

# Making present the absent other: anamnesis and the work of Kiefer, Boltanski, Cruise and Coetzee

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It is possible that artists, in the making of memorials and monuments, might aid in the process of national healing after a traumatic national era or event. This, it is argued, is more likely to be achieved through the ‘counter-monument’, where a process of anamnesis might occur because of viewer participation, encouraged by certain kinds of contemporary approaches to memorials. Having established motivations for such a process, this article then examines selected examples of post-war German art and post-apartheid South African art, to show that visual representations might have a healing function. It concludes that psychology can learn from art, which can activate the instinct of reflection and act as a psychic mover.

**Key words:** monument, memorial, counter-monument, anamnesis, Kiefer, Boltanski, Cruise, Coetzee

Die moontlikheid bestaan dat kunstenaars, deur die skepping van gedenktekens en monumente, ‘n wesentliche bydrae kan lewer ter heling van die nasie na die afloop van ‘n nasionale traumatiese voorval of era. Hierdie artikel stel voor dat die moontlikheid van sukses verbreed word deur die ‘teen-monument’, waar ‘n proses van anamnese dalk kan plaasvind as gevolg van deelname van die toeskouer, wat vergemaklik word deur sekere hedendaagse benaderings tot gedenktekens. Na bevestiging van die beredenering vir so ‘n proses, vervolgens ondersoek die skrywers geselekteerde voorbeelde van Duitse na-oorlogse kuns, sowel as Suid-Afrikaanse na-apartheid kuns om derhalwe te illustreer dat visuele voorstellings moontlik beskik oor helende funksies. Die sielkunde kan van die kunste leer, wat nabetraging kan aktiveer en sodoende die rol van die ‘psiegiese aanvoerder’ kan vervul.

**Sleutelwoorde:** monument, gedenkteken, ‘teen-monument’, anamnese, Kiefer, Boltanski, Cruise, Coetzee

South Africa, in its conflicted past, can be said to have unhappy parallels to other violent histories, for example, that of Nazi and post-war Germany. A question that might arise is how artists have subsequently negotiated these painful histories and memories, and how have they chosen to engage with evidence of their pasts. Such attempts often take the form of monuments or memorials. How do the inheritors of memories narrate and negotiate their pasts? Can dignity be restored to both victims and perpetrators in the aftermath of conflict?

A memorial (*The Oxford English dictionary* 1978:330-331) is defined as an object, festival or event instituted to commemorate an event or a person, or, more broadly, as that which pertains to memory, preserves memory or assists the memory. A monument, which is a kind of memorial, is generally “an object that by its survival, commemorates a person, action, period or event (*The Oxford English dictionary*, 1978:636). Monuments are generally objects that are permanent, enduring and made in a “lasting material”, erected in memory. In considering artworks that function as memorials or monuments, the question arises as to whether art can contribute meaningfully to an understanding of events of upheaval. Does representation in any way act to acknowledge, heal or offer closure to guilt and pain? Is there a way in which the perpetrator can attempt to reverse the ‘otherness’ of the victim that he or she created? One kind of art that one might examine for possible answers is public art: the memorial. This article will interpret some ‘alternative’ public artworks, that are not necessarily monuments in the familiar or conventional sense but that may be argued to be memorials in that they seek to effect a real change of perspective.

‘Anamnesis’ is a useful concept in this investigation. It is defined in the *Collins English dictionary* (Treffry et al, 1998:53) as “the ability to recall past events; recollection; to call to mind”. In this context, it is useful also to consider that it means the healing or reversal of ‘amnesia’, “a defect in memory, especially one resulting from pathological cause” (Treffry 1998:49). ‘Amnesia’ itself is a word closely related to ‘amnesty’, which refers to the overlooking

or 'forgetting' of an offence. So anamnesis carries associations with re-remembering, with healing through calling to mind, and even with forgiveness.

