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Title: The Representation of White Working Class Women in the
Construction of a Reactionary Populist Movement: 'Purified'
Afrikaner Nationalist Agitation for Legislation against 'Mixed'
Marriages 1934-1939.

by: Jonathan Hyslop

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The Representation of White Working Class Women in the Construction of a Reactionary Populist Movement: 'Purified' Afrikaner Nationalist Agitation for Legislation against 'Mixed' Marriages, 1934-1939.

Jonathan Hyslop

In May 1938, the largely white South African electorate went to the polls. But the question which had preoccupied participants in the preceding weeks of the election was not, as one might imagine, the segregationist policies of General Hertzog's government or the economy's gradual emergence from the depths of the Great Depression. Rather, debate and agitation focused on an image of white womanhood. That image was contained in a poster distributed by the 'Purified' National Party (Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party) (GNP) of Daniel Francois Malan, and was a pictorial representation of the GNP's contention that Hertzog, through his 'Fusion' alliance with pro-British forces of General Jan Smuts to form the United Party (UP), had sold out Afrikaner political interests, in particular by adopting insufficiently aggressive racial policies.

In the poster (Burger, 8.5.38.), a young woman is placed at the centre of a text: "The Hope of South Africa speaks to You and says 'Vote for the National Party and Protect my People (Volk) and my Posterity (Nageslag)'...". The invocation of posterity signifies the GNP's view of women as the continuators of racial 'purity'. For in the lower part of the poster, the 'dangers' against which she has to be 'protected' are identified. In a sketch on the left-hand side of the poster, a young white woman, wearing a simple cotton dress characteristic of working class Afrikaner women of the period, is shown sitting outside a slum house (cf. the photographs in Brink 1986:vi,xxi-xxv). Two neglected-looking children, one black and one white, are playing in the door-way. Slouching against the wall is a black man wearing a tuxedo. He is smoking a cigarette through a long cigarette holder. The intended import of this somewhat baffling image is conveyed through the words below it. The 'Hope of South Africa' is to be protected against "Mixed Marriages which the United Government Will Not Prohibit By Law". The message was that the unwillingness of the UP to legislate against 'mixed' marriages was allowing feckless black males to marry and exploit white women.

The other dangers against which the GNP proposed to defend Afrikanerdom are portrayed in the lower right hand portion of the poster. Four men stand arm-in-arm, clad in suits of varying degrees of elegance. They are identified by labels on their trouser legs: "Capitalist, Communist, Imperialist, Jew". The caption tells the reader that they represent the peril of "Fusion with Foreign Elements : The Price of the United Party's Creed of Love and Peace". In this Hitlerian paranoid fantasy, the Afrikaner volk is warned of an unholy alliance against it of external forces. As in Nazi propaganda, the anti-semitic element

is a crucial one, for it provides GNP leaders with a basis for the inherently implausible idea of a Capitalist-Communist alliance, by suggesting that both groups are arms of a Jewish Conspiracy. The term 'fusion' (samesmelting) is a play on the name given to the Hertzog-Smuts alliance; it is not merely a fusion between two political parties, but a fusion of renegade Afrikaners with the enemies of the volk.

It was not the anti-semitism of the third picture, but rather the portrayal of mixed marriages in the second that became the central issue of the election campaign. The contest became one waged between the GNP and the UP on the terrain of which party was most opposed to mixed marriage, and which policy was best equipped to prevent it. The GNP claimed that only legislation against 'mixed' marriages could ensure the maintenance of 'racial' boundaries. The UP on the other hand made great political capital of the idea that the National Party had insulted white women by the mere suggestion that they would marry black men. Their campaign was based on the assertion that white women did not need legislation to protect them against the wiles of black seducers. As the campaign boiled over with racist invective, the male politicians of each side competed as the champions of white women against the supposed black threat. This incident consolidated white political opinion against mixed marriages. It was no accident that the very first significant piece of apartheid legislation enhanced by the Malan Nationalist Party on coming to power in 1948 was an act of the subsequent year prohibiting 'mixed' marriages.

Faced with such evidence of the racial obsession of white South African politics in the pre-apartheid era, it is extremely tempting to come to the same conclusions as South Africa's most outstanding literary figure, J.M. Coetzee. In a recent article Coetzee (1991) examines the thought of the Afrikaner nationalist ideologist, Geoff Cronje, who played a prominent role in articulating Malanite racial doctrine on sex, marriage and 'miscegenation' in the years leading up to the NP's 1948 election victory. Coetzee portrays the rise of apartheid as a phenomenon of collective insanity. For Coetzee, the contemporary historians of apartheid fail because they does not recognise that apartheid is a form of collective madness. The white electorate of the 1940's was "for a time crazy or at least crazed" (30). Coetzee argues that historians, by seeking to show the 'deeper' interests such as those of ethnic mobilization or class lie beneath the overt ideology of apartheid, fail to deal with the irrational in politics. He goes further, to attack the very idea of trying to explain the origins of this collective racial madness; all that is possible is a "tracking, a following in the footsteps of the movement in which ideas are displaced - reading, that is to say, rather than explanations" (27). Coetzee finds the work of contemporary historians deficient in that it tends to posit a notion of a "thinking, devising subject animated by self-interest". Leaders are, he charges, seen as consciously writing ideologies in order to manipulate supporters, while the ordinary person becomes "the object on whom this text is written" (27). Coetzee suggests that instead leaders were just as caught up in

the racial madness of apartheid: "Legislators no less than the electorate were caught in the phantasmic transaction" (28). He questions whether there was anyone involved "who was neither deceived nor self-deceived nor crazy ..." (30).

Coetzee undoubtedly identifies a significant limitation of the work of contemporary South African historians. There is certainly a tendency to move too rapidly from economic and political interests to the identification of cultural phenomenon as their direct expression. The psychological level of connection between structural realities and perception in South Africa would repay closer scrutiny. But Coetzee's article commits the classic error of psycho-history, conflating a useful study of the inner world of an individual with the related but different question of how we are to explain collective behaviour. As T.G. Ashplant (1988) points out in a survey of the field, successful examples of psycho-history include a careful delineation of the groups involved and their interaction and an awareness of the complex sets of mediations between the level of the unconscious and the level of public action. This understanding of social groups and mediations is precisely what is lacking in Coetzee's article; he moves directly from Geoff Cronje's unconscious to 'the mind of Apartheid'. Moreover, even when we move into the realm of the irrational, this does not as Coetzee implies, exhaust the possibilities of explanation. Coetzee gives a classically Freudian account of the obsessive neurosis underlying racism (18-19). What is Freud's thought if not a rational attempt to explain the irrational? To enter into psychoanalytic discussion is not to abandon the usefulness of explanation. There are ways in which psycho-history can usefully take us beyond the postmodern fascination with 'surfaces'.

More importantly from the perspective of this paper, Coetzee abandons the terrain of social explanation with altogether too much eagerness: we cannot explain everything about apartheid at but we can explain much more than Coetzee allows, especially through investigating the issues of gender. A central problem is that, like many of the historians he criticizes, Coetzee fails to develop an analysis of gender relations in the rise of Afrikaner nationalism. Explanation is indeed insufficient if it confines itself to explaining how Afrikaner nationalism organised the consolidation of the leadership of emergent bourgeois over subordinate classes and of white over black. For central to the dynamics of this social and political movement was the organisation of a new form of the domination of Afrikaner men over Afrikaner women. A great deal of what appears as 'irrational' in the behaviour of male Afrikaner political leaders is in fact quite explicable if examined from the perspective of gender relations. In this paper, I will argue that the social and economic upheavals of the 1920s and 1930s gave rise to an Afrikaner female proletariat whose new-found independence threatened the patriarchal relations of white society.

Many of the features of social relations in the period can be understood as an attempt to exert male control over women in this new period. And this is particularly the case in explaining the

interaction of race and gender. The Nationalist's apparent hysteria about "mixed marriages" in fact performed an important role in re-establishing gender hierarchy. By portraying white women as sexually threatened by black men, Afrikaner males claimed the role of protectors of women, thereby reasserting their patriarchal control. None of this is of course to suggest that there is not a range of 'deeper' psychological anxieties amongst Afrikaner men which such claims led in to. But it is to suggest that there was also a level of gender interests at play which makes much political behaviour of the period explicable.

