PARLIAMENTARY HISTORY

'A Pageant Apart from Politics': The Opening of the South African Parliament, 1910–2020*

RACHEL JOHNSON

Durham University

In Westminster-model institutions of which the South African parliament is one, an opening ceremony takes place annually at the start of a parliamentary session. In the South African context in the early 20th century, it involved a speech by the governor general on behalf of the British monarch, but it is now known as the 'State of the Nation Address' (SONA) and delivered by the president, as head of government and head of state of the republic of South Africa. This article examines the history of this ceremony in South Africa, and in particular looks at the ways in which the ceremony has been disrupted in recent years and used as a site for (re)making ideas of nation and politics. The South African parliament has been reinvented at least four times since it was founded in 1910: from loyal colonial parliament, to republican stronghold of white-rule after 1961, before becoming a late-apartheid reform project in the 1980s, and finally the post-apartheid 'people's parliament' after 1994. Contestation and outright disruption of the annual opening of parliament reveal the compromises and fault lines of each of these reinventions – shaped by relationships with its predecessor(s) and by globally circulating ideas and ideals of parliamentary practice.

Keywords: South Africa; disruption; ceremony; colonial; apartheid; race; gender

For weeks in the run-up to South Africa's 2017 'State of the Nation Address' (SONA), the populist opposition party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), had warned that they planned to disrupt proceedings.[1] This was no idle threat. Every year since their entry into

* My thanks must go, firstly, to the staff at the parliament of the republic of South Africa who assisted in my research and took the time to speak with me, in particular, Tom Schumann in the parliamentary library, and the late Godfrey Cleinwerck, sergeant-at-arms from 1994 to 2011. The early fieldwork that this article draws upon was conducted when I was a research associate on the project on 'Gendered Ceremony and Ritual in Parliaments' (GCRP) that was funded by the Leverhulme Trust. The research and ideas presented here have had a long gestation: many thanks to numerous friends and colleagues who have heard and read earlier iterations. Thank you, finally, to David Thackeray and Amanda Behm for providing such a hospitable and intellectually enriching home for this article in the 'Parliamentary Empire' workshop and this special issue. Note that in this article the term 'coloured' is used in a sense specific to southern Africa to refer to multiracial people. It is therefore not a synonym for 'people of colour'. In southern Africa, the term is of long standing, was given legal status under apartheid, and remains in usage. It has been retained on that basis.

[1] For an emergent literature that debates the content and style of the EFF's politics, see Christi van der Westhuizen, 'Populism as African Fascism? Examining the Economic Freedom Fighters in Postapartheid South Africa', *Africa Today*, lxix (2023), 3–25; Noor Nieftagodien, 'The Economic Freedom Fighters and the Politics of Memory and Forgetting', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, cxiv (2015), 446–56; Matthias Pauwels, 'The Aesthetic Politics of Fighting for Black Economic Freedom: Between Militant Socialism, Fascism and Bling-Bling', *Social Dynamics*, xlviii (2022), 357–75; Lone Sorensen, *Populist Communication: Ideology, Performance, Mediation* (Cham, 2021).

parliament in 2014 they had disrupted the annual ceremony which opens each new session of parliament. The African National Congress (ANC) government took their pronouncements seriously and security was tightened. The ceremony began with the presidential motorcade travelling through deserted Cape Town streets. Anyone venturing near to the parliamentary precinct was warned that they were entering a restricted zone and would be subject to searches enforced by army personnel.[2]

The presidential procession into the house took place after MPs and other invited guests had been arriving on the red carpet for several hours: an element of the ceremony in South Africa, which has, as this article will explore, taken place since the colonial era. The conspicuous consumption on display on the politicians' red carpet has drawn more and more criticism over time in the post-apartheid period. In 2017, given the (now proven) accusations that President Zuma and others within his government pursued personal enrichment at the expense of the state, there was sharp political critique in one newspaper columnist's quip 'they are wearing your taxes darling', in response to being repeatedly asked to describe MPs' outfits.[3]

That year, the largest opposition party in parliament, the Democratic Alliance (DA) arrived all carrying black flags bearing the phrase 'Remember the Esidimeni 94'. It was the second time the DA had used black at the ceremony as a way of signalling dissent; in 2015, the DA had boycotted the red carpet and turned up to SONA dressed all in black emphasising 'our country is in crisis, we are not celebrating'.[4] In 2017, they took their flags into the chamber and the DA's chief whip – unsuccessfully – asked the Speaker to allow the house to observe a minute's silence before President's Zuma's speech in memory of 94 mental health patients from Gauteng who had died as a result of a government decision to change their care providers. The DA stood in silence anyway. This attempt to create an alternative narrative around the ceremony was one that relied upon an older repertoire of protest within the South African parliament. In the use of the colour black and of silence, these protests contained an echo of the actions taken by the women's organisation the Black Sash who, during the 1950s, had attended parliamentary events wearing black roses and sashes as a symbolic protest against the National Party's changes to the rights of political representation.[5] In both 2015 and 2017, the DA's acts were ultimately overshadowed by the subsequent performances of the EFF and their more confrontational and radical challenge to parliamentary proceedings.

The EFF have always eschewed the red-carpet entrance to SONA, instead wearing on this occasion, as ever, their party uniform of red beret and red overalls or domestic workers' outfit. This is a uniform that both invokes the presence within the parliamentary chamber of those that they purport to represent, South Africa's working class, and, as Noor Nieftagodien

[2]Marianne Merten, '#SONA2017: The Night of Ultraviolence', *Daily Maverick*, 10 Feb. 2017, https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-02-10-sona2017-the-night-of-ultraviolence/#.WK1y9H9ta4k (accessed 20 Oct. 2023).

[3]Tom Eaton, quoted in 'Beret the hatchet: the #SONA2017 Quotathon', *Daily Maverick*, 13 Feb. 2017, https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-02-13-beret-the-hatchet-the-sona2017-quotathon/#.WK1zFX9ta4k (accessed 20 Oct. 2023).

[4]*Sowetan Live*, 12 Feb. 2015, https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2015-02-12-no-red-carpet-appearance-for-da-at-sona/ (accessed 20 Oct. 2023).

