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# Running on the outskirts: Outpacing the City of Pretoria and its monumental commandments

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## Abstract

This article considers subtexts in two trail runs, the trajectories of which highlight the city of Pretoria against the Voortrekker Monument<sup>1</sup> and the Union Buildings,<sup>2</sup> nationalist heritage sites that are built on *kopjes*. This article proposes that, while the utilisation of this milieu is deliberate and strategic, the reclamation of this city in Afrikaner nationalist terms wells up, but also loses authority in the codings of these country runs. It suggests that this failure may be related to the eulogisation of the alleged heroism of the South African Defense Force soldiers during the 'Border Wars' (1969-1989), most of which downplay the violations perpetrated against black South Africans. The resulting porosity defines the city beyond the racial and national paradigms. Introducing perspectives that render the city permeable, this article probes continuity between heritage and the city.

Key words: City; country runner; heterotopias; memory; museum; tracker

## On your marks!

Standing on the Northern exterior of the Voortrekker Monument on Monument Hill and casting the eye about 4km north east (Figure 1), the spectator connects the Monument with the Union Buildings erected on Meintjies Kop. Between these monumental structures but slightly to the west, the city of Pretoria appears safely nestled. To the west on Salvokop rests Freedom Park, constructed in 1999, about half a century after the official commencement of Afrikaner nationalist rule in 1948. If the viewer associates the new dispensation with cleansing from colonial atrocities, s/he also learns that its memorial setting – the Freedom Park which is built on a lower altitude – does not make possible an aerial view of the city. S/he might consider this relatively low altitude to be symbolic of the marginal impact defining the city in the new dispensation. This is notwithstanding the site's invocations of non-racial democracy and healing at the level of the nation and black self-reclamation (to be discussed later).

This visual outline of the spatial and historical topography of the city seems to resonate in the routes of the 'Dinamika Springbok Vasbyt' and 'The Value Logistics Ou Voetpad' (henceforth referred to as 'Die Ou Voetpad') mountain races. The organisers of these events, the Voortrekker Monument Athletics and the Tshwane University of Technology's Marathon Clubs respectively,



**Figure 1:** View over Pretoria, standing on the northern exterior of the Voortrekker Monument; the Union Buildings appear on the top left corner, while the sight of Freedom Park is visible in the shape of a mound, as it were, on the right (Photo by author 2011).

seem to attribute political capital to the spatial layout of these sites of heritage. Both are Gauteng North (GN) teams operating under the aegis of Athletics South Africa (ASA), a national council that assures the quality of South African road running. However, each race's coding reveals the distinctive ideology or political inclination of the relevant local road running club.

A common thread runs across these trail runs, all attesting to the vision of one person, Leon Bezuidenhout, the chairperson of these teams at respective times; a nostalgic recall of Afrikaner male heroism as shown allegedly during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), The Battle of Delville Wood (1916) and the Angolan and the Namibian Wars (1966-1989). Both athletic events are distinguishable by at least three key features. These concern the fact that (1) the races are set within either the proximity of the Voortrekker Monument and the Union Buildings, or make them visible from a distance; (2) implicitly invoke these sites' elevated positions to highlight the city of Pretoria; and (3) ap-

pear to propose that trail running on the outskirts is a metaphor of authority over the city.

While the first is a synchronic enunciation of the triumph of Afrikaner nationalism, the second is iconic of the narratives that extol the reclamation of the city at the turn of the twentieth century by the pioneering Afrikaner nationalists. The third also elaborates on these themes, evoking further narratives eulogising apartheid's violent extension of dominion over Southern Africa between the late 1960s and early 1990s. These country trails construct and organise moments in the broader narrative of the Afrikaner nationalists' expansion into the Southern African interior.

It is therefore interesting to note that these commemorations translate 'walking' effortlessly into 'running' and thereby link up with the 'Koevoet' narratives (see, e.g., Hooper 1988; Kamongo & Bezuidenhout 2011; Stiff 1999). This is a genre that documents how, aided by black people who trotted ahead of the apartheid battalions in pursuit of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and of its later consolidated South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), apartheid soldiers allegedly fought courageously to protect its sovereignty across Southern Africa. In the narratives of this genre, political domination appears as an entanglement in which blacks are complicit, in which the destabilisation of Southern Africa between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries appears devoid of white racism and in which its histories of Africa are uncritically celebrated.

