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

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An aspect of the roles of Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller in the Second Language Movement, c.1905 – 1927.[1]

A Boer guerilla fighter, Denys Reitz, described the defeated Boer commandos drifting into the camps in 1902, as a rabble of 'starving, ragged men, clad in skins or sacking, their bodies covered with sores, from lack of salt and food … their appearance was a great shock to us who came from the better-conditioned forces in the Cape.'[2] The Afrikaner seemed defeated – family farms were destroyed and 26 000 women and children were dead in the concentration camps.[3] In the post-war education system, Afrikaans children were believed by many to be threatened with anglicisation. A common – if apocryphal or exaggerated – story told by Afrikaners was that those children who spoke more than the three hours of 'Dutch-Afrikaans' permitted at school had to wear a placard that read 'I'm a donkey, I spoke Dutch'.

[1] My thanks to Stanley Trapido; Lisa Jenschke; Andy Loveridge; Adrian Ryan, and Magdalen College, Oxford.

[2] D. Reitz, *Commando – A Boer journal of the Boer War* (London: Faber and Faber, 1929, 1983) 320.

[3] There is a vast amount of literature on the South African war; for firsthand descriptions of the camps see, for example, Rykie van Reenen (ed.), *Emily Hobhouse – Boer War Letters* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1984, 1999) and for a good general description of the war's effects on white Afrikaans speakers, see F. Pretorious, *The Anglo-Boer War, 1899 – 1902* (Cape Town: 1985).

A mere generation later, however, the ragged army was in power. By 1933 the Afrikaans language had been entrenched by the Second Language Movement, the Afrikaner had political control and a greater measure of economic autonomy. The Language Movement was a loosely associated, predominately male group, working after the South African War to foster a sense of Afrikaner identity, chiefly through the promotion of the entrenchment of Afrikaans as an official language. Analysts have shown that the standardisation and consolidation of the Afrikaans language by the Language Movement was crucial to the construction of an Afrikaner identity.[4] The establishment of Afrikaans as an 'official language' in government, science and education has been delineated.[5] These descriptions of the *taalstryd* (language struggle) – both those that are objective and those that are vehemently partisan – usually concentrate on the accomplishments of the *taalstryders* (those who struggled to entrench the Afrikaans language). For constructionist historians, these people are middle-class culture-brokers consolidating the vernacular in order to manufacture a workable identity and assimilate the lower classes; for Afrikaner nationalists these

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

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

people are heroes.[6] Both Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller have been depicted as examples of such heroes – as life-long campaigners for the Afrikaans language.[7]

Perhaps because of the rapidity of the rise from 'ragged army' to 'nation', complete with its own language and political control, there has been a consistent focus on the 'achievements' of this transition. Attention has been paid to events like the creation of the Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap (Afrikaans Language Association) (1905), the Afrikaanse Taal Vereeniging (Afrikaans Language Union) (1906), the founding of the S.A. Academy (1909), and the recognition of Afrikaans by provincial councils in 1914, and by parliament in 1925. Titles like M.S. Du Buisson's *Die wonder van Afrikaans; bydraes oor die ontstaan en groei van Afrikaans tot volwaardige wêreldtaal* (The wonder of Afrikaans – contributions on the development and growth of Afrikaans to a fully-fledged world language), T.J. Haarhoff's *The Achievement of Afrikaans* and E.C. Pienaar's *Die Triomf van Afrikaans* (The Triumph of Afrikaans)

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[6] For a discussion of the first school, the 'constructionists', see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983, 1991); for the second school see, for example, the influential F.A. Van Jaarsveld, *The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism*, 1868 – 1881 (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1961).

[7] F.G.M. Du Toit, *Eugene Marais – Sy Bydrae tot die Afrikaanse Letterkunde* (Amsterdam: N.V. Swets, 1940) 235. There are a legion of triumphalist accounts: R. Antonissen, *Die Afrikaanse Letterkunde van Aanvang tot Hede* (Johannesburg, n.d.), E.C. Pienaar, *Taal en Poësie van die Tweede Afrikaanse Taalbeweging* (Cape Town, 1926), C. Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging* (Pretoria, 1922).

epitomise the manner in which the story of the *taalstryd* has been told.[8] Even Hofmeyr, in her nuanced analysis of the Second Language Movement, has tacitly accepted that the struggle ultimately delivered what the *taalstryders* desired.[9] Where opposition to the aims of the *taalstryders* does receive rare mention, it refers to outside hostility from English-speakers in state positions and commerce, and a few figures in church circles, rather than any intra-movement dissidence.[10] In the popular historical imagination, the *taalstryd* remains a great success story, the victory of a shared vision of like-minded men (and even some women).

