
INTRODUCTION

Landscape, Character, and Analogical Imagination

If historical writing is a continual dialectical warfare between past and present—a continual shaping and forcing of the configuration of the past so as to release from it the meanings it always had, but never dared to state out loud, the meanings that permeated it as an unbreathable atmosphere or shameful secret—then what entities and images will come first?

—T. J. Clark, “Reservations of the Marvellous”

Over its short life, the nation of South Africa has become known for its turbulent political history as well as the distinctiveness of its landscapes, yet relatively little attention has been paid to how these two factors might have been connected. The emergence of a white society that called itself “South African” in the twentieth century has usually been ascribed to an intertwining of economics, class, and race, and the role of geographical factors in this process has largely been seen in instrumental terms, focusing on resource competition, the spatialization of ideology through segregationist legislation, and shifting attitudes toward nature.¹ While much has been written on land use, settlement patterns, property relations, and the influence of the frontier experience on the subsequent human-land relationships in the subcontinent,² the imaginaries and iconographies that underpinned this territorialization have only recently started to receive attention, more often from archaeologists, cultural historians, literary theorists, and architects than from geographers.³ This is understandable. Because the politics of imperialism, nationalism, economic maximization, and racial difference have dominated South Africa’s history over the last century, utilitarian rather than aesthetic analyses have often seemed more appropriate to thinking about relations between humans and the environment in the subcontinent. Yet it could be argued that a parallel version of this narrative of cultural formation might be traced, using hitherto overlooked processes that have to do with the imaginative appropria-

tion of landscape, mediated by taken-for-granted cultural practices of observation and description. Such an account would be supported by the historical tendency, in many different countries, for the emergence of the “imagined community” of nationhood to coincide with the emergence of a collective subjectivity toward a given territory, and for this to often occur when significant physical alterations of the national landscape are taking place.

The roots of Europeans’ problematic relationship with the southern reaches of the African continent can be traced back to their encounter with it at the end of the fifteenth century. Unlike other parts of the world “discovered” in the early modern period, the African continent was never seen as an Eden. It belonged not to the New World but to the *ecumene* of the Old, of which it formed the farthest, most fearsome extremity.⁴ Even before the early Portuguese explorers had physically set foot on land, they had, viewing it from offshore, given it a powerful and tragic identity as Adamastor, the mythical figure of Camoens’s epic poem, *The Lusiads*. It fell to the Dutch, however, who colonized the region from 1652 until 1799, to test this premonition through actual settlement and further exploration. Neither the Dutch East India Company, which administered the Cape Colony as a victualing station, nor the prosperous population of a then-underpopulated Netherlands, saw the subcontinent’s interior as having much to offer, though a few adventurous Dutch colonists did penetrate it as *trekboers*, hunters, and explorers.⁵

For the British, who assumed control of the Cape at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the region posed an equally awkward environmental conundrum. It was unlike overseas territories that had been discovered by imperialism elsewhere in the world: it was neither irremediably different and other, nor completely devoid of the familiar social relations of home.⁶ The Cape was already populated by a mixture of indigenous inhabitants and colonists who spoke a European language but refused to act out the modes of life that might have been expected of them as Europeans. Conversely, these “uncivilized” peoples seemed at odds with the apparently fertile and benign environmental character of some parts of the subcontinent—a character persuasive enough to encourage the British government to actively promote further colonization in the 1820s and control the region’s territory and inhabitants once these colonists had arrived.⁷ Still, until 1850, the dominant focus of European trade, travel, and emigration continued to be the Orient or the New World, and Southern Africa remained a pastoral backwater, largely off the map as far as most potential emigrants and entrepreneurs were concerned. European geographical imaginaries only started to assume political and cultural significance in the region after 1860, when the discovery of mineral resources in the interior dramatically brought the subcontinent into contact with the world of mercantile capitalism. After 1880, though, the region was propelled out of its pastoral isolation by industrialization and transformed into an autonomous, modern society by the geopolitics of imperialism.

There is little doubt that the rapidity and lateness of South Africa’s social transformation contributed to the racist cast of the society that subsequently grew up there, as well as the unusually reflexive relationship it developed with its geographical territory. During the twentieth century, the preoccupation with finding some kind of psychic accommodation with “the land” became a defining feature of white South African nationhood, an ever-present topic in art and literature, and a recurring anchor

of identity both in the minds of those who controlled the land and those dispossessed and exiled from it.⁸ One only needs to think of the work of modern South African authors as diverse as Nadine Gordimer, J. M. Coetzee, Andre Brink, and Doris Lessing (to name only the most obvious examples) to realize that, for those of European descent living in the subcontinent during the twentieth century, the native landscape constituted as inescapable and problematic an inheritance as the indigenous populations. One reason for this preoccupation has undoubtedly been the subcontinent's spectacular scenic environment. Over the centuries, few European visitors to Southern Africa have been prepared for the affective power of its landscapes; even those hostile to the prevailing political dispensation or unsusceptible to natural scenery have been surprised by seductiveness of the country's powerful sense of place. This remains true today, when the country has undergone radical political and social change and we are skeptical about notions of universal aesthetic appeal, but many individuals still describe South Africa as one of the most beautiful countries in the world.

Nevertheless, contemporary critical theory suggests that in tracing the roots of white South Africans' preoccupation with landscape, we need to move beyond the realm of pure aesthetics into less obvious and less ideologically charged processes of meaning-making. Today, no exploration of place and identity can ignore Foucault's and Said's arguments that political and economic ideologies are inextricably intertwined with the way individuals and collectivities appropriate space and, indeed, are integral to the radical transformation of received notions of space and place in the modern era.⁹ Others, such as Peter Bishop, Denis Cosgrove, Stephen Daniels, James Duncan, Nicholas Green, Derek Gregory, Ann Hyde, David Lowenthal, David Matless, and Rob Shields have developed these ideas by looking at how spatial imaginaries are constructed, mediated, and disseminated through representational practices and discourses.¹⁰ All of these authors emphasize that such practices and discourses simultaneously shape identities and subjectivities even at the same time as they transform geographical space into socially constructed, ideologically charged place. An important strand of this writing has been how these discourses use landscape to mediate the construction of the imagined communities of nationhood, especially in the context of the new and emergent colonial and postcolonial societies.¹¹

Broadly speaking, this book follows this same intellectual tradition in its exploration of how landscape helped mediate the construction of the cultural identity that came to be known as "South African." Looking at the period of national formation from 1900 to 1930, it charts how the movement toward nationhood was facilitated by the cultural use of the subcontinent's terrain, mediating the tensions between nostalgia and modernity that were an integral part of this new country. Although I situate this appropriation of landscape within the political events and economic relations shaping early twentieth-century South African society, my primary concern is with culturally produced and circulated representations that were infused with unarticulated (and perhaps unarticulable) anxieties and desires. Looking at a period before the radically unequal power relations later characteristic of South African society had become fully entrenched, I am interested in the contingent ways Europeans living in the subcontinent during this period constructed a sense of themselves and their place in the world, not so much as rational schemers—economists, social

scientists, and empirically-minded historians—but also as dreamers, storytellers, and fantasists, caught up in a “thick,” lived-in world of experience and memory.¹² For this reason, the book is structured around a series of studies exploring how individual encounters with the subcontinent’s terrain were transposed into a sense of collective identity through landscape representation. These studies are based on archival study and fieldwork undertaken in South Africa and the United Kingdom from 1995 to 1997.

As this approach suggests, the book has broader ambitions than simply recounting the history of how landscape and white identity became intertwined in South Africa. It also seeks to question the ways in which humanistic and historical geography have recently come to theorize the cultural use of landscape. While acknowledging the wealth of recent inquiry in geography and the other social sciences on landscape representation and cultural identities, I am also interested in incorporating ideas raised in art history, philosophy, literature, architecture, and landscape studies about the taken-for-granted imaginative exchanges that arise between people and the material world. Weaving through the following pages is a desire to draw into the discussion about landscape and identity the role of situated experiences and imaginaries and how these are mediated through observation, description, and interpretation. The book could therefore be seen as an attempt to stage a conversation between epistemologies that seldom acknowledge each other about the relationship between places and identity. It also attempts to recover something of the contingent, improvisational nature of the individual lives that are usually aggregated in hindsight as social history.

In part, this approach has been provoked by empirical evidence: during the early twentieth century, discussions of what a distinctly South African identity might be repeatedly invoked the importance of direct, lived experience of the subcontinent’s landscapes. But this approach is also a response to the call for accounts of what colonization felt like on the ground in a particular place, the need for narratives that counter the empire of theoretical discourse that itself risks reinscribing the universalizing effects of historic imperialism. In this, though, I am not so much interested in taking up Said’s notion of “traveling theory” as in trying to move beyond received ideas about South Africa as a somehow uniquely flawed society, in which questions of race and power have determined all forms of social and cultural production, and from which little else can be further learned.¹³ This view fails to address the curious paradox that at the same time twentieth-century South Africa was a highly divided and unequal society, it was also, by certain cultural measures, and given its small size and marginal position relative to Western centers, an unusually productive one. The view of South Africa as a flawed society also skirts questions of how race and power might have been imaginatively legitimized and naturalized by everyday practices and experiences, and obscures how the often demonized ideas held by whites about space and place were embedded in and produced by profoundly modern and transnational networks of knowledge and discourse.

Thinking and writing in a transdisciplinary way is always risky, bringing with it the burden of establishing your intellectual credentials in discourses whose histories and canons are unfamiliar—sometimes to your readers, sometimes to yourself as author. It also brings the related dangers of simplifying and misunderstanding the complexities and nuances inherent in these discourses. We are all well acquainted

with forays made by writers from different disciplines into critical theory that are embarrassingly naive, simplistically equating what can be seen and made with complex and historically rooted values and ideologies. We are also equally aware of critical accounts of human activities that require a degree of situational knowledge by those who have no firsthand experience of those activities, which flatten out that knowledge, and read instead like the work of “reasoners who frame deep mysteries, and then find them out.”¹⁴ If I fall into one of these two categories from time to time, I beg the reader’s indulgence, in the cause of interdisciplinary dialogue.

But my approach is also profoundly rooted in my own experience and subjectivity. One cannot argue that landscape representation is grounded in the specifics of lived experience and cultural subjectivity without acknowledging one’s own. This book is, after all, yet one more layer, albeit a highly abstruse one, in the ongoing representational discourse about South African landscape. Therefore, it has to be stated that the following exploration of the relationship between South African landscape and white identity is written by someone who is trained as an architect and landscape architect and is part of the largely invisible international diaspora of white South Africans who have left (but maintain ties with) the country over the last forty years. My training as someone who habitually works with material landscapes and how individuals and groups involuntarily respond to them will already have become implicit in my interest in lived, subjective experience of place. That I grew up in South Africa poses the possibility that my bias toward the material and the experiential is rooted in a nostalgia that seeks to recuperate a way of life in which such realities loomed large. Although I have lived outside of South Africa for more than two decades and no longer feel particularly exiled from the country, there may be some truth in this. On the other hand, this may be no bad thing. Nostalgia, as Peter Bishop reminds us, is a human emotion that is, at root, about the desire for a fundamental sense of belonging and “Being,” a major part of which are the subjective, affective dimensions of human relations with place—in other words, precisely what this book is about.¹⁵

I raise these matters not only to declare my own authorial position, but also to introduce the theoretical questions and genealogies of thought that lie at the heart of this book, which are ultimately traceable to my own personal history and experience. At stake here is what the distinguished human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan calls one of Western philosophy’s most perennial questions and a ubiquitous dimension of human experience: the relationship between surface and that which lies beyond or behind it, between sensory impression and intellectual understanding.¹⁶ Even though I can posit a number of rational, intellectually derived, explanations why and how landscape was used to construct white cultural identity in South Africa, for me, at a certain level, these still seem like rationalizations after the fact. Growing up in South Africa, connections between landscape and identity always seemed, quite simply, given. My own fascination with the country’s landscapes long predated any reflexive understanding of the political and cultural values that coursed through them, and this understanding does not capture the texture and depth of that connection.

Ideologies, of course, always feel like that. Constellations of ideas produced as part of historical processes, they are usually passed off as mere conventional wisdom or common sense. Without discounting such arguments, it still seems that the South African landscape somehow communicates in an unusually direct and wordless way

to a wide array of people. Traveling around South Africa when I was growing up, I noticed that certain districts displayed a distinct quality, and how in some instances, this took on an animistic quality best described as a “mood.”¹⁷ This mood varied greatly, and was independent of whether the landscape was named, inhabited, or had any recorded history that I was aware of. Seemingly inhering in the experiential and (as I now know how to describe them) phenomenological qualities of the landscape, it resembled the character found in human individuals—infinately nuanced and hard to describe, yet always distinctive. As with people, so with these naively given sections of geography, some seemed to welcome one into their aura while others made one feel profoundly uncomfortable. Certainly, it did not seem too far-fetched to personify some of these landscapes as threatening, joyful, austere, calm, contorted, exhilarating, or expansive.

On such naive intuitions are intellectually ambitious projects launched. I started wondering whether the affective power of the South African landscape was just something I personally imagined, or whether it was something that others discerned too. In other words, was it really there? I began to observe and ask others whether they experienced equally libidinal responses to the landscape, and found that while some did not, many did. For these individuals, as for me, this sense seemed to have little to do with personal histories and associations, nor did it derive from images they had seen or texts they had read about the landscape in question. This curiosity was deepened when I met people visiting South Africa, or even simply seeing photographs and films of it for the first time, who professed to experience some the same kinds of responses to the landscape. Increasingly, I wondered what there was about the South African landscape that affected people who came in contact with it and (possibly) transformed those who lived in it permanently. The possibility began to emerge in my mind this perceptual character was more than the straightforward projection of privileged, politically marginal white South Africans minds. This possibility seemed to be corroborated when I traveled outside the country and found that few landscapes I encountered—no matter how distinctive their scenic quality—seemed to evoke such a strong affective response in me.

