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Technology Beyond History
Re-workings of Afrikaner Identity on the Internet[1]

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A substantial literature on the creation of an Afrikaner identity demonstrates the importance of the ideological use of history in South Africa in the pre-apartheid and apartheid periods. But Afrikaner identity has been reworked in the late 20th century. Scholars have demonstrated the significant role history played in the development of the National Party (victorious in the general election of 1948), and how that party represented itself as a vehicle for the restitution of Afrikaner rights against the perceived injustices of British/ English speaking capitalism (Moodie 1978; O'Meara 1983). A particular version of history continued to sustain Afrikaner nationalist values for some time after 1948 (Thompson 1985). However, the nationalistic portrayal of Afrikaners as struggling pioneers and victims of British greed and militarism, or, increasingly, as victims of foolish English liberalism that could not deal effectively with relationships between the races[2], faltered in the later 1980s and its credibility was eventually destroyed. But the manipulation of history in the service of remaking Afrikaner identities is still a potent issue, and the Internet has become a prime location for contesting these identities. A close analysis of one Internet text, "Who Are The Boers? The Truth At Last" by Arthur Kemp (1995), explores the reinterpretation and reinvention of Afrikaner identity on the Internet, in the context of the changing political and economic conditions of South Africa following its transition to democracy.

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1. A version of this paper was presented at the International Conference on Memory and History: Remembering, Forgetting and Forgiving in the Life of the Nation and the Community, Cape Town, 9-11 August 2000.
2. In the earlier part of the twentieth century "races" in South Africa was used to refer to English and Afrikaans speaking divisions among whites, as well as to blacks.

One of the important aspects of the transition in South Africa inaugurated by the first democratic general election in 1994 is the perception by many white people (who were the only truly enfranchised group in the apartheid period) that they have been pushed into a fringe group. These individuals blame corruption and nepotism, affirmative action, land restitution, attacks on white farmers by black assailants, and falling standards brought about by integrated education and escalating crime on the present government, epitomised by its black leaders. For some white observers, these developments appear to confirm predictions of the *swart gevaar*[3], the paranoid belief, propagated by the National Party and some of its predecessors, that blacks would swamp the cities, and that anarchy would be the result. This ideology originated in the 1920s and was effective in aiding the campaign that brought the National Party (and thus apartheid) to power. A fringe group of heirs to *swart gevaar* paranoia call themselves "Boers" and feel that they have been sold out by Afrikaners which, at one level is ironic since the Afrikaner identity has always been extolled as divinely ordained and divinely favoured in Afrikaner Nationalist propaganda. The paper seeks to understand this apparently paradoxical distinction between "Boers" and Afrikaners.

Why Afrikaners or Boers?

Although many Coloured[4] and Black people in South Africa speak Afrikaans as a mother tongue, the term Afrikaner is usually applied to whites.[5] Although the majority of non-white people in the Cape provinces speak Afrikaans as their first language, the term Afrikaners is most commonly used to connote white. The language was widely promoted in the twentieth century because it expressed the supposedly unique national character of its white speakers. British attempts to suppress its usage after their victory in the South African War were emotionally recalled by Afrikaner intellectuals and politicians

3. Literally meaning "black terror," from the Afrikaans.
4. In South Africa, the term Coloured means people of "mixed" (white and black) parentage. Coloured was a manufactured category by the National Party-led apartheid government for a people who did not fall into the other categories (black and Indian) designated by the Population Registration Act (1950). After the transition in South Africa in 1994 many people of "mixed" descent have now taken on the term Coloured as a recognised identity of which they feel proud.
5. A language based on Dutch, which evolved at the Cape from the seventeenth century onwards and which was made one of the two official languages alongside English in 1925.

(Moodie 1978; Hofmeyr 1991) and used to stoke the fires of Afrikaner nationalism.

The history of the word Boer is complex and paradoxical. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Dutch/Afrikaans speaking farmers were referred to as Boers[6]. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Boer acquired derogatory connotations in the South African War. Variously called by both sides the "Boer War" or the "Anglo-Boer War", it was recently renamed the "Anglo-Boer South African War" by President Thabo Mbeki. Many British officials, journalists and popular historians, defending the British cause against the Dutch/Afrikaans speaking citizens of the Orange Free State and Transvaal Provinces, characterised Boers as primitive, irrational, and incapable of basic hygiene. Later, in the course of resistance to apartheid, the government's opponents often used Boer to denote white Afrikaans speakers in general as well as the state and police-military services. Building on its past associations as well as perceptions of the closeness of the relationship between Afrikaners and apartheid, the word Boer developed connotations of backwardness, bigotry, idiocy and brutality. It was no longer applied exclusively to those who worked the land, although it carried an implicit reference to a perceived rural (country bumpkin) mentality.

