

CHAPTER 2:

Monumental Dresses: Coming to Terms with Racial Repression

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Phila Portia Ndwandwe was a high-placed South African freedom fighter who had been missing since 1988 and who turned out to have been murdered by the security police. She was the first victim whose remains were exhumed after information was provided by perpetrators appearing before the Amnesty Committee of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa. Phila Portia Ndwandwe had been trained in Quatro camps and had functioned as the acting commander of Natal Umkhonto activities from Swaziland. She was responsible for the infiltration of the African National Congress (ANC) cadres into Natal. After the unbanning of the ANC she did not return to her family. A number of stories started to circulate, explaining for instance that she had not gone missing but had become a police collaborator (an *askari*). However, as the whole nation could witness in the special TRC reports dedicated to the Amnesty Committee's exhumations and broadcasted by SABC-TV in 1997, and as we can read in the 1998 TRC report, security branch members had abducted her from Swaziland. This abduction happened with the help of two *askaris*, but she never became an *askari* herself.

The case of Ndwandwe is often referred to in the post-TRC literature as proof of the rightness of the truth before justice strategy. Without the Amnesty Committee, her story might not have been told, and Phila Ndwandwe might have been remembered, informed by speculations, as a police collaborator. The truth emerged because, in order to receive amnesty, some of the policemen involved in Phila Ndwandwe's disappearance appeared before the Amnesty Committee and told the story of her last days in prison. The security police members clearly stated that she had not been prepared to co-operate with the police. She explicitly did not want to turn into an *askari*. Consequently, as the policemen did not have admissible evidence to prosecute her and as they could not release her either, they killed her and buried her on the Elandskop farm. In the end, the exhumation of the remains of Phila Portia Ndwandwe took place in KwaZulu-Natal on 12 March 1997. On that occa-

sion, amnesty commissioner Richard Lyster noted that this was one of “the most poignant and saddest” of the exhumations. According to Lyster:

She was held in a small concrete chamber on the edge of the small forest in which she was buried. According to information from those that killed her, she was held naked and interrogated in this chamber for some time before her death. When we exhumed her, she was on her back in a foetal position, because the grave had not been dug long enough, and had a single bullet wound to the top of her head, indicating that she had been kneeling or squatting when she was killed. Her pelvis was clothed in a plastic packet, fashioned into a pair of panties indicating an attempt to protect her modesty.¹

The story of Phila Ndwandwe is only one of the numerous examples of the tensions between truth and justice which were central to the process of political transition in South Africa. While dealing with the nation’s legacy of racial repression, the guiding question that preceded the holding of the TRC hearings was how something really new could be achieved. Legal vindication alone is not sufficient to pave the road towards a new community; that much is shown by the lessons of history.² But establishing insight into the truth just might achieve this. The attempt to clear the path and enable the coming of a new era eventually led to the decision to let truth prevail over justice. Not with an eye on neglecting justice, but rather with a clear focus on a higher ambition: deterring discord, aiming for forgiveness and reconciliation. It had always been the TRC’s hope and aim that insight into the truth, the different kinds of truth, would eventually bring on reconciliation, because the belief was that something new could only flourish on the soil of reconciliation. The question of how something really new could be achieved therefore transformed into

¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, Volume II, 1998.

² The joint treatment of the children and grandchildren of Dutch people who had collaborated with the German occupier (NSB) together with WWII victims turned out to be impossible even for the second and third generation at the Dutch Centrum ’45, a clinic for the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) resulting from WWII as well as from subsequent wars. The Netherlands did have a WWII tribunal, but no WWII truth commission. See also Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992); Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002); Richard A. Wilson, “Justice and Legitimacy in the South African Transition,” in *The Politics of Memory: Transitional Justice in Democratizing Societies*, ed. Alexandra Barahona de Brito, et al., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 190–218; Carli Coetzee and Sarah Nuttall, eds., *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998).

another question as the TRC process evolved: how can our attempt to articulate a collective memory steer clear of bringing on new dissent? The TRC thus not only offered redemptive political possibilities, but also announced the beginning of a new struggle over South Africa's past, present and future.

