

"Taaltriomf of Taalverdriet?" An aspect of the roles of Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller in the Second Language Movement, circa 1905-1927"

Sandra Swart and Lize-Marié van der Watt

Amongst the grievances of the Boers during and after the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), a special emotional space was occupied by the threat of Anglicisation – English being one of the more intimate and palpable perils of imperial conquest. In the post-war education system especially, Afrikaans children were believed by many to be threatened with Anglicisation. A story commonly recounted 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 am a donkey, I spoke Dutch".¹

By 1933, a mere generation later, the language of those who "spoke Dutch",² had been codified and entrenched through the Second Language Movement as Afrikaans. The Afrikaner had a much larger measure of political and ideological control, and started to display a greater measure of economic autonomy. The Second Language Movement was a loosely associated, predominantly male³ group, working after the Anglo-Boer War (historians are divided as to an initial date, varying from the

¹ "Language Triumph or Language Despair?". This article comes from Swart's doctoral thesis, supervised by the late Stanley Trapido. Our appreciation goes to him, as well as to Lisa Jenschke, Albert Grundlingh, Adrian Ryan, Leopold Scholtz, Johanna Lategan, Ronel Foster and Doret Jordaan.

² Sandra Swart is a Senior Lecturer in the History Department, Stellenbosch University, who has just published a co-authored book with Greg Bankoff, *Breeds of Empire: The "invention" of the horse in the Philippines and Southern Africa, 1500-1950* (NIAS Press, Copenhagen, 2007) and a co-edited collection, with Lance van Sittert, *Canis Africanus – a dog history of Southern Africa* (Brill, Leiden, 2008). Lize-Marié van der Watt is a MA student in the Department of History, Stellenbosch University, working on themes of socio-environmental change, particularly in the Free State.

1. D. Harrison, *The White Tribe of Africa: South Africa in Perspective* (Macmillan – South African edition, Johannesburg, 1986), p 48.

2. Note on terminology – the "Dutch" spoken by these school children would have been unrecognisable as such to most educated Dutch speakers from the Low Countries, and more closely resembled what would become known as Afrikaans.

3. Some notable exceptions included Mabel Malherbe, politician and editor of *Die Boervrou* and M.E. Rothman, politician and author.

immediate aftermath to 1914),⁴ to foster a sense of Afrikaner identity, chiefly through the promotion of Afrikaans as an autonomous and official language. Those who advocated the use of Afrikaans or Dutch as opposed to imperial English, and actively engaged with it, referred to their cause as the Second Language Movement and it was seen as such for much of twentieth century Afrikaans historiography. In the 1980s, L.T. du Plessis, as well as other linguists and historians, described more varied, nuanced versions – Du Plessis arguing that there was indeed more than one language movement. There is also increasing controversy as to what extent the purported "Second Language Movement" was infused with other ambitions by individual proponents and to what extent it was a platform for the nationalist venture.⁵

Analysts have shown that the standardisation and consolidation of the Afrikaans language by the Second Language Movement was crucial to the construction of an Afrikaner identity (and it arguably still is in maintaining that identity).⁶ The establishment of Afrikaans as an "official language" in the machinery of state, science and education, has been delineated in a plethora of academic and polemic works.⁷ These descriptions of the *taalstryd* (language struggle) – both those that attempt objectivity and those that are unabashedly partisan – usually concentrate on the accomplishments of the *taalstryders* (those who fought in the struggle for the entrenchment of Afrikaans). For structuralist historians, *taalstryders* were middle-class culture brokers consolidating the vernacular in order to manufacture a workable identity and assimilate the lower classes. For Afrikaner nationalists, these people were heroes, theirs

4. L.T. du Plessis, *Afrikaans in beweging* (Patmos, Bloemfontein, 1986), p 72.

5. See for example Du Plessis, *Afrikaans in beweging*, p 69; P.H. Zietsman, *Die taal is gans die volk: woelinge en dryfvere in die stryd om die Afrikaner se taal* (UNISA, Pretoria, 1992); or the more recently contested work of P. van Eeden, *Afrikaans hoort by Holland: Ons Afrikaanse Taalverdrriet* (Brevitas, Howick, 1998).

6. Isabel Hofmeyr's analysis is the most insightful in this regard. I. 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* (Longman, Harlow, 1987). The centrality of the Afrikaans language to Afrikaner identity was again emphasized in the Afrikaanse Taaldebate (Afrikaans Language Debate) of the late 1990s and beginning of the twenty-first century, fought on platforms such as the internet journal *Linnet* (www.linnet.co.za/taaldebate) and in the Afrikaans press.

7. Authors who wrote published works on the history of the Afrikaans language movements as such, for instance include G.S. Nienaber, P.J. Nienaber, J.C. Steyn, J. du P. Scholtz, E.C. Pienaar, P.C. Schoonees, M.S. du Buisson, and more lately P.H. Zietsman and I. Hofmeyr.

is a history of the success and the "triumph of Afrikaans".⁸ Both Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller have been depicted as examples of such heroes – or alternatively, successful "constructors" – as well as life-long campaigners and successful mediators for the Afrikaans language.⁹

Perhaps because of the rapidity with which the scattered, war-torn "Dutch" speakers¹⁰ came to be a "nation", complete with its own language and political control, there has been a consistent focus on the "achievements" and "successes" of this transition. Attention has been paid to the creation of the *Afrikaanse Taalgemeenskap* (Afrikaans Language Association) (1905), the *Afrikaanse Taalvereniging* (Afrikaans Language Union), the founding of the *Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns* (South African Academy for Sciences and Arts) (1909) and the recognition of Afrikaans as medium of instruction by provincial councils in 1914, and by parliament in 1925, when Dutch ("Hollands") officially included Afrikaans. 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 to the development 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)

8. Quote from G.S. & P.J. Nienaber, *Die Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Beweging* (Van Schaik, Pretoria, 1941), p. 195. There is a legion of similar triumphalist accounts, for example: R. Antonissen, *Die Afrikaanse Letterkunde van Aanvang tot Hede* (Nasou, Johannesburg, n.d.), E.C. Pienaar, *Taal en Poësie van die Tweede Taalbeweging* (Nasionale Pers, Kaapstad, 1926), P.C. Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging* (De Bussy, Pretoria, 1922), M.S. du Buisson, *Die wonder van Afrikaans: Bydraes oor die ontstaan en groei van Afrikaans tot volwaardige wêreldtaal* (Voortrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1959), T. Johannes, *The Achievement of Afrikaans* (CNA, South Africa, 1934) and E.C. Pienaar, *Die Triomf van Afrikaans* (Nasionale Pers, Kaapstad, 1943).

9. F.G.M. du Toit, *Eugène Marais – Sy bydrae tot die Afrikaanse letterkunde* (N.V. Swets, Amsterdam, 1940), p. 235; J.H.H. de Waal, "My herinnerings van ons Taalstryd", *Versamelde Werke I* (Nasionale Pers, Kaapstad, 1939), pp. 187-207; H. Oost, "In die Skaduwee van die Nederlaag: Preller as Vertolker van die Volkswil om te Oorleef", *Die Huisgenoot*, 22 October 1943, p. 5. D.J.C. Geldenhuys, *Uit die Wieg van ons Taal: Pamevis en Preller met hul pleidoioe* (Voortrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1967).

