MOURNING BECOMES ...: THE WORK OF FEMINISM IN THE SPACES BETWEEN LIVES LIVED AND LIVES WRITTEN

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Synopsis — The "work of mourning" of the death of people loved and lost has a resounding and complex impact, raising as it does fundamental ontological issues about the boundaries between "life" and "death" and between "the past" and "remembrance" of it. Thinking about mourning raises additional issues, regarding honour for and justice concerning past lives and past deaths. Discussion of this starts from the death of Olive Schreiner's baby daughter and how this was responded to, then uses ideas drawn from this to think about the deaths of many other children during the South African War 1899-1902. It also uses mourning and its reverberations to contemplate different ideas about feminist scholarship and about justice and honour for lives lived and deaths died. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

A SHORT INTRODUCTION CONCERNING WHO SEES WHAT

Who and what lies within the literal and also the figurative frame of this photograph, which I call either "an aspect of the work of mourning" or "a metaphor for feminist scholarship"? Who, when looking at it, sees a man holding a baby, his foot on one of the three boxes at his feet? And who, instead, sees a feminist, her baby and her dog in the foreground, with her estranged husband holding another baby just behind them, in its background? I look and I see one, the other, both, like a lens bringing into focus one thing, then
another, back and forth. Two indissolubly linked premises underpin my discussion of these questions about representation and interpretation and their complex reverberations. The first is that in thinking about social life, and like Leah Hewitt (1990, p. 4) in commenting on autobiography, I insist that the "referential effects remain persistent if problematic." Consequently, I am with the philosopher Jacques Derrida (1986, p. 53) in confronting what, when discussing his memories of his friend, the critic Paul de Man, he termed "the irreducibility of a certain history..."—in the last resort, we must acknowledge that lives are lived and that writing about lives, however complexly and problematically, makes reference to this. When it comes down to it, then, my argument is one which insists on the irreducibility of lives lived and deaths died. And my related second premise is that, at the same time it is crucial to acknowledge that the "referential effects" are indeed problematic—between the last resort of that "certain history" back then and the now of writing about this lie accounts and versions—representations of different kinds—that are not reducible to the absolutely true and the absolutely false. Consequently, then, no one-to-one referentiality claim about the past and those lives lived in it is entertained here, and attention is, instead, directed to the demandingly uncertain status of "knowing the past," a knowing that is also troublesome in an ethical and political as well as in an intellectual sense.4

The foreground of my discussion deals with the complexities of the work of mourning, the shimmering boundaries of the "one thing becomes another" quality of the "life into death" ontological status of the newly dead person and the emotional and intellectual response to this of the living. Its background is a concern with ideas about justice and respect for the dead and honour for their lives lived and their deaths died, and also regarding the resonance of these things for social life and its moral orders. Mourning and justice are both present in its pages, with each being brought into focus at different points. The "work of mourning"5 has a resounding impact on the lives of those who experience the death of someone loved. Mourning raises fundamental issues about ontological matters, about the very meaning of death and loss, and their relationship to the very meaning of life; mourning brings home with immediacy the complex ways that the past and its remembrance invade, pervade, the present. In addition, mourning, I shall suggest, can refuse the divide between the material and the immaterial, between the past and the present, and, as a result it, can act as a powerful means of thinking about not only living lives but also writing lives as well. Justice should be accorded to the dead, and this also includes the dead that academic scholarship turns investigatory attention towards and of whom written and published accounts are produced. Mourning and justice cohere around the writing of lives as well as their living and dying.

On one level concerned specifically with "the past" and particular lives within it, my discussion here of justice and honour and of mourning has reverberations for feminist scholarship more widely, for it raises questions about the moral order of different styles of feminist scholarship as well as the different moral orders of social life—its reverberations concern now, and not just then. In what follows, I begin with mourning and its complex "tracing the name" workings and reworkings of remembrance, looking at these in general and regarding "the law" regulating the relationship between death, mourning, and moral citizenship. I then discuss the death of and mourning for the baby daughter of the feminist writer and theorist, Olive Schreiner (1855–1920), starting with the photograph that appears at the start of this introduction, for contemplating it raises some important epistemological, ethical, and political issues surrounding different understandings of feminist scholarship. Although readers may be tempted to read my discussion as simply a contribution to feminist autobiography (and see here Stanley, 1992), please resist! It is this, but it is primarily a contribution to feminist social theory and to feminist ethics, as the unfolding argument will show. Then, and by reference to a sculpture that depicts a grieving mother, the discussion examines some ways in which mourning can resist "the law," here through prolonging grief and by exacting vengeance. From this, I conclude by contemplating the issues raised by grief and vengeance for thinking about justice in feminist scholarship.

THE WORK OF MOURNING, INSIDE THE LAW

... here, just outside the boundary we find mourning women: Antigone ... and the wife of Phocion ...

What is the meaning of these acts? Do they represent the transgression of the law of the city—women as the irony of the political city, as its ruination? Do they bring to representation an immediate ethical experience, 'women's experience,' silenced and suppressed by the law of the city, and hence expelled outside its walls? No. In these delegitimate acts of tending the dead, these acts of justice, against the current will of the city, women reinvent the political life of the community. By insisting on the right and rites of mourning, Antigone and the wife of Phocion carry out that
intense work of the soul, that gradual rearrangement of its boundaries, which must occur when a loved one is lost — so as to let go, to allow the other fully to depart, and hence fully to be regained beyond sorrow. To acknowledge and re-experience the justice and the injustice of the partner’s life and death is to accept the law, it is not to transgress it — mourning becomes the law. Mourning draws on transcendent but representable justice, which makes the suffering of immediate experience visible and speakable. When completed, mourning returns the soul to the city, renewed and reinvigorated for participation, ready to take on the difficulties and injustices of the existing city. The mourner returns to negotiate and challenge the changing inner and outer boundaries of the soul and the city; she returns to their perennial anxiety (Rose, 1996, pp. 35–36).

For the political philosopher Gillian Rose (1996), in her Mourning Becomes The Law, proper mourning is an act of closure, something that can be completed in the sense that, its work done, the borders between life and death are once again rearranged by the person who has died being allowed fully to depart.” Mourning becomes the law: Mourning removes people from “ordinary life” and its duties and obligations; however, completed mourning accepts the law of death and their love for the dead person is regained beyond sorrow by those who live on, for the formerly mourning person returns to “the city” and to actively involved citizenship. Rose’s comments about mourning occur in the context of her wider discussion of justice and injustice and the motif of the “three cities” she uses metaphorically to invoke ways of thinking about them (and see here Rose, 1995). Her argument is immensely interesting and persuasive, while the fact that that some chapters of her book were written and all were revised when she was confronting her own death adds a particular thoughtfulness to reading them. But Gillian Rose’s approach to mourning itself, oddly, is also one that forgets. What it forgets is memory and the acts of remembrance, those complex tracings of the name of the person who “no longer answers,” as Derrida (1986) puts it, which are so absolutely central to mourning. Because the dead person never again answers to their name, then in a fundamental sense mourning and remembrance remain symbiotically linked for as long as memory lasts. That is, whenever there is remembrance, the name is evoked, invoked; but the person who is dead does not answer; and because they do not answer, their absence and their silence occasion mourning; and this recurs and recurs. As Derrida (1996) suggests, “Mourning is interminable. Inconsolable. Irrec- oncilable. Right up until death,” but it also “interrupts itself interminably” (pp. 172, 192), and so this inter- relationship is to be seen as an economy of exchanges or a “dynamics.”