Sexual difference and transitional justice

This example from South Africa's recent history provides us with numerous leads for further reflection on how feminist theory offers a perspective on relating to the question of dealing with racial and sexual differences, or to phrase it differently, the question of how to come to terms with legacies of injustice in a globalising world. The case described above touches upon the phenomenon that life in a state of repression does not necessarily imply that a clear demarcation line between victims and perpetrators can be drawn in all circumstances. Different stories were circulating about Phila Ndwandwe. In 1988 she had been a victim of apartheid by definition; but had she then turned into a perpetrator by collaborating with the oppressor, that is, by becoming an *askari*? Victims do indeed sometimes turn into perpetrators, in a concatenation of repression. *Askaris* were feared within the ANC, and an individual suspected of being one might easily receive a death sentence. The state was unmistakably the main perpetrator, yet human rights were also violated in the ANC Quatro camps, particularly when party members were suspected of having defected to the enemy camp. Working through the legacy of oppression, including all the possible positions this involves, requires a complex and differentiated concept of victim and perpetrator. Victims can respond in different ways to their victim status. Dealing with past violations of human rights therefore calls for strategies that enable a consideration of the complexity, or multilayeredness, of oppression and victimhood.

In feminist and postcolonial theories this is an all too familiar problem. Oppression and internalised oppression are complex processes to work through. Often the biggest obstacle to lasting change is the lack of a new structure, a new language of address, which can be utilised once the yoke of oppression has been cast off. When the representatives of an oppressed or marginalised grouping begin to partake in the public space, how do they manage, for example, to transform the public space in such a way that their own particularity can be realised? For decades so-called equality thinkers as well

as difference thinkers in the field of feminist theory have tried to steer the course of social and academic change by focussing both on the terrain of formalising equal rights—something that is indispensable and of ongoing necessity—and on that of adequate symbolical representation. On the one hand, it was important to ensure justice on the level of numerical representation in political reality (equality thinkers); on the other hand, the very texture of this political reality had to be analysed for the way it is intrinsically interwoven with the repression of alterity (difference thinkers). For the time being, the latter continues to be the case, because our symbolical order is governed by the law of sameness, to cite the leading philosopher of difference, Luce Irigaray. This holds for the oppressed and oppressor alike. Irigaray argues that we are molded by a tradition of thought that teaches us to order the world in terms of opposites, whereby one pole is defined in terms of the other.³ Irigaray uses her concept of the operative law of sameness to expose the ingrained tradition of thinking the one in terms of the other, of conceptualising black as non-white, woman as not-man, lesbian as non-heterosexual, poor as not-rich, the other as not the self. Each opposition therefore implies hegemony, norm, structural unity, and thinking in terms of sameness. In Irigaray's analysis that sameness translates into so-called phallogocentrism, that is, thinking in terms of an ostensibly disembodied, but implicitly masculine rationalism. She holds therefore that structural change in society can only be achieved by abandoning sameness thinking and developing an alternative. We should learn to think in terms of difference. This involves driving a wedge, for instance, into the ingrained dialectic of masculine and feminine, and also into that of perpetrator and victim, of oppressor and oppressed. In other words, as long as the dialectic of sameness determines the definition of the problematic, allowing the dominant term to define the marginalised one, the emergence of anything new is precluded.

As I will illustrate below, this also affects the manner in which a concept of justice is created after a period of repression. When we apply Irigaray's premises, predicated on sexual difference, to attempts at establishing new ways of doing justice, the conclusion is that as long as an economy of classic justice—based on the barter of punishment for crime—dictates where we

³ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985).

