

FOR  
REFERENCE ONLY

ACCOMMODATING THE PASSENGER

INTERIOR DESIGN FOR  
THE UNION-CASTLE LINE  
1945 – 1977

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## Abbreviations

- BF National Maritime Museum Brass Foundry
- CAY Cayzer Archive, formerly on loan to the National Maritime Museum
- CL National Maritime Museum
- IM Iziko Museums, Cape Town
- MMC Marsh Maritime Centre, Iziko Museums, Cape Town
- MMM Merseyside Maritime Museum
- NLSA National Library of South Africa, Cape Town Campus
- NMM National Maritime Museum

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the history of interior design for the Union-Castle passenger liners sailing from Southampton to South Africa between 1945 and 1977, when the last Union-Castle ship left Cape Town. Interrogating the passenger accommodation of five Union-Castle ships, *Pretoria Castle* (1948), *Edinburgh Castle* (1948), *Pendennis Castle* (1960), *Windsor Castle* (1961), and *Reina del Mar* (1973), it analyses the design choices and decisions taken by Union-Castle and its managing company, British & Commonwealth Shipping Ltd. (B&C), posits reasons for these, and considers their implications for the creation of Union-Castle's interiors.

Drawing upon established design-historical methods, I also argue throughout for an interdisciplinary approach, in particular since this enables a reading of the 'un-designed' and non-canonical space. I contend that it is essential to engage with the wider histories that provided the environment for Union-Castle's operations, and argue that this is a design history that cannot be meaningfully written without also tracing the relationship between Union-Castle, B&C and the Afrikaner National Party government (1948-1994). It is this relationship that provides the underlying discussion of the thesis: the extent to which the co-constitutive themes of both the 'representation of politics' and the 'politics of representation' informed the interior design of Union-Castle's ships.

Such was the nature of the National Party's hegemony that its political ethos can clearly be demonstrated to have had an impact not only upon the process by which, but also the interiors of the vehicles with which, the shipping line conducted business. Of critical significance to this history is the fact that nowhere on board any of the ships that provide my case studies is there ever any reference to black Africa. Instead, a series of interiors were produced which were variously inscribed with wholly 'white' ideas about emigration, nationhood and colonial relations between Britain and Africa, and, in the post-colonial

period, with ideas about British heritage versus modernity, power-broking vis à vis Pretoria and with discourses associated with the rise of air travel and mass tourism.



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However much one roots through archives, and however great a return these yield, there is no substitute in enlivening a project for the input provided by human voice and personal recollection. And that these elements are inevitably subjective is also hugely instructive, in fact. For their time, ideas and enthusiasm, I would like to thank Ann Haynes and Pam and Peter Laister in the UK, and Vee Wilson, Alice Herd, Lalou Meltzer, Elizabeth Van Heyningen and Peter du Toit in Cape Town. It was a particular privilege to learn more about Jean Monro's work for Union-Castle from her long-time colleague and friend John Lusk and I am very grateful to him for his time.

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Finally, thank you to the anonymous blogger who wrote in response to an entry I posted about this research on the NMM blogspot; 'This is extremely helpful info!!! Especially since you guys are offering it for free!! Very good listing. Everything is true. Thanx'. I think there are a few people out there who may not agree with you as to the 'truth' of what the three of us, Anne, John and I, have tried to put together here. But I am very pleased that it meant something to you. Surely this is the only real point of any kind of research study: that it means at least something, to someone else, somewhere else.

This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall  
Or as a moat defensive to a house,  
Against the envy of less happier lands;  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Act 2, Scene 1

She's got supporters in high-up places,  
Who turn their heads to the City Sun,  
Jo'anna gives them the fancy money,  
Oh! To tempt anyone who'd come.

Eddy Grant, *Gimme Hope Jo'anna*, 1988

I think that in a tumultuous world where emotion gets the better of common sense, we cannot afford to lose any of our trade.

Sir Nicholas Cayzer, *Time and Tide*, June 1976

## Introduction

### *Background*

Taking a route past the tourist shops, franchise restaurants and groups of would-be Ladysmith *Isicathamiya* singers at Cape Town's harbour and celebrated urban regeneration project, the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, it is possible to locate Union-Castle House, a structure once central to the maritime history of The Mother City, as Cape Town is known by South Africans. [Fig. 1] Nowadays more noticeable, to my foreign eyes at least, for the armed security guard standing sentry at the cashpoint embedded in its entrance, this modest, low-set 1919 dock building offers a reminder (as does the Union-Castle office building, its grander, neo-classical 1897 counterpart on Cape Town's Adderley Street) of the shipping line that bound South Africa and Great Britain together for the greater part of the twentieth century.

Both of Cape Town's Union-Castle buildings were designed by the British architect Herbert Baker (1862 -1946). Initially practising in the Cape at Prime Minister Cecil Rhodes' invitation, Baker also worked on Pretoria's Union Buildings, and later, with Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944), on the Secretariat and Parliament House in New Delhi, India. Baker's background and his Union-Castle buildings provide something of an architectural synecdoche for the position of the shipping line as a vital link in the historical relationship between London and Pretoria in the twentieth century. In view of his practice, which included many colonial administrative building projects, Baker has been described as something of an 'architect-imperialist' (Merrington:1997). Others have seen his work as representing the first attempts to provide a (white) South African architecture for the new post-colonial Union of South Africa. Dipti Bhagat (2002), for example, whilst acknowledging views on the imperial content of Baker's architecture, has revisited his work, seeing it as the realisation of an effort to establish a Cape Edwardian aesthetic. In his article 'The aesthetics of Union' (1997), Peter Merrington has written of the 'imperial hieroglyphs' of Baker's work as 'exemplifying Cape imperial iconography', which is useful in that it raises a number of historical issues (Merrington:1997:651).

Similarly, Southampton's 1846 Union-Castle House (built on the edge of the mid-nineteenth century docks for the Union Steamship Company, before its 1900 merger with the Castle Line), is a building in which it is possible to glimpse the later trajectory of the shipping line's history. [Fig. 2] A functional, Italianate design by Alfred Giles (1816-1895), the building's workaday appearance is testimony to its initial use as the Customs House before being taken over for sole occupancy by Union-Castle in 1922. That Giles was a civil engineer rather than an architect may account for the building's rather cumbersome, to-the-point aesthetic. Giles was also chairman of the Union Steamship Company, and his unpoetic approach to the design of his shipping line's land-based representative betrays a 'business-first' attitude that, as this thesis will demonstrate, was to become the hallmark, over a century later, of the management of Union-Castle under its chairman, Sir Nicholas Cayzer. Like Cayzer, Giles had close connections with the British Conservative Party, and, like Sir Ian Lloyd, Conservative MP for Portsmouth and from 1956 Union-Castle's economic advisor and Director of Research, Giles too held a seat in the Commons at various times between 1878 and 1892 as Conservative member for Southampton.

Although far from ostentatious, Union-Castle's South African Waterfront building is almost romantic when compared with its British equivalent, a quality not simply due to the fact that Table Mountain forms its backdrop, or to the frequent possibility of encountering it in the African sunshine. Embodying the establishment of a national South African aesthetic, yet at the same time demonstrating the country's colonial ties, the Cape Town Union-Castle building offers a metaphor for the complex and involved connections between South Africa and Great Britain and between Pretoria and the Union-Castle shipping line, relationships onto which were projected any number of nuanced associations, aspirations and alliances. It is these relationships which lie at the heart of this design-historical study of the ocean liners that sailed between the two nations.

Union-Castle's origins lie in the founding of the Southampton Steam Shipping Company (later, under Alfred Giles' chairmanship, the Union Steamship Company) in 1853. The company originally served to transport coal from South Wales to Southampton; by the 1850s it was simply known as the Union Line, and at this date won a contract to convey mail to South Africa. Having built up the

Castle Mail Packet Company, which traded on the Calcutta route via the Cape of Good Hope, Giles' company had consolidated its position by the end of the century. Meanwhile, the business of another shipping magnate, Sir Donald Currie's Castle Line, was to suffer substantial losses as a result of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Currie redirected his fleet to sail to the Cape only, and his Castle Mail Packet Company had in 1876 also been awarded the mail contract to South Africa. Following years of both competition and, during the first Anglo-Boer War (1880-1881), co-operation, the Union Line and Castle Packet Line merged on 8 March 1900 to create the Union-Castle Mail Steamship Company Ltd.

Significantly, throughout its long history Union-Castle was both central to, and took the leading role in, the conglomerate of European shipping lines which operated on the Cape Route: the South African Conference Lines, or more simply, the Conference. Numerous incidents throughout the period from 1900 to 1977, recorded in the company's Managing Directors' Minute Books (now held in the Caird Library Archive at the National Maritime Museum), testify to Union-Castle's dominance of the Conference; those minuted on 22 August 1947 were typical of many others noted for the post-war operations of Union-Castle surveyed by this thesis:

#### South African Mail Service

The Chairman reported that he had had an interview with Mr L C Burke, Post-Master General of the Union of South Africa, when he had advised Mr Burke of the fact that the British Post Office were shipping mails for South Africa by other fast vessels sailing in the same week as the Company's regular Mail vessels and that Mr Burke had undertaken to approach the GPO on the subject with a view to ensuring that only this Company's vessels are used for the conveyance of mails to South Africa, except in weeks when no such vessel is available. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (3519))

Likewise, in March 1954 a note was entered into the Managing Directors' Minute Books to the effect that in return for regular payments from Union-Castle, the only other British company to sail regularly to South Africa, the Ellerman & Bucknall Steamship Company, was to sign up to an

agreement that Union-Castle had 'prior claim on the conveyance of cargo and passengers, with Ellerman's undertaking not to negotiate with the Union for a Mail Contract as long as the agreement was in force.' (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (10147))

Not only did Union-Castle hold a monopoly within the Conference, but since this grouping represented the fulcrum of the trading partnership between Britain and South Africa, it was therefore also critical to wider relations between the two nations. Equally, Union-Castle was responsible for a significant percentage of British investment in South Africa, the contentiousness of which was to peak at the end of the period under survey and to continue well into the 1980s, as the anti-apartheid movement around the world became increasingly vehement. Throughout the post-war years explored by this study, funds were deposited in South African banks and ventures, first by Union-Castle, and later, after its takeover of Union-Castle in 1956, by the line's new managing company, British and Commonwealth Shipping Co. Ltd (B&C) and by chairman Sir Nicholas Cayzer's companies' holdings, an investment strategy that neither of the potential crisis moments offered by the coming to power of the National Party in 1948 and South Africa's exit from the Commonwealth in 1961, ever seriously interrupted. As Union-Castle Managing Directors' Minute Books testify:

8 August 1947

It was recorded that an investment of funds in South Africa had been made. Two sums of 50 000 each were being placed by the Cape Town [Union-Castle] branch with the Standard Bank of South Africa and Barclays. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (3545))

30 April 1958

It was recorded that monies were to be paid to the National Veld Trust since Mr McIntyre of the [Union-Castle] Local Board strongly supported the appeal, he did so since Mr van Heerded, Veldt Trust Trustee carried very great influence in Afrikaans-speaking circles, amongst whom the publicizing of the benefits of sea-travel would be the ultimate benefit of the Company.

14 August 1969 *The Daily News* [South Africa]

Multi-million rand office and shop development creates the largest block of flats in South Africa is taking shape in Durban.

Commissioned by Cayzer Irvine, the R7 000 00, 35 storey complex will radically change Durban's skyline. (NLSA MSC 69 6 8)

Whilst historians disagree<sup>1</sup> as to the reasons for the highly complicated ties that historically bound Britain and South Africa, all are agreed as to the symbiotic, though labyrinthine, nature of that relationship. It is for this reason that any attempt to understand the circumstances in which B&C traded must address the political situation of its trading partner, Pretoria. A brief political history of South Africa between the years surveyed by this thesis, 1945 – 1977 is therefore used to foreground and contextualise an investigation of the Union-Castle shipping line. An equivalent history of the British political history through these years is not provided. There are two reasons for this: firstly because this thesis is constructed according to the British Arts and Humanities Research Council's requirement that it respond to a clear brief (Appendix 1) which specifies an investigation into South African rather than British politics (although specific instances such as the arms embargo debate of the 1960s are referred to where relevant (see Chapter 4); secondly, since it was Pretoria and not Westminster who were the key trading partners for the most important –and lucrative- of B&C's mail and passenger service routes.

The influence of British political and social culture and economic conditions during the years under survey has not been ignored however; although not relevant to the discussion in explicit terms, these circumstances should be recognised as underpinning the discussion in Chapter Two of cultures of production in the post-war period, in Chapter Three of the importance of Windsor Castle as representative of the new Elizabethan age and in Chapter Four, of negotiations between Nicholas Cayzer and Prime Minister Harold Wilson about the arms trade with South Africa and also

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Ronald Hyam and Peter Henshaw (2003) take issue with 'the dominant revisionist historiography' [which has] written an overall economic determinism' (Hyam and Henshaw):2003:3) into the nature of the relationship between Britain and South Africa in the post-war period.



in respect of the coming of containerisation. Certainly, as will be argued in Chapters Two and Three, not only were the ships British built, owned operated, crewed and flagged but were inscribed with particular references to the British (English) historical past.

In this study, too, there is an acknowledgement of the thorniness of the links between Britain and South Africa which underpins its core research question as mapped out by the project brief (Appendix 1): that is, to provide a design-historical examination of Union-Castle line's interiors from 1945 to 1977, against the background created by the apartheid administration. In adopting an approach which deals with the complexities, difficulties and contradictions inherent to any tracing of the history of interiors, this study also acknowledges recently emerging approaches within the history of the modern interior (notably Sparke, *The Modern Interior* (2008)), which seek to question and reinterpret the more linear thinking within the field which, if left unchallenged, might otherwise represent an oversimplification and delimitation of the discipline's discussions. Furthermore, with regard to its complex political context, if this is a very knotted history in terms of colonial/neo-colonial relationships between Britain and South Africa, the story becomes even more Gordian with the coming to power of the Afrikaner National Party. The route I have chosen to take in offering a reading of Union-Castle's post-war interiors has by no means been an immediately obvious one. I have arrived at it, however, since I can only think that, in the highly charged and acutely politicised years under survey – those of the apartheid era – attempting a survey that does not also recognise the critical importance of political and economic histories of South Africa (see discussion p.5) and the impact that these have had upon the various modes of visual representation examined here would have proved a rather bland exercise producing a project which would have failed to meet the project brief (Appendix 1) and offer only to produce yet another descriptive survey of the ocean liner (see discussion p.36). It has been very helpful that whilst writing, new texts have emerged which have endorsed this approach. The journal *Interiors: Design, Architecture, Culture* (Berg: 2010) provides published evidence of the dynamism currently being brought to interior design history through external perspectives and *Global Design History* (Adamson, Riello, Teasley: Routledge: forthcoming) posits objects, and the stories they can tell us about cultural interactions

on a global scale locating the discussion of design and its various forms of practice within themes such as trade and empire.

Coming to power as a result of a small majority general election win in May 1948, the right-wing Afrikaner National Party (the ruling political party throughout the period under survey) is remembered most infamously for its imposition of apartheid, the doctrinal, political, social and economic structure of racially divisive rule which was to continue until 1994 and that year's first democratic general election, after which the African National Congress (ANC) returned to government and former ANC activist Nelson Mandela to presidency. Whereas before the Second World War South African governments had displayed – and acted upon – segregationist impulses with regard to the country's black, coloured, Indian and white populations, the years following 1948 were to see the all-embracing concept of apartheid become institutionalised, endlessly extended and ever more entrenched.

Derived from the Afrikaans word 'apartness', apartheid, a key policy of the National Party, was the doctrine of racial segregation, discrimination and disenfranchisement enforced by successive white minority, National Party governments over South Africa's majority populations: its black, Indian and coloured communities. With the Nationalists' accession to power, 1948 became the occasion of a dramatic shift from unpalatable, though limited, discriminatory measures towards a systematic and determinedly ideologically-driven negation of rights for all but the minority white population. The structure of South African society was from now on to be based upon a hierarchy of race and colour enforced by a merciless system for the imposition of regulations which were to affect every sphere of ordinary life, domicile, relationships, work and education. Despite its all-encompassing nature, it would be wrong, however, to view post-war South African politics solely in terms of apartheid; from the point of view of this study it is also important to recognise that this ideology and

system of legalised racism was critically connected to another issue of immense bearing on relationships with Britain, that of Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>2</sup>

Preoccupation with issues around their own ethnic solidarity and white identity was, for many hard-line Afrikaners, and in particular those aligned with the National Party, an obsessive quest in its own right and one that was conducted without reference to their black majority compatriots. Most significantly, however, the ideals and rhetoric of an imagined and unified Afrikaner state very easily lent themselves, as a corollary, to the endorsement of a racially and economically exclusive power-base. As James Barber notes, Johannes (John) Vorster, South African prime minister between 1966 and 1978, was to record privately that the cardinal principal of his party 'is the retention, maintenance and immortalisation of Afrikaner identity within a white sovereign state' and that, 'Apartheid...is merely a means to achieve this' (1999:183).

If the irreducible nature of Afrikaner ambition with regard to nationhood was the building and protection of the white (Afrikaans-speaking) race, then these aims were not only quick to translate into legislation regarding the Indian, black and coloured communities, but also had implications for relations with other Europeans, and in particular with their sometime allies, and often adversaries, the British. Central to any study of British-South African relations, then, is the question of the continuing importance of the connection, 'the special relationship and its mutual benefits', which, as Nelson Mandela, once described, 'history has bound us in' (Hyam and Henshaw:2003:xi).

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<sup>2</sup> The term Afrikaner, as used in the twentieth-century context, refers to all white Afrikaans-speaking people, that is, those of the (larger grouping) of Cape Dutch origin and of the (smaller constituency) of Boer origin, both of which descended from northwestern European settlers who first arrived in the Cape of Good Hope during its administration by the Dutch East India Company between 1652 and 1795. In particular, Afrikaners claimed ancestry from Dutch Calvinists, and from smaller groups of Germans and French Huguenots. Amongst wider Afrikaner society, the Boers in particular came to represent the descendants of the Dutch-speaking settlers of the eastern Cape frontier in Southern Africa during the 18th century as well as those who left the Cape Colony during the 19th century to escape British rule and settle in the Orange Free State, Transvaal, and to a lesser extent Natal. English-speaking white South Africans comprised, and were historically viewed as representing, a separate group again.

Basing their substantial and involved history *The Lion and the Springbok* (2003) – a study of British and South African relationships from the late nineteenth century – around the use of British government records, historians Ronald Hyam and Peter Henshaw have identified the ties that continued to connect the two nations in the post-war period. Whilst accepting that the most persistent of the links between the two countries were those based on economic exchange, they usefully argue that a whole raft of other considerations were also at play. These Hyam and Henshaw identify as ranging from mutual enmity to the Soviet Union during the Cold War years to sporting and other cultural connections. Taking exception to the 'simplistic' economic determinism they detect in the analyses of some of their peers, Hyam and Henshaw describe their own position as being one of 'an alternative approach to the complex and uneasy special relationship between Britain and South Africa', and one which

...provides a place for the economic dimension whilst widening the perspective to restore political, strategic, geo-political, diplomatic, ethical and socio-cultural considerations to their appropriate place. (Hyam and Henshaw:2003:4)

This study at once accepts and rejects the methodological argument advanced for *The Lion and the Springbok*. Whilst it is a premise of this thesis that design history cannot be studied in a vacuum, and that wider historical considerations must have a bearing upon the subject, my discussions as to the origins and nature of Union-Castle's ships' interiors in fact privilege an outlining of the political economy of the line's trading with South Africa (and also of the political position that underpinned this).

This said, the cultural and social dimensions of sailing the Cape Route, and of the colonial and post-colonial relationships that provided the occasions, reason and context for this travel, are also included within my argument wherever I believe that their discussion facilitates a reading of the interiors in question. The enduring impact upon the visitor of arrival in Cape Town by sea (or indeed the view from land of an approaching lavender-hulled liner, as has been described to me by

people who witnessed it at the time) should surely be mentioned as forming a very significant element of the highly significant poetics behind Union-Castle's place in this history, something which fed into and shaped the regard with which the shipping line was held, which lay behind the utter dismay felt by many in Cape Town at news of the discontinuation of the Mail service (for example, van der Post:1977) and which in turn, therefore, informed Union-Castle's key role within the South African-British partnership. More than this, arrival into Table Bay provides a useful analogy for thinking about Union-Castle as a *journey* and for its passenger accommodation as providing a particular *mise-èn-scene* for this literal, physical, geographical, emotional and metaphysical transition from A to B.

Table Bay, and the vista it affords of the famous flat-topped mountain that dominates the scene, is at once limitless, but at the same time bounded by Table Mountain itself, a situation that equally provides a reflection of life on board ship. Table Bay as figurative space – inflected by generations of travellers with all the poetics associated with arriving within this marvellous setting – mirrors the imaginative longings of travel and the 'place without place' progression of the ocean liner across the sea. At the same time, however, Table Mountain (representing the barrier behind which the Europeanised Cape Colony historically ended and point beyond which Africa began), circumscribes the envisioned locale, just as passengers on board ship are contained and framed by their physical environment, whatever the limitless horizons of the constructed and imagined spaces they occupy.

First settled by Europeans in 1652 with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck and the men of the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC), the Dutch East India Company, the Cape of Good Hope was to become a British crown colony, once it had been wrested from the Dutch in 1795. From this time onwards, although ownership of the Cape was frequently contested, Table Bay's picturesque view of land from sea, located securely beneath the benign might of Table Mountain, retained a particular symbolism for maritime Britain. John McAleer (2010) has written of the scene and its aesthetic and metaphysical associations for European engagement in the region: 'As one of the first features of landscape space in southern Africa with which European seafarers came into

contact...[Table Bay] has a long history of representation'. Table Mountain thus came to be seen as both beacon and icon, becoming 'a recurrent, but malleable, anchor around which European visitors constructed and articulated their impressions of the bay, the town and the adjacent hinterland.' (McAleer:2010:17).

From the anonymous commentator on Sir Francis Drake's circumnavigation of the globe (recorded in Richard Hakluyt's *Voyages and discoveries: The principal navigations, voyages, traffiques and discoveries of the English nation* of 1589, (cited in McAleer:2010:2), to Union-Castle pursuette Ann Haynes, the first arrival into Cape Town on board *Transvaal Castle* in 1965, travellers by sea have been awed by the view that they met with on arrival at the Cape:

...a most stately thing, and the fairest Cape we saw in the whole circumference of the earth...(McAleer:2010:2)

...I'm down here and can hardly believe it, I keep pinching myself...It's just like the picture in my geography book at Bishopshalt School. Oh, I'm so thrilled to see it...Got in here and I was allowed to rush up on deck and there was the Mountain with the tablecloth on, marvelous. (Haynes:1997:5)

Together with approaches by sea into the city of Venice and Sydney Harbour, sailing into Cape Town has long ranked as providing a singular visual experience for ocean travellers. Nowadays, without a private yacht the only way to approximate this arrival is to book a chartered trip around the Bay or, strangely, to make the crossing out to sea in reverse, on one of the tourist-laden ferries bound for Robben Island, when one encounters Table Mountain's majestic visual hold over the Bay for the first time. The latter option, however, takes on a spectatorial or even voyeuristic aspect missing from the experience of ocean liner passengers arriving into Table Bay facing forwards. Formerly both leper and penal colony, from 1961 Robben Island notoriously became a key locus for apartheid as resistance leaders, most famously Nelson Mandela, were sent to exile in its prison.

Following the removal of the apartheid system and the election of a democratic government in 1994, anti-apartheid activist Eddie Daniels remembered a sea-trip he had made from Cape Town 30 years earlier, in 1964:

On board the *Issi* – named after the wife of Gen Jan Smuts, the shackles were removed from my ankles and I was taken, still handcuffed, down to the hold. Perhaps I was too wound up to notice the stench of bilge oil, but on later trips to and from Cape Town it affected me to the extent that I vomited. The small portholes in the hold were blackened out which added to the gloom, the paint had peeled off in places on a few portholes and as we travelled to the Island I squinted through the holes but I was so low down all I could see was the grey sea. (Daniels:2002:145)

The proximity of the Union-Castle ships' entrance into Table Bay was drawn out for me by a conversation I had with a former Robben Island inmate, Eddie Daniels; I learnt that he and his colleagues, many of them imprisoned for many years (Daniels himself spent 15 years on Robben Island), had been aware of the vessels in the shipping lanes sailing in and out of Cape Town past the island. (Eddie Daniels:February 2010:Cape Town). Similarly, Yasien Mohamed, gun-runner for the Pan Africanist Congress, who narrowly escaped imprisonment and is now a curator for the Robben Island Museum, talks about the way he watches shipping traffic from his home in what was formerly the warders' village on the island. (Yasien Mohamed: April 2008:Cape Town). Having worked as a young man on the whaling ships off the Cape, Daniels, in particular, is hugely 'shipping-literate'. Were you ever aware of ocean liners with lavender hulls? I asked Daniels. 'Oh, yes, you mean Union-Castle', was the unequivocal response from a man released from a 15-year sentence two years after the last sailing, in 1979.

Table Bay, then, provides the backdrop for the operations of the twin points of focus in this study; those of the Union-Castle Line, specifically with regard to the decisions made as to its ships' interiors, and those of the state system of apartheid. In the course of researching this study it has become apparent that the two themes are very closely related, a realisation which hit home with particular clarity once it occurred to me that it was impossible for Union-Castle's liners to sail into

Cape Town without occupying, if only for a time, the same waters as the Island and its craft, prison ships like the *Issi* or the *Susan Kruger*, for example, a thought verified by Daniels and Mohamed. Crucially, that these two processes, the practices of interior design and of apartheid, might have any common ground in the study of the Union-Castle line is something that became apparent, and significantly so, through the omissions and denials that the primary research material for the project revealed.

In a striking undated (c.1955-65) advertisement for Union-Castle, a lavender-hulled liner sails into Table Bay [Fig. 3]; curiously, however, its location within the Bay in relation to the view of the ever-present mountain positions the ship roughly where Robben Island should be, had any mention of its barren landscape not been assiduously avoided. Compositional and artistic licence aside, the image prompts a few questions as to the reasons for this deliberate misrepresentation. Missing, too, from the London papers lent by the managing directors of Union-Castle (from 1956 the Cayzer family, managing directors of British & Commonwealth Shipping Ltd.) to the archives at the National Maritime Museum, are documents from the British end of correspondence that is readily available in the National Library of South Africa's (NLSA) Cape Town archive. Letters marked 'Top Secret' or 'Security,' held by the NLSA and written, on copy paper, between Cayzer House and Union-Castle's offices in Cape Town, dealing with such subjects as bomb threats and the company's liaison with the South African police force, are nowhere to be found as matching copies in the London archives. Also noticeable through its absence in the interiors of the ships surveyed, as will be discussed throughout the chapters that follow, is *any* mention of black Africa. Disturbing the history that has produced these omissions in order to get behind the story of Union-Castle's post-war interior design has been the central challenge of this study.

### *Themes, aims and methodology*

The aims of this thesis are threefold. First, this study aims to critically examine the history of Union-Castle ships' interiors, particularly in relation to issues around representation, with a particular focus on exploring the extent to which their interior schemes were influenced by the prevailing trading circumstances of their managing companies. The second aim, and the over-



arching theme for the project, arises as a continuation of the contextual background for this study, (i.e. South African-British political and economic exchanges during the second half of the twentieth century); this is to demonstrate that interior design (*any* interior design, not only that scrutinized by this study) may well be informed by seemingly unrelated histories, and that in this instance the practice and imposition of apartheid is highly relevant to design-historical discussion. Arguing for the potential importance of oblique, causal connections between the interior and its external context and the way in which these might nuance, if not actually shape, the historical interior provides an important leitmotif of this thesis. Finally, thinking in terms of the psychological and emotional aspects of Union-Castle's passenger accommodation, it is also possible to describe the way in which these spaces were inflected with aesthetic constructions that had as much to do with conveying messages about British-South African relationships during the period as they did about the organized planning of a given decorative scheme.

In focusing on these mutually constitutive aims, this study ventures into new territory. It does so on three counts. First, the study of historic interiors on board ship is a recent departure within design history and, with the notable exception of Anne Wealleans' *Designing Liners: a History of Interior Design Afloat* (2006) – the first work to examine the study in academic detail – is an area that has received little attention, the interiors designed for the various vehicles of transport having been previously regarded as of secondary importance to the interiors of places of work or domicile. However, Wealleans' work constructs a historical account that suggests a positivist trajectory in terms of the professionalization of interior design in this context, a narrative that is at odds with the Union-Castle situation in which, even as late as the 1960s, the 'decoratorly' was privileged over the 'designerly'.

Secondly, I would argue that the interiors revealed by Union-Castle's post-war ships do not necessarily fall into any standard design-historical trope, the interiors of early post-war ships *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle* exhibiting, for example, an aesthetic that I have characterised as 'non-design', one which evinces a decorative ambience influenced, I argue, by criteria other than the aesthetic. Indeed 'design' is a difficult and unhelpful phrase to apply for example to the

interiors of these earlier ships which were assembled by subsidiaries of the major shipping lines who were responsible for fitting out ships with 'ready made' furniture and furnishings. Design in the context of the ocean liners under review here then is not limited only to mean the formal practices of the 'designer' but rather a whole range of activity associated with providing rooms with fixtures, fittings, furniture and soft furnishings. Equally 'design' does not here necessarily mean the application of any coherent 'style'.<sup>3</sup>

The absence of formal style is also apparent in the last of Union-Castle's Cape Route liners, *Reina del Mar*. Chartered and then, in 1973, bought by B&C in the dying days of the Cape mail service, *Reina* too was planned with 'designed' interiors, only to the extent that these produced a neutral, blank canvas. This provided the backdrop for the performing of the by now more important criteria for the conveying of passengers, which centred on sociability and which paralleled the functional modernity of the airport lounge. Like its predecessors, *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*, *Reina* cannot be described according to any analysis of the lexicon of formal styles available to the design historian. Instead, this thesis argues for a move into a new discussion, in that it is sometimes necessary to offer conclusions derived from studies that do not rely upon analyses of the *object* and which, in the absence of readable 'raw material', privilege discussions based in other disciplines.

In contrast with the lack of visible design schemes on board *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Reina del Mar*, Union-Castle flagships *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle* are awash with design ideas and stratagems. Even here, however, the schemes surveyed do not fit a neat canon of academic writing. Highly differentiated design on board the ships along passenger class lines was played out in First Class through the use of the modern-conservative English country-house style,

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<sup>3</sup> As well as suggesting an enormously complex and large task beyond the remit of this thesis' brief, it is also for this reason that ship interiors whilst undoubtedly aspirational, have not been discussed in terms of questions of public taste. Furthermore, since *all* design can be argued to be aspirational, (else what is its point?) the discussion of this issue in this context is hardly enlightening for a study of Union-Castle's interiors. Additionally a discussion of the rather pedestrian observation that aspiration ought to be taken into account with regards to finding a reading for objects, something simply assumed by design historians to be the case, (as well as providing an issue discussed extensively within design historical literature) does not aid the thinking required by a PhD thesis, this that it focus its discussions on original, previously unpublished thought.

and in Tourist Class via a mediated 'popular modernism'. Although the subject of a great deal of writing, the country-house look has not often been a focus of academic texts, as already mentioned; a question arises in this regard as to the historical view taken of the frequently female lead in the practice of this particular style by 'decorators,' as opposed to the scholarly attention paid to the (male) 'architect/designer' engaged with other styles, such as Modernism, for example.

This history of design is grounded in an account of the relationship between Britain and South Africa in the second half of the twentieth century. A history of the interior, it is mapped out against the changing circumstances of colonial, and later the post-colonial, engagements of the two countries between which Union-Castle principally sailed (though comparison is also made with Union-Castle's East African route and *Kenya Castle*, one of the liners engaged on that service). Although charting the contemporary history of the country that was left behind by British travellers and immigrants is beyond the scope of this thesis – interestingly, Britain was a country undergoing a great deal of political and social change, with both the end of Empire and the arrival of its own immigrant communities<sup>4</sup>– this is a design history which must, I argue, acknowledge and, at least briefly, explore the circumstances for immigration and travel to South Africa during the apartheid era with reference to their South African context.

My research has uncovered a 'story' that has revealed itself by degrees, and which did so thanks in particular to information 'forgotten' in Britain, but meticulously recorded by the National Library of South Africa. Importantly, the nature of this chronicle, as I have encountered it, is such that it can only be meaningfully told, I argue, through an examination of the political economy that underpinned Union-Castle's operations during the years 1945–1977. The economic negotiations that comprised the conducting of business between Union-Castle and the South African

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<sup>4</sup> Significantly, Pretoria pointed to the importance of the *MV Empire Windrush* in this regard. Originally built for the Hamburg South American Steam Shipping Company in 1930, but subsequently bought and renamed by the British government in 1947, *Windrush* famously brought the first Caribbean immigrants to Britain in June 1948, a situation described by the Afrikaner organisation The 1820 Memorial Settlers' Association, as having been instrumental in the desire on the part of a large number of Britons to emigrate to South Africa during the second half of the twentieth century (Brownell:1977)

government in Pretoria were themselves informed by the 'mindset' and priorities of the apartheid administration, the political history of which it is also therefore essential to include here.<sup>5</sup>

Describing the history of the passenger accommodation on board Union-Castle's post-war ships, the fundamental argument of this study is that these interiors were influenced by British and Commonwealth Shipping's trade negotiations, *entente* and power-broking with the apartheid administration of the National Party in Pretoria throughout this same period. An argument adopted throughout this study is that interdisciplinarity (which in this instance means specifically an engagement with lines of enquiry that delve into political and diplomatic, as well as social and economic history), as well as design-historical readings, is vital to an understanding of the decisions made by Union-Castle, and from 1956 by B&C, in the creation of the interiors of the companies' ships.

The overwhelming evidence of this study shows that there were very close connections between the National Party administration in Pretoria and Union-Castle, and that this was a situation which strengthened from 1956 onwards, through the agency of B&C. Indeed, these ties were fundamental to the shipping line's continued trading with South Africa. Pretorian politics, centred through the period under survey on Afrikaner nationalism and, as a corollary, the instigation, expansion and consolidating of apartheid, were thus vital elements in the history of Union-Castle's operations between 1945 and 1977.

It might be considered that Nicholas Cayzer was simply acting according to the dictates of mercantalism and profit making and that shipping line owners merely wanted to make as much money as possible by the most direct means. In this case it might be argued that, for example, the company's investments in South Africa (see discussion above p.4) and the critical need for B&C to maintain good relations with Pretoria was simply indicative of good business sense, responsibility

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<sup>5</sup> As explained (p. 5), an equivalent discussion of the British political and economic context is not relevant to a discussion of B&C's relationship with the circumstances of its trading partner, effectively the South African government.

to shareholders and worries, later in the period surveyed, about trading at a time that witnessed the threats posed by the 1956 Suez Crisis (which, in closing the Suez Canal to British shipping, blocked access to B&C's East African route), trade union discontent, containerization and air travel. Noticeably however, although Cayzer commanded a great network of trading routes<sup>6</sup> interviews record that was critically aware of justifying his operations vis à vis Pretorian politics, arguing for example that 'One must get a sense of proportion about South Africa.'<sup>7</sup> (*Time and Tide*: June 1976:8-9 NMM CL CAY/249). The Suez Crisis although affecting British-East African shipping was never of relevance to Cayzer's conducting of business on his principal -and most lucrative- South Atlantic route and, as discussed in Chapter Four, Cayzer was quick to embrace containerisation, becoming one of the leading lights in the formation of Overseas Containers Limited (OCL) and also the rise of jet travel through the provision of sea/air packages indicating with a sure-footedness indeed suggesting a sharp mercantile instinct but not of one of unnecessary concern with regards the vicissitudes of trade. With the decline of the mail service, apparent from the late 1960s, Cayzer began to sell vessels in the B&C fleet. In a situation in which the need to remain on friendly terms with Pretoria was reducing he nevertheless chose to sell to Safmarine, the South African merchant fleet, rather than to any other national line. Nor, significantly, is the bond between B&C and its trading partner Pretoria replicated elsewhere contemporaneously. As John Graves, Curator of Ship History, National Maritime Museum, has remarked in this context, there is no evidence that, other lines, (P&O, for example) were in the pockets of Delhi, Sydney or Hong Kong. This is not to say that Union-Castle was entirely unsympathetic to, or unaware of the plight of, the majority population of the country to which it principally sailed. Occasionally during this

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<sup>6</sup> Clan Line was first founded as C. W. Cayzer & Company in Liverpool in 1877 by Charles Cayzer. It was set up to operate passenger routes between Britain and Bombay, India via the Suez Canal. 1890 The company again expanded its operations with the purchase of the Persian Gulf Steam Ship Company in 1894, bringing four more ships into the company. They used these new assets to expand their routes into the Persian Gulf and to North America, and to begin to carry cargo. In 1956 the Clan Line joined with the Union-Castle Line, King Line and Bullard King & Company to form British & Commonwealth Shipping Limited. A number of transfers then took place between the component companies. They formed the Springbok Shipping Company in 1959 to take over the operations of their South African services, and several of the Clan Lines' ships were transferred to it. In 1961 the Springbok Shipping Company became part of Safmarine.

<sup>7</sup> See discussion below, p. 190

history, instances occur where black dock workers employed by the company were given support, for example<sup>8</sup>. Very rarely a black member of staff might be employed in one of the South African Union-Castle offices [Fig. 4], but, highly significantly, never on board ship. References indicating the humanitarian face of the shipping line are few and far between, however, and only exist for the early years of this survey, ceasing to be recorded, at any rate, after the takeover by B&C in 1956. Furthermore, such was the nature of the National Party's autocratic control, particularly from the late 1950s, that party policy can be seen to have had an impact not only upon the process by which, but also, literally, the vehicles with which, the shipping line conducted business during these years. Quite simply, offending Pretoria by failing to maintain a visual and cultural code in line with its policies on board ships bound for South African ports would have meant Union-Castle running the risk of alienating, if not in fact losing, its trading partner.

In the light of these findings, the overarching theme of this thesis has become one of asking whether apartheid can be seen to have had an impact upon design. Though they explore a number of issues (the expression of an imagined continuing colonial supremacy, class-differentiated design concepts and the deployment of the design binaries of historicism/modernism, for example), the chapters that follow each argue that, in one way or another, either the institution or the practice of apartheid was indeed influential in the design of Union-Castle's passenger accommodation. This is a thesis, then, that adopts a particular political position, one that is also informed by a belief in the impossibility of neutrality over an issue so fundamental to questions about human existence as apartheid.

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<sup>8</sup> On 28 April 1950, for example, it was reported by the Union-Castle East London Agency that

a native Messenger named Knox had died on 15 March. The circumstances of his widow were noted and the Chairman decided that she should be given one month's pay and be made a grant equivalent to the amount of funeral costs and debts outstanding together with any medical expenses incurred...in addition the widow was to be granted an allowance of £1 pcm. for 6 months...until a further report of her circumstances be received. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (4143))

This study did not set out to be overtly political, however. Originally, although the political history of the years 1945 – 1977 was clearly key to the project, its primary motive was simply to provide an interdisciplinary investigation of the Union-Castle line and its ships. Drawing upon established design-historical methods and approaches, my research has necessarily had to engage with political, social and economic histories of aspects of travel to South Africa, as already explained. Using the resources of the National Maritime Museum, the Merseyside Maritime Museum, the National Library of South Africa (Cape Town Campus) and the John H Marsh Maritime Centre (part of the Iziko Museums, Cape Town), my research has incorporated findings from archival documents, press cuttings, ship plans, photographs and ship models and trade journals<sup>9</sup>. Interviews with passengers and crew members have also been invaluable to the project. And it has been the overwhelming evidence of this material that has led me to argue a causal link between apartheid politics and Union-Castle's post-war interiors.

In wider terms this thesis acknowledges the work of numerous exhibitions and publications many of them important markers within the History of Design for their discussion of aesthetics in terms of the context of the political culture/s of design, manufacture and production.<sup>10</sup> Another way of explaining this approach within the discussions drawn out by this thesis (and of drawing attention to the highly complex relationships between the aesthetic and the political) is to highlight the fact that underpinning the project has been the idea that interior design on board ship is co-constituted with issues of representation which very frequently here implies both Party Politics and also the informal maneuverings of various of the protagonists that have been researched and recorded.

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<sup>9</sup> Although my research has primarily been based upon documentary archival evidence since trade journals for example, particularly, *Shipbuilding* and *Shipping Record* provide information that has not been particularly useful to this study because their contents are essentially oriented towards the re-writing of Press Releases that are contained in the original in Union-Castle archive documents.

<sup>10</sup> For example: Arts Council of Great Britain, Hayward Gallery, *Thirties, British Art and Design before the War*, 1980; Hayward Gallery, *Art and Power. Europe under the dictators 1930-45*; Jane Pavitt and David Crowley, *Cold War Modern, Design 1945- 1970*, V&A publishing, 2008.

A reader unfamiliar with the work of the design historian might insist that there is no evidence of the relationship between political belief systems and design styles; no direct causal or trajectorial link, in other words, between the values informing aesthetic style and its outcome in terms of the visual formation or 'coding' of the product (in this case a room on board a ship). Whilst there might be a strong body of evidence that, in many circumstances, the two operate independently and that particular aesthetics can serve a wide range of belief systems, or none at all, as every entry-level design historian is taught, equally, there may well exist an invisible thread which connects value or belief system and aesthetic. As every undergraduate reading of Roland Barthes' work on semiotics (used as standard introductions to design historical themes) suggests, the study of signs are useful in design historical interrogations. Barthes explained that the vast majority of signs and signifiers were in no way a direct representation of the thing signified calling these vital elements in a design 'second-order signs'. Motivations for the way in which such 'second-order signs' may be manipulated occurs for all manner of reasons, for example in order to sell the product or, as here, I will be suggesting, in order to maintain the status quo of a system of political belief. This thesis therefore works with the bottom-line premise that has engaged design historians since the inception of the discipline in the 1970s, that it is essential to look 'behind the scenes' when attempting a reading of an object. Were this thesis to adopt the 'none at all principle' in terms of relationship between signifier and signified there would in fact be no thesis. However, accepting that aesthetics can indeed serve a wide range of belief systems, it is up to the design historian to determine which of these might be most pertinent in any given situation. In this case, evidence gained from primary research at the NMM and in South Africa, suggests that a whole tranche of agendas relating to the political economy of trade between Union-Castle and Pretoria were in fact the 'belief systems' that informed the shipping line's interiors.

Separately however, since 'design', as already explained, is not always present in any professional or 'formal' sense on board these ships. A secondary theme of my discussions is therefore to describe the way in which imaginative aspects of the real, ocean-going progression of the journeys made by Union-Castle's liners were created through their interiors, their atmosphere and their *interiority*. Different psychological or emotional constructs were deployed in each the interiors of



the ships that form my case studies. The decorative means by which this was done, and the various imagined associations thereby inculcated, will be discussed according to the periodisation adopted in the chapters which follow: 1945-1955, *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*; 1955-1965, *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*; and 1965-1977, *Reina del Mar*.

Importantly, however, this thesis does not focus on an explanation of Union-Castle's interiors as being the product of gender-based design (though this, too, would of course constitute another political issue). And whilst I see these interiors as being the product of a 'decorator's' – rather than a 'designer's' – work (a differentiation that has been usefully flagged up in recent design-historical writing (Wealleans and Lees Maffei:2008)), I have not pursued these differences as constituting the principal basis for the exploration of the rooms created on board *Pendennis* and *Windsor*. I have not gone down this otherwise valid route because I believe that in terms of arriving at an overarching reading of these interiors, gender issues – already well rehearsed elsewhere (Pink:2004; Kirkham:1996; Heynen & Baydar:2005) – are of less importance to the design of the ships' interiors than are the effects of the high-political and economic interplay conducted between Union-Castle and Pretoria.

It is this awareness that has shaped the third area in which this study aims to open up design history's current epistemology; that is, in providing an exploration of the relevance of apartheid practice to the discipline. Although there is a small but significant body of work, mainly located within visual culture/and or architectural studies, concerned with a discussion of the re-envisioning of post-democratic South African architectural and material culture – which necessarily examines apartheid's structures before moving on to describe South Africa's remodelling of itself since 1994- I have not been able to find any literature, either in the UK or in South Africa, that deals specifically with the impact of the separationist and racist policies of the National Party administration on

design. The nearest equivalents are those studies analysing the impact of apartheid upon urban and spatial planning<sup>11</sup>.

Design History is not a subject that is taught in South Africa, partly because design itself was not a Nationalist priority and partly, as Graham Owens commented in the late 1980s in relation to the difficulties of discussing twentieth-century South African architecture, for example: 'One often experiences a deeply disturbing ambivalence: an oscillation between admiration for its intelligence, formal experiment and audacity...; and revulsion at the social context in which it was produced.' (Owens;1989:3)

In the UK, the only academic to have studied the region through this discipline's lens, Dipti Bhaghat, whilst providing extraordinarily insightful and rare discussions of the psychology and materialization of representations of white South Africa, has not written of the period following the Second World War. Furthermore, Bhaghat herself locates her work as much within cultural geography as within design history.

Although Union-Castle managed a fleet of 15 ships during the period 1945 – 1977, I have chosen to examine only five vessels, providing a focused 'case-study' approach although a widening of the picture through the inclusion of comparative studies, in Chapter Two in the form of analysis of British India's *SS Uganda* and in Chapter Three, P&O's *Canberra* is included.<sup>12</sup> Working within this

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<sup>11</sup> See Lindsay Bremner's 'Living in the ruins of Apartheid', *Architectural Review*, June 2007, for example, or Graham Owen's 'Forget Europe, forget America: architecture and Apartheid', *Journal of Architectural Education*, Spring 1989.

<sup>12</sup> Although *Transvaal Castle* (1961) was designed as a 'one-class' ship suggesting that its interiors might be rather different from B&C vessels of the same era, *Windsor Castle* and *Pendennis Castle*, its design produces the same themes – historicism and popular modernity- as these other two vessels. Union-Castle decorator Jean Monro also worked on the remodeling of the Cunard Line's *Carmania* and *Franconia* in 1963. It might be suggested that this is an important point since the new interiors were arguably in the same style as on Union-Castle's liners and this is was very important as the Cunard sisters which were revamped for the American cruise trade – serving a clientele from a nation in which apartheid was present in some, though by no means all States. On the one hand this sort of assertion only serves to further prove the normative 'safety' of such designs within this context, emphasizing the applicability of their use in the South African context. On the other

project's brief to provide an analysis of Union-Castle's Ocean Liners (Appendix 1) I justify this deliberately limited selection partly on account of the availability of relevant archival documentation, but also, and more importantly, because those ships that have been chosen for the survey are those which I see as having been emblematic of the shipping line's operations at particular chronological moments. Thus *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*'s 1948 decorations reflect the early post-war trade between Britain and South Africa, *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*'s striking and lavish 1960-61 interiors mirror British engagement with South Africa during the boom years of the decade that followed their launches, and *Reina del Mar*'s concentration on atmosphere and sociability maps onto the rise of 'cruise culture' and air travel and the decline of the ocean liner in the 1970s. An account organized according to the tripartite periodisation suggested by the ships themselves also offers the possibility of breaking down this study's essential but brief political and economic surveys into three correlating and loosely-defined intervals of roughly 10 years' time-span each. In each instance these wider histories are presented as the background material against which I argue that the interiors of the ships must be read, and therefore in each case I also briefly detail changing patterns in travel to South Africa from the UK. In summary these patterns were characterised by a ground-swell of passengers responding to the urgent call from South Africa for white English-speaking settlers in the immediate post-war years, to a decline in immigrants with the arrival of the Nationalists in power in 1948, through to a resurgence of business (First Class) and visiting travelers (First and Tourist Class) and emigrating customers (Tourist Class) through the 1960s and on into the 1970s.

Chapter Two, dealing with the period 1945-1955, surveys the years immediately after the Second World War and discusses the situation in which Union-Castle found itself at the time: that is,

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hand however, this is by no means a like-for-like comparison. The majority population of the United States (and therefore the clientele to whom Cunard were pitching their ships) was, white rather than black, the reverse of course, obtaining in South Africa. Secondly Cunard was not trading with Washington as Union-Castle was perforce trading with Pretoria.

Additionally I have not discussed this material which has been extensively written up in Wealleans' *Designing Liners* (2006) since a repetition of secondary material is not the main thrust of a PhD and secondly since, as pointed to elsewhere, this thesis had necessarily to respond to the brief set in agreement with its funding body the Arts and Humanities Research Council who required a focus on Union-Castle alone.

pressed into service to implement Prime Minister Jan Smuts' Special Immigration Service, arguing that these particular circumstances were to have an impact upon designs for the interiors of *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*. Smuts' political demise and the arrival in power of the National Party in 1948 forms the second half of the political background provided in this chapter, and both Smuts' and the National Party's years in power are discussed in terms of the resultant trading relationship with Union-Castle. Having described how, from 1948 onwards, Union-Castle was in a position of uncertainty around continuing relations with the anti-British National Party, the chapter moves to a reading of the ships' interiors which demonstrates uncertain responses to a confluence of changing political events and the line's resulting loss of business confidence. A comparison with the East African route's *Kenya Castle* also offers a demonstration of the sense in which Union-Castle's early post-war ships constructed a set of ideas around the late (British) Empire in which interiors demonstrating an imagined and continuing colonial superiority offset the reality of Britain's loss of its sense of place and global dominance in the second half of the twentieth century.

Surveying the period 1955-1965, Chapter Three deals with the consolidation of National Party interests and the progression of apartheid policy. It also discusses the shift in Union-Castle's position, fortunes and ethos brought about by the shipping line's takeover by B&C in 1956. Although the relationship between Union-Castle and the National Party government – without which trade would have been impossible – continued along a very complex trajectory, this chapter discusses the extent to which B&C's owners, the Cayzer family, were always prepared to accommodate Pretoria's viewpoint for the sake of the company's business interests. Moreover, I argue, it is noticeable that at certain key moments, B&C was to become actively involved with the South African machinery of government, a situation I see as being critical to the ethos of the ships' interior aesthetic since it clearly informed the decoration of the company's two gleaming new flagships *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*.

Part and parcel of B&C's new management of Union-Castle was the appointment of decorator Jean Monro to work on the ships' passenger accommodation. Occasioning the implementation of a dramatic new aesthetic, Monro's work for First Class accommodation offers a view onto British

(English) imaginings around notions of heritage, social hierarchy and continuity with what, by the 1960s, was becoming the disappearing social world of the English country house. In contrast, Monro created a rather different imaginative construct in relation to her work on Tourist Class accommodation. Offering a popular re-styling of aspects of the Modern Movement, mediated through a contemporary 'youth-look,' the Tourist Class accommodation of both *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle* nevertheless also served to bolster notions of British – or more appropriately, English – superiority as world leader of an emergent 'street-style'.

Surveying the final period encompassed by this study, Chapter Four deals with the potential for disturbance to trade caused by mounting social and political instability within South Africa. As with the preceding two chapters, a discussion of the wider political manoeuvrings of trade is used to contextualise the mechanics of engagement between Union-Castle (in the form of B&C) and Pretoria, and in particular, the accommodation by B&C of the National Party's determination to boost the fortunes of the South African merchant fleet Safmarine.

Together with the rise of air travel and changes in international shipping economies, heralding the advent of containerization, these moves were to play out in a turning of attention in Union-Castle's interiors towards a greater focus on sociability and cruise culture, made evident by the character of the final liner to be discussed, *Reina del Mar*, first chartered in 1964 but finally bought outright by Union-Castle in 1973. I argue that *Reina's* interiors need to be read not as the aesthetic product of Union-Castle's design aspirations, but rather as having arisen with reference to 'non-designerly' considerations such as mass-market travel and tourism. This final chapter, then, brings the thesis full circle: like *Pretoria Castle's* and *Edinburgh Castle's*, *Reina's* interiors suggest the potential value of the use of tangential material in the writing of histories of interior design.

#### *Notes on illustrations and terms used*

Illustrative material included at the end of the thesis has not been included for its ability to offer close visual analysis. Rather, the visual material that is used here was the first point for departure

in the formation of the arguments proposed around the creation of these interiors, and has been used to augment and demonstrate the points being made in the text.

I have chosen to avoid talking about ships in the feminine, as is traditional. Since one of design history's key concepts is the reading of objects as having gendered meanings, the use of the personal pronoun 'she' when describing ships becomes something of a minefield.