Staging these trail runs within and between these sites of heritage entails creating 'metaphor[s] of landscape embodiment' (Bunn 2006:357). These are physical locations that people cite or invoke in 'contest[s] ... over national memory and national identity' (Bunn 2006:357). However, thronging these scenes of inheritance about

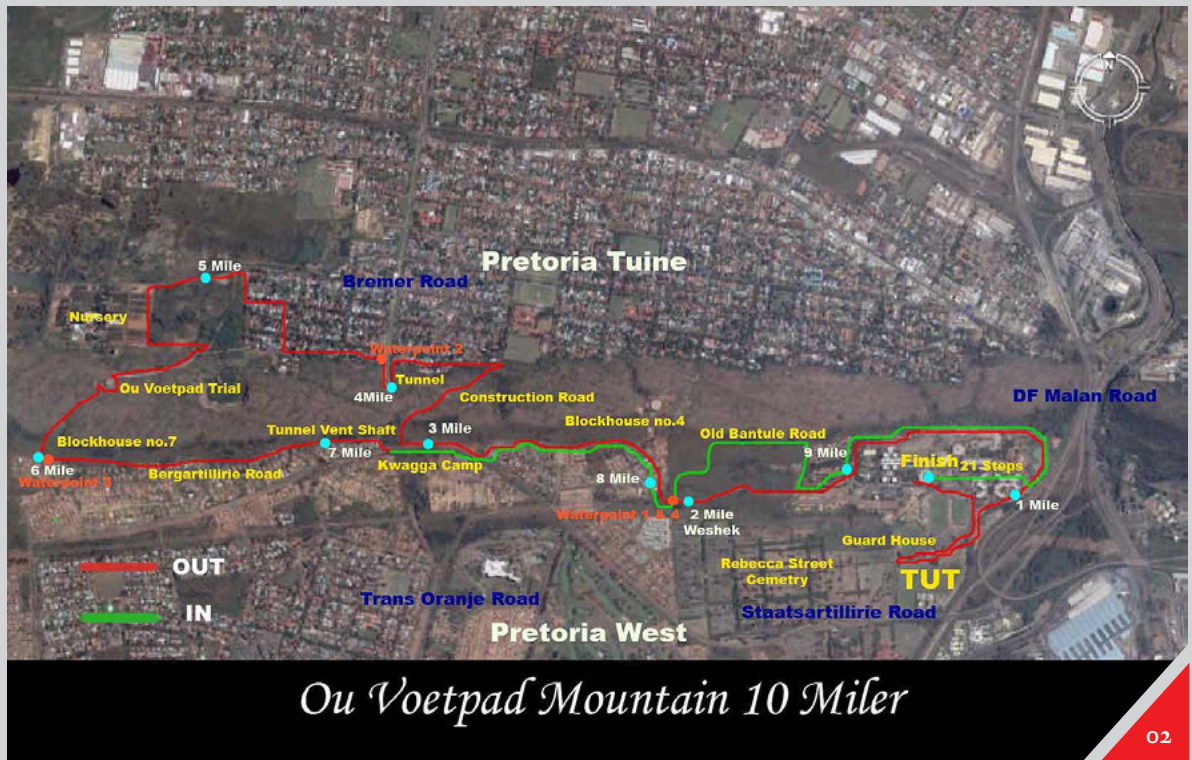
seven decades after the Anglo-Boer War, takes us into scholarship on heritage that considers the museum as a 'social technology', re-casting existing narratives with novel emblems and in new methodologies (Kratz & Karp 2006:2). '[Going] outside the museum, or the museum outside' (Bunn 2006:358), therefore, makes possible 'new forms of civic self-fashioning' (Bennet in Bunn 2006:358). Seen diachronically, it may be concluded that the 'museum space' is 'never singular' (Bunn 2006:358), because, as a host of 'protean mandates' (Kratz 2006:1), it gives rise to 'a series of real or imaginary articulated zones' or because it 'may be appropriated for a variety of other purposes ... external to the museum' (Bunn 2006:358). Corinne Kratz and Ciraj Rassool (2006:349) use the term, 'remapping', in order to describe these re-populating or re-conceptualisations of museums, spaces and narrations.

