**Exploring the 'Habitus' of Empire
as lived by 20th Century English-Speaking White South Africa.**

by

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Abstract:

What role did the collective common sense of English-speaking, white South Africans play in the making and un-making of apartheid? My research assumed that new narratives had supplanted the euro-centric textbook myths of empty land and wagon-borne settlers to make room for the rainbow nation. Rather than a 'new' narrative I found old narratives, deeper than those of the colonial myth makers, which complicate the "moral victory" of apartheid's end. Little has changed in the *habitus* of English-speaking white South Africans, nurtured by imperial pretensions and fed on privilege. An identity grounded in the wider geography of an empire and an inviolable sense of cultural and racial entitlement meant that English South Africa could find shelter from immediate realities behind various forms of disengagement. My thesis explores the link between these practices and the ability of white, English-speaking South Africans to weather rather than acclimatize to social change.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The research described in the following chapters explores the “collective common sense” of white, English-speaking South Africans. I have tried to articulate what Foucault might have called their “ground of reason” or Bourdieu described as their *habitus*, the assumed attitudes and practices that define and limit what is expectable and acceptable. Following Dennis Mumby’s assertion that we use narrative to organize and articulate “the complex and shifting terrain of meaning that makes up the social world” (Mumby 1993:3) I have looked for stories, for narrative threads, in order to follow them back to the assumptions and understandings that underlie them. I expected to find a shift in these meta-narratives to correspond with the presumed social upheaval in South Africa as the country moved from apartheid to the rainbow nation. When I began this work, I assumed that the social changes in South Africa leading up to and following the end of apartheid were so obvious that they could be taken as given. What I have learned examining the *habitus* of English-speaking, white South Africa has led me to question that assumption. In some important ways the seeming changes in South Africa can be seen as the playing out of deeper continuities. The assumptions and expectations of English-speaking white South Africans have much to say about why some changes happen while others do not.

I grew up believing that the Afrikaners, the quintessential other of English-speaking white South Africa, were responsible for apartheid and all its evils. Textbook history was full of Afrikaans names: Van Riebeeck and his thorn hedge, Retief and his *voortrekkers*, Malan and his Nationalists. Although beneficiaries of apartheid’s structural privilege, English-speaking white South Africans commonly expressed the belief that they could do little to effect real change, and even congratulated themselves as less harsh,

less racist, more enlightened employers of garden ‘boys’ and kitchen ‘maids’ than their Afrikaner neighbours. The goal of my research has been to question this presumption of “cultural blamelessness” (Steyn 2001:107). I set out to explore the parallel role of English-speaking white South Africans in the making and un-making of South African apartheid.

The community under discussion must be linguistically defined. Their “Englishness” is salient both in distinguishing them from white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans and in allying them with a “colonial history and memories of empire” through which they sustain the certainty that “their fate does not have to be linked to this land” (Steyn 2001:80). Those who speak English hold an international position of privilege and power by default. Facility in English, or its lack, affects the way people think about power (Ives n.d.:7). English “linguistic colonization” has privileged Western “knowledge structures” and imposed “English” expectations and outcomes in contexts from classrooms to boardrooms to international fora. Western bodies of knowledge and ways of knowing are normative (McLean 1999:7, 14, 10). English carries the baggage of imperialism and its attendant hegemony, but it also has a history of pragmatic versatility. The pragmatic potential, hegemonic influence and colonial history of English speakers and the English language must all be taken seriously.

In apartheid South Africa the construction and deployment of difference as a means of social control was blatant and brutal. Apartheid’s prism teased out putative differences and assigned them socio-political weight. In this context ‘colour’ must also be considered salient in defining the community under study. There are, of course, English-speaking black South Africans. The current government conducts its business in English

(Webb 1996:148). Prominent black South Africans have made significant contributions, writing, and speaking in English¹. Many were educated in English-speaking mission-run schools, and some, like current President Thabo Mbeki were ‘groomed’ for leadership roles in British universities. The implications of English-language education and even the seemingly ‘natural’ choice of English as the lingua franca of the anti-apartheid movement would make an interesting study, unfortunately beyond the reach of the current undertaking.

The absence of non-white English-speakers from my research is not a failure to recognize their significance, but a pragmatic attempt to limit the scope of material to be considered. A sharp definition of the discourse community being examined was necessary to make the research task manageable. To make the results of the research meaningful, however, it is equally vital to acknowledge both the presence of black critics of and participants in the white discourse under discussion, and the absence of an overwhelming majority of black South Africans, excluded from the conversation by the use of English. In his study of South Africa’s current socio-linguistic map Vic Webb points out that communicative competence in English is problematic. “[O]nly about 25% of the South African population has an adequate proficiency in English for the purposes of effective economic activity...These people are, furthermore, mainly members of the higher socio-economic classes. Nationally, 75% [of] black South Africans are not proficient enough in

¹ see for example Sol Plaatje, Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela inter alia. I would add here that the fact that Mandela’s first public address after his release from 27 years in prison should have been offered in English is itself rather extraordinary given the linguistic background of his constituency. The use of English was clearly deliberate. It made his speech visible on the international stage in a way that the same speech delivered in Xhosa (the majority language of South Africa) would not have been.

English to be able to use it as a meaningful instrument of economic activity” (Webb 2002:227).

The multi-layered, multilingual lyrics of Johnny Clegg’s music² play in the background as I write. I wish it were possible to recreate in text the vibrant overlay of voices holding their own in and around the dominant melody that is so easy when the words are spoken or sung. It is imperative to ‘hear’ between the lines of text the insistent murmur of the absent majority, a counterpoint rhythm of alternative interpretations of the events this work will consider. The English-speaking community whose narratives we will study often seems oblivious to the many other stories being played out in their midst. I have sought to keep those other stories alive in my thoughts even when they are missing from these pages, not least because their absence seems to me the first count against the cultural innocence of English-speaking whites in the construction of South Africa’s racial divisions.

Newspapers on microfilm, collections of speeches and letters, commentaries, histories, and novels have provided a key to the collective ‘common sense’ of English-speaking, white South Africa. Newspapers: opinion pieces, letters, editorial cartoons, and reports, became, in fact, the backbone of my research, providing access to the dialogue so necessary to the collective imaginary. Dennis Mumby calls humans as a species “homo narrans” (Mumby 1993:1), the teller of stories. Those stories are woven around events. The immediacy of newspapers, on the front line of interpreting and assimilating events in progress, proved to be a valuable point of access. Histories, novels, conversations, and my

² Johnny Clegg is a South African musician who incarnates the possibilities of a multilingual future for the new democracy. He performs in English and Zulu as well as Afrikaans and French on the CD I’m listening to: “One Life”. His career as a performer has challenged all the restrictions of South Africa’s rigid racial laws, both in his practice as the leader of a multi-racial band, and his provocative lyrics.

own remembered experiences added depth and context, ‘thickening’ my ability to interpret what I read.

Rationale

My study of English-speaking white South Africa grew out of a more general interest in how we collectively manage change. I am convinced that our agency, especially in terms of collective action, is shaped and limited by the archetypal stories, instantiated *habitus*, and unconscious categories embedded in the language we use. My own use of language here, the deliberately over-generalized pronouns ‘our’ and ‘we’, is meant to essentialize what I take to be essential to the human situation. We are in many ways incarnations of our own stories, performed into being individually and collectively, at least in part, through the generative power of words (Butler 1988:519).

In our lifetime we make and remake ourselves countless times, reflecting the evolving configuration of relationships, responsibilities and possibilities that surround us. As collectives, families, communities, and nations we are also in flux. Change is a constant process of construction: contesting, renovating, razing and rebuilding. My interest in social change is twofold. I am fascinated by the tools we use to cope with change, and intrigued by the idea that change might be ‘manufactured’ and directed (for good or ill) by the planned or accidental pro-active use of language. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue convincingly that while “words alone don’t change reality...changes in our conceptual system [our words] do change what is real for us” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:145-6).

Tools to accommodate change seem to fall into two ‘classes’ of experience: words and practice; understood in terms of the discourses that define the Foucauldian “ground of reason”, and the automatic behaviours and attitudes of Bourdieu’s “*habitus*”. We weave new story lines backwards and forwards into our defining narratives. We weave new behaviours into the fabric of the days that clothe us. Personal narratives and collective histories are constructed and reconstructed to support the present and accommodate possible futures. Practices are ritualized or automatized, reinforcing assumptions and conceptions by conscious or unconscious repetition.

The term ‘praxis’ is useful here. In theological discourse the term is reaching for a way to articulate the intersection of belief and practice: the interweaving of meaning and behaviour, each informing and shaping the other, both implicit in understanding. The idea of taking ‘practice’ seriously as a source of knowledge is much debated in academia. The notion of embodied knowledge is far from the clean separation of mind and body that characterizes the scientific view of knowledge. And yet, as Thomas Csordas points out, we do not experience our own bodies and minds as divided (Csordas 1993:149). He cites Merleau-Ponty who writes that “perception beg[ins] in the body”, and Bourdieu who describes ‘paying attention’ as “attending to and with one’s body” (Csordas 1993:137). What we know begins in our senses. My understanding of both language and practice spill over each into the other. Words are, after all, a kind of action (Austin 1975) and behaviour is often a form of wordless language. Given their joint role in shaping and articulating a cultural *habitus* I am not convinced it is helpful to worry at what separates them. Together they have fascinating potential as the vehicle and shaper of cultural change.

Case Study

To anyone interested in cultural shifts South Africa's apparent volte-face, from apartheid to the rainbow nation, cries out to be examined. Stories that supported Afrikaner ascendancy, fictions dating back to South Africa's earliest "histories"; the constructs of "ignoble...Khoikhoi", "savage...Xhosa", and empty land waiting to be productively claimed (Bank 1997:280) were the cornerstones of school book history and the orthodox mythology of white South African identity. How were these stories challenged and changed to make room for a racially inclusive democracy? My early questions about how the sweeping political changes had been and were being accommodated met with different answers from different sources: the explanations were primordial, instrumental, and cynically opportunist. My own conclusions about the limits to change are the most cynical of all.

Afrikaans and apartheid are inextricably linked. Afrikaans was deliberately framed as the language of South Africa's Dutch- and Huguenot-descended settlers. Non-standard (i.e. non-white) versions of Afrikaans were discouraged, and a view of "learner forms" of Afrikaans as less valid was "unashamedly perpetuated" (Van Rensburg 1999:81). The place of Afrikaans in shaping an elitist Afrikaner identity and creating the isolation and separation necessary to the apartheid regime is thoroughly documented. Piet Erasmus of the University of the Free State, South Africa, writes that the Afrikaner was responsible for apartheid as apartheid in turn defines and determines Afrikaner identity

(Erasmus n.d.) It is understood that part of achieving a new inclusivity in South Africa will lie in stretching the imaginative potential of the Afrikaans language³.

As a child of English-speaking white South Africans I was interested in examining the parallel role of English-language narrative and discourse. It was English linguistic arrogance that sought to stamp out Cape Dutch, a language born of the practical need for intelligibility in a community of Dutch, French, Malaysian, Zulu and Xhosa speakers. I was not convinced that English, with its embedded imperialism, was a silent bystander to South Africa's racist agenda. My research began with a salvo of questions: What role did English-South Africans play in forming, justifying, and protesting the imposition of apartheid? What changes in narrative, discourse and perception equipped English-speaking South Africans to stretch their perceptions of 'self' and 'other'? How was English so positioned that it could be perceived as the language of liberation in the anti-apartheid struggle? How and why did English disappear from the official narrative, leaving Afrikaans holding the apartheid ball?

Method

My research relied on marrying a literature review exploring relevant theories in language, practice and communication with examples of language usage drawn from primary and secondary sources. I looked for changes in the way English was being used in South Africa to name names and tell stories. Antonio Gramsci is quoted observing that, "Every time that the question of language surfaces, in one way or another, it means that a series of other problems are coming to the fore" (Ives n.d.:1). Language is the site of

³ For an interesting exploration of this idea see Antjie Krog's novel, *A Change of Tongue*. Her discussion of the difficulties she encounters when Mandela asks her to translate his autobiography *The Long Walk to Freedom* into Afrikaans is especially telling.

generational conflict, of gender misunderstanding, and of class exclusion. Because it is so malleable, and arguably so close to the very processes of thought, perhaps it is not unreasonable to think of language as playing the role of the canary in the coal mine, the first indicator of shifts of understanding or interpretation.

Raymond Williams describes the experience of returning to Cambridge University after four and half years away in the Second World War to discover that his colleagues “did not speak the same language” (Williams 1983:11). The accelerated social change of the war years, and his absence (and particular experiences) exaggerated the usually subtle ongoing shifts in meaning such that he could feel the disconnection. Williams concluded that “some important social and historical processes occur within language...[new] kinds of relationships, but also new ways of seeing existing relationships, appear” in the meaning of words (Williams 1983:22). Words, he says, appropriate new connotations, and shed old meanings “to fit an argument” or reflect changed understandings (Williams 1983:17). Vocabulary has no “natural authority” but is a tool to be used, “to find our own ways in”, to change as we see fit (Williams 1983:24-5). There are times and places “where radical changes in the things that words refer to necessarily change the meaning of the words themselves” (Peter Gose - email communication March 14 2006).

A careful analysis of the context and practice surrounding white, English-language public discourse in South Africa offers insights into how the apartheid regime was both tolerated and protested by South Africa’s white English-speaking population. My reading spanned a reasonably wide cross-section of public language dipping into what Mikhail Bakhtin called the “thread of discourse”, both official and unofficial. My goal was to glean samples that were, in William Hanks’ words “not atypical” of their moment,

and following his example to situate them in time and space, “saturating” them in the specifics and details of their context. Hanks’ “communicative practice” approach is compelling because it insists on communication as a social endeavour. His work describes the way in which meaning is constructed within a context, and how the context in turn is realized by the constitutive power of words (Hanks 1996: 140, 230, 141, 237). A full exploration of context will call for “thick description” writ large.

I might have undertaken instead to look for places where there was obvious and heated disagreement. Gramsci’s association of conflict over language with social growing pains suggest that these ‘hot spots’ might have yielded fruitful information about how the community was inscribing new experiences or perceptions into its collective common sense. Choosing to look for coalescence over conflict will prove more helpful in examining a habitus that will prove elusive. The collective commonsense of privilege affords the luxury of agreeing to disagree, with no hard feelings, and a certain pleasure in debate for its own sake.

The leap from text to context required some thought. Text, frozen in print and gathered into collections according to some editorial criteria has traveled a long way from its original context and living practice. “Saturating” such samples of language in context meant resisting both the trap of eisegesis (reading into them my own perceptions and perspectives) and the blithe acceptance of prior exegesis (failing to look past the context and assumptions affixed to them by where I find them). When I was reading theology a number of years ago I worked to get beneath assumptions and connotations by reading un-translated texts where possible, stripping them of context (I was reduced to reading meticulously from below rather than relying on schemata and allowing myself to skim the

material) in order to achieve a 'clean' reading. In this project I took the opposite approach. I worked to immerse myself in each period in an effort to 're-member' past understandings, giving them arms and legs as part of an embodied, context-specific practice. The precondition to restoring context, of course, involved digesting a feast of South African history and politics. I expect that confining my research to library and archival sources rather than traveling to South Africa has had an impact on my findings. That impact deserves acknowledgement. On the other hand, I have tested my impressions with a community of family and friends, inside and outside South Africa, who are deeply familiar with its history and current context.

Structure

My finished work is presented in six chapters: i) the introduction above, outlining my question, project rationale and research method, ii) a brief overview of South African history to provide a timeline and overall sense of South Africa's story, iii) a look at South Africa between 1899 and 1910 exploring the English presence and *habitus* as the country moved from war to union, iv) a study of the 1948 elections focusing on the years between the end of WWII in 1945 and 1950 as the country settled in under apartheid, v) an exploration of events and attitudes surrounding the ANC victory in 1994, reaching back to consider life under the apartheid regime as it was experienced by white English-speaking South Africans, and forward to catch a glimpse of that life in the first decade of 'democratic' rule. As I did my research each time period made different demands in terms of where to open and close the discourse under review. Each chapter suggested its own logic about where best to begin and end its story. The final chapter summarizes my

findings and seeks to articulate some conclusions about the role of English-language attitudes and practice in social change.

I have woven theory into the narrative of my paper where it seemed appropriate and helpful. I prefer to imagine that side by side the theory serves to enrich the narrative and the narrative to explain the theory. In my own mind they are interlinked. Much of the work I have found most useful explores the interplay of discourse and practice. A brief look at some of those formative ideas may prove useful before launching into the body of my work.

I have relied on Judith Butler's notion of identity as the "legacy of sedimented acts" performed "in obedience to an historically delimited possibility...a sustained and repeated corporeal project" (Butler 1988:523, 522). When I began my research I was looking for the transformative break in the "stylized repetition" of "constituting acts" Butler suggested as a possibility (1988:519-20).

Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus* concept neatly accommodates the dual nature of our experience of experience as both an external, objective 'given' and an internal, subjective construction: the "structured and structuring dispositions" through which we organize and understand our world. Bourdieu describes the *habitus* variously as a "quasi magical process of socialization": a "system of dispositions": a "particular universe of possibilities": and a "feel for the game". Significantly, Bourdieu insists that although "quasi magical" and "miraculous" the interaction of objective and subjective experience produce "real effects, durably inscribed in the body and in belief" (Bourdieu 1970: 52, 58, 59, 61, 66, 58).

In *The Discourse on Language* (1970) Foucault describes the ‘rules of exclusion’, the prohibitions drawn around some topics, some situations, and some people so that not just anyone can say anything anywhere. The idea that rules of form and authorship, and the boundaries between disciplines, create internal constraints around what can be said, and by whom, is especially interesting. Rituals (religious, juridical and academic), give some people and some utterances credibility while denying it to others. “Fellowships of discourse” limit access to certain knowledge, and orthodoxy fences knowledge, keeping some ideas inside, and all others out (Foucault 1970: 216, 222, 225, 226). Foucault’s insight that the use of expected vocabulary in expected ways could create an “envelope of the unthought and the unsaid” (Knauff:391) is central to my research on English language discourse in South Africa. I examined the ways that English patterns of speech (and presumably then of thought) made room for the practice of apartheid.

The brief history of South Africa found in the next chapter outlines white South Africa’s orthodox narrative. My goal is to lay out the story as it has been taught to and by white, English-speaking South Africans. I hope to make plain the bias in the telling of this history, what is included and excluded, the present that motivates this telling of the past. In my first essay at a brief history of South Africa I was struck by the absence of all but Afrikaans and English voices in the most common narrative. South Africa’s story is most often presented as a contest between two colonial tongues, a duet that would ring truer as a chorus.

Chapter Two: a Brief History of South Africa from the 'English' Point of View

According to South African historian Andrew Bank the earliest histories of South Africa were written in the 1820s and '30s in the context of an ideological struggle between enlightenment liberals, in favour of humanitarian concessions and compensation for South Africa's aboriginals, and Boer and English conservatives, in conflict with the Khoikhoi and Xhosa peoples respectively. Each faction justified its position in terms of "history". John Philip, an abolitionist, was the first to publish. Ironically, given the trajectory South Africa would later take, this first 'history' was framed in terms of "violent dispossession" and gross injustice (Bank 1997:263). It catalogued the ills done to the Khoikhoi by the invading Dutch. Philip's interpretation "found little sympathy among the established settler community at the Cape", Dutch or English (Bank 1997:265).

Liberal disapproval in general and John Philip's condemnatory *Researches* (1828) in particular, drove the Dutch settlers to "actively construct a specifically colonial history and identity" (Bank 1997:265). Centre stage in the fictive community created in the pages of Abraham Faure's *Het Nederduitsch* was Jan van Riebeeck, iconic bearer of civilization to the Dark Continent (Bank 1997:266). Rescuing van Riebeeck's reputation from liberal critique became part of re-establishing the "concept of rights by conquest" (Bank 1997:269) in the face of liberal moral qualms.

