Smuts – A Biography* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1946) pp.5 - 7.

Afrikaans as an official language, revival of interest in the Voortrekkers.⁷² These manifestations of nationalism coincided with the entrenchment of a romantic aesthetic of nature – as part of an attempt to create a common white identity. There was a pattern of linking Afrikaner heroes with love of nature, as in the case of Gustav Preller's historical description of the Voortrekkers' 'love of nature'.⁷³ Deneys Reitz, for example, claimed that the national park proposal idealised Kruger's dream and insisted that it was a national duty to preserve the landscape 'just as the Voortrekkers saw it'.⁷⁴ Marais's work fits this pattern of linking the Afrikaner to a love of nature. The Afrikaans press praised the Transvaal as the first state in Africa to conserve its wildlife and affirmed that a 'volkspark' would be an apt accolade.⁷⁵ As Carruthers has argued, in attaching an Afrikaner cultural tradition to conservation, the role of poor whites in the pre-Union past was recast. No longer were the poor whites remembered as having hunted meat to supply urban markets and, from having been a divisive issue during the ZAR, game saving was used to unite classes within Afrikaner society after World War I.⁷⁶

⁷² See Jane Carruthers, 'Creating a National Park', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2, January 1989.

⁷³ For an analysis of this phenomenon see J.J. Oberholster, 'Die Neerslag van die Romantiek op ons geskiedskrywing – Gustav S. Preller' (The impact of the romantic on our historiography), *Intreerede* (Inaugural lecture), University of the Orange Free State, 6 May 1965, p15.

⁷⁴ D. Reitz, *No Outspan* (London: Faber and Faber, 1943) p.69; D. Reitz, *Commando* (London: Faber and Faber, 1929) p.126. Cited in Carruthers 'Creating a National Park', p.208.

⁷⁵ *Die Burger*, 14 December 1925; *Die Huisgenoot*, 8 January 1926.

⁷⁶ Stanley Trapido, 'Poachers, Proletarians and Gentry in the early twentieth century Transvaal', unpublished paper, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1983.

As social constructionist work on the environment has shown, landscapes are the 'symbolic environment created by a human act of conferring meaning on nature and the environment'⁷⁷ and thus landscape reflects the self-definition of people within a particular cultural context.⁷⁸ Nature is thus 'socialized... reorganized... [and] made into a material manifestation of social structure.'⁷⁹ These shared and reified meanings contribute to the social network. As Bennet observes: 'Humans are constantly engaged in seizing natural phenomena, converting them into cultural objects, and reinterpreting them with cultural ideas.'⁸⁰ Marais wrote at a time when the natural world was becoming utilised as a vehicle to transmit shared ideology through the Afrikaans press. J.M. Coetzee has likened this link between land and *volk* to a theme of nineteenth century German nationalism, like that of Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, who thought a patriot's task was to find a natural bond between *volk* and land, to naturalize the *volk*'s possession of the land.⁸¹ The nationalist agenda required hegemony over the anthropology of landscape, which was increasingly portrayed as inextricably part of the Afrikaans spirit.⁸²

⁷⁷ Thomas Greider and Lorraine Garkovich, 'Landscapes: the social construction of nature and the environment', *Rural Sociology*, Spring, 1994, no. 1, vol. 59, p.1.

⁷⁸ See, for example, P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: a treatise in the sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967).

⁷⁹ L. Busch, 'Irony, tragedy, and temporality in agricultural systems, or, values and systems are related', *Agriculture and Human Values*, 1989, 6 (4), p.7.

⁸⁰ J.W. Bennett, *The Ecological Transition: cultural anthropology and human adaptation* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1976) p.4.

⁸¹ J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing – On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (Yale University Press, 1988) p.61.

⁸² This is an extension of the notion that when a people are at home in an environment, the landscape speaks to them and is understood by them. J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing*, see Chapters Two and Seven, in particular. Leipoldt's 'Die Soutpan' had the veld speaking to the reader in a common language, Jan Cellier's 'Die Vlakte' and C.J. Langenhoven's 'Die Stem van Suid-Afrika' anthropomorphises the landscape. There was a stream of natural history writing – like J.F. Cellier's *Herinneringe uit die Jagveld* (Reminiscences of the hunt) (1922) and C.J.

Marais insisted on natural authenticity and criticised, for example, M. Jansen's *Die Veldblommetje* for being too Dutch and not presenting 'Die ware Afrikaanse gees' (the real Afrikaans spirit), and he was particularly disparaging of mistakes like the thorn trees blooming a few months too early. Marais recalled, apropos of this, a recent literary 'fraud', who had her hero abandoned in love standing wistfully under a prickly pear and plucking a leaf – which Marais noted wryly would result in more than his heart suffering pain.⁸³

Afrikaans as Scientific medium

Working for the popular press, Marais had to sell his science in the same way that he had in the pre-war ZAR to sell his newspapers. It is here that his Afrikaner Nationalism and Science share a powerful parallel - both were complex sophisticated conceptions that had to be reduced to journalistic newspaper style. Marais often resorted to cheap sensationalism in his science, with an element of the side show charlatan. Marais gave a 'South African' flavour to his work, for both Nationalist and commercial reasons. This was part of a program developed by Marais and his colleague and friend Gustav Preller. As has been discussed in Chapters Two and Three, both men realized that the use of Afrikaans would expand their constituency.⁸⁴

Grové's *Jakkals se strooptogte* (Jackal's raids) (1932) and Dr P.J. Schoeman's *Die Swerwer-Jagter* (*The Wanderer-Hunter*) (1933) all of which drew on the tradition of G.R. Von Wielligh's animal stories, like his 1907 *Dierestories*. The editor of *Die Huisgenoot* suggested in May 1918 that 'sketches from our animal world' along with portraits of great Afrikaners, art, language question, jokes would be published. A.A. Pienaar, reporter for *Die Burger*, who wrote under the 'native' name Sangiro, heralded a new period of natural history writing originally appearing in *Die Huisgenoot*, where animals were not just a piece of 'dead meat' but each lion or wildebeest was a finely detailed organism, a personality with emotions. His *Uit Oerwoud en Vlakte* (From Jungle and Plain) (1921) and *Op Safari* (On Safari) (1925) urged his readers to take pleasure in observation rather than hunting, and depicted nuanced emotions and instincts of animals.

⁸³ *Die Brandwag*, 25 April 1920.

Revealing of the manner in which he promoted his science is the invention of the ‘Oom Dirk’ character, an old Boer with whom Marais claimed to be in contact, as a mechanism to ‘sell’ scientific ideas to the growing Afrikaner Nationalist movement, and equally successfully, to the media. Marais started using the literary vehicle ‘Oom Dirk’, an old man he purportedly met in the Waterberg region:

Oom Dirk had built his house at the exit of a small kloof known as Geelhoutgrag.... Never have I seen anything more beautiful in my life than the lonely little house in its natural environment... At night - it was winter and bitterly cold in the mountains - we would sit around a great stone hearth ... A flask of wild plum brandy would be kept close at hand, and then Oom Dirk would tell us all about birds and animals - everything he had had the privilege of witnessing in nature... One could sense that everything he told one was the gospel truth. In this simple soul there was no room for lies and exaggeration⁸⁵

‘Oom Dirk’ probably never existed - oral historians could find no trace of such a figure in local memory.⁸⁶ This persona was to appeal to the Afrikaner imagination, a stock folk character, who could better capture the cadence of popular experience than his elegant urban inventor. Marais’s work has many parallels with that of his life-long friend and supporter Gustav Preller. Like Preller, Marais used personal experience and popular memory as organising principles for his work.⁸⁷ Just as Preller used popular cadences and well-known narrative forms to foster public understanding of his historical writing, Marais portrayed his science through a lens of popular idiom. Preller and Marais worked on the newspaper *De Volkstem* together and both incorporated journalistic devices into their serious writing. Both injected the personal

⁸⁴ For evidence of Preller’s agenda, see Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words’, p.104.

⁸⁵ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.239.

⁸⁶ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.239.

⁸⁷ Isabel Hofmeyr, ‘Popularizing History: the case of Gustav Preller’, *Journal of African History*, 29, 1988, p.523. Hofmeyr investigates the historical writing of Preller with the tools of historical discourse to show how he used strategies of historical writing that relied on familiar shape and cadence to make popular sense.

and the anecdotal into the genres they created. There was emphasis on eyewitness testimony and anecdotal, 'everyday' narration. If, as Hofmeyr suggests, the secret of nationalism's success lies in its 'appropriation or re-interpretation of everyday life', then together Preller and Marais set out to capture the *lares et penates* of the platteland homes.⁸⁸ Both were aware of the *Taal* as a language of the home, a 'trusted, intimate language of the big nation-family while English is the hard commercial language of the world'.⁸⁹

Why did Marais write in Afrikaans - thereby limiting his audience to a small South African reading public, ensuring his own obscurity, opening himself up to plagiarism? The traditional answer has been that he wrote in Afrikaans for altruistic motives of Afrikaner Nationalism. Certainly such gestures were occasionally made by scientists in public forums.⁹⁰ Marais's first biographer, F.G.M. Du Toit, notes that although Marais was more comfortable expressing himself in English, he made the sentimental decision to use Afrikaans.⁹¹ This was certainly what he told his translator and admirer Winifred de Kok, 'It was purely for sentimental reasons that I refused to write in any language except Afrikaans, notwithstanding the fact that I am far more

⁸⁸ Hofmeyr, 'Popularizing History', p.526. Hofmeyr explored Preller's style and the motivation behind it. A comparison between Preller and Marais is reasonable on the grounds of their very close relationship, which meant almost certainly intimate discussion of their mutual narrative techniques and great familiarity with one another's work. They were also writing for the same reading public.

⁸⁹ From a letter by Preller, TAB, A 787, V 267, F 259.

⁹⁰ In 1929 at a joint congress of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, the scientist Skaife observed a South African scientist reading his paper in Afrikaans although the great majority of his audience could not understand him. Skaife noted: 'This mistaken gesture was ... intended by him to demonstrate his loyalty to his language and country.' S.H. Skaife, *A Naturalist Remembers* (Cape Town: Longman, 1963) p.85.

⁹¹ Robert Ardrey focuses on this point particularly in his book *African Genesis*. Robert Ardrey, *African Genesis* (London: Fontana, 1961, 1967) p.67.

fluent and at my ease in English'.⁹² He was to criticise Jan Smuts for writing *Holism and Evolution* in English. This is part of Marais's personal ideology and something for which he has been honoured: that he wrote in the Afrikaans language out of *volksgevoel* (national feeling, patriotism), although more comfortable in English. It was much implied that his sacrifice was great – he had, after all, been a victim of plagiarism and deprived of his rightful glory because Maeterlinck won the renown denied one who published only in Afrikaans. His plagiarism case was supported by nationalist intellectuals, as his use of the vernacular fitted the *zeitgeist*. As Celliers noted: 'It must surely be apparent to every Afrikaner that we can only reach our goal through our own literature, nurtured in Afrikaans soil, permeated by an Afrikaans spirit and thoroughly accessible to Afrikaners in language and content.'⁹³ The Second Language Movement (S.L.M.), as a group of individuals attempting to promote the entrenchment of Afrikaans as a language, cultivated emerging writers and provided a publishing space for their work.

The real answer may, however, lie in Marais' commercial sense: it was considerably easier to sell articles to the Afrikaans language press. His connections and the lower standards of these papers made them a more lucrative vehicle. It is revealing that he never resisted foreign language translations of his works, in fact he was delighted at the prospect. Popular magazines like *Die Huisgenoot* and *Brandwag* created a cult of the personality around selected literary figures.⁹⁴ Marais was able to use this phenomenon to his advantage – as *volksdigter* (people's poet) with a

⁹² Letter from De Kok to Marais in Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p.170.

⁹³ Quoted in Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words', p.108.

⁹⁴ Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words', p.109.

scientific bent. It has been shown that through science comes a language – usually the language of the metropole.⁹⁵ From the perspective of Afrikaner nationalist development, a significant contribution was made in the medium rather than solely the message of Marais' writing. As Preller was always to remind one, in the same way that Marais demonstrated that Afrikaans could be a *literary* language, he also demonstrated that it could be a *scientific* language.

The *Superorganism* and the Scandal

The plagiarism scandal is discussed in detail, not because it is inherently important, but to show how partisan supporters of Marais ignored the available evidence and made grand claims for their hero. Marais first wrote about termites in 1923, in *Die Burger*, New Year edition, 'Verskynsels van die dieresiel' (Phenomena of the animal soul). His book *Die Siel van die Mier* was published in 1933, and subsequently translated into English and German. In it Marais presents his own view of nature: termites, and even the higher organisms like baboons, do not act as individuals but under orders from a group soul. This he argued, is true of the higher animals too, though more subtle. The controversial theory of the organic unity of the termite nest is that the queen acts as a brain, controlling the organisms from her strong palace walls like a skull protecting the soft brain, while just as in an organism, food is absorbed externally and processed within the body by the workers, which act as the teeth. Ideas about co-operative relationships between organisms animated contemporary discussions of natural history. The idea of organic unity was linked to the holism promoted by Smuts and increasingly fashionable in South Africa.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Roy MacLeod, 'On Visiting the 'Moving Metropolis': Reflections on the Architecture of Imperial Science', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, vol. 5(3) p.1.

Antithetically to Marais, Smuts argued ‘the individual bee or ant lives its own life and is not lost in the joint venture of the hive or nest’.⁹⁷ In his articles Marais admitted that initially he had wanted to ‘startle’ the scientific world, but other naturalists had ‘already become aware’ of the model.⁹⁸ He inverted the work of Claude Bernard in his address to the French Academy (1869) and of Dr Durand de Gos, who, in his *Electrodynamique Vitale* (1855) and *Variétés Philosophiques* (1857) had tried to show that the vital organs of humans were separate animals.⁹⁹

When Maeterlinck’s book appeared in English translation in November 1927, he recorded in his introduction:

So much for the facts. I have unearthed them from all kinds of places: they were confused and vague, obscure, often meaningless in their isolation... It is only the interpretation that is more or less my own... Interpretation, indeed, is the one exclusive property of the historian. It would have been very easy... to allow the text to bristle with footnotes and references. ...[T]he letterpress would have been swallowed up in vast masses of comment, like one of those dreadful books we hated so much at school. There is a short bibliography at the end....¹⁰⁰

No mention, however, was made of Marais. In December 1927, Marais wrote to a friend:

I have just been greatly worried over the last book of the great Maeterlinck, *The Life of the White Ant*. He quite calmly loots a theory of mine and gives it as his own. It is the theory that the termitary is in fact a single organism in a certain stage of evolution... He admits that he has ‘borrowed’ all his

⁹⁶ It was applied to different disciplines: Dr C.F. Visser, for example, wrote an article on ‘Holisme in die onderwys’ (Holism in education) for *Die Huisgenoot*, 30 June 1933.

⁹⁷ J.C. Smuts, *Holism and Evolution* (London: Macmillan, 1926) p.83. For a discussion see Thackwray Driver, ‘Smuts, Ecology and Holism’, *Science and Society in Southern Africa*, Centre for Southern African Studies, University of Sussex, 10-11 September 1998.

⁹⁸ Marais, *Soul of the White Ant*, p.80.

⁹⁹ Marais, *Soul of the White Ant*, p.80.

¹⁰⁰ Maeterlinck, *Life of the White Ant*, pp.15-16.

information but in order not to 'disfigure' his book he gives no references, - only a biography [sic] at the end in which my name does *not* figure. I am not in the least concerned about the 'honour' of priority, but I am very much afraid that I shall in the future be accused of stealing from Maeterlinck and not Maeterlinck from me. There is, of course, no shadow of doubt about the plagiarism. You will see this at once if you make a comparison. I am going to have to put it straight in the *Huisgenoot* and also in English in the *Star* in a fortnight's time if I get my original mss. from the Nasionale Pers before then. The theory was first described by me six years ago in a New Year Number of the *Huisgenoot*.¹⁰¹ Maeterlinck's book was published a few months ago. References to my work appeared in Dutch, Flemish and Belgium-French papers from time to time and it was no doubt from one of these that Maeterlinck got his information. I am also writing to him personally and I have no doubt that he will at once, as a man of honour, admit the plagiarism. ... I should hate to undergo even the suspicion of theft of this kind and it will surely come if I do not succeed in putting it right straightaway.¹⁰²

Marais contacted his old friends, F. Paver of *The Star* and H.G. Viljoen of *Die Huisgenoot*, both of whom had published many of his articles.¹⁰³ In an interview with the *Star* and an article in *Die Huisgenoot*, Marais asserted his own innocence of plagiarism.¹⁰⁴ Viljoen made it front page news. In the latter Marais recorded aggrievedly:

I can well understand that he made use of a far-off and in Europe, unknown Afrikaans writer without citing his name. The use would not bother me in the least if he had just admitted he formulated his work from South African work. I was not slightly concerned that he mention my name. But the accusation of plagiarism against me in South Africa would be much more serious than the accusation against Maeterlinck in Europe.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Actually it appeared in the *Burger-Nuwejaar's nommer*, 1923.

¹⁰² Marais to W. Spilhaus, 10 December 1927, quoted in Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p.183.

¹⁰³ Leon Rousseau, *Die Dowwe Spoor van Eugène Marais* (Cape Town: Ibis Press, 1998) p.41.

¹⁰⁴ The *Star*, 24 December 1927; *Die Huisgenoot*, 6 January 1928.

¹⁰⁵ *Die Huisgenoot*, 6 January 1928.

Marais insisted that it was ‘quite clear that [Maeterlinck] had borrowed the theory’ from *Die Siel van die Mier*.¹⁰⁶ Marais wove this story into the fantasy he constructed of his own sense of biography; he made it part of the mythology surrounding his addiction to morphine, for example. Ironically, however, it may be argued that the scandal actually *boosted* his own book sales and helped increase his status within South Africa. His translator noted that: ‘Your foreword, giving the facts of the plagiarising, will prove magnificent publicity and will sell the book well.’¹⁰⁷

The currency of science is originality of ideas, but historians of science have demonstrated repeatedly that few revolutionary ideas develop without a pedigree - most discoveries are, in the sociologist Robert K. Merton’s term, ‘multiples’.¹⁰⁸ Just as Darwin and A.R. Wallace independently discovered the principle of natural selection at very nearly the same time, Marais may conceivably have independently invented the *superorganism* notion. It is more likely, however, that both Marais and Maeterlinck had connected – directly or indirectly. Was there a mutual source? There are four schools of thought on the plagiarism accusation. The first school as represented by Leon Rousseau and J.C. Kannemeyer accepts Maeterlinck’s guilt in stealing from Marais, but concedes that both drew on a mutual source.¹⁰⁹ This school contends that the articles were written in Afrikaans and were thus inaccessible to the vast majority of foreign scientists and interested amateurs. Maeterlinck, however, was Belgian and could understand Flemish, and thus Afrikaans. Maeterlinck could

¹⁰⁶ *Die Huisgenoot*, xii. 301, 6 January 1928.

¹⁰⁷ Rousseau, *Die Dowwe Spoor*, p.43.

¹⁰⁸ Robert K. Merton, ‘Resistance to the Systematic Study of Multiple Discoveries in Science’, *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 4(1963), pp.237-82.

certainly read Dutch, well enough to translate the medieval mystic Ruusbroec. The theory first appeared in *Die Burger* in 1923, and also in *Die Huisgenoot*, 1923 to 1926, ample time for Maeterlinck to have scrutinized it. The originator of the idea of the *superorganism*, and the probable source of Marais's position, was a Harvard professor of entomology, William Morton Wheeler (1865 – 1937). Wheeler proposed the idea of the *superorganism* in his 1911 essay 'The Ant Colony as an Organism', drawing on earlier theorists like Herbert Spencer, Ernst Haeckel and G.T. Fechner. He argued that the animal colony fulfils the criteria of an organism, behaving as a unit; being idiosyncratic in behaviour, size and structure; having a clearly adaptive growth and reproductive cycle and being differentiated into 'germ plasm' (queens and males) and 'soma' (workers).¹¹⁰ From 1928, it became common to call the social insect colony a *superorganism*. Maeterlinck was quoted by Wheeler and in turn openly acknowledged his own debt to Wheeler, when he spoke of 'the spirit of the hive ... It disposes pitilessly of the wealth and the happiness, the liberty and the life, of all these winged people; and yet with discretion, as though governed itself by some great duty.' In his *The Life of the White Ant* (1927) and *The Life of the Ant* (1930), he employed Wheeler's concept more explicitly and scientifically. Certainly, it is demonstrable that Wheeler and Maeterlinck were aware of each other's work. Both openly drew on the work of Grassi, Hegh, Bugnion and Prell. Interestingly, both Marais and Maeterlinck quote Claude Fuller who worked in the government department of entomology.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Die Afrikaanse Literatuur* (Cape Town: Academica, 1978) p.232 Rousseau, *Die Groot Verlang*, p.393.

¹¹⁰ William Morton Wheeler, 'The Ant Colony as Organism', *Journal of Morphology*, 22 (2): p.305-325, 1911. In addition to this article, the Transvaal Museum library contained 'Social life among the insects', *Scientific Monthly*, vols. 14,15, 16, June 1922 – March 1923, which contained the idea of the social organism.

¹¹¹ See Claude Fuller, 'The termites of South Africa', *South African Journal of Natural History*, 3, 1922.

Fuller wrote widely on white ants.¹¹² Marais refers to him as ‘My friend ‘Claude Fuller’ and quotes him on peripheral technical points, while Fuller writes of sharing information with ‘non-scientific friends’.¹¹³ Maeterlinck quotes Fuller as a useful source, indicating a shared body of knowledge with Marais.¹¹⁴

The second school exculpates Maeterlinck. Caenberghs has investigated in 1997 from the Maeterlinck side and decided that the answer is still unknowable.¹¹⁵ Maeterlinck scholars have not encountered the plagiarism story nor did the French or Belgian press run the story.¹¹⁶ Marais certainly drew on many sources. It is also true that he had asked Preller to order recent scientific monographs on the topic of social insects from the Department of Entomology and had asked Preller not to mention his name.¹¹⁷ It is worth noting that Marais also accused F.W. Fitzsimons of Port Elizabeth Snake Park of unacknowledged borrowing – perhaps he was becoming paranoid as his morphine addiction took control of him.¹¹⁸

¹¹² The Transvaal Museum library contained C. Fuller’s ‘White ants in buildings, orchards and plantations’, *Agricultural Journal*, vol.3, 1912; ‘White ants in Natal’, *Agricultural Journal*, vol.4, 1912; ‘Termite economy’, *South African Journal of Science*, vol. 12, 1915; ‘Observations on soome South African termites’, *Annals of the Natal Museum*, vol.3, 1915; ‘Notes on white ants’, *Bulletin of the South African Biological Society*, vol.1, no.2, 1918; ‘White ant notes’, *Journal of the Department of Agriculture*, vol.2, no.5; vol.3, no.2, 1921; ‘Suid-Afrikaanse Rysmiere’, *Die Landbouweekblad*, no.106, 1921; ‘The termites of South Africa’, *South African Journal of Natural History*, vol.3, no.1, 1921, no.2, 1922 and ‘the termites of South Africa’, *South African Journal of Natural History*, vol.5, 1925.

¹¹³ Marais, *Soul of the White Ant*, p.143 and Claude Fuller, ‘Termite economy’, *South African Journal of Science*, vol. 12, 1915, p.60.

¹¹⁴ Maeterlinck, *Life of the White Ant*, p.50

¹¹⁵ Jacqueline Caenberghs, ‘Marais versus Maeterlinck – De Strijd om de Ziel van de Mier’, *Deus ex Machina – Tijdschrift voor literatuur en kunst*, 1998 in Dutch.

¹¹⁶ ‘Marais versus Maeterlinck – De Strijd om de Ziel van de Mier’, *Deus ex Machina – Tijdschrift voor literatuur en kunst*, 1998, p.90 and p.91.

¹¹⁷ TAD A.787, Preller Collection, p. 95, Marais to Preller, 28 March 1927.

More damning evidence shows that Marais had copied from others and had not only not acknowledged them but later maintained that their theories derived from his work. In 1933 he wrote an article for *Die Vaderland*; referring to his 1914 article on drought which appeared in the *Agricultural Journal*, he noted that ‘the world famous French astronomer Flamarion had used [Marais’s article] to make his predictions that the world was dessicating’. In reality, not only did Flamarion’s theory predate the 1914 article, but Marais had *actually quoted him in the article*: ‘In Asia and Africa...the disappearance of water annually is so great it seems to justify the prediction of the French astronomer, Flamarion, that ... the human race will find its final eclipse in this cause’.¹¹⁹

A contemporary newspaperman has commented on Marais’s pathological egocentrism, which might also have been responsible for his solipsism.¹²⁰ Marais sought fame through his scientific prose. While Marais maintained that he was ‘not concerned with publicity’, even his translator and friend, Winifred De Kok, writing shortly after his death, noted that while Marais is remembered for his poetry, it is for his scientific writing, particularly on termites, for which he would wish to be remembered.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ ‘Die wêreld se mees gevreesde slang’, *Die Vaderland*, 13 May 1933.

¹¹⁹ ‘Die wêreldberoemde French astronomer Flamarion ... het daarop... voorspellings gegrond...dat die gehele aarde aan die uitdroë is...’

¹²⁰ J.H. Viljoen, *’n Joernalis vertel* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1953) p.46.

¹²¹ Winifred de Kok in Marais, *The Soul of the White Ant*, p.13.

The third school maintains Marais's innocence and censures Maeterlinck. C.K. Ogden, for example, the editor of *Psyche* maintained in 1933 'There cannot be any doubt whatever about Eugène Marais' priority'.¹²² Robert Ardrey, the popular science writer, diffused this idea from 1967 *African Genesis* dedicated to Marais. Two passages are offered for comparison by Marais in the *Star* and *Huisgenoot* articles:

Maeterlinck, *Life of the White Ant*, (George Allen and Unwin, trans.1927) p143:

Another hypothesis might consider the hive, the anthill and the termitary as a single individual, with its parts scattered abroad; a single living creature that had not yet become, or that had ceased to be, combined or consolidated; an entity where different organs...remain always subject to the same central law, although outside it a apparently individually independent. So in the same way is our body an association of 60 000 000 cells...the organisation which we carry in ourselves is based on the same design...the same system of defence, the same cannibalism of the phagocytes in the matter of dead and useless cells; the same blind, obscure, dogged toil to achieve unknown ends. Thus it happens that after a profuse haemorrhage the red corpuscles at once begin to proliferate in obedience to an order issued one knows not whence. All that we know is that the most important functions of our organs are performed by our endocrinous glands with their internal secretions or hormones, and more particularly by the thyroid gland, which checks or restrains the action of the conjunctive cells...I come back to it; there is perhaps only one solution – to consider the termitary as an individual.

Marais, 'Die Siel van die Mier', *Die Huisgenoot*, December 1925, translated by Marais:

One hypothesis is that the termitary is a separate and complete animal, incapable of locomotion. We shall have to consider the proofs of this theoretical conception in detail. It will afford at the same time a clearer conception of the origin and development of the communal mind in nature... Our body consists of an agglomeration of millions of cells. Through... these circulate a fluid... The blood consists chiefly of two kinds of organism known as the red and white corpuscles. The movements and work of these organisms is directed by the common mind. Through them the body is built up and maintained, wounds healed and invading hostile organisms destroyed. Every wound in the outer skin is at once surrounded by a cordon of the phagocytes and invading organisms are destroyed there and then, or later within the cells and passages of the body... Everywhere in the body there are ductless glands which secrete very minute quantities of certain chemical bodies. Some of these bodies exercise a profound influence on the working of the entire organism without apparently coming into direct contact with the centres affected.'

¹²² *Psyche*, vol. xiii, 1933.

They have powerful similarities, but may have drawn on a third source. Marais had also been quite willing to name his other sources: Barthellier in Indo-China, Carpenter in British East Africa, Maxwell Le Roy in India, Prell in German East Africa, Hegh and Ghesguière in the Congo, Hill in Australia, others in the Americas, and, more locally, Jan Wessel Wessels, ‘the finest of practical naturalists’.¹²³ Marais contended that ‘Most of these facts have not been published before; indeed I do not think they have been discovered by scientists’.¹²⁴ An interesting aspect of the scandal was its localization. No breath reached the European papers. Only faint echoes of the scandal resonated in Britain a decade later, with the English translation of the *Soul of the White Ant* in London. It was noted that Maeterlinck had not been taken seriously by entomologists as he did not record his sources – and ‘only the curious wondered where [he] obtained his material.’¹²⁵ The *Times Literary Supplement* noted simply ‘the mystery is now solved.’

The final school contends that both authors had woven a more tangled web than previously realised. Maeterlinck exposes his unacknowledged use of Marais’s work in his use of the word ‘Nasicornic’. As Marais asserts in the *Huisgenoot* article, he derived it from the Afrikaans for *eenhoringmier*.¹²⁶ ‘Nasicornic’ was not a word invented by Marais, as even a cursory glance at the Oxford English Dictionary makes clear, but certainly he revived it and coined its use in this context. This unwitting use of a neologism as though it were common scientific currency reveals that Maeterlinck had read Marais’s article of 22 January 1926. Conversely, however, it is in fact

¹²³ Marais, *The Soul of the White Ant*, p.133.

¹²⁴ Marais, *The Soul of the White Ant*, p.22.

¹²⁵ *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 June 1937.

possible that Marais had looted the idea from Maeterlinck's previous book, *The Life of the Bee*: in which he writes of the 'soul of the swarm/hive' – the English translation dates back to 1901.

It is important to note that Maeterlinck's work was not unknown in South Africa. For example, Emily Hobhouse quotes him in a letter to Rachel Isabella Steyn, wife of the president of the Orange Free State.¹²⁷ Maeterlinck had used the idea of a 'group soul' two decades before Marais. It is extremely likely that both had read Wheeler – a fact Maeterlinck openly acknowledges, but Marais does not. It may be demonstrated that Wheeler's work was known in South Africa, as the reviewer in *Die Huisgenoot* refers to him, noting that that in many areas Marais is in accord with him.¹²⁸ Wheeler had in any event been the first to delineate the notion of the termitary as *social organism*, drawing in turn on other forebears like Haeckel, whom Marais *had* acknowledged. The web of borrowing, acknowledged and unacknowledged, presents a strangely apposite insight into the process of science, where ideas are the result of – albeit unaccredited and often unwilling – collective effort.

Because neither Marais nor Maeterlinck made the initial break through, many like the entomologist and socio-biologist E.O. Wilson, relegate the scandal to the status of a 'tempest in a teapot'.¹²⁹ Not everyone deemed the theory – and hence the scandal – worthy even of a teapot. The critic C.S. Grobbelaar conceded that it offered

¹²⁶ *Die Huisgenoot*, 22 January 1926.

¹²⁷ Rykie van Reenen (ed.), *Emily Hobhouse Boer War Letters* (Human and Rousseau, Cape Town) p.9.

¹²⁸ C.S. Grobbelaar, 'Die Wêreld van die Miere', *Die Huisgenoot*, 8 February 1935.

¹²⁹ E.O. Wilson, *The Insect Societies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971) p.317.

uplifting insights into animal psychology, but maintained that it was undermined by the ludicrous mistakes of an amateur (such as asserting that a scorpion is an insect) and assaulted Marais's central thesis as old-fashioned mechanistic vitalism rather than scientific dualism.¹³⁰ Dr S.H. Skaife, writing in *Dwellers in darkness*, dismissed the theory as 'just nonsense' and noted that 'it does not help us to understand the organisation of the termite community at all'. S.J. Du Toit reviewed *Die Siel van die Mier* in *Ons Eie Boek*, and states unequivocally that although Maeterlinck plagiarised Marais, the work is 'not science'. He quotes a Stellenbosch University zoologist, C.A. Du Toit, who dubbed the work a 'poetic dream' rather than science. Equally, a review by the *Times Literary Supplement* of 21 July 1927 damned Maeterlinck's monograph as more poetry than biology and his central thesis of the *superorganism* as an 'arbitrary fancy'.

Yet in other sectors in South Africa, particularly in the popular Afrikaans press rather than in either the English or academic press, Marais's stature grew. The nationalist writer and compiler of the Afrikaans dictionary, M.S.B. Kritzinger, maintained that Marais had an amazing knowledge of the animal and insect world, of psychology and scientific developments.¹³¹ The lesson taught by the white ants is emphasised by Kritzinger, who urged: 'Consider [Marais's] ant!'¹³² Kritzinger recommends *Die Siel van die Mier* - even in his obituary of Marais. There may have been an element of self-interest as he had collected the various articles by Marais and had compiled the book himself. In *Die Burger*, C.A. Du Toit, who admitted there

¹³⁰ Grobbelaar, 'Die Wêreld van die Miere'.