should look for a solution, no new structure can come into being. The economy of barter justice implies a level of equality; it implies sameness, tit for tat—and it does not involve acknowledging the essentially different. The paradigm of sexual difference entails that a new situation can only arise if victim and perpetrator relate to one another in essentially new ways. It is this principle that has been put into motion by those who set up the South African TRC. That essentially different position could become more firmly established through an acknowledgement that differences between perpetrators and victims are unbridgeable in light of their different historical backgrounds. That chasm of difference cannot be yoked by the punitive system. At the same time, however, a contiguity between victims and perpetrators may be revealed if we differentiate along categories and consider individual stories; it then turns out that there are different classes of crime, victim, and perpetrator. This is not to say that those who really did commit the murder of Phila Ndwandwe could just as quickly receive the gift of forgiveness in exchange for the truth and the acknowledgement of difference. It does mean, however, that the disclosure of the specific story of victim and perpetrator creates opportunities for making a new language suitable for designating sameness as well as differences within the category of various classes of perpetrators and victims. Such a new language comes into being with those who are paradigmatically related, either to the perpetrators, for instance because they shared the same privileges during apartheid and/or did not actively resist the regime, or to the victims, if only for reasons of materially lagging behind. The process of articulating and mediating similarities and differences within a social category is exactly the strategy Irigaray has in mind with her politics of difference. Driving a wedge into entrenched oppositions and differentiating between them bleeds forth from the law of sameness and exhibits the need for a vocabulary for putting on the agenda the differences within. Only if an oppressed group is capable of doing so can liberation and participation in the public sphere be realised with some success. The established power relations then are not simply reversed but will acquire a new form of appearance.

The woman who kept silent

It will be evident that the domain of transitional justice, that is, of creating a novel and other notion of justice, needs to be informed by other disciplines—disciplines that employ a concept of the powers of imagination, most notably the arts. Characteristic for the process of political transition in South Africa is that the potential role of art in constituting the new and multilayered South Africa was acknowledged in academic circles from the start. It is generally recognised that the task of giving memory a home, of placing it within the visible domain, cannot rest solely on the publication of the testimonies of victims and perpetrators in the TRC report.⁴ To paraphrase South African author André Brink:⁵ One might even say that unless the enquiries of the TRC are extended, complicated, and intensified in the imaginings of literature and the visual arts, South African society cannot sufficiently come to terms with its past in order to face the future. Even from his perspective as a judge of the Constitutional Court, Albie Sachs recently called on people to take seriously the potential of art to add complexity and depth to politics, arguing that it should be granted a proper position in the public debate on the new South Africa. For that reason and as if to underline the interaction of justice and the arts, Sachs bought a tribute to no one less than Phila Ndwandwe, which is the installation of Judith Mason, now on permanent exhibition in the main hall of South Africa's Constitutional Court.⁶

The core of the installation consists of a dress made of blue plastic bags. Along the skirt's hemline the following text is written in calligraphy:

Sister, a plastic bag may not be the whole armour of God, but you were wrestling with flesh and blood, and against powers, against the rulers of darkness, against

⁴ See also Rory Bester, "Trauma and Truth," in *Experiments with Truth*, ed. Okwui Enwezor, et al., (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2002), 155–173; Annie E. Coombes, *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003); Jill Bennet, *Empathic Vision: Affect Trauma and Contemporary Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); Mark Sanders, *Ambiguities of Witnessing: Law and Literature in the Time of a Truth Commission* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Rosemarie Buikema, "Crossing the Borders of Identity Politics," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 16, 4 (2009): 309–323; and Rosemary Jolly, *Cultured Violence: Narrative, Social Suffering, and Engendering Human Rights in Contemporary South Africa* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010).

⁵ André Brink, "Stories of History: Reimagining the Past in Post-apartheid Narrative," in *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, ed. Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998), 29–43.

⁶ See Albie Sachs, "Apartheid's 'sterile spaces' need arts," *Sunday Argus*, October 17, 2010; and "Support the arts in places apartheid tried to make sterile—Sachs," *Sunday Independent*, October 17, 2010.

spiritual wickedness in sordid places. Your weapons were your silence and a piece of rubbish. Finding that bag and wearing it until you were disinterred is such a frugal, common-sensical, house-wifey thing to do, an ordinary act ... At some level you shamed your captors, and they did not compound their abuse by stripping you a second time. Yet they killed you. We only know your story because a sniggering man remembered how brave you were. Memorials to your courage are everywhere; they blow about in the streets and drift on the tide and cling to thorn-bushes. This dress is made from some of them. Hamba kahle. Umkhonto.