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

[9] Davenport simply preserves Marais and Preller in historiographical amber in their mid-thirties as 'northerners', who wanted to promote Afrikaans above Dutch. T.R.H. Davenport, *The Afrikaner Bond, 1880 -1911* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1966) p264-265.

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

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

Language and the making of National Identity

Language is central to the activity of historians. Literary or documentary evidence is perhaps the most complete and explicit kind of historical evidence. As Corfield has it, 'language cannot evade history, nor historians language'.[11] The importance of language in understanding nationalism has been asserted from the eighteenth-century German Romantic notion of a 'Herderian community of language', to discourse theorists of today.[12] As Breuilly has contended, the idea that language is a basis for making political distinctions is a modern notion.[13] Different temporal and

[11] Penelope Corfield, *Language, History and Class* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) 29.

[12] Johann Gottfried Herder (1744 – 1803) maintained that each language promoted a different 'mode of thought' and each community had a different language and, therefore, a unique mode of thought. Discussed by John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) p56-64.

geographical examples demonstrate the importance of language in the formation of national identity. In Africa, languages were – and are – central items to the assemblages that make up different 'tribal' cultures.[14] Often a determination to replace a European language as the medium of state bureaucracy added momentum to the nationalist cause. Sometimes it was hegemony of other 'tribal' languages that was resented: for example, in Swaziland in the 1960s, IsiZulu was challenged with SiSwati, which proved pivotal to the Swazi nationalist agenda.[15] In Asia, as Seton-Watson has shown, the 'literary upliftment' of vernacular speech was a decisive stage in the formation of national consciousness.[16] In the late eighteenth century, for example, Ukrainian (or 'Little Russian') was scornfully tolerated as a language of yokels, but as Ukrainian-medium poetry, prose and texts on grammar were produced in the early nineteenth century, a national consciousness coalesced around them and by 1846 the first nationalist organisation was founded. Similarly, in India, as

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

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

[15] Hugh MacMillan, 'A Nation Divided? The Swazi in Swaziland and the Transvaal, 1865-1986', in Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, 303.

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

Chatterjee has demonstrated, the crucial moment for the development of modern Bengali came in the mid-nineteenth century, when the bilingual elite sought to provide their 'mother tongue' with the linguistic equipment to enable it to function as a tool in modern bureaucracy. A network of presses, magazines, newspapers and literary societies was created outside the purview of the state, through which the new language was consolidated.[17] The current ebullition of nationalist movements represents the same ambitions that mobilised the nationalist agendas of a hundred years ago. Once again, linguistic demands have surfaced, especially in the territories of the former Soviet Union. Hroch has observed this phenomenon in Estonia, for example, where under the Soviet Union, Russian had been decreed the language of public life and where now knowledge of Estonian is a precondition of civil rights. Similarly, the Institute of Slovak Literature has promoted a linguistic argument for national independence in Slovakia.[18] Another recent example is provided by the Roma people, a floating population of twelve million, who want recognition as a 'non-territorial' nation based on their shared language.[19]

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[17] See for example, Tapati Guha-Thalkurta, *The Making of a New "Indian" Art* (Cambridge, 1992) and Partha Chatterjee, 'Whose Imagined Community?' in Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation*, 218.

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

[19] 'Europe's Gypsies lobby for nation status', *The Guardian*, 28 July 2000.

