The Lives and Deaths of Memorials: The Changing Symbolism of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments

Names: Robert Benjamin Uys

A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of MA in History.

Student Number: 3716253

Department: History

Institution: University of the Western Cape

Supervisor: Prof. Leslie Witz

Keywords: monuments, memorialization, 1938 Voortrekker Centenary, Afrikaner nationalism, Great Trek, ox wagon, Voortrekker Monument, red ox, Riebeek-Kasteel, Riebeek-West, Durbanville, Pampoenkraal Heritage Park, experiential economy, sculpture, apartheid, public art

http://etd.uwc.ac.za/
DECLARATION

I, Robert Benjamin Uys, declare that “The Lives and Deaths of Memorials: The Changing Symbolism of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments” is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Robert Uys

March 2019
This mini-thesis is dedicated to Anemone Robertson and Cornelle Young.
Acknowledgements

I want to thank my family for their patience and support during these last two years. Cornelle and Stan Young, Gerhard and Tammy Uys, Simone, Sassan and Arabella Machhadi, Anemone Robertson and Ben and Maggie Uys. Thank you for accommodating this odd-ball in taking risks – I am because of you. Thank you for your love and grace.

I would like to particularly thank my mother who has led by example. I knew I could do this because you did it already and you encouraged me with statements like “aahouer wen!” and Nike’s “Just do It!” I would also like to acknowledge my father and Ouma Nem. Gerhard, thank you for your encouragement and making me feel that I had the capability to “move to the next point”. Ouma Nem, thank you for being such a fantastic inspiration and for caring about my work. This thesis is dedicated to you.

I also want to extend my gratitude towards Professor Leslie Witz – my superb supervisor. I could not ask for a more competent and intellectually stimulating person to guide me through this process. Secondy, I would want to extend my gratitude to Professors Ciraj Rassool and Patricia Hayes. Professor Rassool’s Master’s course on Museum and Heritage Studies was especially useful for this thesis and Professor Patricia Hayes introduced me to the intriguing world of photography through her Visual History course. Along with Eric Miller’s photography classes, the Visual History course was the absolute highlight of this Master’s for me. I owe Professor Hayes further gratitude for nominating me for a bursary for Visual History through the University of the Western Cape’s Centre for Humanities Research. Without Hayes’ nomination and the CHR’s subsequent financial and academic support I would have had to quit half-way through my studies. Thank you to the Director of the Centre for Humanities Research, Premesh Lalu for generously advocating for and investing in the fellows of the CHR.

I want to thank the administrators within UWC’s excellent History Department and the CHR, especially Janine Brandt, Lameez Lalkhen and Micaela Felix. My fellow Master’s candidates: Julia Buss, Bongiwe Hlekiso, Retha Ferguson and Nsima Udo – thank you for your thought-provoking discussions, laughter and sympathy.

I would also like to thank all my friends. I want to especially mention Emre Kaya for supporting, caring and encouraging me in these last few months. I also want to thank Anita Ferreira, Linda Nel, Christelle du Toit, Hanro van Tonder, Berna, Nico and Marelize Viljoen for stimulating my mind and heart through the years – julle is my hart-mense. I want to thank Yusriy Abrahams for pushing me off that cliff in 2015. I would have never had the courage to pursue change. Rumi said that “the wound is the place where the light enters you.” Finally, thanks to the boys from Boston Coffee (Pieter, Yus, Neva, Faff, Herdo, Aleks and Arney) for keeping me company and caffeinated during those long and tedious working hours.
Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the lives and deaths of four 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments. The 1938 Voortrekker Centenary saw the construction of more than 500 centenary monuments. Each one of these structures has a biography. This study will consider how monuments celebrate current regimes and ideologies instead of narratives pertaining to the past. It will explore how monuments dating from South Africa’s imperialist and apartheid pasts reflect continued inequalities in both rural and urban South African landscapes. It will also consider how monuments cement problematic and mythological versions of the past.

The most infamous 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monument is the Voortrekker Monument, designed by Gerard Moerdyk, in Pretoria. The Voortrekker Monument is important because in many ways it acts as a proxy to the hundreds of smaller 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments scattered around South Africa. This study will look at how some of the theoretical frameworks concerned with the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria can be applied to three centenary monuments in the Riebeek Valley and Durbanville in the Western Cape.

This thesis will consider how perceptions of the symbolism of these monuments have changed between their construction in the late 1930s and 2018. The Afrikaner nationalistic fever that gave birth to these structures will be dissected. It will also consider how the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments symbolically changed as South Africans witnessed the disintegration of apartheid. This study will explore how these monuments have integrated into the heritage and experiential economies. It will also consider some of the anomalies relating to these structures, including hauntings. Finally, the vandalism, destruction and futures of these structures will also briefly come into question.
List of illustrations

Figure 1: Girls from a local Voortrekker School in Pietermaritzburg awaiting the oxen of the 1938 Centenary Trek. (Photograph taken between 18 and 20 November 1938. Henry Murray. Scanned by Robert Uys from Dirk Mostert’s ‘Gedenkboek’)

Figure 2: Ellen and Wessel Lategan's bridal outfits worn when they got married during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. On display at the ATKV’s Hartenbos Museum. (9 November 2017. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 3: All the couples that got married during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations at Bloedrivier. (14 December 1938. Scan from Bloedrivierse Eeufeesgenendenboek)

Figure 4: Many men grew their beards specifically for the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary as supposed proof of their masculinity as men who identified as Afrikaners. (9 August 1938. Unknown photographer. Scanned from Dirk Mostert’s ‘Gedenkboek’)

Figure 5: Thousands of people congregating around the ox wagons in Church Square, Pretoria. (14 December 1938. Johanna Uys. Scanned from Dirk Mostert’s ‘Gedenkboek’)

Figure 6: Anton van Wouw's depiction of a 'Voortrekker' mother and children at the entrance of the Voortrekker Monument. (7 January 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 7: The Voortrekker Monument viewed from Freedom Park. (3 June 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 8: A panoramic photograph of the view from the top of the Voortrekker Monument. (7 January 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 9: Danie de Jager's 'In Vlug' with the Voortrekker Monument in the background. (7 January 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 10: Jo Roos' bust, depicting F. H Odendaal, has been moved to the entrance of the Heritage Centre from the State Theatre. (7 January 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 11: Hennie Potgieter's 'Getemde Vryheid' was moved from a location situated in Parliament Street to the Voortrekker Monument. (7 January 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 12: A romanticized image from W. H. Coetzer's 'Vir Jou, Suid-Afrika'. (7 January 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 13: Another image of 'Vir Jou, Suid-Afrika'. The painting used to hang in the THA-Building (sic). (7 January 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 14: The commando escorting the ox wagon down Main Road towards Riebeek-Kasteel’s village green (11 August 1938. Unknown photographer. Courtesy of Chris Murphy from Malmesbury’s Heritage Association)

Figure 15: The ox wagon stops at Groenrivier, Riebeek-West after a stormy journey through the weather and the public. The photograph was published on 12 August 1938 in Die Burger.
Figure 16: The canon donated to the town of Riebeek-Kasteel during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. (7 September 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 17: Riebeek-Kasteel's 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monument – the fenced red ox. (7 September 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 18: The red ox on its pedestal. (7 September 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 19: Riebeek-West’s 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monument. (8 September 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 20: A panoramic photograph of the corner of Riebeek-West's Main Street and the entrance to the town hall. (8 September 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 21: Riebeek-West’s 1938 Voortrekker Ceremony with the fence which surrounds the park. (8 September 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 22: Christoffel Basson (Kuikentjie) next to his bovine creation - the red ox. (Presumably 1938. Photographer Unknown. Courtesy of Chris Murphy from Malmesbury's Heritage Association)

Figure 23: Louisa Gerryts' depiction of the 2017 Riebeek Valley Olive Festival. (Postcard dates from 2017 but was scanned on 24 November 2018)

Figure 24: Louisa Gerryts' depiction of Riebeek-Kasteel's 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monument - 'Die Rooi Os'. (Postcard dates from 2017 but was scanned on 24 November 2018)

Figure 25: An illustration by David Griessel of Riebeek-Kasteel's red ox carrying the mayor’s daughter in Wendy Maartens’ ‘Die beste Suid-Afrikaanse Spookstories’ (2014). (David Griessel. 2014. Scanned by Robert Uys from Wendy Maartens’ children’s books on 5 December 2018)

Figure 26: A scanned copy of David Goldblatt's photograph of Riebeek-Kasteel's red ox. (7 February 1993. David Goldblatt. Scanned by Robert Uys from ‘Intersections Intersected’) 

Figure 27: A scanned image of a photograph taken by David Goldblatt. In 'Intersections Intersected' the photograph is placed opposite the image of Riebeek-Kasteel's red ox. (23 June 2004. David Goldblatt. Scanned from ‘Intersections Intersected’)

Figure 28: This is the life-sized artwork depicting an elephant in Riebeek-Kasteel's village green. (9 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 29: Durbanville's Voortrekker Monument seen from the curb of Durban Road. (Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 30: An engraving on Durbanville's monument. (5 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 31: The top of Durbanville's monument. (5 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)
Figure 32: A panoramic view of Pampoenkraal Heritage Park from Church Street. (5 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 33: Another (panoramic) side of Pampoenkraal Heritage Park, looking towards the corner where Wellington Road meets Durban Road. (5 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 34: Durbanville's Voortrekker monument is situated just off-centre of this panoramic photograph. (5 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 35: A panoramic photograph of Pampoenkraal Heritage Park from the corner of Wellington Road and Durban Road. (5 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 36: 'The Maker' and the drove of colourful oxen in Pampoenkraal Heritage Park. (5 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 37: 'The Leader' is either leading the oxen or being lead. (5 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 38: Notice that 'The Leader's' eyes are closed. (5 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 39: Somebody attempted to saw off one of the ox's tails. (5 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 40: One of the smaller ox's tails was chopped off by a vandal. (5 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 41: One of the smaller ox's, just 'sculpted' by 'The Maker', had a horn chipped off. (5 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements 4

Abstract 5

List of illustrations 6

Introduction 11

Chapter 1: Monuments and the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary 17

A moment in time 17

The ‘Great Trek’ towards Afrikaner nationalism 21

The formation of the Afrikaner Broederbond 28

From the Afrikaans language to the Afrikaner’s language 30

An (un)Holy Celebration: The Planning and Execution of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary 33

Chapter 2: The Voortrekker Monument as proxy 44

Big things have small beginnings 44

The victory of Afrikaner nationalism 46

Caressing Afrikaner symbols 48

The road to hell is paved in Voortrekker monuments 55

The great pollution 61

Saved by the tourist 64

Vampire Nationalism 68

Chapter 3: An ox and a wagon: The 1938 Voortrekker Centenary

monuments of the Riebeek Valley 77

Introducing the Riebeek Valley 77
Trekking to Afrikaner nationalism 79
Jan van Riebeeck joins the ‘Great Trek’ 86
Kasteel’s ox and West’s wagon 89
Kuikentjie’s bovine idol – The birth of a monument 97
An experiential economy 102
The red ox becomes a ghost 105
David Goldblatt photographs the red ox 116
Pissing on ‘white heritage’ 125
Looking towards the future 128

Chapter 4: Durbanville’s Centenary monument and the Pampoenkraal Heritage Park 131
A quiet violence 131
When old communities adopt new nationalisms 133
Durbanville’s monument: a pile of rocks 134
Durbanville: A pleasant contradiction 137
Afrikaner nationalism metamorphosis into a rainbow nation 143
On vandalism 153

Conclusion 158

Bibliography 160
Introduction

“ek is nie bang vir die toekoms nie, maar die verlede skrik my soms af
’n monument wil ek wees, ’n standbeeld opgerig teen vrees”

(I am not afraid of the future, but the past does sometimes scare me away
I want to be a monument, a statue erected against fear)

“Monument” (2018) by Bouwer Bosch

I had never given monuments much thought. I was always aware of them, but I never critically engaged with them until I began working on this thesis. To an earlier self a monument determined whether a city was affluent and powerful. Monuments, regardless of the regimes and historical narratives they presented, generally served an aesthetic purpose to me. I had grown up in Cape Town which is an aesthetically pleasing city mainly in terms of its natural beauty, but which hosts a surprisingly large collection of visually stimulating historical monuments and buildings in Cape Dutch, Victorian, Edwardian, neo-gothic, neo-baroque, neo-classical, art-nouveau and art-deco styles. I felt comfortable in this environment because it imitated the sort of European sophistication that my naïve and younger self aspired to associate with. Furthermore, this city described by some as the most European city in Africa represented me and my past through its built landscape – a relatively affluent Afrikaans-speaking man who may have been designated officially as ‘white’ in the days of apartheid.¹ The monuments and buildings of this city celebrated historical figures, many of whom were white men my age and younger, who had come to southern Africa to settle, conquer and become enormously wealthy.²


² The man who supposedly christened the Cape of Good Hope with its illustrious name Bartholomew Dias (1450 – 1500) was perhaps 38 when he sailed past Table Mountain in 1488. His statue is probably one of the first monuments one sees when entering Cape Town’s central business district via the foreshore. The first European commander of the Dutch East India re-victualing station at the Cape, Jan Anthonie Van Riebeeck
I had blissfully waddled in this pool of ignorance until 2015 (I was 27 at the time) when the
#Rhodes-Must-Fall movement had toppled me from my pedestal of entitlement, by
demanding the removal of a particular monument depicting Cecil John Rhodes. This had
definitely not been the first time students had demanded the removal of this particular statue.3
During my undergraduate years at the University of Cape Town I would often walk (or rather
climb) from Lower Campus to Upper Campus only to greet a rather nihilistic Rhodes which
had been defaced with spray-painted slurs like “F*ck Imperialism!” or “This is BS!”. This
did not bother me then since I felt that Rhodes was somewhat over-represented in Cape
Town’s monumental landscape anyway, with the “Where is Your Hinterland?” statue in the
Company Gardens and a temple-like memorial, not far from UCT, on the hangs of the
suitably named Devil’s Peak. Furthermore, I vaguely knew that there was some issue with the
imperialist-era monuments on campus but between 2008 and 2011 I was consumed by the
general wave of apathy experienced by many privileged UCT students regarding these
structures. However, the #Rhodes-Must-Fall movement, although not novel (besides for its
exploitation of Social Media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram), had
succeeded what few (if any) similar movements in South Africa’s past had done – it
successfully managed to place so much pressure on the university that it would eventually
remove the monument.

The general consensus amongst scholars invested in the subject of memorials and
memorialisation is that the post-apartheid South African government has been quite lax in the

3 Afrikaans students would also protest against the placement of this particular statue in the late 1940s and
1950s.
removal of structures dating from the imperialist and apartheid epochs.\textsuperscript{4} Sabine Marschall suggests that the new government’s response could have been interpreted as an attempt by the African National Congress “…to capture the moral high ground, underscoring nationally and internationally the generous spirit and non-confrontational, forgiving and peaceful nature of Nelson Mandela’s ‘rainbow nation’.”\textsuperscript{5} Some of the more obvious names of the most well-known apartheid figures have been changed (e.g. Verwoerdburg, named after the supposed ‘Father of apartheid’ Hendrik Verwoerd [1901 – 1966], was named Centurion). Yet, the CBD’s of Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth and Pretoria (although somewhat shabby) have not changed much in terms of memorials and monuments.\textsuperscript{6} This has left many feeling alienated in their own hometowns and cities.\textsuperscript{7} I realised that the majority of South Africans do not share my sentimentality regarding these structures and that a simple act of walking in the city could be a painful reminder of oppression and lives denied.

In 2015 I also started to take my grandmother, who could no longer drive long distances, to visit friends on a farm near Williston in the Northern Cape. We would drive from her home in George in the Southern Cape on a rather precarious route which dissected South Africa, passing an engrossing sample of historic towns and villages: George, Oudtshoorn, De Rust, Prince Albert, Fraserburg and Williston. One of the challenges of driving with an octogenarian with a heart condition is that one would often need to stop for comfort breaks. I used these necessary stops to explore the towns and villages en-route, looking for historic structures and buildings that might be of any particular interest. One of the most common sites in practically every settlement we passed was an obscure set of


\textsuperscript{5} Sabine Marschall, \textit{Landscape and Memory: Commemorative monuments, memorials and public statuary in post-apartheid South Africa} (Leiden, Netherland and Boston, MA: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2010), 20.

\textsuperscript{6} However, the names of some of the most recognised apartheid figures can be found printed on the landscape. I live near a high school which has controversially decided to cling on to the name D.F. Malan.

\textsuperscript{7} Zahira Asmal, “Cultural Iconography and Public Memory.”

http://etd.uwc.ac.za/
structures; usually a rock pile, but often an obelisk (as was the case in Prince-Albert) or a cement wagon wheel (as was the case in Fraserburg). These monuments, although often somewhat differing in appearance, all celebrated the same historical event – the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary.

I was intrigued. A set of questions formulated that would eventually become the basis of this thesis came to mind. What was the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary? What did these monuments symbolise to the communities that lived and worked around them in the past? What do these monuments symbolise to the communities that live and work around them today? I also wanted to know what on earth are these structures still doing here almost a quarter of a century into South Africa’s democracy? I soon realised that my experience of Cape Town’s monumental landscape had essentially already answered the last question. These structures still existed because these communities, like large swathes of this country still continue to be today, were still fundamentally unequal and remained in many ways still segregated. The towns and villages which hosted such structures often still had very clearly demarcated racially designated neighbourhoods. I then began to look at how differing communities engaged with these structures. Some had forgotten completely about these structures, perhaps as a form of denial or an attempt to forget about and avoid narratives of retribution and guilt. Others continue to preserve these structures as the Afrikaner nationalists had done in the 1930s. Yet, there were also one or two communities which had successfully (and/or unsuccessfully) engaged with these structures through redeveloping the spaces around the structures. They had given the structures new lives.

This led to an interest in the biographies of these monuments. These structures continued to stand through some of the most turbulent times in South African history. They were born during the fever of Afrikaners nationalism in the 1930s; had witnessed the effects of the Second World War on the South African public; then there was the 1948 victory of the
Purified National Party and the official commencement of a policy called apartheid; the referendum amongst the racially designated white electorate which resulted in South Africa becoming a republic; the struggles against apartheid; an economic boom and bust; the constant state of emergencies of the 1980s; the first democratic elections of 1994; and witnessed the crime waves of the 1990s to name but a few. The small lives of these monuments were somehow reminiscent of the greater historical narratives of the 20th century.

The stories surrounding the lives (and deaths) of these monuments showed how the grand narratives of South African history and invented history manifested in and influenced people on a localised level. John Tosh writes that these individual and localised case studies are important because “…local history serves as a reminder that their [the historian’s] subjects is not about not only the central institutions of the state, but also the assertion of authority over ordinary people.”

Through this thesis I will seek to explore these questions particularly in the context of two towns. One, Durbanville, immediately north of Cape Town used to be separate from the city (and remains an independent municipality) but has essentially been swallowed by city’s seemingly unregulated urban sprawl. The other, the two sister villages of the Riebeek Valley (Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West), is in the Swartland municipality about a 67 km drive north of Durbanville. I decided to focus on these particular communities partially because of their close proximity to each other and my home in Bellville but also because they included both urban and rural case studies. Furthermore, these towns have had different approaches in dealing with the legacy of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary and the separatist nationalism which this festival promoted. One clawed onto an antiquated status quo by simply preserving and fencing these structures, thus, making it almost impossible for the public to engage with

---

theses monument. The second re-developed the space and even added to the monument in such a way which encouraged public engagement.

The major shortfall of this thesis is the most prominent deficiency of history as discipline – the issue of scope. It is simply impossible to provide a truly comprehensive history of even three of the 500 plus 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monuments, since that would require a machine that can move back and forth in time. When historians write biographies they are simply providing glimpses of an individual’s past. The past in its entirety and all its dimensions is inaccessible to humans as we are now. We are allowed blurry snapshots, but a perfectly accurate depiction would mean literally recreating the past. Entire decades are left out in this thesis simply because the author could not find any reference or sources which mentioned or depicted these monuments in that time period. That does not mean that these structures disappeared completely – they had ‘lives’. They were there, just like an ancient yellowwood in the vast forests of the Tsitsikama. No human may witness the growth of the tree or the way it bends during a storm or the array of creatures that make it their home, but simply because we as humans do not bear witness does not mean that these things do not happen. So simply because I do not mention sections of the lives of these monuments dating from the 1950s and 1960s does not mean that these structures ceased to exist during those times. It would be task of future historians to fill in at least some of the missing gaps. However, this lack of ‘evidence’ pertaining to the lives of these monuments between 1950 and the late 1970s may suggest that these structures did not symbolically change as symbols of Afrikaner nationalism.

---

CHAPTER 1: Monuments, Afrikaner nationalism and the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary

A Moment in Time

How do the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monuments operate as sites of memory? Victoria Regina Heunis explains the Latin origin of the word monument. The term derives from the Latin word *monumentum* which is etymologically rooted in the word *monere* which can be translated as to admonish, remind, warn and advise. Monuments do act as warnings, reminders and advisors to people living in a particular community, city or nation state regarding the power relations and structures of authority in a certain space. Nevertheless, one cannot help but recognise the relation of the Latin word *monumentum* to *momentum* which is the Latin root for a moment. With this connection it is suggested that monuments are not just necessarily reminders, advisors and warning a particular group of people regarding the past but they are the products of that moment in time. Maurice Halbwachs wrote in *The Social Framework of Memory* (1925) “the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present.” They communicate to people who they are expected to be now as opposed to who they were in the past. This even pertains to structures that date from past epochs. Such structures continue to be tolerated in cities and towns around the world because even though they may be dated they still speak of a certain set of values cultivated by a people. The United Kingdom is littered with monuments which celebrate its empire because through its financial sector it is still an imperialist power. Cities and towns in the United States of America abound with statues of supposed heroes of the Confederacy because the USA is still,
regardless of the Civil Rights Movement of the latter half of the 20th century, a racially divided society. Similarly, monuments dating from the period of British Imperialism and apartheid are still scattered around the South African landscape because South Africa is still a vastly unequal society in terms of economic and social mobility. People generally destroy or hide monuments which they strongly feel as a collective (or government) no longer communicate the values of the time. In many of the former Eastern Bloc nations monuments that commemorate Stalin or Lenin are often kept in designated parks frequented by the odd tourist while one would have to go to some trouble to view a statue of Saddam Hussain in Iraq. The 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments were meant to communicate to people what Afrikaner nationalists perceived as the qualities of ‘true’ Afrikaners, an image which was based on the mythological Voortrekkers.

Monuments are not just the remnants of moments in time but also physical manifestations of collective memory itself. At this stage it is important to emphasize that collective memory is different from what would be deemed by the mainstream academic community as modern historical writing. Modern mainstream historians realise that they can never truly escape the discourses which have influenced them as political, social and psychological beings. Nevertheless, modern historical writing aims (even if this is admittedly an impossible task) to be as truthful, comprehensive and objective as possible. However, this is not how collective memory, which includes constructions regarding nationalist narratives of heritage, operates. Maurice Halbwachs wrote “every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time.”  

During the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary the collective memory celebrated involved narratives regarding the mythical ‘Great Trek’ and the group which supported this ‘memory’ were Afrikaner nationalists. This group, propelled by organizations such as the Afrikaner Broederbond, sought to make the invented ‘collective

13 Kirk Savage, “History, Memory and Monuments”
memory’ of the ‘Great Trek’ national (thus, accepted as legitimate) through the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary and through the construction of monuments. Why construct monuments to legitimise mythologised pasts? Kirk Savage states that the very physical make up of monuments, the materials from which monuments and memorials are constructed (e.g. marble, stone, cement, bronze and steel), seek to create the impression of timelessness and indestructability. \(^{14}\) He writes that “public monuments are the most conservative of monument commemorative forms precisely because they are meant to last, unchanged forever. While other things come and go, are lost and forgotten, the monument is supposed to remain a fixed point, stabilizing both the physical and cognitive landscape.”\(^{15}\) Monuments cement iron and bronze mythological pasts and essentially transform these mythological pasts into accepted fact by being inserted into the physical landscape. They permit people to literally see, touch, smell and in some cases even hear constructed historical narratives in public spaces and lived environments. However, this permanence is only a front. Time has shown that even the colossus of Rhodes can be toppled.

Another central point which this thesis seeks to reiterate is that monuments, like people, have lives which can be depicted by means of biographies, thus, like a child which matures into adulthood and acquires new roles (e.g. daughter, friend, colleague, partner, mother, employer, matriarch, grandmother etc.) so do monuments. This is ironic because the intended purpose for constructing a monument is to supposedly ‘resolve’ the past. Kirk Savage writes in *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves* (1997) that public monuments are supposed to “yield resolution and consensus, not prolong conflict. The impulse behind the public monument was [is] an impulse to mold [sic] history into its rightful pattern. And history was [is] supposed to be a chronicle of heroic accomplishment, not a series of messy

---


\(^{15}\) Kirk Savage, *Standing soldiers, kneeling slaves*, 4.
disputes with unresolved outcomes.” Savage adds to this argument in a different essay when he writes “monuments had to instil a sense of historical closure. Memorials to heroes and events were not meant to revive old struggles and debates but to put them to rest—to show how great men and their deeds had made the nation better and stronger. Commemoration was a process of condensing the moral lessons of history and fixing them in place for all time; this required that the object of commemoration be understood as a completed stage of history, safely nestled in a sealed-off past.” The physical nature of a monument is supposed to make the narrative which monuments celebrate or commemorate untouchable fact. However, quite the opposite seems to happen once a monument is presented to the public. Its history, aesthetic and what it symbolises all eventually come under the public firing line and is scrutinized because the monument is no longer safely locked in the form of conceptual plans and drawings in the cupboards of city-planners, architects and artists. As a result, “despite the apparent permanence of memorials, they are always subject to debate and change. Thus to alter memorials or to give them new use is not in fact destroying history, but altering the interpretation and actually giving history a sense of vitality. It shows that memorials and monuments have their own lives that are always, like history itself, changing.” This thesis will seek to explore the lives of three monuments dating from the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. It will firstly explore what these structures meant to their original creators but it will also consider how views regarding these Afrikaner nationalist structures have changed. Nevertheless, before one can look at the lives of monuments of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary it is necessary to first look at the historical context of this event.

16 Kirk Savage, Standing soldiers, kneeling slaves, 4.
The ‘Great Trek’ towards Afrikaner Nationalism

What did the 1938 Voortrekker Eeufees intend to symbolise to the people that partook in these celebrations? In the ‘Foreword’ of the souvenir program, published by the Cape Peninsula’s Dingaan Festival Monument Committee, it is claimed that “met hierdie eeufeerviering van 1938 sluit ‘n grootste en glorierike tydperk in ons geskiedenis af” (With the festivities of 1938 the biggest and most glorified time in our history is concluded). This is an intriguing statement because it infers that the most glorified moment in the Afrikaner nationalist’s history is not the invented ‘Great Trek’ of the 1830s but the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary celebrations. This statement emphasizes the importance the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary in the development of an Afrikaner identity. Leslie Witz writes that “the Voortrekker centenary was… concerned primarily with inculcating the sense of a classless, unified, white Afrikaner volk.” Social constructions such as ‘Afrikaners’ and whiteness were still being defined even in 1938. Heribert Adam and Hermann Giolomee beautifully describe this predicament in The Rise and Crises of Afrikaner Power (1979) when they state “like the trim outline of Table Mountain seen from afar, Afrikaner identity appears to be a well-defined feature of the South African political landscape. Yet a look at history shows that this identity was much more blurred than this appearance suggests; indeed, its boundaries were often adjusted in order to fit historical circumstance and social contexts.” Pieter Labuschagne writes “this symbolic 1938 re-enactment of the Great Trek was destined to have a decisive political and cultural impact on the politically disempowered Afrikaner community and caused a political and cultural ‘ripple effect’ of many of the inhabitants of hamlets and

20 Leslie Witz, “Solly Sachs, the Great Trek and Jan van Riebeeck: settler pasts and racial identities in the Garments Workers’ Union 1938-52,” in Rethinking settler colonialism: History and memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand and South Africa (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 47.
21 I acknowledge that notions of ‘Afrikanerhood’ did exist before the centenary.
large towns along the route. The symbolic trek along the tributaries of the road network managed to weave the towns and cities along the route into a powerful political and cultural unit and helped to form a distinct Afrikaner identity.” Albert Grundlingh writes that “the 1938 celebrations served as a powerful binding agent and represented a truly unique moment of cross-class ethnic mobilization.” The historian Dr A. P. J van Rensburg wrote in 1972 in ‘Die Simboliese Ossewatrek van 1938’ (The Symbolic Ox Wagon Trek of 1938) that the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary was “die grootste Afrikaanse monstering wat nog in hierdie eeu plaasgevind het” (the largest Afrikaans mobilization that has taken place in this century). This reiterates the notion that Afrikanerhood was a social construction – an identity that could be adopted. People were not born Afrikaners but were mobilized to become Afrikaners. However, as the Volk were mobilized, they were also taught what it meant to be an Afrikaner. The 1938 Voortrekker Centenary was not just a commemoration of the supposed ‘Great Trek’ but it was also meant to educate participants about the values of the mythological ‘Voortrekkers’ as ascribed by Afrikaner nationalists.