Additionally, I frequently refer to the *British* characteristics of Union-Castle's liners. I have used this particular identifier partly because two political *administrations*, London's and Pretoria's, are writ large through this discussion. The second reason for adopting this otherwise non-specific term is in recognition of the fact that from 1956 the Union-Castle line was owned by a company that chose to call itself *British* and Commonwealth, its conservative idea being that it represented Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the place of origin of many of the ships, their having been built at the Belfast yard of Harland and Wolff) in the wider foreign realms where British sovereignty still applied. However, the discussions presented in this thesis have highlighted numerous occasions on which I believe that the term *English* provides a more accurate description for both the stylistic and the power-broking ramifications that the ships' interiors represent, in a survey which does not necessarily seek to include Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland as *ipso facto* inheritors of these same traditions.

Equally awkward, unless first explained, is my use of the nomenclature of apartheid: black, coloured, Indian, white. I stick with these words because it is impossible to describe apartheid's processes without using them, but also because, for South Africans born before 1994, these terms are not nowadays simply racist labels but potentially important identifiers which reveal a whole history of very particular and separate experience.

## Chapter One

### History and Historiography

As a means of mapping out the place that this study occupies within related design-historical work, it will be useful to contextualise the project. Before doing this, however, I first want to locate Union-Castle's post-war interiors within the longer history of ocean liner design, something that cannot be done without reference to Anne Wealleans' seminal text *Designing Liners: A History of Design Afloat* (2006). Most importantly I want to trace the trajectory via which passenger liners became symbols of national identity, a theme present throughout the history of these ships' interiors and which is of continuing importance to the Union-Castle case studies I identify for the twentieth-century post-war period.

Having provided a historical context for Union-Castle's operations and identity for the period 1945-1977, I then want to position this thesis within its field through an exploration of the limited number of texts that focus on a discussion of liner interiors and ambience. This 'ship historiography' needs then to be broadened and the project posited in relation to a wider interior design history of styles adopted by Union-Castle during the period: for example, the 'English country-house style' in relation to First Class interiors. In thinking through the design of Tourist Class accommodation, this also entails an examination of the 'modernity' that informed the youth- and street-styled 'popular' aesthetics of these spaces.

### *History*

*Windsor Castle*, the most famous of Union-Castle's post-war ocean liners, was launched in 1959 amid much hurraing about its style, modernity and statistics:

All ABC cinemas will be showing the pathé newsreel featuring the launching of the *Windsor Castle* from Monday June 29 to Wed 1<sup>st</sup> July inclusive. This newsreel will also be shown at the Empire Cinema Leicester Square, Studio One, Oxford Street ...and others.  
(NMM CL CAY/220)

Another press release, dated 20 June 1959, announced:

The largest passenger liner to be launched at a British shipyard since the *Queen Elizabeth* in 1938, the new 38 000 ton Union-Castle line *Windsor Castle* will be launched from the shipyard of Cammell Laird and Co. Ltd. at Birkenhead on June 23, the ceremony being performed by HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

The *Windsor Castle* will be the largest vessel ever employed on the Union-Castle mail service to South Africa, and the largest passenger liner ever built on Merseyside. Costing over 10 000 000, she will be 783 ft in length. Fully laden she will draw 32 feet of water. (NMM CL CAY/220)

For all the marveling at *Windsor's* entrance onto the world shipping stage, an examination of its interiors reveal a curious tension. Marketed as providing state-of-the-art luxury and comfort, particularly in First Class, *Windsor's* aesthetic was decidedly historicist and conservative, if anything; rooms such as the First Class Library [Fig. 5] referenced the English country house. Why might this have been the case? This chapter will delineate a brief history of the decorative and design styles used in passenger ships from the nineteenth century and explain how their interior styling came about. A great deal has been written about ships, liners and maritime history, but very little of this work discusses the interior fitting-out of these vessels, notable exceptions being Wealleans (2006), Votolato (2007) and Quartermaine and Peter (2006).

Whilst the accommodation for high-ranking crew had received some consideration prior to this date (for example, Vice-Admiral Viscount Horatio Nelson's cabin on board HMS *Victory* was a copy of a Georgian drawing room, complete with sash windows (Graves:October:2010)) it was not until the nineteenth century that passenger accommodation began to be paid any systematic attention. The story of the interior design of the passenger ship begins in the second half of the nineteenth century, and it was when client – as opposed to crew – accommodation began to be



located as a particular space on board ship, and accordingly became subject to the decorator's touch, that the ocean liner was born. Prior to this, the primary concerns of owners and builders had been the technology concerning the speed and safety of ships in an increasingly competitive area of commerce. From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, however, as greater numbers of people began to travel by sea, passengers as clients began to be taken into account, and moving from a situation in which sea travel was undertaken on cargo ships offering limited accommodation, vessels specifically built for passenger travel became a growing concern. With the arrival of this business-led initiative, the commercial need to attract paying customers also began to grow. As a result, owners and shipbuilders began to pay increasing attention to the appointment of their ships' interiors.

At the same time, as Gregory Votolato has pointed out (2007), the public interiors of the boats plying the inland waterways of the United States throughout the nineteenth century, for example, began to borrow from the lead taken by the railway companies in attempts to provide interiors – featuring seating and beds – designed to make passenger travel more comfortable. Personal pride also began to play a part in attempts to re-think the passenger accommodation on board US river vessels:

The captains of such ships, many of whom up to the mid-century owned their boats, expressed their own taste through the vessel's decoration and vied to create the most extravagant and eye-catching ships in order to attract passengers amidst fierce competition. (Votolato:2007:105)

Of course the majority of European ocean travellers in this period, however, did not constitute a market that shipping owners needed, or wanted, to woo. The 35 million European emigrants making the difficult Atlantic crossing between 1820 and 1920 (Wealleans:2006:12), would undertake the journey whatever the conditions provided, so desperate were they to flee famine, crippling poverty or political tyranny. Significantly, too, poor emigrants frequently had no choice

but to cope with the notorious vagaries of sail rather than travel on board the more efficient and faster new steamships.

The wealthy European and North American élite, however – people who undertook ocean travel either for business or because they had a choice, and who were increasingly accommodated on board steamships – were another matter altogether. It was with this class of passenger in mind – those who could also afford to make decisions as to which shipping line they travelled with – that the interior decoration and design of ocean liners really began to take off.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a competition had become well established among the European nations to build the grandest and fastest ship afloat...Not surprisingly Britain and Germany first led in this race, since they were the leading naval powers in the world. France, Italy and the United States, all concerned to display not only their nation's most advanced technology, but their taste, artistry and craft skills, followed them... (Votolato:2006:108)

The importance attached by the various shipping companies to marketing their vessels' accommodation to the growing number of wealthy customers during the second half of the nineteenth century continued grow. During the final stages of its pre-voyage preparation, the SS *Great Britain* for example, was moored at Blackwall, on the Thames, and, such was the acclaim with which it had already been celebrated in the press, whilst there, was visited by an average of 1 500 people a day, including members of the Royal Family (Wealleans:2006:17).

The jamboree attendant on *Windsor Castle's* launch over a century later, mentioned at the opening of this chapter, was nothing new, then. In keeping with the very important stake ocean liners held in terms of their ability to denote national prowess through demonstrations of advanced technological capability and progressive decorative skill, the launch and, following their later completion and fitting-out, the first voyages of such ships were always also an occasion of national consequence. In Britain, the launching of a new liner was traditionally graced by the

presence of (and was usually performed by) the commissioning shipping line's chairman's wife; if not, preferably by a member of the Royal Family. Typical, then, was the launch of *Edinburgh Castle* in October 1946, an event which involved Princess Margaret, second in line to the throne, in travelling to Belfast to perform the ceremony. [Fig. 6] A reminder of the significance of state stakeholding at such moments is the fact that the slightly earlier launch of *Edinburgh Castle's* 'sister' ship, *Pretoria Castle*, had been performed by South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts' wife, Ouma (Issie). Conducted via radio link to the Harland and Wolff yard a few months earlier, in August 1947, Issie Smuts' participation in the ceremony spoke of British colonial might, and the showing-off of modern communications<sup>13</sup>. Even more significantly, however, Smuts' involvement – her speech made in both English and Afrikaans and accompanied by the singing of Afrikaans folksongs – also provided an early register of a theme that is of central importance to this thesis; the claims made by the South African government to an equal role in the fortunes of the Union-Castle line in the post-war era.

The politics informing both the design and launching of ships as emblems of national identity and contiguous associations with state (whether in the form of monarchy and/or government) were historically also frequently inscribed in the hierarchies of the passenger class system on board ocean liners. The provision of socially and behaviorally appropriate spaces according to passenger class is a theme that will be discussed in this thesis. As a longstanding historical concept serving to inform decisions about different styles of decoration, this is a discussion I draw particular attention to in relation to the interiors of *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle* which will be discussed in Chapter Two. Here, notions of 'heritage', 'aristocracy' and the desire to create an atmosphere of formal elegance in First Class, paralleled by ideas around collective travel, youth

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<sup>13</sup> Issie Smuts did not want to undertake the journey to Belfast for *Pretoria Castle's* launch, so it was arranged that she should press a button in the sitting room of her home in the Transvaal, which triggered an electronic transmission by landline to Cape Town, from where this was sent by radio to London and from there re-transmitted by landline to Belfast, where the electric charge released a bottle of South African wine against *Pretoria's* bow.

(([www.rogerpalmer.info/texts/text\\_interwatertxt.htm](http://www.rogerpalmer.info/texts/text_interwatertxt.htm) (accessed 9 April 2010) and Mitchell and Sawyer:1984:70)

and popular culture and sociability in Tourist Class, will be explored in terms of Union-Castle and B&C's scripting of these associations according to various decorative parameters on board ship.

At the end of the nineteenth century the story of the interior design of ocean liners was to take another couple of turns, both of which are relevant to the history of the Union-Castle ships in the second half of the twentieth century. First, the period saw an increasing engagement with ship interiors on the part of professional designers. Second, with ever-greater volumes of travellers creating a vibrant shipping/liner economy, a more pressing need to attract the niche market of the wealthiest passengers steadily took hold. As a result, lines of demarcation with regard to hierarchies of accommodation according to passenger class became even more clearly drawn. Wealleans has noted how, therefore, 'the internal layouts of ships were radically altered to accommodate the passengers' needs, and more sophisticated interior decorations ... employed.' (2006:24) It was at this moment that wealthy shipping magnates increasingly turned to professional – and often already well-known – architects and designers to work on their ships: the White Star Line, for example, employed the renowned Arts and Crafts architect Richard Norman Shaw.

Having worked for the entrepreneur Thomas Ismay of the White Star Line on Ismay's house on the Wirral in 1896, Shaw was appointed to design the new offices for the Line's managing body, the Oceanic Steam Navigation Company. This initiative proved only a short move from working on an actual ship interior, and in 1899 Ismay commissioned Shaw to work on the new liner *Oceanic*. Although it is difficult to trace those elements of the ship's interior over which Shaw had overall control, certain areas are undoubtedly his: the solid oak staircase featured in the *Oceanic's* calendar for July 1900 is not dissimilar to the staircase he designed for Cragside Manor, built in 1863 and extended by Shaw between 1870 – 1877 [Figs. 7 & 8].

Similarly, *Oceanic's* First Class Dining Saloon, in particular, included a number of Shaw's trademark stylistic devices. 80 ft long by 64 ft wide, it was lit by a vast domed, circular skylight, the dome supported by fluted pillars with elaborate Renaissance-style murals depicting America, New York, Britain and Liverpool on the walls beneath the dome. The overall colour scheme of white

and gold was offset by decorative plasterwork on the ceiling and friezes. Second Class dining room accommodation was similar in style but with the notable use of heavy wallpaper panels instead of the more expensive hand-crafted plaster-work. Above all, Shaw's designs for the ship created visually distinct, as well as physically separate, social spaces; a device, as already mentioned, that was to be of continued importance for Union-Castle in the second half of the twentieth century. A further detail useful for mapping the contextual history for Union-Castle's twentieth-century interiors is that the firm of Aldman Heaton and Co., a subsidiary of shipbuilders Harland and Wolff, were involved in the fitting-out (that is, the provision of interior furnishings) of both *Oceanic* and Union-Castle's *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*.

By the onset of the First World War, then, the three main elements of ship interior design history relevant to this history were in place. These were, firstly, the professionalisation of interior design within the shipping industry; secondly, the physical and aesthetic demarcation of space according to passenger class; and finally the associations made between these designed spaces and notions of national identity. In the period following the First World War, international rivalry and competition for clientele escalated, consolidating each of these trends. Whilst the history of liner interior design from the late nineteenth century onwards is one of progressive innovation and modernisation, it is also one of the ever-present desire to provide greater luxury and decorative standards, and in this way ships act as prestigious bearers of industrial and artistic capability and thus, also, of national status.

In addition to acting as progressivist carriers of British prowess, by contrast, however, ocean liner interiors can be argued as referring to history to invoke a sense of security, order and comfort – and again, also of national identity. Just as the stained-glass galleon, symbol of Britain's glorious maritime heritage and popularly included on the front doors of the newly-built modern houses of the 1930s, can be read as indicating the proud, independent and comfortable status of the burgeoning home-owning classes in the period, so ships themselves, whatever their technological advance, provided enduring symbols of permanence and reliability for a maritime nation deeply attached to

the poetics of its imagined sea-going past. No wonder the *Titanic* tragedy continues to both fascinate and dog the British and American psyche.

Additionally, as satirist Osbert Lancaster pointed out in his 1938 publication *Pillar to Post*, modern design and comfortable luxury have never really been synonymous for the British. The acceptance of modern architecture, he suggested, 'presupposes a barrenness of spirit, which, despite every indication of its ultimate achievement, we have not yet quite attained.' (Lancaster:1938:80) Interestingly, this dialogue was taking place at this time as a reply to the Modern Movement in architecture and design. Championed most notably by the Swiss Modernist architect Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, (le Corbusier) (1887-1965), Modernism celebrated industry, technology and the clean lines of its associated new aesthetic as providing the only acceptable form of expression for the twentieth century. Le Corbusier proclaimed famously in his 1923 treatise, the book *Vers Une Architecture*, that the modern house should be designed as a 'a machine for living'; with this in mind, it is not surprising that he cited modern ships as embodying the perfect technological style. According to this concept, the passenger liner ought to have become the machine for living *par excellence*. However, the streamlined forms of Modern Movement design, and its celebration of the industrial, were scarcely ever considered either comfortable or status-conferring for the British, whose aesthetic sympathies were largely embedded in the safe and the known, and the psychological security imparted by the master-crafted look of the antique.

Ideas embodied by *Orion* about empire, colony and, later, Britain's post-colonial status were also concerns inscribed into Union-Castle ship interiors in the period covered by this thesis. As will be discussed, *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*, sailing the Southampton-Cape Town route, and *Kenya Castle*, sailing to Mombasa via the Suez Canal, were all launched (between 1947 and 1955) during a period when Britain still had colonial interests in South Africa (a dominion since 1910) and Kenya (a British colony). In Chapter One, I argue that these ships demonstrated British ideas about a correct – and superior – relationship with its dominions. By the time that *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle* made their first voyages, the picture had become much more complicated. Although South Africa was to leave the Commonwealth in 1961, and was, as will be

explained, by now asserting its own point of view regarding the design of the Union-Castle ships sailing to its ports, even the liners of the 1960s retained something that related to old assumptions of colonial power in their interiors.

Redolent, in particular, of ideas about British national and imperial status, the most famous of the pre-war British ships, however, were the famous 'Queens', *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth*, both belonging to the Cunard Line, launched in 1936 and 1940 respectively. Self-consciously modern, *Queen Mary* adopted a glamorous Art Deco styling appropriate to its Southampton-New York route. Originally offering the same awareness of fashionable styling, *Queen Elizabeth's* entry into service was delayed by the outbreak of war, however, so that by the time the ship made its first voyage, in 1946, its aesthetic belonged essentially to the inter-war past. That is not to say, however, that the 'Queens' interiors did not continue to provide an aesthetic currency in the years following the war; as Chapter One discusses, the interiors of *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle* each displayed something of *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth's* earlier styling, and provided a somewhat compromised visual identity which, as previously mentioned, had as much, if not more, to do with notions of old colonial relationships as with modernity.

Distinctly less of a compromise were the post-war Articles of Association of the Union-Castle Mail Steamship Company Ltd. Under Item 4, entitled 'British Control' it was stated that:

-It is to be regarded as a cardinal principle of the Company that it is to be and remain under British control accordingly;-

The Company shall not enter into any combination, amalgamation or other arrangement which will have the effect of transferring the management or control of the Company to any foreigner or foreign Corporation. (NMM CL CAY/136-138)

Not surprisingly, then, it was not a foreign company with which the Union-Castle line was to merge in the mid-1950s, but the British-run Cayzer, Irvine and Company. Papers dating from the second half of the 1950s appear to stress the British aristocratic genealogy of the owners of the resulting

concern, the British and Commonwealth Shipping Co Ltd (B&C): 'Sir Nicholas Cayzer Bt. is the third generation of the Cayzer family in the business created by his grandfather, and carried on by his father and uncles.' (NMM CL CAY/253) At the end of *Windsor Castle's* life as a Union-Castle vessel, a nostalgic article for the August 1977 issue of the B&C periodical *The Clansman* recalls the way the ship's First Class passenger lists 'had read like society pages'. (NMM CL CAY 220)

What were the implications of this heritage for Union-Castle's liners as an embodiment of British national identity in the post-war period, and did these become manifest in the creation of their interiors? How, and where, were these poetics matched on board? And how, alternatively, were equally important statements of British modernity conveyed and accommodated alongside B&C historicism?

### *Historiography*

The history of the design of ocean liners mapped out here could not have been written, is as will have become apparent, without reference to Anne Wealleans' *Designing Liners: A History of Interior Design Afloat*. In the introduction to her book, Wealleans calls upon the Foucauldian concept of the 'heterotopia', or place without place, embodied *par excellence*, as French philosopher Michel Foucault himself wrote, by the 'non-place' spaces of the ship at sea. Significantly, *Designing Liners* occupies what might be thought of as an intellectual heterotopia. Through the book's detailed history of the burgeoning business of liner interior decoration from the mid-nineteenth century through to the post-war twentieth century, Wealleans explores themes located within design history, yet not yet widely discussed, let alone championed by the discipline. The ideas she brings to the fore are valuable in that they suggest the importance for design history of veering away from the well-trodden paths created by academics dealing with great names and great designs. In exploring themes currently outside the design-historical canon, such as the 'non-design' of the decorative arrangements employed on ships like *Edinburgh Castle*, this study acknowledges Wealleans' seminal work. However, such was the nature of the aesthetic desired for Union-Castle, first by Chairman Sir Vernon Thompson and then by the Cayzer family at the helm of B&C, that, as already mentioned in the Introduction, it has been important to diverge from



Wealleans in including a discussion of the *absence* of the signature of a professional designer (as opposed to decorator) on board the vessels that provide my case studies.

In his far-reaching survey of the evolution of different modes of mass travel, *Transport Design, a Travel History* (2007), Gregory Votolato develops themes introduced by Wealleans and, with regard to the evolution of the ocean liner, expands on ideas around gendered space and the formation of bounded space as a construct of class of travel. Very significantly, Votolato also addresses the importance of 'glamour' for the ship-owning companies and their vessels, the rise of which is viewed from an interesting interdisciplinary point of view and charted through the context of another icon of modernity, the 'celebrity' culture associated both with Hollywood and with 'star' designers such as the American Raymond Loewy (1896-1986). Whilst, as argued throughout, Union-Castle's interiors offered more of a 'B-', than an 'A-list' approach to styling and design, eschewing the cutting-edge in favour of a more homely aesthetic, it was nevertheless important that the ships' interiors combined a sense of the familiar with the allure of accommodation that spoke of luxury and privilege.

Votolato also emphasises the growing importance of physical and psychological comfort in vehicle design. In a new and sensitive acknowledgement of the dangers of ocean travel and attendant disasters, particularly in third world countries, which offers a useful counterpoint to the Western mythologizing of the *Titanic* disaster, *Transport Design* discusses the means by which design has been used to reassure passengers and to focus attention away from the *process* of travel by sea towards a preoccupation instead with the diversions afforded by decorative surroundings and by entertainment.

In discussing issues around safety, spatial demarcation and gender, both Wealleans and Votolato demonstrate the importance of a number of political issues that have always been inherent to the design of ocean liners. I depart from these authors, however, in insisting that the 'high' politics – that is, the manoeuvring of political parties (and their funding bodies) and party-political regimes, administrations and lobbyists – are vital to an understanding of the design history related here.

Whereas Wealleans and Votolato bring issues with political implications – gender, national identity and international competition – to their discussions, the context for this thesis, the South African situation in the second half of the twentieth century, insists, I argue, that Politics with an upper-case ‘p’ be brought to bear upon the subject.

In surveying ‘the role of the design process within individual industries and the cultural and political constructions put upon both...’, Maguire and Woodham’s text *Design and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain* (1997:xiii) is relevant to the approach adopted by this thesis. The book charts the transitions of location and meaning/s of design from the immediate post-war period (ie. a time of highly controlled, state-backed production based on expediencies imposed by wartime restrictions) to the far more liberal and essentially market-based economy that emerged once controls had been lifted.

Maguire and Woodham’s survey is useful to my plotting of a case-study register of the chronological design changes between Union-Castle’s 1940s and 1960s ships, in that a comparison between *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle* (both of which made their first voyages in 1948) and *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*, built during the economic boom of the late 1950s, similarly reveals the well-known history that *Design and Cultural Politics* repeats: the two later passenger mail ships displayed a flamboyance and wholesale reversal of previous aesthetics, providing in effect a maritime equivalent of the introduction of the earlier ‘New Look’<sup>14</sup> in fashion design. However, this survey echoes, rather than mirrors, Maguire and Woodham’s work. Whilst the context for my reading of Union-Castle’s interior design is provided by descriptions of the economic circumstances of the shipping line’s trade during the period, this is not a survey of the design differentials caused by British wartime/peacetime economies. In fact, no evidence exists to suggest that the early post-war interiors of *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh* were the result of restricted access to furniture and furnishings. Indeed, as I have posited, comparison between *Pretoria*

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<sup>14</sup> Introduced by French couturier Christian Dior, in 1947, the extravagant, full-skirted and highly tailored new styles for women’s dresses offered a response to wartime restriction and economies of production, the term ‘New Look’ having been coined by the fashion journal *Harpers Bazaar*.

*Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle* (the latter built once restrictions had been lifted), all of which are very similarly furnished and decorated, suggests just the opposite.

In arguing an approach that has long been adopted by the design history discipline, Maguire and Woodham's argument is useful to this thesis to the extent that their text reiterates a demonstration of one design-historical methodology in arguing that the designed object is always the outcome of a raft of extraneous circumstances and influences, notably the political and economic. This obtains whether the 'object' is a single item (within an interior), an interior itself, or indeed, as here, the interiors, *plural*, that comprised the visual ambience of the ships reviewed or, more holistically still, combinations of all three. Throughout this thesis, it is my contention that design can only be meaningfully understood as being the product of a number of contributing factors; those that are particularly important here, as already suggested, are the politics of national identity, nationhood and belonging (issues which, very significantly, apply both to the countries of departure and of arrival), economics and trade negotiations, and the high politics of government and state.

The ships' interiors surveyed here were either 'designed' or rather, as is the situation with my early case-studies of *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle*, 'decorated', by anonymous individuals working at the supplier end of the fitting-out business (that is, for the firms who provided the furniture, textiles and fittings to the shipbuilders, companies such as Aldman Heaton and Tabb), or by interior decorator Jean Monro, whose work, though surely of an immaculate standard and clarity of vision, has failed to receive critical attention. This study reveals the extent to which design history has been held in something of a stranglehold by Modernism and its persuasive progressivism, a theme so embedded within thinking about design that even post-modernism subscribes to the argument that this is an idiom 'better than' that which preceded it.

In addition to seeking to move beyond the tropes afforded design-historical discussion by the Modern Movement, this thesis also offers a glimpse of a field of study set slightly apart from design history's traditional preoccupation with Europe and North America, one which is currently being challenged by Glenn Adamson, Sarah Teasley and Giorgio Riello, for example (*Global Design*

*History*:2011, forthcoming). Whilst this thesis aligns itself with the importance of discussing design in global terms, the incursion that it makes into thinking about non-Western design is necessarily limited, however, both by the geographical context provided by the Cape as one of the most Europeanised areas of Africa, and by the South African apartheid government's rejection of anything *too African*.

As a discipline, however, design history has made critical advances in offering more than the many hagiographic monographs on individual ships, or comparative histories of the shipping companies written by former crew members and/or enthusiasts, collectors and maritime historians. Such works (Janette McCutcheon's *White Star Line: A Photographic History* (2006), for example, or Manhattan's South Street Seaport Museum's Curator of Ocean Liner Studies William Miller's prolific writing on any number of the great liners (*The QE2: a Picture History* (2008), *SS United States: The Story of America's Greatest Ocean Liner* (1991)), though informative, and often the source of invaluable and well-researched photographic and ephemeral records, do not tend to critique or position liner design against anything other than *other ship interiors*, however. Even detailed and scholarly works such as Philip Dawson's *The Liner: Retrospective and Renaissance* (2005) tend to focus on constructing chronological histories describing the ambitious drive on the part of the shipping lines to build ever more elaborately lavish, comfortable and technologically advanced ocean liners.

Whilst remaining firmly within the 'great liner' idiom, Catherine Donzel's *Luxury Liners: Life on Board* (2006) is useful in acknowledging sociability as a means of reading these ships. However, her history, as lavish in its production as the subjects it portrays, does not expand the subject much beyond the glamour associated with ocean travel. Of more relevance to the themes discussed in this study, and valuable as considered scholarly critiques, are John Graves' *Waterline: Images from the Golden Age of Cruising* (2004) and Peter Quartermaine and Bruce Peter's *Cruise: Identity, Design and Culture* (2006). Although, as will be apparent from their titles, these two works focus on cruise culture, Graves' writing breaks new ground in detailing the extent to which cruising as ambience, lifestyle, entertainment and holidaymaking was around long before the cruise liners

themselves. Borrowing this theme, Chapter Three of this study discusses the extent to which Union-Castle's ocean liner *Reina del Mar* (chartered by Union-Castle in 1964), privileged service, atmosphere and entertainment over interior design, a situation which became important with the winding-down of investment in the company in the wake both of air travel and containerisation. Importantly Graves inclusion of waterline photographer Geoff Pettit's commentary about sailing on board Orient Line's *Orcades* in 1958 also contextualises Union-Castle's apparent lack of adaptation to climate change on board in terms of its vessels' interior design. Pettit records being invited to sleep on deck en route from Vancouver to Honolulu (Graves:2004:47) in order to escape the heat of his cabin. Although *Pendennis* and *Windsor Castle* are specifically mentioned in archival material as having been fitted with air-conditioning units, this appears to be the extent to which their interiors are 'spelt out' -according to the primary material available- as having responded to issues arising from crossing the equator; certainly no mention of the need to factor in design specifically engineered around climate control is made anywhere in any archival material relating to Union-Castle. This is possibly because the inclusion of promenades and patio doors leading to these areas were such an obvious and standard design device, that conversations with regards to this planning are not recorded. Whilst plans and diagrammes exist indicating the importance for Union-Castle, as for any shipping line operating within the tropics, of considerations of climate control, a discussion around this issue is neither possible nor relevant here. This is firstly on the grounds of lack of primary material, apart from the banal point, just made, that the existence of plans provides evidence as to the importance of climate control to Union-Castle. Secondly, since such plans were standard across all ocean liners, just as this thesis does not need to explore the installation of, for example, lifeboat provision, turbines, engine-rooms or navigational equipment, as having an impact upon design, climate control engineering was also *ipso facto* an element of the engineering- but not of the *interior* design of Union-Castle's vessels. Furthermore, the longitudinal, cross-equatorial journey of the ships on the Cape Route may well explain the apparent absence overall of concession to changes in temperature with regards to their interior design. That the ships' heavy draperies, plush upholstery and dark-panelled rooms of First Class gave way to lighter more open surroundings in Tourist Class appears to have been dictated according to socially prescriptive, rather than climate-aware, design, a situation which might well

have been justified by the fact that although, when the liners sailed from a British winter they arrived in a South African summer, temperate United Kingdom summer sailings terminated in the very cold and stormy South Atlantic.

Providing a new departure in writing about maritime travel, Quartermaine and Peter address the design, culture and social life of the purpose-built vessels that became the basis of the worldwide boom in cruising from the 1970s. Whilst their work provides unprecedented insight into a different class of ship from the ocean liners providing the case studies for this thesis, my writing acknowledges Quartermaine and Peter's book through its tracing of the history of the rise of the cruising phenomenon. Although *Reina del Mar* had been built as a passenger liner, and was intended to continue in this service when purchased from the Pacific Steam Navigation Company by Union-Castle in 1973, much of the ship's aesthetic and ambience needs, most usefully, to be discussed in terms of cruise culture. This becomes all the more apparent when the *lack* of attention to the ship's interior design is understood as being subsidiary to an adoption of the mores and atmosphere of cruising as a 'holiday in itself'.

The overall theme of this study, then, is that there is much that design history can explore through looking at objects which are far from canonical, or even through looking at instances of design practice where this has been eschewed in favour of other criteria, as on board *Reina del Mar*. In their ability to engender a myopic obsession, design 'classics' have much to answer for, since a focus upon these excludes other products, obscuring the relevance to the discipline of the badly-designed, the 'un-designed', or simply design which falls outside the Modernist canon. Union-Castle ships provide a counterpoint to the fetishisation of the object as icon.

It is surely significant, for example, that whilst views and reviews of the iconic interiors of P&O's 'superliner' SS *Canberra* (1961) – briefly surveyed in Chapter Three, in order to provide a tool with which to highlight Jean Monro's work on *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle* – can be accessed through the Royal Institute of British Architects' (RIBA) library catalogue, not a trace of Union-Castle is to be found in the RIBA's holdings. However, as the chapters that follow will suggest, it

is precisely because Union-Castle's post-war interiors provide examples of mediated and circumscribed design that they reveal so much of value for the discipline. The point that this thesis makes is that Union-Castle Line's post-Second World War interiors, whilst by no means always subject to designerly attention, have much to reveal about the vital insights that interdisciplinarity can bring to design history and specifically, as a result, in this case, raise the challenges of thinking through issues around apartheid and design.

That business not only could, but in fact, it was felt, *should* be conducted with Pretoria through the apartheid era was symptomatic of the archly Conservative ethos of Union-Castle's managing company, B&C. As discussed in Chapter Two, B&C's right-wing politics were matched by an entrenched conservatism when it came to a design aesthetic for its liners. An exploration of Jean Monro's robust historicism and adoption of the English country-house style therefore necessarily places this study outside the design-historical literature that tends to concentrate on the sort of description and hagiography which situates some ocean liners as being worthy of inclusion in the RIBA catalogue, and others not. As Fiona Walmsley points out in *Interior Design and Identity*, in her chapter 'Pragmatism and pluralism: the interior decoration of the *Queen Mary*' (McKellar and Sparke: 2004): 'Much of the literature on luxury liners, their histories and their interiors, is style-orientated, focusing on the liners as visual icons of modernity.' (McKellar and Sparke:2004:155). Instead, Walmsley writes;

This account of the *Queen Mary*, in contrast, seeks to unpack the process that resulted in its design, looking in particular at the conflicting views of its designers and of the Cunard representatives responsible for its commission. (McKellar and Sparke:2004:155)

As with the *Queen Mary* (commissioned by Cunard in 1930), which the architectural press chose to ignore (noted by Walmsley, in McKellar and Sparke:2004), so too, apparently, with Union-Castle's newly designed interiors for *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle* in 1960 and 1961. It is surely significant that a common decorative theme in each of the three ships was the adoption of historicist references associated with the English country manor. In her recognition of the value of writing

about a ship which received little contemporary acclaim in the design press, Walmsley's analysis has been useful to this study. Likewise, her discussion of the plurality of styles found on board *Queen Mary* (of which references to the country house were one), something she attributes to Cunard's desire to provide 'something for everyone', has been of relevance to this study. However, whereas Walmsley suggests that *Queen Mary's* historicist overtones were the result of Cunard's wishing to woo its North American passengers via the adoption of themes from 'gentrified' Britain, I argue that Union-Castle's adoption of a similar style for *Pendennis* and *Windsor's* First Class accommodation came about for rather different reasons.

Sailing an altogether different route, Union-Castle's passengers were not making the prestigious UK to New York (first world-to first world) voyage that Cunard's clientele were undertaking, and which dominates ocean liner history. In Chapter One, I explore *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle's* pluralist interiors in the context of the neo-colonial and colonial axis of power they represent, and in Chapter Two, which examines Monro's deployment of the English country-house idiom, I argue that the use of this style was occasioned by assumptions about class and travel made by B&C, and against which its passengers' experiences on board were being scripted by the company.

Where Walmsley's analysis investigates ideas around the relationship between *Queen Mary's* passenger market and the ship's design, this study, in surveying the wider arena in which Union-Castle traded, takes the view that, rather than having arisen as a result of wishing to win clientele, the shipping line's interiors – though clearly designed to be of great appeal to customers – were primarily dictated by politics. Entirely dominating both British-South African merchant shipping and the conference of northern European merchant fleets trading with South Africa (the South African Shipping Lines Conference), B&C was able to make the kind of autocratic decisions in relation to Union-Castle that even lines with the kudos of Cunard, operating on the far more competitive North American sailing route, could not. Indeed, as Chapter Two describes, B&C diktat threatened at one point to alienate its trading partner, the national government in Pretoria, as a result of Union-Castle's references to British royalty, heritage and empire.



Given B&C's remarkable facility for bending to Pretorian rule at most other key moments of the period 1945-1977, it says something about the significance to the company of these historicist styles that this idiom was clung to – in First Class at least – despite South African opposition. In the light of this, it is useful to examine the scant literature that exists within wider design history on the place of the country-house style. Louise Ward's chapter 'Chintz, swags and bows: the myth of the English country-house style, 1930-1990' in McKellar and Sparke's *Interior Design and Identity* (2004) is helpful here. Whereas other writings by the proponents of the style itself exist (for example, John Fowler and John Cornforth's *English Decoration in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (1974)), Ward offers a rare analysis of a subject (a hybrid, commercial manufacture and 'non-iconic' idiom) that has received little of design history's attention. Her description of this modern reinvention of an imagined aesthetic past takes the history of interior decoration into a new arena:

...the values encoded in the English country house were transformed into an *image* of it: acting like a veneer that could be applied to every surface of almost every interior, the English country-house style of decorating was presented to consumers as a ready-made status-laden identity. However, although it was drawn in part from actual country houses, this identity did not really represent the historical country house. Rather it was a reinterpretation of something which was itself a fabrication...In fact, the carefully co-ordinated riot of ruffles and swags of brightly patterned chintz... bore very little to anything seen in English houses before the 1980s. (Ward, in McKellar and Sparke:2004:95)

Useful though Ward's account is, however, this study departs from her work in two ways. First, and most obviously, it addresses the use of the style on ships that were fitted out, and in their First Class accommodations decorated according to an assumed 'country-manor' look, at least twenty years before the key moment for the adoption of the look in the 1980s, the focal years of Ward's analysis. Indeed, this thesis holds that whilst, as Ward describes, the style was one of pure fabrication (and, she details, one that originated in the inter-war work of American decorator Nancy

Lancaster), the style was already a forceful idiom by the time Jean Monro was filling *Windsor Castle* with 'antique' furniture and 'historic' textile hangings.

Secondly, tracing Jean Monro's biography before going on to describe her use of conservative and historical references on board *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*, I come to a different conclusion about the deployment of the English country-house style. I agree with Ward's analysis of the ersatz nature of the look, but believe that Monro adopted the style to provide an authentic aesthetic. Monro describes the rooms she grew up in, for example, and although these were created by her mother – herself an exponent of the look – Monro's autobiography reveals that she believed very sincerely in the appropriateness of 'recreating' an aesthetic and ambience with which, it was simply assumed, First Class passengers would be familiar and would therefore feel comfortable. It is also very significant to this association with B&C, that later in her career Monro was involved in providing a country house refurbishment for the National Trust at its Suffolk property Ickworth House, in the 1980s. Whatever the view today of the curatorial correctness of reviving real historic interiors with what was, paradoxically, a modern a-historical style – an investigation beyond the scope of this study – the point of significance for this thesis is that if an icon or 'national institution' such as Union-Castle had employed Monro to decorate according to this idiom, then surely this was an aesthetic that might be adopted for another revered British institution, the National Trust. Once again, the complicated ideologies surrounding the creation of the modern interior mapped out by Penny Sparke's *The Modern Interior* (2008) are valuable here. In particular, this text is useful in this context in its offering of a reminder that the neatly organised, ideologically streamlined and 'built-from-scratch' interior is a Modernist construct that frequently has little or no bearing upon either the philosophy or pragmatics of interior design.

Ward argues that the apotheosis of the English country-house style was not to be achieved until the 1980s, by which time it was attractive because it was felt to represent a lost past, and, following the economic and social changes brought about as a result of the Depression and then war, reached a peak just at a moment when a further 'crisis for the future of the country house [was] forecast.'. (Ward, in McKellar and Sparke:2004:93). I would suggest instead that the use of the English

country-house style on board Union-Castle's ships was designed to invoke British heritage not in the sense of representing a disappeared age and society but as a deliberate device to create a continuing present. The means by which B&C wielded this idea as a rather snobbish demonstration of superiority over a former colony, South Africa, is examined in Chapter Two.

In suggesting *How to Recreate the Traditional Period Home*, Stephen Calloway and Stephen Jones' book, *Traditional Style* (1994), offers the general reader access to the very design ethos and process practised by Jean Monro, and indicates the continuing currency of 'the past' within both 'professional' and 'popular' British interior design. More than this, however, their chapter 'Old look, new look, 1945-1950' very usefully summarizes the imprint made by the English country-house look on contemporary styling. Although designed as an accessible style guide, and therefore deliberately reductionist in approach, their writing echoes many of the sentiments expressed by Monro in her autobiography and serves to underline the psychological dimensions of filling a room with romantic versions of earlier styles. More nuanced than their 'How to' chapter, Calloway and Jones' insightful equation of the 'Old look, new look' with relevant literature (novelist Evelyn Waugh and critic, writer and poet John Betjeman are cited in particular) is relevant to my discussion where it seeks not only to deal with the hard evidence offered by the political and economic arenas, but also with the intangible poetics informing the construction of the interior. In a commentary that succeeds in being both light and appropriately frivolous, with razor-sharp social critique, Calloway and Jones' writing offers a highly apposite appraisal of the aesthetic produced by Monro for Union-Castle's First Class accommodation on board *Windsor Castle* and *Pendennis Castle*, and a historicism which, they say;

... offered clients a bold, colourful and richly satisfying blend of the large-scale classicism of William Kent, the sophisticated brilliance of the Regency, and the ample comfort of nineteenth-century upholstery: diverse ingredients that none-the-less combined happily in a product as deliciously English as sherry trifle.... it is a look intentionally redolent of money and not easily brought off cheaply. Whole bolts of floral glazed chintz go into the

making of elaborately swagged or ruched curtain treatments...(Calloway and Jones:1994:169)

In reflecting upon issues around the psychological and emotional dimensions of the interior, Mario Praz's philosophical musings in *The History of Interior Decoration* (1964) offer a useful model for dealing with both the amorphous issue of 'interiority' as well as the role of the decorator. The poetics of Praz's 'Singing the Sofa', the device – taken from an eighteenth-century William Cowper poem<sup>15</sup> – via which he beatifies the historic interior is useful in the context of this thesis not for a demonstration of the value of historicism but rather for conveying the sense of solidity and presence that furniture – any furniture, of any style – can instil in an interior. When Praz quotes Cowper, he takes the poet's overlaid descriptions of the birth and evolution of this piece of furniture<sup>16</sup> at face value and instead, using the sofa to stand for a whole interior, identifies it as both haven and emotional anchor: Praz's identification of the psychological/emotive connotations of this particular item of furniture is redolent of the importance of *indoor* rooms within the transitional external world bounded by the superstructure of the ship at sea.

Writing of historic styles and their adoption from the vantage point of the 1960s (at the same time as Jean Monro was working for Union-Castle), Praz's suggestions as to the extent to which the artificially-created environment might result in caricature also provides a resonance with the deliberately over-decorative aesthetic employed by Monro:

The pupils of those who at the end of the last century revived a taste for the furniture and objects of the French 18<sup>th</sup> century...became even more

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<sup>15</sup> I sing the Sofa, I who lately sang

Truth, Hope Charity, and touch'd with awe

The solemn chords, and with a trembling hand

Escaped with pain from that adventurous flight,

Now seek repose upon a humbler theme, yet august and proud

The occasion – for the Fair commands the song. (Quoted in Praz:1964:14)

<sup>16</sup> intended by Cowper to be a spoof of English 17<sup>th</sup> century poet John Milton's writing.

methodical than their masters, and in their homes they created the most flawless Regency and Louis XVI decors that we have known. And certainly Leopoldskron, the castle of the bishops of Salzburg, can never have been so systematically furnished in Rococo style as it was when Max Reinhardt [Austrian film director, 1873 – 1943] made it his home. (Praz:1964:29)

Mirroring the diametric opposition between First and Tourist Class in the case studies offered by the accommodation on board *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle* in Chapter Two, Praz's reflections have an equivalent contrast in Thomas Hine's much more immediate writing style in his survey of mid-century American design, *Populuxe* (2007). Demonstrating design types 'From Tailfins and TV Dinners to Barbie Dolls and Fallout Shelters', Hine's text has been valuable to my reading of Jean Monro's Tourist Class designs in affording a view of an aesthetic which, like the 'popular luxury' denoted by the American style, sought to be both popular and 'everyday', as well as new (and therefore out-of-the-ordinary) and luxurious, as befitted the special, and thereby 'modernised', glamour of ocean travel.

Similarly, architect Alan Hess's book on the 1930s and '50s Los Angeles architecture of motels, coffee shops and fast-food stands, *Googie Redux* (2004) has been useful to my surveys of Tourist Class accommodation on the 1960s Union-Castle ships investigated. However, *Googie Redux* has been useful here less in providing references for the popularised styling of Union-Castle's interiors, since these suggest instead an affinity to British popular and youth styles, but in offering a model for describing the way in which the 'everyday' becomes glamorised via design and is thus, paradoxically, elevated away from and beyond its pedestrianism. In this sense I see a parallel between the 'Googie' – architecture of the California hot-dog stand, ordinary constructions taken beyond the everyday via their souped-up styling – and the formica-topped tables of *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*'s Tourist Class lounges. Here, for example, the application of new materials became markers of the uncommon in an environment self-conscious about flirting with the predominantly young occupants who, the company expected, would travel Tourist Class and

who, it was assumed, would respond to stylistic devices intended to create an 'out-of-the-ordinariness' itself, amplified by the adventure of being on board ship.

For a more stylistically relevant conceptual basis for discussing *Pendennis* and *Windsor's* Tourist Class spaces, Breward, Ehrman and Evans' *The London Look* (2004) is helpful in providing an analysis of the interface between fashion, art and popular culture – for example, their discussion of iconic 1960s British fashion designer Mary Quant – which, in an admittedly watered-down version, I read into Monro's Union-Castle interiors. Whilst providing a highly relevant and interesting model for thinking through the Tourist Class spaces of Union-Castle's 1960s ships, this text has been of particular use to this thesis from the point of view of highlighting the shipping line's decorative schemes as an *inversion* of contemporary popular cultural tropes. For example, the book points to the importance of subversion as part of the process through which the London fashion scene was created and appropriated, both regionally and internationally. Mention is made of the importance of the August 1959 edition of *Queen* magazine, the *Establishment Chronicle*, in this regard. This was an issue of the journal created expressly as a spoof of the periodical *The Eton Chronicle*, produced by the British public school of the same name. I argue that by contrast, whilst acknowledging contemporary youth styles, Monro's Tourist Class interiors on *Pendennis* and *Windsor*, far from providing an iconoclastic critique of the British Establishment, if anything confirm, rather than disrupt, the status quo.

This thesis, then, is a design history which aims to be significant not through the exploration of exemplars of the work of the designer, but rather the opposite. Indeed, it is the very absence of 'state-of-the-art' schemes that reveal so much for an investigation of Union-Castle's passenger accommodation and which, I would argue, provide insight into a far more vital area of my research, the praxis of the apartheid system and the implications of this for the designed object, in this case the ocean liner.

Never cutting-edge in its interior design, Union-Castle is far more the territory of its devoted, highly knowledgeable, lavender-wearing aficionados than of design critics. Instead, these chapters tell a

story that belongs to the shipping line's own experts (both passengers and crew), 'the club'-members who (rightly) cherish their memories of association with the company, not because the ships they worked on were design classics but because they are proud to have been part of the 'Union-Castle-ness' of travel on the long-celebrated Cape Route.

That these chapters also reveal a much darker and far less palatable side of the managerial and corporate decisions made as part of Union-Castle's involvement with South Africa during the post-war period is at no point intended as an indictment of those associated with the company as passengers and crew; the history of the need to travel, or indeed emigrate, to South Africa from Britain following the Second World War is far too complex for such judgements to be made. Indeed to do so would be to restrict the design history that this thesis seeks to narrate.

Arguing, as a sub-text, that all types of spaces are contiguous with constructions of many notions of identity, I have been critically aware that the power relationships represented by Union-Castle's passenger accommodation are open to varying interpretation according to one's position vis à vis the history that has been scrutinised here, the historicist version of English national identity imbued by Jean Monro's English country-house style symbolising, for me, B&C's dedication to Establishment protocol, was alternatively experienced as 'an escape' by South African Joanne McGilvray, 'a way of spending some time in a democracy and with all things parliamentarian'. (McGilvray:Kalk Bay:2008). It is for this reason, in agreement with some of the most recent thinking in interior design history, that this thesis therefore acknowledges the currency and contributions of globalism to the design-historical debate.

Additionally, as mentioned in the Introduction, this study aims to negotiate the complexity of the concerns that underpin it, bringing an energy to the subject from exterior sources. As the new journal *Interiors: Design, Architecture, Culture*, an exponent of this dynamic approach to the history of interior design prompts, I aim to achieve this 'through an exploration of 'the interior environment's orchestration and composition and its impact on the inhabitant from a trans-disciplinary perspective' (Massey and Turpin (eds):2010). As will be argued in the following

survey of Union-Castle's early post-war ships, *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle*, political history, economic history and material culture are all important to a reading of the design of their interiors.



***Pretoria Castle, Edinburgh Castle and Kenya Castle, 1945 – 1955***

Of all the ship interiors surveyed in the case-studies presented in this thesis, the interiors of *Pretoria Castle, Edinburgh Castle and Kenya Castle* offer a view onto the psychological dimensions of the interior; in this case, the subjective and emotive issues around accommodating passengers in a confined space whilst travelling between two very different places. The key theme of this chapter is that in line with the tenor of Sir Vernon Thompson's pragmatic chairmanship of Union-Castle (1931-1953) during the period, these vessels can also be understood as offering a familiar world for passengers travelling to the south and east African lands still tied to Britain in which, upon arrival, British settlers were expected to act as representatives of the Crown. Relaying a message of conservative moderation through their fitting out and furnishing, the ship interiors surveyed here provided a visual stamp which represented the indelible and can be read as being designed to remind passengers of the nature of British sovereignty over its dominions.

In parallel with a discussion of the cultural, social and psychological ambience evoked by the three ships, however, this chapter argues that it is essential to explore the contemporary manufacturing culture which underpinned decisions as to their interior arrangement. During a period in which, despite a general trend towards increasing professionalization in the industry, ocean liners might not always be fitted out and furnished by a 'designer' of some description, but rather by subsidiaries of the shipbuilding companies (this being the Belfast company of Harland and Wolff, in the case of *Pretoria Castle, Edinburgh Castle and Kenya Castle*), it is particularly important to assess the context in which furniture and furnishings for the ships were being produced.

Focusing on Union-Castle's early post-war ships, this chapter will also look briefly at a rival ship on the East African sailing, the British India Steam Navigation Company (BI) vessel *SS Uganda*. Sailing to the East African colonies by BI had long been the accepted and, it was thought, rather more 'upmarket' way to make the voyage, civil servants being expected to take up berths on BI,

rather than Union-Castle, ships for example. In fact, as a subsidiary of P&O (Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation company), BI was, in a sense, an instrument of government, the (semi)-official carrier of His Majesty's civil servants. (Graves:JAGraves@nmm.ac.uk:9 October 2010:Re.Caird, email to HMcKay@rca.ac.uk). The extent to which *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle* were invested with ideas about the probity of Empire via their passenger accommodation can be measured in their adaptation of a very similar aesthetic to that of the ships of the BI line which had most recently predated them – for example *SS Kampala*, in service from 1947.

Significantly, however, the visual parallels between the interiors of *SS Uganda* and its Union-Castle contemporaries are markedly discontinued in one vital area. Making its first voyage in 1952, the interiors of *SS Uganda* presented an accrual of African artefacts demonstrating the continent's visual and material cultures (*SS Uganda Trust:1998*). Nowhere was this the case on board the three Union-Castle ships surveyed here. The comparison of BI's ship and those of the Union-Castle line during the period outlined by this chapter thus introduces the core theme of this thesis: that is, the argument that from 1948 the nature of Union-Castle's relationship with the South African apartheid government was to result in interiors which represented the preclusion of any portrayal of black culture.

Twin ships, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Pretoria Castle* [Fig. 10] were launched in Belfast in August and October 1947 respectively. Embarking on their first voyages for Cape Town the following year, they sailed from a Britain still beset by the physical and economic aftermath of The Second World War. During the conflict overseas, investments had been wound up to pay for combat. The transition to a peacetime economy and the maintaining of strategic military commitments abroad had led to severe and continuing problems with the balance of trade, with food and essential goods rationing being carried forward into the post-war period. In following a strategy to force a reduction in consumption, limit imports, boost exports and stabilise the pound, the British government's aim during what became known as the 'austerity years' (broadly 1939-1954) was for the country to trade its way out of financial crisis by adopting these measures. In common with

other national shipping lines, Union-Castle was seen by the British government as providing an instrument it might employ as a tactic of economic resurrection. In particular, the war having alerted government to the extent to which Britain had become dependent upon imported goods, it was now keenly felt that a recapturing and regeneration of foreign export markets was essential to recovery. (Maguire and Woodham:1997:31)

In addition to their potential to foster economic revitalization, mail ships such as Union-Castle's ocean liners now had an important role to play, as *design*, in the projection of ideas about national identity. Having acted as showcases for a visual culture into which might be embedded statements about national prowess, British passenger ships operating in the period before the Second World War had conveyed not only passengers, but also messages about Empire. After 1945, shipping lines were now required to enter into the battle for post-war economic recovery not simply by providing demonstrations of style and sophistication but also, literally, as the vehicles fostering economic growth and recovery. That this was the case was made evident, for example, in the inclusion of important references to shipping in the state-backed 1951 Festival of Britain, an event designed to proclaim the nation's resurgence through the recounting of its past technological, industrial and scientific achievements according to a progressivist historical trajectory. For the Festival's locus on London's South Bank, architect Sir Basil Spence (1907 – 1976) designed an exhibition, the Sea and Ships Pavilion, to be included in the Festival's Land of Britain section. Created as an evocation of a shipyard, the Pavilion's interior was 350 ft long and made up of 17 lattice steel frames. It was divided into six sections, some of which opened out onto the Thames. Particularly notable features were the display's floating dock, a 4,000-ton merchant ship and a full-size reproduction of a clipper ship. (Sir Basil Spence Archive Project: <http://www.basilspence.org.uk>: accessed 5 November 2009)

As Wealleans has commented in relation to the building of new ships in the immediate post-war period, 'There was an optimistic faith in the future as reconstruction got underway, fuelled by a trust in new technologies and the power of consumer freedom' (2006:136). A state-backed initiative, this drive also sought to boost the economy through the reform of industrial design

standards (through a standardizing and simplifying of both the structure and aesthetic of design practice). Union-Castle's early post-war ships, did not, however, demonstrate an aesthetic that was in line with this programme. Instead, the shipping company continued to decorate its vessels' interiors according to a local and small-scale industrial arrangement whereby shipbuilders Harland and Wolff subcontracted the post-launch fitting-out process to an old-established decorating firm owned by John Aldam Heaton and Ashby Tabb, Heaton Tabb and Co.<sup>17</sup> Although it ran counter to state initiatives for modernising production and design, this continuing pre-war practice of employing Heaton Tabb in the fitting out of its ships can in fact be seen to have suited Union-Castle both economically and with regard to the company's projection of ideas about nationhood and empire.