The image of a trail runner that 'remap[s]' (Kratz & Rassool 2006:349) the significance accorded to the Voortrekker Monument and the Union Buildings in the city in an Afrikaner nationalist renaissance, is provocative. It constructs a 'heterotopia' as a set of 'counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites ... are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted' (Kratz & Rassool 2006:349). This history-textured portrait recalls Michel de Certeau's (1984) analysis of how the 'walker' disrupts the 'official' identity of the city.

Pertinent to De Certeau's (1984:97, 100) thesis is how the 'pedestrian' who traverses the city, or what he calls a 'constructed order', in 'unofficial', 'anonymous' and 'everyday' ways, enunciates 'rationalities that belong to no one' (De Certeau 1984: Dedication page). This article is concerned with three key metaphors that De Certeau uses interchangeably in elaborating the ways in which the walker defies bureaucracy. In the first instance, De Certeau (1984:100) argues that

'passers-by offers [sic] a series of turns (tours) and detours that can be compared to "turns of phrases" or "stylistic figures"'. Secondly, De Certeau (1984:101) compares 'walking' to a 'long poem ... [that] manipulates spatial organizations', 'creat[ing] shadows and ambiguities within them', 'insert[ing] its multitudinous references and citations into them' and revealing itself as a product of 'successive encounters and occasions that constantly alter it'. He explains this process in terms of the words, 'synecdoche' and 'asyndeton' (De Certeau 1984:101). The first introduces an idea that broadens the semantic reach of a concept – perhaps quite in the way of a Thesaurus – while the second refers to 'the suppression of linking words such as conjunctions and adverbs, either within a sentence or between sentences' (De Certeau 1984:101). Finally, he notes that the 'masses ... make some parts of the city disappear and exaggerate others, distorting it, fragmenting it, and diverting it from its immobile order' (De Certeau 1984:102).

Extending the implications of 'walking in the city' to 'trail running', we have to take off at the outskirts. This exercise highlights 'a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another' (Foucault 1986:23). First, by virtue of the setting of these museums, trail running recalls the heroic exploits of Afrikaner nationalist history at the turn of the twentieth century. Second, as demonstrated below, the chivalry demonstrated in these events' commemoration of the Border wars also evokes the memory of the 'tracker', the black man who was hired or interpellated to identify the 'spoors' of the so-called 'insurgents' in preparation for an ambush (Kamongo & Bezuidenhout 2011: 119; see also Hooper 1988:16). The section tasked with the recruitment of trackers was called "'Koevoet" ("Crowbar")', an elite South African Police anti-terrorist unit"' (Kamongo & Bezuidenhout 2011). Thus, black



**Figure 2:** The Dinamika Springbok Vasbyt's official aerial photo of the trail's trajectory, with emphasis on the historical sites of the Anglo-Boer War (Image provided by L Bezuidenhout, e-mail 2011).

participation in these country trails may, in contrast to what they mean to the respective athletics clubs, be seen to be opening up spaces for histories audible in intimations of confession and ritual cleansing on behalf of the 'tracker'. Also implied in this intervention is the assumption that trail running, which involves a comparatively rapid movement of the body, confirms these events' constructs of Afrikaner nationalist memory highlighting racial violence. Running is thus a 'tactic' or 'art of the weak', as it makes polysemic the 'strategy' (De Certeau 1984:37) that these teams utilise to memorialise Afrikaner nationalism.

In considering these heterotopias, the view on the city from elevated country settings is significant. These elements dramatise the different histories of the subjugation of population groups of Southern Africa since the turn of the twentieth century. The appearance of

the black African athlete in mountain running renders black alterities visible, enunciating difference through and within a nexus of multiple desires and interests that exceed the dialectical opposition between apartheid nationalism and its institutionalised or hegemonic counterparts. Here, black heterotopias surface in tension and schism with resurgent Afrikaner nationalism over how to reclaim the city. Significant in these contestatory reclamations is the relationship between trail running and walking.