In the global struggle for land and resources, indigenous claims have often been treated as "dubious...because other groups [could] make more productive use" of the land (Maybury-Lewis 1985:139). U.S. Chief Justice John Marshall declared that "to leave [the Indians] in possession of their country was to leave their country a wilderness" justifying its expropriation and the people's expulsion (Fairweather 2006:6). Australia was declared

terra nullius through “English legal witchcraft” (Fairweather 2006:207). The nomadic Khoikhoi, whose “congregation in groups had more in common with the fish and birds of the sky than with a society of people” (Bank 1997:269) became another example. Their lack of a European-compatible concept of land ownership was used to support a “legal variant of the Myth of the Vacant Land” (Bank 1997:269).

British “anti-liberal histories” (Bank 1997:279) claimed that they and the Xhosa had arrived at more or less the same time on the *Zuurveld*, South Africa’s central plateau. The Xhosa, therefore, “had no more right to land in the country than whites” (Bank 1997:280). Robert Godlonton, who “invented the myths of Xhosa aggression...and the Vacant Land” in his *Sketches of Kafraria* (1836) claimed that the Xhosa had “usurped” the territory between the Kye and Fish Rivers and that the British had more right to the land than a people who “had gained a footing in it by treachery and violence” (Bank 1997:279). The constructs of “ignoble and degraded Khoikhoi”, “savage and hostile Xhosa”, and empty land waiting to be productively claimed (Bank 1997:280) became the cornerstone of accepted history and the orthodox mythology of white South African identity.

Van der Lingen, a spokesman for the Dutch conservatives, injected the idea of historical destiny into the mythos. He claimed that the worthy Dutch settlers shared “a native excellence and a disposition for whatever is great and noble... inured to fatigue and nerved by hardships” (Bank 1997:272). I was interested to find an English variant of this arrogance attributed to Alexander Sutherland, a nineteenth-century historian: “If it is a divine law that Anglo-Saxon people must double themselves every half century, it must be divine law that they are to emigrate and form new homes for themselves in waste

lands” (Fairweather 2006:7). The disappearance of primitive, vulnerable ‘races’, however lamentable, was accepted as inevitable. During the 19th century international law moved from “notions of equality” to “the rights of discovery” (Fairweather 2006:46).

The Orthodox Story⁴

‘Official’ histories of South Africa begin with the Great Trek; a tale of ox carts carrying fiercely independent Afrikaner farmers (*Boers*) and their families (the *voortrekkers*) inland to escape English rule. Their leader, Piet Retief, accused the British authorities of having “abandoned the proper way of handling black-white, master-servant relations, and offended the law of God as well as human susceptibilities in doing so” (Davenport and Saunders 2000:53).

The Dutch also considered themselves the first settlers in an empty land. Jan van Riebeeck arrived on the Cape in 1652 to settle in Table Bay with three ships of Dutch settlers and instructions to establish a hospital and a vegetable garden (Davenport and Saunder 2000:21). During the 1700s the community of Dutch farmers and their slaves imported from the Dutch colony in Malaysia served the Dutch East India Company by re-supplying trading ships as they rounded the Cape of Good Hope. The British, whose merchant ships traded with the Khoe along the coast, were driven to cement their hold in the region as part of the global competition for territory and resources. They defeated the Dutch decisively in 1806. Britain settled the Cape and moved up the southeast coast, establishing British rule in Port Elizabeth by 1820, and reaching KwaZulu /Natal in the

⁴Within the context of my study I am looking for the stories told within white, English-speaking South Africa. The story as told within this community is frustratingly univocal. I considered several ways of manipulating the text so that this story in particular would not read as a single, uncontested flow of words. If it were possible I would write this history as a musical score so that the alternative tellings and silenced voices were also available. While I cannot pretend to offer them in any acceptable fashion I can put their existence as an insistent background hum into our minds.

1830s (Webb 2002:75). Frustration with British rule chased the earlier Dutch settlers into the interior where their arrival coincided with the *Difaqane* (a Zulu word meaning ‘the crushing’). It was a period of “dislocation” and upheaval which no doubt contributed to the illusion of vacant land (Davenport and Saunders 2000:13). It is difficult to tell whether English-speaking historians offer the *Difaqane* up as an excuse or an apology for the gross misinterpretation that became a ‘fact’ with legal weight.

The Great Trek away from the Cape and into the interior in the 1830s is at the heart of Afrikaner identity as it came to be articulated. The death of Piet Retief and his advance party at the hands of the Zulu King Dingane after crossing the Drakensburg Mountains was woven into the founding myth of the Afrikaner people. Afrikaner victory in a retaliatory battle at Blood River on December 16, 1838 is celebrated as the sign of a covenant between the Boer *voortrekker* pioneers, and their Dutch-Reformed God, which made them a chosen people (Harrison 1981:15-17). A re-enactment of the Great Trek undertaken in 1938 illustrates the huge and enduring significance of the Afrikaner’s self ascription as a covenant people. The ox-drawn wagons travelled from Cape Town to Pretoria. In towns and villages along the way crowds gathered to greet the Ox-drawn wagons of the *Ossewatrek*. “Children were baptized when the wagons arrived. Young men fought to get near the wagons to smear their handkerchiefs with axle grease” (Crapanzano 1985:120). Others accompanied the wagons for miles along the ceremonial route.

When the initial *voortrekker* settlement in Natal was taken over by the English the Boers trekked back across the mountains to establish independent Republics in the Transvaal and the Free State (1852). The relationship between the Boer Republics was

uneasy. Their relationship with the British was worse. Diamonds were discovered in Kimberly, a contested territory between the Transvaal and the Free State in the 1860s. In 1873 gold was found in the Transvaal. Mining “precipitated the transformation of South Africa from a rural, agricultural country to an urbanizing, industrializing one” (Johnson 1982:216) and mineral wealth fuelled a perpetual cycle of raids, interventions, and counter-attacks which led, eventually, to war (Harrison 1981:21-2).

The Anglo-Boer War⁵ of 1899 to 1902 left deep scars in the relationship between English- and Afrikaans-speakers. In order to starve out the Boer commandoes, British troops killed livestock and burnt crops. They gathered Boer families into concentration camps where they served as hostages in order to convince their husbands and fathers to surrender. Afrikaner commandoes destroyed the farms of *hensoppers* (those who put their hands up) who surrendered to the English. At one point British High Commissioner Alfred Milner tried to convince Afrikaner General Botha to leave the farms of deserters in peace in exchange for better conditions for the women and children in the camps. Botha refused. Families continued to be used as pawns. Afrikaners who fought the English to the very end won esteem as *Bittereinders* (those who fought to the bitter end) (Harrison 1981:25-47).

Within two years of the war's end the Afrikaner 'colonies' were granted self-government. By 1910 the four colonies had negotiated their incorporation into the Union of South Africa. The new country included the Cape, Orange Free State, Transvaal, and

⁵ The Boer War is a particularly contested bit of history telling. Since we will return to it in the next chapter, again dominated by the relationship between Briton and Boer, it seems especially important to point to some significant omissions. For a fuller discussion of the role of blacks in the war: teaching the Boers guerilla tactics, choosing sides, dying and being betrayed by their English 'friends' see Christopher Saunders, P. Warwick, Bill Nasson, and Bernard Makhosetwe Magubane inter alia.

Natal colonies. Afrikaans was not included with Dutch and English as an “official” language of state (Webb 2002:75). The Afrikaners remained at a disadvantage. Their own laws of inheritance, designed to keep all their sons and daughters close to home, had subdivided their farms into ever-smaller bits of land. The majority were farmers: poor, and without the skills needed to meet the challenges and opportunities of an industrialization that was in full swing as the 20th century began. While Milner, the British High Commissioner, denied the claim that he intended to “exterminate the Dutch” it is clear that his agenda involved ensuring “the dominance of the British element, politically and culturally” (Davenport and Saunders 2000:239). He insisted that “Dutch should only be used to teach English and English to teach everything else...Everything that makes South African children look outside South Africa and realize the world makes for Peace. Everything that cramps or confines their views to South Africa only...makes for Afrikanerdom and further discord” (Milner in Davenport and Saunder 2000:239). Needless to say, there was resistance.

The Afrikaner *Broederbond*, initially framed as a ‘social club’ to promote cultural events when it was formed in 1918, quickly became the driving force behind Afrikaner militancy (Harrison 1981:87-91). The objective of the ‘Brotherhood’ was “to close the gap between Afrikaner and English wealth”, and address the white poverty issue by protecting “the poor white from competition with blacks” in the labour market (Giliome 1995:197). The Afrikaner leadership felt strongly that isolation was the best way to ensure survival (Posel 1995:211-212). The political potential of Afrikaans was first realized and promoted as early as 1870, when the Afrikaans-speaking Eastern Cape made a bid for secession from the British held Cape Colony (Webb 2002:74 and Van Rensburg

1999:80). In the early decades of the 1900s it became a “mobilizing tool” in Afrikanerdom: exploited to instill pride, develop a distinct identity, and ensure isolation (Giliome 1995:192, 2002: 365).

An Afrikaner himself, Gerhard Maré describes ethnicity as a social identity with a purpose; defined by clear markers, a ‘sacred’ history, and an exclusive in-group (Maré 1993:23), all present within the Afrikaner context. The “ethnic mobilization” (Maré 1993:17) he describes is evident in the work of the Afrikaner *Broederbond*. Working behind the scenes as a secret society they were everywhere.

Nothing which can affect the well-being of the Afrikaner escapes the notice of the Broeders. They are concerned with everything, from birth control to burial clubs; from religion to race relations; from the dangers of Afrikaans children singing English rugby songs to the need for a sympathetic English language newspaper.

(Harrison 1981:93)

Their membership included many of the country’s teachers and clerics, giving them a firm hold on education and religion (Harrison 1981:91-93, 101). As Davenport and Saunders observe, “The battle for the minds of the Afrikaners centred on the classroom” where a religious and linguistic agenda pushed the integration of “Church, school and family in the upbringing of a child”. The Dutch Reform Church positioned itself as a ‘civil religion’, with its charity ‘turned inward’ to look after its own (Davenport and Saunders 2000:247).

The *Broederbond* set up banking and insurance businesses, and came to dominate South Africa’s economy (Harrison 1981:94). From there they moved to orchestrate a “completely independent, genuine Afrikaans government for South Africa” (Harrison 1981:97). The principal tool of ethnic mobilization available to the Afrikaner leadership was language, the “one bond which joins us as a nation together, the expressed soul of our

volk” (Giliome 2003:369), and they used it to good effect. In 1925 Afrikaans replaced Dutch and joined English as one of two official languages recognized in South Africa. By the end of the 1940s, when South Africa elected its first entirely bilingual government, and could insist on a universally bilingual government bureaucracy, Afrikaans had achieved “functional equivalence with English” (Webb 2002:74).

Ernest Gellner has interesting things to say about the relationship between “literacy education” and nation building (Gellner 1994:65). His work spells out the significance of a “school-mediated” national identity. Gellner also defines a nation in terms of words. He insists that nation-building is a “school mediated”, “literacy education” project (Gellner 1994a:65). Nationalism, he argues, is not rooted in the human psyche but in the “now pervasive social order” of capitalism (Gellner 1983:34). It is the direct product of industrialization and its subplots, urbanization, mobility, and centralization. Far from “the awakening of an old, latent, dormant force” nations reflect “education-dependent high cultures, each dependent on their own state” (Gellner 1983:55). People, “destined to a permanent game of musical chairs” as the mobile, malleable ‘labour’ of industrial capitalism (Gellner 1983:25), must be “trained by an educational system to formulate and understand context-free messages in a shared idiom” (Gellner 1994b:viii). In order to ensure that their idiom is the shared idiom, people “willingly and often ardently identify” with a “well-defined, educationally sanctioned” nation (Gellner 1994b:viii, 1983:55).

Lending credibility to the link between nations and schools Eric Hobsbawm (cited in Anderson 1983:71) points out that “the progress of schools and universities measures that of nationalism, just as schools and especially universities became its most conscious

champions”. What if the hegemony of a single national language is an external requirement of the global labour market as Gellner claims? If it is true that a single shared language has more to do with context-free communication than with shared imagining, it becomes possible to see that ‘shared words’ under some conditions become a form of surrendering rather than affirming identity.

National Party Government

Afrikaner identity was so successful in pulling itself up by its own bootstraps that the National Party, the *Broederbond*’s political incarnation, held power in South Africa from 1948 until 1994. British / Afrikaner tensions ran high during the 1948 election. More than a century of division within white South Africa had been given fresh venom in World War II. The English could not tolerate the perceived pro-Nazi stance of the Afrikaners. No more could the Afrikaners, “bred on resentment” of their treatment under British Imperialism, understand English loyalty to the Empire (Davenport and Saunders 2000:377).

An overview of the factors contributing to the NP victory in 1948 suggests that the seeds of that victory were sown in the war. Smuts damaged his party’s position by overplaying South Africa’s imperial connection, welcoming both a visit from King George VI, and an influx of 60,000 post-war immigrants from Britain. They were intended to address a “manpower shortage” but were viewed with suspicion within Afrikaner circles as yet another attempt to “plough the Afrikaner under” (Davenport and Saunders 2000:370). The growing racial integration (black and white) of the war years and a post-war wave of liberal ideas also played into the NP’s hand. The would-be NP government, with apartheid as its “central slogan”, was able to “appeal to the voter’s

desire for security in a world which was seen to be moving too fast in a liberal direction and turning its wrath against South Africa as it did so” (Davenport and Saunders 2000:373-4).

The new Government launched its apartheid project at once. Government legislation layered prohibition on prohibition in the name of separate development for each ‘ethnic’ group: the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act in 1949, the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Bill in 1950, the Immorality Amendment Act in 1957, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act in 1959. White bilingual schools (called dual-medium schools in South Africa) were closed to remove “impressionable young Afrikaners” from the influence of “English language and thought” (Harrison 1981:198). The segregation of English and Afrikaans students became compulsory (Johnson 1982:218). Under apartheid “[s]eparation was the keynote...no mixing of languages, no mixing of cultures, no mixing of religions...[b]ilingualism was an evil to be avoided at all costs” (Harrison 1981:198).

James Hertzog (Prime Minister of South Africa as leader of the Afrikaner National Party in 1924, and again as leader of the coalition government in 1933) described the relationship between South Africa’s white communities as flowing in “two streams – the English speaking stream and the Dutch speaking stream, each stream with its own language, its own way of life, its own great men, heroic deeds, and noble characters” (Crapanzano 1985:117). Apartheid mythology tied language to culture to identity, and it sought to isolate and incubate each one separately. Under the auspices of separate development “the labeling of ...linguistic variety...[as] first and foremost a political act” was perfected (Kaschula 1999:66). Fictive ethno-linguistic divisions were

used to justify the establishment of homelands, the stratification of society into rigid racial groups and deep inequality in access to resources and possibilities.

The elegant amalgam spoken by the polyglot who shifts language and cultural self-ascription with a simple change in posture reminds us that neither language nor identity is a fixed entity. Language use and social identity are not as coterminous as apartheid assumed. The final irony, of course, is that these distinct languages, in some cases little more than fictions used to justify the allocation of people to 'homelands', are entrenched in the 1996 constitution (Kaschula 1999:66).

Under enormous pressure both from within the country, and from the international community, the Apartheid system and its supporting structures became more and more costly. Eventually, in order to diffuse an explosive situation and contain the predictable political and economic fallout, the National Party made way for multi-racial elections in 1994, conceding power first to an interim Government of National Unity, and eventually to an African National Congress government under Nelson Mandela. South Africa became, in the words of Marc Gevissar, "the nation that talked itself out of war and into democracy" (Gevissar 2004:518)⁶.

Afrikaans and Apartheid

Greg Denning rather intriguingly suggests that while only one of the many possibilities available in the past was lived out, "[h]istory still contains them all" (Denning 1993:87). The implication is that in the retelling of history all the roads not travelled can be returned to the map. It would be interesting to speculate about what might have been different if the British conquerors had been more open to the possibilities inherent in a

⁶ There are of course many voices who protest that the 'miracle' has been over-stated. See for example Hein Marais, Howarth and Norval, and John J. Williams.

language developed specifically for the multi-ethnic, polyglot community living in South Africa's Cape Province.

Many historians have already considered this relationship, and “commonly [lay] the later development of Afrikaner nationalism at the door of Somerset's Anglicization policy” (Davenport and Saunder 2000:45). As Governor of the Cape Colony in 1822, Lord Charles Somerset made English the only official language of the colony's courts and schools, despite the fact that the English were then outnumbered eight to one by Cape Dutch speakers (Harrison 1981:48). The question of what might have been seems especially poignant given that South Africa's future may depend on the validation of just such a polyglot *habitus* (Webb 2002:143). Whatever cause and effect relationships might have existed, what did happen is that Afrikaans became a tool of ethnic mobilization and isolation for the Afrikaner.

Apartheid's story might be said to begin with the British attempt to stamp out the variant of Dutch being spoken in the Cape when they arrived at the beginning of the 1800s. Afrikaans began with Dutch, took on a smattering of French and German, some vocabulary from Malaysia and Madagascar, a few words of Xhosa and Zulu. It surrendered its declensions in a pragmatic bid for intelligibility by the many language groups working for the Afrikaners and “took on a sound of its own” (Harrison 1981:48). The English press described it as “a truly stupid patois...fit only for peasants and up-country kraals” (Giliome 2002:367), inciting its speakers to a defensive, isolationist stance.

Christo Van Rensburg suggests a different view of the way Afrikaans was formed. He sees it as the result of language acquisition, the inter-lange of language learners

moving toward Dutch, rather than Dutch speakers moving away from it (Van Rensburg 1999:78). He would like to disentangle Afrikaans from apartheid, believing that the link has been “overemphasized” (Van Rensburg 1999:81). Van Rensburg places responsibility for South Africa’s “colour bar” with the Dutch East India Company and its policies. He points out that, “[o]nly company servants and freeburghers could hold land or gain political power in the official hierarchy”, and since company employees were universally European and white, and their servants coloured imported labourers or black locals, the division between those who could hold land and wield political power and those who could not was immediately racialized (Davenport and Saunder 2000:34). However, Van Rensburg follows his defense of Afrikaans with a description of the systematic way in which non-white usage of Afrikaans was discouraged, and a view of “learner forms” of Afrikaans as less valid was “unashamedly perpetuated” (Van Rensburg 1999:81). He goes on to suggest that the place of Afrikaans in shaping an elitist Afrikaner identity and creating the isolation and separation necessary to the apartheid regime was such that for Afrikaners post-Apartheid South Africa began with the Soweto riots. To protest against the Afrikaans language was to protest against the whole system (Van Rensburg 1999:82).

Van Rensburg’s reminder that Afrikaans was in fact the working language of many is important. Cape Town’s Muslims, descendants of imported slaves, were the first to write Afrikaans. Literate as a requirement of their religious practice, they wrote *Kaapse Afrikaans* (a Cape Town variant) using Arabic script (Van Rensburg 1999:79). *Oosgrensafrikaans* (an Eastern Cape variant) was spoken by the “former officials of the Dutch East India Company [who] left the service of the Company to become cattle farmers” (Van Rensburg 1999:79) on the colony’s eastern border. As mentioned above,

its use as a political tool to debate the secession of the Eastern Cape from the Cape Government sowed the seeds for the later adoption of Afrikaans as a political tool (Van Rensburg 1999:80). The *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (Fellowship of True Afrikaners) translated the Bible into ‘their’ variant of Afrikaans, ignoring all the other varieties. These ‘true Afrikaners’ laid the groundwork for the later mobilization and political unity of white Afrikaans-speakers (Van Rensburg 1999:80).

Language and the New Nation

South Africa’s 1996 constitution names eleven official languages. The importance of excluding no one was clearly understood by the first post-apartheid government. Language policy planners agree that the country’s current socio-linguistic profile must account for a huge array of spoken languages (Webb 2002 63-4). The choice of any one language as the “national” language will be definitely “controversial”, and rife with potential conflict (Webb 1996:140). Recognizing the role of language in nation building, Vic Webb, of the University of Pretoria, acknowledges that, “language planning is basically a political act” (Webb 2002:2).