Within the dynamics of mourning, the borders between memory and forgetting are unpredictably shifting. Sometimes, the borders to “there and then” are open wide in flood-gates fashion and grief becomes raw anew, while at other times, the borders are closed, memory fades and looses its raw edges, and the landscape of the mind attends to the “here and now.” And the openings and closings of these borders are often occasioned, not by the formal commemorations of birthdays, deathdays, and other anniversaries, but, instead, by occurrences of sudden unplanned and often unwilling remembrance, triggered by the flotsam and jetsam that come serendipitously into the mind, to conjure up sharp memories of someone now dead (always “now dead,” never “then dead”), raw bleeding jagged feelings of loss and grief. Remembrance of the past also brings remembrance of people past, once living but now dead.

As Gillian Rose comments, “the wife of Phocion” has no name. She is just “a woman,” one forever locked within a category that captures her presence only in the “within the law” activities she carried out in gathering the ashes of her unjustly disgraced husband and honouring these, and, thus, of course, also honouring her remembrance of him and their shared past. He is the named subject, and she is his mourning appendage. In the next part of my discussion, I shall “follow the name” of a particular person who died, but follow it only in a certain sense, for this, too, concerns someone without a name, someone else who is invoked only in a category membership that appends her to a named subject: Olive Schreiner’s dead baby. I do this in part so as to think about in what ways and with what kinds of consequences “lives” are written about, and the complex and ultimately unknowable relationship that “written lives” have to “lives lived.”

But I also do so in order to honour the dead, to honour this particular unnamed dead child, and through her many other dead children, to accord them justice as well. I shall “tell the tale,” as it were, of this particular life and death, and its resonance for those who were involved and also for those who think and write about this now. Important questions arise about how to interpret this death, including in what ways it can be understood, and whether and in what ways the “death in life but life in death” relationships which occurred around it, can be done justice to in present-day feminist scholarship. These questions about life/death, death/life, mourning, and doing justice to lives lived and
deaths died, have a provoking and discomforting character and encourage some hard thinking.

MOURNING WITHOUT THE LAW—
"THE BABY DIDN'T CRY, BUT THE FEMINIST PICKED IT UP."

The foreground here is the birth on 30 April and death on the early morning of 1 May 1895 of the daughter of the feminist writer and theorist Olive Schreiner. The ethnomethodologist, Harvey Sacks (1972), in discussing category membership in a conversation in which a child said, "The baby cried. The mommy picked it up," argued that the "gap" between the first sentence and the second is filled by people obligingly "hearing" that the mother and the baby "belong together." These are not just any old baby and any old mother; the listener "hears" that the baby belongs to this mother, the mother to this baby. I rework this here as "The baby didn't cry. But the feminist picked it up." in order to problematise, indeed, to disrupt, the gendering: that the baby "belong together." But first things first.

"Fine baby girl all well." (telegram from Samuel 'Cron' Cronwright-Schreiner to Ettie Stakesby Lewis, from Kimberley, 30 April 1895, Schreiner Collection, Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa)

"Our baby is dead." (telegram from Cron Cronwright-Schreiner to Ettie Stakesby Lewis, from Kimberley, 1 May 1895, UCT Schreiner)

"My darling sweet Mary ... I can't write to you about what has happened. It was such a great beautiful strong healthy child. It lived 16 hours. It weighed 9 lb and 9 1/2 oz when it was born, such a great, placid, strong face. The day may come when I can write to you about it. But now I cannot. I was 2 and a quarter hours unconscious under the chloroform and the instruments tore me to pieces, but it had to be. I would go through it all again to hold that little form just once more in my arms for a moment. It will be some weeks before I can walk but otherwise I am doing well." (Olive Schreiner to Mary Sauer, from Kimberley, 10 May 1895, Schreiner Collection, South African Library (SAL), Cape Town, accession no. 2.11.82)

"My old darling Ettie, I am sending you three pictures of my little one. When you have looked at them send them on to Will, and ask him to show them to Mrs Innes and Mrs Sauer, and ask Mrs Sauer to send them back to me. They are only taken

by Cron's little hand Kodak, but they are all I have ... Do you remember how we used to play at having babies when we were little girls? I lie here and think of you often. Oh Ettie, my poor old Ettie! People say 'forget.' They don't know the one joy is that one can never forget: that as long as I live I shall feel that little dead body lying in my breast comforting me ..." (Olive Schreiner to Ettie Stakesby Lewis, from Kimberley, 16 May 1895, UCT Schreiner)

"Olive's baby 'girl' born Ap 30 1895. Died following morning with mucus in tubes. Had been feeble. Remarkably large head much crushed by forces. Labour severe and stitches insufficient for large head which [prevented delivery] (Cape M.D. had had charge of her). Perineum rather torn but lost little blood and no violent rise of temp. Baby hermetically [sealed] up and buried in garden near house." (undated note by Havelock Ellis, Schreiner Collection, National English Literary Museum (NELM), Grahamstown, South Africa).

"Darling Mary ... I have made my Baby's grave close by the house now and planted violets and lilies all over it. It's such a comfort to me to look at it ..." (Olive Schreiner to Mary Sauer, from Kimberley, nd August 1895, SAL Schreiner, accession no. 2.11.96)

"My dear old Laddie ... It's curious how much I want my baby, the one that died. It comes over me in fits as if I could go looking for it everywhere. You love a child so much even before it's born carrying it those long nine months: you can feel its little hands and feet move. I used to talk to it; it hardly seemed nearer when it was born." (Olive Schreiner to Will Schreiner, Kimberley, 2 April 1896, UCT Schreiner)

"Dear Mrs Smuts ... it would be a great pleasure to spend a day with you and Baas Koosie, a baby is a great joy to me. My little girl died when she was two days old." (Olive Schreiner to Isie Smuts, from Johannesburg, nd June 1899, copy UCT Schreiner).

"Dear Friend ... I like to think you and Miss Greene look at my mountains and love them ... It is on the top of that highest point that you see from Cradock that I have bought my two acres of ground and where Cron and I and my baby are to be buried. I know you won't quite understand it but it's such an unchanging joy and rest to me to think of that mountain top ... You can see far, far away, right down to the sea, mountains one way, and away to the Katberg the other ..." (Olive Schreiner to Betty Molteno, from Johannesburg, 17 July 1899, UCT Schreiner)
“I was immensely touched when I read the first draft of her will, that she left Lyndall a broach with her baby’s hair in it which she knows [Lyndall] will treasure, and that the photo of Cron with the baby that hangs at the foot of her bed is to go in her coffin with her.” (my research diary, 24 April 1997, written while working at NELM)

“…6. I wish to be buried with me in the same grave the bodies of my little daughter and of my dog Neta, the most faithful friend a human being ever had.” (Olive Schreiner’s final draft will, NELM 30.38a)

“I have painted my baby’s little inner coffin, the shell, a beautiful pure white for her birthday on the 30th April. It is so nice to think it will lie beside me in my coffin. You must take it out of the outer case and put the little white shell in by my side, not my feet dear…” (Olive Schreiner to Cronwright-Schreiner, from Hanover, 14 March 1907, in Cronwright-Schreiner, 1924b p. 265)

(writing about a house being built for them in De Aar, Olive Schreiner asked her husband for a small room to be built onto it) ‘I want it nicely plastered up and a tiny window at the back and a door in front with a fan-light. I want to make it into a tiny very little room to put our little coffin in. I’ll make it so pretty, dear Chummie, with flowers, and no one but you and I will know it’s there…’; in his edition of her letters, he commented about ‘Baby’s and Nita’s (sic) coffins lay in this room until I buried them in Sept. 1919 in the cement grave in my garden …’ (Olive Schreiner to Cronwright-Schreiner, from Hanover, 8 December 1907, in Cronwright-Schreiner, 1924b, p. 275)