At a political level, Coetzee also plays down, quite excessively, the element of conscious self-interest. As we shall see, the Malanites made great capital, after they became the official opposition in 1934, of the failure of the government to introduce legislation against mixed marriages. Yet the Malanites had been part of the governing party during the entire previous decade and had never seriously attempted to bring about such legislation. Are we then to conclude that the Purified Nationalists were relatively sane before 1934, but suddenly became 'crazy' on splitting with Hertzog? A more plausible explanation is that the GNP knew that agitation around 'mixed marriages' could perform certain important tasks for them. Firstly, the GNP was attempting to mobilize 'poor whites' behind them. In doing so they faced a paradox. Their racial ideology proclaimed that whites had an instinctive aversion to racial 'mixing' of any kind. Yet at the same time, it was apparent that in the urban slums whites were frequently not demonstrating this 'aversion', socially or sexually. By thumping away at the 'need' for mixed marriage legislation, the Malanites were able to strengthen poor white identification with a racially-defined identity, thus facilitating their task of Afrikaner ethnic mobilisation. Secondly, the GNP knew that the M.P.s on Hertzog's side of parliament were divided for and against mixed marriage legislation. The issue was that one on which the governing party could potentially be split. The Malanites lost no opportunity to foment these divisions.

At economic level too, Coetzee does under-rate the element of conscious self-interest in the racial politics of the era. While he is certainly correct that numerous historians have fallen into a crude economism in viewing Afrikaner nationalism, the level of expedient financial interest was far from absent. As we shall see, the apparently irrational agitation for a mixed marriage act was intimately linked with an agitation against the strong position of the Indian community in the retail trade in the Transvaal. Accusations that Indian shopkeepers were sexually exploiting white female employees and forcing them into marriage were used by Afrikaner nationalist agitators as part of a quite conscious attempt to introduce discriminatory measures against Indians which would open up economic space for Afrikaner entrepreneurs.

Coetzee's inadequate recognition of these 'interest' dimensions of apartheid is perhaps rooted in his particularly literary form of inquiry. His article examines the racist texts produced by

Cronje as exemplifying the madness of apartheid. And indeed, viewed on its own, the racist hysteria of these texts seems quite inexplicable, and does probably tell more about the peculiarities of Cronje's psyche than anything else. Yet to focus on these books in themselves is misleading. It tends to give the impression that the elaboration of racial ideology was a self-sufficient process; and that the literary transmission of racial ideas was crucial. But as Christopher Hill (1977:76-77) wisely warns, "Historians, themselves the products of a literary culture, relying so much on the written or printed evidence, are always likely to under-estimate the verbal transmission of ideas". The ideas expressed by Cronje's writings, which were not published until the 1940s, had in fact emerged and crystallized in the election meetings and political congresses of the 1930s. They came not only from the brain of a demented ideologue, but rather out of political battles in which political and economic interests impinged on the apparently irrational to a greater extent than Coetzee is willing to concede (Furlong 1991:225-230).

A further difficulty with Coetzee's approach is the question of how far his use of 'madness' as an account of apartheid is supposed to extend. Is he claiming that it was a purely South African phenomenon? In the world of the 1930s the international hegemony of white racism was only slowly eroding. When the De Villiers commission on mixed marriages reported in 1939, it gleefully attached to its report an appendix of nine pages dealing with restrictions on 'miscegenation' in some 30 U.S. states. In almost all the states involved the restrictions on 'mixed marriages' were more severe than those prevailing in South Africa. (The legislation in the U.S. was in force in both Southern and Western states, in the former case actuated by anti-black racism and in the latter by anti-Asian racism). Are we then to conclude that the whole 'white' world was mad until the 1940s? Possibly, but then such an argument cannot be based on an argument concerning the exceptional mental state of Afrikaners.

'Mixed' Marriage: The Background

The centrality which the mixed marriage issue assumed in 1930s political discourse does seem very odd indeed if one considers the tiny number of marriages which were considered as falling into this category. The De Villiers commissions own statistics for 1930-37 showed that the total number of marriages involving one non-black partner fluctuated between a high of 101 in 1937 and a low of 72 in 1934 (De Villiers 1939:26). The vast majority of these marriages were between white men and women regarded as 'coloured' (Hansard, 22.1.37:529). What is particularly striking, given the hysteria that came to surround the marriage of white women to 'Indians' and 'Africans', such marriages hardly occurred during the period in question. The De Villiers commission found nationally that there were three cases of marriage between white women and African men in the period 1929-1931, and that no examples of such marriages could be found in the five years thereafter. As for marriages between white women

and Indian men, these ranged, in the 1930-7 period, between a high of 8 in 1937 and a low of 1 in 1935 (De Villiers 1939:25).

Remarkably, before 1948, neither the Union of South Africa nor any of its predecessor states had imposed legal sanctions against mixed marriage. The pre-Boer War Transvaal republic (and thus, subsequently, Transvaal province) had provided racially separate legal structures for white and black marriages, making it impossible for marriages which were viewed as inter-racial to be solemnized in that part of the country. But the Transvaal did recognise the validity of inter-racial marriages contracted in the other three provinces which placed no legal obstruction on them (Findlay 1936:5; Du Toit 1982:65).

The 1927/28 Immorality Act did reflect a rising official concern with inter-racial sexual relationships, but it was not part of the sort of frantic populist agitation that surrounded the 'mixed marriage' issue in the 1930s. This odious piece of legislation essentially rationalised existing provincial measures preventing African men from having sex with white women. These prohibitions were contained in broader pieces of legislation aimed at regulating prostitution (Du Toit, p.64). The Immorality Act consolidated these existing regulations and introduced a new provision making sex between white men and African women illegal. The Act did not, however, outlaw sex between, whites, coloureds and Indians (Du Toit 1982:65). Nor did it in any way affect the legality of marriages between whites and Africans. There was a sharp rise in marriages between whites and Africans in 1927 and 1928 as cohabiting couples sought to legalise their relationships (De Villiers 1939:27).

American Comparisons

In order to understand the relationship between the anti-'mixed' marriage agitation and Afrikaner Nationalist political mobilization, it is useful to draw a comparison between developments in the South Africa of the 1930s, and the Southern U.S. in the era between, approximately, 1890 and the First World War. It is well known that in the U.S., the turn of the century brought with it an upsurge of racist political mobilization, a dramatic rise in the number of incidents of lynching of blacks by whites, and the advent of Jim Crow legislation, laws formally segregating areas of Southern life where racial separation had previously taken place by custom, and had been less systematic. As C. Vann Woodward (1988) convincingly argues in a recent defence of his classic work on Jim Crow (Woodward 1957), this era of more formal racial segregation was a phenomenon connected with urbanization. In the rural past, paternalistic forms of racial control had been exercised by white agriculturalist patriarchs over rural blacks. Formal segregation was not a major part of this social order, firstly because it would have cut across the white paternalist's ideological claim to be a 'father' to his black family, and secondly because it was simply impractical in the close physical and social proximity in which black and white lived in pre-industrial agricultural society. However, with the

rise of the 'New South', industrialization and urbanization shook both poor white and poor black loose from the land, and increasingly threw them into contact in the new urban centres. With the failure of the somewhat half-hearted attempts during the 1890s, of white populists to build solidarity between poor farmers of both races, racist populism increasingly won support amongst the white poor. Racist demagogues came to the fore, and the white plantocracy more and more abandoned their paternalist control of black voters, to embrace the segregationist cause and the disenfranchisement of blacks.

However, feminist historians of the American South have recently added a gender dimension to our understanding of this period, which has important implications for our appreciation of the significance of the 'mixed marriage' issue in South Africa. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall (1979: 129-157) has demonstrated that the hysteria of Southern white males in defence of the venerable institution of lynching was in fact bound up centrally with defence of their power as men. The standard defence of lynching offered by Southern men was that it was necessary in order to protect Southern women against the threat of rape. In fact studies of lynching have shown that it was only in a minority of cases that the lynch victim was even accused of sexual offences. But this did not mean that the 'rape' issue was only an excuse for racial repression. Certainly, lynching served to keep Southern blacks in a state of terror. But the claim of white men to be protectors of Southern 'ladies' also reinforced their claims to control of white women in a period of dramatic social change.