[5]For a history of the Black Sash, see Kathryn Spink, *Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa* (1991).

has suggested, symbolises their pledge to 'work hard' within the institution.[6] The EFF refused to stand at the entrance of President Zuma. The performance of that year's *imbongi* (praise singer) was drowned out after just a few minutes by chants of 'ANC, ANC, ANC' from the benches of the ruling party and '*tstotsi*' (gangster) from the EFF, in reference to President Zuma.[7] Once Zuma took to the podium, the EFF's chief whip, Floyd Shivambu, got to his feet to raise a point of order, in the first instance objecting to the presence of South African military police within the parliamentary precinct. Other members of the EFF continued to raise points of order for the next hour and engaged in heated debate with the Speaker over their right to do so under parliamentary rules. Most of these points of order centred upon either the presence and use of police within parliament or upon Zuma's continued presidency and whether, given the constitutional court's ruling that he had contravened the constitution, he should be morally allowed to address parliament.[8] This was a performance that aimed to portray those who were breaking the rules and being asked to leave the house as those who were in fact attempting to uphold the constitution and the rule of law. The Speaker's initial refrain in the face of these points was 'take your seat', which soon became 'take your seat or leave this house'.[9]

After being ordered to withdraw from the chamber, EFF MPs were eventually forcibly evicted by South African police, dressed in the uniform of plain black trousers and white shirt of parliamentary staff. Following the EFF's eviction, the DA and other opposition parties also walked out on the grounds that security forces should not have been used within the parliamentary chamber. The parting comment of the DA's chief whip took up the line that the EFF had followed throughout their interruptions: 'that man [meaning Zuma] has broken South Africa and you have broken parliament'.[10] President Zuma eventually delivered his speech over an hour later than scheduled, whilst opposition MPs spoke to journalists outside the chamber about their withdrawal.

All of this makes clear that the annual ceremony opening parliament in South Africa is far from 'a pageant apart from politics' as it was described in 1912 by a *Rand Daily Mail* journalist.[11] Even in 1912, the picture of 'a pageant apart from politics, a display of glittering uniforms, wonderful hats, costly frocks, and little else', belied the reality that the union of South Africa was in its early years a fragile and deeply contested political entity. However, in the colonial, apartheid, and immediate post-apartheid period, the ceremony itself was rarely disrupted. After 2014, and the arrival of the EFF in parliament, disruption of the ceremony has become an expected, and even anticipated, part of proceedings. From 2014 to 2017,

[6]Nieftagodien, 'Economic Freedom Fighters'.

[7]Merten, '#SONA2017: The Night of Ultraviolence'.

[8]In a case brought in 2016 by the EFF and heard by South Africa's constitutional court, the court held that the president had failed to uphold, defend and respect the constitution by not following the recommendations of the public protector's report of 2014 into upgrades made to his private residence. This report had found that the upgrades, totalling R246 million, had included features such as a swimming pool and visitor's centre that were not 'security upgrades' for which the taxpayer could be reasonably expected to pay and recommended that Zuma repay these costs to the state. See Public Protector South Africa, *Secure in Comfort*, Report 25 of 2013/14, https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/public-protectors-report-nkandlaa.pdf (accessed 20 Oct. 2023).

[9]Hansard (South Africa), Proceedings at Joint Sitting, 9 Feb. 2017, pp. 59–60. Hansard is available at https://www.parliament.gov.za/hansard-papers (accessed 20 Oct. 2023).

[10]'Beret the Hatchet'.

[11]*Rand Daily Mail* (Johannesburg), 27 Jan. 1912.

the ceremony emerged as a moment of symbolic stand-off between an ANC president, Jacob Zuma, accused (and found guilty) of corruption, and opposition parties who argued that parliament was paralysed in holding the president to account due to the ANC majority in the institution.[12] Since 2020 when Zuma's successor, President Cyril Ramaphosa, came under investigation over corruption allegations himself, this is a dynamic that has resurfaced once again.[13] Whilst these disruptive performances are very much rooted in the post-apartheid present, what I argue in this article is that the South African parliament's long colonial and apartheid past is central to the meanings of parliamentary politics being contested within them.

In what follows, I detail a history of the annual ceremony, now known as SONA, and once called the opening of parliament, from 1910 onwards. This is way of telling a history of parliament in South Africa that centres not on the legal exclusions and oppressive laws promulgated there, but rather considers parliamentary spaces and ceremonies as sites for (re)making nation, gender and race.[14] The South African parliament has been reinvented at least four times since it was founded in 1910: loyal colonial parliament, then republican stronghold of white-rule, before becoming a late-apartheid reform project, and finally the post-apartheid 'people's parliament'. Each of these reinventions was shaped by a relationship with its predecessor and by globally circulating ideas and ideals of parliamentary practice. Yet the relationships that shaped these South African parliaments have often been hastily forgotten or disavowed. In direct contrast to the centrality of 'exceptional parliamentarianism' as the 'core around which modern British historical consciousness coalesced', highlighted in the introduction to this special issue, the South African parliament has held a much more ambivalent place within the contested politics of nation. Its racially restricted electoral franchise before 1994 meant the South African parliament was, for most South Africans, the home of pseudo-politics, a masquerade of democracy; since 1994, it has also been criticised as a place of anachronistic practices or mimicry.

The annual ceremonial opening is a self-conscious and conspicuous performance of parliament as an institution (claiming to be) representative of the nation. It is a performance which is mediated by the mass media.[15] Between 1910 and 2020 the potential technologies

[12]In addition to the scandal of the upgrades to his private residence, Zuma was also embroiled in corruption allegations surrounding a 1999 arms deal made early in the post-apartheid period and those known as Guptagate that concerned the improper influence of the Gupta family (amongst others) within the business of government and state-owned enterprises under his presidency. In 2021 Zuma was sentenced to 15 months in jail for refusing to appear before the commission of inquiry established to investigate the latter of these scandals. The 'commission of inquiry into allegations of state capture, corruption and fraud in the public sector' filed its final report into the matters in June 2022, concluding that 'there can be no doubt state capture happened in South Africa'. For more on the commission, see https://www.statecapture.org.za/ (accessed 20 Oct. 2023).

[13]The years 2018 and 2019, which were the first and second addresses delivered by President Cyril Ramaphosa, were the only two in recent times that did not witness multiple interruptions, a walk-out, or the forcible removal of members of the EFF. In 2020 allegations known as 'Farmgate' surfaced in which Ramaphosa was accused of acting improperly around the reporting the theft of a large amount of cash from his private game farm, Phala Phala.

[14]Such an approach has been inspired by an emergent historical, sociological and anthropological approach to the study of parliaments. See, for example, Philip Manow, *In the King's Shadow: The Political Anatomy of Democratic Representation* (Cambridge, 2010); Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place* (Oxford, 2004); Emma Crewe, *Lords of Parliament: Manners, Rituals and Politics* (Manchester, 2005).