So how did the Afrikaner nationalists who orchestrated the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary seek to portray the mythical ‘Great Trek’? The story of ‘Great Trek’ was depicted by Afrikaner nationalists in two ways: one in terms of the grand narratives (a series of supposed events that have either been invented or hyperbolised to make a series of migrations in the middle of the 19th century seem special) and then secondly, a focus on what can be labelled as the everyday lived experience (e.g. cooking, hunting, transportation, social interaction etc.) of these 19th century migrants. The first included the standard narrative taught to South African children, by means of the pro-Afrikaner nationalist Christian National curriculum, during the latter half of the 20th century. This hyperbolised depiction of

---

the ‘Great Trek’ is perhaps best narrated by T.V. Bulpin in his children’s book *The Great Trek*. The very first sentences sets the nationalist tone of the text “no romance of fiction could remotely equal the history of Southern Africa. It is a surging, restless record of adventure, a mighty human drama played by an incredible variety of characters, with perhaps its most stirring chapter being the Great Trek.” Bulpin’s children’s book account of the supposed ‘Great Trek’ is not dissimilar from the Afrikaans descriptions of this mythical event deriving from the various souvenir booklets, festival programs and information booklets dating from the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary.

How was the supposed ‘Great Trek’ of the 1830s and 1840s depicted during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary? Imagine watching a movie, produced by an Afrikaner nationalist like the state historian Gustav Preller perhaps, about the mythical ‘Great Trek’ (Preller’s controversial *De Voortrekker* from 1916 comes to mind). The mythology of the ‘Great Trek’ fits perfectly into the classic story-telling mould in its dramatic structure. Within this narrative of the ‘Great Trek’ the ‘Voortrekkers’, depicted as a singular unified entity as opposed to disjointed and scattered groups of frontier farmers prone to extravagant bouts of in-fighting, leave the frontier after a supposedly ‘spiteful and greedy’ British Empire limits the freedoms of these farmers. The central character of this part of the story is Piet Retief whose manifesto spells out the reasons for the frontier farmer’s unhappiness with the current situation and regime and why they intend to leave Britain’s Cape Colony. If this was a classic adventure novel for children or a movie, the publication of Retief’s Manifesto in the *Grahamstown Journal* would be a part of the exposition. The conflict or rising action of the tale would be Retief’s assassination by the hands of the supposedly ferociously ‘barbaric’ Zulu *impi* under the command of the sly ‘Judas-like’ Dingaan. Up till this point in the story.

---

the ‘kind-hearted and fair’ ‘Voortrekkers’ had been treading carefully not to upset the indigenous peoples they encountered. The massacre of Retief’s party apparently confirmed the Voortrekkers’ worst preconceived suspicions (or beliefs) that they were dealing not with a civilized people but with ‘barbarians’. The murder of Retief justifies a more militaristic approach, apparently confirming that one cannot negotiate with a supposedly ‘primitive people’. The tale then reaches its climax with the ‘David-versus-Goliath-like battle’ at Blood River on the 16th of December 1938, where a battalion of supposedly 20 000 Zulu warriors (the number changes according to who tells the story) attack Andries Pretorius and Sarel Cilliers’ trekker parties. Before this battle, which assumes biblical proportions, commences Cilliers gathers the trekkers and makes a vow to the Christian God that if he allows the ‘Voortrekkers’ to come out as the victors after the Zulu onslaught then the ‘Voortrekkers’ and their descendants would forever consider the Day of the Vow or Geloftedag as sacred – equal to the holy Sabbath. God supposedly listens, and the ‘Voortrekkers’ commit a massacre of epic proportions; causing (according to the myth) the surrounding river to run red with the blood of the Zulu impi. There are other stories of supposedly ‘selfless’ heroes (e.g. Dirkie Uys) and massacres (e.g. massacre of the Ndebele at Makapansgat) but our movie concludes with the ‘Voortrekkers’ essentially closing the northern frontier and creating the two Boer Republics. The sequel of this movie would involve the Voldemort-like enemy (the seemingly despicable British Empire) that would eventually ‘rip away’ the land from the ‘Voortrekker’ descendants, leaving an apparent void in the hearts of every ‘true Afrikaner’ yearning for an independent Boer Republic. This story would make up the basis of the Afrikaner Nationalists supposedly ‘historic’ and Christian claim on South Africa. This seemingly ‘historic’ claim was essentially the reason for the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary – a call to those people that the Afrikaner nationalist organizers deemed as Afrikaners to rise up and take their ‘rightful’ position as the apparent political and economic ‘heirs’ to the Union of South Africa.
The everyday experience of the ‘Voortrekkers’ was also of particular importance to Afrikaner nationalists in getting people to establish a personal connection with the ‘Great Trek’. The more ‘personal’ narrative regarding a supposed ‘Great Trek’ in 1838 which Afrikaner nationalists propagated during the Voortrekker Centenary in 1938 was greatly influenced by (and disproportionately based) on the writings of the historian Gustav Preller. At the time of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Preller (who had supported the nationalist agenda since 1925) was employed as an official state historian. Isabel Hofmeyr writes that “it was largely his [Preller’s] work that popularized the movement that we know today as the Great Trek. This movement of Boers from the Cape to the interior in the 1830s has become the key myth of Afrikaner nationalism, thanks largely to Preller’s written, and more importantly his visual, version of the Trek, an interpretation that since the 1910’s has been widely received as the dominant one.”

Preller particularly valued oral accounts created by those individuals which many would have deemed unimportant (thus the everyday). As a result, one can argue that his interest as a historian involved the realm of micro-histories. However, whereas micro-histories often lead to the ‘discovery’ of subaltern voices, Preller instead made a collection of ‘Voortrekker’ micro-histories into the beginnings of the formation of a nation. Hofmeyr writes that for Preller, personal experience was the very stuff of history, which was an accumulation of intimate events, details and recollections. Each life assumed an idiosyncratic shape, and Preller constantly reiterated that it was his business to eschew the lives of great men and document ordinary lives instead. This populism was, of course, poured into a nationalist mould: counted together, all these ordinary lives form the nation which, according to Preller, assumed the biographical shape of a life itself.

---

28 Isabel Hofmeyr, “Popularizing History,” 522.
29 Isabel Hofmeyr, “Popularizing History,” 523.
Preller’s writings included the stories of “everyday life” of supposedly ‘normal’ people which many individuals could associate with and link to anecdotes told by their own family members.  

By the time of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Preller’s version of ‘Voortrekker’ narratives had become so prevalent that the historian’s bombastic tales of the ‘Great Trek’ had replaced more personal and subdued narratives relating to the events of the 1830s and 1840s, resulting in a form of collective amnesia. Hofmeyr writes that “in their inversions, repressions, ellipses and displacements, his works institutionalise forgetfulness as much as recall.”31 Besides basing his historical writings on some rather shoddy evidence and emitting and white-washing contextual details from the past, Preller also sought to justify the act of conquest and the racial hatred propagated by Afrikaner nationalists. Hofmeyr writes that “virtually all Preller's texts read as an inventory of atrocities which eventually calcify into a set of almost legendary codes: the battered baby skulls, the dead women, the drifting feathers, the skinning alive and so on. All these shorthand images in turn acquire the status of implicit historical explanation and justification.”32

This would have been the historical narrative that participants of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary would have been familiar with, one which focussed on the very worst (some of which had been imagined and fabricated) recounts of the ‘Voortrekker’ experience. From this vantage-point the ‘Voortrekkers’ were portrayed as God-fearing victims of both British imperialism and African ‘barbarism’ who were entitled to the land because their creator had ordained it (through the David vs Goliath victory at the Battle of Blood River) and because they were in the process of supposedly bettering it through agriculture and development. The second Trek of 1938 celebrated the conquest and continued presence of

30 Isabel Hofmeyr, “Popularizing History,” 530.
31 Isabel Hofmeyr, “Popularizing History,” 533.
32 Isabel Hofmeyr, “Popularizing History,” 534.
Europeans in Southern Africa. It also celebrated the emergence of a still somewhat ambiguous group of people who had become a force majeure in South African politics, economics and culture – a nationalistic group of people who identified themselves as racially and culturally distinct and would call themselves Afrikaners.

What aspects concerning the myth of the ‘Great Trek’ made this narrative so attractive to Afrikaner nationalists to exploit? The souvenir program, published by the Cape Peninsula Dingaan Festival Monument Committee in 1938, claims that one of the supposed lessons of this epical Great Trek’ was “dat die Afrikaner deur God geroep is om in hierdie suidhoek van donker Afrika die draer te wees van verhewe roeping, nl. die verspreiding van die Christendom en die beskawing in die groot see van swart barbarie” (…that the Afrikaner was called by God to this southerly corner of darkest Africa to be the carrier of a sublime calling, namely, the spread of Christianity and civilization in the great sea of black barbarity).33 Using different terminology, the ‘Voortrekkers’, the appointed ancestors of the newly forming Afrikaner, provided a supposedly historical justification for the Afrikaner to claim political autonomy from the British and to suppress the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa. This especially pertains to the Day of the Vow, in which the significant losses obtained by the Zulu were seen as God’s blessing. It apparently confirmed preconceived ideas that the invented ‘Voortrekkers’ (and thus the invented Afrikaners, the supposed descendants in 1938 of the ‘Voortrekkers’ from 1838) were like the Israelites God’s Chosen People. South Africa’s indigenous peoples were the Canaanites – the original inhabitants of the ‘Promised Land’ that needed to be suppressed and expelled to open the land for God’s Chosen People.

33 Dingaansfeeskomitee Kaapse Skiereiland, Soewenier Program Honderd Jarige Herdenking Dingaansdag, 69.
Figure 1: "WHITE BEAUTY: Daughters from the Voortrekker School in Pietermaritzburg celebrate the arrival of the ox wagons.” The “blanke skoonheid” does not just refer to the white dresses and bonnets (or ‘kappies’) but also infers that this festival was about the further assertion of white power. (Photograph taken between 18 and 20 November 1938. By Henry Murray. Scanned by Robert Uys from Dirk Mostert’s ‘Gedenkboek’)

The formation of the Afrikaner Broederbond

What were the forces which contributed to the formation of Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s? The decades between the South African War and the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary had been a turbulent period politically and economically for those who began to perceive themselves as Afrikaners. Various cornerstone organizations formed in this period to politically empower and help alleviate supposed ‘white poverty’ but also to promote the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism amongst those of European descent who had been politically, socially and economically marginalised. One of the most explicit (yet secretive) organizational manifestations of Afrikaner nationalism formulated in the early 20th century was the Afrikaner Broederbond. The Afrikaner Broederbond’s history is significant in this thesis as Henning Klopper (1895 -1985), the Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (ATKV) chairman is seen as being responsible for the conception of the idea of a second ‘Great Trek’ in 1938. He had been one of the Broederbond’s principle founders in 1918. The Organization
had begun on a particularly disjointed note which resulted in multiple expulsions and the reorganisation of the Bond at various stages of its initial development. In 1921 it became a secret organization “in an attempt to enforce discipline.”\textsuperscript{34} The Afrikaner Broederbond sought to functionally imitate the Freemasons “operating almost exclusively in the cultural field.”\textsuperscript{35} The organization initially yielded little power and its main function was to seek employment for its members; educate them concerning the Union’s political, economic and social workings, and advocate for and promote Afrikaans as a language. Dan O’Meara states that the Bond only became highly organized in the late 1920s when General Hertzog had allowed South Africa to become a British Dominion after the Balfour Declaration in 1926 thus, effectively abandoning the strive of republicanism.\textsuperscript{36} Many within the ranks of Afrikaner politics perceived this as a “betrayal”.\textsuperscript{37} This resulted in divisions [that] were instructed to increase their [the Afrikaner Broederbond’s] influence in local affairs, so that in every district Afrikaners would be aware of a ‘moving force, even if its source could not be precisely located.’ This marked the end of the ‘youthful phase’ of the Bond and the start of an attempt ‘systematically to infiltrate every arena of importance to the continued existence of the Afrikaner and to make the AB’s influence belt’.\textsuperscript{38}

In 1929 the Afrikaner Broederbond formed the Federatie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge (translated as the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organizations or FAK during the Volkskongres in Bloemfontein - an umbrella organisation that sought to advocate for the preservation and protection of an “eie nasionale kultuur” […own national culture]).\textsuperscript{39} Dan O’Meara writes that “the FAK was to be the most important and most influential of the Bond’s numerous public fronts…the Bond’s early concern with routine cultural work was

\textsuperscript{34} Dan O’Meara, \textit{Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 – 1948} (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), 60.
\textsuperscript{35} Dan O’Meara, \textit{Volkskapitalisme}, 60 – 61.
\textsuperscript{36} Dan O’Meara, \textit{Volkskapitalisme}, 60 – 61.
\textsuperscript{37} Dan O’Meara, \textit{Volkskapitalisme}, 61.
\textsuperscript{38} Dan O’Meara, \textit{Volkskapitalisme}, 61.
openly undertaken by the FAK, freeing the Bond to concentrate on other issues." These “other issues” involved nothing less than the will to take control of and dominate South African politics, ‘infiltrating’ top positions within the realms of politics and economics. The FAK, the public and cultural mouthpiece of the Afrikaner Broederbond, would play a central role in the organization of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary and the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949 since the various committees responsible for organizing these events fell under jurisdiction of the FAK.

From the Afrikaans language to the Afrikaner’s Language

The 1938 Voortrekker Centenary was one of the products of a very uniquely historical set of economic, political and cultural contextual factors which resulted in the region that would eventually become South Africa to transform into a hotbed for the Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s. Besides the peculiar political and economic conditions of a colony on the fringes of the British Empire, there were also social and cultural factors which facilitated the development of Afrikaner nationalism in the latter half of the 19th century and early 20th century. The Afrikaans language, even though it originated from the kitchens, gardens and markets of the VOC’s Cape of Good Hope, had become synonymous with Afrikaner nationalism by the 1930s. Afrikaans literature is divided in bewegings or movements. The Eerste Beweging or First Movement is represented as literature that came into being between 1875 and 1900. JC Kannemeyer writes that this literature was

*temalogies beperk deur die noue verbondenheid met die vaderland in die algemeen en die Afrikaners in besonder. Die meeste geskrieke handel oor Suid-Afrika, die Afrikaanse taal, die godsdien, die familielewe van die gewone burger of die boer en die Afrikaanse folklore, soos die verhale en anekdotes oor die trek, jag, spokery, en dies meer tot uiting kom. Die doelstelling skrywers was om die mense op te wek oor hulle rege, om hulle te stig, te leer of te vermaak*

40 Dan O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 61.
41 Dan O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 61.
(…thematically limited to a generally narrow attachment to the fatherland and the Afrikaners in particular. Most of the scripts are about South Africa, the Afrikaans language, the religion, the family of the normal citizen or farmer and Afrikaans folklore, like tales and anecdotes about the trek, hunting, ghosts and so forth. The purpose of these writers was to educate people about their rights, to create a notion of rights, to educate them or to entertain). 42

Thus, literature played a crucial part in creating a particular public of what it meant to consider oneself as an Afrikaner. While the social construction of Afrikanerdom was still in the process of formulating, Kannemeyer writes


Die didaktiese, pedagogiese en geestige aard van die literatuur in die laaste kwart van die negentiende eeu hang ten nouste saam met die feit dat dit onstaan het in diens van ’n bepaalde saak, naamlik die stryd rondom die Afrikaner en die stryd om die erkenning van Afrikaans. In die ruimere sin beteken dit dat skrywers deur middel van verse en prosa die lesers wou inlig, opvoed of vermaak en daardeur die publiek op ’n hoër kulturele niveau wou plaas.

(the didactic, pedagogical and spiritual nature of literature in the last quarter of the 19th century hangs closely next to the fact that it [literature] came into being in service of a specific cause, namely the fight concerning the Afrikaner and the fight for the acknowledgement of Afrikaans. In the wider sense it meant writers used poetry and prose seeking to inform, educate and entertain, and through that to place the public [supposedly a public who identified as Afrikaners] on a higher cultural level). 43

Many Afrikaans writers would have taken up the plight of the poor white, writing in order to educate and inform an Afrikaans public as a means to supposedly prevent the Volk from regressing to a perceived barbaric and primordial state.

Afrikaans as a language would make massive strides in the early 20th century as people categorised as Afrikaner urbanised. *De Burger* (later *Die Burger*) was established in 1914 with none other than D.F Malan (who would be elected in 1948 as the first prime minister of the apartheid regime) as its editor. The first newspaper reached the public on 26 July 1915. *De Burger* was essential in the development of the Afrikaans language as its journalists and editors had to literally create new words and terms in order to report on the diverse subject matter presented at the time. The paper would become one of the most
significant advocates of Afrikaner nationalism. Booyens and Schoeman state, that “so het Die Burger spoedig die belangrikste mondstuk van Afrikaner-nasionalisme in die jong Unie van Suid-Afrika geword” (So Die Burger became the most important mouthpiece of Afrikaner Nationalism in the young Union of South Africa). The Volksblad, formally a Dutch paper known as Het Westen, first printed in Potchefstroom in 1904, would be Afrikaner nationalism’s mouthpiece in the Orange Free State and Transvaal. Afrikaans would be recognised, along with English, as an official language in May 1925 and an attempt at an Afrikaans dictionary was initiated in 1926. The FAK sought to eradicate what they claimed was the misuse of the Afrikaans language and began collecting Afrikaans folksongs for the FAK-Volksangbundel (similar to the Great American Songbook) first published in 1937.

Even more important was the formation of the Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (translated as the Afrikaans Language and Cultural Organization) or the ATKV in 1931, in Johannesburg. The ATKV specifically focussed on the advancement of the Afrikaans language and perceived culture amongst those working within the railway industry. The concept, organization and much of the execution of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary would come from the ranks of the ATKV. 1931 also saw the formation of Die Voortrekkers, a youth organization that sought to educate children categorized as Afrikaners to appreciate their supposed cultural and natural heritage; to live according to a biblical and Protestant moral code; and to become productive citizens that contribute to the development of their communities and societies. Finally, the first bible to have been translated into Afrikaans in its entirety was published in 1933. The end of the 19th century and first decades of the 20th century was a time in which Afrikaans was formalised as a written language. From the onset


of this formalisation the language was implemented to spread Afrikaner nationalist ideologies. One can even argue that this formalisation of the language took place in order to ease and facilitate the spread of these nationalistic ideas. The 1938 Voortrekker Centenary would not have been possible were it not for the development of the Afrikaans language and the subsequent formation of organizations such as the various newspapers, the FAK, ATKV and Die Voortrekkers that actively sought to promote Afrikaner nationalist principles.

An (un)Holy Celebration: The Planning and Execution of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary

The plans for the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary were initiated on the 24th of May 1934 when the executive boards of the ATKV had decided to actively involve themselves through the organizing the celebrations that would honour the “beskawingswerk” (the job of civilizing) which the ‘Voortrekkers’ had been attributed with by nationalist historians like Gustav Preller. A. P. J Van Rensburg writes that various ideas for the building of a monument that would honour the supposed civilizing force of the Voortrekkers had been floating around since the late 19th century. Nevertheless, it was the FAK that formulated the Sentrale Volkmonumentkomitee or SVK (Central Volksmonument Committee) in Bloemfontein in 1931. The architect (Gerard Moerdijk [1890 – 1958]) and the location (Pretoria) of the planned monument was announced in 1936. It then became apparent to the organisers that the monument would not be finished by the time of the centenary celebrations. As a result, it was decided that the laying of the cornerstone would take place on the 16th of December (the Day of the Vow commemorating the Battle of Blood River) and that this event would be accompanied by a festival celebrated on a national level. The idea of utilizing ox wagons to

47 A.P.J. Van Rensburg”, 12.
somehow imitate the ‘Great Trek’ was the brainchild of Henning Klopper, who was Mossel Bay’s goods and harbour supervisor and the chair of the ATKV. He would later serve as the speaker of parliament from 1961 to 1974. Klopper’s involvement reiterates the nationalist nature of the event. The plans for the centenary Trek were formulated at Klopper’s house in Mossel Bay and at the offices of the ATKV in Hartenbos. Klopper wanted this event to be more than just a simplistic Trek that celebrated a supposedly ‘historical’ set of events. Van Rensburg writes “dit moes ‘n wekroep wees wat moes dien ter hereniging van die hele Afrikanerdom” (it needed to be an awakening call made to unite the whole of the Afrikanerdom).48

On the 6th of April 1937 it was decided during the ATKV congress that the celebration would utilize one ox wagon made from indigenous stinkwood and a yoke of red Afrikaner oxen. The ringleaders would be H. J. Klopper, M. C. Van Schoor and L. A. Nell and would take responsibility for the construction of the wagon. Initially plans involved a fairly subdued event in which one family (who were perceived as ‘real’ Afrikaners) were to use the wagon on a family holiday travelling from Johannesburg to Pretoria, arriving just in time for the laying of the intended Voortrekker Monument’s cornerstone. Nevertheless, as the plans gained more momentum, attention and popularity, plans around the event began to snowball. The starting point was moved to the statue of Jan van Riebeeck on Cape Town’s foreshore and it was intended that the family operating the wagon would stop at landmark sites deemed important in Afrikaner history (including the site of the infamous Battle of Blood River). The committee decided to build a second wagon which it could keep for the organization while donating the other to the Volk for future processions. In April of 1938 the final itinerary of the ATKV’s ox wagon trek was approved. Klopper was appointed the Trek leader with an Oom Tiene van Schoor appointed as Klopper’s second in command. It was

also decided that a festschrift would be created to commemorate the events of the second ‘Great Trek’ – Dirk Mostert’s *Gedenkboek*. This book was a crucial component and source in the formulation of this particular thesis. Peter Labuschagne writes “the memorabilia that were created, manufactured and produced during this period included prints of the ‘Great Trek’, books, mugs and other paraphernalia commemorating the folk festivals. These memorabilia, which were sold during festivals, made a significant contribution to the popularization of specific Afrikaner customs, values and practices and helped to form a distinct Afrikaner cultural identity.” Memorabilia like the *Gedenkboek* was a small but potent physical manifestation of Afrikaner nationalism to be found in almost every household which partook in the centenary event and could afford such a sizeable book. It was not just a curio which reminded people of events passed but a monument of Afrikaner nationalism in itself which could be brought into the realm of the private household. One can imagine that Mostert’s *Gedenkboek* would be kept next to an old Dutch family bible in a chest or a cupboard set aside for only the most precious of personal belongings.

The ATKV circulated letters spelling out their plans to communities who were perceived as Afrikaners and potential Afrikaners around the Union. It was only when the Afrikaans-language newspapers got hold of this information that substantial interests began to be shown by those who had begun to identify as Afrikaans. Once the initial Trek routes became known there was an outcry from communities in the Eastern Cape regarding their general exclusion from the Trek especially since the first ‘Voortrekkers’ had supposedly moved from districts in this region in the 1830s. The result was an adjustment to the route

---

50 My own personal copy of the *Gedenkboek* used to be the property of the village of Bonnievale’s primary school. The *Gedenkboek* must be studied with caution. The text in its very essence is pro-nationalistic and it potentially exaggerates on all fronts. Nevertheless, this is one of the few ‘sources’ available to historians regarding how the 1938 Voortrekkers Centenary played out on a local level.
which included locations and settlements that were once associated with the Cape Colony’s Eastern Frontier.

The two completed wagons arrived in Cape Town at the end of July in 1938 and were displayed for public viewing and admiration at the Castle of Good Hope. On the 5th August the wagons were taken to Cape Town’s City Hall where a crowd of 3000 had gathered, singing supposedly traditional Afrikaans songs. Van Rensburg writes that the feverish response apparently took the organizers by surprise and “dat die Afrikanervolk as ‘n geheel tot in sy diepste wese geroer sou word, het niemand verwag nie” (Nobody expected that the Afrikanervolk, as a whole, would be affected at the deepest levels of their beings). The trek finally started on the 8th August 1938 with Henning Klopper initiating the 1938 Symbolic Ossewatrek with the words “Die Trek het begin – Hy is in die naam van God begin” (The Trek has begun – He was started in the name of God). This invocation of God’s apparent authority reiterated the notion that the first and second ‘Great Treks’ were indeed holy events ordained by the Lord, thus, perpetuating this belief that those who perceived themselves as Afrikaners were the Christian God’s Chosen People, sent to spread his word and destined to rule over the supposed heathen masses. The first stop of the ox wagon was the suburb of Goodwood where a massive crowd of 20 000 people welcomed the wagon. This reaction surpassed all expectations. In retrospect it should not have come as a shock. Albert Grundlingh and Hilary Sapire write that participation during 1938 Voortrekker Centenary was especially boisterous since associations with the Afrikaner nationalist movement had potential tangible economic, political and social advancement.

Large crowds met the ox wagon in all the subsequent communities visited. The response had been so overwhelming

that it was difficult for the trek leaders to keep to the original itinerary and schedule. As a result, extra wagons were commandeered.

By the 16th of December 1938 a total of 9 wagons had been commandeered by the ATKV for the 1938 Centenary Trek. Two (the Andries Pretorius and Piet Retief) had been custom built and a third (the Sarel Cilliers) was donated by the carpenter J. M. Jonker of the Broeders Jonker in Knysna. The Vrou-en-Moeder and the Magdalena de Wet was built by a P.J van Reenen. The Hendrik Potgieter was the designated post-wagon of the trek. The Magrieta Prinsloo was built in record time, while the main trek had already commenced, by the Philips wagon-making company in Paarl. The Louise Trichardt and Johanna van der Merwe were supposedly actual wagons that were used during the first ‘Great Trek’. By the time of Dingaan’s Day these 9 wagons had criss-crossed the country and had basically stopped in every village, town and city in the Union of South Africa. The ATKV might not have intentionally planned to include so many population centres. The effect of this inclusion was remarkable. Including such a massive sampling of population centres in the Trek of 1938 meant that communities that had completely differing historical narratives could now be ‘united’ under the guise of one historical event. It ‘married’ the Republicans of the Orange Free State, Transvaal and Natal with the nationalists from the Cape Province. Leslie Witz writes that “the progression of ox-driven wagons from various centres was used to create local and national identities in expression of which individuals embarked on their own travels, associating the space of the trek with personal journeys of identification with an Afrikaner past.”

Albert Grundlingh and Sapire describes the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary in one journal article as a “feverish festival”. This evokes metaphorical affiliations of sickness and disease

55 Leslie Witz, “Solly Sachs, the Great Trek and Jan van Riebeeck,” 47.
56 Albert Grundlingh and Hilary Sapire, “From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual?,” 19.
– a contagious fever that causes individuals and groups to act without logic and reason. In Hartenbos a couple were married next to the ox wagon (the bride’s dress and groom’s suit can still be viewed in Hartenbos’ quirky ATKV Museum). Similarly, no fewer than five couples married at the celebrations in Blood River on 14 December 1938 (see photographs below). The wagons were used as pulpits to conduct sermons and speeches. Babies were baptised next to the wagons. Most historians that write about the event humorously mention a few of the bizarre names that some rather unfortunate souls were christened with, names like Ossewania, Eeufesia and Kakebenia. The satirist Pieter-Dirk Uys’ drag persona Evita Bezuidenhout’s fictitious family tree claims that the character’s mother (even though websites claim that she was born in 1900) is named Ouma (grandmother) Ossewania Kakebenia Poggenpoel (whose grandmother is supposedly the mythical Sarie Marais) – a comedic reference to this strange phenomenon dating from 1938. On the outskirts of some villages the men and/ or women would take over from the oxen and pull the wagons through their settlements in order to claim full participation. There are accounts of people smearing the ‘traditional’ clothing and accessories which they had especially made for the event with the oil from the wagon wheels as souvenirs. Claire Robertson manages to portray this intense zeal in the novel The Magistrate of Gower when she describes a young woman’s reaction when the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Wagon passes through the fictional town of Gower. Robertson writes

Gower…will not as other towns have, bring its brides and babies to be blessed at the wagons, but there will be shouting along Church Street and weeping from some of the old men. As the wagon…passes the courthouse…a girl in a white dress will reach behind a slow rear wheel to scoop out axle grease and, crying to Jesus, smear the stuff across her breasts.