¹³¹ M.S.B. Kritzinger, *Volkstem*, 4 April 1936, front page news.

¹³² *Proverbs*, vi, 6, *Die Volksblad*, 22 December 1934.

were biological errors, still urged South Africa to be proud of her son, an Afrikaner researcher.¹³³ In a 1934 article for *Die Volksblad*, P.C. Schoonees called him an ‘Afrikaner Fabre’.¹³⁴ He suggested that in a land so full of chattering politicians this book will place the young people on the right path – and quoted Proverbs, urging the youth to ‘consider the ant’ and ask that it be a prescribed text. By 1938, Marais’s *Die Siel van die Mier* had become a set work for the Afrikaans matriculation exam. When Maeterlinck died, the Afrikaans press briefly revived the scandal, assuming Marais’s innocence.¹³⁵ In 1961, the popular writer on animal behaviour, Robert Ardrey dedicated his *African Genesis* to Marais.¹³⁶ In 1999, the *Natal Mercury* commended him as one of the ‘100 people who made South Africa’ – he was number 79 – for having ‘increased the international status of Afrikaner and natural science in South Africa’.¹³⁷

This contested idea then suffered an ignominious end. Until c.1950, the idea of *superorganism* was dominant in the literature on social insects, but today it is seldom employed. This is part of a general trend within ethology, Wilson suggests, of the holistic becoming replaced with the experimental and reductionist.¹³⁸ The idea of the *superorganism* was championed by Alfred E. Emerson, who wrote a series of articles

¹³³ *Die Burger*, 15 October 1934.

¹³⁴ *Die Volksblad*, 22 December 1934.

¹³⁵ *Huisgenoot*, 1949, 27 May, Vol.34, ‘Maeterlinck en Marais’,

¹³⁶ Ardrey searched for ‘the animal within man’ to explain social behaviour, publishing the socio-biologiscal *African Genesis* in 1961, *The Territorial Imperative* in 1966, *The Social Contract* in 1970, and *The Hunting Hypothesis* in 1976. Interestingly, he had a South African wife, who may have introduced him to Marais’s work.

¹³⁷ *The Natal Mercury*, 1 December 1999.

¹³⁸ Wilson, *The Insect Societies*, p.317.

(1938-1962).¹³⁹ The idea was, however, already losing scientific credibility, and even he employed it only in a nominal sense, regarding the *superorganism* as a heuristic device, and, from about 1950, as only analogical. Even the heavily liberalised and adulterated use of the *superorganism* idea came under heavy criticism.¹⁴⁰ From the 1960s the concept was largely abandoned, offering no techniques or measurements suitable in the new range of ethological interests. In its day, the *superorganism* notion was the right amalgam of fact and fancy to generate a seductive mystique, a ‘mirage’, which served to inspire research.¹⁴¹

Conclusion

Biology as ideology has received historiographical attention recently, but too often disciplines write their histories as linear progressions in the Whig Tradition, excluding the dead end- and the pseudo-scientific research. Science is considered ‘pure’, in the sense of rational and disinterested - this paper demonstrates that Marais’

¹³⁹ See, for example, A.E. Emerson, ‘Termite Nests – a study of the phylogeny of behavior’, *Ecological Monographs*, 8 (2), 1938, p247-284. For the post-1950 sense, see his article in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1959, 20, 871-878.

¹⁴⁰ See, for typical examples of the critique levelled, A.B. Novikoff, ‘The Concept of Integrative Levels and Biology’, *Science*, 101, 1945, p.209-215. T.C. Schneirla, ‘Problems in the biopsychology of social organization’, *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 41, 4, 1946, pp.385-402.

¹⁴¹ Wilson, *Insect Societies*, p.319. The ideas to which Marais subscribed are not dead; they live in various guises. Rupert Sheldrake, the author of *Seven Experiments that Could Change the World*, uses Marais’s model. <http://www.sheldrake.org/experiments/termites/> Another proponent of Marais’s ideas is Richard Roll, Allstate Professor of Finance at the Anderson Graduate School of Management at the University of California. Roll uses Marais’s idea in discussing market rationality. <http://www.nd.edu/~mcdonald/f370/Roll.html> or Richard Roll, ‘What Every C.F.O. Should Know About Scientific Progress in Financial Economics: What is Known and What Remains to be Resolved’, *Financial Management*, Vol. 23, No.2, Summer 1994. Marais’s notions have also been applied to engineering methods: his idea of a complex animal is adapted to represent South Africa in a 1997 learning programme at the Gold Fields Computer Centre for Education. <http://world.std.com/~lo/97.01/0610.html>

biological writing was not unadulterated truth, but an amalgam of individual and wider political issues, diffused within a socio-political context. It provides a window into the interaction between social forces and the creation and popularisation of scientific theories. The use of popular media to convey the new biology of Marais impacted both on Afrikaner culture and on the science itself, appearing in the everyday reading matter of Afrikaner men and women.¹⁴² The culture-brokers sought to mask fissures within Afrikaner society by promoting a shared sense of community and culture. Marais's work proved particularly apposite in that it promoted the notion that Afrikaners were invested with an understanding and love of nature. On the basis of an idealised and nostalgically reinvented past, the Afrikaner was conceived as a 'son of the soil', whose 'classroom was the veld'. Yet, at the same time, the work insisted that the Afrikaner was part of a scientific modern nation, which contributed to the 'Afrikanerisation' of science and lent the academic credibility craved by a young nation. Promoted by the Afrikaner nationalist press, Marais' entomological writings in the popular media served to promote the cultural elite's creation of an Afrikaner identity. Marais's *Soul of the White Ant* offers a microcosm of the dichotomy within Afrikaner nationalism – the containment of tradition and progress within a single ideology.

It was the project of middle-class intellectuals to mask factions within the imagined community, in favour of mythologising shared cultural identity. The nationalist magazines, in which Marais was to be published, were an attempt to create a distinct Afrikaans cultural identity, to establish and then maintain standards of *Taal* purity. They were also an attempt to uplift and educate the growing underclass of poor

¹⁴² See, for example, *'n Paradys van Weleer* (1965), a collection of essays on animal life appearing 1926-1934 in *Die Huisgenoot* and *Die Vaderland*.

whites. Marais did not invent a new paradigm. The termite articles were part of the socially constructed ideology for unifying purposes, promoting a shared aesthetics of Afrikanerdom, insisting on the connection between land and people.



‘Bushveld Magic’ and ‘Miracle Doctors’ – a discussion of Eugène Marais’s and C. Louis Leipoldt’s work based on their experiences in the Waterberg, c.1906–1917.¹

Historians have shown that in the early years of the century, orthodox belief in the west faced a crisis. Nietzsche had declared God dead; Freud said sex could be more powerful than reason; Darwin had threatened the foundations of Christian doctrine.² In this crisis, as in the fourteenth century, when vitiated papal control allowed witchcraft and magic to sweep Europe, there was great popular interest in abnormal psychical phenomena – spirit messages, telepathy, clairvoyance and poltergeists – and in new ways of seeing the modern world.³ Yet the socio-religious life of the Afrikaner, particularly in the rural communities, has been described chiefly in terms of the strict unadulterated Calvinism of their beliefs. Such writings, predominately from the Afrikaner Nationalist and Liberal historiographical traditions, maintain that this faith was both impregnable and narrowly parochial, respectively. In a typical example, Patterson contends: ‘South African Calvinism grew out of the veld like an

¹ Many thanks to Catherine Burns, William Beinart, Keith Breckenridge, Ewen Green, Dawn Nell, Adrian Ryan and Stanley Trapido for comments on earlier drafts.

² The crisis of faith was also evident in literary works, like Samuel Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh*. Darwin did not pose an unequivocal threat to the *status quo* – for ambiguities in interpretations of his work, see F.B. Brown, *The evolution of Darwin’s religious views* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986) and P. Bowler, *Charles Darwin: the man and his influence* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

³ For a brief discussion of the definition and ontological composition of ‘modernity’, where this comparison is made, see Paul Johnson, *A history of the modern world: from 1917 to the 1990s* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991).

aloe, unmoved by the mellowing breezes of liberalism that blew from Europe.’⁴ Conventional wisdom has shaped an image of Afrikaans rural communities as stagnant backwaters of isolation and racism in stark contrast to the progressive towns – where there was modernity and at least a measure of racial mixing. This is epitomised in De Kiewiet’s image of the ‘isolated, introspective frontiers of the *fons et origo* both of impoverishment (both black and white) and of racial exclusiveness and animosity’.⁵

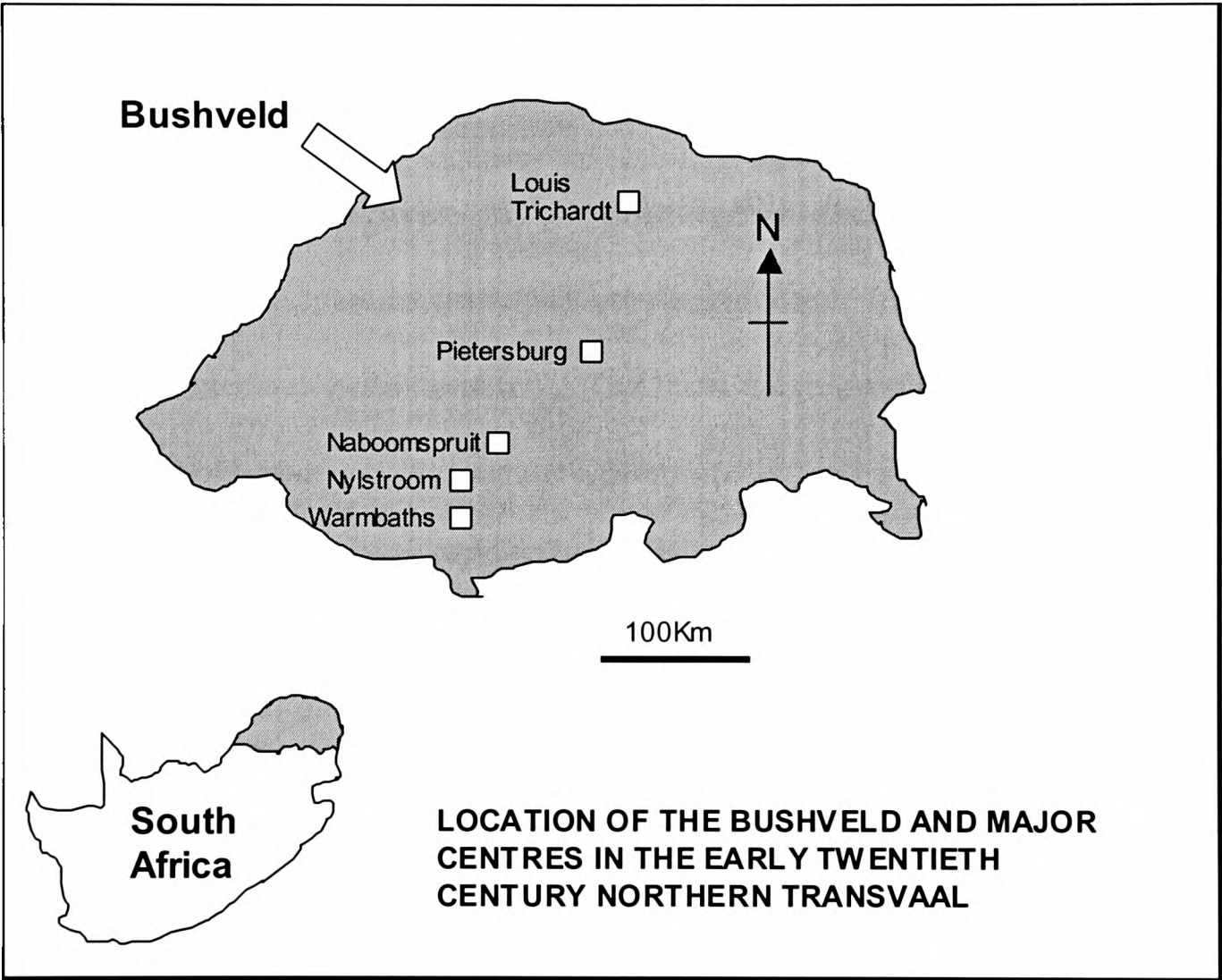
This chapter contributes to the challenge to this historiographical construction of the rural socio-intellectual world of the Afrikaner, as an extension and exploration of ideas suggested by Hexham on white-black socio-religious interactions, drawing on the challenge presented to the conventional stereotype of the Afrikaner by Du Toit.⁶ This is effected through an investigation into the world of the Bushveld Boer through the work of Eugène Marais (1871-1936) and Christiaan Frederick Louis Leipoldt

⁴ Sheila Patterson, *The Last Great Trek – A Study of the Boer People and the Afrikaner Nation* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957) p.178. Patterson is a non-guild historian, but such images are common in amateur and academic texts. See also David Harrison, *The White Tribe of Africa* (Ariel, 1981, 1985) p.25; G.H.L. Le May, *The Afrikaners – an historical interpretation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Graham Leach, *The Afrikaners – Their last Great Trek* (London: Macmillan, 1989) and W.A. de Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa* (London: Rex Collings, 1975). This has been challenged to a degree by, for example, André Du Toit, ‘Captive to the Nationalist Paradigm: Professor F.A. Van Jaarsveld and the Historical Evidence for the Afrikaner’s ideas on his Calling and Mission’, *South African Historical Journal*, no. 16, November 1984.

⁵ C.W. de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa, Social and Economic* (Oxford University Press, 1941, particularly chapters 8 and 9) and W.M. MacMillan, *Complex South Africa: an Economic Footnote to History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1930).

⁶ Andre Du Toit, ‘No Chosen People: the myth of the calvinist origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology’, *American Historical Review*, 88, 1, 1983, Irving Hexham, ‘Modernity’ in William Nichols (ed.), *Religion and Modernity* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988) and Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, ‘The Spread of Christianity among Whites and Blacks in Transorangia’ in Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa – a political, social and cultural history* (Oxford: James Currey, 1997).

(1880-1947). The experiences and writings of Marais and Leipoldt in their sojourns in the ‘Bushveld’ or Waterberg Magisterial District, usually considered a distant hinterland, in 1906 and 1913 respectively, are traced.⁷ Firstly, the very different outlooks of Marais and Leipoldt are contrasted in order to show the heterogeneity of Afrikaner experience and mind-set, to contest further the monolithic historiographical construction.



The second objective of this chapter is an attempt to explore a facet of the popular Afrikaans departure from Calvinist theology and western medicine, towards an interest in African beliefs and traditional medicine – captured in Leipoldt’s term

⁷ The Bushveld consisted of the eastern and northern sections of the Transvaal, drained by the Crocodile River in the west and the Olifants River to the east.

‘bushveld magic.’⁸ As historians of the rural Transvaal have noted, the practical workings of agrarian race relations allowed for a certain measure of cultural osmosis. This phenomenon is thoroughly documented in terms of the white influences on black culture.⁹ White-black interactions over ‘magic’ and healing have received some historiographical attention. There was a widespread practice of tacitly sanctioning witchdoctors’ powers as less disruptive than Christianity¹⁰, although healers were dangerous in their ability to mobilise public opinion.¹¹ Colonial regimes also manipulated witchcraft as the local idiom of power – a variant on the Comaroff’s notion of the ‘colonization of consciousness’.¹² What has not been explored sufficiently is the reverse process: the colonization of white consciousness by indigenous belief. This diametrical process is only beginning to be described and this chapter seeks to contribute to this project.¹³ The third intention of this chapter is to

⁸ Beidelman’s classic differentiation between ‘magic’, ‘witchcraft’ and ‘sorcery’, which imputes moral qualities are not employed here, because the genres ‘witchcraft’ and ‘magic’ are used interchangeably in the white bushveld vernacular, and the word ‘sorcery’ is seldom used. T.O. Beidelman, *The Kaguru: a matrilineal people of East Africa* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1971) p.31.

⁹ There exists a long historiographical tradition on the introduction of Christianity to the black population. See, for a recent example and for a good bibliography, Jean and John Comaroff, *Revolution and Revelation: Christianity, colonialism and consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

¹⁰ See Karen Fields, ‘Political Contingencies of Witchcraft in Colonial Central Africa: Culture and State in Marxist theory’, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 16, 1982, p.584.

¹¹ Although healers, with their ability to mobilise public opinion, were criminalised when they presented a threat to the colonial government. On the ability to mobilise public action see, for example, the Xhosa prophet in J.B. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the great Xhosa cattle-killing movement of 1856-7* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989) and for modern examples David Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (London: James Currey, 1985) and Sean Redding, ‘Government witchcraft: Taxation, the Supernatural, and the Mpondo Revolt in the Transkei, South Africa, 1955-63,’ *African Affairs*, 1996, p.95.

¹² Jean and John Comaroff (eds.) *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). See particularly Ralph Austen ‘The Moral Economy of Witchcraft’ in that collection.

¹³ See, for one of the few examples, Charles Van Onselen, ‘Race and Class in the South African Countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South-West Transvaal, 1900-1950’, *American Historical Review*, vol. 95, no. 1, 1990.

explore public interest in the paranormal and psychic, with emphasis on European trends. This is in order to challenge the conventional wisdom that there was 'in the Transvaal Boer a strong suspicion of all novelty' and demonstrate that the image of intellectual isolation has been exaggerated.¹⁴ This is a contribution to the ongoing project of historians interested in Afrikaner identity, like Du Toit and Giliomee, for example, who probe the image of a monolithic, Calvinist past and stress pluriformity and often secular thinking.¹⁵ This is of historiographical importance because, as Adam and Giliomee have shown, one of the 'most recurrent perspectives used to explain apartheid policies stresses the primitive Calvinism of backward Boers who, in an isolated corner of the world, missed the Enlightenment by being exposed only to the Old Testament rather than Voltaire.'¹⁶

The historiography of the countryside

Olive Schreiner in her essay 'The Psychology of the Boer' noted 'It has been said of the Boer that he is bigoted and intolerant in religious matters. That this accusation should ever been made has always appeared to us a matter of astonishment.'¹⁷ Why the accusation was made, by possibly ill-informed or hasty documenters from the city, is less astonishing than the fact that it has been consistently reiterated by historians and still the image persists of the isolated,

¹⁴ C.T. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition to Kruger, 1890-1895* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1970) p.7.

¹⁵ André du Toit and Herman Giliomee, *Afrikaner Political Thought: analysis and documents, vol. I, 1780-1850* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).

¹⁶ Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979).

¹⁷ Olive Schreiner, *Thoughts on South Africa* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1923) p.282.

suspicious Boer.¹⁸ The Liberal school's C.W. de Kiewiet and W.M. Macmillan were anxious to find an explanation for poverty and, drawing on the drought commissions and investigation into the poor white predicament, presented the image of the stagnation and backwardness of the countryside in stark contrast to the progressive towns.¹⁹ Although they make for strange bedfellows, both the Liberal and Afrikaner Nationalist schools have reiterated this doctrine, arguably because it corresponds with their own agendas. The Liberal school has needed an explanation for the 'irrational' racism of the Afrikaner.²⁰ The Afrikaner Nationalist school requires, and particularly required under Apartheid, an image of staunch unity and firm Christian foundation – cultural osmosis between black and white had to be denied unconditionally as it threatened the rigidly separatist Apartheid state. There was a need to emphasise the barrier between black and white in the countryside and insist that, while a civilising influence may have been wrought by white on black, it was a one-way process. As revisionist historians like Keegan demonstrate a greater degree of economic flexibility and progressiveness, a parallel picture emerges of a more progressive, less isolated social milieu.²¹ Concurrently, the black-white boundary of interaction has received increasing attention.

¹⁸ This image of the backward Boer may, of course, be traced back much further, into the colonial records upon which these historians have drawn. See J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing – On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (Yale University Press, 1988).

¹⁹ See the UG49-1923 *Final Report of the Drought Investigative Commission and Carnegie Commission Report on the poor white in South Africa* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932).

²⁰ For a discussion of the motives and positions of the historiographical schools, see Christopher Saunders, *The making of the South African past: major historians on race and class* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988).

²¹ Timothy Keegan, 'Crisis and Catharsis in the Development of Capitalism in South African Agriculture', *African Affairs*, July 1985, vol. 84, no.336.

Robert Redfield's model of a Great Tradition and Little Tradition has proved useful in this kind of analysis, as Hexham has suggested.²² The Great Tradition is the officially sanctioned discourse of the educated elite – a literate tradition that is transmitted through a formal education system, concentrating particularly on the interpretation of scripture. The Little Tradition, on the other hand, is religion experienced by ordinary people – non-literate, rich in mythology, oriented to cosmic rather than historical time, focusing on experience rather than theology. It is transmitted by family and community rather than by a formal system of education. There is continual interaction between the traditions: the Little Tradition adopts the Great Tradition's symbolism, but adapts the symbols to its own lived reality. The Great Tradition looks upon the Little Tradition with contempt, but incorporates it to buttress itself. In the case of the rural Afrikaner, and to an extent the urban Afrikaner, the Great Tradition is Calvinism, the Little Tradition an admixture of African, Malay, Bushman, and European folklore – coupled with innovations from Europe regarding the paranormal.²³

Marais and Leipoldt

The work of Marais and Leipoldt present a useful framework for the investigation.²⁴ They share characteristics and yet are different enough to broaden the

²² Irving Hexham, 'Modernity or Reaction in South Africa': the Case of Afrikaner Religion', presented to The Consultation on Modernity and Reaction, University of Columbia, December 1981, p.2.

²³ See Robert Redfield, *Human nature and the study of society: the papers of Robert Redfield* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) and Robert Redfield, *The little community; and, Peasant society and culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

window through which the rural world, particularly the Waterberg, is viewed. It might be questioned whether two men represent a sufficient sample size to contest the formulaic monolithic image. Yet these two present the ideal model: firstly, their work was popular and disseminated to a wide audience. Secondly, Afrikaner Nationalist culture-brokers drew heavily upon them and their work, as is explored in Chapter Seven. Finally, while Leipoldt and Marais are the chapter's chief focus, other sources are used to create context.

Leipoldt and Marais were friends and colleagues, at one stage sharing a house in Pretoria.²⁵ They shared a network of contacts, within the Afrikaans-speaking political realm, with many connections.²⁶ Leipoldt was staunchly SAP (South African Party), while Marais was passionately NP (Nationalist Party).²⁷ They were both educated in the Cape and in London. Both worked as medical practitioners in the Waterberg – Leipoldt legally as the appointee of the government, Marais illegally to support himself while prospecting for minerals. Yet there were significant dissimilarities. As a gentleman scholar in a period of professionalisation of South African science, Marais followed the Victorian tradition of the amateur polymath

²⁴ Elize Botha, 'Oor raaisels en rillings: Leipoldt se spook- en speurstories' discusses the literary worth of Leipoldt's prose, but its historical value has been neglected. M.P.O. Burgers, *C.L. Leipoldt* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1960). See also J.C. De Villiers, 'Leipoldt as geneesheer', *South African Medical Journal*, 58: 921, 1980.

²⁵ Leon Rousseau, *The Dark Stream - the story of Eugène Marais* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1982).

²⁶ For example, Leipoldt's uncle, Ewald Esselen was Marais's mentor as a young man. Leipoldt worked on *Die Volkstem*, becoming a close friend of its editor, Dr Engelenburg. He joined *Die Volkstem* in 1923 at the request of both Engelenburg and Jan Smuts, and his fellow assistant editor was Gustav Preller, Marais's best friend.

²⁷ Leipoldt was accused of political bias, 'As if one needed to be a Botha-man or a Nationalist ... to detect malnutrition so glaringly apparent, feeble-mindedness so obvious, and physical deterioration so evident!' C. Louis Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor* (Braamfontein, Lowry 1980) p.14.

scientist, whereas Leipoldt was a qualified medical doctor. Marais had fled the world of newspapers in Pretoria, on Gustav Preller's advice – in order to conquer his morphine addiction and to get over a failed love affair – to go prospecting, and acted as a justice of the peace. Less romantically, Leipoldt toured the Waterberg for a year in 1913, as a government medical inspector investigating school conditions, as Medical Inspector of Schools in the Transvaal, and made recurrent journeys there afterwards. Both Leipoldt and Marais loved nature. Indeed in the 1920s Marais had occasion to correct one of Leipoldt's ornithological assertions in *Die Huisgenoot*.²⁸ As a child, Leipoldt roamed the koppies of Clanwilliam, collecting plants, accompanying botanists as a teenager, maintaining a friendship with Harry Bolus that gave him access to the latest botanical information. Marais devoted much of his life to investigating natural phenomena and describing them for the popular press. Both were formerly English speaking, and felt more comfortable in that language.

Leipoldt presents a more substantial figure than Marais. He was the fourth child in a family with a strong Rhenish missionary background. He spoke Afrikaans, English, Dutch and German. He read widely, reading the works of Dante, Bunyan, Milton, Racine and Scott while very young and then earning his first money from stories he sold to the *Boy's Own Paper* and *The Cape Argus*. At the age of fourteen he became a reporter for the *Cape Times* and subsequently *De Kolonist*. When the South African War broke out he was unable to reconcile himself with the pro-Rhodes sympathies of his paper, and became the Dutch correspondent for the pro-Boer *South African News* and various overseas newspapers.²⁹ In 1902 he traveled through

²⁸ C.J. Mieny, *Leipoldt en Marais: onwaarskynlike vriende* (Pretoria: J. Lötter Publikasies, 1988) p.9.

²⁹ These included the *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily Express* (Britain), *Chicago Record*, *Boston Post* (America), *Petit Bleu* (Belgium), *Hamburger Neueste Nachrichten* (Germany) and *Het*

Holland, Belgium, France and Spain for the *Manchester Guardian*, before enrolling in Guy's Hospital in London in 1903.³⁰ In 1907, having completed his degree in medicine and having won the gold medal for surgery, he became a houseman at Guy's and made a further study of children's diseases in various European centers. In 1909, he acted as personal physician to the son of the millionaire newspaper magnate, Joseph Pulitzer, on a six-month luxury yacht cruise. Between 1910 and 1911, he was attached to a London children's hospital, publishing on hygiene and nutrition and travelling frequently to both Europe and America. In 1912 he travelled for health reasons as ship's doctor to the Dutch East Indies. During the war in the Balkans from 1912 to 1913, he acted as war correspondent and doctor for the Greeks in their struggle against Turkey. He aided wounded Turks, however, for which he was given an honorary degree by the University of Constantinople. He returned to South Africa, appointed chief medical inspector of schools in the Transvaal. In 1915, he acted briefly as Botha's personal physician, but in June 1915, returned to his post of school medical inspector. He continued to publish plays and to contribute articles and poems to *Ons Moedertaal*, *Die Boervrou*, *De Volkstem*, *Die Huisgenoot* and acted briefly as assistant editor of *De Volkstem* in 1924.³¹ He adopted a son and opened his home to many foster children. He continued to devote his energies to public health and education – in 1926, he became secretary of the Medical Council of South Africa and editor of the South African Medical Journal, while lecturing part-time at the

Nieuws van de Dag and *De Telegraaf* (Holland). He was briefly editor of the *South African News*, after the editor was arrested under martial law.

³⁰ In 1904 he began editing *The Hospital*, travelling Europe and America to collect material, and editing *School Hygiene*, the official organ of British school doctors.

³¹ This is discussed in Chapter Three.

University of Cape Town. His prose works were often on murder and detective mysteries, concerned with the super-natural, and abnormal psychology.³²

The Waterberg

After studying in London at the Inner Temple for five years, Marais returned to South Africa in 1902, hoping to help the Boer forces. Prior to leaving he purchased medical equipment. He purportedly attended some lectures at Guy's Hospital while studying at the Inner Temple in London in the 1890s. He later propagated the rumour that he had studied at a nerve clinic while in Europe, but his biographer Rousseau has demonstrated the unlikelihood of this.³³ He did, however, travel with a group of German students on the continent and may have encountered latest developments in psychology through discussions with them. After an abortive effort to return to the world of journalism, hampered by his increasing addiction to morphine, Marais retreated to the Waterberg, where he prospected from 1907. Marais settled on the farm Doornhoek and purchased its prospecting rights from the Van Staden family. The oldest families in the Waterberg were direct descendants of the emigrants from the Cape at the time of the Great Trek. The neighbouring farm, Kromkloof, had a large farm school and a shop. Marais and a prospector friend, Alec Austin, built themselves cottages in a valley on Doornhoek. In 1908 a Johannesburg-based mining company bought the rights and Marais moved on to a farm called Rietfontein. His

³² For a discussion of Leipoldt's writing see, for example, G.M.S. Boloka, 'A Pragmatic Approach to C.L. Leipoldt's early dramatic monologues', MA, 1997, Potchefstroom, and Leon Strydom, 'n Studie van C.Louis Leipoldt se Slampamperliedjies', MA, Stellenbosch, 1969. Leipoldt's autobiographical fragments may be found in *Die Huisgenoot*, 5 November 1926, 1 December 1933, 6 December 1940. The University of Cape Town has his collection of letters, manuscripts and books, while the South African Library has his Cookery Collection.

³³ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, Part 3, pp.112 –135.

friend, Charlie Pienaar, Secretary for Justice, secured him a job as Justice of the Peace in 1911. Shortly after his arrival, tin was discovered at the farm Doornhoek and Marais was appointed the mine doctor at £30 a month. He then moved to the farm Rietfontein where he openly started practising as a doctor, although he did not carry out operations. From 1907, Marais served ten years as the 'Wonderdoctor' of the Waterberg, practicing medicine and experimenting on the health of the residents of the Bushveld.

As a medical man, Leipoldt saw the area as a malarial, bilharzia-ridden cesspool, the breeding ground of poor whites. To Marais, as a prospector first, the Waterberg was the 'ideal theatre of manly adventure, of great endeavours and the possibility of princely wealth.'³⁴ The local community was larger than might be imagined from Marais's descriptions of empty wilderness, and composed of both black and white. Leipoldt observed that, on the whole, 'with exceptions that are beyond the pale, the white settler has kept himself reasonably pure in blood. He has not consciously bred a race of half-castes, although hybridism is not altogether unknown, and is probably more prevalent than is admitted.'³⁵ He contended that the upper and lower limits of the white and coloured communities are difficult to determine, and '[e]very school teacher can quote cases where it was impossible to decide if the child was 'coloured' or European.'³⁶

³⁴ Eugène Marais, *The Road to Waterberg*. Marais observed: 'Where once ivory was the lure, now tin and platinum drew adventurers'.

³⁵ Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, p.138. He had the attitude that '[w]herever there are white men and native women living under conditions that make miscegenation possible but easy, such miscegenation will occur, and South Africa is no exception to that rule', indeed 'no human laws can stop [it]' Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, p.138, p.144.

³⁶ Leipoldt himself adopted a test that consisted of feeling for the niche that exists at the tip of a white child's nose. Leipoldt insisted that with his missionary background he was of those

Medical Practices

This racial ambiguity was extended into the medical realm. There were recurrent attempts to separate science from superstition, medicine from quackery, rationality from irrationality – and white from black, in the 1910s and 20s – culminating in the Medical, Dental and Pharmacy Act of 1928, which banned African healers throughout the Union.³⁷ Although there were repeated attempts by the white medical board to prevent it, white and black unlicensed medical practitioners were much utilised by the Bushveld white community. *Slamaaiers* (members of the Cape Muslim community involved in the supernatural), Indian physicians, Malay healers, Bushman diviners, African *izinyanga* (diviners) and *izangomas* (witchdoctors), and white unlicensed healers, selling patent medicines, found ready custom among the poor white population.³⁸ Indeed, as Isidore Frack, a contemporary medical practitioner, observed: ‘One of the greatest evils which keeps [the poor white] poor is his inordinate love for quack and patent medicine.’ More covertly there were patients

who could see ‘no specific distinction in the human race’ and believing that black and white were simply separated by a ‘cleft that in time could...be bridged by a common civilisation.’ He conceded that he had to modify this outlook – and maintained that in the North the chasm grew wider, and he learnt to appreciate if not to sympathise with a community that had from the beginning to live in fear on a ‘crude, savage reality.’ Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, p.138.