10. For more on what Dutch, Cape Dutch, *Hollands*, *Nederlands*, *Zuid-Afrikaans*, *Afrikaans*, and so on signified at the time, see: J. du P. Scholtz, *Wording en Ontwikkeling van Afrikaans* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1980), pp. 113-120. "Hollands" was used as opposed to "Nederlands" to signify the South African difference from the latter until "Afrikaans" became entrenched. P.H. Zietsman, *Die taal is gans die volk*, p. 18.

epitomise the manner in which the story of the *taalstryd* has largely been told.¹¹ There are more recent historiographical analyses, like that of Hofmeyr, Du Plessis and Zietsman, which is non-normative and nuanced, and this article attempts to locate itself within this growing body of work. Yet even Hofmeyr, in her complex and nuanced analysis of the Second Language Movement, has tacitly accepted that the struggle ultimately delivered what the *taalstryders* desired, namely the entrenchment of Afrikaans as *kultuurtaal* (culture/cultured language), both in the public and private spheres. Special mention should also be made of the controversial, rather polemical 1998 work by Petrus van Eeden, *Afrikaans hoort by Nederlands: Ons Afrikaanse Taalverdrriet* (Afrikaans belongs with Dutch: Our Afrikaans language despair). Van Eeden concedes that the *taalstryders* (for the most part) achieved what they set out to do, but he judges their "achievement" of establishing Afrikaans as an autonomous language as detrimental in the long run.¹²

Where opposition to the aims of the *taalstryders* does receive a rare mention, it often refers to outside hostility from English speakers in state positions and commerce, and a few church figures, rather than any intra-movement dissidence. This is particularly the case where ideological, as opposed to syntactical and grammatical differences are considered – although there are historiographical exceptions.¹³ In the popular historical imagination – school textbook version taught until late in the twentieth century¹⁴ – the *taalstryd* remains a great success story, the victory of a shared vision of like-minded men (and "even" some women).

Yet people intimately involved in the process did not always agree with this roseate picture. So for instance, Advocate J.H.H. de Waal, a pre-eminent political figure in the Second Language Movement, alluded to the initial generational conflict between the respective language movements.¹⁵ This article presents the rather under-explored aspect of

11. Du Buisson, *Die wonder van Afrikaans*; Johannes, *The Achievement of Afrikaans*; Pienaar, *Die Triomf van Afrikaans*.

12. P. van Eeden, *Afrikaans hoort by Nederlands: Ons Afrikaanse Taalverdrriet* (Brevitas, Howick, 1998).

13. Hofmeyr, "Building a Nation from Words", p. 108. Similarly, a recent analysis by Gouws and Ponielis records that there was opposition solely from "clergymen" and intellectuals with "strong ties to the Netherlands". R.H. Gouws and F.A. Ponielis, "The Development of Afrikaans and the Lexicographical Tradition", in L. Zugst (ed), *History, Languages and Lexicographers* (Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1992), p. 77.

14. P.F. de Klerk (ed), *Afrikaans my Taal Si, 10* (Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 1985), last chapter. Sillabus of 1986.

15. J.H.H. de Waal, *Versamelde Werke I*, pp. 165-185.

the roles of two *taalstryders*, Marais and Preller. This discussion follows their roles from the immediate post-war milieu in 1902, following the trajectory of their involvement in development within the Second Language Movement until roughly 1927, when they renounced some major aspects of the movement. The focus is on their growing disillusionment with the movement they helped to initiate, within the context of intra-movement conflict, which was precipitated by personal idiosyncrasies beyond grammatical contretemps and regional differences, particularly between the Cape and the Transvaal.

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".¹⁶ The importance of language in understanding nationalism has been asserted from the German Romantic notion of a "Herderian community of language", to discourse theorists of today.¹⁷ As Breuilly has contended, the idea that language is a basis for making political distinctions is a modern notion.¹⁸ There are several different temporal and geographical examples that 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.¹⁹ This is not necessarily always directed at an imperial European language as medium of state bureaucracy, but also at the hegemony of other "tribal" languages: for example, in Swaziland in the 1960s, isiZulu was challenged with siSwati, which proved to be

fundamental to the Swazi nationalist agenda.²⁰ In central Asia, as Seton-Watson has shown, the "literary upliftment" of vernacular speech was a decisive stage in the formation of national consciousness.²¹ 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 texts and grammar were produced in the early nineteenth century, a national consciousness coalesced around them and by 1846 the first nationalistic organisation was founded. There are some echoes of this in the Afrikaans Language Movements. In their obsession with the creation of a *kultuurtaal*, they wanted to elevate the vernacular from its association with "the kitchen" and peoples low on the social hierarchy,²² for the expressed benefit of the *volk* (nation), hence the aggressively nationalist rhetoric and emphasis on "civilization". Similarly, in India, as Chatterjee has demonstrated, the crucial moment for the development of modern Bengali came in the mid-nineteenth century, when the bilingual elite sought to provide their "mother tongue" with 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 a new language was consolidated.²³

Linguistically perhaps closest to the Afrikaans question, is the problematic of Flemish or *Zuid-Nederlands* (Southern Dutch) as opposed to Dutch. This debate's historical directory reaches back towards the Dutch Golden Age to European identity politics today.²⁴ 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

16. P. Corfield, *Language, History and Class* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1991), p. 29.
17. 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 in: J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1993), pp. 56-64.
18. J. Breuilly, "Approaches to nationalism", in G. Balakrishnan (ed), *Mapping the Nation* (Verso, London, 1999), p. 152. Of course, as Balakrishnan has argued, there are ways in which nations are not conceived in languages. Balakrishnan, "The National Imagination", p. 207. Some nations, for instance, share the same language without language being pivotal in the scaffolding of "nationhood", for example many English-speaking nations, or some Chinese nationalisms.
19. L. Vail (ed), *The Creation of Tribalism in South Africa* (James Currey, London, 1989), p. 11.

20. H. Macmillan, "A Nation Divided? The Swazi in Swaziland and the Transvaal, 1865-1986", in Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, p. 303.
21. H. Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (Westview, Boulder, 1977), p. 187.
22. Afrikaans had been variously called a *kombuistaal* (kitchen language), *brabbeltaal* (gibberish/barbarous tongue) or *Hotnotstaal* (Hottentot language). Zietsman, *Die taal is gans die volk*, p. 26.
23. See for example: T. Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New "Indian" Art* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992); P. Chatterjee, "Whose Imagined Community?", in Balakrishnan (ed), *Mapping the Nation*, p. 218.
24. See, for example: H. Heestermaas, "Het Nederlands, een veelsoortige taal" and R. Willemijns, "Het Nederlands in het Zuiden na 1585: naar een eigen identiteit?", in V. February (ed), *Taal en Identiteit: Afrikaans & Nederlands* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1994), pp. 74-89, 129-148. P. van Eeden also extensively discusses Flemish and Dutch and its relation to the Afrikaans-Dutch debate. Van Eeden, *Afrikaans hoort by Nederlands*, pp. 37-74.

shared language.²⁵ Parallels can perhaps be drawn to the almost obsessive language-consciousness of post-1994 Afrikaans emigrant communities in Australia, New Zealand and London.²⁶ A 2006 research report by Kotzé and Biberauer came to the conclusion that a general consciousness of the Afrikaans language as identity-marker exists amongst expatriate Afrikaans youths living in the UK.²⁷

Language is thus 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.²⁸ 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 running of government – made the standardisation of language important.²⁹ In similar vein, but specific to Afrikaner identity, Hofmeyr has cogently argued how Afrikaans language associations, established after the Anglo-Boer War, spawned a succession of interconnected organisations which began to link teachers, clerics, small farmers, student organisations, lawyers and journalists into a constituency. This characteristic of the vernacularizing thrust of the Afrikaans Language Movement is frequently described as the main triumph of the movement by nationalist historians such as G.S. and P.J. Nienaber.³⁰ In 1914, provincial councils passed a ruling that permitted the teaching of Afrikaans up to Standard IV, which necessitated

25. "Europe's Gypsies lobby for nation status", *The Guardian*, 28 July 2000.

