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Sacrificial and hunted bodies: ritualistic death and violence in the work of selected South African female artists

by

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigates the multiple occurrence of violent sacrificial imagery associated with animalistic and hunted bodies in the work of selected South African female artists as an articulation of the society in which the art was created. The theoretical framework of corporeal feminism is applied with reference to the postulations of George Bataille (1962), René Girard (1972) as well as Deleuze and Guattari (1984,1987), specifically with regard to the notion of becoming animal. This study shows how such imagery is used to act as a catalyst for social change by challenging Cartesian dualisms and forefronts certain issues applicable to women in a society that is patriarchal and violent. A comparison is made with the art of a selected group of Australian female artists who deal with similar themes and imagery from more or less the same timeframe.

KEYWORDS: South African artists, feminist art, Deleuze, Bataille, violence, sacrifice, ritual, becoming animal, female nude, Australian artists, contemporary art.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Recently, the South African social context of violence and crime against women has been a recurring theme in both local and international media following the brutal rape and death of Bredasdorp teenager Anene Booysen and the lethal shooting of model Reeva Steenkamp by her boyfriend, Paralympic champion Oscar Pretorius. Police brutality and murder have also come under scrutiny, following the Marikana massacre on 16 August 2012. There has been a public outcry, specifically against the high incidence of rape in South African society. South Africa has an extremely high occurrence of domestic violence and rape, which is ranked by Interpol as one of the highest in the world, based on reported rape, even though it is estimated that only 3% of rapes are reported (Britton 2006:146). Rape victims, according to Britton (2006:147), are also getting younger, 41% being twelve and younger in 2004 and according to Moffat (in Salley 2012:66), at least one in four women will be beaten by her domestic partner.

The backdrop for this study comprises the occurrence of rape and violence; a deeply patriarchal ideology in South African culture entrenched by colonialism; apartheid (Britton 2006:146); and conservative religions, which still hold strong today (Shefer 2010:382). Tamara Shefer (2010:382) contends that apartheid South Africa was built not only on stark divides based on race, but was also characterised by patriarchal and paternalistic ideologies, which still persist in post-apartheid South Africa. She argues that discourse on normative gender roles and identities intersect with race in complex

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ways, whilst placing (white) male privilege in the forefront. Even during apartheid, racism was experienced differently by women and men, who articulate the differences in the experiences of violence differently. The study thus departs from the premise that in South African society there are still traces of Cartesian dualist thinking in terms of race and gender, evidence of which presents itself in the form of the male as hunter and oppressor and the female as a desirable sacrificial object or hunted animal. It is subsequently argued that selected South African female artists' work demonstrates this condition in relation to sacrificial death and the hunt.

As a main research objective, this study investigates the work of a selection of South African female artists who use themes or imagery associated with the sacrificial and the hunted body in visual art of roughly the last ten years in order to ascertain reasons and explanations for the multiple occurrences of such images. This study also contextualises the use of visual devices concerned with the sacrificial and hunted body within contemporary art theory and South African social conditions as a feminist intervention with the potential for social action.

1.2 Background to the study

According to Julia Kristeva (1982:95), sacrifice operates within a precarious liminal space between the sacred and the taboo and is closely related to religious belief and ritual. According to Kristeva (1982:90), the woman, through various religious and cultural rituals, is controlled by society in order to keep immorality and uncontrollable desire at bay. The female body has been culturally coded as 'unclean' in patriarchal language because of its apparent 'closeness to nature' and must be transformed to be "clean and proper in order to be fully symbolic" by way of various rituals through death "to new significance" (Kristeva 1982:15, 102). Such 'closeness to nature' manifests in

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the investigated artists' work in various ways, through visual devices concerned with sacrificial rituals and hunted bodies, often coupled with animalistic renderings.

The hunt carries specific ritualistic meaning within South African indigenous culture and is traditionally, in patriarchal societies, connected to the masculine and can also be seen as the sublimation or the control of nature. Many of the female artists who are researched in this study, such as Nandipha Mntambo, Diane Victor, Tracy Rose, Sanell Aggenbach and Penny Siopis, work with both images of the sacrificial and the hunted body, often alluding to animalistic aspects. The hunted body is therefore discussed in conjunction with the sacrificial as a metaphor employed consistently by South African female artists. The work of these artists is investigated and discussed within the framework of post-apartheid South African art, and in terms of its possible contribution to feminist aesthetic discourse, both locally and internationally.

