Monuments and the End of Empire
Readings

• Whelan 2002
  – Fate of British monuments in Nationalist Dublin

• Larsen 2012
  – Fate of colonial era monuments in post-independence Kenya
Memory

- The power of memory

- Colonial Era:
  - Colonial power wants to assert its narratives, myths, stories, memories

- Post-Colonial Era:
  - Independent state wants to assert its own narratives, myths, stories, memories

- Replace the old monuments with new
Whelan 2002

• Statues of British monarchs erected in Dublin in C18th-19th
• Deliberately damaged by Irish Nationalists as symbols of British rule
Statues under British Rule

• Erected 1701-1908 as monuments to British rule in Ireland
• Few statues commemorating the Irish
  – Begin after 1850
• A symbolic landscape of colonialism
Figure 2. The statue of King William II during the visit to Ireland of the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1868. From Illustrated London News, 25 April 1868.
Figure 5. The unveiling of the Queen Victoria Monument, 1908. From The Capuchin Annual, 1975.
Figure 4. Malton’s view of St Stephen’s Green (plate 23). Note the location of the statue of King George II in the centre. From J. Malton, *A picturesque and descriptive view of the city of Dublin* (Dublin, 1799), reproduced in J. Malton, *Georgian Dublin* (Dublin, 1996), with text by M. Craig.
Nationalist Iconoclasm

- Desire to honour Republican heroes
- But some reluctance to destroy even the statues of colonialism
  - George III dynamited 1928
  - George I removed and eventually given to the City of Birmingham
  - George II blown up 1937
  - Queen Vic removed 1948, given to Sydney NSW in 1986
Larsen 2012

- Nairobi a colonial creation
- British declare a protectorate over east Africa in 1895, begin building a railway
- Bring in 38,000 indentured Indians to build the railway
- Railway chooses Nairobi as a focus 1899
Nairobi 1900-1910

- No prior African urban population
- Tri-racial community:
  - Europeans (mainly from South Africa)
  - Indians
  - Africans
- Erects statue of Queen Victoria 1906
Nairobi

• Created at the height of the British Empire
• Planned and laid out as a model colonial town
  – Important colonial government buildings
  – Streets named after important colonial figures
  – Monuments erected to promote the colonial order
• Creation of memory
6th Avenue later Delamere Ave
• Eastleigh, Nairobi
1950s
Goans in East Africa
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Nairobi

- Monuments to British monarchs
  - Queen Victoria
  - King George V, King George VI
- Monuments to the war dead
  - Obelisk, African War Memorial, East African Memorial
- Monuments to white settlers
• Obelisk on Kenyatta Ave
Settler Monuments

• The last to be installed
• Came after 1930s
• White settlers aware of rising African nationalism
  – Monuments created to assert settler defiance
Monuments and the End of Colonial Rule

- The departing British aware that their colonial monuments might be unpopular
- Not really needed in Britain
- Arrangements to remove monuments likely to offend
Settler Monuments

• The first to come down
• Lord Delamere statue removed 1963 before independence
  – African crowd cheers
• Delamere Avenue renamed
  – African vendors take over the statue site
Lord Delamere

- The Nairobi statue returned to Delamere’s family
- Place it on their Kenyan estate
Royal Statues

• British ask, but at first the incoming Kenyan government see no urgency to remove royal statues
• Then the Kenyans change their mind, remove King George V and plaque to King George VI in 1964
  – These have now vanished
  – Statues to Kenyatta take their place
Changes

• Delamere Avenue becomes Kenyatta Avenue
• Statues of Kenyatta installed early in the Kenyatta presidency
• Many other statues added since
  – Nurturing an emerging Kenyan nationalist narrative
Nairobi

- Removal of colonial-era monuments not just the result of power changing hands
- Also connected to the creation of new nationalist myths, narratives, memories of the independence era.
Noveau Dublin

• Dublin has renewed its public monuments
Daniel O’Connell
“The Silletto in the Ghetto”
“The Floozie in the Jacuzzi”
“Hags with Bags”