The dress not only symbolically makes up for Phila Ndwandwe's forced nakedness but it also commemorates her struggle, the grand gesture of keeping silent while being pressed to betray one's comrades. The dress thus both restores Ndwandwe's dignity and her agency. This dress negotiates between the seen and the unseen, the said and the unsaid, the known and the unknown. The exhumations most literally brought hidden truths to the surface in such a way that this surface will never be the same. In that vein, the dress performs a sense of redemptive truth as well as a sense of restorative justice for both the perpetrators (or those who suffer from identifications with this position) and the victims. In this context, the very materiality of the plastic dress opens up possibilities to think about the historically raced and gendered space of South Africa in a different way for both the oppressor and the oppressed. The blue plastic shopping bag, which really is omnipresent in South Africa, is paradigmatically related to the blue plastic bag that at least minimally warranted Phila Ndwandwe's dignity as well as her agency. The present and the past, the personal and the political, truth and justice acquire a specific form through the reuse of a plastic shopping bag as a dress.



Figure 2.1: Judith Mason. *The Man who Sang and the Woman who kept Silent* (1998) Sculpture from triptych-central panel. (Courtesy of the artist)

Concurrently, transition or transformation is a process of reiteration and recycling, of remembering history, but in such a way that the repetition recognises the differences within and thus gradually reforms and rebends traditional forms and relationships: between the oppressor and the oppressed, between the different sorts of oppressors, within the grey area of *askaris* and beneficiaries. In that vein, this work of art, the monumental dress made of plastic for Phila Ndwandwe, constitutes an attempt at the embodiment of the process of transitional justice, the visualisation of a new collective skin while recognising the differences within. Recognising and dealing with difference thus becomes a process that, no matter how slow its pace, consciously and unconsciously inscribes itself ever more securely into the cultural memory of postcolonial, post-apartheid society, as on every occasion a different memory is triggered by just any arbitrary flimsy plastic shopping bag. Every simple South African blue plastic shopping bag has become a mnemonic trace, a gesture of restorative justice, through its reuse in the dress by Judith Mason and through its connection to the Constitutional Court.

Thus, a decade after the presentation of the TRC report, it is generally recognised that the becoming post-apartheid of South Africa cannot rest solely on the publication of the testimonies in the TRC report. This indispensable instrument has been only the beginning of a transition still to be completed. It is now up to the arts to inhabit the open spaces between testimonies both public and individual; and up to policymakers to be receptive to the politics of arts.

The poetics of scrap

The reuse of a plastic shopping bag in the installation by Judith Mason has a very specific and special significance, as we have now seen. However, the multilayered performance of the past as well as the future by deploying recycled material is a core theme in the works of other South African sculptors too. In part, this has to do with economic reasons, but more importantly, found materials have a history which can be layered into the new work. The choice of materials in South African art is therefore thoroughly enlaced with the artwork's political effect.⁷ We could call this the poetics of scrap. Recently I have

⁷ See also Sue Williamson, *South African Art Now* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009); Okwui Enwezor and Chika Okeke-Agulu, eds., *Contemporary African Art since 1980* (Bologna:

paid attention to the effects of Willy Bester's use of scrap materials, such as industrial rubbish, parts of medical cabinets, spades, children's shoes, or old anti-apartheid signs. As I demonstrated regarding his famous Sarah Bartmann statue, the way in which he deploys his material should be seen as pictorial research as well as a build-up of geopolitical and intertextual depth that could not be achieved by using new materials. Through his use of scrap material he successfully deconstructs the gendered and raced history of colonial South Africa.⁸

A good example of the way in which South African artists are creating the new by means of rebending the old in the particular context of the post-TRC era, is a very powerful piece in the oeuvre of Nandipha Mntambo, a young sculptor born in Swaziland and working in Cape Town. The piece is another significant example of the aesthetical and political power of used material, but the context of her work also points at the memory of gender-specific human rights violations under apartheid in general and at another dimension to the story of Ndwandwe in particular.