For Olive Schreiner, as I read these and others of her unpublished letters, the work of mourning and the “joy and rest” of remembrance were symbiotically related to each other. As her May 1895 letter to her sister Ettie put it, “People say ‘forget.’ They don’t know the one joy is that one can never forget: that as long as I live I shall feel that little dead body lying in my breast to comfort me …” And while this was written soon after her daughter’s death, Olive Schreiner continued to refuse a binary between the immateriality of grief and mourning, and the materiality of life that lies at the root of remembrance; they were most definitely not antinomies for her. A powerfully striking indication of this in her letters is that for Schreiner, the child was carried and born anonymously, as it were, and came to assume individuality, personality and gender only some time after her death. Thus, the baby starts as an “it” in these letters, an “it” that had just been born and died, and Schreiner referring to her longed-for dead child has a terribly distanced sound to it. But then, later, the dead baby becomes she, my little daughter, and this dead child has birthdays and she “travels” and she “lives” with her parents. Exploring this requires knowing more about the beginning of these things.

Well before the birth of her daughter, within a few weeks of their marriage in February 1894, Olive Schreiner and Cronwright-Schreiner walked up to the top of Buffels Kop, at the foot of which was the farm that Cron managed. She was entranced (as most people who visit it are) by the still and utterly majestic beauty of this mountainous place, the butterflies that clustered in their hundreds when flowers bloomed, the bands of baboons that roamed and chattered about the summit, and the birds that flew above it; and, at her suggestion, they bought a morgen (about two acres) of land on its crown in order that after their deaths they might be interred there. Schreiner’s love of the South African landscape was passionately experienced in a very physical and, indeed, on a number of occasions in a mystical way; the karoo was not merely “the scene” of some of Schreiner’s most powerful and evocative writing (for example, the famous opening of The Story of An African Farm), but also the bedrock of her sense of being and belonging. As her letter to her close friend Betty Molteno of July 1899 emphasises, it gave her joy to think of that place on Buffels Kop; and other letters, which mention it, write that after her death it would become in some sense “hers,” she would belong to it more than ever in life, for she would then become as though at one with the land, a closure between the material and immaterial achieved through death as a beginning, rather than as an ending, the beginning of a totally different ontological state.

Following an appalling labour then forceps delivery while chloroformed, the Schreiners’s daughter was taken by the nurse working with the doctor who “managed” the birth to the room next door, to spend the night with her. As soon as she woke, early on the morning of 1 May 1895, Olive Schreiner asked Cron to bring the baby to her. Entering the nurse’s room, he found her weeping and the child dead on the bed. Later that morning, the baby was photographed, including held in the arms of a grim-faced Cron. Later that day, they decided that, ultimately, the baby would be interred on Buffels Kop with them. The baby was then buried in their garden in Kimberley. At some point, her body in its small coffin was placed inside an outer lead coffin. Whether the baby’s body was in some way “hermetically sealed up,” as Havelock Ellis’s undated note puts it, or whether this is how he understood what he had been told about the
outer and inner coffins, is not known. However, what is known is that wherever their main home was in South Africa, initially in Kimberley, then Johannesburg, then Hanover, then De Aar, the baby’s body in her coffin went with them.

As Olive Schreiner’s letters suggest, the continuing presence of her dead daughter—the incorporation of the baby’s body in its coffin within the surroundings of Schreiner’s home or its garden—was of immense comfort to her. Alongside this, the immateriality of mourning is that it “traces the name,” by invoking a person who no longer answers, who will now never answer again. The materiality of remembrance is that it invokes a material past, a flesh and blood and living and breathing past, a past of physicality as well as emotionality. The newly dead, in the period before their burial or cremation, are in the process of losing their materiality although they still inhabit, as it were, the everyday homely world of the living.\(^{1,2}\) The newly living, as they gain independent life, have not long possessed the kind of materiality that lends itself to remembrance. Thus, for Olive Schreiner, the feel of the little hands and feet moving inside her before her baby’s birth is joined, after it, by her daughter’s face, her hair, her little body held in her mother’s arms and lying on her mother’s breast, and being held by her father. Olive Schreiner had only momentarily experienced the sheer physicality of her daughter in her life, as a distinct and corporeal presence, as a body that was held and a face that was lovingly gazed into. The mourning practices that Olive and Crownwright-Schreiner engaged upon after their daughter’s death were ones that retained, rather than surrendered and departed from, this physical presence of their daughter in their lives—the dynamics of mourning and remembrance brought them life in death, not just death in life.

The ontological status of the newly dead person is a liminal one. For a given period, and within a licensed kind of space, they have a “betwixt and between” ontology and a presence between the (really) living and the (actually) dead. In a physical sense, “they” are still there, with “there” being a kind of place/space that has, historically, moved further and further away from home (for example, with the end of the “lying in” of newly dead people at home and in Britain the culture of cremation rather than burial being another stage in this removal, with these, in turn, being part of a wider “civilising” process, as Norbert Elias, 1978, 1985 has discussed). But in a more fundamental sense, the material “they” that breathed life into the really corporeal has actually gone, does not answer, will never answer again, no matter for how long and how loud their name is called. As a site of mourning, as a time and place/space in which new grief and new mourning for the passing of a person takes place, this liminality “eases the passing” for those who live on. But the expectation is that this is precisely liminal, that it is not a state but a process, something that comes to a proper end.\(^{1,2}\) That is, in Gillian Rose’s terms, the assumption is that there is a “beyond sorrow” in which the boundaries (between the living, here, and the dead, there) are reasserted and the mourning person returns to ordinary life after mourning is over. However, even regarding the death of Phocion, things were not quite so clear cut, so completely over and done with, as this might suggest. Thus, in one version of the story, as Rose notes, the wife of Phocion eats the ashes of her dead husband as the only means, in the unjust regime that governed the city, for her to ensure justice in honouring her dead. Bringing it all back home, indeed!

I now want to think about the idea of “bringing it home” around the presence in the garden or in a room in her home of the little coffin belonging to Olive Schreiner’s baby, a coffin which was joined in 1904 by the lead-coffined body of Olive Schreiner’s much loved dog Neta. Having a dead person “living,” as it were, at home, is something that is out of the ordinary. Living with and among the dead, and also having the dead “live” with, is something that many people would feel unhappy, or more strongly would feel disturbed, about. Things would not be in their proper place. To use Rose’s terms again, this would be to reject the law, to have things stay out of place beyond the appropriate time allotted for this.