This type of analysis has been developed further by Nancy MacLean (1991) in her brilliant interpretation of the 1913-1915 Leo Frank case, in which a Jewish factory manager in Atlanta, Georgia was falsely accused of the murder of a teenage factory worker, Mary Phagan. For Southern populists, Frank, as a northern Jew, became a symbol of the social forces threatening to undermine the Southern way of life, and especially its system of racial domination. The case caused a huge outpouring of reactionary and anti-semitic popular agitation. Frank was found guilty, but his sentence was commuted by the state governor. A mob then broke into the prison where Frank was being held and summarily lynched him.

MacLean (1991:920) usefully designates the form of political mobilization involved in the Atlanta case as "reactionary populism" in which populist anti-elitism coexists with and gains support for a political agenda aimed at maintaining particular social hierarchies. Changing gender and generational relations, MacLean argues, contributed to the appeal of this reactionary populism, and so sexual conservatism should be seen, in interaction with class grievances and racial antipathies, as one of its defining elements. In the process of industrialization, as young white women were drawn into industrial labour in the cities, their new-found independence challenged the domestic authority of their parents, "a daughter going out to work had opportunities to assert her autonomy and to make choices about

her relations with men that would have been hard for her grandmother to imagine" (MacLean 1991:955). The fact that the working woman was now outside the home was a standing threat to the generational authority of parents and the patriarchal authority of fathers and husbands. The power of reactionary populism was that it tapped the emotional fears of Southern males about their declining authority over women and linked these anxieties to their concern about the threat to racial control over blacks posed by urbanization. The racist political mobilization of the period was so appealing to Southern white men because their claim to 'protect' Southern white women against blacks shored up their position in the hierarchy of gender just as centrally as it did their position in the hierarchy of race. (For a fascinating and unexpected South African connection with the Frank affair see Couzens (1992:361-410)).

The implications of Hall and MacLean's work for the South African case are fascinating. Just as in the America of the turn of the century, the 1920s and 1930s in South Africa saw large numbers of young white women drawn into industrial labour. As in the South, this occurred at a period in which urbanization and industrialization were eroding the paternalistic forms of racial domination which had earlier been predominant in an agriculturally-based social order. For Afrikaner Nationalist leaders, the advocacy of the need to outlaw mixed marriages fulfilled a similar purpose to that which the rape scares and panics over the position of white factory girls fulfilled for right-wing Southern demagogues. In both cases the psychological threat experience by white men to their authority within their homes was linked to a campaign for racial control, giving the latter an added psychological charge. But the response of white men to these campaigns were not, as Coetzee's analysis would suggest, solely a manifestations of the irrational. White men had very definite interests in maintaining their social, political and economic control over white women.

The Proletarianization of Afrikaner Women

During the 1920s and 1930s, the declining hold of poorer Afrikaner farmers, small holders and tenants on the land, created a strong trend toward urbanization. In this period secondary industry was growing in South Africa, and this offered the possibility of employment for young Afrikaners moving off the land. The food, textile, printing and chemical industries, especially on the Rand, offered employment to those leaving impoverished and drought stricken rural areas. But this process had a particular gender and racial dynamic. In 1924 48% of the manufacturing workforce in Johannesburg were white women, and this figure had risen by 1935 to an astonishing 73% (Parnell, 1988a, 1988b, 1993).

Why did white female labour become so predominant in manufacturing? Beyond the obvious point that gender relations permitted women to be employed at lower pay rates than men, an important aspect was that rural Afrikaner women were often going

to the cities and engaging in wage labour a whole generation before the male members of their families (Van Niekerk 1988:58). While Afrikaner women typically left school at 16 or younger, their average age of marriage was around 25 (Van Niekerk 1988:68-70). At the same time, the growth of a market economy meant that household goods which had previously been produced by rural women, such as candle, clothes soap and food were increasingly bought in stores. Given that young women were thus available to work and their economic role in the household was becoming less central, it was increasingly an attractive option for impoverished rural Afrikaner parents to encourage their daughters to take waged work in order to supplement the family income (Van Niekerk 1988:67). A contributing cultural element in Afrikaner women's search for waged work was that Afrikaner marriage practices were organised around the dowry: any contribution which young women could make toward the family finances could also help to make them more marriageable (Van Niekerk 1988:67). Ideological factors also contributed to employers preferences for female labour: The industries which employed women often saw them as 'suitable' for factory work (Walker 1979:56), praising their 'inborn' ability and 'nimble fingers' (Brink 1986:64). The question of why employers opted for white rather than black female labour is a complex one. One important explanation is that during most of the 1920s and 1930s, the inland industrial cities were largely white cities. In 1921 there were 153,000 whites in Johannesburg and 136,000 blacks and even by 1936 the number of blacks in the city was only marginally greater than that of whites (Brink 1986:191). But the consequence of an economic system based on the migrant labour of black men, was that the numbers of white women in the cities far exceeded the number of black women. While black men poured into the cities, the migrant labour system meant that the women and children in their families often remained in the rural areas. In 1928, there were 112,000 white women on the Rand, but only 29,000 African women (Brink 1986:191). Although the proportion of African women in urban areas increased sharply between the wars, they still remained much fewer than white women; in 1936, there were 196,000 white women on the Rand as against 107,000 African women (Brink 1986:191). While in coastal cities, especially Cape Town, employers in manufacturing made use of the labour of 'coloured' (supposedly 'mixed' race) women, the employment of women from this community was a limited possibility on the Rand, because of its small size (there were only 15,000 women designated as coloured on the Rand in 1936) (Brink 1986:59,191). An added attraction for manufacturers of using white labour was that in the 1920s and 1930s, government contracts were preferentially awarded to factories employing white labour (Brink 1986:63-64).

A situation where young women were playing a growing economic role outside the home was inherently threatening to the kind of patriarchal authority which Afrikaner men had previously exercised. But the strains involved in this process were undoubtedly magnified by the particular economic impact of the Great Depression on gender patterns of employment. As the depression devastated the economy, urban white male unemployment soared as Afrikaner families were forced off the land, and the

mines carried out retrenchment. In Johannesburg, the numbers of white males unemployed rose from 17,000 in 1926 to 72,000 in 1933 (Brink 1986:45). But at the same time, the urban industries which employed women workers expanded their operations, even in the worst periods of economic disaster. While male employment in industry declined between 1927/8 and 1932/33, the number of women employees rose from 12,000 to 17,000 (Brink 1986:56). For example in the Germiston industrial area, Germiston, employment of white women grew from 429 in 1930 to 843 in 1933, while employment of black and male labour was fairly stagnant (Brink, 1986:191). This situation rapidly changed social relations inside Afrikaner families. The 1932 report of the Department of Labour noted that male unemployment was encouraging women "to remain in or return to the factory after marriage and in a large percentage of industrial families the women are the principal wage earners" (Brink 1986:56). Amongst women garment workers on the Rand it was common to find that they were supporting husbands or fathers who could not find work or were disabled through illness (Brink 1986:79-82,91-5).

This created an economic situation which cut across earlier patterns of gender relations. Afrikaner working women on the Rand were predominantly from the countryside and small towns of the Transvaal, where family relations were of a highly patriarchal kind. Yet in the city of the 1930s, they were predominantly involved in economic activity outside the home. (Brink 1986:16-17,25).

A crucial part of the argument of this paper is that this situation represented a crisis in gender relations. Daughters who had left their families in rural areas were not only free of parental control but were also playing a major role in supporting their families. Women who were part of urban households were increasingly taking the role of breadwinner. This generated challenges by young women to the authority of fathers and husbands. Brink shows that parents felt increasingly defied by their daughters. Anxiety over the sexual conduct of young women was widespread in families. Reluctance to allow young women to the city was only overcome by economic necessity (Brink 1986:147-151; Van Niekerk 1988:73). Domestic violence emerged as a major problem as existing patterns of gender relations crumbled (Brink 1986:84-5). It was this crisis in gender relations within the Afrikaner family which fuelled the appeal to racist sentiment of the Malan Nationalists in the 'mixed marriage' campaign. And to add to the crisis, South Africa had only just incorporated white women into the polity. In 1930 it extended the vote to women (Walker 1979:84). This implied that the various political formations would have to find ways to incorporate women into their political discourses.