Choosing Afrikaans, the “language of oppression”, as the national idiom would be fraught with emotion. English, although it is seen as the “language of liberation”, is spoken by 25% of blacks at best, too few people for it to be truly accessible (Webb 2002:79). Athalie Crawford provides several poignant examples of the limitations of English monolingualism in South Africa’s hospitals. Nurses called upon as translators have been thoroughly acculturated to value “the dominant, white, Christian culture as rational and viable, as opposed to black, non-Western culture which [is] primitive, [and] less respectable...The nurse, often pulled in conflicting directions, may see the patients as

her shadow self – less rational, respectable and upwardly socially mobile than the cheerful, brisk, sensible Western nurse persona” (Crawford 1999:37).

Under apartheid mother tongue instruction was used to divide and dominate the indigenous peoples and consequently instruction in any of the autochthonous languages carries a potential stigma (Webb 1996:141). Adding a further complication, Bantustan policies created geographic boundaries around vernacular languages ensuring that none became a lingua franca. Fanagola, a language spread by migrant mine workers and Indian merchants had some potential as a shared medium, but proved to be too tied to the subordinate identity of mine workers to become acceptable in the way Swahili has been adopted in East Africa (Laitin 1992:136).

If it is impossible to choose one language, it is clearly impractical to use them all. Even multilingualism faces challenges. Since most black South Africans already speak several languages it is the white population who would bear the brunt of language re-education (Webb 1996:151). While Webb is convinced that South Africa’s language policy makers must plan for multilingualism, he concedes that endorsing a multilingual state would mean fighting the perceived negative correlation of multi-culturalism and multilingualism with economic development (Webb 1996:153). The global market economy prefers unilingual uniformity. Here Webb reflects the practical application of what Gellner was pointing to above. Pressure to conform to the demands of ‘capital’ for a generic, mobile labour pool is being felt by South Africa’s language policy makers.

David Laitin also predicts a bi-lingual future for South Africa. He envisions the use of English together with a regionally varied vernacular, although he repeats Webb’s concerns about the challenge of overcoming anti-mother tongue bias (Laitin 1992:135).

Given the historical use of language as a tool of division, Webb is not optimistic about the role language might play in creating unity in the post-apartheid nation. He is concerned that without considerable “creativity”, “the language issue will [prove] an on-going barrier to true nation-building in South Africa” (Webb 2002:140). His discussion of language policy planning in the new South African nation points out that one of the most immediate challenges will be repairing the imbalance in linguistic power relations (Webb 2002:96).

According to Webb, nation building in the South African context will need to include the valorization of “multiple identities”, a multi-lingualism seen not as “the replacement of one identity with another, but as the addition of one identity to another” (Webb 2002:143). In his view successful nationhood for South Africa will involve “widening the horizons of identity” rather than “transferring commitment and loyalty” (Webb 2002:143).

Eric Worby (2006) provides a beautiful allegory for this sort of stretching in his analysis of a pick-up soccer game in Johannesburg. Calling the soccer pitch “a field of animated social freedom” he describes with admiration the different styles of play instantiating the different worlds and lives of the players. In this albeit fleeting community the juxtaposition of expectations and goals is embodied in the contrasting styles of play. This “field of spontaneous encounter” invites invention. The varied expectations of cramped pavement and wide school fields, individual glory and team discipline all fit within the rules of a subtly altered game. Different vocabularies of style and tactics are woven together. The differences alter, and yet do not alter, the game the players share. Is it too limiting to assume that a common discourse requires a common

language? Is it possible to imagine that a discourse, like a soccer game, might make room for multilingual code switching? Might even be enriched by the additive properties of bi- and tri-lingualism, choosing the best word to convey a feeling or understanding from a rich library of options? While “common loyalty” may require a “common discourse” (Webb 1996: 151), Neville Alexander reminds us that “the issue is not any particular language for its own sake, but *language as a medium of culture*” (Alexander 1989:37 emphasis original).

In Victor Webb’s opinion multilingualism is South Africa’s only real option (Webb 1996:153). In fact the country’s majority are there already. Most of South Africa’s ‘blacks’ know at least five languages. Language training would have the greatest impact on the ‘whites’, most of whom speak only two of South Africa’s many tongues (Webb 1996:144). Bolstering the idea that communication is about much more than a single shared language, Webb suggests that skills in handling “communicative derailment” be considered part of language training (Webb 1996:152). The goal of such language education would be the acquisition of a communicative competence well beyond words.

Summary and Conclusions

The above summary is not intended as a complete study of South African history, especially as it glosses over the forty-six years of government oppression and anti-apartheid struggle. This outline is meant only to provide a context for the study of the white English-speaking *habitus* in South Africa that follows. To provide a sufficiently complex look at that context I felt that such an overview needed to acknowledge the existence of multiple indigenous peoples and languages, as well as the competing roles of Afrikaans and English in the building of the South African nation-state. It was important

to highlight the deliberately constructed myths of vacant lands, entitlement, and European superiority that were the underpinnings of colonialism, imperialism and apartheid alike. I felt it was also important to explore the particular relationship of Afrikaans and apartheid, and introduce the idea that English arrogance had a role to play in forcing the Afrikaner's hand, and participating in a linguistic and cultural power play that did not account for, or make room for, any of South Africa's 'non-white' populations. Finally, I was convinced that the deliberate separation of peoples by language, and the unique challenge implicit in healing those separations and bridging those communication gulfs needed to be acknowledged.

The next chapter returns to the beginning of the 20th century. The central protagonists are two colonial powers, dueling for ascendancy, all unaware that they are far from alone in the ring. Again the absence of alternative histories and the invisibility of the vast majority of South Africans needs to be acknowledged. I am looking particularly at one specific community and therefore focusing on one collection of histories or narratives. Even so, I will try to stay mindful of the existence of the many other readings I am holding in the wings.

Chapter Three: The Union of South Africa (1910)

There are two narrative lines that run like deep ruts along the path from the South African War of 1899 – 1902 (also called the Boer War, the Anglo-Boer War and the Third War of Independence, depending, of course, on who is doing the naming), to the South Africa Act of 1910. I was conscious making my own way along that track of tumbling into first one rut and then the other depending on what I read, in what order. For example, I first met Lord Milner, British High Commissioner to South Africa and Governor of the Cape Colony, through a biography written by one of his admirers. My first impression of Milner was of an educated, engaged, compassionate man. Reflected through Edward Crankshaw's good opinion Alfred Milner represented all the highest ideals of Empire. Even his sense of "noblesse oblige" was softened in Crankshaw's portrayal by his interpretation of the "white man's burden" to mean that he was responsible for ensuring that South Africa's 'Natives' were "justly treated" and "well-governed" while being guided toward civilization (Crankshaw 1952:94).

When I met Sir Alfred again through the eyes of historians Davenport and Saunders he was behind "the main thrust of the Imperial attack" on the Boer Republics (2000:220). Condescending, arrogant and power hungry, Milner orchestrated a war to enforce Imperial supremacy and break Kruger's strength (Davenport and Saunders 2000:222). What I find interesting here is that Milner's recasting, from hero to villain, cannot be explained through the perspective of the narrators. He does not become the villain because he is being described by his opponents or victims. Instead, the interpretations are shaped by narrative itself. Milner comes into focus framed by, and in the service of, an already existing narrative line.

Edward Crankshaw believed that ‘the Empire is best’. He credited Milner with having seen beyond the acute Dutch / English conflict to the chronic and underlying disease of the “Native question”. Milner was convinced that “what made them [the Dutch] hate the English was, above all, the British attitude towards the Native question” (Crankshaw 1952:47). The distinction between ‘English’ and ‘British’ in that statement is intriguing. Although it was probably accidental on Milner’s part, English-speaking white South Africans are clearly distinguished from ‘The British’ at ‘home’. In a letter home Milner tells his correspondent that “you might unite Dutch and English by protecting the black man, but you would unite them against yourself and your policy of protection” (Headlam 1933:178). Milner is convinced that Dutch and English-speaking South Africans share a position with regard to the “Native question” and that neither Dutch nor English welcome the intervention of Britain on the ‘Native’s’ behalf. In this story line the Imperial authorities play the part of the ‘good guys’ with Britain as the natural leader of men, a mature and “less grasping power...an influence for stability and peace” (Crankshaw 1952:109). This narrative will surface again. It proves to be part of the “deeper” story constituting English identity that allowed the myths supporting apartheid to be challenged within the white English-speaking South African community. English-speaking white South Africa never quite gave up its Imperial claim or its image of itself as ‘the rescuer’, to whom the moral high ground belonged by right.

Boerish Villains

Another track hard-worn into the South African narrative is the corollary to the English as ‘hero’: it casts the Boer as ‘villain’. Pyrah describes Afrikaners as having “a narrowness of mind possibly unique in the history of white races” (Pyrah 1955:35). He

claims, echoing an oft heard orthodoxy, that the British who arrived in South Africa in 1815 were open-minded and progressive, while the Boers, elect and intractable, preferred to abandon their prosperous farms on the Cape than cede to British rule, especially where it promoted “false ideas of equality” between blacks and whites (Pyrah 1955:102-3).

Given early descriptions of the Boers by the British it is small wonder that they felt the need to defend their ‘white’ status. Bryce wrote in 1900, “many of the Boers, especially in the Transvaal, cannot understand a modern Dutch book, hardly even an Amsterdam newspaper. This defect might give English a great advantage if the Boers wished to express abstract ideas. But they have not this wish, for they have no abstract ideas to express. They are a people who live in the concrete” (Bryce 1900:383). Even Olive Schreiner, who often championed romantic images of the Boers (see for example Schreiner 1899 and 1923), is quoted describing young Afrikaner girls sitting “listlessly” with “no mental resources whatsoever... Luckily, perhaps for them, the paucity of ideas prevents time from hanging heavy on their hands. The history of the day is that of their whole lives” (Crapanzano 1985:65). This posited lack of intellect and literacy, together with other perceived social shortcomings prompted Lord Kitchener to declare the “uncivilized Afrikaner” to be “savages with only a thin white veneer” (Steyn 2001:26). Lord Selborne favoured restoring self-government to the Afrikaner colonies as promptly as possible because it was “above all things necessary to prevent the Boers thinking that the British were going to put them on the same level as the natives or coloured people” (Mansergh 1962:67). Selborne’s protest speaks volumes. Clearly the “whiteness” of the Afrikaners, their claim to full membership in a Eurocentric vision of civilization, was in some doubt.

Britain justified war with the Boer Republics on the grounds that the situation of non-Europeans in the Transvaal, where “the black ha[d] no rights whatever and there [was] neither kindness nor wisdom to restrain the brutality of the ruling oligarchy” (Headlam 1931:178) was “repugnant” (Ashforth 1990:25). The evil Afrikaner had to be stopped. Once defeated in war, the Boer should be assimilated. He would be brought to a higher common sense and moral decency by the sheer weight of British moral force.

In an alternate telling of the same events, the Boer is cast as ‘victim’. Those who sympathized with the plight of the Afrikaner protested that the war was needlessly “barbaric”. The Imperial authorities had “made no allowances for a race of brave, free men inhabiting a country which by the might of their own right hand they had won from savages and wild beasts” (Schreiner 1899:19-20). Earlier in this text Schreiner praised the Afrikaners as, “brave, free, [and] fearless...with the Blood of the Old Sea Kings in their veins...most nearly akin to the English of all European folk” (Schreiner 1899:13). The sense of relationship, coupled with guilt for the concentration camp deaths and farm burnings of the Anglo-Boer War convinced the British public that the conquered Boer States “could not be treated like a coloured or Native population” i.e., governed as a ‘subject race’ (Pyrah 1955:151). Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary for the British Government, acknowledged during a parliamentary debate “[t]hat one great Teutonic people cannot hold another Teutonic people in subjection...the fight has been fought out. Now is the time to shake hands; now is the time for reconciliation” (Pyrah 1955:77). The Afrikaner brother had to be trusted. The British conqueror, being morally ascendant, had to be kind. Afrikaner and English had to become one people, “the great blended South African people of the future” (Schreiner 1899:30).

From War to Union

While acknowledging that the events between 1899 and 1910 look different, indeed *are* different depending on which narrative interprets them, it will still be helpful to have the chronology fresh in our minds. In October of 1899 negotiations between Britain and the Boer Republics of The Orange Free State and the Transvaal broke down. The final straw was nominally an ultimatum from the British regarding the *Uitlander* vote (non Afrikaners living in the Transvaal – largely connected with the mines – who were excluded from decision-making power), non-compliance on the part of the Transvaal, and the launch of hostilities by President Kruger who understood that he had a temporary military advantage and should seize the moment.

By the spring of 1900 it was a “war of movement” with British troops burning farms to cut off the Boer commandos’ supply lines, and the Boers blowing up trains to sever the British from their supplies. 27,927 white inmates, 22,000 of them children, died in British concentration camps⁷ (Davenport and Saunders 2000:228). The Treaty of Vereeniging, signed May 31, 1902 ended the war. Significantly, the treaty deferred the issue of enfranchising the ‘Natives’ until responsible self-government could be restored in the now British colonies of the Transvaal and the Orange River State, this despite the fact that ‘Natives’ had supported the British side on the strength of presumed British good will.

Between 1903 and 1905 the South African Native Affairs Commission investigated the “Native problem” and prepared a report under the leadership of Godfrey Lagden (Resident Commissioner in the Bechuanaland Protectorate). I mention this report

⁷ See Davenport and Saunders (2000:231-32) for a clear and concise summary of the role of black South Africans in the Boer War and the number of Black deaths in British concentration camps.

because it played a role in defining and thus creating the South African “Native”, a clear example of the manipulation of what is ‘real’ through words.

In December of 1905 the Liberal Government of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman took office in Britain. This change of government is important because Campbell-Bannerman (as opposition leader) had proven sympathetic to the Boer cause during the war. The suggestion that a Liberal victory was likely in the next British election helped convince Smuts and Botha to sign the Treaty of Vereeniging. In December 1906 and January 1907 domestic self-government was restored to the Transvaal and the Orange Free State respectively. In 1908 the South African Party won the general election in the Cape Colony. Three of four colonies were then in Afrikaner hands, the Cape, the Orange Free State, and the Transvaal. The constitution written for the 1910 Union of South Africa was “made in the Transvaal” with relatively little input from English-speaking white South Africans (Mansergh 1962:52).

Whether the narrator is telling the Empire’s story in which South Africa plays its minor part, or South Africa’s story with the Empire as an interfering external player⁸, it seems generally agreed that the return of self-government to the Afrikaner-dominated colonies without first ensuring the Native franchise was pivotal in setting the stage for segregation along the colour line. Restoring self-government can be interpreted as a “magnanimous gesture” (Mansergh 1962:15) paving the way for South African union, and saving the nascent country for the Empire. It can also be seen as the betrayal of the Empire’s most vulnerable subjects in the mistaken belief that “you have only to be very

⁸ I must acknowledge here the equal possibility of multiple ‘African’ stories in which the Europeans would no doubt be reduced to a late-coming subplot, or allowed to play third clarinet.

kind and patient and magnanimous, and *give away your friends to please your enemies*, in order to make the latter love you” (Milner in Crankshaw 1952:89 – emphasis original).

From the Empire’s perspective there were simply too many risks in upholding the Native’s cause (Pyrah 1955:93). Insisting on a Native franchise would alienate the Afrikaners. Keeping the promise of suffrage to the Indian community, given their growing numbers, risked the eventual loss of the country to “Eastern instead of Western” influence and would have been difficult in any case “in view of the almost unanimous opposition of the white population” (Pyrah 1955:99). Black suffrage would have been still less popular. Lord Selborne, Under-Secretary for the colonies under Chamberlain, observed that, “However democratic whites in South Africa may be in respect of each other...there is nothing in the world less democratic than the attitude of the white working man towards every black” (Mansergh 1962:70).

There were, of course, voices in the Imperial camp who recognized the alternative risk and were alarmed by the effect that the regressive imposition of a colour bar would have within an Empire which included 360 million “coloured” subjects (Pyrah 1955:122). Cabinet voices like Winston Churchill’s cautioned that it was all too easy, “by the gift of Responsible Government... to throw the reins on the horse’s neck” and be rid of “troublesome questions in far away places” (Mansergh 1962:30).

It is worth acknowledging here that it is the conflict between the English and the Dutch / Afrikaner / Boer which is talked about as “the racial issue”. The right of one or the other European ‘race’ to claim the territory is not challenged. The ‘Native problem’, is seen in relation to European rights and claims. Even when being directly considered, the ‘Native’ remains troublingly invisible.

Black Labour

South Africa, as it entered the 20th century was on the cusp of industrialization. New methods of governance, and new ways to think about economics were needed as the driving force of social organization moved from farming to industry. Edward Crankshaw describes the South African war as sitting on the divide between two ages (Crankshaw 1952:44). It marked the end of pre-industrial South Africa.

After the war, J.C. Smuts, Afrikaner general (and later Prime Minister and statesman), insisted that the “racial issue has receded” and been replaced by a competition for “political power between mineowners and the permanent population of the land” (Pyrah 1955:167). In this narrative the conflict between Briton and Boer is not racial but economic: a conflict between agrarian and industrial socio-economic needs. Once this economic dimension is acknowledged it becomes easier to see that South Africa’s ‘Native’ population was being swept into the worldwide Marxist narrative of proletarianization. Their name became ‘labour’.

The possibility of exploiting South Africa’s blacks as a labour force was expressed succinctly by Natal’s “Kafir Commission” in 1853. It is “cheaper and infinitely preferable to train the young kafir in industry than to exterminate him: and one or other must be done”. Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape Colony during the same period felt that the ‘kafir’ could profitably be “made part of ourselves, useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue” (Fairweather 2006:75).

Natives and work were the ‘Native problem’. At the micro level, the ‘problem’ with Natives was the work they were willing to do. At the macro level, the ‘problem’ was

that the Natives were unwilling to work⁹. At both levels whites were totally dependent on black labour, a state of affairs which James Bryce records with concern.

The white people lost the habit of performing manual toil, and acquired the habit of despising it. No one would do for himself what he could get a black man to do for him...The artisans who today [1900] come from Europe adopt the habits of the country in a few weeks or months. The English carpenter hires a Native "boy" to carry his bag of tools for him; the English bricklayer has a Native hodman to hand the bricks to him which he proceeds to set; the Cornish or Australian miner directs the excavation of the seam and fixes the fuse which explodes the dynamite, but the work with the pickaxe is done by the Kafir...Thus the coloured man is indispensable to the white man, and is brought into constant relations with him. He is deemed a necessary part of the economic machinery of the country, whether for mining or for manufacture, for tillage or for ranching.

(Bryce 1900:349-50)

This is the context in which Lord Milner, planning a celebration in Cape Town shortly after his appointment there as Governor in 1897, wrote approvingly, "Earl Grey will insist that each man dig his own hole to plant a tree in honour of the Queen's birthday, pleased to lead by example in order to show "what d---d nonsense" this is...It is this false sentiment...which is keeping Africa back" (Headlam 1931:104). What the Earl calls "d---d nonsense" is the perverse and pervasive idea that manual labour is degrading and should be done always and only by blacks. The implication of Milner's comment is that if Earl Grey were not to insist that each celebrant "dig his own hole" many, or perhaps most of them, would not. Black labour would become so invisible that a popular joke about Van der Merwe the legendary butt of South African humour gives him this punch line: "Hell man, but these rooinecks [a road crew in London] are lazy. Just give me

⁹ Needless to say, such sweeping statements are never uncontested. See Duncan Moodie and Patrick Harries for discussions of the intergenerational impact of mine work, and of those young black men who chose to work in the mines. My research suggests that the common perception of English-speaking whites at the time was that it was hard to find black labour for the mines.

half a dozen kaffirs and I'd do a simple job like that on my own" (paraphrased from Harrison 1981:78).

According to Pyrah, during the labour shortage and economic depression that followed the war 'poor whites' preferred to go without jobs than to take on 'Kaffir' work (Pyrah 1955:191). The association of black skin with labour, and labour with something 'degrading' would make it hard to see past the labourer to the man (The singular masculine pronoun here is intentional. In official parlance the 'Native' was by definition male, and if not, would have been specifically referred to as 'the Native woman' – Ashforth 1990:32). Bryce observed that the white South African in 1900:

considers the Native to exist solely for his own benefit. He is harsh or gentle according to his own temper; but whether harsh or gentle, he is apt to think of the black man much as he thinks of an ox, and to ignore a Native's rights when they are inconvenient to himself. Could he be got to feel more kindly toward the Native, and to treat him, if not as an equal, which he is not, yet as a child, the social aspect of the problem – and it is not the least serious aspect – would be completely altered.