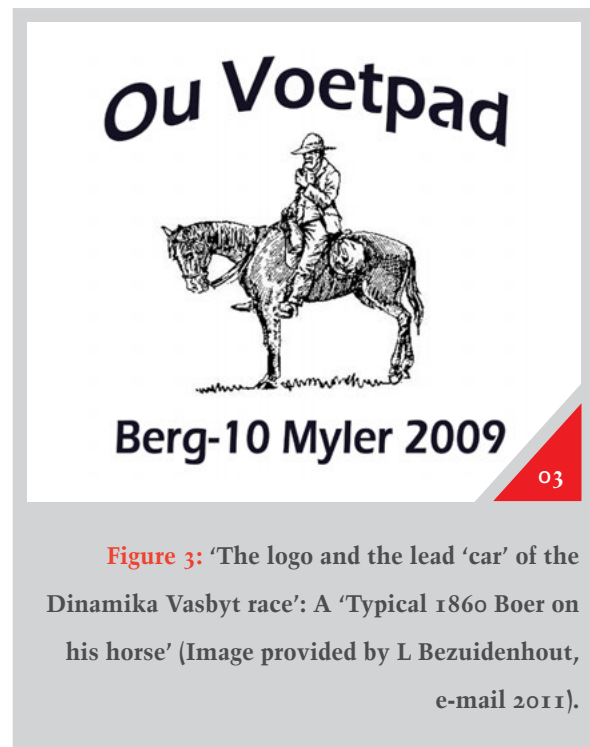
## In full steam: Museum on a trail run

According to the 2005 version of the Dinamika race advert,<sup>3</sup> walking was instrumental in the Afrikaner's resumption of control of the city of Pretoria from the

British during the battle of Pretoria. The Afrikaners were reportedly residing in the 'Moot area' (in the current (2012) North Eastern suburbs of Pretoria of Weavind Park, Waverley, Rietondale and Capital Park) after losing control over the city. During this apparently brief reign, the British had made the Daspoortrand (Figure 2) the only official access point into Pretoria, much to the chagrin of the Afrikaners. Undermining this official entry, they reportedly then beat footpaths in the wilderness over the Witwatersberg into the city, assisted by the Irish soldiers enlisted or hired in the fight against the British.

According to the initiator of this race, Leon Bezuidenhout (31 August 2011), the war was trans-national, as the Afrikaners assumed sovereignty assisted by groups which had no direct connection with the Afrikaners' power struggle with the British. This is also why, echoing his perspective about this war, the invitation to the 'Dinamika Vasbyt' race, an event that memorialises the Anglo-Boer War, solicits patronage by drawing attention to the 'unofficial' and seemingly 'a-political' elements that were ostensibly central to this history. These defined the city, paradoxically, through the spaces that were peripheral to it and also portrayed the journey into the city from the margin as a metaphor of power over British dominion. We have an elaboration in this extract from this race's advert:

Long before motorized transport was invented the only way to cross the Witwatersberg to Pretoria was to lead your horse over the Daspoortrand footpath. The race follows part of the old footpath. During the Anglo Boer War the British built a blockhouse on the footpath to protect it and to control access to Pretoria. Why not come and experience the footpath for yourself? ... The logo and the lead "car" of the race is a typical 1860 Boer on his horse [Figure 3]. Irish soldiers are around with their pipes and drums— at the start and later in the neck at the



**Figure 3:** 'The logo and the lead 'car' of the Dinamika Vasbyt race': A 'Typical 1860 Boer on his horse' (Image provided by L Bezuidenhout, e-mail 2011).

mountain. ([www.trailrunning.co.za/events\\_detail.php?id=505&&type=current](http://www.trailrunning.co.za/events_detail.php?id=505&&type=current))

In Bezuidenhout's aerial representation of the course of the 'Dinamika Vasbyt' race (Figure 2), the power and strategic significance that he ostensibly attributes to eyesight appears through hyperbole, once again deliberately excising blackness from the trajectory of the mountain race and from the history of Pretoria, at least during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Taken from the air, the photograph has a touch of the omnipresence and the pan-optic, interpellating the reader into a 'disciple' of the 'officialisé' deployed to construct and reclaim the city in the terms that appear neither disputable nor controversial. The map may be considered in the same way in which the spectator who is standing outside the Voortrekker Monument is made to survey and define the city without being observed or questioned.