It is also a term associated with both Jewish and Christian liturgy, where it refers to a remembrance (of Christ's life) and a looking to fulfilment, "the anticipation of the new age" (Leech, 1985: 271). Thus anamnesis is associated particularly with the Passover and the Last Supper, in the latter with the remembrance of sacrifice and the mysterious "making present" of Christ (Chapman, 1994: 305).<sup>1</sup> So healing through remembrance is coupled with a yearning for renewal, "the remembrance of the past events..., and the making present of those events in the lives of the worshippers" (Leech, 1985: 278).

### **The German experience: Kiefer and Boltanski**

In the closing stages of World War Two, Adolf Hitler and a number of leading Nazis committed suicide, while others fled abroad, thus denying their victims the satisfaction of any natural or judicial redress. The war had seen terrible genocide committed by the Nazis against European Jewry, gypsies and dissenting religious and social leaders. These victims were made 'other' and, deemed superfluous, were exterminated. So after the war, many issues were left unresolved, the victims' recourse to reparation, redress and compensation taking much longer than had the punishment of those of the perpetrators who were punished. Germany's main act of contrition was to be largely through financing the construction of industry for the newly created state of Israel.

Any intervention such as a debriefing of the German public, as catharsis or panacea to the wounded collective memory, was not undertaken. Individual stories were not heard and personal narratives were lost. The victims did not have the opportunity to confront the guilty. This implied that they could not reintegrate with society in a shedding of their 'otherness'. Those who were neither perpetrators nor victims were unable to deny their support of, or demonstrate their opposition to, the Nazi regime. Thus, the German people and their descendants became in a sense 'post-other' to themselves, and without forgiveness there could be no closure.

Young German artists, post-war, were inadequately equipped to deal with the immediate past, and many of the older, established artists, for example, George Grosz, Otto Dix or Ernst Kirchner, who had practiced social criticism or commentary in their art, had ceased working, died or fled impending Nazi persecution before the war. Added to this, non-representational art, such as Abstract Expressionism, were becoming the artistic mainstream in important centres like New York, and this was not an approach to art that encouraged social commentary or memorialising. According to Clement Greenberg (1986: 8), the influential critic of modernist formalism, "'Art for art's sake' and 'pure poetry' appear, and subject matter or content becomes something to be avoided like the plague. ... Content is to be dissolved ... completely into form...". So social commentary, memorialising and anamnesis were largely eschewed in modernist art after World War Two.

Thus post-war German artists were "[h]eir to a double-edged postwar legacy: a deep distrust of monumental forms in light of their systematic exploitation by the Nazis, and a profound desire to distinguish their generation from that of the killers through memory" (Young, 1993:27). Most, if not all, young German artists found the task of memorialising difficult or impossible. Indeed, the sheer impossibility that many artists felt in the face of the genocide that the end of the war revealed, made such art difficult or impossible: as Theodor Adorno (In Marcuse, 2005) wrote, "[t]o write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric". Even the post-war German economic recovery could be seen as hollow because, according to Saltzman (1999:

15), “West Germany prospered at the expense of one crucial element, memory”. It was only later, in the nineteen seventies, that certain German artists made work that evoked anamnesis, or healing through remembering. Until then, according to López-Pendraza (1996: 17), Germany and its artists had carefully cultivated a “sort of collective forgetfulness”.

One such artist who sought to revisit German history and restore collective memory is Anselm Kiefer. Born in 1945, he was a first generation post-war artist and sometime student of Joseph Beuys, who is one of the older generation of German artists who sought catharsis and healing through artmaking (Saltzman, 1999; López-Pendraza, 1996). Kiefer persistently positioned his work within an exploration of the legacy of fascism and the trauma of the resultant holocaust. His artistic mission is a restorative one: a search for memorial on one hand and a reclaiming of German dignity, despite the seeming impossibility of this, on the other. He also explores what Jung referred to as Germany’s “collective guilt” (López-Pendraza, 1996: 11), for which there was no simple means of expiation. “There is an urgent need to fight the shadow and to reflect on the madness in history” (López-Pendraza 1996: 12).

