Guy Butler and South African Culture

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Abstract

This paper looks at Guy Butlers theories about English South Africans and the English language. I have outlined his reputation as a critical thinker, poet and scholar, with a view to understanding the role he has played as an individual in South African cultural politics. I have also tried to trace some of the social roots and implications of the ideas he puts forward and the social purposes these serve. These have been investigated from a `political´ and sociological perspective.

I have concentrated on his socio-political discourses as they have appeared in conference papers, journal articles and newspaper articles and the media response to the ideas has also been analysed. Butler´s poetry and more properly literary work is not a direct concern of this paper and is not given extensive attention.

I have concluded that Butler´s work is an interpretation of South African reality which serves the purpose of promoting a set of mythical goals and purposes for English South Africans based on the founding myth of the 1820 settlers in the Eastern Cape.

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1. Introduction

The most important legacy of Guy Butler's career to date is not academic, intellectual nor perhaps even literary. Although he made a large contribution to the battle for the acceptance of English studies in South Africa in the 1960s, he is not personally responsible for much of the research done in this area or for the directions it has taken since then. His distinctive contribution lies, this paper will argue, in the symbolic realm. He has constructed a history and a cluster of symbolic ideas which together provide the basis for an English South African cultural programme based on the founding myth of the 1820 settlers. Most of his writing is directly or indirectly concerned with English-speaking South Africans and their language, culture, role, identity and history. This writing includes a few repeated and rhetorical ideas which also form the basis for many of his fictional projects.[1]

My criticism is not meant to be individually or morally directed -- indeed the thesis has as one of its working assumptions that the individual is always as much socially produced as a social producer -- but is rather an attempt to understand the relation between text, individual, and history. Having said this, it still seems to me that to analyse any discourse, symbolic system, or system of practice without taking into account the speakers and the identity of those who

produce the signs is to do to history what I have complained the agents and agencies of the English South African culture theory do to the individual: collapse particular social configurations into the universal. This explains the concern in the first section with the formation of Guy Butler's popular and academic reputation and his self-identification as an heir to the 1820 settler frontier 'tradition'. My aim, therefore, is to try to make the connections between history and its actors and subjects. In the second section I look at the forms of representation that Butler has used in order to construct his cultural theory with the aim of marking the place of his ideas in the struggle around the political and social organisation of culture in South Africa.[2]

The paper is thus working towards an understanding of the specific function of Butler's theories in South Africa, as well as towards an understanding of the ways in which his codes construct his object of study (primarily the English people and language in Africa) while maintaining the illusion that these codes are complete and based on universally shared human experience. More specifically, the paper will involve an examination of a core myth of Butler's work, expressed in 1959, and repeatedly since, in terms of a particular geo-political awareness:

> The Settlers of 1820 were placed on the frontier between the Dutch pastoralists and the African tribesmen, and, metaphorically speaking, that is where we still are: in the middle.[3]

The lack of human agency and implied passivity in the

words 'were placed' point towards other aspects of Butler's construction of the historical role and character of English-speaking South Africans as caught between two violent and contending nationalisms: some of these are that the English-speaking South African 'is a generous giver and a gregarious do-gooder';[4] their history has for the most part been an attempt to uphold egalitarian morals and ideals in South Africa; the role of the English in South Africa is to act as a catalyst which, bearing a politically neutral world contact language, may be able to release the moral/literary creativeness presently blocked by Afrikaner and African nationalism; the English are, or should be, or will be major contributors (through the spread of the English language) to the presently emerging 'common South African culture' which is based on the existing 'common ground of sentiment among all races'.[5] It is necessary to problematise these and the other similar formulations and projections of the role of English in Africa with a view to identifying the particular interests and goals they are linked with, as well as to understanding the cultural power of Butler's texts.

His influence appears most clearly in the persistence of theories which are grounded in a particular period of history during the British colonial expansion into the Eastern Cape. His ideas form some of the theoretical foundations for the institutionalisation of English studies in Africa in the shape of numerous journals, conferences, projects, academic institutes and English Department syllabi -- all dedicated to

cultural pursuits affected, and in some cases defined, by the English cultural theory here under discussion.

Butler's version of the past, present and future of English-speaking South Africans attempts to be a source of cohesion and continuity for English-speaking South Africans who, according to Butler, have, since the 1948 National Party victory, experienced a feeling of cultural and political helplessness and confusion, resulting in the often-discussed 'English identity crisis' and a pervading sense of anomie. Since English-speaking South Africans do not constitute a nation-state, as Butler himself repeatedly points out, he constructs the subjectivity that is needed to identify them as a group in generalised terms which apparently lie outside the social political domain (it is, in part, the aim of this paper to restore these ideas to this domain), employing a notion of a sort of Euro-African cultural identity which is open and dynamic, in contrast to closed and static traditional structures, and which is the basis of any reasonable society.

Dominating much of his critical writings is, I will argue, an ethical rationalisation of colonialism which at times leads to the denial of any role at all to the historical and economic in the genesis and shape of conflict, even whilst depending on particular historical constructions to do this. Particularly relevant to this aspect of Butler's writing is Frederic Jameson's comment on ethical thought:

> In its narrowest sense, ethical thought projects as

> permanent features of human 'experience', and thus as a kind of 'wisdom', about personal life and interpersonal relations, what are in reality the historical and institutional specifics of a determinate type of group solidarity or class cohesion.[6]

This also suggests what will be another major concern of my paper -- to mark Guy Butler's place in the struggle around the organisation of culture: his role in the founding of Academies, institutions, journals, and various literary committees, his editorial career, and of course his career as a writer and literary critic. The aim is to get a clearer idea of the institutional sources of his popular reputation and to examine what I earlier called the 'objective structures' of his cultural influence. These institutions can be seen as areas of cultural activity formed in an environment where Butler's particular variety of geo-political awareness is a controlling power -- not only a vehicle for that power which lies exclusively elsewhere in, say, political institutions. The broad aim of the paper has been to go some way towards understanding how Butler's cultural theory is linked to other historical structures and power relations in South Africa.

The South African English cultural theory based on the 'settler tradition' has indeed had serious implications for the study of English in South Africa. One sign of this is that Butler's constructions of social reality have given momentum to, for example, the building of a multi-million rand cultural complex in remembrance of the 1820 Settlers (he is also Director of the 1820 Settlers Memorial Foundation), and have

received relatively extensive and sympathetic coverage in both the English and Afrikaans media. In the light of this, as well as being concerned with an examination of his major ideas, I will be asking why and how these few seemingly simple and easily disputed ideas have been so powerful and have conferred on Guy Butler cultural prestige rarely accorded to intellectuals in South Africa.

2. The Basis and Formation of Guy Butler's Popular and Academic Reputation

2.1 The Battle for the Acceptance of South African English Studies.

Guy Butler has over the years built up a reputation as the 'doyen of South African literature' and is widely recognised in the Afrikaans and English media as a pioneer and authority on the subject. This reputation has its roots in Butler's enduring concern with South African literature in English, particularly poetry, and to his important role in arguing the case for South African English studies in the 1950s when it was uncommon to do so. About this time Butler was becoming known as a poet, particularly after the publication of his volume Stranger to Europe, as a poet who was trying to break out of the dilemma writers with commitments to both England and South Africa were apparently experiencing. His work since then has been described as

> a sustained endeavour to distinguish and reconcile the two strains of Europe and Africa...to establish an African mythology and archetypes (Livingstone, Camoens, the Last Trekker); to acclimatize as far as possible 'the Grecian and Medieval dream'. Orpheus has 'African incarnation' ('Myths'), Apollo must come to "cross the tangled scrub, the uncouth ways" ('Home Thoughts') and join the Dionysian dance.[1]

As such his poetry has been intimately related to his endeavours to promote a peculiarly English South African tradition in his academic and pedagogic work.

In his article 'The Battle for the Books: The Evolution of the Academic Criticism of South African Literature in English'

Geoffrey Haresnape points out that as early as 1926 poets like Roy Campbell and William Plomer were noting the lack of critical writing on South African literature.[2] While creative fiction continued to flourish in South Africa before and after 1926 very little commentary appeared. Today the lack of commentary on South African literary texts has been rectified to some extent, but there was until recently very little written in the way of `metacommentary' or literary and cultural theorising around South African literature. Butler may be said to have been one of the first to do this, to formulate theories around South African literature and to theorise around the texts themselves by discussing the role of English in South Africa and putting forward his views about the significance of this group and its language. If indeed Butler was an important theorist in the genesis of a concern with an approach to South African literature then it is important to look more closely at what these ideas were and at the significance of the cultural theory and practice that is at the root of much of these studies today.

At the 1956 Conference of Writers, Publishers, Editors and University Teachers of English, where he presented his paper on `Poetry, Drama and the Public Taste', Butler was urgently concerned, in contrast to most of the delegates at the conference, with South African writing and with resolving the tension South African writers felt between African and European interests.[3] This paper, while being mainly concerned with the difficulties and role of the writer rather than critic,

lent strong support to the lobby for the introduction of the study of South African literature in English Departments. It contains some of Butler's earliest formulations of what were to become enduring concerns:

> I believe that this continent, which has produced nothing yet, will do so if we Western Europeans are really true to the West: by which I mean maintaining our curiosity about our world, a determination to bring what is dark into the light, a compassionate imagination. Our role, as I see it, is to play Apollo to Africa's Dionysus. This is very different from another type of Loyalty to the West: a sort of Ancestor Worship, a terrified refusal to become aware of the magnificent, if barbaric, deity dancing and drumming all around us.[4]

The distinctions between reason and instinct, culture and primitive nature, and brains and loins that are implicit in the Appollonian and Dionysian terms he uses are repeated throughout his work; it is a dichotomy implicit in all of his writing, whether it be concerned with literary criticism, politics or history. The implications become almost ominous when we read Butler's words about Dionysus and his function: 'Originally Dionysus is a vegetation god, the epitome of the seed that must die in order to live, and give life.'[5]

In support of the plea for South African writers and academics to take South African literature more seriously, to break away from the fixation on strictly European literary boundaries, Butler made one of his earliest references to the frontier, a reference that later grows to become the 'English South African Frontier Tradition': 'The European in Africa is,

in fact, like anyone on a frontier, starting something. Time and again he has to do things for which he knows no precedent.'[6] By 1966 Butler was President of the English Academy of Southern Africa and at its conference on South African Writing in English and its Place in School and University (Grahamstown, 196[illegible]) he continued to campaign for the introduction of South African English studies into schools and universities on the grounds that these studies would help the English to feel that they belonged in South Africa:

> Does not the child need, indeed, has he not the right, to find his own environment, his own landscape and history, in some of his reading? If he does not, will he not be encouraged to believe (as some would like him to believe) that his language, and therefore his people, are alien, do not belong in Africa?[7]

In the context of the rise of Afrikaner Nationalist power and its perceived threat to the English liberal programme, these words make more sense. The reference in parentheses is directed to Afrikaners and relates to the sometimes acrimonious press debate in the 1950s around what Butler saw as `the drive to suppress English'. Opposition to Butler's ideas at the 1969 conference was expressed by, among others, Philip Segal, then Professor of English at the University of the Witwatersrand. According to Haresnape his opposition was based on his belief that to emphasise South African literature `would be to "assert a provincial and pointless cultural pseudo-nationalism"':

> Like some of the participants in the earlier Johannesburg conference, Segal was concerned that the inclusion of local texts might displace from the syllabus acknowledged masterpieces of the main-line tradition.'[8]