26. Afrikaans schools, festivals and churches are gaining in popularity in these communities. For running commentary on this phenomenon, consult www.linnet.co.za, especially the *expat* and *taaldebat* pages. Other examples include <http://afrikaansinchurch.org.nz/afrikaans/>, calling Afrikaans *die mooiste taal in die mooiste stad* (the most beautiful language in the most beautiful city). One of their projects is creating Afrikaans libraries; <http://www.afrikaans.org.au> & <http://www.afrikaansinydney.com> are Australian based websites. A Google search for "Afrikaans in Australia" and "Afrikaans in New Zealand" gave 629 000 and 682 000 results respectively (18 April 2008). In 2003, Afrikaans was the second most common language after English in Auckland, New Zealand – *Cape Argus*, 15 July 2003, p. 8.

27. E. Kotzé and T. Biberauer, "Die rol van Afrikaans as identiteitsfaktor by SA ekspatriate in die Verenigde Koninkryk", *Journal for Language and Teaching/Tydskrif vir Taalonderrig*, 40, 1, 2006.

28. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Verso, London, 1983/1991).

29. Anderson has shown that capitalism, and more specifically print-capitalism, has helped to create the vernacular movements.

30. Hofmeyr, "Building a Nation from Words", pp. 106-110. See for example: Nienaber & Nienaber, *Die Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Beweging*, pp. 135-179; J.C. Steyn, *Trouwe Afrikaners: Aspekte van Afrikaner-nasionalisme en Suid-Afrikaanse Taalpolitiek 1875-1938* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1987), pp. 41-51.

printers, linguists, publishers and distributors to produce teaching materials.³¹ Afrikaner women's organisations, which had arisen during and immediately after the Anglo-Boer War, worked particularly among the poor, ethicising poverty and in so doing, incorporating poor whites into the Afrikaner nation.³² Women, in their roles of mothers, were lauded by *taalsryders*.³³ Post-Union politics also contributed to the objectives of the language lobby. Union had not meant unity and disaffected groups existed, which the Afrikaner nationalist leader 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 seems to have attracted 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".³⁴ The 1914 Boer Rebellion lent impetus to the movement, particularly afterwards with the establishment of the *Helpmekaar* (Help-one-another) movement which paid rebels' fines – thus also ensuring material reward for having behaved as "Afrikaners" and in order to prevent further discord in the community. It was indeed, their "privilege and duty as men and Afrikaners".³⁵ They also funded cultural and educational organisations. The Nationalist coalition

31. Hofmeyr, "Building a Nation from Words", pp. 106-110.

32. The role of ethnic identity through women's institutions has been examined by, for example, J. Butler, "Afrikaner Women and the Creation of Ethnicity in a Small South African Town, 1902-1950", in Vail (ed), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*; L. Kruger, "Gender, community and identity of women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the Volksmoeder discourse of *Die Boerevrou*, 1919-1931." MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1991; L. Vincent, "The Mothers of Invention: Gender, Class and the ideology of the Volksmoeder in the making of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1918-1938." D Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1997.

33. Zietsman, *Die Taal is Gans die Volk*, p. 51.

34. Hofmeyr, "Building a Nation from Words", p. 107. J.C. Steyn also wrote extensively on the links between the Afrikaans language movements and politics. See for instance: *Trouwe Afrikaners and Tuiste in Eie Taal: Die Behoud en Bestaan van Afrikaans* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1980).

35. In the *Helpmekaar* Commemorative Book, this ostensibly altruistic and Christian incentive is explicitly linked to preventing a situation where *die gehele finansiële toestand sou in verwarring gekom het* (the financial state would have become dishevelled). Furthermore, to join in the projects was a *plig en voorreg als manne en Afrikaners* (duty and privilege as men and Afrikaners). *Helpmekaar Gedenkboek: 'n geskiedenis van die groter reddingsbeweging van die Afrikanervolk met statistieke van die Helpmekaar-beweging* (De Nationale Pers Beperkt, Kaapstad, 1918), pp. 9, 15.

victory in 1924 saw legislation conferring full official status to Dutch, as an appellation that includes Afrikaans, in May 1925 (Act 8 of 1925).

"The language of the conqueror in the mouths of the conquered is the language of slaves"³⁶

As has already been mentioned, there is some debate on how to distinguish between the two (or more) language movements. However, at discussion here is what the specific historical actors perceived themselves to be a part of – the account of events that dominated the historiography for most of the twentieth century.³⁷

The First Movement to promote Afrikaans was restricted to the Western Cape, in particular Paarl and Stellenbosch, and revolved chiefly around the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (The Association of Authentic Afrikaners), their mouthpiece, *Die Afrikaanse Patriot*, and the person of S.J. du Toit. The Second Movement however, was much more extensive in geographical scope and heterogeneous in its personalities. It was a reaction against what was perceived as a vituperative Anglicisation policy of Alfred Milner, British proconsul to South Africa from 1897 to 1905,³⁸ whose post-war reconstruction administration, was accused of a drive to "wipe out the last trace of Africanderism and damn the consequences".³⁹ Milner had made it clear in his infamous letter of December 1900 to Major Hanbury Williams that he meant to use the Republic's defeat to extend English culture and restrict Dutch.⁴⁰ The

36. Quote from Tacitus in T. Perry, "Language Rights, Ethnic Politics: A Critique of the Pan South African Language Board" in *Occasional Papers*, p 14, <http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/prasa/Occasional%20Paper%2012%20text%20layo ut.pdf> (accessed: 10 February 2008).

37. The overlapping of the two Language Movements is discussed by Nienaber & Nienaber, *Die Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Beweging*, pp 105-110. On the other hand, L.T. du Plessis argued in *Afrikaans in Beweging* (1986) that one can distinguish five language movements, an assertion that led to considerable debate. W.A.M. Carstens and H. Waher, "Afrikaanse Taalbewegings: 'n Gesprek in Beweging", *SA Journal of Linguistics*, occasional papers, 7, 1988.

38. J.H. Wrench, *Alfred Lord Milner: the man of no illusions* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1958), p 166.