Kiefer makes no attempt to portray history realistically or to isolate any particular episode as a synecdoche for the wider German narrative. Rather, he imbeds himself in a sense of this history, becomes one with it. He is aware that history is fragmentary, and thus he deals with “memory which itself lies in ruins” (van Alphen, 1997: 7). History can only be understood through an acknowledgement of the “very inaccessibility of its occurrence and experience” (Saltzman, 1999:16). Kiefer adopts the difficulties of figurative representation and narrative, rather than the narcissistic comfort of formal abstraction, but not in a realist, documentary sense.



Figure 1

Anselm Kiefer, *Shulamith*, 1983. Oil, acrylic, emulsion, shellac and straw on canvas, 290 x 370 cm. Private collection. (Saltzman, 1999: 30; López-Pendraza, 1996: 63).

Between 1981 and 1983, Kiefer produced a series of memorial paintings based on the Holocaust poem, *Todesfuge* (Death fugue) by Paul Celan (Online s.a), a Jewish poet and survivor of the death camps.<sup>2</sup> This poem has deep levels of metaphor in Margarete, the blond figure of German womanhood, and Shulamith, the Jew, the ultimate other, with hair of ash, playing out the vast tragedy between Aryan and Jew. In *Shulamith* (Figure 1), Kiefer uses the fascist architect Wilhelm Kreis's 1939 design for the Great Mausoleum of German War Heroes, as a memorial site for Shulamith. He paints a monumental, vaulted building, seen dramatically from a low perspective, employing all the aesthetic traits of a Nazi propaganda poster circa 1939. The dark funeral hall seems blackened with the soot from a thousand crematorium ovens. It thus becomes symbolic of a giant oven in itself. Against the back of the cavern-like space are the flickering flames of a Jewish menorah, which transforms the heart of this Nazi mausoleum into a memorial to Jewish victims. Conversely, the bays in the arches, designed to hold torches in memory of Nazi heroes, are obliterated by blackened cut-outs. In the upper left corner, the name Shulamith appears, scratched in small white print. "Here, in linguistic inscription only, is Margarete's other, the dark haired woman of the Song of Songs, forever transformed by Celan's verses into an ashen symbol of European Jewry, irrevocably absent" (Saltzman, 1999: 28).

The absence of direct figural representation is convincingly argued by van Alphen (1997:10):

Instead we are lured into the event itself experiencing a certain aspect of Nazism or of the Holocaust as we view an image. We are no longer listening to the factual account of a witness, to the story of an objectified past. Rather, we are placed in the position of being the subject of that history. We are subjectively living it... We will not respond to a re-presentation of the historical event, but to a presentation or performance of it.

Shulamith is thus not implied but 'applied' and made present by and to the viewer. Such is anamnesis.

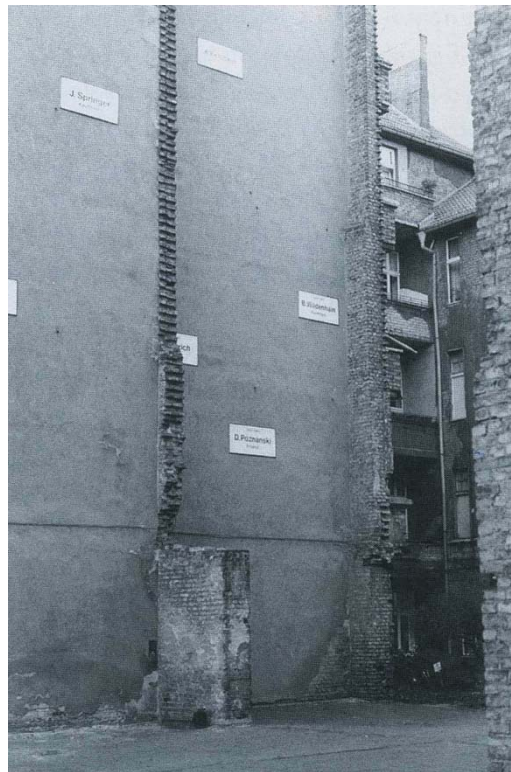
Other young German artists developed what Young (In Saltzman 1999: 3) called 'counter monuments', making use of impermanence and empty space as memorial.<sup>3</sup> This can be related to the notion of "relationship aesthetics", which Buys (In Thurman 2009: 2) argues refers to works "explicitly concerned with viewer participation, communication and a supposedly democratic or equitable exchange between the artist and the viewer", in works that are not only impermanent and site-specific, but also fugitive and relational. In such works, although the artist obviously has a particular vision, intention or intended effect, the work is such that the viewer can "deviate in meaning and effect" and there is a "greater potential between work and site... and, crucially, from the intention of a viewer with both". It is perhaps in this openness of meaning, the unfamiliar approach to the monument, that defamiliarization, 'enstrangement' or awakening of the viewer can take place, from which might follow a more intensely felt remembering and hence healing.