Before I go on with this somewhat sketchy picture of the dynamics surrounding the battle for the introduction of South African studies I want to make it clear that I am not making the claim that Butler alone was responsible for redirecting English studies. He was the articulate spokesman for a group of academics who had formed themselves into The English Academy of South Africa which, after much debate about the worthiness of local literature, came to have as its belief that `the future of English writing in Southern Africa depends on the attitudes and interests of university and school teachers, and the departments of Education.'[9] Butler was then a leading figure of a literary movement which he described as `the result of a number of people whose antennae are registering the presence of an as yet unseen mountain range forming a public conspiracy to climb it and put it on the map.'[10]

It was almost a decade later that their attempts seem to have really taken off. In 1977 for the first time a national conference of university English teachers at the University of Cape Town accepted the fact of South African literature into their curricula. The move was likened by Jack Cope in that year's edition of Contrast to the situation in the United States `where the locals have managed to throw off British colonialism and have a culture of their own'.[11] The

reference to colonialism is here clearly meant to refer to the loosening of cultural ties by white South Africans and not used in the usual sense of the word. By a peculiar sleight of hand the colonialists become the colonised and black South Africans to not enter the picture anywhere at this stage. The list of recommended books for the proposed courses in South African literature demonstrate that the South Africanising of literary studies meant that more attention was to be given to the literature produced by white colonialists and settlers. Besides the settler memorabilia urged by Butler,[12] the recommended list included: Olive Schreiner, William Plomer, Pauline Smith, H.C. Bosman, Thomas Pringle, Roy Campbell, Ruth Miller.[13] Reasons given for this choice included their suitability for examination by the existing critical orthodoxy, or as Haresnape put it: `[This work] is of sufficient complexity and agreed artistic achievement for [the students] to exercise their critical equipment efficiently.'[15] Butler, in a staff memorandum written in 1971, wrote of the aims of the South African literature course which had been earlier introduced to the Rhodes University English Department syllabus:

> i) To inculcate some awareness of the language, English: its linguistic characteristics, its growth and development.
> ii) To train students how to read, respond and assess [South African works] according to a respectable critical method; to make them aware that there are other methods.[15]

The clear, if unintended, implication is that these 'other methods' are something other than respectable. However, since the English are, according to Butler, characterised by an 'inclusive' outlook on life and, since these other methods do in fact persist, they will be mentioned if only to make clear that they cannot be accorded serious critical attention. According to the same approach to literary studies, the history of South African English poetry is said to have begun with the arrival of the British, and is divided into four periods marked by European activity:

> (1) from the arrival of the British to the discovery of diamonds; (2) from the discovery of diamonds up to the end of the First World War; (3) the period between the two world wars; (4) from 1940 to the present. Each period is characterized by a shift in attitude towards the two main points of reference: Britain, the country of origin of the English language and poetic tradition; and Africa, the new historical and geographical environment.[16]

The 'anti-colonial' thrust of these academics, then, was intended to serve the interests of a group of intellectuals and writers who in turn may be said to have been articulating the concerns of a class fraction threatened by its removal from the direct seat of political power. As Butler put it in 1970:

> Both our tradition and our language are under open attack...After 150 years -- during much of which English-speakers were in the political and/or economic ascendancy -- we find ourselves treated in a manner which shows that, in some minds at least, we are shortly due for linguistic and therefore political demotion, to be followed by gradual assimilation.
>
> The Englishman, we are informed, will be welcome if he (a) is conservative; (b) identifies himself with the Afrikaner's history, struggle and

> mission. It seems that the tradition and language established in 1820 are not so securely rooted as we think.[17]

The sense of being threatened by the recent reversal of political power between the English and Afrikaans is clear here: where earlier the British Imperialists had proved their military, political and cultural power in the Boer war, now the loser's right to moral outrage is claimed. If the belief in dialogue and the attempt at harmonising group relations through the individual sharing of experience was not to be swamped by the Afrikaner claim to a superior right to the land (backed up by the powerful mystique engendered by having a language that fitted its geographical boundaries), a myth of consensus and a base from which to pursue the liberal programme of reform within an ethos of tradition, permanence and objectivity had urgently to be constructed. (Butler's concept of a `common culture' which I discuss later forms part of this programme, a programme in which black South Africans are informed that they will be welcome if they are (a) `liberal', (b) identify themselves with the cultural parameters set by the English Academy. It seems that the traditions and languages established prior to the British colonial invasion are of no significance whatsoever.) It is here that Butler's writings, dedicated to the building of such a `tradition', played a powerful and timeous role. His deep identification with the 1820 settlers and his theory built around this provided a much needed legitimation of English economic and social power, and at the same time provided them with the sense of belonging

that seemed to have proved so powerful for Afrikaner Nationalists.

The Institute for the Study of English in Africa, established at Rhodes University in 1964 through the growing influence of Butler and those for whom he spoke, was another important institutional base from which to promote the new direction in literary studies. Commenting on the establishment of the ISEA and its 'Writers and their Work' series Jack Cope makes the often repeated claim for their objectivity when he says that the authors 'are not essentially making value-judgements or setting up critical standards but, so far as one can see, aim at presenting informative material and listing sources of information for further study.'[18] In effect the institute was making a claim for a role as a cultural support of social communication, but more than this it, by definition, also instituted this communication. It was both an instrument and an active force in the hands of a group of academics with particular ideas of what social communication means. They defined the range of meanings available and their 'objectivity' therefore meant (as it usually does) the agreement of subjectivities.

In the same article Cope points to the problematic of modernisation that informed much of the reasoning of this literary reformation in English Departments: 'The challenge is great and until it is taken up South Africans can hardly pride themselves that in the field of the arts they belong to an independent or modern society.'[18] A critique of the

traditional/modern dichotomy that informs much South African criticism is provided by Michael Vaughan in his article 'Ideological Directions in the Study of Southern African Literature'. He points out that 'the terms of the couple are invariably used with the implication that traditional means static and modern means dynamic',[20] This dichotomy is everywhere evident in Butler's work and is the implicit basis from which he projects the role of the English in Africa as that of a creative catalyst. It is also apparently the reason for the absence of a novelistic tradition in black writing: 'Perhaps a people in so rapid a state of growth and transition cannot be expected to achieve the degree of detachment needed for extended fiction'.[21]

The point that I have tried to make is that in the process of instituting English Studies the academics involved were not merely passive communicators of an objectively constituted body of knowledge. Rather, the institutions then launched must be seen as instruments in the hands of social actors with particular interests, interests that were not innocent of political or ideological motives. The cultural theories advanced by these institutions can therefore not be seen merely in terms of communicative relations. To see them as such reduces, as a necessary precondition for the effectiveness of these theories, relations of power to relations of communication. The effective role of, say the English Academy of South Africa, is to act as a kind of cultural bank, amassing what Bourdieu calls 'cultural capital', only to hand it over as

a `gift´ to the poor, entering into an assymetrical relation in which the debtors must pay with a promise of assimilation. The recognized, if euphemized, relationship is an unequal balance of power.

2.2 Self-representation and Popular Reputation.

In Reality Construction in Society Burkart Holzner distinguishes between roles within scholarly work communities `such as the discoverer of truth, the systematizer, the contributor, the fighter for truth, the eclectic and historian, the disseminator, the discoverer of facts, the discoverer of problems´ and points out that these are arranged

> around the cultural and organizational issues of creating and `administering´ knowledge. Reality constructs must be found, stored and disseminated, the activities of persons related to them must be organized and coordinated. This gives rise to...complex power systems.[22]

It is in a combination of almost all of these roles that Butler as an individual has so powerfully influenced the direction of English studies in South Africa. This is recognised when Van Wyk Smith writes that `one is tempted to speak of a presence in South African literature, for Guy Butler has become just that -- a strong presence in South African literature, as writer, encourager, preacher and scholar´.[23] Butler has established the 1820 settler realm in his combined role as `discoverer of truth´ and historian; as `systematizer and disseminator´ he has founded institutions such as the National English Literary

Museum in Grahamstown, and as `discoverer of problems´ he has presented the problem of the function and identity of the English in South Africa. As `writer and scholar´ Butler has been important in constituting and defining the field of South African poetry by editing the first anthology of (white) local verse and following it up with one that is meant to meet the needs of contemporary readers.[24] He has also been responsible for the organization and coordination of much of this knowledge as Head of Department and as Professor of English at Rhodes University, a position he achieved in 1952 when he was thirty-three years old, the youngest ever South African English Department Head. Along with his accomplishments as a poet and playwright all these have given Butler the formidable power to make interpretations of social reality that carry enormous weight.

If it is true, as John Sharp argues in `Constructing Social Reality´, that `any interpretation depends on the identity, beliefs, knowledge and interests of the people doing the interpreting, as much as on the characteristics of the objects being interpreted´[25] then a brief look at Butler´s identity, knowledge and interests should help in understanding the interpretation of reality that is being widely taught by the English Departments affected. The focus on Butler´s self-representation is undertaken with the continual reminder that he is a representative of particular group interests. If he is singled out this is because he has been one of the most articulate spokesmen of the group and has been granted

extraordinary acclaim and authority in the South African media.

Butler's construction of his own role, the role that has brought him fame as a poet, patriot, scholar, and 'champion of the English heritage in South Africa',[26] is anchored in a network of symbolically defined relationships with other roles. While it may be true that all role constructs work in this way, it is especially obvious in Butler's case where the implication is that his role as a Professor of English provides a particularly authoritative platform from which to analyse the situation of the English in South Africa. He identifies and at the same time defines his orientation to others (as well as that which others are likely to have towards him) in these words which have been been repeated by the editors of Contemporary Poets, and in various forms by the South African media:

> I am, I think, a product of the old almost forgotten Eastern Cape Frontier tradition, with its strong liberal and missionary admixture. The nature of the frontier has changed and spread, until all articulate men, but particularly artists, are frontiersmen and/or interpreters.
>
> English, as the chosen language of literature of millions of Blacks, has a great and exciting future in Africa; and I've made it my life's business to encourage its creative use in this corner of the world.[27]

His self-identified role is related to an encompassing conception of a collective identity (English- speaking South Africans) which he feels is in need of clarification. It is further related to the historical role of the 1820 settlers on the Eastern Cape frontier which he feels is relevant to his own

role activity of encouraging the creative use of English in contemporary South Africa. Thus his role-specific frame of reference is anchored in the legitimation of the social role itself. However, it is flexible enough to permit the construction and application of the theories which are examined later in this paper. The concrete point at which the (constructed) collective history of English-speaking South Africans and Butler's personal identity meet is, then, in the projection of a social role which is fitted into a symbolic network of ideas.

There are other socially significant communities in which Butler may have placed himself (for example, Christian, academic, artistic or pedagogic communities) since, as the editors of South African Keywords have shown, group categorizations are fundamentally arbitrary, not expressions of fact but rather social constructions. The point I am trying to make here is that Butler's own group categories and boundaries are as arbitrary as the ones he places around other groups, whether ethnic, national or linguistic, and are historically produced rather than essential. The social purposes of the boundaries, however, are not arbitrary. His idea of his cultural role and past is deeply bound up, as it is for everyone, in the 'cultural process of establishing political and personal identities', but the boundaries of this identity are culturally constituted and cannot be used to explain cultural differences or to draw the boundaries of these differences.[28] Robert Thornton expresses this idea in

another way:

> The idea that each volk or people 'belongs to' or possesses a different culture is itself a part of the cultural processes of establishing political and personal identities. When seen in historical perspective, these ideas emerge clearly as products of their times (our times), which will themselves change.[29]

Butler's role construct is, as he suggests, backed up by his 'life's work' which has been an attempt to mobilize a group of people by telling them what they want to hear: you belong, you have roots here, you can be culturally as well as economically powerful. The Star reported on one of Butler's speeches given in his capacity as Director of the 1820 Foundation in 1982 as follows:

> It was not that English-speaking South Africans lacked public conscience or were socially idle. They were in fact generous givers.
>
> More of this talent must, however, be directed quite consciously to their own very urgent cultural, social and political needs.
>
> In looking after these, we shall grow in knowledge, confidence and experience; we shall be drawn into social and political life and instead of being spectators we shall participate effectively in policy-making.'[30]

2.3 Who authorizes the author?

Himself a perfect representative of the group (since he is committed to South Africa, English, liberal, a man of letters descended from the 1820 settlers, a public figure and a poet), Butler has been given the authority by the whole group to promote the authorizing (English) language and to act on its

authority.