The whole question of subjective response to landscape has of course, received a great deal of attention, through lenses that have ranged from the scientific and statistical, through the psychological, to the cultural and political.¹⁸ My concern, however, is with the possibility that certain parts of the earth’s surface can evoke powerful and *similar* intimations of something there, noumenal or otherwise, in different people. Although such topographical intimations are forgotten today, they played a central role in Western environmental imagination until the end of the eighteenth century and remained current up until the end of the nineteenth century. Most crucially for this study, though, this kind of hermeneutics was closely related to those operative in the other practical arts—such as architecture, theater, painting, and geography—that were the often-unacknowledged contributors to the so-called landscape idea.

Most ancient cultures subscribed to some version of the idea that the earth was a potentially fertile maternal figure that needed to be inseminated to bear fruit (hence, the inherently constructive basis of culture, which is closely related to the act of cultivation). From this evolved notions that certain sites were imbued with an agent or spirit that could either be nurtured or destroyed. Such sites were usually

those untouched by human activity, where the spirit of the Mother Earth was manifested: singular trees or hills, unworked rocks, caves, rivers, and especially springs. This imaginary evolved into the classical concept of *genius loci*, imaginary figures that were associated with and characterized as particular places or locales in the landscape. Sometimes rendered as a “god,” the *genius loci* mediated the sense that certain locales embodied a living presence that had to be respected and in some cases, appeased.¹⁹ The discernment of an invisible (or not yet visible) presence, in need of recognition, enunciation, and possibly accommodation, remained a constant of the environmental imagination in classical societies, from the originary oracles and Hippocratic occult tokens of the ancient world to Vitruvian observational strategies for discerning propitious signs for inhabitation and the sophisticated translation of these at key Roman sacred places.²⁰ Even during the Renaissance flowering of humanism and retreat of pagan animism, ancient sacred presences of the earth continued to be invoked within and refracted by the geometric symbolism of that most cultivated of human artifacts, the garden.²¹ Although notions of the environing natural world as an animate and meaningful “thou” increasingly gave way to the sense of it as an inert “it” after the Renaissance,²² the irrational notion of significant natural presence continued to challenge human recognition and description during the Enlightenment, when the perceived relationship between appearances and content was radically rethought as a part of the general weakening of religious belief and the rise of scientific rationalism. The second half of the eighteenth century was a particularly crucial period when, under the influence of Montesquieu and Rousseau, there was a growing skepticism of a priori explanations and a strengthening belief that everything was subject to natural laws. It was precisely at this time that constructs of “type” and “character” first emerged as attempts to provide a rational framework for those sensations that had previously fallen within the realm of the mythical, the religious, and the interpretive. Closely related was the emergence of aesthetics, the attempt to develop a consequential science of appearances, which mediated the emergence of modern—that is, instrumental—representation, and the occlusion of an older poetic tradition of classical mimesis.²³

These developments in environmental thought and aesthetics remain relevant today because they occurred as part of a general transition, in which centuries-old forms of perception became incorporated in the epistemologies of seeing, feeling, and thinking that we still inhabit. This transitional quality was exemplified by the Third Earl of Shaftesbury’s influential ideas on nature and garden design. Shaftesbury wrote extensively about the *genius of the place*, arguing that “figures” (specific arrangements of physiography or plants) hid “form” (the inner native character, or “natural force,” only available to the intuition and imagination).²⁴ Although they belonged to different orders of reality, figure and form were not unrelated: the former provided access to the latter, which constituted the *genius of the place*; again, the intellectual maneuver involves the play between surface and depth, and the problematization of what is really there. Crucially, Shaftesbury also argued for a more abstract notion, that of the “*genius of the Nation*,” which was taken up and elaborated in Herder’s idea that every culture had a unique “way of thinking, acting and communicating.”²⁵ For all their intellectual rigor, Shaftesbury’s theories were essentially a reworking of the construct of the notion of *genius loci*; they typify the Enlightenment project of

reconciling feeling with rationalism. Shaftesbury's writings, themselves influenced by landscape theorists Pope, Addison, and Morris's discussions about the genius of place, would in turn become the basis for nineteenth century "natural theology," exemplified by the writings of Ruskin and the poetry of Hopkins.²⁶ While the idea of living environmental presence appears to die with these two thinkers, it became transposed into geographical environmental determinism and continues to manifest itself in contemporary constructs of deep ecology and the Gaia theory.²⁷

Shaftesbury's was not the only Enlightenment attempt to translate the sense of "something there" in the environing world into rational, intellectual structures. Johann von Goethe's empirical observations of natural phenomena introduced another question that still haunts the Enlightenment project (and landscape studies) today: whether the laws that seemed to govern nature were *found* or *applied*. He addressed this conundrum by arguing that "[o]ne need not seek for something beyond the phenomena," that "they themselves are the lore," proposing that morphology, the study of form as a way of understanding the genesis of things, would reveal the systematic organization of this "lore."²⁸ In this way, Goethe's observations established the epistemological foundations for the use of landscape as the fundamental unit of geographical knowledge, most notably in the work of von Humboldt.²⁹ And it was surely a Goethean notion of morphology that underpinned the "naively given section of reality," the unit of regional landscape that the American cultural geographer Carl O. Sauer used as the natural mediation between the variability of the physical world and the systematization of analytical thought: "In the selection of the generic characteristics of landscape the geographer is guided only by his judgment that they are *characteristic* . . . [He] is . . . constantly exercising freedom of choice as to the materials he includes in his observations, [and] continually drawing inferences as to their relation."³⁰

To the degree that all these modes of thinking about the environment are concerned with recognizing, identifying, and describing "something there," they are also concerned with questions of representation. A persistent question haunting all of them is that possibility that the relationship between observing subject and observed object is more than the former receiving the latter (what has sometimes been called "instrumental representation").³¹ This question takes us back to a premodern (or poetic) understanding of representation, in which there is a more active exchange between human subject and material object, and the transference of meaning occurs through an imaginative act of completion on the part of the subject. This form of intellection is most potent when we are confronted by objects whose empirical inscrutability requires us to become active accomplices in their interpretation (as Lacan remarks, "to trap a human, one need only present the possibility that something is concealed").³² Tracing such imaginative participation requires not so much a theory of *communication* as one of *reception*, an acknowledgement that meaning occurs at the site of the subject (reader, user, or audience) rather than being fully formed and present in the object.³³

It is no coincidence then, that at precisely the same time as ancient intimations of genius loci were being transposed into the quasi-objective "genius of place," a parallel transposition from poetic to instrumental representation was occurring in architectural theory. David Leatherbarrow has argued that architectural meaning has always

to some extent been rooted in an imaginative mutuality that arises between users and a building's situation, materials, and means of construction.³⁴ In this mutuality, a building's character stems from the way it simultaneously participates in being a building and a body.³⁵ This reciprocity is grounded in elaborations of the simple, but primal spatio-corporeal coordinates such as near/far, up/down, in/out, or left/right, which we learn growing up in the world. Donald Kunze deepens our understanding of this imaginary reciprocity between subject (person) and object (building or environment) when he argues that in architecture, the user "receives the building by identifying with it bodily."³⁶ This user is more than a "mechanical, biological client" of the building; the user identifies with its formation, thinking his or her way into its often inaccessible parts, and the building becomes an "analogue not just of a body but of the receiver's particular body." Thus, the identity of the user is "born for the first time, out of (the building's) constituent parts."³⁷ Intimations of character, then, are a consequence of an identificatory form of imagination.

The body implied by Leatherbarrow and Kunze is thus not the abstracted, idealized, or geometric body of the Renaissance—in other words, that of metric equivalence or figural resemblance—but an older one, "displaced [and] realized through displacement."³⁸ This displaced, poetic body was implicit in pre-Enlightenment treatises on building, which characterized architectural form according to proportion, conduct, and decorum, concepts that were expressed and understood through the gestural relationship of the parts.³⁹ As the meaning of these terms suggests, what was being referred to was a way of being rather than what something was; the character of a building inhered in the relational tension between its spaces and forms, the "display of details in context."⁴⁰ This way of conceptualizing architecture exploited the fact that every building, like every body, is fundamentally like others, while also always being slightly different: in size, in situation, in status, in function. It also reflected the phenomenological reality that the universal is only perceivable in the particular, and that the particular is only perceivable in relation to the universal. It is precisely this same hermeneutic that underpinned the emergence of "type," another construct through which Enlightenment thinking sought to rationalize and make replicable that which had previously been intuited and concealed.⁴¹

Enlightenment intimations about environmental morphology and genius of the nation, as well as notions of architectural character and type, would all seem to be rooted in this involuntary, displaced, poetic body. All imply an imaginative exchange between human subjects and material objects funded by recognition, literally *re*-recognition, more spontaneous and ubiquitous than recall, and deriving from the subconscious (or implicit) rather than conscious memory.⁴² Recognition was central to Aristotle's notions of representation, which were most tellingly laid out in the *Poetics*.⁴³ For Aristotle, representation was motivated by the desire for knowledge, and its vehicle was mimesis. Too often defined as "imitation" or "resemblance," mimesis in its original sense was about the recognition of forms of evidence that are immanent but not (yet) objectified or given form. For Aristotle, the most explicit manifestation of mimesis occurred in drama. Unlike textual narrative, the unfolding of events on a stage achieves its effects through visible action, not explanation, description, or the recounting of objectively verifiable facts. Dramatic mimesis is never simply imitation; it is an autonomous, fictional *re*-presentation of lived experience whose plausi-

bility rests on a situated synthesis of visible action: as much of this representation as possible unfolds through spatial movement and gesture. Similarly, knowledge about the character or identity of those who participate in this reconstruction arises from how they behave under circumstances, something that was recognizable to the audience as a way of being. Thus, the audience's intimations of character were tied to the knowledge they brought to the performance, and shaped by *their* sense of what was probable and necessary in the dramatic situation. Shared knowledge was the basis for both likely and unlikely action; the events of the plot could only be meaningful if they tapped into known structures of experience.

This digression into Aristotelian representation reveals that recognition of bodily displacement is much more than passive response to visual display. At once constructive and synthetic, reflective (drawing on what has already been experienced) and inventive (directed to the dawning of things), it exposes the underlying continuities between representation, memory, and imagination. The *Poetics* also suggests that the perception of the visible (*what* something is) cannot be separated from knowledge of that which is known but invisible at present (*how* something is). This is echoed by notions in art theory that an important part of the effects of painting are achieved through *metaphoric* appeals to subconscious and involuntary dimensions of bodily experience.⁴⁴ That such involuntary recognition has wider application than just dramatic representation is confirmed by the fact that both Kunze's and Leatherbarrow's arguments about architectural character draw heavily on Aristotle, and it is precisely the (re)cognition of life or action that triggers the participative mutuality between buildings and bodies.

The question arises whether this identificatory mutuality by which architectural forms are imbued with corporeal character can be extended to landscape. Does landscape, especially unimproved landscape, invite bodily displacement and the discovery of the self in it through the way its parts are composed and interrelated? Kunze himself introduces this doubt with his argument that the prime relational mode of bodily displacement is "frontality": to attend to something, to make sense of it, is to face it, bodily, mentally, and sensorially. "[W]e face what faces us, our senses are met fully by the images and sensation before us."⁴⁵ (This echoes observations made frequently by artists that they feel objects in the world are looking at or speaking to them.)⁴⁶ The implicit frontality of the bodily encounter with the world means that imaginative displacement acquires a sagittal or penetrative quality, perpendicular to the surface of the object, a prereflective intuition of an inward substance that mirrors that of the interrogative body-subject itself. "'Depth' . . . is less a Cartesian matter of quantitative extension and more an atmosphere or temperament that affects small objects and local events even more intensely than larger landscapes. Its discontinuities (horizons, shadows, *terrae incognitae*) infect our locale to the extent that we prefer objects (books, boxes, drawers, cabinets) as more adequate representatives of global order."⁴⁷

This insistence on solidity and objecthood as prompts to the sagittal imagination casts into doubt whether such participatory imagination applies to landscapes, especially if we see landscape as cognate with space rather than form. Landscapes are neither objects nor bodies in the accepted sense of the world. They are never as

bounded and solid as buildings, nor are they as clearly intended as human artifacts. Equally, their difference in scale from our bodies is of a quite different order of magnitude than buildings. Countering this, one could argue that every instance of topographical intimation in the long history of Western environmental imagination has involved a repertoire of forms that could be read in terms of life or action, in which there were distinctive topographical figures of the kind that, effectively, most readily engaged the senses that Kunze argues have the tightest grasp on spatial reality—vision and touch.⁴⁸ They included standing and rising figures (promontories, headlands, high points), discontinuities in the general terrain (clefs, caverns, folds), or particular moments in the broader landscapes where topographical elements converged and organized themselves into a characterful, quasi-corporeal lie of the land. This synecdochic figuration was, fundamentally, mimetic, an imaginative projection of ways of being (thus, often *genius loci* were gods who displayed *human* behavior distilled and exaggerated). It could also be argued that Shaftesbury's figures and forms were recognizable and legible to the degree that they participated in some bodily way of being, and that Goethe's sense of the morphological was rooted in the physical processes and interactions, another analogue of life or action through which material forms arise. Similarly, in Sauer's naively given section of reality, geographical character is figured not so much through fixity and replication as through recurring patterns and relationships between an array of phenomena (how things are).