A further way of understanding the possible effect of such a counter-monument, and its potential for healing, is through the notion of the 'aesthetic experience', which is explained differently by a variety of art critics: Jaus (in Holub 1984: 73) sees it as pleasure which comes not only from a surrender of the ego to the object but moreover from the act of recognising the object as art. It is on some ways a creative act in itself. This effect might then be heightened by art that in some way escapes easy classification or interpretation.

Lèvi-Strauss (1970: 17) felt that the aesthetic experience was not simply pleasure, but a variety of complex emotions and responses, the sensations of which generate excitement in the viewer. Fuller (1988) sees it as a broad range of evoked associations, emotions and memories, and his view agrees with earlier ones, for example Fry (Quoted in Fuller 1988:200), who wrote that art got its force "from arousing some deep, very vague and immensely generalised reminiscences". For many critics, including Fuller (1988: 145), art that is open-ended, that is

layered with references and possible associations, that eschews the purely formal and is not ‘reduced to a dialogue with itself, about itself’, has all the more potential to arouse this aesthetic experience. Eco (1979: 90) argued that this experience occurs more markedly with art that is ambiguous in its content and/or form. This kind of intense experience can be argued to be associated with anamnesis and the potential of the counter-monument for change in the viewer, and possibly healing.

In just such an open-ended and ambiguous work, French born artist, Christian Boltanski, identified the site of a demolished house in Berlin’s formerly Jewish Scheunenviertel precinct, that had belonged to a Jewish owner (Figure 2).



**Figure 2**  
**Christian Boltanski, *The missing house*, 1989. Berlin, (Saltzman, 1999: 33).**

Boltanski has done little to the site, beyond cleaning it. Randomly attached to the walls of the adjacent buildings, he has placed a number of plain hardboard commemorative plaques bearing the names of deceased Jewish inhabitants of the area. The boards are enlargements of newspaper-type obituaries. This work marks and configures absence into the empty space, at the same time filling it with a haunting memorium. Boltanski’s work is stark and, although it achieves the same result as Kiefer’s *Shulamith*, it foregoes even the small distractions of the handmade mark, the focus on one specific victim and the use of ‘artistic’ materials. For this reason, anamnesis occurs, as the viewer is thrust into and shares the chillingly real space and, by extension, the experience of the victim.

It must be noted that both Kiefer’s and Boltanski’s works were done some forty years after the end of World War 2, so it was a relatively long time before German art began to come to terms with the country’s traumatic history and memorialising and anamnesis could begin.

### **The South African experience: Cruise and Coetzee**

South Africa is a country with a history of the meeting and clashing of different groups, through

wars, through colonialism and through apartheid. So victims and perpetrators are everywhere in its history, and ‘othering’ has occurred from white to white, black to black and white to black, with people becoming foreigners in the land of their birth (See Callinicos, 1985 and Davenport, 1981).

After the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, and as part of the processes of its implementation, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established by an act of parliament in 1995.<sup>4</sup> The seventeen-man commission, led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, was charged with the task of providing a public platform from which the political crimes and violations of the apartheid era might emerge, might come into the light of memory. The hearings acted as a public engagement with memory. Its method was to provide a controlled introduction of victim to perpetrator, where acknowledgement might be made, pain and anger expressed and forgiveness and healing might take place. These narratives act as a repository of fragments of the South African experience, and have, in a sense, become a new historical document, a monument to the truth about South Africa’s recent past. Does such a re-living of past horrors have any positive or redeeming benefit?