(Bryce 1900:368-9).

Unfortunately the 'social' was terribly tied up in the economic, and superiority, which even Bryce expresses ("not as an equal, which he is not"), is not readily disposed toward "kindness" when it is mixed up with dependency. The personal dependency of white South Africans, English and Afrikaner alike, made the situation of the black labourer in South Africa very vulnerable.

For South African industry the problem inherent in the 'Native Question' was that of "securing an adequate supply of cheap labour for the gold mines of the Witwatersrand" (Ashforth 1990:23). Researching the potential of South Africa's 'Natives' to form a usable labour pool the South African Native Affairs Commission disappointingly reported "primitive pastoral or agricultural communities who possess exceptional facilities for the

regular and full supply of their animal wants, and whose standards of economic needs are extremely low” (quoting Transvaal Labour Commission para 101 – Ashforth 1990:25). The ‘Natives’ had no need for wage employment, and were not at all enthusiastic about working in the mines. There was no ready proletariat for South African industry. In fact, Africans were evicted from their prosperous farms (myths of unproductive, vacant land notwithstanding), to force them to become wage labourers, and to remove them as competitors to white farmers (Fairweather 2006:78).

Once in the “totalizing institution” of the gold mine’s labour compound the “raw Native” could be transformed into a “useful worker”. The problem was encouraging a sufficient number of Natives to go to the mines at all (Ashforth 1990:23). This problem was complicated by the need to tread gently on the piqued sensitivities of the British public. Decades of anti-slavery campaigning and the recent war propaganda decrying the practices of the Boer Republics made it imperative that the ‘Native’ be ‘encouraged’ rather than ‘forced’ to participate (Ashforth 1990:25).

The mandate of the South African Native Affairs Commission struck in 1903 (and made up of English South Africans) was to design a system of governance for the ‘Natives’ which would allow for such encouragement. The Commission’s work beautifully demonstrates Foucauldian principles of who can speak, when, and about what. It defines a special category of citizenship for ‘Natives’, grounded in tribal social organization, land reservations, and the transfer of a chief’s sovereign rights to the crown based on the “peaceful annexation” of tribal lands by the Empire (Ashforth 1990:35-39). Key to this ‘sleight of words’ is that in tribal society there were no “citizens bearing equal rights” only “subjects equally subordinated” (Ashforth 1990:44). The fact that tribal

organization was neither identical with the way the Commission described it, nor universally similar was dismissed out of hand. The Commission had the authority to name names and define definitions. The nature of the ‘problem’ and the range of possible solutions were in their hands. Adam Ashforth provides a passage from a presentation Godfrey Lagden made to his Commission in which he offers definitions for four of the names for black South Africans then in common use. The term “Native” he says, is compromised because these “Natives” are not really autochthonous. They are more generally known as “Kafirs” by the Europeans (sometimes spelled with one “f” sometimes with two). “Bantu” he considers to be the scientific term referring to their physiology and race, “Savages” describes their socio-psychological situation (taken from Lagden’s minutes – address to Native Question – Ashforth 1990:31). Significantly none of the names the people gave themselves are part of this address.

It was also significant that the monies levied from the ‘Natives’ to encourage them to accept wage labour were called “taxes” and not “rents”. To pay rent would have compromised the land reserve principle and made a lie of the transfer of sovereignty from chief to Crown. A tax, on the other hand, was close kin to tribute and fit within the governance design. It was especially helpful in terms of public sentiment in Britain that raising a ‘hut tax’ meant penalizing men with many wives each in her own hut. Insisting that the ‘Native reserves’ cover their own administrative costs, while imposing English moral standards, must have played well with the British public.

The South African vocabulary of identity ascription (bantu, kafir, black, white) is distasteful and awkward. I find using it uncomfortable. I want to acknowledge the danger that in reading and writing the discourse I am examining I will seem to validate it.

Vincent Crapanzano's reflections on his own discomfort with the vocabulary are reassuring. In order to express the ideas and attitudes of the villagers in Wyndal where he conducted his field work he felt obliged to use their words. Even so he protests that "white South Africa's sociological language poses a serious problem", in that the vocabulary itself forces categories of thought (Crapanzano 1985:27). It is not enough to describe and explain a way of knowing. An archaeology of knowledge must dig below the object it examines to explore the sedimentation of socio-political privilege. There is "a whole mythology" embedded in language, the words we use and how we use them (Crapanzano 1985:28). Words reveal a way of knowing, but they can also obscure alternative perceptions, and cement the advantage of those who control the naming of names, and set the rules of syntax.

Divided Loyalties

The pages above summarize what I gleaned from history books, some written during the time under scrutiny, some years later, some full of first hand observations, some of collected letters and documents. Knowing little about the period around the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 I began with a history survey and then went on to look at newspaper clippings armed with some expectations of what I might find. I was looking for examples of language that would provide evidence of attitudes, practices and expectations I could consider to be "not atypical" of the time, based on the themes and trends my survey had already suggested. The newspapers from the 1890s and 1900s that I read are revealing in both their use of language, and their choice of content. They provide evidence of the conceptual framework and *habitus* of English-speaking white South Africa as it became a 'country' within the British Empire. The pages that follow

consider several of the ‘not atypical’ examples of language use and subject matter I found interesting. They endeavour to follow William Hanks’ example by saturating the language in context in order to discover something of the *habitus* expressed in the words.

The first thing to catch my attention scanning through *The Rand Daily Mail* of 1910 was the content of the front pages. Instead of headline news to catch the reader’s attention, the first few pages of each day’s paper read like small-town gossip. There are columns of birth and death announcements, wedding and engagement announcements, congratulatory and condolence messages, personal ads, endless musical evening invitations and, most significantly, a double column down the right hand side of the page listing the people who have come and gone on ‘The Mail’, the ship linking Cape Town to London. These newspaper pages act as a bulletin board for news linking those at ‘home’ and those away in the colonies. The evening entertainments suggest a certain level of wealth and mobility seemingly confirmed by the regular comings and goings across the sea. English-speaking white South Africans were a mobile set, evidently still firmly connected with ‘home’. James Bryce observes, “Comparatively few adult Englishmen sprung from fathers themselves born in Africa are as yet to be found. But the descendants of the Dutch and Huguenot settlers are Afrianders [a typical spelling of Afrikaner in turn-of-the-century texts] up to the sixth or seventh generation” (Bryce 1900:16). The British have been on the scene for very nearly a hundred years by 1900, but they have yet to really settle in.

Despite the distinction Lord Milner drew between the British and South African English, it has been quite natural to move back and forth between South African and British texts and sources. It was helpful to mark the difference only in order to see the

narratives of 'nation' and 'Empire' as separate story lines. In the first decade of the 20th century South Africans like Olive Schreiner would not have made such a distinction. For her, and many like her

the memory of fog-smitten London is inextricably blended with all the profoundest emotions, the most passionate endeavours, the noblest relations our hearts will ever know...If tomorrow hostile fleets encompassed England, and the tread of foreign troops was on her soil, she would not need to call to us; we would stand beside her before she had spoken
(Schreiner 1899:10-11).

Schreiner admits that there are exceptions, those who did not travel 'home' for school or regular visits, but her tone makes them sound 'exceptional' (Schreiner 1899:12).

The Old Boys' Club

An ad posted in *The Rand Daily Mail* published Saturday, March 12, 1910 (pg. 2), suggests something of the *habitus* of the mines. An ex-policeman of 28 who can boast of "excellent testimonials for [the] last seven years" and speaks "Kaffir, Dutch [and] English" addresses himself "To Mine Officials and Others" seeking a "situation". The most interesting information embedded in the ad is that the situation-seeker speaks "Kaffir". The conflation of race and language ubiquitous in later apartheid ideology is already assumed. "Kaffir" is the European pejorative for black South Africans and not the name of a language. The ad writer is not making that distinction. It seems most probable that his "Kaffir" refers in fact to Fanagola, the functional 'lingua franca' developed in the mines to facilitate communication between 'bosses' and workers in a multilingual situation. The claim to speak "Kaffir" implies a near total ignorance of the range of 'Native' languages and suggests that the bid to submerge the 'Native's' identity as an individual has been effective. He is no more than a labourer and there is no need to speak

to him except in the context of that labour. His own tongue as well as all other contexts for communication are gone.

On page eight of the same newspaper I found an article describing the “Daring Escape” of Tommy de Jong, a “Cape boy” accused of theft. He went to the “sanitary convenience” under the supervision of “a native constable” and is thought to have made his getaway from there. The “police boy” waited “a considerable time” but de Jong did not reappear. I am interested here by the existence of a “native constable”, even if he is later called a ‘boy’. Had the trial been taking place in the Cape Colony (where Tommy de Jong originated) a ‘Native’ in the role of police officer would be less surprising. The Cape Colony was known for its progressive attitudes and inclusive suffrage. The Rand, however, was a no-man’s-land of sorts within the conservative Transvaal, under the sway of the mining companies. To describe de Jong’s escape as “daring” rather than something more menacing may also reflect the special temper of the Rand. Bryce seemed dazzled by what he saw there in his travels:

there is nothing to remind the traveler that he is in a Dutch country except the Dutch names of the streets on some of the street corners. The population – very mixed, for there are Germans, Italians, and French as well as some natives of India – is practically English-speaking, for next in number to the colonial English and recent immigrants from Great Britain come the Australians and Americans, who are for all social purposes practically English. It is a busy, eager, restless, pleasure-loving town, making money fast and spending it lavishly, filled from end to end with the fever of mining speculation. (Bryce 1900:306)

The impression the article leaves with me is not of lightheartedness, but of inconsequence. The ‘Cape boy’ escaped from the ‘police boy’ – how very diverting.

The *Times* of London published an excerpt drawn from Canon Henson’s sermon of June 1, 1902, the day after the Treaty of Vereeniging ended hostilities in South Africa.

In his address the Canon calls on the British people not to forget the price that has been paid for lasting peace:

The very greatness of the price we have had to pay in suffering and sorrow indicates the special responsibilities attached to it. Be it our task as Christian citizens to heal the resentments of this long conflict, and to join hands with our gallant opponents, now become our fellow-subjects, in order to build a Christian civilization on the land which has been for so many months ravaged by war. South Africa was a land without traditions, without history – one of the blanks in the moral geography of mankind. It is now a land rich in sacrifice and heroism, able to provide a worthy environment for a manly and high-minded society.

(*The Times*, London, Monday June 2 1902, pg.12)

Another editorial in the same paper declares of the Treaty of Vereeniging's generous terms:

That is the conclusion which has been the aim of the British people from the commencement of the struggle. They were determined, from the moment when our frontiers were violated, to force the Boers into submission, and, when submission had been made, to spare no effort for the welfare and the contentment of our adversaries within the pale of the Empire. The many noble qualities displayed by the Burghers [here meaning the citizens of the Boer Republics] in the course of the struggle have made a profound impression on the race which is proud to see them beneath its flag.

(*The Times*, London, Monday June 2 1902, pg. 9)

All the talk is of Boer and Briton: their terrible conflict, their nobility in war, their need for reconciliation, the glories of their projected collective future. The narratives of Teutonic cousins, noble Empire, fair play, and good sportsmanship are plaited together. The whole “it was a good fight, now let's shake hands” line smacks of extramural sports fields and the shared and exclusive code of belonging between British ‘Public School’ boys on the rugby field. I thought it was interesting that Pyrah, in his appended *Biographies of Statesmen* included Asquith's “Balliol days” (Public School) association with Lord Milner as consequential in his later political alignment (Pyrah 1955:260). I

suspect that the school days *habitus* of competition and camaraderie continued to inform the worldviews and alliances of grown men¹⁰. The line “spare no effort for the welfare and contentment of our adversaries” made me think of Milner’s quip that to end the conflict between English and Dutch the Empire was ready to “give away [its] friends to please [its] enemies”. If Milner was truly convinced that South Africa’s ‘Natives’ were the Empire’s ‘friends’ while the Afrikaner was its foe, he may well have been in a slim minority. The real line between friend and stranger seems to be clearly drawn in Canon Henson’s sermon. Before it was sanctified by Boer and British blood South Africa had no tradition and no history. It was a blank spot “in the moral geography of mankind”. I would be unconvinced by an offer of friendship from an Empire that looked right through me.

The final newspaper clipping provides an interesting narrative to underlie all the others in my mind. In *The New York World* I found an article sent in by *The World’s* London correspondent. “*Boers Reply Portends War With England*” it announces, and goes on to describe something of the proposals and counterproposals of the last months leading to the South African war. The reporter’s source, “a high Colonial Official”, unnamed, expresses his opinion that the issue boils down to money, and Kruger’s will to “make money out of them [the *Uitlanders*]”, contributing to the economic interpretation of the war. It is the last few sentences of the article that most interested me though:

It is learned that the Government is somewhat dismayed at the public’s slight interest in the Transvaal. One member of it said: Dreyfus seems the

¹⁰ There is ample evidence of the school days / boy scouts ideal of imperial manhood in the person of Lord Baden-Powell. Cynthia Enloe offers an interesting, and amusing description of the inherent superiority of the white man because he had “learned how to fight tooth decay, walk without slouching and properly carry his rucksack...” (1989:50).

only thing our people talk about, though England is in a most serious crisis.
This indifference is perhaps typical.

(*The New York World*, Wednesday, August 23, 1899 pg.2)

Typical indifference. Crankshaw called it “the British version of original sin: inertia, woolly thinking, and self-deception” (Crankshaw 1952:138). He describes Milner’s ongoing frustration with a British public who confused ‘peace’ with tranquility and bucolic afternoons (Crankshaw 1952:34). Nicholas Mansergh chides that English South Africans “preferred their evening game of bridge to the hard thinking given to ... constitutional drafting” (Mansergh 1962:52) and quotes Patrick Duncan, a member of the British Parliament in 1909 saying, the Boers have vision and cohesion while “the others [the English] have about as much cohesive principle as chaff on a windy day” (Mansergh 1962:52). Interestingly, every President of South Africa between 1910 and May 1994 was an Afrikaner.

Perhaps the British and their English South African counterparts could afford indifference. They could afford entertainments and inter-continental mobility. They could afford amusement at the inconsequential daring of ‘Native’ “boys”. They could afford to be sportsmanlike in a war far from home. They could afford to overlook centuries of tradition and history and striving in a country now theirs by conquest. As Olive Schreiner so delicately expressed it, ““we may have no wish to oppress, but we do not readily understand wants and conditions distinct from our own” (Schreiner 1899:18). Crankshaw sums up the English *habitus* quite nicely. “In many societies including our own, children are said to be grown up when they have reached the stage of forgetting that the game they happen to be engaged in is only one of many” (Crankshaw 1952:13). As British subjects and lords of the Empire theirs was the only game in town.

Summary and Conclusions

Impressions based on immersion in the thoughts and issues of white English-speaking South Africa circa 1910 seem to support my original suspicion that English-speaking white South Africa played at least a supporting role in making room for the later Apartheid policies. They colluded with the Afrikaners in limiting non-European franchise rights in the first constitution. The *habitus* of white English-speaking South Africans allowed them to overlook the humanity of their black “boys” and “maids”, to negate their history and their languages, and to come to depend on them for their labour quite separate from their personhood. When it came to a perceived choice between the social and political rights of the essentially alien ‘blacks’, and forming a union with their European neighbours, neighbours and the Union won. There may even have been a naïve certainty that the choice was not so much a choice as a deferral, that the unfolding of civilization toward the pinnacle of British liberalism was inevitable and needed only time. Perhaps their continued attachment to a home in Britain made them lazy about events and affairs they felt did not touch them too closely. Perhaps the impending European war made the Union seem imperative at whatever cost. Whatever the rationale or motivation, the Union of South Africa’s first Constitution did not include a ‘Native’ or ‘coloured’ franchise and English-speaking white South Africa signed on.

Chapter Four: National Party Victory (1948)

Researchers, talking about their experience of field work, describe the way they piece together an interpretation of what is going on by paying attention to details, stepping away from them into the rhythm of days and events, and eventually noticing new details in repeated experience as they begin to know what to look for, to know what counts and what does not. I tried to simulate that experience on a rather different scale by going directly to newspapers, novels and the various other documents on microfiche in the library to investigate the English white South African experience around the time of the 1948 election. Perhaps the much more scattered, less coherent picture of attitudes, events, and chronology that I patched together is a closer facsimile of what I might have experienced living in the field as a contemporary. It is after all rather contrived to begin with a narrative strung like a clothes line ready to peg details onto as they are uncovered.

On the other hand, it is possible to make a case for something like a pre-existing conceptual ‘clothes line’, understood as the “assumptions, values, and attitudes, [the] overlay” through which and by which we experience our world (Lakoff and Johnson 2001:57). Lakoff and Johnson’s insight that how we experience things is as much a result of how we think about them as our perceptions are a result of our experiences turns our being in the world into a hermeneutical circle in its own right, with our perceptions and experiences in constant interaction. Whether the circle begins with experience or perception is in some ways a moot point. Even an infant is building on experiences experienced against a perceptual backdrop imposed by the responses of those around him or her. If we did begin as a blank slate it wouldn’t last long.

A South African reading *The Rand Daily Mail* in Johannesburg in 1948 was in fact fitting new details onto a pre-existing string of details, assumptions and interpretations running back through a lifetime of such details. The challenge I faced was to avoid letting the impressions I was gleaning settle too quickly into any pattern at all lest they settle out in a way that reflected my location in this time and place (Canada, 2007), and the assumptions about South Africa that are precipitates of my experience as the child of English-speaking white South African émigrés living in Canada. The idea that there is no ‘absolute’ socio-historical truth to be uncovered is both liberating and intimidating. It implies constant flux. Whether we think of the discernment of ‘truth’ in terms of Gadamer’s ‘playing out’ of a dialogue (1975:93), Ricoeur’s ‘circle’ being fed with new experiences and information (1981:190), or a conceptual system à la Lakoff and Johnson “grounded in, and constantly tested by, our experiences and those of other[s]” (2001:193), what we think we know must remain tentative and contingent. Under those conditions it seems not only forgivable but perhaps essential that my target is still very much in motion.

I have chosen several examples of English ‘discourse’ that fit my criteria as “not atypical” of English-speaking white South Africans at the time of the National Party victory. These “not atypical” cases reflect attitudes and themes that surfaced time and again in my reading, pointing to the conceptual framework and *habitus* operating in the white English-speaking community at the time. These attitudes and practices shed light on English South Africa’s role in the National Party victory, and the subsequent implementation of its apartheid agenda. Traditionally, this is the point in South African

history where Afrikaans takes over as the language of government, and the Afrikaners are left holding the ball while the English wash their enlightened hands.

The impression I gleaned of English-speaking white South Africa's reaction to the NP victory was a mixture of surprise, blaming, distancing, racism and fear. Obviously, it would be misguided to look for a univocal response. White, English-speaking South Africa was no more of one mind than any other group has ever been. I would go so far as to suggest that if the collective was torn about how to respond to the post-war context in South Africa, a context that included the rise of African independence movements, international ideological debates, and staggering economic changes as well as the rise to power of Afrikanerdom, few individuals were any more certain of their own stand.

Stunned surprise in the face of the NP victory is everywhere. "The world was bewildered, as were the South African people themselves" (Sachs 1953:15). There is no doubt some truth in English South Africa's orthodox "it wasn't me" line. In the days following the election, letters to the editor in *The Rand Daily Mail* describe National Party supporters "in the streets and shops of Johannesburg" demanding to be spoken to in Afrikaans. On Monday May 31, 1948, the day the NP victory was proclaimed, a story on the newspaper's front page complained, "*English, they say, is no longer the language of the capital*". On Wednesday, June 2 the front page headline read, "'South Africa Belongs To Us Once More' Says Malan". English-speaking, white South Africa felt itself under siege. This sense of being swept before an alien power might explain some part of individual quiescence in the face of racial policy developments under the NP. There must have been a sense of betrayal added to the sting of exclusion. Upsets like this were not

meant to happen. How had the benevolent Empire failed to take things in hand and set them to rights?