In this map, the signs, 'Ou Voetpad Trial [sic]', 'Kwagga camp', 'Blockhouses no. 4' and 'Blockhouses no. 7', hint

at the Battle for Pretoria between the Afrikaners and the British at the turn of the twentieth century. Through the site marked as 'Old Bantule Road', the map ironically takes the reader from the focus on the Anglo-Boer War forward to the history of racial oppression that began after the promulgation of the 1913 Land Act, a composite set of legislations that confined Africans to 13 per cent of the land mass of South Africa and gave Whites 87 per cent. This map's epistemic violence is also evident in the obliteration of the history of Lady Selbourne, a multi-racial community that resided in Pretoria West from 1905 to 1973, when its people were forcefully relocated to Atteridgeville and other neighbouring Pretoria black townships following the Group Areas Amendment Act of 1956. The same conclusion may be drawn from the fact that this map does not

inscribe Marabastad, a thriving slum of small-scale economic activity currently (2012) populated by merchants of African, Oriental and Asiatic descent. In contrast to the triumphalism of the Voortrekker Monument Athletics Club, therefore, this trail highlights the different heterotopias of brutality against Black Africans in allusions that reverberate across the twentieth century history of South Africa.

Through its echo of the Anglo-Boer War narrative central to which is the eulogy of how the Afrikaners regained control of Pretoria by beating footpaths over the mountain – detouring away from the British-garrisoned Daaspoortrand – 'Die Ou Voetpad' race appears in stark contrast to the 'Dinamika Springbok Vasyt' race. This trail run, organised by the Voortrekker



**Figure 4:** Cannon: Photograph of an enactment of the soldiers disconnecting a war cannon, reminiscent of the Anglo-Boer War (Image provided by L Bezuidenhout, e-mail 2011).



**Figure 5:** Photo of decommissioned South African war planes in a drill just before the commencement of the ‘Dinamika Vasbyt’ and ‘The Value Logistics ou Voetpad’ races (Image provided by L Bezuidenhout, e-mail 2011).



**Figure 6:** Depiction of the smoke after the cannon blast. It used to signal the commencement of both ‘Dinamika Vasbyt’ and ‘The Value Logistics Ou Voetpad’ races (Image provided by L Bezuidenhout).

Monument Athletics Club, deftly weaves an Afrikaner nationalist memory in allusions that criss-cross the histories of the Anglo-Boer, the First World War and the Border Wars in terms that are unashamedly scornful of South Africa’s post-1994 non-racial democracy. Notwithstanding this key focus, this race’s racially based exclusions are undermined by the portrait of the black athlete who, except on few occasions, leads the race from the beginning to the end, mockingly reminding us of the ‘the lead “car” of the race [or] a typical 1860 Boer on his horse’ of ‘Die Ou Voetpad’ country run.

The 2006 version of the ‘Dinamika Springbok Vasbyt’ race commenced at the Northern exterior of the Voortrekker Monument. It quickly descended north out of the Monument Hill on which the Museum is built and then meandered for about 5km, emerging on the Southern foot of Salvokop on which Freedom Park is established. From this foot, the run ascended in a maze of about 5.5km within this Park and then backtracked to the starting line. By contrast, the 2011 edition of this contest, held on 18 July, Nelson Mandela’s birthday,

did not proceed to Freedom Park. Pertinent to this event, therefore, is an attempt to expand Afrikaner nationalism in terms that symbolically encroach upon the present/future non-racial democracy.