[15]The importance of the production and consumption of national news for nation-building has been recognised from the very beginnings of the cultural history of nationalism. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983).

for imagining the nation have changed quite dramatically. In 1910 the ceremony inside and outside the chamber was relayed beyond its immediate audience only through newspaper reports. This remained the case in South Africa for a comparatively long time. The ceremony outside parliament was filmed for cinema newsreels in the 1920s and 1930s. However, the ceremony inside the chamber was broadcast by radio for the first time only in 1953 and film cameras were not allowed inside parliament until 1963. Even then this was not to record the ceremony but to make a short film about the new republican mace, unveiled that year. The apartheid state was nervous about the potential effects of television on its citizens and a national television service was not introduced to South Africa until 1976. In 1994 the opening ceremony was broadcast on TV, radio, and extensively reported in the national and global media. By the 21st century, the internet and, in particular, social-media sites, had become an additional lens through which South Africans 'saw' the ceremony.[16]

In the remainder of the article I explore the history of the opening of the South African parliament, through media reporting of events, pausing at moments of constitutional change in 1910, 1961, 1983, and 1994. At these times of political change, the continuation of the ceremony was contested by new ceremonies and by parliament's shifting place in the national narrative and new political arrangement. But at each of these moments, and in the years following, the place of the ceremony in national narratives was reasserted, albeit in ways that left open continued grounds for challenge and contestation. The history of this ceremony reveals parliament as a site for nation-building within the settler colonial, apartheid, and post-colonial and post-apartheid, states alike. In the conclusion I return to the recent disruptions of the ceremony and the place of parliament within them.

4 November 1910

The union of South Africa joined the two 19th-century Afrikaner republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, briefly crown colonies after their defeat in the South African War, to the self-governing British colonies of the Cape and Natal. The Act of Union was drafted in South Africa by a national convention that brought together the leadership of the four colonies but was ultimately an act of the British parliament, which was marked ceremonially in South Africa through the opening of the new union parliament in November 1910. Whilst the Act of Union retained the existing franchise of the former colonies, which meant some Africans and those classified as 'coloured' held on to limited voting rights in the Cape and Natal, it did stipulate outright that only whites could sit as MPs in the parliament of the union.[17] The union only enfranchised men. From its beginnings the South African parliament was a conspicuously racially exclusive and gendered space.

[16] For analysis of the EFF's disruption of the 2015 SONA that uses social media as a lens for understanding these disruptions, see Sorensen, *Populist Communication*; Lone Sorensen, 'Disrupting Democracy: Democratization Conflicts as Performative Struggles', *Media, War & Conflict*, xiii (2020), 8–26.

[17] In part motivated by frustrations at the failure of African political challenges to the racially exclusive franchise for the union, Walter Rubusana challenged the unofficial convention that whilst some Blacks could still qualify to vote in local elections in the Cape, they did not run for political office. In 1910 Rubusana stood for election to the Cape provincial council and won. See Timothy Stapleton, 'Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana: South Africa's First Black Parliamentarian', in *Unexpected Voices in Imperial Parliaments*, ed. J.M. Fradera, José María Portillo and Teresa Segura-Garcia (2021), 183–205.

The year 1910, when the union parliament opened, was also the year that Edward VII died and his son George V became king of England. Indeed, it was due to the death of Edward VII that a proposed day of thanksgiving for the union planned to be held in May 1910 never took place. Instead, the opening of parliament became the day for the symbolic inauguration of union.[18] It was Edward VII who had revived and 'invented' many of the traditions of a state opening of parliament in Great Britain to include 'a procession in the state coach through the streets of London, with the king, clad in his full regalia personally reading the speech from the throne'.[19] His death saw a variant of this ceremony adopted by the new South African nation. The union parliament moved into the buildings that had previously housed the Cape parliament. In this context, whilst the 1910 opening of parliament was the first day of union government, it was also an important Cape Town event. In the years after 1910 there has always been greater interest in the ceremony expressed in the newspapers based in Cape Town (the *Cape Times* and *Cape Argus*), but for the first opening of the new union parliament the media enthusiasm was widespread; it was, for instance, heralded in the Johannesburg-based *Rand Daily Mail* as 'a set piece of unexampled splendour'.[20]

The opening ceremony of 1910 came at the end of a week of festivities including the pageant of the union.[21] In choreographing the opening of parliament in this context, parliament's national significance was reaffirmed and its importance as a cultural site for nation-building was signalled. The pageant of the union involved the depiction of 17 carefully chosen episodes that made up a history of the two white 'races' in South Africa. The performance was spread over two days and took place on a stage constructed on Cape Town's foreshore. It was a huge organisational operation which involved large numbers of people. As Leslie Witz has written of the pageant, it was 'designed to establish South Africa as a "new country", with a history that set up the colonial enterprise as the central motor and binding force of the past'.[22] The very act of participating in the pageant, as well as its message, was understood by the organisers to be a way of making a unified citizenry for the new South Africa.[23] The need for unity in the fragile union was acute. Any mention of the recent South African war was omitted.

The opening of parliament came at the end of the week-long festivities, appearing as the triumphant 'culmination' of the pageant and the 'official christening' of the new nation.[24]

[18] Cape Town Archives, Prime Minister's Office (PMO), vol. ccxlii: Ref02/10, proclamation.

[19] David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition", c. 1820–1977', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. E.J. Hobsbawm and T.O. Ranger (Cambridge, 1992), 136.

[20] *Rand Daily Mail*, 5 Nov. 1910.

[21] The pageant is a cultural event which has attracted the interest of some historians, although the place of the opening of parliament as the culmination of the week has not been explored. See esp. Peter Merrington, 'Masques, Monuments and Masons: The 1910 Pageant of the Union of South Africa', *Theatre Journal*, xlix (1997): 1–14; idem, 'Staging History, Inventing Heritage: The "New Pageantry" and British Imperial Identity 1905–35', in *Archaeologies of the British: Explorations of Identity in the United Kingdom and Its Colonies, 1600–1945*, ed. Susan Lawrence (2003), 239–58. See also the analyses in Leslie Witz, *Apartheid's Festival: Contesting South Africa's National Pasts* (Bloomington, IN, 2003); Loren Kruger, *The Drama of South Africa: Plays, Pageants and Publics Since 1910* (1999).

[22] Witz, *Apartheid's Festival*, 44.

[23] Merrington, 'Masques, Monuments and Masons', 5.

[24] *Rand Daily Mail*, 5 Nov. 1910.