Language is intimately connected to one's sense of self. In addition, as Anderson has shown, the very palpability of language generates the idea of a definable shared community.[20] He has argued that the expansion of a framework of 'public opinion' – expressed in popular newspapers and magazines, and often linked to the growing importance of elected assemblies in the running of government – made the standardisation of language important.[21] In similar vein but specific to Afrikaner identity, Hofmeyr has shown that the vernacularising thrust of the Afrikaans language associations, established in 1905 and 1906, spawned a succession of interconnected organisations which began to link teachers, clerics, small farmers, student organisations, lawyers and journalists into a constituency. In 1914 provincial councils passed a ruling that permitted the teaching of Afrikaans up to Standard IV, which necessitated printers, linguists, publishers and distributors to produce the teaching materials.[22] Afrikaner women's organisations, which had arisen during and immediately after the South African War, worked particularly among the poor, ethnicising poverty and in so doing, incorporating poor whites into the Afrikaner nation.[23] Post–Union politics also contributed to the objectives of the language lobby.

[20] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983, 1991).

[21]Anderson has shown that capitalism and more specifically, print-capitalism, has helped create the vernacular movements.

[22] Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and 'ethnic identity'', p 106 –110.

Union had not meant unity and many disaffected groups existed, which J.B.M. Hertzog was able to mobilise behind him when he broke away from the ruling South African Party (SAP) in 1914 to form the National Party (NP) that same year. The SAP appeared to attract the support of wealthier farmers and mining interests, alienating urban workers and small farmers, who were drawn to the NP. The language lobby received much support from the NP: Hertzog provided a political home for many 'language men', as Hofmeyr records, 'from whence they could continue with their work of forging a language'.[24] The 1914 Boer Rebellion lent impetus to the movement, particularly afterwards with the establishment of the *Helpmekaar* (Co-operation) movement which paid rebels' fines (ensuring material reward for having behaved as 'Afrikaners') and funded cultural organisations. In 1918, Afrikaans became a subject in two universities and won status as a third language when it was legislated that the word 'Dutch' in the constitution included Afrikaans for official purposes outside the House. The Nationalist coalition victory in 1924 saw legislation conferring full official status to Afrikaans in May 1925.

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

[24] Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and 'ethnic identity'', 107.

Second Language Movement

While the First Movement to promote Afrikaans was restricted to the Western Cape, revolving chiefly around the group the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (The Association of True Afrikaners), the newspaper *Di Patriot* (The Patriot) and the figure of S.J. Du Toit,[25] the Second Language Movement was more extensive and heterogeneous, ranging across the provinces and represented by many different personalities. It was a reaction to what was perceived as Alfred Milner's anglicisation policy, which was intended to transform the republican Afrikaners into English-speaking colonists, intending to 'Wipe out the last trace of Africanderism and damn the consequences'.[26] Milner had made it clear in his infamous letter of December 1900 to Major Hanbury Williams, that he meant to use the Republics' defeat to extend English culture and restrict Dutch.[27] English was therefore made the sole official language after the war and the medium of instruction in the schools. The teaching of Dutch had been guaranteed in the peace treaty, but the number of hours was restricted to three. The Cape also abandoned obligatory knowledge of Dutch as a prerequisite

[25] Discussed briefly in Chapter Two ,in Sandra Swart, A 'Ware Afrikaner' – an examination of the role of Eugène Marais (1871-1936) in the making of Afrikaner identity. DPhil, Oxford, 2001 and extensively in T.R.H. Davenport, *The Afrikaner Bond, 1880 -1911* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1966).

[26] M.A. Basson, *Die voertaalvraagstuk in die Transvaalse skoolwese* (Pretoria, 1944) 46.

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

for entry into the civil service. English was already pervasive: for example, during the war the Boer generals had often written their dispatches in it. Both Preller and Marais expressed themselves less comfortably in Afrikaans – both thought in English and often switched to English in serious discussion.[28]

Marais and Preller

Marais (Pretoria 9.1.1871 - Pelindaba 29.3.1936) was one of the intellectually heterodox, socially liminal and culturally innovative individuals whose imagination were significant in the making of the Afrikaner nationalism. He was born to English-speaking parents, in the Cape. His father was, however, disgraced in a white-collar corruption scandal, and the family relocated to Pretoria before Marais' birth, although Marais returned to the Cape to be educated. By nineteen he was editing his own paper, *Land en Volk*. He was an opponent of Paul Kruger's regime and a supporter of the Progressive faction. Marais studied law sporadically in London during the 1890s, returning to the Transvaal after the South African war, to briefly edit a newspaper. He spent the rest of his life writing sporadically for the popular press, while he relied on a group of literary friends, particularly the historian and newspaperman, Gustav Preller,

[28] There was much linguistic diversity in 'home languages' of Afrikaners: for example, Leipoldt and J.D. Kestell spoke English at home, whereas Engelenburg and Levi used Dutch. J.H. Viljoen, *'n Joernalis vertel* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1953) 43 and Du Toit, *Eugene Marais*, p237–238. Hertzog corresponded with his fiancée in English, while he was a student. D.F. Malan used English when writing letters. At Stellenbosch University the students used English in debates and journals. Moodie, *Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 40.

for financial support. His addiction to morphine and his increasing depression as he grew older resulted in his suicide in 1936.