³⁷ It is worth recording that there was significantly more faith invested in western medicine and official derision directed towards ‘alternative’ healing practices, than is the case today.

³⁸ Terminology must be cautiously applied, as Deacon has noted. Classifications based on race into ‘folk medicine’ versus ‘indigenous medicine’ are based on teleological dichotomy. Harriet Deacon, ‘One piece of the puzzle’: Indigenous herbal medicine and settler practitioners in the Cape Colony’, Conference on Recovering the History of Indigenous Medicine in Africa’, Oxford Brookes, 12 June 1999. For a contemporary article on perceptions of witchdoctors by a white English-speaking doctor see J.B. McCord, ‘The Zulu Witchdoctor’, *South African Journal of Science*, January to February 1919. For further discussion see Karen Flint, ‘Diagnosing their ills’: competition between African healers and white medical practitioners in KwaZulu-Natal in the 1920s and 30s’, History and African Studies Seminar Series no. 28 of 1998, 11 November 1998.

among the middle classes.³⁹ Frack recorded the cheating of the gullible by the charlatans.⁴⁰ He noted that qualified doctors were often dismissed on the grounds that: ‘We have our own medicine.’⁴¹ Henry Taylor, a doctor who had trained at London’s Guy’s Hospital before moving to South Africa and practising in rural Lesotho and the Free State, also recorded the high preponderance of quacks. He called them a ‘vulgar, ignorant and bombastic crowd’ who ‘fleeced the Boers to an enormous extent’.⁴²

Every home had a *huisapotheek* (home pharmacy), a tin box containing a number of twenty-ounce bottles of ‘Dutch remedies’ – ranging from the ‘innocuous’ to the ‘nasty’.⁴³ There were also books available like D.J. Smal’s *Die Afrikaanse Huisdokter*, a compendium of traditional remedies assembled from many other works.⁴⁴ *Boereraadjies* (traditional Boer remedies) shared space with patent cures like Zam Buk ointment, Buchu Rub, Blue Butter, Evan’s throat pastilles, Staaldruppels and Dr Kiesow’s Essence of Life.⁴⁵ Home-remedies, quacks’ wares and indigenous beliefs were often combined in treatment.⁴⁶

³⁹ Paul Kruger, for example, admits in his autobiography to having used a ‘Boer remedy’ to heal the wound left by his self-amputated thumb. Paul Kruger, *The Memoirs of Paul Kruger – Four Times President of the South African Republic* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1902) p.37.

⁴⁰ Isidore Frack, *A South African Doctor looks backwards – and Forward* (South Africa: Central News Agency, 1943) p.118.

⁴¹ ‘Ons het ons eie medisyne.’

⁴² Henry Taylor (ed. Peter Hadley) *Doctor to Basuto, Boer and Briton 1877-1906* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1972) p.128.

⁴³ Taylor, *Doctor to Basuto*, p.130. An observer noted that the Afrikaners that trekked from the Bushveld to Rhodesia, in the first two decades of the twentieth century had homemade remedies for every medical occasion. Patrick Guilbride, ‘Pawpaw Picnic’, Rhodes House Library, Mss Afr.s.1315, p.85.

⁴⁴ D.J. Smal, *Die Afrikaanse Huisdokter* (Koedoe-Aptek, Pretoria, 1921).

Another troubling malady was *kaffergif* (African poison) designed ‘exclusively to annoy Europeans’, which was responsible for migraines, dyspepsia, boils and backaches. If these could not be alleviated by Dutch remedies, a witchdoctor had to be consulted for a cure. Van Onselen has noticed a similar phenomenon a little further south in the South Western Transvaal. The herbalist-sharecropper Kas Maine gained renown as a *ngaka* or herbalist and routinely aided white farmers in the 1920s by spreading a magic potion around their fields to protect them from grain-eating birds – for a standard price of five bags of grain.⁴⁷ Maine also used a fusion of Christian symbols and traditional herbs to cure the backache of his white business partner. Taylor also recorded many Afrikaans adoptions of African belief: ‘This sort of story is told by the Boers, seriously and gravely, and with a firm belief in its truth, and it would be thought the height of rudeness to laugh, or seem to disbelieve.’⁴⁸

In his 1918 *Praatjies met die oumense* (conversations with the old people), Leipoldt discussed common Bushveld complaints like malaria, and warned against charlatans and ‘cancer healers’.⁴⁹ In a speech on 30 September 1935, entitled

⁴⁵ C. Van Onselen, ‘Race and Class in the South African Countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South-West Transvaal, 1900-1950’, *American Historical Review*, vol. 95, no. 1, 1990, p.116.

⁴⁶ Taylor often found their final resorts farcical: like tying a frog to one’s chest to cure pneumonia, or, in the case of a rupture, splitting a young sapling in two, then holding the halves apart and passing the patient through them. Afterwards the halves were bound together with twine – if the sapling lived, so would the patient. Taylor, *Doctor to Basuto*, p.128.

⁴⁷ Van Onselen, ‘Race and Class in the South African Countryside’ p.115. See also Charles van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine, the life of Kas Maine - a South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1996) p.110, p.439.

⁴⁸ Taylor, *Doctor to Basuto, Boer and Briton*, p.128.

⁴⁹ Leipoldt wrote widely on quackery. See his *Skoolgesondheid, Die Afrikaanse kind in siekte en gesondheid*, and *Gesondheidsleer vir die laerskoolkind*.

‘Medicine and Faith’ (at a congress in Grahamstown) and published in the Christmas edition of the *Lancet*, he noted:

There is no country in which itinerant quackery is more rampant than in South Africa; none where the consumption of quack remedies is so high per head of white population, none where the charges for quack treatment are higher.⁵⁰

Social and environmental forces encouraged the utilisation of black medical practitioners. The forces of nature itself drove the poor white to desperation.⁵¹ Poor White farmers and *bywoners*, already forced into arid regions, now faced an almost biblical succession of plagues. Locust, stock disease – anthrax, *gallamziekte*, *lamziekte* and *sponsziekte*. People began to make anxious comparisons with the devastating 1896 rinderpest epidemic. In 1910, a five-year drought set in. With the drought and the plagues, farmers were unable to make their debt repayments. The 1913/14 labour agitation and fear of war in Europe caused the economy to decline, causing the money market to call in unserviced bonds. People began to call vainly for a moratorium on debt. Labourers were beginning to work for 2s 6d a day, where previously a *bywoner* would have laughed scornfully at less than 5s a day.⁵² Impoverished rural areas suffered malnutrition and disease.⁵³ The children of poor families were pallid and listless. Disease became seen as inevitable, something ‘boys were bound to get’.⁵⁴ Leipoldt recorded a case that was not rare, of a father compelled to send his son to school on only a cup of

⁵⁰ *Lancet*, Christmas edition, 1935.

⁵¹ An ecological approach to history was advocated by Leipoldt in 1937: ‘For no historian of the Transvaal can afford to neglect the influence of disease and climate upon the men who played a conspicuous part in shaping that history’, *Bushveld Doctor*, p.103.

⁵² Land and Agricultural Bank Report, UG 20-1915, 1914, p.177. Cited in Robert Morrell (ed.), *White But Poor* (Pretoria: UNISA, 1992) p.39.

⁵³ There were two parasitic diseases in particular that debilitated their sufferers: malaria, which causes kidney damage, and bilharzia, which causes debilitating tiredness and impaired liver functioning.

⁵⁴ Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, p.94.

coffee and a twist of tobacco.⁵⁵ Droughts, rinderpest, locusts and upheaval and social dislocation precipitated by the South African War disrupted the communities.⁵⁶ Post traumatic stress syndrome may also have been a factor in creating mental instability and inexplicable neuroses. This hypothesis gains weight from the anecdotal evidence of ‘sun-stricken’ or ‘dazed’ ex-combatants. Leipoldt, for example, described a man who was a ‘stray from some patrol during the Boer War. He was not wounded but ‘sun-stricken’...[he learnt to speak Afrikaans and married a local woman] he had forgotten his English, and could give no details about his regiment...’. Leipoldt heard another story of a man returning from the war only to have his black farm manager report a ‘tame Englishman at the huts’, whom they had found in uniform and had hidden – he could no longer understand English, speaking only ‘broken Afrikaans’ and ‘fluent Shangaan’.⁵⁷

Various factors attracted a white clientele to both African healers and white unlicensed practitioners: lower prices, familiarity and proximity. Another factor may have been the lack of faith in SAP government doctors when the local residents were predominately NP supporters. Embarrassment may have prevented others from consulting medical doctors. There were many remedies upon which the medical board would frown: like *Bangalala* (an aphrodisiac), *Pitsa-ea-basali* (to prevent sterility) and *Ndiyandiya*, which was designed to confuse a judicial officer and ‘sway him to

⁵⁵ Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, p.39.

⁵⁶ C. Van Onselen, ‘Reactions to rinderpest in Southern Africa, 1896-1897’, *Journal of African History*, 13: 3, 1972.

⁵⁷ Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, p.55.

one's favour'.⁵⁸ Kas Maine, for example, treated a poor white for what the patient assumed to be a sexually transmitted disease and thus was unwilling to have treated by the white village doctor.⁵⁹ Sol Plaatje observed that 'lower middle-class Boers attach great weight to the guesses of native bone-throwers. It is strange sometimes when a Malay charmer is prosecuted for imposing on the public to find Dutch witnesses giving evidence of the healing powers possessed by the accused and emphasising the absurdity of prosecuting a man who benefited them and their relatives more than many a certificated medical man'.⁶⁰ Even a mail order company was created, the 'House of Israel Alexander and Mafaruke Ngcobo', in the 1930s.⁶¹ The medical board noted apprehensively:

The native doctor has attractions for the ignorant European by virtue of there being something mysterious about him...Hence the native will always get a small following of Europeans to stimulate his ambitions to go further, and if allowed to go on unhampered... we Europeans will soon be the exploited and our hopes of a pure white race will soon be gone.⁶²

African healing practices may be crudely divided into herbal remedies and sympathetic magic. African belief and healing traditions were not static and were transformed over time.⁶³ Although diagnosis and rational treatment were ostensibly the preserve of the licensed medical doctor, white chemists and patent medicine

⁵⁸ Karen Flint, 'Diagnosing their ills': competition between African healers and white medical practitioners in KwaZulu-Natal in the 1920s and 30s', History and African Studies Seminar Series no. 28 of 1998, 11 November 1998, p.8.

⁵⁹ Van Onselen, 'Race and Class in the South African Countryside', p.115.

⁶⁰ Sol. T. Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Writers Series, 1982) p.373.

⁶¹ SAB (Central Archives Depot, Transvaal) GES, 1788, 25/30M.

⁶² J.A. du Toit, 'The Native Doctors and European Patients', *The Journal of the Medical Association of South Africa*, II, no. 2, 1928, p.45.

⁶³ Flint, 'Diagnosing their ills', p.2.

sellers were being brought to court for ‘practising as a doctor’.⁶⁴ Marais himself practised without a license. Marais was widely known to have an understanding of indigenous beliefs. As one reviewer noted: ‘He knew Native beliefs and practices.’⁶⁵ He was considered to understand the ‘motives of the natives’, as M.S.B. Kritzinger, compiler of the Afrikaans dictionary and powerful figure in *kultuurpolitiek* (the politics surrounding the production of Afrikaans culture) observed.⁶⁶ Leipoldt also maintained an interest in indigenous practices, and had, unlike Marais, objected to race prejudice, occasionally under the pseudonym ‘Forsyth W. Bascombe’, arguing that the ‘Native is integral to communities’ and total segregation impossible.⁶⁷

Leipoldt took a scholarly interest in what he called ‘Bush magic’. He acknowledged that as a boy he had heard many Bushmen tales of Heitsi Kabib [Heitsi Eibib], whom Leipoldt contrasted favourably with Jesus – after all ‘*He* never disputed with the doctors in the Temple, but he ran races against the sun, and he had a wonderful and alluring dog’.⁶⁸ Leipoldt adopts an irreverent tone, pointing out Jan van Riebeeck’s interest in Bushman belief and noting that the first settlers, ‘common folk of no great culture’, believed in witchcraft.⁶⁹ Leipoldt records that native belief and

⁶⁴ See, for contemporary commentary, A.W. Burton, ‘Medical Practitioners and Dispensing’, *The Journal of the Medical Association of South Africa*, 1, no. 19, 1927.

⁶⁵ ‘Naturellegelowe en –gebruik het hy goed geken.’ C.A. Groenewald, *Die Suiderstem*, 7 September 1937.

⁶⁶ M.S.B. Kritzinger, ‘Eugène Marais as Digter’, *Ons Tydskrif*, May 1936. There has been speculation that Marais may have used dagga (marijuana) himself. Certainly he did say that brandy was more dangerous than dagga, Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.263.

⁶⁷ *The Cape Times*, 24 September 1896.

⁶⁸ Leipoldt, *Bushveldt Doctor*, p.150.

⁶⁹ Leipoldt, *Bushveldt Doctor*, p.153.

imported superstition became incorporated, with Malay magic particularly influential – a melting pot of ‘animism, Hinduism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Lhamanism, Mohammedanism and Christian Gnosticism’.⁷⁰ There was a link between the African natural world and the world of the paranormal. For example, Hexham’s study of rural oral tradition unearthed successive retellings of the initiation of white Afrikaans speaking children by an African, Bushman or Malay servant, into the workings of the natural or supernatural world.⁷¹ Certainly ghost stories were told simply for entertainment, but with the inclusion of Malay myths, for example, religious connotations were incorporated. Particular themes were the appearance of ‘spirits’ either at the occasion or warning of death. Other mythical figures included the African’s Tokoloshe – a small hairy figure with immense strength and sexual prowess.⁷² At the same time, for example, Arthur Conan Doyle travelled South Africa in 1928, lecturing on spiritualism and communing with the ‘Other Side’.⁷³ Journals were generating interest in the paranormal.⁷⁴ Significantly, between 1906 and 1912 the Dutch Reformed Church dealt with several cases of witchcraft. Two church elders even wrote a booklet expounding the evils of anti-Christian superstitions.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ For an examination of ‘Malay magic’ see W.W. Skeat, *Malay Magic – an introduction to the folklore and popular religion of the Malay Peninsula* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984)

⁷¹ Hexham, ‘Modernity or Reaction in South Africa’, p.5.

⁷² Also known as ‘Tokkelosie’ or ‘Tikoloshe.’

⁷³ *Die Volksblad*, 4 December 1928.

⁷⁴ See, for example, W.F. Barrett, ‘Aspects of psychical research’, *Contemporary Review*, November 1922; E.J. Dingwall, ‘Recent work in psychical research’, *Psyche*, January 1922; a journal called *Occult Review* and ‘Science or superstition: ‘the Other Side’, *Cornhill Magazine*, May 1921.

⁷⁵ Hexham, ‘Modernity and Reaction’, p.12.

Leipoldt noted that in the Bushveld white and black did not doubt the existence of ghosts.⁷⁶ Herman Charles Bosman, writing of his experience of the frontier Marico district, satirised the rural belief in the supernatural, emphasising each time the shared beliefs with Africans. He noted that ‘When it comes to having to do with ghosts, a Mtosa can be almost as educated as a white man’ and wrote of the occasional necessity of sending for a ‘good Malay ghost-catcher up from the Cape.’⁷⁷ Similarly, Leipoldt (who while in England had become a member of the Society for Psychical Research) wrote of the ‘Shangaan witchdoctor, who throws the *dol-os* bones’ (to predict the future) and the ‘white baas, who in public derides both, [but] is privately a little afraid of what either might be able to do.’⁷⁸ Marais displayed a more cavalier attitude towards scientific accuracy in investigations of the paranormal, observing that: ‘In my opinion a ghost story is a story ... whether based on truth or fiction ... The aim of the ghost story is to frighten – nothing else.’⁷⁹ Marais’s taste for illusion and showmanship manifested itself when, at age forty-two and a resident

⁷⁶ Leipoldt, *Bushveldt Doctor*, p.154.

⁷⁷ In another of Bosman’s stories one of the Marico’s less intellectual citizens, Dawie Ferreira, a former policeman, encountered a ‘ghostly Bechuana’ carrying his head under his arm and promptly asked him for his pass. H.C. Bosman, ‘Ghost Trouble’ in *Jurie Steyn’s Post Office* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1971) p.21, p.28, p.138.

⁷⁸ Leipoldt, *Bushveldt Doctor*, p.154. Afrikaans authors published ghost stories for popular consumption. Reenen van Reenen, for example, published anthologies in 1919 and 1920 in the vein of Edgar Allan Poe. T.L. Kemp published stories with a very Afrikaans flavour of ghostly interludes concerning ‘Oom Faan’ and ‘Oom Flippie’. *Die Huisgenoot*, July 1921. Leipoldt and Langenhoven wrote traditional (in the western sense) ghost stories but set in Afrikaans communities, as P.C. Schonees, observed. P.C. Schoonees, *Die Prosa*, p.52. Langenhoven’s ghosts were very rational. Marie Linde and I.D. Du Plessis also wrote short ghost stories for popular magazines.

⁷⁹ In 1879, the eight-year old Marais and a friend draped themselves with sheets and not only terrified the neighbourhood children, but scared themselves and created more tumult by tripping over roots and pursuing the children in bloodied sheets. Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.13.

Justice of the Peace, he fabricated a spectral figure, which appeared at full moon, near the police post. He later reported this hoax as a supernatural phenomenon.⁸⁰

Modernity and its Enthusiasts

The conventional notion of Afrikaner antipathy towards scientific progress is conjured out of a few stock caricatures. Gordon quotes the example of the Volksraad member and purported Progressive J. du P. de Beer, who protested against a museum, arguing that every schoolboy has seen a scorpion, a chameleon, and ‘other such nonsense’.⁸¹ These anecdotes were invariably repeated by those with a political advantage invested in emphasising the antediluvian dimensions of the ZAR. Percy Fitzpatrick, for example, made much of the anxiety felt by the Volksraad in generating rain by firing into the clouds because it was in defiance of God, and that equally locusts might perhaps not be resisted as they were sent by God.⁸² Such recalcitrance was answered summarily by progressives like Lukas Meyer, who asked simply why no one had objected to the extermination of lions, jackals and leopards.⁸³ Indeed, Kruger defended science as long as it did not endeavour to ignore or overthrow religion.⁸⁴ Every new scientific theory that shook Victorian conservatism resonated in the periphery. N.P. Van Wyk Louw, the Afrikaans critic and poet, noted that:

⁸⁰ Later Marais wrote an article on this phenomenon, even contending that he had confirmed its paranormal nature ‘experimentally’. *Die Boerevrou*, December 1927.

⁸¹ Notulen, Eerste Volksraad, 1898, arts. 231, 262. Gordon does not, however, usually stereotype the Afrikaner as a monolithic body, sensitively analysing factionalisation between Afrikaans-speaking groups. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition to Kruger*.

⁸² Fitzpatrick, *The Transvaal from Within*, p.311.

⁸³ Notulen, Eerste Volksraad, 1896, arts. 870-2. *Press*, 11 July 1896.

By about the nineties of the previous century, shall we say... when Kolbe, Eugene Marais, General Smuts and General Hertzog were very young, and Leipoldt, Totius and Celliers were boys, our people [the Afrikaners] – all, or a great many of them – ‘started dreaming in a different key’; chiefly as a result of the advent of new scientific, mainly biological, concepts. And in all these figures the old peasant world was broken, the almost sixteenth-century world in which we had lived ...⁸⁵

Far from the stagnant backwater, suspicious of innovation, as represented by liberal critics, the countryside embraced a measure of modernity. Olive Schreiner expressed total disbelief in the notion of the Boer’s organic incapacity to adapt and change – the ‘Boer leaps in one generation from the rear of the seventeenth century thought and action to the fore front of the nineteenth’, accepting with enthusiasm [after studying abroad] ‘all the latest inventions, an advocate of new ideas and an upholder of the newest fashions’.⁸⁶ Marais was such an advocate. Part of his material had a European rather than an African origin, and was novel rather than traditional.⁸⁷ As previously discussed, post-traumatic stress syndrome may well have been a factor in creating a number of cases of mental instability and inexplicable neuroses in the Bushveld. It was these deep psychological scars that Marais was able to heal or at least ameliorate through a crude form of psychoanalysis, the rudiments of which he had learnt through his reading of Charcot and Freud.⁸⁸ Marais also spent several

⁸⁴ *Press*, 7 December 1892.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.43.

⁸⁶ Olive Schreiner, *Thoughts on South Africa* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1923) p.259.

⁸⁷ Marais was familiar with Freud’s *Studien über Hysterie* (1895) – and the treatment of hysteria with hypnosis. Significance of Dreams (Traumadeutung). He was also introduced to *Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* (Psychopathology in Daily Life) and *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (Three Treatises concerning Sexual Theory). Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, pp.300 –301.

⁸⁸ Marais, *Soul of the White Ant*, p.27. He contended that humans possessed ‘two souls’ and that it is possible by means of hypnotism to ‘imbue one of them with an activity which it does not possess normally.’ Letter to Spilhaus from Marais, 24-3-1926, quoted in Du Toit, p.180. See also *Vaderland*, 9 September 1933, an article entitled ‘Wanneer die onbewuste geheue die bewuste siel genaak’ (When the unconscious memory affects the conscious soul). Preller

weeks at the house of Tant Francina du Toit, near Nylstroom, a famous local interpreter of dreams.⁸⁹ Marais first encountered the idea of hypnotism while studying in the Inner Temple in London. Freud's 1893 *Studien über Hysterie* (Studies of Hysteria) came out in English translation in 1895.⁹⁰ Freud's mentor was Jean-Martin Charcot.⁹¹ The late eighteenth century Austrian doctor Franz Mesmer had taken Paris by storm, purporting to cure illness by means of animal magnetism. The French Royal Commission found Mesmer's hypnotic technique dangerous, but others continued his work – on both serious and fraudulent levels. By the 1880s, mesmerism started to be applied scientifically. In the Salpêtrière, a mental home in Paris, Charcot applied hypnotism to the insane.⁹² From 1885, Freud used Charcot's techniques in treating insanity. Freud hypnotised his early patients, curing through the power of suggestion, and used electrotherapy, as influenced by Charcot.⁹³

While in London, Marais acquired medical knowledge and probably worked in a laboratory.⁹⁴ Hypnotism was to become a crucial part of Marais's studies of animals and the 'cures' he effected in humans. Marais conducted experiments around hypnosis, hypothesising that the cortex monopolises the sense-impressions to the

later disseminated the story that Marais had practised medicine free of charge, but it seems likely that he was recompensed. Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.209.

⁸⁹ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.215.

⁹⁰ There is evidence to suggest that Marais spoke German, and was certainly in London when the English translation came out and was aware of its controversial reception.

⁹¹ It is also worth noting that while in London, Marais met Gerald du Maurier, son of George du Maurier, author of *Trilby*, the famous novel of the 1890's in which Svengali hypnotises a young woman for villainous ends.

⁹² A famous lithograph shows Charcot using hypnosis to compel a paralysed patient to walk.

⁹³ Edward Shorter, *A History of Psychiatry* (New York: John Wiley, 1997).

⁹⁴ Later Marais was to maintain that he had actually studied at Guy's Hospital, but their records reflect otherwise. Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.140.

exclusion of the ancient centres, which become mere conduits to the grey brain. Once the cortex is put out of action – as through hypnosis – the organism has to depend on the old centres, becoming ‘animal’ once more. In his typical approach of the intermingling of the academic and the popular, Marais drew upon the work of both Charcot and Freud, and developed his own theory about the animal deep within humankind.⁹⁵ He argued that ‘[t]he animal soul within the human is like the appendix, a remnant of a past evolutionary state’, and that ‘it only surfaces under unusual circumstances.’⁹⁶

Rousseau found oral evidence to show that Marais was treating patients by asking them about their dreams, in the Freudian manner.⁹⁷ Marais quickly became known as a ‘miracle doctor’, after hypnotising patients who had failed to get relief from authorised doctors.⁹⁸ This was a marriage of indigenous, particularly Bushman, belief with modern western psychology. Marais argued that 90% of people are susceptible to hypnotism, particularly women of hysterical disposition and black people.⁹⁹ He described in considerable depth the process of hypnosis: the initial loss of ability to move the body, the subsequent suggestibility, followed by complete loss of consciousness, often followed by somnambulism. Marais contended that the

⁹⁵ Marais wrote to Spilhaus that: ‘I am quite satisfied that Freud’s psycho-analysis is simply so disguised that he does not recognise it himself.’ Quoted in Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p.276.

⁹⁶ Marais used the word ‘soul’ in its physiological sense, like consciousness. ‘’n Nuwe Sielkundige Teorie’, *Die Banier*, in *Die Brandwag*, February 1921.

⁹⁷ This trend from the Metropole had other supporters, from within the authorised medical profession. For example, the physician, Isidore Frack, encouraged the medical profession to learn from the psychotherapeutic developments based on the work of Freud, Jung and Adler. Frack, *South African Doctor*, p.125.

‘hypnotic consciousness’ is a remnant of the animal soul within the human. He lent scientific verisimilitude to this contention with his sophisticated terminology and by asserting that his findings were supported by ‘American experiments’.

It was this application of international developments in the rural Waterberg that helped Marais make a name for himself as a purveyor of ‘miracle cures’, mainly through the use of hypnotism.¹⁰⁰ Preller publicised his ‘Wonderwerke’ or miracles.¹⁰¹ Marais made use of the power of autosuggestion in health science to cure particular illnesses. Hessie van Deventer of Rooiwal, Waterberg was Marais’s equivalent of Freud’s ‘Anna O’, the case that established his reputation. She had suffered for 17 years the total paralysis of her legs. Marais hypnotised her and, after autosuggestion and a three-hour hypnotic sleep, she awoke and walked.¹⁰²

There is little doubt that Marais transgressed the boundary between insight and quackery. Human gullibility has cash value, and served to inflate both his prestige and his pocketbook. After the scientist, came Marais the showman, unable to resist the

⁹⁸ Marais occasionally made light of *Boererate* like the skin of black chickens for snakebite. ‘Slanggif’ *Natuurkundige en Wetenskaplike Studies and Sketse uit die Lewe van Mens en Dier*.

⁹⁹ Marais, *Soul of the White Ant*, p.1.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Hipnotisme’, *Die Brandwag*, September 1920.

¹⁰¹ Gustav Preller, *Historiese Opstelle* (Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik, 1925) p.205 and A 787 Preller Collection, p.116, refers to Marais as ‘die Wonderdokter’.

¹⁰² ‘It was soon clear that Mrs Van Deventer was highly susceptible to hypnosis. She was hypnotised three times to accustom her to the condition. The fourth time she was made to sleep very deeply, and it was then suggested to her that, as soon as she awoke, she would have a strong desire to walk, that she would try to walk at once and that she would again have the power to move her paralysed legs. After a hypnotic sleep lasting three hours (to strengthen the suggestion) she was awakened, and to her own surprise and extreme joy she started walking at once. The paralysis never reappeared.’ *Die Banier* in *Die Brandwag*, September 1920, Eugène Marais, *Natuurkundige en Wetenskaplike Studies* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1928) p5.

sensationalist touch.¹⁰³ Marais conducted experiments on five young Boer girls on the farm Rietfontein – after hypnosis the girls were found to be able to do ‘wonderful things’ – they could ‘scent like dogs’, ‘hear like antelopes’ and they had the ‘homing sense of a namaqua partridge’. One of the items of medical apparatus he brought back from London was an appliance that could administer electrical shocks, the type of ‘medical equipment’ of which Leipoldt had written in his *Lancet article*, ‘We have all kinds of quackery ranging from the semi-scientific electrical treatment to the pretentious cancer cure.’ Whereas Leipoldt despised quacks, Marais was one. Marais employed the ‘electrical treatment’ to great effect, an eyewitness recounted:

Then he had an electrical thing, but we called it a shock-fish... It was electric shocks, you see. Then the people would touch hands and they would twitch all around, oh, it was great fun for the old people.¹⁰⁴

Marais was always willing to pay half a crown to any African willing to touch it.

Patrolling the cultural borders

This chapter has contended that the picture of black-white as discrete social entities bounded by borders of racism is a false image conjured up by the Liberal school. Another producer of this image is the Afrikaner Nationalist school – which raises questions as to their motivation. The literary vehicles of Afrikaner nationalism encouraged a wide diversity of subjects to cover a variety of regional, class and intellectual traditions, as Hofmeyr has shown.¹⁰⁵ As has been discussed in Chapter Four, the intelligentsia needed to capture the attention of a broader audience, as the

¹⁰³ Similarly, in London Marais acquired the skills of conjuring, card tricks and knife throwing.

¹⁰⁴ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.215.

¹⁰⁵ Isabel Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and “ethnic identity”, 1902-1924’, in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (Harlow: Longman, 1987) p.109.

language lobby confronted a factionalised community.¹⁰⁶ Newspapers and publishers went to unprecedented and even unethical lengths to get hold of Marais's work. The publisher Van Schaik purportedly manipulated Marais's morphine addiction to extort contracts from him.¹⁰⁷ It may be conjectured that nationalist magazines appropriated practices and beliefs of 'mixed' origins and stamped them 'Ou Boeremiddels' (Old Boer remedies) and 'Afrikaanse veldkuns' (Afrikaans bush skills), possibly in an attempt to solidify the permeable cultural boundaries between rural black and white and mask the ongoing socio-cultural osmosis.¹⁰⁸ There was an analogous process between the way the language movement attempted to purge the 'creole elements' from the *Taal*, discussed in Chapter Three, and the nationalist press's discussion of healing practices, which was moving towards appropriating and reclassifying hybrid systems. Indeed, Marais's work went one step further and diverted popular rural interest in 'bushmagic' into a direction he invested with a European nomenclature and the *avant-garde*. This is paralleled by a similar process in the *Taal* movement, particularly assertions by members of the Language Movement of the Graeco-Roman basis of Afrikaans. Significantly, the same clique of culture-brokers was involved in purifying both the *Taal* and health practices. The nationalist press eagerly solicited Marais's work as it helped to foster the *leeslus* (love of reading) by appealing to the rural readers' lived experience – but, it may be contended, it also helped to purify traditional healing practices and exoticise African superstition. Subsequent studies

¹⁰⁶ Hofmeyr, 'Building a nation', p.111.

¹⁰⁷ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.484.

¹⁰⁸ See 'Volksgeondheid' (People's/national health), *Die Huisgenoot*, February 1919; 'Ons veldmiddels' (Our bush remedies) *Die Huisgenoot*, December 1918. Questions about health in the agony column – 'Om die Koffietafel' (Around the coffee table) in *Die Boerevrou*.

might demonstrate that Marais's work was prized because it went further by introducing a continental gloss over the practices.

Conclusion

Marais and Leipoldt used the young Afrikaans press to write not only about Afrikaans heroes and nationalist politics, but also about superstitions, miracle cures and the existence of ghosts. On their very different levels – which serve to emphasise the heterodoxy of Afrikaner outlook – both Leipoldt's and Marais's work is of significance to historians attempting to understand the rural socio-intellectual world of the Transvaal. Their work presents a challenge to the historiographical construction of the Bushveld as entirely racially circumscribed and parochial, by exploring the popular departure from a European *zeitgeist* rooted in Calvinist theology, towards an interest in African superstitions and medicine as well as public interest in fashionable European psychology.

Leipoldt presented a more scientifically sound and substantial contribution. In their heterodoxy, these two very different men illustrate the same two points. Firstly, Afrikaners, even in the Bushveld, were not narrowly confined in outlook, instead embracing new ideas from Europe. Both men reveal in their very different ways the surprising extent to which Bushveld healing practices provided an entrance point for both the innovations of western 'modernity' and traditional indigenous practices. Far from being 'unmoved by the breezes of liberalism that blew from Europe', the Bushveld was the recipient of a vast amount of hot air from European fads. Intellectual isolation was not as severe as has been imagined. Secondly, there is evidence of intimate cross-racial intellectual traditions. The hybridity of healing

practices reveals that the cultural groups of the Waterberg were not discrete entities. The cultural *cordon sanitaire* did not extend to the sickroom and the different Bushveld communities shared relationships based on a configuration of cultural and religious exchanges that went beyond the purely material.