From the end of the South African War through the course of the twentieth century, by contrast, the term Afrikaner was used by Afrikaans speakers *themselves* to denote an ethnically/racially distinct nation, and "Africander" (meaning "of Africa") was used to reinforce the claim that they were indigenous to the continent. The term Afrikaner was linked to the development of Afrikaner nationalism and pride and to the emerging Afrikaans language, cultural institutions and history as part of a bid to take political and economic power away from the English speaking elite (see Moodie 1978; O'Meara 1983; Hofmeyr 1991). For Afrikaner nationalists, Boers primarily meant those Dutch/Afrikaans speaking guerillas who had bravely defended their homeland against the British in what was then and continues to be called by many Afrikaners "The Anglo-Boer War".

In the 1990s, the adoption of the term "Boer," as distinct from "Afrikaner" (which formerly carried associations of noble suffering and heroism) by white supremacist Afrikaans speakers who wish to emphasise that once again they are being dispossessed and badly treated, contradicts its meanings in South

6. Literally meaning "farmers."

African history. The new distinction between "Boers" and "Afrikaners" has been introduced precisely to emphasise that the "Boers" feel that their traditional way of life is under attack, and that their history is being co-opted by other groups in South Africa.

Why do they embrace an identity that has been so denigrated and ridiculed? Perhaps the answer lies in an appreciation of the symbolic role played by the South African War, fought between 1899 and 1902. The *Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek* (ZAR, South African Republic) President, Paul Kruger, declared war on Britain because he felt threatened by extensive British propaganda against his government. Kruger was unsympathetic to the economic aspirations of the "*uitlanders*"[7] and concerned by increased troops in the British-controlled Colonies of the Cape and Natal, as well as in the former Rhodesian Colony. Kruger was supported by the other Boer Republic, the *Oranje Vry Staat* (OVS, Orange Free State). The combined Boer forces invaded Natal and the Northern Cape in 1899. As Nigel Worden (1994) suggests, one of the most surprising features of the war was that "almost half a million troops of one of the most powerful industrial nations on earth were bogged down by the commandos and guerrilla forces of what the British had belittled as backward and incompetent Boer rural states" (pp.28-9). In addition to massive British casualties, over 30,000 farmsteads in the ZAR, OFS and the Northern Cape were destroyed and 26,000 Boer women and children died in the concentration camps set up as part of the British strategy to cut Boer guerrillas off from their supply lines.

The suffering of the Boers in the South African War played a prominent role in Afrikaner Nationalist ideology. This ideology was directed at mobilising Afrikaners against their historical enemies and in striving for a completely independent Republic that would decisively throw off its British shackles. The image of Boers in this instance, popularised by Afrikaner historians such as Gustav Preller (Moodie 1978; Hofmeyr 1991), was of a small but united group doggedly fighting for their freedom against the might of imperial Britain.

Academic and political interventions in the last two decades have highlighted instead the suffering of black people who also participated in the South African War and died in the thousands in concentration camps. Under the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC), in the centenary year of the war, the trend of revealing the extent of black suffering reached a climax

7. Literally "outsiders," used to describe residents of British origin.

when, as has been noted above, the official renaming of the War by President Mbeki took the emphasis off the ethnic identity of the antagonists and implied that it was a war that affected all South Africans. The "Boers" are reacting to the erasure of their name as an appropriation of *their* War and *their* suffering. Their attempt to rehabilitate the term Boer gives a new context to its very particular historical resonance.

The "Boers'" response — staking out what is unique about "Boers" and their historical traditions — must be seen against the dramatic transitions that have taken place since the end of apartheid in 1994, namely, affirmative action and the reversal of segregated education. They see their language as being under threat, because Afrikaans is no longer one of two official languages, but one of eleven. Even some respectable Afrikaner academics, who would no doubt distance themselves from the extreme right wing groups under discussion, have been upset by the inclusive gestures of President Mbeki[8]. While acknowledging that black people did play a role in the South African (Anglo-Boer) War, they have stressed that this was mostly in the capacity of outriders (scouts), messengers and transport drivers, and that the Boers still suffered the most[9]. Assertive claims about the Boers' seminal role in history and their unique suffering are a reaction to perceptions that contemporary South Africa has made Afrikaners redundant and, in the quest for a new nation, has diluted their past.