Could affective feelings triggered by a landscape be a consequence of a prereflective, corporeal-mimetic recognition of life or action in its material constitution, rather than evidence of some kind of secret fixed or complete essence standing behind the object?⁴⁹ If so, exchanges between landscape formations and latent corporeal knowledge through participatory visual imagination would deepen the imbrication of human subjects and topographies, and make the act of recognition automatically and involuntarily an act of identification. In this involuntary but profoundly physical form of identification, material formations would become homologues for subjectivities (or, simply how one feels right now, here, in this situation). This possibility has been beautifully captured by Michael Pollan in his account of his search for a site for a small building in the New England landscape he owns:

I realized that I wasn't just looking for a view, but for something more personal than that—a point of view. . . . Some spots . . . implied an oblique angle on the world, while others met it forthrightly. I could see that I was going to have to decide whether I was a person more at home in the shadows, or out in the sunny middle of things. . . . Some sites offered what seemed like the geographical correlative of shyness, others self-assertion. It was as though the landscape were asking me to declare myself, to say this place, not that one, suited me, in some sense *was* me.⁵⁰

The fact that most people will recognize the simple commonplace truth of Pollan's topographical epiphany suggests that this participatory, bodily form of subjectivity remains accessible and meaningful today. It is precisely this identificatory kind of enmeshment of body-subject and topography that I believe was at work in my own responses toward the South African landscape, and which I believe inheres as a potential for many others in that same landscape. The question arises, though, whether

this involuntary, participatory imagination is significant enough to shape the process whereby collectivities make use of their environments to forge a sense of identity. This generally is the fundamental question around which much of this book revolves.

Corporeal, participatory forms of environmental imagination implicit in the constructs of type and character have fallen out of favor today, as the ongoing post-Enlightenment rationalization (and disembodiment) of the human-environment relations continues. Recent theoretical-critical writing about landscape has turned its back on older, analogical forms of environmental imagination and focused instead on how culturally and socially produced processes, interacting with each other in and across space, condition not only *what* we perceive in the world but also *how* we construe it. Today, most discussion of the role of the poetic, displaced body in the affective signification of space is confined to the fields of dance, dramatic performance, film, architecture, and landscape design—all endeavors that have little to do with the ongoing fashioning of broad cultural identities and whose effects are geographical only in the most indirect sense. Ultimately, of course, the replete richness of any individual's experience of the material world is untranslatable, and objects can trigger a wide array of associations, meanings, and interpretations. Yet, as Pollan's experience (and my own, as a designer) suggests, it remains true that certain kinds of places, configurations, and situations do generate similar, albeit involuntary responses in most, if not all, people, and that these responses provide the raw material for the making of meaningful, imaginatively inhabitable places.

Reasserting the role of involuntary, participatory bodily imagination as a constitutive factor in the construction of cultural identities is not to retreat into environmental determinism; rather, it is simply to acknowledge the heterodox, multilayered means by which geographical space and place are appropriated and understood. It also recalls Tuan's enigmatic relationship between sensory impression and intellectual understanding. But to do this requires adopting an interpretive, hermeneutic approach, which focuses on meanings found in the world (rather than hovering around above it) as a consequence of lived experience. This means bracketing (but not excluding, as the next two chapters demonstrate) structuralist and semiotic theory, with its focus on the social constructedness of meaning, its preoccupation with political power and justice, and its propensity for reducing objects to signs. By invoking older, less socially determined, and more analogical ways of figuring the nexus between places, individuals, and identities, I am neither suggesting that these should be revived nor that they should be rejected. Rather I am interested in finding ways of integrating these dimensions of the geographical imagination within contemporary theories about cultural identities and representational discourse. I am not so much interested in recuperating Shaftesbury's "genius of the Nation" so much as exploring how some of its philosophical, anthropological, and psychoanalytical implications might play out in more contemporary cultural use of landscape.

Ultimately, though, the theoretical wager of this book is that commonplace descriptions and interpretations of geographical place might be read as unconscious interpretations of ourselves, both as autonomous subjects and characterful collectivities, and that this involuntary (and unthinking) characterization of the material world offers important insights into our imaginative interactions with that world. Both as a topic and a construct, character is undecidable and highly accessible (or

recognizable). Because it describes *how* rather than *what* something is, it is an instinctively understood strand of what we call an identity. At the same time, and this is especially true if we reclaim an older, less personified version of the construct, it suggests the possibility of some kind of articulation between such apparently incommensurate phenomena as physical terrain and a disposition or way of being in the world. The construct of character also makes space for the kind of unmediated, contingent experiences and feelings that arise as an integral part of lived relations with place, and how these might become bound up with the workings of place description and interpretation. The topic of character reasserts the importance of the material and sensory particularities of places in shaping people's attachment to and identification with those places, even at the same time as it emphasizes that this attachment and identification itself is shaped by where and when it occurs. In two quite different senses, then, this book attempts to reclaim the South African landscape from the margins it has often been consigned to—those of the global imagination and those of critical discourse—and suggest that the subcontinent may demonstrate something important about how the geographical imagination works.

FROM IMPERIALISM TO NATIONALISM

South Africanism and the Politics of White Nationhood

Waar wij spreken van “Afrikanders” meenen wij niet . . . Hollandsch sprekende of Englesch sprekende Zuid Afrikanen; maar hen die gevormd zijn en nog worden gevormd tot die bijzondere natie. [When we speak of “Afrikanders,” we mean neither . . . Dutch- nor English-speaking South Africans, but those who have already become and are becoming a particular nation.]

—*Die Volksblad*, 1875

And so you see, the true Imperialist is also the best South African.

—Lord Alfred Milner, 1905

Contemporary social theory questions the notion that identity is given, innate, or endogenous, proposing instead that it arises as a result of conduct and practice. Within this situationally constructed model, however, two alternative interpretations of identity are recognized.¹ The first sees identity as deriving from a sense of incompleteness that leads to the desire for something missing; thus, lack defines a person or a place because identity is known through difference.² The second construes identity as an affirmative, active flux, something that arises through practice, cognate perhaps with the quality or condition of being.³ In this second definition, “identity” is very close to “subjectivity,” and the two terms are often (and confusingly) used interchangeably. Like identity as a quality or condition of being, subjectivity is neither imprinted, nor develops as a separate, internalized entity, but is formed through interaction with an array of phenomena beyond the self, honed by living in the world, with others.⁴ Thus, although it usually refers to dimensions of human consciousness experienced as private and individual, subjectivity cannot be formed in isolation: it arises largely through (socially constructed) experience.⁵

There is probably no form of socially constructed identity that is more taken for granted (and therefore culturally powerful) than that associated with living in a geographically bounded place or territory. The equation of place and identity is one that

few question: where you come from is assumed to say significant things about who you are. The strength of this equation seems to be proportionate to scale. So powerfully are geographical territory and nationhood intertwined in most people's minds that it is almost impossible to talk about national consciousness in isolation from the physical territory with which that consciousness identifies itself.⁶ Shared subjectivity toward geographical space is one of the primary ways in which cultural groups come to imagine themselves as groups. Until recently, few people questioned the notion that the world is ineluctably divided into nations, organically grown entities that are collective answers to the "call of the blood." The psychic equation of collective identity and geographical space remains as appealing as ever, even as we move into a postcolonial and perhaps even postnationalist era.

History, however, shows that the relationship between geographic territories and those who inhabit them is far from given; it is neither a straightforward spatialization of a priori social and cultural values, nor an unproblematic, somehow natural source of those values. Such assumptions are the outgrowth of ideas that arose during the Enlightenment, when images of spaces and places started to be used to clarify imaginary identities that transcended older, more ambiguous cultural and ethnic markers. After the end of the eighteenth century, the notion of national territory became one of the chief means by which the abstract idea of "the nation" was conveyed to its putative subjects and its unique character rendered tangible. "Nations"—groups of people who believe themselves to share a common destiny—do not need to possess (or *be*) a state, but they frequently aspire to, because only states have sovereign power.⁷ Such power is most clearly expressed through having space, that is, geographical territory deemed necessary for the security and vitality of the nation. This territory may be space actually inhabited by the nation, or space it does not occupy but which nevertheless helps define it. In general, though, nations seek to maximize control over this territory, first by establishing a consensus over its boundaries, and second by increasing internal cohesion, usually by diminishing regional variations within those boundaries (see color plate 1). The key agent here is the state, one of whose primary functions is to control and administer the nation's territory in a way that reinforces the cultural cohesion of its population and, recursively, that population's identification with the state. Thus, nation, territory, and state are rarely synonymous, and the relationship between them is complex, ambiguous, and symbiotic (something that is obscured by the erroneous belief that the nation and the state are the same, exemplified by the expression "nation-state").

Not being synonymous, the nation and the state seldom coevolve.⁸ Apart from a few older societies that already existed in Western Europe before the end of the eighteenth century, most others inside and outside of Europe were the products of the spread of the nationalist ideological blueprint, which invents nations where they do not exist.⁹ In some instances, where the nation-to-be had an imagined homeland rather than an already occupied territory—here, Zionism is the prime example—nationhood came first and had to find its appropriate state and territorial definition. In many cases, however, of which South Africa is one example, the state emerged before there was a nation (-to-be). In fact, most nations came about largely as the result of the creation of states; in most cases, the establishment of a state was the single strongest force in creating a people.¹⁰

Thus, although a nation cannot be conceived of without the specific territory that gives it roots and boundaries, it is essentially an artifice, the outcome of socially and politically constructed myths forged over time. While a number of different scenarios have been identified in this social construction of the nation, it is generally agreed that it is a process sociologically inseparable from the emergence of modern society, in which isolated, premodern communities and identities are dissolved and replaced by democracy, industrialization, advanced capitalism, and the emergence of a larger unitary society stratified by class.¹¹ The emergence of the nation-state thus coincides with the inclusion of the broad mass of population in civic society, and a shift from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* that creates the need for solidarity with and membership in the new, larger social structure.¹² This process of identity formation invariably brings with it a longing for national form that is answered by geographical space, which provides a means for welding together fragmented individual and group experience. Indeed, it is largely through the definition, control, and reification of territory that the nation's citizens become socialized as citizens. This occurs through a long, complex process that involves the manipulation and control of the environment, the molding and interpretation of social space, the definition and hardening of national boundaries, and the imaginative abstraction, inhabitation, and use of the nation's territory through cultural discourse. This is precisely what occurred in South Africa during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

The transformation of peoples without a sense of their own history into nations at the end of the nineteenth century was a result of fundamental shifts in philosophical, historical, and anthropological discourse earlier in the century; nationalism was the offspring of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Before this, the nation's genius was seen to reside in a sophisticated, largely urban civilization, in which nature (human and otherwise) was implicitly ruled and shaped by cultivation.¹³ Over the course of the nineteenth century, however, there arose an alternative to this civilizationist model of society, which sought to legitimize the nation-state in terms of regional or vernacular mores and traditions. The belief arose that all societies contained a core essence, or *Kultur*, that had to be discovered. This cultural essence was believed to derive from local geography, climate, and customs, and manifest itself in the collective use and transformation of such local natural phenomena. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, this so-called culturalist model of society, in which a heightened scrutiny of nature was mirrored by an increasing scrutiny of human nature, began to express itself in a number of different ways. In industrial nations, the growth of disciplines like archaeology, anthropology, and folklore and quasi-scientific geographical discourse emphasized the interconnectedness of climate, terrain, and racial character.¹⁴ Among smaller imagined communities still struggling toward self-determination and territorial autonomy, like the Irish, the Catalans, and the Finns, this culturalist model manifested itself in the recovery and resuscitation of languages and other expressions of folk or peasant traditions like costume, dance, music, native crafts, and pagan heroes, as well as the emergence of architecture adapted from a number of indigenous sources.¹⁵ Thus, while very few modern nations have ancient roots, most incorporate premodern elements within their cultural identity.¹⁶

Geographical territory defines national identity through two distinct hermeneutics: internally (how the national community is linked to the land); and externally

(how the national community is delimited in relation to other groups). In the early years of South African existence, the country's hybrid, transitional political character as an autonomous nation-colony within a global empire, as well as its unresolved borders, meant that both these hermeneutics were simultaneously in play. Indeed, it could be argued that the unfolding discourse of South African nationhood exemplified to an unusual degree the way in which place-based identities arise in the modern era, both within and across geographical scales that may be both larger and smaller than the state. The resultant geographical identities are as often transnational as national. Nested within or overlapping each other, they may reference groups of countries as well as localities and regions within a given country. Thus, during the period of identity formation in South Africa, the country's national identity could not be understood separately from the larger-scale British imperial identity that both covered and divided its territory, and which was, in its own right, more than the sum of its constituent parts.

Implicit in such overlapping, multiscalar, place-based identity formation is the reality that no region or locale is ever perceived without some imaginary reference to others elsewhere. All political collectivities' identification with geographical territory involves weaving together, in a shared narrative, memories of often quite different geographical and historical scales. Needless to say, the memories referred to here are not the true records of past events, but a selective, socially constructed set of fragments from which identity is crafted and recrafted.¹⁷ The transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* is effected precisely through the replacement of the pre-conscious, personal memory embedded in everyday life with socially constructed, collective memory, mediated by cultural representations stressing roots, boundaries, and belonging. Nations' claims to deep roots are made not only for geopolitical reasons, however, but also for reasons of collective security. The very idea of nationhood is impossible without the social use of memory. Nationhood is founded on a "narrative of descent" that isolates and reifies a variety of identity-forming principles (race, religion, language, cultural *moeurs*, continuity of inhabitation) that link the nation to a shared past in a shared territory.¹⁸ Given the rapid economic and cultural transformations usually associated with the emergence of the modern nation-state, it is no accident that the land—apparently both unchanging and distinctive—looms large as an icon of continuity. During periods of rapid social change the land becomes an object of consolation to a wide range of individuals, partly because even as it changes and decays it is renewed, and partly because its life is longer than theirs.