For Freud (1919/1955), the common core of things which are experienced as “uncanny,” the unheimlich, involves what should be secret and hidden but which, as it were, instead inhabits the borders between the animate and the inanimate—the one thereby becomes, or seems to become, the other; and there is a consequent uncertainty as to ontological status here. The key examples for Freud are the automaton, the double, “odd” repetitions of things, animism, and the return of the dead; and he suggests that it is not so much the behavioural intentions of such beings/things, as it is their “out of place” character that occasions feelings of disturbance and fear. It is their very being, and not their doing, that disturbs—it is their ontological shakiness. But was the baby in her coffin and the dog in hers in those gardens and rooms of the Schreiners in Kimberley, then Johannesburg, then later Hanover and De Aar, actually “uncanny,” “unheimlich”? For many people, the answer would be a definite yes; but for Olive Schreiner, it was most certainly no. Her baby and her dog were not out of
place but very much in it; the one was without her own name, and the other was with hers, but both of them came under the nomenclature of the feminist to whom they were attached — they belonged to this name, they were at home there with Olive Schreiner.14

By rejecting “the law” of things in their proper, their separate, places and times, Olive Schreiner achieved precisely the “one thing shading into another” characteristic that Freud notes about the unheimlich. As he points out, sometimes heimlich (homely) and unheimlich (uncanny) trade meanings with each other; and, by each becoming “identical with its opposite,” they take on just the very feeling that “everything . . . that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (Freud, 1919/1955, pp. 224–225). This is very much to the point in thinking about that baby and that dog in their coffins in the garden or outside room in Hanover and De Aar, because by being where they should not be and very out of place, but by being at the same time so very “homely” and so very much in their place, they confound the usual separation of life and death, mourning and after mourning. They are not in themselves “life” but certainly became an ordinary part of it for Olive Schreiner, and as their “life in death” presence was routinised and domesticated, they stopped occasioning mourning, in the sense of sorrowful grieving, but they were not “after mourning” either. Mourning became . . . it became something else, something quite different in kind, something for which there is no easily available word or concept.15

What does it mean, then, to domesticate death? In terms of living it, that is, of domesticating the death of someone loved in one’s own life, it is difficult to know its meaning unless and until one has “been there and done that” — Schreiner’s response may be similar or different to our own, and only if the time comes will we know which it is for us. In terms of thinking about such matters, what it means is to reject the law, or, rather, it is at least not to accept the law. And so what if the law of mourning is not accepted? One trajectory is to sink into grief, to immerse oneself in that raw sense of sorrowful loss that comes at the very start of mourning and to perpetuate this over and over, so that it occurs anew. Another trajectory is to move beyond grief in this sense, to routinise mourning in the sense of bringing it home by making it ordinary, homely, an everyday part of daily life. Interestingly, for Olive Schreiner the latter trajectory was one that she combined with a “return” to the struggles within the just and unjust city that Gillian Rose’s argument insists upon, for Schreiner made a deliberate decision to turn her analytical attention towards the future, to where things occurring in the “here and now” would take future generations in the “there and then” to come.16 But Schreiner did not accept the law, the dead person was not allowed fully to depart. She confounds Rose’s ideas about “proper mourning” and its proper ending, for while rejecting “the law,” at the same time she strove to reinvent the political life of the community, and she returned to that perennial work concerning justice and injustice that Rose’s discussion is so concerned with.

I intend “The baby didn’t cry. But the feminist picked it up,” to have another meaning in addition to the one introduced earlier, that the feminist Olive Schreiner continued to “pick up” her daughter even though the baby never cried and never answered to a name. This other meaning involves thinking about the meanings of the acts and practices of academic
feminism in relation to such matters. As a feminist scholar concerned with tracing these occurrences in the past and their reverberations down the years, in a sense, I, too, have "picked up" this dead baby, Olive Schreiner's loved daughter who died, and I, too, have mourned her passing. I commented earlier that mourning raises issues concerned with honour and justice for the dead, concerned with a feminist ethics. Through the complex intersections of this ethics with grief and vengeance, it provides a powerful way of thinking about the feminist project, its very meaning, and our relationship, that of "we feminists," to it.

**Attending to death and mourning means giving up on that conventionalised, successive, and linear way—"life—death—mourning—life"—of thinking about them. It means, instead, grappling with the "life in death and death in life" trails of mourning across the lives of those who remember and for whom traces and echoes of the name of the person who now never answers continue to resound and reverberate that I have been discussing. It also means recognising the conjointed heimlich and unheimlich existence of the past in the present, its uncanny yet also homely presence. To explore such things a little more, I return to the photograph that appears at the start of my discussion and its captions, "an aspect of the work of mourning" and "a metaphor for feminist scholarship." When I look at this photograph, I "see" Olive Schreiner and her baby and her dog—that they are "there" within it leaps out of the frame, because my mind leaps towards this knowledge, it "sees" their presence inside those boxes that are their covered coffins. In the exact same moment, I can also see, albeit in a different way, the husband holding a friend’s baby and his foot casually placed on the coffin of his dead wife, too. It is these two intellectual "moments" of the photograph that I now contemplate further.

This photograph was taken at the top of Buffels Kop when the coffined bodies of Olive Schreiner, her baby and Neta were interred on 13 August 1921, and the living baby that Cronwright-Schreiner is holding is "the three-month-old Van Dijk baby" (Cronwright-Schreiner, 1924a, facing p. 400). As "an aspect of the work of mourning," this photograph embodies, it enframes, what I have been discussing about mourning. For me, it is invested with that complex "death in life and life in death" quality—the dead feminist bringing her baby and her dog home with her—that homely mourning has. It is also a part of the work of mourning that I engage in as a researcher concerned with the people and the events of the past: I trace the name, and in doing so people's remembrances of this other person, people themselves perhaps now dead, thereby become part of my own, entering that home that is my mind and my memory. But there is never an answer to the names that are called; and, paper over it though we may with chapters and articles and books, there remains an in-the-last-resort unbridgeable gulf between the lives that were lived then, and lives as these are written about now. To state this is to be outside, looking in at the photograph, thinking about what kind of "gaze" ours is as we look upon it, and contemplating what this gaze perceives and evaluates the claims made for this.

Concerning the photograph as "a metaphor for feminist scholarship": Thinking about it like this raises something profoundly uncomfortable and disquieting about feminist scholarship and its knowledge claims. Thinking about the frame and the photograph metaphorically as a disquisition on feminist knowledge making requires a shift in point of view, involves thinking about being inside the frame that holds "feminist scholarship," being inside it and looking out. And thinking about the photograph like this, the feminist scholar stands posed at the centre displaying a living baby in our arms, as it were, the living baby that is the living knowledge we claim to have and to hold, as we familiarly put our foot on the corpse of those women whose lives are written about within the frame of feminist knowledge making.

Turn the photograph one way, then, and the feminist scholar is outside, holding the frame and looking in at the photograph, seeing what lies beneath as well as on its surface, thinking about lives, tracing the name of the dead feminist Olive Schreiner, Olive Schreiner once living and thinking and writing and now dead. But turn the photograph another way and, metaphorically speaking, the feminist scholar is inside the frame—there she is, proudly holding the living baby that is her claim that, although the past may be a foreign country in which things were done differently, nonetheless, the feminist researcher knows, she knows what's what about her subject. And both of these "moments" are there "in" the photograph, its frame encompasses them, literally and figuratively; neither of them can or should be excised; and the ethical and political reverberations of both are necessarily contemplated within a thoughtful feminist inquiry, for they are aspects of, although not determinants of, all inquiry. I pursue this through what follows.

**MOURNING, GRIEF, AND VENGEANCE**

My discussion is not only concerned with mourning, not only concerned with knowledge claims and the past, but also with honouring the dead, with publicly honouring that nameless child that "never answered"
to any tracing of her name. The baby daughter of Olive Schreiner and Cronwright-Schreiner was never named. Or, rather, her name consists in the nomenclature of her relationship to the materially real feminist who actually picked her up and held her in her arms — for Olive Schreiner she was "my baby" or "my Baby," while sometimes for her and Cronwright-Schreiner, this became their daughter's name, the name of "Baby," a child caught in a name of the moment of her ever-present "life-and-death." But who is this dead baby for us, who is she for who has written, and you who are now reading, these words? Having dwelt for 15 years now among the papers, the material traces, of her mother, for me mourning becomes her in the sense that it gives honour to her; it adds to this baby's stature that remembrance does its work and that she is not forgotten. She inhabited her mother's life in that past now gone that I think so much about; and her mother remembered and loved her and treasured this remembrance until she herself died. I remember her by thinking about her in that past that was her own past, that of her short but sweet life; and for me she also has a present as well, for she inhabits the present of my life and thought: I am remembering her, I am remembering her now as I write this, as I read it afterwards.