---

58 My own grandmother claims that she was christened during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary celebrations at Delareyville in what was formally known as the Eastern Transvaal.
Events in the novel do not allow for this fictional town to be as jovial as other actual communities were during the Trek of 1938. Yet, the last description of girl smearing the grease over her breasts is both evocative and disconcerting. The graphic image manages to effectively unsettles readers, allowing them to realize that the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary was to many who participated much more than just a ‘historic’ festival but a holy procession. The descriptions of communal participation during the event in the *Gedenkboek* reiterates this feverish zeal as one reads of how the wagons passed through most settlements, villages and cities.

Such zeal had performative value in the sense that it was meant to be witnessed by others. Individual performances were evidence that one took part in the collective and that such a participant was now a member of (or reiterated one’s credentials as being a part of) the Afrikaner *volk*. This zealous and feverish behaviour was particularly interesting within the context of the Cape Province since these regions did not share the historical narrative of the ‘Great Trek’. Sure, some of the protagonists (or antagonists – depending on one’s perspective) like Piet Retief had originated from the Cape Colony, but the truly ‘epical’ events narrated by Afrikaner Nationalist historians like Gustav Preller involved the chapters where the ‘Voortrekkers’ had entered the so-called frontier, events like the massacre at uMgungundlovu (or Moordkoppie) and the infamous Battle of Blood River. Settler communities such as Durbanville and those in the Riebeek Valley, the intended focus of this thesis (as will become more apparent in the following chapters), could boast of histories of early settlement that predated the first ‘Voortrekker’ settler communities of the north by almost two centuries. So why then did so many people living in communities unrelated to those of what was called the ‘Great Trek’ so actively involve themselves with celebrating the 1938 Voortrekker Eeufees?
This is where one should draw a comparison between the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary and the Van Riebeeck festival of 1952 which followed a similar pattern to the event in 1938. However, the 1952 event celebrated European settlement whereas the 1938 event celebrated conquest. Leslie Witz argues that “to make this Van Riebeeck Festival spatially national, the organizers of the tercentenary of founding perceived it necessary to move beyond the geographical limits of Cape Town and its immediate environs and to ensure the participation of other locales in his festival.”61 In 1952 the Dutch commander Jan van Riebeeck, of the refreshment station and half-way stop for ships sailing from the kingdom of the Netherlands to the VOC’s lucrative colonies such as the Spice Islands and Batavia in Southeast Asia, had been made into founder of the first European settlement in Southern Africa. Similar to the situation of many communities (e.g. Durbanville and those in the Riebeek Valley) partaking in the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary without any tangible connections to the ‘Great Trek’ of 1838, many of the towns and cities that was pressured into partaking in the 1952 Van Riebeeck festival did not have any historical connection to the Cape Colony’s first commander, the VOC and early Dutch expansion and settlements. This particularly pertained to the port cities such as Port Elizabeth, East-London and Durban on South Africa’s eastern coast. These settlements tended to have a narrative of conquest as their narrative of colonialism. These communities participated in the 1952 Tercentenary through celebrating their “own founding” even though there was no direct relation between the historical narrative of Van Riebeeck’s “founding” of Cape Town and the “founding” of settlements such as East-London.62 Nevertheless, Witz writes that “these local commemorations which selected moments of origin to designate ‘own founding’, within the national framework of ‘national beginning’, were intended to provide these towns with the

62 Leslie Witz, Apartheid’s Festival, 216.
opportunity to become part of the festival and so show that ‘the rest of South Africa’… ha[d] an interest in the fact that Van Riebeeck landed in 1652. \(^{63}\) Witz’s theory can also be applied to the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary when examining how local narratives were adapted to fit within a national and Afrikaner nationalist mould. By participating in the events of 1938, the communities of the Cape showed “interest” in the Afrikaner nationalism propagated by the Centenary and actively sought means to associate themselves with its cause. It did not matter that these communities had absolutely no association with events that were constructed as the ‘Great Trek’, participation in the second ‘Great Trek’ of 1938 essentially implied that these communities were inducted into an Afrikaner volk (even if they themselves were not entirely sure what it entailed to be an Afrikaner yet). Participation meant inclusion.

![Figure 2: Ellen and Wessel Lategan's bridal outfits worn when they were married during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. On display at the ATKV's Hartenbos Museum. (9 November 2017. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)](http://etd.uwc.ac.za/)

\(^{63}\) Leslie Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival*, 216.
Figure 3: "Couples at the ox wagons". All the couples that got married during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations at Bloedrivier. (14 December 1938. Scan from Bloedrivierse Eeufeesgendenkboek)

Figure 4: "THERE HAD TO BE BEARDS: The organizational committee of Koeberg also made their beards. From the left to the right is: A.J Slabber (commandant), A.D. Steyn, A.J. v. d. Merwe, H. C. Dreyer, T. J. Mostert (voorsitter), H. C. van Niekerk (eieraar van die oor)."

Figure 4: “THERE HAD TO BE BEARDS: The organizational committee of Koeberg also made their beards. From the left to the right is: A.J Slabber (commandant), A.D. Steyn, A.J. v. d. Merwe, H. C. Dreyer, T. J. Mostert (chairman), H. C. van Niekerk (owner of the oxen).” Many men grew their beards specifically for the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary as supposed proof of their masculinity as men who identified as Afrikaners. (9 August 1938. Unknown photographer. Scanned from Dirk Mostert’s ‘Gedenkboek’)

http://etd.uwc.ac.za/
Figure 5: “THE VOLK LIVES: Thousands supplant each other in the big enthusiasm which the wagons awake. Thousands of people congregating around the ox wagons in Church Square, Pretoria. (14 December 1938, Johanna Uys. Scanned from Dirk Mostert’s ‘Gedenkboek’).”
CHAPTER 2: The Voortrekker Monument

Big things have small beginnings

The zenith of the 1938 Voortrekker Eeufees was reached during Geloftedag during the laying of the Voortrekker Monument’s cornerstone in Pretoria. An estimated 100 000 people (one tenth of the total population who identified as Afrikaner) gathered to partake in the ceremony and celebrations surrounding the site of the intended monument.

The biography of the Voortrekker Monument is important to the development of this treatise because the Voortrekker Monument has in many ways acted as a proxy for the hundreds of smaller monuments dating from the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary scattered across South Africa. The Voortrekker Monument has provided a model and a mode of comparison, based on extensive scholarly research and media attention within the last 80 years, for the development of a theoretical framework that can be applied to the monuments focussed on in this thesis. The laying of the cornerstone of the Voortrekker Monument represented the climax of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. Thus, one cannot properly investigate the lives of the smaller structures dating from the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary without at least briefly considering the biography of Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria.

The monument itself was only inaugurated in 1949 which spawned another large Afrikaner nationalist festival. Nevertheless, the birth of the monument cannot be separated from the design and execution of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. As stated, plans for a monument commemorating the ‘Great Trek’ of the 1830s and 1840s had been brooding since the late 19th century. Renewed interest in a potential monument, instigated by a wave of Afrikaner nationalist sentiment, arose in the 1920s. In April 1931 the Sentrale Volksmonumentkomitee or S.V.K was formulated in Bloemfontein, under the auspices of the FAK (the cultural mission of the Afrikaner Broederbond), which consolidated all the lobby groups for the future monument. In October 1935 Die Volksblad published one of the first
proposed plans for the Voortrekker Monument resembling an Egyptian temple. Alta Steenkamp writes that “it seems that the architect of this proposal, Gerhard Moerdyk, might have had it published as a strategic move to become associated with the project.”\[64\]

Steenkamp’s statement is based on the fact that the S.V.K had only officially begun discussing and planning what the monument should resemble some months later. Moerdyk possibly thought that if he could gain public support for the design he would be awarded with this potentially prestigious commission.\[65\] In April 1936 *Die Volkstem*, a Pretoria-based Afrikaans newspaper, published another Moerdyk plan. However, this time the proposed monument resembled the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus. By then the S.V.K had made it clear that it had not appointed any architect for the project. Nevertheless, Moerdyk was eventually invited to address the S.V.K regarding the design of the structure and managed to convince them that he would be the most qualified person for the commission. Gerard Moerdyk was appointed the *Boumeester* (translated as the Building Master) in that same year. The S.V.K first revealed Moerdyk’s design for the monument at the Empire Exhibition of Johannesburg in September 1936.

Elizabeth Delmont and Annie Coombes argue that by associating the Voortrekker Monument through these initial designs with internationally renowned architectural masterpieces, from Egyptian Temples to monuments commemorating Napoleonic Europe, Moerdyk “cement[ed] the historical legitimacy of an Afrikaner ascendancy.”\[66\]

Moerdyk would also vainly compare the Voortrekker Monument in official guides to monuments


\[65\] Some scholars like Annie E. Coombs use the spelling ‘Moerdijk’ as opposed to ‘Moerdyk’. Both forms of spelling seem to be accepted amongst scholars and the author of this thesis quotes authors that use both ‘Moerdijk’ and ‘Moerdyk’. This makes it difficult to be consistent. Nevertheless, where the author did not quote he used ‘Moerdyk’ as this form was easier to type.

outside of the Union of South Africa to supposedly give the visitor some perspective regarding the dimensions of the structure. Coombes writes

> the architect Gerard Moerdjik places the monument within the lineage of other internationally significant locations, including the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus. While acknowledging the disparity in scale, Moerdjik (in the official guidebook to the monument) is not reticent about marshalling the Hôtel des invalids in Paris and India’s Taj Mahal as points of comparison…”

The effect of such a comparison is an indirect statement that historical narratives, propagated by Afrikaner nationalists regarding the ‘Great Trek’, is as grand and should be viewed in the same momentous light (and as ‘historical fact’) as Mughal reign in India or the Napoleonic conquest in Europe; even though these structures (e.g. Hôtel des Invalids) in themselves represented contested narratives propagated by a particular set of regimes. As discussed in chapter one, it is a particular characteristic of monuments to solidify murky and contested pasts. Delmont and Coombes highlights this by exploring how narratives such as the ‘Great Trek’ become supposed ‘historical’ fact even within the planning phase of these structures.  

**The Victory of Afrikaner Nationalism**

By the time that the Voortrekker Monument was inaugurated in 1949 the Union of South Africa was a different country than it had been in 1938. The Purified National Party celebrated a narrow victory in 1948. Nonetheless, the repercussions of this victory would be earthshattering for many South Africans since it was this regime that would bring the policies of apartheid into effect. One cannot help but wonder how the massive mobilization of Afrikaners during the 1938 Voortrekker Eeufees would have contributed to the 1948 election results. I would argue that the 1948 victory would not have happened were it not for the Afrikaner nationalism propagated during the centenary a decade earlier. 1949 was not just a celebration of the completion of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria but it was also a

---

celebration of an Afrikaner nationalist victory. The party that inducted apartheid simply further cemented the ideologies and mythologies propagated in 1938. Between the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949 and the 1970s there is little to be said about the Voortrekker Monument and all the other 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments. Articles commemorating the 1938 centenary appear in magazines such as Die Huisgenoot and special newspaper editions in Die Burger. The story of the ‘Great Trek’ is also mythologized and romanticized through the novels of the Afrikaans writer F. A. Venter (1916 – 1997): Geknelde Land (1960), Offerland (1963), Gelofteland (1966) and Bedoelde Land (1968). Geknelde Land would win the famous Hertzog Prize, a prestigious literary prize awarded to Afrikaans-language writers presented by the South African Academy of Art and Science, in 1961. The description on Geknelde Land’s cover asks

*Hoe gebeur dit dat ‘n hele gevestigde gemeenskap sy tentpenne uitruk en die wilderness intrek? In Geknelde land gee Venter ‘n diep-menslike antwoord op dié en ook op baie ander vrae. Die uiterlike verloop van die Groot Trek is aan elke skoolkind in Suid-Afrika bekend. Maar die menslike aspek van hierdie volksverhuising is haas’n geslote boek. Nou het Venter die volle verhaal van die Groot Trek aangedurf.*

(How does it happen that an established community pulls out its tent pens and moves into the wilderness. Venter provides a deeply human answer to these and many other questions in Geknelde Land. The outward development of the Great Trek is familiar to every school child in South Africa. But the human aspect of this exodus is a closed book. Venter has now taken on the full story of the Great Trek).69

Venter’s quartet of novels is simply a different version or an extension of Gustav Preller’s personal accounts or ‘micro-histories’ concerned with the ‘Voortrekkers’. This narrative assumes that the ‘Voortrekkers’ were a united entity or volk and that the ‘Great Trek’ was an actual historical set of events. By this stage it is also assumed that even children would be well versed in the mythology of the Trek. Interestingly Venter chose the format of a novel as opposed to a chronological narrative that follows the conventions of ‘historical writing.’ This further entrenches the notion that the ‘Great Trek’ was primarily a story. This does not steer

69 F. A. Venter, Geknelde Land (Tafelberg Publishers: Cape Town, 1960), cover page.
away from the fact that depictions of the ‘Great Trek’ did not change much between 1938 and the 1970s. The assumption would then also be that the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monuments would not have changed much in what they symbolised between 1938 and the 1970s.

Caressing Afrikaner Symbols

In June 1995 the editors of Loslyf (translated as loose body), a newly established Afrikaans pornographic magazine which formed after the draconian censorship laws of the apartheid regime were abolished, did what would have been considered as blasphemy in its time, but especially given the conservative religiosity of previous decades. Its first issue contained a nude photographic essay of a woman called Dina, whom the magazine claims is a “Boeremeisie in murg en been” (Boer girl in marrow and bone), posing suggestively in front of the Voortrekker Monument. The cover photograph for the series depicts Dina, the “inheemse blom van die maand” (indigenous flower of the month), wearing shorts with a leopard print which accentuates her brown tanned legs. Her blouse is buttoned open, thus exposing her navel, breasts and nipples. Both her hands are behind her head which obviously creates the effect of further protruding her chest.

Another photograph in the essay depicts Dina in a side-pose, slightly and invitingly lifting her exposed breasts with her one hand. Behind her is the statue of Hendrik Potgieter, one of the most prominent Voortrekker leaders of the 19th century and the first head of state of Potchefstroom and the Zoutpansberg, which adorns one of the corners of the Voortrekker Monument. As the essay develops nothing is left to the reader’s imagination. The accompanying article claims that Dina is a supposed descendant of Potgieter. Dina posing

---

half-naked with one of the patriarchs of the ‘Great Trek’ in the background is evidence of how sentiments amongst people who perceived themselves as Afrikaners had possibly changed since 1938. The article supposedly quotes Dina and states

*Dina’s statement is a radical, ironic and tongue-in-the-cheek invitation to topple the Voortrekker Monument (and the Afrikaner nationalism it symbolises) through profanity. The purpose of a pornographic magazine is to stimulate desire and lust. Dina’s poses are meant to stimulate sexual fantasies in which men are touching her body. Through fantasizing about copulating with Dina, the viewer is essentially ‘f*cking’ Afrikaans culture and the Afrikaner nationalism that has been historically equated with it. Dina clearly warns the reader that if you touch her symbols (the monuments which are the physical debris of Afrikaner nationalism) then you are touching her. Nevertheless, this seems more like an invitation than a warning. Yet, through ‘desecrating’ Dina the viewer is also ‘desecrating’ the Voortrekker Monument. The essay associates the act of sexual penetration with the desire to destroy the monuments of Afrikaner nationalism. The creators of *Loslyf,* whose first editor had been a former sub-editor of the controversial anti-apartheid newspaper the *Vrye Weekblad,* essentially invites the viewer and reader to dismantle the Voortrekker Monument.

In 1938 the plans for the monument had been a holy symbol of a supposed nation on the rise – a reminder to a Calvinistic people that they were the supposed rightful and godly-ordained heirs to southern Africa. However, by 1995 the monument had become somewhat of

---

an embarrassing joke and a bitter reminder of the hypocrisy and atrocities committed in the name of Afrikaner nationalism during apartheid. Many of the people who would have been classified as Afrikaners in the past sought to challenge the constructions created around Afrikaner identity by Afrikaner nationalists and thus relieve themselves of the cultural and political baggage that came with associating oneself with the Afrikaner. Annie Coombes writes that “with the Voortrekker Monument looming large in the near background, is one kind of slap in the face for the Calvinist puritanism of Afrikaner nationalists.” 73 Antjie Krog writes in the preface of The Erotic Drawings of Anton Kannemeyer that photographic essays such as ‘Dina by die Monument’ (Dina at the Monument) presented in Loslyf, along with the shockingly controversial and graphic drawings by the artist Anton Kannemeyer, were a form of “attacking the myths of Afrikaner purity and masculinity.” 74 Hattingh, the first editor, writes “Afrikaners have always been portrayed as khaki-clad repressed people and I wanted to show them as normal, sexual, f*cking human-beings.” 75 By portraying those perceived as Afrikaners with “normal” sexual desires figure like Hattingh and Kannemeyer were demystifying and humanising the self-proclaimed overlords of Southern Africa. John Peffer writes that Dina “re-inserted what the monument itself, as a quasi-divine symbol of Afrikaner nationalism, had pulled out of the picture. The Loslyf pictorial was iconoclastic, in the sense that it slyly assaulted the image of the monument by profaning it, while at the same time claiming to be on the side of the founders.” 76

But Dina is not just an attack on constructions of Afrikaner masculinity and puritanism but also on constructions of Afrikaner femininity. Annie Coombes draws a comparison between Anton van Wouw’s (1862 – 1945) statue of the Voortrekker woman and

---

73 Annie E. Coombes, History After Apartheid, 40.
74 Antjie Krog, “Enter these pages at your own peril!” In The Erotic Drawings of Anton Kannemeyer, ed. Sophie Perryer (Cape Town: Stevenson Gallery, 2014), 10.
75 Annie E. Coombes, History After Apartheid, 49.
children, at the base of the monument at the two staircases that lead up to the visitors’ entrance to the Voortrekker Monument, with the depictions of ‘Dina by die Monument’. Coombes describes the Voortrekker puritanical woman represented by the statue as symbolising “white civilization” protecting future generations from the supposed ‘barbarity’ and the “dangers of Africa” (symbolised by the friezes of wildebeest running away from the statue). The mother’s tired eyes stare out into the horizon; nevertheless, her stare can only be observed through carefully zooming in with a digital camera into photographs since her bonnet or kappie obstructs the viewer from studying her facial expression; thus, essentially rendering her without an identity other than her role as a volksmoeder. This evokes a further sense of austerity. This mother stands symbolically in direct opposition to Dina. Dina does not stare at the horizon but like Édouard Manet’s (1832 – 1883) ‘Olympia’ (1885) looks directly at the viewer – confrontational and without pretence, yet, inviting. Coombes writes that “far from the Calvinist puritanism of the early Voortrekker dress…our ‘indigenous flower’ is confusingly kitted out in an outfit more resonant of the threat of the African wild [especially the leopard- print pants] or of the male Voortrekker’s attempt to tame it… Nor is motherhood the first thing on her mind… she disrupts the versions of both femininity and masculinity (black and white) played out in the monument, providing a kind of composite figure in which both gendered and ethnic identifications are deliberately confused.”

Coombes claims that “the effect here is to display the contradictions of the image of the demure Calvinist homemaker and procreator of the Boer nation by casting the Boer woman as Amazon – in other words exposing the contradiction by explicitly sexualising the Boer woman’s warrior status.”

77 Annie E. Coombes, History After Apartheid, 42.
78 Annie E. Coombes, History After Apartheid, 42- 43.
79 Annie E. Coombes, History After Apartheid, 43.
The myth of the Boer woman during the ‘Great Trek’ was heavily exploited during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. Judith Pellissier, the wife of Samuel Henri Pellissier (the founder of the Afrikaner Volksang- en Volkspelebeweging), in a speech made on the 14th of December 1938, at the proposed site of the Voortrekker Monument, claimed that the “heilige roeping” (sacred calling) of the Voortrekker woman was to become the “Moeder van haar volk, draer van lewe” (Mother of her volk, carrier of life). Leslie Witz writes that “not only were women depicted in Afrikaner nationalist histories as performing maternal duties in the service of the volk, but they were also portrayed as the keepers of racial boundaries.” Voortrekker woman were seen as both the motherly protectors of the supposedly pure white Afrikaner race through producing Aryan babies, but simultaneously they stood right behind the men loading their weapons and shooting at the ‘heidense gepeupel’ (heathen hordes) during the Battle of Blood River. Leslie Witz writes that such images asserted “racial exclusivity and superiority” and that “images of Afrikaner women in immaculate white bonnets and dresses served as ‘boundary markers’ visibly upholding the fetish signs of national difference and visibly embodying the iconography of race and gender purity.” Judith Pellissier quoted a historian (she fails to acknowledge exactly who this historian is, possibly Gustav Preller. Nevertheless, without acknowledging her source the critical reader can imagine that she simply invented the quote) who apparently wrote that “as die vroue nie aan die sy van hul mans en broers gestaan het om die gewere te laai nie, dan was dit heel onwaarskynlik dat die burgers die kampe teen die duisende wraaksugtige aanvallers kon verdedig het” (if the woman did not stand at the sides of their husbands and brothers to load

82 Leslie Witz, “Solly Sachs, the Great Trek and Jan van Riebeeck,” 48.
their guns, then it would have been completely unlikely that the burgers could defend the camps against the thousands of vengeful attackers). Pellissier also states

\[\textit{die Trekkervrou was nie 'n heilige engel uit die hemel nie, sy was 'n gewone mens met foute en tekortkomings, maar haar dade wat in die geskiedrolle van Suid-Afrika as feite tot 'n nageslag spreek en hom besiel, getuig daarvan dat sy nie maar die soetsappige vermaaklikheid van die man was nie, maar dat sy 'n onmisbare krag, ja, een van die grootste faktore in die nasiewording van die Afrikanervolk was}\]

(The Trekker woman was not a holy angel, but she was a normal human with shortcomings and faults, but her deeds recorded in the history manuscripts as facts which has spoken and touched the descendants, testify that she was not just the sweet entertainment for men, but that she had indispensable power, yes, that she was one of the greatest factors in the Afrikaner volk becoming a nation).

The myth of the ‘Great Trek’ meant that a certain level of toughness (thus androgyny) was expected from Voortrekker woman. Yet, traditional Afrikaner nationalist gender constructions do not allow such females to be depicted as sexual predators (like Dina) since such an expression would challenge both Calvinism and the strive for a pure white race (since it was apparently not likely that a ‘wanton woman’ would discriminate against men [and women] of a different race when it came to satisfying their supposed animalistic cravings).

Dina is evidence of a massive shift in culture and society, in how many who might have called themselves Afrikaners perceived Afrikaner nationalism and the physical structures which exemplified it. Contrary to what some may argue, Dina’s photographic essay represents an important chapter in the biographical narrative of the Voortrekker Monument. It represents a cultural break from the supposedly Christian values of Afrikaner nationalism and exposes the very human dimension of sexual desire – a human characteristic which had always been suppressed through religion and censorship under apartheid law. The creators of \textit{Loslyf} boldly displayed their utter disregard for the Calvinist and Afrikaner nationalist regime which the monument represented by associating the structure with what some might have considered to be the basest of human needs and sexualising the Volksmoeder. Dina posing

---

naked in front of the monument would have been seen as sacrilege in the realm of the Afrikaner civic religion. It was a sacrilege that was now permissible in a post-apartheid democratic South Africa. Dina was a bold statement of some who might have been in the past cast as Afrikaners finally refusing to further perceive the structure of the Voortrekker Monument as a temple to the supposed ideology of Afrikaner nationalism.

Figure 6: Anton van Wouw’s depiction of a ‘Voortrekker’ mother and children. The statue is just below the main entrance of Voortrekker Monument. Van Wouw’s depiction epitomizes the ideal Afrikaner woman according to the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism. (7 January 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)
The Road to Hell is paved in 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments

Dina’s sensual symbols would not be the only slap in the face of the Afrikaner nationalist establishment’s face from a group of people that would have been cast as Afrikaners. Perhaps an even more painful blow would come from within the deepest ranks of Afrikaner conservatism. To understand the depth of this apparent betrayal to Afrikaner nationalism, it is necessary to go back to the Voortrekker Monument’s design. The final design of the Voortrekker Monument borrowed much from that of the Völkerslachtdenkmal or the Monument to the Battle of Nations, a structure commemorating Napoleon’s 1813 defeat in Leipzig, Germany. The Völkerslachtdenkmal employed many masonic elements (its designer Bruno Schmitz [1858 – 1916] was a known Freemason) which Moerdyk, probably unintentionally, copied. This indirect and rather suspiciously weak connection between the Voortrekker Monument and Freemasonry resulted in a fascinating response by many who would regard themselves as Afrikaners. The late 1980s, 1990s and 2000s saw a massive exodus of perceived Afrikaners from the Dutch Reformed Church, the religious authority that had been at the heart of Afrikaner nationalism. Barry Tolmay writes in the DRC’s official newspaper, Die Kerkbode, that

Die oorgang na die Nuwe Suid-Afrika in 1994 het baie individuele vryheid gebring. Die nuwe politieke samelewings het die sosiale sisteme verander en daardeur die kerkbywoning van Afrikaanse hoofstroomkerke beïnvloed. Die etiket van apartheid waardeur Afrikaanse hoofstroomkerke aan vorige regerings verbind word, het ’n negatiewe koppeling waarvan ’n groep jonger volwassenes wil wegkom.

(The transition to a New South Africa in 1994 brought many individual freedoms. The new political order changed the social systems and with that the attendance of mainstream Afrikaans churches. The etiquette of apartheid which connected mainstream Afrikaans churches to previous regimes, had a negative association from which younger people want to escape).85

The first edition of the *Loslyf* magazine from 1995 interestingly enough has an article about this very phenomenon entitled ‘*Kerk in Krisis*’ (Church in Crisis).\(^86\) The article speaks of some 42 000 DRC members who had “recently” resigned from the DRC.\(^87\) Many were drawn to Charismatic and Evangelical Churches which employed a much less constrained forms of praise and worship. Furthermore, such churches come forth as being much more informal (but no less authoritarian) in terms of matters such as dress-code etc. Nonetheless, while the Dutch Reformed Church has liberalized to a certain extant where there are currently genuine debates within the church authority regarding issues such as gay marriage and environmentalism, the large Charismatic and Evangelical Churches has arguably become more conservative at least in its strict application of biblical laws.\(^88\) Such denominations often employ a very literal interpretation of Biblical narratives and metaphors, and there is a strong component within these communities that seek to expose the supposed ‘demonic’ and ‘devil-worshipping’ nature of secretive organizations such as the Freemasons and the Afrikaner Nationalist equivalent the Afrikaner Broederbond. One such Christian, Denise Woods, is quoted by Alta Steenkamp when she writes that there is little doubt that the Voortrekker Monument is a Masonic Temple, supported by the fact that the architect, Gerhard Moerdyk, himself referred to the monument as a temple. The Voortrekker Monument, she [Woods] argues, is a product of nationalism and nationalism, in turn, is the product of satanic wisdom as the men who developed it had rejected the Word of God and embraced occult practices. Because of this the Afrikaner and their descendants are bound into a strong covenant with the powers of darkness and it is now up to us, as future generations, to deal with this idolatrous and blasphemous legacy that we inherited from our fathers…The festivities and rituals conducted during the Centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938 and the inauguration of the monument in 1949 confirm, for her [to Woods], the Masonic characteristics. This includes activities such as the vows made along the ox wagon routes, the torch marathon, the sacred flames lit from the sun and burning today still, and the laying of the foundation stone. In the design Masonic elements and symbols include the altar, the perpetual flame, the floor pattern which represents the blazing star, the obsession with the exhalation of womanhood, and on the bas relief panels,

---

\(^{87}\) Johannes van der Walt, “Kerk in Krisis,” 51.
referred to by Woods as the ‘title deed’, the Governor’s hand symbol, the mother and child, the anchor, the building implements and act of building, the circle (mandala) of wagons and finally, obviously, Piet Retief’s water bottle clearly marked with Masonic symbols… Accordingly, she [Woods] posits, the monument is infused with occult symbolism associated with ancient practices of Sun worship, and, says Woods ‘… all evidence points to the fact that the monument is an altar endowed with spiritual authority to ‘govern’ the affairs of the nation and direct its destiny for a thousand years and more.’ In conclusion, she [Woods] states that the merits of dismantling not only the Voortrekker Monument but also the associated minor monuments erected during the 1938 Centenary Celebrations are open to debate as each offer an entry point for demonic activity…God, she [Woods] says, leaves the choice up to us… but it is clear what would happen if left up to her [Woods].

