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## **A 'secret history' of local mourning: the South African War and state commemoration**

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*A central claim in the war commemoration literature is that World War I brought about a fundamental change in state commemorative practices. This argument is problematised using a case study concerned with the relationship between local mourning, state commemoration and remembrance following the South African War of 1899-1902, in which meanings about nationalism, belonging and citizenship have been inscribed within a 'legendary topography' which has concretised remembrance in commemorative memorials and monuments. Two silences in commemoration from this War – a partial one concerning children and a more total one concerning all black people – are teased out in relation to the Vrouemonument built in 1913, the Gedenktuine or Gardens of Remembrance constructed during the 1960s and 70s, and some post-1994 initiatives, and also related to ideas about citizenship and belonging. Many commemorative practices claimed as originating in Europe between 1914 and 1918 were predated by these of the South Africa War, which sometimes acted as a direct prototype for later European ones.*

“One must never forget, and precisely for political reasons, that the mystery that is incorporated, then repressed, is never destroyed. This genealogy has an axiom, namely that history never effaces what it buries; it always keeps within itself the secret of whatever it encrypts, the secret of its secret. This is a secret history of kept secrets. For that reason the genealogy is also an economy”<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction: war commemoration, the nation and the state**

There is a growing body of work analysing memory, remembrance and state commemoration in Africa<sup>2</sup>. My particular interest is in war commemoration, specifically commemoration practices stemming from the South African War of 1899-1902 around the changing parameters of the (republican and colonial, then national) state<sup>3</sup>. In the wake of the South

1. Derrida 1995, p.21.

2. See for instance Deacon 1993, Delmont 1993, Doominy & Callinicos 1999, Hall & Lillie 1993, Krog 1998, Kros 1998, Nuttall and Coetzee 1998, *South African Historical Journal* 1993, van der Watt 1998, Witz 1997, Witz et al 1999; while Gaskell and Unterhalter 1989, Brink 1990, Brink and Krige 1999 and Grundlingh 1998 are highly relevant precursors to my discussion here. For memory, the past and Africa more generally, see Amadiume and An-Na'im 2000, Combes 1994, and Mudimbe 1988, 1994.

African War, 'local mourning' involved the expression of grief about the deaths of people known, loved and remembered, and it was intensely bound up with naming the dead and inscribing their names on memorials of different kinds<sup>1</sup>. The 'name after name after name' character of local mourning was then re-written by being incorporated within collective practices engaged in to commemorate the dead and so remember them. One element of this involves war commemoration on the part of the state (or, in the example discussed later, quasi-state), which inscribed meanings about the South African War and its dead onto the moral and political landscape. This landscape is both symbolic and literal, with war commemoration including monuments, ceremonial marches, remembrance ceremonies, gardens of remembrance, and a range of ways of organising and indeed orchestrating memory through testimony<sup>2</sup>. Public remembrance and commemoration and their relationship to the social organisation of death are central sociological topics. Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, for instance, sees public ceremonials, of which commemorations of the war dead are a part, as fundamental to how a society is organised and 'works':

Society cannot make its influence felt unless it is in action and it is not in action unless the individuals who compose it are assembled together and act in common ... There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality. Now this moral remaking cannot be achieved except by the means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments<sup>3</sup>

'The state' in South Africa post-1902, post-1910, post-1948, and post-1994, has differed significantly and has organised and responded to remembrance of the South African War and its dead differently over time; and this has substantially impacted upon the moral landscape of remembrance, which Maurice Halbwachs has termed a 'legendary topography'<sup>4</sup>. The legendary topography of the South African War has included 'concretised' remembrance in an array of commemorative memorials and monuments<sup>5</sup>, embedded in a moral geography 'read', understood and used around ideas about what happened and notions of justice and injustice ascribed to this. These moral meanings have been inscribed onto and successively reworked within the political and physical landscape of South Africa. Some of the factors shaping the moral landscape of commemoration of the South African War

3. The literature is voluminous; work drawn on includes Hall 1999; Hobhouse 1902, 1923, 1927; Lowry 2000; Nasson 1991, 1999a, 1999b; Pretorius 1985, 1990, 1999, 2001; *South African Historical Journal* 1999; Spies 1977; Surridge 1998; Suttie 1998; Van Reenen 1984; Vorster 1990; Warwick, 1983; Warwick & Spies 1980.

1. This is not to imply that mourning is not social through and through; it is, however, to insist on its specificity.

2. See Stanley 2002a for this regarding the South African War.

3. Durkheim 1915, pp. 418, 427. Durkheim's argument is that such beliefs and ceremonies are examples of wider collective social forms than just 'the religious life'.

4. Halbwachs 1952/1992. Halbwachs means a landscape 'seen' through a strong set of convictions about past events believed to have taken place within it.

5. See Oberholster 1972 and Dreyer nd.

are explored in what follows, starting with the Vrouemonument, the Women's Monument in Bloemfontein in the Free State, originally to have been an expression of local mourning but which was overtaken by the commemoration activities of a quasi-state, in which both pan-Boer nationalistic sentiment and a broader humanitarian impulse were involved.

Derrida's idea of a 'secret history of kept secrets', in the epigraph to this discussion, is concerned with the way that mysteries, once incorporated, become 'secrets then repressed'. These become speaking silences, silences which resound. The 'secret history of kept secrets' forms a dynamic of forgetting and remembering: it becomes a genealogy (it is successive) and economy (it involves a dynamic of values and exchanges) and its reverberations spread outwards, eventually gaining an 'everywhere and nowhere' quality. As used here, 'mysteries' and 'secret history' refer specifically to the submergence over time of local mourning within war commemoration after 1902.

There is now an extremely interesting literature on war commemoration<sup>1</sup>. This is predicated upon European wars and contains assumptions, about when, where and how modern war commemoration practices came into existence, which need problematising. In his insightful analysis of state commemoration practices in Zimbabwe, Richard Werbner summarises the defining premises of this body of work:

The biopolitics of remembered identity in the nation-state have never been the same since the First World War. With that watershed in modern warfare, marked by conscription and mass death in the trenches, came new, modern ways of memorialising the common soldier. The change was – at least for the Great Powers – a radical shift in the command by the state over the identities of the war dead. The state reached well beyond its old limits; it encompassed painstakingly, as never before, the individuality of the common soldier. The state no longer tolerated that unsacralised oblivion for the dead which left common soldiers anonymous, missing without trace, and, worse still, beyond the pale of the commemorated nation. Instead, their names, their dates of birth and death, their bodies and last resting places, all became the object of elaborate state remembrance, equally for all, on an unprecedented scale. This standardised practice, so distinctively the modern democracy of death, appeared most strikingly in the making for the first time of mass military cemeteries with row after row of uniform graves on standardised plots for individuals ...<sup>2</sup>

The consequence, as Werbner notes, was the incorporation into citizenship of many more 'common' people, in a greatly expanded franchise.