As a particular manifestation of the sacrificial or a hunted body, the maternal body, the bodies of children, and depictions of the female nude are also regular occurrences in the work of artists such as Siopis, Aggenbach, Rose, Wilma Cruise and Christine Dixie. Traditionally viewed as articulating male desire (Nead 1990:325), the engagement with the female nude in the context of this study partly becomes a feminist intervention. The erotic underpinning of feminist painting is critically addressed in order to demonstrate how such artists use traditional painting as a transgressive medium (Schor 1997:165) and an articulation of feminine desire. Furthermore, painting is discussed not only in terms of its materiality, but also as an active, embodied process through which the female artist may engender a performative action (Saltzman 2005:376) and emulate aspects associated with feminine desire. Performance art, within this context, is investigated in terms of how female artists use their own bodies, also as transgressive vessels, in order to bring to the fore the "materiality, irreducibility and sitedness of the body, using the body as a tool for reckoning with the world" (Weibgen 2009:55-56).

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The selected artists' reinterpretation of classical mythology is interrogated with regard to cultural and gender bias. Simone De Beauvoir (in Gubar 1979:301) reiterates the importance of challenging male-biased mythologies and creating "poetry of their own" through the telling and presentation of their own stories from a feminine perspective. Classical mythologies are permeated with themes of the sacrificial and hunted body and are often coupled with animalistic notions of 'becoming' and identity. The interrogation of myth in this instance is included insofar as it challenges stereotypical ways in which culture has ascribed certain roles and behaviours to women, but also as a tool which female artists use to explore their own feminine subjectivities. Karen Von Veh (2012:22), for instance, argues that "feminist strategies exposing patriarchal controls are still a necessary response to local conditions", and she believes in the abilities of such depictions to challenge inequality and bring about social change.

This study shows how, through various themes associated with the sacrificial and hunted body, South African female artists not only articulate a condition of gendered violence, but also challenge the patriarchal and unequal power structures that have given rise to it.

1.2 Aim and objectives of the study

Within a time frame of more or less the past ten years, various South African artists' work is investigated within the framework of corporeal feminism[1] as theorised by Elizabeth Grosz (1994, 2008, 2011), Andrea Liss (2009), Rosi Braidotti (1993, 2003), Alison Bartlett (2002), Rachel Fensham (2005), Ingrid Richardson and Carly Harper

[1] According to MacCormack (2009:95), corporeal feminism is also sometimes described as Australian feminism and is characterised by an engagement specifically with male French philosophers such as Deleuze, Guattari, Derrida and Foucault. The focus of corporeal feminism is not on women's suffrage or its history, but rather the philosophical aspects of sexuality, including queer identity. Corporeal feminism highlights the importance of the body, which can be seen as an important consideration in the work of all of the artists discussed in this study.

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(2006) and others. The research focus is specifically on articulations of bodies as sacrificial and hunted, drawing on the work of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1984, 1987) concerning animal 'becomings' and its applications to corporeal feminism (Grosz 1994), as well as the work of Kristeva (1982), George Bataille (1962) and René Girard (1972) concerning the sacrificial and ritualistic elements thereof. The aim is to find reasons for the multiple occurrence of these visual devices and to explain sacrificial and hunted bodies in terms of its metaphorical meaning in contemporary South African art and culture.

I further demonstrate how the dual metaphors of sacrifice and the hunt are used in the work of the chosen artists in order to dismantle Cartesian dualism (Grosz 1994:8). In South African society there are traces of Cartesian dualist thinking in terms of race and gender, established by apartheid and re-enforced by fundamentalist political, social and traditionalist discourse in South Africa (Chidester 2012:75). These prevailing discourses, described by David Chidester (2012), permeate the social fabric of South African society through dualist thinking, which keeps binary categories such as male/female, black/white and modern/traditional intact. Fundamentalist thinking, brought about by these dualisms, opposes the modern and racial and gender equality, despite the aims of a progressive and democratic constitution. In this study it is argued that South African female artists present the sacrificial in visual art as a device to counteract conditions of oppression and violence[2] which are applicable to women in an unequal and violent society. It is shown how dualist thinking is opposed and overturned, through the employment of imagery associated with the sacrificial condition.