Steenkamp seeks to disprove the Voortrekker Monument’s connection to the secretive Freemasons. Nevertheless, Wood’s view, like the Loslyf’s photographic essay of ‘Dina by die Monument’, is proof of an interesting change in perceptions amongst many of those who would have considered themselves as Afrikaners in the past concerning the symbolic value of the Voortrekker Monument. Where ‘Dina by die Monument’ displays how some progressives and leftists might have felt about Afrikaner nationalism in 1995, individuals such as Denise Wood represent the perspectives of a no less angry, disillusioned and bitter Evangelical Christian community – many of whom represent people that would have been classified as Afrikaners. This view propagated by many within the realms of conservative Christian Afrikaans society can be ironically juxtaposed with the original intended meaning which saw the structure as being symbolic of the Christian God’s grace and covenant with the Voortrekkers and their supposed Afrikaner descendants. Denise Wood’s fundamentalist Christian viewpoint on the Voortrekker Monument reiterates James E. Youngs’ claim that “the monument has increasingly become the site of contested and competing meanings, more likely the site of cultural conflict than of shared national values and ideals.”

Nationalist interpretation. This evangelical worldview does not consider the Voortrekker Monument as a reminder of the favour that the God of the Voortrekkers granted to his people but rather as a temple to the occult and satanic worship. The charismatic interpretation views the monument as a stronghold of the devil’s nationalistic grip on the South African nation. Within such a religious perspective one can assume that the smaller monuments, studied later in this thesis, are considered as the place-markers of smaller ‘doors’ or gateways to the ‘spiritual realm’ in which the ‘forces of evil’ can enter into the physical realm of humans, thus, possessing humans and influencing the decision-making abilities of those not ‘protected’ by the blood of Christ (which apparently must have been all the Afrikaner Nationalists that have ever lived). This view essentially relieves those Christians that perceive themselves as Afrikaners of any guilt associated with apartheid and Afrikaner nationalism because it essentially shifts the blame to the devil and his demons. Within this narrative the only ‘sin’ which the Afrikaner has committed is not the atrocities committed in the name of Afrikaner nationalism through the apartheid regime, but a failure to properly dedicate their lives to the Christian God, thus opening a ‘spiritual door’ through which the demonic powers of nationalism could enter the physical world. This view does not really consider the intricate set of historical conditions which made this (Afrikaner) society what it is today but ironically (particularly the fact that they supposedly serve an all-powerful and ‘good’ God) the Voortrekker Monument represents some triumph that evil has had over Afrikaner society, which is then linked to the occult and satanic worship. As bizarre as this manner of thinking might seem to some, it does reveal (like the Loslyf magazine) how perceptions of a monument dating from the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary have drastically changed since its construction in the 1930s and this rather recherché viewpoint should not be omitted when considering the biography of this particular monument.
So why did some of the people who identified as Afrikaners have such a massive change of heart in how they viewed the Voortrekker Monument in 1990s and 2000s? Albert Grundlingh provides an answer to this particular question in ‘A Cultural Conundrum? Old Monuments and New Regimes: The Voortrekker Monument as a Symbol of Afrikaner Power in a Post-Apartheid South Africa’. Grundlingh explores the different meanings attached to the Voortrekker Monument and the 1938 Voortrekker Celebrations through the decades. He argues that this seismic shift in the manner in which people who identified as Afrikaners viewed the Voortrekker Monument from 1938 to the democratic era is due to an economic and geo-political shift in circumstance of those who identify as Afrikaners. The previous section has spelt out the harsh economic conditions and lack of political autonomy that communities that would be labelled as Afrikaner would experience in the early 20th century. By the 1980s this had radically changed. In the 1930s it economically, politically and socially benefitted those that spoke Afrikaans and could pass as white to identify as Afrikaners. This was not the case in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s for the majority of people who identified as Afrikaner.

Similarly, perceptions of the Voortrekker Monument would also change. The monument had been constructed as God’s covenant with the Afrikaner, the Afrikaner’s supposed position as lords of the land, and a symbol of national pride from the 1930s through the 1960s and 70s. However, by the late 1980s it would be an embarrassment to the Afrikaner bourgeoisie, a symbol of a regime that struggled to integrate within the global economy because of isolationism and various trade embargoes. It was a symbol of a government which oppressed the majority of the country’s population and denied them their basic human rights.

---


It was a symbol of a nationalism that had formulated nefarious institutions such as Vlakplaas, the headquarters of the South African Police counterinsurgency unit C10 (later C1) outside Pretoria, that saw the abduction, torture and eventual murder of hundreds of many freedom fighters. It was a symbol of a nationalism that censored both black and white writers, artists and musicians. It was the symbol of a regime that was responsible for sending roughly 600 000 young white men to fight in a series of border wars against an often imagined Rooi Gevaar resulting in thousands returning with PTSD. This same regime had allowed Dr Aubrey Levine (also known as Doctor Shock) to ‘experiment’ on gay conscripts using electroshock therapy and hormonal ‘treatments’. Many of the horrors of apartheid remain classified even under the ANC government or have only recently been revealed or exposed. One is reminded of the severe allegations against top apartheid officials like Magnus Malan (1930 – 2011) regarding the sexual abuse of boys at Bird Island. A series of controversial exposés reported by publications such as the Vrye Weekblad in the dying decades of apartheid and the work done by restorative-justice body’s such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the 1990s resulted in a portion of white South Africans (of which some would have considered themselves as Afrikaners) to feel disillusioned and humiliated by the level of brainwashing that they had been exposed to and were forced to endure under apartheid. Albert Grundlingh writes that “there are fewer and fewer Afrikaners who are prepared to defend the apartheid past; it is no longer a history of which they can be proud. As the distortions of the past are uncovered, the Voortrekker Monument is also categorized as an episode of nationalist deception.”

Afrikaners were angered by the atrocities which the regime had committed in their names. In such a context it seems conceivable that the Voortrekker Monument, the symbol of the ideology of the regime that would give birth to apartheid, would be considered as a gateway to hell or a space claiming false sanctity that needed desecration.

The Great Pollution

The Voortrekker Monument, like the Taalmonument in Paarl, was privatized in a scurry of paranoia based on a set of fears which expected the worst from the new democratic government in the 1990s. However, as stated the new regime initially did very little to purge the physical landscape of structures of the apartheid era. Instead the ANC government, especially under the leadership of the former presidents Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918 – 2013) and Thabo Mbeki, sought to formulate a new nationalist narrative more fitting to the post-apartheid political agenda. Under such a guise South Africa was presented through archaeology and anthropology as one of the origin centres of humankind. Artefacts such as the oldest supposed drawing found (thus far) on a piece of ochre from the Blombos Cave and the 8000-year-old Coldstream Burial Stone, along with the discovery of various skeletal remains around the country, were incorporated into the body of evidence which declared Southern Africa as being a part of the Cradle of Humanity. Furthermore, focus shifted from the history of settler communities and their conquests to narratives which celebrated Southern Africa’s indigenous peoples, and the formation of great civilizations such as that seen at the Mapungubwe World Heritage Sites. Instead of destroying old monuments the new South African government (invented) and invested in ‘new’ heritage sites such as the Maropeng Visitors Centre at the Sterkfontein Caves which celebrated Afrocentric histories.98

No other monument perhaps asserted this new narrative as Freedom Park (a vast complex which contains a state-of-the-art museum, park, memorials, amphitheatre and a

substantial collection of public artworks built and developed between 2001 and 2004 by the
ANC government) strategically situated on a hill right across the Voortrekker Monument in
Pretoria. Elizabeth Rankin writes “Freedom Park was planned as an inclusive national
monument, reflecting Mandela’s concept of a people’s shrine…”99 The Freedom Park also
represents the South African government’s reaction to the looming presence of the
Voortrekker Monument. It is in many ways a counter-monument to the Voortrekker
Monument. When the author visited the complex in June 2018 it became clear that the
Freedom Park presented and reiterated a counter-narrative to that of the Voortrekker
Monument. The European Settler and its subsequent generations, particularly those depicted
as Voortrekkers and as Afrikaners, are displayed as a polluting force at Freedom Park. One
information board relating to “when the European colonisers first arrived on our shores, the
indigenous people met them with openness. They warmly welcomed the strangers as they
would visitors in their homesteads... But ultimately the colonisers did not want to be taken
into the fold. They wanted to take possession of the land...”100 The use of “our” and “they” is
a clearly intended to create a delineation between an ‘us’ and ‘them’. This is exactly the same
type of othering which Afrikaner nationalists sought to formulate during the centenary.
However, the Afrikaner nationalists depicted the supposed Voortrekkers as a Christian force
sent to save the heathen nations, while the ANC’s Freedom Park depicted the white coloniser
(which included the Voortrekker) as a bad guest who not only over-stayed his welcome but
went on to rob his host. The information is ironically entitled “They Are Also Humans” and it
is important to clarify that the “they” is not specified; meaning that the humanity of one
group has somewhat come into question. The European settler and their descendants are
blamed for stealing both the land from (and the supposed innocence of) indigenous societies

99 Elizabeth Rankin, “A Janus-Like Juncture: Reconciling Past and Present at the Voortrekker Monument and
Freedom Park,” in Public Art in South Africa: Bronze Warriors and Plastic Presidents, eds. Kim Miller and
100 “They Are Also Human,” Information Board inside the Freedom Park Museum.
and desecrating the mystical landscape with mine heaps and brutalist architecture. Freedom Park rejects the Afrikaner nationalist claim that the Voortrekkers were God’s chosen people and that the Voortrekker Monument is a symbol of God’s covenant. Instead it narrates the Voortrekkers as thieves and oppressors which supposedly sought to actively break indigenous peoples’ spirit of *Ubuntu* and their sacred connection to the earth. Freedom Park stands literally and figuratively in opposition to the Voortrekker Monument.

![Image of the Voortrekker Monument viewed from Freedom Park.](http://etd.uwc.ac.za/)

*Figure 7: The Voortrekker Monument viewed from Freedom Park. I found it quite difficult to get a clear unobstructed view of the Voortrekker Monument. Freedom Park has clear views of the city of Pretoria but one has to struggle to get a good view of the Voortrekker Monument. (3 June 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)*
**Saved by the Tourist**

Regardless of onslaughts made by pornographers, born-again Christians and the ANC government, the Voortrekker Monument still stands. In fact, visitor numbers show that it is more popular than Freedom Park. Statistics indicate that the Voortrekker Monument, now a part of a privately owned section 21 company, saw half-a-million visitors in 2015.\(^{101}\) In the same year Freedom Park admitted only 54000 even though through governmental funding it had much more resources at its disposal to invest in publicity and advertisement.\(^{102}\) A part of the Voortrekker Monument’s success was an aggressive marketing scheme aimed at booming Asian tourist markets, especially the Chinese. 43% of all Chinese tourists that travel and tour through South Africa visit the Voortrekker Monument.\(^{103}\) While the authoritarianism symbolised by the Voortrekker Monument found a niche amongst complicit Chinese tourists, the monument’s original and intended audience is significantly shrinking. The Voortrekker Monument could no longer depend on the support of an ever decreasing (whether through immigration or just a general decline in the birth-rate) white Afrikaner demographic, especially since “devoid of an earlier puissance, its grip on the Afrikaans cultural marketplace has also weakened considerably; its former clients reject its political message while discovering new areas of cultural expression in a globalized consumer economy.”\(^{104}\) Grundlingh also states that “it’s rather ironic that Afrikaners have all but deserted the monument, but now foreigners, once regarded with a fair degree of xenophobia as inimical to

---


\(^{102}\) Luke Alfred, “No easy road between the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park.”

\(^{103}\) Luke Alfred, “No easy road between the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park.”

the ideal of the pure, self-contained Afrikaner nation, help pay the upkeep of what was a semireligious shrine of nationalism.”

In recent years the management of the Voortrekker Monument has had to compromise the supposed sanctity of the monument to ensure that the structure becomes commercially viable. This links to Martin Hall’s argument relating to how historical spaces have been allowed to be appropriated by the heritage economy. Hall writes that “aspects of these historical landscapes have been reinvented as entertainment centres in the ‘experiential economy’.” The experiential economy involves the process by which a historical site or space becomes so commercialised that historical narratives surrounding the site no longer seems to matter – the historical landmark just becomes one of many items that the tourist and visitor ticks off from their bucket list. Few visitors actually engage with the historical realities of such a site beyond finding the perfect spot for a selfie. The historical significance of sites and the values of the societies which created structures like the Arc de Triomphe in Paris or the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin becomes irrelevant within the experiential economy dominated by the likes of gap-year backpackers and package tours in which tourists are bussed in to spend perhaps an hour at the monument to take a few pictures and then are sent off to Sun City or the Kruger National Park. Once a historical landmark, like the Voortrekker Monument, is integrated into the experiential economy it is relieved of the load of history because “the measure is their ability to entertain – to organize performances and create simulations that engage their visitors in the dialogue of a pin-ball game…Their operators have little interest in matters of public history or heritage as education – their objective is a return on their investment.” The only expectation from the monument from a managerial perspective is to remain noteworthy enough to generate a surplus income. This actually turns

107 Martin Hall, “Identity, Memory and Countermemory,” 203.
out to be a saving grace for sites like the Voortrekker Monument, since a substantial portion of visitors no longer care about the Afrikaner nationalist origins of the structure but instead perceive it as an ideal opportunity to capture a photograph of themselves posing with a view of South Africa’s administrative capital in the background. Grundlingh writes that “foreign visitors to the monument are not necessarily concerned about or even particularly aware of the building’s earlier significance or status. What seems to impress them most are the scale of the building and the technical craftsmanship of the sculpture. The dome with its ray of sunlight on December 16, and the open areas surrounding the monument.”

More importantly the “tourist gaze” not only results in the “depoliticization” of the site but it also “places it outside of the arena of contested history.” Thus, there is an ironic full circle in terms of development. When the monument was constructed and inaugurated it represented the ideals of Afrikaner nationalism and a mythologised past. The structure was deemed a holy reminder of God’s covenant with the supposed Afrikaner. However, as the political, economic and social situation of this particular group improved attitudes towards the structure began to change. As the horrors of apartheid became more apparent, people who perceived the monument (and the nationalism it represented) as being representative of themselves began to channel their anger, bitterness and embarrassment regarding the political situation towards the monument. The result was photographic essays such as ‘Dina by die Monument’ and Denise Woods’ accusations of the Voortrekker Monument representing the spiritual gate to Hades. Consequentially, the Monument lost its target audience. Nonetheless, with privatization came the autonomy to seek alternative audiences. Such an audience was found in the international tourist industry, which is willing to support any site with a ‘wow-factor’. Tourism “sanitizes” a site but then also ensures that the site remains historically

significant. This seems contradictory to earlier statements. The tourist does not take much note of the narratives perpetuated by the proprietors of the Voortrekker Monument. However, by paying money to visit the monument the tourist is essentially securing the structure’s continued existence and is reiterating that the mythologised history which the Voortrekker Monument represents remains as a historical narrative accepted, remembered and deemed as important within the realm of mainstream South African history. Albert Grundlingh writes that “currently, with its proven tourist appeal and its near impotence as a cultural political symbol, it is probably well placed to fight possible future battles along lines that will differ from those of the past.”

![Panoramic view of the Voortrekker Monument](image)

*Figure 8: A panoramic photograph of the view from the top of the Voortrekker Monument. The Afrikaner nationalist past of the Voortrekker Monument has been eclipsed by the view of South Africa’s legislative capital. (7 January 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)*

---

Vampire Nationalism

As a last note, I visited the monument early 2018. It is understandable that the tourist would be awed by the spectacular scale of the structure – there is nothing else in terms of historic architecture that can compete with this building in South Africa. However, when I visited the site the monument and its surrounding felt like a graveyard for Afrikaner Nationalism and the monuments of apartheid. Besides the Voortrekker Monument itself, the site is scattered with artworks, sculptures and monuments which are either on loan from South African governmental institutions or have been purchased by the private section 21 company which manages the site of the monument.111 When one parks one’s vehicle at the parking bays next to the steps which lead to the entrance of the monument, the visitor is immediately met with a massive shimmering gold sculpture formally known as ‘In Vlug’ (In Flight) by the sculptor Danie de Jager (1936 – 2003). The sculpture used to be located at the entrance of O. R Tambo International Airport (then Jan Smuts Airport). Nevertheless, when the airport was upgraded the sculpture was placed in storage where it was vandalised and parts were stolen. Today the sculpture sits on the roof of a look-out point and at the entrance it states Quo Vadis? It was rechristened after it had been restored and donated to the Voortrekker Monument. The new name referred to the concluding words of D.F Malan’s speech during the inauguration of the monument in 1949. Almost 70 years later this seems to be a fitting question especially when one considers the uncertain future of this Afrikaner nationalist symbol in the 21st century. Near the entrance of the Heritage Centre, the building which seem to form a part of the look-out on which the Quo Vadis? statue is located, is a hardwood bust by the sculptor Jo Roos (1926 – 2010) of F. H. Odendaal (Fox, 1898 - 1966) who had been the Administrator of the Transvaal between 1958 and 1966 and was the First Chairman of the

111 All the information regarding the individual artworks currently being loaned to or ‘saved’ by the Voortrekker Monument I got from the information boards and plaques at the Voortrekker Monument. The tone of these descriptions often depict those responsible for managing the Voortrekker Monument as heroic in their efforts to conserve these artworks dating from apartheid times.
Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal or PACT. The information sheet next to the bust claimed that the sculpture was on loan from the State Theatre in Pretoria. A few metres away is a bronze statue by the sculptor Hennie Potgieter (1916 – 1992) of a semi-clad and muscled male Aryan youth controlling a gigantic and virile Afrikaner bull by pulling tightly on its reins. The artwork is entitled Getemde Vryheid or Tamed Freedom and was formally situated on a grassed area in Pretoria’s Parliament Street. The bull supposedly represents the many nations living in South Africa and the young man represents the youth (clearly implying young white supposedly Afrikaner and successful men) to who take over the metaphoric reins of power and subdue the virile (mostly black) masses. In the monument itself, at the bottom section near the cenotaph, is W. H. Coetzer’s (1900 – 1983) Vir Jou, Suid-Afrika or ‘For You, South Africa’ – a massive oil on canvas of an epical scene supposedly depicting a group of Voortrekkers, led by Louis Trichardt, travelling over the Drakensberg. The image contains some of the most familiar scenes of the ‘Great Trek’ replicated by the media. The painting was originally placed in the “THA-building” (sic) in Pretoria which was emptied after the 1994 elections.

The painting was left in a section of the building out of bounds to the general public. In 2003 the Voortrekker Monument received a donation of R43 000 which it used to remove and transport this gargantuan painting from its original site to its current home in the monument. Even though the Voortrekker Monument might be surviving financially, the effect of consolidating all these structures and artefacts into one location reflects the shrinking influence of Afrikaner nationalism on South Africa’s physical and political landscape. The presence of these artefacts creates the impression of the Voortrekker Monument being like a graveyard or that it is perhaps similar to the monument parks for the

112 “Vir Jou, Suid-Afrika!”, plaque describing W.H. Coetzer’s painting in the Voortrekker Monument. I am not sure which building this refers to. A Google search suggest that the THA-building might be the Union Building.
structures commemorating Soviet leaders and propaganda in the nations of the former East Bloc. Instead of grappling with these artworks through exhibitions which allow for the public to scrutinize the past, those responsible for curating the artefacts located at the Voortrekker Monument has focussed on their effort to ‘save’ and preserve these artworks. This shows that the historical narrative presented through exhibiting these artworks at the Voortrekker Monument is not a history that the curators of the museum and monument want to be perceived as changing and dynamic. History in such a context is singular and open to only one interpretation. Such histories are stagnant and allude to this notion that spaces such as the Voortrekker Monument are graveyards.

Figure 9: Danie de Jager's 'In Vlug' with the Voortrekker Monument in the background. (7 January 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)
Figure 10: Jo Roos’ bust, depicting F. H Odendaal, has been moved to the entrance of the Heritage Centre from the State Theatre. (7 January 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 11: Hennie Potgieter’s ‘Getemde Vryheid’ was moved from a location situated in Parliament Street to the Voortrekker Monument. (7 January 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)
Culturally, in terms of the production of Afrikaans music, television and cinema, the organization of large festivals such as Die Woordfees, the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival and Aardklop and the publication of Afrikaans literature, poetry and an ever-growing presence on the internet indicate that people who identify as Afrikaners are flourishing.
Nevertheless, the Afrikaner nationalism celebrated during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary has been experiencing a slow death since the 1980s. Afrikaans culture and the Afrikaans Language is not dying, but the Afrikaner Nationalism of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary is slowly shrinking. This becomes especially clear when one considers those events which celebrated the ‘Great Trek’ at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. 1988 saw the sesquicentennial celebrations of the ‘Great Trek’. Compared to the zeal and fever of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary the sesquicentennial event of 1988 was a great disappointment. As explained earlier, the economic situation of the majority of those who perceived themselves as Afrikaners had greatly improved by the 1980s. Furthermore, many who identified as Afrikaners had become disillusioned with apartheid rule under the Nationalist Party. As a result, many people who identified as Afrikaners no longer felt they benefitted from any association with Afrikaner nationalism. One of the consequences of this was that the 1988 sesquicentennial event actually saw two ‘Treks’ - one organised by the comparatively centrist FAK and another orchestrated by the Afrikanervolkswag (People’s Guard) which would later evolve into the Afrikaner Vryheidstigting (Afrikaner Freedom Foundation). The latter group was an Afrikaner right-wing organisation that originally sought to rescue Afrikaner identity from political crises in 1984 and that would advocate for the establishment of an Afrikaner Volkstaat (homeland). Its founder, Carel Willem Hendrik Boshoff (1927 – 2011), would establish the infamous whites-only village of Orania in South Africa’s Northern Cape. A failure to find common ground regarding the celebration of the

115 When the Afrikanervolkswag was founded in 1984, 7000 people had rallied in Pretoria – not even a tenth of the crowd which participated in the Union’s capital city in 1938.
‘Great Trek’ is further evidence of the growing schism within the ranks of the Afrikanerdom in the late 1980s.

Nevertheless, the Afrikaner Nationalism symbolised by structures such as the Voortrekker Monument might still have a few punches left in it. In 2013 there was a 175th ‘Great Trek’ anniversary event. However, this ‘Great Trek’ (in which the management of the Voortrekker Monument in the very least took on an advisory role) was much different than previous Treks. Interestingly enough, this Trek did not involve wagons or coaches but rather 4x4’s. It was labelled the Viertrek Groot Trek (4x4 ‘Great Trek’). One is reminded of the lyrics of Ralph Rabie’s, also known as Johannes Kerkorrel (1960 - 2002), *Ossewa* (1989) in which the artist describes a hitchhiking trip to the former Transkei. The two hitchhikers are picked up by a modern ox wagon or *ossewa*:

*En ons cruise langs die highway, ja duidelik nie van hier*
*Teen ’n 160 kilometer per uur*
*Die ander karre op die pad het ons gou verby gegaan*
*Hy bied vir ons bier uit sy wa-kis aan*
*’n groot span osse sleep hy agter ons aan*
*En die nuut ontwerpte Venter sleepwa*
*Hy trap die remme plat en ons is vinnig by die see*
*In ons funky nuwe rock ’n roll ossewa*

Sweet, sweet *ossewa*
Sweet, sweet *ossewa*
*Ossewa, ossewa, ja, ja ’n ossewa*  

And we cruise along the highway, yes clearly not from here
At 160 kilometres per hour
We passed all the other cars on the road
He offers us a beer from his wagon chest
He pulls a big yoke of oxen behind us
And a newly designed Venter wagon
He steps on the accelerator and we arrive quickly at the ocean
in our funky new rock and roll ox wagon

Sweet, sweet ox wagon
Sweet, sweet ox wagon
Ox wagon, ox wagon, yes, yes, an ox wagon

The ox wagon, the symbol of Afrikaner nationalism in 1938, is replaced by a sports car with a Venter wagon. The sports car is a symbol of conspicuous consumption and therefore perhaps symbolic of late capitalism. The song speaks of the changing values of people who are cast as Afrikaans. Afrikaner nationalism is replaced by a “funky new rock and roll ox wagon.”¹¹⁸ Thus, the song communicates how the Afrikaner nationalist dream (the dream of a pure white Volkstaat) has been replaced by aspirations consumed with capitalist gain. In Kerkorrel’s song the “Oom” (uncle) that drives the sports car is a new kind of Afrikaner less bothered with the Volk en Vaderland and more interested in showing off his new BMW at his vacation home on the Wild Coast.

Replacing the ox wagon with a 4x4 during the Viertrek Groot Trek is reminiscent of Kerkorrel’s song. Nevertheless, it would be problematic to assume that Afrikaner nationalism has become extinct and that the modern Afrikaners (whatever such a classificatory title would entail) only aspiration is to become richer. Satellite television, blogging and social media platforms have made it much easier to spread ideologies such as Afrikaner nationalism amongst groups perhaps previously thought as lost to the Afrikaner nationalist cause. Furthermore, debates relating to land expropriation, fearmongering in terms of a supposed ‘white genocide’ by means of farm murders and attacks, and anxieties relating to affirmative action and poor-whiteism have the potential to act like petrol on fire in terms of reigniting Afrikaner nationalist sentiment. In that sense the Viertrek Groot Trek should not be taken lightly. The Viertrek Groot Trek might be depicted as an ember in a fire that is considered as contained, yet, that ember may still cause much damage given the right wind.

The 175th anniversary was a small event with a big audience since it involved a television mini-series, imitating the popular Afrikaans reality travel program Voetspore, broadcasted on the Afrikaans satellite television channel KykNET. Danie Langer, the

¹¹⁸ Johannes Kerkorrel, “Ossewa.”
managing director of the FAK, writes “die Groot Trek 175 is dalk stiller gevier sonder voorbladkoerantopskrifte, amfiteaters vol Afrikaners, vlae en toesprake deur volksleiers, maar die keer sonder verdeelende konflik” (The Great Trek 175 was perhaps celebrated in a quieter fashion without front-page newspaper headlines, amphitheatres filled with Afrikaners, flags and speeches by the nation’s leaders, but this time it was done without any splitting conflicts). The execution of the 175th 4x4 ‘Great Trek’ suggests that there still is a group of people that identify as Afrikaner, willing to embrace modernity (at least in its technological form), that continue to cherish the values supposedly propagated by the ‘Voortrekkers’ and that are still willing to honour the mythical Vow made by Cilliers and Pretorius at Blood River. In the commemoration booklet of Groot Trek 175 Langer claims that the collective numbers of people who identify as Afrikaners who belong to the sizeable spectrum of Afrikaner organizations, from the ATKV (which recently opened up its membership to non-Afrikaners) to the remnants of neo-Nazi organizations such as the Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging, outnumber the total membership of the Nationalist Party at its peak. The validity of this statement is problematic and questionable because it would benefit Langer to portray people cast as Afrikaners as a growing and flourishing community. Nevertheless, worldwide nationalism is experiencing a resurgence and Langer’s claim should be taken seriously. Perhaps Afrikaner nationalism is not dead. Perhaps it is a vampire (or ‘demon’) that is hidden in the Voortrekker Monument’s cenotaph, which only exits its unholy chamber in times of darkness.

120 Danie Langer, Op die spore van Retief, 21.
CHAPTER 3: An ox and a wagon: The centenary monuments from the Riebeek Valley

Introducing the Riebeek Valley

Welcome to the Riebeek Valley…a part of the Western Cape with stunning beauty and a unique character. Nestling on the slopes of its own mountain, the dramatic Kasteelberg, the surrounds are wheatlands, vineyards, orchards and olive groves, creating a distinctive touch of the Mediterranean in Africa. Only an hour from Cape Town you will be able to savour the rural atmosphere that lets you believe you have been transported so much further away.121

A more flattering description of the villages of the Riebeek Valley cannot be found. The description infers that the Riebeek Valley is comparable to Tuscany, Provence or maybe on the island of Crete. It derives from a pamphlet which was given to me by Riebeek-Kasteel’s tourism information office when I visited the village in 2017. When I visited again in 2018, I had entered the town via the Bothmaskloof Pass from the direction of Malmesbury. This is a beautiful region and the pamphlet was accurate in its description. It was late winter, so one could see snow on the Cape fold mountains, the wheat fields were emerald green, and the magnificent spring flowers synonymous with South Africa’s West Coast already started to bloom. Sunlight was piercing through dark rainclouds and there was a light drizzle – jakkals trou met wolf se vrou (fox marries wolf’s wife - an Afrikaans idiom which describes a situation where two supposedly uncomplimentary elements, like rain and sunshine, meet).