This reification of the land as icon of nationhood is encouraged by the way most landscapes contain material traces of past activities that can be selectively used to justify a cultural group's activities in the present and the future.¹⁹ Wherever history and mythology are used to construct a common past, landscape has the potential to stand for an imaginary shared space in which the great story of nationhood has unfolded, rendering it timeless and indisputable. (Hence there are very few countries whose anthems do not in some way celebrate the qualities of their geographical regions and environments, or whose national narratives do not single out ways of life rooted in such places.) In almost every country, the spread of collective memory was marked by the emergence of loci considered to be visible containers of the narrative that had given rise to the new national order, and which otherwise would have been lost from

view.²⁰ This allegedly timeless pact between nation and nature is usually deemed to be especially evident in rural landscapes in remote parts of the national territory that remain untouched by industrial capitalism or rural mechanization (often precisely those regions left behind by those whose lives are most disrupted by the emergence of the modern nation-state). Consequently, prevailing responses to landscape at the historical moment when a nation achieves political and cultural autonomy (for example, the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, the United States in the nineteenth) tend to lay the groundwork for shared and enduring ideas about the relationship between a nation's culture and its landscape.

This seminal historical moment occurred later in Southern Africa than in many other parts of the world.²¹ Because of this, the imperatives favoring the construction of an imagined nation and the placing of that nation in a bounded geographical territory were strong and were complicated by a number of unique factors. The country came into being as a state without a nation, without clearly defined borders, its polity fashioned from a demographic minority recently at war with itself and divided by that most fundamental badge of cultural identity, language. The new nation was moreover of a kind never been seen before: an independent, predominantly European society in Africa with strong ties to Britain.²² And, as we shall see, the construction of a narrative of descent was further complicated by the fact that the only true peasantry could not be recognized, because they happened to belong to a different race from the dominant polity.

Polarization and Persuasion: The South African War and the Creation of Union

The story of place-based identity formation in twentieth century South Africa begins with the social, political, economic, and environmental factors that conditioned this process before, during, and after nationhood. At the end of the nineteenth century, the African subcontinent was divided into two British possessions—the Cape and Natal Colonies, which occupied the maritime littoral, and two Boer republics, the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR, South African Republic) and the Oranje Vrijstaat (Orange Free State), in the interior. This division followed the most basic of environmental differences, which are still evident today. Because of the almost continuous mountain ranges that divide the subcontinent's narrow coastal belts from an expansive, relatively flat interior, its southern and eastern margins receive the most precipitation, and only the eastern half of the interior receives adequate rainfall and has permanently flowing rivers.²³ In a part of the world where a perennial supply of water is rare, this had a lasting effect on population density and distribution. In the colonial period, most European settlement was confined to well-watered areas within a few days travel from the coast, close to the sea and the market economies to which the settlers owed their marginal existence. The annexation of these coastal margins by the British in the early nineteenth century, along with pressure from southward moving African tribes along the eastern seaboard, led to the departure from the Cape Colony of more than ten thousand Dutch-speaking farmers in the 1830s and 1840s. Unwilling to live under a British colonial administration after the repeal of slavery, these descendants of earlier Dutch, German, and French colonists under the Dutch East India Company made their "Great Trek" into the interior, where they established

their two independent republics on the elevated grasslands that until then had been the home of Africans of Nguni descent.

This division of the subcontinent into a coastal littoral politically, economically, and culturally connected to Europe, and an isolated interior populated with widely dispersed, barely socialized subsistence farmers, both black and white, came to an abrupt end during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. The discovery of diamonds and then gold in the interior dramatically inverted the territorial value of the subcontinent to mercantile imperialism and expanded trade networks into the African interior after 1860. The resultant influx of foreign capital and personnel into the subcontinent (whose entire 1890 white population numbered only 600,000)²⁴ introduced powerful tensions between the tradition-bound governments of the Boer republics and the European immigrants who financed, owned, and ran the mining companies. These tensions were particularly acute in the South African Republic, where the richest goldfields lay. The discovery of gold coincided with a time when worldwide demand for the metal was critically in excess of prevailing supply and British imperialism was at its apogee.²⁵ Under the guise of protecting British expatriate interests, tensions in the Boer republics began to be exploited by imperialist politicians in London and the Cape from 1895 onward.

The resultant war between Britain and the Boer Republics, which broke out two months before the end of the century and lasted until early 1902, became, effectively, a civil war in which all those living in the subcontinent were forced to take sides. The South African War also dramatically called into question the aggressive strategies Britain had used to accumulate its empire, and proved to be a catalyst for a profound reevaluation of long-held notions of national identity and purpose in Britain.²⁶ However, the war's most crucial effect was to bring together in a powerful way the various social and economic forces present in the subcontinent at the end of the nineteenth century. No other event heightens the connections between history and geography—and hence, identity formation—like war, and the South African War was undoubtedly the single most important event shaping white society in the subcontinent during the next half-century. The conflict transformed the European geographical imagination of the region and helped bring about the politicization of the relationship between people and place. It also introduced notions of territoriality where there had previously mostly been notions of locality, and left a legacy of place- and space-based memories that would, indirectly and directly, be used to anchor and shape identities in the postwar period.

The mobility of labor and capital in the subcontinent during the 1880s and 1890s meant that before the war, many English-speaking whites had lived in the Boer republics, while many Dutch-speaking whites had lived in the British colonies of the Cape and Natal.²⁷ During the war, this loose relationship between people and place came to an end. British-subjects were evacuated from the Boer republics at the start of the war, and Boer sympathizers were placed under house arrest by the British forces in the border zones.²⁸ Captured Boer troops were incarcerated in prison camps, and in some cases deported overseas. Most significant, however, was Kitchener's policy after mid-1901 of rounding up and placing thousands of Boer women and children in concentration camps, ostensibly to prevent guerrillas still in the field from receiv-



Burning a Boer farm house. MuseumAfrica Photographic Collection file ref. 968.0447; reproduced with permission.

ing assistance, and to protect families whose menfolk had surrendered from being driven from their farms by Boer forces.²⁹ Of the 18 percent of the tiny prewar Boer population lost in the war, most died in these camps (some 28,000, of which nearly 80 percent were children).³⁰ For the Boers, a people whose way of life revolved around autonomy on the land, the trauma of displacement from the land and loss of families deepened as the war progressed.³¹ Land belonging to imprisoned Boers was reclaimed by African clans who argued that it had wrongfully been taken from them in previous decades.³² After the war, still more Boers lost their farms through loan default, either because they had been unable to work the land while they were imprisoned, or because their stock, already diminished by the rinderpest epidemic of the 1890s, had been destroyed or stolen. It is no surprise, then, that the war left a hatred of British imperialism that would last decades among many Boers.

Among those who won, the war fostered imaginative connections between landscape and identity of a somewhat different, though equally potent, kind. When peace was signed in May 1902, the two ex-Boer republics were transformed into the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies, which, it was hoped, would in time be brought into some kind of single political system with the older, self-governing colonies of Cape and Natal. Whether this system would be federation or union was as yet undetermined, but reconstruction was seen as playing a key role in bringing it about. Reconstruction of these new Crown Colonies was overseen by Lord Alfred Milner, since 1897 the governor of the Cape Colony and high commissioner for South Africa, and since the war, governor of the new colonies as well. Before the war, Milner had spent much time at the Cape discussing the future of South Africa with Cecil Rhodes, the multimillionaire mining magnate and imperialist prime minister of the Cape Colony. Rhodes envisioned the postwar subcontinent transformed into a feder-



Aerial view of Norval's Pont Concentration Camp, ca. 1901. MuseumAfrica Photographic Collection, file ref. 968.0967; reproduced with permission.

ated South Africa, a “union of civilized spirits mothered by Britannia, nursed and nurtured by the benevolent spirits of Europe.”³³ His death shortly before the end of the war meant that it fell to Milner and his so-called Kindergarten of young, hand-picked, Oxford-educated administrators to implement this vision.³⁴

In 1902, the Orange River and Transvaal Colonies were in chaos, and the task facing Milner was formidable. The results of the British “scorched earth” policies—burned farmhouses, machine-gunned stock, uprooted crops, and smashed orchards—were everywhere visible on both sides of the Vaal River, and thousands of Boer families needed to be reestablished on their farms.³⁵ There were few reliable maps of the region, only a jumble of hand-drawn deed diagrams of Boer farms, railway surveys, and military maps of strategic areas.³⁶ The Witwatersrand gold mines, the main motivation for the war and the region’s sole economic resource, stood idle due to labor shortages and physical damage. Away from the Rand, only the railways, which during the war had been vital to British control and therefore were guarded by hundreds of blockhouses, were still in operation.

Milner’s personal connections with a number of pro-imperial intellectuals at Oxford during the 1890s meant that he saw the reconstruction of the Crown Colonies as an opportunity to test a new kind of colonialism that could, at the proper time, be exported to the rest of South Africa and possibly to the rest of the British Empire.³⁷ As a result, the policies he and the Kindergarten developed for the new territories were shot through with the ideas then current in Britain about culture, society, and

Alfred Milner (standing in doorway) with the Kindergarten at Sunny-side. MuseumAfrica, Johannesburg, file ref. 968.o; reproduced with permission.



environment. A key strand of this *mentalité* was a residual, overdetermined ruralism, whose historic origins can be traced to Britain's centuries-old history of landscape domestication, and the English aristocracy's eighteenth century withdrawal to country estates in response to early industrialization. By the late nineteenth century in Britain, these historic social phenomena became intertwined in a moral geography that romanticized the harmony between peasant life and the natural world and saw the most authentic expressions of culture arising from life on the land. This viewpoint, which I call "culturalist," located the nation's strength, stability, and identity in an unchanging, semifeudal, place-bound way of life characterized by custom and repetition rather than rootless, mobile trade.³⁸

By 1900, this ruralist, anti-urban *mentalité* had almost become a defining feature of British society. The mid-Victorian period's promise of harmony—between religion and science, capital and labor, city and country, art and nature, aristocracy and democracy—had started to unravel, and the city was being demonized as a place of rampant capitalism, corruption, vice, vanity, ill health, and un-English cosmopolitanism.³⁹ After nearly a century of industrialization and urban growth, not only the mercantile establishment was perturbed by the cultural consequences of urbanization, but also Fabian socialists frustrated at their failure to alleviate urban poverty and degradation were increasingly embracing a nostalgic, pastoralist vision of how society might be transformed.⁴⁰ By the 1890s, this vision had led to the formation of many different guilds and preservation societies acting on behalf of ancient buildings, nature, customs, handicrafts, and folk songs, all of which emphasized the virtues of a settled rural existence against the vices of the city. This vision appealed especially to the growing urban bourgeoisie, who increasingly turned to rural life as a locus of privacy, sensation, and refreshment that counterbalanced stressful, upwardly mobile lives.⁴¹ Sometimes, it also carried an implicit condemnation of Britain's supposedly

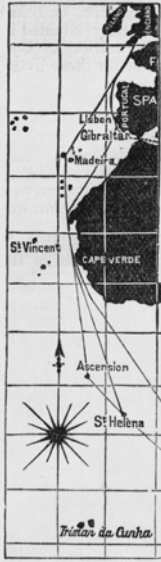
feckless urban masses, concern over widespread agricultural depression and decline, and a generalized fin de siècle anxiety about continuing British imperial supremacy.

Insofar as they consciously thought about such matters, the ideal society envisaged by most Britons at this time combined the best qualities of both aristocracy and peasantry: a community of rural landowners, a “yeoman gentry” made up of educated, somehow classless individuals who would act as a bulwark against creeping urbanization and the spread of mass culture and revolution and would maintain patrician values of memory, continuity, and social order. In what was by this time the most industrialized society in the world, such ideas acquired an edge and a potency unequaled anywhere else. At home in Britain, they gave rise to the first garden suburbs, as well as the perception that the thinly settled, upland margins of Wales and Scotland were the home of people of outstanding hardiness, virtue, and probity. Abroad, it encouraged Britain to compete with other imperial nation-states to acquire overseas territories where resettled metropolitan masses could be regenerated through life on the land.

In South Africa, large tracts of the new Crown Colonies seemed admirably suited to the latter project. Although the acquisition of land for settlement had not been the main goal of the war, Milner and others in Britain perceived the project of reconstruction as a golden opportunity to establish a white man’s country in Africa. Milner himself saw the bringing of peace to a region plagued by dissent and ignorance and the securing of the subcontinent as a loyalist British Dominion, as closely related goals, best achieved through the swift restoration of civil and economic life under an imperially minded administration. In Milner’s exemplary vision of South Africa, not only the Boers but also the *uitlanders* had to be shown the contrast between the virtues of a British administration and the incompetencies of the superseded republican governments. He tackled the task of reconstruction across a broad front. He reorganized local and regional government along British lines, promoting industrial investment, and ensured that mines had adequate labor, but he also placed great emphasis on rural development.⁴² A key strategy was attracting large numbers of enterprising young English-speaking emigrants to settle in rural areas, where it was hoped they would in time form a substantial farming class of loyalist smallholders. Particularly in the Transvaal, Milner believed that introducing English-speaking farmers in a pattern of “closer settlement” would, through a combination of cultural osmosis and a policy of Anglicization in education, help break down the prewar polarization between urban English entrepreneurs and rural Boer farmers and make the denizens of rural South Africa more friendly toward Britain. Because this policy was formulated when the war was still in progress, and the postwar political dispensation still uncertain, Milner hoped to attract emigrants from Britain and the other colonies as well as soldiers who had fought in the war, who could help combat ongoing Boer guerilla attacks and provide men for local militias once peace was declared.