39. M.A. Basson, *Die Voertaalvraagstuk in die Transvaalse skoolweese* (Voortrekkerpers, Pretoria, 1944), p 46.

40. 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. Furthermore, higher education in Dutch necessitated relocation to Holland. D. Denoon, *A Grand Illusion: the Failure*

sentiment many *taalstryders* harboured towards the Milner administration is perhaps best summed up by D.J.C. Geldenhuys: "Milner knew that if they gave up their language, they would cease to exist as a people. A people without a language is, after all, a people without a soul."⁴¹ English was made the sole official language after the war and the medium of instruction in schools. The teaching of Dutch had been guaranteed in the peace treaty, but the number of hours was restricted to three. The Cape also abandoned obligatory knowledge of Dutch as a prerequisite for entry into civil service. English was already pervasive: both Preller and Marais expressed themselves better in English than in Afrikaans, especially Marais who had been educated in English and also studied in England.⁴²

Marais and Preller

Eugène Marais (1871-1936) was one of the intellectually heterodox, socially liminal and culturally innovative individuals whose imagination was significant in the making of Afrikaner nationalism. He was born to English-speaking parents and grew up in the Cape, where he was educated. He settled in Pretoria after his childhood education and by nineteen he was owner-editor of the newspaper *Land en Volk*. He was a vociferous opponent of Paul Kruger's regime and supported the Progressive faction of General Joubert. From 1897, and during the

of *Imperial Policy in the Transvaal Colony during the Period of Reconstruction 1900-1905* (Longman, London, 1973). P.H. Zietsman too argued that the relationship between Milner and some pre-eminent *taalstryders*, especially Marais, was more congenial than is usually portrayed. P. Zietsman, "Eugène Marais, Vrydenker of Volksverraaier?", *De Kat*, Junie 2001, pp 37-41. Also see: R. van Reenen, "Lord Milner se geld toe al die tyd agter Winternag", *Rapport*, 4 Augustus 1974, no page number. Nevertheless, Milner's administration has been interpreted by most participants in the Second Language Movement as well as Afrikaner nationalist historians throughout the twentieth century as vehemently pro-Anglicisation and anti-Dutch, and it is this historiography that is of concern here.

41. *Milner het geweet dat as hulle hul taal sou prysgee, hulle ook sou ophou om as volk te bestaan. 'n Volk sonder 'n taal is immers 'n volk sonder siel' – Geldenhuys, Uit die Wieg van Ons Taal*, p 36.

42. Letters between Marais and his son were, for instance, mostly written in English. Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum, Bloemfontein (hereafter NALN): M 2000/88 Marais Manuscripts. There was much linguistic diversity in the "home languages" of Afrikaners: for example, Leipoldt and J.D. Kestell spoke English at home, whereas the newspaper editor Engelenburg and Levi used Dutch. J.H. Viljoen, *'n Joernalis vertel* (Nasionale Boekhandel, Cape Town, 1953), p 43; Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, pp 237-238; Zietsman, *Die Taal is gans die volk*, pp 84-91.

Anglo-Boer War, Marais lived in London, intermittently studying law. He returned to South Africa just as the Boer forces capitulated, and briefly worked as newspaper editor again. He spent the rest of his life sporadically writing for the popular press and sometimes acting as a law professional. Most of the time, however, he depended on a group of literary friends, particularly historian and newspaperman, Gustav Preller, for financial support. His addiction to morphine and increasing depression as he grew older, resulted in his suicide on Preller's farm in 1936.⁴³

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* that had been shut down before the war, subsidised by the colonial regime at £500 a quarter. Doctor Frans Engelenburg, who was perceived as a fervent Krugerite, had not received the same permission to restart a newspaper immediately after the war.⁴⁴ Debilitated by recurrent malaria and his growing addiction to morphine, Marais needed an editor to shoulder much of the work. He chose Gustav Schoeman Preller (1875-1943), a 27 year-old article clerk, who had worked in the Department of Mines, acted as a war correspondent for *De Volksstem* and *De Zoutpansberg Wacht*, and who had been deported as a prisoner-of-war to India.⁴⁵ Immediately after the war, Preller attempted to reclaim his previous job at the Department of Mines, but they could only offer him a temporary job for two months at £20 a month.⁴⁶ He was also incensed that Milner's assurances to the "new British citizens" apparently meant nothing. Preller then intended to emigrate to Argentina with a party of *bittereinders* (those who fought to the "bitter end" of the Anglo-Boer War), but was recommended to Marais by a mutual friend,

43. S. Swart, "A 'Ware Afrikaner' - an examination of the role of Eugène Marais (1871-1936) in the making of Afrikaner identity," D Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 2001. Also see: L. Rousseau, *Die Groot Verlang* (Protea, Pretoria, 2005) - a comprehensive biography of Marais.
44. He received permission to restart *De Volksstem*, the main rival of *Land en Volk* in that market segment, in 1903.
45. National Archives Depository of South Africa, Pretoria (hereafter NASA): Transvaal Archives (hereafter TAB): A 787, Preller Collection, Volume 3: F.V. Engelenburg - G.S. Preller, 4 October 1899.
46. NASA: TAB: A 787, Preller Collection, Band 237: G.S. Preller - Mynwese, 2 September 1902.
47. NASA: TAB: A 787, Preller Collection, Volume 237: G.S. Preller - Mine, 26 October 1902.

P. Hoogenhout Tulleken.⁴⁸ Marais urged Preller to stay, in order to help rescue his *volk* from adversity and degradation.⁴⁹ In a postscript, Marais added that the offer was contingent on their "getting along with each other".⁵⁰ Their friendship, however, developed quickly and lasted for the rest of their lives.⁵¹ So for the *volk's* moral good and £25 a month, Preller became editor of *Land en Volk*.⁵²

Land en Volk appears to have been the first, and until 1903, the only Afrikaans/Dutch language newspaper to re-open after the war. Its publication was sanctioned and it even received government funding, but it was not permitted to discuss politics.⁵³ This did not however mean that Marais and Preller abstained from political commentary - anything but. On 20 September 1902, 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.⁵⁴

48. Du Plessis, "Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller", p 100. Marais and Preller had first come into contact with one another in 1891, when, while working as sub-editor of *The Press*, Marais rejected a short story of Preller, adding that it was not wholly without merit. G.S. Preller, "Vroeë herinneringe aan E.N. Marais", *Ons Tydskrif*, May 1936.
49. NASA: TAB: A 787, Preller Collection, Volume 182: E. Marais - G.S. Preller, 15 September 1902.
50. Rousseau, *Die Groot Verlang*, p 161.
51. Preller's biographer maintains that they were "soulmates", based on their shared love of their nation, country, literature, culture and science. Du Plessis, "Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller", p 101.
52. The paper was subsidized by the government and received revenue from government notices. Colonial Secretary, 1078, 07/02: W.E. Davidson - Lord A. Milner, 19 January 1903.
53. W. van Heerden, "Preller die Joernalis", *Tydskrif vir die Geesteswetenskappe*, Desember 1975, p 269. Why *Land en Volk* was allowed to re-open, is open to speculation. Perhaps Marais' opposition to Kruger was considered to be a positive factor. Milner was well-aware of Marais' morphine addiction and related ill-health (see Zietsman, "Eugène Marais: Vrydenker of Volksverraai?", p 39). Preller, on the other hand, knew little people of real influence.
54. W. van Heerden, "Gustav S. Preller", *Die Huisgenoot*, 29 Mei 1931, p 45. In the first post-war edition Marais and Preller published a letter written by Milner to Chamberlain concerning the replacement of Afrikaans farmers by English colonists.