[2] Violence, within the scope of this article is referred to in terms of David Chidester's (2012:55) understanding thereof, which does not only refer to physical harm, but includes the scarring of one's humanity and unintentional harm brought about by unethical behavior or discourse.

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The connection between violence and eroticism as theorised by Bataille (1962) will also be shown through the discussion of the selected artists work in order to demonstrate the effects of gender on the experience and the representation of violence. Attention is given to the specific South African condition of post-apartheid and violence against women, and the influence of organised conservative religions in South Africa on aspects of identity formation as articulated through the art of selected contemporary South African female artists.

Furthermore, it is shown how the corporeal desire of individuals is articulated as being in opposition to entrenched patriarchal moralistic schemas and how individuals refuse classification through dualistic schemas such as race, gender and sexuality, through the depiction of sacrificial and hunted bodies. The role of such imagery made by female artists is discussed insofar as they contribute to the visibility of specific issues related to violence and the resistance to patriarchal power structures and the visibility of female bodies in visual culture.

Lastly, I comment on the contribution of differential aesthetics to contemporary art practice and theory, specifically focusing on the work of South African female artists who draw from the premises of corporeal feminism. This approach aims to contextualise the work of the selected South African artists within the broader field of feminist philosophy, art practice and ethics.

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1.4 Literature review

Sources on South African female artists and feminist art

Much has been written about the work of South African female artists with regard to political identity as well as feminist concerns. Brenda Schmahmann (2004) presents a study of female artists from South Africa who represent 'the self' in various ways thematically, focusing on aspects such as the Self as artist, family life, the body,and a section on different performances of femininity and identity. Schmahmann (2004) draws together various aspects pertaining to feminine identity in South African society by thematically engaging with a variety of artists and works stretching from early modernism to 2004. Her work shows the development of feminist thought and art throughout a complex history and how this history has influenced the development of work and its reception and reading within a local and international context.

Marian Arnold (1996) takes an art-historical perspective in her work entitled *Women and art in South Africa* in a series of essays interrogating the work of South African female artists pre-1994, which attempts to bring to the fore the voices of said artists from a non-patriarchal position. She also aims to reposition earlier verdicts on many of the artists discussed in her book. Feminist writing on art, according to Penny Florence and Nicola Foster (2000:10), continues to exist on the periphery of art writing. Arnold (1996:xi) echoes this view in her introduction to her anthology on women's art in South Africa. Within South Africa, feminist writing on art is often overshadowed by an interest in the female body as an articulation of the 'non-white' body, as in apartheid (Kerkham 2000; Siopis 1999; Pollock 2005). Many art historians have explored feminist concerns in South African art to some extent, such as in the works of both Schmahmann (2004)

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and Arnold (1996), although racial and gender issues have mostly been grouped together within South African differential aesthetic discourse.

Within the context of this study a generalised discussion of ‘othering’ is avoided in order not to downplay the effects of gender in favour of broader discussions on race in the South African context. in South African art discourse and criticism, issues of race and gender are intrinsically linked to South Africa's apartheid past, which complicates and politicises discussion on these aspects. Ruth Kerkham (2000:46) criticises the egocentric approaches of male South African art writers in particular, whilst Siopis (1999) also states the dilemma within South African art discourse, which immediately situates 'black' and 'female' as 'Other' and 'white' and 'male' as 'Self', therefore complicating the intersection of race and gender in contemporary art practice.

Without side-lining race as a definitive differential aspect, this study brings to the fore feminist concerns as articulated specifically through the work of selected female South African artists, produced within a context which is post-apartheid, patriarchal, post-modern and relational. It is shown how the art practice of the discussed artists contributes to broader philosophical and ethical debates concerning patriarchy and violence against women, and how this informs feminine subjectivity in the South African context.

Lisa Aronson (2012:1) notes how South African feminists have been an important force in raising gender and other political issues during South Africa’s ‘nation building process’ since the 1980s and how academia, literature and the arts in South Africa are showing a growing body of work drawing on feminism and gender concerns. Arnold (in Aronson 2012:4), however, contends that feminist issues, in a South African context, are still side-lined to a certain extent in favour of broader discussions on race and that black female artists especially are still in short supply. It is also noted how post-

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apartheid political change prompted South African artists, for the first time, to move away from the depiction of wider political concerns towards various articulations of personal and private accounts of trauma and violence where each interprets their own experience according to their political milieu (Aronson 2012:4).