From deep within the Boer-as-villain narrative, historian Brian Bunting links Dr. Malan, the National Party leader, with Hitler, and NP ideology with Nazism. Ties between Malan's National Party and Germany were not a secret. Afrikaans-speaking Nationalist supporters had gone so far as to sabotage the Allied war effort in southern Africa, working toward a German victory, and their own inclusion as an independent Republic in the regime that would follow. Bunting speaks for English-speaking white South Africa when he expresses his outrage with the election results: "Was this the fruit of victory; that the admirers of Hitler should come to power?" (Bunting 1964:130). World War II was only recently ended, and its geopolitical fallout not yet resolved. Emotions still ran high. Dutch Reformed Church clergy had been imprisoned during the war as "subversive elements". To express their disapproval of those who participated in the English war many *predikants* "excluded soldiers in uniform from their church services and refused to baptize soldiers' children" (Sachs 1953:59). English South Africa resented the attitude of Afrikaner 'Republicans' who had seen the war as a chance to shake off membership within the British Empire.

Bunting is doubtful that "many English votes were cast for the Nationalists in the 1948 election" (Bunting 1964:125). The election statistics point to the inherent weakness in the "first-past-the-post" electoral system. Despite 'winning' the popular vote by 53.3% to 39.4% the United Party lost the election to the Nationalists (Davenport and Saunders 2002: 372). Bunting's numbers give the NP 70 seats to the UP's 65 (Afrikaner Party/9: Labour/6: Native Representatives/3: Bunting 1964:129), numbers confirmed by

Davenport and Saunders who state that “the HNP and their allies won the general election...by 79 seats to the 71 gained by the UP and its associates” (here the National Party is given its name in Afrikaans *Herstigte Nasionale Party* and allied with the Afrikaner Party -- Davenport and Saunders 2002:369).

Davenport and Saunders attribute the NP's success largely to “the work of the delimitation commission, which had produced this result partly by the loading and unloading of constituencies, but more especially by the drawing of constituency boundaries in such a way that the Nationals were able to waste fewer votes than their opponents (Davenport and Saunders 2002:372). While Davenport and Saunders do not actually accuse the NP of gerrymandering, they do point out that the “loading” or distribution of votes between ridings gave rural (predominantly Afrikaner) votes undue weight. In conversation with Allen Cook, South African historian and an executive member of the International Defense and Aid Fund for South Africa, I was able to confirm the significance of these “loaded ridings”. The disproportionate weight of the rural vote was understood by Smuts and his government. Its significance was simply underestimated. According to Cook, Smuts was overly fond of his role on the world stage. He failed to give the situation unfolding in South Africa after the war due time and energy. Smuts allowed the loaded ridings to stand, and even turned down a petition to increase the number of members representing black interests (three or four seats which might have been enough to sway the balance) because he was overconfident, and he was not paying attention (Allen Cook – personal communication Dec. 10 1996). The sense of surprise I read in English-language editorials, letters to the editor and election results coverage is consistent with the fact that the Nationalists lost by 140,000 votes but won the

election (Bunting 1964:129). If that number seems small, it will help to remember that the whole population of South Africa in 1948 was 11,957,000 (Lahmeyer 1999/2005 “Populstat”) and that only a fraction of that number (something close to 10% or 1,195,000) had the right to vote at all.

The English sense of powerlessness is reflected in a spate of letters to the editor responding to the editorial printed in *The Rand Daily Mail* on September 8, 1950. The editorial writer is commenting on “the exodus of English-speaking people from the Union to other parts of the British Commonwealth” in response to government policy “now clearly visible to all but those who are determined not to see it”. The writer is convinced that “there are uncomfortable times ahead for all but the devoted adherents of the True Faith”, orthodoxy being the divine ordination of white rule and racial separation. Nevertheless the editorial pleads with English-speaking South Africa not to jump ship, abandoning the country to the extremists. “The more difficult things become,” pleads the writer, “the stronger is the case for remaining and putting up such a fight as is possible...Those who run away...can never be entirely at peace with their consciences” (*The Rand Daily Mail* Friday, September 8, 1950 p.8).

Among the eloquent responses defending the English-speaking exodus I found one entitled “*The Case for Running Away*” arguing the futility of opposition (*The Rand Daily Mail* Thursday, September 14, 1950 p.8). Another piece signed “Going Bye’M Bye” defends the writer’s decision to leave lamenting that,

the bad dreams have become a reality...the Nationals are secure in the saddle, and the United Party is dead as a dodo anyway...We see our children growing up in a nest of hatred and intolerance of those things we love; everything British is being taken away from us...It’s not defeatism

that is driving people out of the Union; it's just plain indifference. Nobody likes us or really cares what happens here.

(*The Rand Daily Mail* Monday, September 11, 1950 p.8)

While “Going Bye’M Bye” clearly articulates his own feeling of being overlooked by the new regime, it is noteworthy that he grieves for “*everything British*” and is concerned about the “intolerance” shown for “*those things we love*” (my emphasis). The psychic connection with England lives on. This is 1950. Thirty five years later in 1985, nearly a hundred years after Olive Schreiner described the abiding love of England in the English-South African soul, the “locus of meaning and values, [and] significance” for English-speaking white South Africans will still be elsewhere. Their displacement, or dislocation, with one foot in Africa and one in England earns them the name “salties”. Their Afrikaner neighbours, with their feet planted securely on African soil, will mock the English for straddling the salty sea (Crapanzano 1985:200).

Having pointed out the glaring lacuna in “Going Bye’M Bye’s” self-centred complaints (the important issues after all went well beyond hurt Anglophile sensitivities), we can still concede that there was justification for the writer’s sense of being uncared for. When the National Party government, as one of its first acts in office, released German collaborators being held as “war-time offenders” the “uproar” of protest from English-speaking Unionist Party supporters was simply ignored (Bunting 1964:131). The Native Affairs Department inherited by the incoming government and “dominated by English-speakers with UP sympathies” was deliberately “purged” of this “so called ‘liberal’ element”. Malan’s government was “the first to consist of Afrikaners only” (Posel 1991:270). The English might well have felt routed from the corridors of power.

It is telling that Deborah Posel chooses to qualify her description of United Party supporters as 'liberal'. She clearly feels that the adjective is overly generous (Posel 1991:270). Emil "Solly" Sachs is equally unwilling to credit the UP with 'liberal' thinking. He declares that, "There is no liberal party in South Africa and there never has been one, nor is there any organization or unity among the people who like to call themselves liberals" (Sachs 1953:52). According to Eugene Dvoria, liberalism in South Africa at the beginning of the National Party tenure was a matter of individual rather than party politics. Dvoria writes in 1952 that "there is little to choose between the two [principal political parties in South Africa]... the mild accents of liberalism have been rendered inaudible by the clamour...for a white South Africa at any price" (Dvoria 1952:31).

In his 1949 address to the Synod of The Anglican Church of Cape Town, Bishop Clayton chastises his fold. While making it clear that he finds the situation precipitated by the National Party victory appalling, he refuses to lay blame for the plight of South Africa's non-European population entirely on the new government's shoulders. He goes so far, in fact, as to state that the lack of opportunity for 'blacks' in South Africa is "not in any way due to the policy of the present government...it is due, not to law, but to custom, to the action of individuals...It has gone on for years" (Clayton 1960:5-6). Sachs echoes this condemnation. Under the previous United Party government, he comments dryly, "the oppression inflicted on the non-European people was [only] an expedient... actuated almost solely by a desire to meet the labour needs of farms and mines" rather than "the foundation of a permanent national policy". He goes on to suggest with deadpan irony that had the previous mandate continued "it is highly probable that sections of non-

European people would have been granted certain elementary rights such as education, vocational training, better housing, etc.”, as a more skilled work force became necessary to industry (Sachs 1958:35). It hardly needs to be pointed out that under the pre-1948 regime these things were no more available. Sachs is bitingly clear that practice has always been dictated by the needs of industry rather than any ‘liberal’ compassion for the ‘Native’.

I have a sense that the lack of political leadership is significant. The voice of Hofmeyr, a lone member of parliament pleading the rights of non-Europeans within the United Party is something of a voice in the wilderness. Other voices pleading for reason and compassion, like Bishop Clayton, and Trevor Huddleston, speak from pulpits rather than parliament and do not carry the force of legislation. The pressures of daily interaction with the ‘other’ are too close. The tyranny of the urgent is not counter-balanced by a larger collective vision. I was very conscious, struggling to make connections, that there were no ‘English’ figures around whom to build a story; no Alfred Milner or Joseph Chamberlain. Perhaps if English-speaking white South Africa had been ready to rally behind a black leader, or take up Gandhi’s standard...? But that would have been a big step.

Separate Development

Between the lines of the Empire-as-good-guy, Boer-as-villain narrative it is possible to read a variation of the Boer-as-victim account. This telling portrays the National Party’s Apartheid policy as the natural unfolding of popular opinion and practice within, and even outside, South Africa. Herman Giliomee argues that “[f]ar from being a Nazi-style deviance, apartheid developed within the mainstream of pre-Second World

War racism and social engineering enthusiasms in the West” (Giliomee 2003:379). In the right light, it can be viewed as “an indigenous, post-colonial response” to growing African independence (Van Zyl Slabbert in Giliomee 2003:375). Allowing for separate development meant segmenting South Africa’s territory to make room for independent African states.

When Rev. J.C. du Plessis, a Dutch Reformed Church pastor, first used the term ‘apartheid’ he was protesting the wholesale imposition of Western values and capitalist precepts along with the Christian message of salvation. British missionaries were accused of being as interested in creating Englishmen as in saving souls. Their activity “indirectly responded to the needs of capital to create labourers and consumers of British manufactured products” (Fairweather 2006:76) or, more sinister still, was a “powerful agent” in “the disintegration of South Africa tribes” (Dvorja 1952:49). Du Plessis was condemning this sort of assimilation when he insisted that the gospel had to be taken to ‘Natives’ in a way “that fitted the African ‘character, nature and nationality’”. His ideology was not about fencing off the ‘other’ (segregation), but about ensuring that “the various races [had] the opportunity of uplifting themselves on the basis of what is their own”, an ideology re-framed to political ends under Apartheid (Malan in Giliomee 2003:374). In the best light Apartheid meant a clean division of territory that would allow for “complete racial partition” and “responsible guardianship” (Sparks 1990a: 178). Apartheid zealots would argue that

confronted with a conflict between the requirements of the ideology and the economy, South Africa should choose “to be poor and white rather than rich and multi-racial”... We will have to be prepared to make great sacrifices...which we must count as an honour...and if we must give up much of our leisure that the presence of the native has afforded us, and put our own hand to the plough, and the spade, and the pickaxe, and the

broom, then there must arise in us a high sense of duty that it is all in the interest of creating a home for posterity.

(Geoff Cronjé in Sparks 1990a:180)

Patrick Van Rensburg, seeking to explain his part in promoting Apartheid, points to the parallels between Apartheid's goals and the goals of Indian Partition (Van Rensburg 1962:27). The project's objective was to draw lines through South Africa in order to give distinct peoples separate territories. His allegory does not address the horror that accompanied the severing of India. Van Rensburg also compares South Africa's situation to that of the Belgian Congo. Unlike the Belgians, who avoided racial conflict in their colony by keeping the white working class at home, "we [Afrikaners]", he says, "had no home base in Europe to which the Whites could go" (Van Rensburg 1962:29). One clear and ever-present distinction between the Afrikaners and the English in South Africa rides on this sense of there being nowhere else to be. While the Afrikaner considered him or herself a part of Africa, the English could always say with Sparks, "It is all very well for me, an English-speaking South African, to adopt a liberal stance, to be prepared to risk the leap of faith involved in committing oneself to the principle of majority rule...I know that my own racial and cultural heritage is not at stake... an English-speaking world will always be there" (Sparks 1990a:209-210). Hurt insistence that there are complexities in the South African context which the world at large has failed to take into account is a repeating coda in the Boer-as-victim narrative.

English Distance

Many English-speaking South Africans with truly liberal views, unable or unwilling to live with the social costs of dissent took the "path of lesser resistance" and held their peace, or "decamped and [shook] the dust of the country from their feet"

(Dvoria 1952:32). It is also fair to point out that there were many, both English- and Afrikaans-speaking, who left South Africa as part of a more generalized white exodus, driven less by ideology and more by growing social unrest and the promise of stability elsewhere.

English-speaking whites who stayed in South Africa after the NP election victory developed a range of coping skills, many of which are brought to life in Nadine Gordimer's novel *A World of Strangers* written in 1958. The central character, Toby, has recently arrived in South Africa to represent his English family's publishing house. Gordimer's social commentary is channeled through him. In conversation with a legal aid lawyer who has come to ask him to allow one of his employees a few days' absence to deal with a legal matter involving his mother and the "location" where she lives Toby expresses his surprise at the silence surrounding race laws and racial conflict; "It's like love, or God; and I thought that here everyone would be discussing it over coffee cups, the way we do Russian foreign policy or expense accounts [at home in England]" (Gordimer 1958:85). Anna, the legal-aid lawyer, answers him saying, "you must understand that you are in a country where there are all sorts of different ways of talking about or rather dealing with this thing. One of the ways is not to talk about it at all. Not to deal with it at all. Finished. That's possible, you know; you'll find out" (Gordimer 1958:84). The reader is exposed in this exchange to both the tool of 'silence' and the reality of black/white, employer/employee relationships in which it is expected that the white lawyer will need to vouch for the black employee's need for time away from work, and the employer has the right to be privy to details of the employee's personal affairs.

Toby also notes and remarks on an attitude he comes to see as common among English, white South Africans, “an unexpressed desire to dissociate themselves from their milieu, a wish to make it clear that they were not taken in, even by themselves” (Gordimer 1958:73). The girl he is with when he makes this observation is an intriguing example, a butcher’s daughter playing the part of English country gentry, complete with equestrian competitions and afternoon tea parties. Her sense of self is a composite of persona from ‘home’, but it leaves little room for the here and now of where she lives. It is as if she is playing a role in someone else’s story; exonerated from responsibility because this is not really her life.

Another “not atypical” bit of language gleaned from *The Rand Daily Mail* reflects distancing of a similar sort, with a similar effect. One of the letters to the editor on Thursday September 7, 1950, is responding to a speech made by President Harry Truman of the U.S. in support of the fighting in Korea. In his speech Truman outlined three essential freedoms that are under threat. In his letter the writer quips that “as the Transvaal no longer officially believes in the third freedom [freedom of speech], I take it that the South African Squadron now proceeding to Korea will be instructed to fight only three quarters of the time”. The letter’s writer is being glibly clever in a way that seems significant to me. It suggests an association between aloof detachment and displayed intelligence that will prove important in understanding the Imperial *habitus*. Just as significant, in terms of inferring something of the writer’s outlook is the fact that he entirely overlooks the first two freedoms mentioned in Truman’s speech. Freedom of worship was taken away from a huge sector of South Africa’s population by clause 29 (c) of the Native Laws Amendment Bill which forced white area churches to turn away

coloured and black members, enforcing the colour bar even in worship. For the same vast population the freedom to choose one's own employment simply never existed. The quick-witted letter writer betrays his distance from the lived world of black South Africa even as he displays his 'clever' indifference.

Racist Grammar

The most troubling examples of accepted language usage reveal a deeply embedded racism, implicitly likening 'Natives' and animals. In a story printed in *The Rand Daily Mail* on Friday September 8, 1950, police are cleared of wrongdoing after shooting "several Natives" who threw rocks at a troop carrier driving through Alexandria Township (a 'Native' location) during the May Day riots (May 1, 1950). The nine dead men are never named. They are described as 'Natives' five times, and as a mob twice. The article mentions that six 'people' were killed when the police opened fire but it is not clear how this number relates to the nine 'Natives' also mentioned in the article. The separation of natives from 'peoplehood' is conspicuous.

Nadine Gordimer's, *A World of Strangers* (1958) begins and ends with similar negations of 'Native' personhood. The novel's narrator, Toby, describes his first impression of Mombasa as he looks down onto the quay from the ship. "I hate the faces of peasants", he writes, "[h]eavy, mild and brutish faces, on which emotion settles momentarily, from the outside, like a fly on the face of an ox" (Gordimer 1958:1). Very near the end of the novel Toby goes on a hunting expedition with nine other men, a mixed crowd of six English and Afrikaans speaking white South Africans, and three house servants who have been brought along to do the heavy carrying and clean the birds that are shot. Coming back to the cars after a lunch stop he tells us that the three Africans

“who had been packed in along with the gear” were “eating over paper packets in the station wagon and did not even look up when we came out of the hotel” (Gordimer 1958:264), or again, “the Africans...heard only the sense, ignored the words, and did the minimum of what was required of them...[two] very black Nyasas with blank faces that looked worried the moment they took on any task...[and] a little sniveling Basuto with a face the colour of fear” (Gordimer 1958:276). In place of personal pronouns Toby/Gordimer uses the exotic tribal names ‘Basuto’ and ‘Nyasa’, clouding the grammatical distinction between who and what, between human and animal. There are practical consequences embedded in the distinction made by the words.

There were other examples of words being used to divide in the various texts I read. Patrick Van Rensburg grew up in the 1940s in Natal. As a child he lived outside the Afrikaner community, going by his English-speaking, Roman Catholic grandmother’s name, Lagesse. His description of the people populating his childhood is riddled with classifications and divisions. His people, says Van Rensburg, were anti-Indian and anti-Afrikaner, but

‘liked the native’, who, one believed, in turn ‘liked us’. He was we thought, ‘perfectly happy’, sitting and laughing in the sun. He was lazy and unambitious, but what right had we to impose ‘our way of life’ on him?...At school we spoke of the African as ‘Jim fish’, the ‘Munt’, or the ‘Coon’; the Indians were ‘Coolies’ or the ‘Churrahs’; the Afrikaners the ‘Boets’, ‘Jaaps’ or Backvelders; the coloureds (or Eurafricans) the ‘Koetchies’; and the Jews the ‘Yids’. In our house, Johannesburg was often called Jewsborg...I never questioned any of these attitudes.

(Van Rensburg 1962:13).

When as a young man Lagesse / Van Rensburg sought a place in the civil service, the government ideology of separate peoples that should remain separate was as easy for him to take on as was his father’s Afrikaner name. As Crapanzano pointed out in his

reflections on the insidious danger of the vocabulary in use in South Africa, the plethora of labels creates a plethora of separate identities.

In an appendix to Hofmeyr's work J.P. Cope, Hofmeyr's editor, offers some of his thoughts about the National Party 1948 victory. He observes that in post World War II South Africa, "The white worker was haunted by the nightmare of being displaced by lower paid natives. The white parent, whether Afrikaans or English, had his dreams disturbed by the vision of a half-caste nation of the future. The crude election cry of 'Are you willing to see your daughter married to a Kaffir?' was capable of swaying almost any white electorate" (Hofmeyr revised by J.P. Cope 1952:223-4). Sachs tells us that both parties, the NP and the UP, engaged in the "unscrupulous exploitation" of the "Kaffir-Coolie-Communist bogey", a play that sadly misfired in the case of Smuts' United Party (Sachs 1958:45). If the 'bogey' was real, as both parties insisted it was, then the National Party had by far the more coherent plan to counter it.

Curbing Integration

The architects of Apartheid sought a way to stop integration without undermining industry (Posel 1991:8). Their principal concern was the urbanization that came with increasing industrialization. They believed with Col. Stallard that "the Native should only be allowed to enter urban areas, which are essentially the white man's creation, when he is willing to enter to minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister" (Posel 1991:40). Permanent non-European settlement, even on the outskirts of 'white' urban centres, was viewed with alarm. There were also, of course, those who saw urbanization as an inevitable corollary to industrial development, and even saw in it the possibility of co-opting urbanized 'Natives' and

capitalizing on the development of a skilled and stable work force (Posel 1991:40).