Marais had returned to Pretoria immediately after the Treaty of Vereeniging in 1902. Martial Law was in force, and an Afrikaans-Dutch newspaper could only exist on condition of neutrality, with leading articles pre-submitted to the Colonial Secretary for approval. Approached by the Director of the State Press, Marais accepted the conditions and received permission to re-open *Land en Volk*, subsidised by the colonial regime at £500 a quarter. Dr Frans Engelenburg, who was perceived as a fervent Krugerite, and had not received permission to restart a newspaper after the war.[29] Debilitated by malaria and his growing addiction to morphine, Marais needed an editor to shoulder much of the work. He chose Gustav Schoeman Preller, a 27 year-old articled clerk, who had worked in the Department of Mines, acted as war correspondent for *De Volksstem* and *De Zoutpansberg Wachter*, and who had been deported as a prisoner-of-war to India.[30] Immediately after the war, he had attempted to reclaim his previous job in the Department of Mines.[31] The Mines had offered Preller only a temporary job for two months at £20 per month, and he was incensed that Milner's assurances to the 'new British citizens' apparently meant nothing.[32]

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[29] He received permission to restart *De Volkstem* in 1903.

[30] A 787 Preller Collection, Vol. 23, F.V. Engelenburg to Preller, 4 October 1899.

[31] A 787 Preller Collection, Band 237: Preller to Mynwese, 2 September 1902.

Preller had intended to emigrate to Argentina with a party of *bittereinders* (those who fought to the 'bitter end' of the South African War), but was recommended to Marais by a mutual friend, P. van Hoogenhout Tulleken.[33] Marais urged Preller to stay in order to help rescue his *volk* (nation) from adversity and degradation.[34] In a postscript Marais added that the offer was contingent on their 'getting along with each other'.[35] Their friendship, however, developed quickly and lasted for the rest of their lives.[36] So for the *volk*'s moral good and £25 a month, Preller became editor of *Land en Volk*.[37]

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[32] A 787 Preller Collection, Vol. 237: Preller to Mine, 26 October 1902.

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

[34] A 787 Preller Collection, Vol.182, Marais to Preller, 15 September 1902.

[35] Leon Rousseau, *Die Groot Verlange*, 161.

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

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

Land en Volk appears to have been the first and, until 1903, the only Afrikaans-language newspaper to re-open.[38] Although its publication was sanctioned and it even received government funding, it was not permitted to discuss politics.[39] On 20 September 1902, four months after the Treaty of Vereeniging, the first post-war edition of *Land en Volk* appeared and continued in the investigative vein Marais had forged in the pre-war Transvaal, exposing administrative scandals in the Milner regime.[40]

Milner urged Marais to teach English-language skills through *Land en Volk.*[41] Marais refused, but in the politically charged situation, initially kept silent on the

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

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

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

language issue. Others were not as quiet: in reaction to what was perceived as Milner's anglicisation attempts, 'Christian National Education', which promoted Dutch as mother language, was initiated and Taalbond members like Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr, began to promote the use of Dutch publicly. There appears not to have been much initial opposition by the general public to the use of English in the schools.[42] It did rankle with those who were becoming the new Afrikaner elite; but, initially, they proved unsuccessful in attracting pupils to the Christian National Dutch-language schools that they were starting to establish.[43] Stellenbosch professors, like W.J. Viljoen, sought the solution in the Vereenvoudigde Nederlandse Spelling (V.N.S.) movement, which was an attempt to render Dutch easier for Afrikaners, while keeping its basic form and vocabulary.[44] In 1903 Hofmeyr and a group of Western Cape Afrikaners revived the Zuid-Afrikaansche Taalbond, dormant during the war, to develop knowledge of Afrikaans, set exams in Dutch grammar and South African

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

[42] Denoon, *Grand Illusion*, 90.

