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Land, Race, and Citizenship: The Political Spaces of Monumentalism in South Africa

Abstract: This essay discusses the nature of (old and new) national monuments in post-apartheid South Africa which even now, twenty years after the first free elections, remains a democracy in transition. The discourse of monumentalism in transitional political systems is marked by concrete political interests that, in the case of South Africa, are centered on questions of race and citizenship as well as on territorial claims. Monumentalism in South Africa is inextricably linked to the spatial organization of political community, before and after apartheid, and as such it runs parallel to developments in public law and constitutionalism. On the one hand, officially sanctioned forms of monumentalism, such as the Voortrekker Monument, the Taal Monument, or Pretoria’s Freedom Park, tend to camouflage the political and social tensions of post-apartheid South Africa. On the other hand, new forms of monumentalism create accidental and liminal spaces that expose the political paradoxes and historical ambiguities of the new South Africa as in the case of the spatial relationship between the Women’s Monument and the cooling towers of the power station, painted with ANC motifs, in the urban landscape of Bloemfontein.

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This essay is, among many other things, about the four cooling towers of a power station and about a sandstone obelisk, otherwise known as the Vrouemonument, or National Women’s Monument. Both can be found in the city of Bloemfontein, South Africa. It is in the spatial relationship between the cooling towers and the Women’s Monument, I argue, that a new form of monumentalism emerges which is largely accidental and unintended. As such, this new monumentalism reflects, more so than any officially sanctioned form of monumentalism, the complexities of a post-apartheid South Africa which, twenty
years after the first fair and free elections, remains a democracy in transition.¹ This article, then, is primarily concerned with the way in which real politics is always part of monumentalism. Since monumentalism is embedded in real politics, it also reflects the manner in which concrete interests about political power and access to resources are negotiated in any given polity.² This has already been the case in nineteenth-century European and American monumentalism, which was directly concerned with the projects of the modern nation state, of nationalism, and empire. The intersection of real politics and monumentalism is particularly relevant, however, in transitional political systems, such as South Africa. South Africa’s monumentalism, both new and old, is not merely an aesthetic phenomenon with vague political implications. Rather, it is directly embedded in a set of intersecting themes that, at present, stand at the heart of South Africa’s constitutionalism and that also have a multilayered historical depth: land, race, and the question of citizenship. The situation, in other words, is complex and some explanations are necessary before it is possible to return to specific monuments.

Inasmuch as monumentalism always is of a historical kind, it should not be surprising, first of all, that it gains considerable relevance in periods of political transition that, invariably, have to deal with their own past. Everyday life in post-apartheid South Africa, as soon as it is shaped by political questions, is marked by a complex historical temporality that first emerged in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), set up in 1995, which presented the wider public with an often controversial historical accounting of the apartheid regime’s crimes.³ The TRC’s historical narrative, from eyewitness accounts and first-hand experiences to documentary material and sobbing public apologies, is far from linear; it develops as a network of overlapping themes, combining the personal and intimate with the grand scheme of racist segregation and economic exploitation that was apartheid.⁴ While the broader mandate of the

² I adopt the term “real politics” from Raymond Geuss, Philosophy and Real Politics (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008).
TRC – the recording of past crimes, coupled with the occasional amnesty, in the service of racial reconciliation – was initially greeted with much enthusiasm, it seems doubtful that the TRC has achieved its goal of preparing the ground for reconciliation and the emergence of a more inclusive notion of citizenship. Much of this has to do with the persistence of demands for retributive justice, but more importantly South Africa, in the early 2000s, saw an increasing shift from a dominant essentialist discourse of race to a discourse of social inequality along racial lines, even though the latter often remains couched in essentialist terms.

At the same time, and despite one of the most advanced constitutional documents of modern history, South Africa has not yet entered the realm of normal democratic politics. The ANC government’s consolidation and concentration of power, both on a regional and on a national level, often run counter to the normative ideals enshrined in the new constitution that came into effect on February 4, 1997, after an interim constitution between 1994 and 1996. Together with rising social inequality and the disastrous HIV/AIDS policies of previous decades, the growing attempt by the ANC governments under Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma to fuse its party program with the institutions of the South African state – justified by its historical claim as a liberation movement – is a direct threat to the constitutional norms of post-apartheid democracy in that it seeks to undercut the legitimacy of parliamentary as much as extraparliamentary opposition. The concrete problems of a transitional democracy, in other words, were bound to overshadow the goals of the TRC. As a result, real politics continues to be marked by contradictory and competing accounts of South Africa’s past, even predating the apartheid system that began with the victory of the National Party in 1948. Monumentalism in South Africa, old and new, cannot seriously be understood without paying attention to the historical layers and reference points that are part of real politics. Already at the beginning of this article, then, it is important to make a wider, and perhaps somewhat controversial, point: The questions raised by monuments, and by the broader discourse of monumentalism, cannot simply be dealt with in the realm of aesthetics and theory as it currently marks much cultural and literary studies.

To be sure, the intersection of monumentalism and real politics is hardly a novel phenomenon. Throughout the nineteenth century, the symbolic landscape of European nation states has generated a political “memory”: Founding myths – from the glorification of military victories and successful revolutions to the

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reinterpretation of traumatic historical events – respond to concrete problems of political justification.⁶ At the same time, we need to be cautious, in the following, not to overemphasize the use of “memory” and “trauma” as explanatory models for the historical dimension of what I have termed, above, “real politics”⁷. The excessive use of memory and trauma in current cultural studies contributes little to the understanding of real politics; not unlike the academic frequent flyer’s appeal to postcolonial rationalization, it tends to create comfortable moral indignation about past and current crimes instead of critical understanding, and it thus prevents us from recognizing how enmeshed we are in these pasts. Excessive appeals to memory and trauma as explanatory models continue and reaffirm what they claim to explain, while lacking attention for the fine distinctions and multilayered complexity that make up political and historical realities – if everything is memory, and everything can become a cultural or historical trauma, there is the danger that nothing really is and that the idealization of trauma and memory overshadows political responsibility.⁸

The politically contested nature of the symbolic landscape of monumentalism becomes most obvious when traditions and interpretations, political claims and historical assertions, clash, for instance, in the case of political transitions from colony to independence, or from authoritarian regime to democracy. This is the case especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where the style of European monumentalism, after the great wave of independence from 1956/57 to 1975, from Ghana to Angolan and Mozambique, was quickly adapted to local circumstances as well as to the political programs of the various liberation movements: Hypermodern, abstract concrete structures, such as Accra’s Independence Square or the Mausoleu Agostinho Neto in Luanda for the MPLA leader and first president of Angola, stand next to fairly traditional statues that resemble those of

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⁸ See, for instance, the extremely wide definition of cultural trauma in Jeffrey C. Alexander, “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma”, Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity, ed. Alexander et al. (Berkeley: U of California P, 2004) 1–30, at 1, as a “horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon … group consciousness” and that changes “future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways”. On this account, social and political responsibility is directly based on “trauma creation” – no trauma, no political responsibility.
Bismarck or Marianne, as in the case of the monuments for Samora Machel, the socialist revolutionary who led Mozambique to independence, or the statue of Nzinga Mbande, the seventeenth-century Angolan Queen, both in Maputo.

African monumentalism, then, at first sight seems to adhere to the phenomenon of “coloniality”, continuing colonial structures of power and knowledge, but also aesthetic principles, into the postcolonial era. Coloniality, though, is a contested discourse and we shall see that South Africa’s monumentalism, inscribed into the country’s spatial organization, not only reflects the multilayered political situation and historical trajectory of present-day South Africa. Indeed, monumentalism in South Africa, old as well as new, shows that notions of coloniality as much as the conceptual arsenal of postcolonial theory at large, or appeals to hybridity and the celebration of the subaltern, merely reflect what Craig Calhoun once described as the “class consciousness of frequent travellers” which invariably entails an “élite perspective on the world”. What is at stake in South Africa’s new monumentalism, and what comes to the fore in its contrast to an officially sanctioned form of monumentalism, are the pitfalls and tensions that are part of real politics beyond the normative hopes, justified or not, often projected onto a “rainbow nation” – itself a quasi-mythical term with both biblical and indigenous connotations, coined with good intentions by Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela but now largely used to gloss over the conflicts within South African society.

Part of real politics within the modern nation state, of course, is the idea of political citizenship. If such citizenship is made and formed over time and through a process that is far from straightforward, as opposed to the simple legal status of being in the possession of a specific national citizenship, then political citizenship is an inherently temporal phenomenon. It becomes manifest, first of all, in the multitude of practices with which we engage in the con-

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texts within which we live; secondly, it is reflected in the material world that we occupy, in the bricks and mortar of institutions and monuments, of infrastructure and commodities; and thirdly, it always has historical depth. In the same manner in which the circulation of things as commodities comes to express, as much as create, the values we subscribe to, so does the built environment through which we move in time, both as individuals and as part of specific political communities.\textsuperscript{13} Political citizenship, in other words, possesses a spatial dimension, both with regard to architecture itself but also with regard to the land and landscape within which this architecture is situated.\textsuperscript{14} It also possesses a historical dimension.

