

**Memories of a Lost Cause.
Comparing remembrance of the Civil War by Southerners
to the Anglo-Boer War by Afrikaners**

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The Civil War in the United States (1861-1865) and the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902) hardly seem comparable. In the first place, the war in America was a civil war with no foreign power involved, while the one in South Africa was a colonial war in the sense that Britain entered the war as a colonial power with the objective of safeguarding her colonial supremacy in South Africa. In the second place, the Civil War was a much “bigger” war than the Anglo-Boer War, both in number of participants and in number of casualties suffered on both sides. The mere fact that no prominent historian has ever produced a comparative study of the two wars or even of aspects of the two wars, also places the comparability of the wars in doubt. However, there are a number of similarities between the two wars, such as the massive material, as well as psychological losses suffered by the vanquished in both wars; the intentional destruction of the territory of the vanquished carried out by the victorious side in both cases; the participation of blacks; the political issues relating to the abysmal fate of blacks in the eventual post-war dispensation in both cases; and lastly the fact that even though the South and the Boers were the losers, in both cases they managed to have their leaders and heroes such as Robert E. Lee and Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson in the South, and Christiaan de Wet and Koos de la Rey of the Boers, portrayed as the most able, dedicated and valiant warriors in the war, if not in the whole history of their respective countries.

One of the aspects common to both wars which certainly warrants comparative attention, is the ways in which both have in the past been, and in some instances still are commemorated, especially in the ranks of the respective vanquished and their descendants, namely the Boers (and at present the Afrikaners) in South Africa and the Southerners (former Confederates) in the USA. This article focuses on this issue. More specifically, answers will be sought to two questions, namely how both the Southerners and the Afrikaners attempted to make sense of their

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defeat while at the same time justifying their huge sacrifices; and how historical developments and especially the changing position of blacks in their respective countries, influence the way in which both Southerners and Afrikaners commemorated the war in their respective countries.

The Lost Cause

In the United States, loyal Southerners soon after the end of the Civil War began referring to the dream that they fought for as the “Lost Cause”. C. Mills explains that: “The Lost Cause is the name given to a whole body of writings, speeches, performances, prints, and other visual imagery that presented a certain version of Confederate history – as told from a Southern white perspective.”¹

Gaines M. Foster provides a different interpretation:

The Lost Cause ... should not be seen, as it so often has been, as a purely backward-looking or romantic movement. The Confederate celebration did not foster a revival of rabid sectionalism. With the exception of a few disgruntled and unreconstructed die-hards, its leaders and participants preached and practiced sectional reconciliation. Although in no way admitting error, their accounts of the war emphasized not the issues behind the conflict but the experience of battle that both North and South had shared. The Lost Cause did not signal the South’s retreat from the future, but, whether intentionally or not, it eased the region’s passage through a particularly difficult period of social change.²

Another issue regarding the Lost Cause on which there is some debate in American historical circles, is race/racism. In his authoritative study entitled *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920*, published in 1980, Charles Wilson argued that although closely related to the essence of the Lost Cause in the South, race “was not the basis of it, was not at the centre of it”. The racial attitudes of the Southerners formed only a part of the so-called “Southern Way of Life” that was perpetuated in the Cult of the Lost Cause. However in his book *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, published in 2001, David Blight states that race was, by implication at least, central in

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1. C. Mills, “Introduction”, in C. Mills & P.H. Simpson (eds), *Monuments to the Lost Cause. Women, art, and the landscapes of Southern memory* (University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 2003), p xvii.
 2. G.M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy. Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South 1865 to 1913* (Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1988).

the Southern Lost Cause narrative, since the “Southern Way of Life” was based on white supremacy.³ In South Africa, the nineteenth century “Republican way of life” was certainly also based on white supremacy, but that aspect hardly featured in the Afrikaner Lost Cause narrative.

Despite the differences of opinion on exactly what the Lost Cause encompassed, historians agree that from a Southern perspective, everything had been sacrificed for their cause. Thousands of young Southern men (and older ones as well) had thrown themselves into battle to preserve their cause, but it was all in vain. They did not lose the war because they had been beaten by a more able and gallant enemy – the North (or Yankees) only won because they had a massive numerical and monetary superiority. Mills in this regard points out that according to the Lost Cause version of Civil War history, “southern men suffered no shame in military defeat, because the war was lost only because of the industrial might and overwhelming numbers of the North.”⁴

In South Africa, hardly any use was ever made of the expression Lost Cause. A prominent general in the armed forces of the South African Republic (Transvaal) who emigrated to the United States soon after the war, Ben Viljoen, used the expression in a romance that he wrote about the war, namely *Under the Vierkleur*.⁵ The book, which was filled with sentimental memories of the war, was banned in South Africa since it criticized the British authorities severely.⁶ Viljoen probably learnt about the Lost Cause concept when he relocated to the United States. Since the cause that he and his comrades had fought for in South Africa was also lost, but nostalgic memories lingered, he could not but see the applicability of the expression to the situation of the post-war Afrikaners. That probably explains his choice of title for the romance. However, few other Afrikaners of Viljoen’s era were aware of the Lost Cause of American Southerners and the expression Lost Cause never caught on in their vocabulary.

However, even though the terminology differed between South Africa and the American South, the same line of reasoning gained

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3. Quoted in: R. Müller, “War, religion, and white supremacy in comparative perspective: South Africa and the American South”, *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 25, 1, 2004, pp 195-196.
 4. Mills, “Introduction”, p xviii.
 5. B.J. Viljoen, *Under the Vierkleur. A Romance of a Lost Cause* (Small, Maynard & Company, Boston, 1904).
 6. J.W. Meijer, *Generaal Ben Viljoen 1868-1917* (Protea Boekhuis, Pretoria, 2000), p 256.

the upper hand in Afrikaner memory about the Anglo-Boer War. Their war was lost and they were forced to give up the fight because the alternative was extinction of their race by the British. They believed that they had only lost because of the enemy's massive numerical preponderance of about 20 to 1 by the end of the war, and because the British were targeting their women and children by placing them in concentration camps, where large numbers had died. The British had not beaten the Boers – the latter had merely decided to accept a negotiated peace treaty because the British were using barbaric methods against which they were powerless.⁷ Thus the author Stuart Cloete's main character in his romance *Rags of Glory*, Louis van den Berg, says to himself on returning home after the war:

The British were of no importance now. They could do nothing more to him, these well-fed, red-faced Tommies, the smart officers on their fat, well-groomed horses. Victorious, yes. But he knew, and they knew that the Boers had never been properly beaten, had not been brought to their knees. Millions had been spent to bring about an unconditional surrender, but it had not been unconditional. There had been conditions, as there had to be with so many Boers still in the field at the end of it.⁸

These sentiments were shared by the vast majority of former Boer fighters and their descendants.