One purpose is anamnesis. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn states, “[b]y not dealing with past human rights violations, we are not simply protecting the perpetrators’ old age, we are thereby ripping the foundations of justice from beneath new generations’ (Krog, 1999: 405). So anamnesis is a way of dealing with the past with the future in mind. Krog (1999: 23) explores the *raison d’être* for the Truth Commission in explaining the Commission’s sensitivity to the notion of ‘truth’. “If its interest in truth is linked only to amnesty and compensation, then it will have chosen not truth but justice. If it sees truth as the widest possible compilation of people’s perceptions, stories, myths and experience, it will have chosen to restore memory and foster a new humanity, and perhaps that is justice in its deepest sense.” Anamnesis may be one way to begin to come to terms with, and perhaps to repair, the legacy of ‘othering’ that typifies South Africa’s history.

This ‘othering’ in turn led, especially under apartheid, to milestone events in the history of resistance, such as the Women’s March of 1956, the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960, the 1976 Soweto riots and the killing of Black Consciousness leader, Steve Biko, in 1977. There is much to remember and to memorialise.

Of particular relevance to this paper is the Women’s March of 1956. Pass laws for black women, who were generally poverty-stricken and disempowered by the Nationalist government and by socio-cultural-economic circumstances, led to their organising countrywide protests, denouncing these laws as destructive of the black family unit. On 9 August, 20 000 women converged on the Union Buildings in Pretoria to see the Prime Minister, Johannes Strijdom, in spite of official attempts to prevent the march. The women gathered and sang a song that would become the rallying cry for future women’s protests, *Wathint’ abafazi*,<sup>5</sup> delivered a petition with hundreds of thousands of signatures and stood in silence for thirty minutes.

The site of this protest was the Union Buildings, Pretoria, built in 1911 and designed in a neo-classical style favoured by the late Victorians. They were intended by the architect, Herbert Baker, as a symbol of reconciliation between English and Afrikaner. As such, they later came to be a symbol of colonialism but they have subsequently, as the seat of the democratic government, come to represent the present government, which has been enhanced by their use for highly symbolic events, such as the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president in 1994. This symbolic usage suggests that the building can be reinterpreted as a memorial to the past and to various historical events.

In keeping with Baker's ideals of reconciliation, but from the perspective of the new democratic order, the incoming cabinet of 1994 prioritized the renaming of this site's amphitheatre and vestibule, as part of its Legacy Project.<sup>6</sup> A competition was launched to create a national monument to women for this site. In his announcement of the competition, Gordon Metz, director of the Legacy Project, stated:

The women had laid claim to the Union Buildings. Indeed, they literally chose and created a 'symbolic site of struggle'. The dramatic events of 9 August, 1956, celebrated an harmonious and non-racial event, in which occupation, collaboration, co-operation, generosity, determination and remarkable self-discipline were displayed; all qualities which continue to have meaning in our new democratic society. ... In keeping with our constitution, which recognises that power is unequally distributed and that there is an urgent need to uplift the women of South Africa, it is appropriate to locate a national monument to women at the core of the democratically elected government's buildings, and so place our women in a central place of acknowledgement.

The competition was won by Johannesburg artist Wilma Cruise, assisted by architect Marcus Holme, and unveiled by President Thabo Mbeki on Women's Day 2000.

The approach to the monument is indicated to visitors to *Malibongwe Embokodweni*,<sup>7</sup> the name of the site, with an inscription in Roman typeface, of stainless steel imbedded in the stair risers leading from the amphitheatre up to the vestibule. The text is a summarised quote from the women's petition of 1956 to Prime Minister Strijdom, demanding the repeal of the Pass Laws (figure 3).