The intersection of local mourning and commemoration stemming from the South African War enables these assumptions to be confronted with an antecedent set of war commemoration practices. These too were concerned with the individual singularity of the 'common dead' and utilised distinctive forms of memorialising, but occurred before World War I and in an 'Other' to Europe. The South African War dead were buried in mass standardised cemeteries, and memorialising practices for them inscribed the relationship between the name, the individual, the collective and the state in a distinctive way; and

1. See for example Amadiume and An-Na'im 2000; Ashplant et al 2000; Davies 1993; Gillis 1994; King 1998; Lloyd 1998; Nuttall and Coetzee 1998 Sivan and Winter 1999; Werbner 1998a; Winter 1977, 1985, 1988, 1995

2. Werbner 1998b, p.71. This excellent case study stands without being hitched to these premises.

as a consequence, ideas about 'belonging' and citizenship were re-configured. Moreover, the evidence sketched out here shows not only that there was an earlier reconfiguration of mourning and commemoration, but also that the later European experience directly drew upon mourning and commemoration practices of the South African War<sup>1</sup>.

The building and dedication of the Vrouemonument in 1913 to commemorate the women and children who died during the South African War in the concentration camps established by the British military is the organising point of this discussion<sup>2</sup>. Commenting on the Vrouemonument in discussing changes in the configuration of Afrikaner motherhood, Deborah Gaitskell and Elaine Unterhalter suggest that "The sufferings of Afrikaner mothers were central to the emotional portrayal of the nation's agony since both were seen as blameless victims", with the Women's Monument giving expression to "the deep sense of devastation which the people felt in defeat"<sup>3</sup>. Gaitskell and Unterhalter see Afrikaner nationalism as already formed by 1913 and the Vrouemonument a key expression of it. However, the evidence considered here suggests that the Vrouemonument was not an expression of nationalism, but rather one of a number of phenomena around which nationalist sentiment was gradually being constructed, with women inscribed more as co-participants than simply as 'mothers'<sup>4</sup>.

A complex set of political events, both before and after Union in 1910, underpinned the Vrouemonument and what it was seen to commemorate. Some of the twenty thousand people who attended its dedication and unveiling in December 1913 would have had considerable knowledge of these; others much less<sup>5</sup>. And, for the small number directly

1. I am *not* thereby suggesting that the South African case is paradigmatic, being always suspicious of claims of 'originating moments' for complex social practices.
2. The concentration camps were established by the British military as a part of its 'scorched earth' policy. People were 'removed' from burned farms and transported long distances to camps. Many children were already ill with a virulent strain of measles. Living under canvas meant exposure to extremes of temperatures. Boer propaganda about the wealth and social status of Boer farmers resulted in rations set centrally at very low levels. Camp superintendents often received no warning of the arrival of large numbers of newly 'removed' people and were unable to adequately provision them on first arrival. Epidemics of measles and pneumonia, 'enteric fever' (typhoid), diphtheria, enteritis and dysentery took their toll in an unfolding tragedy in which over 26,000 Boer people died, over 22,000 of them children. Some present-day South African commentators present these camps as a direct precursor of the Nazi concentration camps, which seems misguided on a number of levels. The archival evidence suggests that what seemed a 'good idea' to the military and endorsed by men in London failed to understand the size and climate of South Africa and the difficulties of supplying a 'concentrated' population of some hundreds of thousands. What resulted was sometimes ameliorated by competent and humanitarian camp superintendents and medical personnel, sometimes made worse by the incompetent or uncaring. Nazi use of the term 'concentration camp' to describe their death camps was influenced by South Africans present in Nazi Germany for education purposes; and this in turn was milked after 1948 for nationalistic purposes.
3. Gaitskell and Unterhalter 1989 p.61.
4. By a different route, my argument parallels Du Toit 1983, Akenson 1992 and Tamarkin 1996, that it was only after the South African War that a sense of 'Afrikaner nationalism' came into being, and is *contra* that of Moodie 1975.
5. See van Schoor 1993, using contemporary sources.

involved in planning and organising this ceremony, there was additional privy knowledge about 'behind the scenes' matters, some aspects of which were actively hidden from public gaze, while others became forgotten over time. Even in 1913 the meanings held by the monument were multiple and intertwined with the wider dynamics of mourning and war commemoration; and these were 'there', but lodged primarily in people's minds and feelings, rather than being inscribed in a literal sense on the face of the monument<sup>1</sup>.

### Local mourning and emergent pan-Boer nationalism

The Vrouemonument was dedicated on Dingaan's Day, 16 December 1913<sup>2</sup>. Planning began in July 1906, a national competition for designs was held, and money was raised through donations by July 1911. State commemorations of women are very rare – the state in whatever country rarely bothers with commemorating women<sup>3</sup>. Consequently the existence in South Africa of a national memorial to women is intriguing and requires explanation as an exception to a *de facto* rule.

Emily Hobhouse's work in distributing relief and campaigning against conditions in the white concentration camps of the War is of course well-known<sup>4</sup>. Hobhouse was invited to return to South Africa to participate in the commemoration ceremony. When she died in 1926, her ashes were interred at the base of the Vrouemonument<sup>5</sup>. Hobhouse was invited not just to the ceremony, but also to unveil the monument. However, although she reached South Africa, her heart condition prevented her from travelling to Bloemfontein, and so her speech was printed as a pamphlet and distributed to the crowd at the ceremony, and also read aloud by a member of the organising committee, Charles Fichardt<sup>6</sup>, while Mrs Steyn unveiled the monument at its conclusion<sup>7</sup>. However, Hobhouse's speech was read in a shortened form, and a version published in a commemorative issue of the Free State newspaper *Die Volksblad* on Saturday 13 December 1913 had three pieces of text censored from it<sup>8</sup>.

Hobhouse argued, firstly, that withholding rights and freedoms from black people was a direct parallel to what the British had done to the Boers; secondly, that Britain too was

1. Here I agree with Grundlingh 1998, that over time many mutations of meaning concerning the Vrouemonument have occurred; see also Grundlingh 1999 for the 'legacy of bitterness' from the War.
2. During the 1920s and 30s, the nationalist symbolism of this date became considerably stronger. See du Toit 1983 and Cauthen 1997 for interesting discussions, and also Malkki 1995 looking at something similar in a different national context.
3. Higonnet *et al* (1987, p.11) make this point about commemoration following World War I; it has wider applicability.
4. See here Balme 1994, Fisher 1971.
5. Much of the practical work Hobhouse did was in the Bloemfontein camp, so in part the sentiment was a local one.
6. She stayed in the Fichardt family home while in Bloemfontein; his mother Caroline was a particular friend.
7. Rachel Isabella Steyn, wife of Marthinus Steyn, ex-President of the Free State, was a close friend of Hobhouse's; for their correspondence, see Bloemfontein Archives Depot A156: 1/1/11 - 1/11/14.
8. See van Reenen 1984, pp.515-6.

still struggling to accept that liberty existed only to the extent that it was “without distinction of race, colour or sex”; and thirdly, that so-called ‘civilised’ nations were the real barbarians in killing on a mass-scale, in contrast to the supposed barbarians (Hobhouse referred specifically to Dingaan<sup>1</sup>), while justice required remembering how many black people had died during the War<sup>2</sup>. As well as the resounding silence about ‘race’ matters imposed by censoring these parts of her speech, there was a more ambiguous silence at the ceremony, and indeed on the monument itself, concerning the children who had died relative to the primacy given to commemorating women. These two silences are interestingly configured at a number of linked sites at Brandfort in the Free State, and have been re-configured subsequently, including in 1999 when a memorial to the dead from the black camp at nearby Nooitgedacht was commemorated.