The central fact behind Milner’s emigration proposals, however, was that his vision of South Africa as a united “white man’s country” loyal to the British Crown was only realizable if Africans remained politically disempowered and sufficient numbers of whites supported it through the ballot box.⁴³ This either meant that the defeated Boers had to be induced to support his vision, or substantial numbers of British immigrants had to be attracted to settle in South Africa. (Milner initially estimated

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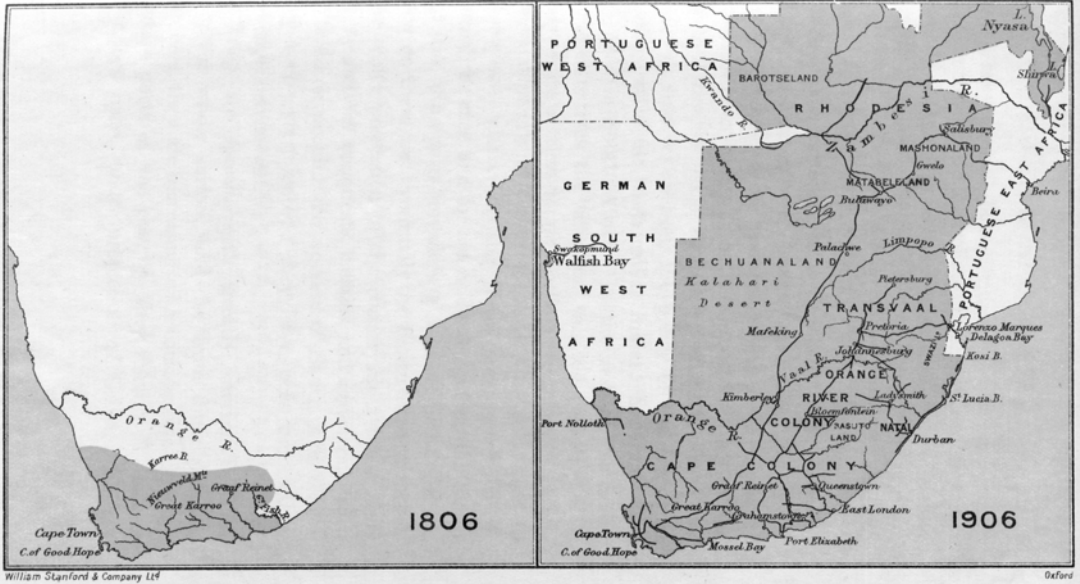
At Las Palmas the Company's boats connect with those of "La Veloce" Company, which touch at the island on their way from Genoa and

"Information for passengers by the Castle Royal Mail Packets Company, Ltd." Union Castle Guide to South Africa, 1896-97. Author's collection.

that nearly 150,000 would be needed.)⁴⁴ Thus, Milner's policies astutely interwove political expediency and an almost Jeffersonian cultural idealism. They simultaneously masked the underlying agenda of Anglicization, assuaged metropolitan concerns that annexation of the ex-Boer republics had largely been driven by the greed of a cosmopolitan, profit-oriented, *urban* culture, and transposed contemporary ways of thinking about culture and nature to what was being seen as a new, quasi-British country. Milner's promotion of rural settlement was central to these policies. Without rural settlement, rootless urban industries like mining rather than agriculture would become the long-term backbone of the South African economic and hence cultural life; the land would remain largely undeveloped, leaving the region's economy overly dependent on mineral resources that might soon be exhausted.⁴⁵ Implicitly British rural emigration would not only promote scientific, progressive, and therefore surplus-producing agriculture, but also build a conservative yeoman gentry society that was both autochthonous and loyal to the British crown.

Apart from their social and ideological agendas, these plans for rural settlement mediated a significant change in geographical perception about South Africa. Predominant images of nineteenth-century agriculture in South Africa had been generally pessimistic, emphasizing the backwardness of farmers and the ecological fragility of the land. Compared to other parts of the world the British had colonized—Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Argentina, for instance—South Africa seemed

EXPANSION OF BRITISH SOUTH AFRICA.



far less organized and technically developed, and it produced fewer exports. Milner’s optimism owed as much to his lack of any real knowledge about the land’s carrying capacity as it did to romantic visions of the subcontinent and overconfidence in what British administration and governance might achieve, when applied to the Boers’ apparently hopelessly “unscientific” farming methods.⁴⁶ Hence, his assertion: “It is our duty and interest to preserve the Boer as a farmer; (but) it is neither our duty nor our interest to preserve him as a negligent landowner.”⁴⁷ Milner’s confidence in the region’s agricultural prospects was reflected in the sponsored immigration schemes and Land Settlement Board he set up to provide loans and assistance to individuals considering taking up farming in South Africa. Milner also established an agricultural services department in the Transvaal to encourage new farming methods, veterinary research, and pest control, and he set in motion several major reconnaissance surveys to explore irrigation opportunities.⁴⁸ Africans who had reclaimed white farms were driven back into assigned tribal areas by the South African Constabulary (formed from British Army volunteers at the end of the war), and Boers whose farms were above a certain size were given assistance with restocking, fencing, boreholes, and seed.⁴⁹

Milner’s plans met with stiff opposition from a number of quarters. In South Africa, the Dutch argued that he wanted to swamp them with British emigrants, while urban and mining interests accused him of squandering money on agriculture. In Britain, liberals focused on the underlying political agenda behind the land settlement and, using the example of Ireland to show how disastrous a plantation policy could be, argued it would, if anything, exacerbate tensions in the region. The more imperially minded complained that not enough was being done to encourage settlement, while officials in Whitehall cast doubts over whether the policy was practical in a country where agricultural prospects were so unknown. Milner, who had little taste for diplomacy or public rhetoric, was forced to devote considerable time and energy

Expansion of British South Africa, 1806 to 1906. Archibald R. Colquhoun, *The Afriander Land* (London: John Murray, 1906).

to promoting his ideas to the public, usually through the offices of his Kindergarten. As it turned out, his plans for reconstruction had barely begun to be implemented before he was replaced as high commissioner by Lord Selborne in 1906. This was closely followed by the return of a Liberal government in London, which conferred self-governing status on the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies the following year, long before Milner thought it would or should have.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Milner and members of his Kindergarten laid down enduring structures for the governance, economy, and ordering of social relations in the new country. Milner's Reconstruction articulated a conceptual blueprint for white South African society that had a lasting appeal for many English-speaking whites who, whether civilians, administrators, missionaries, scientists, artists, or hunters, all believed in the fundamental rightness of imperial objectives in South Africa.⁵¹ This in itself was an important achievement at a time when both Britain and its colonies were seriously reconsidering the nature of their relationship with each other. When formulating his policies, Milner had been mindful that the recent events in South Africa had made white colonial populations elsewhere in the empire restive. (Some forty-nine thousand colonial troops from Australia, New Zealand, and Canada had fought alongside British troops in South Africa.) During the first decade of the twentieth century, although increasingly dependent on its colonies as trading partners, Britain also wanted to shift onto them some of the financial burdens of colonial administration and of safeguarding free trade through control of the seas.⁵² Meanwhile, the colonies (or Dominions, as they became after 1907) increasingly aspired to become self-governing nations with their own economic infrastructures and control of their own social and political affairs.⁵³ Although the colonies were generally in favor of remaining part of a *cultural* "Greater Britain," the political, economic, diplomatic, and trade implications of achieving this simultaneously with greater independence from Britain were problematic. It was also unclear what kind of identity the populations living in these colonies would have under this future dispensation.

An influential document in addressing these questions was a 1905 book, *Studies in Colonial Nationalism*, by Richard Jebb, another imperialist with Oxford and Kindergarten connections.⁵⁴ After traveling throughout the empire immediately after the South African War, Jebb came to the conclusion that it needed to be revitalized as a "field of expanding loyalties." He proposed a New Imperialism that would generate devotion to Britain and the monarchy while encouraging the emergence of what he termed colonial self-respect. Divisive regional ethnic differences would be replaced by a "higher allegiance" to the civilized and democratic ideals of a Britannic Commonwealth.⁵⁵ Jebb argued that this would not only recognize colonial aspirations but also appease the more progressive (and traditionally anti-imperial) elements of metropolitan British society: liberty, not force, was to be the cement of this new, expanded empire.⁵⁶ He coined the term "colonial national" to describe the identity of these "English-speaking or English-influenced countries developing independent cultures" that would belong to this new imperial framework.⁵⁷ In Jebb's estimation, colonial nationalism seemed most likely to take hold in Canada and Australia and least likely in New Zealand and South Africa.⁵⁸

Certainly, in South Africa, the ideal of colonial nationalism was ill-equipped to deal with realities like a large indigenous black population and a white population

polarized by war.⁵⁹ Theoretically, the appeal of belonging to a powerful, transnational polity should have weakened the internal animosities among whites that had been created by the war. In practice, the response was much more mixed, especially after the Bambatha Rebellion in Natal in 1906, and after the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies gained self-government in 1907.⁶⁰ Colonial nationalism obviously appealed to the wealthy, educated white elite whose cultural, political, and economic power depended on the viability of the Rand goldmines, as well as settlers who had a personal interest in continuing strong imperial ties. Many whites in the old Boer republics, however, saw colonial nationalism as a Trojan horse for exploitative imperialism-as-usual. Among these whites, the South African War had left a deep distrust of the British that was deepened by the belief that they would thwart any laws that maintained or increased differences between themselves and the African population. Probably for this reason, educated, politically active Africans tended to put their faith in colonial nationalism; while it did not specifically guarantee them rights, it seemed more likely to offer them better prospects than a locally constructed political dispensation.⁶¹

Although Britain's main goal in annexing the Boer republics—political and economic control of the Rand mines—had been successfully achieved by 1910, the consolidation of the four colonies into a single new colonial national state proved more difficult, and the official passing of the South Africa Act in 1909 was uncertain until the last few months.⁶² The successful passing of the act was due in part to the work of the Kindergarten and other disciples of Milner who had stayed on after he had returned to Britain.⁶³ Broadly, the members of this group subscribed to Milner's idea that fusing the four colonies would help destroy the political and geographical basis for separatist memory, but they set about achieving this in a more cautious and subtle manner than their mentor. Both before and after union, they worked to promote an imaginative vision of a unified South Africa that complemented the political one and put in place what they saw as the cultural underpinnings necessary for an autonomous white man's country.⁶⁴ They tirelessly lectured on the advantages of union and set up a "Closer Union" movement with chapters in many regions and its own monthly journal in which various topics of national interest were discussed. In the years before union, members of the Kindergarten also worked to establish the foundations of various ostensibly apolitical institutions that would in time play a significant role in the new nation's social and cultural life.⁶⁵ With their imperial perspective, the Kindergarten realized that, in the words of one eminent historian, "While Canadians or Australians or New Zealanders were born, South Africans had to be *made*."⁶⁶

In the end, the Kindergarten's behind-the-scenes efforts combined with those of accommodationist Boer veterans, who were appreciative of the gains to be made from ties with Britain, and persuaded the majority of white South Africans that union was in their best interests. This consensus was only limited and temporary, however. The reconciliation achieved between Boer and British at the Peace of Vereeniging had really only been a provisional one, and both sides remained determined to win the peace.⁶⁷ The South Africa Act was a compromise that glossed over these residual differences, and the new Union of South Africa came into existence in May 1910 with a divided polity and a political system that was in some ways tentative and incomplete. A racially exclusive, British-influenced parliamentary system was agreed upon, but

View of Union Buildings, Pretoria, completed 1912. Transnet Heritage Museum Library Publications Colour-Spread Collection; reproduced with permission.



apart from the entrenchment of a nonracial qualified franchise in the Cape, the new constitution incorporated compromises on racial issues that would eventually lead to the complete disenfranchisement of the African population. The South Africa Act left open the possibility that the Union's four provinces might form part of a still incomplete British-African imperial subsystem, which one day would include the Rhodesias and the three protectorates of Basutoland, Swaziland, and Bechuana-land. The unresolved character of the new nation was reflected by the fact that it had two nominally equal official languages, English and Dutch, and three capital cities: Cape Town (legislative), Pretoria (administrative), and Bloemfontein (judicial). Its first government was formed by the centrist white South African Party under Prime Minister Louis Botha, an ex-Boer general who also received some support from English-speaking whites.⁶⁸ Within a couple of years, this vision was given material form in the twin towers of the new Union Buildings in Pretoria, intended to represent the reconciliation and partnership between the two "white races" that made up the new South Africa⁶⁹

The Growth of the South African State and the Politics of White Nationhood

It was perhaps inevitable that a nation that came into existence under the hopeful motto of "Unity is Strength/Eendracht Maakt Macht" would struggle to achieve a clear national identity. Soon after union, two broad strands of political ideology emerged that, although latent in the subcontinent before 1899, had been precipitated by the war and are probably best understood as competing conceptualizations of a modern nation that was both connected to and separate from a mother country. Over the next two decades, these two ideological positions would vie for control in South Africa, become entrenched in white party politics, and harden into increasingly divergent constructions of national identity. Although these two ideologies sometimes made political use of the same events and phenomena to present opposing points of

view, this contestation masked (and facilitated) a concurrent evolution of a shared, place-related vision of nationhood and identity.

The one construction of nationhood was that promoted by the state itself, which used a homogenizing political rhetoric of patriotism to erode ethnic, historic, and regional differences in pursuit of economic and bureaucratic efficiency and to promote a sense of a unified imagined community. In the other construction of nationhood, a sense of identity cultivated initially by a smaller group within the state in order to achieve self-determination became a form of nationalism that sought to remake the state according to its own cultural and ideological blueprint.⁷⁰ The discourse of South African nationhood and identity from 1910 to 1948 can be crudely described as a situation in which the former position initially had the upper hand, but was eventually eroded and overcome by the latter. Both political groupings were headed by an alliance of cultural activists who sought to promote their particular version of national identity through the creation of a narrative of descent that incorporated a set of supposedly unifying cultural values and ideas.