By the 1930s, the perception that white working class women were socially and sexually out of control was widely being expressed by the middle classes. Elsabe Brink has shown that although Johannesburg Rand Daily Mail gave positive coverage to a 1928 strike by women garment workers, the strikes of 1931 and 1932 were met with extreme hostility by respectable opinion; the

strikers were commonly characterized as "factory girls" who "slept with the police" and who did not "know how to behave decently" (Brink 1986:165-167). Within the factories, Brink (1986:162) points out, "in a relationship with men not controlled or overseen by kin or family relations, these women were regarded as being unprotected and not quite respectable". In the mind of male officialdom, white women factory workers were viewed as indistinguishable from prostitutes. Following a tour of inspection of local (multi-racial) brothels in November 1938, Johannesburg's mayor, J.J. Page, commented that "one of the main causes for the state of affairs was the poor wages of the factory girl. We must raise her wages to the level where she will be able to afford harmless pleasures" (Freed 1949:102-4).

Notions of female sexual degradation were closely tied to the major housing problems affecting the white working class in South African cities from the interwar years. As Susan Parnell (1988a, 1988b, 1993) has shown, by the 1930s, a deep housing crisis had emerged amongst the white working class. In Johannesburg and other industrial areas, white working class people lived in grim slum yards and crowded boarding houses. What was of particular concern to middle class opinion in this situation was that the housing in many of these slum areas was not racially segregated. Housing reform thus became a widely supported objective in white politics. It centred on the idea of saving the white working class from the twin perils of racial mixing and disintegration of traditional family structures. They were to be 'rehabilitated' into the racial boundaries and forms of family life which the middle classes held dear. During the 1930s, public housing schemes were initiated which sought not only to rescue the white working class from poverty, but also to place them in a racially segregated environment. An important limitation of these schemes, was, however, that the new houses were family accommodation only. The large number of single women factory workers who had no relatives in the towns were thus no better off for the existence of new public housing. Their situation was, however taken up by Afrikaner cultural organisations, especially the Dutch Reformed Church and the Women's Federation, which set about constructing single women's hostels. These hostels were conceived by those that ran them as providing simultaneously for the moral regulation of women's sexual behaviour and their inculcation with 'correct' white racial and Afrikaner ethnic identification. Reporting to the annual conference of the Women's Federation, the committee of the Harmonie Hostel warned that bad housing could lead young women "to become spiritually lost in the city and become a burden and curse to the volk instead of a blessing"; while failure by Afrikaner organisations to help them could lead to their "being lost to the volk and the church" (Brink 1986:155). As George L. Mosse (1985:32) puts it for the case of 19th and early 20th century Europe, "the guardians of morality felt threatened by the city, the apparent center of an artificial and restless age", which they saw as a site of deracination, alienation and "unbridled sexual passion".

Malan : 'Saving' White Women for Afrikanerdom

The emergence of the GNP in the 1930s can be understood as analogous to the reactionary populism of the turn of the century American South. The Hertzogites, like the restored plantocracy of the post-Reconstruction South, were content to exercise the sway of a comfortable, rurally based elite over a largely deferential white electorate. Like the Radical racist leaders of the Jim Crow period, the Malanites mounted a reactionary populist challenge to this elite, mobilizing the white poor in a new and activist style of politics, in order to impose a more systematic form of racial domination. In this task, the threats experienced by Afrikaner men to their patriarchal authority were grist to the political mill of the South African racial populists, just as they had been for their American counterparts. Reading Woodward's (1963) magnificent biography of the Georgia populist, Tom Watson, one feels that D.F. Malan and his familiars would have been very much at home with Watson's cynical exploitation of sexual anxieties to achieve strong racial mobilization.

Afrikaner nationalism is often seen as shifting to racial populist agitation with the 1929 general election in which Hertzog's followers focused on the alleged dangers to white control posed by Smuts policies (e.g. Dubouw 1989:16-17). But this view involves a significant blurring of the distinction between Malan and Hertzog's styles of politics. It is perfectly true that Hertzog's platform performances involved a big dose of knockabout racism (Star, 15.5.29). However, his attack on Smuts in 1929 was primarily aimed at Smuts' advocacy of closer political links between South Africa and British colonial Africa. The Hertzogite view was that this would lead to whites becoming a tiny minority within a vast Pan-African state and that this would compromise their position (Kruger 1961:148-149). There was no real fear on Hertzog's part of the South African state not being able to retain racial control. But Hertzog pursued an elitist electoral style. Having whipped up the electorate's racist sentiments, he was quite content to take their votes and then let them go back to daily life. Hertzog's approach to segregation in urban life was far less interventionist than that of the GNP: as Du Toit (1982:61) points out, segregation as practised in South Africa in the Hertzog era "was very much the prevailing norm, but it was maintained largely by custom and tradition".

The rise of Malan nationalism from 1934 represents a populist departure from the relatively elitist style of Hertzog. Malan could only succeed in taking power by organising a revolt by the Afrikaner masses against the leadership of rich farmers and notables typified by Hertzog. In order to do this he had to mobilize the burgeoning Afrikaner working class and urban petty-bourgeoisie. But this aim presented several problems. Afrikaans speaking poor whites in the urban areas would by no means automatically identify as Afrikaners. There were several competitors, besides the UP, for working class support. The Labour Party, although white supremacist, organised white workers

around a distinctively class orientated and non-Afrikaner identity. As O'Meara (1983:78-95) has argued, the Labourites' hold over white unions and white working class electoral politics on the Rand was a serious obstacle to the GNP, and was only eventually broken in the 1940s. The Garment Workers Union (GWU) organised white working class women in a way which, as Brink (1986:145) has demonstrated, enabled them to develop a collective identity based on dignity, and self-respect. The GWU developed during the 1930s as an organisation with a predominantly female leadership (Brink 1986:124-5). The union thus offered a very different form of identity to Afrikaner working women than did the GNP. It was by no means given that white women workers would automatically align with Afrikaner nationalism. There was widespread concern in Afrikaner leadership circles over the lack of such identification: an editorial in Die Vaderland (17.11.36, cited in Brink 1986:156) opined that the white workers were "surrounded by factors which can estrange them and let them come loose from the ethnic group from which they stem".

Malanite rhetoric after 1934 often appears self-contradictory because of the way in which it veers between assertions of the need to prevent the white working class from engaging in sexual activity with blacks and on the other hand, its assertion that whites had a natural or instinctual aversion to racial 'mixing'. But in terms of the political tasks that Malan was pursuing, this apparently incoherent ideology made perfect sense. On the one hand the reality was that many whites in urban areas were often living in mixed slums, where racial boundaries were not very rigid (Parnell 1988a:586; 1988b:115). On the other, the slum dwellers of these areas would only rally to the Nationalists if they could be mobilized on a racial basis. And the more that racial sentiment could be presented to them as both natural and as involving potential social advantages, the more support Malan could rally.

Malan was highly aware that white working class allegiance to an Afrikaner nationalism had to be created, rather than assumed to exist. Addressing a 1934 congress on the poor whites he expressed the fear that the spiritual isolation of the poor white lay in being "no more a member of the volk, and the volk is no longer part of them". The poor white had to be regarded as "a human being and a racial comrade (volksgenoot)". [He] had to be brought "once again to the stream of our volk life from which he had been lost" (Burger, 5.10.34, cited by Scholtz 1984:23). The Malanite leaders took great pains to impress on their audiences that the decline of rectitude in female behaviour was linked to a dwindling race-consciousness on the part of the white working class. In an attack on the GWU, P.J. Kock, leader of the pro-GNP rail union, Spoorbond, talked of how the GWU's activities led to a situation when "daughters of the Free State went to Johannesburg to dance with kaffers" (Brink 1986:186). The Nationalists were also keen to link the question of mixed marriages to the inadequate provision for white working class housing and the 'need' for residential segregation. The GNP's Transvaal leader, J.G. Strydom told the party's 1936 provincial congress that "The National Party had the task of keeping the

white race white. It demands that a stop should be put to mixed marriages and that the races must live separately ..." (Nasionale Party, 1936).

The party also showed an awareness that if it was to appeal successfully to women workers, it would have to take very specific measures. In 1937, the GNP Transvaal leadership decided that, all urban areas were to elect two women delegates to the executive (Furlong 1991:102). The new female electorate was also blandished with an increasing share of political symbolism. References to Voortrekker women were very prominent in the Malanite dominated Voortrekker centenary in 1938: One of the wagons in the commemoration trek was christened "Wife and Mother" (Brink, 1990:284). The Malanites pursued their propaganda on mixed marriages through a wide range of cultural organisations, especially those relating to women and youth. (De Villiers Commission 1936:17-18; Vaderland, 21.6.35; Burger, 28.6.37; Furlong 1991:107-108).