WE ARE WOMEN FROM EVERY PART OF SOUTH AFRICA  
WE ARE WOMEN OF EVERY RACE  
WE COME  
From  
THE CITIES AND TOWNS  
All  
WOMEN UNITED IN OUR PURPOSE  
TO SAVE THE AFRICAN WOMAN FROM THE DEGRADATION OF PASSES  
IN THE NAME OF THE WOMEN OF SOUTH AFRICA  
WE SAY TO YOU – EACH ONE OF US  
THAT WE ARE OPPOSED TO THE PASS SYSTEM  
WE SHALL NOT REST  
Until  
ALL LAWS AND ALL FORMS OF PERMITS RESTRICTING OUR FREEDOM  
HAVE BEEN ABOLISHED  
WE SHALL NOT REST  
Until  
WE HAVE WON FOR OUR CHILDREN  
Their  
FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS  
OF  
FREEDOM  
JUSTICE  
And  
SECURITY (*We are women from every part of South Africa... . 1956*)



**Figure 3**  
**Wilma Cruise, *Women's monument*, the stairs, 2000. Pretoria (photo Cruise).**

The sweep of the stairs serves the dual function of providing a record of the actual past as well as a reminder that this history should not repeat itself. The vestibule itself is a colonnaded, vaulted opening, leading from the back of the amphitheatre through a central axis that continues up through other buildings on Meintjieskop. The original inlaid sandstone floor had an octagonal centre radiating outwards. Cruise has replaced the octagonal centre with a demarcated, textured bronze field in full registration with the original motif. In the centre of the bronze octagon, a highly polished stainless steel disc reflects the morning and afternoon sun. These two elements, bronze and steel, act as a metaphor for the archetypal African *mollo*, or fire in a hearth.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 4**  
**Wilma Cruise, *Women's monument*, the vestibule, 2000. Pretoria (photo Cruise).**

Seeming to float above this field is an *imbokodo*, a millstone which is the grinding surface for maize or sorghum meal, the traditional staple diet of black South Africans. The *imbokodo* used here is not purpose manufactured but is a found object. Approximately the length of a forearm,



it is flat with a concave surface for holding the grain, which is crushed by rolling another rounded stone, fitting both hands, over it. In the rural village context, the milling of meal is traditionally the preserve of women and carries great significance of nurturing and standing in the community. The act of grinding requires the woman to kneel in front of the stone with both arms extended, hands holding the crushing stone. Her body weight is used to crush the grain, in an act of service and utility that is also symbolic of reverence. It also conveys a message of industry and prosperity to the visitor to a village.

The grinding stone and its bronze and steel surround provide the focus to a contemplative space for reflection and meditation. As a memorial, it is a powerful metaphor, proclaiming a site of sustenance and nurture. A remembering of the struggles of the past suggests the potential of future nurturing (figure 4).

In addition, the visitor to the site triggers an infra-red sensor, which activates a device that projects the words of the women's song onto the surrounding pillars in a slow, swirling motion. Simultaneously, the sound of women's voices repeatedly whispering the same words, in the eleven official languages of South Africa, fill the space. "*Whatint'abafazi, Whatint'imbokodo...*".<sup>8</sup> According to Cruise (1999):

It is as if the women are whispering down the tunnel of history. The voices whisper an exhortation and a reminder that tampering with them is tampering with the very source of life – symbolised by the grinding of grain, and by fire. The soft echo of the sibilant voices adds to the cathedral-like atmosphere.



**Figure 5**  
Neels Coetzee, *IDASA Democracy Wall*, 1998-1999. Pretoria (photo Stevens).

In its manifestation as a site-specific installation and its use of multiple elements, visual, textual, architectural and auditory, this work eschews the appearance of the traditional monument and

could be considered a counter-monument. In engaging the viewer in reading, looking and listening, in a multi-sensory experience, the possibility of anamnesis, of remembering and healing, is enhanced.

Another South African counter-monument is the Democracy Wall designed and executed by artist Neels Coetzee for the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA), in front of its nondescript building on the periphery of the business district of Pretoria/Tshwane (1998-99).