Religious interpretation

One of the most difficult challenges facing the survivors on the losing side after a war is how to make sense of the defeat after all the sacrifices that had been made. In both the American South and South Africa, the vanquished managed to handle this issue with relative ease. The steps taken to achieve this – taken as a matter of course, in both cases, and not as steps in the execution of a grand design – were remarkably similar. In the first place, a religious interpretation was found by both societies. Retief Müller points out that Protestant churches in both South Africa and the American South became deeply involved in the creation and Christian interpretation of cultural myths after respectively the Anglo-Boer War and the Civil War. Even though faith should ideally be distinct from

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7. For example, see: M.C.E. van Schoor (red.), *Die Stryd Tussen Boer en Brit. Die Herinneringe van die Boere-Generaal C.R. de Wet* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1999), pp 309-310; T. van Rensburg (red.), *Vir Vaderland, Vryheid en Eer. Oorlogsherinneringe van Wilhelm Mangold 1899-1902* (Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, Pretoria, 1988), p 349.
 8. S. Cloete, *Rags of Glory* (Collins, London, 1963), p 551.

cultural identity, the cultural identity of the respective churches became part and parcel of the war experience. Indeed, the interrelationship of war, religion and group identity became a highly significant historical theme in both South Africa and the American South.⁹

“Baptism of blood” became a significant phrase in the religious vocabulary of the Confederates. In South Africa, a similar belief emerged among the Afrikaner people, namely that God willed them into the war to chastise them, but will confirm them through a “baptism of fire”.¹⁰ Thus the Reverend J.D. Kestell, who served as chaplain throughout the Anglo-Boer War, wrote that “God molded the Afrikaner nation in this gigantic struggle”.¹¹ The historian Albert Grundlingh concluded that the war became part of the Afrikaners’ “sacred history”.¹² Both sides understood their group identity to be linked to Divine intention. Both believed themselves to be a specifically chosen people.

In the case of the Afrikaner community, ethnicity was always and explicitly at the forefront. For many Southerners, the Lost Cause became a natural extension of evangelical piety – a civil religion linking their sense of loss to a Christian conception of history. In South Africa, the Afrikaner Christianity became the religion of a specific ethnic group. In America, the Cult of the Lost Cause helped to absolve Southerners from guilt. In South Africa, the Afrikaners identified with the Biblical Israelites to legitimise their trek into the interior of the subcontinent. In the American South, Christian Ministers condoned slavery and later even lynching, since they believed the African-American would always be inferior. Similarly in South Africa, Afrikaner theologians condoned segregation and later apartheid on Biblical grounds.

Romanticised narratives

A second way in which both the Boers and the Southerners managed to make sense of the defeat they had suffered, was to create romanticised narratives of the wars. In these narratives, the writers emphasised and eulogised the heroism of respectively the Burghers and the Confederates in the early phases of the war, while often ignoring the final outcome.

9. Müller, “War, religion, and white supremacy”, pp 193-194.

10. Müller, “War, religion, and white supremacy”, pp 194-195.

11. J.D. Kestell, *Met de Boeren-Commando's* (Boekhandel, Amsterdam & Pretoria, geen datum), p 279.

12. A. Grundlingh, “The war in Twentieth-Century Afrikaner Consciousness”, in D. Omissi and A.S. Thompson (eds), *The Impact of the South African War* (Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2002), p 27.

Thus in South Africa, authors such as Mikro in the 1940s and 1950s wrote story-books for children and youths such as *Die jongste ruiter* (The youngest rider), *Boerseun* (Farm boy) en *Ruiter in die Nag* (Rider in the night) – a feature film was made of the latter book in the 1960s – in which the protagonists are young Burghers of whom the vast majority are between fourteen and eighteen years old. They carry out heroic deeds in the face of mortal danger against a treacherous enemy (including deserters from their own ranks who joined the British forces). Even as late as 2001, a story book of a similar nature, aimed at young readers and entitled *Tyd van die Penkoppe* (Time of the Youngsters) appeared in the press. In the latter book, as in its predecessors, all the young Boers are described as unerring sharpshooters, while the British soldiers, both officers and ordinary Tommies, are portrayed as incompetent idiots.¹³ Often in books of this nature, the final outcome of the war is never mentioned. When it is, the peace is remembered as a loss of liberty in spite of massive sacrifices. Thus in Manfred Nathan's romance *Sarie Marais*, which was published in 1938, the author lets his heroine burst into tears when she hears about the peace with the loss of republican independence: "... tears for her country, for the men who had fought and died on the battle-field, for the women and children who had roamed over the veld, or had suffered and died in the camps."¹⁴ However, even in the most nostalgic pro-Afrikaner (and by implication anti-British) war stories, the end of the war is not necessarily portrayed as the end of the world. In Mikro's *Boerseun*, the heroine tells the hero on the very last page of the book: "Look, my father is building a sturdy house out of the ashes. We are builders too, the builders of the future."¹⁵

This mode of writing has not only surfaced in fiction, but also in a number of historical studies, such as Gustav Preller's *Kaptein Hindon*, which relates this Boer scout's war exploits,¹⁶ and G.D. Scholtz's *In Doodsgevaar* (In Mortal Danger), which relates the history of the Boer spy Koos Naudé, who was active in and around Pretoria, especially during the latter half of 1901.¹⁷ Common features of these books are that they are charged with emotion and are written to enhance Afrikaner patriotism and

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13. P.W. Grobelaar, *Tyd van die Penkoppe* (Lapa, Pretoria, 2001), for example pp 8-12.
 14. M. Nathan, *Sarie Marais. A Romance of the Anglo-Boer War* (Gordon and Gotch, London, 1938), p 290.
 15. Mikro, *Boerseun* (Nasionale Pers, Kaapstad, second edition, 1944), p 235.
 16. G. Preller, *Kaptein Hindon, Oorlogsavonture van 'n Baasverkenner* (Van Schaik, Pretoria, 1916).
 17. G.D. Scholtz, *In Doodsgevaar. Die oorlogservarings van Kapt. J.J. Naudé* (Voortrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1940).

national consciousness.¹⁸ Popular Dutch and later Afrikaans-language magazines such as *Brandwag* and *Huisgenoot*, published dozens of war narratives of a similar kind throughout the first two-thirds of the twentieth century.