Milner urged Marais to teach English-language skills through *Land en Volk*.⁵⁵ Marais refused, but in the politically charged situation, initially kept silent on the language issue. Others were not as silent: in reaction to what was perceived as Milner's Anglicisation attempts, "Christian National Education" (CNO) schools were found, based on the premises of Dutch as mother tongue and therefore the medium of instruction. In 1903, Jan Hofmeyr and a group of Western Cape Afrikaners revived the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Taalbond*, dormant during the war, to develop knowledge of Afrikaans, set exams in Dutch grammar and South African history and promote the publication of Dutch textbooks. Hofmeyr wanted to use Dutch rather than Afrikaans, because of the rich Dutch literary tradition, but also advocated the simplification of the Dutch spelling to make the language more accessible. Two years after the *Taalbond* had been revived, on 6 March 1905, Hofmeyr gave the famous lecture entitled "*Is't ons Erfs?*", in which he warned of the dangers of Anglicisation, and asked whether the Afrikaner was serious about Dutch being taught at school, or whether they were content to let language equality be mere fiction.⁵⁶ Moreover, *Taalbond* members promoted the use of Dutch publicly.⁵⁷ There appears not to have been much opposition by the general public to the use of English in schools,⁵⁸ but it did rankle with those becoming the new Afrikaner elite. The Christian National Dutch-language schools they founded however struggled to make financial ends meet. In the Orange Free State, control of the schools was relinquished to the Crown in 1905, and with self-government, also in the Transvaal.⁵⁹ Stellenbosch professors like W.J. Viljoen, sought the solution in the Vereenvoudige Nederlandse Spelling (VNS)⁶⁰ movement, which was an attempt to render Dutch easier for Afrikaners, while keeping its basic form and vocabulary. Viljoen travelled to Holland to consult Dutch linguists on how to effect

55. Rousseau, *Uur van Verlange*, p 176. Denoon, *Grand Illusion*, p 90. The competition for the educational control of the youth has been discussed elsewhere – see: M.A. Basson, "Die Invloed van die Transvaalse Onderwys, 1836-1907", *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 19, 2 (Government Printer, Cape Town, 1956); S. Swart, "The Rebels of 1914: Masculinity, Republicanism and the Social Forces that shaped the Boer Rebellion." MA thesis, University of Natal, 1997, pp 61-62.
56. J.H. Hofmeyr, "Is't Ons Erfs?" Rede uitgesproken te Stellenbosch op 6 Maart 1905." Reprinted from *Ons Land* (Cape Town, 9 March 1905).
57. The speech that arguably defined this epoch, was delivered by Hofmeyr to a meeting of *Ons Spreekuur*, a popular Stellenbosch student association that promoted the language issue.
58. Denoon, *Grand Illusion*, p 90.
59. Zietsman, *Taal is gans die volk*, p 180.
60. Translatable as "Simplified Dutch Spelling".

simplification. He was also an ardent supporter of maintaining Dutch in the spoken and written realms of bureaucracy, although he was also fluent in Afrikaans. In an oft recounted anecdote, C.R. Swart, later first State President of the South African Republic, once came to discuss some matters with Viljoen and was preparing himself to speak high Dutch, as usually required. As he entered, Viljoen told his black messenger: "*Ou Jan, gaan haal gou vir ons eers twee koppies tee.*" Tellingly, Viljoen reserved Afrikaans for the black messenger, someone considerably lower on the social hierarchy of the time.⁶¹

Marais and Pretorius reacted immediately to the VNS movement. Marais had long been concerned about the domination of Dutch bureaucrats⁶² in the ZAR, and both he and Pretorius were enthused by the new *taalstryd*. In a series of articles entitled "*Laat't ons Toch Ernst Wezen*" (Do let it be our earnest!), Pretorius took the cause up in *De Volksstem*, 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.⁶³ The fight against English was open and direct – the battle with Dutch far more intimate: as André Brink observed: "English was a material and political threat, but Dutch jeopardized the very *raison d'être* of Afrikaans by humiliating it as a 'kitchen language'."⁶⁴

61. According to the anecdote, told by De Waal and recounted by Steyn, C.R. Swart, later South Africa's first State President, wanted to discuss some matters with Viljoen, who told the black messenger: "*Ou Jan, gaan haal gou vir ons eers twee koppies tee.*" ("Jan dear, please quickly fetch us two cups of tea."). Steyn, *Tuiste in Eie Taal*, p 193.
62. Derogatively called "Kruger's Hollanders" as opposed to South African born *landsoone* (sons of the soil).
63. The articles ran in *De Volksstem* from 19 April 1905 to 14 June 1905, and shortly afterwards they were collected and published by the paper as a pamphlet entitled "*Laat't ons toch Ernst wezen! Gedachten over de aanvaarding ener Afrikaanse schrijftaal*" ("Thoughts on the acceptance of an Afrikaans written language"). On 30 March 1905 (three weeks after Hofmeyr's lecture and three weeks before his first article in *De Volksstem*) there was correspondence between Pretorius and S.J. du Toit on the issue of Afrikaans as *skryftaal* (written language). Argief Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (hereafter GKA): S.J. du Toit Collection: SJT 3/1, G.S. Pretorius – S.J. du Toit, 30 March 1905 & 15 April 1905. Pretorius did not publicly associate himself with Du Toit, perhaps because of prominent *taalsryder* and Afrikaner politician, 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* (Marnix, Weltevredenpark, 1999), p 335.
64. A. Brink, *Mapmakers: Writing in a State of Siege* (Faber and Faber, London, 1983), p 97.

Preller and Marais contested this view, demanding a 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 1905 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".⁶⁵

Hofmeyr has shown that there were sound economic reasons for promoting Afrikaans. Although they were not as yet a large market, increasing urbanisation of Afrikaners in addition to their anti-English sentiment made it a viable market. Just as Marais experimented with the use of Afrikaans to boost sales of *Land en Volk* in 1891, Preller suggested that there was a market of Afrikaans speakers out there, a "mute-nation" requiring a voice.⁶⁶ 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". Anderson 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.⁶⁷

The culture-brokers began to revise the vernacular and establish a sanitized standardized Afrikaans, purged of the coloured and lower-class connections that haunted the Afrikaans middle class. Doctor O'Kulis (Reverend Willem Postma), a popular Afrikaans author and contemporary of Preller in the Free State, for example wrote in *De Vriend* (the Dutch part of *The Friend*): "I want to write and speak the language as used by Afrikaners, and not sink to the level of Jantjie and April, because it always bothers me when I see my language being ridiculed",⁶⁸ "Jantjie

65. G.S. Preller, "Laat't ons toch Ernst wezen! Gedachten over de aanvaarding ener Afrikaanse schrijftaal" (Volkstem, Pretoria, 1905), pamphlet in Africana Section, J.S. Gericke Library, University of Stellenbosch.

66. G.S. Preller, "Laat't ons toch Ernst wezen!", pp 80-81. Marais' experimentation with the use of Afrikaans has been discussed in Swart, "A 'Ware Afrikaner'", p 55. Also see: H. Gilmore, *Die Afrikaners – in Biografie* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 2004) p 316.