[43] Denoon has shown how the DRC schools were initiated. Denoon, *Grand Illusion*, 90. The competition for the educational control of the youth has been discussed elsewhere, see M.A. Basson, 'Die Britse Invloed in die Transvaalse Onderwys, 1836-1907', *Archives Yearbook*, 1956. Sandra Swart, The Rebels of 1914: Masculinity, Republicanism and the Social Forces that shaped the Boer Rebellion', MA, University of Natal, 1997, p61-62.

[44] Viljoen travelled to Holland to consult Dutch linguists on how to effect simplification.

history and promote the publication of Dutch textbooks. Hofmeyr wanted to use Dutch rather than Afrikaans, because of the rich Dutch literary tradition, but also advocated the simplification of the Dutch spelling to make the language more accessible. Two years after the Taalbond was revived, on 6 March 1905, Hofmeyr gave a lecture entitled 'Is 't ons ernst?' (Are we in earnest?), in which he warned of the dangers of anglicisation, and asked whether the Afrikaner was serious about Dutch being taught in the schools or whether they were content to let language equality be a mere fiction.

Marais and Preller reacted immediately. Marais had long been concerned over the domination of Dutch bureaucrats in the ZAR, and both he and Preller were enthused by the new *taalstryd.* In a series of articles called 'Laat't ons Toch Ernst Wezen!' (Do let us be in earnest!), Preller took the cause up in *De Volkstem*, publishing the first in a series of articles which was to become the manifesto of the Language Movement, calling not only for the preservation of Dutch, but for the establishment of Afrikaans.[45] The fight against English was open, direct – the battle

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[45] The articles ran in *De Volkstem* from 19 April to 14 June 1905, and shortly afterwards they were collected and printed as a pamphlet 'Gedachten over de aanvaarding ener Afrikaanse schrijftaal' (Thoughts on the acceptance of an Afrikaans written language). On the 30 March 1905 (three weeks after Hofmeyr's lecture and three weeks before his first article in *De Volkstem*) there was correspondence between Preller and Du Toit on the issue Afrikaans as *skryftaal* GKA, SJT – 3/1. Preller to Du Toit, 30 March, 15 April 1905. (Argief gereformeerde kerke in Suid-Afrika) S.J. Du Toit Collection. Preller did not publicly associate himself with Du Toit, perhaps because of J.H.H. De Waal's antipathy towards Du Toit. Quoted in V.E. D'Assonville, *S.J. du Toit van die Paarl, 1847-1911* (Weltevredenpark:

with Dutch far more intimate: as André Brink observed 'English was a material and political threat, but Dutch jeopardized the very *raison d'être* of Afrikaans by humiliating it as a 'kitchen language'.[46]

Preller and Marais contested this view, demanding complete schism between Afrikaans and Dutch and contending that 'ideally Afrikaners should speak and write Afrikaans, learn Dutch and read both'. A combined campaign ran in the two newspapers, *De Volkstem* and *Land en Volk*, from March to June 1905, in which Preller and Marais advocated the adoption of Afrikaans as a professional, written discourse. They argued that Afrikaans was the 'true language' of the people; that Dutch and Afrikaans should be kept distinct from one another and – if Afrikaans had no literature – it was 'up to the people to put this right'. [47]

Isabel Hofmeyr has shown that there were good economic reasons for promoting Afrikaans. Just as Marais had experimented with the use of Afrikaans to boost sales of *Land en Volk* in 1891, Preller suggested that there was a market of

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Marnix, 1999) 335. The overlapping of the two Language Movements is discussed by G.S. Nienaber and J. Nienaber, *Die Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Beweging* (Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik, 1941) p 105 –110.

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

[47] Preller, 'Laat't ons Toch Enst Wezen', reprinted in Daniël Jacobus Conradie Geldenhuys, *Pannevis en Preller met hul pleidooie* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers, 1967) p80-81 and *Hertzog-Annale*, October 1952, p14-50.