As **Photograph 1** shows, the Vrouemonument’s central pillar has a dedicatory inscription and is surmounted by bronze figures of a younger woman holding a dying child and an older woman in a kappie standing and looking resolutely outward. The inscription is in Dutch, rather than Afrikaans or its earlier incarnation ‘the Taal’, and is ‘To our heroines/ and beloved children’<sup>3</sup>. The two side-panels, like the sculptures, are by Anton van Wouw and cast in bas-relief bronze<sup>4</sup>. The left panel facing the monument shows some children and a woman watching a mother nurse her dying child, under the banner in Dutch of the biblical phrase ‘I will not fail thee, nor will I forsake thee’. The right panel facing it shows a row of adult women wearing kappies standing waiting to enter a camp with some children, under the banner of ‘for freedom, volk and fatherland’<sup>5</sup>.

Later a number of quasi-state commemorative graves were made at the foot of the Vrouemonument: ex-President Steyn was interred centrally under the pillar in 1916; the legendary Free State General Chistiaan de Wet was interred to its right (facing) in 1922; and Ds John Kestell, chaplain to Steyn and de Wet, was interred to its left in 1941. Later some 1970s changes re-aligned the path leading up to the Vrouemonument, so that visitors now approach it head-on and are increasingly dwarfed by it, while commemorative tablets for each of the camps in which Boer women and children were ‘concentrated’ were placed along the path and inscribe the numbers of people who died in them<sup>6</sup>. These add consider-

1. Dedicating the monument on this date was clearly intended to be performative in a ‘national sentiment’ sense; Hobhouse’s statement about the equal barbarism of whites was thereby a contrary political statement.
2. For varied discussions, see Devitt 1941; Martin 1957; Warwick 1983; followed by de Reuck 1999; Nasson 1991, 1999a; Fetter & Kessler 1996; Kessler 1999; Mongalo and du Pisani 1999; and various contributors to Pretorius 2001.
3. The full text in English is ‘To our/ heroines /and beloved children / “Thy will be done” /This national monument/was erected/in memory of the/26,370 women and children/who died in the concentration camps/and of other/women and children/who died at other places as a result/of the war 1899-1902/ Unveiled 16 December 1913’.
4. Van Wouw first gained acclaim for his statue of Paul Kruger in Pretoria and later worked on the Voortrekker monument; for this latter, see Delmont 1993.
5. ‘Volk’ does not easily map on to the English ‘people’ or ‘nation’ and has specific meanings in this context.



Photograph 1 Vrouemonument, Bloemfontein

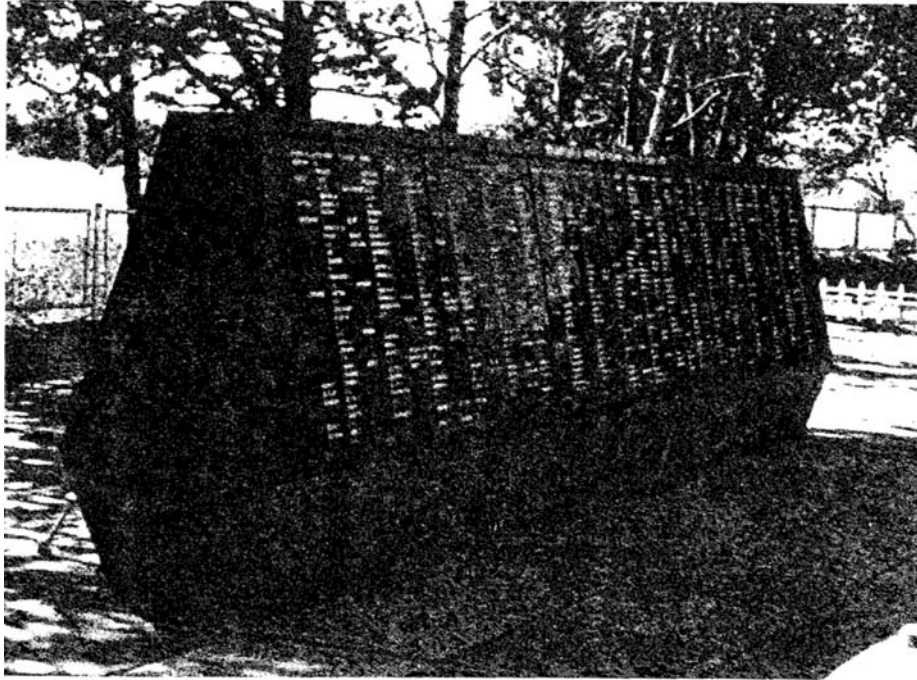
ably to the emotional impact, for they 'toll the knell' for the dead, by emphasising how many died there, how many there, and there.

A women's monument was commemorated in 1906 at the Dutch Reform Church in Brandfort. Along with the Vrouemonument, this is one of the few town memorials commemorating those who died in the camps<sup>1</sup>. Brandfort camp was situated on Louvain farm, just outside the town. As any post-1994 visitor to Louvain becomes aware, there are two camps now commemorated here: Brandfort white camp<sup>2</sup> and, on the adjacent farm, Nooit-

6. A group of eleven small 'relief' camps are commemorated on one collective tablet.



gedacht black camp. A mile or two apart, as an information board at the farm emphasises, the proximity of Nooitgedacht and Brandfort camps indicates the 'together/apart' nature of the relationship between their inhabitants, something also demonstrated by their very different commemorative histories<sup>1</sup>.

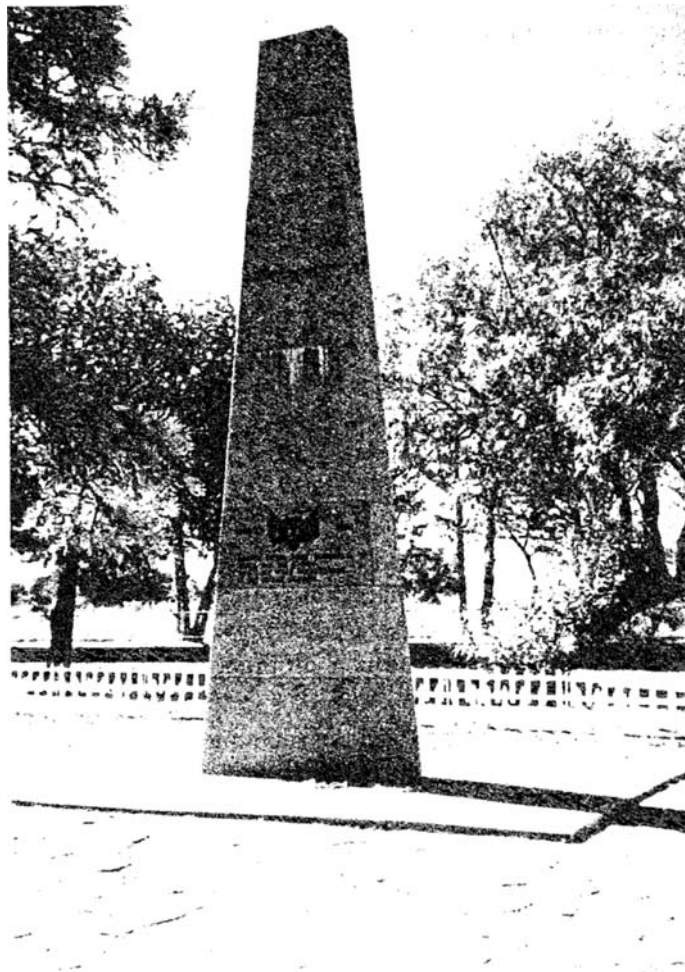


**Photograph 2** Granite monument, Brandfort

The cemetery of Brandfort camp is now a Gedenktuin (garden of remembrance) dating from the 1960s<sup>2</sup> and it shares a number of distinctive features with other Gedenktuine across South Africa. It has a low stone perimeter wall and a covered gateway. Only a few original gravestones have been incorporated. A path is marked out and deviating from it entails stepping onto sacralised ground. The path takes the visitor immediately to its dominating feature, a massive polished black granite stone shown in **Photograph 2**, also dating