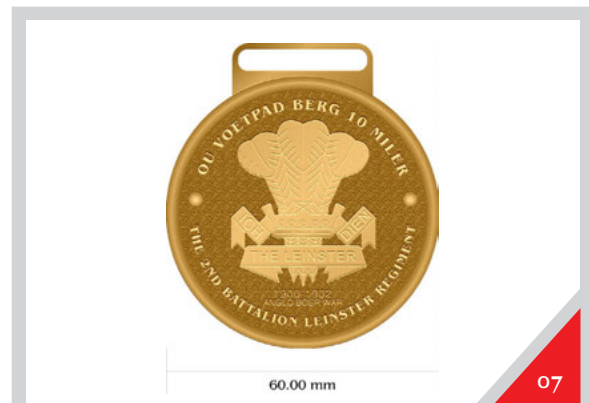
These two versions of the ‘Dinamika Springbok Vasbyt’ trail runs commenced with the displays of brazen masculinity described by Bezuidenhout (2011) as ‘the army [doing] their thing’. It involves a simulation of a war episode in which the army disconnects a cannon – reminiscent of those used during the Anglo-Boer War scenes – just before crossing an overflowing river, and then re-assembling it after the crossing (Figure 4). Next, a procession of decommissioned South African war planes flew past from the south to the north (Figure 5). Then, ‘the biggest bang in the sport, a real 6-pounder cannon’ (2007 advert of the ‘Ou Voetpad’ Mountain race) (Figure 6) followed, making ‘athletes’ ‘run for cover’ first and not ‘for a place’ (Bezuidenhout 2011).

The histories being celebrated – all pertaining to male heroes – are enunciated in the engravings of several

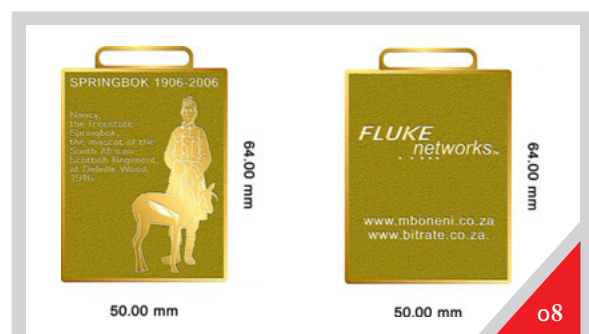
medals awarded to those athletes who complete the race within the stipulated time. For instance, the 2006 race medal (Figure 7), is imprinted with the 'The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Leinster Regiment' logo. Another medal, 'SPRINGBOK 1906-2006' (Figure 8), conferred to the runners upon completing the 2006 version of this race, celebrates the centurion of the emblem of the 'Springbok'. The 'Springbok' centurion medal featuring the words that introduce 'Nancy, the Free State Springbok, the mascot of the South African Scottish Regiment at Delville Wood, 1916', invokes a quest for lost innocence, which also resonates in the 2011 medal, 'Topper Medalje', and in another medal of unknown date. Both articulate nostalgia through the eulogies of Topper van der Spuy and of 'Sergeant Michiel 'Vingers' Kruger' (Figure 9), respectively. Kruger<sup>4</sup> and Van der Spuy as well as the (in)famous 'Puma' receive eulogies in oral and print media. Snyman and company, in particular, appear to enliven the violent history of the conquest of black Africa.<sup>5</sup>

However, because the Pretoria black trail runner is not expected to understand the epistemic violence apparently innocently wielded by these clubs to reclaim the city, s/he is cast in the role of the 'tracker'. As already noted in the synopsis of the primary literature above, the 'tracker' was the skilled black man recruited into police and armed forces under apartheid in order to identify the footprints and locate the so-called insurgents during the war in Southern Angola and formerly so-called South West Africa between the 1960s and late 1980s. The information gathered by the tracker about the black fighters would be used to strategise and to carry out ambushes.