Afrikaans-speakers waiting out there, a 'mute nation' requiring a voice.[48] He contended that circulation figures could be boosted by printing in the vernacular. This conforms to Anderson's model of nationalism in which he contends that capitalism had a 'vernacularizing thrust'. He gives the example of the Bible saturating the market of those who could read Latin, by the mid-seventeenth century, and publishers turning to peddling cheap vernacular editions.[49]

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

> [T]he Afrikander doctrine emanates essentially from the towns and the nonagricultural middle class, and is 'pumped into' the country Boers... It is quite certain that, but for the influence of parsons, doctors, attorneys, law agents, journalists, and the more educated and town-frequenting of their own class, the country Boers as a body would not be irreconcilable.[50]

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[48] Preller, 'Laat't ons Toch Enst Wezen', p80-81. Marais's experimentation with the use of Afrikaans has been discussed in Chapter Two, in Sandra Swart, A 'Ware Afrikaner' – an examination of the role of Eugène Marais (1871-1936) in the making of Afrikaner identity. DPhil, Oxford, 2001, 55.

[49] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 39.

In 1905, a group of Transvaal intellectuals established the *Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap* (A.T.G.) (Language Association) to foster the objectives of the Afrikaans language. Preller, Izak van Heerden, Dr H.M. Hoogenhout and Klasie de Wet met often, occasionally joined by Marais, to establish this *Taalgenootskap*.[51] The A.T.G. upset the Cape Taalbonders, particularly F.S. Malan, who felt that Dutch should receive the focus of attention. J.H.H. De Waal established the *Afrikaanse Taalvereninging* (Afrikaans Language Union) (A.T.V.) in 1906, which was welcomed by the originators of the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* and soon eclipsed the A.T.G. in importance. Davenport has shown how antagonism between the latter and the *Taalbond* was defused by a common decision to support the 1909 formation of the Akademie voor Taal, Letteren en Kunst (Academy for Language, Literature and Art).[52] For the supporters of Afrikaans the imperatives were to give it a technical and professional vocabulary, and strengthen its Dutch inheritance, in order to link it to its European and Graeco-Roman heritage.

Dutch versus Afrikaans, Transvaal versus Cape

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

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

[52] Davenport, *Afrikaner Bond*, 265.

The debate over language was fissured by the rupture between the Cape and the Transvaal – a rupture visible in 1905 after Hofmeyr's 'Is 't ons ernst?' speech. The younger Western Cape intellectuals agreed with Hofmeyr's call for language rights, but did not share his support for Dutch. Instead they entertained a growing enthusiasm for Afrikaans. In a trend discernible from the late 1880s and 1890s there was a belief among clergy and teachers that to demand Dutch as their educational instrument would mean the alienation of the lower class of Dutch-Afrikaners who could not master the language.[53] They now contended that Afrikaans should be raised to the level of a respectable, spoken and written language, by using simplified Dutch spelling (rather than the phonetic spelling of the G.R.A.). As Malan observed in 1908: 'Raise the Afrikaans language to a written language, let it become the vehicle for our culture ... and you will also raise the people who speak it.'[54] In founding the South African Academy for Arts and Sciences in 1909, their leaders compromised by promoting both Dutch and Afrikaans.

By 1920, the Academy was 'stagnant', as Engelenburg observed in a letter to Preller.[55] Preller was relatively active – but working on the Historical Commission rather than on *taal* issues directly – while Marais remained uninvolved in committee

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

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

[55] Akademie archive, vol.7/1922, item 81, Engelenburg to Preller, 8 May 1922.

work. In 1920 the announcement of the new spelling rules by the Academy catapulted them into controversy again. In 1923 Preller was elected secretary and became involved in the compiling of the Afrikaans dictionary and Afrikaans spelling issues.

C.J. Langenhoven, as part of the Cape Commission on Language, wished to replace Dutch entirely with Afrikaans, believing it powerful enough to survive alone.[56] In 1914 when Langenhoven had proposed to teach Afrikaans in Cape schools he had received Preller's support. Moreover, Preller had said: 'We want to go even further than Langenhoven!'[57] In the 1920s, however, Preller and Marais wanted to preserve the Dutch link, in a stance diametrically opposite to the one they had held as young men. Their argument was that, as Afrikaans had merely forty years' worth of literature, the young language needed the richness and heritage of the older language.[58] Preller contended that to ignore the Dutch literary heritage would be to