Like most shipping companies, Union-Castle had suffered a number of losses during the war, the fleet having been decimated by the destruction of eight passenger-carrying ships. (Mitchell and Sawyer:1984:66) A number of ships remained, however, providing an immediate hub from which to rebuild. Additionally helpful was the fact that 12 of these vessels were those built either for the Southampton – Cape Town mail service or for the 'Round Africa' route. Also, of particular interest to Union-Castle at the time was the fact that with the closure of the Suez Canal (the route built to provide shipping access between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea) during hostilities, British shipping attention had necessarily been directed towards South Africa, and Cape Town in particular, as the port at which supplies and munitions might be loaded, and as the location for servicing and repair work.

As this chapter will argue, however, although at the start of the period 1945-1955 the wind was set fair for the development of propitious relations between Britain, Union-Castle and South Africa, the partnerships that unfolded were far from being free of tension and uncertainty. Since affairs conducted between Union-Castle and Pretoria during the decade 1945-1955 were wracked by an

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<sup>17</sup> The company founded by John Aldam Heaton, Aldam Heaton and Co. was later joined by the Ashby Tabb's architectural practice, becoming Heaton and Tabb, or simply Heaton Tabb, according to different archival sources.

ambiguity which was to affect the interior design of the line's ships, the history of the two nations' association needs to be investigated. In addition, since this relationship was itself the product of the changing nature of South African politics during the period, a brief survey of the South African political history of these years is also helpful to an understanding of the design of passenger accommodation on board the liners.

In 1945, the opportunities afforded by the Atlantic route for the strengthening of trade with the Union of South Africa were there to be seized. For Union-Castle, however, realizing this potential set the scene for dealings which were marked, at best, by a great deal of uncertainty on both parts, and at worst by barely disguised antipathy. Equally, the ongoing instability of relations between London, Union-Castle and Pretoria do not appear to have created a situation conducive to a grand or triumphal re-building of the Union-Castle fleet with the arrival of peace.

One of the key aims of this chapter will be to explore the extent to which the circumstances of the brokerage between Union-Castle and Pretoria were to affect the interior styling of the two new ships. Other factors were at play too: the character of the Union-Castle Line under its Chairman, Sir Francis Vernon Thompson (1881-1953); the contemporary spirit of British design, and discourses around colonial and post-colonial power and national identity. Each of these influences needs to be brought to bear on any discussion of the interiors of *Edinburgh Castle* and *Pretoria Castle*.

Launched five years later, in 1952, *Kenya Castle*, operating on the East Africa route, provides a further example of the embodiment of Union-Castle's post-war style. In the early twentieth century, South African status within the Empire had changed from colony to dominion when the nation became the Union of South Africa in 1910, an administrative departure which granted a limited independence. During the period 1945-1955 the East African nations Kenya and Uganda, however, were still very much part of the British Empire, not achieving independence from the United Kingdom until 1962 and 1963 respectively. An account of *Kenya's* operations on the East African route is therefore included here as an aid to reading the post-colonial and transitional situation of

British-South African relations in the 1940s. A description of the East African service also allows for the exploration of a further comparison, with a brief survey of BI's 1952 SS *Uganda*.

Having first described the political and economic relationship between Union-Castle and Pretoria in the 10 years following the end of the Second World War in Part One of this chapter, Part Two will move to a discussion of the ships' interiors. In comparison with the Union-Castle flagships of the 1960s, passenger accommodation on board *Edinburgh* and *Pretoria* appears to have had only limited engagement with ideas about contemporary styling and design. Furthermore, the ships' interiors do not give the impression of having been laid out according to a predetermined scheme but rather that their panelled rooms were simply filled with what were felt to be appropriate furnishings. Particularly when viewed in contrast with their flamboyant 1960s successors *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*, the two earlier liners do not at first appear to correspond to any 'designerly' notions as to style or aesthetic.

Whilst the formal design of these ships' interiors does not appear to have been of paramount importance, elements of their styling do acknowledge the modernising design edicts of the 1940s. As will be demonstrated, however, the inclusion of 'modern' streamlined styling sat side-by-side with a much wider-ranging use of more traditional antique or vernacular styles. How it could be that such an uncomfortable alliance might in fact provide a useful design-historical reading will be explored through the investigation of four themes that are key to this chapter's discussions: contemporary design and manufacturing culture; the importance of notions of 'quality' and luxury on board ship; the production of differentiated space and the complexities of producing this on board ship and the significance of the the psychological dimensions, associations, and connotations of passenger accommodation as a backdrop for the performance of certain notions of British national identity.

Just what it was that these various issues contributed in terms of any overall aesthetic for Union-Castle will be analysed in conjunction with an examination of the demographics of those travelling. Linked with the social and cultural aspects of travel to Africa during this period – and more important

than the absence or presence of the designer's hand – another key point to be made here is that accepted design-historical readings alone do not provide sufficient information with which to decode the interiors of *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle*, and that political, economic and social history are all essential to an understanding of the design of Union-Castle's passenger accommodation. Similarly, it will be argued that reading design as cultural practice also provides an invaluable tool for surveying these early post-war liners. That this is the case is something which becomes all the more apparent when attempting to provide a design-historical reading of a subject with a lack of clear or strong visual indicators, as is the case with these three ships.

When understood in the context of the routes that they travelled and the relationships between the countries of origin and destination in the 1940s and early '50s, *Pretoria*, *Edinburgh* and *Kenya's* interiors can be interpreted as deriving not from stylistic or aesthetic sensibilities but instead from various moral, cultural and emotional precepts. In addition to revealing something of Union-Castle's fortunes within the wider economic and political context of its operation, a reading of the ships' interior design as cultural production offers an insight into the conflicts at play during the early years of the period covered by this study, and which, it will be argued throughout, informed the decoration of Union-Castle's liners. As well as introducing the possibility that the politics and policies of the South African apartheid government (elected for the first time in 1948) had an impact upon design, the vessels surveyed in this chapter provide the opportunity to uncover the importance of the 'un-designed' space for design history.

Reading their interiors as cultural practice, *Pretoria*, *Edinburgh* and *Kenya's* 'undesigned' interiors will be described as being bound up with the politics of personal and national identity. As such, the passenger accommodation on board the ships can be viewed as being redolent of a mythologised notion of the British character – something that had arisen during the 1930s and which had been consolidated during wartime – and which by the period 1945-1955 was being mapped onto the psyche and circumstances of late colonialism as rehearsed on board ship.

This chapter is written with a subtext, then: it aims to present the idea that the anomalous interiors of the three ships used as case studies are typical of the kind of rooms that have received little attention from design historians because they do not easily fit within the parameters afforded by discussions of style, idiom, chronological moment or other key concepts such as gender or spatial type. The ships discussed in this chapter provide an opportunity to explore this 'invisible' area of design history: that is, the places and spaces of 'non-design'. Not being the product of any distinct style, and witnessing no clear decorative differentiation according to familiar design-historical binaries of public and private or gender, or, as might easily be employed in the case of the ship, passenger class, these liners' passenger accommodation offers no ready taxonomical associations.

### *2.1 The Historical Context. South African politics and the relationship between Union-Castle and Pretoria, 1945-1955*

The Union of South Africa, initially a British dominion state, subsequently a Commonwealth realm, and from 1961 a republic, was formed in May 1910 by the uniting of the previously separate colonies of the Cape, Natal, Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The creation of the Union left Southern Africa at large divided, however, with the British retaining control over its High Commission Territories of Swaziland, Basutoland, and Bechuanaland. The struggle for control of the Territories was to dog relations between the United Kingdom and the Union well into the 1960s, and formed a backdrop for negotiations, both political and economic, between the two nations throughout the century.

After a period in power earlier in the century (between 1919 – 1924) Jan Christiaan Smuts, [Fig. 11] had come to power for the second time following a parliamentary coup of 1939 in which he defeated Prime Minister J.M.B. Hertzog on the question of South Africa's entering the Second World War. The issue of the extent to which Britain and South Africa would remain allies during the period, and the events which turned Pretoria away from Britain, were, like the ongoing wrangles over the



Territories, to inform trading relations with Union-Castle – and in turn, it will be argued, to have an impact upon the fitting-out and furnishing of the line's ships.

Events in the run-up to Smuts' return to power set the scene, and are indicative of the degree of conflict within South Africa concerning relations with its former colonial authority: in 1934, in a move to reconcile Afrikaners and the English-speaking white population, Smuts' South African Party and Hertzog's National Party had merged to form the United Party, which subsequently split over the issue of South Africa's entry into the Second World War as an ally of the United Kingdom, something to which the National Party was severely opposed. On 4 September 1939, the United Party caucus refused to accept Hertzog's stance of neutrality in the Second World War and deposed him in favor of Smuts, whose victory brought him to power as Prime Minister for a second time, in the period 1939-1948. The Nationalists, meanwhile, regrouped around D. F. Malan, now at the helm of the *Herenigde* (reunited) National Party.

South Africa had contributed both men and arms to the war effort, mainly to the North African campaign. In total some 342 692 South Africans had volunteered for active service, and the country's involvement extended further on account of its strategic importance as a key producer of ally munitions and armaments. (Hyam and Henshaw:2003:28), However, Smuts' role in the conflict, as well as his relationship with Britain, had remained ambivalent. Whilst a staunch Churchill supporter and a field marshal in the British Army, he was also critically engaged in the continuing concern to secure the transfer of Swaziland, Basutoland (from 1966, the independent state of Lesotho) and Bechuanaland (independent Botswana from 1966), regions administered by the British, to South African control. Equally, of all the governments engaged in combat on the Allied side, Smuts remained the least inclined to risk its electoral support by insisting on austerity or controls in aid of the British war effort.

Following the cessation of hostilities, Smuts' refusal to organise South Africa's import policy in Britain's interests produced a situation which jeopardised the country's right to remain within the Sterling Area. Having come into existence in 1939, the Area had provided a wartime emergency

measure which involved cooperation in exchange control matters between the dominions and colonies of the British Empire. Countries within the Area either used sterling or pegged their own currency to the British pound. Smuts' obfuscation of issues which formed the bedrock of the Empire's trading arrangements thus threatened to seriously jeopardize the two nations' economic and political relationship. That the issue was resolved in such a way as would ensure that neither nation lost out (South Africa retaining access to vital agricultural markets and capital investments, and Britain to its key supply of gold) is testimony to the complexity of the symbiosis that bound the two nations together throughout the period of this study.

Union-Castle Managing Directors' Minute Books for the years 1945-1948 (held in the NMM Caird Library) bear witness to the continuing ties between the two countries; with frequent regularity the weekly directorship meetings note the shipping line's investment in South Africa, for example. Minutes of the meetings of 8 October 1947 and 23 January 1948, to cite just two such entries, are typical:

Two sums of £50 000 each being placed in fixed deposit with the Standard Bank of South Africa and Barclays bringing the total account on deposit in South Africa up to £190 000. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (3454))

Urgent cablegram from Cape Town agency dated 7 Jan 1948 advising the possibility of obtaining at Johannesburg £100 000 Union Government stock at £106 1/8, plus 1/4 % brokerage...the stock redeemable at 1 Jan 1951...the Chairman advised purchase to be made. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (3619))

An added incentive for ensuring a continued flow of capital to the Southern end of the Atlantic is likely to have been British recognition of the importance of foreign investment to the South African gold-mining industry, a heavily capital-intensive operation. Managing Directors' minutes recording such activity demonstrate Union-Castle's very central role as both agent and instrument in the relationship with Pretoria. Furthermore, according to an agreement made with both South African

banks and the country's mining companies, dating from 1926, the gold loaned or paid to Britain through the Bank of England, and which Union-Castle investment helped to mine, was physically transported by Union-Castle ship to London. In addition, Union-Castle received payment for this service at a freight rate of '6s.6d. per cent of the value of the gold being transported, at the price of 85s. per fine ounce'. (NMM CL Director's Minute books, 14 Jan 1932 (4769), 25 Jan 1935 (5582), 10 November, 1938 (6570) and Berridge:1987:16) All in all, the freight rate for the transport of bullion according to the 1926 Gold Freight Agreement had generated an annual net freight which, as Berridge details in his survey *The Politics of the South Africa Run*, by the 1930s had amounted to £150 000 (1987:16). According to Peter Laister, former Union-Castle deck officer, it was an open secret amongst crew that the company's ships were built to include secure bullion vaults but that attempts were inevitably made to ensure that the travelling public were unaware of this facility. (Laister:Longfield:10.3.10)

Not surprisingly, it was a pressing concern for Union-Castle that new life be breathed into the Freight Agreement in the years immediately following the war. The pivotal role of the shipping line, and once again the company's unique position at the centre of the South African-British trade equation, was indicated by the fact that, as Berridge points out: 'It was not altogether a handicap to the Company that its deputy Chairman, Sir Ernest Harvey, who conducted negotiations, should have been Deputy Governor of the Bank [of England] before joining Union-Castle in 1936' (Berridge:1987:17). Union-Castle Chairman Sir Vernon Thompson (1881-1953) had also held a very influential government post during the war as Principal Shipping Advisor and Controller of Commercial Shipping at the Ministry of War Transport. Should negotiations not to go Union-Castle's way, given these background connections the South African government stood to be accused of supreme churlishness, at the very least, by the shipping line. In the end, though, a minute recorded for a company meeting of 27 November 1945 reveals satisfaction with the re-negotiated Agreement; the rate settled for 1946 allowed for the shipment of £100 000 000 in gold which, at 5s per cent, promised a revenue for Union-Castle of £250 000 000, and was, as the minute recording the arrangement notes, 'a substantial source of revenue for the future' (NMM CL UCM 1/8 27 November 1945 (8047)).

In May 1945 Sir Vernon Thompson had considered the ordering of two new mail ships<sup>18</sup>, but it was only with the very successful renegotiation of the Mail Contract and Freight Agreement that the ships were ordered. The generous terms of the renegotiated Freight Agreement were not to result in any radically new spending plan for the design of Union-Castle's liners' interiors, however. Why was it that more was not invested either financially or in design terms in *Edinburgh Castle* and *Pretoria Castle*? One clue may come in the form of a minute from the Managing Directors' meeting of 10 September 1947, in which a rather schoolmasterly Thompson asked that it be noted against an 'Appeal for funds from South African Olympic team due to travel to London the next year' that:

The Chairman, whilst considering it inappropriate to hold the Games in Britain at that time in view of the prevailing economic circumstances and pressure upon transport, decided that a donation of 100 guineas be made. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 10 September 1947 (3537))

Although, as will be explained, wartime restrictions still obtained in the areas of manufacturing which would supply the ships, most noticeably within the furniture trade, for example, the economic constraints to which contemporary British industry was subject only provide a partial answer to the question of why the new ships' interiors were not more lavishly designed. Notoriously autocratic, Thompson appears to have run a very tight budgetary ship.: Managing Directors' minute books even note details such as Thompson's agreement to the bitumen re-roofing of the Cape Town Union-Castle agency office or the ordering of '10 000 glass cloths (size 26" x 36")' for the new ships. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 Meeting of 26 November 1946 (3315)) Elsewhere it was recorded:

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<sup>18</sup> The Chairman recorded that he had met the previous day w Sir Frederick Rebbeck Chairman of Harland and Wolff Ltd. to discuss the order of 2 new Mailships [sic]. Sir Frederick had quoted the following estimated figures:

Alternative A. For 12 1/2 days passage at 21 knots service speed would increase the price by £250 000 per ship

Alternative B. For 12 days passage at 22 knots service speed would increase the price by 350 000 per ship. (NMM CL UCM 3/3 30 5 1945 (2971))

Shipbuilding and reconditioning: With reference to the visits that are made from time to time by the Company's officials and technical personnel in connection with ships either building or reconditioning at Belfast, or elsewhere, the Chairman desires that a report be made to him personally following such visits. The Chairman also wishes to have a statement collated week by week and shown to him setting out a) a list of the personnel from each department who are engaged on duties standing by such ships during their building or reconditioning and b), a list of the personnel who may be sent to such ships in preparation for their completion and dispatch to loading port. (NMM CL U/C/M 3/4, 19 February 1947 (3380))

Significantly, too, photographs of *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle's* interiors do not usually differentiate between the two ships. At least one brochure [Fig. 9] was produced which simply printed both ships' names on the cover, and showed black and white shots of their interiors without labelling these according to which ship they were to be found on board. A minute recorded in the Union Castle's Managing Directors' Meeting Books for 16 July 1947 mentions the question of how to publicise the two ships, asking whether separate material needed to be produced for each vessel (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (3490)). Photographic evidence of the ships' interior arrangements points to the suggestion that the ships were decoratively sufficiently similar that images of them could 'double up'. Although White Star had even operated this cost-effective gambit for the publicity of *Titanic* and *Olympic*, by the 1940s photographic print production had become so much cheaper that this parsimonious policy serves as a reminder of Thompson's caution in a straitened economic climate.

That Thompson's attitude towards his post-war fleet should be influenced by financial consideration becomes particularly marked when viewed against the advances made by Union-Castle's pre-war fleet. According to the ten-year Mail Contract agreed in 1936, the Southampton to Cape Town mail voyage was to be reduced to 14 days. Showing some foresight, Thompson had ordered two new liners designed specifically to complete the Cape sailing in under two weeks; *Athlone Castle* and

*Stirling Castle*. It was these two vessels, both entering service in 1936, that earned Union-Castle its outstanding reputation for reliability and punctuality. Promoted according to the slogan *Every Thursday at 4 o'clock*, the regularity of a Union-Castle mail ship's departure from Southampton at precisely the same time every Thursday afternoon, and its subsequent speed in making the journey to Cape Town, became one of the company's unique selling-points, Union-Castle mythology holding that 'It was said that people at the Cape set their watches by the arrival of the mail ship, just as the people of Southampton, hearing that whistle blast from the docks on a Thursday, knew that it was 4 pm precisely.' ([www.oceanlinermuseum.co.uk/Union Castle Line history.html](http://www.oceanlinermuseum.co.uk/Union_Castle_Line_history.html): accessed 7 November 2010). Despite the importance of shipping to the rebuilding of the British post-war economy, there were to be no such plaudits for *Pretoria Castle* or *Edinburgh Castle*.

Was it that Thompson's management style (and in particular, his detailed consideration and control of the shipping line) offered no room for showy declarations and so avoided any new styling in his liners' interiors? As Thompson had commented of the London Olympics preparations, the contemporary financial climate was one he considered to be inappropriate to lavish spending, whatever the promise of a large and secure income for Union-Castle trade. This may partly explain his approach: certainly the careful, conservative arrangements on board *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle* appear to accord with Thompson's measured managerial style. The typically complicated interwoven relations between Union-Castle and the South African government, however, meant that there was more to the story than caution alone.

South African calls for British immigrants in the late 1940s ostensibly created a situation in which the Union-Castle stood to gain rapid economic ground through selling berths; certainly such overtures appeared propitious for the ordering of a brand new fleet for the company's mail service liners. Paradoxically, however, requests from the United Party pressurising the British government to demand that the shipping line convey immigrants to South Africa had the opposite effect. In an effort to boost the post-war economy but at the same time attempting to bolster his administration against the growing Afrikanerdom of the Nationalists, in August 1946 Jan Smuts announced his

policy to increase the white, English-speaking population of the Union under the Special Immigration Service. The effect of making these demands at this moment, however, was to hinder, rather than help, Union-Castle's development.

The launch of such a policy at a time of an acute shortage of passenger ships – caused both by wartime requisition as well as losses during the conflict – might have offered Union-Castle the opportunity for large-scale new ordering, had it not been for other circumstances. The poor state of the British economy, the nation's huge war-incurred debt and also the urgency with which Smuts desired the Service to be implemented, all militated against a clear position for Thompson to commission new ships. To make matters worse, since Smuts was insistent that not only the berths on ordinary passenger liners be used, but that merchant ships be given over to the Immigrant Service, Union-Castle was also prevented from being able to significantly resuscitate its mail service in the years following the end of the war, a situation which prevented the shipping line's ability to invest in grand new suites of interiors. A dry managerial note issued for *Carnarvon Castle* years later, when detailing the ship's history, recalled Union-Castle's position in the 1940s :

The war over, the *Carnarvon Castle* was not immediately restored to her normal condition. At the request of the South African government, for a while *Carnarvon Castle*, in company with *Winchester Castle* and *Arundel Castle*, served to take large numbers of emigrants to South Africa. Under somewhat austere conditions she was able to carry over 1200 passengers each voyage. (NMM CL CAY 24/7/ 62)

At the time Union-Castle had hoped that playing ball with Smuts on a temporary basis might pay dividends in the future: a minute from the Managing Directors' meeting of 27 March 1947 recorded that:

The chairman desired that it be recorded that he had recently decided that arrangements should be made for the 'R' vessels to carry a limited number of passengers, not more than 12 per vessel,

utilising the existing... accommodation where it still existed. This might be regarded as an experimental and temporary measure during the period of abnormal pressure on the availability of passenger vessels, having regard to the fact that the *Winchester Castle* and *Carnarvon Castle* had been taken up for immigrant service.

The necessary arrangements for carrying out this decision to proceed forthwith. The accommodation and conditions of passage to be on a purely cargo basis, with fares adjusted accordingly. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (3405))

Why was it that Union-Castle, a company so keen to re-establish its mail contract unimpeded by conveying passenger traffic, and which had won major concessions from the South Africans over the Gold Freight Agreement in 1946 in order to do so, should submit so readily to Smuts's requests for immigrant transportation? One answer may lie in Vernon Thompson's recognition that this was a period of mounting nationalism in the Union. As already discussed, the right-wing Afrikaner National Party was continuing to gain ground in the period following the Second World War, one of the most salient factors for this advance being a growing dislike of what was regarded by many as Smuts' pro-British stance.

Against this background, Union-Castle was caught in an impossible situation. Coming to Smuts' aid compromised the fleet's ability to become fully operational and financially healthy with all speed; however, failure to respond with alacrity to Special Immigration Service calls might well play British shipping into the hands of a National Party already remonstrating with increasing pugnacity for the establishment of a South African merchant fleet. June 1946 had seen the public announcement of plans for the formation of the South African Marine Corporation, later to become known as Safmarine. Meanwhile, an indication of the serious necessity to appease the Nationalists regarding the relative strength of the fledgling national line vis à vis the long-established Union-Castle came in the form of the British company's naming of their newly commissioned ship *Pretoria Castle* after the South African capital. (Berridge:1987:19)



Union-Castle's increasing wariness of the escalating voice of the National Party – which, as it turned out, it was entirely right to have felt – may also help to explain the extent to which the two new ships for the passenger-liner fleet were so muted in terms of their interior aesthetic. Knowledge of the Nationalists' dislike of Britain, and their avowal to seek greater economic independence from the Union's former colonial master, was widespread. Under such circumstances the shadow hanging over the British shipping line's negotiations with South Africa took the form of the threat that capital might well be ploughed into Safmarine in favour of foreign shipping. It appeared highly likely too, given the National Party's desire to strengthen the Union's Afrikaner demographic, that emigration from Britain would now shrink substantially, decreasing the number of berths sold on the mail ships. Ominous at the best of times, issues such as these cannot but have played on Thompson's mind; when the National Party came to power in May 1948, they must have really hit home. Indeed, it was later noted in a Managing Directors' meeting of 31 August 1949 'that the number of southbound passages booked by the South African Memorial Settlers Association was showing a considerable falling off.' (NMM CL UCM 3/4 4021)

That a decline in the number of passages booked to South Africa was felt likely to be a consequence of the National Party's coming to power was reflected in company discussions about announcing *Pretoria's* and *Edinburgh's* first voyages. In advance of *Pretoria's* sailing to Cape Town for the first time on 22 July, it was minuted in the Managing Directors' meeting of 7 July that it be recommended that only 'a limited amount of prestige advertising should be undertaken in connection with the forthcoming entry into service of the *Pretoria Castle* (NMM CL UCM/3/4 7 July 1948 (3723))

By the time of *Edinburgh Castle's* arrival into Cape Town on 9 December, later that year, Afrikaner Nationalist resentment towards Britain and the 'disillusionment and outrage' over the High Commission Territories had reached a climax. (de Kiewiet, cited in Hyam and Henshaw:2003:116) Significantly, the period in which *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle* were fitted out and decorated corresponded exactly with the months of the run-up to the 1948 South African general election, during which the National Party had become increasingly difficult to ignore. This was

clearly not the moment to spend a great deal of money on a burst of design creativity for new ships whose success, and even longevity, must have appeared far from assured.

Photographs taken on board *Pretoria Castle* on its arrival in Cape Town on 5 August 1948 show an apparently at ease and delighted Mayor unveiling a painting of Pretoria City Hall on board ship, an event which must also have been broadcast, given the presence of a South Africa Broadcasting Corporation microphone. [Fig.12] Despite earlier moderation and Directors' decisions that only 'limited' advertising of *Pretoria Castle's* launch be conducted, Vernon Thompson had, it seemed, decided to make more of the event, at least in terms of wooing the National Party.<sup>19</sup> Having sailed to Cape Town on board *Pretoria*, once there Thompson held a reception for 200 prominent South Africans, among them Prime Minister D. F. Malan and 10 of the 12 in his newly appointed cabinet. (Berridge:1987:28). Relations between Britain and South Africa were to continue along their complicated trajectory, it seemed, the scenes on board *Pretoria* disguising an imbroglio set only to increase now that the Nationalists were in power.

The National Party was to govern South Africa until 1994. Creating a very particular political, social, economic and diplomatic history, and infamous chiefly for its imposition of the segregationist policy of apartheid, according to a regime that was anything but democratic, it was the Nationalists with whom Union-Castle was to deal for the remainder of its history. This being the case – particularly in the light of the Party's anti-British ticket – it is worth exploring the rise of Afrikaner power.

Following the end of the Second World War, South Africa's entry into which having caused significant political ructions, anti-British sentiment within the Union reached new heights. Alliance

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<sup>19</sup> Thompson, though apparently very wary of the National Party, was of the opinion that the company should do as much as possible to maintain good relations through this testing period and went on record as requiring that 'Directors travel to South Africa from time to time, since in his view it was in the interests of the Company that such visits should be made.' (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (3938))

with Britain left resentment about South African involvement in what had come to be seen as 'Smuts' War'. In reaction, many Afrikaners now steered further to the right to join associations which paralleled European Fascist organisations such as the *Ossewabrandwag* (Ox-wagon guard) (OB), whose antipathy towards British imperialism was summed up in the organization's name: in clearly identifying with the Afrikaners who had trekked with wagons into the colony's interior and beyond the reach of British administration, the movement was referencing active resistance to the United Kingdom.

Threatened by a period of tension in which strikes, urban and rural black unrest and a steady flow of Africans to the towns (filling the vacuum left by the predominantly white men who had been mobilized), both English-speaking and Afrikaner whites increasingly took the view that Smuts was too liberal in his policies, and too much of a racial integrationist. As William Beinart has written, Smuts' demise was, in this way, part and parcel of the rise of Afrikanerdom:

A segment of the white population did emerge from this war for democracy believing that black aspirations should be taken into account. But many responded to the wartime challenges from blacks by moving ideologically in the other direction. Economic stringency after the war reinforced this reaction. (Beinart:2002:137)

Nor had Smuts achieved the long-held South African aim to control the areas left under British responsibility, the High Commission Territories. Although they, too, were never to succeed in this aim, at the time Smuts' failing only served to bolster D. F. Malan's National Party, especially in the eyes of those who, lured by Nationalist avowals of a segregationist 'Greater South Africa', were moving ever further to the right.

Whilst, as mentioned, the issue of the High Commission Territories had dogged British-South African relations since the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, by the 1940s, and

particularly following the National Party's general election victory of 1948, British dislike of Afrikaner policy was so great that the stand-off between the two nations became even more entrenched. Whilst, as C.W. de Kiewiet observed in *The Misery of South Africa* (1956), 'it was not that those in Downing Street loved the natives more, but that they loved the Afrikaners less' (de Kiewiet, cited in Hyam and Henshaw:2003), at the heart of the current tension was the question of the future of the African populations of the Territories under apartheid, should the lands be ceded to the Union. Equally, the British government had felt strongly that despite South Africa's importance to the Empire under Smuts, 'we should never sacrifice the true interests of Africans to a desire to remain friendly with a United Party Government at Pretoria'. (Hyam and Henshaw:2003:116) As Hyam and Henshaw point out, if this were the case, then 'Britain was even less likely to sacrifice those interests to a National Party Government' post-1948. (Hyam and Henshaw, 2003:116) In this sense, Nationalist victory also ensured an end to both any likelihood of negotiation over the Territories and the possibility of their being prised from the British by Malan and his party.

Alongside continuing anti-British sentiment, the Nationalist apartheid regime and its imposition of racial segregation was central to creating this bedevilled situation, something that from time to time was to directly affect Union-Castle's policy and operations. Recording a move made by Pretoria in 1952, presumably designed to dissuade businesses from employing black workers unless where sanctioned by the State, Union-Castle remarked of the Native Services Levy Bill, for example, that:

A memo has been received by Cape Town agency reporting that a bill has been introduced in the South African parliament providing for a levy of 2/6d per week, to be paid by the employer, in respect of every adult male native employee in the Union of South Africa, for the purpose of subsidizing the supply of water, sanitation, lighting and road construction at native locations. The chairman did not wish Cape Town agency to join in the opposition the South African Federated Chamber of Industries was offering to the Bill, although he was of the view that employers should only be expected to pay a levy of this kind in respect of natives introduced by them or on their behalf into urban areas. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (4720))

Even the everyday administration of apartheid was a potential irritation to Union-Castle's ability to engage in easy transactions with the Union.

Mistrust and, after 1948, pronounced mutual dislike did not lead to a parting of the ways between Britain and South Africa, however. Neither did diplomatic relations with the South African government immediately impact on Union-Castle's trading relationship with the country. Despite Malan's insistence that Smuts' Special Immigration Service be terminated, the success of Vernon Thompson's visit to Cape Town in August 1948 had helped keep trading relations at least open, if not warm. It was soon clear that any honeymoon period was over, however. During 1949 it became apparent, as had long been suspected in London, that Malan was indeed keen to lessen South African dependence on foreign, and especially British, shipping. Meeting with Thompson in South Africa on 2 December 1949 Eric Louw, the new South African Minister of Economic Development, voiced unambiguously the view that Union-Castle had always done very well out of the South African Mail service but that this situation could not be expected to last forever. (Berridge:1987: 35)

Underlining this hard-hitting message was the fact that under pressure from Pretoria, the South African Conference Lines – the organisation of British and European shipping lines engaged on the Europe-South Africa route, dominated throughout by Union-Castle – had been browbeaten into admitting South African flag lines into its cartel. As a result, on January 1 1950 SALines and Safmarine were admitted into the Conference. Directors' Minute Books for that month also indicate that it had been decided to start depositing company earnings in the South African National Finance Corporation. (NMM CL UCM/1/8 31 January 1950 (8978)) This, and the previous year's recommendation that the company 'should become a member of the chamber of commerce of South Africa which was agreed at a continuing rate of £100 pa. for the following 3 years' ( NMM CL UCM/3/4 15 July 1948 (3728)), must have been designed as statements of intent for Union-Castle's continuing trade with the country. By 1953, however, all was set to change again, firstly with the death of Vernon Thompson in February of that year, and secondly two months later, with the

solidifying of the National Party's stake in public life in South Africa following a second election win, this time with an increased majority.

By the end of the decade surveyed by this chapter, British-South African relations were in a guarded state of impasse. The United Kingdom was dependent upon the Union for gold imports and industrial exports and, in shipping terms, was at pains not to create a situation which would further Pretoria's desire to foster its own merchant fleet. Despite mounting anti-British sentiment, the Union, on the other hand, continued in its dependence upon Britain as a financial investor and customer. In this way, 'Questions of economic independence were left quietly on one side while the government promoted Afrikaner political ascendancy and Afrikaner economic advancement within South Africa.' (Hyam and Henshaw:2003:144). Meanwhile, within Union-Castle there was a growing critical awareness of the fragility of the company's relationship with Pretoria. Over the question of investment in the Union, it was recorded in a Managing Directors' meeting held in February 1954 that, should the company decide to withdraw funds from Pretorian government stocks to one of its own companies:

...having regard to the fact that the preponderating proportion of the Company's revenue derives from trade with the Union, anything, however small, which was liable to upset the financial stability of South Africa, could be said to mitigate against the Company's interests. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (10107))

Relations between South Africa and Union-Castle hung in the balance, then – neither positive, nor, for the most part *outwardly* hostile. Even had it been Thompson's desire to proceed with a major capital outlay for the decoration of the interiors of his new liners, such an investment was not likely to occur against the background provided by circumstances of uneasy political and economic stasis. During the years 1945 to 1955, the one moment at which there was any direct and dynamic negotiation between Union-Castle and South Africa – and hence any opportunity for the company to invest significantly in its fleet – had appeared in the form of Smuts' urgent call for shipping for his Special Immigration Service. But this had come too soon after the end of the war, and with too little

notice for Union-Castle to respond with decisive new interior designs, particularly as the request came at a time of continued national economic difficulty for Britain.

What was the effect of this particular political-economic situation for Union-Castle's interiors? The smiles and civility recorded by the photographs taken on board *Pretoria Castle* at the time of its first arrival into Cape Town were in fact being played out against a background of an uneasy stasis that would before long develop into mutual distrust. The scene very neatly captures the complicated relationship between the Union-Castle and the South African government during these years. Both parties were waiting to see what the other's next move would be. And, just as the Nationalists, whilst having clear policies in mind, had not yet codified or institutionalised that ideology, nor begun its serious implementation, neither had Union-Castle yet created a distinct new post-war aesthetic.

## 2.2 *Design contexts*

### 2.2.1 *Manufacturing culture in the early post-war period*

The importance to this thesis of reading design through the prism provided by other histories was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. In terms of the way in which design practice was affected by extrinsic factors, the period immediately following the cessation of hostilities offers a moment, second to none, in which design and politics can be seen to have been directly interwoven. However, in the case of *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*, it is also useful to think about the designed product as material culture. This applies both to the interiors created for the ships' passenger accommodation and to the furniture and furnishings which occupied these spaces. In fact, because they were often undecorated (with the exception of the occasional use of veneers in First Class), the 'design' of these rooms is dependent upon the aesthetic created by the pieces with which they were furnished. The overall look of the ships' interiors was a hybrid of modernized, or 'reformed', design and historicist influence [Fig. 13]; representing a confused aesthetic, if one understands (or requires) the designed object to read only as a homogeneous entity and not, as here, as something deriving from heterogeneous contributory factors.

In view of the importance of furniture within these spaces it is useful to investigate the situation of the furniture industry at the time of *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh's* fitting-out. Additionally, thinking about these spaces in terms of a *culture* of production and design, rather than adopting the straitjacket afforded by a purely stylistic or aesthetic analysis creates greater latitude for interpreting these visually ambiguous rooms. Usefully, too, this looser methodological path maps onto the discussion I argue for later in this chapter, of *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle's* passenger accommodation as spaces visually redolent of a number of cultural/psychological dimensions, such as national identity and colonial status.

During the Second World War, a number of areas of the design and manufacture of civilian goods in Britain were brought under the control of the government's Utility Scheme. Instigated in order to ensure the most efficient use of scarce raw materials and economies of labour and production, nowhere was the scheme more zealously applied than in the case of furniture design and manufacture, with a strict regime dictating what might be manufactured, introduced with the first Utility range in 1943 (Dover:1991 and Attfield:1999). Although a pragmatic response to production exigencies at a time of national crisis, the Utility Furniture Scheme also provided an opportunity, second-to-none, for proselytizing about the need to 'improve' furniture design aesthetics. The stripped-back, undecorated lines of Utility, cheaper and easier to produce, might also, design reformers hoped, provide the means by which the general public might be weaned off its taste for carved embellishments and decorative styles, often historicist in inspiration, which threatened to undermine any modernizing stylistic influences within the industry. In expressing these views, members of reform bodies such as the Council of Industrial Design (COID) inherited some of the language of the nineteenth-century British Arts and Crafts movement which had sought to improve standards of design across a number of disciplines (Dover:1991). As Gordon Russell, designer and champion of state-backed initiatives like the COID, was to remark:

Side by side with this effort we are already assured of a great step forward in education. Here is a chance to teach the public now



growing up. To make them more critical of what is good design, what is bad and why, and so stimulate a much wider demand for better things...austerity and Utility will have useful astringent qualities. (Dover:1991:20)

Whereas the Arts and Crafts movement had advocated a return to handcraft and a move away from what it perceived to have been the industrial excesses and failures of the nineteenth century, the Utility Scheme aimed, conversely, to encourage mass-production by fostering standardization and efficiency. Following the end of the war, although the scheme would continue until 1952, various production restrictions were lifted; a change of schedule introduced in September 1946, for example, increasing the range of different items of furniture from 154 to 266 (Attfield:1999: 113). This was followed, in June 1948, by the end of furniture rationing, and in November of that year by a limited loosening of the Scheme's structure to allow a new phase, known as 'freedom of design'. Under this stricture, Utility furniture designs might be adapted and reinterpreted by the manufacturer to allow decoration, or elaboration of the original template through the introduction of traditional forms such as scrolled arms, serpentine seat frames or cabriole legs.

Once restrictions were relaxed and finally lifted in 1952, not least because by now Utility had become associated with wartime, 'making do', and lack of consumer choice, the original range was quickly abandoned by many of the general public, much of the furniture retail trade and by many manufacturers. As far as the general public was concerned, whenever views were tested (as they very frequently were in the heavily state-involved climate of post-war industry) results indicated that Utility was felt to be too 'hard', 'cold' or 'too modern'. (Dover:1991) A report commissioned by the organisers of the 1946 'Britain Can Make It' exhibition (an event designed to educate and reform popular taste and to provide a fillip to manufacturing industries), concluded that:

People were just not interested in Utility Furniture; few looked at this [display], and fewer still commented favourably on it. Utility seems to have acquired a reputation for flimsiness and poor quality, and most of the comments emphasise this. (Dover:1991:70).

In an attempt at social identification and analysis – an exercise which appears extraordinarily blunt in comparison with twenty-first century market research – the report also offered indicators as to the demographic of interviewees: “I wouldn’t have anything like it in my home. It’s a damn shame that these young people just setting up home have to deal with this sort of furniture because within a few years it won’t be worth a farthing.’ (Upper Class Man of 40)”. (Dover:1991:70)

Similarly, whilst the Board of Trade’s ‘reform’-oriented advisors had hoped that Utility would be retained until higher design standards had been attained by the industry, this was not a wish in which they were able to sustain belief for very long. Not only did firms return to the manufacture of reproduction styles, but the majority of small producers returned to handcraft and short-batch production, the virtue of working to the Utility template having failed, to achieve their standardization,.

Between 1943 and 1948, short of resorting to black-market or second-hand purchases, neither of which options were open to Union-Castle, Utility had been the only furniture available to the general public. In addition, in the period before the techniques of mass-production gained ground within furniture manufacture, there was no large standardized contract-furniture industry offering an alternative to Utility. What were the implications of this situation, then, for the fitting-out of *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle*’s interiors?

*Pretoria Castle*’s first voyage in July 1948 and *Edinburgh*’s in December of the same year, this timing did not officially allow for their rooms to have been fitted out with furniture manufactured according to the November 1948 ‘freedom of design’ initiative. However, since the relaxing of restrictions meant that manufacturers could now design their own ranges so long as these were ‘built onto’ the carcass specified by the original Utility pattern (Dover:1991:7), it is not entirely impossible that the furniture supplied to the ships had been manufactured under ‘freedom’ conditions in advance of the official introduction of the changes in November 1948; certainly, if this were not the case, the question remains as to where the ships’ furniture did come from, if not from a producer operating according to government specification. Significantly, however, the furniture for

each of the ships looks very similar to models produced according to Utility's 'freedom of design' phase.

In her survey of the material culture of popular British furniture styles, 'Give 'em something dark and heavy: the role of design in the material culture of popular British furniture 1939-1965', Judy Attfield analyses the role that design had played in the years between 1939 and 1965, a period through which, as discussed, the furniture industry underwent a number of changes. In particular, Attfield focuses on the High Wycombe firm J Clarke (also referred to below) which, as she identifies, adopted the typical manufacturing methods,

...employed by the larger High Wycombe firms was based on the use of standard parts, a flexible system of stock frames kept in quantities from 100 to 1,000, waiting for specific orders before making up, and the finishing processes of polishing and upholstering. (Attfield:1996:188)

On this basis, it was a relatively straightforward exercise to adapt an existing carcass to incorporate a more elaborate design featuring the elements associated by both trade and public with enduring traditions of quality British furniture-making. As soon as the Utility Scheme's regulations were first loosened, and then, in 1951, finally disbanded, J Clarke began to design a range of period-style occasional chairs incorporating carving, and featuring eagle- and ram's-head motifs on the arms, for example. An illustration of a J Clarke post-war piece [Fig. 14] used in Attfield's case study reveals the similarity between the type of design produced by the firm – a company typical of the conservative end of the trade – and the furniture used on board *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*. [Fig. 15]

Whilst Union-Castle Directors' Minute Books for the period do not provide details as to the situation regarding the supply of furniture to the company's new mail ships, nor indeed, details of all the manufacturers involved, they do, in some instances, indicate who the suppliers were. A minute taken on 23 October 1946 indicates that the Chairman, Sir Vernon Thompson, had decided that a

quote for '500 rugs for Tourist class for a total of £1,195 7s 10d from Messers Brintons be accepted', and also that 'It was decided that Messrs Mappin and Webb's tender of £9,337 for the silver plated table ware required for the First and Tourist class passengers and engineers' mess of the Pretoria Castle be accepted.' (NMM CL UCM 3 / 4 23.10.46) In 1947 an order was placed with Doulton and Co. to supply 'Afternoon Teaware' (NMM CL UCM (3400)) and another minute noted that a number of grand pianos should be ordered for the ships, for which the supplier was not specified (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (3414)). Recorded later that year, on 5 September 1947, a minute-book entry reveals that an order for cane chairs for the new ships had been placed with Dryad Furniture (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (3531)), a firm which was at once both reform-aware and conventional with regard to the styling and manufacture of its cane furniture.<sup>20</sup>

The picture that is formed, according to details of the suppliers listed, is largely one of 'high-end', quality, conservative manufacturers and retailers, each of whom, significantly, had been (or in the case of Brintons, were soon to be) awarded Royal Warrants<sup>21</sup>. A full survey of the scope and nature of the immediate post-war production of the various companies supplying Union-Castle in the run-up to the launch of the new ocean liners is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the visual identity of the goods supplied by these companies collectively suggests an aesthetic that can be characterised as conformist and traditional. This synopsis accords with descriptions of the contemporary state of the wider British manufacturing industry suggested by design historians who have studied the industrial culture of the period (notably Atfield:1996 and 1999, and Maguire and Woodham:1997). These commentators have written of the tendency – even amongst larger national firms such as Brintons and Mappin and Webb – to resist standardization, retain small-scale units of production and, as already mentioned, revert to an historically-informed aesthetic as soon as they were once again free to do upon the cessation of Utility restriction.

Patrick Maguire points out, in relation to the conditions prevailing in Britain in the 1940s, that in comparison with the US market, which was much more readily geared to benefit from mass-

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<sup>20</sup> See also discussion of Dryad below, p. 79

<sup>21</sup> Mappin and Webb's warrant was received in 1897, Royal Doulton's in 1901 and Brintons' in 1957.

production, 'British industry attempted to relate to a volatile and highly segmented world market which requires intense product specialisation' (Maguire and Woodham:1996:113). A relatively small home market and very diverse overseas markets were not, in other words, conducive to being

interpreted according to the economies of scale inherent in mass-production principles. If anything, British manufacturing had recently tended (war exigencies aside) to rely on short production runs of higher quality goods. Importantly, aside from an organizational resistance to standardization and volume, it was felt that goods produced according to a large-scale industrial structure would not be attractive to the larger British market, for whom 'quality' was associated with the bespoke and not the mass-industrial process. As High Wycombe manufacturer Maurice Clarke remarked,

We were really worried about what Utility would do to the trade. For us, you see, it meant the loss of all those traditional skills; young apprentices growing up in the trade would have nothing to work with. And we felt this meant a real loss of quality. We felt it was much better for us to stay small, produce quality furniture and maintain high standards you see. (Clarke: High Wycombe:November 1988)

Clarke's views on the campaign to rationalize the furniture-making trade appear to have been typical. This being the case, and in the absence of precise or detailed material relating to the manufacturing restrictions obtaining for the furniture and furnishings of the new mail ships, it is more useful to view their aesthetic as part and parcel of the continuation of an industrial structure that had been in place before the war than as the result of continuing restrictions. There is a danger within this approach, however – particularly if one adheres to a design-historical discussion focused on a Modernist discourse around the 'improvement' of design – of falling into the trap that describes a choice having been made between the 'good' design of the Modernist, modernizing state-backed (socialist) views of the centre versus the conservative and parochial, if not antediluvian, aesthetics of the unpoliticised regions. In reality the picture was far more complicated than this, something amply demonstrated by a brief survey of Union-Castle/Harland and Wolff's decorating firm Heaton Tabb.

A fully owned subsidiary of the Harland and Wolff, Heaton Tabb's involvement with Union-Castle was emblematic of the ongoing and jointly vested interests of shipping line and shipbuilder. This historic link, confirmed during Sir Vernon Thompson's regime by the close friendship between himself and the Chairman of Harland and Wolff, Sir Frederick Rebbeck (Wealleans:2006:142), was also mirrored by the firm's long-established approach to the fitting-out process for the yard's ships. Arriving on the scene as Union-Castle's interior designer in 1956, Jean Monro (whose work is reviewed in Chapter 3) described the very awkward beginning to her relationship with Heaton Tabb and with Harland and Wolff. Visiting the Belfast yard during the course of Union-Castle talks with the company, Monro discovered that:

...Rebbeck was not keen on women in shipyards except to clean up the ships before they sailed, which was, by tradition, women's work! I was therefore taken out to lunch by his secretary at a hotel in Belfast instead of lunching with him in the directors' dining room. This was a great waste of time for both his secretary and for me. (Monro:1988:58)

Judging by the interiors created for *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh* and the furniture chosen for the liners by Heaton Tabb, the traditionalism of the ethos encountered by Monro was matched by a conservative aesthetic which did not offer any dramatic departure from the interior styles typical of inter-war British liners and which offered instead to 'historicise' the straight, modern lines of the structure of the furniture supplied to the ships. Heaton Tabb had, however, begun life with rather less conventional origins. In the late nineteenth century, John Aldam Heaton (1828-1897) had a close association with William Morris's reforming circle of craftspeople and designers in connection with the Arts and Crafts movement which flourished in Britain for around 30 years from 1880. After Aldam Heaton's death, the company provided interiors for *Olympic* and *Titanic*, both of which were also built at Harland and Wolff (1909-1911) and which were decorated according to a range of historic styles.

The example provided by Heaton Tabb following the two companies' amalgamation stands, then, as something of a manufacturing synecdoche for the wider British industrial structure, both within the furniture trade and in other areas of production, during the immediate post-war period. Rather than a black-and-white situation in which manufacture was polarized between those firms that had 'gone modern' (very few) and those that had returned to pre-war manufacturing structures, as the design establishment tended to characterize the state of affairs<sup>22</sup>, a much greyer reality obtained; something that is amply demonstrated in the interiors provided by Heaton Tabb for *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*. The interiors of these two ocean liners were at least as much the end-product of contemporary cultures of manufacturing, design and the fitting-out of passenger liners as they were the result of aesthetic principle, a situation mirrored by the importance of indicators of colonial culture and status on board ship.

### *2.2.2 Pretoria Castle, Edinburgh Castle and Kenya Castle interiors. Mediated modernity, historicism and a discourse on 'quality' and heritage*

Configured according to a traditional layout, with First Class accommodation higher up the ships' superstructures, and the traditional mixture of private cabins and communal interior and exterior areas for both classes, *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*'s interiors were not, however, entirely oblivious to contemporary design debates. Given the degree of contemporary discussion as to how to best furnish a space, it is not surprising that *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*'s interiors (fitted out between August 1947 and August 1948) included areas that were restrained, accorded with COID dictates, and were arranged along clean, simple lines. Unable, or more probably unwilling, to fully embrace the Council's creed, however, Union-Castle saw Art Deco as representing Modernism. In this way, whilst including an Art Deco-style writing desk, the Tourist Class Writing Room on the ships [Fig. 16] provides the kind of uncluttered space that matched the tenor of the COID's 1940s proselytizing. In fact, the rooms' armchairs are not dissimilar from those

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<sup>22</sup> For example in the stark choices between 'good' and 'bad' design laid out for the general public in state exhibitions, such as the 1946 'Britain Can Make it'. (Dover:1991)

illustrated in a COID pamphlet *How to Buy Furniture* (1951) and another Council publication *The Things We See – Furniture* (undated), both by Gordon Russell. [Fig. 17].

Less likely to have met unqualified approval from the design reform lobby, however, was the ships' Cabin Class Smoke Room. [Fig. 18] Rather too boldly upholstered for reformed taste, the chairs used here were designed with stretchers underneath the seats: a small detail, but a significant one given the COID's emphasis on the removal of both superfluous detail and surplus construction elements, and something which, once again, points to the likelihood that the room was furnished with items made according to 'freedom of design'. Similarly, just visible in images of the room is another awkward compromise between the streamlined and the decorative, in the form of plain-topped tables with turned and fluted legs.

Tourist Class bedrooms exhibit the same tension between modern furniture and the carved styles of a more 'traditional' reproduction aesthetic. Whilst this was a device that the COID and its followers were forced to accept, given that both popular taste and furniture manufacturers hurriedly returned to decoration under the auspices of 'freedom of design', the reform movement advocated that a combining of furniture types and styles should only be most carefully and judiciously adopted. For example, the caption to a photograph of a room designed by architect Denys Lasdun, featuring modern and antique/reproduction furniture, which appeared in one of Gordon Russell's advice books, stated that:

A room in a house where old and new furniture is used side by side as it should be. But it must not be forgotten that you cannot usefully mix good and bad furniture. A standard of quality is essential.  
(Russell:undated:41) [Fig. 19]

It is possible, then, that the Persian runner on the floor of the First Class single-berth cabin in one of the ships [Fig. 20] was intended to provide a note of extravagance alongside, and in combination with, the streamlined (but Art Deco-Moderne) aesthetic of the dressing table. The



room's cane chair, by now a well-established furniture type, offered a note of comfortable, but gracious, familiarity.

Interestingly, Dryad, manufacturer of the ships' cane furniture, was to be one of the companies later singled out for praise in Gordon Russell's COID publication *How to Buy Furniture* (1951) [Fig. 20] In many ways Dryad, in fact, provides a very good representation of the wider Union-Castle interior design ethos. Like Heaton Tabb, the company had been born of a reformist, Arts and Crafts-style impulse. It was founded in 1906 by businessman and activist Harry Peach (1874-1936) who had first become interested in the Arts & Crafts movement in around 1901. Inspired by architect William Lethaby's work, Peach was to become close friends with the architect. During the First World War, Peach became involved in the Design and Industries Association (DIA), which, in its attempt to raise the standard of design of everyday goods, acted as a forerunner to the COID.

Just as post-war Union-Castle interiors were to mediate modernism through the use of reproduction furniture and Art Deco-inspired styles so, early on in its history, Dryad had felt it wise to counteract the novelty of its cane furniture to British eyes by giving pieces whimsical names such as 'Jolly Friar', 'Virgin's Bower', and 'Daydream', each redolent of a romantic English past. ([www.gimson.leicester.gov.uk](http://www.gimson.leicester.gov.uk), accessed 6 May 2010.) Before long, however, Dryad's success encouraged rivals, such as the Leicester firm of W. T. Ellmore, from whom Union-Castle also considered obtaining furniture (NMM CL 3 /4 12 8 46 (3254(b))), and increasingly the company began supplying the contract market for hospitals, cafés and restaurants. Interestingly, too, the company already had experience of supplying the travel market, as its furniture was used as aeroplane seating.

By the time Dryad was commissioned to supply furniture to Union-Castle's early post-war ships, the company's clever marketing strategies, now practised for half a century, ensured that cane furniture had become a familiar item within the British furniture market. New enough to register the modernity of the twentieth century but familiar enough to avoid appearing too threateningly avant-

garde, Dryad furniture thus provided an ideal furnishing element for *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*'s moderate interior aesthetic. As Peach's biographer Pat Kirkham has pointed out, he was a man of vision, and all for progress; crucially, however, Peach also felt it imperative to safeguard British cultural heritage in the form of traditional values and styles of design and production, a move which, whilst redolent of Arts and Crafts values, also displayed an attuned commercial eye.

On board *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle* cane furniture was used both for interior furnishing and outside, on deck. Although cane seating was used in First and Tourist Class cabins, it was only used *outdoors* on the Tourist Class deck. First Class outdoor furniture included an oddly heavy, low table, reminiscent of 'pub' furniture [Fig. 21]; this item, being made of wood, was perhaps thought to communicate the idea of solidity and durability (as well as greater expenditure on the part of the shipping company), and thus was considered more suitable for First Class use.