To mark the importance of the union to the British empire, George V sent the duke of Connaught to open parliament on his behalf. The duke took part in a street procession through Cape Town, travelling from the pageant grounds, up Adderley Street, to parliament. Descriptions of the street procession and the reactions of the crowds gathered to watch were an important moment for journalists to report that sought-for unity of the new nation. The *Cape Argus* reported the 'immense crowds' and 'splendid enthusiasm' in great detail, focussing upon the physical, and by implication spiritual, unity of the crowd:

> We have already indicated that the crowds in the street were very large. Spectators formed a *solid human wall* along the route of the Royal procession. People *packed close together*, and remained in position for a couple of hours or more. There were thousands of people of *all classes* along the pavements.[25]

In these descriptions the reactions of the crowd were almost organic: 'the sound of cheering, faint at first, then swelling into a loud outburst'.[26] It was through the choreography of enthusiastic, receiving crowds and lavish street decorations that 'a nation' was laid before the figure of the duke. Four huge arches were erected along the route of the duke's procession to parliament, one for each province of the union. The *Cape Argus* reported how these decorations were to be reproduced nation-wide to receive the duke on a subsequent tour. Similar decorations in Johannesburg were 'erected by a London firm, thereby ensuring completeness and harmony of design'; this link back to London made clear that the opening drew upon an imperial repertoire of celebration and commemoration.[27] Specially constructed ceremonial or triumphal arches were a very common feature of imperial ceremony within the British empire of the late 19th and early 20th century that blended symbolism derived from freemasonry and Roman imperialism.[28] They were an especially common feature of royal tours, along with the illumination of public buildings, the decoration of streets, and huge influxes of spectators.[29]

In Cape Town, the cityscape had been decorated extensively, with bunting, flags and flower garlands, and was illuminated by electric lights at night. The day of the opening was, in some newspaper descriptions, a quasi-magical moment or a suspension of reality:

[25] *Cape Argus* (Cape Town), 4 Nov. 1910 (emphasis added).

[26] *Cape Argus*, 4 Nov. 1910

[27] *Cape Argus*, 22 Oct. 1910.

[28] The arch was a hugely important symbol in masonic thought and iconography. According to Peter Merrington, as a symbol the arch combined the Greek meaning of *arche* for origin and authority with the Latin meaning of *arca* for a coffer or bow and thus 'fused the idea of beginnings and authority together with the idea of an architectonic form, a physical shelter or repository, a site for the safe-keeping of sacred meaning': Merrington, 'Staging History', 245.

[29] For more on imperial royal visits within the British empire, see Robert Freestone and Sharon Veale, 'Sydney 1901: Federation, National Identity and the Arches of Commemoration', *National Identities*, vi (2004), 215–31; Margarita Cappock, 'The Royal Visits to Dublin', *Dublin Historical Record*, lii (1999), 94–107; Philip Buckner, 'The Royal Tour of 1901 and the Construction of an Imperial Identity in South Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, xli (1999), 324–48; Yvonne Whelan, 'Performing Power, Demonstrating Resistance: Interpreting Queen Victoria's Visit to Dublin in 1900', in *(Dis)placing Empire: Renegotiating British Colonial Geographies*, ed. L.J. Proudfoot and M.M. Roche (Aldershot, 2005), 99–113; Anita Callaway, *Visual Ephemera: Theatrical Art in Nineteenth-Century Australia* (Sydney, 2000).

> One of the most impressive and touching sights of all was the statue of his late Majesty King Edward, standing on the Parade facing the City Hall … Somehow ones [sic] attention was attracted in a curious manner towards that figure: it seemed to be part of the proceeding. "There is the statesman to whom we owe Union" remarked a gentleman standing on the Parade … his companions nodded in silence.[30]

Here the reporter for the *Cape Argus* used the statue of Edward VII to tell a narrative of continuity: the benevolent and ever-present British monarchy guiding the union. In this moment of suspension, the symbolic architecture of the city could be cited to tell a national narrative, that plotted union as an imperial triumph.

Once the governor general and the duke had disappeared inside the parliamentary buildings, the audience for the ceremony was very select.[31] Reporters in the press gallery provided the only accounts for those outside. Again, it was the ceremony's suspension of normality that enabled newspapers to tell a narrative – this time not of nation but of politics. The inclusion of women as guests occasioned special consideration and arrangements, as it was feared the atmosphere of the chamber on a summer's day might prove too much for the 'gentler sex'.[32] In 1910, and for many years thereafter, women guests were placed at the very centre of the floor of the senate chamber, on chairs brought in for the occasion. They were conspicuous and temporary. It was the presence of women that made the ceremony a society occasion.[33] In 1912 the *Cape Argus* reported 'The scene in the Assembly was in strange contrast to the ordinary drab appearance of the debating chamber' with women's clothing serving to 'emphasise the sober and serious garments of the members of the two houses'.[34] In this way, the presence of women was a way of marking the male norms of parliamentary politics. In 1936, when the opening ceremony was drastically curtailed because of the death of King George V days beforehand, one of the alterations, which included no procession and the draping of the building in purple and black, was that 'no women attended the opening'.[35]

In an extension of this, there has been from the ceremony's earliest years a media focus on the (female) fashions of opening day, which in the latest reinvention of the ceremony as the SONA, is now manifest in the full-blown, Hollywood-style 'red-carpet moment' for South African politicians mentioned in the introduction. The history of this aspect of the media's coverage reveals the ceremony as an ongoing site for making national gender ideals. Women MPs, beginning with South Africa's first female parliamentarian Leila Reitz in 1933, have, unlike their male counterparts, been viewed through this particular lens, their outfits being scrutinised alongside those of politicians' wives and other women guests. In

[30] *Cape Argus*, 4 Nov. 1910.

[31] The exclusive audience for the ceremony proper within the houses of parliament was a matter of much thought and debate between the organiser of the ceremony, Ernest Kilpin, and his political masters. He wrote in one letter to the minister of public works that some spectators would be allowed to stand along the entrance corridor within parliament: 'provision is made for the spectators to stand two deep. If more are allowed the privilege is of little value and it is very difficult to keep order'. Cape Town Archives (hereafter CTA), Public Works Department (PWD), Vol.2/2/36, Ref B2/51: Ernest Kilpin to Mr Graff, 3 Sept. 1910.

[32] CTA, PWD, Vol.2/2/36, Ref B2/51: Ernest Kilpin to Mr Graff, 16 Aug. 1910.

[33] *Rand Daily Mail*, 5 Nov. 1910.

[34] *Cape Argus*, 26 Jan. 1912.

[35] *Cape Argus*, 24 Jan. 1936.

the late 1940s and early 1950s, this type of coverage of the ceremony intensified when the opening ceremony began to be reported on newly instituted women's pages in some newspapers. In 1949, the *Cape Argus* had a page titled 'A Woman's Diary' on which the opening of parliament appeared as a society event.[36]

Not long after the National Party came to power in 1948, the first Afrikaner governor general, Ernest Jansen, took office in 1950 and his wife Martha became the focus of this society coverage. In 1951 the *Cape Argus* carried extensive coverage of the parliamentary banquet held the night before the ceremony in which the first lady appeared as a domestic, feminine hostess, at times almost literally part of the decorations: 'Mrs Jansen will wear a gown of white-and-gold brocade simply and elegantly cut to tone with the white-and-gold motif of the room'.[37] The media's interest in Mrs Jansen reveals parliament as an unexpected site for the re-fashioning of Afrikaner nationalist discourses of the *volksmoeder*, which from the 1950s onwards began to incorporate a modern Afrikaner woman, who was above all fashionable, into Afrikaner nationalist thought.[38] More generally though, the focus on female dress for much of the early 20th century marked women as hyper-visible in this male space, reinforcing (white) maleness as the norm of politics.[39]

This hyper-visibility was used by the 'Women's Defence of the Constitution League' (later known as 'the Black Sash') in staging their 'haunting' protests in and around parliament during the 1950s in opposition to the senate act that had cleared the way for the removal of those classified as African and coloured from the common voting roll. Using the attention paid to female bodies in male political spaces, the Black Sash stood in silent vigils, their bodies draped in black sashes to mourn the 'death of the South African Constitution'. A form of protest they first carried out at the opening of parliament in 1956, with a vigil outside and inside – with some women guests wearing black roses in the public gallery.[40] Tellingly, this was a protest which was allowed to take place by the authorities on the condition that it remained exclusively white.[41] The critique was tolerable if it maintained the whiteness of parliamentary spaces.