His reviewers and interviewers often comment on this authority and almost invariably grant his claim to be 'an engaged, sensitive exponent of the white English-speaking South African experience'.[31] For example, Haresnape says of Butler that 'when he refers to South Africa there is always that note of involvement which gives his comment authority'.[32] As early as 1958 André Brink wrote that what lends Butler 'remarkable importance as an English poet of this country is that he is the first true poet fully to accept South Africa as his fatherland'.[33] This idea that Butler is particularly important because he has staked a claim in South Africa, or has claimed his 'birthright', is a recurring one; and it is based on his own words:

> I am a South African and, although I am of British stock, I have never felt myself a son of England. The calcium in my bones comes from the brak water of the Karoo and not the white cliffs of Dover.[34]

The praise-names of 'Poet and Patriot' have been given to him many times by the English media.[35] What seems to receive the most emphasis is the fact that he stayed when others did not, that he has a sense of rootedness and a cultural framework and ability by which to articulate this sense of belonging. As a Professor 'born and bred' in South Africa, he is living proof of the vital role English-speaking South Africans have to play here. Over and over again the title of 'wise man', even 'visionary',[36] has been bestowed on him and he is invested with a sort of tacit delegation

of (white) English-speaking South Africans' group moral and cultural authority. And he clearly does try to fulfil this role. Articles like 'The Role and Duties of English-speaking South Africans' constantly recall the English in South Africa to the values they officially recognize, and to the virtues in which they have a vested interest:

> We have a practical instinct for making things work. We are suspicious of magnificent political ideas or ideals, which make absolute demands upon men, and usually spell disaster. We have an ancient belief in the primacy of the individual, in the value and wisdom of discussion, in the necessity for social advancement. Briefly we are sceptical democrats.... [These] are...the conditions of that measure of liberty and flexibility without which neither individuals nor cultures can grow to maturity.[37]

And,

> It is fatefully easy for English-speakers, the most prosperous and most pampered group of South Africans, to shy away from important and heart-searching issues.... I believe that good economics and good morals are usually compatible. But making money and increasing the gross national income is not the whole duty of man. I keep hearing certain craggy commands: Love your neighbour as yourself. Do as you would be done by.[38]

What Butler probably means by 'good economics and good morals are usually compatible' is the occasional muted criticism English business has raised against petty apartheid. It is a criticism which has never been raised except where powerful interests are threatened by, for example, the spectre of

sanctions. English criticism of the State of Emergency, press censorship, and the homeland system has in any case always been carried out on pragmatic, not moral or ideological grounds; on the grounds that these forms of repression 'do not work'. Opposition to British colonialism -- which did work -- is left to critics who then become evidence of the tragic over-politicization of South African society, causes rather than critics of South African conflict.

Butler's personal authority to speak on behalf of English-speaking South Africans remains both diffuse (or as the Rand Daily Mail put it: 'he says it in the beautifully modulated tones of an Oxford-educated scion of good Eastern Cape settler stock') and objectified in the many cultural and educational institutions he heads. In 1972 the Rand Daily Mail granted Butler the power to represent a group which he fears has hitherto been defined only (and uncomfortably) by their ability to grow rich quickly: 'he is one South African who really has taken root in this country's soil enriching both himself and his following in the process'.[39] And much earlier in 1952 the Outspan, calling him 'this ambassador (one might almost say pioneer) of South African culture', says that 'he has done, suffered, and otherwise been through all one expects a man to go through before he places himself in a Chair of English'.[40] Part of the power of the theories he produces lies in the appeal to shareholders in economic capital to become involved in their historical past, to increase their cultural capital, to take up their role in the sacred sphere of culture (a 'disinterested' one), and to 'redress the balance

between the idea of the Englishman as enterprising city dweller and the idea of the Englishman as pioneer, bearer of a language, beliefs and traditions'[41] He is thus the appropriate person for producing the necessary effects to promote cultural theories which disguise the attempts on the part of one group to maintain economic power over another.

2.4 Cultural Banking: The Institutionalisation of a Social Role

The social location of the role of the English is fixed by reference to the institutional spheres which have been formed around the tasks that Butler has recognized as socially necessary. These are the mechanisms of the reproduction of his views (and the social relations they embody) -- the many 'disinterested' foundations and academic and cultural institutions of which Butler is a founder or prominent member. Some of these government and privately funded institutions in which he has been an important mover are the Rhodes University English Department (Professor and Head), Rhodes University Department of Speech and Drama (Professor and Head of sub-department), Rhodes University Department of Journalism, Governing Board of the South African National Theatre Organization, Institute for the Study of English in Africa (Chairman), Joint Matriculation Board (University Representative), National English Literary Museum (founder), Cape Performing Arts Board (Advisory Committee), The English Academy of Southern Africa (President), Commission of Inquiry into the Creative Arts, New Coin (editor), Shakespeare Society of South Africa (First President), and 1820 Settlers Memorial

Foundation (Chair, Festivals Committee).

His academic qualifications from Rhodes and Oxford Universities, and the honorary doctorates from the Universities of Natal and the Witwatersrand, formally guarantee his competence in these spheres, but more than this, these also guarantee, in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, `possession of a `general culture' whose breadth is proportionate to the prestige of the qualification'.[42] The cultural resources that Butler has had access to (Bourdieu's habitus) have been what he calls `the influence of a rich cultural home life'[43] as well as a university education. Thus the Rand Daily Mail calls him, after a rundown of his upbringing and background, `a young man who looks like a rugby player, who speaks like a progressive farmer, and who imparts, to the grand tradition of English literature, a flavour that is intensely South African'.[44] Butler has clearly been entrusted with, to quote Bourdieu once more, `the totality of the capital which is the basis of the group...and with exerting over this capital a delegated authority....'[45]

Butler's voice is the voice of the hegemonic sense of tradition. Since he ties himself and English-speaking South Africans to things immediately experienced -- place, family, particular institutions, and the English language -- his theory has a powerful appeal.[46] It has the capacity to grant a particular ethnic and cultural identity, in terms that conceal vast and uncomfortable areas of significance.

3. The English South African Culture Theory

By the late 1960s social and political configurations demanded a reformation in South African English Departments if these were to remain participants in the ideological forces influencing South African cultural and political life. The need for a new response to a situation where the liberal project of economic and cultural expansion was being threatened by the needs of a competing class fraction, and Butler's ability to articulate the necessary response, combined to provide the tools to build an institutional power base from which to promote the new English 'tradition'. It is worth taking a closer look at some of these ideas.

3.1 The Original English South Africans

Butler has been deeply concerned with what he calls the 'heritage of the 1820 settlers', and his articles, plays, books, and radio features on the subject testify to his belief that the settlers brought with them 'two gifts': the English language and the democratic tradition.[1] He is anxious to redress the 'somewhat false and sketchy literary picture of our ancestors...of the English-speaking settler who came to stay' and our ignorance of them which has led to the idea that they have no claim to the land and:

> [to] the popular notion...that the English -speaking South African has had little share in opening up the country; that he has had no roots in the countryside.[2]

Part of this attempt has taken shape in popular histories of the 1820 settlers such as When Boys Were Men, a book which presents itself as an objective recovery of a neglected period of history. In it Butler gives almost unqualified praise to the settlers, praise which in the tradition of such historiography is focussed on the moral and personal qualities of the individuals. Andries StockentstÖm is described as 'spirited and courageous'; George Bennet as 'gentle, observant, conscientious and humorous'; Nathanial Isaacs was an 'articulate observer and narrator'; Eli Wiggall is 'gentle and long-suffering'; Thomas Stubbs 'intelligent, tough...a thorough frontiersman'; John Montgomery 'was very kind-hearted, particularly to his servants', and Bertram Bowker was 'shrewd...inventive and clever with his hands...frank, humorous, courageous Dingaan was, as South African school history textbooks have always confirmed, a 'murderer and supplanter'.[3]

For Butler, South Africa is a land of original conflict, a land which may potentially be held together by the English language and spirit, a unifying force which may preside over primal chaos.

> I have European origins, but am committed to Africa, here, to this most original, unholy, unjust chaos. I am part of this, as well as being part of the European mess. I cannot clarify either or begin to control or synthesise them until at least part of me is above and outside both.[4]

South Africa was a land awaiting civilization, a largely empty space over which the ideal narrative of the 1820 English tradition may be projected. This also relates to the role of the South African writer today, which is to 'make sense of it, to put it into some perspective of time, to fill, or abolish, or redeem the culturally empty centuries behind us.'[5] Before the arrival of the British there was it seems nothing -- no history, no past, no words, no names: 'Africa has no history, it ticks to a different clock, under constellations many of which are mythless'[6] Thus, the Europeans were starting a new world. They came not to usurp but to baptise and to bring life and civilization to a dark and silent land:

> [T]here was a time when even Attica, Latium, the Seine and the Thames were on the outlandish, twilit backveld of culture: they had to be civilized by craftsmen, poets and priests.[7]

It is a narrative of origins which is intended to connect deeply and symbolically with the present and which depends on a notion of a continuity of essences. Indeed Butler often speaks of the symbolic relation of the 1820 settlers to contemporary English South Africa. The Natal Mercury reports one of his many speeches on the subject as follows:

> South Africans still faced a frontier struggle as the early settlers had, but its nature had changed from a physical to an intellectual one, Professor Guy Butler, head of the department of English at Rhodes University...said.[8]

This formulation has been repeated many times by Butler and

forms a cornerstone of his theories about English-speaking South Africans. Although the frontier-struggle he speaks of is the Eastern Cape one, the concept itself has a far wider national, at times even international, implication:

> Important as other groups were -- most notably the Byrne Settlers of Natal -- the Settlers of 1820 were undoubtedly the most significant and largest single group. They can, therefore, stand as a symbol for all the others. It was in the Eastern Cape that Englishmen in large numbers first came to grips with our country[9]

But since, of course, it was not `our´ but `their´ country, South Africa was, and is, for the settlers a mixed blessing, threat and opportunity entwined. The threat lies and lay in the potential for violence in this warring land, the threat of chaos, degeneracy, barbarism and social disintegration. The advantages centre on prospects for improvement, and through the liberal discourse of reform and co-optation, the English are invited to do as their forebears are said to have done and negotiate a common understanding between warring nationalisms that threaten the liberal project of commercial expansion. The English today, who are defined in terms of the settler ideal, are urged to take up their role and duty to spread the English language and vision:

> It is only through the recruitment of young dedicated minds in all walks of life, but particularly into the church and teaching profession, that the English-speaking South Africans will discover their role and lose their apathy about the things which belong to their and our country´s peace.[10]

Being democratic individualists the 1820 settlers were the idealist emigrants par-excellence. They had, according to Butler, `the habits of debate and discussion and the belief in sitting around a table and thrashing out a problem rather than thrashing each other'[11] They were, in terms that could equally describe the Anglo American Corporation, essentially a contractual society, a voluntary association of farmers, professionals, merchants and craftsmen eager for profit and committed to a code of enterprise, mobility and progress for all South Africans. This code is justified by the highest standard, Christianity and science -- Western Civilisation itself:

> Perhaps, before asking ourselves what we would like this national ideal to be, we should ask what we dare not give up in order to achieve it...I would list three things: The Christian concept of the individual; the scientific method; the democratic principle.
>
> All Western peoples have made their own syntheses of these great sources of faith, knowledge and wisdom (each of which claims a universal validity), but applying them to their particular circumstances. That surely is the characteristic activity of a civilised people. Because they are concerned with the universal as well as the particular, they are capable of producing works of art, systems of thought and practical techniques which jump frontiers, strike root, develop elsewhere.[12]

As a model of identity the settlers are a group resurrected as the heritage of contemporary English in South Africa, who are now told that, in spite of the Afrikaner rise to power, they

have not missed their historical destiny. As a social ideal they are a model of democratic authority, who 'from the start embraced the left and the right'.[13] His historiography works to erode past allegiances, genealogical and national.