Anti-Indian Agitation and Mixed Marriages

Contrary to the implications of Coetzee's article, economic interests of the crassest sort do help us to understand a major strand of the mixed marriage agitation. But at the same time, the absence of an adequate account of gender relations in his article deprives us of another means of investigating the phenomenon. A major strand in the Malanite's support for mixed marriage legislation was their attack on the Indian shop keepers of the Transvaal, who were collectively accused of seducing Afrikaner women. A standard narrative was evolved and propagated by Malanite politicians which held that Indian shopkeepers were hiring Afrikaner women as shop assistants, then seducing them with the intention of trapping them into marriage, and thus gaining ownership of the women's property. This discourse was useful to the Nationalists in two respects. Firstly it channelled Afrikaner resentment of the success of Indian shopkeepers into support for the drive of aspirant Afrikaner capitalists to displace the Indians in the retail sector. Secondly, it picked up the resentment of Afrikaner men that some of 'their' women were working in Indian-owned businesses in a way which threatened racial hierarchy. It linked this resentment to a fear of the loss of control over women. This provided an important way of winning backing for Malanite organisations and votes for the GNP.

The commercial success of the descendants of late nineteenth century Gujerati immigrants was a very clear feature of Transvaal life by the 1930s. According to Swan(1987:190), between 1932 and 1946 millions of pounds worth of property was bought by Indians in the Transvaal. An insight into white rural perceptions of these developments is provided by a 1937 report from J. Vlok, the Magistrate of Bethal, Transvaal, to the Secretary for Justice. Vlok waxed wrathful; "the position of the increasing influence of the Asian in the smaller towns of the countryside is more or less the same everywhere" (Vlok, 1937). Why this success was so

resented is suggested by Vlok's comments on the relationships between Afrikaner debtors and their Asian creditors in small Transvaal towns. He claimed that in the area of Leslie, "a large percentage of the farmers" were "deeply in debt" to the Asians. There were cases of farmers whose "economic position was regarded as strong" who were as much as 700 pounds in debt to Asian firms (Vlok, 1937). What was, of course, so irksome to rural whites was that the disjunction between political power and economic power represented by the fact that enfranchised whites were in debt to politically rightless Indians, threatened the racial hierarchy. Vlok saw this in a particularly paranoid way; for him the Indian businessman was giving credit to whites "to obtain influence thereby which he will use to his advantage in one or another manner" (Vlok, 1937). Vlok connected such incidents to the mixed marriages issue. Such incidents he opined, negatively affected "the prestige of the European". To demonstrate his case Vlok brought four instances of inter-racial relationships which he clearly regarded as shocking. At Leslie, a white schoolteacher had become 'involved' with an Asian while working in a store. At Vereniging, a Miss Denison, was employed as a bookkeeper in an Indian firm, where she had developed a relationship with a clerk (significantly) "without the knowledge of her father". To Vlok's astonishment this had led to such manifestations as Miss Denison taking evening trips to Johannesburg in the clerk's Chrysler. Most dramatically of all, one Ellen Orton had married an Indian trader to whom her father was in debt (Vlok 1937).

The whole thesis of the disreputable intentions of Indian traders toward white women's property was, of course, absurd. It was hardly likely that women who owned large farms or numerous houses would take jobs as clerks and bookkeepers. Ellen Orton's is the only documented case of a white-Indian marriage which even allegedly involved property considerations unearthed in the Transvaal in the entire period, despite the best efforts of anti-mixed marriage campaigners. (And even Vlok (1937) had to admit that there was evidence conflicting with his belief that Ellen had not wanted to marry her husband). The number of white women working for Asians was much smaller than the anti-mixed marriage campaigners rhetoric suggested; a limited study conducted by civil servants in 1937 could only find 62 such employees in the Transvaal (Hofmeyr papers, A1 1Dg (file 1), "Europeans employed by Asiatics 1937").

However, the theme of Indians' alleged seduction of white women was a potential vote winner for the Malanites in the small rural towns. The major role in propagating the myth of Indian shopkeepers designs on white women and their property was played by the Reddingsbond or Reddingsdaadbond (League of Salvation). This Malanite organisation aimed to mobilise the savings and political pressure of the Afrikaner poor in support of the objective of developing an Afrikaner small business sector. The most prominent representative of the Reddingsbond was its president, C.K. Smit. During late 1934 and 1935 Smit stumped the northern countryside holding a series of public meetings in support of his agitation against the Indian traders (Vaderland,

6.11.34; Natal Mercury, 11.6.35., 26.7.35). Smit was brutally frank about the economic benefits which he foresaw in displacing Indians from their economic position. He told an audience in Bethlehem, Free State in June 1935 that if the Indians were "forced out of shopkeeping there would be employment for not less than 12 000 more white people in European shops" (Natal Mercury, 11.6.35). To his rural audiences Smit painted a dire picture of Indian intentions: "He declared that many Indians employed white girls and gave credit to their families to such an extent that at length in some cases the parents agreed to the girls becoming the Indian's wives" (Natal Mercury, 11th June, 1935). Alternatively the women employees "became demoralized and in many cases married Asiatics" (Natal Mercury, 26.6.35). He backed these claims with lists of unsubstantiated tales about relationships between white women and Indian men (Vaderland, 30.10.34). On the podium Smit demonised the Indian shopkeepers to great effect, portraying the most innocent features of daily life in threatening terms. Even politeness on the part of shopkeepers was suspect; he warned an audience near Lichtenberg against the "smooth civility" shown to white customers in Indian shops. "They get what they require out of you, and when they have sucked you dry, you are thrown aside", he continued (Natal Mercury, 26.7.35). This implication talk of exploitative relations, both economic and sexual, linked up to Smit's portrayal of Indians as "dirty". "It was beyond his comprehension how a European person with a different standard of living could use food and sweets purchased from Asians" (Natal Mercury, 26.7.35.). Speaking at a Pretoria conference Smit pronounced that the "Indian question" was "more difficult and dangerous" than "the native question". "The Indian" was, for Smit, a deadly threat to Afrikaner business (die doodstuk van ons handel) (Vaderland, 21.6.35).

The advantage of the anti-Indian agitation from the point of view of the Malanites was that it interwove with rising anti-Indian sentiment on a broader front, including amongst Herzog supporters. A pro-Hertzog paper like 'Die Vaderland' (3.9.35) featured articles which, in alarmed tones, pointed out that the clothing firm of Mothiar and Essa, in Pietersburg, white women were working under Indian male instructors and alongside black men. By late 1935 the largely United Party-supporting Municipal Association of the Transvaal, was demanding residential and business segregation of Asians (RDM, 16.9.35, 11.10.35). In September 1935, a delegate at the OFS conference of the UP was asking General Hertzog to "put an end to conditions which enabled European girls to work for Asiatics". Hertzog managed the matter with a typical piece of humbug, saying that "he felt deeply on this tragic phenomenon in our social life" but that "there were ramifications which placed it beyond the help of legislation" (Hofmeyr Papers A1 1Dg Transcript of report from the Friend, 12.9.35.). However, it was clear that the Malanites propaganda was swaying his supporters and thus presenting him with serious difficulties.

The Parliamentary Politics of 'Mixed' Marriage

At the level of parliamentary politics, the advantage of pursuing the mixed marriage issue was clear for the Malan faction; it would intensify conflicts within the government. General Hertzog's primary concern, as leader of the UP, was to keep together its more reactionary and more liberal factions. Whether or not parliament legislated on the matter seems to have been a matter of indifference to Hertzog. While he did not personally favour legislation, his handling of the matter seems to have been completely subordinated other considerations to maintaining party unity (Paton 1964:259). This was a difficult feat. Powerful figures on the extreme right of the party favoured legislation against mixed marriages. The most notable of these were senior UP members such as Oswald Pirow, and leading Transvaal M.P.'s such as Jan Pienaar, and Piet Grobler. The most able of them, Pirow, was a man whose talk was peppered with terms of racial abuse (Paton 1964:167). The 1936 Transvaal conference of the UP went so far as to pass a motion asking the government to legislate against mixed marriages (Indian Opinion, 16.10.36., Hansard, 22.1.37.). On the other hand, the liberal group of UP members around Jan Hofmeyr strenuously opposed such legislation. This opposition was couched within a racist discourse - Hofmeyr rejected what he called "the revolting possibility of ultimate social equality and the mixture of the races (Paton 1964:242) - as did his supporters in the liberal journal 'The Forum' (Paton 1964:297). However, they favoured leaving the issue up to personal choice. Relations between Hofmeyr and the rest of the cabinet were strained, especially when, in 1936, Hofmeyr and a group of Cape Town M.P.'s voted against legislation depriving African male electors in the Cape of their votes (Paton 1964:231). Yet Hertzog was keen to maintain unity in the party at all costs. While allowing UP members to pursue private bills against mixed marriages, he made Hofmeyr Minister of the Interior (and thus responsible for marriage legislation) in the very same period (Paton 1964:259).