The use of mass-produced, vernacular styles on board *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh* is further evidenced by the arrangement of the First Class Smoke Room. [Fig. 22] This space uses the same tables as the Tourist Class Smoke Room but also included Windsor chairs, which lent an additionally 'masculine' air to the traditionally male environment of the smoking room, through references, again, to public-house interiors, another domain that was the traditional preserve of masculine culture. It is strange, however, that a First Class interior would adopt the furniture associated with popular culture, and possible, then, that another reading for these items is that they were intended to conjure up images of the traditional 'captain's chair'. Although the 'honest', straightforward craftsmanship of the Windsor chair made it a furniture type accepted by the reform movement as an example of 'good design', its appearance on board *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh* also says much about the enduring appeal of the historical in British interiors. So, too, does the extensive use of wing chairs in the ships' First Class spaces. [Fig. 23] As one style commentator wrote in 1951, in a remark highlighting the importance of emotional security evoked by the antique, 'Protection from draughts is no longer needed, but the feeling they' [wing chairs] 'give of shelter is part of their inherent attraction'. (Gump:1951:152)

Evocations of the antique appear, then, in the most luxurious accommodation on board the ships, suggesting the important existence of a hierarchy of styles. Tourist Class furniture tended towards more obviously Utility-based pieces, and First Class offered an aesthetic flourish (and, significantly, also expenditure) with the use of more elaborate pieces referencing historic decoration, and, as will, be discussed below, fine craftsmanship. A view through to the sitting room of one of the ship's suites includes a dressing table and stool of exactly the sort that the design reform movement had decried. [Figs. 24 and 25] Likewise, the equivalent of burr walnut – loathed by the reformers because its figure was *ipso facto* decorative – appears in pronounced veneered panelling clearly visible behind the group of assembled dignitaries (including Vernon Thompson, third from the left), in a photograph taken on board *Pretoria Castle* in August 1948. [Fig 26]. The same room features two further elements that must surely have run against the grain of the COID ethos: an elaborate sixteenth-century style table and a carved lintel. [Fig. 22]

Although fitted out five years later than *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh*, *Kenya Castle*'s interiors are not markedly different from the two earlier ships [Figs. 27 and 28], cabins and public areas looking remarkably similar to those produced for the former two vessels. Importantly, however, *Kenya*'s interiors appear rather more cohesive than those of its predecessors, and although the difference is subtle, throughout this one-class ship they therefore evince a certain style. Indeed, *Kenya Castle*'s 'Cabin Class' was designed to provide a high standard of accommodation throughout, offering, if not deluxe First Class accommodation for all, an impressive, consistent, high-quality aesthetic throughout. As on the earlier ships, historicism still provides a key note, but on board *Kenya* its inclusion is combined more comfortably with areas in which plain upholstery and simple shapes are set against flush Deco-esque panelling, the latter serving to contain the whole within a conservatively modern aesthetic.

Whilst wing chairs are used in the library, for example, alongside streamlined tables and a simply structured bookcase and straightforward tub chairs in plain upholstery, the space achieves an overall visual unity. Interestingly, whilst *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh* employed ornate veneers as a lavish display device and to add a note of luxury, *Kenya Castle* relied on more cohesive Art-Deco

ornament on staircases and in hallways, for example [Fig. 29]. The overall effect was still showy, but less overtly so than on the earlier ships.

Overall, however, the three ships, *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle*, are sufficiently similar to suggest that – especially given the wider availability of styles for Heaton Tabb by the early 1950s – it is likely that the ships' style was dictated by Union-Castle choice rather than a restricted market in furniture, textiles and fittings. As already mentioned, there is no evidence as to the specific regulations and controls to which Heaton Tabb's suppliers had been subject in manufacturing the furniture and furnishings that were supplied to them for the ships' fitting-out. The discussion of contemporary manufacturing culture included above, however, suggests that the ships were fitted out with items manufactured according to 'freedom of design' principles. Given the timing of the ships' first voyages (which occurred in the case of *Pretoria Castle* before, and in the case of, *Edinburgh Castle* just after, 'freedom of design' was introduced in November 1948) it seems likely that the two vessels were supplied with items produced according to this deregulation even before it became law. In any event, the most important point to be made regarding the rather ambiguous passenger accommodation on board each of the three ships surveyed here is that they demonstrated a style that was entirely in line with both the ethos of contemporary manufacturing and wider public taste.

The interior design for *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle* should not be simply dismissed in design-historical terms for its lack of a clear 'modern' style, however. That it is not possible to describe these ships' interiors according to any specific visual idiom does not make them any less valuable as historical documents. In fact, the absence of an easily identifiable visual type available through these case studies confirms historical evidence of the state of the political economy surrounding the building of the three new Union-Castle ships, and adds weight to the argument that against this background chairman Vernon Thompson was unlikely to invest major capital in a design overhaul for his company. The moderate interiors of the Union-Castle ships surveyed for the period 1945-1955 represent, then, a shipping line concerned with asserting a quiet authority in terms of national identity and a pragmatic response to the prevailing economic climate.

Although each of the three liners' compromised interiors are likely to have arisen, firstly, from somewhat straitened economic and manufacturing circumstances, and secondly uncertainty as to relations with the Union of South Africa, to leave an analysis of their arrangement to these conclusions alone does not provide an adequate reading of their interiors: it appears that the design of the ships' passenger accommodation had certainly been carefully considered. On 15 June 1945 it was recorded in the Managing Director's Minute Books, under the heading 'New Mail Boats', that the company's naval architect wished to report

...upon a recent visit he had paid to Belfast and on the progress he had made with the preparation of plans for the new Mail Vessels.

In this connection the Chairman desired that the Assistant Managers should forthwith consult all Departments with a view to obtaining, collating and submitting to him any suggestions, based upon experience with the *Cape Town Castle*, that might advantageously be adopted in the new ships. The Chairman wished the design for the new Mail Boats to be considered from every point of view, including navigational requirements, handling at all usual Mail Service ports of cargo, loading and discharging equipment, lay-out of passenger accommodation, public rooms, deck spaces etc, catering stores and wine departments, crew accommodation, etc. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (2983))

In fact, two further themes emerge from the evidence available in relation to the liners' interiors, both of which offer to locate their apparently ambivalent styling as aspects not of interior design but of *atmosphere*. Firstly, the ships' public rooms demonstrate the continuing British attachment to notions of 'quality,' and an associated, and equally strong, favouring of conservative styles. It will be useful to explore these two themes, because they in turn offer to explain something of the politics of British national identity as played out on board ship in the period 1945-1955, a situation pulled into greater focus when considered alongside an analysis of the social groups who travelled on the three liners during these years. Additionally, the ships' passenger accommodation highlights the

difficulties of discussing notions of private versus public and indoor versus outdoor space on board ship, a context in which both the usual definitions of these binaries is blurred.

Since the late nineteenth century, shipping companies had increasingly sought to compete with one another to attract the wealthiest paying customers. In particular, it had been realised that there was money to be made, and status accrued, from attracting passengers from the highest social echelons. (Wealleans:2006)

Increasing emphasis now came to be placed on designing passenger accommodation which underlined class distinctions via the use of elaborate (and hence expensive) decorative motifs. Differentiation was also written into the design of early twentieth-century liners with the employment of devices denoting quality in both their attention to detail and their luxury of material. The provision of bespoke fixtures and fittings augmented this practice. Luxury, embodied in design details and suitable furnishings, now provided the essential demarcation between First Class accommodation and the rest. In this way, a lavish use of historicism, allowing for decoration in the form of detailed moulding, turning or carving, served to provide extravagant expressions of status, many ships including references to not one but several historical periods, as described in the Introduction of this thesis. The extent to which this trope was employed according to passenger class has already been touched upon as providing an indicator of status, and is an important issue which will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Three with reference to *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*, in which class/aesthetic demarcations were particularly pronounced.

That quality should be associated in the public mind with antique styles was also a measure of the continuing and widely held regard, during much of the twentieth century, for the finesse and skill of the cabinetmaker and joiner. As discussed above, the furniture trade, too, subscribed to this view. Very importantly, interiors created as an expression of luxury also helped to convey a psychological message of safety for the liners' ocean-going clientele. It was as though the immaculate attention to detail conjured up by the bespoke would provide passengers with additional reassurance as to the seaworthiness and security of the vessels in which they were travelling.

The need to express quality – both as psychological marker of safety, and as a demonstration of the material finesse of the hand-crafted – in the passenger accommodation on board *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle* appears, then, to have been a particularly salient factor in determining the interior styling of the ships. Directors' Minute Books reveal, for example, that discussions took place as to the possibility of using Lloyd Loom, an American twisted-paper pastiche of Dryad's cane furniture. Although this would have been much the cheaper option, the initial idea was dismissed on the grounds of Lloyd Loom's inferior quality and also, significantly, since Lloyd Loom was not a British company and thus subject to import restrictions. (NMM CL UCM 3/4).

Thus on the one hand, whilst (some) attention was, by default, paid to current design debates and pared-down styles included on board during the period of continuing Utility regulation, more often the three ships' interiors spoke of the ongoing importance to British ocean liners of notions of luxury as embodied by the skilled craftsmanship of fine furniture. In this way, the First Class rooms on board the ships were carpeted, and included extravagant light fittings, moulded plasterwork, heavily-draped curtains and reproduction cabinets, all of which lent a note of eighteenth-century elegance to the décor. In continuing the long-practised use of historicist furniture styles on board ship, Union-Castle also referred to a history of superior British cabinetmaking dating to eighteenth-century design and manufacturing by firms such as Thomas Chippendale (1718-1779), George Hepplewhite (1726?-1786) and Thomas Sheraton (1751-1806). A comparison with the equivalent, but unembellished, Tourist Class spaces on board *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh* makes this difference all the more pronounced. [Figs. 30, 31 and 32]

During the 'austerity years', and in retort to the industrial, mass-produced style offered by Utility-Modernism, rich veneers and antique-style furnishings offered something which related to a master-crafted past, an essential ingredient if Union-Castle clientele were to feel that their passage to South Africa represented an exclusive, rarefied experience; something which must also explain why there was a tendency for elaborate detail to appear in First, rather than Tourist, Class. Embellished

doorways and ornately decorated furniture also indicated opulence at a time of timber shortage. The experience of 'quality' on board ship was always bound to produce ambiguities, however. The traveller's emotional security, represented by the historical, also required not only all the necessary modern conveniences for client comfort (as in a hotel, for example) but also (unlike hotels) public confidence in the modernity of its capability and up-to-the-minute prowess in terms of operational safety. In order that these expressions of modernity did not negate the ships' luxurious ambience, as noted, the Art-Deco style was employed: this, whilst a twentieth-century style, still provided, unlike Modernism, a vehicle for the expression of the elaborate and the ornate.

The physical process of travel as an expression of modernity can also be read in relation to the need to be set against historical precedent in the form of age-sanctioned interiors in order that journeying remain respectable in the essentially conservative social context of 1940s Britain. It is perhaps not coincidental, then, that the historicist styles employed on board the three ships refer either to the sixteenth century [for example Fig. 22, Smoke Room table] and to a golden age of British maritime history, or to the second half of the eighteenth century and the Britain of Horatio Nelson. The heavily-veneered interiors of *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*, in particular, also conjured up the actor David Garrick's 1759 naval anthem written in response to that year's series of British naval triumphs in the 'Year of Victories':

Come, cheer up, my lads, 'tis to glory we steer,  
To add something more to this wonderful year;  
To honour we call you, as freemen not slaves,  
For who are so free as the sons of the waves?

*Heart of oak* [my italics] are our ships,  
heart of oak are our men,  
we always are ready; Steady, boys, steady!  
We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again.

([www.napoleonguide.com/music\\_hearts](http://www.napoleonguide.com/music_hearts): Accessed 9 December 2009)

Whilst not styled according to any designerly overview, and certainly not the product of any particular aesthetic trope, through their decorative and furnishing schemes *Pretoria*, *Edinburgh* and



Kenya did, then, communicate ideas about national identity. Unchanging in their livery<sup>23</sup>, consolidating the Union-Castle message of reliability and continuity by creating reminders of a historical past, which included both the nation's maritime prowess and its superior capability in the production of luxury furniture, the particular idea of nationhood that the ships expressed was one referencing the longevity of a certain British 'pedigree'. This, in turn, conveyed ideas about the probity of travel by sea. It also highlighted the importance of journeying to Africa, a continent which, as the Board of Trade put it in 1948, was, by contrast, '...still largely in a somewhat primitive state', its people needing British assistance in order to ameliorate the likelihood of 'being plunged into the complications of twentieth-century civilization without the assistance of the slowly-leavening influences of the intervening centuries'. (Board of Trade:1948:2).

In this sense, the three ships' interiors, with their combination of historical markers and conservative modernity, symbolized both 'know-how' as well as authority and command. In expressing these ideas Union-Castle reiterated and legitimised assumptions about British supremacy. Essential to the maintenance of social and political constructs around the idea of nationhood, however, was the creation of spaces on board ship which might reflect personal, as well as national, identity.

### *2.2.3 The complexities of differentiated space on board ship*

Key to representations of Britain on board ship were ideas borrowed from the domestic interior concerning the appropriate use of rooms according to social function. Since the industrial revolution, the home had increasingly become a site of demarcated space. In particular, the emergence of the middle-class house as a place separate and distinct from that of the world of work and commerce

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<sup>23</sup> Union-Castle ships always retained their trademark lavender hull and black-and-red funnels, P&O ships' livery, by contrast, changing in the early 1930s with the introduction to the service of the 'White Sisters' RMS *Strathnaver* and RMS *Strathaird*, the first major P&O passenger ships to be designed with an all-white hull.

witnessed, as a corollary, the rise of prescriptive ideas regarding the status of distinct areas within the home according to whether they offered 'public' or 'private' space.<sup>24</sup>

German philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) viewed the development of separate spaces for work and leisure as both heralding and contributing to the rise of the private – as opposed to collectively-oriented – person. (Benjamin:2004) Signified by this autonomy, the modernity of the individual had itself been ushered in by the Industrial Revolution, the effect of which had been to remove working life from the home. In this way the drawing room or parlour of the middle-class household became the public space in which visitors and guests might be received, whilst bedrooms and boudoirs became much more exclusively places of privacy. Frequently linked with the social apportioning of domestic space was its gender alignment, a notion key to producing and underlining ideas about propriety and respectability. Signifying this cultural shift in interior design, a lighter and traditionally 'feminine' use of soft colours and delicate furniture in a woman's dressing-room might contrast with the darker schemes or heavier furniture of a gentleman's smoking-room, for example.

Concepts of public and private space, and the gendered designation of separate rooms, also served to create and reinforce the individual's sense of self during a time of rapid social change. Not surprisingly, given a situation in which division of the domestic arena was subject to the taxonomies mentioned here, and against the background of a society in flux following industrialisation, ideas about social class were also crucial to the correct decoration, and corresponding definition, of home in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In a passage in his 1910 novel *Howard's End*, E. M. Forster, personifying middle-class aspiration in the form of the London Borough of Chelsea, neatly described the importance of gender and class for contemporary interior decoration. Here, however, the key protagonist Margaret views the room's *lack* of style with some relief.

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<sup>24</sup> For a recent discussion of this theme see Sparke:2008.

The dining room was big, but over-furnished. Chelsea would have moaned aloud. Mr Wilcox had eschewed those decorative schemes that wince, and relent, and refrain, and achieve beauty by sacrificing comfort and pluck. After so much self-colour and self-denial, Margaret viewed with relief the sumptuous dado, the frieze, the gilded wallpaper, amid whose foliage parrots sang. It would never do for her own furniture, but those heavy chairs, that immense sideboard loaded with presentation plate, stood up against its pressure like men. (RCA:2006: HM 1092)

Just as Forster's characterization of upper-middle-class Edwardian taste usefully describes the simultaneous existence of very different styles of furnishing, so it is helpful not to place too formulaic or unequivocal a reading of separate space into design-historical readings. Whilst gender, class and notions about public and private did inform the way the modern interior came to be arranged and decorated, these were concepts which were played out, in practice, with a degree of fluidity. As Penny Sparke points out in *The Modern Interior* (2008), from the late nineteenth century public and private spaces began increasingly to be bridged by middle-class female consumers entering into the public sphere in order to purchase goods for the home. This situation was reinforced, Sparke notes, when it appeared in reverse with the construction of domestic-style spaces in interiors in the public domain.

On one level, therefore, the strong distinction between private and public spheres observed by Benjamin was eroded almost as soon as it was formed. In inhabiting interior environments outside the home which were modelled on the domestic interior, the middle classes were, perhaps, protecting themselves from, and compensating themselves for, the realities of the world of commerce and production, as well as reinforcing and disseminating the value of a bourgeois lifestyle in the world at large. (Sparke:2008:28)

No wonder, then, that the interiors of *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle* should exhibit an ambiguity between public and private. If the land-based domestic interior at once provided, and also signified, a bastion of middle-class respectability, then it only followed that this

space should be replicated in the public domain. References to domesticity were employed to create 'safe' spaces which served to reassure polite society that any potent – and potentially risqué – mixing of the sexes had been normalised. Thus from the late nineteenth century onwards, theatres, concert halls and, of course, hotels referred to domestic interior style. For ships, the psychological benefits of referencing the domestic environment offered the additional advantage that ocean liners represented a situation in which decoration associated with the comforts of home, both physical and emotional, might be particularly usefully employed as a means of easing the progress of a lengthy journey. Taking their cue from hotels, shipping companies appropriated many of the latter's devices to indicate a gracious and respectable bourgeois life (Wealleans:2006). A final benefit of this approach was that, whilst shipping companies and their vessels were part and parcel of the operations of commerce, recreations of domesticity served to screen a bourgeois and upper-class clientele from unseemly reminders of the capitalist process.

Like the hotel, the ship offers design history an important but often overlooked example, of those interiors that are neither straightforwardly public nor private (Sparke's *Modern Interiors* provides an exception). A reading of ocean liners elicits further exploration of this gap in the subject, however. Not only does passenger accommodation on board ship witness an ambiguity in the social usage of spaces but also, as the example of the inclusion of wicker furniture both on deck and in *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh*'s cabins suggests, these spaces indicate a subtle ambivalence as to 'interior' and 'exterior'. Heightened by the employment of a lexicon of domestic tropes – rugs [Fig. 30], side tables and (highly impractical) table-lamps, for example – *Pretoria*, *Edinburgh* and *Kenya* created an 'indoor' ambience that extended to their external spaces on deck.

The inclusion of reproduction vernacular-style coffee-tables on the First Class Decks, underlines the sense in which, on board ship, all spaces, whether internal or external, are in effect 'inside'; as indeed they are, if viewed as areas held within the ship's superstructure<sup>25</sup>. As a parallel to this use of heavy 'interior' furnishings on deck, more ephemeral cane furniture, often, but not

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<sup>25</sup> The parts of a ship, other than masts and rigging, built above its hull.

exclusively, associated with outdoor use, was included in passenger cabins [Fig. 20], suggesting an attempt by Union-Castle at offering something a little lighter, literally, decoratively and in terms of mood. The provision of cane furniture might also be read as recognition of the ships' sailing to a warmer climate where the comfort and warmth of northern European upholstery would be less of an imperative. Equally, arguing that Union-Castle's ships' interiors can be deciphered as representing a point of continuum between Britain (which might be characterised as possessing a largely 'indoors' character), and Africa (the apotheosis of 'the great outdoors'), the interchangeability of furniture types on board is more readily understandable.

If, as Walter Benjamin felt, the domestic interior represented the space in which modern men and women played out their modernity through a subconscious, self-building process of reflection – which this space at once facilitated and confirmed – then an equivalent construction of the emotional/psychological aspects of interior living might have been being employed, again subconsciously, by passengers on board ship. What were the identities being created and rehearsed on board these ships, in their cabins, dining- and smoke-rooms, or on deck? Just as an understanding of the preoccupations and values of the late-nineteenth-century middle class is of value in reading their homes, so a knowledge of the people who sailed on *Pretoria*, *Edinburgh* and *Kenya* is useful for deciphering the accommodation that their passengers occupied whilst on board. Since Union-Castle's South African and East African routes involved a rather different clientele, it will be helpful to survey the situation for *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh*, and then those obtaining for *Kenya Castle* separately.

#### 2.2.4 *Union-Castle interiors, evocations of 'Britishness' and colonial authority, 1945 – 1955*

In his study *British Immigration to South Africa, 1946 – 1970*, written for the inter-racial, correspondence-based University of South Africa in 1977, FG Brownell writes of the early post-war period that the Union was a country chronically lacking, and in need of, skilled labour if it was to benefit both from the stimulation to industry that had occurred as a result of wartime production and

from its generally strengthened economy. In a memorandum to Prime Minister Jan Smuts dated July 10 1946 the Secretary of External Affairs and Chair of the Immigrants Selection Board, D D Forsythe reported that following consultation with the Department of Commerce and Industries, and with the Secretaries of Labour and the Interior, they had clearly determined that 'there was already a shortage of skilled manpower in South Africa'. (Brownell:1977:39). Whilst this view needs to be treated with caution – no mention is made of the possibility that there was a skilled pool of labour amongst the black population – it is nevertheless historically important as being one of the factors that led to the drive to recruit immigrants.

Added to the desire to boost the economy was Smuts' desire to increase the English-speaking white population as a bulwark against his Afrikaner adversaries, the opposition National Party, this too providing an important fillip to initiatives to attract immigrants. In fact, the National Party was also keen to see immigration levels boosted, though for different reasons, and talked in terms of a determination not 'to go down in a sea of colour', the likely upshot it envisaged should white immigration not be prioritized – 'it may not happen today or in 10 or 20 years, but ultimately it must be the fate of the Union' – and the result of the eventuality of failing to attend to opening 'the doors of South Africa' to white Europeans (Brownell:1977:38). All told, then, conditions were ripe for a state-backed marketing of the Union of South Africa in the late 1940s. Foreign missions abroad were instructed accordingly, and told 'to afford every encouragement' to 'desirable types' (Brownell:1977:38), the pressure to do so being felt all the more keenly since it was known at the time that countries who, unlike the Union, could count on their Commonwealth connection with Britain – Canada and Australia – were also seeking to recruit immigrants.

In response to the threat of the perceived politico-demographic crisis, Smuts announced plans for a large-scale programme to support immigration at a meeting of the Transvaal Head Committee of the United Party on 4 August 1946. At the same time, proposals for the building of hostels in key ports such as Cape Town were announced. A statement issued from Pretoria a short while later, and printed in the *Cape Times* on August 15 1946, declared that the government had decided to take

Whatever vigorous and promising steps are practicable to attract to South Africa promising immigrants from European and other countries. While the most urgent need is for skilled artisans, it is considered that every effort should also be made to encourage the entry of persons who have experience and means to set up industries...Indeed every kind of good and useful immigrant would be welcome... Other young countries are taking steps to absorb the best class of immigrants with all speed, and the Union may be left with the leavings if it does not make provision for its requirements without loss of time. (Brownell:1977:41)

This, then, was the continuing mood of the recruitment drive in the period leading up to the first sailings of *Pretoria Castle* in the summer of 1948 and *Edinburgh Castle* in December of that year. Smuts' Special Immigration Service, as the policy became known, once inaugurated was to continue until May 1948, when the United Party was defeated by the Nationalist electoral victory. It was a message that would certainly have been heard in Union-Castle's offices at St Mary Axe in the City of London.

The British response to Smuts' Immigration Service was for the general public, beset by continuing rationing, power cuts and in 1946-'47 the worst winter weather conditions since 1880, to join the queues of people waiting to apply to emigrate in their thousands. (Brownell:1977) Whilst there are obvious problems associated with taking the partisan word of those responsible for marketing South Africa as fact, a note from the London office of the 1820 Memorial Settlers' Association (MSA)<sup>26</sup>, for example, provides one indication of the take-up of calls for immigrants.

The MSA's assertion, made in March 1947, that 'conditions here have been appalling' and that 'everywhere one goes one hears people discussing migration... queues of applicants continue to

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<sup>26</sup> A body commemorating the settling in South Africa of British Immigrants in 1820. The Association provided an organisation which assisted the South African government through overseas support in immigration applications and by offering help to new immigrants on arrival in South Africa.

litter the passages outside our office, and the mail gets heavier every morning' (Brownell:1977:52) is supported by statistics. An enquiry conducted by Britain's *Daily Mail* newspaper in October 1946, in conjunction with shipping companies and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, revealed that of the 511 000 who had applied for immigration since the end of the War, 150 000 wanted to go to Canada, 146 000 to Australia and 50 000 each to South Africa and New Zealand. (Brownell:1977:52) Of those who actually emigrated (as opposed to those who applied but did not, for whatever reason, in the end, travel) to each of these countries between 1946 and 1949, the vast majority were from the 'skilled trades'.

Following the arrival in power of the National Party in May 1948, the number of people emigrating to South Africa from Britain was to decrease, and the social, political and economic background from which they were recruited subjected to greater scrutiny. Alongside efforts to increase immigration from the Netherlands and Germany, Pretoria now began to prioritise the pruning-back of the great numbers arriving from Britain. In a covert move to adjust immigration from Britain according to a policy that had the unhealthy ring of eugenics about it, a new set of instructions was issued and sent to the London recruitment office on 2 September 1948 specifying that there ought now to be put in place a more thorough health screening of applicants, careful security enquiries, and greater checks on the labour efficiency of the individual: 'A reduction in quantity will be more than rewarded by an improvement in quality' the note commented. (Brownell:1977:63) Not surprisingly, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the viability of the easy assimilation of immigrant Britons within the Union.

According to this message, political imperative now became a marketing manoeuvre. Inherent in the ploy to encourage those British immigrants who were acceptable to Pretoria was the awkward tension between the Union's preferred denial of its British connections and the necessity to suggest the continuities between the two countries. Nowhere was the 'Africanness' of Africa mentioned, and indeed, as the implementation of apartheid policies gathered pace it was clear that the National Party desired to eliminate the 'native' wherever possible; this was to



have a bearing on the interiors of the ships that transported immigrants from the United Kingdom to their new home.

While the National Party did not halt British immigration altogether, its conscious desire to significantly diminish the arrival of a white, *English-speaking* (as opposed to white Afrikaner) population produced a sharp downward trend in the numbers of those requiring berths to South Africa throughout the 1950s. Whilst there were 25 513 immigrants to South Africa from Britain in 1948, this number plummeted to 5 094 in 1950 and continued to decrease throughout the 1950s to a mere 3 782 in 1959. (Hyam and Henshaw:2003:21) As Brownell remarks of the situation: 'Ideological considerations generally took precedence and it was only when the Nationalist government felt it had successfully settled its political future that active encouragement again took place' (Brownell:1977:66).

The reinvigoration of South African immigrant recruitment drives, the introduction of an assisted passages scheme in 1960-1962 and the significance of this for Union-Castle will be discussed in Chapter Three. Those travelling as immigrants were not the only passengers on board Union-Castle's ships, however. What proportion of the company's clientele was made up of visitors staying for only short periods of time?

Brownell's analysis does not provide figures which would offer a comparison between the numbers on board the passenger ships sailing because they were leaving Britain permanently and those making the journey for a temporary visit. However, it seems likely that most of the passengers sailing to South Africa in the late 1940s, at the time of the launches of *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*, were working people, heading for Africa not for a holiday, but engaged in the serious process of embarking on a new life. That this is likely to be the case is supported by evidence of the frequency and type of tourism to South Africa at this time. Whilst little has been written on the subject, it has been suggested that where tourism in the period 1940-1948 in particular is concerned,

Insofar as South Africa was considered, it played host to thousands of accidental tourists, because British airmen arrived in the country for training. In general, the considerable movement of people during hostilities also had the effect of alerting the South African authorities to the growing importance of upgrading tourist policy in peacetime. (Grundlingh:2006:105)

It was with this in mind that in 1947 the South African Tourist Corporation (Satour) was formed, having been given a separate identity from the publicity arm of the South African Railways and Harbours, which had dealt with tourist matters until then.

Once the National Party had taken office, it became clear, however, that initiatives to develop tourism were a very low priority to an administration primarily concerned with the consolidation of Afrikaner power and with the early shaping of apartheid policy. As a result, few active attempts to court overseas visitors were made, and until the late 1950s South African tourism remained largely a regional concern, involving predominantly the whites of neighbouring countries such as Rhodesia and Mozambique. Thus, as Albert Grundlingh observes, 'Only 17 per cent were long-distance visitors from overseas, half of whom came from Britain.' (Grundlingh:2006:105). Another important reason for the paucity of British visitors, was, of course, that for them, South Africa represented a 'long-haul' destination. For all but the very wealthiest, who were able to afford to fly from Northern Europe, travel to South Africa during the period 1945-1955 entailed a two-week journey by sea.

When viewed in the context of the nature of the journeys being made on its ships, Union-Castle's sedate interiors for *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh* appear to present less a lack of style than an appropriately matter-of-fact response to the need to convey passengers from A to B. As discussed above, however, the restraint occasioned by this pragmatic expediency did not negate the need to pay as much attention to passenger comfort and to the most 'tasteful' arrangement of the ships as possible. Indeed, one reading of the 'old-fashioned' decoration of the ships is to suggest that their conservatism created an interior designed to soothe via the provision of

psychological as well as physical ease for occupants in their transition to a new life. In other words, Union-Castle's early post-war ships offered a discourse in reassurance.

The ships' decoration also evoked the conservative British ability to acknowledge, but at the same time tame, the modern, or the new, and to recast these as something safer, known, and more 'traditional'; an exercise mirroring the process by which furniture manufacturers like J Clarke of High Wycombe had adopted firstly rational Utility design and secondly the post-war 'freedom of design' when they came into being.

But it was also important that the ships provided continuity with the *present*. Returning to Walter Benjamin's suggestion that a mark of modern life was the domestic interior's ability to create a space of solace and of inward-looking self-reflection, the interiors of *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle* can also be understood as offering a known world of no-nonsense, unpretentious quality and sobriety. The two ships not only provided a place of retreat for passengers before arrival at their destination but also a space which, through its very conservatism (and conjectured notions of a traditional 'Britishness'), drew out a message of continuity between the nations of departure and arrival, Britain and South Africa. In this way, Union-Castle accommodated its passengers psychologically as much as physically in the period up to the mid-1950s.

Also evident on board the ships was a particular notion of Britishness (which usually in fact, meant Englishness), an idea that was played out through visual inculcations of dependability, sobriety and 'decency', leadership and a paternalistic concern for 'inferiors'. The unfortunate case of a Mr Logan, of the company's publicity department, brought to the managing directors' attention in November 1949, was indicative of just this ethos:

The Chairman had received reports from the management of this [Union-Castle publicity department] that Mr D H Logan was seriously in debt and that a sum of money was missing from the department. From the information submitted, it was clear that Mr Logan had acquired the habit of drinking and smoking cigarettes heavily during

the war... The Chairman had interviewed him and having taken him to task for the reasons for his finding himself in his present serious position decided, on receiving from Mr Logan an assurance (which he had already volunteered to do) that he would give up the aforementioned bad habits, and as follows:-

- be given a final chance with the company
- and that he would be given a loan to help him out of difficulties, to be paid back at rate of £5 from his monthly salary. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (4062))

Given the tenor of the highest levels of company management it is probable, too, that the mounting vociferousness of Afrikanerdom informed a sense in which Union-Castle required the interiors of its ships to emanate a certain superiority of command. This became manifest in decorative schemes through which the old colonial notion of 'necessary authority' might be communicated to a former subject state via an appropriate aesthetic gravitas based on historical references. Likewise, in preparation for the impending British royal visit to South Africa in 1947 (an event which was to become the last such until 1995), it was recorded about the decoration, for the occasion, of the Union-Castle building in Adderley Street, Cape Town that 'The Chairman expressed the wish that everything possible should be done within the resources available to ensure the decoration scheme at the various offices was *appropriate and in good taste.*' [My italics] (NMM CL UCM 3/ 4 (3227)) Added to this was the highly potent fact that projecting notions of Britishness when trading with a political regime that had been openly sympathetic to Germany during the Second World War represented a posture that was little short of chest-beating on Union-Castle's part.

If these ideas were true of the aesthetic tone of passenger accommodation of the ships sailing the Atlantic to Cape Town, they were even more so for *Kenya Castle*, a ship trading on the Suez and East African route and sailing to destinations (principally Mombasa) which, in the 1950s, were still part of the British Empire. As late as 1963, and in the period of changeover to independence, the passengers on the East African route were still predominantly 'imperial' civil servants of one kind or another. Kate Chapman sailed from Britain to Kenya on the *Kenya Castle* in 1963. Posted by the Overseas Development Corporation (ODC), her husband was about to

take up a teaching post in Uganda. The couple and their son were typical of the type of families disembarking at Mombasa's Kilindini Harbour:

We were sent through the ODC and it seemed outrageous that we were being paid for to travel in this style; we were all in government employ, more or less. A very large number of Public Works people, civil engineers and civil servants, a small farming community of people who had owned land in Kenya for a few decades – they considered themselves to be the élite – and a sprinkling of medical people. It was basically teaching, engineering, health, but all working for the government. (Chapman:Banham,Norfolk:2009)

If this was the situation shortly after independence, the proportion of passengers who were government employees on the Mombasa sailing in the 1950s, when the East African countries were still Crown Colonies, is likely to have been even greater. One of the series of *Overseas Economic Surveys* published by the Board of Trade, a 1948 booklet, *British East Africa*, corroborates Chapman's understanding of just whom she had travelled with. The booklet is at pains to stress – probably rather over-optimistically – the existence of tourism to East Africa in the years immediately following the war: 'the average man possessing reasonably adequate means is now enabled to visit East Africa on a short holiday without any elaborate preparation or undue expense'. (Deubar:1948:72) However, the publication also admits that the 'relative inaccessibility of the area, the poor internal communications and the inadequacy of the hotels' had militated against the development of tourism and that, until recently, 'no organized efforts have been made to exploit the tourist potential of the British East African territories' (Deubar:1948: 72). With regard to trade, on the other hand, the booklet announced that:

As part of the immediate post-war economy, considerable attention has been given to the question of development plans for the respective East African territories. These are designed to inaugurate and improve...various services, etc. in conjunction with similar schemes financed by contributions by the Home Government under the Colonial Development Welfare Fund.

Considerable attention to these schemes has been displayed by United Kingdom contractors and interested parties. (Deubar:1948:56)

Alongside those travelling to work at the new East Africa High Commission, Nairobi, which had come into being on 1 January 1948, were presumably these same 'interested parties' who made the voyage with the Union-Castle Mail Steamship Co Ltd which, the booklet also noted, had 'resumed their round Africa service to and from the United Kingdom.' (Deubar:1948:67). The preponderance of civil engineers noticed on board by Chapman is likely to have been due to the contemporary concern to develop an independent Kenyan infrastructure around the time that British administration ended.

Although the ODC ran weekend courses, at Farnham, Surrey, for everyone about to sail to Kenya, which included information as to how to behave both on board ship and upon arrival – 'we received pages and pages of notes on how we were expected to relate to servants, social etiquette and details of things like being expected to dress for dinner' (Chapman:Banham,Norfolk:2009) – nobody at the ODC spoke in advance about *Kenya Castle* itself. As already noted, the ship's interiors projected notions of heritage and pedigree and, interestingly, on board *Kenya* the design practice that was part and parcel of these cultural assumptions appears to have been employed at least as much for British passengers as for the subject countries of destination:

They didn't tell us, 'you're going to be travelling on this amazing ship' – very lavish and highly crafted and rather old fashioned – all that was simply expected – now that you were a civil servant and representing the Crown. You were semi-élite. The sense was that they – black Kenyans – would only be pleased to have you and that this was the only way you should be travelling. The journey was also about educating you in becoming used to being waited on, having servants and behaving as though you were part of the ruling classes, which of course you suddenly were, in a sense. And all the elaborate, very traditional, very establishment décor, felt like it was intended to set the scene for that. (Chapman:2009)

If this was *Kenya Castle's* ambience post-independence, how much more might it have been the case ten years earlier, when the ship was fitted out?

The atmosphere into which passengers stepped when embarking for Mombasa was one in which the weight and responsibility of Empire, and, correspondingly, an aesthetic definition of the correct way of being British, was hugely important. Similarly, the look and ambience of *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle* was also one that relied heavily on an aesthetic that had little to do with the practice or realisation of design and far more to do with current cultural and political preoccupations, many of which can be read in the context of the continuing rehearsal of colonial and newly post-colonial relationships elsewhere in Africa.

The three ships' aesthetic was also born of actual, or 'high' political considerations, tensions and relationships at a time of transition and uncertainty in international relations between South Africa, Kenya and the United Kingdom. Although on the Cape Route these considerations appear to have resulted in wariness about committing major capital investment in the redesign of the early post-war vessels, the emerging apartheid policies of the South African state were also at work in effecting a situation in which no mention of Africa is made on board the ships. In fact, particularly when considered in comparison with some competitors' vessels, such as the British India Steam Navigation Company (BI) ship *SS Uganda*, representations of black Africa are conspicuous on Union-Castle's ocean liners only through their absence.

#### 2.2.5 *SS Uganda: An alternative material culture*

Providing sailings on British India's East African Service between 1952 and 1967 (and thereafter commissioned as an educational cruise ship until 1982), *Uganda's* interiors are remarkably similar to those of the early post-war Union-Castle ships. BI's ethos regarding the ship's wider material culture and interiors was entirely different, however. As was the case on board the Union-Castle

liners, flush paneling, streamlined furniture and Art Deco-type light fittings, balustrades and flooring were included, alongside historicist references which combined to present an aesthetic (again, like the Union-Castle ships) that was similar to its pre-war predecessors. [Fig. 33] Writing of her experience of *Uganda's* first voyage, Aileen Hill commented, in the *Kenya Weekly News*:

I returned to that very pleasant Drawing Room [Fig 33] I sank into one of the many armchairs to gain a few impressions of the most important room of the ship. At that stage of the voyage, the Drawing Room was wearing its tropical array of china blue and other soft shades of blue, oatmeal and shades of yellow, old-gold and silver...The room was paneled in an almost astonishing variety of woodwork such as ice-flame birch, prima vera, burr ash, burr elm, sapele and sycamore... (SS *Uganda* Trust:1998:85)

Hill was then taken on a tour around the rest of the ship and came to the Smoke Room [Fig. 34]:

Most smoking rooms on ships are very much the same, but I did think the one on *Uganda* was worthy of praise. It had the same fine paneling as the other big rooms, mostly in figured aspen and straight-grained elm. The fireplace was in walnut over which was figured aspen veneered panelling. On this panelling was a most unusual carving depicting the tobacco plant and cultivation, and its ultimate enjoyment by the peoples of the world. [Fig. 35] (SS *Uganda* Trust:1998:86)

*Uganda's* carved Smoke Room panel is highly unusual in the context of this thesis in that the 'peoples of the world' included, alongside images of two Caucasians, a – very stereotyped – Aladdin-like Arab and behind him a black man nonchalantly reading a book. On board *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* or *Kenya Castle*, the portrayal of anything associated with 'the native', much less an educated black person, would have been unheard of. Although not mentioned by Hill, whose experience of the ship was, as noted, of its first voyage, the same Smoke Room was later to be decorated with two mounted elephant tusks, these being placed on either side of a carved wooden relief of African animals. [Fig. 36] These were a gift from the Kabaka (King) of the



Bugandan people of Uganda, and presented to *Uganda's* captain in 1960. The Ugandan High Commissioner, T B Bazarrabuzza, was also a later visitor to the ship [Fig. 37] and would have met the black crew members who served on board. [Fig. 38] Of course, there was nothing remarkable about BI's welcoming and inclusion of East Africa on board ship; the situation represented by *Uganda* is only really significant in serving to highlight the absence of any mention of black Africa in Union-Castle's early post-war vessels, and illustrates the extent to which the politicized relationship between Union-Castle and Pretoria was to determine the material culture of the former's ocean liners.

Overall, the interiors of the three Union-Castle ships surveyed here conveyed an orderly world of unpretentious respectability and propriety. Moderate and conservative, their ambience matched the restrained mood of Vernon Thompson's management style, an approach increasingly occasioned by the shipping line's view of the mounting bellicosity of the South African government from 1948 onwards. Reading the ships' interiors according to Benjamin, their passenger accommodation mirrored and reinforced the character of Union-Castle as a shipping company. The ships' passenger accommodation was in this sense acting both as a repository of Union-Castle values and as a site for their reinforcement.

In addition, the Union-Castle ships accommodated a clientele travelling on the South African route in the very early years of the period of this study to a country whose ties with Britain were still informed by a colonial past and in which, whatever the current political tensions, the United Kingdom wished, for economic reasons, to play a solid and considered role. The maritime equivalents of the fictional Mrs Miniver, Britain's war-time heroine whose down-to-earth steadfastness and everyday activities, serialised in *The Times*, had reassured millions of Britons during hostilities, *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle* communicated long-held values about moderation, quality, the traditional and the durability of a certain notion of Britishness.

Thus the three ships' interiors demonstrated the importance of 'non-design', in which fashionability was eschewed in favour of an un-showy accrual of diplomatic capital which communicated an

immutable way of managing the world. In doing this Union-Castle relayed the message of a reassertion of power in a response in the face of arriviste aggression on the part of the National Party, and at the same time attempted to reassure passengers that South Africa was really not so different from home. On board *Kenya Castle* this aesthetic was employed as a means of underlining the 'otherness' of East Africa, a region developmentally in need of Britain's practised and guiding hand. In each case the designs of the ships' interiors also point to the idea that design history might benefit from readings grounded not in analyses of style and aesthetics, but in non-visual constructs and concepts.

Politics, certainly, were all too clearly also present in the absence of any mention of native Africa on board any of the three ships. Whilst in the case of *Kenya Castle* this might represent a politically-inspired omission in favour, instead, of imparting messages about the correct conduct of Empire, it is hard not to read *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh's* ignoring of black Africa as a deliberate move not to offend the new Nationalist government. With relations between the shipping line and the National Party hanging in the balance throughout the period 1945-1955, it was certainly not in Union-Castle's interests to antagonize Pretoria by employing references associated with the populations which, it was becoming clear, the administration was determined to restrict, silence and condemn.

The reserved propriety of the passenger accommodation on board *Pretoria Castle*, *Edinburgh Castle* and *Kenya Castle* matched not only the measured tones of Union-Castle under Sir Vernon Thompson, but also the tenor of post-Utility consumption in Britain and international relations with South and East Africa. This mood was set to change dramatically, however. During the next key period of their histories, 1955-1965, both Union-Castle and the South African Union government would become particularly successful in their separate -yet related- endeavours, and liners with an entirely different aesthetic would be launched as part of both opportunity and offensive in the relationship between Union-Castle and the National Party.

***Pendennis Castle and Windsor Castle, 1955-1965***

Writing in *The South African Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review* in August 1960, in an article entitled 'Cape Town Appreciates Benefits Conferred by Mailships', Joyce Newton Thompson, Mayor of Cape Town, proclaimed her welcome for Union-Castle's new flagship vessel, *Windsor Castle*, due into Table Bay at the completion of its first voyage on 1 September:

It is with full appreciation of the benefits conferred upon this Mother City by the fleet of fast, reliable, well-appointed...vessels which carry our mail, passengers and our cargoes to Europe, that I am delighted to welcome the newcomer *Windsor Castle*.

With the entry of the *Windsor Castle* into the listings of the Union Castle Mailships, we welcome also the belief in the future of South Africa of which the investment of 10 million in her building is the proof. South Africa, and in particular Cape Town, has a splendid future ahead. From the moment visitors by sea are welcomed at the pleasant new passenger terminal and drive up the Heerengracht into the Mother City, they will appreciate the beauty, the steady advance and the hospitality of Cape Town. On behalf of Cape Town I welcome *Windsor Castle*. (South African Shipping News: 8 August 1960)

Whilst the first voyages of earlier Cape route ships, *Pretoria* and *Edinburgh Castle*, had not gone entirely unnoticed, their first sailings into South African waters had been met with civil, but muted, celebrations. That *Windsor Castle*'s first appearance in Cape Town twelve years later should be greeted with such triumphalism, and more particularly the reasons as to why this should have happened, form the theme of this chapter.

The period 1955-1965 was to see a turn in the fortunes of the Union-Castle. Just as had been the case during the preceding decade, decision-making about the future direction of the shipping line was intricately bound up with the South African government's trade policies. New to this relationship, however, was the optimism held by both parties: their shared progressivist beliefs were clearly captured by the Mayor of Cape Town's official welcome. A stronger parliament under consolidated National Party lead, a buoyant economy, a period of prosperity in South Africa and a shipping line radically invigorated by the takeover of Union-Castle by British and Commonwealth Shipping Ltd were all to have a decisive impact upon the design of the two key ships of the period, *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*. Ironically, the late 1950s and the first years of the 1960s, the period during which South Africans began to question their country's continuing role within the Commonwealth, also witnessed the impressive new ships' first voyages to Cape Town. As Mayor Newton Thompson's remarks had indicated, questions in the air about the formation of the Republic of South Africa did not, however, dim the excitement or hyperbole surrounding the ships' first arrival at Table Bay.

Although noticeably strengthened during the period 1955-1965, relations between Union-Castle, British & Commonwealth Shipping, Ltd (B&C) and Pretoria were to continue along their complicated and often difficult trajectory. In their account of British-South African relationships during the 1950s Ronald Hyam and Peter Henshaw note how the period witnessed a distinct hardening of attitudes between Britain and South Africa, and foreign relations that were nothing short of tense, a situation which informed negotiations between the shipping line and the South African government at various points during the decade. That B&C were able to successfully negotiate this difficult situation and retain a very strong trading partnership with the Republic is a testament to the extraordinary business acumen of company chairman Sir Nicholas Cayzer.

One of the complexities of London-Pretoria relations during the post-war years was that the two nations remained closely linked both economically and financially, numerous British companies investing heavily in South Africa throughout the period despite relations that were often extremely problematic. Riven with tension, the bonds that united the two nations were to be precarious

throughout this time. At the root of the mutual wariness – and at times open distrust – was the continuing impact of the Afrikaner National Party's autocratic dominance of the political scene. By the late 1950s, particularly since the United Kingdom now needed to tread a very careful path in order not to appear overly sympathetic to the Nationalists and their burgeoning policy of 'grand apartheid', relations had become particularly complex. And, since the expediency of maintaining an important trading partnership was not one that either side wished to abandon, this inevitably vexed, but mutually beneficial, relationship continued with a fair degree of difficulty on both sides through the 1960s. The fact that despite this situation exchanges between Pretoria and Union-Castle went from strength to strength during the period was to prove highly significant for the decoration of the shipping line's new vessels.

In direct contrast to the caution and modest reserve in the design of Union-Castle's interiors in the years 1945-1955, the decade 1955-1965 was to witness the flamboyant resurgence of the shipping line, and the launch of several new vessels within a mere 18 months. From a design-historical point of view, the new liners, *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*, were the visual antithesis of their predecessors, *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*. Although at the time of the B&C takeover of Union-Castle *Pendennis Castle* was in the process of being built at the Harland and Wolff yard in Belfast, both this ship and the slightly later *Windsor Castle* were to mark the new managing owner's consolidation of its shipping interests by the introduction of deliberately highly styled passenger accommodation, the production values of which were indicative of an assertive stamping of the Union-Castle 'brand' with the B&C name.

This chapter's survey of the interiors of the two new 1960s vessels describes interiors which provided striking differences in style from both the earlier liners produced immediately after the war and Union-Castle's last ship, *Reina del Mar*. It will suggest reasons for this change in aesthetic direction, the principal ones being the steadily improving relations with South Africa, the takeover of Union-Castle by B&C and the shipping line's investment in the booming South African economy of the 1960s. In doing so, the chapter will also chart the history that formed the background to the extravagant tone of Mayor Newton Thompson's welcoming of *Windsor Castle* to South Africa. The

fact that the Cape Town political leader celebrated the landing of Union-Castle in far more lavish fashion than was usual for a first arrival into port, and that the futures of the shipping company and Cape Town as South Africa's 'Mother City' should be so closely linked, both provide clues about vital elements of the shipping line's history during this period. It was this close association, it will be argued, which underwrote Union-Castle's success during the period and which, in turn, dictated the design of the new ships' interiors. In order to assess the extent to which the South African Union-Castle/B&C connection had an impact upon design issues, a brief survey of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O) ship *SS Canberra*, launched in 1960 and offering an entirely different aesthetic, will be offered to highlight the character of Union-Castle's south Atlantic trade.

### 3.1 Politics and trade

#### *London and Pretoria*

Although it was not the only policy dear to the South African National Party during the post-war period, apartheid was the most infamous. This chapter will argue that along with the need to skillfully negotiate a course through London-Pretoria relations, Union-Castle was to be critically affected by the Nationalist apartheid agenda.

The reversal of the limited liberality of Jan Smuts' government over racial segregation ushered in by D F Malan's election victory in 1948 had quickly been consolidated through the implementation of stricter policies on racial issues. However, Malan's segregationist approach, although much more in earnest than Smuts', was still a work in progress. By the 1950s his party's formative ideas were increasingly extended and developed, firstly by J G Strijdom (Prime Minister 1954-1958), less cautious even than Malan in voicing racial ideology, and subsequently by the former Minister of Native Affairs, H F Verwoerd. Prime Minister between 1958 and 1966, Verwoerd was a staunch republican and member of the *Broederbond*, the secret neo-Nazi organisation of which, allegedly,

every South African prime minister, from D F Malan to F W de Klerk, was a member, and which was described by Smuts as a 'dangerous, cunning, political fascist organization'. (Jemison:2004:75) Formerly a professor of psychology at Stellenbosch University, Verwoerd's regime was guided by his commitment to social planning and engineering. Exercises in institutionalizing a pronounced racism came increasingly to be explained according to a new presentation of ideas – and associated terminology – which focused on detailing the supposed benefit and value to all South Africans of allowing the development of distinct racial identities within the country. William Beinart has characterised Verwoerd as being

...one of those ideologues who had shifted away from the language of *baasskap* [master race] to mould apparently more justifiable notions of separate cultures, nations and 'homelands'. 'Natives' became 'Bantu', a word derived from the Xhosa/Zulu for 'people'; apartheid became 'separate development'. (Beinart:2001:146)

Whatever the manner in which it was masked, by the end of the 1950s Nationalist policy was moving forcefully in the direction of what came to be known as 'grand apartheid'. In organizing, for example, the wholesale relocation of various African, Coloured and Indian populations, 'grand apartheid' was to be an exercise in social engineering so vast that originally even Verwoerd's government feared it would be impractical to administer. (Clark and Worger: 2004:59)

An article written by South African geographers at the time that Verwoerd's policies were being implemented detailed the extent of his social engineering plans:

... the scale of the operation can be appreciated by the fact that 55 per cent (about 6 million) of the Bantu [<sup>27</sup>], 1.5 million Coloreds, and .5 million Indians are already economically committed with the 3 million Whites in mining, agriculture, commerce, and industry in the so-called "White" areas.

These trends enter into every aspect of the social, economic, and

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<sup>27</sup> Black Africans

political fabric of South Africa. Government legislative machinery is now, however, geared more highly than ever before to attempt to achieve an increasing measure of physical separation of the races which is the goal of the policy of separate development. It is a formidable task. (Fair and Shaffer: 1964:274)

The cornerstone of 'grand apartheid', and a measure of the extent to which this racially-determined rule of law now had an apparently unshakeable grip on the country, was thus the removal of all 'non-Europeans', (non-whites) from white areas. It was also under Verwoerd that the Rivonia Treason Trial of 1963-4 finally indicted and imprisoned almost all the key opposition leaders, amongst them African National Congress (ANC) activists Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeke, and Secretary of the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress Ahmed Kathrada.

That the ANC had been deemed a particularly dangerous terrorist organisation by Verwoerd's administration represented censure that had arisen in part from the Congress's transformation from a protest to an active and, if need be, armed, liberation movement following the Sharpeville Massacre. On 21 March 1960, in the Sharpeville township south of Johannesburg, a demonstration was staged protesting about the detested pass-book system, according to which documentation had to be carried by every member of the black population at all times, and which provided authorisation to be in 'whites-only' areas. Following the protesting crowd's convergence on the local police station, the demonstration resulted in the killing of 69 people, some of them children, by the police.