She has her own importance, this little dead baby, and she is important to me as a feminist scholar who claims familiarity with the life and work of her mother who loved her. She has an additional importance for me as well because, as a dead baby I have in a sense known personally, she "stands for" many other dead children. These are the more than 22,000 children who died of epidemics of illnesses in the camps established by the British military as part of its "scorched earth" policy during the South African War 1899–1902, children I know only impersonally but whose deaths I think about and remember and mourn. 21 I now want to bracket the comments about feminist knowledge making made thus far, recognising that they raise epistemological but also ethical and political issues that, collectively speaking, "we feminists" need to think about, but also recognising that, while they provide useful ways of thinking about these things, they are not the only ways of thinking about them. I turn, then, to contemplating these issues in a different way, by recognising the irreducible facticity of the deaths of these 22,000 children and the ineluctable importance of neither forgetting them nor failing to honour their memory, nor "silencing" the past in a different way by romanticising and simplifying its complexities either.

Olive Schreiner was deliberately excluded from an event that took place on 16 December 1913, an event that she and various of her feminist friends might have been expected to be honoured guests at but were not. This was the unveiling of the Vrouemonument, the Women's Monument, just outside of Bloemfontein in the Free State of South Africa, a monument built to commemorate the deaths of those who died in the camps of the South African War 1899–1902 and to honour the women who had borne the brunt of this war. 22 In 1898 and 1899, Schreiner had commanded international audiences for her critique of the British provocation of the war and the alliance between imperialism and finance capital underpinning these events; and during the war, she and many other feminists had worked across the divisions brought by it to work for peace and to ameliorate conditions in the camps. But, afterwards, Schreiner had equally militantly and just as publicly opposed the growth of Afrikaner nationalism, opposed Afrikaner control of the South African state after Union of the settler colonies in 1910, and opposed the Natives Land Act of 1913 which underpinned the development of what is now known as the apartheid state. 23 Honouring the past by acknowledging the support of Schreiner and other feminists was completely outweighed by present political expediencies for the Free State and Transvaal politicians involved.

Measles, diphtheria, enteritis and typhoid epidemics, followed by pneumonia, spread rapidly through children with little resistance, particularly because they had lived very isolated lives before being taken from their farms to the camps to live at very close quarters with large numbers of others. More than 22,000 Boer children under the age of 16 died over the period of the war. 24 This was around 10% of the total population of Boers or Afrikaners in the four settler states of the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, Natal, and the Cape Colony; indeed, almost an entire generation of Afrikaner children died in less than 2 terrible years from mid-1900 on. It is these deaths and how mourning for them can encourage us to think analytically about the ethical, political, and intellectual concerns of feminist scholarship that I want to think about now.

Olive Schreiner was a woman who lost her much longed-for baby on 1 May 1895, who could not carry another child to full term, who experienced a succession of life-threatening miscarriages in attempting to do so. Her mourning for her daughter's death, if not the ways in which she worked and reworked this, has interesting half-echoes in the mourning of the women in the camps who lost their children, often more than one child, sometimes two, three, more, children in a period of weeks, sometimes just days or even hours at the height of the epidemics. How should we remem-
ber and honour these unnecessary deaths of 22,000 children across the hundred years that separates us now from then, across that “certain irreducible history” of South Africa, which occurred in the wake of the 1899–1902 war? What could we do, what should we do, to ensure remembrance of the suffering of those children and the bitter grief and mourning of their mothers, but in ways that do not forget our knowledge of “what came after,” the long bitter years of apartheid and its terrible imposition of multitudinous injustice, pain, suffering, death, mourning? The grief of Boer (later known as Afrikaner) people involved in “local mourning” for people known and loved and lost, and then as it became caught up in and overtaken by state commemoration, provides a route into thinking about the irreducible importance of all this pain, suffering, death and mourning with even-handedness. I explore some of the dimensions of this grief by means of a photograph of a piece of present-day representational art. This might itself be called “the women’s monument,” and is a ceramic sculpture on wood by the South African artist Charles Goddard.

Behold a grieving Boer mother, look at the wooden cross on which she is hung. Look again, look at her kappie or bonnet, her clothes, her tormented grieving face staring out at us. Look at her, clothed in a shroud, immersed in death. But there is more to see here than this. Look closer.

Look at her closer and closer still, look at the horror of her face, composed by contorted suffering baby faces. Look at those tiny baby hands strung around her suffering neck. Look at the Xhosa shroud she is wearing. Behold, indeed, a Boer mother and how she faces and mourns those tens of thousands of unnecessary deaths of her children. Behold, too, how her mourning displaces and subsumes, takes over and wears, that other mourning, mourning for the deaths of Black people.

We have looked at this photograph, I, the writer, and you, the readers of this, but what have we seen? We might see grief sunk into sorrowing pain, an act and an enactment of suffering, a woman composed by her grief expressed over and over. Or perhaps, instead, we might see grief projected outward into vengeful anger, an act and an enactment of retribution, a woman composed by her vengefulness, raw grief, and bitter anger locked together relentlessly down the years. What enables us to see one rather than the other? How we see is, of course, affected by what we know as well as by what it is that we look at. And what this feminist scholar claims to know includes the barely acknowledged guilt of Boer politicians for continuing the War, although they knew about the epidemics that swept the camps and the high death rates that followed, and the even less acknowledged guilt of their grieving parents who were also the most extreme of the “bitter-enders”; and it includes, too, these people’s unforgiving anger at the demise of the Boer Republics of the Transvaal and the Free State in 1902 when they became British colonies, their determination to exact political re-
venge for this, their determination to give life to the nation within the state, the Afrikaner nation ruling "Ons Land," our land, White land, terre blanche, South Africa.

The commemoration practices engaged in by the "bitter ender" Afrikaner leaders overtook local mourning for the more than 22,000 children and the more than 4000 women who had died.28 turned it into a state project which reconfigured the geographical and political landscape of South Africa and did so now albeit in more subterranean ways.29 This state project commemorated the sufferings of women only insofar as they were the mothers of the fatherland; it lost remembrance of the suffering children except in metaphorical commemorative brackets on either side of the representation of their mothers, in two bronze bas-reliefs at the foot of the Vrouemonument;30 and it consigned to utter deadly silence Black suffering in the South African War, and the inconvenient fact that the vast majority of Black Africans had supported the British occupying forces, had supported them only to be contumaciously disregarded afterwards in the obscene Union of Whites which took place in 1910.

Look again at the mourning Boer mother, the Afrikaner mother, the mother of the nation, the mother of apartheid; look again. What do we see now that we look with this information in mind? Is Charles Goddard's Afrikaner mother to be seen as a woman of suffering and grief? Or as a woman of anger and vengeance? Should she do, but what does she do with it? And might these feelings, those of grief on the one hand, and vengeance on the other, provide interesting alternative tropes for thinking about feminist scholarship to those introduced earlier?

My first caption for this photograph is "Behold the grieving mother." The grieving mother grieves for the loss of what has been, for those who have been alive and now are dead. She knows what has to be accepted is the finality and irretrievability of death, death as a boundary, a final frontier that cannot be breeched apart from by death itself. She knows the loss of the loving presence of loved children, her own children, her sister's children. She knows that such acceptance would commute love to loss to grief to
mourning. But although she knows, she cannot accept that mourning becomes the law, she remains immersed in the rawness of her grief, grieving over and over for those dead children.