'The Wandering Tales' – an exploration of the mythic Bushmen in popular Afrikaans literature, with particular reference to the *Dwaalstories* of Eugène Marais.¹

'The *Wandering Tales* are among the greatest stories in Afrikaans.'
N.P. van Wyk Louw²

'The *Wandering Tales* is the right name. The man's mind is wandering'
Reverend A.J. Louw³

'I want to try to recount a few wandering tales of Old Hendrik's. Unfortunately I never transcribed them word for word. I did jot down a few after he told them...' noted Eugène Marais, at the beginning of his *Wandering Tales*, his anthology of Bushmen poems.⁴ He maintained that an itinerant Bushman, whom he had met during

¹ This chapter was presented at the Graduate History Workshop, Oxford, Trinity 2000. The identification 'Bushman' is used in preference to 'Soaqua' or 'San' (which has been interpreted recently to be a derogatory Khoikhoi/Hottentot label meaning 'those without cattle' or 'non-people'). The specific (but in this case, unknown) dialect group would be preferable to either. It has also been argued that the bushmen/soaqua/san and the khoikhoi were one and the same people, with the latter differentiated by their ownership of cattle. Richard Elphick, *Kraal and Castle: Khoikhoi and the founding of white South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). Feminist critics have also condemned the androcentrism of the label 'Bushman'. For a discussion of the question of ethnicity see, Alan Barnard, 'Cultural Identity, ethnicity and marginalization among the Bushmen of Southern Africa' in R. Voßen (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Study of the Khoisan* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 1988) p. 9-28.

² 'Van die grootste prosa in ons taal.' N.P. Van Wyk Louw, *Vernuwing in die Prosa* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1961) pp.112-113.

³ The Dominee (pastor) disapproved of Marais, largely because of his morphine habit and also because of his acceptance of the theory of evolution, and confided the above sentiment to Marais's doctor and friend, Andries Visser. Leon Rousseau, *The Dark Stream* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 1982) p.379.

⁴ 'Ek wil probeer om 'n paar dwaalstories van ou Hendrik weer te gee. Ongelukkig het ek nooit een van hulle woord vir woord opgeskryf nie. Ek het 'n paar neergeskryf onmiddellik na die vertel.' *Dwaalstories*, p.7.

his sojourn in the Waterberg, had narrated these stories, which he had then written up as a series of prose-poems. These poems, ‘Riet Alleen In Die Roerkuil’, ‘Die Lied Van Die Reën’, ‘Die Reënbul’ and ‘Die Vaal Koestertjie’ have had enduring success since their publication in 1921 in *Die Boerevrou*, a prominent Afrikaans cultural magazine.⁵ Marais himself told Preller that the poems had brought a ‘sea-breeze over the sand dunes’ to his ‘arid desert-life’.⁶ There was a surge of public interest in his work from ‘complete strangers’.⁷ A contemporary literary figure and social commentator M.E. Rothman called them ‘the beautiful, beautiful *Wandering Tales*, an unending source of delight’.⁸ In 1927 they were anthologised as *Dwaalstories en ander vertellings (Wandering Tales and other tales)*, and had undergone three printings as a children’s book in a series ‘Ons kinderrakkie’ (our children’s bookshelf).⁹ In the 1930s, M.S.B. Kritzinger called them a ‘beautiful exploration of the primitive mentality’.¹⁰ In 1959 they were published separately as *Dwaalstories*, with sketches by Katrine Harries, as one of the first publications of the recently established publishing house Human and Rousseau.¹¹ In his 1961 critical discussion of Afrikaans literature, N.P. Van Wyk Louw celebrated the *Dwaalstories* as

⁵ They ran from May to August, *Boerevrou*, 1921.

⁶ ‘[O]ns dorre ou lewe-woestyn, ’n seeluggie oor die sandduine.’ A 787 Preller Collection, p.40, Marais to Preller, 12 April 1923.

⁷ A787 Preller Collection, p.40, Marais to Preller, 12 April 1923.

⁸ ‘... fraai, fraai Dwaalstories, ’n oneindige bron van genot’, *Die Burger*, 6 April 1936. The only critical voice was that of the Reverend Louw, who disliked Marais and may have objected to the influence of marijuana or morphine on the rhymes, see ft. 58.

⁹ This was first published in 1927.

¹⁰ M.S.B Kritzinger, ‘Eugene N. Marais as digter’, *Ons Tydskrif*, May 1936.

¹¹ Eugène Marais, *Dwaalstories* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1959).

representing some of the ‘best writing in Afrikaans’.¹² Their popularity has continued – a recent text called it ‘one of the most exquisite books in Afrikaans’.¹³ Their lasting success may be demonstrated by their repeated inclusion in canonical anthologies and their individual publishing record.¹⁴

Previous debate over the poems has been over their ‘authenticity’ (as to whether or not Old Hendrik really related them), but more interesting for our purposes is the gap they fill in the analysis of western writing on Bushmen and the light they shed on Afrikaans depictions of Bushmen, particularly the role played by Marais in laying the foundation for modern discourse.¹⁵ This chapter explores the content and context of Marais’s Bushman tales, revisiting the historical understandings of the *Dwaalstories* from their publication up to the present. White settler images of the Bushmen in popular writings have received historiographical analysis. There is, however, a striking lacuna in these descriptions of white writings on the Bushmen – the popular Afrikaans writings have been omitted, distorting the chronology and

¹² Van Wyk Louw, *Vernuwing in die Prosa*, pp.112-113. Also quoted in F.I.J. van Rensburg, *Die Smal Baan* (Cape Town: Tafelberg) p.83.

¹³ ‘...een van die fynste boeke in Afrikaans’, F.I.J. van Rensburg, ‘Etnisiteit in die Afrikaanse letterkunde in historiese perspektief’ in Charles Malan (ed.), *Race and Literature* (CENSAL publication no.15, Pinetown: Owen Burgess, 1987) p.80.

¹⁴ They were published in 1927, and republished in 1959, 1962 and 1998. In the late 1950s ‘Die Lied Van Die Reën’ was set to music by the Afrikaans composer, Hubert du Plessis; this tone poem was first produced by the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra and the Stellenbosch Student Choir in 1959. Arnold van Wyk produced the poems as a song cycle named ‘Van Liefde en Verlatenheid’ (Of Love and Loss). They also form part of many South African university syllabi. The popular Afrikaans women’s magazine *Sarie* recommends *Dwaalstories* for its simplicity and purity. See www.sarie.com. The University of Stellenbosch produced the *Dwaalstories* as a drama in 1999.

¹⁵ For a textual analysis using close-reading technique see W.S.H. Du Randt, *Eugène N. Marais as Prosaïst* (Nasou, Monografieë uit die Afrikaanse Letterkunde 1, 1969) p.23.

content of the historiography.¹⁶ This chapter is intended to contribute to the repairing of this fissure in the historiography.

* * *

After centuries of being regarded as vermin in need of extermination, Bushmen have come full-circle to represent pristine, authentic humanity. This image has seeped into public consciousness, particularly through the writings of Laurens Van der Post.¹⁷ Wilmsen has recently argued that the Cold War atmosphere of the 1950s and 60s produced the conditions under which investigations of the bushmen proliferated. In this environment of imminent nuclear annihilation, civil existence and cultural life as the West knew it seemed under threat. Techno-democratic modernity no longer seemed invulnerable and regression to prehistoric society appeared possible. Attention was thus increasingly directed towards humankind's primordial roots.¹⁸ The anthropological forager studies were thus explicitly framed in apocalyptic terms, preparing for a post-nuclear apocalyptic scene return to the Stone Age.¹⁹

¹⁶ This chapter discusses only *popular* Afrikaans writing. In Afrikaans universities, Bushmen have a central role in *volkekunde* (ethnography) discussed in the paradigm set by E.F. Potgieter in his *The disappearing Bushmen of Lake Chrissie: a preliminary survey* (Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik, 1955.), who described them as 'people intrinsically unable of undergoing change'. This chapter is not an attempt to restate the critique of *volkekunde* and the role of Afrikaans ethnologists and anthropologists, partly because this has been much discussed, but mainly because this chapter is concerned with *popular* writing. See R.J. Gordon, 'Serving the Volk with Volkekunde' in J. Jansen (ed.) *Knowledge and Power in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1991), J. Sharp, 'The roots and development of Volkekunde in South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 8, 1981, pp.16-36. The topic has received a considerable amount of attention. See S. Vawda, 'The other anthropology: a response to Gordon and Spiegel', *African Studies* 54 (1), 1995, p.128.

¹⁷ This image was perpetuated more recently by the Jamie Uys film, 'The Gods Must be Crazy', and its sequel, starring the 'real-life Busman, Xao'. (C.A.T. Films, 1980).

¹⁸ Edwin Wilmsen, 'Primitive Politics in Sanctified Landscapes: The Ethnographic Fictions of Laurens van der Post', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, June 1995.

¹⁹ R. Lee and I. De Vore, *Man the Hunter* (Chicago: Aldine, 1968) p.3.

Ethnographers, film-makers and writers responded by imagining a primitive past as a foil to the apocalyptic present. By the 1970s and 80s, a regulation-issue 'Bushman tracker' was standard equipment in most Border war fiction.²⁰ In these modern novels of the Border war, a sympathetic Bushman portrayal provided insurance against accusations of racism.²¹ Bushmen still have political currency: Tomaselli has shown that in post-Apartheid South Africa the San are invested with political meanings. Masilela has contended romantically that the San could be used to mediate between white and black South Africans, just as Van der Post believed the Bushman could be a mirror in which both black and white could see themselves and see that 'neither of us is better than the other'.²² The mythic Bushman was not, however, something invented in the 1950s – there already existed a strong Afrikaans tradition of 'Bushman literature'. The tradition will be contextualised and then explored, through Marais's *Wandering Tales*.

Historiographical contextualisation

Marais's mythic image of the Bushman should be located within the historiography of western images of the Bushman. There are two major historiographical traditions concerning the Bushmen, although many variations exist between the two poles. They may be loosely classified as 'derogatory' and

²⁰ David Maughan Brown, 'The rehabilitation of the San in popular fiction', in Charles Malan (ed.), *Race and Literature* (Pinetown: Owen Burgess, 1987) p.116.

²¹ For the depiction of the bushman as unthreatening collaborator whose presence on the right, white side renders the author invulnerable to accusations of racism, see, for example, Wilbur Smith, *The Sunbird* (London: Pan, 1974) and Wilbur Smith, 'The Burning Shore' in *The Courtneys of Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1988).

²² Van der Post, *Mantis Carol*, p.11. K. Tomaselli, 'The post-Apartheid Era: the San as Bridge between Past and Future', Eyes across the Water Visual Sociology and Anthropology Conference, University of Amsterdam, 1992 and Ntongela Msilela, 'The white South African Writer in our National Situation', *Matatu*, 3/4, 1987.

‘sympathetic’, but their composition is complex. The first is based on early nineteenth century reports of the Bushmen, and from the 1860s (after the 1859 publication of the *Origin of Species*), drawing on Social Darwinist ideas of survival of the fittest race. The Bushman are described as non-human, savage, and their extinction is deemed a good thing. The second school, which propagates that which Voss, for example, calls the ‘modern myth’, subscribes to the neo-Romantic ‘modern’ image of the Bushman – independent, noble, gentle, and as adaptable to Nature as he is wise in her ways.²³

A brief chronology will reveal the diachronic nature of the Bushman image and its dependence on changing white needs. Several early commentators on the Bushmen were sympathetic. At the beginning of the nineteenth century they were seen as ‘an illustration of the freedom, simplicity and general closeness to nature which the age admired.’²⁴ From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, there was an ongoing dialogue on the Noble Savage created by poets, travelers, artists: a discourse of natural goodness versus corrupt European society, oneness with nature versus alienation from it, untutored wisdom versus false sophistication, social community versus alienation, and equality versus European hierarchy. The myths of the golden age were transmuted to the New World. There was a counter imagery of the savage: the ugly, stupid, beast-like, irrational and degenerate.²⁵ Several generations of historians have reconstructed the intellectual origins of noble savagery and its

²³ A.E. Voss, ‘The image of the Bushman in South African English Writing of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’, *English in Africa*, vol.14, 1, May 1987, p.34.

²⁴ Hoxie Neale Fairchild, *The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928) p.362.

²⁵ Harry Liebersohn, ‘Discovering Indigenous Nobility: Tocqueville, Chamisso, and Romantic Travel Writing’, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 99, no. 3, June 1994.

antithesis, as a set of fictions that reveal more about their authors than their subjects.²⁶ The Noble Savage was dying out, even as a literary trend, by 1820²⁷ – but not in South Africa as Pringle’s poems of the late 1820s demonstrate.²⁸ Thomas Pringle, the poet, who travelled South Africa for six years in the 1820s, projected a sympathetic image, as did John Philip, who wrote in 1828 that the Bushman was ‘not irredeemable’.²⁹ Both men argued that the Bushman had suffered a fall from a previously pastoral existence.³⁰ Pringle’s South African poems are late blossoms of the Enlightenment: his ‘wild Bushman’ is in the tradition of the ‘noble savage’, traceable, as Voss observed, from Herodotus to Samuel Johnson.³¹ Writings located Bushmen in genetic and cultural isolation – Pringle, for example, likened them to Ishmael. But as the century wore on and broader public contact with Bushmen increased, the image changed. Voss has demonstrated that the dominant image of the Bushman from c.1850 to the 1920s is of a barely human, duplicitous, cruel savage. When a group of Bushmen were exhibited in London in 1847, Charles Dickens noted:

Think of the [Bushman] who have been exhibited about England for some years. Are the majority of persons – who remember the horrid little leader of that party in his festering bundle of hides, with his filth and antipathy to water.... and his cry of ‘Qu-u-u-u-aa!’ (Bosjeman for something desperately insulting, I have no doubt) – conscious of an affectionate yearning towards

²⁶ For a discussion of this point see Fairchild, *The Noble Savage* and Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

²⁷ Fairchild, *The Noble Savage*, p.299.

²⁸ A.E. Voss, ‘Thomas Pringle and the Image of the ‘Bushman’’, *English in Africa*, 9, 1, 1982.

²⁹ Voss, ‘Thomas Pringle and the image of the ‘Bushman’.

³⁰ Pringle was compelled to order out a commando against a group of Bushmen who attacked his settlement in 1825; he wrote: ‘Ungrateful *schelms*! even after I have celebrated them in song...’.

³¹ Voss, ‘The image of the Bushman in South African English Writing’, p.22. Quoted in Angus Calder, Thomas Pringle (1789-1834): a Scottish poet in South Africa’, *English in Africa*, vol. 9, 1, May 1982, p.3.

that noble savage, or is it idiosyncratic of me to abhor, detest, abominate, and abjure him?'³²

The Times wrote: 'in appearance they are little above the monkey tribe, and scarcely better than mere brutes of the field'.³³ Indeed, they were inferior to the beaver, which could at least build and had 'scarcely any attribute of humanity'.³⁴ In 1850, Livingstone suggested they were the most 'degraded specimens of the human family'.³⁵ In the immediate post-Darwin era, the Bushmen were found to lack humanity – their minimal technology insufficient to distinguish them from the animals.³⁶ In the late 1870s, Anthony Trollope, who was visiting Southern Africa called them 'cruel, and useless' cannibals capable of eating their own children.³⁷ John Philip had suggested it was possible to civilize the Bushmen but a century later G.M. Theal wrote: 'It can now be asserted in positive language that the Bushmen were incapable of adopting European civilization'.³⁸ Sarah Gertrude Millin wrote of the Bushmen as 'little, yellow, monkey-like people'.³⁹

³² Charles Dickens, 'The Noble Savage', *Household words*, no.168, 11 June 1853, p.337, quoted in Voss, 'The image of the Bushman in South African English Writing', p.23.

³³ Quoted in Maughan Brown, 'The rehabilitation of the San in popular fiction', p.117.

³⁴ Anonymous, *History of the Bosjesmans* (London: Chapman, Elcoate and Co., 1847) p.39, quoted in Maughan Brown, 'The rehabilitation of the San in popular fiction', p.117.

³⁵ Quoted in Voss, 'The image of the Bushman in South African English Writing', p.26.

³⁶ Darwin noted 'At some future period...the civilized races will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world.' *Descent of Man* (London: 1871) p.118. In 1876, Ballantyne contended: The highest type of monkey suggests – thanks, or rather, blame to Darwin – the lowest type of man in Africa. This is the Bushman...' R.M. Ballantyne, *Six months at the Cape* (London: James Nisbet, 1876) p.113.

³⁷ Voss, 'The image of the Bushman in South African English Writing,' p.27.

³⁸ Voss, 'The image of the Bushman in South African English Writing,' p.28.

³⁹ From *God's Step-Children* (Johannesburg, 1951), quoted in J.M. Coetzee, 'Blood, flaw, taint, degeneration: The case of Sarah Gertrude Millin', in Charles Malan (ed.), *Race and Literature*, p.41.

Voss and Wright suggest that the literature may have functioned to deal with guilt generated by the process of their extinction, a phenomenon that persisted up until the 1920s.⁴⁰ This approach is epitomised by William Charles Scully:

Dust are those fugitive pygmies, blown by the winds of the desert,
Crushed and heedlessly trodden 'neath heels of hurrying change:
Hunters and haters of men, their hatred has crumbled to ashes...
Clumsy weapons of stone, rough bows and a handful of arrows –
Relics of hunger and hate – only remain of their lives...⁴¹

Francis Carey Slater in *The Karroo* (1924) denies that the Bushmen are human:

In the far days that are gone there dwelt in the ways of the desert,
Scattered and wandering pygmies, hideous, filthy, and squat;
Fitting kindred of Ishmael – their hands against all men were lifted –
Hating all that was human with blind inveterate hate.⁴²

The image of the Bushman changed in specific circumstances. Necessity could form alliances between white settlers and Bushmen, which resulted in ideological shift. The dyad of settler-Bushmen solidarity against the Nguni-speakers may be traced from the Eastern Cape frontier wars of the 1840s to the Namibian border war of the 1980s.⁴³ For Harriet Ward, wife of a colonial officer, Bushmen were 'the real Aborigines of the land...and...a keen-witted race'.⁴⁴ Ward's image is dictated by the ideological needs that followed the military needs of the time. Among their 'allies employed with the army [in the Frontier War of 1846-47] are 150 Bushmen, with

⁴⁰ John Wright, 'San History and Non-San historians', *The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, vol.8, Collected Seminar Papers, no.22, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London.

⁴¹ William Charles Scully, *Between Sun and Sand* (Cape Town, 1898) p.13.

⁴² See *Selected Poems* (Oxford University Press, 1947) p.97.

⁴³ Another example of the alliance between white settlers and Bushmen was during the Dorstland trek; Boers had relied on Bushmen from 1875 to 1881.

⁴⁴ Harriet Ward, *Five years in Kafirland* (London: H. Colburn, 1848.II) p.140.

poisoned arrows'. Perhaps as important as the Bushmen's military assistance was their ideological enlistment on the colonial side:

Notwithstanding the broad assertion of our mock philanthropists at home, that we are not justified in taking from the Kaffir 'the land of his fathers', the country is only his by might – no more his than ours, he having driven the aborigines from the dwelling-place God originally led them into. Where are those poor Bushmen, now? Far up the country among the steep recesses of the mountains, where they form a link between the animals of the wilderness and human nature. Another civilization may follow them when the land of their forefathers shall be under British rule!⁴⁵

Ward's view was not typical of the nineteenth century, but it is an early example of the use of Bushmen as justification of white land ownership. The earliest and in many ways the most explicit example of the use of Bushmen in the justificatory argument is George William Stow's *The Native Races of South Africa* (written in 1880, published in 1905) which helped lay the foundation of the modern myth. It was subtitled 'A History of the Intrusion of the Hottentots and Bantu into the Hunting Grounds of the Bushmen, the Aborigines of the Country', and consolidates the modern view: white settlers were only as guilty as the Nguni, both were intruders.⁴⁶ In this way the fear that whites did not belong was assuaged.⁴⁷ Similarly,

⁴⁵ Ward, *Five years in Kafirland*, p.176.

⁴⁶ The dichotomy in sentiment toward Khoikhoi and Bushman is interesting. Frederickson has argued that the Khoikhoi, who became the Cape Coloureds did not come up to the aesthetic ideal required of a Noble Savage – unlike the American Indian in late eighteenth century. It seems likely that because they were incorporated into the Cape settler economy – as herdsman, ox-trainers, wagon drivers – they were regarded as menial rather than savage. George Fredrickson, *White Supremacy – a comparative study in American and South African history* (Oxford University Press, 1981). Nonetheless not all were incorporated as Shula Marks has demonstrated in 'Khoisan resistance to the Dutch in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *Journal of African History*, XIII, 1972, p.70. The 'hottentots' or 'Khoi' were discussed in a different discourse, which focussed on their idleness and uncleanness. For a discussion of early reports of the Khoi/Hottentots, see J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing – on the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) pp.12 -16.

⁴⁷ Stow was a geologist who studied the Bushmen from 1867, managed a company that worked the coal fields discovered by Stow, died in 1882. Stow has been quoted in liberal Africanist texts to suggest that the dispossession of the bushmen by the 'Bantu' paralleled that

in 1898 William Charles Scully mentions the possibility of a ‘still older race’ driven out by the Bushmen as we ourselves might be driven out ‘by some race developing a ‘fitness’ superior to our own’.⁴⁸

Maughan Brown has asked why sympathetic accounts of Bushmen did not appear sooner, as soon as the Bushmen no longer posed a threat and could prove useful as collaborators.⁴⁹ The answer is: they did, but in the Afrikaans literary tradition.⁵⁰ Although Afrikaans poetry perceived itself as of white culture only, but this did not mean that other cultures were unmentioned.⁵¹ On the contrary, sympathetic portrayals of other races abounded. Marais’s protégé, A.G. Visser, for example, wrote using Xhosa and Zulu motifs; I.D. Du Plessis wrote about the Malay community; D.J. Opperman from the 1940s and Van Wyk Louw’s *Klipwerk* from the 1950s used rural folklore.⁵² Many ‘Hottentot’ stories were published in *Ons Klyntji* from 1896 to 1906 and ‘Bushmen animal tales’ were common; Marais, ‘Die Vaal Koestertjie’ and G.R. Von Wielligh ‘Die Wind en die Windvoël’; G.C. and S.B. Hobson, ‘Kalaharie-Kaskenades’, G.P. Lestrade, ‘Die Leeu, die Wolf en die Jakkals’

effected by whites. See M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford History of South Africa* (Oxford, 1969) in vol. 1, p.194, p.253.

⁴⁸ William Charles Scully, *Between Sun and Sand*, (Cape Town, 1898) p.13.

⁴⁹ Maughan Brown, ‘The rehabilitation of the San in popular fiction’, p.118.

⁵⁰ Maughan Brown, ‘The rehabilitation of the San in popular fiction’, p.118.

⁵¹ For a general background of race in Afrikaans literature, see F.I.J. van Rensburg, ‘Etnisiteit in die Afrikaanse letterkunde in historiese perspektief’ in Charles Malan (ed.), *Race and Literature* (Pinetown: Owen Burgess, 1987).

⁵² From the 1940s coloured voices found themselves in Afrikaans: S.V. Petersen, *Die Enkeling* (Port Elizabeth: Unie-volkspers, 1944) P.J. Philander’s *Uurglas*, 1955 (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1955).

and C.L. Leipoldt 'Die Wit Hondjie'.⁵³ The iconic 'Bushman' was discovered as story-teller, by G.R. Von Wielligh and Marais in particular, from which grew a genre of Afrikaans literature: folklore, especially animal tales, transmitted from Bushmen to white – especially Afrikaans – children.⁵⁴ In 1946, two nationalist literary historians accepted that as 'Hottentots' spoke Afrikaans as their mother language, these stories were part of the Afrikaans literary heritage.⁵⁵

Just as Van der Post was to claim to have memories of bedtime stories recounted by his Bushman nurse (he only identified her as Bushman in his later books, in his earlier books she figures more prosaically as a 'coloured woman'⁵⁶), Marais claimed to have heard the stories from the nomadic Bushman, Old Hendrik, in order to give 'authenticity' to his poems.⁵⁷ He certainly did come into contact with Hendrik, who visited Rietfontein yearly from 1913 to 1921, and Marais may have heard the story outlines from him.⁵⁸ Marais was not averse to using fictional narrators

⁵³ P.J. Nienaber and G.S. Nienaber, *Die Afrikaanse Dierverhaal* (Pretoria: Nasionale Pers, 1946). See also the writings of G.H. Franz, P.J. Schoeman, Minnie Postma, Jan J. van der Post and S.J. Pretorius.

⁵⁴ G.R. von Wielligh (1859 – 1932) joined the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners at age sixteen, and worked as a land surveyor in Paarl and the ZAR. In 1884 he was appointed land surveyor of the ZAR. Between 1875 and 1895, his contributions were published predominately in *Di Patriot* and *Ons Klyntji* (especially his sketches from the lives of Bushmen and Hottentots, which appeared in book form in 1918, *Jakob Platji*).

⁵⁵ 'Omdat Hottentotte Afrikaans as moedertaal besig, behoort hierdie vertellings tot ons letterkunde.' P.J. Nienaber and G.S. Nienaber, *Die Afrikaanse Dierverhaal* (Pretoria: Nasionale Pers, 1946) p.13.

⁵⁶ Van der Post comes out of the Afrikaans literary tradition: his father refused to take oath at Vereeniging, and like Marais, considered himself a *bittereinder*. *Venture into the interior*, p.25.

⁵⁷ In Van der Post's 1986 *White Bushman*, the nurse is a 'stone age Bushman', p.3, while in his 1961 *Heart of the Hunter*, she was simply 'coloured'. Laurens Van der Post, *Heart of the Hunter* (New York: Morrow, 1961) p.xv.

in his writing.⁵⁹ The origin of these stories has been the subject for debate.⁶⁰ He admitted drawing on the writings of G.R. Von Wielligh and W.H.I. Bleek (1827-1875)⁶¹, who fifty years earlier had investigated Bushman languages and ‘literature’ available in the Cape Library. The often sophisticated Afrikaans idiom has led some critics to contend that Marais invented the stories.⁶² His first academic biographer, Du Toit, contended that Marais used white talent to give primitive art a naïveté and thereby delivered something of beauty to which the Bushman-civilisation, using the stories of Bleek as measuring-stick, had not yet ascended.⁶³ Similarly, the critic Van

⁵⁸ A poet is seldom a one-dimensional political collaborator, whose work simply mirrors political developments. There were personal reasons for Marais’s work. Rousseau, Marais’s biographer, has speculated that Marais heard the poems as ‘dagga rhymes’ – that Hendrik related these stories in the traditional manner, while smoking dagga (marijuana). Rousseau goes on to speculate that Marais wrote them up under the influence of morphine. *Dark Stream*, p.263.

⁵⁹ Marais’s narrational gambit of distancing himself from authorship through the invented character ‘Oom Dirk’ is discussed in Chapter Four, ‘The Ant of the White Soul - popular natural history and the politics of Afrikaner identity, with particular reference to the entomological writings of Eugène Marais.’

⁶⁰ M. Nienaner-Luitingh, ‘Kanttekeninge by Marais se Boesmangedigte’, 1958, pp.46-50; J.L. Steyn, ‘Kanttekening by ’n kanttekening’, 1961, pp.45-46; H. du Randt, ‘Op ’n dwaalspoor deur die dwaalstories(1)’ *Standpunte*, 21, 3, 1968, pp.16-23 and ‘Op ’n dwaalspoor deur die dwaalstories’, *Standpunte*, 76, 21:4 pp.38-49.

⁶¹ Letter to Spilhaus, 11 December 1926, quoted in Du Toit, p.221. W.H. Bleek and L.C. Lloyd (edited by Lloyd) (translated), *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* (London: George Allen, 1911). Fragments of lore were jotted down by the traveller Dr H.Lichtenstein, garnered from the missionaries working among the Bushmen, Dr Bleek’s ‘Brief Account of Bushman Folk-Lore and other Texts’ (1875); L.C. Lloyd’s ‘Short Account of Further Bushman Material collected’ (1889), a collection published in 1911 translated into English, with a scientific attempt at orthography. In Cape Town, Dr W.I. Bleek was studying the language and folklore of Bushman convicts captured in the north-west Cape and condemned to work on the breakwater in Cape Town harbour.

⁶² W.S.H. Du Randt, *Eugène N. Marais as Prosaïs* (Cape Town: Nasou, Monografieë uit die Afrikaanse Letterkunde 1969) p.36. Interestingly, the critic Van Melle thought, in contrast, that the use of the high idiom militated against Marais’s having written the poems – as he was not capable of high prose. J. van Melle, ‘Die Boesmanverhale van E Marais’, *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, September 1953, p.41.

⁶³ ‘Marais het van die talent van die blanke die primitiewe kuns ’n naiewe karakter gegee en daardeur iets gelewer van ’n skoonheid waartoe die Boesman-beskawing, altans met die

Melle noted in 1953 that it is a story told for ‘hundreds of years by parents to children’ and begun in a time when Bushmen had a ‘greater measure of civilisation than [they have] today’.⁶⁴ Interestingly, in terms of the discussion of representing the Bushman through a western lens, Marais was ambivalent about Old Hendrik himself. He refused to let a photograph of Old Hendrik be used in the revised edition, but was happy with a sketch by Erich Mayer.⁶⁵



verhale van dr. Bleek as maatstaf, nog lank nie gestyg het nie’. Du Toit, *Eugene Marais*, p.193

⁶⁴ J. Van Melle, ‘Die Boesman Verhale van Eugène Marais’, *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, 1953, translated, p.43. Or alternatively, it represents a remarkable phenomenon that a race so backward carries not only the ability to sketch detailed drawings, but also possesses a fine literary taste which allows them to create wonderful stories. Van Melle leans to the first theory, noting that Bushmen remind him of people that have sunk from ‘rich to poor but who always use the manners and speech of more prosperous times.’

⁶⁵ Preller Collection, p.40, Marais to Preller, 12 April 1923.

The image created by Marais was of a pristine, innocent figure built on neo-romantic principles.⁶⁶ The rise of this modern image, which replaced their portrayal as inhuman vermin, coincides with the rise of industrialisation and urbanisation.⁶⁷ There was – and is – a nostalgic need for a utopian past vision in contrast to modern alienated individualism. The ‘wild’ Bushman – as the last of the South African societies to be proletarianised – functioned as an icon of authenticity, innocent, pristine and child-like.⁶⁸ This was encouraged by the Bushmen’s endearingly paedomorphic features: appearing neotenous, childlike and diminutive, indicated by repeated use of the diminutive in approbation.⁶⁹ This school is best represented by the writings of Laurens van der Post. His Bushmen were the Jungian archetype of authentic humanity, in that ‘his conscious mind corresponded in some sort to our dreaming selves.’⁷⁰ Van der Post believed that modern civilisation was degenerate and that ‘[t]he Bushman was a walking pilot scheme of how the European man could find his way back to values he had lost and he needed for his own renewal.’⁷¹ From 1926

⁶⁶ It may also be argued that there was a political need for a real ‘aborigine’ or first inhabitant of the land as justification for removal from nguni-speakers.

⁶⁷ Whereas the justificatory myth was specific to settler circles, this existential crisis was part of a wider Euro-American or western anxiety.

⁶⁸ Edwin Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies – a Political Economy of the Kalahari* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁶⁹ Olive Schreiner makes a sharp qualitative distinction between Hottentot and Bushman – in *From Man to Man*, Ayah ‘the Hottentot woman’ and Griet ‘the little Bushman girl’. Ayah is portrayed unsympathetically and Griet very sympathetically, her diminutive stature emphasized. Olive Schreiner, *From Man to Man* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1926). Gordon noted that the ‘paedomorphic features, tugs at the boy scout in some of the more romantic scientists’. Robert J. Gordon, *The Bushman Myth – the Making of a Namibian Underclass* (Boulder: Westview, 1992) p.217.