The body in visual art and corporeal feminism

The use of the body, especially the female body, by South African female artists has been widely discussed by the various scholars mentioned above, especially with regard to Kristeva's (1982) notion of the 'abject' and the politicised body under apartheid. The use of the body in contemporary art, however, is an international phenomena, not only in 'women's' art. O'Reilly (2009:7) highlights the importance of the body in the work of political feminist art of the 1970s, which still persists today, in counteracting the "cool detachment" of Modernism. According to O'Reilly(2009:7), the body has become a crucial site for the negotiation of identity and belonging, as well as the contestation of power and mainstream ideologies. O'Reilly (2009:8) further illuminates the relationship of the body to its context in her anthology which covers a broad selection of artists from various backgrounds.

The use of the body as a medium of expression calls for a detailed look at the way in which bodies and their peculiarities are described as well as the possible implications thereof. Within the framework of Cartesian dualism, according to Grosz (1994:8), the body is reduced to an empty vessel to be appropriated and controlled by various societal forces in addition to individual consciousness, which is coded masculine. Dualism assumes that for every concept, there exists an equal directly opposite concept and that the two can never be reconciled. Cartesian dualism separates concepts such as male and female, and nature and culture in a rigid system that has

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specific philosophical implications (Grosz 1994:7). The body's "sensations, activities and processes" (Grosz 1994:8) within this unyielding system, are less important than the mind. The body therefore, is coded as a passive and unproductive "blank slate" (Grosz 1994:156), which can be inscribed in various ways by patriarchal culture. The body in this case is coded feminine, whilst the mind, said to be in control of the body, is coded masculine. Grosz, through her work on corporeal feminism, challenges Cartesian dualism and its subsequent over-simplifying of the impact of bodies on our experience and understanding of existence and the human condition.

The dismantling of Cartesian dualism is an important consideration in corporeal feminist thought, which Grosz (1994:182) believes can to a certain extent be achieved through a selective application of the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Grosz (1994:8) attests to the remnants of Cartesian dualist thinking in contemporary thought, which includes the description of the body as a mere natural biological or scientific object, as well as the body as a machine or self-functioning automaton, which exists in isolation from other forces or bodies. Furthermore, Grosz (1994:9) criticises an understanding of the body as a metaphor or a form of expression, which reduces the body to a passive exterior medium through which interior thoughts, emotions and experiences can be communicated. This, she contends, subscribes to Cartesian dualism since it places interiority directly opposite exteriority, where the body is a passive vessel, which serves the mind.

Grosz (1994, 2008, 2011) is an important theorist for this study in formulating a theoretical framework based on corporeal feminism. Her definition of corporeal feminism differs from earlier strands of feminism, such as egalitarian-[3] and social

[3] Egalitarian feminists, which includes authors such De Beauvoir, Firestone and Wollstonecraft as well as liberal-, conservative-, eco- and humanist feminists (Grosz 1994:15), have sought to move away from the specifics of the body, in order to take their equal place among men (Grosz 1994:15). Egalitarian feminism sees the body as determinate, whilst the mind is sexually neutral

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constructivist feminism[4] in that she asserts that the body is both a product of history and culture and that the borders thereof are permeable and change with time through interaction with various forces and other bodies (Grosz 1994:187). She describes different approaches to the body which strive toward a conception of the body as 'lived' (Grosz 1994:18), meaningful, active and as a site of construction of identity and desire. Grosz (1994:19) asserts that for women to establish "autonomous modes of self-understanding" and create positions that challenge patriarchal heteronormativity, individual female bodies and all their specifics need to be understood, embraced and articulated, thus creating a fluid understanding of the complexities that constitute subjectivity.