1. For the burgher/commando memorials, see Dreyer nd, Oberholster 1972. The Vrouemonument is the only memorial not concerned with the dead in a particular camp. There are, however, many memorials to the camp dead at specific local sites, as later discussion shows.
2. This is not to suggest there were no black and coloured people in the white camps – numbers were present in a variety of service roles.
  1. At least seven black camps, at Aliwal North, Bloemfontein, Brandfort, Harrismith, Heilbron, Kimberley and Vredefort, were in close proximity to white camps and administered with these until the 'Natives Refugee Department' (later Native Affairs) was formed in July 1901.
  2. I am extremely grateful to the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) in Johannesburg for permission to consult its records concerning the camp cemeteries. See here SAHRA Brandfort 7/6/4/7.

from the 1960s, with the names and dates of death of those who died here inscribed on both sides. The eye is taken down columns recording name after name in alphabetical order, more than a thousand times. The next notable feature, shown in **Photograph 3**, is a sandstone stele located away from the path. This is inscribed in Afrikaans, 'Rest in peace tender blossoms,/sacrifice of the storm./Out of weak mother's tears,/this stone was formed' (a verse from A.G. Visser's poem 'By die monument'), and is surmounted by two furled flags on either side of the emblem of the Republic of the Free State<sup>1</sup>. On the outside wall near the exit gate, a row of nine identical kappies<sup>2</sup> in sandstone bas-reliefs is inserted into the wall, a reminder of the women and girls who died and a symbol of 'the volk' and a way of life.



**Photograph 3** Stele, Brandfort

1. From the kind of Afrikaans used, this probably dates from the 1960s.
2. Sun-bonnets traditionally worn by Boer girls and women.

Brandfort Gedenktuin is clearly space and place made sacred. The living are regulated within its confines and it imposes an unmistakable moral order: visitors enter a gate and are led first to the inscribed stone; they walk along the path, with its occasional gravestones set in the sacralised areas; they arrive at the commemorative stele; and leave by another gate. The inscribed granite lists people's names, one after the other in a long uniform succession. The stele is very different, with its insistence on the singular death of the Free State Republic, coupled with the many deaths of the 'tender blossoms', the children whose mothers' tears had turned to stone. The overwhelming impression is of regulation, order and governing silence. Brandfort Gedenktuin is both a testimony to 1960s nationalism and also a very moving place with its reminders of suffering and sorrow and the terrible fact that over a thousand children have been re-interred here.

There are some stark contrasts with Nooitgedacht. This cemetery was only recently 'discovered', and then commemorated in October 1999 when at a ceremony also attended by the Duke of Kent representing Britain, Thabo Mbeki laid a wreath and in a 'nation building' speech emphasised the shared suffering of black people and Boers imposed by British imperialism. The farm's name 'Nooitgedacht' ('never thought of') immediately places on the moral agenda the subsequent deliberate forgetting of black people in the War and the camps. In addition, the cemetery of Nooitgedacht camp contains no gravestones at all. Given that some 1,260 people died in Brandfort white camp and only half a dozen gravestones survive, it is tempting to conclude that Nooitgedacht cemetery is not so very different in this<sup>1</sup>. However, what is different in kind, not just degree, is the absolute anonymity of the black dead and the long failure of any visible signs of mourning for them to appear in this landscape<sup>2</sup>. There is no polished granite inscribing name upon name nor any stele raised commemoratively as public markers for these dead. The demarcation of this cemetery, the information notices about the camp and its inhabitants, are all post-1994. When first re-commemorated, Nooitgedacht cemetery was simply a fence-enclosed plot; during 2000 it was landscaped, with trees, stone paths and symbolic grave mounds. What it has gained of the markers of conventional commemoration – it now mimics the Gedenktuine design – it has lost in symbolic and emotional power<sup>3</sup>. However, the visitor can enter commemorative space for the black dead in a different way, at another site on Louvain farm.

At this site there is a post-1994 sandstone monument commemorating all the now anonymous black dead who died in Nooitgedacht camp. Nooitgedacht monument, shown in **Photograph 4**, is also communal in a way that doesn't directly meet the eye, as the reader discovers on an information notice. The stones set into its top come from other

1. This resulted from a commemoration programme engaged upon by the South African War Graves Council and the Central Civilian Graves Committee, presided over by the Ministry of Internal Affairs under J. de Klerk.
2. This was a largely non-literate group of people, which needs to be taken into account. However, the memorialising involved was also very much an 'own group' phenomenon and, for the whites, 'remembering the dead' meant remembering their own dead.
3. They have now been made to look the same. However, this fudges, indeed denies, the stark differences of black and white lives and deaths at that time and subsequently.

black camps, symbolically emphasising both the anonymity and the shared fate of people in the black camps. In addition, Nootgedacht monument, crafted from rough-hewn sandstone, unlike the polished sandstone of the Brandfort stele, lies along the ground, rather than rearing up out of it. The particularity of mourning here has not been absorbed within a proclamation of nationalist commemoration with furled flags. It does not lie in demarcated sacred space, for this monument is on common ground and can be touched. And the eye of the visitor is not taken upwards to the skies, but instead along the length of the land on which it lies, so that its massive weight and solid monumentality is immediately part of the physical as well as moral landscape. It is very powerful, as well as moving.



**Photograph 4** Monument at Nootgedacht

In Brandfort Gedenktuin there is also another silence, albeit a partial and ambiguous one compared with that governing race matters, which concerns the children who died in the camps. The Brandfort commemorative tablet at the Vrouemonument site enumerates those who died in this camp: 1,021 people aged 15 and under and 242 people over 15. There are similar counts on thirty-nine tablets, and on all of them the deaths of children are considerably more than the deaths of adults. The central column of the Vrouemonument dedicates the monument to the 26,370 women and children who died in the camps. The information provided in a pamphlet on *The National Women's Monument* by N.J. van der Merwe<sup>1</sup>, written soon after 1913 and translated into English during the 1920s, provides a breakdown of fatalities in the War based on official British records but also acceptable to 'Boer

opinion'<sup>1</sup>:

**Table 1** Boer fatalities, South African War 1899-1902

Boer adult males, all fatalities		6,189
Total concentration camp deaths of women, children & boys under 16		26,370
Women & girls 16 and over	4,177	
All children under 16	22,074	
Boys over 16 <sup>a</sup>	119	

a. Given separately to emphasise that these deaths were not males of (official) fighting age.