5 June 1961

In 1961 South Africa became a republic. A republic had long been the dream of Afrikaner nationalists and a desire traced by some of those nationalists to the Great Trek of the 1830s, when Afrikaners left the Cape in their first attempt to be 'free' of British rule. Since 1942 there had existed a draft republican constitution, which suggested a Christian-national republic with Afrikaans as the first official language and a state president with the powers to rule by proclamation.[42] However, the republic was a political project that National Party leaders shied away from implementing until Hendrik Verwoerd became leader of the

[36] *Cape Argus*, 21 Jan. 1949.

[37] *Cape Argus*, 18 Jan. 1951.

[38] Witz, *Apartheid's Festival*, 124.

[39] For the hyper-visibility of women in politics, see Puwar, *Space Invaders*.

[40] For an account of the protest at the 1956 opening, see Spink, *Black Sash*, 39–41.

[41] Spink, *Black Sash*, 40.

[42] Alexander Hepple, *Verwoerd* (Harmondsworth, 1967), 170.

National Party and Prime Minister in 1958.[43] Verwoerd announced at the start of the 1960 parliamentary session that he would hold a referendum amongst the white electorate on the issue. 1960 was the year in which Verwoerd made his republic. It was also the year of the Sharpeville massacre in which 69 peaceful anti-pass demonstrators were killed and hundreds more injured; the banning of the African National Congress and Pan African Congress; the declaration of a state of emergency; and even an assassination attempt on Verwoerd himself.

In the end, the form that the republic took did not amount to a huge constitutional change. Verwoerd's republic retained the union's parliamentary institutions and constitutional practices but replaced the monarch with a president who was head of state but not head of the government. It also gave English and Afrikaans equal language rights. Verwoerd's biographer Alexander Hepple suggests that by the late 1950s the electoral dominance of the National Party was such that nationalist leaders no longer saw the need to dismantle the once despised 'British-Jewish democratic system'.[44] Aletta Norval too argues that the republic saw 'the main cultural and material objectives of Afrikaner nationalism secured, the focus was [now] placed increasingly upon the formation of a white nation' inclusive of Afrikaans and English-speaking whites.[45] The National Party's attitude towards parliamentary ceremony was thus to retain it almost wholesale, simply removing the monarch and royal symbolism and replacing them with a president styled along the lines of the 19th-century Boer republics.

The *Cape Times* emphasised this peculiar blend of political change and continuity in 1961 in a full-page spread on the 'First Parliament of the Republic':

> When the House reassembles on Monday it will be in a distinctly republican Chamber. All traces of the past link will have disappeared … This week workmen removed the full-length portraits of King George V and Queen Mary, leaving vacant the lofty positions from where they have gazed regally on Parliament's proceedings for most of the Union's life … The threefold parliamentary link will become President-Senate-Assembly instead of Crown-Senate-Assembly as during the past era. Parliamentary procedure will undergo no change though. Traditions whose origins have been lost in the mists of the past will continue.[46]

As this extract makes clear, the continuity of parliament and its traditions were offered as a comfort for the *Cape Times* English-speaking readers at this moment of change. Even so, the new structure of the republic instituted another political ceremony, a presidential inauguration, which could rival the opening of parliament as a national political moment. In 1961 the newspaper coverage of both the new presidential inauguration and the old opening of parliament told a narrative of reinvention.

The president was elected in the house of assembly in Cape Town, but was inaugurated in Pretoria, on 31 May 1961 in Groot Kerk, Church Square. The ceremony was described by the *Cape Argus* as 'simple yet striking', and saw the president sign his name in two bibles with

[43]Hepple, *Verwoerd*, 175.

[44]Hepple, *Verwoerd*, 172–3.

[45]A.J. Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (1998), 184.

[46]Barry Riddell, 'First Parliament of the Republic', *Cape Times Weekend Magazine*, 3 June 1961.

a gold fountain pen.[47] The focus was very much upon the personage of Charles Swart, the first state president who had also been the last occupant of the office of governor general. In the coverage of this ceremony and the subsequent opening of parliament, much was made of Mr Swart's height, no doubt accentuated by the president's official costume of 'royal-blue' sash and top hat. The top hat was an unmistakable sartorial message, 'echoing' the most famous wearer of the top hat in South African history, Paul Kruger, the Afrikaner nationalist hero, president of the republic of Transvaal who had gone to war with the British empire.[48] A statue of Paul Kruger stood in Church Square, where the new president was inaugurated and on the evening of 31 May 'Church square was a blaze of lights and colour … with hundreds of people carrying flags crowding around the illuminated statue of Paul Kruger singing patriotic songs and *Die Stem*'.[49] The symbolic architecture of the city, this time Pretoria, was invoked in newspaper reports of this new ceremony to weave a reconfigured national narrative which contained Kruger as a hero. The top-hatted Swart was rendered recognisable to English-speaking readers in the *Cape Argus* by descriptions of him as having 'a most regal bearing'.[50] This was a narrative of reinvention aided by the new republican state's partial retention of royal ceremonial practices and material culture which enabled newspapers to report what was new, through old frameworks.

Despite the Sharpeville massacre and the banning of anti-apartheid political organisations in 1960, there was still organised opposition to the various republican ceremonials in 1961. In response, and anticipation, the state stepped up security measures: on 19 May, all gatherings in South Africa and South West Africa were banned until 26 June, all army leave was cancelled, and the Active Citizen Force mobilised.[51] In Cape Town, the idea of a street procession to coincide with the president's inauguration was rejected because of fears 'any procession might be subject to hostile interference'. At the organising committee convened by the speaker of parliament it was instead 'suggested that any celebration that might be decided upon be held in a place where adequate control could be exercised'.[52]

The largest show of opposition to the coming of the republic was organised by the All-in Africa Council, who called for a three-day stay-away from 29 May. The stay-away was, in the end, only observed unevenly with most back to work by the last day of May. However, opposition also came in other counter-symbolic actions, such as the refusal of many school children to accept republican medals and flags given to them at school-based ceremonies. The *Cape Times* reported that only one in ten children in schools for those classified as coloured had accepted the medals. The president's address to parliament was not disrupted in any way in 1961. A year later, a 15-foot banner with the words 'Equality Now' was hung from the offices of the Liberal Party about 50 yards from the entrance to the houses of parliament.[53] However, whilst the ceremony itself was performed uncontested in 1961, reports emphasised that it was not exactly enthusiastically embraced either. The

[47] *Cape Argus*, 1 June 1961.