These spatial and historical dimensions of political citizenship become most obvious when such citizenship is highly contested, in terms of contemporary political and economic questions as much as in terms of its historical formation. Social exclusion, class division, racial divides, and the question of citizenship, then, are the themes of South Africa’s monumentalism, but what holds these themes together, we shall see, is the spatial and territorial organization of political community. This is bound to complicate our understanding of coloniality within the South African context. Indeed, as one commentator noted, “[T]he terms ‘postmodern’ and ‘postcolonial’ ... often operate as glib smokescreens for those too lazy to map the rich texture of political and cultural exchanges and appropriations that complicate such terms and render them meaningful”.\textsuperscript{15} This article, then, will focus on complexity over neat categorizations. This also means that the Bloemfontein cooling towers and the Women’s Monument have to be situated in a broader field that also includes the much larger, and better known, Taal and Voortrekker monuments as well as the more recent development of Pretoria’s Freedom Park.\textsuperscript{16}


Viewed from Naval Hill, the cityscape of Bloemfontein – almost in the center of South Africa and the birthplace of the ANC – is dominated by four cooling towers. The towers belong to a currently decommissioned, albeit operational, coal power station at the edge of the city center on Harvey Road just south of the main train station. Cooling towers, needless to say, are not a particularly pretty sight; they are functional architectural structures in grey concrete that, through simple evaporation, transfer the waste heat generated by power stations into the surrounding atmosphere. The Bloemfontein cooling towers are no exception here, and the power station used to generate electricity for the roughly 350,000 residents of the city and the barely 700,000 residents of the municipality at large, even though the actual number of residents is difficult to estimate. Since 2011, the municipality is called the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, which also includes the large township of Botshabelo, set up during the apartheid regime, and the town of Thaba ‘Nchu, founded in the early 1870s as a settlement for the Tswana and Sotho people. Both Botshabelo and Thaba ‘Nchu, however, are 50 km and 60 km removed from Bloemfontein itself, almost half-way to the border of Lesotho, highlighting the way in which racial segregation is inscribed into the geography, landscape, and built environment of South Africa.

The cooling towers of the Bloemfontein power station are 60 meters high. They used to be blank grey concrete – four foreign architectural objects in a cityscape that is largely free from any high-rise buildings, with the notable exception of the brutalist twenty-six-story C. R. Swart Building in the city center, which houses the provincial administration and a number of government departments. In 2008, however, as part of a project intended to show corporate responsibility but also to advertise Bloemfontein’s role in the upcoming Soccer World Cup, First National Bank, one of the largest banking corporations in South Africa commonly known by its abbreviation FNB, commissioned a large-scale art project. Covering the four cooling towers in canvas with the help of local artists and focusing on motifs inherently connected to the most positive aspects of the city’s cultural self-perception, the project was overseen by the South African subsidiary of Draftfcb, a large global advertising and public relations firm headquartered in New York City and Chicago. Within the difficult advertising market of South Africa – a minefield of political sensitivities marked

by economic and racial fault lines – Draftfcb positioned itself quickly as a leading public communications firm with ostensible Black Economic Empowerment credentials. Exceeding the remit of traditional advertising firms, Draftfcb not only provides marketing solutions, public relations advice, and product placement but also explicitly presents itself as “promoting behaviour change through social marketing, cause marketing and government communication campaigns”.

Focusing on FNB’s presence in Bloemfontein, two cooling towers were painted with local motifs in friendly colors, while the other two exhibited oversized and towering versions of FNB’s trademark logo: a shaded tree with the African sun rising in the background, combined with the three letters of the bank. Advertising connected seamlessly with the attempt at urban beautification, seeking to display a new kind of South Africa – colorful, proud of its local heritage, but also a place where business was able to thrive – in preparation for the 2010 Soccer World Cup. Draftfcb also placed advertisements in local newspapers, such as the Afrikaans Volksblad, to explain the newly painted iconography of the towers, clearly offering FNB much opportunity to highlight its corporate responsibility and community outreach.

Given FNB’s colonial origins and its not always stellar history, and against the backdrop of dramatically rising socio-economic inequality in post-apartheid South Africa, both the cooling towers and the newspaper advertisements offered a unique opportunity to show the softer and more involved side of African banking. This came at a moment, of course, when FNB was actively widening its interests throughout sub-Saharan Africa with a range of subsidiaries from Botswana to Zambia and planned subsidiaries in Rwanda and elsewhere. Now part of the financial services conglomerate First Rand Limited, FNB’s history is intimately connected with that of South Africa, and since its origins in 1838 in Grahamstown as the Eastern Province Bank it was also intimately connected to land claims, the organization of territorial space, and settler colonialism, from agriculture to mining operations. Through a series of mergers and acquisitions, the bank appeared under different names, with a clear colonial heritage, from the Oriental Bank Corporation and the National Bank of South Africa to Barclays Bank Dominion, Colonial and Overseas. In 1986/87, Barclays was forced to divest from its operations in the apartheid state and FNB emerged as one of the leading banking corporations in South Africa. While FNB, as long as it was under Barclays’ control, occasionally had a tense relationship with the apartheid regime, since Barclays did not hesitate to provide credit facilities to supporters of

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18 See <http://www.draftfcb.co.za/draftfcb.aspx#!/page_Partners>, acc. 28 May 2013. Clients are, among others, PetroSA, Old Mutual, Toyota, Coca-Cola South Africa, and Vodacom but also the South African Department of Trade and Industry.
the ANC, the centrality of land and territorial claims, inextricably linked to the imagery of Afrikaner nationalism, became the hallmark of FNB’s public relations campaigns once Barclays had been forced to divest from FNB. On February 9, 1989, David Goldblatt, as part of his photographic narrative of the symbolic landscape and material structure of apartheid South Africa, took the picture of an FNB billboard in Sannieshof, a small farming community in the flat Transvaal, the Afrikaner heartland. The billboard depicted a farmer, with his young son on his shoulders, looking out over a well-tended and bucolically pleasing agricultural landscape, accompanied by the slogan: “Waneer dit syne is, sal ons steeds hier wees. Eerste Nasionale Bank. Die professionele mense wat omgee [When this is his, we will still be here. First National Bank. The professional people who care]”.19 The double-meaning of “we will still be here”, referring to both the bank as a provider of financial instruments and to the Afrikaner farmer’s claim over the land, and thus to the territorial claims of Afrikaner nationalism, will not have been lost on the contemporary observer. Even commercial monumentalism in the old South Africa was concerned, above all, with the question of land and the political value of landscape and space.

In contrast, FNB’s 2008 initiative in Bloemfontein made the cooling towers become part of an officially sanctioned discourse of reconciliation that sought to negotiate past and present in positive ways, especially since reconciliation continues to be contentious almost two decades after South Africa’s first properly democratic elections in 1994. The political nature of the newly painted cooling towers is, however, difficult to ignore. This is the case mainly because of the architectural prominence of the cooling towers, built so close to the city center and not too far away from a brand new upmarket shopping mall and, just a little further to the North, the suburb of Waverley, with clean tree-lined streets and mansions in both the modernist and the more traditional Dutch Cape style, which both appear somewhat out of place on the arid high plateau on which Bloemfontein is located. North and North-West of the cooling towers the political and economic center of the city – its courthouse, museums, shopping malls, and business district – fades into largely upper middle and upper class neighborhoods. To the South of the towers is a no-man’s land of indistinct industrial areas and to the East the mainly poor townships that make up most of the municipality of Mangaung. The cooling towers always marked an economic and social as much as a racial divide. Furthermore, the towers are situated in close proximity to the city’s main train station, largely avoided by the white Afrikaans- and English-speaking population and mainly the entry point

for those who cannot afford to travel either by car or by airplane. Arriving at the train station and exiting onto Harvey Road, one only has to look left to see the four towers, and those arriving by train, for either work or visit, or to seek opportunity, are predominantly the black and coloured majority of South Africa.

Against the background of the architectural prominence of the cooling towers, and given their strategic and highly symbolic location in the urban landscape, it is not surprising that, in preparation for the centenary of the ANC, founded on January 8, 1912, in Bloemfontein, the towers underwent a dramatic change. A few months before the celebrations began in earnest in January 2012, and before thousands of visitors – politicians, businessmen, trade union leaders, public intellectuals, and foreign dignitaries – arrived in the city, the cooling towers were covered with new canvas, painted in the political colors of the ANC and depicting the presidents of the organization, dating back to its founding, such as John Dube, Albert Luthuli, and Nelson Mandela.

The choice of repainting and thus transforming the cooling towers into a political symbol highlighting the struggle of liberation had only partially to do with their imposing architectural presence, which nevertheless proved to be fortuitous. Right next to the towers, the newly renovated Waaihoek Wesleyan Church was indeed the founding place of the ANC in 1912.20 A far more basic and modest building than the cooling towers, the church stands at the center of Bloemfontein’s urban segregation, a largely forgotten monument of the spatial separation of whites and “natives” which preceded the apartheid system, albeit legally sanctioned by the Natives Location Act of 1879. Waaihoek, founded in 1846 on local farmland, was the first black and coloured township in Bloemfontein, even though it was not officially designated as such. With the city’s rapid population growth in the early decades of the twentieth century, Waaihoek suddenly found itself situated almost in the center of Bloemfontein, surrounded by wealthier white residential and business areas, and by the later 1920s most of its population had been forcibly removed to new black and coloured areas to the East of the city, such as Batho and Heidedal, later Bochabela and, by 1979, to the large township of Botshabelo.21 Although Waaihoek was completely demolished, the church remained, surviving both the construction of the power station and, in 1954, the new railway line linking Bloemfontein to Cape Town,

21 Bloemfontein’s rapid growth in the period between the 1890s and 1920s is not unusual but reflects a wider trend of urban growth in South Africa. See William Beinart, Twentieth-Century South Africa, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) 71–87. Urban growth, followed by a deep recession in the 1930s, prepared the ground for the success of Afrikaner nationalism.
which created a further barrier between the white population of Bloemfontein and the black and coloured populations of Batho, Heidedal, and Bochabela. Completely overshadowed by the cooling towers with their new ANC symbolism – the trademark brand of liberation – the tiny church not only became part of the ANC’s centenary celebrations. It also continued to represent the multi-layered symbolic landscape of South Africa’s slow transition from a dominion of the British Empire through the apartheid state to a seemingly postnational democracy with a new discourse of constitutionalism that, at its very heart, has to negotiate the complex relationship among the different versions of South Africa’s past and its present condition as a state that struggles with its own democratic premises.