Malan and his supporters saw a great opportunity to convince right-wing UP voters that Hertzog was betraying their aspirations. Paton (1964:238-9,268) notes that the Malanites delighted in the 1936 mixed marriage debate in parliament which subjected the United Party to severe strain; Malan's intention was primarily to use the issue to break the United Party. Far from being driven by racial madness to pursue the issue, as Coetzee's position would imply, Malan was rationally pursuing political self-interest. Malan's practical cynicism on the issue is suggested by the fact that his fervour for Mixed Marriage legislation dated from 1934. For the previous eight years he had served as Minister of the Interior, with marriage legislation coming within his portfolio. Yet he made no effort to introduce legislation on the mixed marriage question (Star, 5.5.38.). His interest in the matter increased in direct proportion to the political benefits of exploiting it.

From the background of agitation, an active parliamentary politics developed around the 'mixed marriages' issue. The rules

of the game were clear. Rightist elements of a UP background would introduce measures toward limiting mixed marriages, both because of their own convictions, and the Nationalist-stimulated demands of their constituents. The Nationalists would then weigh in, seeking to maximise the division between the pro-legislation and anti-legislation factions of the UP. Hertzog would characteristically hedge his bets by allowing the pro-legislation elements their head in the debate, while at the same time placating the 'liberals' by failing to put his personal weight behind the proposed measures. Hertzog, by not committing himself, effectively ensured the failure of the campaign.

The parliamentary debate on the marriage issue was an important national sounding-board for the rhetoric of the mixed marriage debate. M.P.'s sought to use this national stage to rally their supporters around their particular perspective on racial matters. There is no doubt that the overall effect was to strengthen the racist consensus in white society. Through newspaper reports of the debates, the arguments of the anti-mixed marriage and anti-Indian campaigners were disseminated. And even the interventions of those opposed to legislation also tended to use arguments which strengthened racist sentiment.

The first parliamentary attempt to introduce a mixed marriages act was a bill introduced by Major F.J. Roberts, the M.P. for Vredorp, in March 1936 (Paton 1964:238). Roberts was an eccentric ultra-rightist who had been expelled from the UP and had recently been engaged in trying to set himself up as leader of a fascist 'All White League' based on the white unemployed (Indian Opinion, 8.5.36). Sufficient time was not allocated for the bill and it was talked out (De Villiers, 1939:15) Once it had become apparent that the bill would not pass, J.H. Grobler, U.P. members for Brits, proposed a select committee to enquire into whether Asians were marrying and employing white women. Grobler made it clear that he was particularly concerned about the extent to which Asians were using marriage to whites to escape racial restrictions on property ownership (Paton 1964:238; Hansard, 28.4.36:2629.) Grobler's speech in support of his bill was a classic example of the central confusion built into mixed marriage rhetoric. For Grobler "it goes without saying that no white girl, especially girls who have grown up in South Africa, would of their own motion agree to marry Indians", he argued that it was only economic conditions that would force them to work in Indian businesses. On the other hand, once a white girl started working for an Indian, "it is obvious that the feeling which exists against colour must necessarily diminish" (Hansard, 28.4.36:2634.) Like the Nationalist proponents of legislation, Grobler was struggling to resolve the contradiction between a belief in 'natural' racial aversion and the fact that the white working class often failed to manifest it (Hansard, 28.4.36.:2637).

Hofmeyr, as Minister of the Interior rejected the call for legislation, pointing out that only one incident had come to light of an Asian in the Transvaal benefitting in terms of land ownership, that a very small number of white women worked in

Asian businesses, and that one of his inspectors had found the working conditions in an Indian owned business in Springs better than those in white businesses (Hansard, 28.4.36.: 2637-2640). Roberts then introduced an amendment banning marriages between 'Europeans' and non-Europeans', citing messages of support from branches of the Reddingsdaadbond, the Afrikaner Women's Federation and other Malanite movements. He launched into a oration about the dangerous political consequences of allowing mixed marriages. If 'coloureds' were allowed to marry whites "why cannot they be the equals of Europeans in other respects?". He agonized over the failure of the white masses to observe the level of racial discrimination he considered appropriate, deploring the fact that "we do not consider it a shame for a girl to stand about the streets chatting to a coloured man or a young man with a coloured girl" (Hansard, 28.4.36:2641-2644). The debate continued with an orgy of anti-Indian and biological racist rhetoric. The nadir of this came when two M.P.'s actually endorsed the Nazi's recently imposed 'Nuremburg Laws', prohibiting sex and marriage between German Jews and their compatriots (A.J. Swanepoel : [Hitler] wanted to keep the blood of his nation pure, and can we blame him (?)" ; M.J. van der Berg: "...attempts are being made in Europe, especially in central Europe, to build up a people that is 100 per cent pure. That is being done in the interests of the health and prosperity of the people ..." Hansard, 1.5.36:2865,2878.) In this Hitlerian atmosphere biological metaphors of contagion flourished. Raising the possibility that mixed marriages would encourage young women in the countryside to get the impression that it was "was not such a bad thing to marry a coloured man", E. de Souza, M.P. for Lydenburg warned "we must kill the germ" (Hansard, 1.5.36:2870).

But while the UP and GNP backbenchers were parading their knowledge of current biological racist texts, the astute Malanite leadership were focusing on the potential political benefits of the debate. J.G. Strydom, the emerging Malanite leader from the Transvaal, drove home the divisive potential of the issue, criticising Grobler for calling for a ban only on white-Asian marriages instead of a total prohibition on marriages between black and white (Hansard, 1.5.36:2870.). He honed in on the divisions in the cabinet on the issue, citing a newspaper report showing that Pirow favoured a prohibition on whites being employed by Asians, but that his colleagues were split on the issue (Hansard, 1.5.36:2870-1.) In the aftermath of the debate, the Malanites Orange Free State luminary, C.R. Swart, crowed that Hofmeyr had sealed his doom as an influence in the UP by refusing to accept Grobler's motion and by his speech down-playing the issue (Sunday Express, 31.5.36, cited by Paton 1964:239). However, much Strydom and Swart may have shared the racial delusions of the time, their political behaviour over the issue is not evocative of 'madness' but rather of a quite 'rational' attempt to exploit divisions amongst their opponents. Despite the failure of Grobler and Roberts' measures they were succeeding in their intentions.

The subsequent year, General J.J. Pienaar, another rightist UP member, introduced a bill to prohibit mixed marriages (Du Toit

1982:67). Clearly a part of Pienaar's motivation was that his party was facing the immediate prospect of three by-elections and the longer term challenge of a general election, in circumstances where the Malanites' mixed marriage agitation had found considerable resonance amongst UP voters (Hansard, 22.1.37:552-557; Paton 1964:259). Pienaar presented his case with a considerable flavouring of homespun biological racism; in people of 'mixed' descent, he opined, "there is a constant strife between the inherited colours which react in neutralising and paralysing way" (Hansard, 22.6.3.7:523-4). All in all, however, he clearly lacked the ideological fervour of the Malanites, for he spent much of his speech reassuring 'liberals' of the moderation of his bill, stressing that only marriage officers, and not the couple involved, would be punishable; that all 'the races' opposed mixed marriages, that the bill merely completed existing measures, and that it was only the "less qualified and inferior" in each race who would want to engage in 'miscegenation' (Hansard, 22.1.37:522-524).