The South African War has been central to Afrikaner nationalism, but so have some other great events told as episodes in the making of the Afrikaner nation. Debates about changing the history curriculum in primary and secondary education, which previously focused on the "great epics" (exaggerated and mythologised) of Afrikaner history, are worrying to "Boers" because they detract from the significance of the events that were used to justify white dominance. As school history attempts to incorporate the social history tradition[10] in the more liberal universities, some Afrikaners worry about the way in which their ancestors, previously portrayed as heroic and committed to

8. It is important to note that not all Afrikaans speaking academics fall into this category. Albert Grundlingh, for example, a professor at the University of South Africa, has written powerful, innovative critiques of Afrikaner history and mythology (see 1999).
9. Speech made at an opening of the Anglo-Boer exhibit by Professor F.S. Pretorius at the Rand Afrikaanse University (RAU, Rand Afrikaans University) in July 1999.
10. A history which places less emphasis on great events and heroic deeds and more on the everyday experiences of ordinary — including black — people.

the nation, may be represented, or fear that they will be overlooked. History has thus become a way of reclaiming the Afrikaners' right to be in South Africa and to be recognised as a unique and superior nation. But for the extreme right wing groups under discussion here, the Afrikaner (represented primarily by F.W. de Klerk, the state president who opened negotiations with the ANC), by agreeing to the compromises that made the democratisation of South Africa possible, has failed them. Hence, the "Boer" (this now becomes a new category of the right wing discourse), who had an affinity for the land and who knew and implemented the principles of what they believe is the proper racial hierarchy through the ordering of his (the assumption is that the Boer is male) household, has been resurrected.

Afrikaners and "Boers" and Cyber-identity via the Internet.

In the early twentieth century, Afrikaner Nationalist ideology was disseminated through re-enactments (for example, of the Great Trek — the major pioneering trail into the interior in the 1830s), pageants, film, popular newspapers and magazines. Later, school textbooks and the implicit or hidden curriculum in the classroom[11] ensured that generations of students would learn how Afrikaners had made the land safe for what they claimed as white civilization, how they had tenaciously fought against unjust British imperialism, and how apartheid had evolved as a way of conserving the national character, not only of white Afrikaans speakers, but of all groups designated under the increasingly detailed apartheid legislation of the 1950s (see Hofmeyr 1991; O'Meara,1983; Thompson,1985; Witz 1997). But both the message and the medium now used by the Boers to disseminate their history have changed. The battle is increasingly being waged on the Internet rather than through conventional text. The Internet is being used to rewrite Boer history and to redefine identities. This medium allows extremist groups a new means of making global connections, and gives them a location on which to write new history. The Internet helps this group of "Boers" to rewrite and mobilise ideas.

The Internet allows such extremist groups to escape the censorship they would receive if they espoused their ideas in conventional media. Newspapers, radio, and television are bound by laws against inciting racial antagonism, and

11. The "hidden curriculum" refers to rituals, assemblies and assumptions on which teachers operate which are not part of the officially prescribed syllabuses, but which nevertheless impart further ideological messages.

have come under increasing scrutiny under the Mbeki regime. No such regulation is given to the web. The Internet is also a relatively cheap medium and is not constrained by the intervention of an editor or owner or by considerations related to retaining sponsorship. Largely unregulated and potentially anonymous, it is a powerful tool for the dissemination and distribution of information. With a personal computer and a modem, individuals and groups are able to broadcast their message to a global audience.

Connecting to a wider audience is also practically feasible because members of these groups need not own a personal computer. They can use Internet cafs, universities, or schools. As Martin Hall points out, although Africa has the least developed information infrastructure in the world, South Africa is an exception. In 1998 South Africa had 95% of the continent's Internet hosts and Egypt a further 2%. Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe (one of the fastest growing sectors on the continent) share a further 1% of hosts, while the remaining 2% is shared between nineteen countries, all with less than 500 hosts each (Hall 1998).