Each of these ideological positions manifested itself through a distinct geopolitical spatiality and definition of what constituted national territory.⁷¹ Initially, the dominant position was occupied by a loyalist “Greater South African” subjectivity (effectively, the local expression of Jebb’s colonial nationalism), which enthusiastically embraced both the imperial connection and the possibility of a larger, more culturally diverse geographic territory that included the other British territories in the subcontinent. This imagined Greater South Africa was part of a larger imagined territory, the British Empire, and the identity of its ideal citizen combined the best qualities of South Africa’s two white “races.” Because it promised continued links with Britain, this vision was understandably popular among English-speaking whites, as well as Britons who had visited the country themselves and been captivated by its potential.⁷² Against this was opposed a “Little South African” subjectivity, which (somewhat grudgingly) accepted that the Union was part of the British Empire, but saw white South African identity as much more narrowly and exclusively defined, formulated around an emerging, explicitly indigenous white culture. The imagined territory of this group was much more limited and autonomous than that of Greater South Africa. A crucial difference between these two versions of white colonial national identity was that the former saw that some accommodation with the African population was inevitable, even if the exact date when this would take place was unspecified.

Given the political polarization around the issue after 1910, it would be easy to equate these two alternative visions of South African nationhood with language differences among the white population. The straightforward equation of language with nationhood is an easy one to make; language, along with race, is one of the most obvious badges of cultural identity. As we have seen, this belief had underpinned Milner’s plans to Anglicize South Africa, and it would also become a central tenet of Afrikaner nationalist ideology. Historically, though, the notion that language was a key to identity only emerged as part of the discourse of identity formation that unfolded after union, which used language as a convenient signifier of differences that could have equally well been attributed to constructs of race, culture, ethnicity, and class.⁷³ Before the 1920s, when Afrikaans began to be more widely used, the term “Af-

rikaner” itself was seldom used, “Boer” or “Dutch” being more common,⁷⁴ and even this category included many emigrants of English (and especially Scottish) descent who had, after a couple of generations, adopted the language. (Until the end of the nineteenth century, “Afrikaner” was often used interchangeably with “Africander” to describe people of mixed race, who would later be called “Colored.”)⁷⁵ Similarly, the appellation “English-speaking South African” (as opposed to “British overseas”) barely existed in 1910, and only really came to define a distinct cultural identity in the early 1950s.⁷⁶ English-speaking inhabitants of the subcontinent rarely called themselves “South African” until after World War I; instead, they either identified themselves with metropolitan Britain or, as did many Afrikaners, with the part of South Africa in which they lived.⁷⁷ Even among these English-speaking white South Africans, there had always existed a diversity of allegiances to Britain. At the end of the nineteenth century, liberal-minded Anglo South Africans experienced Cecil John Rhodes’s and Leander Starr Jameson’s warmongering as deeply abhorrent betrayals, while others saw Britain as an interfering, “doddering old mother country.”⁷⁸

Until 1930, then, there prevailed in white South African society a more fluid relationship between language and identity, and consequently a looser definition of national identity, than that which later became associated with the country. Greater South African colonial nationalism in particular did not see any incompatibility between allegiance to the newly formed country *and* to the British Empire. It claimed to rise above political and language differences and to build a nation which drew on (rather than was defined and limited by) the imperial connection to realize a liberal and progressive future. Benefiting from this broadly inclusive Anglophone citizenship was an economically powerful minority of English-speaking whites who still unashamedly called Britain “Home,” and for whom the idealism of colonial nationalism meant little. Although they lived some six thousand miles (and some three weeks of sea travel) from Britain, this minority felt a greater fealty and loyalty to the Crown than to the land of their birth. They expressed their identity through an essentially personal allegiance to the king, who embodied and bound the empire together, and whom they saw as guardian of their rights within South Africa.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, a loyalist Greater South African identity initially appealed to a broad spectrum of whites because it was simultaneously engagingly idealistic and pragmatically vague. During the early twentieth century, South Africa was still very much a country of immigrants. From 1891 to 1904, the subcontinent’s white population nearly doubled, and three-quarters of this growth was due to immigration. Many individuals who were to shape South African political and cultural life in the first half of the twentieth century arrived in the country between 1902 and 1905. Although a large proportion of these immigrants came from Britain, they also came from Europe, the United States, and other British colonies.⁸⁰ Like their predecessors in the second half of the nineteenth century, these non-British immigrants tended to learn English and subscribe to English (though not necessarily imperial) cultural values. Under these circumstances, Greater South African cultural identity invited the allegiance of colonial South Africans, as well as that of the more than 20 percent of the white population who had been born overseas.

The inclusivist vision of South African identity promoted by the Union’s early governments was soon being challenged by “Little South African” cultural activists

and intellectuals who, like their Greater South African counterparts, maintained ties to European coevals (in the Netherlands and Germany) and used a diverse range of cultural initiatives to raise political consciousness. In contrast to the other group's emphasis on material culture, Little South African initiatives were largely constructed around verbal culture, specifically the recognition of Afrikaans, a local demotic Dutch used as an everyday language by many non-Anglo South Africans (including many people of Khoisan and mixed-race descent). The First Afrikaans Language Movement had started in the Cape during the 1870s and received great support during the British annexation of the ZAR from 1877 to 1881, but had largely died out by the end of the century, because those who spoke the language were uninvolved in commerce and politics, which used either Dutch or English.⁸¹ After 1902, however, the absorption of substantial populations from the former Boer republics in a single polity altered this unproblematic separation, and the recognition of Afrikaans became a rallying point for many who had been impoverished by the war as well as those affected by the closing of the hunting and farming frontiers.⁸² Unlike the earlier Cape-Afrikaans movement, the Second Afrikaans Language Movement became a springboard for a wider cultural and political movement that increasingly revolved around republicanism.⁸³

Two key events in 1913 acted as catalysts for this: the inauguration of the Vrouemonument, a shrine near Bloemfontein to the 26,000 Boer women and children who had died in the British concentration camps, and the speech made by General Barry Hertzog, another Boer veteran, to twelve thousand supporters at De Wildt, which sketched an alternative vision of South Africa's future that was as all-encompassing as its more imperially minded alternative. Even though he himself did not intend it as such, Hertzog's vision was taken as a rallying point by cultural activists who wanted to "build a nation from words": "Employing Afrikaans instead of increasingly obsolete Dutch, and defining it as a modern, white man's language, they sought to construct an Afrikaner nation which would fill Afrikaner churches, attend Afrikaner schools, and buy Afrikaner journals and books."⁸⁴ This literary-linguistic definition of South African national identity was first given institutional weight by the founding of organizations such as the Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap in 1905 and the Zuid-Afrikaansche Akademie voor Taal, Letteren en Kunst in 1909, and the establishment of the first South African literature prize, the Hertzog Prize, in 1914. The emergence of this language-based movement and its evolution into a full-fledged "Afrikaner" identity followed patterns in ethnic separatism elsewhere in the world. Awakened by a sense of relative economic disadvantage, it used programs of social regeneration and cultural resurgence to challenge the inevitability of assimilation promoted by the modern state.⁸⁵ Revolving around the development of a vernacular language, it was also underpinned by the secularization of knowledge and the rise of print technology.⁸⁶ Although the aftermath of the South African War offered a rich potential for exploitation along nationalistic lines, much of this only remained alive in folk memory and was not converted into writing until it suited the needs of the nationalist movement in the 1930s.⁸⁷

An enormously influential figure in this process was the populist Gustav Preller, who from 1905 onward agitated for recognition of Afrikaans and helped establish a series of magazines aimed at increasing its usage among common people.⁸⁸ Preller

understood the power of simple words and images to engage the collective memory of a dispersed, disempowered, and semieducated group and transform them into a single *volk*: every story, picture, or monument became a place where memories of the past could be (re)constructed and stored.⁸⁹ A number of journalists, ministers, and educationists took up Preller's ideas, and from 1914 onward, Afrikaans was gradually introduced into schools, and in 1918 it became a university subject. In the same year, the Broederbond, a clandestine organization to support Afrikaner cultural and economic interests, was established in the Transvaal. An Afrikaans publishing house, Nasionale Pers, was established to publish books and magazines that did not come from Britain (as virtually all English-language material did at this time).⁹⁰ The first Afrikaans poems—Eugene Marais's *Winternag* and Jan F. E. Celliers's *Die Vlakte*—had appeared a few years after the end of the South African War, and soon became touchstones of this new subjectivity, not only because of the language in which they were written but also because of the way they used that language to mediate a collective elegy for a lost life on the land.

However, it was not until 1925, when Afrikaans replaced Dutch as the Union's second official language, that it became possible to reach and mobilize the masses through writing in the language that many of them spoke. Before this, Afrikaner nationalism was still largely a populist movement and not yet a full-fledged political platform. Its primary constituency was an impoverished and sometimes illiterate underclass of displaced rural dwellers migrating to the cities, where they were susceptible to the rhetoric of intellectual activists like Preller who, finding themselves marginalized by the political establishment, rehabilitate themselves as demagogues.⁹¹ At this time, there were a substantial number of non-English-speaking whites who still saw Afrikaans as a bastard, lower-class language, including the long-Anglicized old colonial Dutch families at the Cape.⁹² In the Transvaal and Orange Free State, emigrants from Holland and the wealthier Hoog Hollands-speaking professionals and entrepreneurial classes that began to establish themselves after World War I continued to support Botha and Jan Smuts's centrist South African Party. For less-privileged whites of Dutch descent, however, nascent Afrikaner nationalism's combination of education, cultural uplift, and literature gave them a sense of heritage and a collective past and, by extension, a collective destiny.

This growing emphasis on language as the key badge of identity after 1914 posed a powerful, and in some ways unanswerable, challenge to proponents of a more inclusive colonial national (but ultimately Anglophone) construction of white nationhood. The apparent domination of English speakers in the professions, commerce, and government fanned feelings among politically and economically marginalized Dutch- and Afrikaans-speaking whites that their plight was the result of hegemonic British imperialism, and this strengthened the appeal of a nationalism mobilized around language difference and, increasingly, republicanism. This shift toward the reification of language as the primary signifier of identity placed an inclusive, nonethnic construction of national identity at a distinct disadvantage. If language is the primary medium whereby people imaginatively take hold of their lifeworld and assimilate it into their lives, then a language-based construction of identity worryingly undermined claims of English-speaking whites, even those who had lived in the subcontinent for generations, to be true South Africans.⁹⁵

These crosscurrents of identity formation meant that the first fifteen years of the Union's existence were a prolonged struggle on the part of pro-Empire colonial national politicians to prevent the process of nation building from slipping into the hands of those who had a narrower, "tribal" definition of national identity. The Afrikaner National Party, formed by Hertzog and others who had broken away from Botha's South African Party in 1914, became the political instrument through which nascent Afrikaner aspirations were channeled. War in Europe, and the prospect of South African forces invading the territory of a former ZAR ally (German South West Africa) in 1915, prompted a rebellion by disaffected and disillusioned Boer *bittereinders* (hardliners) who denounced Botha and Smuts as traitors. Despite his own past as a Boer general, Botha put down this uprising with some force. Anti-British feeling among some Afrikaners was further inflamed when one of the uprising's leaders, Jopie Fourie, was tried and executed for treason.⁹⁴ The National Party attracted substantial support in the general election the following year, and it was not long before a small group of Afrikaner militants within the party were calling for a republic.

During World War I, the imperial government in London was anxious not to exacerbate these tensions, and it imposed no conscription on South Africa.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, some 146,000 whites did volunteer to fight, first in East Africa, then on the Western Front in France.⁹⁶ Although the Union contributed relative few men compared to the other more populous Dominions, its participation in the conflict had significant effects on South Africans' sense of nationhood, identity, and citizenship. At the same time, even though English-speaking South Africans heavily outnumbered Afrikaners in the Union's forces, the experience of fighting alongside each other helped foster a social closeness between officers and men and a common patriotism.⁹⁷ This was reinforced as the war progressed and the military situation worsened; the pre-1916 idiom of the war as a European "playing field" that had originally attracted many volunteers began to lose meaning, and gave way to the perception that South Africans were fighting for king and *country* rather than king and empire.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, back at home in South Africa, the war helped nurture anti-British republicanism among rural, Dutch, and Afrikaans-speaking whites, of whom more than half opposed the Union's war policy by 1917.⁹⁹ World War I produced similar divisions among black South Africans. Although most wanted little to do with this "white man's war," significant numbers were persuaded to serve in the South African Labour Corps in France, believing this would improve their standing as citizens after the war.¹⁰⁰ More than six hundred of these noncombatant South Africans lost their lives when the *SS Mendi* sank in the English Channel in 1917, the annual remembrance of which was used to rally support for black nationalist movements in the interwar period.¹⁰¹

During the war in Europe, import substitution and increased overseas demand for South African agricultural products brought about unprecedented expansion of the country's economy in areas other than its two primary industries, mining and agriculture. After the war, however, as Europe struggled to rebuild itself, the boom in South Africa collapsed, bringing a combination of inflation, unemployment exacerbated by the return of demobilized soldiers from Europe, and the spread of organized labor in the economically vital mine industry. News from Europe of the rise of Bolshevism, Irish secession, and the British General Strike encouraged similar political

action in South Africa, where it was overlaid with racial dimensions. In 1922, industrial unrest spread along the Rand, and after nearly two months of civil anarchy, the Union government's attempts to bring order and declare martial law led to 230 lives lost and over 500 injured. The severe economic depression of 1921 and 1922 added to the numbers of rural Afrikaners already ruined by drought and indebtedness, and each year more of them joined the so-called second Great Trek to the urban areas that had begun after the South African War.¹⁰² There, these impoverished migrants with little English found themselves in what felt like a foreign country. They not only encountered a dominant Anglo culture but came into direct competition for jobs (and sometimes housing, as in the Johannesburg neighborhoods like Fordsburg) with the Africans whom they had so recently known as dependents.