My alternative caption for the photograph, paraphrasing Romans 12:19 in the Christian Bible, is “vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the mother.” The vengeful mother remembers that wrongs have been done; her grief has turned outwards to vengeance, it is in your face, and it reverberates down the years. Here, local mourning (my child, my sister’s child) meets the perception of categorical injustice (towards mothers of the fatherland, towards the nation) to provide a moral or ethical grounding for a complex bitter politics of remembrance turned to nationalism and its racial and ethnic supremacies. What rules here is not acceptance of the law but outright rejection, neither a giving way to the inevitability of inexorable facts nor an immersion in grief, but, instead, a militant determination to strike back. Only the injustice to her and hers counts; and the vengeful woman requires that the iron law be used, not in an act of even-handed justice, but, rather, to exact payment, to provide recompense through the hot sweet pleasures of retribution.

The grieving mother is fixed on the past, ghost-walks its highways and byways and haunts the memory of those children who also used to walk them. She endlessly feels its aching losses, sharpens its pains, points accusingly to its injustices; she is condemned to live her past over and over. The vengeful mother knows the wrongs that were done in the past and her gaze on those who committed them is inexorable. This woman insists on remembrance and she demands retribution, always the traces of those names resounding, resounding, for as long as memory lasts. She never forgets and she never forgives; her loss is absolute, their wrongdoing is absolute, the scales and her weighing of rights and wrongs are implacably fixed. But what of mourning? What does mourning become under the sign of vengeance? And what of feminist scholarship when grief on the one hand, or vengeance on the other, becomes its trope?

THINKING OF JUSTICE IN THE SPACES BETWEEN

Mourning, I have proposed, provides a powerful means to think with, to think about the social world, about life and death, about justice and injustice, about wrongs done, and about memory and remembrance of those who once lived but are now dead. Mourning is interesting, intriguing, challenging, in its own right and also because it impels, compels, thoughtfulness about feminist research, feminist theory, the feminist production of knowledge and its concern with doing justice to lives lived in the past and deaths died, its concern with challenging the present as well as the past and so changing the future.

Thinking about Olive Schreiner and her mourning for her dead baby raises some fundamental ontological questions about the nature of life and its boundaries with death, about mourning and memory, and also about love, the mind and the emotions, and their importance and power in people’s lives. These, in turn, have implications for how “knowledge” is conceived and how the practices that produce it are engaged with, as I have indicated through commenting on different ways of “reading” the photograph Olive Schreiner’s sarcophagus on Buffels Kop, around ideas about the feminist scholar looking into the frame and making claims about what is going on within it, contrasted with the feminist scholar being seen as situated within the frame. The life and death of Schreiner’s baby and those of the many dead children of the South African War, as I have proposed through commenting on grief and vengeance as ways of “reading” the photograph of Goddard’s ceramic of the Boer mother, provides some alternative and considerably more disquieting ways of thinking about knowledge and claims to possess it. Wrongs were done in the past and this should never be forgotten; the people who died because of such wrongs should never be forgotten, nor the grief and guilt of those who lived on either. Grief turned outwards as vengeance is founded on the desire for justice, but it exceeds this, tips the scales, and leaves its subjects culpable and with blood-stained hands; vengeance is impassioned, driven and consuming, and it is both right and proper and very very wrong.

Epistemological privilege is implicitly claimed when seeing the feminist project as one of looking into the frame of the representation of that past on Buffels Kop and seeing, knowing, what lies beneath the surface as well as on it. “I know,” I have claimed, I can see both the surface and the really real beneath it. Should epistemological privilege perhaps be grasped rather than rejected as either intellectually suspect or politically objectionable? Should feminism be understood in a confidently expansive way as providing something qualitatively better, providing real knowledge this time, its reality and substance and not merely its pale representational shadow? On one level, this is, of course, immensely attractive, for it asserts the insights and the power of a feminist rethinking — of the past and its people, its women
in particular, but also the present as well; and it enables feminist scholars to confidently, expansively, claim "I know." My position on this is that I certainly stand four-square by the irreducibility of lives lived and deaths died, that these things happened and it matters that we struggle to know about them, and by feminisms as a defensible ethical and political project; but at the same time, I also continue to insist that the issues surrounding referentiality, representation and interpretation cannot be denied either. The seriousness of the intellectual, ethical and political problems here are, I think, pointed up through thinking about the photograph on Buffels Kop "as a metaphor for feminist scholarship." Here, the feminist scholar is standing inside its frame and the necessary insensitivities of her stance are thereby clearly seen, her foot is demonstrably placed on the corpse of the women whose lives and deaths she claims to know and so to have command over; it symbolises her approach to her subject, reveals its politics. And, still in a metaphorical sense, she holds the baby as her prize, it is her possession of knowledge, triumphantly held and displayed.

If we reject this depiction of feminist scholarship, recoil from its implications, can a more acceptable account be provided by perhaps positioning the feminist project around the largely insoluble problems involved? That is, should the prize of the living baby that is "knowledge" be surrendered, the researcher's foot be removed from the corpse of her subject, and a more modest depiction of feminist knowledge be advanced? In doing this, advancing any certain claims for feminist scholarship as an engine for producing "certain knowledge" might be surrendered in favour of instead interrogating interesting and challenging questions. Here, the relationship between the feminist scholar and her subjects would be understood as inconclusive, ambiguous, intriguing, the representational field wide open and "we feminists" situated within it. The intellectual openness of reworking the trope in this way is attractive, for doing so centres fundamental issues but advances modest claims. But, while I relish this modesty, it seems to me also to lack that powerful ethical sense that has propelled the feminist project to such consequential political effect: It loses that insistent emphasis on justice and injustice concerning wrongs done that I want to retain as central to feminist scholarship as well as to feminist politics.

If ethics and justice are to be centred in feminist scholarship, then perhaps a different approach is called for, one that insistently interlinks questions of ethics and politics. Here I want to think about positioning feminist scholarship around a trope which contemplates Goddard's ceramic and emphasises grieving for the wrongs of the past. That is, the watchword here would become "behold the grieving mother," our foremother who suffered great wrongs. This approach would certainly insist on the primacy of ethical considerations and on the injustice of wrongdoing; at the same time, it eschews exchanges of memory and forgetting—rememberance is to the fore; and also this grief is immersed in itself—there is no vengeance because no anger. Here, the past of wrongs done is never actually past, over and done with; its losses are neither regained nor justice for these ever achieved. And this approach, too, has its attractions, for it positions feminist scholarship around questions of ethics and the wrongdoings of oppression. But for me, it still lacks something, its face so resolutely turned to the past; it lacks a quality of feminist politics that I relish, its hopefulness, its insistence that the future counts and matters, and it must and it can change for the better. In Gillian Rose's terms, the unjust city can become the just city, but this is the responsibility of its citizens to effect.

If the law of mourning is rejected and Goddard's ceramic is looked at, as I looked at it earlier, as depicting a woman who intertemporally insists not just that wrongs were done, but who also insists on retribution, on vengeance, seeing the past and its wrongs echoing down the years, what then? If this trope is used to think about feminist scholarship, then raw angry grief and the desire for vengeance appear in the relationship between feminist scholar and her subject, constitute the bond between them. Insofar as feminist scholarship has pivoted on the suffering and oppression of women, this creates some major troubles, disturbs complacencies, for its suffering subject is now seen to have appalling blood-stained guilty hands. And what happens when "women" are no longer seen as suffering angels, if the category is seen to hold devils as well as angels, perpetrators as well as victims, oppressors as well as oppressed? And when such qualities are seen frequently to cohere in the same people? Turn the kaleidoscope one way, and behold the suffering mourning Boer mother; turn it another, and behold the veneful Afrikaner racist.