These pragmatists included “the mining, financial and industrial interests, mainly English and Jewish in composition, who stood to benefit from the industrial revolution...and were prepared to accept some of its social consequences” (Bunting 1964:127): social consequences like urban crowding and lack of facilities which were far more troubling for non-Europeans in their segregated satellite townships than for their capitalist employers. Racial integration was deemed by white South Africa to be too high a price, even for economic progress.

Deborah Posel very helpfully frames the development of apartheid ideology as a response to the issue of influx control, reminding us of the ideology’s material underpinnings. The practice of apartheid within this framework is about the need to control the movement of labour. The ideology of separate development demanded complete separation of the ‘races’, but South Africa’s economy relied on the carefully controlled integration of a labouring class. The management of a deliberately migrant and fluid labour pool met the conflicting needs for non-European exclusion, an industrial work force, agricultural labour and ‘white’ employment that did not entail competition with ‘Natives’ in an open labour market (Posel 1991:43). Apartheid managed a fluctuating group of “outsiders” so as to minimize both the cost of labour and of social unrest. It completed the separation of labour from the humanity of the labourer.

The exigencies of wartime production added to the complex mix. Industrialization and the demand for African labour increased, increasing the number of urban Africans and attendant social problems, including competition with poor whites (Bunting

1964:126). By 1948 segregation or integration were discussed as mutually exclusive alternatives.

In the 1948 election campaign the Nationalists presented Apartheid as the only alternative to integration (Bunting 1964:129). Their platform had the appeal of consistency (Dvoria 1952:192) and convention. As Dvoria insightfully suggests, when “traditional views are made to appear to be the effective solution to current problems, they may become virtually unassailable as a political platform” (Dvoria 1952:188). A long-standing presumption of white superiority and the right and proper status of European civilization as the leader made it easy to accept that white rule should continue, and white privilege be protected in the face of industrialization and the demands of capital. The United Party put forward a “middle way” between ‘segregation’ and ‘integration’ that seemed to do little more than muddy the ideological waters (Posel 1991:47). Their policy had internal contradictions and was, in the end, “illogical” in the face of the conviction that ‘whites’ should rule (Dvoria 1952:192). Giliomee is convinced that “English-speaking South Africans shared the NP’s determination to maintain white domination”. He implies, rather cuttingly, that if the English were squeamish about the NP’s heavy handed agenda it was because, “[a]s the wealthier white community, they could buy their apartheid” (Giliomee 2003:390).

Summary and Conclusions

The examples of white English-language discourse I have assembled demonstrate a mixture of avoidance, pretence, silence, overt racism and the stridently segregated sense of group identity implicit in Van Rensburg’s childhood taxonomy of his neighbours. I have deliberately avoided the sensational in order to strengthen my claim that the

everyday language and commonplace practice of English-speaking white South Africa circa 1948 demonstrate habits of thought and behaviour which could uncomfortably acquiesce to the ideology of Apartheid while shying away from its excesses, and equally uncomfortably protest the practice of Apartheid while benefiting from white rule and economic advantage.

What is most striking in the flow of words is the ready alternative of retreat. In my earliest exposure to the South African story I had the sense that after the 1948 election the Afrikaner was left holding the ball. Perhaps that initial impression, while simplistic, is not altogether wrong. The election is lost through overconfidence; political leverage is lost through attrition as fewer and fewer political policies are contested, and fewer and fewer English-speaking whites seek seats in parliament. There is no obvious collective vision, and no pre-eminent leader within the white English-speaking fold. It is considered clever to be distant from and even disdainful of the surrounding reality.

Antjie Krog, writing about her experience as an observer at South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings half a century later, is confronted with the "specter" of "privilege without belonging" (Nuttall 2001:128). For her the loss of belonging is a tragic possibility, made real as she listens to the commissioners deliberate, making decisions about her homeland that are not about her. It may be that for English South Africans, "privilege without belonging" was a familiar status. It allowed a sort of emotional detachment that makes one feel free of responsibility, in a context of privilege which offers up others to carry the costs. A very different sort of tragedy.

The next chapter moves to the end of Apartheid in 1994. The examples of language are drawn from a wider swath of time, stretching to both sides of the election

that swept the ANC into power. I am looking for changes in vocabulary and subject matter that might reflect changes in attitude and practice. I want to find evidence of a Damascus Road experience. Unfortunately, even my optimistic naïveté will have to concede that if there were conversion experiences leading up to the exchange of power, those experiences were not within white English-speaking South Africa.

Chapter Five: Apartheid's Unmaking (1994)

On April 27th 1994, South Africa held its first fully democratic multi-racial election, giving the African National Congress the vast majority of the popular vote and sweeping the interim 'Government of National Unity' into office. By the time the next election was held in 1999 South Africa had moved through a time of tremendous transition; a once 'banned' organization was the government in power, and a once imprisoned black leader was its president. In little more than a decade South Africa had moved from a 'state of emergency' on the brink of civil war to become a 'miracle' of diplomacy.

David Howarth and Aletta Norval introduce the anthology *South Africa in Transition* with the reminder that what is past passes into 'history'. It becomes a story dependent on the telling. History is not really a question of events inevitably settling into the foundation of the present situation. As 'history' it is subject to the caprice of perspective, selective memory, and interpretation. "[W]hat appears to be necessary and given is shown to be the result of political creation and historical sedimentation" (Howarth and Norval 1998:3). The outcome is self-evident to the observer only because the alternatives have disappeared from view (Bontekoe 1996:1). It is possible to catch a glimpse of those alternatives in the recounting of past events. Our words for the telling of a tale - recount, relate, recite, rehearse, remember – acknowledge this 'revisiting', this 'counting again'. In many ways the story takes on a solid shape, conceals its contingency, depending on what counts as the beginning.

In a radio interview days before the April 1994 election, Pieter-Dirk Uys, a South African playwright and satirist, chose to locate the beginning of South Africa's story on

April 6, 1652 when “three small sailing ships arrived in Table Bay from Holland bringing what has been called Western Civilization”. In the narrative of racial conflict built on this beginning, the coming general election, inclusive and relatively peaceful as it promised to be, could only be understood as a “miracle” defying all “logic”. “[T]here should have been a bloody civil war that would have put Bosnia and Beirut to shame”, said Uys, instead, “4 million people” and “the blacks” who, in the past, “did not count” are now “32 million South Africans, and 31 ½ million all want the future to work” (Uys 1994). It was this ‘illogical miracle’ that first intrigued me. How had the South African story been reworked so that negotiation and reconciliation became possible? I have learnt to look for the answer in the multiple ‘recountings’ of South Africa’s story, beginning from different beginnings.

Ironically, despite its proximity in time, examples of English discourse to typify the *habitus* of English-speaking white South Africa during the upheavals of the late 1980s and early 1990s proved more difficult to find than I had anticipated. *The Rand Daily Mail*, whose editorials, opinion pieces and letters were such a rich source of ‘not atypical’ attitudes and expressions in my earlier research stopped abruptly in 1985. This lacuna proved to be symptomatic of a more generalized silence. Opinions about South Africa in the final decade of apartheid abound. The thoughts and feelings of those inside South Africa are harder to get at. The point here is not to protest the lack of resources or the difficulty in finding suitable material, but to highlight what seems to me a significant feature of life in South Africa during the time in question. Public conversation had been all but closed down by the climate of censorship under apartheid.

Information about events within South Africa was difficult to access inside the country. Television and radio were state-owned and operated. Newspapers worked under strict censorship laws that declared “vast parts of the society off limits to reporters” (Jackson 1993:7). Government action was effectively removed from public scrutiny. The ‘Defence Act’ (1957), the ‘Police Act’ (1958), and the ‘Prisons Act’ (1959) were, each in turn, declared out of bounds. When *The Rand Daily Mail* published an exposé on South Africa’s prisons in 1965 the government took it to court. The trial lasted four years and cost the newspaper R250,000 (Jackson 1993:126). While the international community knew that South African soldiers had invaded Angola in 1975, the invasion went unreported within South Africa (Jackson 1993:111). By the mid 1980s the ‘securocrats’ who dominated the ruling Nationalist Party were parrying the “Total Onslaught” of “Soviet global aspirations, black consciousness and black theology” with a “Total Strategy” of aggressive defence and a wall of official silence (Jackson 1993:27,23). Press restrictions were further tightened under the ‘state of emergency’ declared in July of 1985 in response to growing unrest in the Townships. Newspapers were forbidden to carry images of the protests and ‘disturbances’, information about security crack downs, or news of the ANC. Indeed, printing anything deemed threatening to the “public well-being”, including leaving blank spaces in the copy to indicate missing information, was against the law (Jackson 1993:129-135).

Victor Crapanzano, working in Wyndal, South Africa in 1980 and 1981 describes the way in which violence in the newspapers he saw was “distanced, embellished or trivialised” in the very act of reporting (Crapanzano 1985:239). “When there are no noteworthy photographs of riot and bloodshed, then frequently there is a picture of a

bikini-clad chippy with a caption about how mild the weather has been...violence, sex, scandal, corruption, and sports [are rendered equal by their setting], surrounded by advertisements... Violence, certainly its meaning, is trivialized” (Crapanzano 1985:238).

It was government practice to ‘ban’ groups and individuals who spoke out against the regime. A banned person was “forbidden to write; to be quoted; to be with more than one person at a time; to speak to more than one person at a time; to communicate with any other banned person; to leave the magisterial district of [his or her residence];...to enter printing or publishing premises of any kind; to enter any factory or school or other educational institution”, and required to “register regularly with the police at the nearest police station to [his or her] house” (Woods 1980:314). “Banning” was a five-year sentence, without a trial or the right to appeal. Jackson describes the particular trial ‘bannings’ presented to newspaper editors who, forbidden to quote or refer to a banned person were required to keep themselves apprised of the changing list. According to his figures there were 534 names on the ‘banned’ list in 1989 (Jackson 1993:109). The cost of participation in public dialogue was enormous.

Frozen Discourse

In such a climate discourse degenerates from dialogue into an intransitive, nonreciprocal recitation of the official ‘line’. The speaker, like an actor on a stage, is present and yet not present to the audience. The public is meant to see but not be seen. Transitive communication, in contrast, invites and will reciprocate response. The speaker and the listener are present to each other (Hénaff and Strong 2001:7-8). The adjective ‘transitive’ means “passing or liable to pass into another condition, changeable; transient” (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary Vol. 2 2002:3328). An intransitive pronouncement

leaves no room for conversion or exchange. It does not acknowledge the contingency of knowledge.

Because humour plays an important role in undercutting a system made vulnerable by its own 'too tight' systematicity editorial cartoons can be rich in information about where the system is under stress. Play allows for contingency and alternatives, pointing to the weak spots in a constructed reality. Parody interrupts one-way communication, pointing to sites of contestation. A comic strip printed in the *Johannesburg Weekly Mail* (August 25-31 1989 p.13) to capture the state of affairs as F.W. de Klerk took over from P.W. Botha as South Africa's president offers an example. A blindfolded de Klerk is leading a blindfolded public while campaign slogans allude to the three blind mice. The cartoonist, Abe Berry, reflects a generalized sense that the present is in doubt, and the future is anybody's call. I find the allegory especially telling; a profound mix of social critique (the deliberate wearing of blindfolds and the willingness to follow blindly), political critique (the leader is also blind, without sight or insight), and ideological questioning (the road ahead really is new and unknown).

In the writings of the Bakhtin circle language is always understood within the context of dialogue. Words are always already shaped in response to what came before them, and in the hope of eliciting a response in what will follow. They are embedded in a string of discourse. Because they are active, alive in dialogue, words are "the site of a struggle between multiple and intersecting meanings" (Gardiner 1992:17). They embody class, gender and race in their weight and colour.

Perhaps the most significant contribution to be gleaned from the work of Bakhtin, Voloshinov and Medvedev is the insistence that language is alive. "To be, means to

communicate. Absolute death (non-being) is the state of being unheard, unrecognized” (Gardiner 1992:28). In Bakhtinian thought the natural environment of words is “dialogized heteroglossia” (Gardiner 1992:34), a phrase I understand to encompass the idea of ‘a strange (other) tongue’ and the creation, or drawing out of ideas for exchange. Every word is “but one link in a continuous chain of speech performances and therefore inexhaustible and potentially infinite, like a mirror reflecting back on itself” (Gardiner 1992:89). “A single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing” (Gardiner 1992:25). There is never a single word alone with itself. Meaning is not static.

Elaborating Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas, Gardiner insists that dialogue wants and expects a response. One word on its own, half a dialogue, is “frozen”, “inert” (Gardiner 1992:25,91). Gardiner’s idea of ‘frozen’ discourse is tied, I think, to Lakoff and Johnson’s concern that we need multiple metaphors for some concepts – to provide some elasticity in the way we conceptualize things, cognitive expansion joints. If a structure or system is too coherent it becomes vulnerable, its very ‘systematicity’ becomes a liability. That’s why Lakoff and Johnson insist on elasticity, why Bakhtin embeds all utterances in dialogue, why ideology is often suspect. There is something inherently unstable about a closed thought. In South Africa, the closure of public discourse, the freezing of dissent, and the tight ideological hold of apartheid dogma, represent brittle vulnerability. It may be that the representative discourse I am looking for is difficult to isolate and name precisely because I am trying to capture it in the act of fragmentation. I am looking for the central load-bearing post in a structure that is already falling.

Slaying The Mail

The Rand Daily Mail “vanished from the scene with the facts of its own demise shrouded in mystery” (Gandar quoted in Jackson 1993:72). *The Mail*’s problems date to the beginning of its liberal era, when Laurence Gandar became the newspaper’s editor in 1957. Joel Mervis, a South African journalist, explains that *The Mail*, through the 1960s and 70s, was “spoiling” the paradise of the wealthy by “articulating black grievances, publishing black news, and virtually pleading for integration” (Jackson 1993:76). Ironically, the successful integration of a black readership may have played a significant role in the paper’s demise. Allister Sparks explains the paper’s closure succinctly: “They [*The Mail*’s publishers] had never liked the vigor with which it exposed the iniquities of apartheid nor the heat this brought from the government, and when the paper began losing money, they contended it was because it was selling too many copies to blacks, who were of little value to advertisers, and too few to the wealthy whites” (Sparks 1990b). Early in the 1980s the black readership of *The Rand Daily Mail* reached 70% of its total circulation. Less and less advertising revenue was available as the paper was read by more and more blacks, forcing the newspaper into debt. Jackson also speculates that finances merely served the management as a needed excuse to succumb to government pressure. He is convinced that the newspaper’s money troubles were exaggerated in order to force the hand of its managing board; and even that a state-subsidized newspaper, *The Citizen*, was deliberately introduced into Johannesburg’s already crowded newspaper market to push the *Daily Mail* into bankruptcy.

Later in his analysis Jackson describes a more overtly state-backed conspiracy. “[I]n exchange for being offered the M-Net license, the establishment press, as

represented by [the South Africa Associated Newspapers], undertook to kill *The Rand Daily Mail*" (Jackson 1993:99). M-Net, a pay TV station, represented a breach in the SABC broadcasting monopoly. It was an irresistible temptation: the perfect fatted calf to offer to the financially beleaguered SAAN. Jackson describes M-Net's subscribers as "80% English" and "affluent". "A third of the viewers drive either a Mercedes or a BMW", he writes, "standard issue company cars for senior executives" (Jackson 1993:98). M-Net was an ideal vehicle for advertising, a magnet for advertising revenue.

Allister Sparks' angry commentary on the decision to close down *The Rand Daily Mail* because it was "addressing itself to too distant a future" is informative. He feels that it reflected an acute lack of political acumen on the part of leading English-speaking businessmen. "The problem" wrote Sparks,

goes back a long way. It is the problem not only of the business community but more generally of the English-speaking community, who make up 40 percent of the white population. It is a community that dropped out of politics generations ago, when it found it could no longer call the shots as Afrikaner nationalism began to mobilize its majority in the white community.

It has not had a political leader since Cecil John Rhodes at the turn of the century. For a time it left things to Jan Smuts, the Afrikaner Prime Minister who worked for reconciliation with the whites of British descent after the Boer War, but when he was defeated in 1948 the English-speakers dropped out of politics altogether and concentrated on making their way in business.

As they felt themselves to be politically impotent, their sense of politics atrophied through lack of use.

(Allister Sparks, *The Washington Post* 24 June 1990b)

The Official Line

The *Johannesburg Weekly Mail*, which I was able to find and read, came into circulation just two months after the *Daily Mail* closed its doors, launched on the strength

of R25,000 in 'redundancy pay' given to the *Daily Mail's* junior reporters, Anton Harbor and Irwin Manoim (Sparks 1990b). The NP government was quite successful in framing the 'alternative' press in such a way that it could be isolated and dismissed as "eccentric". To combat this deliberate marginalization papers like the *Weekly Mail* described themselves as 'emerging' or claimed their role as the true opposition by calling themselves 'extra-parliamentary' (Jackson 1993:49). The *Weekly Mail* directly targeted affluent liberal whites – called 'slumpies' -- "Slightly Left, Upwardly Mobile Professionals" (Jackson 1993:58). While the paper's "Slightly Left" readership cannot be assumed to represent a true cross-section of English-speaking white South Africa, the anti-apartheid voice of the English-language press cannot be dismissed as merely an 'exception' either. *The Weekly Mail*, like its predecessor *The Rand Daily Mail*, played "a unique bridging role...where ideas and views could meet across the colour line" (Jackson 1993:71).

South Africa's apartheid government took its role in protecting the white privilege of 'ignore-ance' (Steyn 2001:102) seriously. It required deliberate effort to hear bad news from the exclusive shelter of the white suburbs. The effect of 'white washing' the mainstream news was, predictably, to lull "white South Africa into a false sense of complacency" (Jackson 1993:156). The official line was transposed into private discourse; conversations around family tables and behind closed doors reflecting the orthodox narratives of white entitlement. International censure could be dismissed as a lack of understanding of South Africa's "unique situation", challenges best met by those most familiar with the domestic scene. Failing to acknowledge the systemic brutality of Grand Apartheid, it was 'not atypical' for white South Africans to argue that lifting the

indignities of petty apartheid, the 'whites only' signs on park benches and cafés, would be a sufficient gesture to placate the blacks. They could acknowledge, without flinching, that Old Joe the garden 'boy' had not turned up for work because he had been swept up for some pass law transgression. His absence is not interpreted within a narrative of unreasonable, inhumane restriction but of un-teachable, incorrigible 'blackness'. Silly Old Joe, he should know better by now (Joan Fairweather - private communication, Dec. 17 2006).

Jackson compares white South Africa's attitude toward news to "the smoker who read that cigarettes cause cancer and decided to quit reading newspapers" (Jackson 1993:163). He feels that white South Africans made a conscious decision to spare themselves uncomfortable "grim" news, settling instead for a "frothy diet of sport, semi-naked women, and yet more ways to make quiche" (Jackson 1993:68). Jackson cites a reporter from an 'establishment' English daily who openly declares, "Our paper is very much into sunshine journalism. Our reading market is not interested in black news; basically they're interested in poodles and roadshows" (Jackson 1993:12). It is also probable that many people accepted the government's claims that the alternative press exaggerated the problems, and was in any case a pack of "vagabonds and ne'er do wells" (Jackson 1993:10). Donald Woods calls our tendency to assume that those who are punished must have done something to deserve punishment an "insidious by-product of the repressive society" (Woods 1980:252). Perhaps it might also be understood as a helpful self-delusion, allowing us to believe that punishment is not arbitrary, that we can escape notice if we just keep our heads down.

Keeping their heads well down was a long-standing “way of life for South Africa’s two million whites of English descent”, observes Richard Manning, a correspondent for *Newsweek Magazine*. He continues his summation of English South Africa saying, “Repression of realities, Anglo style, is above all else a frenzied immersion in privilege and luxury”. His final condemnation is that the English in South Africa have become “a giant redundancy” (Jackson 1993: 161). Donald Woods echoes Manning’s observations. In 1957 when he campaigned for the anti-apartheid Federal Party, Woods learned that “the rich were the most selfish politically, that the most opulent houses were generally the most conservative bastions of ignorance and indifference” (Woods 1980:97-8). He was astonished by the depth of “general white ignorance of the practical effects of apartheid laws”, and surprised by the incongruity of visiting the homes of wealthy Johannesburg ‘liberals’, member of the Federal Party, “whose uniformed black manservants wore sashes and white gloves while attending them at dinner” (Woods 1980:90). Writing the epilogue to his autobiography *Asking For Trouble* in 1980, Woods was still convinced that South Africa’s whites knew little of their country’s real situation, and did not see the mounting threat of the “developing war” (Woods 1980:365).