However, Hall also notes the Internet's central feature of collapsing both time and distance. Messages can be exchanged and sent with great speed, unimpeded by borders or distances. People can access and send information, and communicate with others (via electronic mail, net-meeting, Internet Phones, Internet radio/broadcasting or Internet Chat Relay) on a global scale in real time and at less cost than long distance telephone (another time/distance collapsing medium).

Hall also points out the contradictions inherent in the Internet. He notes that not only does the Internet offer an opportunity for mass participation, but it can at the same time exclude and be exclusive, because not all South Africans have access or skills to enable them to participate on the Internet. The Internet allows the "Boers" to rewrite their identity while hiding and resurfacing at will[12]. Authors are not obliged to make a full or even truthful disclosure of their identity. Individuals and groups can join and give support to fringe groups without fear of censure or danger. Conventional media, in contrast, have strict boundaries and are regulated by constitutional principles and by public opinion about what constitutes good taste. Furthermore, how

12. The "Boers" can express blatant racial hatred without the same fear of reprisal that would attend expressions of racial hostility in speeches or other kinds of public hate-acts.

they mobilise their potential constituency may determine some aspects of the Boers' identity.

The "Boers" use the Internet to pose as being anti-establishment, as opposed to the conventional media, which they suggest are in thrall to various malign interest groups. The "Boers" give the impression that they are forced to play a cat and mouse game because they are persecuted by sinister groups who have South Africa in their clutches. The "Boers" reject the constituted government as not serving their interests and question its legitimacy. The "Boers" see affirmative action as an example of how the government works against their interests. This continues the older theme of Boers as persecuted and victimised (see above, notably, their characterisation in the South African Anglo-Boer War).

Boer history has long been a point of contention between progressives and conservatives in its presentation of the Boers as independent, concerned paternalists of the South African natives[13]. In response to the end of apartheid, there has been a shift in ideology from confident paternalism, reflecting a people in power, to victimhood and oppression of a people who have been robbed of their independence, homeland and language.

The "Boers'" need to locate themselves in the shifting parameters of historical discourse, as either victor or victim, is a part of an older tradition used to define the identity of the Afrikaners. Dunbar Moodie (1978) studied Calvinism's impact on the development of Afrikaner identity as well as on the political thought of Afrikaner ideologues, suggesting that both these elements change according to prevailing intellectual influences and political experiences. Thus, for example, during the Second World War, the apparently relentless suffering of the Afrikaner was used by right wing extremists as proof that real Afrikaners never compromised despite the consequences. Moodie is concerned with how a story of unrelieved defeat can be used to mobilise political support and to sustain a sense of nationhood that has divine approval.

Mainstream Afrikaner nationalism used the theme of suffering to mobilise Afrikaans speakers against perceived English domination and traitorous politicians in the twentieth century. Suffering was represented as part of a Divine Plan for the Afrikaner nation in which they would ultimately be vindicated by achieving freedom from British control.

13. Their terminology sometimes makes a distinction of origin between whites and others.

This "sacred saga" (Moodie 1978) of Afrikanerdom highlighted moments of conflict: Afrikaners were outnumbered, exploited, threatened and murdered by African groups and agents of the British government, yet they would be able to win in the end. With the establishment of the Republic of South Africa in 1961, this "sacred saga" has resurfaced and the idea of the Boer as victim-hero has been reclaimed.

The Boers in the present — Who are the "Boers"?

"Who are the Boers? The Truth at Last"[14] (1995), to which I now turn, is a thirteen-page booklet written by Arthur Kemp[15] in defence of the "Boers", available on the Internet. Its brief history of the "Boers" establishes a historically based justification for their continued concern for their culture and identity. Kemp portrays a people who are robbed even in defeat, not only of their homeland (South Africa) and their livelihood (via affirmative action, purported to favour non-whites), but also of their culture (transmitted through the Afrikaans language) and their identity. The term Afrikaners no longer denotes a group of whites who speak Afrikaans; it also embraces other peoples, who were classified, under apartheid, as Coloureds, Blacks and Indians who speak Afrikaans. The "Boers" coined a new term to denote the white Afrikaans speakers who were agitating for their own homeland, the *Volkstaat*[16]. In line with this renewed Boer identity, mainstream Afrikaner leaders such as F.W. de Klerk and Constand Viljoen (the leader of the Freedom Front, formerly a extremist group which adopted a more moderate stance for the 1994 elections) are branded as traitors to the "Boer Cause"[17] and their aspirations discarded. In their place, Eugene Terre'blanche (leader of the AWB[18]), and Carel Bosshoff