Another popular approach was to portray Afrikaners as victims. The most bitter memory that the Afrikaners had of the war, was the British incarceration of Boer women and children in concentration camps, where, through the incompetence and neglect of the authorities, almost 28 000 Boer people died. This loss represented about ten per cent of the total Boer population at the time.¹⁹ Emily Hobhouse, an English woman who became an Afrikaner heroine due to her exertions on behalf of the women and children suffering in these camps, wrote two books to memorialise this tragic aspect of the war, namely *The Brunt of the War and where it fell*²⁰ – which was translated into and published in Afrikaans as well – and *War without glamour, or, Women's war experiences written by themselves 1899-1902*.²¹ Another example is E. Neethling's collection of the war memoirs of women who survived the concentration camps. It is entitled *Mag ons vergeet?* (May we forget?). The following warning is printed on the title page: "NB: This book is not for those who want to forget."²²

These somewhat sentimental books were not only written to remind readers about the huge sacrifices that the Boers made for their cause, but also to set the record "right" and to educate next generations. The history syllabus in South African schools did not include any detail on the events of the Anglo-Boer War, which the Afrikaners preferred to call their freedom struggle.²³ The Southerners in the United States wrote similar types of sentimental narratives about the Civil War, in which it was more often than not claimed that the war was fought to defend states' rights and to protect a chivalrous ante-bellum way of life from Northern aggression. This was done with the dual goal of creating a romanticised narrative of the war that could give meaning to the sacrifices of their relatives and comrades, and

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18. Grundlingh, "The war in Twentieth-Century Afrikaner Consciousness", p 25.
 19. Grundlingh, "The war in Twentieth-Century Afrikaner Consciousness", p 23.
 20. E. Hobhouse, *Brunt of the War and where it fell* (Methuen & Co, London, 1902).
 21. E. Hobhouse, *War without glamour, or, Women's war experiences written by themselves 1899-1902* (Nasionale Pers Beperk, Bloemfontein, 1924).
 22. E. Neethling, *Mag ons vergeet?* (Nasionale Pers, Beperk, Kaapstad, 1938.)
 23. In Afrikaner circles the Anglo-Boer War was (and still is) often called the *Tweede Vryheidsoorlog* (Second Freedom War) to tell it apart from the Anglo-Transvaal War of 1880-1881, which is called the *Eerste Vryheidsoorlog* (First Freedom War).

of controlling the revision of history – in other words of “righting history” by rewriting it from the Confederate perspective.²⁴

In the American South, as well as in the Afrikaner community in South Africa, the argument was also, if only by implication, used that the soldiers/Burghers on the battlefields did not die in vain, because the whole communities from which they came, instantly gained the image of being proud, tough and chivalrous. These characteristics came to be regarded as national features and were further propagated by, in some cases at least, unlikely sources. Thus an Englishman, Arthur Conan Doyle, who became world famous as the author of the Sherlock Holmes books, wrote one of the first historical narratives of the Anglo-Boer War, namely *The Great Boer War*, of which the first edition was published in 1900, when the war was still in progress. Conan Doyle recorded in the first chapter of this book that the Britons had never fought a more formidable antagonist than the Boers.²⁵ The Boers themselves similarly believed they were among the bravest of the brave, heroes in the real sense of the word. This sentiment is revealed in numerous books, including P.H.S. van Zyl’s *Die Helde-album. Verhaal en Foto’s van Aanvoerders en Helde uit ons Vryheidstryd* (The Heroes Album. Narrative and photographs of the leaders and heroes of our freedom struggle), which was published in 1944.²⁶ Similarly in the South, Robert E. Lee, “Stonewall” Jackson and Nathan Bedford Forrest, to mention only three generals, gained a similar reputation, while the victorious Union generals Grant and Sherman were only regarded as successful due to the overwhelming number of soldiers that they could employ in battles.

A common feature in the history of many countries is that its history is written by the winner and represents or reflects the interpretations that the winner attaches to the past. This is of major importance for those in power, since they want to use history to legitimise their claim as rightful rulers of a country. However, both in South Africa and in the USA, the historical narratives of the Boers and the Confederates respectively survived. Especially in the USA, thousands of books praising the military prowess of the Confederate commanders and men have been published.

24. Mills, “Introduction”, pp xv, xvii.

25. A. Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (Smith, Elder & Co, London, 1900, 6th impression), p 2.

26. P.H.S. van Zyl, *Die Helde-album. Verhaal en Foto’s van Aanvoerders en Helde uit ons Vryheidstryd* (Die Afrikaanse Pers-Boekhandel, Johannesburg, 1944).

Erection of memorials

The third way to come to terms with all the suffering, as well as the final defeat, was to erect memorials which portray those who had died as patriots who had not died in vain, but on the contrary had sacrificed their lives for the best cause possible. For the Confederacy and its supporters, it was not an easy task to claim that they had been fighting for freedom, since they were in essence fighting to maintain the Southern way of life, which included the institution of slavery – the opposite of freedom. The issue of slavery is consequently played down in Southern explanations of the causes of the war. Mills points out that Southern “memorials usually gloss over uncomfortable aspects ... for example the moral and physical violence of slavery”.²⁷ The word freedom was interpreted by Southerners to mean the freedom to choose whether they wanted to remain part of the United States, the freedom for states that had joined the Union in the 1780s to break away again if they so chose, the freedom to pursue their own institutions. Mills explains that in terms of the Lost Cause narrative “the war was fought to defend states’ rights and to protect a chivalrous antebellum way of life from Northern aggression ...”²⁸ Mills also points out that: “Great attention was paid to inscriptions, which distinguished each town’s monument and featured Lost Cause ideology and such common refrains as ‘Lest We Forget’ ... as well as quotations from Jefferson Davis.”²⁹ A notable example of the public justification of the cause for which the Confederacy fought and of expression of the legitimacy of their struggle can be found on the huge Confederacy memorial erected in Augusta, Georgia by the Daughters of the Confederacy. The inscription on the front of this memorial reads:

WORTHY to have lived and known our gratitude;
WORTHY to be hallowed and held in tender Remembrance;
WORTHY the fadeless Fame which CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS WON.
who gave themselves in life and Death for us:

For the Honor of Georgia,
For the Rights of the States,
For the Liberties of the People,
For the Sentiments of the South,
For the Principles of the Union,

as these were handed down to them by the Fathers of OUR COMMON COUNTRY.

On the hind-side of the memorial, the following is inscribed:

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27. Mills, “Introduction”, p xv.
28. Mills, “Introduction”, p xvii.
29. Mills, “Introduction”, p xxi.

IN MEMORIAM
“NO NATION ROSE SO WHITE AND FAIR:
NONE FELL SO PURE OF CRIME.”