Although South Africa's participation in World War I had helped give shape to and strengthen white colonial national identity, the postwar years saw an even stronger growth of Afrikaner nationalism. Although Botha's death in 1919 had led to his replacement as prime minister by an equally powerful advocate of reconciliation, Jan Smuts, in 1924, Hertzog's Nationalists, in a coalition with the Labor Party, came to power on a wave of anti-imperialist and anti-business sentiment. This coalition, under the slogan "South Africa First," provided an outlet for the internationalist tendencies as well as the ethnically based grievances of poorer urban whites, and reflected a shift in the Union government's orientation from mining toward farming interests. The period of stability that followed was the result of improving economic conditions, but it also reflected a growing sense of a shared destiny between English and Afrikaner, largely due to Africans' refusal to accept their economic and political disenfranchisement by the white state. During the 1920s, this black resistance started to be channeled by the South African Natives National Council (founded in 1912 and the forerunner of the African National Congress) and the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (founded in 1919). Racial fear of one form or another started to unite white South Africans and drive much new legislation.¹⁰³ This shift exemplified the complex ways in which race, class, and economics were becoming intertwined in South Africa and inscribed in the country's physical landscape.¹⁰⁴ Racial fears among whites stemmed in part from the increasing numbers of Africans in urban areas, who were there largely because of several pieces of legislation that effectively ended their economic independence and rural way of life. This legislation had started with the 1913 Land Act, often considered to be the equivalent of the Enclosures Act in eighteenth-century England.¹⁰⁵ This act had either driven Africans into remote, cramped reserves, which were supported by tribal leaders because they seemed to protect traditional ways of life, or into urban townships, where they provided cheap labor for the mines and other new industries. By the mid-1920s, nearly two-thirds of Africans lived in one of these two areas, leaving the remainder of country increasingly white.

Economic recovery after 1924 was strengthened by the interventionist strategies of the Hertzog-led Pact government, which, for all its populist rhetoric, built on the previous government's close links with big business and the *dirigiste* foundations laid by Milner's Reconstruction. The establishment of Eskom and Iscor in 1928, large parastatal corporations for the production of electricity and steel, jump-started domestic industrialization, while price support and control of various agricultural industries increased production, encouraged exports, and strengthened the Union's

autonomy. The state-run South African Railways and Harbours (SAR&H) became the government's main instrument of economic development, and it was involved in a wide range of activities beyond its core activity of transporting goods and people. The SAR&H made the expansion of mining industry possible and was instrumental in encouraging the capitalization and mechanization of South African agriculture in the 1920s.¹⁰⁶ The expansion of the railways not only facilitated the flow of rural whites to the new industrial and economic heartland of the Witwatersrand, centered around the gold mines, but railways also became a primary source of employment for poor, uneducated whites.¹⁰⁷

Concurrently, however, this ongoing industrialization and urbanization also gave rise to a progressive, urban intelligentsia that was self-consciously South African but retained strong intellectual ties to Europe. This new class of white South Africans was the natural outcome of the expanding mining-based economy. While the mines only made fortunes for a few dozen individuals, they drove an economic expansion that provided a variety of careers for working- and middle-class whites that would have been unimaginable in Europe. The better-educated soon found their way into the professions, the arts, some sectors of government and civil services, as well as colleges and the newly founded universities and research institutions.¹⁰⁸ The growth of modern scientific research within South Africa not only helped nurture the nation's growing sense of itself, but also helped educated white intellectuals justify their existence as Europeans in Africa, because it seemed to promise modern solutions to the subcontinent's many environmental and social problems.¹⁰⁹ The progressive, liberal values of this indigenous intelligentsia were bolstered by the many European-born and trained academics who staffed South Africa's new universities and colleges, as well the fact that many young white professional South Africans still apprenticed in Europe. The University of Witwatersrand, established with support from capitalist mining interests immediately after the war, attracted world-class faculty, such as the historian W. M. Macmillan, a regular contributor to the *Nation* and *New Statesman* in London, and anthropologist/physician Raymond Dart, who was to make epochal discoveries into the origins of man in the Taung quarries. Students at the new universities were an admixture of first-generation Jews, rural Afrikaners, and middle-class English (the offspring of wealthier white families still went to Oxbridge at this stage), an alliance that introduced a new, less imperial dimension to a white settler identity more inclined to question the superiority of European literature, culture, history, and politics.¹¹⁰

The geographical redistribution of South Africa's white population that had begun in the first two decades of the century accelerated during the 1920s. Nearly 18 percent of the Union's 1920 white population (an estimated 250,000) were uprooted from rural areas between 1890 and 1930, and by 1930, almost as many white South Africans lived in urban as in rural areas, and most of the country's wealth was being generated on the Rand. This population redistribution was as much a function of the push of rural change as it was of the cities' economic pull. By the 1920s, debates about the carrying capacity of remote *platteland* that had been going on since the turn of the century started to be resolved, and it became clear that rural ways of life and forms of agriculture practiced earlier were no longer sustainable.¹¹¹ After World War I, legislation that drove African tenantry off the land was complemented by govern-

ment policies that concentrated the control of agricultural land in the hands of well-capitalized white farmers and encouraged improved management methods.¹¹² This intensified land use in rural South Africa further marginalized remaining squatter and migrant white farmers, who were dealt a further blow by the extended drought that lasted from 1922 to 1933.

Such utilitarian processes of establishing the carrying capacity of the land highlighted the shortage of geographical knowledge about the region and the urgent need for further substantive, state-sponsored research. Apart from some localized mapping for mining and military purposes undertaken before the South African War, remarkably little was known about South Africa's topography, vegetation, climate, and demography until the early 1920s.¹¹³ During this decade, the first generation of South African geographers began to systematically accumulate data about the country's geology, soils, hydrology, botany, and climate, and to construct a more objective idea of what constituted normal environmental conditions. This growing geographical knowledge contributed to a growing sense of South Africa as a distinct society and revealed that the subcontinent had a unique and in some ways globally significant natural history. The Land Survey Act of 1927 initiated a systematic trigonometrical survey of the entire country that complemented the more established but still growing body of geological knowledge.¹¹⁴ These two modern scientific practices combined to construct a "saturated knowledge" of the nation's territory that was at once vertical and horizontal and helped to foster ideas of South Africa's distinctiveness that seemed to be objective and apolitical.¹¹⁵

After 1924, Hertzog's consolidation of white domination by legislation proscribing African property ownership, labor, and movement was paralleled by legislation putting in place many of the symbolic props of a self-governing nationhood. In 1925, Afrikaans became the Union's second official language (previously it was Dutch); the following year, a new National Flag Act (replacing the Union Jack) and the National Parks Act were written into law and the country's first national park was established; and in 1928, the country's National Monuments Council was founded. Less obvious, though equally important in symbolic terms, was the development of local currency. As the country moved toward greater economic autonomy from Britain in 1920s, the first national paper money started introducing local symbols of national identity, notably images of indigenous wildlife, to supplement or replace heads of the British royal family. At a time when most large banks were British-owned, Afrikaners provided the major push for the introduction of a national currency.¹¹⁶

The historical coincidence of these various pieces of legislation with the emergence of relatively broad South African settler nationalism is no accident. The instrumental issues facing most modernizing societies are often useful vehicles for transcending ethnic separatism.¹¹⁷ Although the government of the day was nominally Afrikaner, both the Flag and National Park Acts required the support of English speakers to pass. In most instances, this legislation also strengthened the state's role as a resource for the collective benefit of whites, and reinforced the definition of the national territory as a white man's country. By the end of the 1920s, although the exact composition of the nation was still a matter of dispute, there was a general consensus among whites about two fundamental principles: first, that South Africa would, for the foreseeable

future at least, be an independent state within the Commonwealth, and second, that racial segregation between white and black would be upheld and entrenched.¹¹⁸ It was around this time that the phrase “racial question” ceased to refer to tensions between English and Dutch/Afrikaans speakers, and began to be used to describe those between whites and nonwhites.

This strengthening of an internal sense of white national identity during the 1920s was bolstered by various external factors, including the clarification of the country’s territorial boundaries, and international attention that invited white South Africans to see themselves through others’ eyes. Popular awareness about South Africa in Britain stimulated by the South African War was intensified thirteen years later by the presence of South African troops in Europe, as well as Smuts’s unprecedented inclusion in the Imperial War Cabinet.¹¹⁹ After World War I, South Africa was mandated by the League of Nations to govern the former German South West Africa, while Rhodesians had decided in a 1923 referendum that they did not wish to become part of South Africa and instead became a separate, self-governing colony. British awareness of South Africa was further enhanced by the country’s very visible participation in the Empire Exhibition at Wembley, as well as Hertzog’s active role in the passing of the Balfour Declaration at the 1926 Imperial Conference, which confirmed the status of all the Dominions as autonomous communities within the empire.¹²⁰ This interest was further stimulated by the expansion of overseas tourism to South Africa during the 1920s. The SAR&H played a central role in this expansion, as well as promoting South Africa in Europe, the United States, and the empire as a country for settlement and investment. The SAR&H became an important agent in familiarizing overseas visitors with the landscapes of South Africa and also helped create South Africa’s first national park in 1926.

Constructing Collective Memory, Promoting Patriotism

The middle of the 1920s was not only the historical moment when a broad white settler identity started to emerge, it was also a time when South Africanism, the broad cultural movement associated with the politics of a Greater South Africa, enjoyed its widest currency among whites. Although it evolved over its life span, loyalist South Africanism was grounded in the belief that differences between English speakers and Dutch or Afrikaans speakers could be “sublimated” to produce a common imperial South African ideal.¹²¹ This was by no means a new idea. Notions of a hybrid, transethnic white settler identity had been circulating since self-government had been introduced at the Cape in 1872.¹²² The Afrikaner Bond, the Cape-based cultural movement and political party made up of an older Dutch-speaking bourgeoisie, had been pro-imperial since its inception in the 1880s.¹²³ Loyalist South Africanism had, of course, also been latent in the rhetoric of “Closer Union,” but it became a central tenet of the white, pro-imperial, colonial national state after 1910. This was no accident: as a form of national identity, South Africanism was patriotic rather than nationalistic. The ambiguity of patriotic allegiance was more adaptable to the cause of multivalent imperial unity than the idea of outright nationalism, which implied territorial limitations and an ultimate destiny of independence. Patriotism also glossed over ethnic and racial aspects of imperial ideology—the assumption that the

empire was preeminently a union of people of *British* blood—and suggested that the persistence of older, place-based identities, rather than the imposition of a dominant, pan-imperial identity, might be the key to the empire’s survival.¹²⁴

The early Union governments’ promotion of this form of cultural identity was supplemented by the cultural work of a coterie of white capitalists, philanthropists, and intellectuals with links to the Kindergarten and members of the British establishment, many of whom had come to South Africa before, during, or just after the South African War. This group was somewhat different from the more familiar (and notorious) Randlords, the two dozen or so self-made men who accumulated massive mining fortunes in South Africa, which they then used to buy the property and titles necessary to enter the highest echelons of British society.¹²⁵ As in other countries faced with the challenge of divisive ethnic nationalism, in South Africa a loose association of educated, upper-middle-class activists promoted a number of ostensibly apolitical initiatives designed to help a broad assortment of citizens imagine themselves as a unified group, situated in the historical time and geographic space of the new nation. Some of these same individuals continued to promote these cultural initiatives when this was no longer possible in mainstream political discourse. Although most members of this group were English-speaking, some were not. This reflected the underlying cultural idealism and commitment to reconciliation that was its founding premise, as well as the close personal ties that developed between those who dominated political and cultural life in a society as small as white South Africa was at this time.¹²⁶ This group of colonial cultural activists was supported by a small number of individuals with influence in political and publishing circles in London, who knew South Africa well and visited frequently. This group included most of the Kindergarten, as well as people like Rudyard Kipling, Violet Markham, and Fabian Ware, who came to prominence during the Edwardian period in Britain.

Of course, South Africanism also served a number of less selfless goals besides the promotion of an ameliorative white cultural identity. For some individuals, it was an attempt to overcome the gossamer-thin sense of connection they felt toward South Africa and a magnanimous gesture toward the country in which they had acquired their wealth and which many had come to love.¹²⁷ Others saw it as a way of securing patronage from and entry into the mercantile-political establishment. For others still, it was a way of tempering the hostility toward the perceived brashness and materialism of Randlord society that had emerged in South Africa and Britain and the anti-capitalist tendencies that developed among the white working class on the Rand.¹²⁸

We have already encountered the origins of patriotic South Africanism in the Kindergarten’s various behind-the-scenes nation-building activities between the South African War and union. Its essentially discursive, imaginative nature was already evident in the *State*, the Kindergarten’s monthly journal, edited by Phillip Kerr and Lionel Curtis, which was published from 1908 until 1912. In addition to promoting Closer Union, the *State* also published articles on settlement, immigration, literature, travel, agriculture, architecture, scenery, and art. As union became more certain, these articles were supplemented by pieces addressing the need for emblems of nationhood such as a national gallery and anthem, a national university, botanical gardens, the choice of capital cities, and the need for nature conservation. This was the first time many of these topics had been broached in South Africa, and these

articles provided a foundation for a new self-image and understanding of a future national identity at a time when the nation of South Africa, properly speaking, did not yet exist.¹²⁹

Given these beginnings, it is no surprise that the cultural rhetoric of patriotic South Africanism inherited the nostalgic pastoralist ideas about landscape and identity prevalent in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain as well as the idealism and future-oriented *dirigisme* of Milnerite Reconstruction. The latter started to become increasingly necessary after union, when Afrikaner nationalists started using appeals to language and memories of the South African War to fan the embers of emerging republicanism. After 1913, advocates of South Africanism began to realize that reconciliation between whites was all but incompatible with commemoration of the immediate past, which would have raked up questions of the war's course and consequences.¹⁵⁰ This inability to appeal to shared memory made South Africanism particularly hard to define or represent. Vague references in the *State* to the Boers as simple but assimilable people of the soil and the occasional publication of articles by Gustav Preller and C. J. Langenhoven (who would later write South Africa's national anthem) were soon revealed as inadequate. This need to negotiate the mnemonic minefield of the recent past meant that during the 1910s and 1920s the cultural rhetoric of South Africanism tended to dwell on the imaginary consolations and potentials mediated by material culture rather than on concrete facts and political realities.