In terms of the settlement scheme of 1819 about 4 000 British emigrants were settled in the Zuurveld on the Eastern frontier of the Cape Colony to provide an effective barrier against the struggles of the Xhosa to regain the land from which they had been driven in that year. The settlement was agreed to by the Cape Parliament as an 'economy measure', as Kenneth Good puts it: 'Britain would be relieved of surplus labourers, and the metropolis' expenditure on frontier defence would be reduced'. He continues:

> British colonialism was far more destructive of African society than the limited penetration of Dutch merchant and agricultural capitalism over almost two centuries previously.[14]

The question this raises is how, if, as many have argued, the British were not bringers of peace and harmony, were not even the middlemen on the frontier,[15] has Butler managed to pass off the 1820 settler tradition as <u>the</u> significant past? It is no matter that it was not the Eastern Cape settlers that were the first to arrive from Britain, nor even the largest group.[16] The facts and the placing of the 1820 settlement in the historical context of the colonial economy are clearly not what is important here. What counts in this case is invention, the symbolic act of founding and discovery, and what is

achieved is the compression of a multiplicity of conflicts, differences, religions and interests into a single, comprehensive formula called 'The 1820 Settlers'. The effect of this highly selective history is, as Raymond Williams points out in Marxism and Literature, to link it with, and legitimate, the present experience of English-speaking South Africans:

> [Weak senses of 'tradition'] are often points of retreat for groups in the society which have been left stranded by some particular hegemonic development. All that is now left to them is the retrospective affirmation of 'traditional values'.[17]

The point of connection between the English then and now is claimed in their frontier placing (and this may be why the Byrne settlement in Natal and the British at the Cape are largely ignored by Butler; there was no frontier until the British created it in the Cape). Other connections are said to lie in their liberal heritage, the English language, and in the fact that they were starting, as we are, a harmonious new world. The most encompassing connection is in the sharing of the 'civilizing mission'. Accordingly, the two most valuable legacies of the settlers are the English language, which will act as a cure for the multilingual Babel that is South Africa, and the liberal democratic tradition with its attendant institutions. The English today do as the settlers allegedly did then -- act as bridge-builder's among intolerant nationalisms. Back then the English language freed black Africans from tribal divisiveness and 'their long sleep', now

it will free them from apartheid.

Butler's rationale for conquest is a form of comparative anthropology which draws attention to differences, particularly the difference between an international tolerant, peace-inspired, homogenous culture over a provincial divided and intolerant one. Therefore the identity of the settlers is derived by comparison with its own opposite, by its difference from that wished upon black South Africans. The dominant organising category for Butler is thus the binary opposition, particularly the Nietzchean opposition of Appolonian and Dionysian form and formlessness, where the collectivity oppressively dominates the individual. Some of the oppositions he implicitly and explicitly sets up are these:

Western civilisation	African barbarity
Reason	Madness
Historical	Traditional
Science	Superstition
Democracy	Primitive communalism/ authoritarianism
Universality	Narrow local vision
Form	Feeling/ unreason
Creative/dynamic	Static/closed
Humanist	Nationalist
Light	Dark
Order	Chaos
Harmony	Division
Dionysian	Appolonian
Dynamic	Static
Civilised	Barbaric/Uncivilised

For Butler divisions like these articulate the range of possible responses to contemporary race and class conflict in South Africa.[18] They produce the otherness of indigenous

South Africans by translating them all into a symbol (including the bi-polar values inherent in the symbol), and enable him to talk about and conceptually grasp antagonisms that are, within his own framework, otherwise incomprehensible. They express an unease about the indeterminate causes of growing social unrest and give it form. As Rowlands says of the earlier usage of the barbaric/civilised couplet by the French ruling class:

> It served to make a potentially hostile force visible, give it shape and definition and lent a certain predictability, however illusory, to the likely course of this new source of aggression that was to be managed...it not only gives a certain noble grandeur to a putrid social order -- thinking of it as civilization makes it worth defending -- but also defines the enemy `politically' as `outside'...when in fact they [are] very much within.[18]

In addition, the effect is to define the South African conflict as taking place between two universal forces, hiding the fact that it is very much a specific and determinable internal conflict. If the re-discovery of barbarism is a means of managing and explaining a perceived threat, it also provides a salve to fears of a world in moral decline and an indication of the kind of action South African English speakers should embark on to re-generate the necessary epic state of mind to win through in a new and horrific age.

Still, a problem remains that Butler and all liberal South African historians have had to accommodate. Black Africans owned the land, and the English seize and seized possession.

Butler's solution is an appeal to universal human values; he simply asserts (implicitly) the rights of a morally superior culture -- a sophisticated, peace-loving democratic language, culture and tradition, over a conflict-ridden, divisive, static and pagan one:

> The few things that South Africans have in common are taken from outside, from Europe and America, which is tantamount to saying that the forces making for cohesion -- and some cohesion is necessary for culture -- are neither characteristic nor indigenous.[20]

In order to prove their right to the country the English must be seen as hard-working and active participants in the nation-building mission that is theirs. He therefore frequently exhorts the English to work harder, to live up to their ideals and to the new white man's burden -- the South African mission of spreading the English language:

> A nation is built hour by hour through the patient work of her people....We must make sure that we are worth protecting -- that we are worth the privileges we have....
>
> Hard and conscientious work, thoroughness and fairness belong to Western civilisation and Christianity. What does the future of the country depend on more than anything else? I would say: more hard work and less talk.[21]

Butler creates a unity for English speakers today that overrides what has always been a diffuse group, tending towards fragmentation, held together by the loosest of social bonds -- the ideological tenets of free enterprise -- and therefore urgently in need of a myth of consensus. Thus the discourse

derives its authority from its dual function: it holds out the promise, to those who would accept it, of spiritual and social fulfillment, and provides a history on which to base a sense of belonging.

His concern with the 1820 settlers has not remained strictly academic and has received an enthusiastic response among the White English liberal intelligentsia. As the Star pointed out in 1976: `Much has been written about the devotion to his homeland of this Karoo born and bred author -- this patriotism and interest in the preservation of the historical reminders of his and other forbears.'[22] Besides receiving relatively thorough print media coverage, the ideas have been broadcast by the SABC via features like his `A Scattering of Seed', broadcast in May 1965. This concerned `the Settler's struggle for survival during the early years after the arrival in Algoa Bay'[23] and was one of a series on the same subject. The establishment of the 1820 tradition has also been partly dependent on identifiable institutions, such as the 1820 settlers Memorial Foundation and the Rhodes University English Department. In the latter Butler is able to present his selective cultural theories in close association with compulsory examinations. If a myth needs a ritual then the examination system in South African universities, where initiates into the mysteries of culture are required to perform a yearly ritual involving a battle against time and chance to demonstrate their cultural prowess, certainly provides it. The

close association of the Great South African Tradition with regulated learning, a system whereby selected students are required to give an answer to pre-defined topics (which then `fails´ or `passes´), is a powerful tool for the promotion of the hegemonic tradition. Class homogeneity at these yearly rituals, achieved by the simple measure of financial constraint which limits access to universities (and thereby to most professions) to all but a few South Africans has, but for pressure for change originating from outside universities, left little room for serious examination of the universalist and empathetic history that underlies the content tested.

Another means of popularizing the ideas has been the 1820 Settlers Monument, of which Butler has been executive director. It is a multi-million rand cultural complex in Grahamstown, such as is rarely to be seen outside large metropolitan areas, meant to symbolise the past and the present; the tradition of the Settlers and their living presence among English South Africans today. It incorporates the idea of a continuity of essence of the volksgeist kind, meeting the needs of the myth by `the historical collection and preservation of historical documents, books, furniture, pictures and other relics from the past.´[24] Like National English Literary Museum and the Institute for the Study of English in Africa in Grahamstown, the monument serves to wed myth and place together in the same way that the myth of `volk en land´ tries to do for the Afrikaner Nationalists. At the same time as the very newness of these institutions and museums undermines the notion of continuity, the fact that

they are in Grahamstown lends support to the settler tale since the settler's gifts are there to be seen, in the very place that they once struck root.

Reservations about the monument and its usefulness have been dismissed by Butler by the use of a telling analogy to Houses of Parliament:

> The special nature of the building should be borne in mind. Houses of Parliament are not condemned as useless because their debating chambers are silent for certain months of the year. The great Greek theatres were used only once a year for a period of a few days during the festival of Dionysus; and no one, to by knowledge has called the builders mad.[25]

Another repeated defence has been in the comparison with the French Hugenot memorial and Afrikaans memorial. Where these are `static' and `useless', the English monument is to be used for creative purposes.[26] It seeks to `express the wishes of the people whose ancestors it aims to commemorate' and as such `should not perpetuate animosities' and `should avoid sectionalism and exclusiveness'.[27] The monument is appropriately set on the top of one of the largest hills in Grahamstown, Gunfire Hill. It looks over the `Settler City' and provides an expansive view that includes one of the only other hills of any remarkable size in Grahamstown, Makanda's Kop, topped by a few blasted trees, in the middle of the large Joza location. It was a setting that prompted a Grahamstown satirist, Harold Goodwin, to write a series of verse which from 1957 to the opening of the monument continued to complain of

the symbolic sense of victory its setting and size evoked:

> Another memorial rising to say:
> 'We conquered a darker-skinnd nation'?
> Every town in the Union has one today;
> They call it the Native Location.
> (1820 and all that, 1957)
>
> I leave you to think how hearts may be stirred
> When the V.I.P.s come on September the third
> With speeches extolling their love of our past
> (Each as gripping and true as a weather forecast).
> I hope, as they stand there with fervour aglow,
> They'll take care not to see the Location below,
> For its squalor and dirt will consort very ill
> With Uncle Tom's Tombstone on Gunfire Hill.
> (Bloody but Unbowed, 1962)[28]

Butler's belief in the settler tradition and his hope for a future South Africa based on principles of western parliamentary democracy have not taken a firm hold on popular consciousness even among English-speaking South Africans, and indeed this is not really their purpose. That is to say, while the ideas remain as an enthusiastically received appeal to lofty moral superiority, they do not require the English to embark even on reform (this is the Afrikaner's obligation), but merely to continue to do what they have apparently always, or at least since the 1820s, done. The ideas are nevertheless, as I have argued, nurtured by a specific category of professional politicians, university teachers, businessmen and some journalists. It is the English intelligentsia who, like the Dutch-speaking Nationalist members of the Genootskap, have the requisite resources and power to establish an ethical rationalisation of their economic power in the sacred sphere of

culture. The members of the Genootskap are described by John Sharp as having been 'placed in a difficult situation, in the late nineteenth century, by the combination of capitalist economic growth and British political control'.[28] It does not matter then, that the ideal is not fulfilled, that it has not and will never turn South Africa into a community of common political and cultural purpose. It is the existence of a readily available fiction that makes it possible to pursue a cultural programme designed to legitimate, consciously or unconsciously, what is, under the guise of the trusteeship of a neutral world language that is significant here. And what is, and perhaps may always have been, is a broad coalition of white English and Afrikaans language groups to maintain their privileges. It takes the honest conservatism of Die Burger to see this. In an answer to Butler's assertion that the 'English leave in great numbers after every Nationalist Victory'[30] Die Burger wrote the following in their editorial:

> The Afrikaners and their English-speaking countrymen [landgenote] have moved closer and closer to one another, and in the election in May this year, probably the greatest political co-operation between the two groups was noted. It exceeded even the most optimistic expectations.
>
> The dramas which the country has undergone have moreover purged [gestroop] them [ESSAS] of colonialism, and allowed them to come out on the other side good South Africans. The role of the Defence Force in particular, as a unifying factor, cannot be underestimated.[31]

3.2 The New White Man's Burden: Lifting the Curse of Babel

> We were, at one time -- the nineteenth century -- a politically imaginative and creative force. What have we been doing for the past fifty years? Finding our feet in Africa, getting our bearings, I hope; preparing for a new role, a role which we must accept or go to the wall.
>
> The basis of this role is humble; to accept our responsibilities as bearers of a contact language seriously: to make the knowledge of the world available to all our countrymen of whatever race, and to provide dedicated teachers and ample funds for this task. To be in posession of a world contact language should give us a degree of wisdom and necessary detachment, at times, from a too local view. We can...be to South Africa what the ancient Romans were to the Gauls.[32]

Most of Butler's ideas and practices so far discussed depend on an identifiable theory of how language works, and of the relation between the English language and the society in which it is spoken. Because the theory works to smooth over complexities, and because, like his cultural theory, it works within the broader framework of binary oppositions, it lends itself to the sort of demonstration that ordinarily serves to make complex ideas crude. Here the table is, I believe, a reflection of the content rather than a constraint on it:

PROBLEMS FOR ESSAS AND SOUTH AFRICA	CAUSES	CURE
Conflict	Multi-lingual society	English as a contact language
Afrikaner Nationalism	Language and land geo-graphically linked	ESSAS to rememer own link between language and land
Black Nationalism	Intolerance	Communication (English as a contact language)

Over Politici-cization of SA society	Lack of faith, hope, wisdom	English liberal tradition (reflected in English language literature)
Closed/narrow society	Lack of world language	English language
No political power	1948 Nat. victory	Cultural power through spread of English language and vision
Identity crisis/ No cultural cohesion	Ignorance of past/ settler tradition	Monument, etc. to promote the tradition and its language

The English language, according to Butler, achieves a neutrality which competing local languages do not since it accomodates many nationalisms and is available to Africans who are determined to go beyond their 'traditional confines' by means of a fully fledged Western language. Since the theory privileges the modern virtue of unified language as the defining feature of civilised existence, English language proficiency is held out as a positive evolutionary goal for South Africans. Those countries fortunate enough to have been colonised by the British, (or as Butler puts it, fortunate enough to 'have served a British apprenticeship'), have the added advantage of having been taught the 'most widely used and useful of the world languages'.[33]

Butler sometimes sees language, more particularly English, as an instrument solely for communication, as an established fact rather than as subject to process and change; therefore

English as a 'world contact language' is a means to consensus, even liberation:

> One remembers, with surprise, the cry of nineteenth-century movements in Europe: "The language of the conquerors on the lips of the conquered is the language of slaves". In Africa to-day a black nationalist leader might well be heard to cry: "The language of the conquerors on the lips of the liberated is the language of progress".[34]

English is a 'miracle of the human mind',[35] the wonder-gift capable of providing the means to escaping forms of oppression wherever and whenever they occur: colonialism, apartheid, as well as tribalism:

> [M]uch of the current ferment of Africa springs from a desire to escape from the tribe into a larger world, and the essential means for this is a lingua franca. Further, the new ideas are from outside Africa, and call for new vocabulary and techniques which traditional forms do not posess.[36]

English is sometimes also the carrier of an 'ethos', of 'the habits of free men',[37] and 'the main vehicle of our traditions and beliefs'.[38] Its survival is therefore linked to the survival of the English today:

> The survival of English in the Republic depends on a general revival of the English-speaking tradition of vigorous participation in public life. One cannot divorce the language and the tradition.[38]

Butler seems to admit more here than he does where he denies that the English are trying to do anything more than spread a neutral international 'contact language'. He goes so far as to admit that 'it is not so much a question of transmitting a

language, but an ethos, a system of values'.[40] A medium in the English press of the 1950s which gave sometimes detailed coverage of Butler's views:

> The English language in Africa would be a "barbaric dialect" within two generations if its standard continued to decline at the present rate, Prof. Guy Butler, Professor of English...said. Professor Butler, who advocated an immediate drastic rise in the matriculation standard of English, said: "At the back of many of our minds is a horrible uneasy question -- has English a future in this country; has the English-speaking section a future in this country?...It never occurs to us that this language might peter out.[41]

~~Such an urgent message and cause found a willing~~ The same article goes on to record Butler's urging English speakers to become more concerned custodians of their language and to encourage the English community to provide more English-speaking teachers: 'How can a language or literature be transmitted by people to whom that language is not the first language? If...we cannot provide enough teachers, we must take what is coming to us and see our language declining.' The idea that the 'enemy of English' in Africa is not change, but a 'slovenly and inaccurate use of the language' is central to Butler's theory about the language.[42] Within South Africa itself, there is the added threat from Afrikaans language:

> Unless English takes root and becomes the medium in which large numbers of South Africans express their deepest convictions and patriotic ambitions, it will inevitably become a second languaage. It will be retained for its general usefulness, but cease to be a creative and imaginative cultural medium.[43]

After a scathing attack on his alarmism Die Burger points out that the linguistic nationalism of the two groups has more in common than he allows and that in fact the English do not need to fear that Afrikaans will become the sole official language:

> We must admit that we don't have much of a penchant for these sweeping professorial theories on the future of the two languages. We believe that the vitality of a language is determined to a far greater degree by the daily practice of millions of ordinary people...
>
> It would be better for relations between our language groups if chaps ["manne"] like Prof. Butler would promote English without having to engender anti-Afrikaans feelings or suspicion in the English-speakers. We believe that both languages can become more powerful in South Africa, just as living, growing things can exist side by side without the one necessarily withering as the other flourishes.[44]

Butler seems to have taken Die Burger's advice to heart, for after this we hear little more about this specific threat from Afrikaans. Shortly after Die Burger's criticism he is reported in the English press as saying:

> It is Afrikaans which links us most intimately to the soil and history of the country, just as it is English which reveals to us our unique position in the world of human ideas. Both are absolutely necessary for all South Africans if we are to be complete people, true to our best traditions and to our place and time.
>
> To foster a war between the two languages is to start a civil war in ourselves, and utimately beyond. [45]

Butler has been particularly anxious that the traditional form of English should not be transgressed; hence his concern with the teaching of English, with who is going to pass this

cultural capital on, may be seen as a concern that it stay in the right hands -- that it remain a language that can 'preserve and accumulate in objectified form the past, and also the educational system which would give its agents the aptitudes and dispositions required for the symbolic reappropriation of those resources.'[46] The model he points to as an example of good English teaching is an un-named East African country where 'a series of classes is given by teachers with 'good standard voices, at regular intervals....These are supplemented by booklets, and, by careful co-ordination the hearer is trained through both eye and ear'[47] [emphasis mine]. Any interference with the spread of standard English will reduce English to a 'barbaric dialect'; will even lead to 'a major economic and cultural disaster',[48] and hinder the English mission of freeing South Africa from what he calls the 'curse of Babel'. Language, then, is never seen as the product of the anonymous and collective labour of successive generations, but a posession of a particular class fraction which holds it out as a gift and believes it be the very reason for their existence in South Africa: '[E]ven though the language might tend to disappear, a group who were originally defined by a language will go on forever'.[49] Therefore it is to be used within terms of the needs of that class fraction. To do anything else with it is depravity:

> The language needs to be well taught and spoken if it is to remain the superb instrument it is, and it cannot be maintained unless the English-speaking community nurse it; not merely by seeing to it that it is well taught, but by propagating the great literature in that language, with its enormous civilizing freight of masterpieces.[50]

In 1955 Butler was reported as saying that 'something must be done if South African English is not to deteriorate to the point of becoming no more than a medium for primitive expression':

> There should, for instance, be an insistence on a higher standard of English in all school, university and public service examinations...provided that the qualifications of teachers are scrutinised with greater care, and provided that there is no abatement of the present effort to import experienced teachers from Great Britain....
>
> In order to co-ordinate all these activities it might even be wise to establish an English equivalent of the Kultuurraad which has done so much to foster Afrikaans.[51]

This concern to guard a particular form of English, one that can only be taught by truly dedicated English teachers at university or school level, is a concern that went hand in hand with the fear that English may become a language second to Afrikaans.

It need hardly be pointed out that 'university' English has never been anyone's mother tongue, not even, as any first year English essay demonstrates, for students from white privileged classes. Most of the passing and failing of these essays is judged by the successful or unsuccesful assimilation of a university discourse which is generated by, and tied to, particular class requirements.[52] English in its bourgeois form can be handled by only those who have the appropriate background and Butler is aware of this when he recognises that those black South African writers that go some way to meeting his standards have all had the benefit of what he calls 'the long association with "English" English teachers'; those who

have been 'brought into close cultural contact with...devoted and usually enlightened white educators'. He goes on to say that these writers all had 'protracted periods of close contact with good English-speaking 'models'; most of them are university men; their standards tend to be British and metropolitan.'[53] While Butler's analysis of the situation suggests a moral dimension between teacher and taught, Bourdieu's analysis makes clear the relation between competence and class:

> Given that the informative efficiency of pedagogic communication is always a function of the receivers' linguistic competency (defined as their variably complete mastery of the code of university language), the unequal social-class distribution of educationally profitable linguistic capital constitutes one of the best-hidden mediations through which the relationship (grasped by our tests) between social origin and scholastic achievement is set up.[54]

The by now familiar barbaric/civilised couplet is hidden along with Butler's distinction between English and the manner of its use. In his discussion of language it appears as a distinction between a particular disposition towards language (which is proper to the privileged classes) and the 'vulgar' usage characteristic of those classes whose social conditions do not produce the learned and scholarly relation to language Butler approves. The approved relation to language is one that 'presupposes at every point the whole context of legitimate culture and no other context.'[55] But the language is in a new land, that is, it is not in its original concext, and

Butler seems to have no problem with this when he speaks of the 'Africanisation' of language in a way that at first appears to coincide with the demands of black writers in English. What Butler means by the Africanisation of English is never made explicitly clear, but where this is discussed it seems to imply the domesti cation of the 'ethos' and 'tradition' which Butler has named as tied to the language. Africanisation then comes to mean the successful introduction of English, along with a few anglicized South African words, into an environment where the purity of the English vision is potentially threatened. It is not new attitudes or relations to English that are under discussion, but how best to continue the old in a 'new' place; not <u>what</u> is said, but <u>how</u> it is said, that is important for Butler here. While he is more than willing to spread and share the language, he is at the same time anxious to preserve a particular form, as well as the social relations this embodies, of this language.