For a split second I was entranced. But then I remembered one of the lyrics (also borrowing from an Afrikaans idiom) from one of the singer Laurika Rauch’s most famous songs ‘Stille Waters’ (1992). Rauch sings “stille waters, diepe grond…onder draai die duiwel, onder draai die duiwel rond” (Still waters, deep earth…underneath the devil churns, churns around).122 I meditated on this song because I realised that all of this beauty was part

121 Riebeek-Valley Tourism, “Experience the Magic of the Riebeek Valley” Design by Orchard Design, 3.
of the lie of the land. Regardless of its exquisite natural beauty this area was an intensely politicized and contested space. Weeks before my visit, the two most prominent towns of the valley, Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West, had witnessed large riots which saw lootings and the damage of property. These riots were the result of a lack of affordable housing in the poorer neighbourhoods of the town. These riots spoke of a gross inequality in the distribution of wealth in the valley. There are people fighting for basic necessities such as shelter in the Riebeek Valley, while in stark contrast these villages are littered with empty second homes (belonging to wealthy Capetonians and rich foreign nationals), cosy B&B’s and boutique hotels. These villages were in 2018 physically and socially just as segregated as they had been before 1994. This poverty and segregation was in part the result of the policy of apartheid, a policy which was vigorously implemented by Afrikaner nationalists in the latter half of the 20th century.

I would later learn that the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary wagon which stopped in the towns of Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West had taken exactly the same route over the Bothmaskloof Pass in August 1938 as I had done in August 2018. While I was contemplating the immense social, economic and political repercussions of Afrikaner nationalism on these communities, 80 years prior people drove over this exact same pass with the intention of rousing Afrikaner nationalist sentiment. In 1938 the Afrikaner nationalists living in these villages would erect monuments in honour of these very sentiments. In 2018 I had come to conduct research about the lives (and possible deaths) of these monuments to nationalism. I wanted to know if these monuments had symbolically changed since 1938 to the people living in these villages. I wanted to know what layers of complexity had formed like grime and soot around these structures.
Trekking to Afrikaner Nationalism

How was the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary celebrated in the two largest towns in the Riebeek Valley? The ox wagon arrived at Riebee-Kasteel on the 11th of August 1938. Since its rather short visit in Durbanville’s uitspan (described in chapter 4) it had stopped in the farming community of Philadelphia and the heart of the Swartland - Malmesbury. From Malmesbury it travelled to the Riebeek Valley over the Bothmaskloof Pass. An article from Die Burger (12 August 1938) states that “met groot geesdrif het honderde vaders, moeders en kinders sopnat en enkeldiep in die modder myle ver gestap om die wa aan die voet van die berg te gaan inwag en hom verder te vergesel” (With great enthusiasm, hundreds of fathers, mothers and children, wet and ankle-deep in the mud, walked for miles to the foot of the mountain to welcome and to escort him further on). A commando of 150 men (Die Burger claims 130) on horseback, an orchestra of 15, and hundreds of men and women wearing ‘traditional’ Voortrekker costumes welcomed the men steering the Kaapland ox wagon at Bothmaskloof. The wagon then entered the village green of the town of Riebee-Kasteel. The villagers had made an arch, presumably from flowers, through which the ox wagon entered the open space. Some 1500 people had gathered to the village green to welcome the wagon. It rained but this did not initially seem to stall the festivities “maar hoe harder dit geval het, hoe harder het die geesdriftige inwoners van Riebee-Kasteel en Riebeek-Wes gejuig en gesing” (but the harder it fell, the harder the enthusiastic citizens of Riebee-Kasteel rejoiced and sang). In a region often pestered by drought such rain would have further entrenched the belief that this event was godly ordained. Nevertheless, eventually a

123 “Reën kan geesdrif vir die ossewa nie demp nie,” Die Burger, August 12, 1938, 2.
124 “Reën kan geesdrif vir die ossewa nie demp nie,” 2.
126 Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938, 147.
massive downpour did manage to dissolve the crowd. The celebrations continued in the DRC hall.

The Reverend G. van den Berg spoke to the crowd quoting Psalm 146, a song of praise which amongst other things praises the Christian God for supporting those that are oppressed – surely a reference to this notion that the ‘Afrikaners’ were (like the Israelites formally enslaved by the Egyptians but being led by Moses to the promised land) ready to break free from the shackles of British Imperialism (similar to the ‘Voortrekkers’) and take on their ‘Godly-ordained place as the true Aryan masters’ of Africa’s southern lands.\(^{127}\) Van den Berg then continued “\(\text{ons heet hom welkom omdat daardie ou ossewa vir ons versinnebeeld iets wat baie diep in die hart van die volk lê}\)” (we welcome him because that old ox wagon exemplifies something that lies very deep in the heart of this volk).\(^{128}\) The reverend was followed by chairman of the town’s management, who was followed by a Dr J. H Greyvenstein who apparently made a “\(\text{roerende}\)” (touching) speech about the important position which the bible filled within the lives of ‘Voortrekkers’, thus, depicting these early pioneers as a singular blessed entity of apparent godliness. The festivities were concluded with the vice chairwoman of the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereeniging (or A.C. V.V) and the orchestra, directed by a Mrs H. C. van den Berg, performing “\(\text{Die stem}\)”.\(^{129}\) The issue regarding which ‘anthem’ (‘God Save the King’ or ‘\(\text{Die Stem}\)’) would be sung at the laying of the cornerstone of the Voortrekker Monument had snowballed in the weeks prior to the Centenary celebrations and sparked some heated debates. This became particularly apparent by the furious letters written by the readers of \(\text{Die Burger}\) in the letters section. Singing “\(\text{Die Stem}\)” was a clear political statement by participants from Riebeek-Kasteel indicating that

\(^{128}\) \textit{Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938}, 147.
\(^{129}\) \textit{Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938}, 147.
they supported the type of nationalism propagated by the Afrikaner nationalist organisers and supporters of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary.

Figure 14: The commando escorting the ox wagon down Main Road towards Riebeek-Kasteel’s village green (11 August 1938. Unknown photographer. Courtesy of Chris Murphy from Malmesbury’s Heritage Association)

The wagon then moved to Riebeek-West. This town may have been well-known at the time as the birth-place of two prominent political figures of the time – Jan Christiaan Smuts and Daniel Francois Malan.¹³⁰ 2000 people gathered at the town hall to listen to a collection of speeches made by the village’s leadership and Trek leaders. The community handed a 100-

year-old *sanna* (a 19th century firearm) and a copy of Riebeek-West’s DRC septuagenarian celebratory booklet (it had turned 75 in 1933) to the trek leader M. C. van Schoor. The reverend also donated to the Trekkers a historical letter dating from the 16th of July 1838 (the first ‘Great Trek’) written by a ‘Voortrekker’ to an acquaintance in the Riebeek Valley, recounting a rather distressing set of events which included the murder of a brother and five children. Such a letter would have further exemplified and reiterated the supposed ‘barbarity’ of the other, and provide further justification for equating the ‘Great Trek’ with a Christianising mission in which the ‘Voortrekkers’ were God’s torchbearers in ‘darkest’ Africa. This would further entrench the supposed continued need for Europe’s descendants to remain the masters of this land. Furthermore, the letter would have provided an even more important connection between the ‘Great Trek’ as a supposed ‘historical event’ and the town of Riebeek-West – a connection which would have been difficult to make otherwise given that mythology relating to the initiation of ‘Great Trek’ orbited around the Cape Colony’s Eastern Frontier. Riebeek-West and Riebeek-Kasteel had settler histories that were far older than the settlements created by the Voortrekkers in the north. Dirk Mostert’s *Gedenkboek* provides a detailed historical outline of European settler history in the region.  

Nevertheless, it is this small piece of paper that provides a supposed bona fide connection between the Riebeek Valley and the ‘Great Trek’. If supposedly true Afrikaner nationalist values were exemplified by the ‘Voortrekkers’, then the letter meant that there was an apparent historical nexus between at least Riebeek-West and the mythologised ‘Voortrekkers’. This allowed those community members participating in the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary to perceive themselves as true Afrikaner nationalists and provide some bizarre form of certification for it.

---

131 *Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938*, 146.
During the ox-wagon’s hiatus in Riebeek-West the Reverend Van den Berg stated “as daardie ossewa nie vir ons inspirasie bring nie, is hierdie Trek net ’n begrafnisstoet...Die wat vir ons ’n boodskap en daarby ook ’n uitdaging. Die uitdaging is: Sal hierdie Eeupees ons terugbring na die God van ons vaders?” (If this wagon does not bring us inspiration, then it is just a funeral procession…. The wagon has a message for us and with that also a challenge. The challenge is: Will this Centenary festival bring us back to the God of our fathers?).\(^{132}\)

Doctor Gerdener, the master of ceremonies, asked a series of questions regarding what the possible outcome of this second ‘Great Trek’ would be. He stated that

’n Mens kanwel vra of daar al ooit in die geskiedenis so ‘n onderneming was. Dit was ‘n geïnspireerde gedagte...Ons vra onnself af: waartoe sal dit lei? Is dit maar ‘n oombliklike opwellings van vaderlandsliefe? Sal die prikkeling van die volk se hartstog maar tydelik wees? Dit sou bitter jammer wees. Van die volk sal dit afhang wat die uitwerking sal wees van hieerdie pelgrimstog...Ons moet vasstel wat vir ons die boodskap is wat hy bring en wat hy vir ons beteken – nie alleen vandag nie, maar in die jare wat voorgê.

(A person can ask if there ever was such an endeavour in history. It was an inspired thought/idea... We ask ourselves: where to will this lead? Is this but a short swelling of patriotism? That would be a bitter shame. The outcome of this pilgrimage will depend on the volk... we must establish what the message is he is bringing and what he means to us – not only today, but in the years ahead).\(^{133}\)

Gerdener seems to assert that patriotism around a festival is something superficial and ephemeral. The master of ceremonies’ speech calls for something supposedly deeper than a simple adoration of one’s country in the moment. Gerdener is calling people to become nationalists, specifically Afrikaner nationalists. Within such a worldview nationalists cannot be part of a global empire (i.e. the British Empire). Nationalists cannot be inclusive and tolerant, hence the white supremacy advocated by Afrikaner nationalists during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. In such a case the unstated slogan of such a nationalism is not “Ons vir Jou, Suid-Suid-Afrika” (We for Thee, South Africa – the inscription on the cenotaph on

\(^{132}\) Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938, 149.
\(^{133}\) Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938, 149.
the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria) but rather ‘Suïd-Afrika behoort aan Ons!’ (South
Africa belongs to Us!).

Gerdener also states that “ons volk is op ‘n trekpad. Dit is die tweede les. Ons moet
bymekaar staan, ons moet mobiliseer as ‘n volk. Ons moet op trek gaan en al wat ons eie is
saamneem.” (Our volk is on a trek road. That is the second lesson. We must stand together, we
must mobilise as a volk. We must go on a trek and take with us everything that is our own).\textsuperscript{134}
Calling for people to stand together and to mobilise, in this particular context, is a further call
for people to adopt the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism. The 1938 Voortrekker Centenary
was the largest mobilisation of people for the Afrikaner nationalist cause in the 20\textsuperscript{th}
century.

The third lesson which Gerdener argues must be learnt from the 1938 Voortrekker
Centenary is “dat op die trekpad offers gebring moet word. Die volk wat wil trek sonder om
offers te bring is ‘n volk sonder ‘n toekoms. Daar is oral in die volkslewe geleentheid vir
offers. Ons moet mobiliseer en vorentoe trek op die pad van Suïd-Afrika.” (The third lesson is
that offerings/sacrifices would need to be brought/made. The Volk that would want to move
without bringing offerings is a nation without a future. There are opportunities everywhere in
the civil life to make offerings/sacrifices. We must mobilise and move forward on the road
of/that is South Africa). The 1938 Voortrekker Centenary was a ‘holy’ event. A central pillar
of Afrikaner nationalism was Calvinist Christianity. This in turn must have affected how
people in communities such as Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West viewed the structures that
celebrated the ‘Voortrekkers’. T. Dunbar Moodie writes that “in the Afrikaner Civil Religion,
God imbues all history with ultimate meaning.”\textsuperscript{135} Moodie quotes the former prime minister
D.F. Malan who stated “the history of the Afrikaner reveals a will and determination which
makes one feel that Afrikanerdom is not the work of men but the creation of God.”\textsuperscript{136} One

\textsuperscript{134} Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938, 149.
\textsuperscript{136} Dunbar T. Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdom, 1.
can imagine that at least in the months and years that followed their creation and the centenary the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monuments would have been viewed as holy structures – altars to the Calvinist God and the supposed Christianising mission of the ‘Voortrekkers’ and the white men who had conquered and settled in Southern Africa.

Figure 15: “The ox wagon stops at Groenrivier, Riebeek-West after a stormy journey through the weather and the public. Hundreds of people walked for miles soaking wet through the mud to take part in the procession going through Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West. On the horse drawn wagon (left) is an orchestra, at the front is the driver J. Langenhoven, and at the right is a part of the large honorary guard. The commando of 130 horsemen is crowding at the back of the wagon.” The photograph was published on 12 August 1938 in Die Burger. (11 August 1938. Photographer Unknown. Courtesy of the South African National Library in Cape Town)
Jan van Riebeeck joins the ‘Great Trek’

Participation in the event itself (the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary) acted as a form of induction into the puritanical world of Afrikaner nationalism. But as stated, settlement of Europeans in the Riebeek Valley predates the historical narratives pertaining to the ‘Great Trek’ by almost two centuries. The commander of the newly established refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope, Jan Antonie van Riebeeck had commandeered representatives of the Dutch East Indian Company or VOC to establish trading relations with indigenous peoples in what is today known as the Swartland (an agriculturally fertile region north-east of Cape Town) as early as 1655. In 1661 Corporal Pieter Cruythoff and a Danish surgeon Pieter van Meerhoff (the spouse of renowned Goringhaicona translator Krotoa or Eva) set out on a similar expedition. They climbed Riebeek’s Castle (the modest mountain that today overlooks the towns of Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West) and named it after the commander of the Cape of Good Hope, Meerhoff, who kept a diary, described the “beautiful river springing from the mountain. . .there is always good grass and clean fresh water. . .Around this mountain there is good arable land.” Such language focusing on the abundance of resources (an inventory of riches which could be exploited) shows that Europeans were interested to settle in the region as early as the 1660s. As the frontier opened more and more European farmers settled in the area, which led to conflict (especially pertaining to the issue of cattle theft) with the indigenous people who had lived in the region for millennia. This led to the establishment of a military outpost named Het Swartland at perhaps the first sapling of the village that would become known as Riebeek-Kasteel at the farm Swartdam which currently sits on the fringes of Riebeek-Kasteel. A correspondence

139 Mike Turner, “Early Adventuring in the Swartland,” 12.
between the governor Jan de la Fontaine and the Heeren XVII in 1730 states “all land sustainable with water has been allocated”. As a result, one can argue that the frontier of the Riebeek Valley was already closed by 1730, roughly a 108 years before the ‘Great Trek’ and 208 years before the Kaaplander main trek ox wagon stopped in the Riebeek Valley during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary.

One would not think that those individuals who sought to identify themselves as Afrikaner nationalists within the communities of Riebeek-West and Riebeek-Kasteel would feel any need to have to prove themselves as ‘pure white’ (and therefore Afrikaner nationalist) given their long history as the supposed overlords and conquerors of the land and an established narrative of founding. However, having a supposedly old European settler lineage was not enough. To be inducted into the world of Afrikaner nationalism villages had to partake in the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. Nonetheless, having a settler past that predated the mythology of the supposed ‘Great Trek’ was not overlooked in the case of the villages of the Riebeek Valley and even contributed to the status of these villages as ‘white bastions’.

This becomes especially apparent when reading about the 1938 Centenary events in Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West in Dirk Mostert’s Gedenkboek. Before even mentioning the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Feesviering (celebrations) Mostert provides a rather tedious two-page account of the Valley’s history supposedly starting in 1652. He introduces Riebeek-Kasteel by explaining the supposed origin of its name. He states that “hierdie naam verplaas ons in die gees na die eerste jare van die blanke nedersetting in ons geliefde Suid-Afrika, en laat ons dink aan die stigter van Hollands Suid-Afrika – Jan Anthonie van Riebeeck” (This name takes us in the spirit to the first years of the white settlement in our beloved South Africa, and it reminds us of the founder of Dutch South Africa – Jan Anthonie van Riebeeck). There are

---

140 Mike Turner, “Early Adventuring in the Swartland,” 12.
141 Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938, 146.
various issues with this notion of Jan van Riebeeck being cast as the father of the nation which Leslie Witz deals with in his book *Apartheid’s Festival* (2003). Nonetheless, Witz’s argument regarding making the ‘local’ ‘national’ is especially useful when considering this strange attempt of Mostert’s *Gedenkboek* to link Van Riebeeck’s narrative with that of the ‘Great Trek’. Witz writes that “through the pageantry and the writing of local pasts, these journeys, across the South African landscape, as in 1938 and 1949 [the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument], were intended to gather history together under the ambit, localize the nation, and nationalize the local.”

142 He writes that “to define the locality’s position and participation in this discovered and recovered exclusive modern South Africa, each specific place was to acquire moments of founding and then show how ‘events of great importance’ in ‘the development’ of the settler nation occurred there ‘for the first time’”.

143 Dirk Mostert’s extract in the *Gedenkboek* attempts to fuse the founding narrative of Jan van Riebeeck with the mythological narrative of conquest of the supposed ‘Voortrekkers’.

---

142 Leslie Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival*, 222.
143 Leslie Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival*, 223.
Kasteel’s Ox and West’s Wagon

Wendy Maartens, the author of various publications intended for child audiences, writes that

\begin{quote}
In die Wes-Kaap is ‘n dorpie genaamd Riebeek-Kasteel.
In die middel van die dorp is ‘n plein.
In die middel van die plein is ‘n voetstuk.
In die middel van die voetstuk is ‘n standbeeld van ‘n os. ‘n Bloedrooi os met twee lang horings. Hy kyk oor ‘n tralieheining na die hoofstraat. Asof hy vir iemand wag om op te daag.
\end{quote}

(In the Western-Cape there is a town named Riebeek-Kasteel.
In the middle of the town there is a square.
In the middle of the square is a pedestal.
In the middle of the pedestal is a statue of an ox. A blood-red ox with two long horns. He looks over the barred fence at the main street. As if he is waiting for somebody to arrive.)

Contradictory to the description of Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox above the village’s 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monument is not situated in the middle of the towns’ square.

Furthermore, to call this space a square, which evokes a sense of an official and established space, would be exercising some creative license. Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox is oddly placed on the corner of what one should rather refer to as a village green. The corner is situated at where Sarel Cilliers Street (named after the Voortrekker patriarch who, along with Andries Pretorius, had led the ‘Voortrekkers’ to what was presented during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary as a game changing victory during the infamous Battle of Blood River on the 16th of December 1838) meets Main Street. At the one end is a tennis court, no longer in use. The central section of the green is divided more or less in half by a large unkempt patch of grass on the one side, and by a grassless section used as a parking lot. A rather awkwardly placed

\footnote{Wendy Maartens, Die Beste Suid-Afrikaanse Spookstories, (Pretoria: Lapa Publishers, 2014), 7.}
life-sized sculpture of an elephant and its calf stands in the centre of the square. The elephants are made of wire and are covered with a white plastic material. Next to these rather inaptly placed elephants is a bench. Some metres away from the elephant is a sign which states ‘Voortrekkertuin’ (Voortrekker Garden). The red ox monument is in this garden. The garden is in a triangular form and it is surrounded by a wire fence. Closest to the corner of the street is a historic canon. The canon has a bronze plaque on it which states:

_Hierdie kanon is geskenk van Mnr. J. Van Der Merwe van Swartdam, Riebeek-Kasteel. Ter gedagtenis aan sy vader wyle Mnr. I. Van Der Merwe aan die dorpbestuur, Riebeek-Kasteel. Ossewa Eeufees Augustus 1938._

(This canon was donated by Mr J. Van Der Merwe from Swartdam, Riebeek-Kasteel, in remembrance of his father the late Mr I. Van Der Merwe to the town management, Riebeek-Kasteel. _Ox wagon Sentinel_ August 1938.)

The pedestal on which this canon stands has been painted white. However, this must have been done some time ago since the white paint is peeling.

Figure 16: The canon donated to the town of Riebeek-Kasteel during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. (7 September 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Dirk Mostert’s _Gedenkboek_ and _Die Burger_ do not mention this historic donation.

Nevertheless, the canon dates from the 1700s and came from the farm Swartdam, near the
Porseleinberg (a foothill of Kasteelberg). This area used to host a military post which protected farmers and settlers from cattle raids from indigenous inhabitants. Even though the artefact predates the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary by more than two centuries, it comfortably fits into the narrative of conquest propagated by Nationalists during Centenary. Khoisan people had roamed the Swartland for millennia but were systematically pushed off the land into positions of servitude and marginalisation by European settlers during the opening and expansion of South Africa’s Northern Frontier. They were depicted as ‘heathen barbarians’ who had supposedly neglected to fully exploit the resources of the land. It was suggested that they did not deserve the land. Riebeek-Kasteel’s acceptance of this donation (a weapon specifically utilized to warn-off or attack first nation people’s) suggest that some people in the village, partaking in the centenary celebrations, did acknowledge that the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary celebrated the conquest of the land by European settlers.

Surrounded by a metal fence, maybe about 2 metres away from the canon, is the red ox. The ox, as Maartens claims, is slightly elevated on its pedestal. It is painted red, with the exception of its long horns and the tip of the tail which are white and hooves which are black. The ox is sculpted from cement and pieces have chipped off. Some of the paint has also peeled off, exposing the concrete. On the pedestal are two small plastic plaques which provide some historical context for the structure. They contain photographs of the bovine monument’s creator. Nevertheless, they are too small to read for somebody standing outside of the fence which contains this beast. This perhaps suggests that it is not particularly important for the townspeople that visitors understand the historical context of the structure. The author of this treatise, a healthy 29-year old with fairly good eyesight, could not read the plaque. It is doubtful whether other visitors would be able to read it.

But what about Riebeek-West’s 1938 Voortrekker Eeuvees Monument? At this point it becomes necessary to discern between the two main population centres of the Riebeek Valley
- Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebee-West. These communities are essentially sister towns but they are two separate entities because of a historical feud. The distance between Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebee-West’s Dutch Reformed Churches is less than 5 kilometres. This distance is important though because here lies the reasoning behind the formation of the differing communities. The two congregations, and as a result the towns, were established after a feud between farmers of the northern and southern parts of the Valley, at the foot of Kasteelberg, regarding the location of a church in middle years of the 19th century. The church was intended for Riebeek-Kasteel, meaning that farmers in the north of the valley would have to travel further to fulfil their religious expectations. The result was the creation of the Riebee-West congregation in 1857 and a formation of a congregation in Riebeek-Kasteel in 1863. Before the establishment of these churches, Dutch Reformed Church members would travel to Malmesbury for weddings, baptisms and communion. It seems plausible that Riebeek-Kasteel’s ox would have been created in reaction (and competition) to Riebee-West’s wagon since by the 1930s the feud had metamorphosed into a friendly rivalry between sibling towns.

Much less information is available for Riebee-West’s monument. The monument is in the corner of a park, which had recently been enclosed by a fence, thus making access to the structure difficult. Nonetheless, the author did access the structure in 2015 before the fence had been built. The monument’s corner of the park is where Main Street meets the entrance to the town’s recently restored town hall. When the author had visited the space again in 2017 it seemed like the whole area was being re-developed. In retrospect (after a third visit) the restoration process seemed to have been limited to the beautiful town hall. The park which contains the monument had simply received a tall green fence and had been

147 Pam Kolbe, “The Tale of Two Towns,” 36.
adorned with entrances which denies the public access to the park or monument since the
gates had been locked.

The structure is a small replica of an ox-wagon raised somewhat by a tiered pedestal.
It is not large, somewhat bigger than a wheelbarrow – it was definitely not built according to
scale. The monument is made of granite which gives it a much more polished and imposing
look compared to Riebeek-Kasteel’s ruddy old cement ox. Nevertheless, one can argue that
Riebeek-West’s monument is in a worse condition than its counterpart in Riebeek-Kasteel.
The lettering at the eastern side of the structure had been removed, probably because of its
value as a metal. The Western flank had been covered by some rather lewd graffiti –
depicting a cornucopia of sexual drawings. These drawings were already present in 2015 and
as far as the author could establish, they were still there in 2018. As a result, it is safe to
assume that the monument does not receive any regular cleaning and restoration. The issue of
vandalism will be discussed at a later stage in this chapter and in detail in Chapter 4. The
town’s solution to damage caused to the structure seems to have been to simply limit access
to the monument. Although one can only speculate if the monument was even considered in
the decision-making process since this aggressive fencing strategy seems to be intended to
keep people out of the park altogether. It seems ironic that a town would go through so much
trouble and effort to keep people out of a public space. One would assume that this is done to
combat homeless people from setting up camp in the park or to prevent drunkards from
abusing public amenities. Instead of combatting homelessness and alcoholism the community
has chosen to simply fence spaces that could potentially be ‘abused’ by marginalised peoples.
The author could not find any particular information regarding the context of this monument.
It clearly commemorates the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary but little else can be said about its
creator or why it was placed at this location (presumably because of its close location to the
town hall and the main thoroughfare). This lack of information is also worth enquiry since it
suggests that the structure has become a dead monument – a structure in existence whose original intent and purpose has been forgotten by the community which lives and works around it.

Figure 19: Riebeek-West's 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monument. (8 September 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 20: A panoramic photograph of the corner of Riebeek-West's Main Street (left) and the entrance to the town hall (right). (8 September 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection).
So what did these monuments symbolise to the people that had constructed them? The monuments of Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West were a form of communication between those propagating an Afrikaner nationalist agenda and those individuals who were still unsure of what it meant to be an ‘Afrikaner’. An Afrikaner according to this ideology was an Afrikaner nationalist, a Calvinist Christian, and someone who wielded power. The monuments reminded the citizens of these villages of the supposed principles of the ‘Great Trek’ – these included narratives which portrayed Trekkers as puritanical pillars of moral authority, justifying or giving them the supposed right to take the land.
Kuikentjie’s Bovine Idol – The Birth of a Monument

The monument of the Red Ox was created by a local resident Christoffel Basson (1878 – 1946) humorously nicknamed Kuikentjie (which can be translated as chick). Kuikentjie was clearly small in stature when one studies the photographs of the artist posing next to his bovine creation. He is shorter than the structure whereas I (the author of this mini-thesis) am about a head taller than the ox’s horns. The structure had a cement wagon (two-thirds to scale of the original Kakebeen wagon used during the ‘Great Trek’) which was supposed to accompany the ox but the structure was too large and heavy to be transported at the time to the ox’s current location. The wagon was stored on a cement slab in Kuikentjie’s son, Gerrit J. C (Katie) Basson’s, backyard. It was eventually donated in 1973 by Mrs Basson to the town’s primary school where it was damaged to a degree of unrecognition. Nevertheless, at least one of the wheels can supposedly still be found on the school’s premises. Apparently the creator of the quadruped had signed his name on the left side of the ox but “unfortunately many layers of white paint all but obliterated the lettering...”148

The ox was donated to the community by a certain Mr D. Euvrard who had bought it from Basson in 1938. The information sheet once provided by the town’s tourism office regarding the narrative of the structure states that it had a plaque on it which stated “Getrouheid” (which can be translated as faithfulness/ loyalty/ dependability) and it supposedly celebrated the “the faithful ox used as a beast of burden and a draught animal before the horse and tractor.”149 In terms of recruiting people for Afrikanerdom, a call to be loyal and faithful to the newly forming Volk would have been an essential message of those local agents promoting a nationalist agenda. One of the ox’s many purposes was thus to communicate a particular set of values to a people who were not entirely sure what it meant

149 P. de Villiers Collins, “The Red Ox.”
to be Afrikaners – loyalty to the Volk would have been seen as particularly important. Nationalism is built on the pretext of loyalty towards a group of people that is supposed to form a national entity.

The ox was not just a reminder of the faithfulness required from the Volk but during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary it had been viewed for all intents and purposes as a holy animal. This especially becomes evident when considering a controversy regarding a street name change in the Free State’s capital city during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. The City of Roses’ predominantly English-speaking city council refused to allow Maitland Street (named after Sir Peregrine Maitland [1777 – 1854], a former Cape Governor) to be changed to Voortrekker Street. The result was when the centenary wagon Vrou-en-Moeder moved through this street it was pulled by actual wives and mothers. One can imagine that it was a possibility for local woman to want to draw the Vrou-en-Moeder because of its name. However, the sources seem to indicate that in this particular case this was done as an act of protest as opposed to an act of sentimentality. The implication was that it was a sacrilege to allow the holy hoofs of these blessed bovines to touch the soil of a street desecrated by the title of a former British Governor. Thus, the ox did not just represent, to those that celebrated the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary, a practical draft animal utilized during the ‘Great Trek’, but a sacred being which empowered the Voortrekkers, through transport, to boldly move north and fulfil their destiny as a Christianising force. The supposedly sacred blood and life-force of the oxen had provided the Voortrekkers with the means to escape ‘persecution’ in the Cape Colony (a metaphorical Egypt) and conquer new territories (Canaan) for Christendom. Similarly, during 1938 (given the supposed absence of a great Afrikaner leader), these venerated beasts of the second ‘Great Trek’ were honoured for uniting those who identified as Afrikaner; thus, forming the Afrikaner Volk.