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What emerges in the context of the Bloemfontein cooling towers is a new discourse of monumentalism that is of relevance beyond mere urban archaeology for the political self-perception of an increasingly fragile democracy whose difficulties and contestations are inscribed into the symbolic landscape that surrounds its citizens, regardless as to whether they want to or not. At first sight, it is difficult to overlook that after 1994 most publicly as well as privately funded monuments and memorials, albeit with some exceptions, tended to focus on both reconciliation and nation-building, and as such they remain contested and ambivalent. Most monuments that are designated to be “national monuments” continue to have negative connotations, since they were constructed during the apartheid years, and the transition from apartheid to democracy becomes visually and tangibly manifest in the continued existence of apartheid monuments in post-1994 South Africa. Furthermore, the combined logic of reconciliation and nation-building is not without its tensions. Reconciliation inherently requires a recognition of otherness that rightly goes beyond mere tolerance but which invariably also has to emphasize difference. On the other hand, the social and political integration of South Africa along the lines of nation-building, creating a relatively unified constitutional polity that is at once real and ima-

gined, often has to ignore the aspect of difference that is part of the discourse of reconciliation. Even though, for instance, the constitution of the ANC defines the latter’s task as building “a South African nation with a common patriotism and loyalty in which the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the people is recognised”, such recognition is withdrawn to some extent in its overall claim “[t]o unite all the people of South Africa, Africans in particular”. Reconciliation, to be certain, requires the recognition of otherness and of other people’s rights, and it creates, as a result, more equality between the different parties to be reconciled than, for instance, a more hierarchical notion of tolerance. Tolerance does not need to lead to mutual recognition and can even entail a repressive dimension: It is quite possible for a majority in any given polity to tolerate a minority group without being willing to extend any rights to this minority.

Against this background, we can expect monumentalism in South Africa to highlight a fundamental paradox at the very heart of transitional democracies, namely their appeal to both heterogeneity and unity at the very same time. This necessarily creates a difficult relationship between, on the one hand, the undoubtedly need for a radical democracy that allows for the possibility to negotiate the relationship among government and governed in a way that provides a pluralist form of justice, and on the other, the need to translate such ideals into a sovereign nation state that, by its very definition, requires some form of unity, imagined or otherwise. This is particularly important to point out, since the most successful liberation movements of the twentieth century did not create postnational democracies but traditional nation states, as in the case of South Africa and India, even though the imagined unity of nation and of the nation state can be interpreted loosely and does not require cultural or ethnic homogeneity. Moreover, the wider geopolitical developments around 1994, that is, during South Africa’s transition from apartheid to democracy, did not replace the structural oppositions of the Cold War with a new postnational form of poli-

25 See James Tully “Reimagining Belonging in Diverse Societies” and “The Negotiation of Reconciliation”, both in Public Philosophy in a New Key, 1: 160–184, at 166–170 and 223–256, at 229–238, respectively.
28 On the persistence of the nation as a political point of reference even in seemingly hybridized societies, see Anthony D. Smith, Nationalism (Cambridge: Polity P, 2001) 127–130.
tics. Rather, the end of the Cold War lead to a resurgence of ethnic and nation-
alist conflict, and to the rediscovery of national identities where there had been
none. The nation state, after 1994, is alive and kicking, as it were, and procla-
mations of a multicultural and postnational world need to be treated with some
cautions. On the other hand, it is quite reasonable to assume that the protec-
tions offered by constitutional government are best and most fully realized in
nation states, even though this should not be seen as precluding the notion that
constitutionalism has historically been a broadly transnational project, often
interlinking local, national, and global actors and institutions. Nevertheless,
national monuments in South Africa after apartheid also reflect the ambivalence
of the nation state, and of nationalism, as both an emancipatory project and
as a project based on exclusion, and it is this paradox that comes to the fore
in inevitable debates about membership, i.e., citizenship and about territorial
rights.

Against this background, it is not difficult to realize that the discourse of
monumentalism in South Africa is inherently bound up with questions of con-
stitutionalism and public law. Indeed, South African monumentalism, through-
out the twentieth century, runs parallel to developments in public law: What
the discourses of monumentalism and public law have in common is their orga-
nization of territorial space, of movement within this space, and of the political
claims that go along with it. Territorial jurisdiction and the formation of a sym-

bolic landscape go hand in hand. Already the early formation of a symbolic
landscape in South Africa through both British as well as Afrikaner memorials
is connected to claims over land and therefore to property rights: Each and
every monument and memorial, both small and large, scattered throughout
South Africa referring to the Great Trek of the Boers north into the inland to
leave behind the Cape Colony dominated by the British, responding to the two
Anglo-Boer Wars, or marking the violent encounters between white colonialists
and the Zulu kingdom – each and every one of these monuments constitutes a

31 See, for instance, Jeremy A. Rabkin, Law without Nations? Why Constitutional Government Requires Sovereign States (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005), although this ultimately leads Rabkin to argue for an American exceptionalism that is not warranted by the substantive historical points of his argument.
territorial claim. These territorial claims, moreover, gain in relevance not only because they are situated in space, and in the landscape, as markers of rule, but they are continued through their registration, itemization, classification, and explanation in books and even radio broadcasts that are able to circulate, as political commodities, in the public realm.33

At the height of apartheid, during the 1970s, less traditional monuments like the Taal Monument, or Afrikaans Language Monument, overlooking Paarl, make similar claims. Unveiled in 1975, the monument ostensibly celebrates the fifty years that Afrikaans has been an official language providing an intellectual and cultural link between “the large, shining West [die groot helder Weste]” and “the magical Africa [die magiese Afrika]”, as the poet N. P. van Wyk noted on a prominent plaque at the entrance to the monument. More interesting than what almost can be read as a statement of reconciliation – even though it is obvious that the West is great and Africa merely magical – is the inscription, in large capital letters, on the pathway leading up to the monument and viewing platform: DIT IS ONS ERNS, which can mean both “we are serious about this” and “we are earnest about this”. What matters, in this context, is less the explicit meaning of the monument than the claim it makes, built into the hillside and overlooking a wide valley: It is a serious claim about land, overlooking what is under the control of both the language and the legislation written in the language. On the one hand, the opening of the monument coincided with the beginning of the South African Defence Force’s covert operations in Angola. The latter might often be regarded as merely a proxy conflict representing the interests of the main opponents during the Cold War, but in reality it was also an attempt to safeguard South African influence, as much as its territorial integrity, in Southern Africa.34 On the other hand, since 1973, activism among migrant workers created new forms of resistance and by 1975 protests involving students and


trade unions had begun to open a new front against the apartheid state, leading up to the violent Soweto Uprising a few months after the inauguration of the Taal Monument.\textsuperscript{35}

As such, the Taal Monument needs to be placed in a much wider historical context that exceeds its seemingly innocent focus on the Afrikaans language. Even the design of the monument was imperial in orientation. In the massive granite structure of concave and convex elements conceived by the architect Jan van Wijk, the three small markers that symbolize the African languages – isiXhosa, isiZulu, and seSotho – cannot be seen from afar but are overshadowed by a hollow granite needle reaching into the sky. It is the latter which represents the exponential growth of Afrikaans and which can be seen from afar. The lines, curves, and other geometric forms of the monument constitute a scientific graph, an architectural statement of mathematical clarity, and it is, of course, geometry that allows to both represent and control space. The insertion of the monument into the landscape, then, transforms the landscape itself into something that is of an inherently political nature.\textsuperscript{36}

Within the South African context, and especially with regard to the representation of space and landscape among the white Afrikaans-speaking population since the early nineteenth century, the Taal Monument’s positioning above the landscape is of crucial importance. As a high point from which to view the surrounding valley and hills, the monument seeks to make this landscape accessible, turning the latter into a experiential space in which the identity of the observer and the landscape are fused – similar to the FNB billboard from 1989 mentioned above.\textsuperscript{37} The monument, then, is not simply concerned with a celebration of Afrikaans as a language, but it is mainly concerned with the political ownership of land: This land is ours.

Landscape, to be sure, is always of a political kind in that it never simply exists but is rather made, or constructed, through visual representations and narratives. There is no such thing as landscape in nature.\textsuperscript{38} But the Taal Monu-

\textsuperscript{35} Migrant worker activism in the townships is a particularly interesting case in this context, since it also connected demands for rights to mobility. See Mahmood Mamdani, \textit{Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism} (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996) 218–284.


ment’s positioning goes one step further and is embedded in the real politics of South Africa. In many ways it represents an organization of space and of territorial claims that comes to the fore in all official South African monuments but especially those pre-dating the transition of 1994. It is this organization of space that entails racial segregation and, crucially, the disenfranchisement of the majority of South Africans. The history of South Africa’s monumentalism runs parallel to its legislative and constitutional history: The opening of the Women’s Monument in Bloemfontein coincided with the Natives Land Act, No. 27 of 1913; the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument was laid into the ground just before the Representation of Natives Act, No. 12 of 1939, and just after the Native Trust and Land Act, No. 18 of 1936; the opening of the Voortrekker Monument coincided with the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, No. 55 of 1949, and was immediately followed by the Group Areas Act, No. 41 of 1950. Once we keep in mind the development of the legislative efforts that render racial segregation possible, it becomes more obvious that, in contrast to racism in the U.S. or Britain, the system of apartheid is above all concerned with the “control of space” in an almost unprecedented way.40

It is necessary to distinguish between different levels of apartheid – the petty apartheid of everyday life that prevents blacks and coloureds from using specific public restrooms, the urban apartheid that is geared toward the provision of cheap labor for the white population, and the apartheid on the level of the state which provides the legislative, executive, and administrative tools for other forms of apartheid. What holds these levels together, however, is spatial segregation.41 It is the latter, which in the case of South Africa allows for the introduction of a form of citizenship that excludes the majority of the population. Under Hendrik Verwoerd, first as minister of native affairs (1950–1958) and then as prime minister (1958–1966), segregation coupled with partition became the official policy, supported by a broad range of parliamentary acts that, from 1949 onward, consolidated a system of spatial exclusion that had existed in more informal ways throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.42