If vengeance is foregrounded, then understanding the relationship between researcher and subject in feminist scholarship becomes immensely more difficult, more challenging, but also considerably more interesting. There is neither an epistemological nor a moral high ground to stand on when the suffering woman to whom wrongs were done is seen to be also a woman who has done grievous wrongs to others. This woman, the woman of vengeance who can be
discerned in Goddard’s ceramic, never heard and never saw the pain and suffering of those “other” people, the Black multitudes of South Africa who also suffered in the war and the camps, nor their untold suffering before and after this either. It was only her own suffering, only her own, that counted for her; but, but, but, she remains a woman who suffered nonetheless, a woman to whom grievous wrongs were done nonetheless, a woman to whom justice is required Nonetheless, whose 22,000 children died and for whom justice is also required from “we feminists.” Can pain and suffering be weighed against each other in feminist scholarship? What does justice require here? And how is mourning configured now?

My own answer to these questions is a very disconcerting one. For me, and with whatever her terrible and unforgivable faults, mourning becomes Electra. In Euripides’s version of the Greek myth, Electra was an unforgiving and relentlessly vengeful daughter who loved and hated Clytemnestra, her adulterous mother, who with her lover had killed her husband Agamemnon, Electra’s father; and Electra also thoroughly despised Iphigenia, her self-sacrificial sister who had acceded to her father’s sacrifice of her to the gods for a good wind for his war fleet. Mourning becomes Electra, a difficult character, an “awful” woman in the proper sense of the word because so much consumed by the fires of burning vengeance. wrongs were done and Electra remembered and mourned, and she sought justice; this much was right and proper and must not be forgotten. Wrongs were done and Electra exacted vengeance beyond justice; this much was unforgivable, and the injustice, pain, and death she wrought must never be forgotten either. Awful, terrible, suffering, vengeful, blood-stained; loving and hating her mother, despising and loving her sister, resenting and loving her father, loving and using her brother; Electra is Everywoman writ large. Discomforting, terrible, with blood-stained hands, she is Everywoman writ large nonetheless.

Look at Goddard’s Boer mother again now. How still she is; cover her face. Cover her face and give her peace, but do not forget her terrible grief any more than her terrible vengeance, and seek an approach to feminist scholarship which insists on the visibility of mourning and remembrance locked in their economy of exchanges, their continuing dynamics, and which rejects that economy of secrets in which some suffering and pain is not seen, has no existence, does not count, is weighed and found wanting. Seek even-handed justice as the watchword of feminist scholarship.

Gillian Rose’s discussion of mourning is powerfully concerned with justice, and it is important to think through what doing justice to the dead involves. For me, it involves honouring those who have died, and this, in turn, requires both mourning and remembrance, both memory and forgetting, requires also the recognition that mourning and memory are symbiotically linked, that the one does not stir in the mind without the other also stirring. Mourning becomes Electra, becomes Electra because it invokes the traces of the names of those who no longer answer or who have never answered, because it invokes the always unfinished nature of remembrance of the past, the resounding quality of the wrongs that occurred then and which still reverberate now. Mourning requires justice in the present tense, for wrongdoing is never over and done with, ethically speaking, until dealt with and justice. These complex tracings of the name also occasion remembrance in a different way as well. Personal memory of the dead occasions mourning for someone we have loved who has died, someone whose memory will never be forgotten for as long as those who loved them remember. But it ought not to be forgotten that memory, honour and justice are the foundations of social ethics, not only of personal ethics. Other people, those who are humanly and not “personally” (in the narrow sense) involved in social life and its troubles, have responsibility for the work of justice, are responsible for insisting upon the indivisible irreducible worth of every person’s life, every person’s death, every person’s pain. Only then can the work of justice be done, in which justice is a shared and even-handed concern for us all, for “we humans” in our conduct towards each other.

Mourning becomes us, mourning becomes us, mourning becomes us all, for to remember in this sense is to render justice to those who have lived and died, to render justice by not forgetting past suffering, pain, death, mourning, seeking justice for these wrongdoings while always remembering the indivisible absolutely irreducible human worth of other people’s lives, other people’s deaths. Vengeance corrupts utterly because it leads the mourner into giving up that irreducibility; taken from one, the principle falls and it is taken from all. Howsoever it positions itself, howsoever it configures the relationship between past and present, self and other, and whatever metaphors and tropes it works itself around, the pivot of feminist scholarship must surely be a concern with justice, with being even-handed about remembrance and mourning, and so with eschewing any high ground, any claim that we are apart and different and better. The Everywoman that
is Electra proclaims that vengeance is ours, that we do have the right, that we are apart. Electra is startling, discomforting, veneful; she is a terrible, a terrifying, woman and she has blood-stained hands, stained with the blood of her mother who she loved and hated.

Electra neither forgets nor forgives, but she does, in the end, come to recognise her culpability for her own wrongdoing as well as that of others for theirs. The linked metaphors of mourning and vengeance make us think, make us recognise that we are inside the frame, but insist on remembrance and justice, and insist also that any simple division between the good and the bad will not do, for grievous wrongs were done to both Clytemnestra and Electra and grievous wrongs were also done by them both. Vengeance repeats, vengeance repeats, it repeats. The cycle of vengeance was eventually brought to a close by Electra’s remembrance, her realisation of what she had done and its terrible wrongness and not just the small kernel of its rightness; it was her memory of that “certain irreducible history” of those events that brought an end.

The spaces between lives lived and lives written about are the spaces wherein the crucial work of thinking hard about feminist scholarship takes place. The final fate of Euripedes’ Electra was of course exile.

ENDNOTES

1. This article was written while I held the Hugh Le May Fellowship at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, during 2000; I am extremely grateful to Rhodes University for awarding me the Fellowship, and also to the Sociology Department and Fred Hendricks for hosting me. Part of the present article was given at the 4th European Feminist Research Conference, Bologna, Italy, in October 2000; my thanks for this opportunity. Mary Madden and Sue Wise provided comments on the complete draft and my thanks to them and to WSIF’s anonymous referees for helpful suggestions for revision.

2. My grateful thanks to the National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown, South Africa, for the permission to reproduce this photograph.

3. Such a “materialist” and “realist” approach to lives and reality is not usually associated with Derrida or de Man in either deconstructionist accounts or those of critics of deconstructionism, although it is a strong feature of the work of both. They are better social theorists than either their followers or their critics give them credit for.

4. As Michel de Certeau (1988) has emphasised, investigating such matters takes place in the context of canonical topics, ideas, and working practices that circumscribe as much as illuminate and encourage.

5. The meaning I give to this builds on Derrida (1995, 1996); following but also in some ways departing from Sigmund Freud’s (1917/1955) discussion.

6. In this sense, it provides a classic statement of van Gennep’s (1960) idea of “rites de passage” and the existence of a transitional liminal time occurring between one ontological “state of being” and another, which ends when overtaken by the new ontological state it acts as a conduit for.

7. Olive Schreiner (1855–1920) was the key feminist writer and theorist of her age. A foremost contemporary critic of Rhodes and imperialism in Southern Africa, her key publications range across a number of genres—novels, allegories, political pamphlets, “open letters” and theoretical treatises—and are internally marked by heteroglossia; and she “wrote theory” in all the writing genres she used. Born in what later became South Africa, she lived in Britain from 1883 to 1889 and from 1913 to 1920. See Stanley (in press) regarding her contribution to social theory.