In response Hofmeyr hastened to re-assure the house of his membership of the biological racist consensus: "I am strongly against the principle of mixed marriages, probably as strongly as any member. I deplore as much as anybody the consequences of such unions, especially so far as the children are concerned" (Hansard, 22.2.37.:527). However he claimed to be in possession of a better means of preventing such marriages than legislation: "there is a more effective way of dealing with a social evil of this kind and that is by the application of a healthy and well informed and rightly inspired public opinion" (Hansard, 22.1.37:529).

This time the debate was even more divisive for the UP. When the vote on adjournment of the Pienaar bill was taken, Pirow had disappeared from the chamber so as to avoid the dilemma between his desire to support the bill and his obligation to maintain cabinet discipline. Many other UP M.P.'s had also gone missing. As Hertzog came under increasing pressure from the Malanites to commit himself to mixed marriage legislation, he had the debate abandoned, so as to attempt to patch up the splits in his ranks. At an emergency cabinet meeting Hertzog and Smuts tried to conciliate both factions, supporting Hofmeyr's move for the Pienaar/Grobler bills to be referred to a select committee, but attempting to promise the Pirow faction that legislation would be considered at the next session (Paton, 1964:259-261). However, Hofmeyr threatened to resign if the government supported mixed marriage legislation, and Pirow was forced to back down. Once more, the Nationalists had exploited the mixed marriage issue with success.

The 1938 Election

The discourse which parliamentary and extra-parliamentary agitation had generated around the 'threat' of mixed marriages became the focus of the 1938 general election. As in the U.S. case, where in the 1890s and 1900s, the southern upper classes

had embraced more intense racial language, in order to head off the threat of the radical racists, so this election saw the UP develop a new level of racial demagoguery, in order to protect their support from erosion by the GNP.

The controversial election poster was fully in line with the logic of the racial populist agitation through which Malan aimed to build support in the 1938 election. In the short parliamentary session before the election, Malan indicated the political direction he intended to pursue by proposing a package of new discriminatory measures including racially segregated housing and legislation prohibiting mixed marriages and employment of whites by people of other races (Paton 1964:281). In his electoral speeches, Malan plumbed the depths of racial rhetoric. He told an audience at Stellenbosch that the government, by refusing his segregationist measures, was placating the liberals in its ranks and thus "sacrificing the welfare of the country and the poor whites on the altar of party politics". The second picture of the poster, depicting a Jewish conspiracy, fitted in well with Malan's propaganda. He polemicised at length against Jewish immigration, and suggested that Jews were the controlling force behind the UP liberals. The government was, he claimed, reluctant to legislate against Jewish immigration because it was "afraid to lose the support of organised Jewry, and afraid that the liberal and anti-liberal elements in its ranks would come into conflict with each other" (Star, 13.5.38).

The poster, which was widely distributed in the Southern Transvaal (Star, 7.5.38) thus accurately reflected the thrust of the Malan's campaign. It was in fact produced for the Malanites by Voortrekker Pers, which also published the Malanite's new Transvaal propaganda organ Die Transvaler (Star, 5.5.38; Furlong, 1991:38). This newspaper was at the time under the editorship of Dr. Malan's able lieutenant and future 'genius' of the apartheid system and prime minister, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd. Under Verwoerd's energetic leadership, the paper threw itself into the campaign, churning out propaganda. A typical Transvaler cartoon during the election shows, under the heading 'Ostrich Politics', a dam wall cracking under the pressure of a murky black substance marked 'mixed marriages'. Below the dam wall an ostrich, marked United Party, stands with its head in the sand. Hofmeyr and Pirow sit on the river bed ignoring the impending flood, while a nationalist cries out to them in alarm. The caption, personally devised by Verwoerd himself, reads: "Worried Nationalist : Look fellows - there are cracks in the dam wall. The Two 'Friends': Ag, what foolishness is this now?" (Transvaler, 10.5.38). In a similar vein, as part of its campaign Die Transvaler (9.5.38.) ran a photograph of "a certain Mr. Armstrong, a white, and his lawful wife, a Baralong girl" triumphantly flourishing this as evidence of the existence of mixed marriages in the Transvaal.

The Nationalist's campaign, however, met with only limited success. For the UP showed themselves, at least in the short term, quite as adept at manipulating the rhetoric of race and gender. The UP's entire election campaign became focused on the

issue of the poster. Their tactic was to charge that by implying, through the poster, that white women would voluntarily marry black men, the Nationalists had 'slandered' white womanhood. The UP press christened the poster Baster Plakaat (Miscegenation Poster), a term suggesting that the GNP were somehow encouraging racial mixing. The Smutsite Johannesburg Star (5.5.38) reproduced the poster, unctuously informing its readers that "For obvious reasons, The Star publishes the poster with considerable reluctance; but the libel on South Africans irrespective of race, [i.e. English or Afrikaners] is so monstrous that publication is probably the most effective means of putting an end to this shameless propaganda ...". The Hertzogite Die Vaderland (12.5.38) joined in with, for example, a cartoon showing Voortrekker women splattered with filth marked 'Dancing with Kaffers' and 'Baster Plakaat'.

The UP's campaign shrewdly drew in white women, but within the framework of a discourse in which women portrayed themselves as under the protection of their menfolk. Thus not only was the women's vote mobilized, but the male electorate was reassured that the UP's views did not threaten their patriarchal interests. During the final weeks of the campaign UP speakers, especially Pirow in the Transvaal and N.C. Havenga in the Free State, addressed meeting after meeting whipping up the electorate over the supposed 'insult to white womanhood' of the Baster Plakaat (Star, 3-16.5.38; Vaderland, 9-11.5.38). The UP campaign was especially aimed at fostering racist, but simultaneously anti-GNP sentiment amongst white women. Havenga told a meeting at Ladybrand that "He was certain that there were women and their daughters among the Purified Party's ranks who would call to account those guilty of such insults against Afrikaner women" (Star, 4.5.38).

At most of their election meetings, the UP arranged for motions to be passed against the poster, usually proposed by women. In typical resolution, women voters at Ladybrand denounced the Malanites: "For the past few years we have been made the victims of the foulest allegations and insinuations. We have been represented as persons who dance with natives, who require legislation to keep our blood pure" (Star, 4.5.38). Another such motion called on political leaders to attack the Malanites "ghastly misrepresentations of the women and daughters of South Africa" (Vaderland, 9.5.38). In a paroxysm of militancy, the resolution continued "We do not doubt what their answer will be, but if men are not ready for the bitterest struggle, the woman of South Africa will raise her voice and hold high the torch, to fight everything that is destructive of her honour and that of her child" (Vaderland, 9.5.38). Two particular themes were raised by the motions. One was that of the 'purity' of the Voortrekker women's tradition. During 1938, the celebration of the centenary of the Great Trek was taking place. Although in general the Malanites were exploiting the political capital involved in the festivities with great success, during the election campaign, the UP were able to turn much of their rhetoric back on them. At a meeting addressed by Pirow, a motion was passed that "We the mothers, women and girls of Standerton,

descendants of the most honoured of women - the Voortrekker women - hereby declare our strongest protest and deep disgust of the disgraceful way in which the Nationalist Party is conducting its election campaign by the publication of revolting posters ..." (Star, 11.5.38.). The other line of attack on the Malanites made in the meeting was that the poster would undermine racial power structures by inciting black men to lust after white women. The Standerton motion warned the poster would "cause natives and coloured to lose their respect for our women-folk" (Star, 11.5.38.). Aletta Nel, mayor of Potchefstroom, warned of the effect the poster would have on "the native mind", and claimed that the poster had been hung up "on the walls of native homes" (Star, 11.5.38), while at a UP meeting in Kinross, Mrs. J.E.C. Oosthuizen asserted that the poster "has opened a new danger in South Africa, giving the native the impression that his attentions to European women would not be unwelcome" (Star, 7.5.38.).

Nationalist campaigners sought to defend the poster, commonly attributing the agitation against it to Jewish interests (although there was in fact very little public mention of the poster's anti-semitic aspect) (Star, 9.5.38, 11.5.38). But the UP's campaign found considerable resonance amongst the electorate, and soon the GNP, at a local level, were in retreat. In public meetings in the Transvaal, Malan supporters were not opposing the motions against the poster (Vaderland, 9.5.38), and in at least one case, in Krugersdorp, a woman Nationalist supporter actually proposed the motion (Star, 11.5.38.). GNP candidates in six Witwatersrand constituencies undertook not to use the poster and publicly apologised for it (Vaderland, 9.5.38). Confronted by a women's delegation, 'Kaalkop' van der Merwe, the GNP candidate for Heilbron, repudiated the poster and promised "to do everything in his power to prevent it being distributed or seen by natives" (Vaderland, 9.5.38.). The UP had succeeded in demonstrating that their forms of racism were, for the moment, as persuasive to the white electorate as those of the GNP.