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39 This list can be continued into the post-apartheid era: The opening of the first phase of Freedom Park by Thabo Mbeki coincided with the Communal Land Rights Act, No. 11 of 2004, and the South African Citizenship Amendment Act, No. 17 of 2004.
The Bantu Authorities Act, No. 68 of 1951, created new “homelands” for the black population, most famously Bophuthatswana, west and southwest of Pretoria, KwaZulu, in the hinterland of Durban, and Transkei and Ciskei on the coast further to the South. With the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, No. 46 of 1959, these “homelands”, or Bantustans, were administratively decoupled from white South Africa, even though they often continued to receive considerable transfer payments from Pretoria. The Black Homelands Citizenship Act, No. 26 of 1970, finally denied South African citizenship to the African population in these areas. Together with what is generally known as the Pass Laws Act of 1952, which severely limited the mobility of the black and coloured majority of the population, the Natives Resettlement Act, No. 19 of 1954, and the Group Areas Act, No. 41 of 1950 (revised and extended in 1957 and 1966), fundamentally segregated the entire urban landscape in South Africa, over time moving several million people into racially defined urban and rural areas. By the 1970s, around the time of the opening of the Taal Monument, apartheid’s main goal continued to be the relocation of roughly 80% of the population to 13% of the land. While the British administration had already pushed for the establishment of specific “reserves” for the black population in 1913 and 1936, two years before the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument was laid, it was this new form of legislated and sophisticated spatial control that transformed apartheid into a system that exceeded simple racism. The Tomlinson Report of 1954 – a government-commissioned statistical assessment of the economic feasibility of apartheid policies that pushed for further racial segregation and sought to justify the economic exploitation of Africans – warned that the Bantustans were not economically viable constructions and would eventually require massive investment to counteract overcrowding, poverty, and violent resistance. 

43 For an overview of the emergence of the apartheid system and the implementation of its policies during the 1950s, see Beinart 2001, 143–169. On the concept of race and the methods of racial classification that stood at the center of these policies, see Saul Dubow, Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 246–283.

44 For a summary of the report, which itself ran over many volumes of text and data, see Summary of the Report of the Commission for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1955) and, for a concise overview, see Hobart Houghton, The Tomlinson Report: A Summary of the Findings and Recommendations in the Tomlinson Commission Report (Johannesburg: South Africa Institute of Race Relations, 1956). See also, broadly, Jeffrey Butler, Robert I. Rotberg & John Adams, The Black Homelands of South Africa: The Political and Economic Development of Bophuthatswana and KwaZulu, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1978) 157–218. Retrospectively, however, some of the conclusions of this study seem absurd, such as the claim that the existence of self-governed, albeit impoverished, “homelands” for black Africans would offer these communities an
theless, the political reordering of South Africa’s landscape and the internal deportation of the majority of black and coloured South Africans ultimately restricted both their legal as well as political citizenship until 1994, when most of the apartheid legislation was repealed on the basis of the new constitutional arrangement.

The historical depth of contemporary South Africa, together with the resulting political tensions and uncertain identities, becomes manifest prominently in the often accidental new monumentalism of liminal spaces, such as the cooling towers in Bloemfontein. South Africa’s new monumentalism subtly undermines, through the contrasts and tensions it brings to the fore, the strangely ironic continuation of racial essentialism in post-apartheid South Africa. It visibly puts into question, for instance, those racial classifications that were crucial for the apartheid regime but are now present in the Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998, which seeks to provide access to resources for precisely those parts of the population that, until 1994, were largely excluded from these resources.45

The ANC recognized early on the full meaning of the way in which monumentalism intersects with real politics, and in 1994 the ANC, unsurprisingly, sought control over the National Monuments Council. The latter had been created by the National Monuments Act, No. 28 of 1969, and its jurisdiction also included Namibia, under South African control until 1988. By 2000, however, the council was replaced by the South African Heritage Resources Agency, following the National Heritage Resources Act, No. 25 of 1999. Control over the Monuments Council, needless to say, was of crucial political importance, since the council’s decisions as much as its budgetary allocations controlled and shaped the way in which South Africa’s past was publicly represented.

Although the council, in 1992, had begun to recognize anti-apartheid sites, the 1994 transition created a number of political and financial questions. What to do with the considerable amount of monuments representing the claims of Afrikaner nationalism? What would be the political fallout if the Voortrekker Monument, or the Taal Monument, were replaced or destroyed? After 1994, the ANC government consciously decided to accept the massive public expenditure necessary to keep up and modernize such monuments in the service of a broader goal of reconciliation, even though the public statues of Hendrik Verwoerd and other architects of the apartheid state slowly began to disappear from their pro-

opportunity for political, administrative, and economic development. In the period from the Tomlinson Report of 1954 to the transition of 1994 quite the opposite has been the case.

45 See Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998 (Pretoria: South African Department of Labour, 2004) 3, § 1: “[B]lack people” is a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds and Indians”. See also the provisions at §§ 15.2(d) and 15.3.
minent places in front of city buildings, town halls, court buildings, government departments, and cultural institutions.

Nevertheless, the dominance of the ANC in reshaping South Africa’s symbolic landscape, however understandable, does not come without its problems.\(^{46}\) The consensual history of South Africa that the ANC government initially sought to promote through its monument policy remained contested among a broad range of communities, from the ultra right-wing fringes of Afrikaner nationalism to local groups in townships.\(^{47}\) As a response, the ANC’s policy shifted to creating alternative sites for new monuments and add-ons for existing monuments that sought to provide a contrasting interpretation of historical events.\(^{48}\) Commemorating the Battle of Blood River, in which 470 Boer commandos overwhelmed a much larger Zulu force, in what is now the province of KwaZulu-Natal, an Afrikaner monument of nationalist kitsch is contrasted by the Ncome Monument and Museum on the other side of the river, presenting the Zulu version of the events of December 16, 1838.\(^{49}\) Nevertheless, the material site of the Afrikaner monument at Ncome River continues to serve as a rallying ground for the right-wing fringes of Afrikaner nationalism: Every other year hardline Boers, who trace their family histories back to the original Voortrekkers, celebrate December 16, the “Day of the Vow”, in traditional garb, horses and wagons included.\(^{50}\)

Given the site's historical and political relevance, it was certainly apt to construct a new monument, focusing on the Battle of Blood River as \textit{iMpi yaseNcome} on the other side of the river and in plain view of the older monument. The bellicose nationalist kitsch of the Afrikaner monument – one ox wagon in granite erected in 1947 complemented in 1972 by sixty-four wagons in bronze with added cannons – is now extended by the, as yet unfinished, Ncome Museum and Monument Complex, which seeks to present an alternative narrative in a building that takes its architectural cues – kitsch nonetheless – from a stylized version of the Zulu tradition ready for tourist consumption.\(^{51}\)

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49 On the battle itself, see S. P. MacKenzie, \textit{Revolutionary Armies in the Modern Era: A Revisi-}

new South Africa, however, such architectural corrections of the historical imagination invariably lead to further tensions, since the new monument and museum can certainly be seen as an expression of regional Zulu nationalism, ethnicizing a monument that was perhaps initially intended to bridge such divides.52

Given the importance of such contrasts within the symbolic landscape of South Africa, it is necessary to note that monumentalism, new and old, after 1994 is often not so much concerned with what is represented and how it is represented but rather where it is located. The spaces of monumentalism in post-apartheid South Africa do not consist of contested representations, but they are contested sites and spaces. Nowhere does this become more obvious than in the photographs by David Goldblatt, who has recorded the spatial and material “structure” of South Africa’s political landscape throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s highlighting the at times bizarre manifestations of monumentalism. Unsurprisingly, in Goldblatt’s photographic account of the political materiality of South Africa’s landscape the dates 1838 and 1938 stand out. They refer both to the Great Trek of the Afrikaner people, which gave birth to those territorial claims that stand in the background of the apartheid regime, and to the right-wing Afrikaner Ossewa-trek, which sought to retrace the steps of the Great Trek in 1938 and left visible traces, monuments, and inscriptions in the South African landscape, retaking the Boer territory once again through the tools of monumental memorialization.53 The Ossewa-trek was organized by the Ossewabrandwag, a pro-Nazi organization of nationalist Afrikaners founded in Bloemfontein, which sided with Germany during the Second World War but whose influence on the radicalization of Afrikaner nationalism and racists policies should not be underestimated.54 In Ventersdorp, barely 160 km to the West of Johannesburg, the territorial claims and the policy of racist segregation are inscribed directly into the land: The tracks left by the wagons of the right-wing Ossewa-trek were cemented into the ground in 1938, emphasizing that the trek’s movement through Boer territory is the monument itself, and in 1988 the cemented handprints of the leaders of the extreme right-wing paramilitary organization Afrikaner Weerstands beweging were added to the cemented tracks with a plaque.55

54 On the history of the organization, see Marx 1998, 273–322.
55 See Goldblatt 1998, 150.
Inscriptions in the land, such as those left by the Ossewa-trek, transform landscape into a territory of domination. No monument, however, exemplifies the claim to territorial rule and political domination in quite the same way as Gerard Moerdyk’s Voortrekker Monument on a hill outside Pretoria. A massive monolithic structure that combines the features of a cathedral and a tomb with the standard repertoire of fascist architecture, the Voortrekker Monument was inaugurated in December 1949 with a celebration of Afrikaner nationalism involving an audience of somewhere between 175,000 and 250,000 people. Public speeches celebrated the recent victory of the National Party, and the lost Anglo-Boer War was presented as a founding myth for South Africa’s white future in front of an audience partly in Voortrekker costumes, on horseback, and on ox wagons, and with the occasional Coca-Cola sign, of all things, in the background. The foundation stone for the monument was laid in 1938 to commemorate the Great Trek of 1837–1838 from the Cape Colony inland to the Drakensberg region and further into what is today KwaZulu-Natal. The Voortrekker Monument, thus, presents a story about the taking of land, of settler colonialism, but also of treaties about territorial claims and of betrayal. As such, and very much like the mythical narratives of the American frontier, it is not difficult to see how the events of 1837/38, which culminated in the slaughter of the Boer leader Piet Retief and his entourage by the Zulu king Dingane and the subsequent, highly successful revenge commando raid on the Zulu forces at Ncome River could become center pieces of Afrikaner nationalism.