14. The article can be found on the web-sites of *StormFront* and *Freedom 2000*. *StormFront* is a white supremacist organisation whose domain site is situated in the United States of America. It appeared on the Internet in 1995 and acted as a host-site for *Freedom 2000*. *Freedom 2000* is a South African based web site and has disseminated the ideas and ideology of a particular group of Afrikaners — self-identified Boers.
15. Kemp is the author of many articles and books posted on the web sites of *StormFront* and *Freedom 2000*.
16. Volkstaat is literally People's State, but "Volk" (nation) also has its own important history, with influences from German Romanticism. The use of the word Volk on the web site is used to mean people, hence Boervolk, Farmer people.
17. "Boer Cause" denotes the aspirations of the extreme right wing groups who espouse a particular exclusivist view of their history, intentions and guiding principles.
18. AWB, Afrikaner Weerstand Beweeging, literally means the Afrikaner Resistance Movement, an extreme right wing group formed in 1973.

(the leader of Orania[19]), are favoured by this minority because they hold to the ideals espoused by the "Boers".

The title, "Who are the Boers? The Truth at Last", sets up the premise that whatever has been previously written or said about Boers was either false or misrepresentative. The concept "at last" intimates a hard and long struggle, which has finally been resolved.[20]

> Dedicated to the 27,000 Boer women and children who died in the Great Boer Holocaust of 1900-1902 [p.1].

The above dedication follows the title and immediately sets up the intention to clarify the long history of the Boers purchased at the expense of the life-seeds of the nation, the women and children who died in the "Anglo-Boer War."[21] The number of women and children who died has also been increased by 1000 from conventional figures (see Worden 1994: 29), emphasizing a need to stress the magnitude of that tragedy. The term "Boer Holocaust" not only immediately sets up a comparison to the Holocaust of the Second World War, but also indicates a considerable shift in Boer thinking. Whereas before, Boers tended to lay claim to what was uniquely theirs, now they move to identify with suffering groups elsewhere. The "Boers" now claim a shared experience with the suffering that Jews experienced during the Third Reich. This lends credence to the "Boers" and is especially striking in view of the anti-Semitism characterising much prior Afrikaner nationalism. Instead of denying the Holocaust, as some other right wing groups have done, the "Boers" have fully appropriated its meaning.

> The cries of the dying children have been scattered by time, but the message of sacrifice and struggle which they carried can still be heard, the sound of distant drumming, the march of feet, the legions of the dead marching on. They beckon on those left behind: find the strength to carry on, for we died not in vain (Kemp 1995: 1).

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19. Orania is a place situated in the Upper Karoo and was established by some Afrikaners in 1992, who have since attempted to establish an independent *Volkstaat*. There were an estimated 650 inhabitants in Orania in March 2000. Orania has associations with the old pre-South African War independent Republic of the Orange Free State.
20. Paradoxically it also echoes a popular slogan of the ANC in the mid 1990s, "Free at Last."
21. The "Boers" on the Internet have insisted on retaining the old name because they see it as a link to their past as well as the identity they have now embraced.

This text echoes the dedication above. However, the emphasis on dying children expands the argument that the Boer nation itself was under attack. This argument is supported on the web site which cites figures of civilian casualties of the war. The figure of 27,000 given is further broken down — 23,000 children and 4,000 women. The author emphasises the great loss of children because their deaths meant that the reproductive capacity of the nation was severely curtailed. The writing expresses the "Boers" continued mourning not only the loss of their family, friends and neighbours but more importantly the loss of Volk (people).

The writing has a sense of intimacy and emotion, which has long been a popular strategy among Afrikaner nationalist ideologues (Moodie 1978: 41-46).[22] The continued use of this writing style on the Internet is an attempt to emulate the successful strategy of these ideologues. The "Boers" use of this strategy allows them to tap into the already established associations of patriotism and unity that mourning this loss holds within their community.

From setting emphasis on suffering, martyrdom and victimhood, the text then moves on to detail the ideas held about "culture, race and nationhood":

> This work has in essence to do with the difference between culture, race and nationhood. Too often, either through ignorance, indifference or maliciousness, the distinctions between these three concepts are blurred, obscuring the real drivers of history and preventing an understanding of the true causes of events (Kemp 1995: 1).