Sharpeville caused consternation and alarm in both black and white communities within South Africa, and was also, significantly, to create waves of foreign antipathy towards the country. In fostering, therefore, not only what was viewed as internal friction but also foreign tension, the Sharpeville incident was condemned by the United Nations Security Council as having the potential to endanger international peace and security, and was viewed with sufficient alarm that the Council insisted that its Secretary General consulted with Pretoria in order to guarantee that South Africa would uphold the aims and principles of the UN Charter. To make matters worse, the crisis had



come at an already sensitive time. Six weeks earlier, on February 3 1960, Harold Macmillan had delivered his now-famous 'Wind of Change' speech to the South African Parliament in Cape Town, an address which appeared to recognise the need for African independence and also, in the light of this, to question South African racial policy:

The wind of change is blowing through this continent, and, whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. We must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it. ([www.muse.jhu.edu](http://www.muse.jhu.edu): Wind of Change: accessed 13 March 2009)

Even more significantly, Macmillan had emphasised that:

As a fellow member of the Commonwealth it is our earnest desire to give South Africa our support and encouragement, but I hope you won't mind my saying frankly that there are some aspects of your policies which make it impossible for us to do this without being false to our own deep convictions about the political destinies of free men to which, in our own territories, we are trying to give effect. ([www.muse.jhu.edu](http://www.muse.jhu.edu): Wind of Change: accessed 13 March 2009)

The speech reflected British recognition of the potential damage caused by appearing to be too close to the South African government politically. However, in reality Macmillan's government, in a situation once again typical of the complicated symbiosis in which the two nations were held, was uncertain as to how far they might feasibly be able to distance themselves from the Union without jeopardising their valuable relationship with Pretoria. Indeed, the firm note of resolve in Macmillan's message was to be put severely to the test.

Although there was disagreement as to the nature and scale of what this damage might be, it was widely acknowledged in Britain that any major rift with South Africa would undoubtedly have serious economic consequences. The Governor of the Bank of England, for example, asserted that any schism with the Union would create 'very untoward circumstances' regarding South Africa's participation within the Sterling Area community, and also within the Commonwealth. The British

Treasury Office, meanwhile, spoke of the eventuality of an interruption to the British-South African partnership as having the potential to cause a 'major crack in the Sterling Area system' at large. (Hyam and Henshaw: 2003:165)

Sharpeville had created an impossible situation for the British. Should the Britain fail to veto UN disapproval of the massacre, it ran the risk of alienating South Africa, who, it was reported by the South African High Commissioner, 'would feel badly betrayed by the last of their friends.' Should Britain not take a stand against police action at Sharpeville, it would send a very poor message to African nations elsewhere in the Commonwealth, as a telegram cabled from the British Mission to the UN pointed out: 'the position of our friends in black Africa would be sorely affected'. (Hyam and Henshaw:2003:165)

Britain's measures to resolve the crisis was symptomatic of the longer history of its dealings with South Africa during apartheid: in the end, Britain's less than heroic stance resulted in it abstaining from voting for a UN resolution on the Sharpeville issue. The 'wind of change' appeared not, in fact, to be blowing through Anglo-South African relations. As Geoffrey Berridge has commented:

In marked contrast to the attitude of hostility towards South Africa which was demonstrated by most other Western governments...by the Labour Party in the House of Commons, and by the great bulk of the British press during the week which intervened between the killings and the meeting of the Security Council, Macmillan's government seemed to find great difficulty in facing the logic of the Cape Town speech. (Berridge:1981: 115)

Although the increasing momentum of apartheid under Verwoerd was highlighted by the events at Sharpeville and, even though under his administration racist policy was to reach such a pitch that it often appears to have been *the* single defining cause of the Union Government through the 1960s, it would be wrong to understand post-war South Africa solely in terms of its segregationist policies. Alongside the all-encompassing systems designed to institutionalize and police white supremacy,

the Union government was also critically concerned with ideas about nationhood. For South Africa's Nationalists, this involved, in brief terms, anti-imperialism, anti-communism and Afrikaner unity. Each of these political positions was to impact on relations with Britain in general, and more specifically, subsequent relations with Union-Castle.

In April 1960, a second United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution was passed regarding Sharpeville, and on this occasion, in an about-turn – the reasons for which will not be revealed until closure of the archives is lifted in late 2010 – Britain did vote against South Africa. In response to the now unanimous condemnation of apartheid, South Africa voted to become a republic, and removed itself from the Commonwealth in 1961. Although Britain had acted more decisively in relation to the UN than previously, the period between the passing of the second resolution and the Union's eventual departure from the Commonwealth was typically full of hedge-betting and compromise. As late as March 1961 Verwoerd was still insisting that South Africa wished to remain a Commonwealth nation. On the British side, and even in the face of strongly worded addresses from national leaders, including the prime ministers of India (Jawaharlal Nehru), Nigeria (Abubakar Tafawa Balewa) and Ceylon (Sirimavo Bandaranaike), Macmillan remained on the fence. In his summing-up of the first day of the Security Council's summit proceedings, Britain's position, as stated by Macmillan, was to voice the hope that member states might be able to agree on a formula which would allow for the continuing inclusion of South Africa but which would at the same time reaffirm the member states' strong opposition to its policies, and in particular towards apartheid. (Hyam and Henshaw: 2003: 266)

Ultimately, and not surprisingly, compromise along the lines proposed by the United Kingdom could not, however, be reached. Firstly Verwoerd was not prepared to submit to any declarations, let alone measures, against apartheid, and secondly nations such as India and Nigeria asserted that they would leave the Commonwealth not only if Union racial policy were not condemned but also should no indication be received that the South African regime would be altered. Declaring himself to be 'amazed and shocked by the spirit of hostility and even...vindictiveness shown towards South Africa', Verwoerd withdrew his request that the Union remain within the Commonwealth, and

correspondingly, on 31 May 1961, the Union of South Africa became a republic. (Hyam and Henshaw: 2003:269).

Ironically, the United Kingdom was to remain vital to Verwoerd in economic terms. And since, as ever, London stood to benefit from the partnership at least as much as the new Republic, whatever British disquiet at the prospect of maintaining relations in the wake of Sharpeville, trading ties, in fact, looked set to continue uninterrupted. Even more critical to Anglo-South African geopolitics than Commonwealth membership *per se*, however, was the Union's continuing Sterling Area membership. Testament to the vital function this fiscal interdependence performed for both nations – and all-important in terms of facilitating trade between Union-Castle and South Africa – this proved a link that was not to be severed until the early 1970s, when the Sterling Area disintegrated.

### 3.1.2 *Union-Castle, British and Commonwealth Shipping Ltd. and Pretoria*

Union-Castle chairman Vernon Thompson's death in February 1953 came at an already difficult time for Union-Castle. Although this event signified the removal from the South African Shipping Lines Conference of an individual whom Pretoria regarded as the embodiment of loathed British imperialism, (Berridge:1987), Thompson's successor, George Christopher, was to fare even less well in attempting to reach any meaningful or long-term guarantees from the Union as to his shipping line's future on the South African route. Lacking experience in the passenger liner business when appointed as Thompson's deputy in 1949, Christopher had been pressed into service, he later wrote, against his better judgment. (G P Christopher, *Roots and Branches*, cited in Berridge:1987:42). Ill-equipped to deal with increasingly bellicose pressure from Dr A J Norval, then chairman of the powerful South African Board of Trade and Industries, Christopher was placed in an even more difficult position when, in October 1953, the South Africans summarily announced that they would not begin renegotiation of either Union-Castle's all-important Mail Contract or the company's freight rates until the end of 1955, or early 1956 at the soonest.

Union-Castle appears to have been notably angered by Norval's officiousness: renewal of the contracts so late in the day precluded any chance of ordering new liners ready for service once the Mail Contract was renewed, assuming it were to be. In addition, it was beginning to appear that any settlement of terms favourable to the shipping line would be very hard-won. In insisting on this eleventh-hour timing, Norval, on the other hand, had now gained a longer period in which to attempt to boost the expansion of South Africa's own merchant fleet, Safmarine, in line with South Africa's advancing political culture of nationalism; this was a move which would also serve to strengthen Pretoria's position once negotiations were eventually scheduled. (NMM CL UCM 3/4)

The tense relations between Union-Castle and the South African government at this time were made all the more worrying for Christopher since by the 1950s he had on his hands a shipping company facing financial difficulty, numerous Managing Directors' meetings at the time recording both the poor state of both the fleet and profit returns (NMM CL UCM 3/4). In addition, the post-war escalation of shipbuilding and operating costs, the likelihood of restricted earnings in the face of Pretoria's refusal to engage in an early renegotiation of freight rates, coupled with the future detriment to trade inflicted by the inevitability of increased passenger fares in line with inflation, and the ever-growing threat posed by air-travel, all contributed to Union-Castle's financial anxiety at this time.

As had been the case under Thompson's tenure of Union-Castle, it was in the light of this situation that the shipping line was reluctant to invest any capital in replacements for, or even the refurbishing of, its current fleet. As a result, Union-Castle began to receive uncharacteristically bad press, exacerbated by engine failure in a number of ships following the cost-driven switch from diesel to boiler oil. (NMM CL Directors' Minute Books UCM/ 26 January 1954 (10075), 23 February 1954 (10093) 26 April 1955 (10531)) Growing opinion was that as a result of poor management Union-Castle had lost its way with regard to both the state and condition of its fleet and its dealings with South Africa. It was under these circumstances that rumours began to spread around the City of London about the possibility of imminent takeover. (NMM CL UCM 3/4)

In 1935, and again in 1944, Clan Line, a British-owned member of the South African Conference Lines, had attempted to take control of Union-Castle. Owned by the Cayzer shipping family, Clan Line had long resented Union-Castle's historical dominance over the Conference, particularly since Union-Castle had continuously blocked the Clan Line's own entry into the passenger liner business. In 1955, with talk of trouble at Union-Castle's London offices at Fenchurch Street, the Cayzers were waiting in the wings.

In South Africa, meanwhile, J G Strijdom's newly-elected Nationalist government (the successor to D F Malan's administration) was attempting what amounted to another takeover. Under the terms proposed by the Shipping Board Bill of 1955, the idea was being widely promoted within the Union that South Africa should make serious moves to build its own merchant fleet. It was also Pretoria's aim that South Africa should be granted greater power within the Conference to the extent that it, rather than Union-Castle, would henceforth call the shots within the conference. The anxiety with which these changes were being monitored were recorded in the Managing Directors' Meeting minutes; South Africa-watching, apparently a tense and involved precaution, alerted the wider company to possible governmental changes on 21 December 1954:

Union-Castle is noting South African government appointments:

The Chairman stated that as the Board would be aware, Mr JG Strijdom, previous Minister of Lands and Immigration had succeeded Mr Malan as Prime Minister of South Africa. Of the other Cab changes, those of most concern to U-Castle Company were the following:-

Mr Eric Louw Minister of Finance (becomes)

Dr AJR Van Rhijn becomes Minister of Economic Affairs

Mr JJ Serfontein becomes Minister of Posts and Telegraphs and Social Welfare

Mr Ben Shoeman Minister of Transport

It was not expected that Dr Norval's post would change

Previous ministers Mr Naude and Mr Sauer had both been well-disposed to Union-Castle and from that point of view it was unfortunate at this stage that they had been replaced. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 1(0395))

Just as the crisis around the Shipping Board intentions came to a head, Clan Line (who, some Union-Castle Board members believed, had been working behind the scenes to provoke further unrest at this sensitive time (Berridge:1987:54)) approached Union-Castle with an offer of 'amalgamation'. Although it quickly became obvious that this manoeuvre indicated takeover rather than merger, Clan Line, under its Vice Chairman Sir Nicholas Cayzer, was keen to offer assurances that Union-Castle would retain its separate identity. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (10566))

Despite the critical threats overshadowing Union-Castle's discussions to renew its mail contract, according to an arrangement that became known as the 'Pretoria Formula', renegotiations of the Mail Contract and Overseas Freight Agreement (OFA) with South Africa in June 1955 had, in the end, proved relatively successful. Clan Line's fortunes were also boosted by the talks and, strengthened by the agreement, the Cayzers renewed overtures to Union-Castle, persuading it that a 60:40 ratio of control – in their favour – over the company could result in the creation of a workable new holding company. Recognising its limited options, the Union-Castle Board returned a unanimous vote in acceptance of the scheme in late September 1955. An announcement to this effect was made in the press on 3 October. The new company was named British and Commonwealth Shipping Corporation Limited (B&C), and the deal was formally ratified in January 1956. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (10663))

Following Christopher's resignation the following month, in February 1956, Lord Rotherwick, Chairman of Clan Line, took control of both B&C and Union-Castle. Rotherwick immediately seized the opportunity to appoint four additional Clan Line directors to the latter's board, one of whom, Sir Nicholas Cayzer, had successfully steered B&C's takeover bid. From now on, as Berridge comments, 'the Cayzers would run the Union-Castle line and, ipso facto, constitute the single most powerful voice in the South African Conference'. (Berridge:1987:66). Given their importance, it is worth briefly examining the Cayzer family and the nature of B&C under its lead.

Whilst Anglo-South African diplomatic and shipping ties were to remain complicated, the Cayzer regime adopted a rather different approach to the relationship from either George Christopher's or

Vernon Thompson's. Herbert Robin Cayzer, 1<sup>st</sup>. Baronet, shipping magnate, chairman of the newly formed company B&C and Conservative member of parliament, had been raised to the peerage as Baron Rotherwick of Tylney in June 1939. On Rotherwick's death, in March 1958, B&C chairmanship passed to his nephew, Sir William Nicholas Cayzer, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Baronet, better known by his middle name. Created a Life Peer as Baron Cayzer of St. Mary Axe in 1982 by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Nicholas Cayzer was to remain in charge of B&C until 1987.

Unlike his predecessor, whose personal circumstances had made it difficult for him to journey to South Africa, Cayzer readily recognized the value of personal and business-oriented diplomacy, and frequently made the journey to Cape Town. That the new B&C Chairman was actively involved in the South African business community is apparent in his membership of a number of Anglo-South African trade organizations:

Sir Nicholas was until last November President of the UK-South Africa Trade Association which post he held since the Association's inception. He is also a member of the Advisory Board of the Grad School of Business, Cape Town University and a Trustee of the South Africa Foundation. (NMM CL CAY/253)

An article published in the journal *Time and Tide* in June 1976 (by which time Cayzer had chaired B&C for 18 years) details an interview with the B&C Chairman providing an account of his personal view of trade links with South Africa and of the current British Labour government's policies towards the Republic. 'The UK-South Africa Trade Association, of which Cayzer is President', the article ran,

...is a non-political body set up to do everything possible to further trade with South Africa, and to assist British manufacturers by supplying with contacts in South Africa, sponsoring study tours and providing factual information on the importance of South African trade to Britain. He [Cayzer] is also a member of the South Africa Foundation, which exists to interpret South Africa to the world.



'Politics is the art of the possible, but our policy towards South Africa is "The Art of the Impossible"... One must get a sense of proportion about South Africa. One has to look at the situation completely objectively.'

Cayzer is concerned at the way children in schools [in the UK] are being conditioned emotionally to respond against South Africa and does his best to see that the facts of South Africa are put across. "We are concerned with facts, not political opinions"

'We are always listening to the humanitarian viewpoint but if we were to cut off our trade to South Africa it would do a great deal of harm to British industry and a lot of jobs would be lost. We would also do a lot of harm to the South African economy and particularly in this context we should do harm to the black South Africans working in industry.

We trade where we can trade. That is our job. And this is the most civilizing thing that we can do... We shall continue to serve South Africa knowing that we are serving *all* the people of South Africa and helping to bring employment and prosperity.' (NMM CL CAY/249)

Although these views were expressed some years after the B&C takeover of Union-Castle, the attitude betrayed in the *Time and Tide* interview – one of accommodating any situation in which B&C could best trade – had been apparent from the outset. Far more than either George Christopher or Vernon Thompson, Lord Rotherwick, and later Nicholas Cayzer, were prepared not only to accept, but also, in fact, work with, the increasingly pronounced nationalism of Strijdom and Verwoerd's administrations.

It was this same political mood which prompted the drive to boost the South African merchant fleet. Between 1946 and 1953 Safmarine had been managed by former RAF Marshal Sir Arthur 'Bomber' Harris, Air Officer Commander-in-Chief of Royal Air Force Bomber Command, and later a Marshal of the Royal Air Force, during the latter half of the Second World War. Harris had relocated to South Africa in 1948, following European disquiet about the tactics of his bombing campaign (of strategic area-bombing rather than precision, target-bombing) and the ensuing level

of destruction of German cities at the end of the Second World War; he was a good friend of Nicholas Cayzer. By no means averse to having a strategic hand in South African shipping, Cayzer was, as Berridge (1987) has pointed out, more than willing to seal his relationship with Harris and inject Safmarine with cash by way of helping to keep the South African fleet afloat. At the Union-Castle Managing Directors' meeting of 21 December 1954 it was recorded that Safmarine's application for an increased number of sailings should be declined, and that as a result,

Following this meeting, Sir Arthur Harris, Director of SAF, had had a discussion with the Chairman and Mr Bevan, when Sir Arthur had indicated that he was so disturbed at the trend of the discussion that he wished to unburden himself... Sir Arthur also professed himself as being quite fearful for the position of SAF... He added that he was quite certain that Safmarine would go to the Union government and that viewing the matter from the British angle he was afraid that the repercussions would be extremely hurtful to the South African Conference. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (10402))

Whilst moves such as Cayzer's donations to Safmarine appeared to come to the aid of Union-Castle's Conference competitors, Cayzer was far too canny a businessman not to have known exactly how and where such actions would pay off for B&C and Union-Castle. From its inception B&C had been keen to consolidate the improvement in relations with South Africa that had contributed to, and arisen from, the renewal of the Mail Contract under the Pretoria Formula settlement of 1955. Also, with plans to significantly increase tonnage for a revitalized trade, B&C must have considered that it could afford the strategy of allowing some leeway to the South African flag lines. Throwing this sprat to catch a whale, then, is likely to have been a typically well-timed Cayzer calculation. As Berridge notes:

The central fact about the Cayzers – in contrast to the *ancien régime* at Fenchurch Street – was that they were single-minded about the pursuit of profit. They were not romantic about ships, nor were they haunted by

ghosts of the British Empire. 'Flexibility' was their motto. (Berridge: 1987:167)

In line with this policy of accommodation, in the middle of 1956 B&C agreed with the South African Perishable Products Export Control Board that it would meet their request to build two new fruit ships. A rather more triumphant new stake in the Conference, however, was the company's announcement that it intended to introduce new ocean liners, of which *Windsor Castle* would be the first, that would reduce the sailing time from Southampton to Cape Town from 13½ to 11½ days. At the same time, *Pendennis Castle*, already being built at Harland and Wolff at the time of B&C's takeover of Union-Castle, was issued with a new set of specifications and plans, a suggestion that the new ships were to provide clear visual indicators of the change of thinking at Union-Castle under the line's new management.

That adaptability lay at the heart of B&C's dealings with South Africa was just as well. In 1958, at the Triennial Review of the Pretoria Formula settlement, and according to archival evidence that exists in Cape Town but not in the public domain in the UK, an intransigent South African Board of Trade, under its director Dr A J Norval, attacked Union-Castle's building programme as being too extravagant (Berridge:1987), a criticism that had been a recurring theme in negotiations for some time. In August 1954 George Christopher had undergone detailed criticism which had taken the form of 'a searching examination', directed by Norval, of current shipbuilding costs and 'an exhaustive enquiry into past profits, capital structure, depreciation allowance, taxation, shipbuilding policy and all the rest of it.' (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (Notes appended to meeting of 9 August 1954)) In particular, Union-Castle spending was condemned at this time since – as Norval was quick to remind Cayzer – the Pretoria Formula had agreed a freight rate according to Union-Castle results: this new, large-scale capital injection into the fleet was causing an unnecessary burden to be placed upon these rates.

From the point of view of the interior design of the new ships, it is highly significant that although in 1958 Nicholas Cayzer held his ground, insisting on the fulfilment of the envisaged building scheme,

he 'was only able to persuade Norval to retain the mail ships in the Pretoria Formula (and this was qualified) by agreeing to give the government a say in the general design of the two ships [*Windsor* and *Transvaal*] still to be built'. (South African Conference Lines private archive, cited in Berridge:1987:73) Whilst it is uncertain whether Norval's domineering interest was in the new ships' engineering or in their interior design, another remark of his, this time apparently addressing *Windsor Castle's* planned style – which was not, he felt, 'appropriate to contemporary South Africa' - strongly suggests that his interest must have certainly extended to the ships' passenger accommodation.

I have not been able to locate the documents that Berridge refers to and which, he says, detail the confrontation between Cayzer and Norval. It appears that these documents were the contents of a private archive which no longer exists in the UK. Although Berridge, writing in 1987, suggests that duplicates of the records of the Cayzer/Norval furore were available in Cape Town, South African archival reorganisation since 1990 has resulted in a redistribution of material into different collections where the document class-marks quoted by Berridge no longer apply. What is clear, however, is that B&C's approach at this juncture was one that agreed to accommodate Pretoria, if not, in fact, offering an outright resignation to the bullying missives being sent from the South African capital.

In line with this Chamberlain-style mood of appeasement, a great deal of discussion as to how best, and when, to tell Pretoria about the B&C/Union-Castle takeover surrounded the arrival of B&C in the South African shipping world. On 3 October 1955, for example, it had been minuted that the chairman (still Lord Rotherwick, at this time) had met with the South African High Commissioner and given assurances that 'with the exception of the British government, this was the first intimation of the proposals given outside the boards of the two companies concerned'. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (10663)) Analysis of the dialogue between B&C and Pretoria at this early stage in the relationship between the two provides highly significant evidence of the nature of the

partnership that, whilst at times temperamental, would grow from strength to strength under the Cayzer directorship of Union-Castle.

29 May 1956: Relations with the South African government

The Chairman informed the Board that he had addressed letters to Mr Strijdom, the South African Prime Minister, and the Minister of Economic Affairs and Mines, Posts and Telegraphs, Finance and Transport, conveying to them, upon his appointment as Chairman of the Union-Castle Company, his cordial greetings and an assurance of his intentions to provide the best possible shipping services between this country and South Africa.

... The Prime Minister had responded that 'the expression of goodwill and co-operation which the Chairman conveyed to the Union Government on behalf of the Company was much appreciated. Appreciative acknowledgements for the Chairman's letters had also been received from the other Ministers.

The High Commissioner then asked the Chairman for his views on the recent talks in Pretoria [over the Freight Rate Agreement] and the chairman replied that over and above the financial aspect the '*improved relationship*' [my italics] was the most imp achievement...

Sir Nicholas Cayzer had then taken the opportunity of asking the High Commissioner whether he thought that his government would have any objection to the name for the proposed holding company, to which some thought had already been given. The proposed name was The British and Commonwealth Shipping Corporation Ltd, and in reply the HC had said he did not think that his government could raise any objection to such a name. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (10894))

That from the outset B&C had been cautious about presenting the Union with the pro-British nomenclature of Union-Castle's new managing company provides a highly significant demonstration of the degree to which the organisation was alert for any move which might upset Pretoria, and in doing so destabilize their partnership. It also clearly indicates the extent to which B&C were prepared to solicit the views of the South African Nationalists and engage with their

position. Enquiries made regarding the new company's name were not the only issue over which Cayzer was swift to reassure Pretoria that he recognized its point of view: in November 1957, for example, in a placatory move which also served to underline the Union-Castle /South African partnership, it was announced by Cayzer that,

...in view of the intense political feeling in South Africa and in order to avoid giving offence to all sections of the Company's South African passengers:

wherever there was occasion to play the British National Anthem, it should always be followed by 'Die Stem' [The South African national anthem]. (NMM CL UCM 3/4)

Emerging the following year, the issue of Norval's insistence on Pretoria's involvement with the design of the new ships is one of vital importance to any discussion of Union-Castle's interior design. Given the autocratic, if not totalitarian, nature of the Nationalist government's administration, insistence on involvement in the design of the new liners was never likely merely to represent a case of a 'decoratorly dilettentism' on Pretoria's part. It is more than likely that a government capable of instigating, implementing and maintaining 'grand apartheid', and with an ongoing antipathy towards the Nationalists' old colonial rivals, would have had a political, social and economic agenda for demanding that it be involved with the arrangement of Union-Castle's interiors. Having said this, however, it also seems likely that B&C's highly strategic subservience fuelled Pretorian hubris to the extent that, under the direction of Nicholas Cayzer, the British company was to secure a confident position in South African business during the subsequent decade of economic boom. Indeed, the twist in the tale, as will be discussed below in regard to the implications of the historicist styling of the new 1960s liners, was that while bowing to Pretoria over certain issues during the period 1955-1965, and having won South African confidence through so doing, B&C was to move from strength to strength both in its reinvigoration of Union-Castle and its ability to 'manage' Pretoria, both of which were to be demonstrated in the extremely confident design of the ships' interiors.

The building of not one but three new ocean liners (*Pendennis Castle*, *Windsor Castle* and *Transvaal*<sup>28</sup> *Castle*) within only a few years of each other represented a remarkable turn-about in Union-Castle's fortunes, and it is worth investigating the rationale behind such a major investment. A departure as dramatic as this prompts the question of whether it was simply that B&C, aware of the crucial need to revitalise the Union-Castle Mail service, seized the moment, and radically upgraded its building programme?

No doubt Nicholas Cayzer understood that the takeover presented the perfect opportunity for the recently formed company to make an impressive and dramatic entrance into world shipping and to stake its claim to a major role as an internationally prominent merchant fleet. The spectacular redesign of Union-Castle's liners naturally signified this position but also raises questions as to the demand predicted by Union-Castle for berths to South Africa at the beginning of the 1960s. The question of the state of Union-Castle's market, in turn, suggests issues around customer need, the nature of the clientele expected to be travelling to and from South Africa in the 1960s, and the reason for their journeys. It is also worth exploring whether there might be a connection between the movement of people in and out of South Africa and Pretoria's overweening concern to have a stake in the fitting-out of the ships.

### 3.1.3 *Passenger demographics, immigration and travel to South Africa in the 1960s*

Nicholas Cayzer was keen to assert B&C's decisive entry into world shipping with its takeover of Union-Castle. The success with which this was staged relied upon actions dedicated to restoring the prestige of Union-Castle as a shipping line that had, until recently, been very highly regarded. While still a partnership that required very skilful handling following the settlement freight rates in the mid-1950s, Union-Castle's interactions with South Africa were now stronger, apparently more

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<sup>28</sup> While the new one-class or 'hotel' ship, *Transvaal Castle* (1961) provides an interesting aspect of the rising fortunes of Union-Castle under British and Commonwealth, I have not included the ship as a case study, since the liner's interiors repeated a number of the themes employed on both *Pendennis Castle* and the flagship liner, *Windsor Castle*.

stable and more agreeable than at any point since the Nationalists had come to power in 1948. This positive state of affairs created propitious circumstances for the ordering of new ships. That these advantageous circumstances had come about had, in very large measure, been a result of Cayzer's preparedness to accommodate the mood of the South African government.

A key question, given this conciliatory atmosphere, then, is whether B&C were party to plans developing in Pretoria to institute a concerted effort to recruit British immigrants. Critically important to the context in which B&C placed its orders for the new liners was the fact that 1960 saw the introduction of the first state-aided payments for immigrants travelling to South Africa since Smuts' Special Immigration Service had ended twelve years earlier. Had Cayzer known at the end of the 1950s that this policy was soon to be implemented?

As discussed in Chapter One, one of the very early acts of D F Malan's government in 1948 had been the termination of the Special Immigration Service. The axing of the Service had come about not simply because it had been a favourite policy of the ousted Prime Minister, but also, and more significantly, because it was rightly recognised by the National Party as having been the driving force behind a move to increase South Africa's white English-speaking population relative to its Afrikaner community.

Not surprisingly, the 1960 implementation of the new Assisted Immigration Scheme came about for rather different reasons from those associated with Smuts' original immigration policy. As part of Prime Minister H F Verwoerd's pronounced social planning, all 'Bantu' populations except those required to provide an urban/industrial workforce – and who were therefore relocated to the new settlements, such as the South Western Bantu Township (Soweto) – were being forcibly moved to rural settlement areas, or 'homelands'. A parallel aspect of this policy was to be the Department of Immigration's initiative, via foreign marketing and subsidized removal costs, to encourage white immigrants from abroad. As has been identified by Gene Chapin et al. (1970), the purpose of this programme was:

The recruitment of immigrants who can readily be placed in



employment'. Under this programme immigrants whose applications for permanent residence are approved may receive the following benefits:

- (1) a stipend of up to R120 per person regardless of age toward passage costs or the actual passage costs, whichever is the lesser,
- (2) inland transportation at State expense,
- (3) accommodation at the State's expense for the entire family while the head of the family seeks employment,
- (4) transportation of baggage within South Africa at State expense.

(Chapin et al:1970:www.wiley.com/bw/journal: accessed 20 March 2009)

Geographers at the University of Witwatersrand articulated the earlier thinking of the Verwoerd administration in introducing the Scheme in the July 1964 issue of the South African journal *Economic Geography*:

...in the decade 1951-1960, while the economy has continued up-ward (net national income was nearly \$6 billion in 1960-1961), it has been estimated that as much as 94 per cent of the growth of the White population in the Southern Transvaal, containing 32 per cent of South Africa's Whites, was due to natural increase. Only the remaining 6 per cent could be attributed to a net gain through migration...Only immigration from overseas can now supplement on a large scale the growth from natural increase of Whites in the urban areas. However, since the rapid falling-off in immigration after 1948, the average net immigration of people of European descent since 1951 has been only 3800 per annum; though, by a system of assisted immigration now instituted, it is hoped that this number will be considerably raised.

It has been estimated by the 1820 Memorial Settlers Association that some 40,000-50,000 immigrants per year are necessary if South Africa's White population is to reach 10 million by the turn of the century. (Fair and Shaffer:1964:266)

Whilst undoubtedly arising from Cayzer's skilful diplomacy and manipulation, B&C's improved relationship with Pretoria is likely also to have been a result of South-Africa's growing international isolation and censure. Despite having removed itself from the Commonwealth, it was Britain, in

particular, to which the Union now turned to recruit immigrants. In parallel with this, in order to benefit from the projected upturn in potential passages booked, B&C had clearly recognized the need to keep a close ear to the ground for immigration initiatives in South Africa. As early as May 1956 the company had begun to actively consider the establishment of local Union-Castle 'boards' in South Africa, one of their purposes being the gathering of 'general intelligence'. (NMM CL UCM 3 /4 (10895 )). On 29 May 1956 it was reported that earlier in the month, on the occasion of his visit to Britain,

Dr Norval...had had a frank and friendly meeting with Sir Nicholas Cayzer and Mr Bevan. In the course of this talk Dr Norval had been informed of the possibility of the establishment of a local Union-Castle board of a non-political character in South Africa...Dr Norval had wholeheartedly concurred with the idea of a local board in the Union and had undertaken to give thought as to possible nominees...(NMM CL UCM 3 /4 (10895 ))

Once again providing evidence of the extent of Cayzer's Machiavellian ability to woo Pretoria under the guise of submission while all the time playing a card that was distinctly to his own advantage, Union-Castle's Local Board was established in January 1957 and continued to meet until December 1962. Against this background of espionage masquerading as diplomacy, it is highly likely that issues of major government policy such as immigration were captured at first hand and dealt with very promptly by B&C, and that therefore the company was indeed alert to the imminence of Pretoria's intended immigrant recruitment. What is even more likely is that Nicholas Cayzer's adroit business sense would not have sanctioned the commissioning of the new liners at the end of the 1950s had it not been assured that they would return a profit.

While 1960 saw the lowest rate of immigration to South Africa since the Second World War, as a result of the Sharpeville Massacre, it was also during this year that preparations were put in place for the commencing of the Assisted Passages Scheme (APS), due to be implemented in 1961. In laying the foundations for the APS, Pretoria was successful in setting a trend for an enormous increase in the number of immigrants from Britain; this would continue throughout the decade

ahead. On 15 June 1960 *The Times* (London) reported that South Africa was launching a recruitment drive to attract immigrants (Brownell:1977:107), news coverage that was followed later that month by the BBC programme *Tonight*, which asked interviewees in detail why they would chose to relocate to South Africa, but which, in doing so, watched by millions of people in the United Kingdom, demonstrated the resolve of those questioned to keep to their plans to emigrate, whatever the current state of political unrest or state of South African attitudes towards Britain. (Brownell:1977:110)

Certainly statistics indicate that very many of the people travelling by sea to South Africa on board B&C's new ships were making the journey as immigrants, rather than simply as visitors. [See table below] For such passengers, after the process of interview and application, directed by the embassy at South Africa House in London, the character of the voyage to Cape Town would have been key to their introduction to their adopted country; this was a situation which provided one of the contributing factors informing the visual and psychological elements of Union-Castle's passenger accommodation.

Immigration into South Africa, 1950 - 1967

Year	British	Dutch	W. Ger	Total
1950	5,097	2,216	1,861	12,803
1951	5,903	2,572	2,319	15,243
1952	6,941	4,477	2,361	18,473
1953	5,416	3,486	2,824	16,257
1954	4,629	3,295	2,113	16,416
1955	4,444	2,906	1,877	16,199
1956	4,476	1,815	1,598	14,917
1957	4,723	1,232	1,144	14,615
1958	4,450	1,940	1,245	14,673
1959	3,782	1,722	1,134	12,563
1960	2,292	476	85	19,789
1961	2,323	346	824	16,309
1962	4,790	532	1,315	20,916
1963	10,138	706	2,077	37,960
1964	12,807	998	2,936	40,865
1965	12,012	1,322	3,590	38,326
1966	13,130	1,286	3,289	48,048
1967	12,993	1,695	3,362	38,937

(Chapin, Vedder, Gallaway :2006)

Given that it appears likely that Nicholas Cayzer was well apprised of the strong chance of an increase in the take-up of berths on account of the APS, we can assume that he was unlikely to squander the opportunity to capitalize on a boom in the market through not at least appearing to pay attention to Pretoria's demands regarding the design of the ships that would accommodate such a dramatically increased number of passengers.

If resentment at Board of Trade director A J Norval's insistence on the South African government's involvement in the design of the new ships was felt in B&C's London office, this is not recorded. What is clear was that if the operations of the three new Union-Castle vessels were not to be thrown into jeopardy, then it was incumbent upon B&C to pay heed to Norval's interference, even though this represented high-handedness entirely in keeping with the invasive totalitarianism of what had, by now, effectively become a police state. Part 2 of this chapter will discuss the eventual form that the design of *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*'s interiors took, will identify a number of themes apparent in the ships' interior decoration, and will discuss the extent to which Pretoria, as much as Union-Castle's clientele, was accommodated in the decoration of the spaces involved.

### 3.2 Design

Emblematic of B&C's emphatic entry into world shipping was the company's idea that its new ocean liners, *Pendennis Castle* (1958) and *Windsor Castle* (1960) should be designed with entirely different interiors from those of their predecessors. That the Cayzers intended this to be a serious exercise in recasting Union-Castle's image is suggested by the fact that *Pendennis Castle*, built in Northern Ireland by Harland and Wolff, was not, after Union-Castle's takeover, to be fitted out by the Belfast builder's subsidiary Aldam Heaton & Co., as previous ships had been. In a dramatic new departure, the job was instead diverted to a single individual in overall charge of the interior scheme, Jean Monro. (Wealleans:2006:43) In making this move, B&C had broken a very longstanding arrangement with Harland and Wolff and their subsidiary; although the latter were to supply furniture and furnishings to the new Union-Castle ships, rather than acting autonomously in

this role the decorating company now worked to Monro and the directive of deputy Union-Castle chairman Bernard Cayzer. What was it that Monro's decorating style represented for B&C to prompt the company to make this radical move?

### 3.2.1 *Jean Monro*

Although Monro [Fig. 39] does not give her age at any point in her autobiography *11 Montpelier Street*, nor her date of birth, mention of her first (presumably her 'coming-out') visit to Ascot's Royal Enclosure is described as having been in the company of the Prince of Wales and Mrs Wallis Simpson. This suggests that Monro was 18 in around 1934-35. This recollection also implies that Monro had been born into upper-class English life; she was certainly sent to a finishing school in Florence. In the book she remembers her social circumstances while she was growing up:

There were certain conventions, which were strictly followed. You were presented at court, you went to a royal garden party, having signed your name in the book, and you went to the Royal Enclosure at Ascot. (Monro:1988:24)

This background was to remain significant for Monro's later work as an interior decorator. Having worked for the army in the Auxiliary Training Services during the war, following the cessation of hostilities Monro joined her mother Geraldine's London decorating firm, Mrs Monro Ltd., in 1946. Jean Monro's early memories of the way in which her mother conducted business paints a picture of an established society firm:

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, Mamma had become quite well-known. She redecorated the Marlborough Club, now sadly no more, and then did some work both in London and the country near Newmarket. From this time on until the war she was immensely busy... As I got older I used to go with her on her expeditions during the school holidays. It was a great treat and I loved the days out. She used to hire a car from the Daimler Hire Company...and we would set off. Mr Hillier, who was

the curtain fixer, would sit in front by the chauffer and we ... would sit in the back. (Monro:1988:8)

Mrs Monro was not alone in providing decorating services within this social milieu. Recent writing (for example, Sparke:2005) has rightly reassessed the role of the woman decorator, recasting it as being important both to a feminist understanding of women's relationships with the domestic sphere and, as a concomitant, in terms of providing influential modernizing trends within the industry; however, it is difficult to read Jean Monro's practice – especially her work for B&C – as belonging within this trajectory. Although Monro balked at the chauvinistic reception she received on first arriving at the traditionally male environment represented by the Harland and Wolff yard (Monro:1988), referred to in Chapter One, her relationship with her inveterately conservative employers was characterised by a professional approach which appears to have been conducted according to a gendered and professional hierarchy in much the same way as the interiors Monro produced for Union-Castle's liners preserved – and even reinforced – the status quo in British society.

As will be discussed below, B&C, in its bid to carve a name for itself and to mark its confident entry into world shipping framed Monro's input as facilitating (rather than creating) its design ethos. In the only Cayzer/Monro 'interview' on record it quickly becomes clear which side of the partnership accredited itself with providing the lead on design decisions, Bernard Cayzer's authoritarian and authorial tone implying B&C control throughout:

*Mr Cayzer:* Time has passed so quickly that it doesn't seem three years ago that we first started to talk about the decoration of the Windsor Castle. You will remember that what I wanted to achieve on this ship was a combination of the elegance of the past with the comfort and lightness of today... Now, seeing the ship almost completed, I think you have achieved it. How did you manage it?

*Miss Monro:* As you know I gave the problem a great deal of thought... the first and most important principle in First Class is that a

room must be beautiful and easy to live in...In the Tourist Class, following your brief, the accent has been on gaiety. (The Times: 18 August 1960)

As late as 1988, the date of publication of *Monro's* autobiography, by which time the practice of interior design was well established and, in general, design disciplines having been long since professionalized, *Monro* still spoke in very conservative terms of the decorator's skill as being something that a person was either born with or not, and she presents a contradictory view of the decorator's practice as being both democratic and rarefied:

There is a growing misconception that everyone has to have a degree of some kind to be any good. In medicine, law and accountancy, for example, degrees or qualifications are obligatory but in this particular branch of the arts there are only two things that really matter, assuming that you have a good general education and are reasonably well-read: firstly a God-given eye for colour and proportion and secondly a willingness to take trouble. (*Monro:1988:xii*)

Although she was strongly in favour of an apprenticeship in the trade – 'carrying the bag' as *Monro* put it – all-important, more so than professional training as a prerequisite, was an individual's innate 'good taste'. *Monro* remembered this in connection with her mother who, whilst not being good at remembering others' personal details, found that:

... if she liked a client, or even more, if she approved of their house and taste, then she always remembered their name, and would say, when we got back in the car, 'What very civilized people'; that was the greatest accolade. (*Monro:1988:45*)

In the introduction to *11 Montpelier Street*, *Monro* points to her own great admiration for the established society decorator Mrs Guy (Ethel) Bethell, colleague and friend of some of the best-

known people in the profession in the inter-war period. In recalling Bethell's approach to her practice, Monro also voiced her own work ethos:

...you must always struggle for perfection, and by that I mean never be satisfied until you get as close as you can to true excellence. That is what matters. Perhaps the next most important factor of all is knowing when to stop. Restraint is not a common characteristic of interior decorators today, but it is one of the most vital. The late Mrs Bethell was one of the greatest English decorators because she had this quality above all. (Monro:1988:xiii)

Bethell's company, Elden Ltd., was important for having employed in the late 1920s the influential British decorator John Fowler (1906-1977), a man who was also regarded by celebrated society interior designer Nancy Lancaster (1897-1994) as being 'by far the greatest decorator' she herself had ever known. (Wood:2007:13) During the course of his career Fowler transformed some of Britain's key historic interiors, his work creating a legacy for the adoption of period styling within both the private and heritage sectors, the conflation of which added to the style's currency in Britain in the twentieth century.

Lancaster, too, had been very significant to the story of British interior decorating. An American from Virginia, she had worked with both Fowler and his business partner, the influential society decorator Sybil Colefax. Taking over the management of their company Colefax and Fowler in 1950, Lancaster is widely regarded as having been the source of one of the most enduring and widely applied twentieth-century decorating idioms, the 'English country-house style'. [Fig. 40] A purely modern invention, the look depended on creating rooms that appeared to have evolved through generations of (aristocratic) family living, was highly decorative and through both its lack of formal design (as opposed to 'decoratorly') values and its whimsical poetry provided the antithesis to Modernism.



Mourning the loss of Europe's grand mansions during the Second World War, philosopher Mario Praz described the poetics of antique-collecting activities in terms that also resonate with the decorating style that Jean Monro was to inherit:

These are phenomena which, of course, cannot be predicted with mathematical precision in their details... since they originate in the human imagination. Yet they can be ascribed to a general law which relates the rhythm of taste to that of nature and the universe, so that we can distinguish cycles and seasons. (Praz:1964:26)

In their book, *Traditional Style: How to Recreate the Traditional Period Home* (1994), Stephen Calloway and Stephen Jones provide lively, engaging notes as to how best to decorate according to the English country-house, period look. Written by academics for a more generalist audience, the tone of the book neatly matches Monro's highly theatrical, but at the same time light, and sometimes jocular, approach. Describing the idiom, Calloway and Jones remark that '...the general effect is achieved by a subtle over-scaling of considered details, akin to gentle caricature...', a description which might also be applied to the self-consciously historicist aesthetic of Monro's First Class accommodation on Union-Castle's ships.

In reality the style, described by Fowler as providing a vision of what he called 'humble elegance' referred more to a deliberate adoption of luxury and a concomitant assertion of spending power than to the real homes of the British (and usually, more specifically, English) gentry, which had often become rather frayed and uncomfortable and were increasingly being relinquished, throughout the 1950s to the English conservation charity the National Trust. In its emphasis on lavish styling and opulent furnishings, the full-blown country-house style provided an interior design equivalent of the Christian Dior-invented 'New Look' in couture, the tailored, full-skirted rejoinder to 'austerity styling' which had first been shown in Paris in the spring of 1947. Gently lampooning the country house interior, Calloway and Jones described a trope they characterised as 'Old Furniture, New Money' as follows: 'Strongly historicist in nature, [its] schemes were put together to create

rooms which, whilst evoking sophistication and tradition were not actually required to be in any degree historically accurate.' (Calloway and Jones:1994:70)

In fact, as Louise Ward points out in her essay on the country-house style as myth (McKeller and Sparke:2004), to have been historically true to the original English country houses (often, as already suggested, in a state of disrepair, even by the inter-war period) would have run counter to the all-important criteria of the new fashion. Essential to the country-house look was the creation of an idealized image of these manor houses as places of opulence (achieved through lavish use of antiques and expensive soft furnishings and decorative arts) and ease (created through informality and luxurious upholstery). In the light of this ethos it is highly significant that a supplement to *The Times* (London) marking the occasion of *Windsor Castle's* first voyage provided an overview of the ship's interiors in a column headed 'Yesterday's elegance, today's comfort' (*The Times*:18 August 1960).

Although the country-house aesthetic was deeply conservative – particularly when viewed alongside Syrie Maugham's white, Style-Moderne rooms of the inter-war years, for example – it was new enough to be both à la mode and stylish. Remembering her mother's work, set wholeheartedly, within the Lancaster-Fowler idiom, Jean Monro even appears to have considered the style to be rather daring:

The small sitting-room by the front door was particularly charming, and it too was regarded as very avant-garde. My mother had the walls covered with an enchanting sprigged chintz with matching curtains. It was cosy and comfortable and in the winter, with a fire blazing, it was where we all sat. (Monro:1988:25)

This and other descriptions of her mother's work for the homes in which she grew up suggest that Geraldine's work remained highly important to Monro. Just as she recalled her mother's 'delicious vagueness' and frequent 'waving of her very elegant hands' (Monro:1988:49), the fact that Jean Monro, who remained unmarried, kept her mother's name, 'Mrs Monro', for the decorating firm

,even once she had begun to work independently, points to the significance of the maternal influence on her decorative schemes:

Because my mother wanted to entertain for my brother and I she took great pains in decorating the dining room and drawing room. I can see them now. The dining room had Chinese yellow walls with matching curtains of yellow brocatelle...We had a very good dining table from Auchinbowie [a house the family owned in Scotland] and Hepplewhite armchairs. (Monro :1988:24)

Monro inherited a decorating style, then, which was notably reverential towards the past ('there are two wonderful books in print [one of which is]; *English Decoration in the Eighteenth Century* by John Cornforth and the late John Fowler (which in my opinion is infinitely the best of its kind)' (Monro:1988:xii)).<sup>29</sup> This was an idiom that was also keenly alert to the comforts of modernity, however, and, paradoxically, to the essential need to provide a period decorating style which offered a fresh, new look. This was a style that placed an emphasis on 'livening up' an interior. And, just as Fowler's work for the National Trust in the 1960s worked with the spirit – though not necessarily the authentic detail – of a house in order to breathe new life into it, so Monro was keen to create a certain atmosphere and decorative ambience. A press report of the viewing of a house Monro had refurbished in Bath's Royal Crescent points to just this approach:

The opening was a festive affair...[and] had the sunny flavour of a society wedding reception, with women dressed to match. A matron in mandarin hat and pale mauve looked genuinely Georgian, as is the décor. Under guidance from the Victoria and Albert Museum and London designer Jean Monro, the colours and fabrics breathe life into the house. There's no museum feeling here.

(Goring:1970:www.royalcrescentbath.com:accessed March 17 2009)

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<sup>29</sup> Monro also worked with interior decorator Michael Inchbald on the refitting of Cunard's ocean liners *Carmania* and *Franconia*. Noticeably the ships' cabins, areas that were strikingly 'contemporary and new without any historical reference, a major point of departure for Cunard', were designed by Inchbald and not Monro. (Wealleans:2006:148)

The house in question was in fact a museum, however, and today also provides offices for the Bath Preservation Trust. It was donated to the Trust in 1968 by Bernard Cayzer, younger brother of B&C chairman Nicholas Cayzer. Bernard Cayzer and Monro had met while on holiday in Jamaica in 1953, and she had subsequently worked on a new scheme for his house in Eaton Square, London. Although by the time of the fitting-out of the company's show-stopping new liners of the 1960s Monro had enjoyed a long association with the Cayzer family, this alone cannot have been enough to secure her lead on one of the largest British maritime interior design ventures of the decade. Clearly, there was something about Monro's style that accorded with the vision and the 'branding' that Nicholas and Bernard Cayzer had envisaged for their newly acquired shipping line, Union-Castle.

Shortly after their first meeting, Bernard Cayzer invited Monro to work on the ships' interiors. Sailing to Cape Town with him on a fact-finding mission on board the *Pretoria Castle*, 'the ugliest of the Union Castle's ships inside', (Monro:1988:56) she simply mentions in her autobiography that 'we made great plans about the interior design of the future ships of the line', and that she and Cayzer were determined that the dining rooms as well as the 'cabins in both first and tourist class must be completely redesigned'. (Monro:1988:56)

It is probable that Monro was not given any specific brief; certainly nothing is recorded in Union-Castle Directors' or Managing Directors' minutes regarding her appointment, let alone any remit for the decoration of the new ships. Whilst Monro does describe her trepidation at appearing before Nicholas Cayzer with drawings and samples for the first time (Monro:1988), discussions with Anne Wealleans, who has told me that at no point in her extensive research for *Designing Liners* (2006) did her research reveal any shipping line interior design briefs, have also confirmed the likelihood that Monro's involvement with B&C was not tied to a rigorous design brief. This is not to say that Monro's work was not viewed as being of critical importance to B&C's new image for Union-Castle.

The National Maritime Museum (NMM) manuscript and photographic print archives provide particularly rich and detailed resources for investigating the interiors of both *Pendennis Castle* and

*Windsor Castle*. Material contained within these archives offers an extraordinarily vivid picture of these liners' interiors. Many of the NMM's paper records for these ships are B&C press releases, and whilst marketing material of this kind inevitably provides a very particular slant and aspect to the representation of Union-Castle, marketing material does offer valuable insight into the way in which B&C wanted to portray Union-Castle under its new management.

Equally significantly, however, the wealth of Union-Castle's own promotional material is matched by a striking dearth of any follow-up to this publicity within the British (or indeed, South African) press. Although ships such as the contemporaneous (1961) P&O SS *Canberra* received attention in the architectural design press, no equivalent reviews exist for Union-Castle's new ships. Even the social *hauteur* of *Windsor Castle*'s entrance into world shipping is scarcely covered in design terms, either in shipping journals, such as *Mariners' Mirror*, or in the architectural design press. Neither *Architect's Journal* nor *Architectural Review*, the two main conduits for any serious discussion of interior design at the time of ships' launches, refer to Monro's work. Creating editorial copy reminiscent of the celebration of a royal wedding or coronation, the exception to this lack of commentary on visual terms was *The Times*' production of a souvenir supplement to its daily newspaper on the occasion of *Windsor Castle*'s first voyage (already quoted above); and this was exactly the point: Union-Castle's new ocean liners were not *products*, decorated to attract the attention of design journalists or pundits; instead, the two vessels, and *Windsor* in particular, were created as *personalities*, regal envoys of a particular notion of British class-based pedigree. In his eulogy to Union-Castle on its final sailing from Cape Town, Afrikaner liberal Laurens van der Post wrote of *Windsor* on its departure from Southampton:

Dressed overall, as we saw her in that long level light of the morning of August 15 [1977], she looked like a *débutante* waiting to be conducted to her first ball...than a ship charged to perform the last rites over the passing of herself and her entire kind.

Her colours...the lilac hull and scarlet hem of petticoat, underneath the immaculate white of decks...and funnel scarlet again, but bound against

dissolution in the blue of sky and ocean with a broad band of absolute black, sat on her like silk and made jewellery of the fresh morning light. Yet as she eased herself with the grace of a young queen from the quay... she was beginning the end of an era. (Van der Post: *The Times*: September 24 1977)

To anthropomorphise the ships in this way was also to create an interiority which amplified Union-Castle's 'Britishness' along the lines described by Mario Praz's philosophical musings on the psychological dimensions of interior spaces:

...surroundings become something more than a mirror of the soul. They are indeed, a reinforcement of the soul, or to return to the mirror image, they are a play of many mirrors which open infinite perspectives, depths of identical, multiplied reflections. (Praz:1964:23)

More specifically, the ships' 'multiplied reflections' of sovereignty and national identity were thus well placed to act out this personification in the face of upstart Afrikanerdom. In this way, Union-Castle was able to demonstrate a placatory – and business-essential – adherence to Pretorian politics whilst at the same time projecting anti-Afrikaner ideas around the continuing 'pedigree' of Britishness (though with an undoubted emphasis on *Englishness*) and of the country's supposed international status.