⁷⁰ Laurens van der Post, *A Mantis Carol* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1989) p.10. Edwin Wilmsen, ‘Primitive Politics in Sanctified Landscapes: The Ethnographic Fictions of Laurens van der Post’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, June 1995. Van der Post had been introduced to Jung by his wife. Laurens van der Post, *Jung and the story of our time* (London: Hogarth Press, 1976).

the literary magazine, *Voorslag*⁷² appeared – with Laurens van der Post, the junior ‘Voorslagter’, claiming literary-historiographical descent from Stow. Van der Post was certainly aware of Marais, indeed praising him for avoiding too close an involvement with politics.⁷³

Marais’s work helped lay the foundation of this school. He too, saw the Bushmen as little windows into innocence, explicitly urging anyone interested in the psychology of the child to read his poems.⁷⁴ Marais helped render the Bushmen prisoners of their reputation – so that they were regarded not as a poverty-stricken rural proletariat but as a romantic template. His folkloric poems helped render a static synchronic view of a society frozen in time. Marais did not simply repeat verbatim bushman stories in the manner of Von Wielligh and Bleek. His stories were entirely different in structure from the bushman stories previously collected, with their long sentences, repetitious style, linear plot and lack of adjectives. As Kannemeyer, Minnaar, Smuts and Van Wyk Louw have argued, the story structures were derived from western fairy stories.⁷⁵ Although he drew on stylistic resources from western fairy tales, he used the *faux-naïf* bushman world to represent the idea of ‘simple’

⁷¹ Laurens van der Post, *A walk with a White Bushman* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988) p.26

⁷² Ironically, William Plomer noted that the Voorslagters were like ‘twentieth-century Bushmen, [leaving] a few vivid paintings on the walls of that dark cave, the mind of the White South African’, William Plomer, *The South African Autobiography* (Cape Town, 1984) p.172. See, for ease of reference, R. Campbell, W. Plomer, and L. Van der Post, *Voorslag: a magazine of South African life and art*, Reprint series (Killie Campbell Africana Library); no.5 (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1985).

⁷³ Laurens van der Post, ‘Kunsontwikkeling in Afrikaans’, *Voorslag*, no. 2, pp. 39-43.

⁷⁴ ‘Iemand wat belang stel in die sielkunde van die kind, sal gou besef waar die aantrekkingskrag van die storie sit’. Marais *Inleiding* (Introduction), *Dwaalstories*.

⁷⁵ J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Die Afrikaanse Literatuur* (Cape Town: Academica, 1978) p.234; Minnaar, ‘’n Beeld van Eugène N. Marais as digter en prosaïs’, *Lantern*, p.215; J.P. Smuts, ‘Eugène Marais as prosaïs’, *Lantern*, p.293.

people thinking ‘simple’ thoughts.⁷⁶ The literary critics, Kannemeyer and Smuts note that the stories were unique in that they did not slot into any known genre of Afrikaans literature pre-1930.⁷⁷ Although similar to, for example, the stories of Sangiro and P.J. Schoeman, in that they used animal characters and bushman as subject matter, they were the first to present the bushman in an aesthetically beautiful – rather than comical – light.

The first story, ‘Riet Alleen In Die Roerkuil’ (Reed alone in the shifting pond), concerns the eponymous Riet, a name which his grandfather gave him for his restlessness. He was a good runner and was used by the group to deliver messages. Then came a time of great terror for the clan – a terror that is never named, but perhaps it is the threat of another clan. The elders decide to send Riet to enlist the help of a neighbouring leader named Red Joggum. It was a journey that Riet can make in a day, and he leaves before sunrise. But Riet exhibits the sin of complacency, he is too sure of his skill as runner. He is warned by his father to watch out for the magic of Nagalie. Riet ignores the advice and opens himself up to her witchcraft – she blinds him to dangers, costing him valuable time. She sends a whirlwind in the guise of a young woman to lead Riet a time-wasting dance. Nagalie then sends a buck in the shape of a young Bushman to challenge Riet to a race – in the wrong direction. In his desire to win, Riet forgets his mission. Night overtakes him and he arrives at day-break back in his own village, which he mistakes for that of Red Joggum. His

⁷⁶ See particularly Chapter Five in J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing – on the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

⁷⁷ Smuts, ‘Eugène Marais as prosaïes’, p.297. They were the first example of non-metrical verse in Afrikaans, a form later adopted by Uys Krige and Breyten Breytenbach. With their fantastical elements and imagery, the stories had closer links to the later prose sketches of Jan Rabie and Breytenbach written in the 1950s and 60s.

people's fury ends in his execution. The story thus fits a discernible pattern of hero's quest narratives of the fairy stories of western Europe.

The second story, 'Die Vaal Koestertjie' (the grey Pipit) revolves around a young girl, Nampti, who receives power from a magical little bird she once helped. This power enables her to turn into a lion at night so that she can hunt food to feed her enfeebled grandmother. When Nampti finally marries a local man, Oukiep, he comes to realize her ability, which Nampti then loses.

The third story, 'Die reënbul' (The Rain Bull), is of an old woman, Galepa, who lives with her two granddaughters in the mountains. Fearing her witchcraft, the townspeople drive her out and the three live a lonely outcast existence. One of the granddaughters, Nampti, is driven insane with solitude and begins to hear voices in the pond where she draws their water. Her grandmother gives her potions to rid the pond of the corruption. The following day she throws the herbs into the water and a young hunter arises, full of sweet words. The next morning, Nampti arrives dressed as a bride and she joins the hunter in the water. Her sister and grandmother find only her footprints.

The fourth story, *Die Lied van die Reën* (The Song of the Rain), tells of the law that in times of desperation each would help his neighbour. One village, Bessiebome, was blessed with water and food in abundance, but their new leader, Jakob Makding, was a hard, haughty man, who refused to help them during an unexpected famine. This ruthless man had one soft spot, for music. An old woman, Nasi-Tgam declared that Heitsi-Eibib – the law-giver – had said the dead await the

master songmaker, which would mean the end of Jakob Makding. There was in a nearby town an unknown musician, who was very shy and modest and of whom no one had ever heard. Joggom Konterdans constructed a fiddle out of elements of the veld. He was overheard by Nasi-Tgam and she thought he was perhaps the one the dead had meant. Small Joggom then played the song of the rain. Makding was powerless before him – he called on his vultures and his great snake, his soldiers and his subjects – but his people simply danced to the song of the rain.

Marais observed that Afrikaans children always had an affinity for the stories, as so many were supervised by bushmen domestic servants.⁷⁸ Historians have demonstrated the childhood introduction to Bushman narratives: for example, Irving Hexham's study of rural oral tradition unearthed successive retellings of the initiation of white Afrikaans speaking children by a Bushman servant, into the narrative world of the bushmen. In the introduction to the *Dwaalstories*, Marais describes the Grobler family whose children were all 'more or less raised' by an old Bushman, Outa Flip, who was a famous story-teller. Marais noted that those stories that rhymed revealed their western influences as 'Bushman know nothing of rhyme'. Marais said those he recounted were unadulterated and had a deeper meaning than those of the 'Grobler-type' (by which he meant Outa Flip's westernised stories), which were merely bastardised rhymes. His poems appeared at the junction when society no longer feared the Bushmen (indeed, after near genocide, it could afford to pity and begin to romanticise them) and the growing urbanisation of the Afrikaner (which was contributing to a renewed interest in the vanishing rural heritage). As Voss observed:

⁷⁸ Hexham has also noted the frequency with which Afrikaans children were supervised by bushman servants. Irving Hexham, 'Modernity or Reaction in South Africa: the Case of Afrikaner Religion', presented to The Consultation on Modernity and Reaction, University of Columbia, December, 1981, p.5.

‘By virtually removing the historical people it purports to re-create, it has made the a-historical myth-figure possible: by materially changing the land and society of South Africa, it has generated the sophisticated nostalgia that demands the myth.’⁷⁹ The discourse on other races, particularly in fiction, really reveals much about the Afrikaner. It may be argued that the bushman poems were part of the literature of a dying rural order, filled with nostalgia for the rural past. They were poems for the generation that left the land, under various economic pressures, and their popularity reflects nostalgia for the childhood experience of bushman domestic help. For the same reason from 1920 to 1940, the Afrikaans novel concerned itself almost exclusively with the farm (*plaasroman*) and *platteland* society, because of the painful transition from farmer to townsman. (As Coetzee points out, in the same period, only three English-language novelists used rural life as their subjects.⁸⁰) As has been discussed in Chapter Four, the urbanising Afrikaner remembered the farm as a sacral place, and the poems conjured up those told in childhood.⁸¹ Also, as Shula Marks observed: ‘[n]ow that they pose[d] no threat either as an external enemy or an internal proletariat, it is perhaps easier to view their activities in a positive, if not heroic, light.’⁸² Marais’s poems were novel in their subject matter, which has caused some critics like André Brink and Jack Cope to see them as radical departures from the

⁷⁹ A.E. Voss, ‘The image of the Bushman in South African English Writing of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’, *English in Africa*, vol.14, 1, May 1987, p.34.

⁸⁰ See the writing of D.F. Malherbe, Mikro, Jochem van Bruggen, Johannes van Melle, C.M. van den Heever, Abraham Jonker, discussed in J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing – on the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) p.63.

⁸¹ J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing*, p.175.

⁸² Shula Marks, ‘ ‘Bold, thievish, and not to be trusted’; racial stereotypes in South Africa in historical perspective’, *History Today*, 31, 1981, pp.15-21.

norm.⁸³ The literary critic Cope contends that because Marais adopts a Bushman's perspective he created:

a fusion of African and western: Writing the *Dwaalstories* Marais not only committed himself and every subsequent reader to an act of faith, but he achieved in literary form a statement of humanism undercutting the sorry record of racist bigotry and intolerance that has bedevilled the race of mankind.⁸⁴

Marais's relationship with his subject matter was more complex than this analysis admits. Writing sympathetic poems from 'Bushman perspective', did not make him an anti-racist.⁸⁵ Marais had a layered approach to matters of race.⁸⁶ Indeed, his view may be seen as relatively liberal – his son went so far as to call him, half-jokingly, a *Kafferboetjie* ('little brother of the African' or 'nigger-lover').⁸⁷ The Nationalist mainstream minimised these leanings of Marais, whereas those who would see Marais as subversive over-emphasise it. Rousseau, for example, contends that Marais had a common bond with Indians, as they provided his drugs.⁸⁸ This ignores Marais's earlier vitriolic anti-Indian writings for *Land en Volk*, where editorial policy was to lambaste Pretoria's Asian community.⁸⁹ However, as shown with Ward's descriptions, there was a different relationship to Bushmen as opposed to other

⁸³ André Brink, *Mapmakers – writing in a state of siege* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983) p.23.

⁸⁴ Cope, *Enemy Within*, p.17.

⁸⁵ Similarly, Van der Post campaigned against Apartheid but stereotyped people on the basis of race.

⁸⁶ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.313.

⁸⁷ Rousseau interview, Cape Town, November 1998.

⁸⁸ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.264.

⁸⁹ See Chapter Two, 'Eugène Marais and the Opposition press in Kruger's ZAR'.

indigenous black groups. Cope ignores the fact that Marais did not regard the Bushman as human. Marais wrote in an unpublished article:

The profound somatic differences between the Bushman and the lowest human race precludes all idea of a common species... Everything points to a near ape-ancestry and to an ape-ancestry different from that of the rest of the human race...And it is a singular thing that this ape-like being... the first cousin to the chimpanzee, should yet be the only true native South African artist. He was the first and only engraver and painter; the only musician; a poet and storyteller whose genius would compare favourably with that of any human race of a far higher degree of culture. And wherever the yellow streak has polluted the stream of 'higher' South African blood it has prepotently carried with it this masterful strain of artistry. The so-called Bushman is our true and only Bohemian. With a broken-backed fiddle, a hoarse concertina and a bottle of virulent brandy he can still at will transform the wilderness into a joyous paradise.⁹⁰

This emphasis on the artistic side of the Bushman, his talent for music and painting, built on past references and helped propagate the idea. This opinion ranged from the grudging '[t]he Bushmen, wretched as their condition was, seem to have had the faculties not incapable of cultivation, and in the matter of artistic talent at least they stood higher than any of the races around them.' (1901) to the enthusiastic 'But looming from cave and krantz are inscribed colours that fade not, /Hints from the heart of their secret – symbols and signs of their dreams.' (1924).⁹¹ The one factor, as Voss contends, that is accepted in mitigation of the sentence of the Bushmen's extinction is the fact that Bushmen are artists.⁹²

⁹⁰ 'The Yellow Streak in South Africa' – can Bushmen really be human?', paper by Marais. *Standpunte*, XVIII: 6 August 1965. This depiction predates Van der Post's depiction of a 'gay, gallant, mischievous, unpredictable, and to the end unrepentant and defiant' Bushman. Laurens Van der Post, *The Lost world of the Kalahari* (London: Hogarth, 1961) p.11.

⁹¹ James Cappon, *Britain's title in South Africa* (London, 1901) p.80, and Slater, *The Karroo*, 1924.

⁹² Voss, 'The image of the Bushman in South African English Writing,' p.34.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to address two issues: firstly, Maughan Brown has asked why sympathetic accounts of Bushmen did not appear sooner, as soon as the Bushmen no longer posed a threat and could prove useful as collaborators.⁹³ The answer is to be found in Marais's writings: these sympathetic accounts did exist, but in the Afrikaans (rather than in the English) literary tradition and Marais's stories formed their basis. Marais's work also illustrates the early foundation of the attitude towards the Bushman that later historians, like Wilmsen, have tended to ascribe to Van der Post and the Cold War era anthropological studies. By looking at Marais's writing, we can see that such notions were in evidence far earlier.

White writers' descriptions of Bushmen have ranged from 'vermin' to 'innocent' noble savages. They have been necessary both materially – as military allies, for example – and ideologically as important elements in the justificatory myth for white land ownership and in providing an example of 'pristine' primitive humanity. Highlighting Marais's writings helps fill the historiographical gap in the understanding of western writing on Bushmen: popular Afrikaans writing created a foundation upon which the literary tradition of the 'good Bushman' is based. In Marais's *Wandering Tales* the 'Bushman characteristics' known to us from later works, like those of Van der Post, are displayed: innocent, simple, childlike, highly artistic, naïvely cunning people closely linked to nature. The profound ambivalence towards Bushmen is built on dyads, which simultaneously entertain the idea that they are savage but innocent, uncivilised but artistic, powerless but a useful ally. There is a remarkable consistency in approach – the lineage has proved enduring.

⁹³ Maughan Brown, 'The rehabilitation of the San in popular fiction,' p.118.

'The Enduring Apparition' – the making of Eugène Marais as an Afrikaner hero.¹

'All the bad things can wait until after my death ...'

Marais in a letter to Gustav Preller.²

'I always find it somewhat terrifying to see my own name, even in print. Please be merciful with the biography'.
Marais to Preller.³

Eugène Marais is now a commonly used name in South Africa. A cursory review of headlines and articles turns up a Eugène Marais who operates a porn shop in Pretoria, another Eugène Marais who has been jailed for his right wing activities in the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), and yet another Eugène Marais who is, coincidentally, an entomologist.⁴ The name clearly has resonance and meaning for a variety of Afrikaners. South Africa remembers the original Eugène Marais in a variety of ways. There is the Anton Rupert-endowed chair of zoology at the University of

¹ Marais once wrote in a letter, of his scientific pieces: 'As a matter of fact, I have always been a little ashamed of these tales, they lie so far outside the sphere of what I have always regarded as my real work. They appeared as feuilletons in an Afrikaans newspaper and were never intended to assume a more enduring apparition'. *The Soul of the Ape* (London: Penguin, 1969) p.13. This chapter was presented in the seminar series Southern African History and Politics, Queen Elizabeth House, Trinity 2000. Thank you to the Agricultural Research Council, National Botanical Institute, Pretoria.

² 'Al die slegte goed kan maar wag tot ek dood is.' TAD (Transvaal Archives) Preller Collection, A 787, 41, Marais to Preller, 24 April 1923.

³ 'Dit is [vir] my altyd bietjie skrikwekkend om my eie naam selfs in druk te sien; wees dus genadig met die biografie!' TAD Preller Collection, A 787, 46, Marais to Preller, 11 May 1923.

⁴ See 'Pretoria is SA's new porn capital', *Mail & Guardian*, 17 March 1995.

Pretoria.⁵ There is the Eugène Marais prize for literature. There is the Eugène Marais hospital in Wonderboompoort. A rare Waterberg cycad has been named after him: *Encephalartos eugene-maraisii*.⁶ Last year *The Natal Mercury* remembered him as one of the '100 people who made South Africa'; he made it in at number seventy-nine.⁷ The leader of the AWB, Eugène Terreblanche, has likened his own poetry to that of Marais's.⁸ In the Nylstroom public library there is an alcove devoted to Marais's bust.⁹ At Naboomspruit, the children of the primary school enter through an arch carrying his name. At Lekkerrus in the Waterberg, the owner of the local hot springs resort guides hikers to the old Union Tin Mine in the kloof where the descendants of Marais's troop of baboons still live.

Primarily, Marais is remembered as an Afrikaner hero. There are, however, different claims to his meaning as 'hero'. Some remember him as the 'father of Afrikaans poetry', one of the most canonised writers in Afrikaans and part of the Afrikaner nationalist movement.¹⁰ Yet, a second intellectual tradition remembers him as a dissident iconoclast, an Afrikaner rebel. This chapter seeks to show first how these two, very different, understandings of Marais came to exist, and second that the course of this rivalry of legends was inextricably bound to the socio-economic and

⁵ Anton Rupert, 'Eugene Marais kom die eer toe, 'n huldeblyk', Stellenbosch, Rembrandt-tabbakkorporasie, 1971.

⁶ Inez Verdoorn was alerted to the cycad by Marais and named it after him in 1945.

⁷ *The Natal Mercury*, 1 December 1999.

⁸ The AWB is a right-wing revolutionary faction dedicated to the ideal of white hegemony. See the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging's website, <http://www.lantic.co.za>.

⁹ Sculpted by Willem Nezar in 1975.

¹⁰ René Marais, 'Die Kanonisering van Eugène N. Marais as digter', *Afrikaanse Letterkundevereniging*, 1:1, March 1993, p.11.

political history of South Africa. The methodology of this chapter is to look at his portrayal at particular historical moments and analyse the changes that have occurred, with reference to broader developments in South Africa. In particular this chapter shows how Marais's changing image was a result of material changes within the socio-economic milieu, the mutable needs of the establishment and various inputs from individuals, for reasons that were not always nationalist or even political. The hagiography of Marais by the Nationalist press, both during his life and after his death is explored, showing how the socio-political context of the *Taalstryd* (language struggle) was influential in the 1930s in shaping his image. The chronology of his representation is traced in terms of the changing self-image of the Afrikaner over the ensuing seven decades. Finally, in order to understand the fractured meaning of Marais today, the need for alternative heroes is considered.

In his own lifetime

Marais once asked Preller: 'Tell me, Gustav, was it just a dream that I ever did anything for the cause and literature of Afrikaans?'¹¹ It is a question worth consideration by historians of nationalism, particularly those interested in the creation of the identity of the Afrikaner and why Marais became remembered as a hero. Marais had characteristics unexpected in a mainstream Afrikaner hero. His home language was English, he was educated in London. He openly professed to pantheism and maintained that he only entered churches for weddings. He was something of a snob, alienated from his backveld contemporaries, whom he derided as *takhare*

¹¹ TAD Preller Collection. A.787. 184. 21 March 1927, Marais to Preller. The letter is composed solely of this sentence. Gustav Preller himself played an important role in the creation of a national identity, as an historian and newspaper editor. See P.J. Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller, 1875-1943', D.Phil., University of Pretoria, 1988.

(hayseeds or hicks).¹² Moreover, he was not actively involved in *kultuurpolitiek* (the politics surrounding the production of a recognised Afrikaans culture).¹³

The nationalist magazines, for which Marais wrote, represented an attempt to create a distinct Afrikaans cultural identity, to establish and then maintain standards of *Taal* purity.¹⁴ It was the project of middle-class cultural entrepreneurs to de-emphasise factions within the imagined community in favour of mythologising cultural unity.¹⁵ Much as the Italian nationalist, d'Aglezio, once declared 'We have made Italy, now we must make the Italians', the intellectuals of the Second Afrikaans Language Movement set out to consolidate a workable Afrikaner identity.¹⁶ Although Marais's work was solicited by these same intellectuals, he did not play a significant role in their ranks. He briefly edited the Pretoria-based *Land en Volk* from 1902 until 1905, when his interest waned and he sold it in 1906; it closed the following year. Although he continued to contribute to newspapers, Marais withdrew from the political race, moving to Waterberg in 1907. Marais instead worked within the power

¹² Leon Rousseau, *The Dark Stream – the story of Eugène Marais* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1982) p.9.

¹³ *Kultuurpolitiek* may be defined as the politics of culture, the debates and institutions surrounding the propagation of Afrikaans language and 'civilisation'.

¹⁴ As has been discussed in Chapter Three, this period saw the creation of the Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap for the Transvaal (1905), the Afrikaanse Taal Vereniging (1906), the founding of the S.A. Akademie (1909), the recognition of Afrikaans by provincial councils in 1914, including the schools, and acceptance by the churches between 1916 and 1919, and by parliament in 1925.

¹⁵ The publishing house Nasionale Pers promoted the idea that it had been established by a 'number of fervent nation-feeling Afrikaners' from 'all classes' who wanted not to make a profit but rather to 'see better provision being made for the supply of Afrikaans reading material to the Afrikaans volk.' 'Waarde vir U geld', *Die Huisgenoot*, July 1921. This has been discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

¹⁶ The Second Language Movement were a loosely associated predominately male group, working to foster a sense of Afrikaner identity, chiefly through post-war promotion of the entrenchment of Afrikaans as an official language.

network of the Nasionale Pers and Nationalist politicians. He asked, for example, for a directorship of the Zoological Council, urging Preller to use the Nationalist politician Carl Jeppe's influence and reminding him: 'The Huisgenoot people will also undoubtedly be willing to use their influence with Malan. It might be a good thing if you could write them a letter, if you would be so kind'.¹⁷ Marais was not, however, given the jobs by the Nationalists that he frequently requested. In a letter soliciting a job on Marais's behalf in the civil service, Preller reminded Dr Malan, Minister of Domestic Affairs, that Marais was 'a good Nationalist'.¹⁸ The extent of Marais's political involvement had, however, been limited to editorials in *Land en Volk* promoting the use of Afrikaans and was entirely peripheral after 1907. It is thus not for his parliamentary or lobbying role that he is remembered. Yet, for all this, Marais is celebrated as a powerful figure in the establishment of the Afrikaans language and culture.¹⁹ The answer lies in the culture-brokers' need for an 'Afrikaner poet'.²⁰

The First Poet

Marais is one of the most lionised writers in Afrikaans, but his periodisation within the canon is problematic.²¹ There are two schools of thought on his poetry. The

¹⁷ TAD, Preller Collection, A787, Marais to Preller, p.92, Heidelberg, 11 December 1926. Malan probably refers to D.F. Malan. Jeppe had been active in ZAR politics and by this stage had become Judge of the Water Court.

¹⁸ TAD, Preller Collection, A787, Preller to Malan, p.93, 14 December 1926.

¹⁹ Marais is venerated as 'a founder of Afrikaans as a literary language', Donald Denoon, *A Grand Illusion – The failure of imperial policy in the Transvaal Colony during the period of reconstruction* (London: Longman, 1973) p.84; 'whose poetry had proved that Afrikaans was a language in its own right', H.H. Hewison, *Hedge of Wild Almonds* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1989).

²⁰ The term 'cultural entrepreneur/broker' is used and theorised by Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976) p.45

first considers him a poet from the Language Movement's stable. These critics place Marais firmly in the post-war generation of poets, along with Jan F.E. Celliers, Totius and C. Louis Leipoldt.²² The second school portrays him as a maverick genius, appearing at the turn of the century, as a 'lone star' in the Afrikaans literary firmament.²³ The contested periodisation is partly a result of the difficulty in periodising poetry produced intermittently and in different languages over four poetic 'generations'. He first published in the 1880s and 1890s, during the First Language Movement; then in the years immediately after the Anglo-Boer War, in the early days of the Second Language Movement; then again after 1919, and finally, in the 1930s.²⁴

Marais's first poem, 'The Soldier's Grave', based on Byron's 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage', was written in 1883 when he was twelve.²⁵ He published two more English-language poems two years later.²⁶ Over the next two years he published seven more English poems in the *Paarl District Advertiser*, in the style of the English

²¹ René Marais, 'Die Kanoniserings van Eugène N. Marais as digter', *Afrikaanse Letterkundevereniging*, 1:1, March 1993, p.11.

²² Lindenberg, 'Herout of Twintiger?' in 1965, p.20 J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Literatuur* (Pretoria: Academica, 1984) pp.222-240.

²³ Marais, 'Die Kanoniserings van Eugène N. Marais as digter', p. 11. Dekker and Antonissen adopt this image of Marais, as the first significant Afrikaans poet, independent and unaffiliated. See G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1947) and Rob Antonissen, *Die Afrikaanse letterkunde van aanvang tot hede* (Johannesburg: H.A.U.M., 1955) p.79.

²⁴ It is debatable whether his poetry falls over three or four generations. Kannemeyer maintains only three, while René Marais contends four generations. Kannemeyer, 1984, p.222; Marais, 'Die Kanoniserings van Eugène N. Marais as digter', p.12. Kannemeyer himself has, however, labelled the thirties as a new phase in the development of Afrikaans literature. Kannemeyer, 1984 and 1988.

²⁵ F.G.M. Du Toit, *Eugene Marais – Sy Bydrae tot die Afrikaanse Letterkunde* (Amsterdam: N.V.Swets, 1940) p.102.

²⁶ 'Ode to the Paarl' and 'The Soldier's Grave', *Paarl District Advertiser*, 14 October 1885 and 7 November 1885.

Romantic movement.²⁷ Four years elapsed before Marais began to publish poetry again, this time in Afrikaans, in *Land en Volk*, the Pretoria-based newspaper he edited.²⁸ Fourteen years later, at the age of 34, Marais published Afrikaans verse again (this time under the pen name 'Klaas Vaakie' (the Sandman)): 'Piet van Snaar', 'Die smit' (the Smith) and 'Winternag' (Winter night).²⁹ 'Winternag' has come to be remembered as the first Afrikaans poem of any literary worth, which fosters the second image of Marais as 'maverick genius' rather than simply as a member of a poetic movement. As a pioneer in the use of popular vernacular, Marais is thus venerated as 'a founder of Afrikaans as a literary language', 'whose poetry had proved that Afrikaans was a language in its own right'.³⁰ Published in 1905, the poem captures the parallels between a bleak Highveld night and the post-war world.

²⁷ 'South Africa' (26 March 1886); 'Majuba' (29 September 1886); 'There Shall be no more sea' (13 October 1886); 'On revisiting a spot where the author met his girl sweetheart, years ago' (29 January 1887); 'Hymn for a stormy night at sea' (23 February 1887); 'Anglified Africanders' (15 March 1887) and 'Love' (11 May 1887).

²⁸ *Land en Volk*, 'Gert Senekal' 8 September 1891 and 'Di meisies', 15 September 1891, under the pseudonym 'Afrikanus Junior'. These poems, 'Gert Senekal' and 'Di meisies' fall within the tradition of the First Language Movement.

²⁹ *Land en Volk*, 5 May 1905, 19 May 1905 and 23 June 1905.

³⁰ Donald Denoon, *A Grand Illusion – The failure of imperial policy in the Transvaal Colony during the period of reconstruction* (London: Longman, 1973) p.84.

Winternag
(Original version)

O koud is die windjie
 En skraal.
En blink is die dof-lig
 En kaal,
En zoo wyd as die Heer se genade,
Leg die velde in sterlig en skade.
 En hoog in die rande,
 Versprei in die brande,
Is die gras-zaad aan roere
 Soos winkende hande.

O treurig die wysie
 op die Oostwind se maat,
soos die lied van 'n meisie
in haar liefde verlaat.
In elk' grashalm se vouw
 Blink 'n druppel van douw,
En vinnig verbleek dit
 Tot ryp in die kou!

Winter's Night
(My translation)

Oh cold is the wind
 and spare.
And clear is the half-light
 and bare,
And free as the mercy of God
The veld lies in starlight and dark.
 And high in the hills,
 split on the rills
The seedgrass is waving
Like beckoning hands.

O sad voice
 Of the East wind.
Like the song of a girl
abandoned in love.
On each fold of grass
 The dew gleams still
And quickly it pales
 To frost in the chill!

The Afrikaner Nationalist historian, D.W. Krüger noted in the otherwise prosaic, widely prescribed school textbook *The Making of a Nation*:

The soul of the people were as starved as the arid plains of the upland plateau, and when in 1905 a young poet, Eugène Marais, made the first real contribution to Afrikaans literature it sounded like the first raindrops after a prolonged drought.³¹

The poem, however, was put to an entirely different polemical use when it was first published in *Land en Volk* in 1905 under the pseudonym 'Klaas Vakie'.³² On 17 June 1905, Preller appropriated it to end a series of articles he had written on the use of Afrikaans, in *De Volkstem*. Preller, certainly with Marais's approval, invented a

³¹ D.W. Krüger, *The Making of a Nation* (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1969, p.20). Krüger also wrote a hagiographical account of Marais's attempt to carry weapons and ammunition to a Boer commando in 1902, D.W. Krüger, 'Dr. Schultz en Eugène Marais probeer om deur Oos-Afrika die Boerelinies te bereik', *Die Huisgenoot*, 11 January 1946.

³² Marais was in fact later to write a poem 'Klaas Vakie' in *Die Brandwag*, 15 July 1910.

more polemically useful author for his purposes: 'The writer is an unlettered Boer who can never write in Dutch, but who is undoubtedly a poet. It is a fragment, titled 'Winter night', but you can listen to it'.³³ This mere 'fragment' was later 'rediscovered' by Preller, when an accomplished Afrikaans poet proved more useful to his nationalist discourse than an 'unlettered Boer'.³⁴ Shifting his argument diametrically, Preller praised the sophistication of the poem:

It has been a little too much said that in AD 2139 there will only be ten lines remaining of all that has been written in Afrikaans, but I always thought that the ten lines of Eugène's *Winter's Night* will be among them.

In his introduction to an anthology of Marais's poems in 1934, Preller noted that the verse provided hope for a revived Language movement, as it demonstrated 'the Mother language's ability to express subtle concepts'.³⁵ By the 1930s *Die Vaderland* labelled Marais the 'one genius produced so far in Afrikaans literary world'.³⁶ Marais came to be included in the 'Big Four' along with Jan Celliers, Totius and C. Louis Leipoldt.

There were efforts to remember Marais as solely an Afrikaans-medium poet.

M.S.B. Kritzinger hotly denied rumours that Marais wanted at first to write

³³ 'Die skrywer daarvan ...is 'n ongeleerde Boer, wat nimmer of nooit Hollands kan schrijft nie, maar hij is ongetwijfeld 'n digter. Dit is maar net 'n brokkie, getiteld, 'n Winternag', maar jij kan daarna luister'. See M.S.B. Kritzinger, 'Eugène Marais as Digter', *Ons Tydskrif*, May 1936 and Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p.120.

³⁴ In 1936, M.S.B. Kritzinger attempted to explain away this political stratagem by contending that the political climate prevented Marais from revealing his identity. M.S.B. Kritzinger, 'Eugène N. Marais as digter', *Ons Tydskrif*, May 1936. This is clearly not the case, as Marais openly published direct criticism of the Milner regime, and 'Winternag' has no overt political content.

³⁵ Preller's 'Introduction' in Marais, *Gedigte*, 1934, p.8. Indeed, C.M. Van den Heever maintained that its publication heralded the beginning of the Second Language Movement. C.M. Van den Heever, Critique of *Die Swart Verraad*, *De Vaderland*, 10 June 1933.

‘Winternag’ in English.³⁷ In later publications of ‘Winternag’, the words were further ‘Afrikanerised’ (the Dutch spellings were removed): ‘gras-zaad’ became ‘grassaad’, ‘vrouw’ became ‘vrou’ and ‘zoo’ became ‘so’. His fifteen English poems (published in the *Paarl District Advertiser*), were ignored in anthologies and in works of literary criticism.³⁸ After its newspaper publication, ‘Winternag’ appeared in *Gedigte* (Poems), a collection of sixteen of Marais’s poems, compiled by his son, Eugène Charles Gerard Marais, Preller and Charlie Pienaar, and first published in 1925, then reprinted in 1932, 1934 and 1943. The introductions by Preller are hasty affairs – the 1934 edition, for example, bears the date 1925. The 1943 edition perpetuates the earlier errors and it carries the date 1937.³⁹ Accepting Preller’s version, later commentators perpetuate these errors: D.F. Malherbe, for example, dates ‘Winternag’ to 1904 rather than 1905 and labels it Marais’s first poem whereas it is his fourteenth published verse, perpetuating the myth of Marais as an Afrikaans-only poet.⁴⁰ The first thirteen poems are ignored as they detract from ‘Winternag’. The intellectual establishment wished to see it as the first poem, to reinforce it as the start of the Language Movement. *Die Vaderland* asserted, for example, that ‘Winternag’ began the lyric tradition in Afrikaans, which had not yet explored its evocative power.⁴¹ As the *Nuwe Brandwag* pronounced in 1933, ‘if ever an artist was a volksdigter then is it Marais

³⁶ *Die Vaderland*, 31 March 1936.