[48] Robert Ross, 'The Top-Hat in South African History: The Changing Significance of an Article of Material Culture', *Social Dynamics*, xvi (1990), 99.

[49] *Cape Times*, 31 May 1961.

[50] *Cape Times*, 31 May 1961.

[51] Hepple, *Verwoerd*, 183.

[52] *Cape Times*, 10 May 1961.

[53] *Cape Argus*, 19 Jan. 1962.

Cape Times suggesting that during the street procession, 'apart from the clatter of horses' hooves and the clapping of hands there was not much noise: Cape Town's crowds were, as always, reserved'.[54] The *Cape Argus* too noted that 'the mood of the crowd was subdued. The procession was greeted with polite applause, but there was little cheering'.[55] However, this atmosphere was read by supporters as a positive sign. *Die Burger*, the foremost Afrikaans newspaper, praised the 'solemnity' and 'dignity' of the new republican ceremonials in its coverage.[56]

The *Cape Times* parliamentary correspondent reported the scene inside the chamber; the apparent seriousness with which the ceremony was performed provoking a mixture of admiration and irreverence:

> It was a day of oaths, affirmations and congratulations, all sworn, affirmed and delivered in an atmosphere of slight strain and slightly bleak ceremony. There seemed to be about it all a determination to get as far away from the pomp, colour and ceremonial of a monarchy as possible. One could not help hoping that the republic develops some gaiety of its own eventually, some panache and glitter, to replace this rather grey simplicity. It must be possible to be solemn as a Republican without being oppressively so. For instance would it not be possible for Dr Verwoerd to come out and greet the President in velveteen breeches and a slouch hat with an ostrich feather in it?[57]

Part of what was 'missing' in June 1961 was the high society element of the ceremony – since the change from union parliament to republican parliament took place mid-session, the first president's address was not in fact a full-scale opening of parliament but an informal meeting of both houses. Sixth months later, in January 1962, the first full opening of the republican parliament attracted 'the biggest turnout for years' on the streets of Cape Town, but no details of the government's legislative programme were given in the president's address.[58] In 1963, the two elements, street procession and a substantive president's address, were once again combined and parliament's place within a republican ceremonial calendar was confirmed.[59]

18 September 1984

The mid-1980s saw the National Party government's attempt to reform apartheid structures in the face of growing internal and international political opposition. At the centre of the 1983 constitution was a reinvented tricameral parliament, with a house of assembly representing white voters, a house of representatives for coloured voters, and a house of delegates for Indian voters. Black Africans continued to be excluded from the reformed system. Aimed at co-opting the support of the coloured and Indian communities, the new

[54] *Cape Times*, 6 June 1961.
[55] *Cape Argus*, 5 June 1961.
[56] *Die Burger* (Cape Town), 1 June 1961.
[57] *Cape Times*, 6 June 1961.
[58] *Cape Argus*, 19 Jan. 1962.
[59] *Cape Argus*, 16 Jan. 1963.

constitution and the elections for the tricameral parliament instead galvanised anti-apartheid activism with a new umbrella organisation, the United Democratic Front (UDF), formed to co-ordinate opposition to the constitution. There was, from the mid 1980s onwards, a reinvigoration of internal political protest and counter marches, held at the same time as the president's procession and centred upon the Grand Parade, a site symbolic for its history of civic protest were instituted. These protests took place outside parliament, which was symbolic of its ongoing exclusions, even though the reforms of the 1980s attempted to manage a limited inclusion. At the same time the president's procession to parliament became increasingly a display of military strength.

From its inception the tricameral parliament was regarded by many as a farcical institution and there was a distinct lack of reporting of the first official opening. This lack of reporting was not only symbolic of the broader failure of the reform project. It was perhaps also evidence that the ceremony and the tricameral parliament were themselves failed symbols. Newspapers did not write national narratives in their reporting of the first official opening of the tricameral parliament on 18 September 1984; indeed, the ceremony barely registered in the South African press. Only the late final edition of the *Cape Argus*, otherwise the newspaper with the most voluminous coverage of parliamentary ceremonies, carried mention of the opening. Even then the paper concentrated on reporting the content of President Botha's address to the joint sitting of the three houses, carrying just one photograph captioned 'the procession of the House of Representatives on the way to the opening of the new parliament'.[60]

A week or so earlier, newspapers had been more interested in observing the first time that white, Indian and coloured MPs had come together in parliament. On 5 September, 50 white, 25 coloured and 13 Indian MPs who constituted the electoral college for the new office of state president met and elected P.W. Botha. The *Cape Argus* described the MPs as 'mingling amiably' and told their reader's 'several white and coloured MPs shared benches and white and Indian MPs sat together'.[61] This was a mundane act with symbolic significance, given the context of petty apartheid restrictions such as 'whites-only' benches in public parks. Significant newspaper coverage was also given over to the inauguration of Botha as executive state president, a role that under the new constitution combined head of state and head of government roles. In this coverage journalists again found ways to weave a narrative of reinvention. The political correspondent of the *Sunday Times* explained the position of the state president under the new constitution with reference to Cape Town's symbolic architecture:

> The Tuinhuis, seat of presidential power in the new constitutional system, straddles the red-brick Parliament building and the old Cape Dutch-style President's Council chambers. Just as, in a political sense, the President's office will straddle the Tri-cameral legislature on the one hand and the advisory and deadlock-breaking President's Council on the other. It is a symbolism liked by the President's men … they have continually sought to project the uniqueness of the office while maintaining a sense of its historic continuity. The Tuinhuis fits the mood well.[62]

[60] *Cape Argus*, 18 Sept. 1984 (late final).

[61] *Cape Argus*, 5 Sept. 1984.

[62] *Sunday Times*, 16 Sept. 1984.

Presidential inaugurations are not annual events, however, and the official opening of the second session of the tricameral parliament in January 1985 saw the newspapers' interest restored. The multi-racial character of the tricameral parliament added a new dimension to the South African press's fascination with the fashions of the opening ceremony. A reading of the opening as a display of cultural diversity through dress began in the 1980s particularly focusing on the 'traditional costume' of the wives of Indian MPs. From 1986, the papers were particularly interested in Soheir Hoosen, the only coloured female MP (elected that year to the house of representatives), often including prominent and large photographs of her outfit. The fashioning of a national narrative of diversity and inclusion through dress would go on to be one of the most prominent features of the coverage of the SONA, the reinvention of the opening ceremony after 1994.