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

68. 2 June 1905. "Ek wil die taal skrywe en spreek soos Afrikaners dit gebruik, en nie afdaal tot die peil van Jantjie en April nie, want dit hinder my altyd as ek sien dat van my taal 'n grap gemaak word." Quoted in: P.J. Nienaber, *Ons Taalhelde* (Nasou, Cape Town, 1965), p 57.

and April" being a way to refer to coloured speakers. 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 strived to promote the fusion of language and nation – or rather those they wanted to include in the "nation". They wanted to assimilate the newly proletarianised *bywoner* into their middle-class-driven nationalist venture, through the upliftment of their language to a *standaardtaal*, but were initially ambivalent about "coloured" speakers of Afrikaans.⁶⁹

In 1905, a group of Transvaal intellectuals established the *Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap* (ATG – Afrikaans Language Association) to foster the objectives of the Afrikaans language. Preller, Izak van Heerden, Doctor H.M. Hoogenhout and Klasie de Wet met often, occasionally joined by Marais, to establish this *Taalgenootskap*.⁷⁰ The ATG upset the Cape *Taalbonders*, particularly F.S. Malan, who felt that Dutch should have been receiving the focus of attention. J.H.H. de Waal established the *Afrikaanse Taalvereniging* (ATV – Afrikaans Language Union) in 1906, which was welcomed by the originators of the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* and soon eclipsed the ATG 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).⁷¹ Moreover, J.H.H. de Waal realised the need for the literary brilliance of some prominent Transvaal writers, specifically Eugene Marais.⁷² It in fact is one of Marais' poems, *Winterdag* (1902), a poem that can be read as a "metaphor for the post-war desolation and mood of bitter resignation"⁷³ that was most cited by his contemporaries as proof of the "literary-worthiness" of Afrikaans.⁷⁴ It is only in the 1960s,

69. Steyn, *Tuiste in eie Taal*, pp 227-228. Some *taalstryders*, like J.H.H. de Waal, wanted to include coloured people in the language struggle. The shared language, though mostly considered as being just slightly different dialects of Afrikaans, was one of the main paradoxes that the "coloured question" struggled with.

70. NASA : TAB: A 787, Preller Collection, Volume 10 : 384. See also: NASA: TAB: E.C. Pienaar Collection, 48/9/70: C.P. Hoogenhout to G.S. Preller, 28 July 1905; Nienaber & Nienaber, *Die Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Beweging*.

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

72. J.H.H. de Waal, "My Herinnerings van ons Taalstryd", p 202.

73. H. Gilmore and B. Mbenga, *New History of South Africa* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2007), p 228.

74. The poem is still celebrated as the first step towards a mature literature in Afrikaans. In 2005 a commemorative anthology was published by PRAAG.

after Afrikaans had been established as a language, that the apparent "perfection" of the poem became contested.⁷⁵ For the supporters of Afrikaans, the imperatives were to give it a technical and professional vocabulary, and strengthen its Dutch inheritance, in order to link it to its European and Graeco-Roman heritage.

Dutch versus Afrikaans, Transvaal versus Cape

The debate over language was fissured by the rupture between the Cape and the Transvaal – a rupture visible in 1905 after Hofmeyr's "*Is't ons Ernst?*" speech. Older Stellenbosch academics like Professor J.I. Marais maintained that "the kitchen language that is exalted in Pretoria is not the language of the developed Afrikaner."⁷⁶ 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 discernable 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.⁷⁷ They contended that Afrikaans should be raised to the level of a respectable, spoken and written language, using simplified Dutch spelling (rather than the phonetic spelling of the GRA). As D.F. Malan, later Prime Minister of South Africa, observed in 1908: "Raise the Afrikaans language to a written language, let it become our vehicle for our culture ... and you will also raise the people who speak it."⁷⁸ In founding the South African Academy for the 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.⁷⁹ Preller was relatively active – but working on the

75. L.C. Minnaar, "n Beeld van Eugène N. Marais as digter en prosais", *Tydskrif vir die Geesteswetenskappe*, Desember 1972, p 199.
76. "De kombuistaal, die in Pretoria verheerlijkt word, in niet de taal van den ontwikkelde Afrikaner." Quoted in: Van Eeden, *Afrikaans hoort by Holland*, p 145.
77. H. Giliomee, "The Beginnings of Afrikaner Ethnic Consciousness", in L. Vail (ed), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (James Currey, London, 1989), p 43.
78. S.W. Pienaar, *Glo in U Volk: D.F. Malan as Redenaar* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1964), p 175.
79. Archive for Contemporary Affairs (hereafter INCH), Bloemfontein: Akademie Archive: Volume 17/1922, Item 80: F.V. Engelenburg – G.S. Preller, 8 May 1922 – the papers are in a process of being re-inventoried.

Historical Commission rather than on *taal* issues directly⁸⁰ – while Marais remained uninvolved in committee work. In 1920, the announcement of the new spelling rules by the Academy catapulted them into controversy again. In 1923, Preller was elected secretary and became involved in the compiling of the Afrikaans dictionary and Afrikaans spelling and grammar issues. Preller was particularly in favour of grammatical forms that would link Afrikaans more closely to Dutch – upholding what Preller valued as a vital link to its cultured European heritage.

C.J. Langenhoven, author and member of the Cape Commission on Language, wished to replace Dutch entirely with Afrikaans, believing it to be powerful enough to survive on its own.⁸¹ In 1914, when Langenhoven had proposed to teach Afrikaans in Cape schools, he received Preller's support. Moreover, Preller said: "We want to go even further than Langenhoven!" Ironically, in 1912, Langenhoven had supported the retention of the past imperfect, and by the 1920s denounced it. Langenhoven attacked those who preferred Dutch because he contended that the more one clung to Dutch, the more people would be driven to English, as Dutch was a dead language in South Africa.⁸² In the 1920s, however, both 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.⁸³ Preller contended that to ignore the Dutch literary heritage, would be to "chop down the stem, which provides our lifeblood".⁸⁴ They used *Ons Vaderland* to promote their pro-Dutch language use position.⁸⁵

80. It is in his work as historian that Preller was most influential – F.A. van Jaarsveld credits him with the making of the "Voortrekker myth" F.A. van Jaarsveld, "Gustav Preller: Sy historiese bewussyn en geskiedbeskouing", *Historia*, 35, 2, November 1990.
81. INCH: Akademie Archive: Correspondence 1927, Chapter 4: "Extract from the report of the Superintendent-General of Education", Cape Province, 31 December 1919.
82. "Ons wil verder gaan als Langenhoven!" NASA: TAB: A787, Preller Collection, Volume 205: G.S. Preller – W. Postma, 13 May 1914; *Die Brandwag*, 15 May 1912.
83. Preller also wanted this to be combined with active attempts to increase the amount of literature available in Afrikaans, for example in the translation of classic texts such as those of Emil Zola or Shakespeare. NASA: TAB: A 787, Preller Collection, Volume 241: G.S. Preller – Grosskopf, 6 February 1918.
84. "Ons kap die stam, waaruit ons lewenssap trek, af." *Die Burger*, 9 Desember 1925.
85. J.S. Gericke Library, University of Stellenbosch (hereafter US): Langenhoven Collection, Volume 202: G.S. Preller to C.J. Langenhoven, 11 April 1926.