The belief in the role of the English intelligentsia in spreading the English language and its vision came to explicitly influence the South African literature syllabus introduced by Butler at Rhodes University. The staff memorandum written in 1971, some years after the introduction of South African literature in the Rhodes university English Department, outlined the 'Functions of a Department of English Literature' and put the case for the English intelligentsia's 'calling' to ensure the future of English:

> It is not enough, in my view, to regard our function solely as the handers on of a language and a literary

> tradition. We are, in South Africa, called upon to ensure that English does not disappear or decline, and to promote English as an African language. What does this mean?
> a) English as the language of some two-and-a-half million people of European descent who have chosen to live and have their being in Africa.
> b) English as the adopted language of several millions of Coloureds, Africans and Asiatics who have not merely chosen it as their lingua franca, but as an educational and artistic medium.
> In other words, we have...to look to the future as well as the past in order to discover our proper rôle. We are responsible for the future of the language of the community: and communities need literatures....Awareness of the relationship between the language and the land, the language and the people is inadequately developed.[56]

Herein may lie the clue to understanding that uncomfortable feeling of having achieved a degree, but no tangible proficiency at anything, that English Department graduates often confess among themselves.[57] The memorandum demonstrates that the English Department, as defined by Butler, has no other technical function beyond what Bourdieu calls its `social function of legitimating the culture and relation to culture of the dominant classes.´[58] This attitude to the language recently prompted Ndebele to name it `prescriptive open-mindedness´. He points out that common to all Butler´s comments on the matter is `the unquestioned, non-negotiable, primacy of western civilisation and its spectrum of values embodied in what has been called free enterprise and the special kind of democracy based on it.´[59]

3.3 Afrikaners: Friends or Foes?

Since Butler´s thesis is that the English, with their gift of

the English language, may the arbiters of South Arica's fate, and since things are not going according to plan, someone or something must be standing in the way; it is here that the Afrikaners, with their rival claims to a historical mission, come in for some of the blame for the current South African situation that is elsewhere (implicitly) relegated to 'traditional' black Africans.

According to Butler South African culture has been conditioned by the fact that there are two colonial groups with directly contrasting aims at work in South Africa. The Afrikaners are in the ascendancy apparently because their link between language and land is more direct than it is for the English whose language is linked to the metropolitan centres of the world. This is also the source of both the moral superiority and the political ineffectiveness of the English (since politics is anyway, for the most part, a distressingly secular pursuit their apoliticism can only enhance the moral qualities of the English).[60] In addition, the Afrikaners are apparently inherently given to the kind of jingoism and politicking which rallies that curse of modern Africa: collectivities.

The similarities between Butler's attempts to set up an English South African tradition and Afrikaner mythology of the Great Trek variety are sometimes too clear for comfort and he is at great pains to distinguish the two. His theories must enable him to explain the cleavage between two fractions of the

white community, both with an overriding interest in continuing the exploitation of the black majority, as a conflict between directly opposing world views. At the same time, however, their common purpose must be strengthened and this gives rise to an ambiguous attitude to white Afrikaner nationalists.

Butler has in the past had no problem with identifying with the symbols of the National Party, 'Die Stem' and the South African flag. He was one of four academics who were asked in 1952 to sit on a panel to judge the best English translation of the anthem, but who eventually wrote the translation themselves since none of the submissions was considered good enough. In his article 'National Anthems and Flags -- A Personal Note' he explains that

> I had come to regard the existence of English speakers of distinctly South African sentiments as a fact; sentiments many of which could be shared with other South Africans; and it was therefore desirable that we should learn each other's languages, and sing each other's songs. By "we", and "South African" in most contexts I suspect I still meant white South AFricans. At that time a few whites had got as far as seeing blacks as fellow South Africans. The cultural and language divide was perhaps too great....
>
> The open friendship of men like E.G. Malherbe, Leo Marquard, Uys Krige and others disposed my sanguine nature towards a cultural symbiosis of the two language groups....Certainly the 1948 Election came as a shock, but it was not until 1954 that the blind fanaticism of the architects of apartheid began to dawn on me.[61]

The cultural and language divide, then, between English and Afrikaans is not as great as between the other groups that Butler defines. When a white Afrikaans audience is in mind the

unity of the two white language groups is often stressed. In 'The Future of Afrikaans', written in 1959 for the Huisgenoot, he uses terms that imply the common purpose of the white minority in Africa:

> [I]n Africa, the greatest need is for [a] sense of reality. Africa has never had it; and we who could have given it to her, have lost courage, we have yielded to a mass-fantasy which will sooner or later require a tragic elucidation. If what follows sounds relentless and outspoken, it is not any more so than it would have been if I were writing about the future of English.[62]

His unpublished '1820 -- A Cantata for Children' also includes the idea of the unity of the two settler groups. Initially, the stage instructions tell us, 'the chorus is divided into two groups, Boers and English. In Part One they are seperated by as much space as the stage will permit. Throughout the next movements they gradually move together and become one as the play unfolds.'[63]

But since the English are competing with the Afrikaners for political domination (something Butler is at pains to deny), or rather for the power to impose the particular form this should take, it is required that the blame for apartheid be handed to Afrikaners. Similarities between Butler's English nationalism and Afrikaner nationalism lie in the fact that both link the identity of a linguistic group to the idealization and mystification of their settler forbears, but Butler is nevertheless able to draw deep differences between them using, ironically, apartheid terminology which first became widely

used in South Africa in the 1960s. This divides South Africa's population into a series of 'ethnic groups' which differ from each other culturally and linguistically; it conveniently follows that no one one group then has the majority or the right to rule and, since the English have a vision which is open to co-opting other groups, they should be the arbiters of South Africa's future:

> The English speakers as a group do not have the common bonds which Afrikaners do, but for this very reason their press, writers, churches, universities etc. can work creatively to realise a South African nationalism which is "open-mindedly" agreeable to including all the minority-groups of South African society.[64]

As regards the apartheid state, Butler's history makes use of a standard and effective device for obscuring social reality: it starts from 1948. It is almost as though, and it is indeed sometimes explicitly suggested, that the British imperialists inherited a land already divided along apartheid lines when they came to South Africa. The entire period of British colonial rule has to be ignored in order for him to postulate that 'in the area of politics [the English] have mostly allowed themselves to be led by Afrikaners. Neither have they ever won for themselves a political power base.'[65] Thus the English conveniently escape all responsibility for conflict; they never caused it, never benefited from it, and most of all, are inherently unable to ever do so. They may, indeed, pride themselves in being free from the contamination by 'ideology'

(a term reserved for those ideas that deviate from liberal humanism):

> One of the reasons that they could not associate themselves with Afrikaner Nationalism, was according to [Butler] that this nationalism was equivalent to the opposite of [Afrikaner] values....
> "[I]t seems to be a good thing that South Africa has a small but meaningful part of its society which is relatively free of the compulsion to give over body and soul to the collectivity. The collectivity to which the Essas belong is vague. Essas will not, in my opinion sacrifice reason to deep-seated calls for blood, the land and mother-tongue-education.[66]

If the Afrikaners nationalists have lost their souls (presumably to the Devil), the English on the other hand, are willing to show the way to `a new South Africa [which] will have to be a synthesis of the best from each of its many minority groups.´[67] If they are rejected this is because they live in a misguided and ungrateful land which is like `a sort of crazy, lust-dieted, cursing old Lear, banishing and exiling his most perceptive children´.[68]

3.4 Welcome to my universe: Towards a `Common Culture´

> Those who handed our civilisation on to us believed in its universal validity, and that they were given the task to spread it, to give it to all men. If we do not believe this we are not their heirs, and we must stop talking about civilisation. We shall not be doing violence to the soul of Africa by civilising Africans. They will of course make their own synthesis. The universals will canalise their energies as they have canalised ours.[69]

The rationale for all Butler´s claims for the English in South

Africa is that they came not to displace an alien people but to bring peace to them, not to usurp but to heal. In the face of this their superior moral right to the land need not even be overtly stated, but is implicit everywhere. The full-scale myth that is set in play involved then as now a trio of English, Afrikaans and African, with the English on a special mission to unite all while at the same time retaining their special identity. Though it is never certain whether this common culture is a fact or a goal, it is clear that the English have a major part to play in its formation:

> [J]ust as the multifarious nations and tongues of Europe gradually developed a common culture in the centuries that followed the collapse of the Roman Imperium, so are we, in the vacuum left by the astoundingly slick vanishing acts performed by the British and French Empires, fumbling towards a modus vivendi, a new cultural amalgam, in fact, a new civilization.[70]

The English occupy the middle ground, but also the common ground which must be extended to all. In other words, the criteria and possibilities that constitute the boundary of this common culture will be defined, or have already been defined, by the English, the rest, provided they are willing to give up their own inevitably unreasonable alternative criteria, are welcome to join in. Here contemporary calls for `a peoples culture' are reversed by the suggestion that South Africans already have the basis for a common culture and a shared political destiny; not that `people upon whom history has thrust a common political destiny (whether it is political

autonomy or subjugation) should have a common culture to give expression to their shared experience.'[71]

The role of the South African writer in English is to work towards this common culture; they are to 'articulate the very considerable body of feeling which is common to all sections of South African society', and, Butler writes, 'Alan Paton expresses this commonality'.[72] Part of Butler's concern has been with the elaboration of a form of writing and poetic language conveying these feelings in artistic terms, and capable of turning 'Africa into Art':[73]

> The artist's job is to say what he is impelled to say, and, if necessary, to create a new form of idiom to say it in. Our society is bubbling with things that have never been said, shapes which have never been seperated and contemplated, "still unknown modes of being", if you like. (Adam's first task, you will remember, was to name the beasts.)[74]

English South African writers face specific problems in doing this because, 'though the rivers and ranges are mapped and properly named, life in Africa still moves on an unpredictable frontier'.[75] Therefore the writers are urged to become involved in what Lewis Nkosi, in a review of A New Book of South African Verse, calls 'a poetic attempt to stake a claim to a new territory'.[75]

The new South Africa that Butler looks to will be built on the moral and spiritual tradition of the settlers, and this therefore moves beyond mere geographical definition. Since the settlers are, as we have seen, defined by their mythical

spatial origins and telos, their meaning transcends territorial limits and may be extended to any part of South Africa that can be invested with the sacral qualities of the myth. This potential new cultural amalgam depends crucially on English as a lingua franca, a uniting and binding communicative force planted here along with the settlers.