³⁷ M.S.B Kritzinger, ‘Eugène N. Marais as digter’, *Ons Tydskrif*, May 1936.

³⁸ Anthony Thorpe, *Eugène Nielen Marais – Gedigte/Poems* (Pretoria: J. L. Van Schaik, for The Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1956).

³⁹ In the 1934 edition, for example, Preller refers to ‘’n Winternag’ rather than the correct ‘Winternag’, he also refers to its ten lines, whereas it consists of eighteen lines and he quotes Marais’s birthdate as 1872 instead of 1871.

⁴⁰ D.F. Malherbe quoted in Nienaber, 1947, p.12.

with his ‘Winternag’, giving expression to the deepest pain of the *volksiel* (soul of the nation/people).⁴² As *Die Burger* declared in 1936: ‘He was a poet before any other Afrikaans poet. And yet, in spite of having travelled widely, he was so intimately linked to the Afrikaner soil, that one can always see the poet of Afrikaans spirit.’⁴³ Marais thus became known not only as the originator, but also the producer of some of the greatest poetry in Afrikaans – and also very much a *volksdigter* (people’s poet), producing poetry of and for the Afrikaans people. As D.F. Malherbe acknowledged, ‘Winternag’ was ‘a powerful propaganda tool in the increasing struggle for recognition of the mother language.’⁴⁴

Yet the extent to which the *public* knew and loved him for his poetry, as the 1930s culture brokers maintained, is debatable.⁴⁵ His poetry oeuvre was relatively slim, his output sporadic (after the 1907 publication of ‘Klaas Vakie’, twelve years elapsed before Marais published poetry again), and he seldom published more than two poems in the same publication,⁴⁶ often under a pseudonym.⁴⁷ Marais never

⁴¹ C.M. Van den Heever, ‘Die Eensame onder die Afrikaanse Kunstenaars’, *Die Vaderland*, 3 April 1936.

⁴² G. Dekker, ‘Review of *Gedigte* and *Versamelde Gedigte*’, *Die Nuwe Brandwag*, May 1933.

⁴³ Hy was digter...voor enige Afrikaanse digter.’ ‘Maar tog is dit alles, ten spyte van sy bereisheid, so innig verbonde met die Afrikaanse grond, dat’n mens hierin en in ander gedigte nog altyd die digter van Afrikaanse bodem sien.’ A.H. Jonker, ‘Eugène N. Marais’, *Die Burger*, 1 April 1936.

⁴⁴ ‘as kragtige propagandamiddel in die toenemende stryd om die erkenning van die moedertaal’. D.F. Malherbe, *Die Volksblad*, 11 April 1936.

⁴⁵ The use of pen names was common practice during the First Language Movement. See, for example, the poems in S.J. Du Toit’s *Afrikaanse Gedigte, byeenversameld uit wat in di laaste 30 jaar verskyn is: 1876-1906*.

⁴⁶ *Paarl District Advertiser* (9), *Land en Volk* (5), *De Volkstem* (1), *Die Boerevrou* (1, one reprinted from *De Volkstem*), *Die Brandwag* (2), *Die Burger* (1), *Die Huisgenoot* (5) and *Ons/Die Vaderland* (3).

attempted a complete anthology of his poetry.⁴⁸ Fifty-four poems exist in total, but by 1925 only sixteen had been published under Marais's own name in *Gedigte*. Until 1932, these sixteen were the only ones anthologised, compared to C. Louis Leipoldt's three anthologies between 1910 and 1923 and Jan F.E. Celliers's nine anthologies between 1908 and 1924.⁴⁹ The intellectual public often did not categorise him with the triumvirate of Totius, Celliers and Leipoldt, not perhaps because of a lack of quality, but for a lack of quantity and consistency.⁵⁰

Was Marais a literary legend in his own lifetime? He was something of a hero thanks to Preller's promotion of him as creator of the first Afrikaans poem, yet most of that image was created in the 1930s long after the publication of 'Winternag', particularly immediately after his death in 1936. He was better known for his popular science writing on termites and baboons, than for his poetry. This was particularly the case after 1927 when Marais attracted attention after the Maurice Maeterlinck episode discussed in Chapter Four. Marais won a measure of renown as the aggrieved party, and as an Afrikaner researcher who had opened himself up to plagiarism because he published in Afrikaans out of national loyalty.⁵¹ Thus, despite the use of his poetry for

⁴⁷ He used the pen names 'Klaas Vaakie', 'Eugène, O.F.S.', 'Afrikanus Junior', 'H.v.R.v.O.', 'V.R.' and 'Niggie van A.G. Visser'.

⁴⁸ Today there exists no complete collection of the poems published in his life-time, let alone the nine poems discovered posthumously. Even from his *Versamelde werke* (Leon Rousseau (ed.) 1984) certain poems are omitted.

⁴⁹ In 1933, Van Schaik published Marais's *Versamelde Gedigte*, consisting of thirty poems, the first to be selected and edited by Marais himself. *Versamelde Gedigte* underwent changes as it was reprinted – the 1934 edition, for example, included 'Wanneer dit reën op Rietfontein' and the 1936 edition saw the addition of 'Diep rivier'. The definitive version of 1936, contained thirty two poems, omitting twenty two. Rousseau's 1984 *Versamelde Werke* uses all of these and adds two to total 56, thirty-five of them in English.

⁵⁰ M.S.B Kritzing, 'Eugène N. Marais as digter', *Ons Tydskrif*, May 1936.

⁵¹ For a discussion of these points see Chapter Four.

the *taalstryd*, Marais was better known for the plagiarism scandal than for his 56 published poems, in any language or under any pseudonym. Ironically, Marais brooded at the time of the scandal: 'I wonder whether he blushes when he reads such things [critical acclaim], and whether he gives a thought to the injustice he does to the unknown Boer worker?'⁵²

The 1930s - the Myth Machine and the 'Good Afrikaner'

The 'Boer worker' was the focus of the culture-brokers' attentions in the next decade as the urban labour market became an arena in which Afrikaner intellectuals sought to capture the cultural allegiance of the urbanising Afrikaans-speaker. The 1930s were a period of economic insecurity – exacerbated by the drought and increasing industrialisation and urbanisation. In Johannesburg alone the number of Afrikaners increased from 86 700 to 163 575 between 1926 and 1936, the year of Marais's death.⁵³ The perceived need for Poor White 'upliftment' – both educational and economic – was infused with ideas of ethnic identity and history.⁵⁴ This economic quest required unity. Dr N. Diederichs, a nationalist politician and chairman of the Broederbond, agonizing about the abyss between Afrikaner 'haves' and 'have-nots', argued that it was 'essential to create unity so that the poor can identify with us and

⁵² Quoted in Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p.184.

⁵³ E.L.P. Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad* (Pretoria: H.A.U.M., 1978) p.17.

⁵⁴ As D.F. Malan declared at the Great Trek Centenary celebrations on Blood River Day 16 December 1938, 'Your Blood River lies in the city.' Quoted in Albert Grundlingh and Hilary Sapire, 'From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual? The Changing Fortunes of Great Trek Mythology in an Industrializing South Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, 21, 1989, p.23. Grundlingh and Sapire have shown how the Great Trek proved a changing reference point to meet changing historical exigencies. They analysed the Great Trek mythology over a period of fifty years against a backdrop of successful ethnic mobilisation of Afrikanerdom in the 1930s and the subsequent mutations of the mythology in an increasingly industrial society as the material basis for beliefs changed.

feel one with us.’⁵⁵ Shared heroes were necessary to promote social unity, a fact demonstrated by the proliferation of historical works produced by nationalists in this period. It may also be argued that in any condition of social stress (the drought and depression had rendered this a time of social anxiety) there is a socio-psychological craving for heroes, which facilitated the intellectuals’ agenda.⁵⁶ In order to mobilize Afrikaners, nationalism needed to have mass appeal. As Tom Nairn has noted, wherever nationalism was manufactured, the new middle-class intelligentsia had to ‘invite all the masses into history; and the invitation card had to be written in a language they understood.’ In the 1930s, in the run-up to the Great Trek celebrations, Afrikaner culture-brokers (a class consisting of teachers, clergy, academics, lawyers, newspaper editors, lower level civil servants) had perfected this part of the enterprise. Benedict Anderson has pointed out, however, with respect to Nairn’s formulation, that ‘it still has to be explained why the invitation came to be seen as so attractive.’⁵⁷ This is a harder question to answer. Why did the public welcome Marais in the way they did?

While Afrikaner Nationalism was not the only discourse available for Afrikaners, it proved successful with the majority.⁵⁸ Alienated by the values and

⁵⁵ Quoted in Grundlingh and Sapiro, ‘From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual?’ p.23.

⁵⁶ Bill Butler, *The Myth of the Hero* (London: Rider and company, 1979) p.7.

⁵⁷ Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain* (London: New Left Books, 1977) p.340 and B. Anderson, *Imagined communities* (London: Verso 1983, 1991) p.80. This argument was used in Albert Grundlingh and Hilary Sapiro, ‘From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual? The Changing Fortunes of Great Trek Mythology in an Industrializing South Africa’, *South African Historical Journal*, 21, 1989, p.24. This article asked why the public responded to the Centenary celebrations, probing popular motivation.

⁵⁸ Other appealing alternatives existed - such as socialism and ‘South Africanism’, promoted by both state and capital. Both failed, perhaps because they lacked reference to a communal past. The historical dimension was missing, and neither ideology could provide the body of

culture of new urban environment, they turned predominately to the 'balm of traditional culture'.⁵⁹ Mobilisation had to be through that which was there, as Nairn has noted, but the 'whole point of the dilemma was that there was nothing there', no economic and political institutions: '[t]he middle-classes, therefore, had to function through a sentimental culture sufficiently accessible to the lower strata now being called into battle.'⁶⁰ Having made slight economic advance, the intellectuals led through aggressive cultural assertion and mobilisation.⁶¹ Class cleavages and economic insecurity made the public receptive to politico-cultural blandishments of this group of intellectuals.⁶²

They used the Great Trek Centenary to manufacture a period of heightened nationalism.⁶³ Romantic versions of voortrekker history were promoted, men grew

historical mythology made available by Afrikaner nationalism. For a discussion of 'South Africanism' as an ideology see B. Bozzoli, *The Political Nature of a Ruling Class: Capital and Ideology in South Africa 1890-1933* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981) pp.204-5, 243.

⁵⁹ This phenomenon has received great attention – see, for example, Grundlingh and Sapiro, 'From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual?'; Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad*, p.17. and J. Joubert, 'Blanke Arbeid in die Sekondêre Industrieë aan die Witwatersrand 1924-1933', D.Litt, R.A.U., 1987.

⁶⁰ Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain* p.340. Grundlingh and Sapiro have used this argument in their review of the changing fortunes of the Great Trek myth. 'From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual?' p.22.

⁶¹ See Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979) p.110.

⁶² S.W. Pienaar and J.J.J. Scholtz (eds). *Glo in u Volk: Dr D.F. Malan as Redenaar 1908-1954* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1904), pp.122-123.

⁶³ O'Meara has described how the upper level were dispossessed of power, how dominees lost control, lawyers lost clientele, how teachers were trapped in the '50-50' (50% Afrikaans, 50% English) educational system, how civil servants needed English skills to get ahead, and argued that they promoted Afrikaner Nationalism as a way forward to regain control. O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, capital, and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934-1948*, p.55. See also Adam and Giliomee, *Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner power*, pp.110-111 and T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

long beards, women wore vootrekker dresses and *kappies* (bonnets), and many babies were baptised ‘Ossewania’, ‘Kakebenia’ and ‘Eeufeesia’.⁶⁴ Central to these activities was the idea of the ‘imagined community’ – the Voortrekker republics, rooted in the heroic, rustic past.⁶⁵ The ‘re-discovery’ of the Voortrekkers was promoted in works of popular history by Preller and J.D. Kestell.⁶⁶ Preller’s biography of the Voortrekker Piet Retief had already run into ten printings and 25 000 copies by 1930; his six volumes of edited voortrekker reminiscences and his edition of the diary of Louis Trichardt and biography of Andries Pretorius were also very popular.⁶⁷ The nationalist ‘myth machine’ directed the process of inventing national heroes. Marais was also co-opted to produce such articles as ‘Enige Merkwaardige Afrikaners’ (Certain Noteworthy Afrikaners) and ‘Twee Dapper Afrikaner Meisies’ (Two Brave Afrikaner Girls) and ‘Van Oudae en Oumense in Pretoria’ (About the olden days and people in Pretoria).⁶⁸ He was called upon to defend the Boer image against the criticism levelled by John Barrow.⁶⁹ The works of Voortrekker hagiography by Preller, Kestell and Marais created a climate of ancestor worship, the *platteland* equivalent of shintoism, that functioned as foundation myths that defined and legitimised the polity.

⁶⁴ The names translate as ‘Ox-wagon’, ‘Jawbone’ (representing a kind of ox-wagon) and ‘Centenary Festival’.

⁶⁵ The nostalgic interpretation proved potent because the rural world was disintegrating as discussed in Chapter Four.

⁶⁶ J.D. Kestell, *Die Voortrekkers – ‘n kort geskiedenis verhaal* (Pretoria: J.H. de Bussy, 1926).

⁶⁷ Gustav Preller, *Piet Retief* (Cape Town: Nationale Pers, 1930); *Voortrekkermense*, 6 vol (Cape Town: Nationale Pers, 1918-1938); *Dagboek van Louis Trichardt* (Cape Town: Nationale Pers, 1938) and *Andries Pretorius* (Johannesburg: Die Afrikaanse Pers, 1940).

⁶⁸ ‘Van Oudae en Oumense in Pretoria’, *Ons Vaderland*, 15 January 1930. ‘Oumense’ refers to ancestors in a cultural sense.

Just as in the case of the Great Trek celebrations, the Afrikaner intellectuals promoted the celebration of *volksdigters* (people's poets). The Language Movement cultivated emerging writers and provided a publishing space for their work. Popular magazines like *Die Huisgenoot* and *Brandwag* created a cult of the personality around selected literary figures.⁷⁰ Marais was a *volksdigter*, vigorously promoted by Preller as the 'first poet', as has been shown, from the middle 1920s onwards. His work was eagerly solicited and enjoyed by the public, one editor asked: 'when is there going to be something by Mr Marais in the paper?'⁷¹ By the 1930s there was public interest in his work from complete strangers and Marais was coming to be thought of as a 'Good Afrikaner'.⁷²

The idea of the '*Ware*' or 'True' Afrikaner gained prominence and discursive power from the 1910s, particularly after the 1912 split by Hertzog and the formation of the National Party and the 1914 Rebellion. Frequent mention was made of a man's role in the South African War. The election of 1924, which initiated the Pact victory, vividly demonstrated this public feeling when the English-speaking SAP candidate suffered a defeat at the hands of the Afrikaans-speaking candidate, who had not only fought in the South African war, but lost the use of both legs in doing so. Ostensibly 'True Afrikaners' were required to have fought in the South African war, speak Afrikaans, and share the Calvinist religion. But few of the nationalist intellectuals

⁶⁹ Barrow (1764-1848) was an English traveller and geographer, who made derogatory observations of the Boer farmers in the Cape. Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.319.

⁷⁰ Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words', p.109.

⁷¹ Translated. TAD, Preller Collection, A787, S.P. Auwyk to Preller, April 1936.

⁷² 'Preller Collection, p.40, Marais to Preller, 12 April 1923.

fitted this mould exactly. Some like Preller, Kestell and Marais spoke in English when in serious debate. Neither Marais nor Preller had seen active service during the South African war, and while some were religious, and infused their nationalism with Calvinism, like S.J. Du Toit, others like N.P. van Wyk Louw, Preller and Marais were non-believers.

Preller was Goethe to Marais's Schiller – encouraging him, soliciting his writing, getting him work.⁷³ Preller played the most powerful role in defining Marais's identity and moulding him into an Afrikaner hero. Marais continually missed deadlines⁷⁴, and editors relied on Preller to get his articles written.⁷⁵ An article in *Die Burger* maintained that the public would never even have seen one anthology of Marais's poems without Preller.⁷⁶ Even in Marais's obituary, the nationalist and compiler of the Afrikaans dictionary, Kritzinger, observed that Marais's work was only published 'thanks to Preller.'⁷⁷ Preller also collected Marais's work for the journal he edited, *Die Brandwag*.⁷⁸ He often maintained that Marais was 'not concerned with publicity.'⁷⁹ Yet Preller himself was vigorously involved in promoting Marais's publicity. He had used him iconically as the 'first poet', and from 1925 he promoted him vigorously as *volksdigter*. His political dissidence under Kruger was

⁷³ See Chapter Three for greater detail.

⁷⁴ Y. Jooste, 'Eugene Marais, my uncle', *Jaarboek Africana Vereniging van Pretoria*, 1992: 10, p.1-3.

⁷⁵ J.H. Viljoen, *'n Joernalis vertel* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1953).

⁷⁶ A.H. Jonker, 'Eugène N. Marais', *Die Burger*, 1 April 1936.

⁷⁷ 'Te danke aan Preller.' M.S.B. Kritzinger, *Volkstem*, 4 April 1936.

⁷⁸ *Die Brandwag* was published from 1910.

⁷⁹ Winifred de Kok in Eugene Marais, *The Soul of the Ant* (London: Penguin, 1973) p.13.

noted briefly (Preller conceded that his newspaper was so rabidly anti-Kruger that it appeared to be *against* the Republic and *for* the English opposition) but Preller hastened to add, Marais always remained a ‘good Afrikaner through and through’.⁸⁰ While Preller noted that their long-standing friendship might render him subjective, he devoted an entire chapter to Marais in his 1925 *Historiese Opstelle*, creating a national historical figure.⁸¹ He argued that Marais’s greatest service lay in the realm of Afrikaans poetry.⁸² He shaped a stereotypical heroic framework for Marais’s biography: his attempt to bring aid to a commando in the Anglo-Boer War; his old and established family and his early rural upbringing. Just as Anderson has observed, in nationalist discourse there is not only a need to remember, but also a need to ‘forget’.⁸³ Preller ignored his identification with the decadence and aestheticism of George Moore and Thomas de Quincey,⁸⁴ his cosmopolitan tastes and leanings towards morphine and the *avante garde*. Instead, Preller promoted the image of a persona who was a ‘typical Boer of simple tastes’⁸⁵, a good rider and shot,⁸⁶ a ‘man of the veld’, who taught the young to shoot guinea fowl in the air not on the ground, and who taught everyone to make biltong from wildebeest or kudu, although having

⁸⁰ Translation from the Afrikaans. Gustav Preller, *Historiese Opstelle* (Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik, 1925) p.183.

⁸¹ Gustav Preller, *Historiese Opstelle* (Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik, 1925).

⁸² Preller, *Historiese Opstelle*, p.180.

⁸³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp.204 – 206.

⁸⁴ Discussed in Chapter Five, ‘‘Bushveld Magic’ and ‘Miracle Doctors’ – a discussion of Eugène Marais’s and C. Louis Leipoldt’s work in the Waterberg, c.1906-1913. See also M. Grobbelaar and H. Roos, Eugene Marais: estetisisme en dekadent? 1992, *Tydskrif vir letterkunde*, 1992, 30:4, p.64-74, Nov.

⁸⁵ ‘Sy smaak was eenvoudig, soos ons almal s’n’. Preller quoted in Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, pxiv.

⁸⁶ Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p. xiii.

‘moral dislike’ for the hunt itself.⁸⁷ Later the myth-making continued – as *Die Suiderstem* observed in 1937: ‘He always remained a Boer ... at home on a horse.’⁸⁸ In 1940, F.G.M. Du Toit’s thesis *Eugene Marais – Sy Bydrae tot die Afrikaanse Letterkunde* was published.⁸⁹ It was based on interviews with Marais just before his death and based on a significant contribution by Preller. Preller observed in his introduction to Du Toit’s thesis: that Marais was ‘’n beste Afrikaner’ (a consummate Afrikaner).⁹⁰ The thesis itself was simply a more sophisticated version of Preller’s vision, the language of literary analysis used to perpetuate the icon, as Preller had it: ‘Marais earned the honour of his volk through an indestructible contribution to our intellectual heritage’.⁹¹

War, Wine and Women – in Pretoria

Marais’s attainment of the standing ‘Good Afrikaner’ is demonstrated by the role he played in an incident four years before his death. In 1932 Marais participated in a court case –his last case as an advocate - that is illustrative of his own stature as Afrikaner icon and a lesson in the politics of defending a recently imagined identity.⁹²

⁸⁷ Hy wou in die veld wees, in die wilde natuur, en hoe nader daaraan hoe lief, maar om waar te neem en te bewonder, nie om dood te maak nie. (Du Toit, *Eugene Marais*, p.xiii) This aligns with the argument that at this time there was a need to reinvent the Afrikaner as a man of the veld, explored in Chapter Four ‘The Ant of the White Soul – popular natural history and the politics of Afrikaner identity, with particular reference to the entomological writings of Eugène Marais’.

⁸⁸ ‘Hy het altyd Boer gebly...tuis op ’n perd.’ C.A. Groenewald, ‘Enkele Herinnerings aan ’n groot digter: Eugene Marais, *Die Suiderstem*, 7 September 1937.

⁸⁹ F.G.M. Du Toit, *Eugene Marais – Sy Bydrae tot die Afrikaanse Letterkunde* (Amsterdam: N.V.Swets, 1940).

⁹⁰ Du Toit, *Eugene Marais*, p.vii.

⁹¹ ‘EM het die erkentlikheid van sy volk verdien deur onverwoesbare werk aan ons intellektuele besit.’ G.S. Preller, ‘Vroeë herinneringe aan E.N. Marais’, *Ons Tydskrif*, May 1936.

The recently forged Afrikaner nation was becoming sensitive in protecting its public image. As early as 1914, for example, Preller had lectured on ‘Anti-Afrikaanse tendense in ons roman-literatuur’ (Anti-Afrikaans leanings in our novels).⁹³ But Henry P. Lamont, a senior lecturer in French at the University of Pretoria (UP), had written *War, Wine and Women* – purportedly the experiences of Wilfred Saint-Mande, a soldier in World War I. The soldier is advised that:

The backveld Boer bathes only for baptism, marriage and burial. He has no notions of sanitation and often uses his bedroom as a latrine.’ ‘Many [of the voortrekkers] were illiterate boors... Their favourite pastime was begetting children, both with their wives and their numerous black concubines....’

Published by the London firm, Cassell, it duly appeared in South African bookshops in the middle of 1931. Eight months elapsed before Sannie Broers, housemother of the women’s residence at UP and chairperson since 1916, raised the matter at the Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouefederasie congress held in Pietersburg, from 29 March to 2 April 1932.⁹⁴ In the climate of ancestor worship created by the voortrekker hagiography discussed previously, this precipitated uproar. The novel threatened one of the foundation myths that justified the polity. Johanna ‘Hannie’ Preller, wife of Gustav Preller, wanted the book suppressed by D.F. Malan, the Minister of the Interior and the author’s identity revealed.⁹⁵

⁹² Wilfred Saint-Mande, *War, Wine and Women*. This incident is discussed in J.C. Steyn, *Trouwe Afrikaners – Aspekte van Afrikaner-nasionalisme en Suid-Afrikaanse taalpolitiek* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1987). See also E.Kahn, ‘When the lion feeds – and the censor pounces’, *South African Law Journal*, 83 (3) 1966, p.311 and Dian Joubert, *Teer-en-Veer in 1932- rondom die Lamont-saak* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1972).

⁹³ To the Academy in Pietermaritzburg. Quoted in Steyn, *Trouwe Afrikaners*, p.149.

⁹⁴ *Die Volkstem*, 11 April 1932.

⁹⁵ The role of women in defending ethnic identity through women’s institutions has been examined by Jeffrey Butler, ‘Afrikaner Women and the Creation of Ethnicity in a Small

There was public outcry at the desecration of recently created heroes. Preller's editorial in *Ons Vaderland* called it 'simply disgusting'.⁹⁶ Lamont reacted in the *Pretoria News*, still under his pseudonym, 'If a ...novelist could be arraigned because of any words uttered by his puppets, the situation would become impossible...' but offered to remove the offending parts in later editions.⁹⁷ A few days later, however, some of his colleagues at the University of Pretoria signed a petition asking that the book be suppressed.⁹⁸ The Afrikaanse Studentebond asked that the author be identified and, if a lecturer, dismissed.⁹⁹ The English-language press damned it as a 'heresy hunt',¹⁰⁰ and even Preller's *Die Vaderland* criticised *Die Volkstem* for fomenting irresponsible racial conflict.¹⁰¹ On 13 May, Malan decided not to commission an inquiry into the suppression of the novel, and the younger NP and SAP supporters became rash with rhetoric. Four young nationalists, J.W. van N. Trichardt, Dr M. Steyn Vorster and F.C.K. and S.P.E. Jacobsz, two brothers, decided to take the law – and Lamont – into their own hands. Taken to a garage, he was stripped (but modestly reclad in a bathing suit), tarred (albeit only in wagon grease) and feathered, and deposited unceremoniously in Church Square – carrying a placard which read 'War, Wine and Women'.¹⁰²

South African Town, 1902-1950' in Leroy Vail, (ed.) *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989).

⁹⁶ Translated. *Ons Vaderland*, 15 January 1932; repeated in *Die Vaderland*, 6 April 1932 ('Ons' had changed to 'Die' in the newspaper title).

⁹⁷ *Pretoria News*, 5 April 1932.

⁹⁸ *Pretoria News*, 9 April 1932.

⁹⁹ *Die Volksblad*, 9 April 1932.

¹⁰⁰ *Pretoria News*, 26 April 1932.

¹⁰¹ *Die Vaderland*, 21 April 1932.

The four perpetrators immediately contacted the offices of *Die Volkstem* and *Die Vaderland*. The English-speaking public and many Afrikaans-speakers were appalled.¹⁰³ Afrikaner intellectuals were vocal on the issue: Preller, for example, felt that Lamont had bruised the nation's honour¹⁰⁴, and Langenhoven contended that a nation had to be concerned with defending its honour.¹⁰⁵ It became an issue of popular debate, in the classroom and from the pulpit.

The young men appeared in court on 7 June on charges of assault. Dr Hjalmar Reitz and Marais were asked to defend them.¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, Marais was asked, not as an advocate (he had not practiced law for several years) but as a *great Afrikaner*. A contemporary commentator, Wim Hartman, observed: 'We all wanted to hear what he would say.'¹⁰⁷ Marais had come to represent the Afrikaner establishment as a lawyer and the Afrikaner as a man. The defence adopted was that as Afrikaners and

¹⁰² *Die Burger*, 24 May 1932. *The Pretoria News* reported erroneously that Lamont was both a professor and released naked into Church Square. 23 May 1932. Lamont later emigrated.

¹⁰³ *The Star* was indignant, *Die Volkstem* was critical of the incident, *Die Vaderland* maintained that not only was the tarring-and-feathering unchristian, it was also un-Afrikaans (although in a later article *Die Vaderland* was more critical of the English press and less apologetic); *Die Weste*, the nationalist paper from Potchefstroom, was highly critical of the English press and *Die Vaderland*'s defection and the Free State *The Friend* regarded the men as heroes and martyrs. *The Star*, 23 May 1932; *Die Volkstem*; *Die Vaderland* 25 May 1932, 28 May 1932; *Die Weste* 27 May 1932 and *The Friend*, 2 June 1932.

¹⁰⁴ *Die Vaderland*, 25 May 1932

¹⁰⁵ *Die Burger*, 17 August 1932. C. Louis Leipoldt dissented, supporting Lamont's right as an author to allow his characters complete freedom of speech. *Die Volkstem*, 14 September 1932.

¹⁰⁶ Reitz (1877 – 1946) was the eldest son of President Reitz, brother of Deneys Reitz, and an author and politician. He fought in the South African War and was exiled to India, later elected to the Transvaal Provincial Council and elected to the House of Assembly as Nationalist member for Brits. In 1932 he co-published, with Harm Oost, *Ons land en ons volk: 'n nasionale jaarboek, 1931*.

¹⁰⁷ *Ons wou almal hoor wat [Marais] sou sê.* He added that Marais was very out of practice and his ramblings caused his popular image to crumble. C.J. Mieny, *Leipoldt en Marais – onwaarskynlike vriende*, p.50.

descendants of Voortrekkers the defendants felt personally affronted by the novel. J.W. van N. Trichardt was the grandson of Carolus Johannes Trichardt¹⁰⁸; the Jacobz brothers maintained that Kruger was their great grandfather and that Vorster's father was a *predikant* (clergyman).

Marais was out of practice and presented a rambling defence – he lost the case and the magistrate imposed the maximum penalty: a fine of £50 each or six months hard labour, to a chorus of approval from the English press and a cry of outrage from the Afrikaans press at Lamont's apparent exoneration.¹⁰⁹ *Die Volksblad* and *Die Burger* started a fund to pay their fines, accepting only small donations so that more people had a chance to participate. Lamont sued the young men in a civil action and was awarded £750.¹¹⁰ A significant ramification, which was at least partly the result of the *cause célèbre* that split the University of Pretoria and heightened nationalist sentiment, was the decision on 7 September to make Afrikaans the university's official language.¹¹¹

Four years after the case, in 1936, while in semi-retirement on Preller's farm, Marais borrowed a gun, ostensibly to shoot a snake, and committed suicide. His increasing bouts of depression, which he had called 'an hesperian melancholy' or 'the

¹⁰⁸ Carolus 'Karel' Trichardt was a celebrated early trekker.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, *The Star*, 21 June 1932 and *Die Burger* 24 June 1932.

¹¹⁰ Lamont was to write in 1933 from Oxford to *The Star* that he did not receive the full amount and was busy with a new book, *Halcyon Days in Africa*, which would deal with the 'experiences of a lecturer at a university'. *The Star*, 6 July 1933. *Halcyon Days* was duly published (London: Eric Partridge, 1934). Safe from wagon grease, Lamont has one of his characters refer to Nationalists as 'fanatical, uncultured, mendacious, double dealing boors...' and offered the advice: 'Keep clear of a cobra, a toad, a viper and the Nationalists', p.93.

sadness of twilight', had been well-known. A reviewer of one of his scientific papers commented wryly on Marais's view of ultimate earthly ruin through global drought and desiccation: 'We would not regard Mr. Marais as a pessimist, but he evidently finds optimism difficult in the face of what he has observed and records.'¹¹² His death was, however, a shocking surprise. Shortly afterwards, *Die Huisgenoot* sent an urgent telegram to Preller asking him to write a eulogy.¹¹³ The obituary mentions neither the morphine addiction nor the suicide. Preller received a number of letters afterwards from members of the public. One noted:

Although I never knew Adv. Marais, I loved him. Why? After your piece I loved him even more.

This thought was accompanied by the thought that there be one or other means by which Afrikaners can commemorate a great Afrikaner.¹¹⁴

His memorial service was just such a commemoration. Held on the 15 May 1936, at the University of Pretoria, it included speeches by notables, selections of Marais's poetry and a rendition of 'Die Stem'.¹¹⁵ There was indeed some confusion as to who would erect a suitable gravestone: the family Marais or *Die Vaderland*.¹¹⁶ While some of the intellectuals were keen on establishing a memorial with the support of his

¹¹¹ The debates with the University of Pretoria are discussed in Steyn, *Trouwe Afrikaners*, p.150.

¹¹² Editorial Notes, *The Agricultural Journal of the Union of South Africa*, vii, p.150.

¹¹³ TAD, A.787, Preller Collection.

¹¹⁴ Translated. TAD, A.787, Preller Collection, 128, V.A.. Van der Spuy to Preller, 24 April 1936.

¹¹⁵ C.J. Langenhoven's poem 'Die Stem' (The Voice) had been set to music in 1921 and had been used by the South African Broadcasting Corporation in addition to God Save the King (it was played in addition to God Save the King at the opening of parliament in 1938).