The Academy decided to maintain "Dutch links", which meant arguably little in practice. Already only a reading knowledge of Dutch – rather than a speaking or writing knowledge – was being taught in schools.⁸⁶ Preller accepted this compromise, although Langenhoven bitterly resented it.⁸⁷ In a newspaper war, Preller blamed Langenhoven for the *onooglike stompstêrt Afrikaans* (unsightly, duck-tailed Afrikaans) learnt by schoolchildren, because his antipathy to Dutch resulted in Anglicisms.⁸⁸ In 1926, Preller attempted to reconcile with Langenhoven, maintaining: "We need each other too much in our little world in which we are surrounded by enemies of our language and our entire cultural struggle."⁸⁹ He suggested that Dutch should 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.⁹⁰ Marais, writing under a pseudonym at the time, said that "Afrikaans is the only civilized written language in the whole world with no past imperfect".⁹¹ Important value then was attached to Afrikaans being a so-called "civilized written language" (our emphasis). Preller in particular perceived the imperfect tense to represent the pronounced and acceptable differences between Cape and Transvaal patois. He also tried to replace *moet* with the Transvaal's *met* and to incorporate the Transvaal's use of 'k' rather than

86. *Die Burger*, 2 Augustus 1927.

87. J.S. Gerike Library, US: Langenhoven Collection, Volume 202: G.S. Preller – C.J. Langenhoven, 11 April 1926.

88. *Ons Vaderland*, 17 Februarie 1926.

89. "Ons het mekaar te seer nodig in die klein ou wereldjie, waarin ons aan alle kante omring is van vyande van ons taal en kultuurstryd." J.S. Gerike Library, US: Langenhoven Collection, Volume 202: G.S. Preller to C.J. Langenhoven, 11 April 1926. Also see: Steyn, *Trouwe Afrikaners*, p 207, for a valuable discussion which includes Langenhoven's position.

90. INCH: Akademie archive: Volume 9, 1924, Item 68, File 4/2: P.C. Schoonees – G.S. Preller, 15 September 1924. Preller also believed *ek* should replace *ik*. INCH: Akademie Archive: Correspondence: G.S. Preller to Chairman of the Spelling Commission, 27 September 1926. Marais was using *ek* as early as 1891 – but returned to using *ik* after 1902. Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p 241. Preller adopted this form. Pienaar, *Taal en Poësie van die Tweede Taalbeweging* (Nasionale Pers, Kaapstad, 1931), p 169. The 1921 Academy spelling rules saw the end of the *ik* form and after 1923 Marais reverted to the *ek* form (though occasionally still using *ik* in letters to Preller).

91. "Afrikaans is die enigste beskaafde skryftaal in die gehele wereld wat geen onvolmaakte verledene tyd besit nie." Steyn, *Trouwe Afrikaners*, p 214.

the Cape's 'j' sound (for example, the Transvaal's "manneki" versus the Cape's "manneetje").⁹² Similarly, Marais maintained that he would persist in writing the Afrikaans he heard in the *volksmond* (mouth of the people),⁹³ and concurred with Preller over the necessity for a Dutch infusion. 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 golden ring pervaded with quicksilver (mercury), so that it becomes brittle and worthless. If we learn no Dutch, then we shall lose within a few years the ability to say what is in our language and not foreign ... not just only in choice of words, but especially in the sentence construction, word construction and idiom.⁹⁴

Regretting the revolution

By 1927, Preller and Marais publicly rued the fact that some of the reforms they had advocated in their passionate polemics of 1905 had actually been instituted.⁹⁵ Preller openly lamented that *Die Volksblad* had managed to raise £5 000 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".⁹⁶ He even went so far as to denounce the new status of Afrikaans as an official language.⁹⁷ The question is how this denouncement of the official recognition of Afrikaans corresponds with what Preller and Marais had set out to achieve. To estimate this, one must re-evaluate their goals, as there is a

92. Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p 239.

93. G.S. Preller, S. Engelbrecht and J. van Bruggen, "Afrikaans en di Akademi", *Ons Vaderland*, 12, 16, 19 and 23 Oktober 1928.

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

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

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

97. *Ons Vaderland*, 26 November 1926.

certain value difference between the official recognition of a language for political gain and the recognition of a language on the merit of it being a "kultuurtaal" that can serve the bureaucracy, academia and the cultural elite autonomously. Perhaps, when this is taken into account, they believed that the official recognition of Dutch alone would give enough space for the development of Afrikaans without English being a government-supported threat, which would give Afrikaans enough time to develop into their idea of a civilized and worthy tongue. Regional strife, which played out in more stages in the South African political theatre than just the *taalstryd*, also played a role. In June 1927, Preller voiced his view that there was too great a "Cape influence" in the written language and that "Transvaal Afrikaans" was being marginalised.⁹⁸ 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".⁹⁹ For a month before a crucial meeting of the Academy, Preller and Marais published a series of articles – ostensibly by Marais alone – called *Afrikaans op die Kruispad* (Afrikaans at the crossroads) in *Ons Vaderland*.¹⁰⁰ The articles were a polemical defence of Dutch links, citing, for example, the penchant of the Voortrekker Louis Trichardt – a personality Preller himself popularised through his historical works – for the past imperfect. The articles emphasised their continued support for the use of the past imperfect and the increased amalgamation of Dutch into Afrikaans. They had limited success as Preller was elected – along with Jochem van Bruggen and S.P. Engelbrecht – to investigative uncertainty in language structure and make recommendations to the Spelling Commission of the Academy.¹⁰¹ Preller's report emphasised the dangers of dialect – it contended that there were four distinct patois: (i) *Bosveld* (Rustenburg, 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 "language" from *kombuistaal* (kitchen patois). Yet Preller warned against the historical variety being overwhelmed by "radical particularism". This was a reference to the "Cape influence" – as Preller observed; the Spelling Commission members came from the Western Province. The report urged that the Transvaal-Orange Free State tradition should not be treated as "if it had

98. *Ons Vaderland*, 27 September 1927.

99. *Ons Vaderland*, 31 Desember 1926.

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

101. INCH: Akademie Archive: Correspondence, 1927-1928: "Verslag van die Akademie – Kommissie insake die taalvorm", 18 April 1928.

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 for the past imperfect to be retained. Almost a quarter of the report was devoted to it. Preller used Marais as witness to the value of the *imperfekrum*, citing Marais' theory that the ancient Egyptian language had become extinct because they had had "no indication of time by conjugation" and thus could not compete with the versatile Greek language, with its many verb tenses.¹⁰² He argued that the Egyptian extinction was the result of the lack of this conjugation: when the Egyptian language was confronted by 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.¹⁰³

Preller, so Steyn argues, was a radical nationalist, who sought in the imperfect tense something he thought authentic to Afrikaans as a white man's tongue (he was also a fervent advocate of racial segregation).¹⁰⁴ Why this apparent paradox – would one not perhaps rather argue that it is its lack of an imperfect tense that makes Afrikaans unique, authentic amongst its Germanic family-tree? Perhaps Preller saw in the absence of an imperfect an aberration revealing Afrikaans' past as a language originating from the lower rungs of the social hierarchy. Furthermore, the manner in which Preller upheld Marais' theory on the extinction of Egyptian placed great emphasis on the ostensible loss of prestige with the death of the language.¹⁰⁵

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".¹⁰⁶ The Preller Report was summarised by a two-man commission, E.C. Pienaar and D.B. Bosman, who – while conceding that some imperfect forms, like *dog* (was thinking), *kon* (could have), *sou* (would have) would linger on – accepted that, for the most part, the past imperfect could not be restored. The Spelling Commission, while agreeing *pro forma* that Anglicisms posed a danger, accepted the

102. "... geen tydsbepaling deur vervoeging gehad nie."