Retief’s killing by Dingane’s men is of special importance in this context, since both had just signed a treaty, on February 4, 1838, that allowed the Voortrekker group to stake territorial claims and settle the boundaries of their new homeland. Leaving aside the details of the story, it is the connection among territorial claims, broken legal obligations, and the experience of violence that is able to transform the Great Trek from a simple story about the frontier into a powerful political founding myth for the apartheid regime, centered on a historical trauma that, from the perspective of the Afrikaner nationalists, had been turned over a period of 100 years into a success story that highlighted the superiority of Afrikaner culture – a superiority both over black Africans and over a British Empire that was in rapid decline after the Second World War.

Barely a year after the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument apartheid legislation took its course. As such, the monument marks architecturally the

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56 Settler colonialism is the driving economic and political force in Southern Africa throughout the nineteenth century. See Beinart 2001, 36–61.
real effects of the historical trauma of the Boers that had been transformed into the founding myth of Afrikaner nationalism, while materially linking the government policy of racial segregation to the events of 1838, in particular the legal treaty about territorial claims between the Boers and the Zulu, Retief’s death, and the subsequent Battle of Blood River. Two of the enormous statues at the corners of the monument depict Retief and Andries Pretorius, who had led the successful commando raid on the Zulu warriors. The foundation stone was laid by, among others, the grand and great-grand daughters of Retief and Pretorius, underlining the charged role of Afrikaner women for the continued reproduction of the white race. Under the foundation stone, it is claimed, we can find a copy of the treaty between the Boers and the Zulu. Historical trauma, legal claims about territory, colonial domination, and supremacist fantasies are rolled into one architectural structure.

While the complex, which today is presented to the public in a decidedly apolitical manner, also includes an amphitheater for more than 20,000 people and a massive wall that surrounds the monument and depicts the ox-wagons of the Great Trek in a defensive position, presumably directed against the symbolically black African space beyond the monument’s boundaries, the building arrangement is centered on the monolithic monument. The latter can be seen from afar and thus constitutes a marker in the symbolic landscape, but the surrounding landscape can also be viewed from the top of the monument, so that, as in the case of the Taal Monument, the building is directly linked to the political control of the surrounding territory. Furthermore, the monument contains a cenotaph and can be entered as a kind of inner sanctum of Afrikaner nationalism, while the sacral dimension of this inner space is further enhanced by the symbolic use of light as it enters the building through a sky dome, some forty meters high. Each year on December 16—the “Day of the Vow” in apartheid South Africa, which commemorated the successful attack on the Zulu warriors at Ncome River and which established a quasi-religious claim over the territory as a homeland for the Afrikaners—a sun ray falls onto the cenotaph at the bottom of the monument, inscribed with the words “Ons vir jou Suid-Afrika [We for you, South Africa]”. As in the case of the later inscription on the pathway leading to the Taal Monument, this constitutes a direct claim of rule and dom-

58 See <http://www.voortrekkermon.org.za/>, acc. 1 June 2013, which simply notes: “The majestic Voortrekker Monument is situated in the northern part of South Africa in the Pretoria (Tshwane) region in a nature reserve. It is a unique Monument which commemorates the Pioneer history of Southern Africa and the history of the Afrikaner and is situated in a beautiful setting”. 
ination that fuses the Afrikaner as a people with the territory of South Africa, creating a form of political citizenship that is inherently exclusionary.

The Voortrekker Monument certainly exhibits many architectural similarities with the old monumentalism of nineteenth-century Europe, and it is indeed directly modelled on the much larger Völkerschlacht Monument in Leipzig. But the depiction of Afrikaner women, as statues and on friezes that tell the story of the Great Trek, also links the monument to the 1913 Women’s Monument in Bloemfontein, which is not surprising since Moerdyk, the main architect, also brought Anton van Wouw on board, who had designed the statues in Bloemfontein. In the case of the Voortrekker Monument, however, the role of women is entirely subordinated to the dominant role of the Afrikaner men, and this iconography is repeated in the ritualistic opening ceremony of 1949, which made international headlines, for instance, in an article in the American Life magazine on January 16, 1950. Against this background, it is not surprising that the Voortrekker Monument should be a particularly contested site in post-apartheid South Africa.

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Traveling south on Bloemfontein’s Harvey Road, past Bophelo House and the early twentieth-century architecture of the central train station and its outbuildings but also past the street vendors, travelers, and food stalls with Tastic Rice, Star Super Maize Meal, and Jungle Oats, any observer will immediately realize that the cooling towers of Bloemfontein’s power station mark a boundary. Beyond this boundary, and beyond the last supermarket inviting its customers to “Have a Ding Dong Day”, the cityscape is taken over by an industrial area of small and medium-sized workshops, showrooms, car repair shops, and similar enterprises. Harvey Road itself, however, extends almost imperceptibly, past a roundabout, into Monument Road, leading to the outskirts of Bloemfontein and to the Women’s Monument. Together with the Taal Monument outside Paarl and the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, the Women’s Monument in many ways represents the symbolic landscape of an older monumentalism, intimately connected to the apartheid regime and thus to the spatial segregation that is

the most pervasive feature of the latter. In the most straightforward manner, the cooling towers with their ANC symbolism are directly connected to one of the prime Afrikaner monuments by a traffic artery that runs parallel to the train tracks and thus also renders manifest the spatial segregation between the black and coloured townships to the East of the city and the wealthier, predominantly white suburbs in the West and North.

Inaugurated in 1913, and designed by the architect Frans Soff with additional sculptures by Anton van Wouw, the Women’s Monument is a fairly basic structure that, especially in winter, almost blends into the landscape because of its use of locally available material reflecting the beige and brown colors of the semi-arid Highveld that surrounds the city of Bloemfontein. It mainly consists of a central sandstone obelisk of 36.5 m in height on a foundation equally made of sandstone and surrounded by semi-circular walls that demarcate a small square right in front of the obelisk. The lower part of the obelisk is dominated by a bronze sculpture of two women, one of which holds a dying child in her arms, with an explanatory inscription in Afrikaans and flanked by friezes, emphasizing liberty and suffering but also an appeal to the nation, the vaderland, which already hints at the very fact that the emancipatory ideals of the monument are bound to be limited by subsequent male interpretations of Afrikaner nationalism.

Between the sculpture and the explanation, however, the central inscription reads: “Aan onze heldinnen en lieve kinderen. ‘Uw wil geschiede’ [To our heroines and beloved children. ‘Thy will be done’].” The women and children that perished in the camp system are transformed into a religious trope, and the quotation from the Lord’s Prayer, as it appears at Matthew 6: 9–13, has a multi-layered and vague meaning: It can, of course, simply be read along the lines of a certain Stoicism, noting that the suffering in the camps was merely God’s will that had to be endured, but it is also an appeal to the future, that the surviving Afrikaner women and their descendants will bring about God’s will, leaving aside what God’s will might be. The vagueness of the inscription, undoubtedly, is bound to make the monument adaptable to different circumstances and changing political conditions.

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Situated merely 2 km from the cooling towers with the ANC imagery in the center of Bloemfontein, and almost in a straight line, the Women’s Monument is, above all, a memorial to the almost 27,000 women and children that died during the Anglo-Boer War in British concentration camps set up throughout the Free State and elsewhere, which, in the view of the British commander, Lord Kitchener, were a crucial means to achieve a British victory in a long and extraordinarily bloody conflict, of whose value and relevance the British public itself was rather skeptical. The iconography of the two grieving women with the dying child, however, is directly based on an artistic rendering by the British welfare activist Emily Hobhouse, the sister of the liberal politician and political theorist Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse. Vehemently opposed to what she had experienced as the unwarranted and cruel treatment of the Afrikaner civilian population by the British forces, she publically criticized the Anglo-Boer War and, like her brother, directly influenced the changing British opinion about the war. Able to travel to Bloemfontein at the height of the war because of her family’s connections to the political establishment and senior civil servants in London, Hobhouse witnessed the conditions in these concentration camps at first hand, from overcrowding and lack of hygiene to an increasing lack of basic resources, such as food and medicine, that were intentionally withheld from the women and children in the more than thirty camps of varying size between Port Elizabeth on the coast and the towns of the Free State, several hundred kilometers inland.\textsuperscript{62} The mortality rate among the weakest prisoners, in particular children, accelerated dramatically over a period of eighteen months, and in the camp at Springfontein, a small farming community en route from Port Elizabeth to Bloemfontein, Hobhouse reportedly witnessed the scene that is depicted on the central sculpture of the Women’s Monument. The iconography is clearly reminiscent of the pathos formulae derived from Greek tragedy, which the context of the inscription turned into a Christian motif of suffering compatible with the ideological commitments of the Dutch Reformed Church’s support for racist policies from the early 1930s onward.

By the mid-2000s, however, the context of the monument had shifted once again in post-apartheid South Africa and it is now described, in one of the most frequently used travel guides, as commemorating “the countless Boer and Black African women and children” that had perished during the Anglo-Boer War.\textsuperscript{63} This shift, to be sure, is remarkable since the original conception of the monu-

\textsuperscript{62} See, for instance, Emily Hobhouse, \textit{The Brunt of the War and Where It Fell} (London: Methuen & Co., 1902) 114–125.
ment flatly ignored the fact that probably around 15,000 black African men, women, and children also died in the British camp system, with the total number of interned white Boers and black Africans being roughly equal, around 115,000 in each case. But the more recent description of the monument is more than a mere historical correction of the monument’s own explanatory inscription, which makes no mention of the black population. It is bound up with the need to negotiate past and present that can be found in the public perception of the Anglo-Boer War after 1994, which by then had also been fully transformed into the “South African War” since it also involved the black population.  