¹¹⁶ Preller Collection, p.1, A. Eloff to Preller, 18 June 1936:

family, Preller militated for a memorial to built with public funds.¹¹⁷ He was aware that the right publicity had to be generated, especially after discussions with a colleague over the fact that Tielman Roos, the Nationalist politician and lawyer, had been already forgotten, his funeral unattended.¹¹⁸ The editor of *Die Vaderland* started a fund the 'Eugène Marais – Fund for Inexpensive Afrikaans Books'.¹¹⁹ Joan Couzyn, the sculptor, was commissioned to sculpt Marais. A fund was started by the Afrikaanse Skrywerskring in Johannesburg to bronze the plaster cast of Marais, to which schools and private individuals donated. The *Volksblad* noted that 'the sentiment existed to honour [Marais] as one of our purest and fêted artists. The most fitting manner is to commission a bust and to place it in the Afrikaans room in the Johannesburg public library, available to the Afrikaans public'.¹²⁰ Even in death Marais's public image was pragmatically orchestrated by Preller for nationalist ends. Preller was anxious over one of the two statues that were produced, in which Marais's eyes were closed in sleep. He feared that a look of rest resembled rather too closely one of a morphine stupor. The statue was destroyed.

1950s – Marais R.I.P.

The 1950s were quiet for Marais's ghost; only Thorpe's anthology of his poems appeared. With the Nationalist victory in 1948, the 1950s saw less need for hagiography. Grundlingh and Sapire have shown that other symbols like the Great

¹¹⁷ Apparently the Marais family wished to raise their own; his son negotiated unsuccessfully with the editor of *Die Vaderland*

¹¹⁸ Preller Collection, p.134, letter from Albert van Ginkel to Preller 25 April 1936. 'En wat word ons gou vergeet. Wie praat nog oor Tielman Roos? Tog seker 'n figuur wat populêr was. Ek was op sy Memorial Service.....'t Was pynlik om die leë saal te sien.'

¹¹⁹ TAD, Preller Collection A 787, A. Eloff to Preller, 18 June 1936.

¹²⁰ 'Eugene Marais Borsbeeldfonds', *Die Volksblad*, 17 November 1944.

Trek celebrations also lost support – as an identity group, Afrikaners had material interests to pursue, and were secure enough not to need continual reminders of their own unity and potential. Rapprochement between English and Afrikaans speakers accounts for this bilingual anthology of translated poems as the anti-imperial and ethnic differences became less important than the racial element.¹²¹ With the attainment of political hegemony and economic strength, it was not a time that needed heroes. Marais might have been allowed to rest in peace, becoming increasingly only of interest to historians of literature, had it not been for renewed interest from an unexpected direction.¹²²

1960s – the scientist triumphant

The year 1961 saw both South Africa's transition to a Republic and great change in Marais's image. This latter transformation was effected by Robert Ardrey for reasons alien to *kultuurpolitiek*. Although initially there had been little interest in Marais's primatological writings, Marais had always longed to be remembered as a scientist, hoping his work would live on and he would be remembered for his work on animal behaviour. His work had not, hitherto been celebrated in this way. After a brief burst of fame during the Maeterlinck scandal, he settled into general scientific obscurity. *Die Huisgenoot* afforded (the posthumously published) *Burgers van die Berge* a lukewarm reception in 1938. It was damned as fragmentary and full of errors, and it was recommended that 'the theory' side be left out if a second edition came to

¹²¹ Thompson has shown that as Great Britain ceased to be a major power, anglophobic rhetoric was replaced by anti-black ideology. Leonard Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) p.40.

¹²² There was interest from a few academics: P.J. Nienaber, *Eugene Marais – Die Groot Eensame* (Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, 1951); J. Van Melle, 'Die Boesmanverhale van Eugene Marais' *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, 3(3), 1953.

be published as it was built on ideas that were ‘already old-fashioned in 1938’.¹²³ In 1960, the literary critic Dekker noted that although Marais wrote a few interesting natural history studies, he was of importance really only as a poet.¹²⁴ Another reviewer did note that Marais’s popularity was growing slowly but steadily abroad and asked whether his dismal reception in South Africa was a case of a prophet not being honoured in his own land.¹²⁵

Developments in Europe and America were to catapult him back in his own land’s esteem.¹²⁶ A disciplinary turf war had erupted in the field of ethology (animal behaviour). Crudely put there were two camps in the field, divided over the weight they gave to the different poles in the nature-nurture continuum. The ethologist Konrad Lorenz’s (1903-1989) writings – culminating in his 1966 publication *On Aggression* – maintained that aggressive impulses are innate and draws analogies between human and animal behaviour. The popular version, promoting vigorous biological determinism, contended that two lineages of hominids inhabited Pleistocene Africa: one was a small territorial carnivore, which evolved into current humankind, the other was a gentle herbivore, which became extinct. In his 1961 *African Genesis* and his 1966 *The Territorial Imperative*, Ardrey, the populist wing of the Lorenz camp, contended that *homo sapiens* had built a society predicated on territoriality. Ardrey dismissed Freud’s idea of sex as societal pivot, postulating the

¹²³ *Die Huisgenoot*, 3 June 1938, review of *Burgers van die Berge* by C.G.S. de Villiers.

¹²⁴ Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, p.55.

¹²⁵ M.S.B. Kritzinger, *Die Volksstem*, 23 April 1938 front page review of *Burgers van die Berge*.

¹²⁶ It is interesting that this chronology elegantly models Thompson’s hypothesis that there is usually a time lag of a generation before the events translate into the myth. Leonard

aggressive drive as fulcrum. Thus ‘the predatory transition’ to hunting established a pattern of innate violence and engendered modern humankind’s territorial urge.¹²⁷ As Stephen Jay Gould observed: ‘With Konrad Lorenz as godfather, Robert Ardrey as dramatist, and Desmond Morris as raconteur, we are presented with man, ‘the naked ape’, descended from an African carnivore, innately aggressive and inherently territorial.’¹²⁸ Ardrey’s touchstone was Marais.

Ardrey re-awakened international interest in Marais with his popular works on socio-biology. Ardrey dedicates his 1961 *African Genesis* to ‘The Memory of Eugène Marais’. This book is a ‘personal investigation into animal origins and nature of man’, which is in essence also the basis of Marais’s work. Ardrey devotes a considerable portion of his book to praising Marais: ‘the purest genius that the natural sciences have seen in this century’; ‘no discussion of animal societies can begin without homage to his name’.¹²⁹

Lorenz and Ardrey had dismissed Freudian theory about the primacy of sexuality and argued instead that the key to behaviour lay in territorial aggression. In attacking Freud, Ardrey needed to undermine those ethologists who used sexuality as

Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) p.206.

¹²⁷ Robert Ardrey (1908-1980) studied natural and social sciences at the University of Chicago, producing *African Genesis* (1961), *The Territorial Imperative* (1966), *The Social Contract* (1970) and *The Hunting Hypothesis* (1976). See the Robert Ardrey Papers (Collection 957), Department of Special Collections, University Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. Ardrey was married to an Afrikaans-speaking actress.

¹²⁸ Stephen Jay Gould, *Ever Since Darwin – Reflections in Natural History* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1977, 1980) p.238.

¹²⁹ Robert Ardrey, *African Genesis*, p.64 and p.70.

the theoretical foundation for behaviour. He used the example of Solly Zuckerman's research on primates, *Social Life of Apes and Monkeys* (1932), in which Zuckerman had argued in terms of a Freudian analysis of the basic motivating force of primates as sex.¹³⁰ Zuckerman had never paid any attention to Marais and had not even included him in the bibliography. Marais's significance lay in his criticism of Freud – overtly in correspondence and implicitly in the paradigm of his work.¹³¹ While embracing the subconscious as the common residue of beast in man, he rejected what he called the 'greatest fallacy' of sex as pivot – locating the drive in territoriality and pain.¹³² This became a popular theory, adopted by social commentators and filtering into public consciousness through, for example, films like Stanley Kubrick 'Clockwork Orange' and '2001 – a Space Odyssey'.¹³³ Following his new fame, Marais's fifty-year old unpublished manuscript *The Soul of the Ape* was published in 1969, with a foreword by Ardrey, and there was sudden interest in publishing academic analyses of Marais's

¹³⁰ Zuckerman argued that constant female receptivity was the very foundation of primate society. *Functional Affinities of Man, Monkeys and Apes* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1933).

¹³¹ Marais had read Freud's *Studien über Hysterie* (1895), in which it was averred that hysteria could be treated with hypnosis, and his *Traumdeutung*, on the significance of dreams, and it has been suggested that he also read *Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* (Psychopathology in Daily Life) and *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (Three Treatises on the sexual theory). Leon Rousseau, *Die Dowwe Spoor van Eugène Marais* (Cape Town: Ibis Press, 1998) p.33. In *Natuurkundige en Wetenskaplike Studies and Sketse uit die Lewe van Mens en Dier*, Marais explored the treatment of medical conditions through hypnosis and dreams, 'Die Pad van Drome' (*Laramie, die Wonderwerker*).

¹³² The centrality of pain to existence is the central theme in Marais's work, recurring in 'Salas Y Gomez' (*Die Huis van die Vier Winde*), 'Die Woestyn trek van die Herero's' (*Sketse uit die lewe van mens en dier*), 'Die Lied van Suid-Afrika', *Die Siel van die mier*, 'De Boom in het Midden van den Hof'.

¹³³ *Life* magazine serialised *The Social Contract* and *The Territorial Imperative* proved very popular in US secondary schools. See Dona Haraway, *Primate Visions – Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London: Verso, 1992) p.395. Arthur C. Clarke made use of Ardrey's work in Kubrick's 2001- A Space Odyssey. See Arthur C. Clarke, *Lost Worlds of 2001* (New York: New American Library, 1972).

work, like the texts of Nienaber-Luitingh (1962), Cloete (1963), Lindenberg (1966) and Du Randt (1969).¹³⁴

It may be argued that the image of Marais conjured up by Ardrey resonated particularly well in the 1960s. The economic boom of the 1960s and 1970s entrenched the Afrikaner urban bourgeoisie. With political dominance and economic might, anti-capitalist elements were discarded. There was much soul-searching in magazines like *Die Huisgenoot*, into the social implications of prosperity.¹³⁵ But the lonely rural genius was particularly welcomed in the 1960's as this was a period of anxiety over the dangers of consumer culture and rampant materialism. The simple figure of the solitary genius in the bushveld resonated with intellectuals who sought a return to rural values. This icon had managed to combine being an authentic bushveld Afrikaner with being a genius.

The 1970s and 1980s – Doubt and Dissent

The 1970s were a period of accelerated socio-economic change in South Africa.¹³⁶ As Hobsbawm has contended, invented traditions are usually reworked

¹³⁴ T.T. Cloete, *Eugène N. Marais* (Cape Town: Nasionale Opvoedkundige Uitgewery, 1963); W.S.H. Du Randt, *Eugène N. Marais as prosais* (Cape Town: Nasou, 1969); E. Lindenberg, *Versamelde gedigte van Eugène N. Marais* (Pretoria: Academica, 1966) and M. Nienaber-Luitingh, *Eugène Marais* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1962).

¹³⁵ *Die Huisgenoot*, 28 May 1965, 'Die Nuwe Afrikaner: sy hede is in die stede' (The New Afrikaner: his present is in the cities); *Huisgenoot*, 12 July 1968, 'Word ons Afrikaners te Ryk? (Are we Afrikaners becoming too rich?); *Die Huisgenoot*, 10 November 1961 and 17 November 1961, 'Stand en Klas by die Afrikaners' (Standing and Class among Afrikaners).

¹³⁶ Stuart Jones and André Müller, *The South African Economy, 1910 – 1990* (London: Macmillan, 1992).

during periods of the ‘most bewildering and rapid change’.¹³⁷ In this decade there was economic upheaval, a severe balance of payments deficit, climbing unemployment and inflation and a decline in the gross domestic product. There were subsequent internal challenges to hegemony: some Afrikaner businessmen and intellectuals doubted the system’s ability to function if it remained predicated on racial division and state intervention in the economy.¹³⁸ Under the broad political label ‘verligte’ (enlightened), they began to pressurise the government to reform, believing in the need for moderate black and English speaking support, which meant the unifying idea of the ‘*volksiel*’ (people’s soul) was disappearing as a useable concept and old symbols were under threat. Posel has shown that a new political vocabulary based on technocratic rationality came to replace apartheid orthodoxy.¹³⁹ But old ideological language and images persisted because, as Posel has demonstrated, the new language of legitimisation eschewed ideology and could not provide answers to ‘issues concerning the ethics of apartheid and the status of the volk’.¹⁴⁰ Old heroes endured for those for whom the new technocratic state was not enough. A ‘broedertwis’ (fratricidal conflict) erupted as certain factions attempted to retain the traditional mythography. There was declining interest among Afrikaans matriculants in taking

¹³⁷ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (London: Canto, 1983, 1997) p.4-5.

¹³⁸ Stanley Greenberg, ‘Ideological Struggles within the South African state’, in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (eds.), *The Politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987) p.393.

¹³⁹ Deborah Posel, ‘The Language of Domination, 1978-1983’, in Marks and Trapido (eds.), *The Politics of race, class and nationalism*, p.419.

¹⁴⁰ The soul-searching of some factions in the face of the growing espousal of consumerism discussed previously, continued as Afrikaner prosperity increased. Adam and Giliomee capture the divergence in self-image by considering two popular images of the Afrikaner in 1979: a ‘rugged rifleman of Boer war’, who still places ‘his beliefs before his pocketbook’ and an ‘Afrikaner elite behind BMW and Mercedes steering wheels’. Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979) pp.7-8.

history as a school subject.¹⁴¹ Yet when an Afrikaans-speaking historian, F.A. Van Jaarsveld, dared to challenge traditional interpretations of the Day of the Vow, he was tarred and feathered by the AWB.¹⁴² This was a manifestation of polarisation of Afrikaner opinion: as the NP won increasing support from English-speakers – swollen by immigrants from Zimbabwe – they alienated many right-wing Afrikaners, particularly small farmers and urban workers whose chief identification was still ethnic and who tried to cling to traditional heroes and iconic events. In this period of doubt and re-evaluation, Marais was reborn as a dissident icon and the two great historiographical traditions began to diverge in earnest.

There was a need for icons of dissidence to unite those English and Afrikaans speakers who were both opposed to the government's conservatism, and to inspire the dissident Afrikaners themselves.¹⁴³ Marais received support through the Verligte - rather than the Verkrampste - camp within the *kultuurpolitiek*. Anton Rupert, who had fallen out with Verwoerd in 1959 and become part of 'verligte' opposition to the conservative faction, endowed the Eugene Marais Chair of Zoology at the University of Pretoria.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, N.P. van Wyk Louw,¹⁴⁵ who was attacked for 'political

¹⁴¹ C.R. Liebenberg, *The Teaching of History at South African Secondary Schools* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1972) pp. 23-24.

¹⁴² The conference was 'Problems in the Interpretation of History with Possible Reference to examples from South African history such as the Battle of Blood River.' Terreblanche told the press: 'We as young Afrikaners are tired of seeing ... everything that is sacred to the Afrikaners desecrated... by liberal politicians, dissipated academics and false prophets'. *Sunday Times*, 1 April 1979.

¹⁴³ There were efforts to create a narrative of collective white effort, with a resultant emphasis on Marais's home language – certainly, the manuscripts of poems like 'Mabalel' justify the contention that Marais thought in English.

¹⁴⁴ Anton Rupert, 'Eugene Marais kom die eer toe, 'n huldeblyk', Stellenbosch, Rembrandt-tabbakkorporasie, 1971. The post has been held by one incumbent since 1971, Professor J. du P. Bothma.

deviation' by Verwoerd and who had championed the muted iconoclasm of the *sestigers*¹⁴⁶, argued that Marais's Bushman poems were among the best in Afrikaans.¹⁴⁷ In 1974, Leon Rousseau published his biography of Marais, the result of twelve years' painstaking research.¹⁴⁸ It was serialised in *Rapport*, which won Rousseau praise from one faction for his candid portrait of Marais's drug abuse and some public outrage at the besmirchment of his memory. Willem Nezar created a sculpture of Marais the following year, and in 1977, the playwright, Athol Fugard, wrote and produced the film, *The Guest – an episode in the life of Eugene Marais*, centering on Marais's failed attempt to break his addiction.¹⁴⁹ Leon Rousseau consulted for Fugard. Fugard noted '...[Marais's] vision was essentially one which was produced in an interaction with Africa, and we wanted very much to make a film that had its roots here, in the country in which it would be made.'¹⁵⁰

Almost paradoxically, considering his significance in the nationalist mainstream, Marais was adopted as a symbol of the Afrikaner conscientious objector

¹⁴⁵ G. Olivier, 'N.P. van Wyk Louw and R.F.A. Hoernlé', Paper to Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of the Witwatersrand, 30 May 1994. For other views of Van Wyk Louw's role see, for example, Mark Sanders, 'Problems of Europe': N.P. van Wyk Louw, the Intellectual and Apartheid', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 25, no. 4, December 1999.

¹⁴⁶ The *sestigers* (literally: the sixties-generation) were young urban Afrikaners who voiced opposition to their conservative elders, through literature (the significance of this movement was not lost on a people whose political identity had itself grown out of a linguistic and cultural movement).

¹⁴⁷ 'Van die grootste prosa in ons taal', quoted in F.I.J. van Rensburg, *Die Smal Baan* (Cape Town: Tafelberg) p.83.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Rousseau, Cape Town, November 1998.

¹⁴⁹ With Fugard as Marais and Marius Weyers as Dr A.G. Visser, the poet Marais discovered in the course of attempting to get him to supply morphine.

¹⁵⁰ Athol Fugard, *The Guest – an episode in the life of Eugene Marais* (Ad. Donker, 1977) p.8.

refusing to be co-opted by the Afrikaner establishment. As André Brink noted in 1971, more than ninety percent of Afrikaans writers were 'pro-government, pro-establishment and pro-system', so the anti-Apartheid movement increasingly sought out historically subversive writers.¹⁵¹ For example, Jack Cope, the literary critic, described Marais as a lonely genius, averring '[a]n almost stone-walled lack of communication between this one artist of brilliant and searching mind and the plodding, blinkered people around him – this was the key to his life, and to his failure.'¹⁵² Du Toit contended that Marais chose the lonely and select path.¹⁵³ Cope likened Marais to Jan Rabie, in their common call for modernism against an antiquated patriarchy, and to Etienne Leroux, in their mutual escape from the limitations of *volk en kerk*, through mysticism and the occult.¹⁵⁴ Ardrey had devoted a considerable portion of his book to praising Marais, maintaining that no discussion of ethology can begin without honouring his name.¹⁵⁵ The lonely genius image is perpetuated in Athol Fugard's *The Guest*. Doris Lessing maintained: 'But his isolation was the saving of an original genius' of 'intellectual loneliness'.¹⁵⁶ In 1975 Zuckerman returned to South Africa and delivered a public lecture at UCT on 'Direction and Misdirection in Science' in which he called Marais a 'scientific impostor whose skilful pen had been steered by a lively imagination, sometimes

¹⁵¹ Jack Cope, *The Adversary Within – Dissident writers in Afrikaans* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1982) p.39.

¹⁵² Cope, *The Adversary Within*, p.3

¹⁵³ Du Toit noted 'hy 'n eensame en afgesonderde weg uitgekies het' Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p.xix.

¹⁵⁴ Cope, *The Adversary Within*, p.99 Indeed, Cope adopts a Freudian approach in interpreting Marais's opposition to Kruger in terms of his hatred of the father figure. He contends that Marais's scorn for his own ineffectual, absent father was projected onto Kruger.

¹⁵⁵ Ardrey, *African Genesis*, p.64 and p.70.

fuelled by drugs'. Afterwards, Zuckerman noted ruefully that he 'should have been warned. The accounts of my lecture in the papers next day made it clear that I had committed something like sacrilege in the way I had referred to an Afrikaner who had entered South African folklore as a literary and scientific genius.'¹⁵⁷

The apocrypha of dissidence – the anecdotes of individual opposition to authority – accompany these discussions of Marais as a subversive. These focus, for example, on his opposition to the Krugerites of the *Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR). Marais himself relished what he represented as his own family's disdain for authority, telling how Paul Kruger – then Commandant-General of the Republic – once dropped by, and Marais's mother, having no idea who the visitor was, asked him to wait on the *stoep* until her husband returned. Indeed, as one of the Marais sisters later recounted: '[Mother] wouldn't put a quilt on his bed.'¹⁵⁸ Cope retells the questionable anecdote about Marais's perennial adversary, the Reverend A.J. Louw, a dour Dutch Reformed Church clergyman, nicknamed 'the Pope of the Highveld'. Marais purportedly responded to Louw's denunciation of Darwinism: 'Don't pick on me, Dominee. It's a matter between you and the Almighty. I really had nothing to do with the creation of the universe'.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Doris Lessing, 'Ant's Eye View', *New Statesman*, 29 January 1971, reprinted in Lessing, *A Small Personal Voice* (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 1974) p.145-146.

¹⁵⁷ Solly Zuckerman, *Monkeys, Men and Missiles, an autobiography 1946-88* (London: Collins, 1988) p.456; see also *Times*, 26 September 1975.

¹⁵⁸ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.9; pers. comm.

¹⁵⁹ Cope, *The Adversary Within*, p.2.

Yet the image of Marais as iconoclast is as distorted as his mainstream heroic identity. André Brink contended that when the young poet Marais clashed with Kruger, it represented the ‘universal struggle of morality against corruption.’¹⁶⁰ Similarly, Cope has misconstrued Marais’s opposition to Kruger as an act of solitary dissension. In the 1890s, the ZAR was a realm where ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ were relative states; only in the Volksraad Chambers did they crystalise into two unambiguous nuclei.¹⁶¹ Even there, it was not uncommon to vote for the ‘opposite side’. It must also be remembered that Marais had never been an outsider, relying heavily upon the self-labelled Progressive network as a journalist-editor in Kruger’s ZAR from 1891-1896, and after his return in 1902, relying on a network of powerful men in editing *Land en Volk* under Milner. After his withdrawal from the role of editor after 1905 until his death in 1936, Marais relied heavily on a network of colleagues and nationalist intellectuals to get his writing published, and indeed to accommodate him. The distortion by Cope and Brink is exacerbated by the ahistorical notion of a monolithic ‘Afrikaner establishment’. The early Afrikaner nationalist movement was neither Afrikaans nor nationalist nor a movement.¹⁶² A combination of individuals who spoke variously English, Dutch or an amalgam of Dutch and other languages, operated in ways too varied and idiosyncratic to be called a movement in order to work towards ideals that varied but seldom included a straightforward vision of a nation-state. ‘Afrikaner’ was a construct; it signified a series of relationships rather than a synchronic entity. Historians of nationalism concede the wider audience held views contradictory, diverse and loosely. The corresponding fallacy is that the

¹⁶⁰ André Brink, *Mapmakers – writing in a state of siege* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983) p.17

¹⁶¹ For a discussion of this point see Chapter Two.

¹⁶² To paraphrase Voltaire on the Holy Roman Empire.

middle-class culture brokers offer a tightly knit programme of views and goals. There were, however, contradictions within the 'core', and a lack of homogeneity among the culture brokers. The idea of a monolithic unity, organic *volkseenheid* has been a teleological imposition, promoted particularly since the 1940s. Historically permeable boundaries and a fragmented nature characterised this group. What constitutes dissident and establishment Afrikaners for Cope is a reductive view of societal relations that renders the ZAR a bleak political cartoon. Factionalised but powerful *blocs* characterised Afrikaner communities and while Marais may not always have been in favour with the government (as under, for example, the Kruger regime), he certainly was popular with the Pact Government from 1924, and remained in contact with powerful figures both in and out of office. Also it must be remembered that when Marais opposed Kruger it was Marais who invoked the Afrikaner cause as opposed to Kruger's supposed favouritism of the more cosmopolitan sections of the community.

Marais was certainly not the 'lonely rebel' of this iconography. The lonely genius image is perpetuated in Athol Fugard's *The Guest* and in Ardrey's writing, where he is depicted as a lonely 'Van Gogh figure'.¹⁶³ In reality, he was incorporated into the network of intellectuals and politicians. From 1912, Marais supported Hertzog in the Nationalist breakaway. During the 1914 Rebellion, Marais evinced unequivocal support for the Rebellion, donating his stallion to the rebel Jan Wessel Wessels.¹⁶⁴ Following the Rebellion, the Pretoria bar was the dominion of nationalists: Colin Steyn; Oswald Pirouw; Charles te Water; Danie de Waal and Tielman Roos. The network was close-knit - there is evidence to suggest, for example,

¹⁶³ Ardrey, *African Genesis*, p.70.

that Roos and Marais were close friends.¹⁶⁵ His friend Charlie Pienaar appointed Marais special justice of the peace in the Waterberg. In 1919 Marais encouraged Mabel Malherbe to establish the first Afrikaans magazine exclusively for women, *Die Boerevrou*. Marais was friends with the influential Miemie Rothman and C. Louis Leipoldt.¹⁶⁶ A series of letters to Preller show that Marais was desirous of work in the civil service, and anxious that Preller use their mutual friends' influence.¹⁶⁷ Marais was not a recluse – for example, he loved attending tennis and dinner parties.¹⁶⁸ The figure of a genius, driven to suicide by a quixotic quest for perfection is also false. Marais published as an active pragmatic newspaperman accustomed to meeting deadlines. He wrote many brief light-hearted stories for cash.¹⁶⁹ Even Preller conceded that Marais indulged in writing pot-boilers for profit hungry publishers, and made slighting reference to Marais's head line hunting contributions to the vulgar and sensational yellow press.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ There were personal links to rebels – his tie to the martyred rebel Jopie Fourie as an old family friend and to the rebel leader C.F. Beyers through his niece and Marais's late wife, Aletta Beyers – may have influenced him as much as their overtly nationalist rhetoric.

¹⁶⁵ TAD Tielman Roos Collection, Roos to Miss D.E. Van Reenen, 18 April 1921, 3 June 1921.

¹⁶⁶ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.340.

¹⁶⁷ TAD, A787 Preller Collection, pp.93-99.

¹⁶⁸ Y. Jooste, Eugene Marais, my uncle, *Jaarboek Africana Vereniging van Pretoria*, 1992: 10, p.1-3.

¹⁶⁹ 'Die wegraak van Sannie' (*Magriet van Laastelust and Die Wegraak van Sannie*), 'Die Brief van Nooitgedag', 'Die Mielies van Nooitgedag' (both from *Sketse uit die Lewe van Mens en Dier*), 'Die Leeus van Magoeba' (*Die Leeus van Magoeba*).

¹⁷⁰ Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, pix, x.

The 1990s – the re-invention of the Afrikaner

Flexible symbols are the ones that endure. What currency did the figure of Marais have for an Afrikaner in a society that increasingly identified itself with international consumer culture? In the early 1990s there was a need to reinvent what it meant to be an Afrikaner in a post-Apartheid South Africa. Key Afrikaner symbols underwent radical alteration, reflecting the competing factions within Afrikanerdom, and others persisted, entrenched by those with invested interests.

Thus the romantic image of Marais as neglected scientific genius has persisted. In 1999, the *Natal Mercury* commended him as one of the ‘100 people who made South Africa’ – he was number 79 – for having ‘increased the international status of the Afrikaner and natural science in South Africa’.¹⁷¹ His memory is also internationally promoted by Rupert Sheldrake in his works of popular science. Since the end of the 1960s, Marais has no longer been remembered chiefly for his poetry, but for his science – celebrated as a genuine Afrikaner ‘tragic genius’. Marais was once again re-deployed as an icon of alternative chic, anthologised in a collection of ‘Green poetry’, as an early ‘ecological poet’.¹⁷² *The Guest* was re-dramatised by Little Karoo Arts Festival. There was still a need for icons of dissidence to demonstrate that not all Afrikaners should be tarred as racists in order to foster reconciliation. This is

¹⁷¹ *The Natal Mercury* 1 December 1999. A survey of those people who had ‘exercised the greatest influence on the shaping of South Africa in the twentieth century’, was opened to the public on the internet in 1999. Marais was placed at number 36, well after Danie Craven at 8, but before Albert Luthuli at 44. This survey was published as *They Shaped Our Century* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1999).

¹⁷² Marais has been celebrated recently in ecological or ‘green’ poetry collections, Johann Lodewyk Marais, *Groen: gedigte oor die omgewing* (Pretoria: HAUM-Literêr, 1990) and

epitomised by Nelson Mandela eulogising Ingrid Jonker in his first presidential address to parliament. The historian O'Meara labelled Marais one of the Afrikaner dissidents, to whom he dedicates his book. He lists Marais as having fought against the 'nationalist mainstream' in opposing the 'obscurantism' of Kruger.¹⁷³ O'Meara maintained that Marais, Uys Krige who opposed fascism in the 1930s and Ingrid Jonker, a martyred suicide – like Marais – or 'Johannes Kerkorrell' (Ralph Rabie) were 'ware Afrikaners'. Nevertheless, the radical right has not forgotten Marais either. Terreblanche likens his own poetry to that of Marais and the Boere Staat email group remember him as a hero.¹⁷⁴

Nations need heroes and the aesthetics of heroism are wrapped up in changing discourse.¹⁷⁵ In the years since Hobsbawm and Ranger published *The Invention of Tradition*, the central idea that national traditions are often the invention of intellectuals seeking to create national unity, has been widely accepted and applied. An unfortunate side effect of this is a tendency to assume that if an account of history can be proven to be invented it no longer matters.¹⁷⁶ This chapter has sought to show that it matters enormously as it reflects the changing socio-political milieu and as such can be a window into understanding different trends in public opinion, the politics of

Johann Lodewyk Marais, *Ons klein en silwerige planeet: Afrikaanse, Nederlandse en Vlaamse gedigte oor die omgewing* (Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik, 1997).

¹⁷³ Dan O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: the Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994* (Randburg: Ravan Press, 1996) p.125.

¹⁷⁴ Unsurprisingly, there exists no pristine organic 'volk' vision of Marais: the Boerestaat group list recommend Rousseau's book.

¹⁷⁵ Jay Baird, *To Die for Germany – Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

unofficial discourse in South Africa. The politics of official discourse may be systematically analysed through published government material – unofficial discourse is harder to capture, and one way is through the heroes.¹⁷⁷

Conclusion

There is no single and unitary discursive realm in Afrikaner nationalism. There are many Afrikaners, many Afrikaner factions and there are many Afrikaner heroes. It is interesting, however, that they may often be found occupying one body. As Thomas Carlyle observed in his 1840 disquisition on heroes and hero-worship: ‘Alas, the hero from of old has had to cramp himself into strange shapes: the world knows not well at any time what to do with him.’¹⁷⁸

This discussion has focused on the public understanding of Marais as an Afrikaner hero.¹⁷⁹ Marais has not suffered the fate of most sacred cows – to be milked as long as they yield and then to be butchered. Other Afrikaner ‘heroes’ have received revisionist attention – C.J. Langenhoven, for example, was long venerated and then vilified.¹⁸⁰ Marais is described in the historiography in two very different ways: he is

¹⁷⁶ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*, p.1. See the discussion by Justin Willis, ‘Whose Shaka? A review of Carolyn Hamilton’s *Terrific Majesty*’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 April 1999, No. 5011.

¹⁷⁷ For an example of an analysis of the official discourse see Adam Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

¹⁷⁸ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-worship, and the heroic in history*, annotated by Michael Goldberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) p.133.

¹⁷⁹ Recent dissidence towards establishment orthodoxy within Afrikanerdom has received investigation from Joha Louw-Potgieter, *Afrikaner Dissidents: A Social Psychological Study of Identity and Dissent* (Philadelphia: Clevedon, 1988)

¹⁸⁰ As fellow Afrikaner hero Langenhoven has, for example, dubbed ‘a disturbing example of what can happen to a writer if he has to write in order to serve a group.’ André Brink in *The*

popularly known as a nationalist hero, a founder member of the coterie who established Afrikaans as a literary language. A need for national heroes allowed him his difference, hid his decadence and absorbed him into the Afrikaner mainstream orthodoxy. Almost paradoxically, considering his significance in the nationalist mainstream, Marais has been adopted as a symbol of the Afrikaner conscientious objector refusing to be co-opted by the Afrikaner establishment.