These 26,370 deaths represent around 10% of the Boer population as a whole, and few Boer people across the four settler states did not experience the deaths of someone they knew. Around 84% of these were the deaths of children, a staggeringly high proportion of Boer children under 15, although this is not explicit in the inscription on the monument<sup>2</sup>. There is nothing 'sinister' about this, but rather a taken-for-grantedness that the 'women's monument' commemorated both women and other people as well, along with a taken-for-grantedness about how the relationship between women and state commemoration should be read.

The Women's Monument was the result, but the start was a group of Bloemfonteiners planning a 'living memorial' for local children<sup>3</sup>. So how and why did this shift occur? After the War, a working committee of Bloemfonteiners was formed to found a school or hospital or some other practical facility. However, ex-President Steyn, who had left for Holland a very ill man in 1902 after the Treaty of Vereeniging was agreed<sup>4</sup>, returned to Bloemfontein in March 1905 and when he heard of the plan insisted that there should be instead a monument to make a statement and 'capture the imagination'. Another commit-

1. Van der Merwe nd. Van der Merwe was son-in-law to Marthinus and Rachel (Tibbie) Steyn; as a child, he had been in Bloemfontein camp; he was later a National Party MP, involved in a gingergroup opposing the Hertzog line, and by 1929 chairman of an Afrikaner Broederbond offshoot, the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (FAK).
1. These figures were given to Hobhouse by P. Goldman, Clerk to the Interior of the Union of South Africa in 1914, taken from British-kept registers. Goldman's original data also included a total of 1,676 'men over 16 residing' in the camps who had died: the figure for boys over 16 is a sub-set of this.
2. As noted earlier, the key factors were epidemics of measles, pneumonia, enteric fever (typhoid) and dysentery, exacerbated by an insufficient diet, bad water, exposure to extremes of temperature under canvas and inadequate sanitation arrangements.
3. King 1998; the term became widely used in Britain after World War I for practical schemes to remember those who had died by helping those who survived; it distinguishes these from 'monumental masonry' kinds of commemoration.
4. Steyn had persistently emphasised he would rather die than capitulate the independence of the Free State Republic; the Treaty of Vereeniging was ratified and signed "without his assistance" (Van der Merwe nd, p.24). As the War ended, Steyn became paralysed by a major illness.

tee was formed in July 1906<sup>1</sup>, chaired by Steyn and composed by Free State men, including his brother J.W.G. Steyn, General Barry Hertzog, Abraham Fischer, W.J.C. Brebner, C.H. Wessels, Rev C.D. Murray, Rev Grosskopf, Charles Fichardt and Dr Stallreiter<sup>2</sup>; it thus contained a number of key 'bitter-enders' in addition to Steyn himself<sup>3</sup>. A conference was held in 1907 attended by representatives of Boer groups from all four states.

When Steyn and his committee overturned the original local plan for a living memorial by instituting a quasi-state commemoration project, it was not only Steyn's determination that was crucial but also his political and moral authority. As its President, Steyn had personified 'the Free State Republic' during the War and had refused to sign away its independence; for him and his supporters, there was more at issue than to 'remember the children', concerning the role of women in the War and the subsequent loss of independence for the Boer Republics. Women had played a crucial participatory role, including maintaining farm production, and many thousands of them became in effect prisoners-of-war in the camps. Under the terms of the Treaty of Vereeniging, the Republics had been demoted to British colonies, in the case of the former Free State losing even its name by being re-named the 'Orange River Colony', so that 'the state' in the two Republics was brought to an end; in effect killed. The Transvaal and Free State Boers became subject to direct rule by Britain, while in the Cape and Natal men deemed to have been 'rebels' lost the franchise. At the same time, the Cape retained a franchise that was property as well as sex based. So while many Boer men lost citizenship status, those non-white men who met the Cape property qualification continued to vote and retained citizenship rights there.

Between 1902 and 1913, the possibility existed that 'a nation' could be created by linking Boer patriotism to anti-British sentiment coupled with anger and grief about the War and the camps. However, a new political form was needed within which to shape this sentiment. The formerly disparate, indeed frequently conflicting, interests of Boer people living in the four settler states were gradually being re-worked into a more cohesive and oppositional form, and the organisation of the conference organised by the Steyn committee and its concern with 'commemorating the nation' bears the signs of this<sup>4</sup>. However,

1. Drawing here on Van der Merwe nd, Van Schoor 1993, and information kindly provided by Miss Elria Wessels, archivist at the War Museum of the Boer Republics. The War Museum has been unable to locate the papers of the organising committee; they are now presumed lost or destroyed.
2. These names resonate in the political landscape, although the most significant is that of Hertzog. Fischer, Brebner and Fichardt, with A.E. Ramsbottom, ran *The Friend of the Free State* on nationalist lines; Fisher had been a member of the Free State executive committee; Fichardt's brother married one of the Steyns' daughters; Fichardt himself helped to found Oranja Unie; Wessels and Fischer had been Boer envoys during the War; Grosskopf distributed aid in the camps, and his son, post-War, was a prominent nationalist. They were all 'bitter-enders' in opposition to the conciliatory approach of the Botha and Smuts government. Following a speech in early December 1912 attacking government policy made by Hertzog, then its Minister of Native Affairs, Botha had resigned then immediately reformed his ministry to exclude Hertzog. Thus, while their involvement in the monument project might have been politically 'innocent' in 1906, by 1913 it had become politically charged.
3. 'Bitter-enders' is used here of the Boer politicians and military commanders (rather than commandos 'on the grounds') who did not agree to the Treaty of Vereeniging. See Pretorius 1990, 1999; Vorster 1990.

'the nation' did not map neatly onto 'the state' in 1906, nor even after Union in 1910. Instead, it took more embryonic forms, including, in relation to the Vrouemonument and war commemoration subsequently, invocations of a pan-Boer 'nationalism within' the state, a kind of secret nation in process of becoming. There are two important questions to ask about this. One concerns what happened to grief and the emotional work of mourning as quasi-state commemoration overtook this. The other is why a pan-Boer nationalist commemoration project had not already been conceived in its own right, but instead came about by re-working something else.

An exploration of what happened to grief and mourning looks to the successive processes of inscription and naming that occurred post-War, of which the 1960s Gedenktuine programme is a fascinating aspect<sup>1</sup>. At Brandfort, for instance, the granite slabs inscribed with the names and dates of the dead constitute an inventory in which each name remains visible. However, mourning is thereby made collective by amassing and inscribing these names uniformly; and at the same time, mourning has also been highly privatised because incorporated, buried, within the totality. The names of the individual women and children who died are commemorated here, but in a formulaic way. The particularity of 'remembering the person' that the original gravestones had inscribed on them has now been superseded. Personal acts of grief and remembrance still occur, but against the grain of the Gedenktuine design<sup>2</sup>. The symbolism of the Brandfort stele with its Free State emblem and furled flags, made by women's tears turned to stone, also emphasises communality. In commemorating the death of the Republic by incorporating the 'sacrifice' of the children, the particularity of local mourning for particular people known, loved and lost vanishes; the only particularity the stele signifies is the singular mourning for the death of the Republic. But another 'secret' is also encrypted here, for state commemoration has overtaken mourning in a way that is less apparent as well.