Kemp argues that the true "drivers of history" are culture, race and nationhood. He places his study in the realm of dispassionate scientific analysis different from those done in "ignorance, indifference and maliciousness".

> A race can be defined as a group of individuals who share broadly the same common genetic characteristics. In this way, broadly speaking, the peoples of Europe share a common genetic inheritance which can be seen through their physical appearance (Kemp 1995: 1).

22. According to Moodie, one of the consequences of the South African Anglo-Boer War, was the birth of lyrical poetry which was a form of coping with the grief and anguish caused by the devastation produced by the War. As van Wyk Louw put it: "The task of these writers was the spiritual transformation of the war, so that it would become meaningful and not remain a brute material happening for us... so that [we] could again become men, with human values and evaluations" (quoted in Moodie 1978: 41).

Kemp bases his definition of race upon "genetic characteristics" linked to the broader use elsewhere within extreme right wing circles, of blood as explanatory concept for nationalism[23]. Nation in Kemp's worldview is profoundly biological.

> The same applies broadly speaking, to the other main racial groups around the world: the Black (Negroid); the Mongolian (Asian) and so on. This common genetic heritage defines not only the different races' physical appearance, but also (and more controversially), their intelligence and cognitive abilities (Kemp 1995: 1).

Kemp argues that genetic characteristics influence much more than the physical appearance of different races, a racist idea that was common in the 1930s and even before, but which has waned considerably since. Saul Dubow, evaluating the impact of this concept on racist ideologies in South Africa in the earlier part of the twentieth century, points to the then new techniques of mental testing and to the debates about how educable Africans really were. He discusses apartheid ideologues' unsuccessful search for scientific proof of black intellectual inferiority. Even Hendrik Verwoerd (an academic who became the most notorious of apartheid's prime ministers in 1958)[24] came to think in the 1930s that there was "no demonstrable differences in the intelligence of blacks and whites" (Dubow 1995: 231). Ideas about genetic intelligence have ceased to have much importance in conventional academic circles, but Kemp, assuming the tone of an academic analyst, argues that it is possible to determine "intelligence and cognitive abilities" by genetic heritage.

> Nationhood can be defined as the feeling of unity experienced by a group of individuals, and not necessarily racially defined. It is possible for a collection of individuals from different races to claim a common nationhood, depending on how that nation defines itself (Kemp 1995).

Benedict Anderson (1991) and others have explored how nations are constituted in the minds of their members. While Anderson sees nation as an

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23. The emphasis on "blood", especially "pure blood" has its origin in the Nazis' need to prove the existence of a "pure Aryan race". This idea has been appropriated by extreme right wing groups on the Internet.
24. Hendrik F. Verwoerd is regarded as the "architect" of apartheid. As Minister of Native Affairs in 1953, he saw to the implementation of Bantu Education, which prepared Black pupils for little more than manual labour. He became prime minister in 1958 and was assassinated in Parliament on 6 September 1966 by Dimitri Tsafendas.

act of imagination, Kemp cannot tolerate this potentially inclusive view, making instead a distinction between cultures and races:

> This is likened to the concept of culture: for example, although the peoples of Europe share more or less a common genetic heritage, no one in their right mind will claim that Irish culture is identical to that of, say, Austria. The fact remains that cultures differ, even amongst virtually identical racial groupings. It is this difference in culture which forms the basis of this booklet. It is important to note that culture is transferable. An example: if a German born baby is taken at birth and raised in a Scottish household, that child will, culturally speaking, be a Scotsman first, and then a White person second. Being German will not even rate as a third place (Kemp 1995).

For Kemp, certain races maintain inherent genetic characteristics but the white race is exempt from biological determination, contrary to the notion that racial categories are not natural, but constructed.

> In this way a nation known as Boers has come into existence in South Africa. The Boers are a collection of peoples originating in Europe who have coalesced into a culturally, even ideologically, uniform group which has set them apart from others in Africa — including Whites who have not made the cultural shift (Kemp 1995).