Leaving aside the gendered context of the monument, which heavily influenced the glorification of Afrikaner motherhood as it can be found on the friezes of the Voortrekker Monument, the monument itself had now become part of a wider redefinition of the Anglo-Boer War: As a conflict over land and territory, it was not anymore a simple quasi-revolutionary war of the Afrikaner population against the British authorities, but the memory of the war was adapted to changing political circumstances and affected by real politics, from the surge of Afrikaner nationalism, the victory of the National Party in 1948, and the subsequent introduction of the apartheid system to the 1994 transition. Over time, the Anglo-Boer War morphed from a founding myth for Afrikaner nationalism into a liberation struggle against empire.  

After 1994, it could easily be presented as a conflict against Western imperialism in the global South. It is difficult to overlook the historical irony such a move involved: As one of the most important founding myths of the oppressive apartheid regime, the Anglo-Boer War was now able to become part of a wider discourse about African liberation that, despite its many twists and turns as much as unintended consequences, stretches from the mid-1950s to the most recent debates over the future of Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe or social inequality in South Africa. Although this might be pushing the parallel to an extreme, the anti-colonial rhetoric of violent land re-

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form in Zimbabwe in the early 2000s mirrored the struggle of the Afrikaner pop-
ulation around 1900 against a British Empire in decline. From 1995 onward,
South African presidents began to visit both British and Afrikaner graves of the
Anglo-Boer War in the Free State. When Thabo Mbeki, on March 8, 2004,
opened the Garden of Remembrance at Freedom Park, the new national monu-
ment outside Pretoria, he not only quoted at length Percy Bysshe Shelley’s Ado-
nais, showing his intellectual side, but he also outlined what was, in effect, the
officially sanctioned version of the Anglo-Boer War aimed at reconciliation:
“The justice and liberties that Emily Hobhouse said the Afrikaner people loved
have now become the common heritage of all our people”. Territorial conflict,
racial segregation, and anti-imperialism were now combined and, in an almost
Hegelian manner, aufgehoben in a vague appeal to “a better world for all
humanity”.

There is, however, another point to be made. It would be shortsighted to
simply conclude that the Women’s Monument embodies a “selective memory”
that is “contained and recirculated for each new generation of white chil-
dren”. Indeed, for its annual reunion Bloemfontein’s C & N Meisieskool Or-
anje, one of the foremost girls schools in South Africa, congregates in front of
the monument. The crucial point, however, is not that the school continues to
define itself as both “Christian” and “national”, or that it continues to lack in
diversity among its student body. Rather, it is crucial that the audience and
participants of the reunion are women. That the Women’s Monument does not
exclusively continue to serve as a point of political identity for Afrikaner na-
tionalism, in Bloemfontein as much as elsewhere, becomes obvious once we consid-

66 See Bill Nasson, “Commemorating the Anglo-Boer War in Post-apartheid South Africa”,
Memory and the Impact of Transition in Public Space, ed. Daniel J. Wachowitz & Lisa Maya
Knauer (Durham: Duke UP, 2004) 277–294, at 283–289. See also Graham Dominy & Luli Calli-
nicos, “Is There Anything to Celebrate?” Paradoxes of Public Policy: Examination of the State’s
Approach to Commemorating South Africa’s Most Ambiguous Struggle”, and Elsabe Brink &
Sue Krige, “Remapping and Remembering the South African War in Johannesburg and Pretor-
67 “Address of the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, at the Ceremony to Hand Over the
Garden of Remembrance, Freedom Park, Tshwane, 8 March 2004”, South African Government
2004/04030815461001.htm>.
68 David Bunn, “White Sepulchres: On the Reluctance of Monuments”, Blank+: Architecture,
Apartheid and After, ed. Hilton Judin & Ivan Vladislavic (Rotterdam: Netherlands Architecture
70 Tellingly, the school nowadays prefers to use the abbreviation “C & N” instead of the full
“Christelike & Nasionale”. 
er the gendered dimension of the monument. Much of the long-term success of social cohesion within Afrikaner communities depended on the central role of women within these communities. In remote farming towns and on desolate farmsteads, women, from the 1880s onward and closely connected to the Dutch Reformed Church, built schools, supported libraries, and provided informal forms of social welfare among each other in order to overcome the kind of poverty that often stood in sharp contrast to the standard of living experienced by the British colonial government.\textsuperscript{71}

After the Anglo-Boer War, these developments accelerated, especially in towns like Bloemfontein, which bridged the gap between rural and urban: not only the Women’s Monument responds to the Anglo-Boer War, but 1907, six years before the monument’s inauguration, saw the founding of the C & N Meisieskool Oranje. Afrikaner women, through institutions such as this, transformed themselves into cultural entrepreneurs, both taking part in the discourse of Afrikaner nationalism and subverting the latter’s emphasis on traditional female roles by emphasizing a gendered education of self-sufficiency directly connected to social and economic struggles.\textsuperscript{72}

The gendered dimension of the monument highlights that there is more at stake than racial identity and racist segregation. In the speech that Emily Hobhouse intended to give in 1913 at the monument for its inauguration but which was read out by Charlie Fichardt, since Hobhouse’s ill health prevented her from reaching Bloemfontein, she directly linked the economic struggle and the concentration camp internment of the Afrikaner women to Abraham Lincoln’s anti-slavery policy in Civil War America, adding that Europeans are no less “barbarous” than the Zulu nation. Most interestingly, however, she developed the idea of the concentration camps as unintentionally generating a quasi-republican polity, “a community of interest, which binding all in one, roots out racial animosity”. From Hobhouse’s perspective, steeped in the liberal British tradition, the Women’s Monument represented not Afrikaner nationalism but rather that “liberty is the equal right and heritage of every child of man, without distinction of race, colour, or sex”. It is here, moreover, that Hobhouse situated the monument in a much broader tradition in the history of political thought.


that oddly linked Christian political theology to modern republicanism: “A community that lacks the courage to found its citizenship on this broad base, becomes ‘a city divided against itself, which cannot stand’”. The latter quotation not only refers to the New Testament, with Hobhouse quoting the King James version of Matthew 12: 25. Rather, the history of this passage also stretches from Thomas Hobbes’ account of the indivisible nature of the rights of sovereignty through Thomas Paine’s complaint about the structure of monarchical government to Abraham Lincoln’s speech, on June 17, 1858, launching his unsuccessful bid to become the U.S. Senator for the state of Illinois. Hobhouse’s image of political citizenship is the one that South Africa, post-apartheid, could have achieved, but, as I am going to argue with regard to Pretoria’s Freedom Park monument, did not quite achieve.

Even around the middle of the twentieth century Afrikaner nationalism, which eventually became the ideological backbone of the apartheid system, was less homogeneous than commonly assumed: Divisions among different social classes within the Afrikaner community, differing interpretations of theological dogma in the Dutch Reformed Church, but also highly diverse conceptions of the future of a possible South African nation state had not yet been melded together into a more unified image of Afrikanerdom. Social and economic struggles prove as important, for instance, as the tropes of racial exclusivity, and such struggles, in the way they cut across racial fault lines, introduce considerable complexity into the iconography of a monument that, with Hobhouse’s ashes at its foot, was already connected – in contrast to the monument’s use during the apartheid regime – to the European peace movement of the early twentieth century.

At the same time, it would be problematic, however, to argue that the Women’s Monument was simply appropriated by a predominantly male version of proto-fascist Afrikaner nationalism, as it comes to the fore on the friezes of the

73 Qtd. according to Goldblatt 1998, 227.
Voortrekker Monument outside Pretoria.\textsuperscript{77} It is certainly true that, once Afrikaner nationalism was in full swing during the 1930s and 1940s, a specific image of womanhood had emerged in white South African society that, directly supported by the Dutch Reformed Church, was fundamentally traditionalist and thus tied in neatly with the church’s theological justification of what was to become the apartheid system. The Women’s Monument, however, cannot easily be reduced to this image of womanhood. Rather, the, as it were, male version of Afrikaner history, as it was organized by the secretive Afrikaner Broederbond, also founded in Bloemfontein in 1911, is added to the monument by surrounding statues and buildings that, in style as much as in substance, differ from the actual monument itself: More bellicose, first of all, but also turning trauma into a founding myth and thus employing the reality of the concentration camps as justification for the oppression of another population. It is only the context of the entire monument complex, much of it added after 1913, which transforms the representation of female suffering into the conservative image of a saintly and devoted motherhood, which wholly served the interests of Afrikaner nationalism and the radically anti-modern and increasingly racist stance of the Dutch Reformed Church.\textsuperscript{78} Indeed, the inextricable link between Afrikaner nationalism and the Dutch Reformed Church combined concrete economic interests, a theological justification of racial superiority, and perceived historical injuries into a supremacist doctrine that, for its public presentation, relied in no small part on an extremely conservative image of women.\textsuperscript{79} This, to be sure, is an image of childbearing motherhood, reduced to church and kitchen, that in various forms is common to all totalitarian as well as authoritarian regimes across the entire political spectrum. In the South African context, such an image of motherhood, as the Voortrekker Monument renders most obvious, was intimately connected to ideals of racial purity that fed into the ideological discourse of the apartheid regime. This was a “man-made” image of motherhood, as one commentator