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

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

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

'chop down the stem, which provides our lifeblood'.[59] They used *Ons Vaderland* to promote their pro-Dutch language use position.[60]

The Academy decided to maintain 'Dutch links', which meant little in practice. Already only a reading knowledge of Dutch – rather than a speaking and writing knowledge – was being taught at the schools.[61] Preller accepted this compromise, although Langenhoven bitterly resented it.[62] In a newspaper war, Preller blamed Langenhoven for the 'onooglike stompstêrt' Afrikaans (unsightly, docked-tail Afrikaans) learnt by schoolchildren, because his antipathy to Dutch resulted in anglicisms.[63] Predictably, in 1926, Preller attempted reconciliation with Langenhoven, maintaining: 'We need each other too much in our little world in which we are

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[59] 'Ons kap die stam, waaruit ons levenssap trek, af.'*Die Burger*, 9 December 1925.

[60] J.S. Gericke Library, Langenhoven Collection, vol. 202, Preller to Langenhoven, 11 April 1926.

[61] *Die Burger*, 2 August 1927.

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

[63] *Ons Vaderland*, 17 February 1926.

surrounded by enemies of our language and our entire cultural struggle'.[64] He suggested that Dutch operate for Afrikaans as Latin operates for English – to provide a term or an expression if one does not exist.

Preller and Marais wished to retain an arguably more intellectual form, not in common use. Although criticised for their taste for the linguistically 'exotic and pedantic', Preller and Marais began to agitate strongly for the use of the imperfect tense.[65] Preller, in particular, perceived this tense to represent an example of the pronounced and acceptable differences between Cape and Transvaal patois. He also tried to replace 'moet' with the Transvaal's 'met' and incorporate the Transvaal's use of 'k' rather than the Cape's 'j' sound (for example, the Transvaal's 'manneki' versus the Cape's 'mannetje').[66] Similarly, Marais persisted in writing the Afrikaans that he heard in the '*volksmond*' (people's mouth), and agreed with Preller over the necessity

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

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

[66] Du Toit, *Eugène Marais,* 239.

for a Dutch infusion.[67] Preller was coming to regret his own polemic power and the 1905 publicity campaign he had waged to entrench Afrikaans. He noted in *Ons Vaderland*:

> Our language is being permeated by English, like a gold ring pervaded with quicksilver (mercury), so that it becomes worthless. If we learn no Dutch then we shall lose within a few years the ability to say what is genuine Afrikaans and what is foreign … not just in diction, but especially in sentence construction, word construction and idiom.[68]

Regretting the revolution

By 1927, Preller and Marais rued the fact that the reforms they had advocated in their passionate 1905 polemics had actually been instituted.[69] Preller openly

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

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

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

lamented that *Die Volksblad* had managed to raise £5000 for the translation of the Bible into Afrikaans. He argued that it would be a 'blessing' if the Bible were to be read in Dutch for another fifty years and that 'rushing Afrikaans resulted in crude and inappropriate spelling and vocabulary'.[70] He even went so far as to denounce the new status of Afrikaans as an official language.[71]

In June 1927, Preller openly voiced his view that there was too great a 'Cape influence' in the written language and that 'Transvaal Afrikaans' was being marginalised.[72] He contended that the powerful figures in the Academy were from the Cape and their influence meant that 'the whole Union has to write Afrikaans as one province speaks it'.[73] Preller wanted a move towards the 'skryf-soos-jy-praat' (write-as-you-speak) approach – adopted in 1875.[74] For a month before a crucial meeting of the Academy, Preller and Marais published a series of articles – ostensibly by Marais alone – called 'Afrikaans op die Kruispad' (Afrikaans at the crossroads) in *Ons*

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

[71] *Ons Vaderland*, 26 November 1926.

[72] *Ons Vaderland*, 27 September 1927.

[73] *Ons Vaderland*, 31 December 1926.

[74] *Ons Vaderland*, 5 July 1927.