8. In the letter extracts which follow, “ ’xxx’” indicates a word that the writer inserted later, and square brackets indicate an uncertain reading. Samuel Cronwright was Olive Schreiner’s husband; he took her name on marriage, adding it to his own, while she was generally referred to as Mrs Schreiner; he was known to family and friends as Cron. Ettie was Schreiner’s next older sister. Mary Sauer was, for a time, a close friend of Schreiner’s, and she was married to the liberal Cape politician James Sauer. Havelock Ellis had been a close friend when Schreiner was first in Britain, but she came to experience his emotional demands as attempts to control her, although their friendship persisted; Ellis became a protagonist in the development of “sex psychology” and in later life became a pundit on such matters. “Laddie” was Schreiner’s nickname for her favourite brother Will; he became Attorney-General in the second Rhodes’ administration in the Cape Colony, but after the Jameson Raid in late 1896, his politics took an increasingly radical turn; he was Prime Minister of the Cape before and during the early stages of the South African War 1899–1902 and was deeply opposed to British military interventionism. Isie was married to the Afrikaner politician Jan Smuts; while Schreiner completely rejected his racial politics, she felt very affectionate to Isie and also, although crosscut with her critique of his politics, for Jan as well; “Baas Koosie” was the nickname for their baby son. Betty Molteno was Schreiner’s closest friend from 1890 on; a Quaker and pacifist, Molteno was headmistress of a famous girl’s high school in Port Elizabeth in South Africa; Schreiner was also very close to Alice Greene who lived and worked with Molteno; in letters to mutual friends, she described theirs as one of the perfect loves she had witnessed. Lyndall was Will Schreiner’s eldest daughter and Schreiner’s favourite niece.

9. Olive Schreiner had a number of increasingly serious miscarriages after the birth of her daughter (the last in August 1899); she probably used this form of words so that Will would realise she was referring to the child who was born, not to a miscarriage she had experienced not long before this letter was written.

10. Buffels Kop is part of a mountain range outside the small town of Cradock, in the karoo area of the Eastern Cape in South Africa.
11. Perhaps "odd" for a present-day reader unused to the frequency of infant deaths and the need for means of remembrance, this was, in fact, often done once the Kodak camera made it possible.

12. Thus, the disturbing quality of the "living dead": They properly belong to immaterial death, but the remnants of their once-living flesh improperly reenter the material world. I discuss Freud (1919/1955) on the "uncanny" later. See also Spyer (1998) for an interesting collection concerned with spatial borders and the fetishes—forms that bring together different orders of being in the world. "A start and a finish" processual nature of liminality is fundamental, as it is in Rose's ideas about mourning.

13. As I understand the anthropologist Victor Turner's (1974, 1982) work on liminality and its rites de passage underpinnings in the work of van Gennep (1960), the "start and a finish" processual nature of liminality is fundamental, as it is in Rose's ideas about mourning.

14. In this, Schreiner adopted similar remembrance practices to people in various other cultures "before the missionaries"; thus, Andrew Strathern (1985, p. 212) notes of Hagen, in Papua New Guinea, that "Commemoration of the dead was sharper in the past: men and women wore bones of kin or spouses round their necks; the bones of a baby which died might be hung up in a netbag and kept for some months, wrapped in sweet-smelling grasses, while its mother mourned her loss. Skulls were kept and placed collectively in a hamlet or village-based cult house (tapa yapu)."

15. At least not in English and in present-day Europe, societies in which "ancestors" and other dead are very much a part of life have few such conceptual difficulties. The phrase "mourning becomes..." for me immediately invokes completion by reference to Eugene O'Neill's (1932) trilogy. Thus, although my discussion starts with Gillian Rose's completion of it with "mourning becomes the law," my later discussion will determinedly follow the name of Electra.

16. This is not to imply that Schreiner developed any wishy-washy sentimental feeling about this, for certainly her take on life and death also encompassed what is, in An African Farm, life's lack of any fundamental ethical purpose and its frequently "short, nasty and uneventful quality.

17. Schreiner became a Freethinker early in her life, and as an adult, she came to the view that Christianity was by definition hypocritical and actively evil in its doctrine of repentance and forgiveness. She also had strong convictions about the holism of "life on earth" and understood death as a return to life in this wider sense. Her ideas and convictions about this were materially based, or rather they refused the materialism/idealism binary; and they are consonant with how she understood her feminism and socialism.

18. How to interpret the analytical ideas and writings that Schreiner developed is not the topic of this discussion, but see Chap. 3 of Stanley (in press) for a detailed account. However, Schreiner herself was clear that "I fix my thoughts in the future, even the very far future which is yet so near in the life of the race where so many will reach what we have only dreamed of." (Olive Schreiner to Anna Purcell, no date, SAL Schreiner 29.8), and her thoughts about current matters were harnessed to contemplating where in "50 or 70 years" time" they would take South Africa.

19. In making these interconnections, I have been influenced by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's (1998) discussion of biographer/subject relations.

20. I make no apologies for the inclusiveness of this "we." If we are feminists, we are within the project, however diversely this is conceived and practiced and disputed; and if not, not.

21. During the South African War 1899–1902, the British military formed camps of tents—concentration camps—for Boer women and children whose farms were burned as part of a "scooped earth" policy against the Boer commandos, to stop food going to the Boer fighting forces. Over 26,000 people, just over 22,000 children and 4000 women, died as the result of epidemics of measles, typhoid, enteritis, and diphtheria followed by pneumonia. Later Afrikaner statements attempting to legitimate apartheid to the contrary, these were not akin to the Nazi death camps; see Stanley (submitted for publication) for a discussion of local mourning for these deaths and how it was overtaken by the state commemoration practices of emergent Afrikaner apartheid nationalism, and Stanley (submitted for publication) concerning moral life and the concentration camps.

22. See here Stanley (submitted for publication) for the "secret history" of the Vrouemonument. On "the brunt of the war," see Hobhouse 1902.

23. See Stanley (in press) on Schreiner's political activities and writings.

24. These were White children. Probably as many Black children also died, of the same causes. There were around 50 White camps and probably more than 60 Black camps. Black people were "concentrated" for the same reasons as Whites—to damage farm production and stop food going to the Boer commandos. It should also be noted that the "White camps" contained large numbers of Black women and children working as servants for Whites. See De Reuck (1999), Fuller & Kessler (1996), Kessler (1999), Mongalo & du Pisani (1999), Stanley (in preparation), and Warwick (1983).

25. See Antjie Krog (1998) for an interesting attempt to map this.

26. Here, I have been greatly influenced by Todorov (1996), as well as by the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

27. Goddard's ceramic, and a companion-piece of a male figure, is owned by Jan and Estee Coetzee; this photograph, taken by me, appears with their permission. What follows is of course my interpretation of Goddard's sculpture, and not any meaning accorded to it by Goddard himself.

28. Figures on all Boer fatalities given to Schreiner's friend, the humanitarian reformer Emily Hobhouse in 1914, taken from camp registers of deaths in the Archives Deposits of the two former republics, were repeated in an early pamphlet on The National Women's Monument by van der Merwe (nd but after 1913) and widely accepted as accurate by Boer politicians and commentators, and are as follows:

| Boer adult males, all fatalities | 6189 |
| Total concentration camp deaths of women, children and boys over 16 but under 21 | 26,370 |
| Women and girls over 16 | 4177 |
| All children aged 16 and under | 22,074 |
| Boys over age 16 but under 21 | 119 |
REFERENCES