Nevertheless, regardless of this biblical comparison there is perhaps something surprisingly ‘heathen’ and idolatrous (even in the eyes of a non-religious scholar) about venerating these particular draft animals in such an extreme manner within the South African and the Calvinist Christian context. Cattle had and continues to have an important practical and symbolic value to Southern African indigenous peoples.\textsuperscript{151} Uhura Portia Phalafala argues that “the cow’s function is to connect, to bridge, to invoke. Cows exist in a liminal space between the human and the divine, the physical and the spiritual, the alive and the ancestors, the worldly and the universal.”\textsuperscript{152} Through elevating the ox those who partook in the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary imitated the very people/groups who they claimed their Voortrekker ancestors sought to civilise. Furthermore, it is ironic that ultra-religious nationalist supporters had erected an ox in the centre of Riebeek-Kasteel given that Exodus 20 (the Biblical source of the ten commandments) states “I am the Lord thy God… you shall have no other gods before me.”\textsuperscript{153} This statue was by all means and purposes a tribute to the ‘god of nationalism’. The irony is extended when considering the biblical narrative of the Israelites’ stop near Mount Sinai en route to the ‘Promised Land’. Exodus 32 Verse 4 recounts the tale of the Israelites losing faith when their leader Moses is away consulting God on Mount Sinai. Aaron, Moses’ ‘deputy commander’, collected vast amounts of gold belonging to the Hebrews, smelting it into the form of a golden calf which God’s Chosen People then prayed to. When Moses returned he found the Israelites in a festive orgy in honour of their new bovine idol. Moses was furious. He dropped and broke the stone tablets on which God had inscribed the ten commandments. According to the biblical tale, the patriarch then ordered


\textsuperscript{152} Percy Mabandu, Milisuthando Bongela, Kwanele Sosibo & Katlego Mkhwanazi, Kwanele Sosibo, “Cows: The sacred and profane.”

\textsuperscript{153} Exodus 20, \textit{New International Thompson Student Bible} (Indianapolis, Indiana: Kirkbride Bible Company, 1999), 107.
that the male members of the Tribe of Levi (who had apparently not partaken in the idolatry) to conveniently kill practically all the men from the other tribes as a form of exercising God’s wrath. Consequently, it becomes quite clear that revering a being other than God in the manner similar to what was done to the oxen during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary was a ‘sin’ within the Calvinist Christian religion. Riebeek-Kasteel’s ruddy ox is definitely not a golden calf, but the similarities between a man-made bovine created during a time of feverish festivities and the idolatrous calf sculpted by the Hebrews is striking. It seems odd that the highly religious Afrikaner nationalists participating in the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary did not or could not (or did not want to) make this connection.

The information for the sheet mentioned, provided by the tourism office, was provided by a P. de Villiers Collins, grandson of Christoffel Basson, in 2015. It is interesting that this information sheet omits any mention of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. It simply refers the reader to a booklet which commemorates the 125th founding of the community’s local DRC for further information. This could be an attempt to distance the town, its creator and its
monument from the ultra-nationalism celebrated during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary or perhaps indicate that the community had mostly forgotten about this event. The DRC’s booklet states “sover vasgestel kan word is die Rooi Os gemaak as ‘n teenprestasie vir die monumentjie wat Riebeek-Wes gedurende die Ossewatrek van 1938 langs the hoofstraat kon oprig” (As far as can be established is that the red ox was made in reaction to the monument that Riebeek-West erected next to the main road during the Ox Wagon Trek of 1938). The wording “Sover vasgestel kan word” suggests that there is some level of uncertainty (at least for the author of the DRC’s commemorative booklet) regarding the origin of the monument. Nevertheless, the booklet does link the creation of the monument to the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary but it also suggests that it was done because of rivalry between the communities of Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West. This would not be surprising given the historical contexts of these two specific towns.

155 V. A. Espost, Riebeek Kasteel N.G. Kerk Gemeente 125, 125.
An Experiential Economy

Regardless of the apparent derelict condition of the square, it is clear from the surrounding buildings and institutions that Riebeek-Kasteel is a tourist village. The village green is surrounded by historic houses and buildings that have been converted into coffee shops, curio and antique stores, restaurants and Bed & Breakfasts. One of the surrounding buildings hosts the town’s tourism information centre and there is a liquor store that specialises in wines and alcoholic beverages produced in the Swartland region. Further up Main Street one passes an art gallery, the Royal Hotel, the Garagista beer brewery, the neo-gothic Dutch Reformed Church and a further collection of curio stores, clothing boutiques, coffee shops and restaurants. Tourism is possibly the greatest contributor to the local economy after agriculture. The village is also renowned for its annual olive festival, usually held in early May and described by its official website as “one of the most popular lifestyle festivals in the Western Cape” and it has been a local institution since 2000. 156 The village’s proximity to Cape Town suggests that it would be a popular destination for the type of mini-breaks taken by wealthy Capetonian’s to taste wine, eat-out, shop and perhaps explore the odd historical site.

The red ox, as in the case of Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, has unsurprisingly been absorbed into the Valley’s experiential economy. This can especially be seen in a postcard dating from the 2017 Olive festival (see below). The postcard is a copy of a painting made by a local artist Louisa Gerryts. In the foreground are what seem to be sophisticated and wealthy urbanites leisurely walking on the village green (which appears to be much neater than it is in reality). Their wealth is depicted through their fashionable clothing and the large number of shopping bags filled with local produce each urbanite carries. In the


http://etd.uwc.ac.za/
background is a depiction of Kasteelberg and next to that one can see a smaller image of Table Mountain – a reiteration of the Valley’s close and ‘convenient’ proximity to Cape Town’s urban elite. Just in front of Kasteelberg are some of the structural landmarks of the town which include a shopping centre built in a style which evokes a sense of pastiche, two old houses transformed into stores and the neo-gothic church built between 1913 and 1914.\textsuperscript{157} None of these structures are situated next to each other in reality and it would be impossible to realistically get a photograph of the red ox, Table Mountain, Kasteelberg and that particular collection of buildings. The postcard’s punctum is the red ox which is supposedly communicating to the viewer by means of a speech bubble. It states “It’s the Riebeek Valley Olive Festival 2017.”\textsuperscript{158} The speech bubble might be a supposedly quirky reference to local lore which describes the red ox as ‘coming alive’ and rescuing people who find themselves in compromising situations (I will go into detail regarding these tales later in this chapter). The red ox is inviting and is depicted as having no fence around it. The artist utilises the image of the red ox to promote the Olive Festival but also Riebeek-Kasteel’s proximity to Cape Town, the village’s main attractions and its natural beauty. The postcard is intended to display the best that Riebeek-Kasteel has to offer in terms of shopping, nature and ‘heritage’.

Another postcard, also painted by Louisa Gerryts, simply depicts the unfenced red ox on its pedestal. The caption underneath the painting of the ox states “Die Rooi Os” and underneath that is the town’s name. At the back of the postcard it states that “the Red Ox Monument was erected in 1938 on the village square to honour all the brave oxen during the Great Trek”. These postcards indicate that the Red Ox, regardless of its Afrikaner nationalist origins, has become a landmark and symbol of the town of Riebeek-Kasteel. This is indicative of how the experiential economy cements problematic mythologised narratives like

\textsuperscript{157} Pam Kolbe, “The Tale of Two Towns,” 35-36.
the ‘Great Trek’ and white-washes the past. The postcard does not engage with the narrative of the supposed ‘Great Trek’ but simply reiterates myths regarding “brave” bovine beasts and ‘epical’ journeys inland.¹⁵⁹

(figures 23 and 24)

The red ox becomes a ghost

One of the more curious characteristics of Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox is that it is supposedly haunted. When the author spoke to some of the town’s residents about the structure many jokingly referred to the iron-spiked fence around the structure as being originally intended to prevent the beast from foraging in the village green at night. At first it sounded somewhat like a gimmick – a quaint tale told to entertain visitors and guests. Such tales are perhaps propagated by villagers who understand the value that the supernatural and unexplained bequests to a particular site in terms of the experiential economy. The public’s fascination with the unexplained and the supernatural has long been the saving grace for historic sites whose image has been tainted in the midst of reigning narratives increasingly critical of the presence of sites and structures built and erected by colonial authorities and those associated with white-government rule. Decreased funding, partially the result of a shift of government expenditure in sites highlighting the struggle against apartheid (e.g. various apartheid museums and sites like the Robben Island Museum) and non-racialized narratives pertaining to the South African landscape being the cradle of humankind (e.g. Pretoria’s Freedom Park and the Maropeng Visitors Centre), meant that many structures, museums and monuments associated with European settler narratives and people groups have been financially neglected by local governments that seek to reimagine notions of South African heritage. Thus, there is an increased dependence on visitor fees to sustain such sites.

Tales pertaining to the supernatural attract visitors. Ghost bus tours are a monthly occurrence in South Africa’s main metropolitan centres and usually include an array of historical houses and sites. Many historical attractions such as Cape Town’s Castle, the Lord Milner Hotel in Matjiesfontein, the MacGregor Museum in Kimberley and General Jan Smut’s house at Irene happily host multiple ghostly apparitions. Such tales add another layer to the narrative of a historical site that might have otherwise been neglected because of its
connection to the colonial or apartheid era. Ghosts allow historical sites to attract a greater variety of visitors, beyond just the local amateur genealogist or the odd school group. The Oude Kerk Museum in Riebeek-Kasteel is supposedly haunted by no less than four different ghosts. In fact, when talking to a Riebeek-Kasteel resident and ghost—enthusiast it seemed that Riebeek-Kasteel is infested with ghosts. Isabel Hofmeyr argues that such publicity reinforces a site’s historical importance. Hofmeyr’s claim does not directly pertain to ghosts but she uses the example of the statue of Paul Kruger in Pretoria’s Church Square; nevertheless, there is a link which will be discussed. The history of the statue of Paul Kruger and its reliefs, and how it came to where it currently stands, was almost as interesting and layered as the historical figure or idea that the statue was supposed to represent. Visitors came to see the statue not just because it represented an important historical statesman (Paul Kruger) but because the structure itself had been imbued with complex layers of scandal and publicity from the onset of its design by the artist Anton van Wouw, its creation in Weimar Germany, the placement of two of the boers (parts of the statue) in Lord Kitchener’s estate in England to George V’s final release of the statues and their return to South Africa in 1923. This “…intense publicity…” in turn reinforced and entrenched “…the original conceptualization of the statue as a symbol of the life of Kruger and the Transvaal Republic.” Ghost sitings and rumour brings publicity. It provides a structure or a site with another layer of complexity that might in turn reinforce its apparent importance as a site valued for its historicity. The ghost thus ensures that the red ox remains an important historical landmark. This in turn should theoretically increase visitors’ numbers. A Heritage Impact Report, written for the proposed upgrade of Riebeeck-Kasteel’s village green reads “the red ox is featured in an Afrikaans book [presumably Wendy Maarten’s book] on ghost

160 Isabel Hofmeyr, “We spend our years as a tale that is told”: Oral Historical Narratives in a South African Chiefdom (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 1993), 149.
161 Isabel Hofmeyr, “We spend our years as a tale that is told,” 149.
stories in which it is said to come alive and walk around talking especially to children.”

The inclusion of this information suggests that there is a link between the red ox’s ghost and projects that seek to boost tourist numbers in the town; and that the story of the ghost could potentially draw visitors on its own accord, thus, linking the ghost to the experiential economy.

Yet, even though I was informed about this ghost by locals, it seemed that many of those who physically operated on the ghost’s voorstoep (front porch) knew nothing of this apparition. I asked locals and officials working around Riebeek-Kasteel’s village green and nobody could (or wanted to) tell me anything about this ghost. A receptionist at Riebeek-Kasteel’s tourism office, a librarian, post-office worker who had lived in the town since 1982 and a representative of the local branch of the Swartland municipality had never heard of the existence of this ghost. One individual referred to the story as “twak”, meaning rubbish. It is fair to say that not everybody would be interested in the narrative of the ox. Nevertheless, one would expect the local librarian and representatives from the tourism office to have at least heard of this story.

The author first came into contact with the story of the red ox’s ghost through a fellow Master’s candidate living in Riebeek-Kasteel. This spawned the usual Google search, which resulted in the ‘discovery’ of the children’s author Wendy Maartens’ Die Beste Suid-Afrikaanse Spook Stories (The Best South African Ghost Stories). Maartens’ account of the ox relates several anecdotes relating to ghostly sightings in and around Riebeek-Kasteel which involved the sculpture of the red ox. The first recounts the tale of a widow whose son becomes sick with fever. The mother terrified that she may also lose her only child sits with

163 Informal interview with a lady who worked at the reception of Riebeek-Kasteel’s Post-Office.
164 Wendy Maartens, Die Beste Suid-Afrikaanse Spookstories, 7-12.
the boy while he sleeps in bed. The boy suddenly wakes, sits right up with his eyes wide open. He tells his mother that he saw an ox similar to the one in the village green. It had stuck its head through the window and licked the boy on his forehead. The boy seems to heal fast after this event and he eventually returns to school. However, when he returns to school he decides to take a detour through the village green and he says dankie (thank you) to the ox, meaning that the boy perceived the ox as playing some role in healing him. The ox becomes something quite equivalent to what some may refer to as a guardian angel. This notion is reiterated in Maartens’ second anecdote which recounts the tale of the mayor’s four-year-old daughter that goes missing during a vicious storm. The girl had gone into the fields to pick flowers but fell asleep and eventually got lost. While the parents mourn for their lost child at home they hear a knock against the door and then the voice of their daughter. When the parents interrogated the child she recounted that when she was lying in the field a large red ox came towards her and bowed down so that the child could get on its back. The ox carried the child home but when they reached the child’s home the ox simply disappeared. Maartens’ book contains a delightful illustration (see below) by David Griessel of a little girl blissfully sleeping on the back of the red ox.165 In the third anecdote a homeless man sleeps under a tree. He wakes and realises that the town hall is on fire. However, he then witnesses a massive red ox taking the rope that leads to the town’s bell in its mouth and the beast starts to tug on it so that it rings to notify the townsfolk. The towns-people blame the homeless man for starting the fire but he recounts the tale of the ox. The people challenge him to show them the village’s mysterious quadrupedal saviour and the man points to the red ox on its pedestal. According to these tales Riebeek-Kasteel’s ghost is a ‘good’ ghost. It heals and comforts sick

children. Furthermore, the bovine aids missing children to find their way back home and it warns people when danger is imminent.

During an informal interview with Maartens it was ascertained that her source was The Cape Odyssey volume 101.\textsuperscript{166} It was based on an account by a Tannie (aunty) Hester Heese which was dated 8 April 1981.\textsuperscript{167} Maartens did not conduct major structural changes to the stories which the author had sourced from The Cape Odyssey. She did however exclude one tale that related to a mother who had been made aware that her eldest son was sent to prison.\textsuperscript{168} The mother’s heart was broken and she stared out of the window in quiet suffering. However, the red ox appeared out of nowhere in front of her window. Tannie Hester Heese writes

\begin{quotation}
Sy oë was groot, vol medelye. Hulle het mekaar aangekyk; sekondes lank. Die vrou het gevoel hoe die bitterheid in haar hart stadig plek maak vir ’n groot deernis. Die trane het oor haar wange geloop en verligting gebring. Sy het haar kop laat sak en stil gebid. Toe sy weer opkyk was die os weg.\textsuperscript{169}
\end{quotation}

(His eyes were big, filled with empathy. They looked at each other, for long seconds. The woman felt how the bitterness in her heart made way for great compassion. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{166} \textit{Tannie} Hester Heese, “Die Legende van die Os van Riebeek Kasteel,” in The Cape Odyssey: A Journey into the Fascinating History and Heritage of the Cape: 101, eds. Gabriel Athiros and Nikolai Athiros (Cape Town: Historical Media, 2013), 161.
\item \textsuperscript{167} \textit{Tannie} Hester Heese, “Die Legende van die Os van Riebeek Kasteel,” 163.
\item \textsuperscript{168} \textit{Tannie} Hester Heese, “Die Legende van die Os van Riebeek Kasteel,” 161.
\item \textsuperscript{169} \textit{Tannie} Hester Heese, “Die Legende van die Os van Riebeek Kasteel,” 161.
\end{itemize}
tears rolled over her cheeks and brought relief. She bowed her head and quietly prayed. When she looked up again the ox was gone).

In this anecdote the ox brings comfort to a distraught mother, somebody like the lost girl or the sick boy that suffers, thus, perpetuating this notion of a good ghost. This tale was probably excluded from Maarten’s version because it involved a character that had been imprisoned and prison is perhaps one of those harsh realities that does not comfortably fit into the realm of children’s literature. Furthermore, the mother’s apparent bitterness speaks perhaps of a more complex set of emotions which might be difficult to translate to a child who has probably experienced emotions such as anger and jealousy but lacks the life-experience which one would associate with the feeling of bitterness.

Before analysing what these anecdotes might actually symbolise it is important to add the side-information included with Tannie Hester Heese’s tale in The Cape Odyssey. The information provides a ‘context’ for readers about Riebeek-Kasteel. This information reads more like a tourist brochure for a Swiss mountain resort. It reads “bathed in almost continuous sunshine this unique little village, in the unpolluted country air, has become a delightful retreat for writers, painters, and those seeking beauty and serenity away from the noisy city.”¹⁷⁰ The description is accompanied by a photograph of the village taken from Kasteelberg with the snow-capped Cape fold mountains in the background and the DRC’s church spire sticking out amongst the green of the wine lands and wheat fields. In the foreground is a hill with some roaming wildlife. Along with this generous description an especially idyllic picture of the village is painted. I was especially amused by the description “bathed in almost continuous sunshine…” since a particularly freezing cold-front had hit the Swartland in the week I spent in the village to conduct research.¹⁷¹ There had been snow on the mountains, yes, but this lowered the temperatures and along with the continuous rain it

¹⁷⁰ Tannie Hester Heese, “Die Legende van die Os van Riebeek Kasteel,” 163.
¹⁷¹ Tannie Hester Heese, “Die Legende van die Os van Riebeek Kasteel,” 163.
resulted in a rather unpleasant few days. Nevertheless, the placement of this little contextual block of information does contribute to the argument that the ghost of Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox might have been a tourist gimmick. Readers of The Cape Odyssey might have been amused by the tales of a quirky ghost lovingly haunting, but also protecting, a pretty town apparently used as an escape by artists and the literati alike. This would have definitely acted as an advertisement for the village. The publication’s website claims “we strategically place or sell our publication all major Hotels in the greater Cape Town area, Iziko and other Museums, Libraries, Tourist Information Centres, Coffee Shops, Farm Stalls, Cape Union Marts, Guest Houses, Art Galleries and Wine Farms.”\textsuperscript{172} This implies that, with the exception of local libraries, the out-of-print publication’s main target group would have been both domestic and international tourists. One can imagine that its readership would consist of a wealthier variety of urbanite, perhaps interested genealogists and local folklorists, that can afford mini-breaks or weekends away in boutique hotels in quaint villages such as Riebeek-Kasteel. The website further claims “The Cape Odyssey is devoted to an appreciation of the Cape, its history, heritage, people and endeavours of the past.”\textsuperscript{173} Nevertheless, if one pages through copies of this publication one would often not receive more information on a particular subject than that which is provided by a travel guide. Furthermore, one cannot help but question the validity of some of the contributions. I do not want to be demeaning of local amateur historians, especially, since they had provided much of the backbone of this very thesis, but I did notice that much of the information does not have substantial references. Even Tannie Hester Heese’s story holds little historical clout. She even states at the end of the story “Ek dink nie dit is ‘n wonderlike storie nie. Ek het dit geskryf om aan julle te stuur. Miskien het ek dit maar net gedroom.” (I do not think it is a wonderful story. I only wrote it

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{172} “Welcome to the Cape Odyssey,” accessed February 25, 2019, http://www.sawestcoast.com/odyssey.html. \textsuperscript{173} “Welcome to the Cape Odyssey.”
\end{flushleft}
to send it to you. Maybe I just dreamed it). This is a particularly confusing set of
statements. She does not think it is a “wonderlike” story, yet, she believes it is worth retelling,
thus, she does attach some kind of value to the story. She states that she wrote it specifically
to send to (assumingly) the publication. Does this imply that she simply made it up or that she
intentionally wrote it down as fragment of local lore that she wanted to protect by means of a
publication that would outlive her? Did Tannie Hester Heese place value on the story because
she (or perhaps somebody close to her) had imagined it into being or because it was based on
a local myth that she perhaps knew was being disregarded by younger generations but still
wanted to protect? Maybe she concocted the tale to gain attention or to gloat about the fact
that she had managed to get a complete lie published. And what about the last sentence? Does
she state that it was a dream to add to the dramatic effect, to recapitulate emotions of
uncertainty associated with supernatural beings such as ghosts. The last line suggests that she
could have been the source of the story. Could this mean that Tannie Hester Heese could
have actually been one of the characters in one, some or perhaps even all of the anecdotes?
Was she the little girl that got lost or/and the mother of the boy who got terribly sick? Maybe
her son had gone to prison or/and ended up homeless in the streets? Or perhaps it really was
just a bizarre dream that needed an outlet?

Should Riebeek-Kasteel’s ghost be taken seriously? Besides the very real economic
advantages of having a ghost, the notion that there might be villagers who believe in the
ghost’s existence is perhaps more perplexing. However, narratives surrounding such
apparitions should not be overlooked in the context of Afrikaans culture. The Afrikaans
language has a strong literary tradition relating to ghosts dating from as far as the Eerste
Beweging or First Movement mentioned in Chapter 1. Often referred to as the father of the

174 Tannie Hester Heese, “Die Legende van die Os van Riebeek Kasteel,” 163.
Afrikaans language, the writer and poet C. J Langenhoven (1873 – 1932) was and continues to be renowned for his ghost-stories. In Die Slaapwandelaar II Langenhoven asks whether ghosts exist. He answers his own question by stating “laat ons hierdie woord vermy, met die spookbetekenis wat hy bygekry het en die geur van minagting wat hom aankleef. Laat ons die vraag op ‘n ernstige manier stel…” (Let us avoid this word [i.e. ghost], with the ghostly-meaning that was added to him and the odour of belittlement that cleaves unto him. Let us ask the question in a serious manner…) Langenhoven’s tongue-in-the-cheek call to take the question regarding the existence of ghosts seriously is perhaps not dramatically different from Luise White’s call in Speaking with Vampires: Rumour and History in Colonial Africa (2000) for the academic community not to disregard the tales of vampires and witches in colonial Africa. Ghosts, vampires and witches in a post-enlightenment world are usually metaphoric of a greater (more realistic) ill that is plaguing a community. Thus, one should ask oneself what aspect of life in a village in apartheid South Africa would remain so misunderstood that some villagers felt it necessary to give birth to the metaphor of a ghost? Perhaps the answer lies with the author of this strange ghostly anecdote.

Who was Tannie Hester Heese, the supposed author of these ghost story? The Cape Odyssey does not give any biographical details about the supposed author (Tannie Hester Heese) of this set of ghost tales, other than that she was a Tannie or aunty, meaning, that she was an older woman. The surname, assuming she was local to either Riebeek-Kasteel or Riebeek-West, suggests that she was a white Afrikaans-speaker although there would have certainly been families within the mixed-race communities of the region with the surname

---

178 I did contact Gabriel and Louise Athiros, the editors of the Cape Odyssey 101, with the intention of inquiring about the origin of the story. I received a very kind response informing me that they were not able to help me since they were now retired. In that same month in which I had sent the email they had published a new anthology of stories relating to the Cape’s heritage.
Heese. The date could also provide some information of both Tannie Hester Heese and the origins of the ghost. It suggests that a narrative regarding the red ox’s ghost had either begun in or predated the early 1980s. This implies that the story was created within two generations since the creation of the red ox in 1938, which is not a particularly long time given that there were people alive in 2018 (like my own grandmother) who could still remember the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. Tannie Hester Heese must have at the very least been a girl or a teenager. Had she been 20 years-old in 1938 it would mean that she was 63 years-old in 1981 when the Cape Odyssey published the story. Such a person would have witnessed the Great Depression, the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, the Second World War and the Nationalist Party’s victory in 1948. She would have followed the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument on the radio in 1949; celebrated the referendum which made South Africa a republic in 1961. And she would have possibly mourned the assassination of Hendrik Verwoerd in 1966. Her life as a working-aged adult would have taken place within the contextual framework of a country which was in the midst of an economic boom.

Nevertheless, more or less the time that she became middle-aged the South Africa she thought she knew began to drastically change.179

The 1970s and 1980s would have been a difficult era to process (by means other than the metaphoric) for those who considered themselves as Afrikaners. The apartheid regime was involved in a series of border conflicts against the Rooi Gevaar (Red Danger), a mostly imagined communist threat, that resulted in many young conscripts cast as white to return from the fronts with post-traumatic stress disorder. The June 16th 1976 Soweto Uprising, which saw thousands of black school children rising up against the apartheid regime to

---

179 My grandmother, Anemone Robertson, claims that Tannie Hester Heese was perhaps the wife of Dr Kallie Heese. He was a theologian and a leader of the South African children’s Voortrekkers. Hester Heese wrote various children’s books that were published in the 1980s. This implies that the story could have intentionally been written for children. Yet, the question remains – why write about the red ox? What is the author’s connection with the story of the red ox?
protest against the implementation of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in schools, would have made headlines regardless of the authorities trying to hush it up. The 1980s would also see the implementation of a nearly constant state of emergency which afforded the government and military special privileges not associated with free societies. Fear and uncertainty would have consumed many communities especially smaller towns such as Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West as the economy began to buckle because of international pressure and rumours spread of the atrocities committed by the apartheid regime. In such an environment, plagued by suspicion and doubt, villagers would have longed for the supposedly uncomplicated rural world of the past – a world in which Afrikaner nationalism would have been cast a saving grace to many in terms of political and economic advancement. Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox’s ghost possibly represents the longing which many like Tannie Hester Heese who perceived themselves as Afrikaners would have had, in the 1970s and early 1980s, for an imagined past that was less threatening and complex. Perhaps the ghost of the red ox represents a desire for a community to be saved from the harsh reality of the present by the idealized version of the past. The lost girl and the sick boy could be metaphoric of a society that is sick and lost. The mother worrying about her son that is in jail can be representative of a society which fears the future and that is plagued of the crimes its own blood has committed. The town hall burning could symbolise the slow destruction the Nationalist Party’s government. However, in each of these tales the red ox, a symbol of Afrikaner nationalism and ‘good’ Christian values, comes and saves the day. As a result, the red ox might represent the belief that the apartheid state could only be saved if Afrikaners were only to return to the religious and political values propagated by the Afrikaner nationalist during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. Thus, the chaos of the present could only be corrected by a return to the past. If this was really Tannie Hester Heese speaking, then the red ox’s ghost can be seen as an old lady’s nostalgic and moralistic call for the return of an
old world that never even existed in the first place. So, maybe there was no Tannie Hester after all.

**David Goldblatt photographs the Red Ox**

After the disastrous sesquicentennial celebration of 1988, the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments of the Riebeek Valley could have been forgotten and become dead monuments. The gargantuan changes in South Africa in the early 1990s meant that the Afrikaner Nationalism which these structures celebrated were already in the process of decomposing. Nevertheless, this was definitely not the case for at least Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox. In fact, something quite remarkable happened – the renowned South African photographer David Goldblatt had taken a photograph of the red ox. The photograph is dated 7 February 1993.  

The picture was taken at the corner of Main Street and Sarel Cilliers Streets. It is black and white – a signature synonymous with images taken by South African photographers during the anti-apartheid struggle years. The red ox is situated close to the left corner of the photograph, yet, it is clearly, to use some rather tired photographic nomenclature, the punctum. The ox rises out of some quite thick foliage. Dominating the right corner is the historic canon which used to be located on Kasteelberg. The effect of the elevated ox and the canon pointing in the same direction reminds one of a battalion of soldiers at the frontline of a conflict ready for battle (or rather conquest). Both canons and oxen were used during the conquest of this land one way or another.