Mntambo is known for her sculptural costumes made of cowhide. Cowhide is not exactly the same as scrap or waste material, but it shares the feature of having served elsewhere, of bearing a history. The symbolism of hide and the historical significance of cows made cowhide the material of her choice. Cows are historically associated with affluence and prosperity in agrarian societies in sub-Saharan Africa. Those families who could afford it used to bury their dead wrapped in cowhide. Traditionally only men were allowed to dye and cure the hides. In some African contexts, cows are still the accepted currency that a prospective groom must offer his bride's family in the age-old practice of bride-price (*lobola*). At the same time, those practices are criticised in Mntambo's sculptures, because women are deprived of agency and reduced to the level of possessions. The equation of women and trade, women and

Damiani, 2009); Salah M. Hassan and Olu Oguibe, eds., *Authentic/Ex-Centric: Conceptualism in Contemporary African Art* (Ithaca, NY: Forum for African Arts, 2001); Sarah Nuttall, ed., *Beautiful Ugly: African and Diaspora Aesthetics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁸ Rosemarie Buikema, "The Arena of Imaginings: Sarah Bartmann and the Ethics of Representation," in *Doing Gender in Media, Art and Culture*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema and Iris van der Tuin (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 70–85. See also for the materiality of South African art Nuttall, *Beautiful Ugly*; John Pepper, *Art and the End of Apartheid* (Minneapolis and London: Minnesota University Press, 2009); Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu, *Contemporary African Art*; Nii O. Quarcoopome, ed., *Through African Eyes: The European in African Art, 1500 to Present* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 2009); and Williamson, *South African Art Now*.

passivity, but still also the representation of women as agents are thus foregrounded in the use of hide for Mntambo's sculptures. As she points out herself: "This material memory that seems to live within the skin cells of the animals I use means that the medium itself can be seen as one that physically engages the concept of recollection, both on a cellular and physical level."⁹ Dressing the cow hide is an essential part of the way she works. Mntambo describes how she literally has to work her way through layers of fat, which need to be removed. She then shapes the cured skins on casts of her own body and those of women close to her. The end result is a set of hairy life-size women, who are not necessarily or unequivocally repulsive. Instead, it is a fascinating performance of all kind of boundary blurrings. The animal skin allows her to shape morphing structures that are part human and part animal, part alive and part dead, part grotesquely revolting and part sensually enticing. The fragments of female form may elicit repulsion not only because of their hairiness but also because of the particular smell and the touch of the material. However, it is repulsion intended to evoke the residue of life and the actual presence of the corporeal rather than the female body as victim, damaged, abused or abject, as Mntambo states in the *Ingabisa* catalogue. The literal and symbolical references to digging, memory and forgetting, victimhood and agency, thus thematically and formally link Mntambo's art to the political context of South Africa in general. A political context which has everything to do with the sense of unease, the ambivalence, the two-ness, provoked by the smell and the shapes of the animal skin. But, as I mentioned earlier, there is one particular piece which deserves to be highlighted here, since the general engineerings of trauma and memory seem to echo Ndwandwe's story as referred to in the TRC report and Mason's dress.

Indlovukati (2007) is a single pale coloured skin which sensuously delineates the back and buttocks of an absent woman. This dress-like statue made of smelly hairy cowhide is floating in the exhibition space just like *The woman who kept silent*, Mason's famous dress installation. The form of the absent, ghostlike body here is that of a kneeling woman. As the TRC report taught us, Phila Ndwandwe was kneeling or squatting when she was killed. Against that background this dress called *Indlovukati* seems to be made to cover Phila Ndwandwe's humiliated falling body. The particular shape of the

⁹ Catalogue statement for the *Ingabisa* exhibition at Michael Stevenson (2007).

animal skin is here occupying the space in between the living and the dead in a very significant way. At the same time, “indlovukati” is Nguni for “mother of the king”. Further investigation into the meaning of this title reveals that the name of Ndwandwe refers to a Swazi clan which has known a famous indlovukati called Nukase Ndwandwe (1890–1957).

This woman played an active role in the religious and social welfare of Swaziland. In general, the indlovukati and her son function at the head of the political hierarchy. These connotations, evoked by the title of this floating dress, commemorate another aspect of the story of Phila Ndwandwe, an aspect which also adds to the iconic value of her vicissitudes. One of the appealing facets in Ndwandwe’s story is the fact that she was not only a freedom fighter suspected of collaborating with the police, but also a mother and a lover. ANC historiography describes her as the woman breastfeeding her baby in one arm and keeping a gun in the other. When she did not return in

1990, her parents reported her as being missing to the TRC. Only after the Amnesty hearings did those parents learn about the existence of their grandson Thabang. On the occasion of the reburial of Phila Ndwandwe’s remains—a few weeks after the exhumations—the ANC posthumously awarded her a medal for bravery and asked her son Thabang to accept it. The jury report of the order of Mendi for bravery reads: “Demonstrating bravery and valour and for sacrificing her life for her comrades in the cause for a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society.”