Post-1948, the National government, through its Ministry of Internal Affairs, instituted a major programme of work for the camp cemeteries, many by then in a bad state of repair, during the 1960s. As part of this programme, the original graves were removed and the dead re-interred within the Gedenktuine design. Its characteristic features are a covered entrance and gate; low stone walls or some other enclosing device; a symbolic representation of the cemetery inside it; and black granite slabs inscribed with the names of the dead. Some also contain a commemorative sandstone stele and/or a rough-cut sandstone cairn. Sometimes in an internal or external wall there are sandstone bas-reliefs, often of kappies (the Bethulie Gedenktuin, pulling out all the emotional stops, has both kappies and babies' booties, together with a verse by the poet Totius)<sup>3</sup>.

The specific naming practices on the inscribed granite stones vary among the different

4. See van Schoor 1993.

1. Successive layers of commemorative re-working of the camp cemeteries and what they were seen to signify occurred in the 1930s, the later 1940s, the 1960s, the 1980s and around 1999.
2. On successive visits to Brandfort, for instance, flowers, toys and other offerings have been left beneath tablets with individual names on them set into the perimeter wall (some are originals, others have commemorative dates well after 1902). But as there are no more than a few dozen of these, over a thousand Brandfort dead cannot be thus 're-individualised'.

Gedenktuine<sup>1</sup>. Thus Brandfort has family names and initials and dates of death; Norval's Pont has full names and ages; Springfontein has full names, dates of death, ages and sex; Bethulie has family names and initials together with the place people had originated from; and Irene, Turffontein and Pietersburg have names and initials only<sup>2</sup>. Brandfort and Pietersburg Gedenktuine incorporate only a small number of gravestones, while at Bethulie and Irene many are placed on the inside faces of walls. In contrast, Springfontein has only minimal Gedenktuin structure – a brick entrance and wall – and contains the graves of British troops and a fairly large number of original camp graves<sup>3</sup>. The British graves at Springfontein, in their original form as well as those re-dressed in the 1950s and 1990s, are in parallel rows of evenly-spaced stones. The camp graves are less precise but still ordered in rows; many are marked by a large uncut stone, while in the ground alongside them is a small metal name-holder from which the name of the dead person has now vanished. The 'recovered' Bethulie and Irene gravestones are similar to, although generally smaller than, the remaining gravestones at other Gedenktuine and show considerable variation in shapes and styles.

Surviving photographs and the 'all styles and shapes' particularity of the remaining 'recovered' gravestones show that a range of inscription practices were used in the original camp cemeteries – related to the availability of suitable materials, proximity to towns and stone-masons, whether grave plots were shared, and the wealth or poverty of bereaved families – but situated within the prevailing conventions. The original camp cemeteries were like ordinary civilian cemeteries, then, rather than the highly formalised Gedenktuine.

The Gedenktuine design removes the individuality and specificity of local mourning – our child, my mother, our grandparents – by absorbing it within a communal and state-orchestrated commemoration project. While the inscribed granite slabs at most Gedenktuine incorporate the 'name after name' nature of local mourning, the distinctiveness of each particular life and death as inscribed by the personal information on gravestones has been encrypted, made secret: what is left is the communal form and nothing more. Even

3. Discussions occurred about using the Gedenktuine design for camp cemeteries across the Free State, Transvaal, Natal and the Northern Cape. In practice these 'land acts' were instituted mainly in the Free State.
1. Of the eighteen sites visited thus far, four (Heidelberg, Standerton, Belfast and the three Middelburg cemeteries) are exceptions in not containing inscribed granite slabs. As well as the Gedenktuine sites themselves, for what now follows, see the following SAHRA archive files: Bethulie 7/6/4/18, Brandfort 7/6/4/17, Irene 7/6/3/10, Norval's Pont 7/6/1/4/3, Springfontein 7/6/4/16, Turffontein 7/6/3/12, Pietersburg 7/6/3/11.
2. This follows the way that records were kept by the various camp administrators. Of the other camps mentioned here, there were 1,737 deaths at Bethulie, 1,263 at Brandfort, 1,179 at Irene, 366 at Norval's Pont, 704 at Springfontein, 716 at Turffontein, and 657 at Pietersburg.
3. The entrance to Springfontein was built in the mid-1990s and the granite slabs inscribed with names were set into the inner wall of this. Many of both the unnamed and the named British graves have been re-dressed in polished stone. The exceptions are graves which, immediately post-1902, were given marble memorial stones inscribed with fuller and more personal information by spouses or parents. Springfontein is distinctive, although not unique, in containing both camp and British graves.



so, the work of local mourning reasserts itself, even a hundred years later and against the grain of the Gedenktuine. Individual acts of remembrance continue<sup>1</sup>, although inevitably these are losing the 'face to face' quality they had for earlier generations. Moreover, this is to consider the effects from the viewpoint of *mourning*, local mourning and those who do it. Considered from the viewpoint of *commemoration*, the Gedenktuine make a remarkable, indeed monumental, statement of nationalist sentiment: the dead of the nation commemorated by the state across the land<sup>2</sup>.

In considering why a formal pan-Boer commemoration project was not conceived in its own right but instead took over a local mourning project, it is pertinent to note an exchange of letters between Emily Hobhouse and Jan Smuts between March and July 1913<sup>3</sup>. Hobhouse wrote to Smuts that "On your side I want to know if this really *is* a National Monument provided by the *National* movement or if it has settled down to be only a Free State and local affair ... Will it be treated as a National dedication and the Prime Minister, etc. be officially present? ... I seem to remember when I left Pretoria you and Botha were not very much inclined towards it. Personally I *cannot* think it either *should* or *could* rouse racial animosity"<sup>4</sup>. Although Hobhouse's letter has been described as 'unpropitious'<sup>5</sup>, Smuts pressed Hobhouse to accept the invitation.

In fact the evidence suggests that Smuts and Botha *had* drawn their distance and *did* view what was happening as a 'Free State nationalist and local affair'<sup>6</sup>. However, the Vrouemonument project received widespread popular support across all four states and many donations came from English-speakers as well as Boers – albeit marshalled from the Free State – it clearly touched an emotional nerve far beyond this. At least formal support was forthcoming from Botha and Smuts and both gave speeches at the unveiling ceremony. In addition, if Hobhouse had unveiled the Vrouemonument as intended, such was her standing in South Africa that her involvement would have emphasised the occasion in strongly humanitarian terms and in part defused the nationalist impulse involved<sup>7</sup>. It is in this context that Smuts's encouragement for Hobhouse to accept the invitation, and why she was invited to participate by the Steyn committee, should perhaps be read.

At the commemoration ceremony, Steyn said some opening words and then his speech

1. When I first visited Bethule Gedenktuin in August 2000, an elderly man and woman came to leave flowers. However, large numbers of camp inhabitants had been transported long distances from their homes, preventing 'local mourning' in this sense for many people.
2. In fact this is a *post hoc* fabrication, incorporating something much messier into the clear lines of 'death for the nation'; see Stanley 2002b for a discussion.
3. See van Reenen 1984, pp.389-90, 393-4; *Smuts Papers* vol III, pp.126-7, 128-30, 136-7, 137-8, 152-6. Hobhouse and Smuts had been friendly since the early 1900s, through her friendship with Isie Smuts began during the War.
4. Hobhouse to Smuts, 6 March 1913, in van Reenen 1984, p.389. By 'racial', she meant between English-speaking and Boer South Africans.
5. Ingham 1986 p.69, because arriving at the time of the Rand mining strike and Hertzog adopting an increasingly hawkish line.
6. For instance, Smuts wrote to A.B. Gillett (who had married Margaret Clark, Emily Hobhouse's co-worker on her 'Boer home industries' work) on 18 May 1913 that the 'rumpus' with Hertzog was "... all coming to a head" (quoted in Ingham 1986, p.145).

was read by Rocco de Villiers. Botha spoke and then Smuts, who stressed the shared grief of Boer families across the whole country, the need for restraint from bitterness by “those among us who recognise in the long list the names of wives, mothers, daughters or children”, and the “equal but different” role of women during the War<sup>1</sup>. Smuts was followed by Christiaan de Wet, who made an impassioned speech about restitution of pre-War Boer citizenship rights; his involvement in the 1914 uprising, the *Rebellie*, came soon after. And as noted earlier, Hobhouse’s speech was censored. It is difficult not to conclude that Botha and Smuts had been out-manoeuvred by the emergent pan-Boer and highly racialised nationalism orchestrated by Steyn and the other bitter-enders.