In South Africa, the Afrikaners had a much easier task to legitimise their struggle, since they claimed with some justification that they had been fighting for a universal cause, namely freedom. Thus on the pedestal of the National Women’s Memorial in Bloemfontein (see Figure 1), which pays homage to the approximately 28 000 women and children who died in the concentration camps erected by the British military authorities, the inscription reads: “To our women heroes and adorable children who gave their lives for our cause.” They did not die in vain, it is claimed. They died as a sacrifice to the freedom of those who survived. The freedom was temporarily ploughed under by the British forces in 1902, but began to re-emerge less than ten years later, when the Women’s Memorial was taking shape. At the unveiling of this monument in 1913, the last President of the former Republic of the Orange Free State, Marthinus Steyn, declared to the gathering that the monument was not built to instigate hate, but to advance love. He added that he believed that the day would come when every member of the South African nation, whatever his or her origins, would accept the virtues immortalised in the monument as part of their common heritage.³⁰



Figure 1: National Women’s Memorial, Bloemfontein.
Side-panel illustrating a dying child in a concentration camp.

30. Dr. Okulis, *Die Boervrou. Moeder van haar volk* (De Nationale Pers, Beperk, Bloemfontein, 1918), p 153.

There are, of course, also monuments to Afrikaner men who sacrificed their lives for the cause of freedom. Memorials called “Burgher” monuments were erected in virtually every district of the former Boer republics, as well as in towns in the Cape and Natal, which were British colonies at the time of the Anglo-Boer War, but from which many Afrikaners joined the Boer forces. These monuments usually contain the names of men from the specific district or town who were killed in the war only, plus a verse from the Bible. In some cases, the inscriptions are used to justify the Boer cause. Thus the Burgher monument in Standerton, Mpumalanga, (Figure 2) contains the following inscription:

DIT MONUMENT WERD OPPERIGT DOOR FAMILIELEDEN EN
VRIENDEN TER EERE VAN GESNEUVELDE BURGERS EN
GESTORVEN VROUWEN EN KINDEREN VAN STANDERTON
DISTRIKT VOOR VRYHEID EN VOOR RECHT TYDENS
DE DRIEJARIGEN OORLOG 1899-1902.³¹



Figure 2: Side-panel of the Burgher Monument, Standerton, Mpumalanga.

One of the foremost Afrikaner heroes who was killed in action during the Anglo-Boer War, was the Boer scout Danie Theron. He died

31. Translated, it means: “This Monument is erected by relatives and friends to honor fallen Burghers and women and children of Standerton who passed away for liberty and justice in the Three Years War 1899-1902”.

when he single-handedly took on a British unit in the Gatsrand area southwest of Johannesburg in September 1900. A huge memorial was subsequently erected for him on the spot where he had died, and a statue of him was put up in Kimberley, in the Northern Cape. When this statue was relocated to Pretoria in 2002, it was unveiled by former President Nelson Mandela, who in his speech at the occasion remarked that Boer leaders such as Christiaan de Wet and Danie Theron had always been role models to him, since they were prepared to sacrifice their lives for freedom.³²

Battlefields as commemorative sites

With regard to battlefields as commemorative sites of the wars under discussion in both the USA and South Africa, one cannot but take note of the huge difference in scale, but there are comparable similarities. In both countries, there are some battlefields that have been well developed as commemorative sites, while others are hardly indicated on maps and remained without spectacular memorials. The importance and outcome of a specific battle do not seem to be determining factors in its development as a commemorative site. In South Africa, there are for example memorials at Platrand outside Ladysmith to commemorate an inconclusive battle during the Boer siege of a British unit in this town; a memorial on Spioenkop on the Natal Front where the Boers scored a huge victory towards the end of January 1900; and a large Boer memorial at Bergendal (Dalmanutha) east of Belfast in Mpumalanga where the Boers suffered defeat. However there is no Boer memorial on the Stormberg battlefield in the Eastern Cape where the Boers won the first of their three major victories in what became the British Black Week in December 1899, neither at Sannaspos in the Free State where General Christiaan de Wet achieved one of his most important victories of the whole war in March 1900. Probably the best developed battlefield site in South Africa from a commemorative viewpoint, is Magersfontein in the Northern Cape, where the Boers achieved victory in December 1899.

In the USA, there are many well-developed battlefield-sites – in most cases as a result of support from the federal government. However, the memorials at many of these former battlefields were erected many years ago, well before National Parks Administration took over the battlefields. Examples of early Confederate memorials erected on such battlefields can for example be found at Franklin in Tennessee and Chickamauga in Georgia. Subsequently numerous massive memorials

32. Notes made at the unveiling ceremony by the author of this article.

were erected by the governments of Southern states to commemorate the role of Confederate forces on the battlefields of Vicksburg in Mississippi, Shiloh in Tennessee en Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, to name but a few. A well-known battlefield on which there is no memorial, is the Fort Wagner area in South Carolina where the famous Massachusetts 54th Regiment, which was made up of black soldiers, failed in its assault on a Confederate stronghold.

Memorials for specific heroes and martyrs

Numerous memorials and statues to commemorate specific heroes of respectively the Confederacy and the Boers were erected both in the American South and in South Africa. The outstanding examples of statues in the American South, are those of the “Big Three” of the Confederacy, President Jefferson Davis, as well as Generals Robert E. Lee and “Stonewall” Jackson, in Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia. In addition, there are numerous other statues and memorials all over the South, such as the enormous engraving on the granite rock-face of Stone Mountain in Georgia of the same Big Three (Figure 3), as well as statues of General Joseph Johnston in Dalton, Georgia, and of General Nathan Bedford Forrest in Selma, Alabama.



Figure 3: The Confederate “Big Three” on Stone Mountain, Georgia.

In South Africa, compared to the American South, there are fewer statues of Boer heroes of the Anglo-Boer War specifically erected to commemorate their activities in the war. The Danie Theron statue in

Pretoria has already been mentioned. Of General Christiaan de Wet, there is an equestrian statue in Bloemfontein and of General Koos de la Rey a similar statue in Lichtenburg, Northwest Province. Memorials of specific Boer heroes are also not plentiful. Two examples can be found in the Eastern Cape, both of Boer commandants, namely Hans Lötter and Gideon Scheepers in Middelburg and Graaff-Reinet respectively. Both of these commandants were regarded as villains by the British military authorities basically because they were leading units of Cape rebels fighting on the side of the Republics. Both were executed after their capture towards the end of the war. Lötter and especially Scheepers instantly became martyrs of the Boer cause. Their counterpart in the American South, is Captain Henry A. Wirz, who was the commander of the Andersonville prisoner of war camp of the Confederates in Georgia. Of the total of about 45 000 Union soldiers who were held there as prisoners of war, almost 13 000 died of poor conditions in the camp. When the war ended, Wirz was arrested and taken to Washington DC, where he was found guilty on trumped-up charges of conspiracy and murder, and executed. The Georgia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy subsequently erected a monument to Wirz in the town of Andersonville. The inscription on the memorial states that "Captain Wirz became at last the victim of a misdirected popular clamor" and that the monument was erected "to rescue his name from the stigma attached to it by embittered prejudice". The Sons of the Confederate Veterans also stepped in and issued the Confederate Medal of Honor to Wirz posthumously in August 1981.³³