In his ethnography of white South Africa in the early 1980s Crapanzano describes this evasion in somewhat more sympathetic terms. He characterizes the people he has come to know as “waiting for something, anything, to happen” (Crapanzano 1985:46). The difference between “waiting for something concrete” and this sort of unspecified “waiting” is like the difference between fear (specific) and anxiety (generalized). Because it is so uncomfortable, so “terrible”, says Crapanzano, we try to give this sort of unfocused waiting a focus by substituting a symbolic object for the impending

unknowable. Their need to deflect or displace the fears raised by “a problematic and limited future” (Crapanzano 1985:307) explain the villagers fascination with the Christian charismatic renewal movement where their own fears are overlayed and transformed in a narrative of apocalypse and salvation (Crapanzano 1985:287). It also explains their “frozen and ultimately unrealistic picture of social reality...[a picture] that requires confirmation and reconfirmation through endless repetition” (Crapanzano 1985:27).

Crosscutting Dialogue

Given the extent of public apathy, evasion and dissociation, the efforts of the opposition press to keep a public dialogue going show fervent dedication. Such perseverance suggests that at least a small section of English-speaking, white South Africa had not simply “adjusted to Nationalist rule” (Jackson 1993:76), or indulged in disengagement. The stories of East London’s *Daily Dispatch* and Johannesburg’s *Rand Daily Mail* belong in a larger narrative of opposition to the Afrikaner Nationalists and their apartheid policy that began before the NP were in office, and continues in post-apartheid South Africa, battling the on-going economic apartheid that seems even more difficult to dismantle. It is essential to acknowledge that English-speaking white South Africa did not, and does not, constitute an amorphous whole. A significant feature of the inherited *habitus* of privilege is the assumed right to differ from the collective; a sense that individual opinion counts.

Every issue of the *Weekly Mail* I read included a list of the newly banned in a column entitled “Apartheid Barometer”, together with detentions, restriction orders, detainee profiles, border fence deaths, and banned books, publications and objects (pg. 12, Jan.19-25 1990: pg. 4, Jan.25-Feb.1 1990 etc.). The exact content of the column

varied from week to week, reflecting the gathering storm of protest. Many of the *Weekly Mail's* stories exemplify white, English-speaking white participation in the growing resistance movement inside South Africa. In the front page story "771 *conscientious objectors tell the South African Defence Force 'We will not serve'*" army conscripts refuse to "defend apartheid" despite the possible costs of association with the banned 'End Conscription Campaign' (*Weekly Mail*. Sept.22–28 1989 p.1). In the story headlined "*Now Baby Dawson flaunts apartheid laws*", a white father defies the Population Registration Act by refusing to register his two-month-old baby. "[I]t is not enough just to say that you are opposed to unjust laws [he says] – one must be prepared to demonstrate this by disobeying them" (*Weekly Mail*. Sept 1-7 1989 p.3). In her regular column a television reviewer applauds a teacher who called in a pledge to a televised charity drive and turned his 2c worth of air time into an opportunity to protest the situation in township schools. In the reviewer's mind someone has at last "said something straight" on television. "For years white South Africans have been trained to synchronise every word and deed with the Nationalist signature tune *Apartheid uber alles*. But now, [crows the reviewer] with the aid of the same organizations (like the SABC) we are being debriefed" (*Weekly Mail*. Oct. 13-19 1989 p.35). For this English-speaking discourse community the line between 'us' and 'them' has been drawn in a new place. "We" are the dissenting majority; "they" are the Pretoria regime.

Two editorial comic strips in the May 4-10 1990 edition of the *Weekly Mail* ground the optimism of the stories above. They made me think of my cousin, Gavin Stafford, showing us around the newly built Constitutional Court in Johannesburg. The site was deliberately crafted to re-shape public narrative and provide a new 'beginning

place' for South Africa's story. Gavin was clear that the mix of past and future being built into the public space was intended to speak to everyone, and not only to the 'Struggle Junkies' (private communication, August 2004). He was mildly dismissive of a group of people who find themselves at a loss now that apartheid has been defeated, interested, he felt, only in building museums. The editorial cartoon Comrade Joe is a light-hearted jab at the fortunes of South African communism, embodied in a family dog. In a strip published nearly three months after de Klerk's 'unbanning' of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela, Joe, the previously pampered family pet is coming to terms with the arrival of a new baby and his own displacement. The 'baby' is here to stay. Joe's new status will take some getting used to (*Johannesburg Weekly Mail* May 4-10 1990 p.13). A second comic strip, entitled Who's Left, picks up the theme of changed reality. Two men are talking. One is keen to sign up as a member of the now legal ANC, the other is less sure. A flirtation with an impossible relationship was exciting, but "suddenly now it's all above board and serious...It's like marriage, man" (*Johannesburg Weekly Mail* May 4-10 1990 p.27).

The 'new normal' of post-apartheid South Africa will take a little wearing in, even for those who have worked for and welcomed it. In Durban we visited an arts centre where another cousin had worked for years building up a multi-racial dance company. Her head had gladly ceded leadership to the incoming black energy and talent, but her heart clearly grieved the loss of her project, and her role. It is difficult to relinquish a vocation even to allow it to move on. For many white South Africans engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle success has meant moving to the side lines.

An interesting book by Melissa Steyn called “*Whiteness Just Isn’t What It Used To Be*”, addresses the changing narratives of self and community in white South Africa. She begins by locating “the notion of whiteness” and all that goes with it at the core of Western thought (Steyn 2001:xxvii). Deeply complicit with capitalism, ‘whiteness’ has been a way to justify uneven wealth (Steyn 2001:10). Naturalized ‘whiteness’, like naturalized ‘maleness’, supports an ideology, that, like all ideologies, universalizes an otherwise sectional interest, denies alternatives, and presents the status quo as inevitable (Steyn 2001:18). Once you marginalize your own interests, admit alternatives, and question existing social structures you are standing on different ground. The title of Allister Sparks’ book about South Africa’s transition, *Tomorrow is Another Country*, has a certain prescience. In this new country it will be important to dismantle ‘whiteness’ as an identity boundary. What is needed instead is “an ethos that celebrates syncretism...commends the creolized, the multiple, the blurred boundary”; poly-centric, poly-vocal identities will prove more constructive (Steyn 2001:162, 169). Since the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ are co-created “hearing the voice of the ‘other’ will inevitably call for the reconstruction of the ‘self’” (Steyn 2001:139). It can be hoped that dismantling essentialised notions of whiteness will also bring down the inverted essentialisations of blackness. It is all much more easily said than done.

Steyn gathers the attitudes of the people who contributed to her survey into five broad narratives. Two of them were immediately familiar from my own experience. “Afro-pessimistic narratives”, as Steyn calls them (2001:80), explain any failings or shortfalls in the performance of the new government as expected. “They cannot live up to the higher standards that whites are used to” (Steyn 2001:72). It is that simple. At its most

extreme there is even the whiff of a patronizing indulgence. Once they have quite finished we will still be here. “The present, this narrative insists, is the complete antithesis of “normal” expectations; the world is turned upside down and inside out” (Steyn 2001:67). Those who see the post-apartheid world as “normal”, on the other hand, have to figure out what to do with their ‘whiteness’ now that the default “natural” has switched colour. Steyn offers this narrative the mantra “Don’t think white, It’s all right”. The trouble is that it is strangely difficult to shed an identity you have never acknowledged. As Steyn quips, “the whiteness of those who never have recognized it turns out to be strangely color fast” (2001:105). “Being white has never bothered me” or “My being white is not an issue in my life” or “I’m only comfortable with blacks and coloreds who also like Shakespeare, Brahms, Van Gogh, privacy and punctuality” are not productive openings to dialogue (Steyn 2001:102,109, 90). None of these speakers have created any space at all for exchange or change. One of Steyn’s respondents admits that she has “few skills in chatting with people of other groups”. Her comment made me remember Vic Webb, working on language policy in the new South Africa. He suggests that skills in handling “communicative derailment” become a part of early socialization and language training in South African schools, an essential component of a polyglot self concept (Webb 1996:152). Until now, as Steyn admits, one “privilege of being white was that one could choose not to hear, not to know” (2001:9). Only the marginalized ‘un-naturalized’ position need consider the reality of the other side.

The central character in Nadine Gordimer’s 1989 novel *A Sport of Nature* finds herself tossed back and forth across boundaries. As a child she straddles households, one engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle, one in denial. In adulthood she feels herself

redeemed by her union with a black Ghanaian and the birth of their child Nomzamo (named for Mandela's first wife). With her black husband she stands for others as "assurance that they, too, could be given absolution for their country's colonial past" and their present white skin (Gordimer 1987:197). Gordimer's narrative is intentionally choppy, offering brief cameos of a life lived in motion, multiple discourses speaking past one another, unable to find common ground. There is an interesting observation to be made here. Earlier I considered the possibility that the thread of English-language public discourse in the early 1990s was difficult to find because it was unravelling, pulled apart by the torque of an ideological world collapsing. Too tightly interconnected, a system is vulnerable. It seems it might also be true that too loosely connected, there is nowhere to stand and talk. I might equally describe the difficulty as one of finding and gathering together threads of discourse so at odds that they are not part of the same conversation.

Talking about Talks

Thomas Moriarty argues that South Africa moved from violent conflict to negotiation because "its political leaders changed the way they talked about the political scene" (Moriarty 2003:3). He is convinced that words have the power to shape reality. While the "*actual* world does exist...language and argument give *meaning* and thus *reality* to that world...political language *is* political reality" (Moriarty 2003:5 emphasis in original). Nationalist Party discourse in 1985, at the beginning of the declared 'emergency' insisted that South Africa's blacks were not oppressed but 'nurtured' by the state. The real threat, according to the government was "a communist conspiracy masquerading as a liberation organization" (Moriarty 2003:19). They would not even dignify the ANC with a name. The ANC's leadership participated in this game of

‘othering’ by referring to the National Party Government only as the “racist clique” or “diehard fascist braggarts” (Moriarty 2003:43). Violent conflict seemed inevitable given such division. Moriarty’s study traces the subtle changes in language as the two sides move from irreconcilable differences to negotiations at a common table. In order to begin talking both parties, according to Moriarty, had to “reconstruct political reality for their supporters” (Moriarty 2003:56).

Oliver Tambo, president of the ANC, first acknowledges a distinction between white South Africans in general and the NP government in particular in his 1987 anniversary speech (Moriarty 2003:38). A year later his speech included a challenge to the ANC’s “white compatriots”, a strong word to use, implying partnership and solidarity (Moriarty 2003:42). By 1989 he concedes the legitimacy of the NP government by naming it directly. The whites-only referendum held in March of 1992 framed the question of entering into negotiations with the ANC as a matter of order vs. chaos. To vote against negotiations was to betray “26 million fellow South Africans” while a vote in their favour would make South Africa “the pride of the world” (Moriarty 2003:74). The 70% ‘yes’ vote suggests that de Klerk succeeded in constructing a political reality in which negotiations were both “thinkable and desirable” (Moriarty 2003:76). Moriarty points to the significance of the ritual rhetorical battles of the election campaign leading up to the 1994 ANC victory and even the ongoing battles within the transitional Government of National Unity. These were “political battles between...political parties, not a war pitting freedom fighters against racist oppressors” (Moriarty 2003:116). The 1999 campaign and election, Moriarty declares, “were remarkable because they were so ordinary” (Moriarty 2003:119), proof positive of the successful transition from violent

conflict to rhetorical conflict, and the discursive reconstruction of South Africa's political reality.

What Moriarty does not explain is why the de Klerk government and the ANC worked together to re-construct South Africa's political landscape. What motivated the movement from violent to rhetorical conflict? Which storyline were they playing out as they deliberately moved negotiation and reconciliation within the horizon of possibility?

David Howarth chooses to begin his telling of the push that toppled apartheid with the Soweto uprising in June of 1976, although the history of black resistance to white domination clearly has a much longer history. Police over-reacted to a student protest in a black township outside Johannesburg, sparking a year of "unprecedented" confrontations that left hundreds dead (Beinart 2001: 237). In proximal terms the students were protesting the imposition of Afrikaans language instruction, a final straw in the burden of 'Bantu education'. At a more fundamental level the Soweto student uprisings represent the coalescence of many factors: independence movements in South Africa's neighbouring states and the growing strength of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM); an economic downturn within South Africa, increased state coercion, a loss of confidence within the ruling regime and a groundswell of new hope within the opposition. Howarth calls the Soweto event a "dislocatory experience" (Howarth et al. 2000:168), an event which neither the state, nor its opposition could adequately inscribe into its discourse. It was what Gramsci called an "organic" crisis in that the existing collective imaginary could neither contain nor repair the moment of instability it created.

Nadine Gordimer describes the Soweto uprising and the decade of defiance that followed in graphically organic terms.

The demands arose first from the apparently narrow orbit of children's lives – the third-rate education, the prohibition of student's councils, the objection to Afrikaans as a medium of instruction [but they represented] a real microcosm of real social conditions... What the young really were doing was beginning to put their small or half-formed bodies under the centuries' millstone. And they have lifted it as no adult was able to do, by the process of growing under the weight, something so elemental that it can no more be stopped than time can be turned back.

(Gordimer 1987:319)

It was in the moment of crisis precipitated by Soweto that the African National Congress, and the Charter-centred vision it championed, came to the fore. Howarth argues that the ANC was simply better placed to catch the fallout of Soweto's aftermath. Radicalized youth, jailed or escaping into exile, met ANC members and supporters with a long experience of operating in exile (Howarth et al. 2000:172,184). While the BCM's mythos, centering on the concept of 'blackness' positioned itself as exclusive, especially of anything Western or having to do with consumer capitalism (Howarth et al. 2000:174), the ANC's Charterism took hold of the collective imaginary as inclusive and 'progressive' (Howarth et al. 2000:178). The "hotchpotch" of community organizations that fell under the ANC's banner was especially well-suited to withstand government crackdowns. Being disparate and un-centred it was able to reproduce itself despite government action to stamp it out (Howarth et al. 2000:184).

The strength of an un-centred opposition facing a too-centred hegemonic ideology has been explored in the context of the struggle of ad hoc coalitions against 'globalization' (Graeber 2002, Klein 2001, Shepherd and Hayduk 2002 inter alia.). Even without the corroborating theoretical explanations for its success, it would be a gratifying idea. There is something inherently attractive about a David and Goliath story, something

with elemental appeal. In this context though, there are some questions about who or what constitutes 'Goliath' and who or what might have been supplying David with his stones.

Nelson Mandela's iconic stature is unshakable. It is clear that the man had in himself a formidable presence. The Botha Government's early and tentative contacts with him found that he would not be co-opted to serve their ends. Broederbond leaders who met him found him gracious and urbane. Hendrik Coetsee, NP Minister of Justice, Police and Prisons, describes his first encounter with Mandela as "quite incredible...He took complete command of the situation. He was like the host... I have studied Latin and Roman culture, and I remember thinking that this is a man to whom I could apply it, an old Roman citizen with *dignitas*, *gravitas*, *honestas*, *simplicitas*" (Sparks 1994:24).

It takes nothing away from Mandela's exceptionality to note that Coetsee's praises are due to Mandela's ability to fulfill his (Coetsee's) ideal. This is significant. Mandela plays by rules of engagement that belong to Coetsee, and European diplomacy, and Western norms. Before his first meeting with President Botha, Mandela was carefully costumed to play his part. A new suit was made to measure by the prison tailor. A new shirt, tie and shoes bought and ironed and shined and tied. He must look the part of a respectable respectful peer (Sparks 1994:54-55). Later, during the long preparatory talks and then the negotiations, Government negotiators found their ANC counterparts easy to work with: "they would be well prepared. They would be properly mandated, and we would always find a spirit of compromise, of seeking solutions" (Sparks 1994:185). In such formalized contexts authority is claimed and demonstrated by a display of credentials based on specialized knowledge of certain facts and practices. Identity,

legitimacy and agency are won or lost in the playing out of a rubric (Keane 1997:18). If there have been any accommodations made for differing frames of reference or formal expectations it is the ANC who have made them. There is no suggestion that anyone from the white government has yielded to the unexpected.

The special status afforded the African National Congress by the international community also invites examination. Earlier I considered the way in which the ANC took advantage of the dislocatory effects of the Soweto uprising in 1976 to assert its leadership over that of the Black Consciousness Movement. David Howarth described the ANC as better placed, more inclusive, and already operating effectively in exile and detention. The implication was that the ANC took the lead because they were in the lead, more open, more progressive, more enlightened. Howarth also pointed to the fact that BCM discourse was built around the problematic idea of “blackness” and the rejection of all things “Western”. He spent some time discussing the problems associated with “blackness”; does it include all blacks, even half blacks, only blacks, only African blacks? The liability inherent in rejecting ‘all things Western’ is only glanced over. It seems to me to represent at least an equal handicap. The international community could hardly have thrown its weight behind an organization that had placed itself in opposition to the global ‘Westernization’ project. The BCM articulated its aims in terms of recovered identity; the ANC was focused on bettering material circumstances (Howarth et al. 2000:185). Their agenda was more universally intelligible, and much more easily supported. Besides, they had proven themselves willing to play according to Western expectations.

After the Changes

In April of 1992 *The Guardian Weekly* and *The Johannesburg Weekly Mail* joined forces. The tone of the merger announcement I read is defensive, clearly under the shadow of the not-yet-lifted cultural boycott. It justifies the joint venture on the grounds that more and better international news is in demand in South Africa since De Klerk's grand gesture, and points to *The Johannesburg Weekly's* impeccable liberal credentials as further mitigating the *Guardian's* involvement. I found it interesting that the article looked to a spokesperson from the ANC to give the project an official blessing (*Marketing Week* 28 February 1992). The newspaper continued to be published in Johannesburg and, judging from the copies of the 2005 edition of *The Mail and Guardian* that I was able to find, retained much of its former look and tone. Even the newspaper's self designation as a public watchdog remains intact. The 'Apartheid Barometer' of the 1990s became an HIV/AIDS Barometer, keeping a running tally of estimated worldwide deaths from HIV/AIDS and a close watch on local, national and international response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic (*The Mail and Guardian* Jan. 14-20:29, 2005, Jan 21-27:30, Jan. 28- Feb.3:31...). The tone and content of the editorial pages was also familiar.

While John Williams specifically names *The Mail and Guardian* as having played a role in South Africa's alternative press under apartheid, he states clearly that in the new political economic climate there is no opposition press at all (Williams 2006:428). It has become "anathema" to question the reigning economic order. Williams has studied the role of the media in structuring the debate about development strategies and economic planning in post-apartheid South Africa. "News media discourse" he argues, has replaced

real debate with a “celebration of the market as the panacea for prevailing socio-economic problems” (Williams 2006:439).

Closing the debate about economic directions has an inevitable impact on discussions of race, racism, and the legacy of racialized inequality left by the apartheid regime. Amy Ansell describes the discourse around race and racism as ‘bifurcated’ along the colour line (Ansell 2004:7). Black South Africans tend to define racism “structurally” as having to do with “unequal structures of power and advantage”. White South Africans define it in terms of a universal principle, the “inalienable rights on the part of the individual” (Ansell 2004:11). Needless to say, whites are more inclined to advocate colour-blindness. Ansell believes that “the vocabulary of non-racialism serves to impoverish the political imagination”. It makes combating racism a matter of “changing mind-sets and not structures of power” (Ansell 2004:13). It allows those who would deny the continuing impact of racialized access to resources and opportunities to push the discourse to move “beyond race” (Ansell 2004:10-11).