The key lies in the changing nature of factions within the establishment itself and its ability to incorporate and refashion Marais in its own image. Marais was re-imagined by Afrikaner Nationalist culture-brokers and engineered for socio-political ends to fit an image of a 'good Afrikaner'. Marais was fêted as part of the cult of the personality created by the popular magazines like *Die Huisgenoot* and *Brandwag*.¹⁸¹ The Marais myth was promoted through his own vigorously promoted fables, Preller's protection and patronage, the nationalist intellectuals of *Nasionale Pers*, and subsequent champions, like Ardrey. Almost paradoxically, considering his significance in the nationalist mainstream, Marais has been adopted as a symbol of the Afrikaner conscientious objector refusing to be co-opted by the Afrikaner establishment. Over time, Marais has been remembered as poet, scientist, mainstream hero and dissident icon. Nations need heroes and the aesthetics of heroism are wrapped up in an ever-mutable discourse. Heroes are necessary for a nation to imagine itself. If Marais had not existed, he would have to be invented, and to a certain extent he was.

Argus, 4 August 1997 – Adam Small labelled him simply a 'racist', quoted in J.C. Kannemeyer, *Langenhoven* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1995) p.56.

¹⁸¹ Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words', p.109.

Chronology – Remembering Marais

1900s

- 1904 'Winternag' is published under a pseudonym in *Land en Volk*
- 1905 'Winternag' is republished and incorporated into Preller's *Taalstryd* polemics
- 1905 Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap for the Transvaal
- 1906 Afrikaanse Taal Vereniging
- 1907 Marais departs to the Waterberg
- 1909 the founding of the S.A. Akademie

1910s

- 1914 the recognition of Afrikaans by provincial councils including the schools, 1916-
- 1919 acceptance of Afrikaans by the churches between 1916 and 1919

1920s

- 1925 acceptance of Afrikaans by parliament
- 1925 EM's *Gedigte*
- 1925 Gustav Preller's *Historiese Opstelle* includes a whole chapter on EM
- 1927 Maeterlinck Scandal

1930s

- 1932 *Gedigte* reprinted
- 1932 EM's courtcase over *War, Wine and Women*
- 1933 Van Schaik published Marais's *Versamelde Gedigte*
- 1934 *Gedigte* reprinted
- 1936 The definitive version of *Gedigte*
- 1936 EM's suicide
- 1936 The editor of *Die Vaderland* started a fund the 'Eugène Marais- Fund for Inexpensive Afrikaan Books'; Joan Couzyn, the sculptor, was commissioned to sculpt Marais; A 'Borsbeeldfonds' was started by the Afrikaanse Skrywerskring in Johannesburg to bronze the plaster cast of Marais. Schools and private individuals donated.
- 1938 Great Trek Celebrations
- 1938 *Siel van die Mier* part of Afrikaans matric exam

1940s

- 1940 EM became the subject of a post-graduate thesis Du Toit, F.G.M *Eugene Marais - Sy Bydrae tot die Afrikaanse Letterkunde*. Amsterdam: N.V.Swets, 1940
- 1943 *Gedigte* reprinted
- 1945 cycad named after EM
- 1948 National Party wins power

1950s

1956 Thorpe, *Eugène Nielen Marais – Gedigte/Poems*

1960s

1961 South Africa becomes a Republic

1961 Ardrey dedicates *African Genesis* to 'The Memory of Eugène Marais'

1962 M. Nienaber-Luitingh, writes *Eugène Marais*

1963 T.T. Cloete writes *Eugène N. Marais*

1966 E. Lindenberg, *Versamelde gedigte van Eugène N. Marais*

1969 W.S.H. Du Randt writes *Eugène N. Marais as prosaïes*

1970s

1971 Anton Rupert endows Eugene Marais of Zoology Chair, at University of Pretoria [so far only one chair, incumbent:]

1974 *Groot Verlange* serialised in *Rapport*

1974 Eugene Marais hospital in Wonderboompoort

1975 Solly Zuckerman denounces Marais at UCT

1975 Sculpted by Willem Nezar.

1977 Athol Fugard's *The Guest*

1979 Van Jaarsveld tarred and feathered

1980s

1982 Rousseau's *Dark Stream*

1982 Jack Cope, *The Adversary Within - Dissident writers in Afrikaans* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1982) devotes chapter to 'rebel Afrikaner' Marais

1984 Rousseau's *Versamelde Werke*

1990s

1990 Henzi *Annotated Soul of the Ape*

1994 First democratic elections in South Africa, National Party loses power

1996 O'Meara labels Marais one of the Afrikaner dissidents, to whom he dedicates his book. *Forty Lost Years: the Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994* (Randburg: Ravan Press, 1996)

1999 *The Natal Mercury*, 1 December 1999: EM is one of the 100 people who made South Africa.

2000s

2000 Rousseau publishes *Die Dowwe Spoor van EM* to celebrate EM Hospital

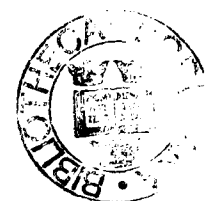
Conclusion

In South Africa's turbulent early twentieth century, numerous socio-political forces gave rise to several forms of the 'imagined community'.¹ These included the impact of war, the creation of state boundaries, the differing ideological endeavours of the intelligentsia, the vernacularising thrust that accompanied the spread of the printed word in a period of developing capitalism. Consequently a range of identities were constructed and promoted by historical agents, who competed over which identity or representation of a community would prevail over the others. This thesis has focused on the role of Eugène Marais in the construction of an Afrikaner identity. He played a multi-faceted role from the start of his career in 1890 to his death in 1936, and he was deployed posthumously by culture-brokers up to the present. Investigating the place of a significant individual in the shaping of Afrikaner identity has proved fruitful, because through the figure of Marais it has been possible to examine both those who assisted in the self-conscious construction of Afrikanerdom and those who came to be seen as *ware Afrikaners* (true Afrikaners).

The conscious work of constructing a pre- South African War Afrikaner identity is evident in Marais's efforts, as a young newspaper editor, to contribute to the reconfiguration of public consciousness. From 1893 for the first time in the ZAR there developed an embryonic public party-political consciousness. Marais's involvement in the Progressive movement opens a window into pre-war ZAR

¹ Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, 'A White man's country?' The construction of the South African State and the making of white South African 'nationalisms', 1902-1914', unpublished paper. Thank you to Judith Brown for her suggestions for this conclusion.

relations between those who were beginning to make political capital out of being 'Afrikaners' as opposed to other groups. The spectre of Hollander domination was largely the creation of the Progressive press, which refashioned the political sphere in the public mind as a clash between Hollander and Boer, foreigner and *landszoon*. Marais, like many of his colleagues, defined himself as an Afrikaner, not only as opposed to the English-speakers, but also as opposed to the Dutch. A sense of ethnic identity, or 'Afrikanerdom', necessitated not only the existence of a community with a distinct set of institutions and a separate language, but also a consciousness of a set of needs in conflict with those of other groups. *Land en Volk* helped in the creation of this perception through the invention of an enemy, creating a composite figure from 'the Jew', the 'foreign capitalist' and the 'Uitlander'.



After the South African War, there was an increasing focus on fostering a pan-South African Afrikaner identity. The intelligentsia were confronted with a factionalised community, so efforts were focused on masking fissures within Afrikaner society by promoting a shared sense of community. Newspapers and publishers courted – indeed occasionally went to unprecedented lengths to get hold of – Marais's work. This was because it proved particularly apposite in promoting the essentialist notion that Afrikaners were invested with an organic understanding and love of the South African countryside. On the basis of a romantically reinvented past, the Afrikaner was conceived as a 'son of the soil'. Yet, at the same time, Marais insisted that the Afrikaner was part of a scientific modern nation. This contributed to the 'Afrikanerisation' of science and fostered a sense of academic credibility craved by the young nation. Promoted by the Afrikaner nationalist press, Marais' entomological writings in the popular media served to promote the cultural elite's

creation of an Afrikaner identity, offering a microcosm of the dichotomy within Afrikaner nationalism – the incorporation of tradition and progress within a single ideology.

Similarly, Marais's 'Bushman' poems appeared at the juncture when society no longer feared the Bushmen and recognised reluctantly the grim realities of the growing urbanisation of the Afrikaner, which was contributing to an interest in the vanishing rural heritage. The discourse on other races, particularly in fiction, reveals much about the Afrikaner writer: the Bushman poems were part of the literature of a dying rural order, filled with nostalgia for the rural past. They were poems for the generation that was leaving the land, under various economic pressures, and their popularity reflects nostalgia for the childhood experience of Bushman domestic help. For the same reason from 1920-1940, the Afrikaans novel concerned itself almost exclusively with the farm (*plaasroman*) and *platteland* society, because of the painful transition from farmer to townsman. For the newly urbanised Afrikaner, the farm was remembered as a sacred place, and the poems conjured up those tales told in childhood. Marais's work also illustrates the early foundation of the attitude towards the Bushman that later historians, like Wilmsen, have tended to ascribe to later authors, such as Van der Post, and the Cold War era anthropologists' studies. By looking at Marais's work we can see that such notions were in evidence and welcomed by a *platteland* audience as early as 1921.

Yet, although Marais's work was sought and promoted by the Afrikaner intelligentsia, the entrenchment of an identity is too complex a process to command conformity in the men and women who roam the mutable field of politico-cultural

allegiances. This may be demonstrated by the alienation of Marais and his friend Gustav Preller from the *taalstryd* (language struggle). Regional animosity, particularly between the Cape and the Transvaal language lobbies, led Marais and Preller to believe that the language ‘revolution’ had happened too soon. Their early post-war pro-Afrikaans polemics came to be replaced by disillusionment over what they saw to be the marginalisation of the Transvaal and Free State versions of Afrikaans in favour of that of the Western Cape. They supported the increased incorporation of Dutch elements into Afrikaans to counter anglicisms. Their opposition to the aims of other *taalstryders* reveals the intra-organisational fissures of a movement usually portrayed by historians – even by those who accept its constructed nature – as unified.

Another cultural stereotype that has been challenged by an investigation of Marais’s work in conjunction with that of Louis Leipoldt, has been the picture of black-white as discrete social entities bounded by borders of racism. Marais and Leipoldt used the popular Afrikaans press to write not only about Afrikaans heroes, but also about superstitions, miracle cures and the existence of ghosts. On their very different levels – the variance of which serve to emphasise the heterodoxy of Afrikaner outlook – their work presents a challenge to the historiographical construction of the Bushveld as entirely racially delimited and insular. An analysis of their work suggests that firstly, Afrikaners, even in the Bushveld, were neither narrowly confined in outlook nor strictly intellectually isolated, instead embracing new ideas from Europe. Secondly, there is evidence of intimate cross-racial intellectual traditions, reflected in the hybridity of healing practices between the different racial groups of the Waterberg.

Marais lends himself to further research, as a way into understanding identity issues of a more domestic nature, beyond the scope of this dissertation. Marais provides a window into the heterogeneity of Afrikaans constructions of masculinity. The letters between him and his son open an avenue into uncovering unusual familial relations. His drug use – and its potential as a source of black-white interactions discussed briefly in this dissertation – requires extensive oral history fieldwork, and warrants a thesis in itself.

A legend in his own life-time, Marais was used posthumously by the nation-building ‘myth machine’, as a nationalist hero. Marais did fill the classic role of the nationalist intellectual, raising the socio-cultural scaffolding of the nation and arguing it into existence. He was also *used* by more active intellectuals as an icon – particularly by Gustav Preller. Thus a man who was a putative culture producer, was also the cultural *product*. He has been re-imagined by contemporary Afrikaner Nationalist culture-brokers and engineered for socio-political ends to fit an image of a ‘good Afrikaner’. This image has come to predominate in the historiography and in popular understandings of the South African past. Yet, almost paradoxically, considering his significance in the nationalist mainstream, Marais has been adopted as a symbol of the Afrikaner conscientious objector challenging the Afrikaner establishment. The explanation lies in the changing nature of factions within Afrikaner communities and their ability to refashion Marais in their own image. In modern South Africa, political commentators admonish the Afrikaner from all sides – ‘Jan Publiek’ (Joe Public) is told to assert himself, to remain inconspicuous, to

integrate, to isolate himself.² In the light of such profusion of directions and ensuing social anxiety, it is important to recognise and to demonstrate that Afrikaner identity, which appears threatened at the end of the twentieth century in South Africa, has always been an identity in flux and open to contestation.

² For such contradictory advice see, for example, C.J. Jooste, *Afrikaner self-determination: a current appraisal* (Pretoria: South African Bureau for Racial Affairs, 1994); Jaap Marais, *Afrikanernasionalisme en die nuwe Suid-Afrika* (Pretoria: Stryders, 1990) and Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, *Tough choices: reflections of an Afrikaner African* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2000).

An aspect of the roles of Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller in the Second Language Movement, c.1905 – 1927.

A Boer guerilla fighter, Denys Reitz, described the defeated Boer commandos drifting into the camps in 1902, as a rabble of ‘starving, ragged men, clad in skins or sacking, their bodies covered with sores, from lack of salt and food ... their appearance was a great shock to us who came from the better-conditioned forces in the Cape.’¹ The Afrikaner seemed defeated – family farms were destroyed and 26 000 women and children were dead in the concentration camps.² In the post-war education system, Afrikaans children were believed by many to be threatened with anglicisation. A common – if apocryphal or exaggerated – story told by Afrikaners was that those children who spoke more than the three hours of ‘Dutch-Afrikaans’ permitted at school had to wear a placard that read ‘I’m a donkey, I spoke Dutch’.

A mere generation later, however, the ragged army was in power. By 1933 the Afrikaans language had been entrenched by the Second Language Movement, the Afrikaner had political control and a greater measure of economic autonomy. The Language Movement was a loosely associated, predominately male group, working after the South African War to foster a sense of Afrikaner identity, chiefly through the

¹ Denys Reitz, *Commando – A Boer journal of the Boer War* (London: Faber and Faber, 1929, 1983) p.320.

² There is a vast amount of literature on the South African war; for firsthand descriptions of the camps see, for example, Rykie van Reenen (ed.), *Emily Hobhouse – Boer War Letters* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1984, 1999) and for a good general description of the

promotion of the entrenchment of Afrikaans as an official language. Analysts have shown that the standardisation and consolidation of the Afrikaans language by the Language Movement was crucial to the construction of an Afrikaner identity.³ The establishment of Afrikaans as an ‘official language’ in government, science and education has been delineated.⁴ These descriptions of the *taalstryd* (language struggle) – both those that are objective and those that are vehemently partisan – usually concentrate on the accomplishments of the *taalstryders* (those who struggled to entrench the Afrikaans language). For constructionist historians, these people are middle-class culture-brokers consolidating the vernacular in order to manufacture a workable identity and assimilate the lower classes; for Afrikaner nationalists these people are heroes.⁵ Both Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller have been depicted as examples of such heroes – as life-long campaigners for the Afrikaans language.⁶

Perhaps because of the rapidity of the rise from ‘ragged army’ to ‘nation’, complete with its own language and political control, there has been a consistent focus

war’s effects on white Afrikaans speakers, see F. Pretorious, *The Anglo-Boer War, 1899 – 1902* (Cape Town: 1985).

³ The penetrating analysis by Isabel Hofmeyr is the best source. Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and ‘ethnic identity’, 1902-1924’, in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (Harlow: Longman, 1987).

⁴ Dan O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, capital, and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934-1948* (Cambridge, 1983) and Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words’.

⁵ For a discussion of the first school, the ‘constructionists’, see Chapter One and, for an in depth discussion, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983, 1991); for the second school see, for example, the influential F.A. Van Jaarsveld, *The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1868 – 1881* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1961).

⁶ F.G.M. Du Toit, *Eugene Marais – Sy Bydrae tot die Afrikaanse Letterkunde* (Amsterdam: N.V. Swets, 1940) p.235. There are a legion of triumphalist accounts: R. Antonissen, *Die Afrikaanse Letterkunde van Aanvang tot Hede* (Johannesburg, n.d.), E.C. Pienaar, *Taal en*

on the ‘achievements’ of this transition. Attention has been paid to events like the creation of the Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap (Afrikaans Language Association) (1905), the Afrikaanse Taal Vereeniging (Afrikaans Language Union) (1906), the founding of the S.A. Academy (1909), and the recognition of Afrikaans by provincial councils in 1914, and by parliament in 1925. Titles like M.S. Du Buisson’s *Die wonder van Afrikaans; bydraes oor die ontstaan en groei van Afrikaans tot volwaardige wêreldtaal* (The wonder of Afrikaans – contributions on the development and growth of Afrikaans to a fully-fledged world language), T.J. Haarhoff’s *The Achievement of Afrikaans* and E.C. Pienaar’s *Die Triomf van Afrikaans* (The Triumph of Afrikaans) epitomise the manner in which the story of the *taalstryd* has been told.⁷ Even Hofmeyr, in her nuanced analysis of the Second Language Movement, has tacitly accepted that the struggle ultimately delivered what the *taalstryders* desired.⁸ Where opposition to the aims of the *taalstryders* does receive rare mention, it refers to outside hostility from English-speakers in state positions and commerce, and a few figures in church circles, rather than any intra-movement dissidence.⁹ In the popular

Poësie van die Tweede Afrikaanse Taalbeweging (Cape Town, 1926), P.C. Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging* (Pretoria, 1922).

⁷ M.S. du Buisson, *Die wonder van Afrikaans; bydraes oor die ontstaan en groei van Afrikaans tot volwaardige wêreldtaal* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers, 1959), Theodore Johannes, *The Achievement of Afrikaans* (South Africa: C.N.A., 1934) and E.C. Pienaar, *Die Triomf van Afrikaans* (Cape Town, 1943).

⁸ Davenport simply preserves Marais and Preller in historiographical amber in their mid-thirties as ‘northerners’, who wanted to promote Afrikaans above Dutch. T.R.H. Davenport, *The Afrikaner Bond, 1880 -1911* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1966) pp.264-265.

⁹ Hofmeyr, ‘Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and ‘ethnic identity’’, p.108. Similarly, a recent analysis by Gouws and Ponelis records that there was opposition solely from ‘clergymen’ and intellectuals with ‘strong ties to the Netherlands’. R.H. Gouws and F.A. Ponelis, ‘The Development of Afrikaans and the Lexicographical Tradition’ in Ladislav Zgusta (ed.) *History, Languages, and Lexicographers* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1992) p.77.

historical imagination, the *taalstryd* remains a great success story, the victory of a shared vision of like-minded men (and even some women).

Yet people intimately involved in the process did not always agree with this roseate picture. This chapter presents an aspect of the roles of two *taalstryders*, Marais and Preller. The discussion follows their roles from the immediate post-war milieu in 1902, following the trajectory of their involvement in developments within the Language Movement until roughly 1927, when they abandoned the movement. The focus is on their growing disillusionment with the movement they had helped initiate, in order to provide a window into the understanding of the intra-movement conflict, precipitated by personal idiosyncrasies and regional differences, particularly between the Cape and the Transvaal (already hinted at in Reitz's description).

Language and the making of National Identity

Language is central to the activity of historians. Literary or documentary evidence is perhaps the most complete and explicit kind of historical evidence. As Corfield has it, 'language cannot evade history, nor historians language'.¹⁰ The importance of language in understanding nationalism has been asserted from the eighteenth-century German Romantic notion of a 'Herderian community of language', to discourse theorists of today.¹¹ As Breuilly has contended, the idea that language is a basis for making political distinctions is a modern notion.¹² Different temporal and

¹⁰ Penelope Corfield, *Language, History and Class* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) p.29.

¹¹ Johann Gottfried Herder (1744 – 1803) maintained that each language promoted a different 'mode of thought' and each community had a different language and, therefore, a unique mode of thought. Discussed by John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) pp.56-64.

geographical examples demonstrate the importance of language in the formation of national identity. In Africa, languages were – and are – central items to the assemblages that make up different ‘tribal’ cultures.¹³ Often a determination to replace a European language as the medium of state bureaucracy added momentum to the nationalist cause. Sometimes it was hegemony of other ‘tribal’ languages that was resented: for example, in Swaziland in the 1960s, IsiZulu was challenged with SiSwati, which proved pivotal to the Swazi nationalist agenda.¹⁴ In Asia, as Seton-Watson has shown, the ‘literary upliftment’ of vernacular speech was a decisive stage in the formation of national consciousness.¹⁵ In the late eighteenth century, for example, Ukrainian (or ‘Little Russian’) was scornfully tolerated as a language of yokels, but as Ukrainian-medium poetry, prose and texts on grammar were produced in the early nineteenth century, a national consciousness coalesced around them and by 1846 the first nationalist organisation was founded. Similarly, in India, as Chatterjee has demonstrated, the crucial moment for the development of modern Bengali came in the mid-nineteenth century, when the bilingual elite sought to provide their ‘mother tongue’ with the linguistic equipment to enable it to function as a tool in modern bureaucracy. A network of presses, magazines, newspapers and literary societies was created outside the purview of the state, through which the new

¹² John Breuilly, ‘Approaches to Nationalism’, in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation* (London: Verso, 1999) p.152. Of course, as Balakrishnan has argued, there are ways in which nations are not conceived in languages. Many nations, for example, share the same language. Balakrishnan, ‘The National Imagination,’ p.207.

¹³ Leroy Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989) p.11.

¹⁴ Hugh MacMillan, ‘A Nation Divided? The Swazi in Swaziland and the Transvaal, 1865-1986’, in Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, p.303.

¹⁵ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: an enquiry into the origins of nations and the politics of nationalism* (Boulder: Westview 1977) p.187.

language was consolidated.¹⁶ The current ebullition of nationalist movements represents the same ambitions that mobilised the nationalist agendas of a hundred years ago. Once again, linguistic demands have surfaced, especially in the territories of the former Soviet Union. Hroch has observed this phenomenon in Estonia, for example, where under the Soviet Union, Russian had been decreed the language of public life and where now knowledge of Estonian is a precondition of civil rights. Similarly, the Institute of Slovak Literature has promoted a linguistic argument for national independence in Slovakia.¹⁷ Another recent example is provided by the Roma people, a floating population of twelve million, who want recognition as a ‘non-territorial’ nation based on their shared language.¹⁸

Language is intimately connected to one’s sense of self. In addition, as Anderson has shown, the very palpability of language generates the idea of a definable shared community.¹⁹ He has argued that the expansion of a framework of ‘public opinion’ – expressed in popular newspapers and magazines, and often linked to the growing importance of elected assemblies in the running of government – made the standardisation of language important.²⁰ In similar vein but specific to Afrikaner identity, Hofmeyr has shown that the vernacularising thrust of the Afrikaans language

¹⁶ See for example, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New “Indian” Art* (Cambridge, 1992) and Partha Chatterjee, ‘Whose Imagined Community?’ in Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation*, p.218.

¹⁷ Miroslav Hroch, ‘From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation’ in Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation*, p.90. He does note that the linguistic movement operates in conjunction with the political, and seldom (if ever) in isolation.

¹⁸ ‘Europe’s Gypsies lobby for nation status’, *The Guardian*, 28 July 2000.

¹⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983, 1991).

²⁰ As has been discussed in Chapter One, Anderson has shown that capitalism and more specifically, print-capitalism, has helped create the vernacular movements.

associations, established in 1905 and 1906, spawned a succession of interconnected organisations which began to link teachers, clerics, small farmers, student organisations, lawyers and journalists into a constituency. In 1914 provincial councils passed a ruling that permitted the teaching of Afrikaans up to Standard IV, which necessitated printers, linguists, publishers and distributors to produce the teaching materials.²¹ Afrikaner women's organisations, which had arisen during and immediately after the South African War, worked particularly among the poor, ethnicising poverty and in so doing, incorporating poor whites into the Afrikaner nation.²² Post-Union politics also contributed to the objectives of the language lobby. Union had not meant unity and many disaffected groups existed, which J.B.M. Hertzog was able to mobilise behind him when he broke away from the ruling South African Party (SAP) in 1914 to form the National Party (NP) that same year. The SAP appeared to attract the support of wealthier farmers and mining interests, alienating urban workers and small farmers, who were drawn to the NP. The language lobby received much support from the NP: Hertzog provided a political home for many 'language men', as Hofmeyr records, 'from whence they could continue with their work of forging a language'.²³ The 1914 Boer Rebellion lent impetus to the movement, particularly afterwards with the establishment of the *Helpmekaar* (Co-

²¹ Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and 'ethnic identity'', pp. 106–110.

²² The role of women in defending ethnic identity through women's institutions has been examined by, for example, Jeffrey Butler, 'Afrikaner Women and the Creation of Ethnicity in a Small South African Town, 1902-1950' in Leroy Vail, (ed.) *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989); Lou-Marie Kruger, 'Gender, community and identity of women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the Volksmoeder discourse of *Die Boerevrou*, 1919-1931', MA, UCT, 1991 and Louise Vincent, 'The Mothers of Invention: Gender, Class and the ideology of the Volksmoeder in the making of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1918-1938', D.Phil., Oxford, 1997.

²³ Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and 'ethnic identity'', p.107.

operation) movement which paid rebels' fines (ensuring material reward for having behaved as 'Afrikaners') and funded cultural organisations. In 1918, Afrikaans became a subject in two universities and won status as a third language when it was legislated that the word 'Dutch' in the constitution included Afrikaans for official purposes outside the House. The Nationalist coalition victory in 1924 saw legislation conferring full official status to Afrikaans in May 1925.

Second Language Movement

While the First Movement to promote Afrikaans was restricted to the Western Cape, revolving chiefly around the group the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (The Association of True Afrikaners), the newspaper *Di Patriot* (The Patriot) and the figure of S.J. Du Toit,²⁴ the Second Language Movement was more extensive and heterogeneous, ranging across the provinces and represented by many different personalities. It was a reaction to what was perceived as Alfred Milner's anglicisation policy, which was intended to transform the republican Afrikaners into English-speaking colonists, intending to 'Wipe out the last trace of Africanderism and damn the consequences'.²⁵ Milner had made it clear in his infamous letter of December 1900 to Major Hanbury Williams, that he meant to use the Republics' defeat to extend English culture and restrict Dutch.²⁶ English was therefore made the sole official

²⁴ Discussed briefly in Chapter Two and extensively in T.R.H. Davenport, *The Afrikaner Bond, 1880-1911* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1966).

²⁵ M.A. Basson, *Die voertaalvraagstuk in die Transvaalse skoolwese* (Pretoria, 1944) p.46.

²⁶ The policy was not as chauvinistically pro-English as was imagined. Denoon has, for example, shown that the Director of Education, appointed by Milner, had sympathy for Afrikaans and regretted the lack of literature available in it. The reason why he was opposed to Dutch-medium education was that Afrikaans children grew up speaking Afrikaans rather than Dutch, experiencing difficulty in the latter and that higher education in Dutch necessitated relocation to Holland. Donald Denoon, *A Grand Illusion* (London, 1973) p.76.

language after the war and the medium of instruction in the schools. The teaching of Dutch had been guaranteed in the peace treaty, but the number of hours was restricted to three. The Cape also abandoned obligatory knowledge of Dutch as a prerequisite for entry into the civil service. English was already pervasive: for example, during the war the Boer generals had often written their dispatches in it. Both Preller and Marais expressed themselves less comfortably in Afrikaans – both thought in English and often switched to English in serious discussion.²⁷

Marais and Preller

Marais had returned to Pretoria immediately after the Treaty of Vereeniging in 1902. Martial Law was in force, and an Afrikaans-Dutch newspaper could only exist on condition of neutrality, with leading articles pre-submitted to the Colonial Secretary for approval. Approached by the Director of the State Press, Marais accepted the conditions and received permission to re-open *Land en Volk*, subsidised by the colonial regime at £500 a quarter. Dr Frans Engelenburg, whose pre-war role has been discussed in Chapter Two, was perceived as a fervent Krugelite, and had not received permission to restart a newspaper after the war.²⁸ Debilitated by malaria and his growing addiction to morphine, Marais needed an editor to shoulder much of the work. He chose Gustav Schoeman Preller, a 27 year-old articled clerk, who had worked in the Department of Mines, acted as war correspondent for *De Volksstem* and *De Zoutpansberg Wachter*, and who had been deported as a prisoner-of-war to

²⁷ There was much linguistic diversity in 'home languages' of Afrikaners: for example, Leipoldt and J.D. Kestell spoke English at home, whereas Engelenburg and Levi used Dutch. J.H. Viljoen, *'n Joernalis vertel* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1953) p.43 and Du Toit, *Eugene Marais*, pp.237–238. Hertzog corresponded with his fiancée in English, while he was a student. D.F. Malan used English when writing letters. At Stellenbosch University the students used English in debates and journals. Moodie, *Rise of Afrikanerdom*, p.40.

India.²⁹ Immediately after the war, he had attempted to reclaim his previous job in the Department of Mines.³⁰ The Mines had offered Preller only a temporary job for two months at £20 per month, and he was incensed that Milner's assurances to the 'new British citizens' apparently meant nothing.³¹ Preller had intended to emigrate to Argentina with a party of *bittereinders* (those who fought to the 'bitter end' of the South African War), but was recommended to Marais by a mutual friend, P. van Hoogenhout Tulleken.³² Marais urged Preller to stay in order to help rescue his *volk* (nation) from adversity and degradation.³³ In a postscript Marais added that the offer was contingent on their 'getting along with each other'.³⁴ Their friendship, however, developed quickly and lasted for the rest of their lives.³⁵ So for the *volk*'s moral good and £25 a month, Preller became editor of *Land en Volk*.³⁶

²⁸ He received permission to restart *De Volkstem* in 1903.

²⁹ A 787 Preller Collection, Vol. 23, F.V. Engelenburg to Preller, 4 October 1899.

³⁰ A 787 Preller Collection, Band 237: Preller to Mynwese, 2 September 1902.

³¹ A 787 Preller Collection, Vol. 237: Preller to Mine, 26 October 1902.

³² Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller', p.100. Marais and Preller had first come into contact with one another in 1891, when, while working as sub-editor of *The Press*, Marais had rejected a short story of Preller's adding that it was not wholly without merit. G.S. Preller, 'Vroeë herinneringe aan E.N. Marais', *Ons Tydskrif*, May 1936.

³³ A 787 Preller Collection, Vol.182, Marais to Preller, 15 September 1902.

³⁴ Leon Rousseau, *Die Groot Verlange*, p.161.

³⁵ Preller's biographer maintains that they were 'soulmates', based on their shared love of their nation and land, literature, culture and science. Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller', p.101.

³⁶ The paper was subsidised by the government and received revenue from government notices. Colonial Secretary, 1078, 072/02. W.E. Davidson to Milner, 19 January 1903.

Land en Volk appears to have been the first and, until 1903, the only Afrikaans-language newspaper to re-open.³⁷ Although its publication was sanctioned and it even received government funding, it was not permitted to discuss politics.³⁸ On 20 September 1902, four months after the Treaty of Vereeniging, the first post-war edition of *Land en Volk* appeared and continued in the investigative vein Marais had forged in the pre-war Transvaal, discussed in the previous chapter, exposing administrative scandals in the Milner regime.³⁹

Milner urged Marais to teach English-language skills through *Land en Volk*.⁴⁰ Marais refused, but in the politically charged situation, initially kept silent on the language issue. Others were not as quiet: in reaction to what was perceived as Milner's anglicisation attempts, 'Christian National Education', which promoted Dutch as mother language, was initiated and Taalbond members like Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr, began to promote the use of Dutch publicly. There appears not to have been much initial opposition by the general public to the use of English in the schools.⁴¹ It

³⁷ After the war, Izaak Wallach sought to reopen *De Volksstem*, but the authorities refused permission fearing alliance between *Land en Volk* and *De Volksstem*. C.S.076/02. A subsequent request was granted and it reopened in March 1903.

³⁸ W. van Heerden, 'Preller die joernalis', *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, December 1975, p.269. Why it was allowed to re-open is open to speculation: perhaps Marais's opposition to Kruger was considered a positive factor. Possibly it was simply that Marais and Preller posed little threat – they were two young men, one suffering from malaria, and Preller knew few people of influence.

³⁹ W. Van Heerden, 'Gustav S. Preller', *Die Huisgenoot*, 29 May 1931, p.45. They published a letter written by Milner to Chamberlain, concerning the replacement of Afrikaans farmers by English colonists. He contended that the farmers were in debt to the government and when they fell behind in their payments, their farms could be purchased cheaply and distributed to English colonists. *Land en Volk*, first post-war edition.

⁴⁰ Rousseau, *Dark Stream*, p.176. Denoon, *Grand Illusion*, p.90. See also Milner to Major Hanbury Williams, 27 December 1900, in C. Headlam (ed.) *Milner Papers*, quoted by Marks and Trapido, 'A White Man's Country', p.17.

⁴¹ Denoon, *Grand Illusion*, p.90.

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