For some back up proof of the role of the English in this common cultural achievement Butler often refers to the Roman Empire which on its fall brought forth a new cultural amalgam (producing Shakespeare in the process). Apparently the fall of the British Empire has had, despite centuries of evidence to the contrary, the same effect. This idea, of a continuity of historical form (as distinct from the continuity of essence implied in the return to the 1820 settlers), is found in one of Butler's earliest critical articles written in 1950:

> Western Europe during the fifth century presents certain parallels with Africa in the twentieth: sophisticated, skilful, consciously superior Romans mixed with raw energetic barbarians speaking another tongue and utterly different in culture. Out of this uncompromising mixture came Dante and Notre Dame, Shakespeare and St John of the Cross. Without minimising economic and other factors, it seems to me that, as always, cohesion and order come from man's consciousness, i.e., from above, not from below, from mere causation....In response to the disastrous fall of the great city of Rome...[St Augustine]...pivoting history and himself on the cross and its tremendous claims, declared for a common citizenship, for duties and privileges which are far more important than one's Roman or Germanic or Celtic culture,...It was an audacious and difficult idea: but it looked forward,...out of it, gradually, there came a new society, a new synthesis, carrying along with it much of the ruined civiisation which had given it birth.[77]

Here Butler provides the basic code which structures expectations of the completely different and disparate South African situation.[78] It was used, according to Rowlands, by European historians during the revival in the Renaissance of Europe where 'the dissolution of the Ancient World through invasions by barbarian tribes was said to have destroyed a perfect unity from which Medieval Europe had only gradually recovered.'[79] According to them the Germans were responsible. For the French writers of the time the barbarians lay to the east, in Scandanavia and the Slavic world and, according to Rowlands, 'German writers reacting to the Englightenment tradition present an alternative account of their barbarian origins...which transformed barbarian origins from a source of guilt and shame to honourable status':

> Barbarism achieves this polyvalency through the legitimacy of a myth of origin in which exterior force confronts culture rooted in 'habitual response', is domesticated by the latter and tamed to serve a higher moral purpose. This is the historical justification of western captitalist development as a continuous and linear pattern of growth...
>
> Barbarism is the hyper-metaphor for all those tendencies in late 19th century thought to see progress as a series of steps from simplicity to complexity, from savagery to autonomous mastery, the discovery of the necessity of repression and the neurotic internalisation of conflict.[80]

Rowland's article goes on to outline the many different recontextualisations of the meaning of barbarism in order to reveal what he calls the 'sub-text that destruction and violence can be morally justified as creative acts by the

European myth of origin'. It is a justification which Butler has exploited to its fullest extent in his reading of the South African situation.

It is evident that the English are no more involved in programmes of national good will than the Afrikaners have been. Furthermore, the idea that these programmes are 'open-mindedly agreeable' to including all the minority groups in South Africa obscures the basic social fact that there is only one minority group: the white ruling class. Since the 'traditions' on which this common culture is to be based are those of the English, it should come as no surprise that the culture to be pursued should be theirs. There are no historical or logical grounds to suppose that these interests will coincide in any way with those of the black majority.

3.5 The critics

What little academic criticism and comment there is on Butler's cultural theory may be divided into two [illegible]. On one hand there are those like D.M. Maclennan and M. van Wyk Smith (here I would also, but more cautiously, include Stephen Watson), who basically accept the terms and the 'spirit' of his discourse, but who find him to be too optimistic and doubt particular emphases. Thus Watson is in basic agreement with Butler's explanation for 'English cultural impoverishment':

> History is identity, and...the absence of one as an ongoing concern, as a felt presence in the present, will entail the absence of the other and its attendant insecurities among which a sense of unbelonging is the obvious one.[81]

Watson, for example, also employs a notion of 'identity crisis' in his analysis of English writers in South Africa, calling it 'cultural schizophrenia -- 'one reflection of an absence of a past and of a shared communal history'[82] It is, of course, precisely this which Butler seeks to construct. Watson argues that the 1820 British settlement was an event of too little relevance to be given mythic and historic significance. Thus for Watson the terms of the argument are validated; he only doubts that they may be realised in the present social organisation of South Africa.

Similarly, Maclennan and Van Wyk Smith, in a 'Conversation with Guy Butler' doubt that the 1820 settlers tradition is strong enough to provide any kind of cohesion for the English

in South Africa:

> Our history, if one looks at it, and I've looked at a little of it, is not a very impressive history; it's a history which can be repeated anywhere there's a bonanza and people come in in the hopes of making money. There's some excitement to it, and some colour, but nonetheless the numbers of people who came in are too few, all in all, and the period of time is too short for anything of real value to be found.[83]

These critics, too, agree that 'with a rising Black nationalism and a rampant Afrikaans nationalism, he [the English] finds his position difficult, to say the least'.[84] Since, according to my argument, it is invention rather than facts that are at stake, it is easy for Butler to counter that it is in this very weakness (the absence of heroic history) that the strength of the English tradition lies. He argues in this conversation that while there was some, even enough, heroism, it is its relative absence that enables the settlers to serve as a non-sectarian model and as bringers of peace. This, as Butler points out, 'is an extraordinarily difficult thing to embody in a myth':[85]

> It's to the credit of the English-speaking South African whose battle honours in this country, believe me, are second to none...[that] they have not harped on this thing, and the great strength, in one sense, of the English-speaking 'tradition' in this country is that it has never chosen to glamourise its fights, either with Blacks or Boers, into something to be magnified and glorified... [I]t was a colonising movement which was tempered from the start by an enormous educational and missionary emphasis, and not merely among the missionaries themselves, but among the colonisers.
>
> This is what makes it difficult to give a simple or Wild West or Great Trek kind of tradition.

> You've got to find something more complex than that.[86]

The basis for agreement among these commentators lies in identifying political and cultural weaknesses among the English which stem from a lack of community, the so-called identity crisis. The differences with Butler, therefore, are restricted to argument around the degree to which this is true. Butler's assertion that the importance of the English lies in their 'minority status by virtue of the fact that we have a world language, and we are the firm basis for that language in Southern Africa' is left largely unexamined.[87] On the other hand, critics like Njabelo Ndebele and Mike Kirkwood examine the terms of the argument themselves, foregrounding the colonial relationship involved in order to provide an alternative understanding of the situation Butler describes.

Ndebele, in an address delivered at the 1986 Jubilee Conference of the English Academy of South Africa, restores the relations of power involved in the work of the Academy and argues that the strategy that Butler and the English Academy follow, is one of 'benevolent containment and encapsulation in order to maintain, expand, and to exert influence'.[88] His critique of Butler's language theory, to which my own is heavily indebted, remains one which has not been answered. Mike Kirkwood's criticism in 'The Colonizer: A Critique of the English South African Culture Theory' is likewise a radical attack on the whole notion of the English as a buffer

settlement. He argues that the 1820 settlers never did and do not now occupy the socio-economic-military middle ground. Like Ndebele he insists on placing the English, along with the Afrikaners, on the top of a vertical scale rather than in the middle of a horizontal one.

4. Conclusion

Since Butler's literary-critical discourses are an active force in contemporary thinking in South African English Departments (and not merely problematic historiography), my paper has in part attempted to relate the ideas to the real social contradictions to which they are, for some, a viable response. If, as I have argued, Butler's work sets up a legitimizing tale of the English past using a cluster of myths that reinforce one another, thereby constructing an identity for the English in South Africa, this attempt is not really enough. The effect of the cultural theory persists, not because it has a base in social fact, but because, on the contrary, it is a powerful means to obscure those facts. It has served as a rationale for conquest, a rationale flexible enough to cope with the changing needs of the South African English. Therefore I have mainly tried to demonstrate the way the myth itself works, the elements it has in common with other myths and which make it something of an independent force -- persisting despite the changing conditions in which it operates.

What does the future hold for the English South African Culture theory? I have tried to show some of the qualities which provide its power, but that cannot be the whole picture since it is also peculiarly vulnerable at particular points, peculiar because these vulnerabilities have not spelled doom for it before now. Raymond Williams points out that the

persistence of any tradition and its myths depends on a community of individuals who will fulfill the myth[1] and Butler is aware of this when he urges individuals to get involved in the spheres of teaching and to go back to their roots in order to understand their contemporary place and role. But what if the individuals don't want the myth? A recent edition of the English Academy Review points to the problem of a declining and aging membership and to the problem of raising funds for the work of the Academy:

> Our membership is dropping.... Young people are notoriously and conspicuously absent from the ranks of the Academy and similar organizations. We need young people. The image of the Academy I suspect is a fairly antique one composed of greybeards and senators who can't be taught anything. It would be very useful and very healthy if we could have an influx of young people. They won't arrive. They will come only if they are cajoled, persuaded, dragged along to join the Academy's ranks.[2]

The article goes on to explain the problems as stemming from a result of 'a vast misconception about what the English Academy is' and to consider changing the title of the 1820 Foundation to correct similar misconceptions about the 1820 Foundation which is apparently experiencing problems paralell to those of the Academy.[3] But no amount of name-changing, or even 'reassessment' is going to help to attract younger students and academics for whom the the 1820 Foundation's benign myths simply are not an answer to anything. To dismiss these as 'misconceptions' only confirms the distance between these 'young people' and the Foundation. A rhetoric designed to transcend history, and that in effect precludes historical alternatives whilst depending crucially on an appeal

to historical legacy, must in the end take a serious battering from the academic establishment where Butler has held most power, particularly in the face of its inability to deal with the complex reality provokes those questions. Both its appeal and its weakness lie in its smoothing over complexities until it simply cannot deal with this reality.

So these myths have been vulnerable to history because the record of the settler past is recoverable. Butler's tradition with its selective privileges and interests can be, indeed has been, in the work of Ndebele and others, recognized. Most academic departments have long ago begun to question the version of history which presents the English as a benign force. If this has not seriously dented the aims and ideals of the English Academy and similar institutions, it may be that no-one of any real importance is even prepared to debate these issues any longer. Those closer to contemporary South African realities refuse, sometimes on principle, to enter into dialogue with colonial die-hards. This may be why Butler takes recourse every so often to a muted version of the doomsday threat: English will become a barbaric language; will be wiped out; we are moving into the nightmare hiatus between civilizations, and so on.

So what emerges when history overtakes its own myths and rhetoric? Nothing much, only the facts of conflict; a more mundane distinction between moral purpose and social interest;

a more chargeable concept of 'frontiers' as signifying constructed barriers, rather than a heaven-sent summons to expand; a sense of the difference between liberal ideals and transcendent truth, and along with this, perhaps, a genuine debate about ideological alternatives, instead of the redundant cultural ambitions that have confined South African political and intellectual life, and warped the growth of English studies in South Africa.

Notes

Notes to Introduction

[1] Since my concern is with Professor Butler's academic writing and his pedagogic role rather than his specific contribution as poet or dramatist I have concentrated on his non-fictional prose writings rather than on his more properly literary creations. This is not because the creative and theoretical formulations are differently grounded, on the contrary, but because it is in his conference papers, newspaper articles, and journal articles that his ideas on culture are most clearly stated and easily accessed. Insofar as his ideas have been diffused beyond the universities this has been largely through media coverage of speeches in his various institutional roles. Except for the mention that he is a poet and dramatist, criticism of his poetry is largely confined to academic articles.

[2] A note on terminology: my use of the word `construction' (social construction, ideological construction, symbolic construction, historical construction, etc.) is not meant to carry a moral content, but is meant to indicate any premise or logical thesis without any sociological, historical or, psychological referent where, usually, as Bourdieu argues, the misrecognition of its status as a construction is a necessary condition for its working effectiveness.

[3] Guy Butler, A Book of South African Verse, p. xvii.

[4] Butler, `The Future of English-speaking South Africa', p. 20.

[5] Butler, `Butler Explains his "Road Ahead" Speech', p. 20.

[6] Frederic Jameson, The Political Unconscious, p.59.

Notes to Chapter 2

[1] R. Murphy and J. Vinson, Contemporary Poets of the English Language, p. 169.

[2] Geoffrey Haresnape, `The Battle of the Books: The Evolution of the Academic Criticism of South African Literature in English 1956-1976', p. 41.

[3] For a fuller discussion of this debate see Haresnape in above article.

[4] Butler, `Poetry, Drama and the Public Taste', p. 109.

[5] Butler, `An Aspect of Tragedy', p. 16.

[6] Butler, 'Poetry, Drama and the Public Taste', p. 109.

[7] Butler, 'The Purpose of the Conference', p. 13.

[8] Haresnape, 'The Battle of the Books: The Evolution of the Academic Criticism of South African Literature in English 1956-1976', p. 47.

[9] Butler, 'The Purpose of the Conference, p. 16.

[10] Butler, 'The Purpose of the Conference, p. 16-7.

[11] Jack Cope, 'Notes', Contrast, 42, p. 95.