The character and meaning of the memorial project had changed considerably from 1906 to 1913, from a Bloemfontein initiative to remember its children to a pan-Boer and quasi-state commemorative one. The events involved, however, are revelatory in their piecemeal and happenstance character. ‘A nation’, even a ‘nation within’ like pan-Boer nationalism from 1902 on, cannot come into or out of existence by fiat<sup>2</sup>. The existence of ‘the nation/within’, in contrast to the legal entity of the state, requires *sentiment* - that is, it requires a widespread conviction of belonging, inclusion and attachment to a specific history. The events outlined here were part of attempts to create this sentiment: the Vrouemonument was not the *result* of Boer nationalism; it was rather one of the means by which this was being brought into being, taking on this meaning in a definite way only considerably *post hoc*. At the end of the War in 1902, and also in 1906 when the Steyn committee began meeting, there was no clear sense of separateness, of not belonging, around which a Boer nationalist movement could have created ‘its own’ monument, for there was no ‘it’ to do so. Even in 1913, Afrikaner nationalism was still in process of becoming, with the unveiling of the Vrouemonument and the passing of the Natives Land Act the same year as two important elements within this process.

### Citizenship, the Gendered Nation and Children

The resounding silence around the Vrouemonument concerns ‘race’. Silences on ‘race’ matters were of course multiply inscribed into the public life of the settler states well before the South African War, not just after it; and an exclusionary franchise and accompanying socio-legal practices enforcing who counted, and whose deaths as well as lives mattered, were all involved in this silence. There is also the more ambiguous silence about the large majority of deaths in the camps being those of children. This knowledge was encrypted by being subordinated to the paramountcy of mothers inscribed as sacrificing their children for the volk and fatherland. Gender is also inscribed here, complexly inter-

7. Moodie’s (1975, p.19) suggestion that Hobhouse was of little importance because the speeches made no reference to her seems quite mistaken. Hobhouse withdrew only a day or so before the unveiling and until then all the speakers expected her to be present as a central figure. The lack of reference to her is better seen as indicating the importance of her planned role. Steyn’s speech was altered to make glowing reference to her and lament her absence.

1. *Smuts Papers vol III*, p.145.

2. Although of course states can, and in South Africa did so through the 1902 Treaty of Vereeniging and the 1910 Act of Union.

twined with these apparently 'other' concerns. The Vrouemonument is of course a Women's Monument. However, the inscriptions on the Vrouemonument, Brandfort women's monument and Brandfort stele all indicate that it was not just 'women, full stop' who were being commemorated, but a specific kind of woman. These were the women who were 'the heroines of the fatherland'. As Brandfort stele expressed it, it was 'weak mother's tears' which gave rise to the hard stone of commemoration; and in this respect Gaitskell and Unterhalter's argument that it was only women as mothers who counted is quite correct<sup>1</sup>. But what the phrasing on the Vrouemonument and Brandfort stele also suggests is a 'special relationship' – these heroine-mothers were not a constituent part of the fatherland (for this was conceived in masculine terms), but had a distinctive role in relation to it.

However, the question of 'why' recurs – why should the shift from local mourning for children in 1906 eventuate in 1913 in a monument commemorating women? Why wasn't this a monument to commemorate those who died in the camps, who were overwhelmingly children? That is, if a moral and political point about 'methods of barbarism' was being made, then the unnecessary deaths of so many children would have been far and away the most emotionally powerful way to make it. On the other hand, if 'for nation read fatherland read men' was the name of the game, as Gaitskell and Unterhalter propose, then such a masculinist nationalism would have simply commandeered the project and reshaped it in its own image, commemorating the men who fought and died. But neither of these happened.

Like black people, Boer women were firmly excluded from the franchise and there was no notion they would be included in the future life of the state as envisaged when the Vrouemonument was commemorated<sup>2</sup>. But it was women who had borne the brunt of the War, the camps and the deaths of their children; it was women who had maintained agricultural production and enabled men to continue fighting; it was also women who were the mothers, not only of the children who had died, but also those born afterwards and thus who were the source of the future citizenry of the masculine state. There was wide acknowledgement that women's full participation, not just 'support' or 'suffering', had been crucial and without it the War would have ended much earlier. Boer women, then, had precisely the kind of 'outside/inside' status that the Vrouemonument as the public commemoration of the War conveys. Indeed, for many outsiders it was the kappie-wearing Boer women, with what was prototypically seen as their indomitable resolution in the face of hardships and disasters, that symbolised 'the Boers' rather than the men. 'Weak women's tears' is absolutely *not* what 'Boer women' conjured up for such observers; nor was 'the Boers' seen as a *de facto* category of men to which women were tangential.

At this point, the eye of the observer might well return to the women's figures on the Vrouemonument, for it was because of such widely-shared ideas about the strength and determination of Boer women during the War that 'the children' could be collapsed into the metaphorical category of 'mothers of the fatherland' who were strong enough to make

1. Gaitskell and Unterhalter 1989. See also Brink 1990, van Heyningen 1999, Vincent 1999.

2. There was a women's enfranchisement movement, including in the Transvaal and Free State, from around 1905 on; see Walker 1982, 1990; Vincent 1999.

this sacrifice for the volk. It is an interesting paradox that these women were the steel of emergent Boer nationalism, and not the men who were the franchise-holding citizenry of the erstwhile Boer republics. This brings with it a salutary reminder that 'the state', and its citizens, and 'the nation' and the people who compose it, are not necessarily coterminous, neither then nor now. It emphasises that notions of citizenship cannot be collapsed into specific franchise arrangements. And it also shows that 'gender' can be highly complex, internally-fractured and contain subtle inversions of expected hierarchies.

The words of the Brandfort stele, 'sacrifice of the storm', are also an encrypted way of recognising that the children had indeed been 'sacrificed' in a War that their mothers as much as their fathers had insisted on fighting to the bitter end. This too is involved in explaining why a women's and not a children's memorial eventuated. The deaths in the camps escalated and peaked in October, November and December 1901<sup>1</sup>. In November 1901, a formal exchange occurred between Kitchener as commander-in-chief of the British military, and Schalk Burger and Frank Reitz as acting President and Secretary of State of the Transvaal respectively<sup>2</sup>. Camp conditions and in particular the death rates were raised, and Kitchener in response offered to have the camps evacuated and their occupants transported to the Boer lines; Hobhouse in *The Brunt* wrote without comment that "No information has yet been received as to how this offer was met by the Boer officers, and we do not know if the permission was made known to the women in the camps"<sup>3</sup>. One possibility here is that political and moral guilt produced by the post-War public realisation of the scale of deaths in the camps led to the Vrouemonument as a symbolic reparation to the women whose children had died because the state (and the men who composed it) had seen their deaths as politically necessary, as precisely a 'sacrifice' of the 'tender blossoms'. Another is that the pain and buried guilt of mourning parents for the deaths of these 22,000 children remained too terrible, too tragic, to be openly inscribed. Hobhouse also commented that: "From the one side or the other it was clear that the Boer women with their little ones must suffer. They were between the devil and the deep blue sea"<sup>4</sup>. Indeed.