Vaderland.[75] The articles were a polemical defence of Dutch links, citing, for example, the voortrekker Louis Trichardt's penchant for the past imperfect and mourning the fact that Afrikaans would be the only civilised language in the world lacking a past imperfect. The articles emphasised their continued support for the use of the past imperfect and the increased amalgamation of Dutch into Afrikaans. They were a limited success as Preller was elected – along with Jochem van Bruggen and S.P. Engelbrecht – to investigate uncertainty in language structure and make recommendations to the Spelling Commission of the Academy.[76] Preller's report emphasised the dangers of dialect – it contended that there were four distinct patois: (i) Bosveld (Rustenberg, Zoutpansberg, Waterberg); (ii) Hoëveld (Transvaal, Northern Orange Free State), (iii) Namaqualand, Eastern Province and Southern Free State and (iv) Western Province. They were concerned at the fissures within Afrikaans, and the thin line that separated a 'language' from a 'kombuistaal' (kitchen patois). Yet Preller warned against historical variety being overwhelmed by 'radical particularism'. This was a reference to the 'Cape influence' – as Preller correctly observed, the Spelling Commission members came from the Western Province. The report urged that the Transvaal-Orange Free State tradition not be treated as 'if it had never existed'. Reference was made to the vacuum left by the absence of Dutch, which could be filled by anglicisms. Preller made another impassioned plea – like Cato asking yet again that Carthage be destroyed – that the past imperfect be retained.

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

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

Almost a quarter of the report was devoted to the past imperfect. Preller used Marais as a witness to the value of the 'imperfektum', citing Marais's theory that the ancient Egyptian language had become extinct because they had 'no indication of time by conjugation' and thus could not compete with the versatile Greek language, with its many verb tenses.[77] He argued that the Egyptian extinction was the result of the lack of this conjugation: when the Egyptian language was confronted by the Greek, people tried to keep Egyptian alive, but Greek was more complex and capable of nuance and thereby was able to defeat and replace the six thousand year old language within a mere hundred years.[78]

Both Preller and Marais reiterated the need for a stronger link with Dutch than did their colleagues in the Cape. They both feared anglicisation more than those in the south. Both felt that spoken Afrikaans did not have to be identical to written Afrikaans. Preller claimed to have had to revert entirely to Dutch forms – out of desperation and 'pure hopelessness'.[79] The Preller Report was summarised by a two-man commission, E.C. Pienaar and D.B. Bosman, who – while conceding that some imperfect forms, like 'dog' (was thinking), 'kon' (could have), 'sou' (would have) would linger on – accepted that, for the most part, the past imperfect could not be

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[77] 'geen tydsbepaing deur vervoeging gehad het nie'.

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

[79] Du Toit, *Eugene Marais*, 254, interview by Du Toit.

restored. The Spelling Commission, while agreeing *pro forma* that anglicisms posed a danger, accepted the Pienaar-Bosman Report.[80] The Academy also refused to publish the Preller Report so that his recommendations had to remain mediated through the Pienaar-Bosman Report.[81] Preller resigned, citing Cape intellectuals who, he contended, ignored the struggle of the Transvaal and Orange Free State.[82]

Conclusion

The conventional portrayal of the *taalstryd* as a cultural victory cloaks both the complex struggle, characterised by dissension, and the highly constructed nature of the language. A discussion of the roles of Marais and Preller provides a window into the understanding of conflicting individual loyalties and regional feuds, particularly between the Cape and the Transvaal. Marais and Preller believed the revolution had happened too soon. They had helped fire the kiln when the Afrikaans

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

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

[82] *De Volksblad*, 29 September 1928, *De Burger*, 1 October 1928. In Afrikaans today ‘kon’, ‘moes’, ‘sou’, ‘wou’, and ‘was’ live on, dag/dog is used infrequently, ‘wis’ is used by only an older generation or in attempts to represent archaic speech, ‘had’ and ‘mog’ are very seldom heard, ‘brag/brog’, ‘kog’ and ‘begon/begos’ are no longer used. See, for example, J. du Scholtz, *Taalhistoriese Opstelle* (Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik, 1963) p38-39.

language was malleable, and resented the way it had cooled, forged by *kapenaars* (Capetonians) and debased with anglicisms. The early post-war pro-Afrikaans polemics of Marais and Preller came to be replaced with disillusionment over what they saw to be the marginalisation of the Transvaal and Free State versions of Afrikaans in favour of the Western Cape's. Their active opposition to the aims of other *taalstryders* reveals the intra-organisational fissures in the Language Movement that is too often portrayed as uniform and seamless.