Against the background of those historical events, *Indlovukati*, the mother of the king, shapes the absent body as well as the body to come. The



Figure 2.2: Nandipha Mntambo. *Indlovukati* (2007) Cowhide, resin, polyester mesh, waxed cord. 153 × 89 × 70cm. (Courtesy of Michael Stevenson Gallery)

effect of this artefact, working through the history of Phila Ndwandwe as well of that of other women living under multiple oppressive conditions, is that Phila Ndwandwe's individual story is provided with a gender- and race-specific context. Her individual vicissitudes are deepened and complexified in such a way that they get to perform the multilayered past and are able to contribute to the articulation of alternative practices of doing justice.

The dress sculpted out of cowhide, working through layers of matter, layers of history, has come to simultaneously perform absence and presence in a very significant way. This hairy dress has a history and a future. It performs the need to fight and the need to be protected. The glossy fur of the hide betrays traumatic and smelly origins; its new shape, however, can be inhabited, apart from by Phila Ndwandwe's story, by the stories and bodies of other named and as yet unnamed heroines. It is a gesture, an index of a community of the living and the dead. It performs the need to fight and the need to be protected. In that sense *Indlovukati*, Mntambo's dress, is undoing the victim-perpetrator dichotomy while underlining Irigaray's device of articulating the differences within, shaping new genealogies among women in order to be able to design other forms of solidarity and justice. Just as long as the story of subaltern voices needs to be visualised, told and retold.

Implications for teaching: Working with exemplary case studies

The approach in this chapter is very much based on the didactic principles we deploy in the introductory course in Gender and Ethnicity as it is taught within Utrecht University's Gender Studies programme. In this course we signal that gender studies has become a fully-fledged academic discipline, and we describe the transformations spawned by gender studies in the study of culture as a process of reconsidering, subverting, and rearranging what was and what is.

Constituting a new phase in the discipline, the textbooks we compiled for this course are also a form of documentation.¹⁰ The different ways of writing the history of women and of gender studies as a discipline are classified,

¹⁰ Rosemarie Buikema and Anneke Smelik, *Women's Studies and Culture. A Feminist Introduction* (London: Zed Books, 1995); Rosemarie Buikema and Iris van der Tuin, eds., *Doing Gender in Media, Art, and Culture* (London: Routledge 2009).

documented, and addressed. As the latter term indicates, the idea of a dialogue or debate involved in our historiographical method departs from the notion of a present “in conversation” with previous versions of the past. The trails of the past serve to delineate the paths for the future. Or as Sarah Ahmed said: “Perhaps when we think about the question of feminist futures, we need to attend to the legacies of feminist pasts, in order to think through the very question of what it would mean to have a world where feminism, as a politics of transformation, is no longer necessary.”¹¹

This process of reconstruction and constitution, of retelling and looking ahead is a core theme in the course and illustrated in the textbook we use by the deployment of the figure of a heroine, a woman warrior, as it were. In each session of the course, this figure serves as a prism of gender studies research in dealing with stories by and about heroines which have been circulating for some time in traditional disciplines involved in the study of culture. In other words, we point out that the story of each heroine has dwelt in different contexts, changing ever so slightly. The genealogy of those stories is traced and retold. These heroines, both the well-known and the lesser known, are put on the map again and we subsequently initiate a debate with (or about) fellow scholars in the same way as I have done in this chapter for *Teaching “Race” with a Gendered Edge*. I put the reception of the story of Phila Ndwandwe into dialogue with the work of Luce Irigaray in order to be able to illustrate a broader theoretical debate within gender and critical legal studies, namely how to deal with the legacies of oppression in times of political transition. This is a question that has become more urgent than ever, as developments all over the globe illustrate. Specific emphasis always has to be put on the multilayeredness of oppression as for example the conflicting interests of the fights against patriarchal and racial repression might illustrate (see also the questions below). Moreover, in this chapter I inserted the debate on medium-specific ways of performing and dealing with legacies of injustice to illustrate my claim that art as the singular encounter of content and form has intricate possibilities to deal with complex political issues.