The discursive construction of identity is always contingent on appeals to collective memory. This was especially true at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe, when transformations in social and economic life were challenging traditional ideas about cultural continuity and rejuvenating historical and museum culture.¹⁵¹ This historical revivalism was also linked to the emerging nation-state's need to construct a narrative of descent that created a sense of membership in the larger, abstract imagined community of nationhood.¹⁵² In South Africa, as in other colonial societies, constructing this narrative of descent was complicated by a number of different factors. First, in the colony, construction of the "imagined community" usually involves the creation of an entirely new collectivity, rather than the transformation and fusion of existing communities. This imagined community seldom, if ever, refers to indigenous, precolonial (and usually non-European) populations, but instead to European settlers who arrived at different times and usually share few identity-forming principles other than that they inhabit the same territory.¹⁵³ Furthermore, this narrative of descent necessarily draws on a brief history that is largely determined by the colonizing power and is invariably marked by regrettable episodes of brutal dispossession.¹⁵⁴

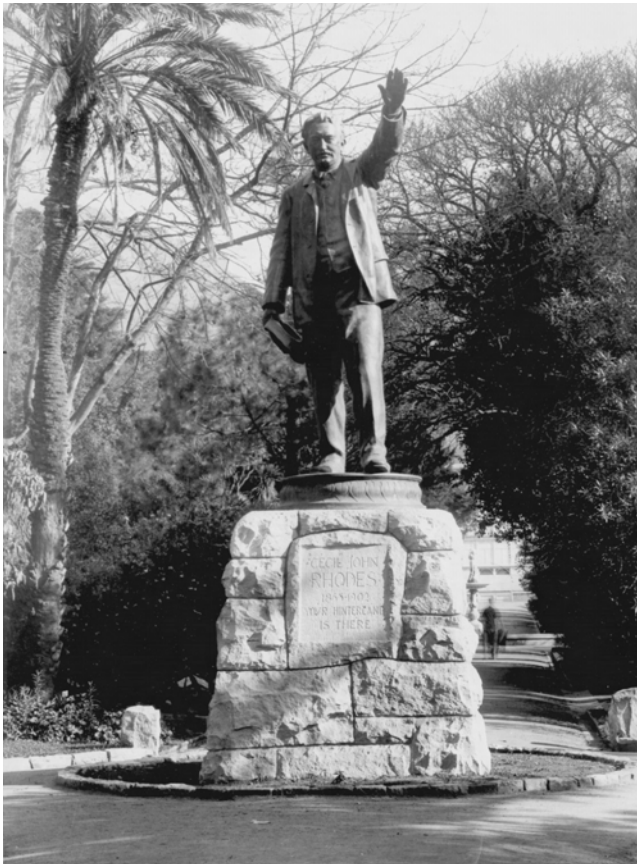
All of these facts mean that the project of constructing a long, collective memory from a short, contested history almost always results in the exclusion of the non-settler population from the "we" or "us" of the imagined nation. It also guarantees that as they evolve into modern nations, colonial societies tend to develop ambiguous attitudes to modernity.¹⁵⁵ For all their need to transcend history, colonial societies are also societies in which the future is contingent or unpredictable, and they have a strong psychic need to create a sense of sequence out of aleatory chaos.¹⁵⁶ Thus, although one would expect such new societies to reify development and technology as symbols of modernity and national progress, they are also often haunted by the

loss of premodern experiences that characterized most of their history (see color plate 2). This ambivalence can be traced to the contradiction that lies at the very heart of constructed identities: to start over is to cut oneself off from the master narrative of history, the unspoken basis for authenticity and standing. This tension between impatience with the past and nostalgic longing for it is, if anything, heightened for intellectuals and cultural producers who travel between the metropole and the colony and for whom the narrative of descent needs to incorporate and make sense of two quite different histories.

It is no surprise that the first, top-down attempts to construct a patriotic colonial national culture in South Africa involved reinterpreting, classifying, and appropriating the past, but as in other dominions, this discourse also fostered the identity, esprit de corps, and self-confidence of an emerging white colonial elite, and saved some of the premodern practices, relations, and experiences that its growth was displacing.¹³⁷ Colonial national South Africanism attempted to fashion a narrative of descent that organized into an orderly progression and redeemed British conquest, control, and settlement of the subcontinent, and which romanticized violent or contested episodes of history.¹³⁸ The implied cultural values of this narrative were very much progressive, British ones that drew on the “the best that has been thought and said.” At the same time, this narrative strove to provide an optimistic vision of the future, assimilating the Boers as white Africans and promoting a mutual admiration between colonial national white elite and what they perceived to be the African tribal aristocracy ruling over a contented peasantry.¹³⁹ For a number of decades, this romanticized view of Africans formed an integral and persuasive part of fundamentally racist assumptions and policies. It allowed members of the colonial national white elite to see themselves as paternal figures with a natural right to become involved in tribal legal and cultural affairs; it also allowed these whites to be perceived by conservative Africans as bulwarks against the designs of both more radical segregationists and the African intelligentsia.¹⁴⁰

The cultural construction of this narrative of descent began before the South African War, at the Cape. A key figure was Cecil John Rhodes, who used the idea of a continuity of European settlement to legitimate his historicist cultural visions for the subcontinent and elide the more commercial and political ambitions of British imperialism. There is little doubt that the powerful afterlife enjoyed by Rhodes’s vision and his own transformation into an inspirational figure for many colonial nationalists were mediated by the various memorials he caused to be constructed in South Africa, both before and after his death in 1902. As early as 1889, Rhodes had erected a statue of the Dutch founding father of white South Africa, Jan Van Riebeeck, in the center of Cape Town—setting a precedent for his own statue, which would be erected nearby in 1907, itself a pale precursor of the much larger and more famous memorial to him that was constructed on the slopes of Devils Peak and inaugurated in 1912.¹⁴¹

By this time, though, these kinds of historicist imaginaries had become part of loyalist South Africanist discourse through other means as well. In 1900, the Guild of Loyal Women had been founded at the Cape, primarily to identify graves and care for the cemeteries of both British and Boer war dead. This loyal unionist organization was involved not only in locating, marking, and maintaining all known graves but also in raising funds for *uitlander* refugees and Dutch women and children, and it



Statue of Cecil John Rhodes, 1907, Company Gardens, Cape Town. Cape Archives, file ref. R1569; reproduced with permission.

worked closely with overseas group such as the Daughters of the Empire in Canada and the Victoria League in Britain.¹⁴² The year 1905 saw the founding of the National Society for the Preservation of Objects of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty in South Africa (later simply known as the “National Society”) out of which the statutory National Monuments Council was to grow. This organization, which was modeled on the National Trust in Britain (founded in 1895), was soon complemented by the South African National Union, which promoted all aspects of national development, including indigenous arts, crafts, and industry.¹⁴³

Equally influential was the literary and historical work of the first Cape Colonial archivist C. V. Leibrandt and historian Dr. George McCall Theal in the 1890s.¹⁴⁴ Although they sometimes offered competing interpretations of the past,¹⁴⁵ both writers glossed over contemporary differences among whites and emphasized a long, productive history of *white Protestant* cooperation, settlement, and culture at the Cape (thus potentially including Dutch, German, and French Huguenot, as well as English) (see color plate 3).¹⁴⁶ These ideas were given institutional form by publications such as the *Cape Monthly Magazine* and the formation of the Van Riebeeck Society in 1918. A recurring figure in popular histories at this time was Simon van der Stel, the Dutch governor at the Cape during the last part of the seventeenth century, who was held up by colonial nationalists as a historical antecedent of the cultivated, Protestant European-African identity they wished to promote. Theal’s assertion that black people



The Smuts and Phillips families in front of Vergelegen. Barloworld Archives Phillips Collection file ref. #11, reproduced with permission.

arrived in Natal toward the end of the sixteenth century, and only settled on the Highveld in the eighteenth also helped undergird visions of South Africa as a white man's country by implying that black Africans had no more right to the land than Europeans.¹⁴⁷ Theal and Leibrandt provided the intellectual and historical ballast for the work of a largely Cape-based group of cultural producers that emerged at the turn of the century who sought to transcend the older, jingoistic colonial culture of overtly English churches and public buildings, ubiquitous statues of Queen Victoria, and private schools that were "little Englands on the veld."¹⁴⁸ This group of Anglophile South Africanists included, among others, the authors Alys Fane Trotter, Dorothea Fairbridge, and Percy Fitzpatrick; the architects Francis Masey, Franklin Kendall, and J. M. Solomon; and the artists George Smithard, Jan Juta, Edward Roworth, and Robert Gwelo Goodman.

Several key figures associated with the South Africanist movement were women. In South Africa, as in other colonial societies, women were expected to be not only mothers, homemakers, and educators but also promoters and guardians of cultural values. Like their male counterparts, these female cultural activists were well educated (often in Britain) and perpetuated a tradition set in the nineteenth century by the likes of Lady Anne Barnard and Lucy Duff Gordon, imperial women of means who commented on Cape society from a bifocal point of view.¹⁴⁹ In fact, Lady Ann Barnard was the subject of one of the many books by a central figure in the movement, Dorothea Fairbridge, who helped found both the Guild of Loyal Women and the National Society. Other key figures in colonial national cultural activism were Mrs. Marie Koopmans De Wet, an Anglo-Dutch dowager whose imposing townhouse in Cape Town, along with its contents dating from the turn of the nineteenth century, became South Africa's first cultural history museum in 1914; and Florence



Inauguration ceremony, Delville Wood, Longueval France, October 1926. Reproduced with permission of South African National Museum of Military History, Northern Flagship Institute.

Phillips, the South African-born wife of Randlord Sir Lionel Phillips. Together, the Phillipses formed the nexus of a network of patronage and taste-making that spread into virtually every corner of cultural life. Both became ardent supporters of Botha and Smuts when it became clear that the ex-Boer veterans were going to become politically dominant after 1906, and the couple used Lionel's money and influence to support a wide range of initiatives.¹⁵⁰

Florence Phillips was perhaps the ultimate cultural activist. A famous hostess and patron of historians, writers, architects, and artists, she was sometimes called, not entirely kindly, the "queen of Johannesburg." A founder of the National Society, Florence started a furniture industry on their estates in the northern Transvaal and commissioned Herbert Baker to design their house in Johannesburg. Florence Phillips also spent enormous amounts of her husband's money restoring the buildings and gardens of Vergelegen, which had been the home of a famous governor of the Cape from 1699 to 1709, Willem Adriaan van der Stel (Simon's son, known as "the Rhodes of his day").¹⁵¹ Florence Phillips was also a close friend and patron of Dorothea Fairbridge and shared horticultural interests with women like Ruby Boddam-Whetham and Marion Cran, who, along with Fairbridge, wrote the first books on South African gardens and gardening.¹⁵² Both Florence and Lionel Phillips were ardent nature conservationists, something that was reflected in the management of their own properties and their commissioning of the first *The Flora of South Africa* from the preeminent South African botanist Rudolf Marloth; this work ran to four volumes and was published in 1913.

World War I was as important a catalyst in the unfolding discourse of colonial nationalism as it had been in the realm of economic and politics. A sense of national

identity had already been hinted at before the war by the emergence in all the Dominions of national symbols such as the maple leaf and the wattle, but this sense gained potency during the conflict. The experience of fighting alongside their metropolitan counterparts, often under the authority of incompetent British officers, made many colonial soldiers feel that they had passed some crucial test, while at the same time highlighting differences between them and their metropolitan cousins.¹⁵³ The European battlefields became arenas in which prewar debates about the white Dominion's political and cultural future within the empire were rehearsed and tested, contact zones in which not only British, French, and German but also Canadian, Australian, New Zealander, and South African identities were forged and honed. Like their other Dominion counterparts, the South African Brigade developed a distinctive form of soldierly self-identification, under their newly created emblem of the vaulting Springbok.¹⁵⁴ The South Africans in Europe also saw themselves afresh, through the eyes of those among whom they moved: as white (*not* black, as some Europeans expected) men from Britain's Empire whose Dutch-Afrikaans vocabulary enabled them to communicate easily with Flemish speakers, but whose schooling in muscular Christianity, rugby, and classics also gave them a strong affinity with their British counterparts. Union soldiers played up this distinct Anglo-African identity, using South African cultural and verbal references, and idealizing the empty, hot, dusty landscapes of home in comparison to the devastated, waterlogged landscape of France.¹⁵⁵

This process of differentiation continued in postwar calls from the Dominions for memorials that unambiguously commemorated their participation in the conflict. The (mostly) voluntary participation of Dominion soldiers in the war had epitomized the ideals of colonial nationalism, and although the Imperial War Graves Commission initially decreed there would be no national memorials, physical reminders of the Dominions, national efforts during the war were politically hard for Westminster to deny. For the Dominions, the World War I memorials were opportunities to give material, understandable form to the highly ambiguous, idealistic, transnational identity of colonial nationalism, and redeem the sacrifices made by tens of thousands of their citizens. Advocates of colonial national South Africanism embraced these opportunities for nation building with alacrity: a national war memorial was a unique chance to give symbolic form to and promote the transethnic cultural identity they sought to construct. The legend of the "Springboks on the Somme" was rooted in the notion that only a *nation* was worthy of the ultimate sacrifice of one's own life, and both English- and Afrikaans-speaking men had made that sacrifice in Europe.¹⁵⁶ The South African monument in France, which was inaugurated in October 1926, was one of the first Dominion memorials to be completed in Europe, probably because those responsible for its creation sensed that their position was threatened by the turning political tide in South Africa. Although it eventually received the approval of the Union government, which purchased the land on which it was built, the monument was initially the idea of South African politicians, financiers, and members of the British establishment with close connections to the Union and was paid for by public subscription.¹⁵⁷ Those who promoted and paid for the monument believed that the war had allowed South Africanism to take on a more distinctively national character while remaining subsumed within the wider British imperial context.