Paintings and sculptures

Lost Cause commemoration often took the form of paintings and sculptures. On both the Boer and the Confederacy side, a number of able artists used their talents to portray the suffering, sacrifice and occasionally heroism of their champions. On the Boer side, the contemporary sculptor Anton van Wouw deserves special mention. He was not only responsible for the centre-piece of the National Women's Memorial in Bloemfontein, which consists of a mother with her dying child on her lap and another despairing woman next to them. He also made a number of highly acclaimed miniature sculptures of war scenes, including *Bad News*, depicting two dejected Burghers somewhere in the veld. Erich Mayer portrayed prisoner-of-war camp scenes on canvas, as did Frans Oerder amongst others. The garden of the War Museum of the Boer Republics in Bloemfontein contains three statues depicting war

33. Original award certificate in Confederacy Museum, Andersonville, Georgia.

scenes, namely *Farewell*, *The Bitter-ender* and *The Prisoner of War* by sculptor Danie de Jager. The *Farewell* statue portrays a Burgher on horseback, saluting his young wife and child as he rides off to the battlefield. This is also the topic of a painting that Gilbert Gaul of Nashville, Tennessee, made some years after the Civil War (Figure 4). This specific painting illustrates numerous themes of the Lost Cause dream: the young Southerner eager to leave for the front, saying farewell to his distinguished looking father in the spacious front room of their house. His mother is too distressed to watch, his neatly dressed sisters seem anxious, as do two elderly slaves who witness their young master leaving to go fighting for the cause. A young slave stands in the doorway, holding the reins of the young master's horse, which is visible in the background.³⁴ This is the first of a group of twelve paintings by Gaul on a specific young Southerner's war experiences. The last painting shows him returning to the desolate ruins of his former home – with nobody to greet him³⁵ – similar to a water-colour later made by Emily Hobhouse, the English lady who rushed to the assistance of Boer women and children suffering in British concentration camps in South Africa in 1901-1902.



Figure 4: *The Farewell*, by Gilbert Gaul.

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34. J.M. McPherson, *The Illustrated Battle Cry of Freedom. The Civil War Era* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003), p 250.
35. Six of the paintings, including *Return Home*, are exhibited in the Art Museum, Montgomery, Alabama.

Poems

Commemoration was of course not restricted to physical structures. In both the American South and in the former Boer Republics, numerous stories, dramas, tableaux, songs and poems were written about aspects of the war – especially about battles, heroism and suffering.

For both the Confederates and for the Afrikaners, the fact that their flags had to be lowered in humiliation immediately became a sad symbol of the irrevocable loss they had suffered. In both communities, poets instantly appeared to articulate this sorrow. In the South, it was Abram Joseph Ryan, a Catholic priest who had served in the Confederate forces as a chaplain. Ryan wrote *The Conquered Banner* within an hour of hearing the news of Lee's surrender. The poem masterfully reflects the trauma and pain of defeat.³⁶ Its final paragraph is especially passionate:

Furl that Banner, softly, slowly;
Treat it gently – it is holy,
For it droops above the dead;
Touch it not – unfold it never;
Let it droop there, furled forever, –
For its people's hopes are fled.

The Conquered Banner is generally recognised as the most popular Confederate poem. Miller reports that, "Surcharged with emotion, this poem has appeared in Southern school readers, ... and, framed in gilt or mahogany, hangs upon the wall in hundreds of homes."³⁷

In South Africa, Francis William Reitz, the State Secretary of the South African Republic, wrote a similar poem entitled *Vaarwel aan die Vierkleur* (Farewell to the Quadricolour). Reitz was present at Vereeniging on the last day of the Anglo-Boer War, 31 May 1902, when the Boer delegates decided to accept the British terms and end the war. That very day he wrote this poem – originally in Dutch, but soon afterwards he himself translated it into English. Reitz admirably succeeded in articulating the traumatic loss of freedom for which so many men, women and children had sacrificed their lives:

36. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, p 36.

37. F.T. Miller (ed), *Poetry and Eloquence From the Blue and the Gray. The Photographic History of the Civil War IX* (The Review of Reviews Company, New York, 1911), pp 240, 242, 248.

No longer may our Standard wave
And flaunt its colours to the sky,
'Tis buried with our heroes brave
Who on the field of Glory lie.³⁸

As in the case of *The Conquered Banner*, this poem was also subsequently framed and hung on the walls of hundreds of Afrikaner homes.

Overview of Lost Cause commemoration

In both South Africa and the United States, the dream that the Lost Cause could be resurrected, lingered for many years, and often found vocal expression in commemorative ceremonies and political activities. In the years immediately after the Civil War, commemorative efforts in the American South centered on the respectful burial of the dead and the creation of mourning rituals. As a result of the destruction brought about by the war and the massive cost of rebuilding the country, little money was available. Consequently, as Mills reports,

... remembrance often took a modest, local form, such as small shafts or obelisks in graveyards. A Confederate decoration day was soon celebrated each spring, during which women and children spread flowers on graves and townspeople gathered to hear speeches praising the dead.³⁹

Similar circumstances were the order of the day in the former Boer republics. Visits to especially concentration camp ceremonies to lay flowers on the graves of women and children victims of the war, soon developed into organised wreath-laying ceremonies.⁴⁰ The annual observance of the Day of the Covenant – also called Dingaan's Day – to celebrate the Voortrekker victory over the Zulu on 16 December 1838, was also used by the Afrikaner community from 16 December 1899 onwards to pay tribute to the Boers who had fought for freedom against the British Empire, and also to thank God for the protection granted to their Burghers on the field of battle.⁴¹

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38. F.W. Reitz, *Oorlogs en Andere Gedichten* ("Het Westen"-Drukkerij, Potchefstroom, 1910), p 70.
 39. Mills, "Introduction", p xvi.
 40. T. van Rensburg, "Introduction", in T. van Rensburg (ed), *Camp Diary of Henrietta E.C. Armstrong. Experiences of a Boer nurse in the Irene Concentration Camp, 6 April-11 October 1901* (Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, 1980), p 26.
 41. A. Bailey, "Geloftedagvierings in Suid-Afrika, 1910 tot 1994". MA dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2002, pp 64-66.

What is certainly unique in Afrikaner commemorations of the war when compared to Southerners, is that Anglo-Boer War celebrations always stood in the shadow of Great Trek celebrations. Grundlingh provides a convincing explanation for this phenomenon, namely that the Great Trek represented an ultimately victorious period in the Afrikaner history, while the war ended in defeat, despite the heroics of the bitter-enders and the sacrifices of the women and children in the camps (Figure 5). The Great Trek period simply lends itself better to celebration.⁴²



Figure 5: Wreath-laying ceremony in Irene Concentration Camp Cemetery, 1956.