### 3.2.2 *Pendennis Castle*

A press release issued by B&C in 1957, in advance of *Pendennis Castle's* launch, described the ship's intended passenger accommodation at length. Detailing the lounges, Smoke and Card Rooms, Libraries, Lidos and Childrens' Playrooms in both First and Tourist Class accommodation, Union-Castle was also keen to mention other facilities, such as cinemas and hairdressing salons, that would be available to passengers en route to Cape Town (see Appendix 1). Of equal significance to the prolific detail provided about the ships' passenger accommodation in this and

other publicity material is the fact that a noticeable amount of coverage appears to have been given to the appointment of Jean Monro, and the impact that her work had achieved for the appearance of the new ship's interiors. It is interesting that in every case, though, Monro's work is described as having been *led* by the Cayzer family. There is no sense, in any of the available descriptions, that Monro was in primary charge of making decorating decisions for a client who expected to be guided by her professional judgment. Rather, the arrangements between B&C and Monro are always billed in such a way as to make it evident that her work had *facilitated* (as opposed to *directed*) the design ideas of the B&C management. A press release issued on 10 December 1957 is typical:

Under the guidance of Mr Bernard Cayzer, A Director of the Union-Castle Line, special attention is being given to the general furnishing and decoration of the entire accommodation and, in addition to the principal Subcontractors Messrs. Heaton, Tabb and Co Ltd, certain well-known specialists in this field have been commissioned and amongst these is Miss Jean Monro, the well known Interior Decorator. Miss Monro has had a wide and varied exp in designing for and carrying out work in important buildings in this country and on the American Continent.  
(NMM CL CAY/ 220)

Although the Cayzers appear to have ensured that they headed the bill when it came to reviews or publicity regarding the new schemes, it is certain that Monro would never have been appointed had her particular idiom not accorded entirely with the B&C managing directors' vision for the shipping line. Nor, in fact, is there any evidence that she was not given a free hand, or that her work ever received any internal criticism. Undoubtedly the Cayzers intended to retain full control of the design of their new liners, but in appointing someone who they knew would work entirely according to their vision – a situation that had been tried and tested privately through the decoration of Bernard Cayzer's domestic residences – they were, in any case, doing just this<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Clearly this situation is relevant to further discussion in terms of its political and gender-based implications, particularly in relation to the role of the woman as decorator within the predominantly masculine world of the shipping industry. I have not expanded upon this theme, however, since all evidence suggests that the

A press release issued on 14 November 1958 made clear the fact that new ownership of Union-Castle heralded the advent of a new and dynamic approach towards the Union-Castle ships' engineering design:

The new liner *Pendennis Castle* was handed over officially to the Union-Castle today... Following the change in management after the Clan Line/Union-Castle merger (Jan, 1956), it was decided to incorporate various additional features into the vessel. The fitting of Denny-Brown stabilizing equipment necessitated the vessel being lengthened amidships after construction had commenced on the slipway. The power of the vessel was also increased, which involved lengthening and fining the forward end of the ship. (NMM CL CAY/220)

Running parallel to this message was another, indicating that the company recognized the need for a design overhaul that would release the ships from what were now being characterised as literally the liners' 'dark days' under previous management:

Most of the accommodation is being especially designed, and for the soft furnishings the range of patterns and textures is being greatly extended from those currently used: this has assisted the use of colour to supplement and subtly improve the lighting of the cabins and public rooms whether in the daylight or at night. In a complementary fashion the lighting is also being reviewed in relation to the softer colours and in general indirect lighting and shaded pedestal lights will be used. (NMM CL CAY/220)

In her autobiography *Monro* recalled how, having presented initial drawings to Nicholas Cayzer, she and Bernard Cayzer had sailed to Cape Town on board *Pretoria Castle*:

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aesthetic connection between *Monro* and Cayzer was synergistic to the extent that these other issues were not to have any effect upon the outcome of the former's work for Union-Castle.



...We decided that the cabins in both First and Tourist class must be completely re-designed. The lighting was awful... Bernard and I made a list of the worst horrors we must try to get rid of. Brown linoleum came very high on that list! (Monro:1988:56)

Although keen to emphasise Union-Castle's redesign, however, B&C were also at pains to present the fact that this long-established shipping company was not going to be subject to new ideas that could be construed as being radical in any way.

Internally the layout of the passenger spaces departs in some respects from that adopted on her predecessors and the travelling public will find some interesting innovations. Essentially modern in appearance, the *Pendennis Castle* will nevertheless maintain the traditional beauty of Union-Castle ships. (NMM CL CAY/220)

For a shipping company with the inveterate conservatism of B&C, Monro's English country-house style provided the perfect solution to the issue of representing the traditional while at the same time accommodating the desired modernization of its ships' facilities. As already discussed, the adroit accommodation of tradition and convenience that was the hallmark of this aesthetic had been one of the key tenets inherited by Monro from her mother's, as well as Nancy Lancaster's and John Fowler's practices. The restyling of *Pendennis Castle*'s First Class Dining Saloon pointed to just this approach. Having particularly 'disliked [*Pretoria Castle*'s] dining room, which was a sea of tables and chairs, interspersed with terrible things called 'dumb waiters' which stuck out like sore thumbs' (Monro:1988:56), Monro and Cayzer had agreed that a reworking of the area was essential. On board *Pretoria* with Monro and Cayzer was the manager of London's Connaught Hotel, Rudolph Richard, employed by B&C to reorganize the kitchens and the service provided from them. Richard's work produced a great advance in *Pendennis Castle*'s dining room service capability:

An inter-comm telephone system has been installed between the serveries and the principal working spaces. Hobart polythene covered crockery storage is used generally throughout these spaces.

There are motor-driven revolving doors to the Saloons [sic] which, in conjunction with the layouts of the main serveries, ensures steady flow and quick efficient service. (NMM CL CAY/220)

Behind the scenes, clearly, technological modernity and an acknowledgement of the modern practice of rational kitchen planning<sup>31</sup> were applied to *Pendennis's* galleys in order that service should be as efficient as possible. The aesthetic of the public space of the dining room itself, on the other hand, represented the conservative combination of implementing, but at the same time mediating, change through a visual vocabulary that preserved an entrenched sense of the historical. A Union-Castle press release issued on 18 September 1958 described the result:

A room that will naturally attract attention is the great First Class Dining Room... Specially commissioned Mural Paintings will give interest, and in a prominent position there is a portrait of Lord George Churchill, Admiral of the Blue, [Fig. 41] who commanded two successive Eighteenth Century warships, and first named '*Pendennis*' and the second '*Windsor Castle*'. Revolving doors have been fitted to prevent draughts and the smell of cooking from the galley entering the Dining Saloon, and ample dumb-waiters have been provided to facilitate rapid service. (NMM CL CAY/220) (See also Appendix 2)

Next to the Dining Saloon was a private dining room over which particular care had clearly been taken to create a historical setting. It was as though the more exclusive the social use of a space on board ship, the greater the imperative for it to reference historical élites, in this case the court of Louis XV:

Adjacent to the Dining Saloon is the charming Private Dining Room, where lunch, cocktail and dinner parties may be given. It is decorated in

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<sup>31</sup> The practice espoused by American educator Catherine Beecher in the mid-nineteenth century and more systematically by Christine Frederick in the United States in publications of the 1910s.

Louis XV style, ornamented with special paintings, furnished with French furniture of the day and a specially woven carpet based on a famous 'Aubusson' design. (NMM CL CAY/220)

The First Class Smoke Room, on the other hand, made reference to the English gentleman's club:

The 1<sup>st</sup> Class Smoke room, abaft the lounge, is panelled throughout in Pine, in the Georgian manner, with a fine antique fireplace and a well equipped Bar. The room is furnished with luxurious easy chairs upholstered in lacquer red and hunting green, and coffee tables topped with Tinos marble. (NMM CL CAY/220)

As well as providing reminders of upper-class social life, *Pendennis Castle's* First Class accommodation also offered a discourse in ease and comfort. Like the country-house style on which the ship's First Class decoration was based, these areas sought to create an ideal of gracious living that was firmly centred on a deliberate mixing of modern light levels and spaciousness (designed to maximize a sense of the 'openness' associated with modernity, and contrasting with the closed-in spaces evoked by the Victorian interior, for example) with antique styles, through which an appropriate sense of pedigree might be evoked. As B&C publicity for the new liner proclaimed:

The decorative schemes are being specially designed so as to convey to all those on board the feeling of light and air, of peace and comfort and an overall atmosphere of spaciousness. The traditional will be blended with the modern to further this end.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Class library, which is a quiet room, is fully carpeted and provided with comfortable easy chairs. It has accommodation for 1475 books in bookcases which have special internal lighting so that book titles may be easily read. (NMM CL CAY/220)

Likewise, *Pendennis's* First Class cabins were to be air-conditioned, have private bathrooms, wall-to-wall carpeting, Venetian blinds aiding the control of light levels, and comfortable armchairs

upholstered in chintz (See appendix 3). As well recreating the country-house style's aesthetic and ease, Monro's designs for Union-Castle also bought the livelier notes of her work to the ships:

Adjacent to the Smoke Room is the 1<sup>st</sup> Class card room and writing room, a feature of which is a large picture window' with curtains of a bold design called Chantclair. The upholstery of the black-lacquered furniture is a bright scarlet which gives a gaiety to the room. (NMM CL CAY/220)

'Gaiety' was the keynote too of *Pendennis Castle's* Tourist Class accommodation [Fig. 42]. Here, the emphasis was less on providing rooms which imbued a note of discreet sophistication but which instead spoke of youth and jollity, concepts which appear to have been cast as belonging in a separate sphere from the historicist gravitas employed in First Class:

The Smoke Room (Harlequin Bar) is one of the gayest rooms in the ship...Off-white walls show off the bright colours of upholstery in cherry, green and blue, colours repeated in the draperies surrounding the pavilion-like Bar. Instead of the usual curtains there are yellow continental shutters. The inspiration for the Smoke Room came from the picture by Gio Ponti which is hung there.

As in the 1st Class, the Tourist Class lido is divided from the Swimming Pool area by large glazed screens which are folded away in warm weather. The large Pool is tiled in blue, yellow, and white, colours which are repeated in the decoration of the lido. It is hoped that dancing may take place under the stars as in an open-air night club. (NMM CL CAY/220) [Fig. 43]

Stylistically, this description of the lido reads as though it belongs with the set-production notes from William Wyler's very popular 1953 film *Roman Holiday*, in which a disguised foreign princess (Audrey Hepburn) has an escapist encounter with everyday Roman city life, encouraged by an undercover newspaper reporter, played by Gregory Peck, the couple ending their colourful café-filled day with night-time open-air dancing at the Ponte Sant' Angelo. [Figs.44 and 45] In fact the references to European visual culture (including continental shutters, Italian designer Gio Ponti,

vibrant colours and outdoor living) contained in these notes is in tune with the importance of the growing number of Italian coffee bars in Britain in the 1950s<sup>32</sup>. [Fig. 46]

Although of vital importance, B&C's design for *Pendennis Castle's* interiors was not only a projection of the new Union-Castle brand, then. Running through the descriptions of the interiors, and part and parcel of the company's highlighting of the ship's passenger accommodation as a place either of ease, comfort and elegant living (in First Class) or of lively youthfulness (in Tourist Class), are discourses around lifestyle, social interaction and class culture. Each of these issues were to become even more pronounced in the design of *Windsor Castle's* interiors.

### 3.2.3 *Windsor Castle*

Highlighting the flagship of their new fleet, and representing B&C's takeover of Union-Castle, the media opportunities offered by the launch of *Windsor Castle* were maximized to reap their full potential:

All ABC cinemas will be showing the pathé newsreel featuring the launching of the *Windsor Castle* from Monday June 29 to Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July inclusive. This newsreel will also be shown at the Empire Cinema Leicester Square, Studio One, Oxford Street ...and others.  
(NMM CL CAY/220)

Whilst B&C had intervened in the construction of *Pendennis Castle*, and emphatically made its mark on the design of the ship, there was a great deal more triumphalism about the launch and first voyage of *Windsor Castle*, the first ship to be ordered by B&C after the takeover [Fig. 47].

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<sup>32</sup> The Moka coffee bar in Soho had been the first to open, in 1950, with a Gaggia espresso machine, and by 1960 there were 2000 bars throughout the UK. (Morris:2003-2007)

A press release dated 20 June 1959 voiced something of the anticipation surrounding the new liner's launch, and at the same time contributed to the drumming-up of excitement and expectation surrounding its construction:

The *Windsor Castle* will be the largest vessel ever employed on the Union-Castle mail service to South Africa, and the largest passenger liner ever built on Merseyside. Costing over £10 000 000, she will be 783 ft in length. Fully laden she will draw 32 feet of water. There will be spacious accommodation for 250 1st and 600 Tourist Class passengers. (NMM CL CAY/220)

Indicative of the importance of *Windsor Castle* for B&C, and also of the ship's intended status, is the substantial amount of press material produced about the liner. Almost all this material deals specifically with the ship's passenger accommodation, and it appears that it was on the basis of this in particular that the new ship was being marketed:

The vessel will have many new and exciting decorative features and the work is being carried out by a number of contractors and artists supervised by Mr Bernard Cayzer, by the well-known decorator, Miss Jean Monro, who is decorative consultant to the British & Commonwealth Shipping Company Ltd. (NMM CL CAY/220)

By way of underlining the new liner's unique selling point as featuring 'exciting' new decoration, attention was also drawn to the quality of the individual work associated with the ship's interior aesthetic. Contributors employed to create this scheme were all listed and named in a marketing initiative which also served to highlight *Windsor's* bespoke nature.

- Miss Jean Monro - who is supervising under Mr Bernard Cayzer, the entire decoration of the *Windsor Castle*. Interior decorator and designer.

Recent work includes a number of rooms at the Mount Nelson hotel, Cape Town [<sup>33</sup>] and the interior of the Pendennis Castle. Decorative Consultant to the British and Commonwealth Shipping Line Ltd

- Mr Trewin Copplestone - mural Tourist Class Smoke Room
- Mr Dennis Fields – a reproduction of his painting Her Majesty the Queen Mother will hang in 1<sup>st</sup> Class Drawing Room
- Mr Michael Inchbald –Tourist Class Smoke Room
- Mr Felix Kelly Windsor Castle First Class Dining Saloon murals
- Mr Sidney Smith- Mural in the Tourist Class Dining Saloon
- Mr Lin Tissot - glass aviary in 1<sup>st</sup> Class Lounge (who also did the filigrana glass screen in 1<sup>st</sup> Class Lounge Pendennis Castle)

Biographical details of the various artists reveal a grouping entirely in keeping with Windsor's aesthetic ambience. Whimsical and highly decorative, taken as a whole this work provides further evidence of Jean Monro's decoratory (as opposed to 'designerly') taste. Indeed, the ambience that these various contributors' work was desired to create was established early on: the artist Felix Kelly and the others listed above were invited to a special cocktail party at the shipping line offices in St Mary Axe, London, which offered a scale model of *Windsor Castle* to introduce them to the ship and to B&C. [Fig. 48]

Born in Auckland, Felix Kelly (1914-1994) left New Zealand for London in his twenties and worked as a graphic artist until the start of the Second World War. Following the success of his first show in 1943, Kelly began to receive numerous commissions<sup>34</sup>, his post-war projects ranging from book-illustration to stage design, the latter becoming something that he was to demonstrate in his *Windsor Castle* work through the theatricality of his First Class Dining Saloon mural. [Fig. 49 and 50] The real clue as to Kelly's involvement with Union-Castle, however, lies in his earlier career both as society portrait painter and in his taste for architectural whimsy and nostalgia

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<sup>33</sup> The Mount Nelson Hotel was effectively a shipping-line hotel, having been built by Union-Castle to accommodate its passengers. The hotel opened on 1 March 1899.

<sup>34</sup> Including one for Shaw Savill Lines, for which Kelly had decorated panels in the dining room of the *Northern Star*.

(*Independent*: Wednesday 6 July 1994). Kelly's murals of Windsor Castle and environs (St George's Chapel and the nearby reaches of the river Thames), provided a view of England that was highly romantic – bucolic, grandiose and impressionistic rather than authentic: in other words, entirely in tune with the pastiche world of gentrified society created by Monro.

Similarly, Lin Tissot's Venetian glass sculpted aviary provided a lightly surreal, historicist and certainly fanciful note of luxury for *Windsor's* First Class Lounge. Tissot (1904-1994) was engaged by the shipping line to provide 'an exciting work of art... quite different to the more conventional mural painting and sculpture,' and Union-Castle boasted lavishly [Fig. 51] that it provided a piece in which 'the birds and flowers have all the glowing colours and lightness of design for which Venetian glass is so famous.' ([www.oceanlinermuseum.co.uk](http://www.oceanlinermuseum.co.uk): accessed May 2010). The fragile presence of Tissot's costly, scene-setting prop may also be seen as having enhanced Union-Castle's reliable reputation for providing a physically calm, safe and steady voyage.

Employed elsewhere on board *Windsor Castle*, Irish muralist Sidney Smith (1912-1982) [Figs. 52 and 53] produced a classical scene with a Surrealist aesthetic for the Tourist Class Dining Saloon, in keeping with the importance of the historical references within the ship's interior. A note on the back of the photograph reproduced here commented that 'the arts of perspective are employed to produce an illusion of depth and distance and which treats classical architecture in a light-hearted manner.' (NMM BF Print Boxes 50.1 *Windsor Castle*) A curious visual non-sequitur, the mural could be read as alluding to the idea of Athenian democracy inherent in communal dining. And, though likely to have been rather more subconscious than conscious, allusions to ancient notions of democracy might also have provided a half-disguised reminder of Britain's view of itself as a long-established liberal democracy, and superior, therefore, to the 'parvenu' Pretorian autocracy.

Always class-conscious, Union-Castle may also have intended Smith's murals to provide a patrician note in this 'proletarian' space. Interestingly, the artist's background, noted in a 1960 Union-Castle press release, demonstrated an involvement in both popular and upper-class culture, his having 'executed certain Murals for the Festival of Britain and for the Dorchester Hotel and also



[having] been associated with the decoration of many private residences both in this country and abroad.' (NMM CL CAY/220).

Like Smith and Kelly, Michael Inchbald (b.1920) was also known for working in a style which offered 'historicism-with-a-twist'. Creating an impression of antique grandeur, but at the same time demonstrating an interest in modern materials and technologies, typical of this approach was his inclusion of electric standard lamps styled as Dickensian-style urban nineteenth-century street furniture at one end of the Tourist Class Smoke Room. [Fig. 54] At the opposite end of the room, as if to add yet another mix of chronological styles, Trewin Coplestone's abstract (painting?) [Fig. 55] provided the exception to Monro's decorating approach as theatrical, historical fun. Even Coplestone's work was publicly felt to be firmly located on a continuum between classicism and modernism, however, according to an *oeuvre* which, as a review in *The Times* of a recent Coplestone show at a New Bond St gallery suggested, was also located in British maritime history:

The general impression of this exhibition is one of shining white light and a keen interest in atmospheric effects, for which he paints in a very high key with sweeping strokes which suggest that all is about to dissolve in Turnerian mist.

(*The Times*, 10 April 1957:www.timesonline.co.uk: accessed 25 May 2010)

That mural decoration should have been so important a feature of *Windsor's* interiors can also be read as providing a modern version of the medieval or Renaissance tapestry, or the eighteenth-century *trompe l'oeil* which offered views onto an imagined exterior in the absence of windows, a situation with an equivalent in the ocean liner's internal rooms. Mario Praz's poetic remarks about the use of tapestry are particularly pertinent in this regard:

The medieval idea of beauty and security was always something segregated, removed from the world: the cloister, *the castle*, [my italics]

the walled city, the closed garden, the orchard. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century the French, with the help of tapestries, transformed their rooms into exquisite, shady artificial orchards, where the life of the woods, the fields and the hunt were faintly reflected like a light filtered through deep water. (Praz:1964:53)

All in all, then, *Windsor Castle's* specialist contributors produced a deliberate period pastiche which paralleled Monro's application of the English country-house style in First Class, and which mediated the modernism to which Tourist Class passengers were exposed by providing reminders of historical, urban and proletarian/patrician culture. The Union-Castle press office's view of these arrangements was that:

These decorative schemes are being specially designed so as to convey to all those on board the feeling of light and air, of peace and comfort and an overall atmosphere of spaciousness. The traditional will be blended with the modern to further this end. (NMM CL CAY/220)

### 3.2.3.1 *Windsor Castle's First Class accommodation: historicist style; modern convenience*

In addition to the involvement of the various artists commissioned, the emphasis placed on *Windsor's* carefully planned decorative schemes was further underlined by B&C's emphasis on providing immaculate attention to detail. As with *Pendennis*, this ethos was also embedded in the ship's interiors via the installation of modern conveniences – cinemas, spas, air-conditioning – which added to the idea of luxurious living in an elegant environment for the 11½ day sailing to Cape Town. Once again, a historicist aesthetic provided the foil to the necessary incursion of modernity on board *Windsor* (see also Appendix 6):

Each 1st Class cabin [Figs. 56 and 587– which will be an outside room – will have thermostatically controlled air-conditioning ... A wireless relay system is fitted in each cabin. A special non-slip type of plastic has been fitted to the top of bookcases so that passengers who wish to have

photographs and flowers in their cabin may do so without worry of their sliding.

There will be 10 De Luxe cabins...Every one will be comfortably fitted with armchairs, coffee tables, writing desk, book-case, cocktail cabinet etc. Two large windows with sliding jalousies will be a feature of these cabins and each room will have chintz curtains, an electric fire and its own picture or print, with lamps and shades giving its own special character.

In a block on its own will be one suite consisting of hall, sitting room, double bedroom and 2 bathrooms... Ahead will be the sitting room with soft pink toile curtains and an overall scheme of lime, blackberry and turquoise. The mantelpiece will be of marble and a concealed refrigerator for iced drinks will add to the feeling of luxury. The adjoining bedroom will have 3'6" beds of superb quality. (NMM CL CAY 220)

Juxtapositions of the modern with the historicist also suited the tenor of the continuing 'New Elizabethan Age' in which *Windsor* had been launched, and in which simultaneous references to both the sixteenth and twentieth centuries had acquired currency in the years following Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne in 1952. As an era viewed by some as being charged with new promise in the wake of the Second World War, many areas of public life were now heralded as redolent of a reinvigorated Britain. Inheriting a belief in a historical maritime prowess from Elizabeth I's 'golden age', 1960s shipping, under a second Queen Elizabeth, offered to be one manifestation of this new vitality. Certainly, press anticipation in advance of the 1967 launch of the *QE2*, promulgating the desire that the ship provide a new design statement for a new Britain, points to the role that ocean liners (indeed of many developed nations, not just the United Kingdom) continued to play in the construction and reflection of British national identity in the 1960s (Wealleans:2006:156) While the *QE2* (for which Jean Monro was also an early advisor before being dropped by Cunard) was intended to be a declaration of a stylistically modern, contemporary look (see also the discussion of *SS Canberra* below), *Windsor Castle's* aesthetic, particularly as far as First Class accommodation was concerned, remained true to the idiom Monro had absorbed

through her mother's interior decoration practice, and produced a style which was intended to convey grace, tradition and elegance.

In line with the associations between British monarchical and maritime glory, *Windsor Castle's* First Class aesthetic is not very different from two ships both used by the Royal Family during the period: HMS *Vanguard* and the Royal Yacht *Britannia*. A Royal Navy battleship converted for George VI's visit to South Africa in 1947, *Vanguard's* royal accommodation was created as a deliberately historicist study in which, for example, furniture in the style of two renowned British eighteenth-century cabinetmakers, George Hepplewhite and Thomas Sheraton, was included [Figs. 58 and 59]. In addition, *Vanguard's* decorators used chintz and pale colour arrangements as a backdrop to the elegant luxury provided by this furniture, producing an aesthetic that was to be mirrored by Monro on *Windsor Castle* 13 years later [Fig. 60]

HMY *Britannia* had been built in Clydebank, and having been launched by the Queen on 16 April 1953, entered service in January 1954. Designed by Hugh Casson, who had been Director of Architecture for the 1951 Festival of Britain, and was appointed Head of the School of Interior Design at the Royal College of Art in 1953, the ship's interiors again revealed the importance of classical eighteenth-century furniture, chintzes and light pastel tones as a standard royal trope [Fig. 61].

A 1960 description of *Windsor Castle*, a ship which, by virtue of its name, was from the outset replete with royal associations, refers both to the decorating styles employed on *Vanguard* and *Britannia* and to *Windsor's* association with royalty:

The 1<sup>st</sup> Class drawing room, in pink and green, has been designed as a comfortable sitting room in the *country house style* [my italics] with fireplace and window seat. Over the mantelpiece a feature of this room will be a repro by the artist himself of a portrait of Her Majesty the Queen Mother by Denis Fildes. [Fig. 62]

The Drawing Room has been designed to reproduce a comfortable sitting room in a typical English way with sofas and chairs, pale pink walls, green and white marble fireplace, card tables for use when the card room is full, and a large bay window with a window seat. (NMM CL CAY 220)

The importance of eighteenth-century and Regency furnishing styles for decorating in the 'English way', as exemplified by *Windsor's* First Class Drawing Room, resonates with the country-house style's insistence on combining history with comfort, and again with John Fowler's sentiments about the importance of 'humble elegance'. As Mario Praz eulogized in 1964, four years after the ship's first voyage:

...when in 18<sup>th</sup> Century France the great palaces were neglected in favour of *hotels*, or the little country houses, *maisons de plaisance*, when in court circles one sought variety, comfort, and gaiety, then the golden age of furnishing was born. Born from the confluence of Bourgeoise and patrician taste...

And it is precisely in England and in the Anglomane France of Louis XVI that furnishing became the faithful expression of the new spirit.

A...poet who wished to translate into images this phase of history of furniture might now sign a cunningly contrived myth ...of the long list of furniture with imaginative and charming feminine names...

...in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, for that...great bourgeoisie of the North, the English, another style of furnishing was born, also filled with *Stimmung* [atmosphere]. Before Robert Adam...interiors had always seemed monumental, unsuited to the needs of a society like that of the 18<sup>th</sup> c, with its sense of intimacy, of quiet well-being beside the hearth. (Praz:1964: pp.56-59)

Elsewhere on board *Windsor Castle*, references to England and its monarchy add further weight to the suggestion that B&C conceived of the ship as both contributing to, as well as being a marker of, Britain's strength, stability and continuing power on the world stage. The castle, symbol of the

social- and land-based permanency of the British upper class – and the royal apotheosis of which was the palace at Windsor, Berkshire – was given significant visual space in Felix Kelly's dining room mural. [Fig. 63] Windsor Castle was also used a decorative motif for the Wedgwood dinner service used in the First Class Dining Saloon [Fig. 64].

An undated press release draft on the back of the photograph of the Dining Saloon in the NMM archive describes a room that once again combined historicist detail with modern devices and materials, and which, in shades of purple, violet, black and gold, had strong regal overtones:

The stairs, grey treads with black risers, lead down to the half-landing, where they will be seen as an entirely new venture in plastics. A famous French wallpaper called 'La Fête chez Thérèse' has been copied in plastic in Violet and White for the walls...

The balustrading is Ormolu and Crystal Perspex, one of the newest and most effective of modern materials. A raised section runs around 3 sides of the room and there is banquette seating, as well as armchairs. The floor is in black and silver grey squares. (NMM BF Print Boxes 50.1 Windsor Castle)

The pronounced theatricality of *Windsor's* Dining Saloon points to another theme that appears to have been evident in the ship's First Class passenger accommodation: that is, the ship as stage-set for the enacting of various social encounters. That sociability was written into the lifestyle the liner afforded its First Class passengers, in particular, was underlined by the inclusion of a Private Dining Saloon which might be booked for exclusive use for hosting private dinner parties. [Fig. 65] As usual, B&C were prompt in describing the luxury of this particular facility in their promotional literature:

Leading out of this room [First Class Dining Saloon] through a lobby is the Private Dining Saloon – this room has cherry silk curtains – the walls are covered in soft grey blue silk grass paper down to the dado height, below which they are marbled. The furniture is mahogany, and on the

floor is a specially designed carpet which picks up the plaster work of the ceiling – its colours are soft blues and greens. There are Ormolu wall lights with candelabra on the table so that the main cove lighting can be turned out when needed. The aim has been to provide a room which can be available for a very special party. (NMM CL CAY 220)

*Windsor Castle's* Card Room also created a particular kind of leisured social interaction and was decorated in a style that reinforced its Regency references:

[Fig 66]

Next to the Drawing Room will be a circular card room, in grey and Chinese yellow. A special circular carpet is to be made for this room, and a brass pole (with a table round it) will rise from the centre of the floor, inspired by the tent-like shape of the card room. Each table will have its own standard lamp. (NMM BF 50.1 Print Boxes)

That the leisured sociability of First Class passenger accommodation, or, as this chapter will go on to describe, the more lively society of Tourist Class, should have been inscribed so significantly into Union-Castle's interior design at the start of the 1960s is unlikely to have been accidental. During a period in which the relatively speedy, and certainly impersonal, process of travel by air was suggesting the end of the age of indulgent, extended sea crossings, Union-Castle appears to have deliberately evoked notions of a bygone and, the assumption was, far more elegant mode of travel.

Remembering the social activity of her youth, Jean Monro writes in her autobiography of the halcyon days before the start of the Second World War:

I realize how very lucky I was to have been able to enjoy those last few years before the war came. We had not a care in the world and life was a succession of parties, dances and country weekends, with racing at Ascot and Goodwood, polo at Hurlingham and the Eton and Harrow cricket match at Lords. The 'Season', as it was called, went on day and night right through from Easter until July, after which everyone went off to

Scotland for the shooting, and of course the highland balls.  
(Monro:1988:24)

*Windsor Castle* certainly received a great deal of attention, drawing on its 'society' appeal. In 1977, B&C's journal *The Clansman* remembered the ship's launch, for example: 'Everywhere *Windsor Castle* was received with acclaim, and soon, during the peak booking period her passenger lists began to read like extracts from Debrett ...' (NMM CL CAY/232). Given the marked extent to which the ship was emblematic of the British establishment, it was no wonder that South African Board of Trade Minister A J Norval had interferingly criticized both the cost and the tone of its design.

Part of Union-Castle's trope of 'luxury living', a covert modernity in the form of modern conveniences discreetly installed in and amongst the trappings of styles that referred to and assumed a historical narrative of upper-class English life, provided the means by which *Windsor Castle* wrote its self-mythologizing story. In order not to puncture the myth, care was also taken to promote the idea that the same lifestyle would be available in South Africa:

Beauty goes to sea.

The *Windsor Castle*, the new 38 000 ton Union-Castle Mailship, is one in which women will love to travel, for here is everything to make the days at sea a time of complete relaxation with the opportunity to enjoy, at leisure, the personal pleasures that are so often crowded out of a busy woman's life.

A particularly welcome innovation, from a woman's point of view, is the installation for the first time on any British ship, of an Elizabeth Arden Treatment salon where passengers may enjoy these famous beauty treatments just as if they were in a Salon in London, New York or Paris – or for that matter, Cape Town, Durban, or Johannesburg, where Elizabeth Arden Salons await them. (NMM BF 50.1 Print Boxes) [Fig. 67]



The press note detailing the inclusion of the beauty salon also spoke of a world in which women were assumed to need to maintain the elegant, poised appearance of the leisured, even if they were actively engaged in a career.

The Salon in the Windsor Castle, situated on the right of the 1<sup>st</sup> Class shopping Square on C deck, will combine that quality of elegance and complete up-to-date equipment which has become a mark of Union-Castle service. Decorated in a soft olive green and pink, the Salon will be avail to 1<sup>st</sup> Class passengers who travel the new flagship. Miss Angela Norman, one of Miss Arden's widely travelled and experienced representatives, will be in charge... She has devoted much of her time to lecturing girls and older women on the art of combining an active business life with personal charm and grooming. (NMM BF Print Boxes 50.1)

If *Windsor Castle's* First Class passenger accommodation was sold as an essay in serenity and sophistication, what was the situation in Tourist Class, and how did Monro's style, so firmly based in an aesthetic that conveyed an illusion of upper-class life, adapt for purposes elsewhere on board the ship? An investigation of the ship's Tourist Class accommodation suggests that the conservatism that underpinned B&C's styling of First Class rooms was, in fact, also apparent here, the shipping company's traditionalist approach being evident both in terms of producing a very qualified modernism and also visible in its paternalistic assumptions about the lifestyle with which Tourist Class passengers would be most at home.

### 3.2.3.2 *Windsor Castle's Tourist Class accommodation: mediated modernity*

On Monro's appointment, Bernard Cayzer had stipulated that her design for *Windsor's* Tourist areas, for example, be one of '...great comfort but with a less formal atmosphere [that is than First Class] and with plenty of gaiety in all the rooms' (Wealleans:2006:145). Indeed, descriptions of rooms in this class of accommodation all employ this kind of terminology; as had been the case with *Pendennis Castle*, a lively, bright atmosphere was clearly felt to provide the appropriate aesthetic for Tourist Class living. A press release for the ship stated that:

Gaily coloured in pink, grey, and lime, the Tourist Class Lounge will have a recessed dance floor in the middle of the room.

The Tourist Class lido and swimming pool will be a very gay area. The verandah café, with bar and soft drinks kiosk, will have soft furnishings of chintz with a bright fruit and flowers pattern, and a wooden teak floor. Round the pool will be covered Promenade and Dance Decks.

A feature of the 1<sup>st</sup> Entrance Hall will be the very fine square of shops, whilst a gay shopping area will be arranged in the Tourist Class entrance hall. (NMM CL CAY/220)

Throughout *Windsor's* Tourist Class accommodation then, the key decorative themes were cheerfulness, colour and jollity. This was an aesthetic aiming to deliver a sense of an energetic bonhomie, and whereas First Class rooms were decorated to convey a conservatively modish grace, Tourist Class areas on board ship were concerned with the fostering of vivacious high spirits and lightheartedness. Whereas on board *Pendennis Castle* this aesthetic ambience had been conceived of in terms of the Mediterranean coffee-bar culture with which some elements of popular British youth culture had engaged in the 1950s, *Windsor Castle's* Tourist accommodation adopted the modern materials and, to a limited extent, elements of the Googie-architectural forms of Californian coffee-shops and hot-dog stands, using bold, chequered upholstery, formica and close tongue-and-groove panelling [Figs. 68 and 69]. Even so, the temptation to historicise was apparently too great for Monro to resist, however: into spaces that were making a bid to provide a contemporary key intruded heavily gilt picture frames and the paraphernalia and prizes of traditional upper-class activities such as hunting and fishing [Fig 70]: '...the Cockpit Bar will be an essentially masculine room, decorated with birds and fish in glass cases, firearms etc.' (NMM BF Print Boxes 50.1). Nor was Monro creating a particularly modern environment in stressing the gendered occupational references and social interaction of this area of the ship's passenger accommodation.

A clue as to the less divisive atmosphere intended for *Windsor's* Tourist Class spaces is contained in Dining Saloon seating plans. [Fig. 71] Whereas in First Class small, often circular tables,

seating only a few people, provided intimate dining conditions, in Tourist Class the 'attractively simple decorative scheme' (that is, without the elaborate styling of the ship's First Class interiors) formed a backdrop to rows of long rectangular tables for greater numbers of people. This canteen-style dining approach, in contrast with First Class's restaurant-type layout, communicated B&C's belief that Tourist Class travel should be focused on group activity and gregariousness. 'The idea was that in Tourist Class one should make new friends', Alice Herd, from Fish Hoek in the Western Cape, told me, in relation to her experience of sailing to the UK on the *Windsor Castle* in the 1960s (Herd: Cape Town:5 April, 2008). Informality, youth and partying were the themes that these rooms were designed to engender. 'Peter du Toit, former curator of the Marsh Maritime Centre, Cape Town, remarked that, the perennial First Class joke on board *Windsor Castle* was that 'if you wanted a party, you had better go *downstairs*'. (du Toit:Cape Town: 5 April 2008)

As well as providing an arena for a particular kind of sociability, the styling of *Windsor's* Tourist interiors spoke of an awareness of burgeoning British youth and popular culture. And again, it was with this in mind that in these areas a mediated modernism was permitted which sanctioned the limited use of modern materials, such as formica, and the inclusion of more modern, though hardly cutting-edge, furniture styles. [Fig. 72]

As if to compensate for the lack of pattern available to First Class passengers, notes produced by the shipping line for Union-Castle's Tourist Class accommodation were at pains to stress the importance of texture and quality of finish. An advertisement for Formica<sup>35</sup> in the special edition of *Ship Furniture and Interior Fittings*, September 1962, ran: 'Aboard the *Windsor Castle* [sic], Formica surfaces...contribute lavishly to the overall impression of comfort, smartness and luxury' [Fig. 73]. Keen to emphasize the degree to which this class of travel might also afford the luxury

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<sup>35</sup> A brand of composite materials manufactured by the Formica Corporation based in Cincinnati, Ohio. In common use, the term refers to the company's classic product, a heat-resistant, wipe-clean, plastic laminate of paper or fabric with melamine resin. Invented in 1912 as an insulating material, formica was increasingly adopted as a decorative finish in the post-war period.

offered First Class passengers, the physical elements of these rooms are often stressed in publicity material.

The Tourist Class cinema, for example, provided a space that was a 'modern room in every way', and which featured:

Textures rather than patterns, dark colours rather than light. The walls, though covered in plastic, look like whitewashed canvas – lights are circular – spaced evenly on the walls. The seating has comfortable foam cushions and is covered in tweed. A carpet in bright dark blue and black covers the floor – there are double curtains in emerald green and blue so that the stage can be used for theatrical purposes as well as for a cinema and the most up-to-date sound and vision equipment has been installed. (NMM BF Print Boxes 50.1)

In highlighting the material quality of its interiors, Union-Castle also drew attention to the extravagance that a ship like *Windsor Castle* represented in the often (literally) materialistic post-war economic boom which started in the late 1950s. The mix of different surfaces employed in *Windsor's* Tourist Class accommodation was mirrored by these rooms' diverse assortments of stylistic influences. Although taking a much more subdued (anglicised) form, in this way Monro's work included faint echoes of the vibrant, highly glamorized resort-hotel interiors built by architect and interior designer Morris Lapidus (1902-2001), the Fontainebleau (1954) and Eden Roc (1955) in Miami. Recognising that clients at these hotels would relate strongly to imagery from film and television, Lapidus designed interiors with this medium in mind: 'My palette has materials and stylistic things left over from the past. I use them the way I want.' [Fig. 74]

Popular culture was also noticeable in modified form in *Windsor's* Tourist Class interiors in relation to British youth styles. While the 'Swinging London' of the second half of the 1960s was not to arrive until some years after the ship's first sailing, iconic books such as Colin MacInnes' 1959 novel *Absolute Beginners* had engaged with popular culture in its exploration of newly-formed concepts of youth style, fashion and music. To what extent did ideas like these provide a cultural context for the decoration of the two new ships?

Christopher Breward has written of London style that it represented the 'triumph of subcultural style over gentlemanly substance' and that this, in turn, contributed to the production of that 'much-discussed phenomenon: the generation gap' (Breward:2004:100). Not so on board *Windsor Castle*, however. Here, instead, B&C's inveterate conservatism merely nodded towards popular contemporary styling and then modified this through the incorporation of generational, class-based and often gendered historical signifiers.

B&C's prescriptiveness was also inscribed into these rooms: when the culture of the customer was assumed to exhibit a tendency for mass-participation, a diluted Modernism seems to have been an acceptable trope for interior styling. Part of the reason for *Windsor's* rejection of a modern aesthetic as a design device in First Class was because this style spoke of industrial manufacture, as opposed to the bespoke production mode of the antique. In Tourist Class, by contrast, B&C seem to have acknowledged a tacit link with popular culture – the culture of the masses and of mass production – which was allowed to make an appearance here through the use of plastics and off-the-peg furniture styles. It was acceptable to employ modern design so long as it helped to give a light-hearted impression in spaces in which, free from the need to demonstrate the historicist gravitas associated with First Class accommodation, a more contemporary idiom might be deployed to create a youthful atmosphere.

In line, as ever, with B&C's desire not to appear *too* modern, however, *Windsor's* Tourist Class social rooms also contained references to traditional working-class culture and entertainment, another indicator of the conservative scripting of 'decoration-as-lifestyle' by the shipping company:

At one end [of the Tourist Class Smoke Room] is the Cockpit Bar, which has a masculine flavour, with seats covered in tweed and mahogany chairs upholstered in hide, with the colour of saddle leather, based on the design of chairs used by spectators at cock fights 150 years ago. (NMM BF Print Boxes 50.1)

Another area of the Smoke Room featured a new and significant decorative departure for Union-Castle – though this too was presented in historical guise – where references were made to the nautical:

The walls are lined with timber which is bleached and worn as if it had been exposed for many years to the action of the sea and the wind.

The walls, formed of mahogany, of the rich colour traditionally associated with ships' paneling, are pierced by four alcoves in which white models of sailing ships are seen against a deep blue ground.

The focal point of the Rotunda is a feature which is a fantasy springing from the twin themes of navigation and solid comfort. Its designer has named it the 'Armillary Stovescope'. Shaped like an enormous telescope...The whole is surmounted by an armillary sphere, an instrument at one time used as a navigational aid. [Fig. 54]

The ceiling is a dome, set with sparkling stars and decorated to suggest a celestial map. Surrounding the 'Armillary Stovescope' the floor is inlaid in black and blue in a star like a design taken from the 'Card' of a marine compass.

(NMM BF 50.1 Print Boxes, *Windsor Castle*)

None of Union-Castle's earlier post-war ships had included maritime references in this way. As discussed in Chapter One, passenger accommodation had previously been designed to recreate the environment customers would have found in hotels on dry land. However, as ocean travel became increasingly comfortable and faster, and as the market began to change as a result of the rise of the airliner, a nascent 'cruise culture' began to emerge, which placed an emphasis on the ocean voyage as an end in itself. It is not surprising, then, that maritime references were to penetrate Tourist, rather than First Class, accommodation since, as argued, this was a space already designated for the experience of sociable fun amidst all that life on board ship had to offer. Also, of course, a greater sense of informality would also have existed in Tourist Class, since passengers were likely to have had more in common with their crew-member compatriots.

While First Class accommodation retained a sense of history, through which Jean Monro discreetly masked the inclusion of modern technology, in Tourist Class the inclusion of contemporary stylistic notes were acceptable as long as these were not too pronounced. Emblematic of a nascent British youth culture, the creation of a lively, high-spirited ambience became the filtering mechanism through which 'modern' came to represent 'young'. It would be wrong, though, to make too hard and fast a distinction between Tourist and First Class spaces on board according to a modern/historicist axis; the picture, in reality, is more complicated. What has been mapped out here are the *overall* tendencies that these interiors make evident. And at no point did Monro's interior decoration threaten to interrupt or dislocate received British (English) notions of class conformity.

Ultimately, B&C seem to have decided upon and offered its clientele the style of design with which they supposed they would be most comfortable, according to enduring class associations. In this way the company produced interior design that made assumptions about First-Class, Debrett-list passengers' preference for the good taste associated with history played out in tandem with an appeal to the modern holiday-making, gregarious nature of the Tourist Class passenger. And, whether as a country-house incarnation or by borrowing from the youthful modern style emerging from popular/mass culture, both of the two new B&C ships for Union-Castle in the early 1960s represented a thoroughly British style. In a continuing discourse around restrained refinement, class-associated 'good taste', and the importance of conservative values to a 'correct' way of being British, the two liners also represented the longevity of *decoratorly*- as opposed to *designerly*- taste as a marker of these values. The extent to which *Pendennis* and *Windsor* evinced these values becomes even more noticeable when they are compared with P&O's much more design-aware SS *Canberra*.

### 3.2.4 SS *Canberra*

In service from 1961, and with interiors and superstructure masterminded by Hugh Casson (who was not, however, a naval architect), *SS Canberra*, designed as a marvellous new flagship for the British shipping line P&O, highlights both the political and aesthetic conservatism apparent in B&C's Union-Castle ships. It is important to note, however, that a description of the very striking differences between the P&O ship's and Union-Castle's contemporaneous interiors [Fig. 75] raises a number of design-historical problems. Such is the nature of the overwhelming visual disparity of the interiors of each of the shipping lines' vessels that it is difficult to avoid discussing these according to a Modernist, gendered binary which would read Union-Castle's approach as decoratory, feminine and historicist/conservative, and *Canberra's* aesthetic as architectural, masculine and progressive. As shorthand for characterizing the difference between the aesthetic tropes employed on board the three ships, I have adopted this rather linear approach. Had this discussion been one focusing on P&O rather than Union-Castle, however, it would have been important to problematise this brief and thus necessarily, starkly contrasting, analysis through further mention of Hugh Casson's highly conservative earlier work on *HMS Britannia* (mentioned above), his establishment credentials as personal friend of the Royal Family, or the inclusion of oddly historical moments on board the ship such as the portrayal of English cricketer W G Grace in the 'cricketers' bar', – the description of this national hero providing an interesting device on board a ship sailing to another famously cricketing nation and named after the country's capital.

In the main, while Union-Castle's ships certainly betrayed an identity that was tied to notions about Empire and received ideas about Britain's (England's) heritage and place in the world, *Canberra*, by contrast, sailed on routes that included a number of Commonwealth destinations (notably, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong), and was styled according to the outward-looking principles of international Modernism. Le Corbusier's vision of the ship as epitome of the '*Machine à habiter*' had come a step closer, and although the years of the High Modernism were now over, P&O were quite deliberate in offering *Canberra* as a Modernist paradigm. Having been appointed to the job through contact with P&O director Sir Colin Anderson, Trustee of the Tate



Gallery 1960-1966 and Senior Fellow of the Royal College of Art, Casson conceived of the sweeping lines of *Canberra's* interiors as conveying a holistic, coordinated and up-to-the-minute style:

Throughout the first class in *Canberra*...ceilings are almost universally white and kept as flat and unbroken as it is technically possible. The rubber floors of staircases, alleyways, entrances and the carpet of the principal lounge...are the rich-blue green of the Pacific. Walls are almost universally of dark smoky woods...or else white...Satin silver metalwork, opalescent glass-fibre, polished glass and natural leather and cane almost complete the range of materials used in those areas...Ceilings are sculpted to subtle forms. Throughout [First and Tourist Class] the lighting has been flexibly devised to change to meet the mood of the moment or time of day. Linked by the blue-green floors and predominantly white walls are the alleyways and cabins...where vivid colours are kept to occasional and very carefully considered points of interest. (Dawson:1997:31) [Fig. 76]

Whilst P&O's styling of *SS Canberra* – international, modern, and executed in a style associated with the political left – would have been anathema to Pretoria, Casson's designs also highlight Union-Castle's 'Britishness'. While the Tourist Class accommodation of both *Pendennis* and *Windsor* represented the sort of youth culture which, according to the National Party's strict Calvinism, was to remain out of bounds even for white South Africans, First Class interiors referenced British monarchy and, by implication, colonial dominance. The question is why, given an always complex relationship with Pretoria, and more particularly the extent to which B&C were keen to remain in the National Party's good books, the company should have deployed a style that, according to Norval's remarks about their inappropriateness ('whether the *Windsor Castle* is in conformity with the modern spirit and in particular with the spirit of this country') had so clearly irritated the South African government (South African Conference Lines archive, Cape Town transcript of discussions between Norval and Conference delegation 22 – 24 Oct 58, cited in Berridge:1987:73)). Though at pains not to alienate Pretoria, it seems likely that B&C retained Union-Castle's historicist First Class vocabulary as a coded but snobbish (and rather jingoistic)

statement that while the South Africans might be calling the shots over the two parties' engagement, Britain was still the senior, if not also the superior, partner in the liaison.

### 3.2.5 *Apartheid and the design of Union-Castle interiors*

It is difficult to gauge the extent to which Norval succeeded in intervening in the design of Union-Castle's ships as he had attempted to do in the late 1950s. Given the likelihood that Norval took exception to Union-Castle's evocations of British national identity, and also the fact that that he was very familiar with Monro and Bernard Cayzer's intended scheme, it is also highly likely that Pretoria had an influence over one other crucial aspect of *Pendennis* and *Windsor's* interior designs: nowhere on board either of these ships (nor indeed the ships surveyed in Chapters Two and Four is there ever any decorative reference to black Africa.

In late 1957, with reference to an entirely different subject for representation, it was minuted at the November 11 Managing Directors' meeting that:

ii Her Majesty's picture should not be screened at the end of cinema performances.

The recommendation had been adopted and it had quietly been agreed to drop the showing of the Queen's portrait on the South African coast. (NMM CL UCM 3/4 (11245))

If a representation of a white monarch was deemed to risk causing offence to Union-Castle's clientele, how much more would references to black Africa have done so?

The journey by sea to Cape Town and its attendant rituals ('equator-crossing' ceremonies and changes of crew uniform to tropical 'whites', for example) all represent a discourse in acclimatization. This was a very circumscribed acclimatization, however. The leisured sophistication of First Class ocean travel on board the ships, the culture of carefree youth and gaiety in Tourist Class, and the notion of the liner as playground for an élite would all risk being

severely disrupted, for Nationalist sympathisers, by the admittance of any reference to black Africa. It was one thing to portray white South Africa, visible in wine lists or in images of Groot Constantia (homestead of Cape Governor, Simon van der Stel), but another altogether to refer to the black population, which the South African administration was focused on repressing, hiding and rendering voiceless. If Pretoria was quick to interfere with and criticize the 'Britishness' of Union-Castle's interior design, B&C ran the risk of outright censure, if not a great deal of damage to trade, were it to fly in the face of apartheid.

Given B&C's ethos of 'flexibility' towards Pretoria, however, and also the company's acute business sense, it is hardly surprising that Union-Castle was complicit in the exclusion of black Africa from its ships. Whether or not Norval was in fact able to make his mark on the ships' decoration in this regard, it hardly mattered. Under no circumstances was a company with a steady eye for profit, and in an already tricky relationship with the South African government, going to jeopardize this association through the demonstration of any kind of black presence on board ship, and make visible, by extension, those people required to remain invisible within the country of destination itself.

Ironically, though, it is possible to argue, particularly in relation to *Windsor Castle's* Tourist Class passenger areas, that in hinting at white London subculture these rooms acknowledged and accommodated the black styles which exerted enormous influence, even if this was unconscious,, on British popular and visual culture following the arrival of Caribbean immigrants to the UK from the late 1940s onwards. The depth to which this influence was buried under Monro's conservative aesthetic was so great, however, that it is unlikely that Union-Castle passengers, much less Pretorian officials, were ever going to uncover such subterfuge.

Providing a still greater incentive for B&C to toe the line was the South African marketing of the Union-Castle ships as 'floating hotels' in the 1960s. A draft of undated copy, 'The office that moves at 15 knots', in the National Library of South Africa's Union-Castle archives illustrates the point:

Progressive South African businessmen are being drawn to a new variation in travel. Union-Castle offer facilities to businessmen which amount to a floating office scheme. Amenities on board permit the full range of office activities. The line even has available top-grade stenographers. The coastal run between Cape Town and Durban, which calls at Port Elizabeth and East London, presents excellent opportunities for the senior representative having business interests in these important centres. Radio and telephone links may be used by passengers while at sea, making contact with those centres. Business can be conducted while in port or underway. In port clients can come aboard for discussions conferences and other gatherings. There is the added attraction that they may enjoy entertainment facilities if they wish. (NLSC UC MSC 59.1)

Aiming to attract white business people – many of whom Pretoria assumed to be sympathetic to its aims – and also politicians travelling between Cape Town and the major eastern South African cities, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban, it was important that the aesthetic landscape of the ships should not alienate this important South African clientele. Accommodating the passenger on board Union-Castle's 1960s ships *Pendennis* and *Windsor* meant in this instance, then, not causing discomfort to a significant constituency of those travelling on board the company's ships, and also represented compliance with National Party politics: it meant, in other words, that 'separateness' be maintained on board, as on land. The close ties between B&C and the National Party were underpinned by more than Cayzer's good business sense, however.

An article in the June 1976 issue of the journal *Time and Tide* quotes Nicholas Cayzer talking about trading with South Africa in the 1970s as the only 'civilising thing to do' (*Time and Tide*:June 1976:9). [Fig. 77] 'Sir Nicholas is not uncritical of the South African government' the article states. It concludes with Cayzer's own words: 'We shall continue to serve South Africa knowing that we are serving *all* the people of South Africa and helping to create employment and prosperity,' adding, in a typically businesslike and unsentimental manner, 'we trade where we can trade.' (*Time and Tide*:1976) There was more to B&C's involvement with Pretoria than this version of 1970s British Conservative economic priorities and principles, however. The *Time and Tide* article lists Cayzer's

achievements, records his life peerage (conferred in 1982 by British Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher), and notes solemnly that

Sir Nicholas was until last November, President of the UK South Africa Trade Association, which post he held since the Association's inception. He is also a member of the Advisory Board of the Grad School of Business, Cape Town University and a Trustee of the South Africa Foundation. (*Time and Tide*:1976: 9)

In his article 'South Africa's Propaganda War' (*African Studies Review*:1979:79), political economist Galen Hull discusses contemporary relations between Washington and South Africa focusing on US lobbyists and the National Party propaganda machine at home. In the article, Hull describes the South African government's Department of Information, the body responsible for the regime's propaganda initiatives and which, Hull details, had put a great deal of time and money into attempting to woo the world to Pretoria's point of view, into encouraging immigration and endorsing – in the department's own phrase – 'unconventional' methods of marketing the country, such as hospitality.