Aftermath of the Campaign

Yet the mixed marriage agitation had intensified the trend toward Malanite reactionary mobilization which would culminate in the forties. This was dramatically illustrated by an incident later in 1938 in the western Transvaal town of Rustenburg. The Indian community had, by and large, tried to avoid the intense political pressure under which they were coming, by taking a conciliatory political stance toward white rightists. The journal, Indian Opinion (17.4.36), assured 'Mr. Grobler and his friends' that the community would not oppose legislation against mixed marriages. When in 1939 Dr. Dadoo tried to organise the community against the Asiatic (Transvaal) Land Tenure Act, which prohibited transfer of land from whites to Indians, he had little support from the Transvaal Indian Congress, because the traders controlling it felt that the imposition of a degree of segregation was outweighed by the fact that the Act gave them

greater security of tenure in their existing properties (Swan, 1987:200-201). But in the rural Transvaal this moderation in no way deflected the wave of anger which the mixed marriage agitation stoked up. During 1938, there were several incidents of assaults on Indians, and stonings of Indian houses by white youths in the western Transvaal town of Rustenburg (Star, 2.12.38; 23.12.38.) Stories circulated in the town that Indian shop owners were extending credit in their shops to the low paid white female workforce of the local tobacco factory, and then using this situation to exploit them sexually (Daily Express, 24.11.38; Vaderland, 26.11.38.).

On 19th November, following incidents in which white youths had thrown stones at Indian houses, a brawl took place, in which the white thugs seem to have come off worse (Star, 23.11.38, 1938; 5.12.38; Daily Express, 24.11.38.) This sparked a mass meeting of a thousand whites in Rustenburg, at which a boycott of the Indian shops was called (Star, 23.11.38.). The atmosphere of pogrom grew so intense that four hundred Indians fled the town, after having been advised to do so by the police (Vaderland, 26.11.38.) Following the incident 31 Indians were tried for assault and 5 were found guilty of grievous bodily harm (Star, 5.12.38; Vaderland, 24.1.39.). Symbolically, the intensity of white feeling around the issue was somewhat diffused by the arrival in Rustenburg of wagons commemorating the Great Trek (Transvaler, 1.12.38.). The energy whipped up by Malanite mixed marriage agitation was channelled into a festival celebrating the newly emergent Afrikaner populist identity.

The mixed marriage agitation was not an immediate success for the Nationalists. In the 1938 election they did well only in the Cape, and to a lesser extent in the Orange Free State. They failed to break through in the white working class areas of the Southern Transvaal which were to be so crucial to their electoral triumph a decade later (Furlong 1991:100,117). Nevertheless, the Nationalist's short term failure contained the seeds of long term success. They had consolidated a strong core of supporters around their reactionary populist programme. Their vote in the election was 58% that of the UP (Furlong 1991:91,117). In May 1939 Malan was able to present to parliament a 230,000 signature petition backing his package of racial measures (Du Toit 1982:77; Furlong 1991:99).

But a longer term victory for the Nationalists was to arise out of their tactical defeat over the mixed marriages act. Hertzog, seeking to avoid responsibility for this fraught issue, treated it in the time honoured manner of South African leaders in difficulties, by appointing a commission of inquiry to investigate the question. He did this despite the fact that in 1937, the Wilcocks Commission on the Cape Coloureds had specifically recommended against mixed marriage legislation (Du Toit 1982:68-69). Given the atmosphere of hysteria that had been whipped up over the issue during 1938, and the way in which the UP had itself fermented sentiment against 'mixed' marriages in pursuit of its own electoral interests, the atmosphere surrounding the commission was hardly conducive to a liberal

outcome. The commission's report, published in 1939, came out in favour of legislation against mixed marriages. In a document structured around biological racist discourses, the commission noted delightedly that black as well as white opinion was against such marriages, welcomed the impact of segregated housing schemes in reducing their incidence, and warned ominously of "infiltration of coloured blood into the European group." Public opinion was held not to be reliable as an obstacle to racial mixing because it would not be universally adhered to, although the committee seems to have preferred the expedient of preventing mixed marriages being contracted to punishing those engaged in such marriages (De Villiers 1939:32, Du Toit 1982:71-2). The motivation for such legislation was spelt out with stunning clarity: "the desire to keep the white population intact, as the dominant and ruling race" (De Villiers 1939:30).

With the outbreak of World War II, the mixed marriage issue temporarily receded from the political horizon. Hertzog, opposed to participation in the war, split from the United Party, and Jan Smuts took over as Prime Minister. As Hertzog's following tended to be the more pro-mixed marriage legislation elements of the U.P., the split reduced the pressure on the party to act on the De Villiers commission's report and the document was left to moulder. In any case politics became increasingly concerned with Afrikaner nationalist opposition to Smuts' support of the British war effort. But after the Malan Nationalists came to power in 1948, the De Villiers Report and the blatant racism of the UP's 1938 response to the mixed marriage issue came back to haunt the party. In 1949 the Nationalists introduced legislation into parliament banning mixed marriages. The United Party, having helped generate a white consensus over mixed marriages, could only argue rather weakly once again, that the best way to avert such marriages was through public opinion. Piloting the bill through parliament, the Nationalists' Eben Donges could smugly point out that the legislation was based on the report of the UP-appointed De Villiers commission. The bill was duly passed, and South Africa had its first piece of apartheid legislation (Furlong 1983:31-38; Du Toit 1982:73-4; Hansard, 19.5.49:6167-8).

Conclusion

This paper is, at a number of levels, a response to current post-structuralist trends in historical work. In a certain sense it is a positive response. The paper has attempted to treat the way in which representations are constructed and disseminated as central to the business of politics. However the paper also represents an uneasiness with some of the more bizarre consequences of post-structuralism, in this case represented by Coetzee's exploration of the rise of apartheid. Central to my criticism of Coetzee has been his failure to locate the texts which he studies in historical context. In this sense the article provides backing for Bryan Palmer's (1990:5) rejection of "all that is lost in the tendency to reify language, placing it beyond social, economic and political relations...". Although Coetzee talks a great deal about the need for 'reading', he would in fact have provided a richer understanding of Cronje and

his ilk had he read more seriously what historians like O'Meara (1983) or Giliomee (Adam and Giliomee 1979) have to say about the background from which Cronje emerged. While there is indeed much to criticize in the work he reviews, there is also much that would have illuminated his study of apartheid origins, had he let it. The paper has especially sought to show that Coetzee's failure to explore adequately the historically rooted social relations of gender weakens his analysis.

Secondly, the paper rejects Coetzee's repudiation of explanation. The fact that a theory cannot explain everything in the world does not mean that it cannot explain anything, or that explanation is impossible. I have suggested in this paper that Afrikaner nationalists bid for working class support, the changing pattern of gender relations, the dynamics of parliamentary politics, and the Afrikaner middle classes aspirations to take the place of the Indians in the retail trade explain a great deal about the actions of people whom Coetzee describes as crazed.

Thirdly, the paper challenges the post-structuralist discounting of any form of human agency. The trouble with an approach which asserts that legislators were just as caught up in the madness of apartheid as their followers, is that it means, in this case, that one must ignore the extensive evidence of cynicism and calculation on the part of both Malanite and Hertzogite leaders. Such a position, as Cornel West (1989:225) points out in relation to Foucault, "surreptitiously ascribes agency to discourse, disciplines and techniques". By and large, the paper has contended the discourse of mixed marriage was the tool of politicians, rather than their master. Malan, the evidence suggests, was precisely the kind of self-aware, manipulative leader that Coetzee taxes historians with describing.

Curiously, it is post-structuralism's favourite philosopher who puts my point best. "The priest rules through the invention of sin" wrote Nietzsche (1974:166). Daniel Francois Malan, ordained minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, played a large part in the invention of the 'sin' of 'mixed marriage', and used it as one of the methods through which he and his supporters attained power.

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