I found a segment of this discourse in the “*Comments and Analysis*” piece on page 14 of the January 14-20 edition of the *Mail and Guardian* entitled “*What happened to the White Left*”. The writer is struggling to point out to his readers the stark differences that separate black and white experiences of the anti-apartheid struggle, and colour expectations of what victory means, and how it can be measured. He is rebuking them for allowing themselves to feel hurt, and allowing their hurt to drive them away from the struggle. White exclusion is not a form of racism, he chides, but

shrinking from Africanism is a failure to acknowledge the African character of this country – that part of the liberation of South Africa is to transform it from a European outpost in Africa into an African country, with a predominantly African cultural character...there is nothing racist

about having a primarily African leadership of this country, its institutions, its economy...something needs to be corrected in a society that is African, but which takes Europe and the United States as its reference points.
(Raymond Suttner *The Mail and Guardian* Jan. 14-20 2005:24-5)

One writer responding to Suttner's reprimand complains that "the white left is excluded", left out of "efforts to reconstruct the country" and "seen as a threat to African leadership". This writer feels "despondent". His "struggle credentials" have been "smeared" (*The Mail and Guardian* Jan. 21- 27 2005:23). Another writer describes himself as "one of thousands of white lefties out there who have not disappeared". He was not "giving up [his] life for the blacks" when he fought apartheid, as his detractors used to quip, but working for a just society "a gentler, kinder society that was also concerned with the environment and with the rights of women and children" (*The Mail and Guardian* Jan. 28- Feb. 3 2005:25).

An "Open Letter to the President" on page 19 of the February 4-10 paper urged Mbeki to stop "attacking white liberals" (*The Mail and Guardian* 2005). The sense of disaffection and exclusion among English-speaking whites in South Africa is still evident in the public forum. President Mbeki's open-letter petitioner accuses him of "promoting a way of thinking that could pave the way for increased polarization and even officially sanctioned ethnic cleansing". The letter writer urges Mbeki to recognize that South Africa has the chance to set "a shining example" (*The Mail and Guardian* Feb. 4-10 2005:19). What the writer is calling on South Africa to exemplify has to do with building a non-racial democracy, not with addressing ongoing, racialized inequities. The moral high ground belongs to those who can see through the colour of skin.

Summary and Conclusions

Ten years after the ANC victory, with a decade of experience under the new dispensation, there is still discussion of hurt feelings and 'reversed racism'. There is no discernable recognition on the part of these writers that the real story here revolves around someone else. Sutter's reprimand, the obvious exception, strengthens rather than weakens my case. "Whiteness" is still a colour-fast identity, thrown into sharp relief against what is still experienced as an uneasy black 'normal'. There is little sign of the composite polyglot identity that Vic Webb advocates. In fact, white, English-speaking habits of mind and practice do not seem to be much at risk.

In an opinion piece for *The Mail and Guardian* (Jan.28 – Feb.3 2005:23) Lindie Botha writes that the fundamental 'truths' learned in childhood "can't be unlearned by clicking your heels three times while chanting the words "black economic freedom"". Mind you, there is plenty of new learning and un-learning in evidence within her simple statement. To begin with, Lindie Botha, though she is Afrikaans, is participating in English, in the repartee of an English-language public forum. She is also taking as given that the 'untruths' of her childhood education need to be unlearned. Finally, I was struck by the figure of speech she used to illustrate her point. Why heel clicking and chanting? Why three times? Although the reference may be unconscious, the presence of Dorothy and her red shoes in Botha's vocabulary of images is noteworthy. This shared vocabulary across the English-speaking world is significant. I am convinced that it plays a part in allowing English-speaking white South Africans to displace their sense of belonging and of responsibility, however unconsciously, onto a wider field. English hegemony, in terms of language, but more significantly in terms of reference points, conventional wisdom,

and standards of normalcy, ensures that English-speaking white South Africa does not really have to stretch its identity much at all. From its place of detachment it has weathered rather than acclimatized to shifts in the political climate.

The image of Dalpark-6 as a racially integrated suburban community will stand up well as a last impression. The Boksburg suburb was once notorious for the “Berlin Wall” erected by its white residents to keep blacks from a nearby squatter settlement out. The impasse was broken, as often happens, through the gesture of one man and the response of another. The suburb is now South Africa’s “most racially integrated” neighbourhood. Allister Sparks, talking to the current ‘multi-racial’ residents, was “struck by how similar they were – in age, in their lifestyle, in their jobs and attitudes and aspirations”, complete with matching Toyota Corollas in the carports, matching dreams of better schools, bigger houses, greater opportunities (Sparks 1994:237), and the matching concern that the encroaching squatter community next door might pose a threat to their property and themselves (Sparks 1994:238). I hear echoes of the old ‘civilization test’, or the notion that the existence of a government “suited to white men” as the measure of the right to sovereignty (Fairweather 2006:63). There is little at stake in reaching out to a neighbour who is determined to be just like you. It is this image of the ‘other’ as now much like us that carries over into the final chapter.

Chapter Six: Discoveries and Conclusions

What was the role of the English *habitus* in South Africa's apartheid policy? My goal in asking the question was to explore the attitudes and practice of a collective. I hoped to discover a generalizable principle about the role of language in social change. I expected to find an answer in the form of a new story, a new conceptual frame. I was looking for ways in which the familiar stories of voortrekkers and empty land had been reshaped and rewritten to make room for new relationships between South Africa's divided peoples, and accommodate the shift away from white minority rule. What I have found is a narrative of white privilege and Western hegemony so profound that it underlies the constructions of South Africa's colonial myth makers and has changed my understanding of the post-apartheid victory.

The newspapers, commentaries, histories, and novels I have read provide a key to the collective 'common sense' of South Africa's white English-speaking community. I had expected to find over the last century, from the Union of South Africa in 1910 to the end of Apartheid in 1994, evidence of profound change, a gradual or perhaps even a sudden rapprochement between black and white South Africa. What I have found troubles me. There has been a convergence, but the movement has been all in one direction. It seems that rather than a changing understanding of the world allowing English-speaking white South Africa to acclimatize to a changing socio-political climate, an unbending *habitus* of privilege has allowed it to weather all storms, riding out both the era of Afrikaner nationalism and its end.

Two of the discoveries made in my research deserve further exploration. The first is the coincidence of the fall of the Soviet Union and the liberation of South Africa. There

is a striking similarity between the notion of the “Empire” as the only game in town with which I concluded my exploration of South Africa in 1910, and neo-liberal economics as the only game in town while the new South Africa is born. South African capital (pre-dominantly white and English-speaking) was able to ride the wave of international consensus about acceptable economic practice to ensure its ongoing stability under the post-apartheid government (Peet 2002:78). Holding to the economic status quo has ensured a large measure of continuity for South Africa’s white English-speaking community. It is hardly insignificant that the rules of both ‘games’ fall within the norms of the English *habitus*.

The second ‘discovery’ has to do with the notion of privilege without belonging. I suggested at the end of the last chapter that while Antjie Krog grieved the prospect of being cut adrift, English South Africa has had no such sense of attachment or investment. I find myself wondering to what extent this ‘Imperial’ *habitus* has informed the attitudes and practice of the Anglo-Saxon diaspora and spilled into white Western belief and behaviour more generally.

My sense that South Africa’s ‘miracle’ might have been carefully scripted to play out on a stage managed by Western interests and free market ideology began with the coincidence of the ‘uni-polar moment’ and De Klerk’s unprecedented announcement. Given the ending, the causes and effects in the narrative leading to it fell into place. Without a communist world from which to draw support the situation of anti-apartheid fighters pitted against South African troops became desperate. Without a communist world against which South Africa stood as a bastion of capitalist values Western tolerance

of apartheid would end. It was, as Howarth and Norval write “an eschatological moment” (Howarth and Norval 1998:57).

Although it came to me as a ‘discovery’ the role of international finance in South Africa’s ‘miracle’ has, of course, been thoroughly analyzed and documented. Even before the April 1994 elections the potential impact of Structural Adjustment expectations on the ANC’s reform agenda was being discussed (see Freeman 1994, and Padayachee 1994 *inter alia*). As the grip of global capital in South Africa continues, and the economic situation of South Africa’s black majority reflects a new kind of apartheid, the discussion is on-going (see Bond 2003, Hart 2002, Marais 1998, and Morris 1991 *inter alia*).

The agreement reached between De Klerk’s government and the African National Congress was guided, according to Richard Peet (2002), by an international and seemingly unquestionable consensus about what was practical, realistic and responsible. As it happens, my hypothesised conversation between South Africa and the international market did take place. A ‘letter of intent’ committing the ANC to the “responsible management” of South Africa’s economy was signed and delivered to the World Bank while negotiations were still in progress (Peet 2002:73). The ANC’s socialist leanings were “disciplined” on the Johannesburg stock market until talk of nationalization and public investment faded away and the new South Africa was made safe for international investment, and ongoing white privilege (Peet 2002:71).

Once in power Mandela toed the neo-liberal line, bowing to the International Monetary Fund’s demands and sacrificing promised structural changes to the exigencies of ‘structural adjustment’ policies (Beall 2001:145). Even the Reconstruction and Development Programme which had been the centre-piece of the ANC’s 1994 election

platform fell victim. It was replaced with the market-friendly Growth, Employment and Re-distribution policy, designed to reassure and encourage foreign investors (Gumede 2005:44-5).

Steven Friedman argues that the need to prove itself capable in the face of the “bigoted assumption” that “black governments, particularly those in Africa, are destined to fail” has coloured the agenda of South Africa’s post-apartheid government (Friedman 2005:757). Indeed, Friedman chides, its need to prove white racism wrong has meant that South Africa’s black-run administration has expended more energy trying to impress the white minority than combating poverty, inequality and exclusion. With Fukuyama’s “end of history” thesis ringing in its ears (Gumede 2005:76), South Africa’s post-apartheid government has done all it can “to modernise the economy and deal with the awful realities of a world in which the state [can] ensure development only if it [enters] into a joint enterprise with the private sector” (Gumede 2005:62).

It is Friedman’s observation that the goal of state-building in South Africa is to achieve a “variant of liberal democracy” espousing Western ideals that most interests me. The new democracy will have “arrived” when it is a copy of its “Northern equivalent” (Friedman 2005:762). Its goal is to somehow shape itself to squeeze into the uniform of the one-size-fits-all global economy. It becomes repetitive to point out that the uniform too conforms to norms as familiar to English-speaking white South Africa as to the rest of the Anglo-American West.

I cannot resist pointing out a poignant irony in this scenario. Lord Milner, protesting what he saw as the betrayal of South Africa’s blacks in order to smooth over the relationship between Briton and Boer as the Union of South Africa was formed in

1910 accused Britain of believing, mistakenly, that “you have only to be very kind and patient and magnanimous, and *give away your friends to please your enemies*, in order to make the latter love you” (Milner in Crankshaw 1952:89 – emphasis original). In the current situation we see the ANC breaking with its longtime partners in the tripartite anti-apartheid alliance, the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Communist Party, in order to win the approval of foreign bankers and Afro-pessimists (Peet 2002:76). South Africa’s most vulnerable constituency is betrayed again.

The uniformity of the wants and aspirations Sparks describes in Dalpark-6 also speaks to the hegemonic process of ‘Westernization’. It brings the liberal platitude that we are “all the same under our skin” to Orwellian life. The idea that a flag-ship “integrated” community in South Africa could resemble nothing so much as American-sit-com suburbia is disturbing. Arjun Appadurai argues that political agendas play a role in the creation of demand as clearly as in the production of goods (Appadurai 1986:58). Demand for a commodity is a function of social practice rather than “of human needs” (Appadurai 1986:29): a social mechanism rather than a response to a “bottomless natural appetite” (Appadurai 1986:40). The idea that ‘what we want’ might be engineered to fit within the parameters of what our society wants to offer us is already troubling. Coupled with theories suggesting that our sense of self is constructed from an amalgam of interpreted experiences and desires it becomes disquieting. I want therefore I am, and what I want shapes who I am. Taken seriously, these theories explain the sort of uniformity found in Dalpark-6. Uniform desires created by a uniform marketplace with one-size-fits-all designs. The ‘other’, both Afrikaner and African, are being shaped by the

same processes that have shaped and continue to shape English-speaking white South African expectations.

The *habitus* of English-speaking white South Africa, nurtured by Imperial pretensions and fed on privilege may have had to stretch very little to accommodate change in the new South Africa, because very little has really changed for them. An identity grounded in the wider geography of an empire and an inviolable sense of “cultural and racial superiority” (Steyn 2001:30) have meant historically that English South Africa could find shelter from immediate realities behind various forms of disengagement. They were accused of “a typical indifference” by a journalist in 1899 and chided for political “impotence” and “atrophied” political acumen by another journalist a full century later. In between, there are numerous portrayals of disengagement Anglo style: “woolly thinking” (Crankshaw 1952:138), pretensions to Euro-gentrification (Steyn 2001:31), avoidance and dissociation (Gordimer 1958:84,73). The strange sense that this is not really my life and I am not really accountable for it takes on various guises: vicarious participation in the London social season on the front pages of *The Rand Daily Mail* (1900); glib cleverness in a letter to the editor that entirely misses the realities of its context (1950); the displaced anxieties of Wyndal’s residents as they wait for “something, anything to happen” (1985);

For Krog, the loss of ‘belonging’ meant feeling severed from the land that rooted her sense of self and community. Afrikaners tied themselves to South African soil generations ago. To cease to belong to Africa would mean being cast adrift. While there are many English-speaking white South Africans who feel a deep love for their homes, and have invested much of themselves in the African landscape, I am convinced that

'belonging' is interpreted differently. Much of what I read suggested that their certainty that there will always be an English-speaking world (Sparks 1990a:210) allowed them to hold onto a 'home' quite separate from their 'here and now'. The image of hydroponic plants serves as a metaphor (ironic perhaps given the "salties" pejorative given them for having their feet in the salt water of the Atlantic, midway between Africa and England). The plants thrive rooted in a medium that unlike soil leaves the individuals discrete, mobile, and unattached to the earth.

The privileged status of English-speaking white South Africans is real. They have always had access to the best schools and the highest incomes, leisure, affluence and mobility. This last is significant. Unlike most of what Gellner described as the mobile, malleable workforce (Gellner 1983:25), English-speaking white South Africans, like colonials everywhere in Britain's erstwhile Empire, have real mobility. Their language, schooling and credentials are internationally recognized. Their welcome as valuable, valued newcomers is, with few exceptions, assured. They have always had somewhere else to go.

In the South African context this possibility of departure, and perhaps more significantly the sense of transient or conditional belonging has allowed for dissociation from political responsibility and personal culpability. Although beneficiaries of the apartheid system, English-speaking white South Africans commonly felt they could do little to effect real change, and even congratulated themselves as less racist, more enlightened than their Afrikaner neighbours.

English-speaking detachment plays out interestingly in post-apartheid discussions of race and racism. Seeing themselves as bystander beneficiaries English-speaking whites

are reluctant to engage with the past. The shocking revelations of the Truth and Reconciliation hearings have made it even more difficult for many to accept responsibility for apartheid's abuses. The more they are outraged, the less they can feel responsible. Even forgiveness would be shaming (Fairweather 2006:186-7). Melissa Steyn's discussion of white "translucence" (2001:104) and Amy Aswell's description of the denial of embedded structural harm in current non-racial discourse (2004:13) are examples of this insistence that the past be left to heal itself. Heidi Grunebaum-Ralph cautions that if discussion about the past is cut off prematurely, there is a danger that South Africa's 'recovery' will be only skin deep. The word 'recover' can mean 'to get well', or 'to cover over again' (Grunebaum-Ralph 2001:199). The pressure to 'recover' too quickly might mean that instead of dealing with lingering conflicts and traumas they are instead 're-covered' under a fragile veneer, re-buried and concealed rather than addressed and healed (Grunebaum-Ralph 2001:199).

Recovery can also mean reclaiming what has been lost. Reconciliation and healing have been central to the post-apartheid work of nation building, but discourses that frame the problem in terms of the relationship between black and white South Africans miss the real source of black alienation. In the words of Itumeleng Mosala, "our alienation is not alienation from white people first and foremost. Our alienation is from our land, our cattle, our labour" (cited in Fairweather 2006:194). It will not be enough to shake hands and declare friendship. Deep structural changes in access to land, resources and opportunities are called for.

Denial is, of course, not universal. My uncle's profound love of South Africa, its landscape and wildlife in particular, was very clear. He enriched our drive through the

Pilansberg Game Reserve with his enthusiasm. He could name so many birds. Talking as we drove together he confessed to feeling that a huge weight had been lifted from his shoulders with the end of Apartheid. He had felt shame. These days he was walking a little taller.

Current debates in South Africa about what it means to be white when the normative backdrop has become black point, as Gramsci suggests, to a moment of social upheaval. Where people are struggling to find appropriate vocabulary, they are struggling to express contested ideas and/or changed reality. For all the hand-wringing evident in the debate, there is not yet, to my mind, evidence of any real loss of status among Anglophone whites. The discussion above of the hegemonic import of Western norms and the global marketplace supports what I saw during my visit to South Africa in 2004, and have since read. The line that divides insiders and outsiders, so necessary to the structure of capitalist production of value (Wallerstein 1988:7-8), has been shifting. The movement is visible against South Africa's colour-coded backdrop. There are a number of upwardly mobile black South Africans, but it is unlikely that English-speaking white South Africa will be excluded from access to social and economic privilege in the foreseeable future. Abject poverty is still exclusively black.

I think that the 'privilege without belonging' that Antjie Krog experienced with regret as she listened to the deliberations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission explains a great deal in the white English-speaking South African *habitus*, and perhaps much of the Anglo-American-Western disposition as well. If we accept the experience of privilege without belonging as given, what might it mean? We have seen how it played

out in South Africa. What implications might it have in the wider context of social change?

White privilege is inscribed deep within the Western worldview and Western experience. Steyn calls whiteness and the “essential attributes” it entails “a core-organizing category in Western ideology” (2001:xxvii). She writes that “the normative nature of whiteness” is affirmed even in ethnic and minority studies within academia (Steyn 2001:xxvi). It is the unconscious standard against which difference is measured. Because it has been so naturalized, the privilege of whiteness is not tied to place. All that English-speaking white South Africans needed to do to remain invisibly privileged was to allow themselves to swept along against the backdrop of naturalized whiteness, moving with the tide from one empire to the next. While at the beginning of the last century the marks of belonging were school ties and impeccable table manners, now they are designer labels and instant electronic access to whatever is new.

The lack of firm roots, the sense of being unattached to the earth is evident in other examples of the English-speaking colonial *habitus*. Ready mobility, the transportability of lives, relationships, and expectations are, I believe, the result of being grounded more firmly in an intellectual universe of ideas and images than in the soil under our feet. I have family in the U.K., Australia, South Africa and Canada. When we gather we have a collective memory of family lore, but we also share a common wealth of story, song and perceptions.

These roots without soil are nurtured instead by a long history of ideas confirming our disconnection from the here and now. We value objective knowledge; knowing that is separate from commitment, facts untainted by self-implication. We learn a history of

thought that separates things from their essence, body from soul, and nature from culture. We have invested much more in counting the stars than in numbering the beetles at our feet. I am sure that this fascination too points to the story deep in our collective imaginary that we are not from here.

It has been a strangely adaptive mixture, this combination of privilege and detachment. The epistemological and ontological assumptions of imperial privilege have underwritten the rules of engagement for the last century, and more. The white Anglophone world, with its hydroponic roots, has done rather well. The interesting question is whether soil-less roots will make it more or less difficult to learn new rules to a new game if and when the current hegemony gives way.

In South Africa political power has been turned over to the ANC, while the economic agenda is guided by a globalized Western common sense. There is little reason to believe that history ends there. Debates about the meaning of race, the possibilities of recovery, and the politics embedded in language suggest some hopeful movement toward engagement on the part of white English-speaking South Africa. Eric Worby's pick-up soccer game remains a potent image of what is yet possible. The game is the same and yet not the same, the rules and the style of play have taken on a hybrid character all their own. It is a game in which you cannot be "quite sure how your mates will respond" (Worby 2006), and in which you might even surprise yourself. In this new game privilege cannot be assumed, and full engagement will be required.

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