However, Hull points out, the Department of Information was certainly matched in importance with regard to activities of this nature by another body, the South Africa Foundation (SAF): 'The SAF, established in 1959 as a private non-profit organisation, rivaled the Dept of Information in the extent of its influence in the US.' (Hull:1979:94) Hull also mentions a Washington law suit naming the SAF alongside the South African Sugar Association, both of which had been making secret cash payments to National Party campaigns (Hull:1979:95). In the same vein, Hull's article cited another work, *The Power Peddlers*, whose authors noted that it is 'no secret in Johannesburg or abroad, that the South Africa Foundation is a "front organisation for government"'. (Howe and Trott, *The Power Peddlers: How Lobbyists Mold America's Foreign Policy*, cited in Hull:1979:94). Cited as being a 'Trustee of the UK- South Africa Foundation' in the June 1976 *Time and Tide* article, clearly Nicholas Cayzer's involvement with the National Party government in Pretoria was greater than his Thatcherite 'business is business' statements alone betray.

While B&C, and hence Union-Castle, were very conservative companies run by a politically Conservative family, and while Jean Monro was clearly the family's preferred choice of decorator, it is unlikely that Monro's decorative style was intended to carry any political meaning. That Monro's work can be read as emanating from an entrenched conservatism by no means allies it with the expression of any conscious political leanings. If anything, the reverse was true: Monro's biography indicates that, certainly as a younger woman, she was entirely apolitical: she reports that in 1938 she had been on a skiing holiday to Austria, and although caught up in the caught up in the *Anschluss*<sup>36</sup>, reported that the trip was:

... great fun. We ski'd [sic] all day and danced most of the night and had a wonderful time. Newspapers never came into our lives, and anyhow we were young and not interested in politics or what was going on in the rest of the world. We were having too much fun. (Monro:1988:25)

An analysis of Monro's major contribution to Union-Castle style in the 1960s also suggests the apolitical stance of simply desiring to create rooms in which people would have a good time. Of course there is an argument to be made about the default political side-taking of *not* offering a comment on so highly charged a situation as apartheid but, especially given B&C's concern to direct her work, the onus of an implication in Nationalist politics must lie with B&C, rather than with Monro, on this account. And, by contrast, an additional benefit of the adoption of Monro's historicist idiom was the opportunity that her aesthetic afforded Union-Castle in taking a stand against Pretorian bellicosity, even if this came in the form of rather smug references to British 'superiority'. Images of the Royal palace at Windsor Castle, portraits of the Queen Mother and a myriad of visual reminders of Britain's superior status as 'sceptred isle' provided an effective

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<sup>36</sup> The 1938 incorporation of Austria into Greater Germany.

rejoinder to *Afrikanerdom*<sup>37</sup>, and might well have been thought likely to appeal to English-speaking white South Africans for whom ties with Britain had not been severed.

Although there is insufficient evidence to claim the deliberate and conscious adoption of 'Englishness' as a strategy to be deployed in jostling for position with Pretoria, such a move on B&C's part was ingrained in British psyche to the extent that it could be argued to have, by now, become second nature.

The interiors of *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle* can be read as inheriting the long history of British occupation of the Cape Colony and the attempts made at various times under British dominion to counter Dutch influence and to ensure its 'anglicisation' by instituting British judicial and education systems and by spreading the use of English. As Robert Ross, in his survey of Cape colonial culture, argues, Britain's rule of the Cape frequently entailed the imposition of British (English) ideas of respectability onto its population (Ross:1999). Often played out through material culture and as the outward manifestation of class ideology ('Respectability and gentility were manifested most clearly in material things. After all, the distinction between them was largely a question of income...' (Ross:1999:78)), the overlaying of social, material and aesthetic constructs on the life of the Cape by the British during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can surely be argued as having been continued by Union-Castle in the twentieth century.

Ideas about social propriety, status and colonial authority were certainly inscribed in the 1960s ships' cabin class structure: the popular modernism of Tourist Class was about looking forward,

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<sup>37</sup> Referring to the famous description of England's realm, the words of William Shakespeare's *Richard II* (Act 2, scene1) provide a useful tool with which to describe the ethos of *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*'s decoration as strategic visual one-upmanship:

...this sceptred isle...

this precious stone set in a silver sea...

whereas the ships' First Class accommodation was all about *looking back*<sup>38</sup>, of providing the reassurance of historical status for the governing and aristocratic classes, people whose 'rule' extended, and was transferable, from Britain to Africa. In the main, First Class passengers were a social élite whose presence in Africa was more to do with continuity and maintenance than it was with change. Nor, for the most part, were First Class passengers the harbingers and product of the change represented by immigration. Immigrants, as testified by Peter Laister and Ann Haynes, who all worked for Union-Castle in the 1960s, were most frequently Tourist Class passengers. (Laister:Longfield: March 2010 and Haynes:Eastbourne:March 2010). In this way Monro's Tourist Class interiors on *Pendennis* and *Windsor*, if anything confirm, rather than disrupt, the status quo.

This is not to say, however, that Jean Monro was necessarily consciously engaging in cultural colonialism. It is likely instead that her apolitical traditionalist style was commissioned by B&C precisely because it did not threaten to voice any kind of radical belief, nor indeed interrupt design schedules and plans that were the product of their imperative desire to maintain good accord with Pretoria. In other words, Monro made design decisions, but it was B&C which made political decisions, and if the nearest Monro came to threatening this relationship was an over-indulgent expression of British aristocracy through the employment of chintz and ersatz 'heirloom' furniture, as criticized by A J Norval, then Union-Castle's managing company might still rest easy.

Referring to her mother's taste for antiques, Monro recorded in her autobiography that when visiting clients she had:

...loved stopping at antique shops en route. They had the same effect on her as a glass of champagne, as they do indeed on me. They were a breath of life to both of us, as they are to all the interior decorators I have ever met. (Monro:1988:44).

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<sup>38</sup> If, for example, the 'wealthiest' decorative spaces on board Union-Castles liners were any reflection of the 'affluent society' of the British 1960s, the financial boom was not represented in First Class accommodation to celebrate any sense of contemporary largess, but instead, referred to Britain's eighteenth century economic empowerment.



The interior as tonic, as stimulant and as effervescent place of gaiety was an idea that seems to lie at the heart of Jean Monro's work for B&C. While the rise of cruise-ship ocean travel as entertainment was to become increasingly important in the next phase of Union-Castle's history, Monro's work for Union-Castle remained firmly centred on the culture of the *ocean liner* and the glamorous lifestyle associated with this type of travel. As Mario Praz claimed of the antique collector, s/he 'not only transports himself, as in a dream, to a distant or past world, but also to a better world...' (Praz:1964:28)

It was as though *Pendennis* and, more particularly, *Windsor* represented a final hurrah for Union-Castle. Certainly the period witnessed an enormous galvanizing of the fortunes of the shipping line, both in business terms and with regard to the consolidation of increasingly good, if intricate, working relations with Pretoria. And, as this chapter has aimed to demonstrate, the former was never going to be possible without the latter.

In a sense, brooking Pretorian intervention into the design of its Union-Castle ships was the price that B&C had to pay for the company's strength and success on the South African route in the 1960s. The fact that B&C were keen not only to co-operate with, but, as Cayzer's close involvement with the South Africa Foundation illustrates, actually support the National Party provide important indicators of the extent to which the company was prepared to bend to the South African government's position, a situation in which the inclusion of references to British heritage in *Pendennis* and *Windsor's* First Class accommodation really only represented a minor misdemeanor.

Clearly, dancing to Pretoria's tune included accommodating ideas which had influenced the design of Union-Castle's ships' interiors. No wonder that Mayor Newton Thompson's welcome to *Windsor Castle* had been so demonstrative; she had not simply been celebrating the arrival of a foreign vessel into port, but rather highlighting this particular ship as cementing and signifying the end result of an important, and in the early 1960s highly successful, mutually negotiated partnership:

Table Bay, at this point in time, was host to the hand-in-glove enterprise that was British and Commonwealth Shipping Ltd. and the National Party government further north in Pretoria.

With the decline of the passenger liner and the rise of the cruising in the late 1960s and 1970s, ships began to be designed with new criteria, such as tourism, leisure and holiday-making in mind. The problem of how to market South Africa as somewhere different and exotic without referring to black Africa, and of how to negotiate a relationship with a nation that the rest of the world had by now rejected, were to be pivotal to the interior design of the final ship to enter Union-Castle service, *Reina del Mar*.

## Chapter Four

### ***Reina del Mar, 1965-1977***

Memo: Sir Nicholas Cayzer to Cape Town office

11 November 1976

It is with great regret that Safmarine/Union-Castle announces that the two remaining passenger mailships [*Windsor Castle* and *SA Vaal*, formerly *Transvaal Castle*] operating on the route between the UK and South Africa are to be withdrawn in the latter part of 1977. This is a direct result of the forthcoming introduction of a container shipping service on this route which will embrace the shipment of cargo presently carried by the mailships.

The *Windsor Castle* and *SA Vaal* were built to carry several thousand tons of cargo in addition to 700/800 passengers each, and they are not economically viable as passenger carriers alone.

(NLSA Union-Castle/MSC 59.13(2)12.11.76)

When the last Union-Castle liners to sail from Cape Town left port in September 1977, they began their voyages across Table Bay from a country much changed since the first ships discussed in this thesis, *Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*, arrived in the summer of 1948. The changes that had taken place politically, economically and socially were not always what they seemed. At face value, the two key elements which contributed to the Republic of South Africa's dynamic character during the 1960s, capitalism and apartheid (forces viewed by some historians surveying the colonial period (for example, Trapido:1978 and Marks:1985), as having been inextricably linked) appeared to have achieved the impossible: the creation of a booming economy within a segregated society. Significantly, however, fissures were beginning to appear within both the Republic's structure and the psychology of the nation.

The rise of Black Consciousness as a political movement and social philosophy, filling the lacuna created by the imprisonment of the ANC leaders, as well as mounting opposition from abroad, were to provide considerable resistance to Nationalist policy. By the second half of the 1970s,

then, important changes, both internally and externally, placed South Africa and its regime in the most precarious position of its entire post-war history. In addition, political shifts and splits within the National Party, coupled, by the end of the period of this study, with regime changes at its borders (within Mozambique and what had now become Zimbabwe (formerly the Rhodesias)), contributed to the undermining of the policies associated with white supremacy.

This chapter argues that ruptures in the apartheid process, combined with the South African economic downturn of the 1970s, were to have an impact on the shipping trade, relations between the British and Commonwealth Shipping Company (B&C) and Pretoria, and on the decisions that B&C took regarding the interior design for the last of Union-Castle's ships, *Reina del Mar*, commissioned from the Pacific Steam Navigation Company in 1964. While British immigration to South Africa was to continue unabated through this period, and indeed even to grow, the events of a wider political and economic history (for example, the pivotal importance of the Soweto uprising of June 1976), the rise of air travel and the arrival of containerization were all to dramatically affect the fortunes of the South African Conference Lines during the period 1965 -1977.

As will be discussed, the external circumstances surrounding *Reina's* voyages to South Africa were to prove so significant that *Reina*, barely redecorated on acquisition by B&C, in direct contrast with the ships discussed in Chapter Two, *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*, appears at first to offer little to this study in terms of a design-historical reading of its interiors. Unlike *Windsor* and *Pendennis Castles*, *Reina del Mar*, was not finally, formally, acquired at a time of economic growth<sup>39</sup> - and although the argument might be made that the rise of cruising reflects increased spending power in the consumer market, any growth in British financial largesse was not translated into the ship's interiors. What *Reina* does offer (and this provides the reason for its inclusion as an important element in this history) is to clearly demonstrate – in fact, by virtue of its

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<sup>39</sup> 1973, the year of the B&C acquisition of *Reina del Mar*, has become notorious for suffering of the British economy as a result of strike action by trade unions which in tandem with the effects of the oil crisis of that autumn, led to the infamous three-day week.

*absence* of design – that Union-Castle's design decisions at this time were essentially bound up with the political and personal diplomacy involved in the South Africa/Cayzer relationship.

Before attempting to describe *Reina's* passenger accommodation, however, it is first useful to discuss the situation in which Union-Castle and B&C found themselves during the years leading up to the cessation of the South African mail service and, very importantly, the extent to which B&C was actively co-operating with the South African security forces in order to maintain stability for its continuing business operations, a move which Nicholas Cayzer saw through to its logical conclusion in petitioning Prime Minister Harold Wilson to end the British arms embargo to South Africa. In order to untangle the highly complex politics of the period and explain the impact upon these on B&C's changing operations within the region and as leader of the Conference Lines, it is useful to describe the disruptions to the status quo within the Republic.

#### 4.1 History, politics and economics

##### 4.1.1 *South African unrest and its implications for British and Commonwealth Shipping*

Having withstood international outrage following the Sharpeville Massacre of 1961, having weathered – without too much difficulty – British reactions to the Republic's departure from the Commonwealth, and with almost all the key resistance leaders either imprisoned or in exile, by the mid-1960s the South African government appeared to be in a position of supreme strength. Not only had racial segregation become a political and institutional reality, but from the end of the 1950s further measures had been taken to consolidate and reinforce white supremacy (and to further disperse and weaken the black majority) according to the policies of 'grand apartheid'. In 1958, Prime Minister Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd had made a paternalistic speech proposing that geographical separation would represent a sympathetic response to a natural human desire:

The big idea I want to talk about is that of separate development. These are words of great hope for the Bantu. Every man wants to have

something of his own – something which is separately his. (Clark and Worger: 2004:60)

By 1963 the Transkei region, one of the reorganized areas, had effectively been cut off from white South Africa, and further 'homelands' or 'Bantustans', established. These were intended to be run as independent states (which, significantly, no foreign nation ever recognized); 'grand apartheid' thus disqualified the majority population from citizenship of their own country. Despite the creation of territorial parcels, which had little or no economic viability, within the nation – the homelands were typically, and deliberately, small, fragmented and underdeveloped regions – by 1965 the South African economy was booming. Equally, the same principles that had informed Verwoerd's strict vision for 'separate development' within the Republic had succeeded in quelling international fears through the fostering of an image of stability following the Sharpeville Massacre and, despite international criticism, both foreign money and immigrants began to return. During the second half of the 1960s foreign investment continued to be attracted by interest rates, which frequently ran as high as 15 to 20 per cent and which doubled between 1963 and 1972, a situation which was also indicative of the state of the economy. (Clarke and Worger:2004).

Appearances could be deceptive, however. Revisiting the period in a post-apartheid context, some economic historians now question the extent of the success of South Africa's economy during the second half of the 1960s. As Beinart (2001) has pointed out, even in the boom years there were signs of weakness in the administrative structure of South Africa. Additionally, despite their implementation of a relentlessly authoritarian system, administrators of apartheid in the late 1960s (in particular, Verwoerd's successor Balthazar Johannes (John) Vorster) even had to face challenges to white domination from within Afrikanerdom itself. In response to the pronounced demagogic tones of government, foreign relations between South Africa and other African states also reached an all-time low.

Following Verwoerd's assassination in the House of Assembly, Cape Town, in 1966 (the motives for which remain unclear) the National Party had regrouped around John Vorster, who was to remain in

power until 1978. With a background as a general of the Neo-Nazi *Ossewabrandwag* Vorster's regime was marked by the decisive extending of the power of the South African security forces. Shortly before Vorster's accession, in November 1965, the white minority in Rhodesia – until that point a self-governing colony – announced a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain. Subsequent British calls from within the United Nations (UN) to take economic measures against the country brought the reality of widespread sanctions right to the Republic's doorstep. The situation also created a background against which B&C's determination to continue to trade with the Republic itself became all the more marked. In response to questions about discontinuing trade with South Africa and the possible economic consequences for the wider region, Nicholas Cayzer later argued that:

Undoubtedly South Africa has always dealt with other African countries in a very matter of fact way. There is a great deal of mutual trade and mutual help. But if we ceased trading with South Africa the whole of southern Africa, especially Mozambique and Namibia, would equally suffer.

On Rhodesia I hope very much that a settlement can be found, and that we can start trading with them again...But I am not in a position, sitting in my office in London, to lay down the law on what should or should not be done...We trade where we can trade. That is our job. And this is the most civilizing thing we can do. (*Time and Tide*: June 1976)

UDI, and, five years later, the declaration of the Rhodesias as a republic, also had the effect of intensifying what became known as the Zimbabwean War of Liberation (or Bush War) led by Robert Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), and by Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), events which created still further destabilization very close to home.

In part as a result of these developments, Vorster's government was to place a great deal of emphasis on security *within* the Republic. With any internal opposition movements effectively quelled, for the moment, the chief programme for opposing external threat was now sited in the

defence against communism, the major impetus perceived to lie behind the Zimbabwean guerilla war. Cold War politics having reached an international peak, communism was also held responsible for having fuelled the insurgency of resistance organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC), the Republic's paranoia being exemplified in speeches by Vorster declaring that 'The security of the state is the supreme law...I regard the security of the state as priority number one', and that the communists 'have been organising for years to take over South Africa... South Africa has always formed part of their world plan'. (Geyser O (ed.) B J Vorster: Select Speeches, Bloemfontein, 1977 cited in Barber:1999:179). In relation to maritime matters, and indicative of just this mood, was the jittery column written by RWT Hallock for *Flotsam and Jetsam*, the B&C South African newsletter, in October 1964.

#### Russian Ships in South African waters

In the Press...one reads frequently of the presence of Russian ships in our waters, particularly on the West Coast, where their large and well-equipped trawling fleets are too prominent for the liking of local concerns. There are reports from the Skeleton Coast area and even as far down as St Helena Bay, but no doubt the movement of these ships are duly kept under surveillance. (NMM CL CAY 245/1-2)

AS an unshakeable capitalist and arch-Conservative, Nicholas Cayzer was quick to endorse the important role of British shipping and trade with South Africa as a bulwark against communism. Prompt, too, in criticizing the British government's stance over the UK arms embargo to South Africa (also discussed below), in response to the question of whether exports to the Republic might have been greater had it not been for the vexed issue of arms he commented, in no uncertain terms:

Straightaway one must say that Great Britain could have got in the defence field with very many good orders. As you know, we don't provide them with any sort of arms. And most of these arms are protective, like frigates. After all a frigate patrolling the coast cannot do other than keep the very important Cape Route open. The Cape Route is absolutely vital



to us because when you see the Russians not only on the east coast but on the west coast as well, and with the kind of fleet they have today, it does seem to me absolutely silly not to realize that the Cape Route is critical to the defence of the west, and not to be very interested in the strategic position. As you know, we don't provide any arms of any kind and if we did that would be a big export impetus. (*Time and Tide*: June 1976:8-9 NMM CL CAY/249)

Chapter Two discussed the extent to which Nicholas Cayzer's 'business-first' attitude lay behind his participation in organizations such as the South Africa Foundation, which supported the National Party government; it also argued that the B&C ethos ensured that the company's new liners were not decorated in any way which might threaten to interrupt trading relations. It was this same attitude towards the creation of profit that lay behind the winding-down of Union-Castle activity and, conversely, Cayzer's active support for the growth of the South African merchant fleet Safmarine and onshore investment within the Republic, and his involvement with the advent of containerized shipping during the period 1965-1977.

In their staunch and vociferous defence, on the one hand, of capitalism, and on the other of South African security measures, Cayzer and Vorster both appeared to be leaders in control, despite the complex and challenging political and economic events unravelling around them. Cayzer's clarion calls in favour of the imminent revolution of containerization, for example, were equalled by Vorster's stand in the face of the perceived threat from the forces of communism and its black apparatchiks, both men apparently retaining a strong and resolute position. In reality the picture was rather more complicated: the many difficulties attendant upon maintaining the status quo, both at Cayzer House in the City of London and in Pretoria were to have an impact on the design of *Reina del Mar* and the fate of Union-Castle, not least because the increasingly volatile situation within the Republic was to affect the ease with which B&C could trade.

Within South African politics, greater divisions began to appear from the late 1960s onwards. The National Party's policy of creating African homelands had already received criticism from the United Party on the basis that it ran the risk of creating domestic 'Cubas'. (Barber:1999) Further to the

right of the political spectrum, members of Vorster's own party began to attack his pragmatic stance on entering into diplomatic relations with foreign black states in order to mitigate against further international criticism. In his survey of the complex histories of the period, James Barber (1999) has pointed out that whilst moves such as this, and a limited tolerance for a degree of racial mixing within sport, appeared to be of little importance beyond the inward-looking National Party, internally

...they created divisions, and sharpened a developing ideological split between those who were categorised as '*vertligtes*' (enlightened) and those as '*verkrampes*' (hard-line). (Barber:1999:180)

Reflecting societal changes whereby English-speaking white South Africans had become more ameliorated and Afrikaners more urbanised and less isolated, the *vertliges* increasingly saw themselves as both white and Afrikaner, whereas the *verkrampes*' sense of identity continued to remain crucially, and solely, within Afrikanerdom. The split between the Afrikaner hardliners and the rest of white society also spoke of shifts in attitude towards the Republic's future on the changing world stage, and its confidence – or the lessening of which – when it came to negotiations, both political and economic, with trading partners such as B&C. As Barber has summarized the situation:

Both sides were firmly committed to apartheid and to white dominance; but while '*verkrampes*' believed that continued white rule depended on rigid opposition to change and that concessions endangered the whole edifice of apartheid, '*vertligtes*' were convinced that future security depended on a degree of flexibility and change to protect the core of white authority. (Barber:1999:181)

Another major rupture came about in 1969. Objecting to a New Zealand rugby tour of the Republic on the basis that the national team, the All Blacks, included Maori players who might mix with whites at social events, the right wing seized the moment to kick up a storm against 'liberalism', and formed the Herstigste Nasionale Party (HNP), a force which was to play a powerful role within far-right South African politics 20 years later, during the 1980s, but which, in the meantime, was to

represent the re-emergence of a virulently anti-British force within Union-Castle's trading environment.

Political divisions within white minority rule were not simply indicative of the complexity of maintaining the apartheid regime, then: they also had implications for the ease and success with which B&C might continue to conduct business with the Republic. Whilst Vorster argued that immigration was of continuing importance for sustained South African economic growth, the HNP was characteristically vehement in opposing any influx of English-speaking settlers. In his analysis of trends in British immigration from 1946 to 1970 (1977) Frederick Brownell remarks:

Although the number of immigrants from Britain to South Africa was overall to continue to rise until 1970, it was nevertheless apparent that a periodic downward trend could be anticipated in view of regular calls from those opposed to immigration to curb this influx. (Brownell:1977:109)

Whilst very much in the minority, the anti-immigrationists were to receive a considerable amount of press attention in the final years of the 1960s, news which must have come to the attention of B&C intelligence bases in the local South African Union-Castle branches.

At the level of party politics, not only had the HNP continued to grow in membership and influence – a factor mentioned by Brownell (1977) as accounting for various dips in rates of emigration from the UK – but the party was also exerting pressure in Pretoria. Rather than risk driving forward support for the HNP, Vorster's cabinet reshuffle of 1968 openly acknowledged HNP feeling, with the effect that immigrant interviews were henceforward held in a reduced number of centres in the UK, and fewer 'recruitment' advertisements were placed in the British press. Although it was not until the 1970s that British emigration to South Africa really began to slow down, by the late 1960s decision-making at B&C regarding the future of Union-Castle was already alert to the viability of the continuation of the mail service: internal wrangles over immigration in South Africa cannot but have informed this process.

As a result of divisions created by immigration and other polemical issues, the 1970 South African general election was fought with a vicious intensity in which the Afrikaner position regarding international politics was forcefully reiterated. In the face of foreign hostility – notably perceived to originate with ‘the global and overall strategy under the leadership of aggressive communism’ (Barber:1999:182) – Defence Minister Pieter Willem Botha declared the National Party position to be one which required a ‘total’ response, involving the media and also a firm resolution to continue along the path of separate development in order that the paradoxical justifications of apartheid, decreed to foster better relations between black and white, and a hard-lining of policy which was to affect foreign relations and international trade.

But the relentless pursuit of the apartheid goal was also to have serious consequences for the South African economy, and began to undermine the boom that had benefited B&C for many years during the 1960s. Under the guise of a programme of conciliation, development of the homelands, or Bantustans, under ‘grand apartheid’ had continued during the period, despite criticism at home and abroad. As already mentioned, the Transkei, one example of a homeland, had been independent since 1963. Importantly, while this independent status divorced a region from the South African economy – and thus any share in its wealth – and asserted a pretence of self-government in internal affairs, any real autonomy was effectively non-existent.

It was not only in economic terms that the apartheid system began to eat away at itself, creating an unstable trading base for B&C, however. While those African leaders who were prepared to work within the homelands system had, for the most part, to accept the restrictions written into this regime, the Bantustans did provide a (necessarily limited) forum for black collectivism: even, ultimately, for opposition. Although the relentless nature of apartheid’s divide-and-rule policy left Bantustan leaders battling to gain as much as possible for their individual region, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, leader of KwaZulu for example, was to emerge with a clear and forceful voice, and in the early 1970s, having re-built the organisation Inkatha YakwaZulu, first established in the 1920s, he offered a movement which provided another avenue for black resistance. Although later dogged by

ambiguity as to its political intent and, in the 1990s, bitter rivalry with the ANC, Inkatha (by now the Inkatha Freedom Party) had cleared a path for a future position of political opposition within the Republic.

Also grounded in the apartheid policy of separate development, Black Consciousness, a movement which emerged from the campuses of black universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was to provide a focus for the resistance movement under the leadership of (Bantu) Stephen (Steve) Bantu Biko. Representing the major opposition to arise within South Africa since the internment of the ANC and Pan African Congress leaders on Robben Island in 1964, the movement was a highly significant factor in the growing internal unrest that developed within the Republic through the course of the 1970s. As such it was also one of the key influences upon the climate in which B&C was doggedly endeavouring to trade. A thorn in Pretoria's side, Biko, although 'banned' (that is, allowed only to meet with one other person at a time) managed to avoid imprisonment until August 1977 when he was convicted, having been discovered outside his banning area. Detained by the security forces, by 12 September, and still in custody, he was dead.

Black Consciousness, often focusing upon education issues and supported by students of all ages, had reached a high point over the question of Bantu education. In 1974, the new Minister of Bantu Education, Michael C. Botha, reinforced the Bantu Education Act that insisted that Afrikaans be used in equal measure alongside English in school. Radicalised black high-school children, for whom Afrikaans was the language of illegitimate minority rule, began increasingly to protest. Action culminated on 16 June 1976, in the Soweto township outside Johannesburg. Hundreds of children began the day by marching to Morris Isaacson High School and then on towards Orlando Stadium, where a protest rally was planned. As the procession progressed, the police were alerted to the demonstration, and began to converge on Soweto with tear gas. In the ensuing chaos, a 12-year old, Hector Peterson, was shot and died on the way to hospital.

As the news of Peterson's death spread, the crowds who had begun to join the demonstration became increasingly violent, and resorted to burning down government buildings. In the course of

that day, 174 Africans and two whites were killed. Minister of Justice Jimmy Kruger's response having been to assume the students were led by communist activators, and Vorster having declared that order was to be maintained at all costs, the following day 1,500 heavily armed police officers were deployed to Soweto. Helicopters monitored the area from the sky, and armoured cars were sent in force to patrol the Soweto streets. Violence continued despite this, however, and as news of what became know as the Soweto Uprising spread around the world the Republic began to feel the impact. Political condemnation was matched by economic sanctions, and as diamond and gold shares dropped it looked as though the apartheid bubble had at last burst. While at no point since 1948 had trading with South Africa not been a political issue, in the years following Soweto foreign companies engaged in any form of commerce with the Republic were now very visibly flying in the face of international criticism.

There is no record of B&C's reaction either to Sharpeville or to the events in Soweto, nor have I come across any documentation, either in the UK or in South Africa, which provides direct evidence of Cayzer's views on conducting business with South Africa during the decade that followed. As late as 1976, by which time, as will be described below, Cayzer was well aware that the mail service had no future, he was, however, not only defending, but in fact arguing for, trading with South Africa to continue to the last. In an interview for *Time and Tide* published in the month of the Soweto Uprising, Cayzer was quoted as saying:

One must get a sense of proportion about South Africa. One has to look at the situation completely objectively, I believe now that we have shed our empire, we have joined the EEC and we are in an economic situation which is rather unfortunate, we have really got to get used to the idea that charity begins at home... So there are good solid economic reasons for saying that we must preserve our trade – all of it.

The South African Conference Lines...provides a very big source of employment to South Africa... We must hang onto all of our trade. Why do we have double standards? Why trade with Russia and not with South Africa? ... If you take the thing to its logical conclusion in terms of

the Do-Gooders there are practically no countries in the world with which we can trade.

*(Time and Tide: June 1976:8-9 NMM CL CAY/249)*

Important archival evidence does exist, however, of the extent to which, by the 1970s, B&C was critically aware of the increasingly violent struggle happening across South Africa, and also of the measures that it would need to take in order to protect its holdings, personnel and passengers under such circumstances. By 1973, three years before Soweto, Union-Castle had already experienced the effects of the growth of black resistance and the rise of civil unrest. On 21 March of that year a letter had been sent from Cayzer House in the City of London to 'all agents in the United Kingdom, Continent, Mediterranean, South and East Africa, Dakar, Las Palmas and Tenerife', and Union-Castle managers. It read:

Dear Sirs,

You have probably read in the press of the trouble which arose in the Clan Robertson [a Cayzer-owned ship] when she was boycotted in Gothenburg, and when we attempted to sail the ship the Zulu crew went on strike.

No doubt as a result of this publicity and the accusation that the Zulus are not paid in accordance with the International Federation rates, we received an anonymous telephone call in this office from someone who said he was a member of the Organisation for the Welfare of Black Africans, saying that they intend to blow up Union-Castle ships during the next three weeks 'for the way you treat Africans'.

Because of this we have introduced stricter security precautions in all our ships to take immediate effect, and the object of this letter is to acquaint you of the reason so that you will understand why all passengers going on board our vessels and that all packages they carry must be scrutinized. (MSC 59.16 (3))

Given that the terrorists feared at Cayzer House were more likely to be black than white activists, the shipping company's directives seem a little misplaced: no black South African would have been able to board a foreign ship as a passenger, since the pass-book system made it illegal to

travel beyond the individual's prescribed locale. The letter is significant, nonetheless, in revealing the increasingly fraught nature of B&C's ships' presence in South African ports, and also for the extent to which at least one arm of the resistance struggle had identified the company with the white supremacist regime. Added to the growing difficulties of defending trade with a nation that the rest of the world viewed as an anathema, civil unrest within the Republic had raised the stakes regarding B&C's operations even before the events of June 1976.

The political partisanship of continuing to trade with South Africa (which was also played out, as I will show, in the design of Union-Castle's interiors) was further demonstrated, and in much more dubious ways, in the early 1970s by B&C's commitment to work with the South African police. While it was understandable that, B&C wanted to protect their vessels, allying with a police force known for its covert operations and brutality makes this complicity appear particularly unfortunate. This armed force, which was responsible for enforcing apartheid, was to have its power extended continually through the 1960s. Moves to further strengthen the effectiveness of what was, in every sense, by now a police state were consolidated by government acts, for example the sanctioning of 90-day (later extended to 180-day) detention without trial, in a situation where *habeas corpus* had simply ceased to exist, and in which thousands of people were tortured, and, like Steve Biko, died in police custody.

A file in the Union-Castle archive at the National Library of South Africa's Cape Town campus marked 'security', and containing material nowhere to be found in the UK, includes documents detailing the lengths to which the shipping company was prepared to go, even before the shock-waves caused by Soweto, to ensure the company's continued operation. A 'strictly confident' letter, sent from the Area Fleet Manager in Durban to Captain R Hart, Fleet Manager at Union-Castle House, St Mary Axe, London, on 4 April 1973 detailed the situation. The letter was copied to Senior Management at B&C and to Neil Semphill, Director of the Cayzer shipping company Cayzer Irvine & Co., and South African Conference Lines representative; it does not appear to exist amongst the papers I have researched in the Cayzer archive formerly on loan to the National Maritime Museum:



Following worry about security of packages going on board Cayzer Irvine has been in conversation with Natal Safe Guards who have 'knowledge of all forms of security, control and investigative procedure'. (NLSA Union-Castle MSC 59.16 (3) )

The letter made it clear that its unnamed writer had over the years, '...developed a very close liaison with the security authorities in Durban and numbers among them in the security branch, the South African Railways Police and the South African Police.'

It continued,

We have promised our assistance at any time to the authorities should incidents become known to us which might be of interest to the police in combating crime or subversive activity. In return we are assured most definitely of the immediate and fullest co-operation of the police and any other security authority at a time of general unrest or if we require them to deal with any specific incident. ((NLSA Union-Castle MSC 59.16 (3))

That the shipping line was prepared to work so closely with the South African police force – crucial, and frequently brutal agents of the apartheid system – is very telling. This chapter will go on to propose that B&C believed that its business operations would only survive in a situation in which it made every effort not to alienate those with whom it traded. Even Nicholas Cayzer's involvement with the South Africa Foundation and donations to National Party funds (outlined in Chapter Two) kept the company only one step away from the thuggery of apartheid law. The fact that B&C should have so deliberately operated hand-in-hand with the police, one of the forces directly responsible for some of the most violent excesses of the apartheid regime – imprisonment without trial, torture and, frequently, murder – offers another slant entirely on the company's involvement with the Nationalist state.

Although it was to be another 14 years before the release of Nelson Mandela, and another four again until the 1994 general election returned the ANC to power to form the new democratic Republic of South Africa, it could be argued that for all the violence with which resistance was

repressed, the 1976 Soweto uprising had fundamentally shaken the confidence of the National Party administration. The political instability that was triggered by the mid-June events was to be exacerbated by international boycott, and at no point thereafter was the Republic to return to the police-state stability that it had maintained prior to that summer. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the uprising, in June 1996, the Ulwazi Educational Radio Project of Johannesburg produced an hour-long documentary describing the events of June 16 1976 through interviews with people who had lived in Soweto at the time. The following year, BBC Radio 4 and BBC World Service broadcast a revised version of the programme, entitled 'The Day Apartheid Died'. It was against the backdrop retold by Ulwazi and the BBC that B&C ended its mail service – though by no means its onshore commitments – to South Africa. This is not to say, however, that B&C did not manage to maintain eminently workable, if not strong, relations with the Republic during these years: ties that, were, as ever, one of the factors influencing the interior design of the last liner to go into service in Union-Castle colours, *Reina del Mar*.

#### 4.1.2 *Conducting trade in a time of transition*

This chapter argues that it is not coincidental that the turning tide of South African politics from 1970 – visible most notoriously in the Soweto events of June 1976 – was to form the background to the winding-down of the Union-Castle service to South Africa. This change in fortunes for the passenger mail service culminated finally in the *Windsor Castle* departing on 6 September 1977 on the last British mail ship voyage. *Windsor* was played out of harbour by two South African military bands and escorted at sea by a South African naval frigate, and in the air by an Air Force fly-past. (Mitchell and Sawyer:1984)

The military presence that accompanied Union-Castle's final departure, underlining as it did the secure solidity of the liaison between B&C and Pretoria, was strangely emblematic of the history of the winding-down, and ultimately the cessation, of the shipping line's operations in South Africa. Whatever the growing civil unrest caused by its administration – and frequently, in fact, in response

to these – Pretoria had continued in its determined show of force. The economic boom of the 1960s, the creation of homelands for separate development and the founding of the Republic all appeared to have vindicated the Nationalists in their grand project. By the 1970s, however, as already discussed, the apartheid system had begun to over-reach itself, its fissures becoming increasingly obvious as the decade progressed. In combination with the rise of air travel, changing patterns in holidaymaking and the introduction of containerization, Pretoria's bullish confidence, and the extent to which B&C was prepared to play along with this, was to be influential in the decision made by the shipping company to withdraw the mail service in the mid-1970s.

The overview of trading relations between B&C and Pretoria provided here will describe how, during the period 1965-1970, the government of the Republic, riding the crest of white minority strength, put increasing pressure on the South African Conference Lines not only to accept rationalization (in the form of decreasing the frequency of sailings to a number of South African ports) but also to admit the South African merchant fleet Safmarine to its ranks.

A move which not only signalled the Republic's vehemently nationalist intentions but also acted as a pragmatic measure in the face of the increasing international adoption of economic sanctions, the admittance of Safmarine into the Conference was to alter the balance of power within the conference. It also provided further evidence of the extent to which, in signing up to a diminution of Union-Castle's traditional power-base, Nicholas Cayzer's firm business approach ensured that he was prepared to ally with Pretoria, whatever the repercussions for Union-Castle, as long as B&C might keep trading. Whilst Union-Castle saw a marked decline in its fortunes through the 1970s, this did not mean that B&C was to suffer in the same way. Quoting from the 1971 edition of *Who Owns Whom*<sup>40</sup> anti-apartheid activist Ruth First cites B&C as one of a (very long) list of 'British companies with subsidiaries or associated companies in South Africa'. Appendix 5 of First's book details the names of council members of the United Kingdom-South Africa Trade Association

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<sup>40</sup> *Who Owns Whom* is an independent research organisation, still in existence, producing intelligence on the South African business and economic environment.

(UKSATA) and their directorships of companies with South African subsidiaries. The first entry on the list reads,

COUNCIL MEMBER	COMPANIES IN WHICH DIRECTORSHIP IS HELD
Sir Nicholas Cayzer	Air Holdings
	British and Commonwealth Shipping Co (Chairman)
	Sun Alliance and London Insurance

(First et al:1972:328)

Cayzer himself acknowledged having South African holdings in interview in the mid-1970s, but these amount to a different portfolio from that that described by First's earlier research:

We have some interests there [in South Africa]. We have a small manufacturing interest in the sintered metal field. We have quite considerable property interests. They have grown out of our business... We've rebuilt a number of our properties, which incidentally, have created jobs in South Africa. (*Time and Tide*:1976:8)

Also indicative of B&C's measures to adapt to changing circumstances whilst at the same time ensuring a profitable return were the circumstances of Union-Castle's acquisition of *Reina del Mar*. Union-Castle first managed the ship (in 1964), then chartered it, and finally bought it outright from the Pacific Steam Navigation Company (PSNC) in 1973, only to sell it shortly afterwards, in 1974. *Reina's* career with B&C can only be explained by the company's having known that there was serious uncertainty about the long-term feasibility of a continued mail service. Certainly, as the third part of this chapter will go on to discuss, this last Union-Castle ship was invested with only scant capital outlay. The only liner of the post-war fleet not to have been built specifically for the company, an investigation of the political economy of Union-Castle/South Africa trade during the period 1965-1977 helps to explain this situation, and provides a context for the decorative and aesthetic choices made for the ship.

The strength of South African resolve to exert its recently reinforced confidence in the success of its apartheid regime, following the eradication of resistance and the implementation of the Bantustan programme in the mid-1960s, was also to become manifest in negotiations between the Conference Lines and the government during the years 1964-66. Despite obvious evidence of the Republic's bellicose strength, this background did not suggest a clear way forward for the Republic, however: British calls for the adoption of sanctions following the Sharpeville Massacre of 1961 were redoubled following the Rhodesian declaration of UDI in November 1965, for example. Given that this situation also threatened B&C's business interests, it was at this point that Nicholas Cayzer took steps to strengthen the B&C-Safmarine alliance; this was a move likely to have been motivated by the fact that should it become impossible for his company to continue to develop business in the shipping of exports to the Republic, it would at least have demonstrated loyalty to Pretoria via this alternative engagement.

In fact the move suited Cayzer's purposes, since he was increasingly seeking ways of gaining a stake in Safmarine himself. It has been suggested (Berridge:1987) that by the second half of the 1960s Cayzer understood only too well that the future of any Overseas Freight Agreement (OFA) between the Conference Lines and South Africa would be highly likely to be contingent upon the adoption of containerization. This, he could not have failed to recognise, would in turn also affect the future of the mail service. Diversification had therefore become financially expedient. As Berridge has pointed out;

The readiness with which Sir Nicholas Cayzer conceded the future of the fruit trade to Safmarine was conclusive evidence of his gradual withdrawal from *direct* involvement in South African shipping. This policy had been adopted not only because of the government-backed determination of Safmarine to obtain a major share in the trade in general, but also because the recent appearance of new techniques in shipping ('the container revolution') had led him to believe that major investment in *conventional* tonnage was unwise. (Berridge:1987:95)

Further incontrovertible evidence of Cayzer's readiness to strengthen his alliance with Safmarine was to appear in 1965 in the form of the announcement that an agreement had been struck between B&C and Safmarine whereby *Transvaal Castle* and *Pretoria Castle* would be sold to the national line at the end of the year; this was a move which must also have had the benefit of shoring up Cayzer's relationship with the South African government. Under this arrangement *Transvaal Castle*, a 'one-class' super-liner that had been launched shortly after *Pendennis* and *Windsor* in 1961, was renamed *SA Vaal*, and *Pretoria Castle* became *SA Oranje*. At the same time, in June 1966, Castlemarine Ltd., a company created by Union-Castle and Safmarine, took over all passenger bookings. By the second half of the 1960s, then, 'Safmarine was now well and truly part of the mail service, and Sir Nicholas Cayzer had more share in the favoured national line'. (Berridge:1987:96)

The importance of securing an ever-stronger position within the Conference for the South African line had also been bought home during the renegotiation of the OFA in 1965-66. At this point, with both sanctions and containerization looming, it had again become clear that, as the leading member of the Conference, B&C was prepared to go along with the South African government's wishes regarding future freight arrangements. The latter had recently manoeuvred itself into the strategic position of being able to employ the Lines to national ends in the fight against sanctions. It had done so by promising an eight per cent average rate of return on freight over the next 10 years of the OFA. Berridge (1987) describes the mid-'60s alliance between the Conference and the South African government that resulted from the new OFA in terms of its having represented something of a marriage of convenience:

In short, just as Union-Castle had 'saved' itself at the end of 1955 by 'merging' with Clan Line, so the South African Conference saved itself 10 years later by co-opting the South African government.  
(Berridge:1987:108)

It was clear which of the partners had the upper hand, however. In a move which once again appeared to indicate the certainty of Pretoria's current belief in itself, and also in being able to

count on Cayzer's support, two days after the conclusion of the OFA meetings in May 1966 the Chairman of Safmarine approached Cayzer to ask for his backing in a move to double Safmarine's trading rights. At the same time, B&C were also asked to approve reforms of the way in which trading rights were to be apportioned across the board.

Further motivation for Safmarine's requests may have been prompted by the disastrous consequences for merchant shipping of the British seamen's strike of the summer of 1966. In addition to wishing to further secure the investments he had already made in Safmarine, it is likely to have been in the light of the months of British merchant shipping inactivity caused by the strike that Cayzer viewed the South African line's overtures with reasonable sympathy. Although firm decision-making on a new freight agreement was postponed in the light of ongoing uncertainty surrounding Rhodesia's exodus from the Commonwealth and ensuing implications for trade with southern Africa, Safmarine was not to be deterred. In October 1966 the South African line made clear to the Conference its firm intention to carry 50 per cent of the Republic's trade in its own ships in the near future.

Late the following year, 1967, a situation arose at home which would demonstrate the extent to which Nicholas Cayzer was prepared to battle on behalf of the joint interests of both B&C and South Africa. Having imposed an arms embargo on the Republic – a move that Ian Smith's removal of Rhodesia from the Commonwealth two years earlier had sealed – Harold Wilson's Labour government (1964-1970) was now facing increasingly vociferous lobbying to have the embargo lifted. Both British business interests and members of the cabinet joined forces in opposing Wilson over the issue.

Particularly prominent amongst the lobbyists were Sir Ian Lloyd, B&C's South African economic advisor from 1956 to 1983, and Nicholas Cayzer. Whilst Lloyd, also Conservative MP for Portsmouth Langstone, always spoke of his opposition to apartheid, there were suspicions in the House of Commons that he was being paid by the South African government, an accusation voiced in 1984 by Dave Nellist, Labour MP for Coventry South East. Although this was denied by

Lloyd, he did later admit having accepted National Party 'hospitality'. ([www.theindependent.co.uk](http://www.theindependent.co.uk): 30 2006:accessed April 2008) Certainly, there was no doubting his active campaign to see the Wilson government's arms embargo on the Republic lifted.

Nicholas Cayzer's activities in this regard were equally clear. In addition to his presence in free-enterprise bodies such as the Economic League (a right-wing, free-enterprise pressure group), and his history of providing contributions to Conservative Party funds – he was ranked as one of the party's largest corporate donors – Sir Nicholas's payments to the National Party-backed South Africa Foundation (SAF), of which he was Vice President (as discussed in Chapter Two), was pivotal to the arms embargo debacle. The SAF, and also Cayzer himself since he was central to its operations, were to play central roles in lobbying Wilson. So forceful were the various protagonists in their attack that they nearly succeeded in forcing the Prime Minister to lift the embargo. Writing about the incident, Berridge (1987) records of the lobbyists, and of the fact that Harold Wilson accepted personal representations from Cayzer:

The most important constituent parts of the lobby were the London office of the South Africa Foundation...and especially the broadly based UK-SA Trade Association (UKSATA), launched with the Foundation encouragement in late 1965. Sir Nicholas put a lot of money into both organizations, and was indispensable to the success of the UKSATA, of which he was the first President. Whilst B&C had described its participation in the pro-South Africa lobby as less a question of arms sales and more one of fear of reprisals vis à vis other imports and exports, the events of 1967 served to highlight the company, and its Chairman's, allegiances. Within the Republic, National Party complacency continued, foreign sanctions and the UK embargo notwithstanding. A firm grip on the internal security continued to succeed in the violent repression of resistance and externally the security measures of *entente* partners in Rhodesia served to lessen any threat from across at least one of the nation's borders. In marine matters, the South African advance continued unabated. (Berridge:1987:126)



In 1971, following discussions initiated by the Freight Review held two years earlier, talks on the rationalization of the mail service were held in Cape Town on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> March. At these, the Conference accepted the arguments of South African Secretary for Commerce, G J J F 'Joep' Steyn, in favour of a reduced mail service, seeing only too clearly that any further freight increases were likely to be conditional upon streamlining operations along these lines. By the end of 1972, Safmarine had secured the right to escalate its share of the Conference Lines' trade over the next five years. It was at this point, with port calls cut dramatically cut by 911 in Europe, and by 2077 at the southern end of the Conference Line's route, (Berridge:1987) that on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1973 Enterprise Container Lines (ECL), a company in which South Africa had interests, and which was registered in the Republic, dispatched its first container ship from Rotterdam.

The entry of ECL into the shipping trade by no means took B&C by surprise, however; since the early 1960s, the company had itself been seriously interested in containerization and, with P&O, Alfred Holt and Furness Withy, three of Britain's largest liner groups, had formed a limited company, Overseas Containers Limited (OCL) in order to develop container shipping. Prepared in this way, in February 1974 B&C and the Conference Lines met with Joep Steyn in Cape Town to negotiate and draw up a new 'Memorandum of Understanding...regarding the introduction of Ocean Transport in the Trade between South Africa and Europe'. (Berridge:1987:174)

The ratification of the Memorandum – in effect a new Ocean Freight Agreement – in 1974 occurred at the mid-point of the years between 1972 and 1976 when negotiations in what came to be known as 'transport diplomacy' were to prove to be of great significance in the relations between B&C and South Africa. Of particular influence, also, during this period, and the reason for the heightened importance of diplomatic links, was the collapse of Portuguese colonialism, partly in response to the Lisbon political coup of 1974 but also as a result of the long-running colonial wars of liberation fought in Angola and Mozambique. As far as the Conference was concerned, changes in Mozambique, which affected the major south-east African ports of Beira and Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), were particularly important. Following the disappearance of what had effectively been a *cordon sanitaire* between South Africa and neighbouring black African countries, economic

links (in addition to the military intervention into Angola staged by South Africa in 1975-76) came to be viewed as increasingly vital. It was against this background that the Republic's stake within the Conference became all-important, and in addition moves were made externally to establish an alternative forum for the country's merchant maritime matters in the form of a new organisation, the South African Shippers' Council.

The growing counterpoint to the dominance of British shipping – and hence also B&C – in the Conference which was posed by South African interests was made all the worse in the mid-1970s by the global oil crisis. Following the 1973 Arab-Israeli ('Yom Kippur') War, members of the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) announced an oil embargo on those nations which had supported Israel in the conflict. The resulting escalation of fuel prices was to prove another reason for the mail service's demise. By 1975, then, B&C faced heavily increased competition within the Conference (not least from Safmarine), soaring costs and an increasingly unpredictable political situation within the whole of southern Africa.

Whereas in the early years surveyed by this chapter B&C had been keen to engage with an aggressive and overly confident Pretoria, by the 1970s the company was finding itself having to sing to the South African government's tune, and for rather different reasons. The solid belief in itself with which the Republic had begun the period 1965-1977 had by now been seriously shaken, as already described. International calls for sanctions following the Soweto Uprising of June 1976 had been redoubled, and an economy by now in decline – partly as a result of government over-optimism in the second half of the 1960s – had been weakened even further. B&C's relationship with South Africa and its negotiations with Pretoria regarding rationalization and freight rates, in addition to the company's desire to move towards containerization, left increasingly little room for Union-Castle's continued survival; its ever-diminishing role was clearly demonstrated by the selling-off of the newly built *Transvaal Castle* to Safmarine only four years after the ship's first voyage.

In July 1977 the South African Conference Lines introduced containerization. The following month, with the final sailing of *Windsor Castle* from Cape Town, the shipping mail service was brought to an end. Before turning to an explanation of the way in which the politics of both Pretoria and the South African government's trade with B&C can be seen to have influenced *Reina del Mar's* interiors, it is essential to investigate one further element of the story: the rise of air travel.

#### 4.1.3 Growing competition from the air

Increasingly successful as a mode of travel during the 1960s and 1970s, air travel was to be of particular importance in setting the terms for *Reina del Mar's* passenger accommodation. The increasing availability and affordability of flights from the UK to South Africa also map onto issues around changing immigration patterns (beyond the scope of this study): the continuing rise in British immigrants through the period (Peaberdy:2009) and the concomitant need for transport was being facilitated not by Union-Castle's ocean liners, but rather by The British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) and South African Airlines (SAA). In this context, it is useful to explore the nature of aircraft design and marketing during this period. In contrast with the BOAC aeroplanes, or indeed the SAA fleets, *Reina*, a passenger liner acting as a cruise ship, can be read as having been designed in order to provide holidays *on board* and also, in the face of the rise of the commercial aeroplane, as offering an alternative to travel simply as a means of journeying from A to B.

A 1964 South African publication celebrating SAA, entitled *Thirty Years of Progress 1934-1964* makes evident the fact that as with maritime matters, air travel was highly politicized during the post-war period. Referencing the 'Grand Trek' into the South African interior staged by the first Afrikaner settlers and central to Afrikaner claims to white supremacy, the introduction to this book points out that 'South Africans have always been transport-conscious and the transition from ox-wagon to jetliner, by way of the railway and the modern road, has been remarkably easy.' (SAA:1964:7)

As with the shipping trade of the Cape Route, Britain and South Africa had from the outset been partners in the air travel business; the first trunk service to South Africa (operating between London and Johannesburg) had been initiated in partnership with BOAC in November 1945, and provided a service which, in order to accommodate re-fuelling, stopped at Tripoli, Khartoum and Nairobi. Early in the 1950s SAA took delivery of new planes (Gold Plate Constellation aircraft), which reduced the flight time to London to 28 hours. This record was improved again when in 1953 SAA followed BOAC, who had introduced the world's first jet aircraft, by operating the Comet-1 jet on lease from the British airline. The alliance between SAA and BOAC was further sealed in October 1960, when an agreement was signed between these two companies and Central African Airlines (CAA) and East African Airlines (EAA) to cover the operation of air routes between Central, Southern and East Africa on the one hand, and Europe and the UK on the other. That same month, a BOAC Boeing 707 inaugurated the first jet flights to Europe.

By 1964 SAA was able to claim that:

During the past 3 financial years, the passengers carried on this service [SAA's Boeing routes] have increased from 32,364 to 54,956, representing a 69.8 (per cent?) increase at a time when there is a worldwide concern over passenger figures. (SAA:1964:21)

With a fleet of jetliners and a carrying capacity of 131 passengers and 11 crew, SAA now operated six regular services a week, four of which terminated in London and two in either Frankfurt or Athens. Furthermore, SAA claimed that 'These services have been instrumental in the development of the overseas tourist potential'. (SAA:1964:21)

Having been banned from flying over a number of other African states, in 1963 SAA countered this protest by planning a new route along the West African Coast and introduced the first regular non-stop service between South Africa and Europe, in the form of a direct flight between Johannesburg

and Athens, with a flying time of nine hours. The dramatic rise in passenger traffic, and in its profitability, during the post-war period was amply demonstrated by statistics, the service on the South African route returning an increase from 3 074 passengers conveyed in 1934-1935 to 460 661 carried in the years 1962-1963, and bringing in revenue which rose from R 5348 at the commencement of the service to R 28 320 329 in 1963. (SAA:1964:23)

Also of significance to Union-Castle's trading history in the period was the increase in air freight:

An analysis reveals an upsurge from 5 831 919 air-freight ton-miles for the year ended March 31, 1961, to 11 594 320 ton-miles for the past financial year, which is an increase of 98.8% for the 3-year period.