In the United States, the federal government built cemeteries for the burial of Union soldiers. However, the Confederate dead were initially excluded from these federal graveyards, since they were considered to have been treasonous rebels. Consequently the creation of the National Cemetery System became a bitter pill to the Southerners. They rose to the challenge by building cemeteries themselves from their own diminished resources. This to them was “an act of survival and continued genteel resistance.”⁴³ No comparable development took place in South Africa, where exclusion from cemeteries of former Anglo-Boer War opponents never became a public issue. Indeed, the bodies of Breaker Morant and P.J. Handcock, two Australian members of the British forces who were executed for the murder of Boer prisoners of war, were interred in the same cemetery where President Kruger of the South African Republic lies buried.

42. Grundlingh, “The war in Twentieth-Century Afrikaner Consciousness”, p 27.

43. Mills, “Introduction”, p xvi.

In the American South, white women's organisations soon became a significant force in memorialising the Civil War. Mills points out that:

White women ... became the most important keepers of war memory in the coming decades ... Ladies' memorial societies formed in the 1860s and 1870s gave way in the 1890s to chapters of the regionwide United Daughters of the Confederacy ... Their activism, which carried women outside the limited sphere of the home, was an important and distinctive element of virtually all Confederate memorialization.⁴⁴

Again no comparable development took place in South Africa. The *Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouefederasie* (South African Women's Federation) was active in the field of the preservation of concentration camp ceremonies, and served as example for the eventual establishment of the South African War Graves Board in 1967,⁴⁵ but no prominent women's organisations emerged to actively drive the commemoration of the Anglo-Boer War.

It is often said with reference to both the Confederates in the American South and the Boers in South Africa that they lost the war but won the peace. Both indeed lost the war, but none were destroyed, and both subsequently fought back with considerable success. The former Confederates were treated as losers by the North immediately after the Civil War. Radical Reconstructionists in the American Congress, which was dominated by the victorious Northern Republicans after the war, attempted to reconstruct the South totally, and by implication to destroy its "way of life" completely. However, by 1877, when Reconstruction came to an end, former Confederates regained power in many Southern states. Their "cause" was forever lost, but in many ways they "won the peace". Thus John W. Cell points out:

Beginning in the late sixties and culminating in the fateful compromise of 1876-7, the white South regained control. The South's regional autonomy – in the quaint religious terminology that came to characterize Southern history – was 'redeemed'. Tired and cynical, the North withdrew its soldiers. Republicans were overwhelmingly replaced in office by patriotic whites, usually called Conservatives, who virtually to a man were former rebels.⁴⁶

44. Mills, "Introduction", p xvi.

45. Van Rensburg, "Introduction", p 26.

46. J.W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy. The origins of segregation in South Africa and the American South* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982), p 85.

In South Africa, it took even less time for the Boers to regain some political power, and their cause was lost to a much lesser extent. Thus George M. Fredrickson explains:

For practical purposes, the Union of South Africa that emerged from a constitutional convention in 1910 was an independent nation. Although they had lost the war, the Afrikaners had in effect won the peace; for they remained a majority of the total white population and had the potential capacity, if they could mobilize themselves politically, to establish their ethnic hegemony.⁴⁷

It must be added that very few Afrikaners regarded the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 as a victory over the British authorities. Even though the former Commandant-General of the Transvaal forces in the Anglo-Boer War, Louis Botha, was now the head of government as South African Prime Minister, the country was still part of the British Empire and in South Africa itself Afrikaners felt that they were, compared to English-speaking white inhabitants, treated as second-class citizens.

The official close of Reconstruction in 1877, when all Federal troops were withdrawn from the South, heralded a new era in commemoration in the former Confederacy. The immediate post-war era of grief and mourning in the local cemetery began to give way to a region-wide commemoration of the Lost Cause in public places. As the pain of the defeat suffered in the war lessened, many Southerners felt that tribute should be paid to the ante-bellum values shared by those who fought.⁴⁸ The result was that in the forty years from about 1880, hundreds of outdoor sculptures were erected across the South to celebrate the Lost Cause. Foster points out that:

Extreme enthusiasm for and extensive participation in Confederate activities developed ... toward the end of the 1880s. For the next twenty years or so, southerners celebrated the Confederacy as never before or since.⁴⁹

A number of region-wide organisations were founded to spread the Lost Cause gospel. These included the United Confederate Veterans, which was founded in 1889 and which veterans all over the South joined. The

47. G.M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy. A comparative study in American and South African history* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1982), p 138.

48. Mills, "Introduction", p xvii.

49. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, p 6.

Sons and Daughters of the Confederacy were also formed at this time, the latter in 1894. Nearly a hundred thousand Southerners annually journeyed to one city for the United Confederate Veterans' reunion and a general festival of the South.⁵⁰

It was from the 1880s that some of the most costly, grand-scale memorials were erected in the South to Confederate military and political heroes, primarily the "Big Three": Davis, Lee and Jackson. The massive equestrian sculpture of Lee in Monument Avenue, Richmond, Virginia, was dedicated in 1890 during a huge reunion of ageing veterans. The audience surpassed 100 000. Eventually five colossal memorials to the Confederacy were erected on Monument Avenue, but not all Confederate monuments were huge. The majority were rather modest. Most represent a single soldier standing on a high pedestal decorated with a variety of motifs, such as the Confederate battle flag. They were put up in town squares, on courthouse and state capitol lawns (see Figure 6), in city parks and cemeteries. The majority of Southern soldiers' monuments were erected on the initiative of local chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. People raised money for them with dances, dinners and stamp sales, amongst other strategies. The monuments obviously represented an important confirmation of mutual respect, shared values and experiences.⁵¹



Figure 6: Confederate Monument on the town square of Sparta, Georgia.

50. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, p 6; Mills, "Introduction", p xviii.

51. Mills, "Introduction", pp xix, xxi.

In South Africa, the majority of Burgher monuments and concentration camp memorials were erected within the first half century after the war ended. The inscriptions on many of these are in Dutch – an indication that they were erected before 1925, when Afrikaans replaced Dutch as an official language of South Africa. It is important to note that the vast majority of early monuments were put up in the grounds of churches, and not on public squares. Indeed, in the Cape Colony and Natal, the British authorities erected memorials to honour the British forces on public squares, for example in East London and Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, and Pietermaritzburg in Kwazulu-Natal.