¹¹ Sara Ahmed, “Feminist Futures,” in *A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory*, ed. Mary Eagleton (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 236.

Narratives of women (heroines) do not necessarily yield a gender and race sensitive story. In this chapter I sought to show that selecting a woman as an object for research offers an opportunity for feminist analysis, but such a selection does not self-evidently warrant feminist outcomes. The first step in gender studies research usually consists of making women present who have been forgotten or inadequately described, but even so this might lead to gender insensitive and/or sexist analyses of these heroines. As a sample of the potential of gender and race sensitive analysis, the chapter intended to demonstrate that this is all about *what kind of questions* a heroine is being asked, and *what theories about gender and justice* are being used.

Questions

1. The case study which this chapter deals with raises a lot of questions concerning the relationship between truth and justice. Try to elaborate on the possible relationships of truth and justice in a context of past violations of human rights, while starting to elaborate on the concepts of truth and justice as such. Try to differentiate several forms of truth (narrative truth, forensic truth, redemptive truth for instance) and several forms of justice (restorative justice, legal justice, transitional justice and so on).
2. In this chapter I argue that in a context of patriarchal and racial oppression the relationship between victims and perpetrators in most cases inevitably is both a gendered and a raced one. This means that we cannot think of new forms of justice without taking the feminist and postcolonial debates into account. Continue the exercise started in question 1 and insert gender and race as analytical tools while examining the relationship between truth and justice.
3. The next step analysing the intersections between gender and race could be elaborated on in a yet unwritten chapter on Phila Ndwandwe's life in the Quatro camps. In 1996 Thenjiwe Mtintso, an MK commander in Uganda during the 1980s and now Deputy Secretary of the ANC, spoke of the expectation in ANC camps that female comrades would provide sex for male comrades. Novelist Zoë Wicomb wrote in 1990: "In South Africa the orthodox position whilst celebrating the activism of women, is that

the gender issue ought to be subsumed by the national liberation struggle. ... I can think of no reason why black patriarchy should not be challenged alongside the fight against Apartheid.”¹²

- a. Do you agree with Zoë Wicomb or can you think of reasons why black patriarchy should not be challenged alongside the fight against racism?
- b. Try to elaborate on the intra-actions of gender and race in the case of sexism within the racially oppressed category. Use this chapter’s analysis of the work of Nandipha Mntambo to illustrate your point.

Assignments

1. In this chapter I presented two examples of the way in which the visual arts contextualised, deepened and complexified an individual story. The arts have the ability to reiterate historical facts in such a way that the repetition provides new meanings out of well-known facts. Essential to that artistic practice is the use of scrap materials.

Another South African feminist artist who works with scrap material is Penny Siopis: “In my recent work I use ‘found’ objects including found film. I am particularly interested in the things people leave behind by force of circumstance: things which embody very specific memories and experiences yet have wider social and cultural resonances. These objects are complex subjective traces of emotional investment not always easy to express. Being found and often made and treasured for intimate and private reasons, these objects are emblematic of a merging of private and public worlds.”¹³ Siopis is also another South African artist who commented on her country’s politics of gender and race. Try to find images of her work and analyse the selected artefacts in terms of the way in which the used materials blur the boundaries between useful and useless, worthwhile and worthless, private and public, arts and politics.

2. The plot of Zoë Wicomb’s novel *David’s Story* (2001) centres around the history of Dulce September, a female freedom fighter and MK commander

¹² Zoë Wicomb, “To Hear the Variety of Discourses,” *Current Writing* 2 (1990): 35–44, 69.

¹³ Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu, *Contemporary African Art*, 37.

whose body is, as Dorothy Driver¹⁴ puts it, in sexual service to the struggle. Try to get hold of the book and read it as yet another way of dealing with female icons as part of the transitional process and as a means of constituting a new and multilayered national identity.

3. Try to find different examples of the intra-action of artefacts and the shaping up of political transitions either in Europe or beyond. Pay particular attention to the medium-specificity of the artefacts.

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¹⁴ Dorothy Driver, afterword to *David's Story*, by Zoë Wicomb, The Women Writing Africa Series (New York: The Feminist Press SUNY, 2001), 215–271.

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