[12] See for example Butler's 'Non-fictional Prose, with Special Reference to Early Diaries and Reminiscences in English'.

[13] This is the list given by Haresnape in 'Notes', Contrast, 42, p. 95.

[14] Haresnape, 'Notes', Contrast, 42, pp. 95-6.

[15] Staff Memorandum, Rhoes University English Department, 1971.

[16] Butler, in English and South Africa, ed. Alan Lennox Short, p. 10.

[17] Butler, 'Role and Duties of English-speaking South Africans, p. 8.

[18] Cope, 'Notes', Contrast, 40, p. 94.

[18] Cope, 'Notes', Contrast, 40, p. 94.

[20] Michael Vaughan, 'Ideological Directions in the Study of Southern African Literature', p. 48.

[21] Butler, quoted in English and South Africa, edited by Alan Lennox-Short. 6.

[22] Burkart Holzner, Reality Construction in Society, p. 137.

[23] Malvern Van Wyk Smith, Olive Schreiner and After. p. xv.

[24] A Book of South African Verse was published in 1959 and A New Book of South African Verse edited with Chris Mann was published in 1979. Both have been criticized as being politically highly selective. Whereas the earlier edition included no poetry by black authors, the second was criticized

by Ian Glenn (English in Africa, 6, no. 2, p. 71) for leaving out `anything threatening or angry or bitter...in favour of a sanitized, de-gutted version, without any real consideration of the problems involved in dealing with protest poetry.´

[25] John Sharp, `Introduction: Constructing Social Reality´, p. 1.

[26] `A New Door is Opening for Guy Butler´, p. 9.

[27] Butler, in Contemporary Poets, pp. 120-1

[28] I am indebted here to Robert Thornton´s, `Culture: A Contemporary Definition´, pp. 17-28

[29] Thornton, `Culture: A Contemporary Definition´, p. 28.

[30] `"Important Role" for English Speakers´, p. 31.

[31] Philip Snowden, Cape Times, see NELM holdings under Butler, G.

[32] Haresnape, `Full Reflections´, p. 83.

[33] André Brink, `Three South African English Poets´, p. 38.

[34] `Professor urges English Survival Tactics´, Cape Times, see NELM holdings under Butler, G.

[35] See for instance The Star, 17 March 1976, p. 22, and Cape Times, 21 February 1976, p. 10.**Q Snowden

[36] Philip Snowden, Cape Times, details unknown, see NELM holdings under Butler.

[37] Butler, `The Future of English-Speaking South Africa´, p. 4.

[38] Butler, `Role and Duties of English-speaking South Africans´, p. 8.

[39] `A Ray of Hope for the Leaderless Ones´, p. unknown.

[40] `About a Guy Called Butler´, p. unknown.

[41] Butler, `1820 Settler Monument´, SABC.

[42] Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction, p. 25.

[43] `Letters to a soldier become a book´, p. unknown.

[44] `After thirty Adamant years, Guy Butler needs time for anger and activity', p. 7.

[45] Bourdieu, Distinction, 23.

[46] I am indebted here to Raymond Williams, `Traditions, Institutions, and Formations', pp. 115-120.

Notes to Chapter 3

[1] The `two gifts' idea is found in much of Butler's work and is succinctly summarised in `South African English Bring Two Gifts', p. 26. I am heavily indebted to Susan Bercovitch's article `Rhetoric as Authority: Puritanism, the Bible, and the Myth of America', pp. 5-18, for many of the ideas in this section.

[2] Butler, When Boys were Men, p. ix. In his chapter `The British and the Cape, 1814-1834', Jeff Peires does some damage to the `Take Root or Die' myth by showing that the British link with the land was never very strong: ``[T]he British brought with them the new conception, foreign to both African and Afrikaner farmers, that land was a commodity that could be acquired and sold without ever necessarily being posessed first'(p. 480). He also shows that unity was never achieved among the settler parties. The joint-stock parties began to `break up even before they landed in South Africa' and `several immigrants sought employment in the towns within the month of their arrival in the Albany district (April 1820)'. Peires records that `by May 1823, only 438 of the original 1004 male grantees remained on the rural locations'(p. 475).

[3] Butler, When Boys were Men, pp. 1-87.

[4] Butler, `South African Literature', pp. 44-5.

[5] Butler, `The English Poet in South Africa' p. unknown.

[6] Butler, `Poetry, Drama and the Public Taste', p. 110.

[7] Butler, `Poetry, Drama and the Public Taste', p. 111.

[8] `SA "Still Faces Frontier Struggle"', p. 6.

[8] Butler, `1820 Settler Monument', SABC.

[10] `Role and Duties of English-speaking South Africans', p. 8.

[11] `SA "still faces Frontier Struggle"', p. 6.

[12] Butler, `The Development of a South African National Character´, pp. 67-8.

[13] `No Excuse for Apathy´, p. unknown.

[14] Kenneth Good, `Settler Colonialism: Economic Development and Class Formation´, p. 607.

[15] See for example Martin Legassick, `The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography´ and Mike Kirkwood, `The Colonizer: A Critique of the English South African Culture Theory´ who argue that the Griquas and so-called coloureds, if anyone, were caught in the middle during military skirmishes on the frontier. Legassick argues that they also acted as go-betweens in the exchange of goods between the Bantu-speaking communities and the white settlers.

[16] According to one of the most widely available textbooks on South African history, T.R.H. Davenport´s South Africa: A Modern History, 6 700 British troops landed at the Cape in 1806. Earlier a smaller British force had been dispatched to the Cape. By 1820 the presence of English traders, missionaries, etc., was established at the Cape. There is no way of telling how many of these there were, but it may safely be assumed that their numbers ran into the thousands. The Byrne settlement of 1849 in Natal numbered some 5 000 English and Scots. The earliest European settlement (not English), took place under Batavian rule. This brought some 8 000 whites to occupy the area between the Fish and Gamtoos Rivers.

[17] Williams, `Traditions, Institutions, and Formations´, p. 116.

[18] I am indebted for many of my ideas in this section to Michael Rowlands, `Repetition and Exteriorisation in Narratives of Historical Origins´, pp. 43-62.

[19] Rowlands, ibid., pp. 46-7.

[20] Butler, `South African Literature´, p. 40.

[21] `"More Hard Work, Less Talk Needed in South Africa"´, p. unknown.

[22] `An Extremely Busy Man´, p. 22.

[23] Anton Heard, `Another Successful Radio Feature on 1820 Settlers´, p. unknown.

[24] Butler, `1820 Settlers Memorial Planned for Creative Activities´, p. 10.

[25] Butler, `1820 Settler's Memorial Planned for Creative Activiteis', p. 10.

[26] See for instance, Anita Temple, `A Living Memorial to Settlers', Thelma Neville, `No Dead Memorial this', and `1820 Settlers Monument planned for "Creative Activities"'.

[27] Butler, `1820 Settler Monument', SABC, see NELM holdings under Butler, G.

[28] H. Goodwin, Songs from the Settler City, p. 14 and 22.

[29] John Sharp, `Ethnic Group and Nation: The Apartheid Vision in South Africa', pp. 87-8.

[30] `Engelssprekendes kan SA lei tot "Nuwe" Nationalisme"', p. 4.

[31] `Die "Nuwe" Engelstalige Suid-Afrikaner bring Hoop vir Toekoms, p. 12.

[32] Butler, `The Future of English in Africa', p. 95.

[33] Butler, `The Future of English in Africa', p. 92.

[34] Butler, `The Future of English in Africa', p. 90.

[35] Butler, `Guy Butler', p. 69.

[36] Butler, `English Verse in Africa', p. 1-2.

[37] Butler, The 1820 Settlers: An Illustrated Commentary, p. 339.

[38] `1820 Settler Monument', SABC.

[39] Butler, `Role and Duties of English-speaking South Africans', p. 8.

[40] Butler, `The Language of the Land', p. 91.

[41] `English as a Barbaric Language', p. unknown.

[42] `"Where do we stand?" -- Question of Identity', p. unknown.

[43] Butler, `The Future of English in Africa', p. 97.

[44] [illegible]

[45] `Lets have Peace Between our Two Languages', p. 6.

[46] Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, p. 186.

[47] Butler, 'The Future of English in Africa', p. 95.

[48] Butler, 'The Future of English in Africa', p. 97.

[49] Butler, 'Guy Butler', p. 68.

[50] Butler, 'The Nature and Purpose of the Conference', p. 16.

[51] 'The Neglect of English', p. 6.

[52] See Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Literate Tradition and Social Conservation', in Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, pp. 107-140.

[53] Butler, 'The Language of the Land', p. 91.

[54] Bourdieu, Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, p. 115-6.

[55] Bourdieu, ibid., p. 120.

[56] Butler, staff memorandum.

[57] This feeling, however, soon dissolves in the socially granted prestige of being recognised as 'learned'. The evidence is the ease, the form, gained with three or four years reading of well-known aesthetes, with which students are able to chat about literature. Being able to 'talk like a book', as Bourdieu puts it, becomes the camoflage behind which a casual acquaintance with a dozen authors is the entire sum of four years learning.

[58] Bourdieu, Reproduction, p. 124.

[59] Ndebele Njabulo, 'The English Language and Social Change in South Africa', p. 7.

[60] Butler has compared politics to a disease; see for example, Karoo Morning, p. 162, where, writing of the 1920s when the Joint Council Movement was launched, he says: 'There had been a severe epidemic of measles. There had also been a severe epidemic of politics in the location.'

[61] Butler, 'National Flags and Anthems', p. 207.

[62] Butler, 'Guy Butler', p. 68.

[63] Butler, 'Cantata for Children'.

[64] 'Engelssprekendes kan SA lei tot Nuwe "Nasionalisme"', p. 4.

[65] ibid., p. 4.

[66] `Engelssprekendes kan SA lei tot Nuwe "Nationalisme"', p. 4.

[67] `Engelse', p. 10.

[68] Butler, `On Being Present where you are: Some Observations on South African Poetry', 1930-1960', p. 100.

[69] Butler, `The Development of a South African National Character', p. 70.

[70] Butler, `On Being Present where you are', p. 87.

[71] Butler, `On Being Present where you are', p. 70.

[72] Robbins, David, `"You are Suddenly Alive..."', p.4.

[73] Butler, `The English Poet in South Africa', p. unknown.

[74] Butler, `Poetry, Drama, and the Public Taste', p. 107.

[75] Butler, `The English Poet in South Afrca', p. unknown.

[76] Lewis Nkosi, `From Veld-lovers to Freedom Fighters', p. unknown.

[77] Butler, `South African Literature', pp. 44-5.

[78] This is Michael Rowlands idea in, `Repetition and Exteriorisation in Narratives of Historical Origins', pp. 43-61.

[79] Rowlands, ibid., pp. 46-7.

[80] Rowlands, ibid., pp. 59-60.

[81] Stephen Watson, `Liberal Ideology and Some English South Afican Novelists', p. 11.

[82] Watson, ibid., p. 12.

[83] Butler, `A Conversation with Guy Butler', p. 48.

[84] Butler, `A Conversation with Guy Butler', p. 87.

[85] Butler, `A Conversation with Guy Butler', p. 48-9.

[86] Butler, `A Conversation with Guy Butler´, p. 50.

[87] Butler, `A Conversation with Guy Butler´, p. 50.

[88] Ndebele, ibid., p. 1.

Notes to Conclusion

[1] Raymond Williams, `Traditions, Institutions, and Formations´.

[2] Angus Rose, `Proceedings of the English Academy of Southern Africa´, p. 214.

[3] Angus Rose, ibid., p. 216.

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