In the United States, the first tangible signs of reconciliation between North and South took about 35 years to appear. This occurred largely as a result of the two former enemies joining together in 1898 in fighting on a common front in the Spanish-American War. The Federal government subsequently took a number of conciliatory steps, such as returning captured flags to Southern states. Furthermore some Confederate bodies for the first time were also moved into Arlington National Cemetery near Washington DC. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the United Daughters of the Confederacy was permitted to erect a ten meter high monument in this cemetery. They called this monument a gift to the nation. The monument includes a figure that became an icon in the Lost Cause mythology, namely a black female household slave. Southerners claimed that these slaves happily cared for Southern white children and families.⁵²

In South Africa, attempts at reconciliation between Afrikaners and Britons took somewhat longer to achieve lasting success. Even though some Afrikaners fought with Britons on the Allied side in both World Wars, including prominent former Boer generals such as Louis Botha, Jan Smuts and Jaap van Deventer, a majority of Afrikaners could not bring themselves to “forgive and forget”, and still regarded the British people as their enemies. It was only after 1948, when the Afrikaners managed to gain political ascendancy in South Africa and thus to wipe out the defeat of 1902, that conciliatory approaches were made for the first time. As Grundlingh pointed out, the war was no longer necessary as a rallying point for ethnic Afrikaner nationalism.⁵³ However, many Afrikaner die-hards continued to demand an apology

52. W. Blair, *Cities of the Dead. Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill & London, 2004), pp 201-206.

53. Grundlingh, “The war in Twentieth-Century Afrikaner Consciousness”, p 29.

from the British people as a final condition of reconciliation⁵⁴ – something which nobody in a position of authority in Britain was likely to extend.

As for including blacks in the Afrikaner *Lost Cause* mythology: the closest parallel to the monument erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Arlington Cemetery probably was the intention to erect a statue in the gardens of the War Museum of the Boer Republics in Bloemfontein to honour the *agterryers* of the Boer forces.⁵⁵ The vast majority of *agterryers* were black African or coloured servants of Boers of all ranks who accompanied them to the battlefield in the Anglo-Boer War and did all sorts of menial work, including cooking and caring for the horses. The *agterryers* certainly made a significant contribution to keeping the Boer forces in tact as a fighting unit right up to the end of the war. No such monument has however been erected.

In the American South, a few monuments continued to rise in the 1920s and 1930s, especially on battlefields. Some, like the Battle of Nashville Monument in Tennessee, which was originally dedicated on Armistice Day in 1927, honoured soldiers of both the Union and the Confederacy, as well as American soldiers who fought in the First World War, but after the end of the war generation, many of the Confederate memorials that once had been unveiled to tears and acclaim, were neglected and left in poor condition. A similar development took place in South Africa, where numerous monuments have been neglected and damaged.

In the American South, a new tide of interest in Lost Cause monuments peaked in the 1960s with the centennial of the Civil War. The 100-year celebration took place in the midst of a tense period in United States history, namely the era of civil rights struggles. The most important outcome of these struggles was that the American Congress voted to pass the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act. Some Southerners regarded these actions as the renewed imposition of Northern control on the former states of the Confederacy. It was in this atmosphere that a number of Southern state legislatures decided to raise the Confederate battle flag again atop the domes of their capitol buildings – probably as a gesture of defiance. In some Southern towns, monuments were cleaned and rededicated, and campaigns were begun to add more Southern monuments to national battlefield parks such as Gettysburg.⁵⁶

54. *The Citizen* (Johannesburg), 5 January 1999, p 5.

55. *Volksblad* (Bloemfontein), 9 October 1986, p 5.

56. Mills, "Introduction", p xxiii.

In South Africa, the centennial of the Anglo-Boer War also took place in a period of almost revolutionary political changes, of which the most important outcomes were the end of white (Afrikaner) rule and the imposition of black power – a development applauded by *inter alia* the British government. Even though the majority of Afrikaners realised that black majority rule was unavoidable and supported negotiations to bring about this new dispensation, there was a sizeable minority who experienced the change as a traumatic, final defeat of the Afrikaner yearning for political freedom and self-determination. These Afrikaners quickly established a synergy between the Lost Cause of the immediate post Anglo-Boer War period and their own Lost Cause ninety years later. Thus the right-wing politician Koos van der Merwe warned that the Afrikaner people would never cooperate with a black government, since it ran against the thrust of their history. Their forefathers had, in the war against the British Empire, paid dearly for the right to self-determination – they would not surrender it lightly.⁵⁷ Despite these and other right-wing threats, a black president took over in 1994.

In both the American South and the Afrikaner community, tableaux were occasionally performed to portray not only the war experiences, but also the justness of their cause. Thus in October 1999, on the centenary of the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War on 11 October 1899, a huge tableau was performed in Pretoria by a right-wing Afrikaner grouping who claimed to be representing the whole South African white community. This tableau highlighted the wrongs committed by the British against the Boers in the century before the war broke out and how justified the Boers were to enter the war.⁵⁸

In spite of the controversies surrounding the Anglo-Boer War centenary in South Africa, a large number of books aimed at the Afrikaner audience was published in this era. These included both academic histories, more popular histories and fictional work. Moreover numerous conferences on the Anglo-Boer War were held, public talks were given and gatherings to celebrate the centenary of battles were held on fields of battle all over the country. A number of new memorials were erected, *inter alia* at the Elandsrivier Battlefield in the Northwest Province, at the Belfast Concentration Camp Cemetery in Mpumalanga and at Donkerhoek, east of Pretoria. Wreath-laying ceremonies took place at numerous concentration camp cemeteries, which were cleaned

57. Grundlingh, "The war in Twentieth-Century Afrikaner Consciousness", p 31.

58. *Afrikaner* (Pretoria), 15-21 October 1999, p 1; *Burger* (Cape Town), 16 October 1999, p 1; *Patriot* (Pretoria), 15-21 October 1999, p 1.

and renovated.⁵⁹ A major difference between these commemorative gatherings and those that took place earlier was that the Afrikaner no longer claimed exclusive ownership of war commemoration. In most cases the gatherings were also shorn of the emotion and sentimentality that prevailed fifty and more years before.

In the United States, African-Americans gained increased voting power during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. As a result, governance of many Southern towns was taken over by local black politicians. Many African-Americans deeply felt that the monuments, flags and other Confederate symbols not only offended them personally, but placed a stigma on the South in general. Increasing numbers of white Southerners, especially newcomers from the North, agreed. As a result, the Confederate battle flags used as state flags by some Southern states have come down.⁶⁰ Similar criticism has been expressed with regard to Lost Cause monuments. The descendants of former slaves experience these sculptures as hurtful remnants of a biased history that are not appropriate models for emulation. Consequently some monuments have been relocated, such as the Nathan Bedford Forrest Memorial in Selma, Alabama, that was moved to the cemetery. Others were moved in connection with accidents, adjacent construction, or roadway projects. However, there has been no systematic effort to remove statues. The bitter criticism of the Confederate memorials has been countered by the region's wish to preserve its distinctive heritage.⁶¹

Southerners who felt negative about Lost Cause memorials, followed several options to bring about change. One option was to reinterpret the monuments. Thus the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia, underwent a series of revisionist interpretations from the 1970s onwards, until it could present one of the most comprehensive American exhibits devoted to slavery by the end of the century.⁶² In other cases, plaques were added to monuments or buildings, explaining them in a new way and citing a more neutral history to replace the rhetoric of the Lost Cause. A final option, which was followed in Monument Avenue,

59. This was widely reported on in the South African media, for example in *Afrikaner* (Pretoria), 9-15 June 2000, p 4; *Afrikaner* (Pretoria), 8-14 September 2000, p 4; *Volksblad* (Bloemfontein), 10 August 2000, p 7.