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\item \textsuperscript{78} The link between Afrikaner nationalism, racist political views, and anti-modern theology becomes obvious in one of the most widely-read publications that shaped the influential protestant seminary at the University of Stellenbosch at the time: \textit{Koers in die krisis}, ed. F. J. M. Potgieter, H. G. Stoker & J. D. Voster (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1935–1941).
\item \textsuperscript{79} In the period between the 1930s and 1950s, the Dutch Reformed Church explicitly argued that the main goal of racial segregation was to promote the concrete economic interests of the Afrikaner community and that Church doctrine and practice had to support these interests. See Johann Kinghorn, “Modernization and Apartheid: The Afrikaner Churches”, \textit{Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History}, ed. Richard Elphick & Rodney Davenport (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997) 135–154, at 140–146.
\end{itemize}
noted. It was the image of the *volksmoeder*, or the mother of the people, as it emerged in Afrikaner nationalism during the 1930s, compensating for the relative poverty of the Afrikaner women at the time and their lack of access to economic and political resources that were dominated by the British administration.\footnote{See Elsabe Brink, “Man-made Women: Gender, Class and the Ideology of the *volksmoeder*”, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa until 1945*, ed. Cherryl Walker (London: James Currey, 1990) 273–292, and Louise D. Vincent, “Bread and Honour: White Working Class Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26 (2000): 61–78.}

The Women’s Monument itself, however, is more subversive than the *volksmoeder* since it is linked to the central role women, as cultural entrepreneurs, played in the formation of a distinct Afrikaans culture, and it is this role which introduces tensions into the imagery and self-understanding of this culture. The image of womanhood that is represented in the monument is far more ambivalent than the one perpetuated by Afrikaner nationalism and the Dutch Reformed Church.

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Given the complex history and multilayered meaning of the Women’s Monument, it seems understandable that its official post-apartheid, government-sanctioned counter-monument was not created in Bloemfontein itself but rather in Pretoria, where it was site-specific. Unveiled by Thabo Mbeki on August 9, 2000, it commemorates the ca. 20,000 women who, on the same date in 1956, marched on Pretoria’s Union Buildings to protest against the pass laws, which severely restricted the mobility of the black and coloured population and made everyday life and work close to impossible. Local pass laws were already introduced, in several stages, in the pre-apartheid Orange Free State, dominated by the Afrikaner population. In 1913, authorities in Bloemfontein required black women to carry reference documents. Despite the failure of this policy, which triggered widespread resistance not only among black women, the Native Urban Areas Act, No. 21 of 1923, officially regulated the movement of black men and women between rural and urban areas, so that the latter became largely white enclaves with the exception of domestic workers required to carry passes. Once apartheid was instated by the National Party government, which came to power in 1948, the Natives Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act, No. 67 of 1952, which did exactly the opposite of what was announced in its
introduced general pass laws that covered the entire black and coloured population, restricting their movement and largely excluding them from white areas. Together with the initial Population Registration Act, No. 30 of 1950, which introduced racial classifications, and the Natives Laws and Amendment Act, No. 54 of 1952, which prevented Africans from residing in white neighborhoods, the pass laws stood at the heart of apartheid policy and were, in a constitutional sense, more important than the various Group Areas Acts.\textsuperscript{81} On August 9, 1956, the 20,000 women who marched on the Union Buildings, offered a petition to then prime minister J. G. Strydom, who had left town, however. Commemorating the event, the ANC government commissioned a memorial by Wilma Cruise and Marcus Holmes, which consists of a traditional grinding stone, or \textit{imbokodo}, placed within the vestibule that links the two semi-circular wings of the massive Union Buildings, and a sound and light installation. Part of the text of the women’s petition is inscribed on the wide stairs leading up to the colonnade, emphasizing that “the women of South Africa ... shall not rest until all pass laws and all forms of permits restricting our freedom have been abolished” and “until we have won for our children their fundamental rights of freedom, justice and security”.\textsuperscript{82}

There is another side to this monument, though, which highlights the ANC government’s resistance to critically engage with the apartheid past but also its general preference for the intellectual simplicity promised by the forms of old monumentalism. In his opening speech, on Women’s Day 2000, Thabo Mbeki intentionally referred to the memorial only in passing, failed to mention either the artists or their multimedia project, which clearly stands out among South Africa’s officially sanctioned monumentalism, and instead opted for a range of vague policy announcements, culminating in the statement that the ANC government “is committed to strengthening the National Gender Machinery so that we are able to enhance the capacity of its various components”. Women, it is not difficult to see, are merely parts of the party machine, leaving aside any of the rights-based discourse of the original petition from 1956.\textsuperscript{83}

The women’s monument at the Union Buildings, of course, is not a large monumental structure and has a more ephemeral character, a space through

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{83} See “Address by President Thabo Mbeki at the Unveiling of the Women’s Monument, Union Buildings, Pretoria, 9 Aug. 2000”, acc. 1 June 2013 <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2000/0008101010a1002.htm>. See also Marschall 2010, 251, who rightly sees this as a “convenient excuse for the underrepresentation of women”.
\end{itemize}
which the visitor can move freely and without a celebration of the nation. The monument is low and almost invisible to the random passerby from below, integrated into an existing traditional building structure, and it seeks to adhere to the proportions of the human body. It is, decidedly, not a statement of grandeur and nation-building, reflecting rather the modest rightful demands of the women of 1956, which had transformed traditional notions of subservience and motherhood into an autonomous form of political agency – not quite the “National Gender Machinery” – with little need for instruction from above. In contrast, whenever the ANC government seeks to memorialize specific historical events of its struggle against apartheid, it invariably leads to a reprise of old monumentalism, establishing new norms of exclusion, or drifting into a sophisticated version of a politically correct, postcolonial theme park, as in the case of the new Freedom Park just outside Pretoria.

Freedom Park consists of eight elements that stretch over 52 hectares on an entire hill outside Pretoria: Isivivane, a resting place for those who have lost their lives in the struggle for liberation, which includes a burial ground with eleven boulders shrouded in artificial mist and a semi-circular seating area; S’khumbuto, the actual center of the park, with the Wall of Names, the Gallery of Leaders, the Eternal Flame, and a Sanctuary, among other structures; Moshate, a large and luxurious hospitality suite for local VIPs and foreign dignitaries; the Uitsplanplek, an open-air space for relaxation; //hapo, a multifunctional exhibition space intended to show Southern Africa’s historical development over a span of 3.6 billion years; the Pan-African Archives; Vhuawele, a garden for meditation; and Mveledzo, a spiral pathway that links these various elements together, fusing landscape, the movement of visitors, and building structures. Given the sheer size of the project, there is certainly the risk of an “ironic amnesia”, that is, too much memory ultimately leads to forgetting.

84 On this transformation within the ANC women’s movement during the 1950s, see Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest (London: Routledge, 1995) 381–382. See, however, Marschall 2004, 1017–1023, who concludes that the monument leads to an exclusion of white women and their role in the anti-apartheid struggle, and that the monument’s focus on the seemingly “phallic” grinding stone reaffirms women’s traditional roles. Both conclusions strike me as unconvincing.


Opened in several phases since 2004, Freedom Park might be positioned on a hill opposite the Voortrekker Monument, but its attempt at pan-African nationalism does have a tendency to establish quasi-imperial claims that reach beyond mere reconciliation. Strangely enough, its location vis-à-vis the Voortrekker Monument, the central symbol of Afrikaner nationalism, often goes unmentioned. A semi-official account by the architect and urban planner Revel Fox, for instance, merely states that the location of Freedom Park was chosen because the “use of high ground, particularly for places of spiritual significance, is consistent with customs and choices in many different cultures and religions”, while the area also happened to be used “for grazing and initiation ceremonies by Sotho-Tswana people” in pre-colonial times. The park itself, however, mixes the visual rhetoric of the liberation struggle and references to the various resistance movements of the global South – represented, among others, by Che Guevara, Haiti’s Toussaint L’Ouverture, and Amilcar Cabral, the leader of Guinea-Bissau’s guerilla movement against Portuguese rule – with a new landscaped architecture at a cost between R 560–800 m (ca. $ 70 m–100 m). In much the same manner as Niccolò Machiavelli, at the end of Il Principe (1513/32), inserted an “exhortation to liberate Italy from the barbarian yoke”, thus, seeking to revive Roman ideals of glory and triumphalism in the manner of a translatio imperii, the symbolic arrangement of Freedom Park mirrors the demands for an African Renaissance that comes to the fore in Thabo Mbeki’s famous 1998 speech and that derives its justification not from the attempt at reconciliation but from continuing the anti-colonial struggle into the future as a new founding myth for South Africa.

While ideas of an African Renaissance have always exhibited a spatial dimension, in theory as much as in practice, from common economic zones and cultural exchanges to joint “peace parks” that straddle the borders between sepa-

rate Southern African states, the Freedom Park monument needs to be seen in aroader context that shows the complexity of such claims.89 Even after South
Africa’s remarkable transition to democracy in 1994, it is commonplace in se-
veral sub-Saharan countries to deploy anti-colonial arguments in order to justify
the oppression of indigenous populations and other minorities, and any remin-
der, from either European or North American governments or organizations,
that universal rights also need to be granted to gays and lesbians, and to wo-
men and children, or to the poor and to refugees, is often met with the notion
that such rights are, in any event, merely a quasi-imperial construct to further
exploit an ill-defined Global South. Such arguments are particularly vexing
since they are fielded in those countries that have gained independence be-
tween the 1950s and 1980s, from Uganda to Zimbabwe, and that ostensibly
sought to overcome colonial oppression with new, and occasionally even radic-
al forms of democracy. Within this broader context, the project of an African
Renaissance, which during the early 2000s was even a guiding principle of
South African foreign policy, is intimately connected to the problem of colonial-
ity. Despite Thabo Mbeki’s 1998 speech the project in many ways harks back to
much earlier ideas of institutional continent-building that were discussed at the
All-African Peoples’ Conference in Accra in 1958 and that were strongly sup-
ported by Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s independence leader, while such ideals of
African revival, of course, can also lead to widespread oppression, as in the
case of Mobutu Sese Soko’s campaign of authentïcitë.