This is a low-slung, two-story building, partly prefabricated and partly concrete, with no particularly redeeming architectural features. The space in front of it is small and was used mainly for parking. It could hardly be seen as a memorial site, yet within these physical parameters, Coetzee constructed a site-specific installation incorporating both a memorial to the victims of past oppression and addressing a united, diverse and constructive future.

Coetzee chose, as a metaphorical vehicle, to use building methods, techniques and materials used by the different peoples of South Africa over centuries (figures 5, 6 and 7). The purpose of the wall is clearly articulated on a plaque in the front office:

The Democracy wall will provide the first visual introduction to the Kutlwanong Democracy Centre and will give aesthetic and creative meaning to the concepts of democracy and nation building. In the past walls were used for division and closing out – at Kutlwanong we want to depict the rebuilding of our nation and the reconstruction and consolidation of democracy. Utilising the construction strategies of the indigenous people of the country will do this. The range of materials and methods of construction will reflect the character of pastoral, rural, suburban and metropolitan structures. The open ended shape of the Wall will depict an opening to new experiences, and the sharing of ideas, knowledge and cultures.



**Figure 6**  
Neels Coetzee, *IDASA Democracy Wall*, 1998-1999. Pretoria (photo Stevens).

The wall is a meandering one, leading to various entrances via the car park, front office, through the gallery to the courtyard, where the journey into the past begins. The courtyard serves as a sanctuary area, which ends with a concave concrete wall, some three metres high. This is constructed using outer and inner shutter shells made from corrugated iron water tanks. Such tanks can be seen everywhere on gravity feed towers, given the aridity of South Africa. In this context, the tank alludes to the nurturing function of water, and also provides an apse and sanctum space for a glass pyramid that rests on the ground. The pyramid contains a fragment of Robben Island stone, which has metaphorically become the cornerstone of the building of democracy, in a biblical sense. On its base, an inscription records the words of Nelson Mandela, Robben Island prisoner: “I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities”.

This extensive installation makes many references through its materials and methods. Leading into the sanctuary is an atrium, used as a gallery. Wooden poles and diamond mesh fencing, normally used to demarcate and isolate space, form hanging screens for the occasional display of work relevant to the institution. Recent exhibitions have included the photographic works of Omar Badsha, Peter Magubane and Drum magazine. Parts of the meandering wall in the garden are made of rough-hewn granite blocks, that still bear the long, grooved marks of the fracture drills. Packed one of top of the other, they attest to primitive industry and also to a more ancient past, in their Stonehenge-like quality. Some of these walls are patterned in herringbone pattern or in ways that explore the different colours of the stones. The building method is based on that used in the settlements of early African migrations, such as Mapungubwe, Great Zimbabwe and TulaMela.



**Figure 7**  
Neels Coetzee, *IDASA Democracy Wall*, 1998-1999. Pretoria (photo Stevens).

Another timeless and traditional form of fencing is found in the tree branch *kraal* stockade. Cattle kept in such stockades signify wealth in traditional farming communities as well as nourishment. Another reference is to the *kgotla*, an outdoor meeting place for tribal councils and elders. In the context of the centre, this is used as a rest or recreational area. A more contemporary fencing is the concrete system developed in the nineteen eighties for protecting military installations. It reflects a more threatening and ominous past. Another part of the structure of the wall is built on the same principles as the blockhouses or bunkers built by British troops in defence of rail supply lines during the Anglo-Boer war. Other structures and gates refer to the Eskom pylons and powerlines that straddle South Africa.

The wall is completed by two further elements. On the outside perimeter, Coetzee has cast a number of concrete ‘blackboards’, intended to be used by the public as a place for graffiti. At the furthest corner of the grounds, a structure has been built from *dolosse*, huge concrete shapes designed by the port engineer of East London harbour to prevent shoreline erosion on this storm-battered coast.

Coetzee thus attempts to articulate a vision for democracy and reconciliation by using, metaphorically, that which displays common historical purpose and diversity, rather than highlighting difference, conflict and ‘otherness’.

