



Remembrance Sunday 2006

PUBLIC ENCOUNTERS:

The negotiation of ritual, risk and relevance in
the performance of Johannesburg's National
Remembrance Sunday ceremonies

BY KEREN BEN-ZEEV

DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own unaided work, save insofar as indicated in the references. It is being submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of Masters in Heritage Studies (by Coursework and Research Report), University of the Witwatersrand.

Signature of the Candidate

_____ Day of _____ 2008

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	vi
List of abbreviations	vii

1. Introduction	Pg 2
-----------------	-------------

1.1. Introduction	2
1.2. Rationale	4
1.3. Methodology	7

2. Theoretical framework: Publics	Pg 12
-----------------------------------	--------------

2.1. Discourse/ Representation	12
2.2. Publics	14

3. Literature Review: Remembrance Day – Ritual, Archive and Reconciliation	Pg 22
--	--------------

3.1. Collective Rituals: Social Commentary, Representation and Power	22
3.2. Commemorative Public Rituals: The ‘public historical sphere’ & the archive	24
3.3. Commemorative Public Rituals: the workings of ritual and spectacle:	27
3.3.a. Theatricality	30
3.3.b. Occupation of Space & Time	31
3.3.c. Symbols of power	33
3.3.d. Military might	33
3.3.e. The body as a site of spectacle	35
3.3.f. Audiences	35
3.4. The discourse of reconciliation in South Africa	37

4. Remembrance Day Commemorations: World War I to Democracy	Pg 44
---	--------------

4.1. Origins and symbolism:	44
4.1.a. Parades	46
4.1.b. The Religious Service	46
4.1.c. The Two Minute Silence	47
4.1.d. The ‘Last Post’	47
4.1.e. The Poppy	47

4.1.f. The Cenotaph	48
4.2. The Remembrance Day ceremony in Johannesburg	49
4.3. Crisis of memory, crisis of legitimacy	54
4.4. Indefinite address, extant scenes of circulation	57
 5. Searching for legitimacy – Ritual, risk and relevance	 Pg 65
5.1. The Cenotaph & Johannesburg's Spatial Geography	66
5.2. The religious ceremony: Reflecting His glory	77
5.3. Parade and the display of the body	86
 6. Conclusion: Fruitful Perversity?	 Pg 101
 7. Appendices (in chronological order, most recent first)	 Pg 107
a. Interview with Jack Msibi	107
b. Interview with Strike Thokoane	122
c. Interview with Rev. Carol Jack	131
d. Interview with Rear Admiral (JG) Lukas Bakkes	140
e. Interview with Eric Itzkin	164
f. Interview with Godfrey Giles	174
g. Sermon 2004 – Rev. Carol Jack	182
h. Sermon 2001 – Padre Plint	186
 8. Bibliography	 Pg 190

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following persons without whom this study would not have been possible:

Lt. Col. Godfrey Giles of the Reserve Force Council; Eric Itzkin of the City of Johannesburg; Reverend Carol Jack; Lt. Col. John Mellitchev of the Rand Light Infantry, Jack Msibi of the Soweto branch of the South African Legion; Strike Thokoane of AZANLA and especially Rear-Admiral JG Lukas M. Bakkes for giving generously of their time and energy, sharing with me their experiences as well as facilitating access to resources and documentation, often of their own personal archives.

Michael Prytz, Jahmil Qubeka, Lara Sklaar, Andiswa Tshandu and Boris Vukasovic for their assistance in the documentation, visual and otherwise, of numerous events considered as relevant examples to the study.

Bill Nasson for the generous access to his library, Andre Venter for sharing his understanding of the research process, and Desné Masie for her attempts at editing.

My supervisor Cynthia Kros for her guidance, encouragement and ideas, as well as Rory Bester for the invaluable insight which shaped the initial conceptualisation of the project. Brett Pyper and Liz Delmont for their understanding, patience and assistance.

My family, for supporting me in my choices, their understanding and loyalty.

And finally, my partner Boris for the endless encouragement, enthusiasm and energy, his willingness to assist wherever possible, and for dedicating uncountable weekends and evenings to being by my side.

More than a decade after the demise of apartheid, the South African nation is one still partitioned by deep social and cultural rifts. Carved through decades of discriminatory and exclusionary practices, these faultlines continue to hound the country's efforts to grapple with the monumental task of articulating a unified national character and set of values.

Alongside other longstanding cultural institutions that have continued their life in South Africa's post-apartheid political dispensation, Johannesburg's Remembrance Sunday ceremonies stand as locales that must wrestle for legitimacy and relevance in a redefined landscape. Performed since the 1920s to both mourn and honour those who gave their lives to the nation in armed conflicts, the Remembrance Sunday ceremony, in preserving the legacies of those it identifies as the ultimate personifications of the nation's goodness, is an institution that aims to embody and replicate the values to which a community aspires.

While the ritual's aim has remained unchanged since the 1920s, the country's transition to democracy has shaken the certainty of its mandate, and has presented it with a quandary: while the name 'South Africa' remains, the political community to which it refers has inextricably changed. This shift – entailing the rejection of the national history represented by the ceremony for many decades; the emergence of new ideals incongruous with past values; and revised understandings of 'goodness' and 'sacrifice' that threaten to estrange the ceremony's longstanding constituents – has meant that the event's survival in South Africa's distant futures is dependent on the negotiation and identification of practices that begin to bridge social rifts, of narratives that attempt to imagine a common world.

Relying on Warner's theorisation of 'publics' and the circulation of public discourse, as well as the methodologies of cultural studies and anthropological enquiries, this study has worked to document and analyse Johannesburg's Remembrance Sunday ceremonies – and their transformation – over a period of three years. In doing so, the project aims to elaborate on the manner by which the search for relevance and legitimacy in a new polity has been balanced with the desire to keep a tradition intact and an existing audience captive. As such, it is also an effort to delineate and contextualise the mutations of public discourse in the process of defining collective identities and common worlds.

List of abbreviations

ACF – Active Citizens Force
ACHS – Arts Culture Heritage Services – within the City of Johannesburg municipality
ANC – African National Congress
APLA – The Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA), the military wing of the PAC.
AZANLA – The Azanian National Liberation Army, the armed wing of AZAPO
AZAPO – Azanian People's Organisation
BCM – Black Consciousness Movement
CBD – Central Business District
CF – Citizen's Force
Clr – Councillor
CODESA – Convention for a Democratic South Africa
CoJ – City of Johannesburg (referring exclusively to the name of the municipality)
HRV – Human Rights Violations
LHR – Light Horse Regiment
MK – Umkhonto we Sizwe
MOTH – Memorable Order of Tin Hats
MOTHWA – Memorable Order of Tin Hats and its Women's Auxiliary
MPLA – Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NP – Nationalist Party
PAC – Pan Africanist Congress
PF – Permanent Force
RLI – Rand Light Infantry
RF – Reserve Force
RFC – Reserve Force Council
SA – South Africa
SADF – South African Defense Force
SAIR – South African Irish
SAMMH - South African Museum of Military History
SANDF – South African National Defense Force
SAPS – South African Police Service
SWAPO – South West Africa People's Organization
THA – Transvaal Horse Artillery
TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission
VE Day – Victory in Europe Day
WR – Witwatersrand Rifles