This particular photograph is part of an essay entitled *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* (1998). The focus of this collection of photographs are buildings, memorials and monuments (i.e. structures). When discussing Goldblatt’s photographic essay on structures

---

such as the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments in ‘Constructs: Reflections on a Thinking Eye’ the late Neville Dubow writes that

the photographs in this book are about structures in South Africa which gave expression to or were evidence of some of the forces that shaped our society before the end of apartheid…Our structures often declare quite nakedly, yet eloquently, what manner of people built them and what they stood for.\(^\text{183}\)

In a later interview Goldblatt would state that

from very early in the time of White people in what became South Africa, there was a gradual but eventually overwhelming domination of Whites over other peoples on this land. The construction of structures used for that domination were both the expressions and tools of domination but the vital impulse came from the will to power of those who wielded it.\(^\text{184}\)

Structures such as the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monument were indeed a “tool of domination.”\(^\text{185}\) It reminded those that subscribed to Afrikaner Nationalism of the values they held dear as an (imagined) society and it acted as a reminder of their position as a people group within the social strata of colonial and apartheid South Africa. These structures acted as a statement to South African society as a whole that those who had perceived themselves as Afrikaners had ‘arrived’ and were ready to take over the political baton. It also reminded those individuals deemed as ‘other’ or those that actively sought to challenge the development of Afrikaner Nationalism of their place within this new arrangement of power. This process of reminder is in fact an “act of violence” according to Neville Dubow.\(^\text{186}\) He writes that “these were images of a thinking kind. They were concerned with structures of a physical sort, with another kind of narrative. They spoke of another sort of violence of a more covert kind, a violence done to the landscape.”\(^\text{187}\) The act of memorialisation through the


\(^{185}\) Baptiste Ligél and David Goldblatt, David Goldblatt.

\(^{186}\) Neville Dubow, “Constructs: Reflections on a Thinking Eye,” 22.

construction of monuments is a “covert” form of violence.\textsuperscript{188} The 1938 Voortrekker Centenary was not a violent event in physical terms. It did not involve an actual army that perpetrated violence on another group of soldiers or civilians. However, it imitated the violent act of conquest through recreating a second ‘Great Trek’. It celebrated acts of violence conquest like the Battle of Blood River and the massacre at Makapansgat. The red ox of Riebeek-Kasteel might seem harmless enough in the sense that it celebrates the role of an animal during a historical set of events. Yet, this animal was utilized to transport people, weapons and equipment on a significant scale, thus, aiding an imperialist force (albeit a disjointed one) to conquer many different indigenous communities. The monument still celebrates the idea of conquest. Goldblatt reminds the viewer that the red ox is not just a quirky haunted tourist attraction but a “covert” “tool of domination”.\textsuperscript{189}

Perhaps this would be a good moment to disrupt oneself and briefly discuss the author’s failure to secure a collection of interviews for this thesis. The author contacted various individuals regarding the possibility of an interview because of their connection to a particular monument. Often the author would simply receive no response to emails sent. Once or twice the subject would refer me to a local heritage enthusiast. However, they themselves would decline an interview. This was counterproductive because the purpose of this particular element of the study was to establish what these structures meant to those who had depicted these structures through art or who had lived and worked around (and with) the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monuments. Perhaps these individuals did not perceive themselves to be experts. Yet I was not seeking an expert opinion. The purpose of this task was not to establish facts but to gather information that was subjective and based on personal experience and opinion. The author thought that this ‘rejection’ might have been because of

\textsuperscript{188} Neville Dubow, “Constructs: Reflections on a Thinking Eye,” 22.
\textsuperscript{189} Neville Dubow, “Constructs: Reflections on a Thinking Eye,” 22.
the impersonal medium of communication – email. As a result, the author organized a weeklong stay near the villages of Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West. It was argued that if potential interviewees could see the author physically that they might seem less intimidated. This would provide the academic with a human face which could potentially be interpreted as being less intimidating. Nevertheless, this did not succeed either. It felt like once the author had explained his purpose that potential interviewees ‘closed-off’. Potential interviewees would often have a look which the scholar interpreted as distrust…as if he was going to expose them…as if he was set out to reveal an uncomfortable truth or secret about the community. After much meditation, the author realised that this was actually true. Something nefarious was being exposed – a reluctance to change and act.

80 Years after the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary these structures were still situated in ‘white’ spaces in a post-apartheid South African landscape. The immediate spaces around these structures saw few demographic changes in terms of the population groups that lived and worked around them, in fact some had become more ‘white’ than they had been in 1938 when ideas of whiteness seemed more uncertain than they are currently perceived. One can argue that even though the political situation had completely changed in the country as a whole the people living in the white areas of Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West had continued to tolerate these “covert” “tool[s] of domination”. As a matter of fact, the town councils of the Riebeek Valley had acted as many white South Africans did after the disintegration of apartheid – they just built taller walls around themselves and their properties. Similarly, instead of truly engaging with these structures the town councils of Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West had simply put fences around their centenary monuments.

It is this realisation which contributes to the making of Goldblatt’s image a truly remarkable photograph. The author tried to engage with Goldblatt’s photograph of the red ox by attempting to take a photograph similar to David Goldblatt’s. Similar at least in the extent of trying to find the exact location of where the photographer stood, thus attempting to rudely ‘copy’ Goldblatt’s photograph. The author was fully aware that any attempt to imitate the master of South African photography would fail purely because of (compared to David Goldblatt) an utter lack of photographic skills.191 However, the purpose of this exercise was to draw a comparison between how the landscape had physically changed between 1993 when the picture was taken and 2018. In a period of over 25 years little had actually changed. The foliage had increased and the branches of a tree blocked that particular view of the ox. There was also a fairly newly erected fence around the structure. One can also observe in the left corner that some of the shops in Sarel Cilliers Street had changed. Nevertheless, it is clear that this was the same space. The two photographs mentioned indicate that Riebeek-Kasteel is a microcosm of South Africa as a whole. The comparison between Goldblatt and the author’s photograph is reflective of a community that has witnessed little change and perhaps even refused to facilitate change after the advent of democracy. This is perhaps nowhere as clear as the service delivery protests which the Riebeek Valley witnessed in 2018 inferred to in the introduction. The vast majority of people in Riebeek-Kasteel live in a neighbourhood known as Esterhof which is situated outside the village – a perfect illustration of the historical and continued marginalisation of black and coloured bodies in South Africa.192 This neighbourhood was even classified as a different census area in the 2011 South African national census.193 In June 2018 an estimated 600 people had participated in a protest and riot that would lead to the arrest of 21 people and the damage of business properties and

191 I did not include my photograph in this mini-thesis simply because I felt too embarrassed. I did not want to be perceived as arrogant by attempting to replicate one of South Africa’s greatest photographers.
government institutions such as a library and municipal office in and around both Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West. Esterhof bore the greatest brunt of the damage. Nevertheless, the protest was related to a greater inequality visible in the towns of the Riebeek Valley. The protests started because of a severe housing shortage in the Valley. The housing shortage has led to Esterhof properties hosting many backyard dwellers and an unrealistically high rental market in Riebeek-Kasteel as a whole. Furthermore, illegal squatters had recently been removed (by instruction of the town’s council) from municipal land. There is also no plan to build any low-income accommodation in Riebeek-Kasteel within the next 5 years. This comes as a bitter pill to swallow given that Riebeek-Kasteel intends to invest a sizeable amount of capital in upgrading the town’s village green. A recent Heritage Impact Report states that this will be done to “provide improved public amenities and formalized organization of its current parking component.” Nevertheless, one must question which ‘public’ will benefit from this upgrade since the village green falls in what Roger Roman, chairperson of the Community Policing Forum or CPF, classified as the “…quaint ‘white-town…” This part of the town is occupied by people who are casted as belonging to mostly white South African and foreign households. Some of the properties are owned by wealthy urbanites and foreigners who only visit the town during particular seasons, holidays and weekends. Improved parking will definitely not aid the majority of the residents of Esterhof who would have to walk or take a mini-bus taxi to use the amenities of the upgraded park. Such a development would beautify the area formally reserved for people cast as white under apartheid law and result in easier accessibility to businesses surrounding the green. More

196 Jenni Evans, “21 People arrested as protests spread to Riebeek Valley.”
197 Graham Jacobs, Proposed Upgrading of Market Square Riebeek Kasteel, 1.
198 Jenni Evans, “21 People arrested as protests spread to Riebeek Valley.”
parking might boost tourism which in turn could have a trickle-down effect in terms of increased investment and job creation. However, this does not directly solve Esterhof and Riebeek-West’s very immediate housing crises. Riebeek-West is in the process of building a 244-unit housing project. Nonetheless, there is a lengthy waiting list and the scheme understandably advantages the elderly and military veterans. Furthermore, this scheme has a cut-off age of 35, which means that young and impoverished families are forced to rely on rental accommodation in a market that has become over-saturated in terms of demand. Like in the rest of South Africa, life in Riebeek-West and Riebeek-Kasteel is good if you are a part of the privileged few. The lack of change represented in the landscape photographed by both David Goldblatt and myself is indicative of how little has changed in South Africa regarding its monumental landscape and the vast inequalities that continue to persist.

Goldblatt’s photograph contains ‘expanded captions’ at the back of _South Africa: The Structure of Things Then_ in which the South African photographer supplies further information relating to the structures which he photographed. Within this caption Goldblatt basically summarises the events of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary and the subsequent repercussions of this nationalist procession. There are other monuments represented in Goldblatt’s collection affiliated with the centenary (e.g. ‘Vrou en moeder plein’ in Philippolis and the Carel Landman monument near De Kol), yet, Goldblatt chose to place this monument first in terms of 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments and the other structures commemorating the mythology of the ‘Great Trek’. As a result, the photograph is in many ways an introduction to the other monuments in the collection but also to the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary as a whole to the viewer. There is no explanation regarding why this is the case - neither Goldblatt nor Dubow explain exactly the reasoning for this. However, it does elevate Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox as somehow representative of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary as a whole. It can be seen as introductory photograph or a kind of ‘opening act’ in
Goldblatt’s depictions of the physical scars of Afrikaner nationalism on South Africa’s landscape. Placing the red ox in a space which makes it representative of all 1938 Voortrekker monuments reiterates both the uniqueness of the red ox (Goldblatt had chosen this monument as opposed to 499 others celebrating the same event which he could have and some which he did photograph) but also its banality as one of many similar structures that covertly reminded people of Afrikaner nationalism.

Figure 26: A scanned copy of David Goldblatt’s photograph of Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox. (7 February 1993. David Goldblatt. Scanned by Robert Uys from ‘Intersections Intersected’)
Figure 27: A scanned image of a photograph taken by David Goldblatt. In 'Intersections Intersected' the photograph is placed opposite the image of Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox. (23 June 2004. David Goldblatt. Scanned from 'Intersections Intersected').

Figure 28: This is the life-sized artwork depicting an elephant in Riebeek-Kasteel’s village green. I found it interesting how this photograph was reminiscent of the picture taken by Goldblatt in Olifantshoek which it placed opposite of his photograph of the red ox in 'Intersections Intersected' (9 August 2018. Robert Uys. Personal Collection).
**Pissing on ‘White Heritage’**

The Voortrekker Centenary monuments in the Riebeek Valley have been subject to various forms of vandalism in the past. Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox has been fenced, not because the beast it represents supposedly roams around the town at night, but because of the damage inflicted on the structure by locals and visitors alike. Riebeek-West’s ox-wagon is, in comparison with the other two structures in Riebeek-Kasteel and Durbanville, probably in the worst condition. The structure is covered in graffiti depicting a cornucopia of sex acts and some rather lewd language. When visiting Riebeek–West in 2017 it smelled like excrement and urine, suggesting that the site was used as a latrine.

The vandalising and general treatment of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monuments reflect the political climate and volatility in communities such as those of the Riebeek-Valley. Municipal and town councils in all three of the case studies have, and continue to go through considerable lengths to beautify the spaces around the centenary monuments. This, as discussed earlier when referring to this notion of the experiential economy, is done partially to ensure that public spaces are more attractive to visitors and tourists. Even though there might be significant and sincere interest in the historical narratives of these structures, one of the most prominent justifications for their preservation are the potential economic benefits of exploiting a heritage economy. The direct beneficiaries of such an economy would be business and home owners situated around spaces such as Riebeek-Kasteel’s village green. In all three cases these monuments are situated in communities that have and continue to be populated by citizens predominantly classified as white and upper-middle class.

The proximity of Riebeek-West’s monument to traditionally white institutions such as the Dutch Reformed Church suggests that this particular monument is similar in terms of location to those studied in Riebeek-Kasteel. However, those that economically benefit (along with the visitors and tourists that they seek to draw) from such an experiential
economy are not the only people that make use of the spaces situated in the immediate vicinity of the 1938 Voortrekker monuments.

RiebeeK-West’s monument is situated in the corner of a park that is on the town’s main street, across the road from the town hall and RiebeeK-West’s Agrimark. Furthermore, a large labour force, supplied by the surrounding farms and wine estates, would utilize this commercial space to resupply and restock during weekends and the month’s end. RiebeeK-Kasteel’s red ox sits in the village green, which is bordered by the municipal offices, library, tourism office and various restaurants, boutique shops and a variety of forms of tourist accommodation – an area that would witness some of the destruction during the riots of July 2018. It is thus clear to see that even though these structures and their surroundings might fall in the realm of (those cast as white) affluent upper-middle class, a plethora of people use and move through these spaces around these structures when conducting their daily business and travelling to and from work or school.

When considering the narratives or lives of these monuments, past vandalism is an important reflection of how these structures are perceived by not just those individuals who benefit from their preservation, but by those groups and individuals marginalised in such communities. The treatment of monuments is reflective of the volatility and political climate experienced within the towns of the RiebeeK-Valley. The gap between the rich and the very poor in all three of these communities are gargantuan. Even though the nationalistic histories of these monuments have been mostly forgotten or remain misunderstood these structures are still associated with whiteness and white history. These monuments and the spaces which they occupy thus become a possible canvas for marginalised persons to display their discontent with municipal governments which deem their presence as undesirable and
actively seek to oust them from neighbourhoods.\textsuperscript{199} When writing about the damage caused to Bruce Fordyce memorial, a part of the \textit{Sunday Times} Heritage Project, Duane Jethro states that “the everyday and the legacies of racial urban planning, the vandalism perpetrated against the Bruce Fordyce memorial could be reinterpreted as an elaborate critique of the post-apartheid urban order perpetrated by a virtually invisible, yet highly conspicuous public who harboured feelings of being left out.”\textsuperscript{200}

One can argue that these monuments provide a space where the marginalised can lash out and display their frustration by damaging structures that are valued by those privileged and perceived as oppressive. The structures become substitutes for inaccessible bodies removed by high walls, electric fencing, private security and tinted windows. The monuments stand in a privileged (but public) space, they clearly receive public funds in terms of upkeep and refurbishment (perhaps more so than that which is invested in homeless shelters and job-creation schemes). Thus, they come to metaphorically represent the body of what may be perceived as an oppressor. The monuments are drawn and urinated on – a display of the contempt harboured towards a community who snubs them. Pieces are chipped away – perceived punishment and retribution for a vast collection of real (and sometimes imagined) injustices.

One can perhaps consider vandalism against the Voortrekker monuments in the villages of the Riebeek Valley as acts of violence, possibly committed by those with limited agency to instigate feelings of release and to express their frustration towards the systems that keep them impoverished and disempowered, meant to be inflicted unto those that do exercise significant power. The problem is that such acts of vandalism simply affirm (at least to those

\begin{footnotesize}

\end{footnotesize}
that hold positions of power) preconceived prejudices that the people that are blamed for vandalism are inferior criminals.

**Looking towards the Future**

Riebeek-Kasteel has recently initiated a venture to redevelop the village green. In April 2018 a *Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment* report was published by CS Design CC t/a ARCON Architectural & Heritage Consultants. The report was written by Graham Jacobs. He states in the introduction that “this report comprises a Phase 1 heritage assessment of proposals for landscaping improvements to the historic market square of Riebeek Square (sic), sometimes known as ‘Rooios Plein’ after a monument depicting a red ox in the northeast corner. The purpose of the project is to provide improved public amenities and formalized organization of its current parking component.” The report states that the initiative to redevelop the village green was initiated in August 2015 when “a public invitation was sent out for proposals for the upgrading of Market Square, Riebeek-Kasteel (sic).” Proposals were submitted by 18 September 2018 and the public was given a consultation period that lasted about 16 days. The winning design included an amphitheatre (in the current location of the tennis court) and a large circular fountain. However, some adjustments have been made to this design.

The assessment report provides history of the square and then Jacobs applies John Karras’ ‘Five Features of Great Public Spaces’. Within this ‘five feature’ framework, Jacobs then applies certain “heritage indicators for the improvement to (sic) Market Square…” This is where things becomes interesting because Jacobs’ Heritage Indicator #2 claims that “Monuments to be retained: The monuments on the square are to be retained but could be shifted/ repositioned if necessary.” I found it fascinating that 10 businessmen could...

---

essentially ‘shift’ or ‘reposition’ a monument to a space that would possibly result in increased visitors numbers (and so increase their profit) with so little obstruction. All they essentially seem to need is the right amount of capital and permission from the correct government agencies. This is while petitions, sit-ins, and protest after protest orchestrated by students calling for the removal of monuments which commemorated British Imperialism, settler narratives and Afrikaner nationalism. Yes, the statue of Cecil John Rhodes was removed but only after the expenditure of immeasurable quantities of human energy. The University of the Free State had only recently (in November 2018) decided to remove the statue of M. T. Steyn (the sixth and last president of the independent Orange Free State) from its campus in Bloemfontein.205 This difference in the expenditure of resources and energy further entrenches the notion that South Africa is a deeply unequal society. Rich businessmen can easily pay to ‘reposition’ a monument for their own gains but university students that feel intimidated and offended by similar monuments have to protest in their thousands to evoke any reaction from the authorities.

The final design does not call for the removal or repositioning of the monument but through mentioning that such a ‘shift’ is even a possibility confirms the notion that this is a business venture that really has nothing to do with the supposed ‘historical integrity’ of the site. In fact, Jacobs describes what would happen if a “No-Go Alternative” (meaning if the appropriate agencies would for some reason forbid the re-development of the Village Green) would be applied. He states that this would lead to “negative local economic consequences” in terms of a parking problem that remains unresolved. He does indicate that the re-development of the square is not a matter of ‘if’ but rather ‘how’ “so as not to negatively impact on heritage resources.”206 This is interesting phrasing because it essentially provides

---

substantiation for the idea that structures such as the red ox are perceived as a “heritage resource” – a ‘means of production’ or something that can be exploited for gain. This fits in well with arguments made by Martin Hall and Albert Grundlingh regarding how experiential economies both cement the supposed ‘historical’ grounding of sites (thus, legitimising such monuments as markers of supposed ‘history’) but also how these monuments or “heritage resources” can be utilized to ensure maximum profit. It is clear from the Heritage Impact Assessment report that Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox’s immediate future is one that is imbedded within the local experiential economy.

Riebeek-West’s monument perhaps evokes greater elusion. There does not seem to be any explicit plan to redevelop this area of the town. The fencing, as already mentioned, seems to be placed there to keep people permanently out of the park in which the monument is situated. The powers that be could have easily decided to indent that section of the fence so as to ensure that the town’s 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monument was accessible to the public. Nevertheless, this is not the case and access to the structure seems to be limited to a privileged few who have access to the gate keys. The question is whether an obscure monument locked in an inaccessible space is still a living monument? Unless, the town of Riebeek-West decides to redevelop the space around the monument there is a possibility that its wagon (without practically any information, lettering and inscriptions) might soon become a dead monument.

\[
\text{Graham Jacobs, Proposed Upgrading of Market Square Riebeek Kasteel, 24.}
\]
CHAPTER 4 – Durbanville

A Quiet Violence

Dirk Mostert’s Gedenkboek asserts that on the 9th of August 1938:

\[\text{Weergaloose geesdrif het die tweede skof gekenmerk van die ossewa wat by Bellville afgedraai het en deur die boere distrike Durbanville en Philadelphia onder gejuig en gesing van perde commandos, voetgangers en agtervolgende motoriste voortgereis het.}\]

(Incomparable zeal defined the second shift of the ox-wagon, that turned off at Bellville and travelled through the farming districts of Durbanville and Philadelphia accompanied by the shouting and singing of commando’s on horses, pedestrians and the cars that followed, continuing the journey).\(^{208}\)

The wagon was a part of the Kaaplandse Hooftrek, which began at Jan van Riebeeck’s statue in Cape Town’s Central Business District and would eventually also travel through the towns of the Riebeek Valley. Its hoofleier (head) was none other than the infamous H. J. Klopper – the utilization of ox-wagons during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary was his brainchild. The ox-wagon did not stay over-night in Durbanville, but would move on to Philadelphia, a small village that is roughly 24 km north of Durbanville’s Town Hall. Mostert claims that about 1000 people had already gathered in anticipation around Durbanville Town Hall by 08:00 a.m.\(^{209}\) The commando, led by a T. Neethling, accompanied the wagon and its procession in what he says was “solemn” silence as it entered the town.\(^{210}\) This was in contrast to the “weergaloose geesdrif” (incomparable zeal) Mostert claims occurred when the wagon drivers had left Bellville en route to Durbanville. Ds. P. J. van der Merwe (1876 – 1960), the minister at Durbanville’s Dutch Reformed Church, welcomed the wagon drivers and the procession, after which the church’s choir sung a hymn.\(^{211}\) While the members of the town’s council and the church board enjoyed some eats “het lede van die publiek elkeen ‘n klip op een hoop in

\(^{208}\) Die Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938, 139.
\(^{209}\) Die Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938, 140.
\(^{210}\) Die Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938, 140.
\(^{211}\) Die Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938, 140.
tie munisipale tuin gaan neerplaas, waar eersdaags 'n klein gedenkteken opgerig sal word"

members of the public each placed a rock on a pile in the municipal garden, where one of these days a small monument will be erected). This pile of rocks would eventually be turned into Durbanville’s 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monument. The celebrations were concluded when the crowd sang one of the verses from the book of Psalms and by 09:00 a.m. the commando with horses accompanied the wagon out of the town on the road to Philadelphia. Thus, the community of Durbanville’s actual participation in this event (with the exception of some who would have presumably joined the celebration in Cape Town or Goodwood) did not last much longer than one hour. Yet, within this hour Durbanville was apparently inducted into the domain of Afrikanerdom. Through hymns, speeches and prayer a quiet and subdued violence was inflicted upon Durbanville.

Durbanville’s quiet and subdued reaction might have differed from the jolly festivities of Goodwood and the zeal described by writers like Claire Robertson. Nonetheless, the sacred solemnity displayed was evidence of the growing influence of Afrikaner nationalism and its stronghold in the area. Like in the villages of the Riebeek Valley, the arrival of the wagon represented a sacred moment for the citizens of Durbanville. The solemn procession, the welcoming led by a minister from the local DRC, the hymns sung by the church choir and the crowds singing from the biblical book of Psalms is evidence that the arrival of the wagon was imbued with a sacred and holy significance. The local in this case study did in fact reflect what would eventually be witnessed on a national level given the religious tone of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary celebrations in the Union as a whole. Durbanville’s sombre atmosphere is perhaps more telling than some areas that had a more festive approach to the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary. A large chunk of the people who partook in the celebrations in Goodwood (with its braai’s and volkspele) for instance would have simply been there for the

---

212 Die Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938, 140.
food, dancing and to generally have a good time. Durbanville was an altogether different matter. It was an austere and solemn occasion – or at least that’s the way it was depicted.

When Old Communities Adopt New Nationalisms

Durbanville’s place in the realm of Afrikanerdom was somewhat uncertain before the arrival of the wagon. Durbanville is an old community in terms of narratives pertaining to European settlement in Southern Africa even older than those communities studied in the Riebeek Valley. The land around the Tygerberg Hills, the most prominent geographical feature of the Durbanville-area, was the first arable land outside the Table- and Liesbeek Valleys given to Burgers (former VOC employees released from their contracts in order to produce the fresh produce needed for Cape Town and the passing ships) by the late 17th century. An account of an expedition undertaken by Governor Simon van der Stel in 1685 suggests that much of the land around the Tygerberg Hills had already been allocated. Durbanville was formed because of three particular features: arable land, access to spring water, and because of the development of road networks between Cape Town and the farming communities that were developing in the Boland.

Durbanville’s age as an area of European settlement is significant because just like Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West the community predates the supposed ‘Great Trek’ of 1838 by centuries. This is important because it reiterates Leslie Witz’s argument that in order to make the ‘Great Trek’ spatially national as a ‘Grand historical narrative’ worth celebrating in 1938, communities that had no connection with the inland movement of frontier farmers had to either invent trekker pasts or zealously partake in this second ‘Great Trek’ in order to publicly affirm their identities as supposedly true Afrikaners.

---

215 Leslie Witz, Apartheid’s Festival, 219.
Durbanville’s Monument: A Pile of Rocks

The most patent relic left in Durbanville from 1938 Voortrekker Centenary is the monument – the pile of rocks. Regardless, of the important role that the Afrikaner civic religion played in this event, it is important to recognise the fact that Durbanville’s monument was placed not in the immediate vicinity of its Dutch Reformed Church (like in so many other towns and villages) but in the municipal gardens, next to the Town Hall, which was asserted as an important outspan for more than 200 years.\(^{216}\) Thus, whereas many other centenary monuments enjoyed a certain degree of ‘anonymity’ because they are situated on the private properties belonging to Dutch Reformed Churches and can be misinterpreted as graves (e.g. the 1938 Centenary Monument next to Prins Albert’s DRC), Durbanville’s monument is situated in a very public space surrounded by the central business district (CBD).\(^{217}\) This in turn makes the structure more vulnerable in terms of vandalism but also makes it available for public scrutiny. This especially pertains to a recent R10 million redevelopment of the municipal park (renamed the Pampoenkraal Heritage Park) in which the monument is situated.\(^{218}\) The space around the monument has significantly changed since 1938. Yet, regardless of its age the monument remains intact.

The structure is somewhat elevated on a two tier cement platform. It has been sculpted from the rocks placed at the site on the 9\(^{th}\) of August 1938. The initials of those who presumably participated in the festivities have been engraved on these rocks. At least one of these rocks (the one labelled J.A.D.K, with a ‘E’ engraved in the ‘D’) has a date confirming its relation to 1938. The structure takes on a pyramidal shape with a fairly wide base. At the


\(^{217}\) Fencing, supervision and security around some Dutch Reformed Churches make it increasingly difficult for the public to access these spaces, which is unfortunate since it limits access to some of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments.

top of the structure there is a marble slab, tilted in such a way that the observer from the street can read, with the following simple engraving in Afrikaans:

Ossewatrek
9 Aug
Voortrekkereufees
1938
Figure 31: The top of Durbanville's monument, tilted in such a way to be viewed from the street. A red ox, one of Marieke Prinsloo Rowe's creations. (Robert Uys, Personal Collection)
Durbanville: A Pleasant Contradiction

Durbanville was a farming community in the 1930s when the monument was constructed. It has since evolved into an affluent suburb which is in the process of being swallowed by Cape Town’s ever-expanding urban sprawl. Durbanville’s CBD is surrounded by traditionally upper-middle class neighbourhoods, with the exception of Morningstar – an impoverished community squeezed into a small piece of land between Langeberg and Wellington roads. Morningstar (which was formally on the outskirts of town before Durbanville’s building boom) would have been the area designated for people cast as coloureds by the complex classificatory code of the old apartheid regime. The suburb’s CBD is clearly not just being used by its well-heeled residents classified by outdated racialist categories as white. Durbanville is the retail centre for surrounding wine and wheat farmers, and the farmworkers derive from economically deprived areas on the outskirts of the city such as Klipheuwel.

The space around Durbanville’s Pampoenkraal Heritage Park has gone through some drastic changes within the last few years. Some of these changes included a multimillion rand upgrade of the municipal gardens, a part of the former outspan. During this redevelopment the space was rechristened Pampoenkraal Heritage Park. The Heritage Park is part of a greater initiative to spruce up the formally neglected CBD and to facilitate economic growth through developing the tourism sector in this already affluent suburb (Property24 claims that the “average family incomes here are in the R70 000 to R90 000 per month bracket, almost the highest category in South Africa...” in 2017) of Cape Town. One of the suburbs biggest drawcards are the wine estates surrounding the area. Some thirteen estates are listed on the website acting as the suburb’s tourism directory. Estates like Altydgedacht, established in

---

219 *Die Gedenkboek van die Ossewatrek, 1838-1938*, 139.
1698, claim to be “one of the oldest wine farm in South Africa.” Furthermore, Durbanville is also renowned for its rose garden, the Rust-en-Vrede Art Gallery (the annual host of the prestigious SANLAM Portrait Award) and sporting events such as horse racing, golf and the 99er Cycle Tour. More capital has also been invested into sprucing up the town’s CBD in recent years with the arrival of coffee shops, restaurants, bars, Die Boer theatre, boutique and antique stores. Looking at the landscape it is obvious that a concerted effort is being made to draw new residents, visitors and tourists. Property24 describes Durbanville as a high-end neighbourhood which even draws new residents from Cape Town’s wealthy Southern Suburbs (e.g. Constantia, Claremont and Rondebosch) who “are looking for a village atmosphere and a more rural lifestyle as well as the larger plots and homes…” Durbanville is advertised as a village within a city.