Sacrifice and violence

Grosz (1994:203) notes how Cartesian dualism provides a deep rift between what is considered human and animal, based on the distinction between nature and culture. Humans are considered to have superior thought processes and agency, which assures their position of mastery over the animal world. Transformed into the shape of a sacrificial animal by women, the female body in contemporary art, according to Anne Creissels (2007:179), implies a "creative act of animalisation", which aims to destabilise Cartesian thinking on gender and sexuality. The sacrifice of an animal body echoes the sacrifice of a female body, providing connections between sacrifice,

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and thus capable of overcoming its bodily trappings and as such subscribes to a form of Cartesian dualism (Grosz 1994:16), which corporeal feminism seeks to dismantle.

[4] Social constructivist feminists, such as Mitchell, Kristeva, Barrett and Chodorow, as well as Marxist- and psychoanalytic feminists (Grosz 1994:16), focus more on the social coding of feminine bodies and their functions, thus proclaiming the need for psychological changes within subjectivity in addition to making intellectual shifts within ideology for the liberation of women (Grosz 1994:17). By once again placing psychology and ideology opposite the body, the mind/body dualism is retained through this viewpoint.

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sexuality and religion. The transgression of the female body, through sacrifice and also through the hunt, especially the virginal female body, is compared to an "experience with the sacred" (Creissels 2007:179),similar to what Bataille (1962) believes. Bataille (1962:90) connects sacrifice, murder and other forms of violent deaths such as suicide and martyrdom with a sacred experience, where the sexual act is described as a transgression on par with violent deaths

Girard (1972:2) explores the relationship between violence and sacrifice and the choices made with regard to the bodies that are sacrificed, be they animal or human. Girard (1972:4) contends that the use of a “surrogate” body in sacrificial rituals often takes the shape of an innocent animal, which is offered instead of a ‘guilty’ human. This apparently protects societies against violence being vented amidst their people. Girard (1972:124) also explores the function of sacrifice, namely to bring an end to antagonism and create a sense of unity between people or between people and their deity. He contends that violent sacrifice occurs in primitive societies where a functioning or effective judicial system does not exist to protect its communities against the escalation of violence (Girard 1972:16).

The sacred, according to Chidester (2012:5) can be described as both transcendental and social, as ‘an otherness transcending the ordinary world’, constantly being mediated between binaries such as the personal and the public and the individual and the collective. Sacrifice operates in a space where binaries are contested and seemingly opposing notions, if not kept separate, could possibly be espoused, giving way to a challenge to social hierarchies and preponderant power structures. Chidester (2012:5) remarks how the sacred, specifically in a South African milieu, mixes aspects of “the modern and the traditional, the local and the global, in a South African political economy of the sacred”.

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Animal 'becomings'

'Animal becomings', according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), is a process where the body as "a discontinued, non-totalisable series of processes, organs, flows, energies, corporeal substances and incorporeal events, speeds and durations" (Grosz 1994:164), is transformed through its mediation with a third term or an animalistic characteristic to which the subject is evolving. Deleuze and Guattari's view on identity construction can, according to Grosz (1994:164), found to be useful within the application of a post-structuralist feminism, such as corporeal feminism, which will be applied in this study to the representation of female bodies as hunted and sacrificial. The concept of Deleuzian 'animal becomings' is used in this study as a tool to describe the occurrence of the animalistic within the imagery of the artists discussed and the role of such imagery in the dismantling of Cartesian dualisms. Images of sacrificial and hunted bodies are shown to be used extensively together with images of the hunted and sacrificial body.

John Peffer (2009:41) argues that the animalisation of human bodies in visual art has been a regular occurrence in South Africa during and following a brutal apartheid past. The massacre of schoolchildren on 16 June 1976, is described by Peffer (2009:53) as a sacrificial scene where the bodies of innocents, especially the body of Hector Pieterson was metaphorically seen internationally as a desperate cry for action and change. Peffer (2009:41) argues that the animalisation of human beings in the visual art of apartheid times stems from the revelation of man's bestial nature in a milieu infected by violence and oppression. Artists like Jane Alexander, Paul Stopforth, Helen Sibidi and Ezrom Legae transformed both perpetrator and victim into images of violent or brutalised animals. This study shows how similar depictions of animal brutality and vulnerability are still evident in the work of a selection of South African female artists.

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The notion of 'animal 'becomings' is evident in the work of South African female artists such as Siopis, Mntambo, Dixie, Cruise and Rose, amongst others, and is not only depicted as metaphorical or symbolic, but as a very real process through which transformations take place. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987:262), these transformations are only possible through animal 'becomings' which do not follow set paths or signposts, but occur as a more haphazard, organic process.