Against this background, it is also not surprising, that the monumental ges-
ture of Pretoria’s Freedom Park highlights the strange irony that permeates the
discourse of “coloniality”. Seeking to describe the continuation of colonial re-
gimes of power and knowledge in the post-colonial and post-independence
states of Africa and Latin America, the concept of coloniality uncannily, and
perhaps unintentionally, introduces imperial claims in reverse that can all too
easily be employed to reject human rights and constitutional norms as yet an-
other oppressive regime of Eurocentric modernity.90 That, on the other hand,

89 For an example of the spatial dimension of the African Renaissance, see Marloes van Amer-
90 This, it seems to me, is the unspoken upshot, for instance, of Walter D. Mignolo’s “The
Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference”, South Atlantic Quarterly 101 (2002):
57–96, and “Coloniality: The Darker Side of Modernity”, The Darker Side of Western Modernity:
Global Futures, Decolonial Options (Durham: Duke UP, 2011) 1–24, as well as Arturo Escobar’s
“Beyond the Third World: Imperial Globality, Global Coloniality, and Anti-Globalization Move-
contemporary international law is indeed a product of colonial power, stretching back to the eighteenth century, is difficult to ignore.91 Contextual complexity tends to be lost in monuments such as Pretoria’s Freedom Park, which overlooks, or conveniently ignores, that, even in post-apartheid South Africa, the structures of indirect colonial rule remain intact as long as administrative authorities, especially in more rural areas, govern along ethnic lines.92 Freedom Park’s “Gallery of Leaders” certainly includes white anti-apartheid activists, such as Bram Fischer, the Oxford-educated lawyer and communist from Bloemfontein, who repeatedly defended Nelson Mandela in court and was himself imprisoned, and Helen Joseph, who helped to set up the Federation of South African Women and stood trial with Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Joe Slovo, and others during the Treason Trial of 1956–1961. Joseph and Fischer are part of the official memorialization of the liberation struggle, as in the case of Johannesburg’s Helen Joseph Hospital and, most recently, Bloemfontein’s Bram Fischer International Airport, which was renamed by Jacob Zuma in December 2012 when the centenary of the ANC, which had also led to the new design for the cooling towers of the Bloemfontein power station, came to an end. But despite the inclusion of Fischer, Joseph, and others in the “Gallery of Leaders”, the way in which Freedom Park remains focused on the opposition between Eurocentric imperialism (by implication white) and the resistance movements of the Global South (by implication non-white) unintentionally highlights the tragic irony of the concept of race within the discourse of coloniality: In the same manner, for instance, in which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s equation of apartheid = Nazism repeated, merely in reversal, the colonial separation of black and white, Freedom Park also reaffirms what it set out to deconstruct, namely the colonial concept of race.93 Indeed, continuing the ethnic and racial distinctions made under colonial rule into the present, either in reverse or by shifting the attention to other populations, can have disastrous effects, even though South Africa, of course, is not Rwanda.94

As a national heritage monument, Freedom Park includes, at its center, a large amphitheater that surrounds a building, set in shallow water, which hosts the Eternal Flame, the Sanctuary, and a candle walkway that highlight the sa-

92 See Mamdani 1996, 31–32.
crical dimension of the site. It is the sacralization of the political, often connected to the past, which is invariably linked to claims of rule.\textsuperscript{95} The central structure is surrounded by slim steel lighting masts – described as “reeds”, invoking the African natural landscape – that stretch up to 30 meters into the sky and that can be seen, in waves, from afar. Ironically, these “reeds” resemble the lighting masts that can be found throughout every larger township in South Africa and that had first appeared, sometime during the 1970s, in Soweto. These masts, roughly of equal height to the “reeds” of Freedom Park, have high-intensity flood lights at their top, which were directed downwards and drenched the township at night in light: nothing was meant to be hidden, and as such the lighting masts were a material manifestation of the social and political control the apartheid regime exerted over the territory of the townships and resettlement camps. The main difference of the “reeds” of Freedom Park is not only that the latter are arranged in a wave-like circular structure but also that the park’s lights are directed horizontally and upward, to show not what is underneath the masts but to establish Freedom Park as a marker in the landscape surrounding Pretoria.\textsuperscript{96}

One of the central features of Freedom Park is the Wall of Names, continuing the tradition of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. but in a compacted earth-color Phalaborwa quartzite rock that mirrors the geological features of the surrounding African landscape. With 697 linear meters of space for 140,000 names of those killed during the liberation struggle of modern South Africa, the Wall of Names is more than twice the size of the Vietnam Memorial, and the ability to add further names in the future clearly underlines the dynamic understanding of the historical past at stake and, thus, also the monument’s function.\textsuperscript{97} While the Gauteng Tourism authority merely speaks of “nation-building”, the Freedom Park administration speaks of a “mandate” that connects “nation building” to “continent building”.\textsuperscript{98}


\textsuperscript{96} For such lighting masts, see the images of Khayelitsha, Letlhable, KwaNonzame, and Marselle in Goldblatt 1998, 45, 81, 103, and 177. The masts still exist, although they now serve crime prevention purposes.

\textsuperscript{97} New names, with detailed information, can be submitted online. See <http://www.freedompark.co.za/cms/index.php?option=com_form&Itemid=96>., acc. 30 May 2013.

Such statements, of course, take on a particular meaning at a moment when South Africa’s foreign policy on the continent, as well as further afield, often stands in some contrast to the political promises of Freedom Park. Apart from failed diplomatic initiatives to resolve the crises in Côte d’Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and a 2013 military adventure in the Central African Republic that ended in disaster, the international human rights record of the ANC government is checkered at best. During its tenure on the UN Security Council, South Africa blocked draft resolutions that specifically sought to address human rights issues in Zimbabwe, Myanmar, and Darfur, and most recently it abstained from a vote on a UN resolution on Syria, ostensibly in support of Russia and China.99 An African Renaissance lead by South Africa, it seems, suffers from material constraints, and South Africa’s ability to project power beyond its borders is often limited, but the post-apartheid state’s foreign policy objectives in its own near abroad do not always compare well to the proclaimed ethical principles, and the painful historical experience, that stand behind its public presentation in monuments such as Freedom Park.100

On the surface, it might be possible to argue that Freedom Park’s monumentalism does indeed offer an alternative political program to the imperial claims of past ideologies. Given the way in which Freedom Park draws on different architectural traditions, ostensibly presenting itself as a mix of European and African conceptions of spatial experience, one might assume that it celebrates a process of nation-building which entails “multiple directions”, thus reflecting a pluralist vision of South Africa’s past and present. On this account, Freedom Park would be the prime manifestation of what some believe to be a specifically South African “culture of dignity through acknowledgment” and mutual recognition.101 To field such an argument, however, requires us to ac-

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cept at face value an officially sanctioned discourse of political authenticity in which monuments, such as Freedom Park, partake in a “participatory redress” of past evils by simply focusing on “truth” and “testimony” and aiming at “restoration” and “forgiveness” in some kind of half-way Arendtian manner. This would also mean to turn a blind eye to the real politics of South Africa in favor of a feel-good version of the postcolony.

Despite its sophisticated layout and symbolic points of reference, the spatial arrangement of Freedom Park, nevertheless, speaks a different language: as a political theme park its spatial extension, coupled with its inevitable quasi-religious focus on the dead, is not one of “quiet openness”, but it rather mirrors that of Zimbabwe’s National Heroes Acre in Harare and Namibia’s equivalent, its Heroes’ Acre outside Windhoek. While the latter might be more conventional in presentation and more direct in their political message, Freedom Park, right from the beginning, was also determined exclusively by ideological concerns, seeking to render explicit a new national identity without having to acknowledge the contradictions, historical and otherwise, that come along with this. Freedom Park’s monumentalism, then, adopts the same rhetoric of territorial claims that already marks older versions of monumentalism, and it is certainly not part of a process of “demonumentalization as redress”. The main reasons for the location of the site are not diffuse references to a precolonial African heritage, or the celebration of a “rainbow nation”, but – apart from the affordability of the land – its direct relationship to the Voortrekker Monument and, as in the case of the Voortrekker Monument, its general visibility from afar. At the core, this is neither a discourse about reconciliation, nor a discourse of rights, but an exclusive claim about the land and its past.

The same can be said with regard to the ANC government’s proclaimed commitments to political pluralism. When FNB, in January 2013, launched a new public relations effort with a clearly political slant, the “You Can Help Campaign”, which highlighted South Africa’s growing social inequality, lack of social mobility, and the lost hopes of an entire generation born after 1994, the ANC accused the bank of seeking to “delegitimize” the democratically elected government, implying that the bank’s current leadership opposed the anti-

103 Herwitz 2012, 129.
105 Herwitz 2012, 124.
106 See Noble 2011, 255.
apartheid struggle.\textsuperscript{107} What is crucial to note in this recent episode, however, is less the ANC’s understandably critical response to a commercial advertisement with a political stance, but rather the fusion of liberation movement, party, government, state, and nation in the ANC’s press releases. It is this fusion that also underlies the visual rhetoric of Freedom Park.

New forms of monumentalism, as they emerge, for instance, in the spatial and historical relationships between the Bloemfontein cooling towers and the Women’s Monument, highlight the complexity of a historically grounded and inherently open political citizenship in South Africa. New monumentalism, in a sense, derives its critical force from in-between and liminal spaces, and from spatial relationships, rather than from well-defined sites of remembrance, regardless as to whether the latter sought to stabilize the political identity of the apartheid regime or now promise a new democratic future by remembering the liberation struggle of the ANC. Officially sanctioned forms of monumentalism, as in the case of the Voortrekker Monument or Freedom Park, camouflage such complexity by establishing imperial claims with regard to citizenship, land, and nation.