103. INCH: Akademie Archive: Correspondence, 1927-1928: "Verslag van die Akademie – Kommissie insake die taalvorm", 18 April 1928.

104. Steyn, *Trouwe Afrikaners*, p 220.

105. For a clear and concise version of Marais' argument, see: Steyn, *Trouwe Afrikaners*, p 214.

106. Du Toit, *Eugène Marais*, p 254 (interview by Du Toit).

Pienaar-Bosman Report.¹⁰⁷ The Academy also refused to publish the Preller Report so that his recommendations had to remain mediated through the Pienaar-Bosman Report.¹⁰⁸ Preller resigned, citing Cape intellectuals who, he contended, ignored the struggle of the Transvaal and Orange Free State.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

The portrayal of the *taalstryd* as simply a whiggish cultural victory, cloaks the complex struggle, characterised by dissension, individualised responses and the highly constructed nature of the language. A discussion of the roles of Marais and Preller provides an 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 to fire the kiln when the Afrikaans language was malleable, and resented the way it 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 regarded to be the marginalisation of the Transvaal and Free State versions of Afrikaans in favour of the Western Cape's. Their active opposition to aims of other *taalstryders* is highly revealing of the intra-organisational fissures in the Language Movement. Their differences over the grammar of language laid bare the fissures in the grammar of their ideology.

Abstract

After the Anglo-Boer War, the threat of Anglicisation had special emotional resonance with many Boers. Their fears were exacerbated by the reconstruction policies of Lord Alfred Milner. This provided impetus to what was termed the Second Language Movement, a movement that endeavoured to make Afrikaans an official, written language, a language autonomous from Dutch, with its own literature and higher-function uses.

107. "Aanbevelinge van die Raadskommissie insake Rapport van Taalvormkommissie", *Tydskrif vir Wetenskap en Kuns*, September 1928.

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

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

The historiography of the Second Language Movement is however, overwhelmingly triumphalist, giving a whiggish account of a successful nationalist endeavour. This article tries to locate itself in a growing body of work that explores the more nuanced aspects of the Second Language Movement and its place in history by examining the roles of two eminent *taalstryders*, Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller. Although they were enthusiastic proponents of the movement at its inception, their position had changed radically by the late 1920s. This article explores possible reasons for this and seeks to throw a different, more nuanced light on the dissonances within the Second Language Movement.

Opsomming

"Taaltriomf of Taalverdriet?"

'n Faset van die Rol van Eugène Marais en Gustav Preller in die Tweede Taalbeweging, ongeveer 1905-1927

Na afloop van die Anglo-Boereoorlog, het verengelsing as potensiele bedreiging emosionele aanklank by baie Boere gevind. Hulle vrese is versterk deur die heropbou beleidsplanne van lord Alfred Milner. Dit het stukrag verleen aan wat as die Tweede Taalbeweging bekend sou word – 'n beweging wat daarna gestreef het om van Afrikaans 'n amptelike, geskrewe taal te maak, 'n taal wat onafhanklik van Nederlands staan, met 'n eie literatuur en hoë-funksie gebruike. Die historiografie van die Tweede Taalbeweging is egter grotendeels seëpralend – die verhaal van 'n suksesvolle nasionalistiese poging. Hierdie artikel poog om deel uit te maak van 'n groeiende groep werke wat die meer geskakeerde aspekte van die Tweede Taalbeweging en die plek daarvan in die geskiedenis ondersoek, deur te kyk na die rol van twee befaamde taalstryders, Eugène Marais en Gustav Preller. Hoewel hulle aanvanklik entoesiastiese voorstanders van hierdie beweging in sy vroeë stadia was, het hulle posisie teen die einde van die 1920's drasties verander. Hierdie artikel ondersoek moontlike redes hiervoor en poog om 'n ander, meer genuanseerde lig op onenigheid binne die Tweede Taalbeweging te werp.

Keywords

Afrikaans; Afrikaans education; Afrikaans literature; *Afrikaanse Taalgenuotskap*; *Afrikaanse Taalvereniging*; Afrikaner nationalism; C.J. Langenhoven; *De Volkstem*; Eugène Marais; Gustav Preller; Jan Hofmeyr; *kultuurtaal*; *Land en Volk*; language and identity; language and nationalism; Second Language Movement; *taalstryders*.

Sleutelwoorde

Afrikaans; Afrikaanse letterkunde; Afrikaanse opvoedkunde, Afrikaanse Taalgemeenskap; Afrikanernasionalisme; C.J. Langenhoven; *De Volkstem*; Eugène Marais; Gustav Preller; Jan Hofmeyr; kultuurtaal; *Land en Volk*; taal en identiteit, taal en nasionalisme; taalstryders; Tweede Taalbeweging.

"Taal op Tuks"

A reappraisal of the change in language policy at the University of Pretoria, 1932

D.M. van der Merwe*

Introduction

In 1932 the language policy of the University of Pretoria (UP) changed from a dual medium to an Afrikaans-only policy. In the official commemorative book, *Ad Destinatum 1910-1960*, published on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Transvaal University College (TUC),¹ this event is discussed at great length and judging from the accounts given in this institutional history, as well as various contemporary Afrikaans and English newspapers of the time, this change in the language policy was not only a turning point in the history of UP, but also amounted to a highly controversial event that caused discord between various groups and individuals attached to the University.

This article will compare the account of the language question at UP as portrayed in *Ad Destinatum* with information from other sources, including Afrikaans and English newspaper reports, minutes of meetings of university bodies, oral and written testimonies of former students, as well as articles written on the language question at South African universities.² It also makes use of the relatively little used documentation of the University of Pretoria Archives.³ The aim of this article is to look at the value, as well as possible pitfalls in the use of official institutional histories in historical research. More specifically, the article will focus on

* D.M. van der Merwe is of the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies, University of Pretoria.

1. Although classes at the Pretoria branch of the Transvaal University College already started in 1908, some people consider the actual founding only when the college received its own campus on the then eastern border of Pretoria in 1910.
2. J.C. Steyn, "Die taalstryd aan die Grey Universiteitskollege ten tyde van die rektorat van D.F. Malherbe", *Acta Academica*, 25, 4, 1993, pp 87-116; J.C. Steyn, "Die voertaalvraagstuk aan die Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite tot ongeveer 1930", *Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Taalkunde*, 18, 1993, pp 225-274; J.C. Steyn, "n Rektor skors sy voorganger – n onstuimige hoofstuk uit die taalstryd aan die UKOVS", *Joernaal vir Eieydse Geskiedenis*, 20, 1, Junie 1995.
3. University of Pretoria Archives, Pretoria (hereafter UPA): A-7-1-1. Some of the latter documentation was only located as recently as 2007.