The allusion to the tracker dissimulates the racially divisive and military context of his role. It also smoothes over a transition whereby the tracker, honoured with medals imprinted with portraits of Afrikaner heroes,



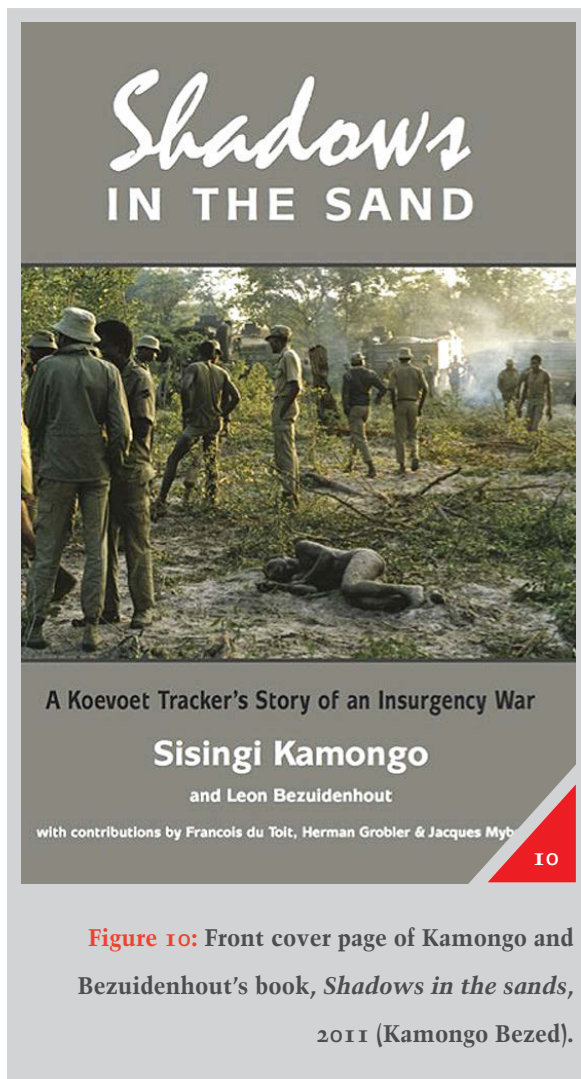
**Figure 7:** Image of the 2006 'Dinamika Vasbyt' medal (Image provided by L Bezuidenhout, e-mail 2011).



**Figure 8:** Image of the Medal given to the finishers of the 2006 'Vasbyt' race which celebrated the centurion of the emblem of the 'Springbok' (Image provided by L Bezuidenhout, e-mail 2011).



**Figure 9:** Depiction of the 2011 medal of the 'Dinamika' race which commemorated the Boer hero, Topper van der Spuy, and, left, apparently of the company 'Mboneni', of which he is Chief Executive Officer (Image provided by L Bezuidenhout, e-mail 2011).



**Figure 10:** Front cover page of Kamongo and Bezuidenhout's book, *Shadows in the sands*, 2011 (Kamongo Bezed).

allegedly continued to glory in his role in this history of brutality, especially by becoming employed as a guard in post-apartheid privatised security firms (Kamongo & Bezuidenhout 2011:221, 223, 226).

Black runners being cast in the image and role of trackers conjure up a narrative of betrayal. For, in contrast to the mercenaries who return to their native countries to resume lives as fully-fledged citizens after wars, the 'trackers' posed a unique predicament in post-1994 South Africa. As former enemies, for this is the notoriety that they had earned by virtue of having sided with the apartheid regime, it seems that the 'trackers' could not be successfully integrated into the new South African army and became marginalised by the

new post-apartheid governments. This seems borne out by the fact that the post-apartheid regime confirmed the settlement of the 'tracker' communities of Khoi and San descent in the semi-arid area of Schmidts-drift, constituting them as an ethnic group in conflict with black nationalist orientations of the ANC.