24 May 1994

In 1994 the entry of so many newly elected MPs after South Africa's first elections based on universal suffrage meant the swearing-in ceremony for MPs, which preceded both the presidential inauguration and the president's address to parliament, also received a significant level of media attention. That many of these new MPs were activists, who had opposed the apartheid state for many years, made their entry into the institution a moment heavy with symbolism. On 9 May the new MPs gathered in parliament for the first time to be sworn-in, and to elect a Speaker and their president from amongst their number. John Scott in the *Cape Times* reported 'unprecedented scenes of African culture, colour and warmth'.[63] One such 'scene' was the performance from an *imbongi* (praise poet), who took to the floor of the house to praise Mandela immediately after MPs had voted to make him president. Whilst in 1994 the *imbongi* performed at the election of the president, the following year an *imbongi* would be incorporated into SONA.

Sandra Klopper has suggested that the ANC decision to include *iimbongi* (praise poets) in state ritual from 1994 'provided a spectacular symbolic affirmation of the fact that South Africa was in the process of changing beyond recognition'.[64] Certainly, in 1994 the *imbongi* Thembile Mlangeni's performance was read in the newspaper coverage as a sign that 'parliament will never be the same again'.[65] Whilst historically the Southern African praise poet was a politically influential figure within many chiefdoms, with a 'licence to criticise without impunity', some have suggested that the modern canonisation of *iimbongi* 'recalls without restoring' their politically 'proactive role'.[66] However, in 1994 the inclusion of an *imbongi* did have some disruptive resonance, not just because of the new context in which he performed, but also because of the form of his art: namely the introduction of an

[63]John Scott, 'Notes in the House: The day hugging made SA parliamentary history', *Cape Times*, 10 May 1994.

[64]Sandra Klopper, '"I Respect Custom, but I Am Not a Tribalist": The ANC-CONTRALESA Alliance and "Designer Tradition" in 1990s South Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, xxxix (1998), 134.

[65]Anthony Johnson, 'Elected Sit African Style', *Cape Times*, 10 May 1994.

[66]Ashlee Neser, *Stranger at Home: The Praise Poet in Apartheid South Africa* (Johannesburg, 2001), 10; Kruger, *Drama of South Africa*, 1; Elizabeth Gunner, 'Remaking the Warrior? The Role of Orality in the Liberation Struggle and Post Apartheid South Africa', in *Oral Literature and Performance in Southern Africa*, ed. Duncan Brown (Cape Town, 1999), 58.

improvised and unpredictable performance into a tightly scripted, stage-managed event. In a sign of the significance of this moment, years later, parliamentary staff still recalled with amusement that in 1994 Mlangeni's performance went on so long that he eventually had to be ushered away.[67] Liz Gunner has suggested that the praise poet 'like biltong and the Protea' is now seen as an exportable symbol of a 'South African identity package'.[68] Tellingly the *Cape Times* reported that in 1994 Mlangeni had 'pride of place' outside parliament, speaking to an 'enthralled throng of foreign journalists'.[69]

In 1994 the rainbow nation of the new South Africa was tied very closely with Mandela's redemptive figure and in this context his address to parliament on 24 May was part of a larger performance of Mandela's relationship with his people. This ceremony saw Mandela follow in the footsteps of his apartheid predecessors and, as in 1910 and 1961, this was read by the newspapers as a performance of reinvention. In the *Cape Times*, one reporter made a direct comparison of Nelson Mandela's performance as president with that of his apartheid predecessors:

> In stark contrast to the mid-1980s, Mr Nelson Mandela yesterday demonstrated that he was the President of the people. As outriders led his motorcade towards the entrance of the National Assembly, spontaneous cheers of joy and songs of praise rang through the streets of Cape Town, as excited members of the public clamoured for a glimpse of their new leader … this time around the enthusiasm of the multi-racial crowds embraced the former symbols of white power as their own; applauding the navy band after it had completed a rendition of the twin anthems.[70]

The masculine norms of parliamentary political power were also challenged in new ways in 1994 through the presence of South Africa's first woman Speaker, Dr Frene Ginwala, who was, as one new ANC MP Pregs Govender put it, a 'powerful symbol – a woman in a sari not a suit'.[71] However, the mainstream press made little comment on Ginwala during the ceremony, aside from noting her sari. This was part of a broader focus upon dress as a signifier of diversity and inclusion. Again, the task (or burden) of representing the new South Africa's inclusivity lay overwhelmingly with women, thereby marking women MPs out as different from their male counterparts at their moment of entry into the institution. The *Cape Times* fashion reporter described the scene at the opening:

> African designer chic dominated the fashion stakes at the opening of Parliament yesterday where Western garb was put firmly in the shade by ethnic headdresses and traditional robes. While male MPs favoured the dark business suit, the hallowed halls of Parliament thronged with many female MPs and guests resplendent in multi-coloured African dress.[72]

[67] Interviews conducted with parliamentary staff, Oct. 2010.

[68] Gunner, 'Remaking the Warrior', 58.

[69] *Cape Times*, 10 May 1994.

[70] Antony Johnson, 'Jubilation Greets the President', *Cape Times*, 26 May 1994.

[71] Pregs Govender, *Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination* (Johannesburg, 2007), 145.

[72] Claire Bisseker, 'Democracy in Fashion', *Cape Times*, 26 May 1994.

Such dressing may certainly have had other meanings for the women themselves. Pregs Govender, for example, remembered a desire to resist conforming to 'this very British Institution' in her choice of outfit.[73] When it came to the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) television coverage in 1994, throughout Mandela's speech the television cameras showed shots of benches full of white (mostly male) opposition MPs alternately with benches of black MPs, with choice of dress at this moment accentuating the appearance of separation and difference.[74]

The inclusion of difference-through-dress and additions such as the *iimbongi* had symbolic resonance for the newspapers because they were obvious changes to an otherwise unaltered ceremony. Similarly, in 1994 the monumental space of the parliamentary precinct offered the chance to tell a narrative of reinvention because the ceremony followed almost exactly the procedure of previous years. The *Argus* described the day as a mixture of 'stiff protocol and toyi-toying exuberance'. Focusing on the statue of Louis Botha, seated on horseback, which stands directly in front of parliament, the *Argus* reporter like his predecessors imagined the statue as part of the performance:

> If Louis Botha could have turned around to have a good look he probably would have palled. While the stiff-upper lipped statesman, soldier and farmer gazed firmly ahead from his plinth on Stalplein yesterday, those behind his statue clung to the sturdy iron fence hoping for a glimpse of proceedings within … While the Stalplein crowd craned and strained, enjoying the national anthems and a thundering fly-past, those at the Parliament street gate broke into song and toyi-toying. Often the scene of tense stand-offs in the past, this parliamentary access yesterday saw an impromptu celebration.
>
> While the people of Cape Town were spontaneous in their joy, the troops who marched and lined the streets were precision perfect. The security forces were out in large numbers to ensure discipline. One motorist was in for a nasty shock. His shiny new car parked near Stalplein irked traffic police and was towed away before it could be a nuisance. From where he sat General Botha had the best view of a now-rare forced removal.[75]

The ironies of these various performances introduced hints of the recent violence and conflict into the narrative of reinvention, but were rendered safely in a comic register. Through the ceremony, a site of protest became a site of celebration. 'Forced removal', the term by which apartheid's mass social engineering projects were described, became a mundane act of traffic management. The spaces of the parliamentary precinct were physically unaltered but nevertheless transformed. The past, embodied in the figure of Louis Botha, was subverted with the celebration literally going on behind his back. Unlike the benign presence of Edward VII and Paul Kruger, in 1910 and 1961 respectively, Botha's statue did not bestow blessing but stood as a symbol of discontinuity and helped render the celebration going on around him as a joyful transgression.

[73] Govender, *Love and Courage*, 146.

[74] Extracts from SABC coverage of the opening of the South African Parliament since 1994 can be found at www.c-spanvideo.org (accessed 20 Oct. 2023).

[75] *Cape Argus*, 23 May 1994.

Whilst nothing on the scale of the Pageant of the Union of 1910 was attempted in the 1990s to celebrate the new South Africa, the organising committee made an addition to the opening ceremony performed outside the parliamentary buildings in 2001. The *Sowetan*, which as a Johannesburg-based newspaper did not often carry extensive coverage of the opening ceremony, reported on this addition to the programme at length:

> In a break with tradition Parliament opens on Friday with a play that will depict the struggles of the indigenous peoples and slaves in this area in the face of successive oppressive administrations since the 15th century. According to National Assembly Deputy Speaker Ms Baleka Mbete the play consists of a tableau, or 'cameos of captured time' covering five elements of the history of the Parliamentary precinct … Mbete said that it was important for the country to face up to its past, to understand what had happened, in order to deal with society's current problems.[76]

The scenes depicted were: resistance by the Khoi against the arrival of the Portuguese in 1503 and 1510; what the paper described as the 'first forced removals' of indigenous people from the Cape area by the Dutch settlers between 1655 and 1658; the 1699 building of the Slave Lodge by the Dutch, a building still standing on the edge of the parliamentary precinct, with this tableau also featuring the story of Armoysen Claasz, a slave who bought her freedom through purchasing a plot of land upon which now stands the Marks Building that houses parliamentary offices; the opening of the 1910 white parliament; the passing of the 1913 Land Act; the removal of African and coloured voters from the Cape voting roll; and finally the opening of the first democratic parliament in 1994.

These tableaus reinscribed upon the parliamentary precinct a history of dispossession and resistance illegible in the imperial buildings and statues, and a history of conflict that the retention and repetition of the colonial parliament and its ceremonies largely obscured. If the 1910 pageant made all South Africans colonists, these tableaus made all South Africans into resisters. I quoted Loren Kruger earlier suggesting that the inclusion of an *imbongi* in the opening of parliament 'recalled without restoring' the historical role of *iimbongi*. The same might be said of the republican presidency of 1961, which recalled without restoring that of Paul Kruger. The fact that the *Sowetan* claimed that this show of 'historical tableaus' was a 'break with tradition' is an example of what we might think of as restoration without recollection in the reinvention of parliament and the nation. The tableaus of resistance were also a means of recalling without quite restoring the fervour of anti-apartheid politics as central to the project of new South African nationhood. Those who devised the new pageant may or may not have been consciously replying to the exclusions of the 1910 pageant. There was certainly no trace of this within the pageant itself but only in its mode of expression.

Conclusion

As Loren Kruger has argued:

[76] Wagheid Misbach, 'Parliament Breaks with Tradition', *Sowetan*, 9 Feb. 2001.

> Although the inauguration of Nelson Mandela and a democratic government represents a distinct *political* break from the ideas and practice of white supremacy, the difference between this event and earlier instances of South African theatrical nationhood marks and masks a *formal* connection to an as yet barely investigated genealogy of national enactments.[77]

What we have traced through examining the performance of the opening of the South African parliament in 1910, 1961, and 1994 is the genealogy of one such national enactment. Parliament has remained a site for the (re)making of the South African nation over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, but an ambivalent and contested site. Despite this, the level of contestation that SONA has been subject to since 2014 through the disruptive performances of the EFF is unprecedented. After 1994 the continuity of the ceremony was central to its meaning for the new South Africa – that a site of white supremacy and oppression had been appropriated, taken over, and subverted. Yet by 2014 this continuity was viewed differently. In his maiden speech to parliament at SONA 2014, Julius Malema, commander in chief of the EFF, returned to a juxtaposition of Louis Botha and Nelson Mandela, this time both in statue form. He commented on the relative size and position of the newly erected statue of Nelson Mandela outside parliament:

> The most prominent statue in this Parliament is a statue of Louis Botha, and the one of Nelson Mandela is very small and is hidden behind the statue of Louis Botha. Louis Botha is not our hero and cannot be a hero of a democratic South Africa … The statue of Botha outside this Parliament must go down, because it represents nothing of what a democratic South Africa stands for.[78]

Whilst in 1994 the *Argus* reporter described Nelson Mandela's first SONA as going on behind Louis Botha's back in an act of subversion, Malema in 2014 described Mandela's statue as 'hidden behind' Botha's, the colonial legacy obscuring that of the liberation struggle. If SONA after 1994 restored or retained the ceremonial forms of the colonial parliament without recalling their origins, the disruptions of the EFF after 2014 have recalled them repeatedly. Malema's maiden speech was the trigger for another EFF expulsion from the house when his statement that 'the ANC government massacred the people in Marikana' was ruled unparliamentary and he refused to withdraw it. The next day EFF supporters gathered outside parliament at the foot of Botha's statue, draping it in a red banner that repeated Malema's words. Malema told journalists that his party would not follow rules 'created by imperialists and colonialists'.[79] The rhetoric of the EFF thus skipped over the long history of parliament in South Africa that I have begun to sketch here. Their performances used that same imperial parliamentary architecture to tell another national narrative: this time, that South Africa's transition to democracy represented an incomplete revolution.

[77] Kruger, *Drama of South Africa*, 8–9.

[78] Hansard (South Africa), Proceedings at Joint Sitting, 18 June 2014, pp. 28–9 (Julius Malema).

[79] Chantall Presence, 'Malema: EFF the Rules of Parliament', *Mail and Guardian* (Johannesburg), 20 June 2014.