Durbanville as a lifestyle village aligns itself with Martin Hall’s theory regarding the experiential economy (discussed in Chapter 2 relating to the biography of the Voortrekker Monument). People are encouraged to move to Durbanville for the lifestyle experience that marketers like Property24 claim the suburb offers, Durbanville is marketed as a pleasant contradiction – it supposedly offers the best of both worlds. It is sophisticated yet quaint, rural (even though this is clearly an extension of a sprawling city) but not isolated, and finally ‘historic’ yet with all the comforts and amenities of modern life. This latter point is of particular importance because in order to maintain this image of quaint rurality, while sustaining a high quality of life index, Durbanville needs to exploit its sense of ‘history’. People move to Durbanville for its “sense of community” (an important part of the supposed ‘Durbanville-experience’), an invented concept that would be difficult to maintain without a constructed sense of communal history. Durbanville’s marketing campaign would have

222 “Historic Durbanville tops the Cape Northern Suburbs property list,” Property 24.
223 “Historic Durbanville tops the Cape Northern Suburbs property list,” Property 24.
struggled without constructions of local heritage – a past that has supposedly ‘glued’ the people together to form this apparently unique community. Pampoenkraal Heritage Park is part of the construction of heritage utilized to promote Durbanville as a lifestyle village.

So where is the Pampoenkraal Heritage Park situated and what does it look like? The park itself is an island situated in the town’s CBD. Its south-western corner sits at the cross of two major thoroughfares: Durban Road and Wellington Road. The north-western corner sits where Pampoenkraal Lane (formally Voortrekker Lane) meets Wellington Road; the north-eastern corner where Pampoenkraal meets Church Street and Louw Street; and the south-eastern corner sits where Church Street meets Durban Road. The park is surrounded by upscale retail shopping centres, individual stores such as bakeries and clothing boutiques, bank branches, and restaurants. It is also a short walking distance from the town’s DRC, Anglican Church and synagogue. Across the street from the Park, at the corner where Church Street meets Louw Street, is Durbanville’s Police Station. The Pampoenkraal Heritage Park is in a rectangular shape. The Heritage Park can be roughly divided into four sections. The most southerly section, next to Church Street, contains what resembles a mini amphitheatre. This section is bordered by the town hall, which had been “closed until further notice” by the City of Cape Town when the author last visited the space in August 2018.224 Behind the town hall is the largest and most significant section for this thesis. This section contains Durbanville’s Voortrekker Centenary Monument but also a drinking and feeding trough from when the space was still used as an outspan. Earthworks Landscape Architects, the company responsible for the design of the refurbished space states “the concept focuses on celebrating the heritage elements while also grounding the site within its current urban context. The initial challenge was to celebrate historic elements while also creating easy pedestrian

224 City of Cape Town notice posted on the door of Durbanville’s town hall.
circulation through the site.”225 This section also contains a new extension of Durbanville’s Voortrekker monument – a yoke of oxen, intended for children to play on, and two bronze statues of children who appear to be racially cast as African. This extension will be analysed in detail in the next section. According to the architects responsible for designing the space this area is supposed to contain a water feature, meant for children to play in, which celebrates the town’s fountain.226 However, there was no sign of such a water feature which in the designs are depicted as several fountains of water bubbling out of the surface. Chances are that it was probably switched off because it was winter when I visited and Cape Town had just recently gone through one of the worst droughts in its recorded history.227 Separating the third section from the fourth is what used to be a water furrow (it is now largely piped) which linked Durbanville’s original water source, a fountain some 500 metres away from the Pampoenkraal Heritage Park, to a dam which used to be situated in the outspan. The fountain is also one of the sources which feeds the Kuils River and, besides the roads and arable land, one of the main reasons why Burgers settled so early in this area when the VOC had released them from their contracts. A fenced electricity substation dominates the fourth section along with some trees and flower beds. The brick surface of the park is dominated by paving lines (made from a different colour brick) which are intended to imitate wagon tracks.228

Earthworks Landscape Architects states that the tracks typically left behind by old ox wagons as they make their journeys to and from the outspan are to be delineated in paving lines. We have interpreted these tracks as curvilinear elements that extend the length of the site and into the adjacent roads. These ‘tracks’ serve multiple functions such as pathways, ramps, signage and lighting. At points, they form decorative, playful elements on the site.229

---

226 “Pampoenkraal Heritage Square,” Earthworks Landscape Architects.
228 “Pampoenkraal Heritage Square,” Earthworks Landscape Architects.
229 “Pampoenkraal Heritage Square,” Earthworks Landscape Architects.
The tracks are not linked to the specific narrative of the ‘Great Trek’ but its proximity to a monument that celebrates the mythological ‘Great Trek’ seems to suggest more than an unintentional association.

Figure 32: A panoramic view of Pampoenkraal Heritage Park from Church Street. The amphitheatre (left) and the City Hall (right) is visible in this picture. (Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 33: Another (panoramic) side of Pampoenkraal Heritage Park, looking towards the corner where Wellington Road meets Durban Road. The two red oxen are the leaders of the drove. Notice the lines on the surface imitating wagon wheel prints. The vehicles on the right are parked in Pampoenkraal Lane, formally known as Voortrekker Lane. (Robert Uys. Personal Collection)
Figure 34: Durbanville's Voortrekker monument is situated just off-centre of this panoramic photograph. The drove of oxen is at the back. One can see both Durban Road (right) and Pampoenkraal Lane (left; formally known as Voortrekker Lane). (Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 35: A panoramic photograph of Pampoenkraal Heritage Park from the corner of Wellington Road and Durban Road (right). One can see the colourful drove of oxen at the back. (Robert Uys. Personal Collection)
Afrikaner Nationalism Metamorphoses into a Rainbow Nation

One of the most challenging questions relating to memorialisation in a post-apartheid context is how does one transform a space characterised by nationalist narratives of exclusion and make it more accessible to a post-apartheid public? The artists and urban landscapers responsible for the creation of Pampoenkraal Heritage Park have made an interesting attempt at addressing this particular issue. The park that surrounds the Voortrekker Centenary Monument is saturated in features such as the oxen and the supposed wagon tracks that can be associated with Voortrekker narratives. However, a fascinating divergence from such a narrative would be the two bronze statues of children depicted as non-Caucasian created by the artist Marieke Prinsloo-Rowe. One, entitled ‘Umensi – The Maker’, represents a young boy kneeling, apparently in the process of forming clay oxen. There are four ‘clay’ oxen at the boy’s feet. The boy is on a platform that links to Durban Road. A drove of oxen then follows in the submerged space below the bronze statue of the boy. There are altogether 14 oxen if one excludes the 4 miniature oxen standing at the boy’s feet and the one he is depicted as in the ‘process’ of forming. What is interesting is that the oxen seem to be ‘growing’. Thus, the oxen closest to the boy are small and the further away they are situated from the boy, the bigger they become. This can be done to create a sense of perspective but it can also form the impression that the clay oxen that the boy is creating are systematically growing into life-size beasts. These oxen are not on a slightly elevated platform like the red ox in Riebeek-Kasteel, they are on an equal and human level. Elevation evokes notions of grandeur and social hierarchy which can remind one of inequality and patriarchy. Furthermore, these oxen do not have a fence around them unlike those monuments in Riebeek-Kasteel and Riebeek-West. In fact, the public, especially children, seems to be

---

encouraged to engage with the structures. The oxen closest to the statue of the boy is small enough to allow toddlers and even babies to *klim en klouter* (climb and clamber) on the structures. Thus, even the smallest members of society are given the opportunity to enjoy and engage with the structures. Their colours also change. The first yoke is pure purple, the second ultra-marine blue, the third cerulean blue, the fourth is lime coloured green, the fifth is a butterscotch yellow, the sixth red, and the final yoke is scarlet red. These are also incidentally (or perhaps it was done with intention) the specific set and ordering of colours on the LGBTQ+ flag. This may be a rather obscure attempt for the municipality of Durbanville (or the artist?) to promote itself as progressive and tolerant in an attempt to draw more LGBTQ+ visitors. However, it is more likely that this reference to the rainbow might simply be intended to make the space more colourful and appealing for children. Nonetheless, the rainbow also evokes certain post-apartheid narratives relating to this notion of South Africa being a ‘rainbow-nation’. The rainbow theme infers diversity, equality and tolerance. Reference to one of the most powerful metaphors of the ‘new South Africa’ may be an attempt to ‘re-brand’ and repurpose a space traditionally associated with Afrikaner Nationalism because of the presence of a 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monument. The rainbow yoke of oxen could also be an interesting attempt to weave the narrative of the ‘Great Trek’ into the narrative of multiculturalism. Within such a perspective the ‘Great Trek’
is seen as simply another supposed ‘historical event’ which contributed to South Africa becoming supposedly a multicultural society.

The second bronze statue is interestingly named ‘The Leader’ and stands about 10 meters away amongst the other colourful oxen.\(^{231}\) It represents a girl with braids walking along with a yellow ox. Her hand is resting on the creature’s shoulders. Her eyes are shut and she has a smile which evokes a sense of serenity. It is open for interpretation whether she is leading the ox (regardless of the title, she definitely does not lead from the front) or whether in fact the ox might be leading her (a strange reminiscence of Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox’s ghost which apparently leads lost children back to their homes). Titles such as ‘The Maker’ and ‘The Leader’ evoke an optimistic and hopeful post-apartheid narrative further associated with notions of a ‘rainbow-nation’ and a ‘free-born’ (people born after South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994) youth.

Figure 37: 'The Leader' is either leading the oxen or being lead. One can see Durbanville's Town Hall in the background. (Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 38: Notice that 'The Leader's' eyes are closed. Is she content with her situation or is she blind? (Robert Uys. Personal Collection)
The Rust-en-Vrede Gallery’s website asserts that Prinsloo-Rowe’s sculptures are another narrative installation and tells the story of a little boy who sits sculpting a small, bright violet ox in clay. He sets out his game of a full team of seven pairs of trekking oxen in a mimic of the pioneers, shared by both Afrikaans and Xhosa cultures. The oxen increase in size with each pair, moving through indigo, blue, green, yellow and orange. The last two are larger than life and in blazing red. On one of this pair a girl is riding, and another girl walks alongside the other as the journey to the future continues together.\footnote{Rust-en-Vrede Gallery, “Marieke Prinsloo-Rowe,” Accessed February 23, 2019, \url{http://www.rust-en-vrede.com/marieke-prinsloo-rowe/} .} 

I only saw one sculpture of one girl. The only other sculpture in the park was that of the boy. I could not find any news report or article which stated that the second statue of a girl riding an ox had been stolen or vandalised. My assumption is that the second statue was never made, which begs the question why this was the case. Did the second sculpture of the girl riding an ox spark some kind of controversy? Did the project perhaps cost too much and did Ward 112’s representatives cancel the production of the sculpture of the girl riding the ox? The outdated and general lack of information regarding these sculptures makes it difficult for the public (and academic) to thoroughly understand what these structures are meant to symbolise. As an artist myself, my answer to the previous statement would be that it is up to each individual viewer to decide what artworks are supposed to symbolise. Without any commemorative plaque or guide to how this public artwork should be interpreted or read the public is given free rein in terms of interpretation. One can consider the inclusion of black representation in a historically white space as perhaps as an attempt to acknowledge the large body of servants (an estimated 5000) and former slaves that narrative pertaining to the ‘Great Trek’ claim accompanied the ‘Voortrekkers’ during their journeys inland.\footnote{Hermann Giolomee, \textit{The Afrikaner: Biography of a People} (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 2012), 162.} It might also refer to the thousands of inboekseling children taken from their communities by the Voortrekkers. Nevertheless, the inboekseling traditions was a practise more associated with a particular group of Voortrekkers in the north, especially those that had
settled around the Soutpansberg in the South African province that is today known as Limpopo. Such an interpretation would see these statues as a symbolic *wiedergutmachung*. Whereas the Voortrekker Eeufees Monument demarcated this as a white space, the representation of black and coloured bodies suggests that Durbanville’s past does not just belong to the white landed gentry and that it was a much more complex and diverse space.

The representation of children is indicative that this section of the park is demarcated for children to climb on and ‘ride’ the oxen. Nevertheless, the inclusion of children may demarcate the space as apolitical. One can consider these depictions of children as an attempt to neutralise the space deemed acidic because of its association with an Afrikaner Nationalist 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monument.

Whether ‘The Maker’ and ‘The Leader’ commemorate the past atrocities committed by people who would have been deemed Voortrekkers or reiterate invented notions of a ‘rainbow nation’ or acknowledges the important role of the servants who maintained the original farms of Durbanville or simply acts as neutralisers in a highly politicized space, these statues could be seen as what James E. Young refers to as counter-monuments. Young considers monuments and memorials in post-war Germany especially within the context of the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* or guilt experienced by many younger Germans regarding the atrocities committed by previous generations during the Holocaust. He looks at how post-war German cities tackled the issue of monuments and memorialisation. Young writes that half a century after the defeat of the Third Reich, contemporary artists in Germany still have difficulty separating the monument there from its fascist past. German memory-artists are heirs to a double-edged postwar (sic) legacy: a deep distrust of monumental forms in light of their systematic exploitation by the Nazis, and a profound desire to distinguish, through memory, their generation from that of the killers. In their eyes, the didactic logic of monuments—their demagogical rigidity and

---

235 James E. Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory.”
236 James E. Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory.”
certainty of history—continues to recall too closely traits associated with fascism itself.237

As a result, recent contributions to Germany’s monumental landscape usually take on forms that are not rigid, that requires introspection, reflection, and sometimes even requires the viewer to complete some kind of action to fully engage with the structure.

So would Prinsloo-Rowe’s sculptures in Pampoenkraal Heritage Park truly qualify as a counter-monument? Young writes “A monument against fascism, therefore, would have to be a monument against itself: against the traditionally didactic function of monuments, against their tendency to displace the past they would have us contemplate and finally, against the authoritarian propensity in monumental spaces that reduces viewers to passive spectators.”238 The Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria in its current form “reduces viewers to passive spectators” but the Prinsloo-Rowe’s sculptures do not. ‘The Maker’, ‘The Leader’ and the yoke of oxen are a reaction against the “authoritarian propensity in monumental spaces…” because it transforms a highly politicised monumental space into a children’s playground. ‘The Maker’, ‘The Leader’ and the yoke of oxen turn the narrative of the ‘Great Trek’ into exactly what it is, a sprokie (fairy-tale) — a thing for children’s entertainment and imagination. But do all people view these sculptures in such a light? Probably not.

Durbanville’s 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monument still stands mostly in its original form. The space around the monument might be embellished with new symbolism but the actual Voortrekker Monument, celebrating an ideology which called for exclusion and oppression, still stands unchallenged. From a different perspective it may be that Prinsloo-Rowe’s sculptures simply draw the viewer’s attention away from the Voortrekker Monument. Prinsloo-Rowe’s sculptures do not really ‘deal’ with or grapple with the past but simply causes the viewer to forget the past by looking at a hopeful and idealised future.

237 James E. Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory.”
238 James E. Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory.”
What is in a name?

One of the most prominent controversies relating to the Pampoenkraal Heritage Park, which relates directly to the presence of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monument, was the renaming in 2016 of a section of one of the roads that runs adjacent to the park, changing it from Voortrekker Road to Pampoenkraal Lane. This name-change was facilitated by the City of Cape Town’s renaming committee who at the time was also recommending several other name changes of streets, buildings and public spaces around the city. Durbanville’s Heritage Association advocated against this name change arguing that the name of the road should not be changed because of the presence of the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monument. They claimed that the “existing name was more fitting…”  

One of the most prolific forms of memorialization during the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary was the renaming of roads. The most famous examples of this phenomenon would be Voortrekker Road, the 18 kilometre stretch of road that was formally known as Maitland Road which runs from Salt River Circle close to Cape Town’s CBD to the neighbourhood of Stikland in the city’s northern suburbs. Another famous example is Piet Retief Street, Wellington’s main thoroughfare. Nevertheless, hundreds of streets were renamed during and after the centenary across the Union of South Africa and even to this day one can expect a Voortrekker Street or Eeufees Road in almost every village, town or city in South Africa. Martin J. Murray writes that “the naming and renaming of places, streets, and key events inscribe the dominant discourses of political legitimization into the social fabric, thereby naturalizing the existing political order.”

Murray maintains that “the act of naming is a twofold procedure directly linked to the process of remembering and forgetting: an existing place-name is first eliminated along with its

---


meaning, and is replaced by a new one carrying its own socio-political significance.”

Honouring a certain political ideology, regime or person by renaming a space after it cements their narratives as supposed historical fact, asserts political authority and essentially discredits the historical narratives of its predecessors. In the case of Cape Town’s Voortrekker Road (not to be confused with the Voortrekker Lane in Durbanville), Afrikaner Nationalists were asserting their newly developing political authority by erasing the name Maitland Road.242 The road was named after Sir Peregrine Maitland (1777 – 1854) who acted as governor of the Cape Colony between 1844 and 1847. Replacing a figure associated with British imperialism with a name describing a group of anti-imperialist rebels clearly suggested that South Africa was at the cusp of entering a new political order where its historical connection with the British Empire would be shunned while narratives propagated by Afrikaner Nationalists were placed in the limelight, thus, ‘naturalizing’ the “political order” of Afrikaner Nationalism.243

What is fascinating about the renaming of Durbanville’s Voortrekker Road is that its new name does not bare any semblance to South Africa’s current political regime.

Pampoenkraal is a local name that derives from the time when the Dutch East-Indian Company was still in control of the Cape (1652 – 1795). A pampoen is the Afrikaans name for a pumpkin and kraal is a Dutch-Afrikaans word which refers to the enclosure for cattle and livestock, within the confines of an African settlement. The name translates to the place in which pumpkins are stored. Pampoenkraal was the name of the important outspan that was located where the Pampoenkraal Heritage Park is currently situated. The outspan or uitspan (a large open space of land where wagons could be parked, animals could drink and feed [hence the historic trough], visitors could camp, and often utilised for important community events such as weddings and baptisms) was at the junction of various important roads, as it

241 Martin J. Murray, *Commemorating and Forgetting*, 42.
243 Martin J. Murray, *Commemorating and Forgetting*, 42.
continues to be today. The route passing Pampoenkraal was the preferred road (even though there were more efficient routes) for wine farmers travelling to Cape Town from the Drakenstein (Paarl) and Wagenmakersvallei (later Wellington) in the early 1700’s. The uitspan was also very popular amongst Capetonians who travelled inland. Usually, a return to an older name involves the romanticizing of a past regime and particular historical narrative. The Indian city of Allahabad’s for instance has recently been renamed Prayagraj – a decision “taken to restore the city’s ancient identity as a major Hindu pilgrimage centre.”

Given the recent gargantuan growth of right-wing Hindu Nationalism in India, which romanticizes pre-Islamic pasts, the name change hardly comes as any surprise. Instead of giving Pampoenkraal Lane a name associated with the indigenous peoples who used to roam around this region of the Cape of Good Hope or with the struggle against Apartheid, the name changing committee decided to refer back to a name dating from the period when the Cape was still in the hands of the VOC. A cynic might say that this might have been done to reiterate that rich Durbanville continues to be a white-man’s territory in a post-apartheid South Africa. The Heritage Association’s advocacy against the name change suggest that there are people still in favour of a space being named Voortrekker Lane which in turn shows that Durbanville is perhaps home to a few Afrikaner Nationalists.

---

On Vandalism

The Heritage Park in Durbanville, like the structures in the Riebeek Valley, has also been plagued by vandalism when the site was under construction and closed to the public.\textsuperscript{247} Part of the local government’s justification for the “R10 million Pampoenkraal Heritage Square upgrade project” was to combat the reputation the park had developed as a site for drug deals and a nightly refuge for the homeless.\textsuperscript{248} The Ward 112 (the area that encompass Durbanville’s CBD) councilwoman Theresa Uys has claimed that she intends to “clean up the Durbanville CBD.”\textsuperscript{249} The homeless, besides being implicated in this affluent white suburb for everything from exhibitionism to burglaries, have also been blamed for vandalising structures like the colourful oxen recently added to the park.\textsuperscript{250} Vandalism as indicated earlier in this work can be a political act in which an individual or a group of people can express their discontent and frustration with local and national government. Nevertheless, it is not always interpreted in such a manner by the powers that be and can often lead to further forms of repression. A City of Cape Town spokeswoman, Hayley van der Woude, has stated that “public art should spark debate and elicit responses from the community, but vandalism flies in the face of this framework.”\textsuperscript{251}

Durbanville’s recent crackdown on homeless people seems to suggest that the homeless or “vagrants”, some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in Cape Town, bear the brunt of the blame when it comes to acts of vandalism.\textsuperscript{252} Are the homeless really to

\textsuperscript{248} Esmé Erasmus, “Pampoenkraal delayed.”
\textsuperscript{250} Esmé Erasmus, “Vagrants taking over,” \textit{Tygerburger}, February 14, 2018, https://www.netwerk24.com/ZA/Tygerburger/Nuus/vagrants-taking-over-20180213-4. Lizahn Wentzel’s news article does not directly blame the homeless for damaging Prinsloo-Rowe’s sculptures. Nevertheless, the journalist constantly refers to Durbanville CBD’s “vagrant” problem in the article, thus, insinuating that the homeless are to blame for this supposed problem.
\textsuperscript{251} Lizahn Wentzel, “Heritage Square Sculptures Vandalised.”
\textsuperscript{252} Lizahn Wentzel, “Heritage Square Sculptures Vandalised.”
blame for acts of vandalism perpetrated around Durbanville’s Voortrekker Centenary Monument? Many different people use the space around the monument and without any actual evidence simply placing all the blame on the homeless is ludicrous. Durbanville’s Pampoenkraal Heritage Park is located in the suburb’s central business district, next to the town hall. It is across the street from the De’Ville Shopping Centre, the local police station, various restaurants and it sits at the junction of two major thoroughfares. It is about five minutes’ walk from Durbanville’s taxi rank and even closer to Durbanville Primary and High Schools. The area clearly experiences a significant foot traffic. The Pampoenkraal Heritage Park was designed to allow for a flow of people through area. The landscape architects who designed this space sought “to celebrate historic elements while also creating easy pedestrian circulation through the site.”²⁵³ It is clear that many different people groups utilize Pampoenkraal Heritage Park and can therefore possibly be responsible for vandalising the structures on the site.

Prinsloo-Rowe’s sculptures, regardless of the artist and architects’ intentions, are probably in the same boat as those monuments of the Riebeek Valley. People could be damaging the structures simply because it provides them with an opportunity to display their discontent with the municipal or even national government. Cutting off an ox’s tail or chipping off one of its horns is an outlet for people that feel that their voices are not being heard (or that they are being deliberately ignored) by the powers that be. Monuments invite and incite violence because they are “inherently” violent.²⁵⁴ Duane Jethro quotes W. J. T. Mitchell when he writes that “monuments as public art are violent because the concept itself is encoded with political forces that exclude certain publics and facilitate the erasure of histories since they inherently assert the authority of the narrative permeating their design.”²⁵⁵

²⁵³ “Pampoenkraal Heritage Square,” Earthworks Landscape Architects.
Since Prinsloo-Rowe’s sculptures have no clear explanation given to the public at the site (nor is any given online) it does not come as a surprise that some members of the public would draw a nexus between these artworks and Pampoenkraal Heritage Park’s Voortrekker Monument. The result is that the sculptures could be seen as extensions of the Voortrekker Monument and therefore celebrate nationalistic ideologies affiliated with oppression. The damage to the sculptures could also have been inflicted by Afrikaner nationalists and white-supremacists that oppose the message of reconciliation (which might be seen as apparent through the incorporation of the rainbow colours and the depiction of children casted as black and coloured) that these sculptures could possibly represent. One is reminded of the destruction of the statue of the anti-apartheid fighter Nokuthula Simelane on 26 January 2011, in Bethel, Mpumalanga, by two white-supremacists.256

Vandalism is a part of the package of monument creation and memorialisation, and the instances of vandalism throughout a monument’s existence (and which can lead to its ultimate destruction or removal) simply reiterates the point made in chapter 1 that “despite the apparent permanence of memorials, they are always subject to debate and change. Thus to alter memorials or to give them new use is not in fact destroying history, but altering the interpretation and actually giving history a sense of vitality. It shows that memorials and monuments have their own lives that are always, like history itself, changing.”257 Vandalism is just another manifestation of monuments that are ”subject to debate and change” which in turn show that monuments really have lives of their own.258 This confirms Kirk Savage’s statement that “the world around the monument is never fixed. The movement of life causes monuments to be created, but then it changes how they are seen and understood.”259

259 Kirk Savage, “The Past in the Present”
Figure 39: Somebody attempted to saw off one of the ox's tails. (Robert Uys. Personal Collection)

Figure 40: One of the smaller ox's tails was chopped off by a vandal. (Robert Uys. Personal Collection)
Figure 41: One of the smaller ox's, just 'sculpted' by 'The Maker', had a horn chipped off. (Robert Uys. Personal Collection)
Conclusion

Through this study I attempted to show that the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary Monuments have lives. The historical narrative of these monuments can be depicted in biographical form. The 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monuments also have layers of pasts which symbolically stick to them like the grime, dust and soot already physically covering many of these structures. Furthermore, it was established that the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monuments cemented mythologised and contested pasts, especially those relating to the ‘Great Trek’ of the 1830s and 1840s. These monuments were originally constructed and utilized by Afrikaner nationalists as a way of reminding a newly mobilized Volk what it meant to be an Afrikaner nationalist – white, Calvinist and patriarchal. Thus, the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monuments communicated to people who began to identify as Afrikaners who they are supposed to be through inventions of what the supposed ancestors of the Afrikaners, the ‘Voortrekkers’, were in the past. It helped invent the idea of a so-called ‘Great Trek’.

The 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monuments arguably remained symbolically static until the 1970s and 1980s. Nevertheless, the symbolism of these monuments changed as South Africa’s political, economic and social circumstances changed. The ghost of the Riebeek-Kasteel’s red ox is perhaps indicative of this change and suggests a longing for a past imagined as less violent. By the 1980s many people who identified as Afrikaners began to become disillusioned with the Afrikaner nationalist apartheid state, resulting in dissident reactions such as ‘Dina by die Monument’. In the 1990s the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary symbolised the scars of apartheid on the South African landscape as depicted in David Goldblatt’s *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* (1998). The continued presence of these monuments in South African town- and cityscapes suggests how little South Africa has really changed economically and socially since the early 1990s when apartheid came to a supposed end.
The vandalism of these structures is indicative that these structures have come to symbolise continued white economic dominance. This especially pertains to how these structures have been integrated into the experiential economy. Through this process the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monuments studied have to an extent been ‘cleansed’ of their Afrikaner nationalist pasts. Nevertheless, their continued presence in towns that are economically privileged and cast as white resulted in these structures representing whiteness and an unequal distribution of resources. Attempts have been made to integrate monuments like the one in Durbanville and the Voortrekker Monument into a post-apartheid narrative relating to a rainbow-nation. The results have been mixed although it does suggest that some communities are willing to engage with the problematic pasts of these structures (compared to Riebeek-West where public access to the monument is denied through a fence). Within the current legislation the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary monuments are theoretically protected by government agencies such as the South African Heritage Resource Agency. However, with the exception of vandalism, the most dangerous threat to these structures would be to remain in obscurity since this will lead to eventual death through ruination. Nevertheless, ruination as Duane Jeppho argues, is a natural part of any monuments life, indicating that regardless of their supposed facade of permanence (through marble, stone and bronze) monuments, like the human body, can in fact die.\textsuperscript{260}

\textsuperscript{260} Duane Jethro, “Transgressive Touch,” 167.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books and Articles


Turner, Mike. “Early Adventuring in the Swartland,” In Riebeek’s Castle. Edited by Gabriel Athiros, Louise Athiros and Mike Turner. 9 - 12, Historical Media cc: Tokai, 2011.


Dissertations


Pamphlets, Postcards, Newspaper Articles, Leaflets, Festschrifts and Commemoration Booklets


“Reën kan geesdrif vir die ossewa nie demp nie.” Die Burger. August 12, 1938.


Websites