During the financial year 1962-63 SAA handled 8 375 tons of freight and mail, representing an increase of 21% over the previous year's figures and mail carried on the overseas services increased by 40% that year when compared with 1961-62. (SAA:1964:21)

In Britain, air travel, like that provided by the passenger liners, had been historically linked with the provision of a mail service. BOAC's origins lay in the Empire Air Mail Scheme of 1934, which had agreed that some of the mail for the British Empire in Africa should be carried by Imperial Airways services with no surcharge. The result was the Empire Flying Boat Service, launched on July 4 1936. BOAC having been formally established in 1934, by 1938 the flying boats were running a twice-weekly service to South Africa from the Marine Air Terminal at Southampton. During the war – a period which saw aircraft technology improve beyond all recognition – investigations had been carried out as to the type of aircraft that would be needed in peacetime. As a result, by 1947 the York aircraft, an aeroplane far more advanced for passenger travel, was being used for flights to South Africa. When, in November 1950, the first British-built pressurised aircraft commenced operation on the South African route, the Flying Boat Service was withdrawn. During 1952, international competition became keen enough for BOAC to introduce second-class travel for the first time. The new rate was labelled the 'tourist fare', nomenclature that was replaced by the phrase 'economy class' in 1960.

Preceding the South African introduction of its Comet 1 by a year, in May 1952 BOAC launched the first jetliner service to Johannesburg. The flight, accommodating only 36 passengers, achieved the revolutionary journey time of 23 hrs 40 minutes, and from the start demand proved so great that the jet brought in more revenue than was spent on its operational costs. (Munson:1970) In the mid-1960s BOAC was seeing record revenue and profit returned, at which point the company became increasingly alert to the need for a worldwide hotel-building strategy lest the rapid growth of the tourist market be slowed down. At the same time it also recognised 'the need to devote more capacity to the carriage of cargo, which in [1965] had increased by nearly 30%' (Munson:1970:70)

The problem of carrying increased cargo having been tackled by bringing two Boeing 707 all-cargo aircraft into operation in January 1966, that same year BOAC went on to order six 350-seat Boeing 747s.

With a total profit of £23.9m, and dividend up from 10 to 15%, BOAC was well placed to add these giants to its fleet. It was well placed, too, to tackle the problem of the shortage of hotels world wide, and announced plans to invest in new hotels or in the extension of existing hotels. (Munson:1970:70)

## 4.2 Design

### 4.2.1 *Aircraft, ships and design*

One of the most striking differences between aircraft and ocean liner design from a design-historical point of view is the extent to which, while the passenger accommodation on board ships was created to provide an experience, and was inscribed with notions about patterns of living as a result, by contrast aircraft have always been conceived of as 'objects'. That aeroplanes were viewed as 'industrial design' is no doubt an integral part of their key role in both the process and

representation of modernity, whereas ocean liners (as explored in Chapter One) were conceived as one-off, rather than mass-produced, vehicles – unlike aeroplanes – and not only designed to 'house' their passengers, but also to accommodate and project ideas around historical national identity, shelter and luxury. Nor did aircraft, so newly arrived on the transport scene, have to respond, either, to a weighty and emotive history around national (maritime) prowess or equally laden engineering or interior design precedents.

Airline companies did, however, have to recognise the importance of conveying messages to their passengers about comfort and safety, psychologically as much as physically. Thus the most sophisticated, up-to-date materials, associated with a modern age of technological superiority (and providing an important visual contrast with the use of wood and wood-veneers on board ship), were employed to this end. As Gregory Votolato (2007) points out, although the mass-market airline companies of the 1960s sold seats (on the basis of ticket price and timetable) long before the passenger would see the interior of the aeroplane on which they would travel, meaning that although, unlike the shipping lines, air travel companies had no need to woo customers with the prospect of luxury accommodation, they nevertheless needed to attend to the functionality and ambience of cabin design. Once again, the styles employed offered a predominantly industrial/modern vocabulary, providing a marked contrast with the historicism of ocean liners such as *Windsor Castle*, for example. Votolato identifies the way in which this modern aesthetic was embraced by the airlines:

Replacement of soft upholstery by hard plastic finishes was perhaps the most important change. Wall panels and bulkheads were made of rigid PVC plastic with decorative patterns silkscreened or roller-printed onto them. The moulded wall panels now included recessed window reveals and built-in sliding window blinds, creating a continuous surface that eliminated the need for domestic-type curtains. The new plastic panelling was easy to remove in standard sections for repair or replacement. (Votolato:2007:202)

The air travel industry's marketing strategies, in combination with the need to convey an individual airline's corporate identity, also heightened the extent to which these vehicles became carriers of design-loaded significance.

While the design of national standard-bearers such as Cunard Line's 1969 flagship *QE2* and P&O's 1961 *SS Canberra*, for example, were notable for their deliberate modernity, passenger ships, in contrast with aeroplanes, continued to be conceived of, discussed and described throughout the post-war period in terms of class-associated styles and modes of sociability as least as much as they were thought through in terms of their engineering design or industrial design. As discussed in Chapter Two, in Union-Castle's case in the 1960s, for example, the ships might offer a commentary on fun-filled, gregarious sociability for Tourist Class passengers or on the elegance of leisured and gentrified travel for those accommodated in First Class. In either case, concepts around design and lifestyle had continued to be inseparable on board ship.

A 1977 advert for SAA, emphasising the hotel-standard comfort of its fleet, [Fig. 78] suggests that it would be incorrect to say that airlines did not attempt to adopt the ocean liner's rhetoric of travel as providing ease and well-being; clearly this was important, and particularly when it came to providing psychological reassurance for the passenger. But for the most part, emphasis was on the creation of a well-designed *product per se*. Given the aeroplane's importance as both symbol and confirmation of a nation's technological advance (something especially significant, for this reason, to the national lines) it is not surprising that in Britain, for example, aircraft design was to provide an important opportunity for the state-backed rehearsal of 'good design' practice as part of its programme of post-war reconstruction. As Sir Roy Fedden (formally Special Technical Advisor to the Minister of Aircraft Production) commented in *Flight* magazine in May 1954, the first responsibility was to promote air travel, and to encourage not just the wealthy, but the average member of the public into the air in order that Britain be able to continue to demonstrate itself to be a great nation. Aviation, he continued,



...is also capable of attracting a lot of money into the country and also brings prestige and approbation from the whole world, which is reflected in the sale of *other goods* [my italics] down to quite a humble and household nature. (Jackson:1991:170)

On board, the importance of BOAC's aircraft in terms of their potential to achieve international kudos was further emphasised. Designers employed specifically for the project produced cutlery, crockery and textiles which – alongside often cutting-edge graphic design employed in marketing campaigns, as well as functioning as emblems of corporate identity – continued to bring home the British Council of Industrial Design's message of national prowess through industrial design.

Following the International Air Transport Association (IATA) decision to significantly reduce fare levels in 1956, a move which heralded the arrival of a mass market for air travel, issues around speed and safety now became increasingly important to the industry. As Frank Jackson has described in his article on design for BOAC, these concerns were played out in designs which would inculcate a sense of 'reassurance, solidity, standardisation of comfort, and the authority of expertise.' (Jackson:1991:183) From this point onwards, design emphasis within the aircraft industry was increasingly placed upon mitigating the sensation of being 'in flight' and of being severely physically restricted within an aeroplane cabin, and on mediating these potentially disturbing circumstances through the limited means available, such as the provision of paperback libraries, meals and the presence of the stewardess.

Although outside the central discussion of this thesis, the stewardess provides and embodies an important conceptual link, bridging themes common to both the aeroplane and the ocean liner, particularly during the period in which the latter began increasingly to adopt the visual signifiers and culture of cruising which, as Quartermaine and Peter identify, were not 'driven by the demands of enterprise, but of entertainment'. (Quartermaine and Peter:2006:10) As spaces that needed to demonstrate cutting-edge technology as part of a dialogue about safety, and which therefore came to be designed according to a standard trope which hardly varied, aircraft interiors had little scope for employing aesthetic devices to distract or comfort the passenger. Instead, quality of service –

preferably provided by a 'decorative' (young) woman – was offered through the presence of the female flight attendant. Despite the fact that the stewardess's role was as much to do with pragmatic logistics as with inculcating notions of luxury through attention to personal needs, the presence of female crew employed in this capacity increasingly came to stand for the mark and distinction of an airline, and served to publicise these qualities at the same time.

There are many reasons why so many attractive young women want to become travel hostesses – chief amongst them, of course, is the legendary glamour of a career in the sky. SAA is constantly searching for girls who are both willing and competent to do the job well.

Because travel hostesses are the people by whom an airline's service is often judged, beauty is not enough – they must have intelligence, poise, refinement, charm and an ever-ready smile. After intensive training they must be almost perfect, in looks as well as capabilities. (SAA:1964:39)

That SAA pointed to the 'ever-ready smile' essential to the stewardess in its 30th anniversary promotional material; this was also indicative of an acknowledgement of the vital importance of providing a culture of 'service for all' in the new age of mass market, package-holiday travel. It was not just the airline industry that was realising this, however.

#### 4.2.1 *Reina del Mar* – Union Castle's 'Fun Ship'

*Reina Del Mar* had begun its life with the Pacific Steam Navigation Company (PSNC). Having been built by Harland and Wolff, Belfast, the ship, which entered into service in 1956, was originally employed on the routes between the United Kingdom, France and Spain, sailing to the west coast of South America, and carrying 780 passengers in three classes. Completing its last South American voyage in March 1964, *Reina* was refitted for cruising during the remainder of the

year and was then chartered to a holiday finance scheme, the Travel Savings Association (TSA)<sup>41</sup>. Once Union-Castle had taken full ownership of the TSA, in October 1964, *Reina*, although still owned by PSNC, was repainted in Union-Castle colours, to be chartered by the line for five years. Converted into a single-class ship with 1026 berths, the ship proved extremely popular and, cruise ship. In 1973 the liner was finally acquired by Union-Castle, only to be sold the following year and broken up in Taiwan in late 1975. During periods of low tourist activity on the Cape route, under Union-Castle management, *Reina* sailed from Cape Town to Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo and Buenos Aires.

That *Reina* was a single-class ship and therefore not an 'exclusive' liner was further emphasised by the informal tone of its marketing: 'You have the whole run of this mighty ship because she's all one class. So everything's friendly and informal – she's a happy ship'. (*Reina del Mar*:1970) In Union-Castle terms, this was particularly apparent with the agenda set for this cruise-liner 'funship' [Fig. 79]

The siren sounds; a cheer goes up from the quayside; you see the gap widening between ship and shore; and along with all the other passengers lining the rails, you cry. 'We're away!'

Yes, away on the best holiday you ever had, a cruise on the *Reina del Mar* (Queen of the Sea), Union-Castle's beautiful 20000 ton liner. Ahead of you lie magic days and nights at sea, thrilling days visiting famous places that were only ever names before – Venice perhaps, or Istanbul, Stockholm or Florence – wonderful living and entertainment, good company, new friends. And above all, no responsibilities, no worries...

Stewards anticipate your needs in cabin, restaurant or bars with smiling service... and from your big British breakfast on till the time you seek your comfortable cabin at night, you can do just what you like. Lie on a

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<sup>41</sup> Created in 1963, the scheme was designed 'for those people who enjoyed travelling as a holiday...The basic idea was for people to make planned payments towards their holiday, earning bank interest and enjoying discounts on a range of goods and services.' (Mitchell and Sawyer:1984:125). The TSA's major shareholders were Canadian Pacific, Royal Mail, Union-Castle and British and Commonwealth.

reclining chair in the sun... swim in one of the deck pools, play various deck games, have a hand of cards. And later there's the cinema, bingo, dancing, maybe the Captain's cocktail party, or a 'Black and White Minstrels' show. Pleasure or leisure, suit yourself. (*Reina del Mar*:1970)

Behind the jollity and camaraderie that B&C's marketing initiatives strove to emphasise for *Reina* there was however, another, less benign incentive for the encouragement of a good service culture: holidaymaking and tourism to South Africa. A typescript in the Union-Castle archive in the Cape Town campus of the National Library of South Africa, entitled 'Sailing South Africa' and written by a Mr Roy L Allen (whose professional affiliation is not mentioned), demonstrates just what was felt to be at stake. Although the document is undated, Allen's mention that 'Next year will see the first direct international flights to Cape Town commence...and the introduction of the Boeing 747 500-seat jet...' (NLSA MSC 59 16 9) dates the draft to 1976. The vehemence of the argument for South Africa's need to generate 'goodwill' suggests that it may have been written during the second half of the year, in the months following the Soweto uprising:

If a country is to develop a very real, very lucrative industry of tourism in a big way, grandiose ideals are useless unless the material aspect of supplies logistics are not thoroughly investigated and necessary supply services organised accordingly.

South Africa is a tourist country. Goodwill on the international scale can be built up through it and by it. That is why it is in the vital interest of the Republic that all obstacles must be pushed away, all barriers dismantled, all lethargy must go in the tourist context. Tourism is destined to become one of South Africa's major industries. (NLSA MSC 59 16 9)

Allen's primary aim in writing the piece appears to have been to pitch for an organisation named Aero-Marine, a modern chandlery company that would supply both liners and the air travel industry. His message about the essential need to develop tourism for diplomatic and political, as well as economic, reasons was typical of a groundswell of marketing initiatives.

No wonder that SAA holiday publicity, though quick to point out that progress had really only arrived in the Republic during the 20 years preceding the mid 1960s – that is, since the coming to power of the National Party – produced such pronounced hyperbole:

In this age of spectacular technical progress, South Africa still holds the key to untold pleasures, mainly because of its unsurpassed natural beauty. Its history fades back into the mists of legend about Sheba and her fabled gold, and has been punctuated with stirring epics. Its development, slow at first, has accelerated during the past 2 decades to economic and industrial maturity. Unspoilt by this vigorous awakening, nature's wonders silently dominate the scene.

From the banks of the Zambezi to the turbulent waters of Cape Agulhas, the southernmost part of Africa, the country is rich in scenic contrasts... Until recently holidays were thought of in terms of laborious overland journeys, but SAA has altered these travelling habits. (SAA:1964:59)

Although the dramatic growth of airlines in the 1960s and 1970s was clearly to have an impact upon ocean travel, it would be wrong to read the resulting implications for merchant shipping only in terms of the losses this inevitably represented for Union-Castle. On the contrary, in fact, in a resounding display of the company's familiar business acumen, B&C was to embrace air travel. The draft of an unpublished memo issued from the company's Cape Town office on January 1971, at the height of the South African summer holiday season, ran:

You can't be away from home-base for too long. Thank goodness for air-travel. You'll fly to London first, from either Johannesburg or Cape Town (now the fairest cape has its own international airport) and then take the short flights to Paris, Amsterdam. Time-saving, marvelous – but by the end of a week you're exhausted (and trying to order those pep-pills in pidgin French)

A few days of tranquility are what you need. Analyse your impressions, collate your information, write that report before the

telephone starts screaming info in that office 21 storeys above the carbon-sprouting tangle that is Johannesburg traffic.

So far a few busy executives have found a solution to this problem. They return to South Africa by sea! (NLSA Union-Castle MSC 59 6)

Another press release printed in the B&C company periodical, *The Clansman*, in 1976 detailed plans, not, this time, for the business sector, but for the holiday market, a number of Union-Castle vessels adopting the guise of the cruise-liner [Fig.80] Indeed, 'fun' appeared to have become the Union-Castle marketing byword. [See also Frontispiece]

Union-Castle has updated its current African holiday brochure to include all sailings of *RMS Windsor Castle* and *SA Vaal* to the end of 1977. ...The holidays offered take the familiar pattern of sea safaris, air/sea holidays and one-centre stays in either Cape Town or Durban. Sample prices include £921 for a 24-day air/sea holiday visiting Johannesburg, Pretoria, Kruger National Park and Cape Town, with sea travel in an outer twin-bedded cab with a shower. (NLSA Union-Castle MSC 59)

This did not mean that the shipping companies of the South African Conference Lines, Union-Castle amongst them, were about to surrender to competition from the airlines. A note in one of Union-Castle's Cape Town office files recorded the visit made by a Mr Squarey, general manager of Ocean Travel Development (a company formed by Union-Castle to promote sea travel in face of the rise of the air industry) to Cape Town in February 1964:

Mr Squarey remarked that, 'more than two-thirds of the world's surface is made up of ocean and added 'it was never put there just to paddle in, fish in or bathe in, but rather it was put there to provide the finest form of transportation ever devised by mankind.' (NLSA MSC CT 18 Feb 1964)

From the late 1960s through to the final year of Union-Castle's sailing between Southampton and Cape Town, in 1977, B&C's offensive in the competition against air travel was two-pronged. First, Union-Castle made a virtue of necessity, and promoted air-sea packages both to business people and to holidaymakers. Secondly, if the ocean was, as Mr Squarey's retort suggested, increasingly redundant in its capacity to facilitate travel, as an attempt to remind the public of the liner's capacity to offer leisure, luxury and hedonism, and as if to emphasise the abundance of the sea as a place apart, cruising opportunities were vigorously promoted by the company in order to keep the public afloat for a little longer. If the public were not going to use the sea to travel from place to place, then at least the ocean might be used as a holiday destination in its own right. Both of these marketing strategies were to affect *Reina del Mar's* interiors.

*Reina* also provides an emphatic counterpoint to the aeroplane as product design: the creation of its interiors was not as concerned with the provision of highly styled spaces as with the production of a holiday mood. As BOAC, SAA and the other airlines had identified in the case of the airline stewardess, in lieu of the provision of indulgence-oriented 'lifestyled' and distracting interiors, an emphasis might be placed on the service offered and the cultivation of a distinctive atmosphere of sociability and friendliness. Importantly, too, these last were ingredients which were not contingent on capital outlay during a period when the cessation of the Union-Castle service to South Africa became increasingly likely.

Paradoxically, of particular significance to a discussion of *Reina del Mar's* interiors is the fact that the ship's passenger accommodation barely features in any contemporary Union-Castle promotional literature. A brochure entitled '*Reina del Mar* Cruises 1970' devotes many more of its colour photographs to the holiday experience itself – sunbathing, playing deck games and images of the ports to be visited – than to the design of the interiors. In a reversal of the marketing strategy that had been pursued for *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*, the front page of the brochure [Fig. 81] makes no mention of passenger accommodation. As a 'hotel' ship, *Reina's* main public areas were of a single standard throughout, with differentiation in accommodation

made available to passengers wishing to spend more on particular cabins. Arrangements were described in the chatty, informal style adopted for the ship:

The cabin accommodation ranges from comfortable to luxurious according to the price you pay. The cheapest cabins have basins with hot and cold running water and bathrooms and loos nearby. The best cabins have their own bathrooms, etc. (*Reina del Mar*:1970)

Even the more sumptuous spaces on board *Reina* do not appear to have been promoted as a marketing ploy. The same brochure features three small images of cabins which, although provided with new bedlinens and textiles, look little altered from the liner's PSNC period, their panelled walls and furnishing styles reminiscent of the *Edinburgh/Pretoria Castle* style discussed in Chapter One [Figs. 82 and 24]. It must have been a relatively straightforward task for Union-Castle to transform cabin accommodation based on PSNC's three-class system into hotel-style accommodation available to all passengers according to their budget. Clearly it was also most cost-effective to retain original fixtures and fittings as far as possible, simply re-carpeting cabins and hanging new curtains to replace those that had seen eight years' wear on the route to South America. As already mentioned, B&C had known for much of the 1960s that containerization was on the horizon and the days of the mail ship, therefore, numbered. This situation, in addition to competition resulting from both the increasing encroachment of Safmarine on the market and the development of air travel, appear to have created a situation in which it was not economic to refurbish *Reina* according to any large-scale decorative overhaul.

What of those public areas which for which a more radical transformation was needed in order to accommodate the ship's new, egalitarian one-standard-for-all approach? The limited information available (as already mentioned, publicizing *Reina's* interiors was not a priority) points to the fact that whilst limited redecoration did take place – lounges, for example, becoming appreciably more 'modern' than in PSCN days through the inclusion of simple, streamlined fittings and furniture – little attention was paid to creating a specifically-designed new environment. Particularly when compared with *Windsor Castle's* showy, elaborate arrangements, *Reina's* interiors look drably



forlorn. Interestingly, too, many of the ship's public rooms have the modern but utilitarian aesthetic of an airport lounge. [Fig. 83] This was no coincidence at a time when the communal spaces associated with air travel would have been familiar to an increasing number of passengers.

In addition to selling sea-air trips to businessmen, Union-Castle began increasingly to promote this travel combination to holidaymakers. A joint venture which was operated in conjunction with various airline companies, sailing on board *Reina* provided only one half of the package. In addition to the financial considerations that a major interior design scheme would involve, the ship's under-designed interiors betray a recognition on B&C's part that because they no longer had sole responsibility for passenger experience, accommodation need not be as lavish and comprehensive as that which had been required for the ships of the early 1960s: the Union-Castle brand was simply no longer at stake in the same way. As suggested, it is likely, too, that the rather functional, low-level styling apparent in the ship's sitting rooms, similar in feel to an airport departure lounge, were arranged to correspond with the latter as representing, firstly, the complementary half of the travel package, and secondly – and more importantly – the aesthetic associated with state-of-the-art travel as represented by the airlines. Certainly, Union-Castle, in common with a number of other British shipping companies at the time<sup>42</sup>, was making serious efforts to promote both sea and air travel in combination:

*Reina del Mar* /TAP Mediterranean Cruise.

Thinking of a holiday in Europe? Want to see London? Fancy the idea of a Mediterranean cruise, or maybe a visit to North Africa? Can't make up your mind whether to go by sea or by air? Well, relax; there's a new trip from South Africa that combines them all.

Like a multi-layer super sandwich, it rolls them all into one, 29-day odyssey, starting from Johannesburg with a daylight TAP-747 flight to Lisbon on September 28 [the year is not given].

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<sup>42</sup> Cunard's *QE2*, for example, offered fly/sail packages.

The holiday, arranged by Union-Castle line in association with the Portuguese airline TAP, has as its highlight a 17-day cruise in 'The Med' on board the perennially popular cruise line *Reina del Mar*...

Cherry on the top of the tour is an air trip to matchless Madeira for a three-night stay in a very comfortable hotel. Then, on October 25, it is back by air to Lisbon and the connecting return flight to Johannesburg. (NLSA union-Castle MSC 59 19 1)

Serving to underline the lack of time spent on *Reina's* decoration, the earlier First Class Dining Room mural, [Fig. 84] which featured Latin American motifs, was retained by Union-Castle who must have justified its inclusion on the basis that the liner would spend the northern hemisphere's low-season winter months cruising between Cape Town and South America. The mural's inclusion of an image of a black cattle herder is the only black representation in any of Union-Castle fleet's interiors in the entire post-war period.

Given this toleration of indigenous references in view of *Reina's* seasonal service to South America, it is noticeable, in contrast, that Union-Castle's refurbishment of the ship also, however, involved the removal of its 'native' sculptures and ceramics. The black herder – who was in any case incidental to the scene depicted – was tucked away above eye level over the door of *Reina's* Dining Room, and would have been costly and difficult to paint out of the mural. The Peruvian statues that PSCN had installed, and which made an important contribution to the ship's décor, were much more easily removed. Manco Capac, legendary founder of the Inca dynasty, and Peruvian leader Chief Chimu are pictured in the 1956 *Reina del Mar* PSNC brochure, where they stand sentinel as a graphic device in front of images of the room in which they had been placed in real life [Figs. 85 & 86]. The statuettes, positioned in niches in the First Class Smoke Room, were specifically mentioned by PSNC as providing thoughtful decorative highlights:

### First Class Smoke Room

This is H-shaped in plan; at the forward end is the bar and opposite this are two niches in the panelling which house carved and painted figures of Inca and Chimu Chieftans. (MMM SAS/33B/1/6)

In the 1970 Union-Castle photograph of the same space, its panelling and niches are preserved, but are now painted white, and are quite empty. For B&C, the representation of the native was clearly to be avoided if at all possible. The stark contrast between the PSCN and Union-Castle approaches to decorating become particularly clear when considering Manco Capac's South African equivalent: to have placed a representation of Shaka Zulu, King and leader of the Zulu nation (c.1785-c. 1828) in one of *Reina's* Smoke Room niches in the ship's Union-Castle lifetime would have been unthinkable.<sup>43</sup>

Two black men do, however, appear in Union-Castle historical documents. There are only two in evidence in both the London and the Cape Town archives – they were, however, treated less heroically than Chimu and Manco Capac. The Cape Town docks newspaper seller – the shipping line's own 'Uncle Tom' – is described as being 'the Union-Castle's most famous character. He sold the *Cape Times* and *Argus* to the ships' passengers, and saw off every passenger Mailship, come rain, hail or shine.' (NLSA Union-Castle MSC 59.5 (57)). The name by which he was known at Union-Castle, according to a scribbled note on the reverse of his photograph, was 'Snowball'. [Fig. 87] The only other black B&C employee to be pictured appears anonymously in a group photograph taken in 1957, the handwritten note on the reverse simply saying 'social groups' [Fig. 4]

Three years after *Reina's* acquisition by Union-Castle, B&C was again in a position of having to consider its position on black imagery. The Cayzer archive, on loan to the National Maritime

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<sup>43</sup> Although not forming one of the case-studies analysed by this thesis *Transvaal Castle's* Golden Room, designed for this Cape Route ship by Jon Bannenberg curiously features Moorish and Assyrian design by way of referencing earlier civilizations which again begs questions as to the avoidance of African visual references in this context.

Museum, contains a flurry of letters arising from the suggestion that an image of a golliwog similar to the one used as the Robertson's jam trademark [Fig. 88] be included on board one of its ships. Proposed for the *Clan Robertson*, one of Cayzer Irvine's Clan Line fleet, and therefore not connected with Union-Castle, the correspondence between B&C's various offices regarding the issue is nevertheless usefully revealing of the company's attitude towards race and politics. A memo sent between Shirley Hawtin of B&C's PR department to a Captain Hart, Marine Engineer, on 1 November 1967, details the background to the situation:

The social club of Clan Robertson approached Robertson's marmalade people to ask if they were prepared to supply display material, incorporating the Golliwog symbol, to decorate their bar on board ship.

Robertson's were more than enthusiastic and are commissioning a special painting, featuring the Golliwog and the Clan Robertson tartan. They would like to present it to the Capt of the ship... towards the end of this month. (NMM CAY 224)

Two weeks later, on 15 Nov 1967, a letter was sent from Ted Lemon, the Conference Lines chairman, evidently interrupting the course of his more usual negotiations with Joep Steyn, South African Secretary for Commerce, to write to the B&C Glasgow office. By now Bernard Cayzer had become involved in the affair, and had written to the managing directors at Robertson's to say that with regret he foresaw 'difficulties from the political angle' (NMM CAY 224) if they were to accept the gift. Lemon's letter shows evidence of a particular cultural mindset: rather than conveying a tone of dismay at the unfortunate nature of the *Clan Robertson* crew's approaches to Robertson's, it suggested a weariness that over-sensitive, difficult foreigners would have to be considered:

Dear Bill,

Thanks for your note of the 9<sup>th</sup> November, enclosing letter addressed to you by Mr Adam, Director of James Robertson Sons, in connection with the idea of a plaque to be affixed in the Officers' Lounge. As you quite rightly surmised, the idea of a golliwog motif can create some embarrassing situations and after giving the matter considerable thought

we have come to the conclusion that we shall head off James Robertson as tactfully as we can.

...The golliwog motif might create embarrassment, if not resentment, in countries particularly such as East Africa and the Indian Sub-Continent. It must be remembered that the citizens of such countries do not look at things in the way British people do, and you will readily appreciate that in the circumstances in which we have to trade we cannot run the risk of upsetting their susceptibilities. (NMM CAY 224)

In the end, the matter, which had occurred at the height of the civil rights movement in the United States and the year before Martin Luther King's assassination, was resolved with a letter from Lemon indicating that, as Robertson's 'have had political difficulties in the USA and other places', they therefore understood B&C's demurrals.

The Robertson's issue, although incidental, is nevertheless extremely useful in decoding the psychological background to B&C's operations, and hence the interior design of its ships. Ted Lemon's assertion that *...in the circumstances in which we have to trade we cannot run the risk of upsetting their susceptibilities* is particularly revealing: in one sentence he sums up the B&C attitude towards business, towards ships as conveyers of meaning about identity and politics and, critically, also summarizes the nature of his company's relationships with those with whom it traded. No wonder that black Africa is nowhere to be found on board B&C's Union-Castle liners: just as Africans or East African Indians might, the company thought, be (unnecessarily) offended by the image of a golliwog, so white South Africa stood to be offended by any reference to the country's marginalized black population, a situation that was to become increasingly significant for Union-Castle. With the decline of the line's UK-South African passenger traffic, by the 1970s the line's ships were keenly marketed as coastal 'hotels' to the white business community:

Business can be conducted while in port or underway. In port clients can come aboard for discussions, conferences and other gatherings. There is the added attraction that they may enjoy entertainment facilities if they wish. (NLSA Union-Castle, MSC 59)

Causing offence to its white South African clientele was something that the shipping line simply was not going to risk. This being the case, it was not simply Pretoria that might be disturbed by mention of the South Africa's hidden majority: National Party sympathizers amongst B&C's all-white South African clientele would certainly not have expected to encounter references to their black compatriots. Equally, it was not unknown for the ships occasionally to carry influential passengers who would have had very strong views on the inclusion of references to black Africa. In January 1977, *The Clansman* reported that Rhodesian President John James Wrathall 'and his wife Doreen, were pictured aboard Windsor Castle during a short cruise they took in September last year' and that 'Mr and Mrs Wrathall sailed from Cape Town to Durban and back.' (NMM CL CAY /246/1-7) [Fig. 89]

More significantly still, on 23 Dec 1975 a memo was sent to the master of the *SA Vaal* from Castlemarine Travel Ltd:

There are no United Kingdom passengers travelling with you on this voyage specially to commend. Among the following travelling with you on the coast we would specially commend the following and anything that can be done to promote their voyage will be much appreciated: Mr P A Vorster, son of the Prime Minister and Mrs Vorster. (NLSA MSC 59. 16)

It was not only dignitaries to whom the holidaymaking potential of the Union-Castle fleet was increasingly directed, however. In attempts to fill berths, by the 1970s the line was increasingly addressing itself in these terms to a wide range of potential passengers, as *Reina's* Cape Town-South America cruises proved. A set of notes produced by the Cape Town Union-Castle office in 1971 discusses these issues and the ship's ambience as its main selling point in the move to attract customers. It is worth quoting the typescript at length:

### *Reina del Mar Cruises*

We have one ship, the *Reina del Mar*, engaged in full-time cruising. She is a one-class ship but having originally been built for three classes she has a wide variety of accommodation... The fares therefore cover a correspondingly wide range. The *Reina del Mar* is fully air-conditioned and stabilized but it would be wrong to describe her as a luxury ship.

In the six years that we have been operating her, *the Reina del Mar* has built up a tremendously popular reputation and undoubtedly her best advertisement is word of mouth. We therefore only need to spend money on advertising her for the purposes of keeping her name before the public...

The market for *Reina del Mar* cruises is, of course, entirely different from the First Class Mail ship market and in consequence the approach both creative-wise and media-wise needs to be entirely different. Although the top grade accommodation in *Reina del Mar* is expensive, it is important to avoid attracting the wrong type of passenger who would not feel happy on these cruises. *Reina del Mar* passengers do not come from any particular class but they must be gregarious. She is quite unsuitable for those who like to feel in any way 'exclusive'. She has, sometimes quite unfairly, been described as 'a floating Butlins' by the wrong type of passenger. We find that the best line in attracting the right type of passenger regardless of the size of his purse is to describe her as 'the friendly ship' (NLSA MSC 59 15)

Union-Castle's relegation of interior design considerations on board *Reina* in favour of the cheaper option of providing a fun and friendly holiday atmosphere – an approach also more akin to the increasingly popular airline tourist package – appears to have paid off. British botanist and travel writer Judith Berrisford's notes about her experience as a cruise lecturer on board the ship in 1969 include the following remarks:

#### *Reina del Mar* - Happiest ship afloat

A feature of life on board the *Reina del Mar* was the verve and spontaneity of the entertainments. Cabaret acts, put on by the untiring ship's purser and hairdresser's staffs who sometimes must have worked

twelve hours a day, included a skiffle group...and Black and White Minstrels. There was plenty of dancing for passengers too.

The cruise was plain sailing all the way, I'd always been happy when in a ship, but for me and for many others, the *Reina del Mar* became the happiest ship of all. (NLSA MSC 59 10 1)

The happiness and fun to be had on board had clearly become Union-Castle's main marketing pitch for *Reina* – something that the ship appears to have lived up to – and this incentive to travel was not dependent on aesthetics or decoration for its effectiveness. Union-Castle's interior design had come full circle.

*Pretoria Castle* and *Edinburgh Castle*'s sombre propriety and sedate interiors had eschewed formal design practice in the immediate post-war period in favour of the presentation of an appropriate visual gravitas in the early post-colonial period. The caution with which Union-Castle's first post-war liners were decorated ran in parallel with the mutual uncertainty of the relationship between the shipping company and Pretoria at this time. Interestingly, neither ship was ever refurbished by B&C, all the company's creative energy going towards the fitting-out of *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*. The highly styled interiors of these two ships became even more pronounced emblems of the arrival on the scene of B&C, in contrast with the ships of Sir Vernon Thompson's regime. The two 1960s vessels were also emblematic of the confidence and high profile associated with the ships launched during the South African economic boom. Although the relationship with Pretoria had been complex and difficult, the Republic's economic growth following the repression, albeit temporarily, of black resistance, along with propitious conditions for trade between B&C and the Republic, were the same factors which lay behind the lavish decoration of B&C's flagships of this period.

By the 1970s, the return of much more muted design for *Reina del Mar*'s passenger accommodation once again represented the prominence of considerations other than the aesthetic in the creation of rooms on board ship, and, indeed, in constructing the Union-Castle brand, which



had by now moved away from emphasizing the luxurious lifestyle afforded by its ships' interiors. Now that the design issues had had their day, key amongst the other marketing considerations to be taken into account was Union-Castle's need, in the 1970s, to promote the existence of a holiday atmosphere independent of the material fabric of surroundings on board.

The Union-Castle/Safmarine holiday brochure 'African holidays', a joint production of 1970, clearly demonstrates the relinquishing of ship interior design as an agent in its publicity strategy: nowhere are the liners' *interiors* mentioned or pictured. Far from evoking the grandeur of historical England via lavish interiors (or indeed its burgeoning pop-style via Tourist Class design), the central gambit of promotional literature of the early 1960s, 10 years later this particular brochure's front cover features not a ship, but a lion. [Fig. 90] Still redolent of colonial attitudes towards the exploration of the mysterious African continent, Union-Castle now pitched itself in terms of the possibilities its ships held for discovering the continent's magic, the cruise-oriented subtext of such a ploy being the idea that 'dangerous' and unknown lands such as the African continent might be explored from the safety of the ship or hotel to which the traveller could easily return:

Night falls quite suddenly. The blood red sun goes down and the earth begins to cool. Africa sleeps beneath a canopy of bright stars; and thousands of miles of changing landscapes take on a new aspect under the African night, unfolding from horizon to horizon, awaiting the dawn.

Africa. You can explore it at any time of year. Come with us and turn your dreams into the memories of a lifetime. (Union-Castle/Safmarine: 1970)

The extent to which holiday marketing had become a joint initiative between Pretoria (via Safmarine) and B&C is highlighted both by marketing material such as this 1970 publication and by documents such as the typescript 'Selling South Africa' quoted above. This material also provides evidence of the fact that tourism had become very important to the Republic as a means

of gaining better international standing and rapport and financial revenue. By the mid-1970s, diversification had become the byword for B&C's operations within the Republic.

Significant investments in Safmarine and donations to the National Party organ, the South Africa Foundation, served to offset any hiatus in the maritime trading relationship between the shipping company and Pretoria which accompanied the rise of air travel; they also served to protect B&C against any losses incurred in their passenger service operations as a result of the rise of political tensions within the Republic. Moves towards making greater investment in South Africa had been part of B&C thinking from the 1960s onwards. In August 1969, for example, the South African newspaper *The Daily News* announced an initiative indicating the business mood within B&C; interestingly, it was one which linked Nicholas Cayzer firmly with Afrikaner settler politics:

A giant new multi-million rand office and shop complex, [Fig 91] containing the largest block of flats in South Africa, is rapidly taking shape on Durban's Victoria Embankment. Commissioned by Cayzer Irvine, the 35-storey, R7 000 000 complex will radically change Durban's sky-line.

The complex consists of a massive curved tower-block named John Ross House...The building is named after the 15 year old Natal boy, John Ross, who, in 1826, set out from Port Natal to walk to Delgoa Bay to bring back medical supplies for Natal settlers. (NLSC Union Castle MSC 59)

In October 1973, B&C and Safmarine combined their operations under the name International Liner Services Ltd. Four years later, *Reina del Mar*, *SA Oranje* (formerly *Pretoria Castle*) and *Edinburgh Castle* were sold off or scrapped, and both *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle* were sold. On 27 September of the same year, 1977, *SA Vaal*, (formerly *Transvaal Castle*) became the last B&C-linked passenger liner to sail from Cape Town for Southampton, and the mail service, which had started 120 years earlier, came to a close. Significantly, however, it had been the slightly earlier final sailing of flagship *Windsor Castle* on 12 August 1977 that in many people's imaginations had signalled the end of the Union-Castle line. Importantly from the point of view of

one of the themes of this thesis, B&C's connections with the National Party and vice-versa, *Windsor Castle's* final voyage was only a month before Steve Biko, one of the key individuals responsible for bringing about the unravelling of the apartheid system which the shipping company had supported, was murdered. While the white liberal Afrikaner writer Laurens van der Post was to make a connection between *Windsor's* final sailing and his country's contemporary political situation, ironically van der Post also identified Union-Castle's departure with South Africa's continuing loss of overseas friendships which, he felt, were key to reaching 'emancipation' from apartheid:

...we were out on the waters with our last ever view of Cape Town... I was overwhelmed, not just by the enormity of the terminal act we had just witnessed, but by its timing, and how symbolic it was... Southern Africa was once more on its own and perhaps never so alone and in need of friends in its 300 years of existence as now. (van der Post: *The Times*: 24 September 1977)

The fruits of B&C's diversification and of the company's standing in South Africa continued to pay dividends, however. Testament to the relationship which had, though precariously at times, endured between B&C and Pretoria (and through the period 1965-1977, in fact, strengthened), was the arrival of the OCL's first container liner in Cape Town on 7 December 1977. Once again, Table Mountain presided over a new scene in the Bay's centuries-long history [Fig. 92]. Throughout the 30 years of the post-war period, the mutual interests of British and Commonwealth Shipping Ltd and the South African government had clearly informed the design of Union-Castle's passenger accommodation. Now, in the late 1970s, the shipping company and Pretoria jointly negotiated a situation which rendered the mail service and the carrying of passengers, and hence any provision for their accommodation, redundant. [Figs. 93 and 94]

This was not to say, however, that despite the mood of the country after the Soweto Uprising, and the way in which much of the outside world had condemned the Republic, that British holidaymaking in South Africa was at an end. As the Cape Town B&C company newsletter revealed in January 1978;

First arrivals to fly in [this year] include Sir Nicholas and Lady Cayzer. We welcomed our distinguished guests... It was good to see them looking fit and relaxed. Amidst the annual busy round of official engagements and social occasions we hope together to recover the Clive Corder Gold Trophy from Safmarine at Clovelly Golf Club on February 18<sup>th</sup>. (NLSA Union-Castle MSC 59 6)

## *Postscript*

In the year that *Reina del Mar* was purchased by Union-Castle, another icon of South African travel and holidaymaking, the luxury Blue Train, [Fig. 95] which travelled between Pretoria and Cape Town, was given an overhaul. The second-generation stock for the Blue Train was completed in 1972-3 and, as the land-based equivalent of the mail ships, was refurbished in such a way as to heighten its reputation for sophisticated and elegant luxury. As a companion guide to the trains put it; 'The Blue Train's reputation for comfort, excellent service, food, punctuality, Irish linen, crystal and silverware in the heart of some of the world's most rugged and spectacular scenery, soon spread around the world.' (Silber:1999:15)

It was not surprising that the revitalised carriages of the famous train matched both the service and the aesthetic offered by Union-Castle: the Blue Train, which began operation in 1939, had its origins in the Union Express (which departed on Mondays from Table Bay docks at 10 am and conveyed First Class passengers and mail arriving from the incoming Union-Castle Line ship), and the Union Limited (which left Pretoria at 06:30 am and Johannesburg at 08:45 am on Thursdays, to relay First Class passengers mail for shipment to the Cape Town docks in time to sail from Table Bay docks at 4pm on Fridays. Panelled interiors, fine dining, porcelain and damask all created the ambience of a grand European hotel. [Fig. 96]

On August 1st 1997, three years into South African democracy following the election of Nelson Mandela as President, another generation of the Blue Train glided out of Cape Town station, heralding a new era in its history. Whilst the train retained the atmosphere of a private club, it now also included a number of new features. These included African masks and ceramics and references to native Africa in the form of animal-print upholstery, [Fig. 97] which together created the environment into which Madiba-shirt wearing staff were able to welcome the new President and his partner on board. [Figs 98 and 99]

## Conclusion

Standing sleepless at 2:00 am, by the lavatories at the back of a Virgin Atlantic flight en route from Heathrow to Cape Town, I met Vee Wilson, a South African now living in London. We commiserated about the purgatory of a cramped 12-hour flight and made vague attempts to console ourselves with Virgin's orange juice. I ventured that the juice was at least a thoughtful measure. Wilson was scornful: 'Oh but you should have seen the way we *used* to travel... You're too young to know anything about Union-Castle...'. It was her sense of longing, rather than the kindness of the remark – not too young to have had first-hand experience of Union-Castle; I travelled with my parents on *Kenya Castle* and *Rhodesia Castle* on the East African Suez route in the mid-1960s – that struck home. It occurred to me that a number of our fellow 250 or more passengers would have made the same journey we were now enduring, until 1977 at least, by Union-Castle. I mentioned this to Wilson, who agreed and added how vitally important the shipping line had been to Capetonians '...because they were *mailships*, you see, they brought people, but they brought our mail, they brought that contact with the outside world, they brought my *Woman's Weekly*, for goodness' sake, which was vital!' (Wilson: Cape Town: February 2010)

Similarly, Peter du Toit, of Cape Town's Iziko Museums, told me during the course of my research that 'almost everyone in this city was affected by the Union-Castle: we all travelled on the ships, had relatives who did, or at the very least received news, letters and mail from the ships. Their arrival in and out of port was a big moment.' (du Toit: Cape Town: April 2008) Even though Lalou Meltzer, Director of Social Sciences at Iziko Museums, described her father as being very politicized with regard to British-South African relations, she said that he would often drive her down to the docks to see one of Union-Castle's ships berth and to watch mail, parcels, and cars being unloaded from one or other Union-Castle vessel. Professor Elizabeth Van Heyningen, brought up in Durban, also remembers the importance of Union-Castle to both ports. This was especially true in historically Europeanised Cape Town, where the influence of colonial settlement was particularly noticeable: Union-Castle had been *the* vital link with the UK, not just in

terms of contact with relatives, but also with the cultural and material world and the associated imaginings of a Britain 6000 miles away across the sea. The transporting of material, visual and information cultures of one society to another was central to the significance of the shipping line's arrival into port in Cape Town, then.

These exchanges had also been tangential to the journeys made by a whole range of emotional ties and imagined constructs relating to British-South African relationships in terms of colony, the neo-colonial situation and British (English) superiority, all of which have been identified by this study as being inscribed in Union-Castle's post-war ship interiors. Talking with Van Heyningen, author of many seminal works on Cape history, I was struck not only by the eloquence of her poetic understanding of Union-Castle's pivotal role in maintaining historical associations between Britain and South Africa, but also, in particular, by the fact that her nuanced language and manner of engaging with my reading of the ships' interiors was entirely appropriate to the complexities of the subject we were discussing. We felt that a subtext for Union-Castle's interiors was, for English-speaking South Africans, the view onto a more gracious age that the ships' interiors afforded, and for Britons, and for English travellers, a reassertion of waning imperial authority.

The importance of these links, and the impact of the imagined place of England's Empire vis à vis South Africa, as it was written into Union-Castle's interior design, is borne out by the enormous amount of media coverage of the shipping line's final departure from South African shores. Throughout 1977 the Cape Town press, radio and SABC television network were full of stories relating to the impending final sailing. This study has argued throughout that Union-Castle was a representative of, and operated according to, the mores of an enduring, complex and deeply entrenched relationship between the two nations at either end of the Cape Route. To this extent it is almost as if, for Capetonians at least, those ties ended not in 1961 with South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth, but in the late summer of 1977 with Union-Castle's final departure from 'the Mother City'. A column in South Africa's *Financial Mail* written during the summer of 1977 summed up the pathos surrounding the last sailing:

### Mailboats and memories

Part of the traditional South African way of life will soon be disappearing.... For many [this] day will be one of immense sadness...no freighter can imitate the imposing lines of the mailboat, nor take its place. You can fly, but to devotees of the captain's table, the comparison of the jumbo jet to the big ship is akin to that of the dog-cart to the landau.

Mailship passengers once included a special breed, found elsewhere only in the works of Somerset Maugham or Noel Coward. When Britain had a colonial Empire ... colonial servants crowded aboard the mailships at Durban and Cape Town on the first leg of their home leave, and returned the same way. Many worked in countries with names of distant memory like Tanganyika and Northern Rhodesia.

Both the [SA Vaal and the Windsor Castle] may end up cruising somewhere. But for them, and those who now go down to the sea in them, life will never be the same again. (NLSA Financial Mail:1977:MSC 59.6 (1))

Talk to anyone over the age of 35 in Cape Town, and a mention of Union-Castle is greeted with recognition, affection and recollections. Anyone white, that is. Attempt to explain 'Union-Castle' to someone from the black or Coloured communities, and one is met with blank incomprehension. At this point the poetics of the both the real and imagined associations between Britain and South Africa, and which echo through Union-Castle's ships' interiors, are abruptly terminated. It is hardly surprising that the shipping line was both foreign and unknown amongst these communities. As a result of one of the apartheid policy's mainstays, the passbook system (which defined and delimited the locale within which black and Coloured South Africans were allowed to live and move), very few non-whites, with the exception of dock workers, would have had occasion to witness Union-Castle ships sailing in and out of port, much less sail on them: this would have been beyond the financial reach of the marginalised South African majority.



This thesis has argued that there is nothing poetic about the operations of Union-Castle as *business*; that is, the way in which trade bound the shipping line to Pretoria, and the choices made, in particular by B&C's managing owners the Cayzer family, about the company's political allegiances. Both of these issues were played out in the design of the passenger accommodation on board Union-Castle liners. Over and above the more lyrical associations of an old-established relationship between Britain and South Africa, these ships' interiors were demonstrably influenced by the politics of apartheid as summarised below. In this context the question of the characteristics of mercantalism flagged, but doubted, (see p. 17) as the major contributor to the relationship between B&C and Pretoria, take on a particularly dubious overtone, the usual exigencies of any businessman's profit-making requiring the supporting and perpetuating of the status-quo and a siding with the already powerful meant that in this scenario Sir Nicholas Cayzer was very firmly allied with Pretoria.

The overarching argument of this thesis that the South African political regime of the years 1945 – 1977 were be of influence in the decoration of Union-Castle's ships' interiors has mapped a complex and involved history. It is one which describes both the one-upmanship of a parade of magnificently British interiors, replete, in First Class accommodation with all the associations of heritage and hierarchy that Pretoria was taking a stand against in leaving the Commonwealth but which also steered clear of any references to anything that would disturb the Apartheid project.

In support of this thesis' main argument, that Union-Castle clearly maintained and cultivated links with the Afrikaner National Party during the apartheid years became particularly noticeable from 1956 with the takeover of the line by British and Commonwealth Shipping, Ltd (B&C). Before this time the shipping line had retained an old colonial aloofness in terms of detailed involvement with Pretoria, its early post-war ship interiors designed to convey the continuing command of Britain in relation to its empire. After 1948, this distant attitude turned to outright suspicion of a nation now embroiled in the politics of an 'upstart' and distinctly anti-British regime. The many uncertainties of the years 1945-1955 created a situation in which Union-Castle clearly felt that major investment in its fleet was unwise. This decision-making was translated into the creation of

interiors that retained an aesthetic that was more in line with the decoration of pre-war ocean liners than with the contemporary dictates of government initiatives to foster design-conscious production, a situation which clearly indicates that design history need not confine itself to discussions of the cutting-edge, or 'well designed', in order to be meaningful.

The Cayzer takeover of Union-Castle, and the company's subsequent trading with South Africa during the economic boom years of the 1960s, gave rise to an altogether different approach both to business operations and to the interiors of the new ships, *Pendennis Castle* and *Windsor Castle*. Fitting-out by suppliers subcontracted by the liners' shipbuilders was now replaced by the semi-professional approach of decorator Jean Monro. Still emphasising Britain's place in the world, Monro's designs promoted ideas of a new English style, expressed on one hand through popular culture and youth style in Tourist Class accommodation, and on the other through the 'new-old' chic, borrowed from the country house and imbued with messages about aristocracy, heritage and pedigree. Although Pretoria, by now the capital of a republic, was to raise an eyebrow at so many references to Britain's imperial past, the period 1955-1965 saw the strengthening of the Union-Castle/National Party alliance. Bold new interiors thus matched the re-energised strength and confidence of both B&C and Pretoria, and the ships' studious avoidance of references to black Africa, as proposed here, ensured that this carefully constructed *entente* would not be interrupted.

The decline in worldwide shipping, the rise of containerisation and, more particularly, of air travel, from the mid-1960s heralded a third change of approach in the management of Union-Castle's operations. At this point the South African economic bubble now burst, a situation both created and exacerbated by internal unrest and international calls for sanctions; attempts were made, nevertheless, to bolster the fortunes of the South African merchant fleet Safmarine. The extent to which B&C was complicit with Pretoria became evident in the company's support of the South African merchant fleet and in wide-ranging onshore corporate acquisition in the country. In the context of deep uncertainty about the future continuation of a British mail service to South Africa, *Reina del Mar's* interior decoration played second place to the ship's role of establishing a

foothold in the cruise and tourist market by developing, instead of sophisticatedly styled interiors, a holiday atmosphere which referenced the neutral design of the airport lounge.

Union-Castle's interiors were not then simply the embodiment of imagined associations with the British historical past, nor of providing a fun, glamorous or privileged lifestyle; they were designed with the need to recognise, and accordingly adapt to, the political regime of another nation very much in mind. It is the central argument of this thesis, therefore, that these interiors were formulated to accommodate Pretoria as much as they were created as temporary living-spaces for Union-Castle's clientele. As has been argued throughout, accommodating the passenger also meant acknowledging and responding to the views and beliefs of Afrikanerdom during the post-war years.

Furthermore, if a key theme of this study has been one which relates to issues of representation, then Nicholas Cayzer's involvement with the machinery responsible for presenting 'grand apartheid' to the world, and the direct financial contributions made to that process, offer to provide a whole new slant on his ships' interiors; his defence of continuing to trade with South Africa, as mapped out in the June 1976 issue of *Time and Tide*, appearing even more dubious in view of the lies that the company were prepared to tell in order to conduct business. [Frontispiece] Whatever B&C marketing might have wanted to persuade the travelling public, for black Africans, South Africa during the years 1945-1977 was most definitely not fun.

Despite its corporate underpinnings, apartheid was not, of course, to survive. In fact, not scrapped until 2005 [Fig. 100], *Windsor Castle* valiantly outlived the regime into which it had been tied. Returning to Cape Town in the final stages of writing this thesis, on this occasion during the week that marked the twentieth anniversary of Nelson Mandela's release from jail, I went to look again at the prison building on the jetty from which chained activists had been sent to Robben Island. Within a minute's walk from Herbert Baker's Union-Castle Building, the jetty terminal contains displays relating to its former history. One image in particular struck me, something I had not noticed previously [p. 233]. It was a 1991 photograph of newly released prisoners arriving on

the mainland for the first time in many years, about to disembark from the prison boat that had transported them from the island, cardboard boxes with possessions in hand, and with Table Mountain, as ever, present in the background. The scene is one of palpable joy. In this recording of a moment captured 14 years after the last Union-Castle sailing from the same harbour, here at last, after three years' research, and in jolting contrast to the B&C 'It's fun...' poster, I had found a *real* image of jubilation that referenced both a ship and black Africa.

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