60. On the controversial career of the Confederate battle flag, see: J. Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge - Massachusetts, 2006).

61. Mills, "Introduction", pp xxiii-xxvii.

62. W.F. Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2005), pp 298-299.

Richmond, Virginia, was to leave the public sculptures in place, but to add another one, honouring an African American hero. The result is that a monument to tennis player Arthur Ashe now stands in the row of Confederate chieftains as a role model for a new generation in a New South.⁶³

In South Africa, the new black leadership after 1994 also questioned the large number of predominantly Afrikaner monuments in South Africa in the midst of very few structures commemorating the black cause in the past. It is only natural that, as Grundlingh explains, the ANC wanted “to highlight the passing of a colonial world and to put the spotlight on the new incumbents in power”.⁶⁴ Various options could be followed. As in the American South, this has not included the large-scale removal of memorials, but rather re-interpretation. Thus in March 2006, the Minister of Arts and Culture, Pallo Jordan, suggested that the National Women’s Memorial in Bloemfontein should be adjusted to make room for honouring black women and children who suffered as a result of the Anglo-Boer War. For the vast majority of Afrikaner cultural leaders, this was unconditionally unacceptable, since to them the Women’s Memorial is nothing less than an Afrikaner shrine.⁶⁵ At the time of writing this article, no adjustments have been made to the memorial, but there can be no doubt that Afrikaner Lost Cause memorials will increasingly come under pressure.

Conclusion

James M. Mayo asks the question: “How are memorials influenced by history and a society’s ever-changing understanding of the past?”⁶⁶ On the same level, one can ask: how is the way in which a society commemorates historical events, influenced by history and by that community’s ever-changing understanding of the past? In both the American South and South Africa, the way in which respectively the Confederates and the Afrikaners commemorated the wars under discussion, was profoundly influenced by both history and by those communities’ ever-changing understanding of the past. In the course of time, the contours of remembrance in both communities have been

63. Mills, “Introduction”, p xxvii.

64. A. Grundlingh, “Reframing Remembrance: The Politics of the Centenary Commemoration of the South African War of 1899-1902”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 2, June 2004, p 361.

65. *Volksblad* (Bloemfontein), 28 March 2006, p 6; *Volksblad* (Bloemfontein), 12 April 2006, p 11.

66. J.M. Mayo, “War Memorials as Political Memory”, *Geographical Review*, 78, 1, January 1988, p 62.

substantially revised through major political changes in both countries. The fact that both communities in some ways won the peace, even though they lost the war, eased the path of Lost Cause commemoration. In the course of time, as personal memories of the wars faded away and new issues captivated the minds of new generations of Southerners and Afrikaners, enthusiasm for Lost Cause commemoration dwindled on both sides of the Atlantic. The rise of black political power coupled with efforts at reconciliation between erstwhile enemies certainly contributed to a readiness in large segments of both the Southern and the Afrikaner community to accept some revision of the orthodox Lost Cause dogma.

However, Lost Cause commemorations are surviving in both countries. In the American South, Lost Cause organisations, such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy and Sons of the Confederate Veterans, still exist. Confederate monuments are still being put up, especially on battlefields, a less controversial site than town squares and statehouses. In South Africa, wreath-laying ceremonies, often accompanied by religious ceremonies, the presentation of tableaux, the singing of historical songs and speeches, are still held at concentration camp cemeteries. Books eulogising Southern and Boer War heroes and heroines are still published and read. The Lost Cause ideology still functions as an identity-building force in both the South and the Afrikaner community, although with much less public support than previously. Humans forgive easily, but to forget a perceived wrong and traumatic experience, even in the life of a community, is a different matter.

Summary

This article explores similarities in the way in which Southerners in the United States and Afrikaners in South Africa looked back upon the Civil War of 1861-1865 and the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 respectively. Both the Southerners and the Afrikaners were defeated and lost what they perceived to be their freedom. Both communities found it extremely difficult to accept defeat and sought to redeem themselves. In the respective redeeming processes, developments which were surprisingly similar took place, such as the building of numerous memorials not only to honour the sacrifices of the “heroes” who gave their lives for cause, but also to legitimise their struggles against “invaders” from the outside. The commemoration of the Lost Cause of respectively the Southerners and the Afrikaners, was still vibrant more than a century after the respective wars. The clear conclusion is that communities do not readily forget what they perceive as malignant actions against them.

Opsomming

Hunkering na 'n Verlore Droom. 'n Vergelyking van die Suiderlinge se herdenking van die Burgeroorlog en Afrikaners se herdenking van die Anglo-Boereoorlog

In hierdie artikel word ondersoek ingestel na die ooreenkomste in die wyse waarop Suiderlinge in die Verenigde State van Amerika en Afrikaners in Suid-Afrika onderskeidelik na die Burgeroorlog van 1861-1865 en die Anglo-Boereoorlog van 1899-1902 teruggestaar het. Beide die Suiderlinge en die Afrikaners is verslaan en het wat hulle as hulle vryheid beskou het, verloor. Dit was vir beide gemeenskappe uiters moeilik om die nederlaag te aanvaar en hulle wou hulleself rehabiliteer. In die onderskeie rehabilitasieprosesse het hoogs vergelykbare verwikkelinge plaasgevind, soos die bou van gedenktekens om nie net hulde te bring aan die opofferings van "helde" wat hulle lewens vir die droom opgeoffer het nie, maar ook om terselfdertyd die stryd teen die "invallende" van buite te regverdig. Die herdenking van die Verlore Droom van onderskeidelik die Suiderlinge en die Afrikaners is meer as 'n eeu na die onderskeie oorloë steeds aan die orde van die dag. Dit is duidelik dat gemeenskappe nie maklik 'n daad wat hulle as 'n onreg beleef, vergeet nie.

Key words

Afrikaners; Anglo-Boer War; Boers; Civil War; commemoration; Confederacy; lost cause; mythology; remembrance; Southerners.

Sleutelwoorde

Afrikaners; Anglo-Boereoorlog; Boere; Burgeroorlog; herdenking; Konfederasie; mitologie; Suiderlinge; terugskouing; verlore droom.