## Conclusion

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (In Soyinka 2000: 23) is quoted as saying that: “even the supporters of apartheid were victims of the viscous system that they implemented...”. Whether victims, perpetrators or bystanders, this system blinded all from seeing the good and constructive in each other. The reconciliatory way in which Tutu, a victim himself, is able to collectivize for South Africans a common ‘otherness’, including even the most heinous of the guilty, is a noteworthy act of closure and of anamnesis.

Thus the German and South African experiences of histories of guilt and blame are similar, although in the case of Germany, there was no specific or official programme of healing, and, one could argue, for this reason it was a relatively long time before memorialising occurred and artists began to find ways of approaching anamnesis through the creation of counter monuments. South Africa in the immediate post-apartheid era had a programme of healing, and memorialising began equally quickly. The two groups of artists furthermore worked in different art making epochs. Kiefer, Boltanski and other German artists have had to struggle with the difficulties of making present the absent ‘other’, of mourning, within non-representational art. South Africans, on the other hand, both in the healing effects of a process such as the Truth Commission and in the background of a multicultural, postmodern milieu, in which varied elements and possibilities of a restorative art exist, have been able in a shorter time to produce convincing, meaningful and contemporary memorialising art, and to thereby encourage that remembering of the past that can come from anamnesis. As argued by López-Pendraza (1996:13-20,40), it can be concluded from the examples above that psychology can learn from art, which can activate the instinct of reflection and act as a psychic mover.

## Notes

1. Chapman (1994:306) refers to the inclusion in the Eucharistic Prayers of a prayer or memorial called the anamnesis. In such a prayer, the “mighty works wrought by God for men [are remembered and] become in a certain way present and real”.
2. The text (abbreviated) of the poem is as follows (Online, S.a., translated by John Felstiner):

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at evening  
 We drink it at midday and morning we drink it at evening  
 We drink and we drink...  
 A man lives in the house ... your golden hair  
 Margareta...  
 Your ashen hair Shulamith we shovel a grave in  
 the air there you won't lie too cramped...  
 He shouts plays death more sweetly this death is  
 a master from Deutschland  
 He shouts scrape your strings darker you will  
 rise then as smoke to the sky  
 You will have a grave in the clouds there you  
 won't lie too cramped  
 Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night  
 We drink you at midday Death is a master aus  
 Deutschland  
 We drink you at evening and morning we drink  
 and we drink  
 This death is ein Meister aus Deutschland his  
 eye it is blue  
 He shoots you with shots made of lead shoots  
 you level and true  
 A man lives in your house your golden hair  
 Margarete  
 He sets his hounds on us grants us graves in the  
 air  
 And plays with his vipers and dreams this death  
 is a master from  
 Deutschland  
 Your golden hair Margarete  
 Your ashy hair Shulamith

3. Kenneth Foote (1990:387) observes varying possibilities for such memorial sites: sanctification, where a site such as a concentration camp will be accompanied by a constructed memorial such as a building, statue or park and a ritual dedication of the site to the

event; designation, similar to sanctification but not marked by the ritual or religious overtones of the latter; rectification, where an existing building is 'put right', generally after an accident or tragedy for subsequent use as a memorial and, finally, effacement, which occurs both actively and passively after a shameful event and involves obliteration of evidence of violence, for example, Spandau Prison, the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin and the Bastille, Paris.

4. The full report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, 2003, is available on <http://www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/2003/trc>
5. For a full discussion of this event, see Schmidt (1983) *Now you have touched the women*. The song is:  
*Wathint' abafazi'*  
*Wathint' imbokodo*  
*Uzo kuf!a*  
 You have touched the women...  
 You have struck a rock,  
 You have dislodged a boulder  
 You will be crushed!
6. For the background to the Legacy Project, see the speech by Ms B Mabandla, Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, announcing the competition winners. Available at <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2000/000313955a1010.htm>. Also note that Wilma Cruise was awarded the commission in partnership with Marcus Holmes.
7. This means 'the place in praise of women' (ANC daily news briefing, 2000).
8. Mollo is a Sotho word for 'fire'.
9. The words "You have touched the women, you have struck a rock" are repeated in Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Pedi, Seswati, Sotho, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Zulu and Xhosa.

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