The alleged intransigence of the 'tracker' appears to resonate in the dedication page of Kamongo and Bezuidenhout's *Shadows in the sand*: 'Dedicated as a monument to those in the Namibian bush war without any memorial – the 128 black Namibian Koevoet policemen who died in action or from wounds'. The cover page (Figure 10) is a glossy photograph of black soldiers, relaxing, apparently, but also coldly oblivious to the body of a scantily clad black man lying lifelessly on the ground behind them. The setting seems to be a clearing in the bush. At least two representations of the Casspir and of a military truck can be discerned. Pinned to the left short sleeve of one black soldier's shirt is a piece of black cloth, ostensibly a sign of mourning. However, his presence here may suggest that he has repressed his sense of grief, preferring to exact vengeance by participating in this war that may have claimed the life of his next of kin. This irony is certainly lost to Bezuidenhout (interview August 2011), the architect of these trail runs, who notes that these country trails' celebration of apartheid's expansion across Southern Africa is not anchored in epistemic violence. He therefore insists that these country runs have no bias against blacks.

It seems that, having been interpellated into a 'tracker', the black athlete of the 2006 version of the 'Dinamika Springbok Vasbyt' race, in particular, was conveniently positioned on the second half of the course which took the runners into the premises of Freedom Park, to plead for penance on behalf of all those black people who were abused by the Koevoet. For it may be argued



**Figure 11:** View over 'Isivivane' or 'lesaka'  
(Photo by author, 2011).



**Figure 12:** Rising mists at 'Isivivane'  
(Photo by author, 2011).

that integral to this site is an attempt to ritually cleanse South African visitors to the site of the traumata wrought by colonial and apartheid regimes.

The Park comprises seven sections, designed to create a sense of how to become a 'nation', and celebrating 'our shared heritage as brothers and sisters of our diverse nation'. Key to this site of constructed memory and narrative is 'Isivivane' (Figure 11). It is defined as 'lesaka [kraal]', because it is meant to evoke 'the burial ground where the spirits of those who died in the struggles for humanity and freedom have been laid

to rest'. Made out of 'boulders', donated by each of the newly demarcated nine provinces, 'lesaka' harbours the centre which is 'shrouded in mist' (Figure 12), 'emphasis[ing] cleansing and purity'. The trail runs' interpellation of the black athlete into a 'tracker' – suggesting that this subjectivity lives on in the form of a black African athlete – subtly proposes a form of therapy that reveals the post-1994 narratives of the 'new' South Africa as non-reflexive rhetoric.

## Notes

- 1 This Monument was inaugurated in 1949, immediately after the promulgation of apartheid, by DF Malan in order to celebrate the Afrikaner group who migrated from the Cape Colony to the South African interior in the middle of the nineteenth century.
- 2 The construction of the Union Buildings was begun in 1910 and concluded in 1913 in memory of the founding of the Union of South Africa. This happened following the amalgamation of the four Boer provinces; Transvaal, Orange Free State, Natal and Cape.
- 3 'This piece of Pretoria's 150 year history is being celebrated by the Tshwane University of Technology's Marathon Club and the South African Irish Regiment Band. A traditional Mountain Race over 10 Miles is taking place on Saturday, 16 July 2005. A special Pretoria 150 Year medal will be issued to all finishers and the first 10 athletes to reach the Blockhouse line will receive a special shield. The Ou Voetpad Mountain 10 Miler will be one of 2005's special events on the Running Calendar' (2005 'Ou Voetpad' Mountain race advertising flyer).

- 4 Described as a 'giant' by Kamongo (2011:62), the 'puma' was a war helicopter used by the Afrikaners mainly in the battles against the 'insurgents' in Southern Angola and Mozambique. Throughout Kamongo's narrative, the 'Puma' characteristically rescues him and the Afrikaner army especially when beleaguered by SWAPO or the Angolan soldiers. On 6 September 1979, a South African Puma carrying 17 passengers was apparently shot down in Mapai, Mozambique, killing all passengers. In 2009 April 11, a search was launched for the remains of the casualties and the aircraft. A memorial in honour of the departed was then conducted on discovering the site (see, for instance, [www.ourstory.com/thread.html?t=370994](http://www.ourstory.com/thread.html?t=370994)).
- 5 By contrast, Stiff (1999:62) introduces David Protter, one of these Afrikaner soldiers who participated in the Border wars, as a 'young man marked by psychopathic tendencies'. This probably accounts for why these characters, as opposed to the 'Voor-trekkers' such as De la Rey, are more intriguing to the enterprises that memorialise Afrikaner nationalism during and after apartheid.

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