While Kemp believes that the Boers are a cultural and ideologically uniform group, scholars such as Dan O'Meara (1983) have shown that Afrikaans speakers were nothing of the sort and that Afrikaner nationalist ideology was created in an attempt to heal numerous rifts. Even during the height of apartheid, many Afrikaners disagreed with the policies of the Nationalist led government. For example, Beyers Naude, a Dominee (minister) in the Dutch Reform Church questioned the moral correctness of apartheid. Some historians and many ordinary people similarly disagreed with apartheid policies, including conscientious objectors[25]. Many English speaking South Africans did not support the regime. Kemp acknowledges these differences with a dig at "Whites who have not made the cultural shift."

> The Dutch, German, French, Belgian, Danish, English and Irish surnames one sees amongst this group testifies to the transferability of culture — and also to the unique blending process which has given rise to one of the most hardy indigenous peoples of Southern Africa (Kemp 1995).

25. Conscientious objectors were people who objected to universal white conscription into the South African Defence Force, which was increasingly used in the 1980s to police apartheid and to crush its opponents.

Kemp argues as if there is and can be a pure race in South Africa. He assumes that the surnames he mentions are an assurance of unbroken white ancestry. "Coloured", a category established with the Population Registration Act (1950), used to denote people of mixed white, black, Indian and Malay descent (to mention a few), proved very difficult for bureaucrats to distinguish for the purposes of implementing apartheid legislation, which suggests how very "mixed" the South African population had become by the middle of the twentieth century (Posel 2000).

> There is a conception held by the outside world — and indeed by many within South Africa — that all the White inhabitants of South Africa are a uniform group — that they are all united and until very recently, all wished to dominate other peoples under the banner of Apartheid. This is a misconception, a factual inaccuracy, perpetuated by those who had either absolute political power in South Africa as their aim, or who wished to see the only indigenous White people of Southern Africa, the Boers, be taken up and destroyed in a large whole (Kemp 1995).

Kemp disassociates the Boers from any responsibility for the colonial past and thus disavows their part in the former apartheid regime.

> According to the Oxford Dictionary, "indigenous" is an adjective meaning "native, belonging naturally to the soil", (from the Latin indigena). An indigenous people is therefore a people occupying a territory whose roots can be shown to have come from that particular territory, and not some other part of the globe. This is a crucial definition to bear in mind when the Whites of South Africa are analysed. Although the outside world has now for many years wrongly regarded the Whites of South Africa as a single ethnic group, there are in fact three distinct ethnic groupings within the White population:
> (i) the British South Africans,
> (ii) the Afrikaners, and
> (iii) the Boers.
> The distinction between these three ethnic groupings, and particularly the last two (the "Afrikaners" and the "Boers") is of crucial importance in determining the Boers rights as an indigenous people (Kemp 1995: 2-3).

The word "indigenous" links to the term Boer, because both have ties to the land. The Boers' use of words is striking in that their connotations of barbarism and tribalism were hitherto negative. The Boars are now making a fundamentally different argument from their earlier stance, which might be summarised as: we are the harbingers of civilisation, peace etc., to a new one in which they regard themselves as indigenous denoted by their ethnic identity,

of "Boer". They have rejected the idea of Afrikaner as nation and moved away from the divine shaping and theology of nationhood that Moodie (1983) located in the 1970s. A counter to the nation building ideology, "Boers" still use the language of betrayal and victimisation, which now justifies ethnic separatism and their African roots. They are the "Boers" — of the land, related to the land. Though the term and language Afrikaans refers to many peoples, there are no black Boers.

The "Boers" have appropriated the language of multiculturalism and of struggle, usually used to denote the movement against apartheid. They have disavowed apartheid but also identified with other victims of genocide and terror. They see the South African War as giving them the same moral standing as is granted to victims of both the Holocaust and apartheid. The appeal to logic, the use of statistics, and scientific presentation through an electronic medium make their ideology appear convincing. The Internet's unregulated and easily accessible form raises dangerous possibilities when a group like this is able to reinvent their whole history without any verification.

Finally, the move of the "Boers" to reshape their identity and history must be seen against the background of affirmative action and integrated education. The threats that the "Boers" see to their livelihood, independence and perhaps even existence cannot be easily dismissed. The enormous changes that have occurred in South Africa over the last few years, such as the transition from apartheid to a multi-party democracy, as well as the uncertainty of economic prospects and high unemployment, truly threaten the privilege of whites. South Africa is a relatively new democracy, brought about by great change. The divisions of the past cannot be swept aside so easily.

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