## War commemoration and the South African case

Some of the conclusions to be drawn from this discussion will be apparent. The Vroue-

1. The extent to which the 'ordinary' commandos knew the full extent of what was happening in the camps is debatable. Pretorius 1999, for instance, suggests that there was little awareness of it until the War ended. However, there were large groups of Boer surrenderers in most of the camps, and also military camps for wounded and prisoners of war around many of them. Regarding the November 1901 exchange between Burger and Reitz and General Kitchener, Hobhouse (1902, p.108) commented that this was "prompted by the tidings which must have penetrated to the commandos, of the appalling figure which the October mortality in the Camps had reached".
2. President Kruger had left the Transvaal for Holland, and the younger President Steyn had gone on commando to avoid capture.
3. Hobhouse 1902, p.112.
4. Hobhouse 1902, p.102. She described the purpose of this book as to "portray the sufferings of the weak and young with truth and moderation", rejected seeing one side as barbarians and the other as civilised, and emphasised that "in reality, all war is barbarous, varying only in degree" (p.xvi).

monument commemorates an emergent 'nation within' of pan-Boer sentiment across the four settler states, but took on a clearly nationalistic meaning only gradually, with the Bloemfontein conference in 1906, Union in 1910, and the dedication of the Vrouemonument in 1913, being markers along the way. Many complex feelings about grief, mourning, guilt and anger are encrypted as the 'secret of its secrets', as Derrida phrases it, and this involves an economy of meaning and memory which is by no means yet effaced. There are some additional conclusions to be drawn.

The 'new command of the nation-state' that Werbner refers to did not originate around the commemorative practices of World War I in Europe – most of the constituent features of this can be found in connection with the South African War of 1899-1902. In the South African context, these definitional practices did not occur over the bodies of the common soldier, but rather those of women. These women were not the literal dead, who were both black and white and overwhelmingly children rather than adults, but instead the Boer women whose more than 22,000 children had died as 'a sacrifice' for 'the fatherland'. The defining practice involved was not the military cemetery, but took three related forms, which have marked the moral as well as geographical landscape of South Africa subsequently in very powerful ways. The first is the 'name after name' character of mourning and its project of inscribing the particularity and individuality of those who died in the camps. The second concerns the monuments and memorials that, like the Vrouemonument, removed specificity and the signs of mourning by inscribing commonality within commemoration, thereby removing from sight those who actually died. And the third is the vast 'forgetting' of the suffering and deaths of black people and the partial and ambiguous forgetting of the deaths of children.

Other South African War commemorative practices also predate those claimed as unprecedented 'inventions' of World War I. In the South African War, the British military dead were frequently buried in organised mass cemeteries, typically at the places where they died, with similar naming details recorded for all the dead where possible. These graves and cemeteries were located in the places where the deaths had occurred, compelled by long distances between battlefield sites and the nearest towns and cemeteries. Military cemeteries from the South African War are marked by impersonalisation and military precision in the placing and spacing of graves in serried rows. In addition, the war commemoration literature has failed to 'see' the memorials of the South African War that exist in Britain and in the other settler colonies whose troops fought in the War, particularly New Zealand, Australia and Canada. In fact a large number of memorials commemorating the South African War (around a thousand) remain publicly visible in Britain; it is by no means the case that these exist only in South Africa, where a European eye might not discern their existence<sup>1</sup>. In addition, like memorials to the dead of World War I, many of these have an 'empty grave/cenotaph' quality to them, for few bodies of those who died were taken back to their home countries.

And once the existence of South African War memorials in Britain is drawn into the

1. My gratitude to Nick Hewitt, co-ordinator of the National Inventory of War Memorials at the UK's Imperial War Museum, for access to the project database. See Gildea 1911 for an interesting contemporary account of those commemorated in Britain.

frame, the fact that South African War commemorative practices sometimes acted as direct prototypes for 1914-1918 commemoration comes into analytical sight<sup>1</sup>. One aspect of this concerns the Boer commando practice (following Zulu custom) of making piled-up cairns of sandstone boulders to mark commemorative sites. This directly influenced the presence of cairns in a large number of British Boer War memorials, and thence the far greater numbers of these in World War I commemorative architecture. A second example concerns the Boer practice of naming commando members on memorials without distinction of rank. This also occurred on a small number of British Boer War memorials, all of them commemorating men in volunteer brigades rather than regular army troops<sup>2</sup>, with this later becoming one of the apparent hallmarks of World War I memorials<sup>3</sup>. A third example concerns the Boer practice of commemorating 'the brave' and not just 'the fallen', by inscribing the names of all the (white) men who fought and not just those who died. Again, there are a number of Boer War memorials in Britain which also record the names of all the men who fought in this War<sup>4</sup>; however, this practice did not continue on the memorials of World War I, because the numbers involved were too immense to permit it. And a fourth example concerns the fact that in some instances World War I memorials in Britain were grafted onto already existing South African War ones, with such 'grafting' occurring on a major scale when World War II commemorations were added to World War I monuments.

The epigraph from Derrida at the start of this discussion proposes that once mysteries are incorporated they remain, for history and the passing of time does not efface secrets but instead buries them, so that an economy of their continued influence, and also their continual absorption of new meaning, is established. A 'mystery' or a 'secret' as interpreted here concerns privy knowledge. Privy knowledge can be so well known that it is not deemed necessary to state it, as with the fact that the 'Women's Monument' incorporated commemoration of the deaths of almost a whole generation of Boer children. But of course privy knowledge can also concern what is considered subsidiary or taboo, as with the commemorative excision of the many deaths of women and children in the black concentration camps, and of the participation and deaths of many black men in war activities. The genealogy of kept secrets that Derrida comments on involves an economy of continuing exchanges of knowing and not knowing. While this privy knowledge of the past may be buried, it continues to be consequential because it infuses what is seen and unseen, what is remembered and forgotten, and thus what is presumed to be known about the past. It

1. 'Anglo-Boer', 'Boer' and 'South African' War were all used contemporaneously.
2. Composed by volunteers, these brigades most closely mirrored the Boer commando groups. An example here is in Appelby in the north of England.
3. However, it is not universal in the way the war commemoration literature implies. Thus, for instance, the World War I memorial in Carlisle Cathedral in the north of England, commemorated just after this war, carefully inscribes ranks.
4. That some of these men survived and returned only becomes apparent from consulting detailed local records (see here, for example, concerning the names on a Boer War memorial plaque on St Margaret's Tower in Staveley, Cumbria, in the north of England). In South Africa, too, the fact that many of the men whose names appear on war memorials actually survived has, with the passing of time, been forgotten.

thereby reverberates and its economy continues to mark the changing moral landscape.

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