Cartesian dualism

According to Grosz (1994:8), feminists need to move beyond dualistic schemas of thinking, associated with Cartesianism, in order to challenge masculine conceptions entrenched through mainstream philosophy, science and religion. According to Grosz (1994:19), bodies can never be generalised or ordered into neat, discursive categories, but should rather be understood in terms of their similarities, differences and peculiarities.

Conservative religions have a profound influence on the formation and understanding of identities and subjectivities and also play an overarching role in society by ordering and controlling specific aspects of social life, policing moral borders and, according to Kristeva (1982:56), separating the sacred from the taboo. Bataille (1962:31) links erotic desire with both religious experience and sacrifice. According to Kristeva (1982:98), transgression of entrenched religious and moralistic schemas is deemed disgraceful for it threatens the precarious borders of society and disrupts the symbolic order. Transgression and taboo are employed by female South African artists such as Sharlene Khan, Rose, Siopis and Victor to challenge these systems of signification, which are patriarchal in their essence. Karen Von Veh (2012:22) argues that feminists can use transgression specifically of Christian myths of femininity as a "catalyst for

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social change" by exposing societal forces that negatively affect women, such as patriarchy.

Feminine desire

Deleuze and Guattari's (in Grosz 1994:167) conception of desire is used in application to corporeal feminism. According to Grosz (1994:168), Deleuze's (1984:5) "desiring machine", opposes unity and structure, by creating new "alignments, linkages and connections", through an "unpredictable, nomadic, non-repetitive, creative" (Grosz 1994:168) corporeal desire.

Desire, according to Fullagar (2002:57), profoundly shapes social relations and understandings of the self, others and the world people live in. Desire is also intensely embodied, and according to Fullager (2002:59), never complete nor certain and often destabilising to the autonomous Self. Belsey (1994a:688) contends that the effects of desire are visible on the body and that desire occupies a paradoxical position within the consciousness of the individual, since whilst it forms the core of the understanding of the self, it often stands in opposition to what is accepted as *truth:* "middle-class, white, patriarchal truth" with all its' "legitimated exclusions, oppressions, and violence ... justified appropriation, damage and destruction" (Belsey 1994a:685).

Jane Blocker (2004:xiii) states that desire is always documented and explained in ways befitting fixed expectations of culture, especially concerning issues of gender, always aspiring to heteronormativity. Society, according to Blocker (2004:xiii), often has difficulty controlling the vigour that individual desires emulate. Blocker takes a feminist viewpoint when she seeks to identify "patriarchal scripts", which seek to order and codify applicable responses to individual corporeal desires, but often fails to control the fallout which desire instigates.

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Desire functions as a fragmentary, and according to Grosz (1994:172) as a "molecular", non-unifying force, which opposes categorisation and dominant power relationships. Bodies, within this understanding of subjectivity, are not singularities, but rather "multiplicities, movements, flows and intensities" (Grosz 1994:172). Bodies, and therefore subjectivity, are always in a state of 'becoming', according to Grosz (1994:173), never fixed, never certain, never singular. 'Becoming', according to Grosz (1994:page), therefore consists of specific forms of "motion and rest, speed and slowness, points and flows of intensity" and is constantly moving from one point to the other, towards a third term, expressed as the animalistic. This 'becoming' does not result in the subject being turned into a specific animal, but rather a departure from normative identity and the forging of an entirely new creation (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:274).

Dixie's (2007) work explores notions of gendered space and feminine experience, often making use of the female body and animalistic elements as a mode of expression. Other works by Dixie explore maternal themes, once again paired with animal metaphors. Mntambo, who is well known for her sculptural installation pieces made from cowhide as well as performance work, also has a clear focus on the female body paired with the animalistic (Perryer 2011a, c; Vundla 2009). She fuses traditional African culture with western imagery through the shapes she chooses for her sculptures (Perryer 2011c:22). In an artist's statement, Mntambo confesses that she aims to "subvert expected associations with corporeal presence, femininity, sexuality and vulnerability" (McIntosh 2008). Cruise's *Alice Diaries* (2012) will also be explored in terms of her engagement with the animalistic within human experience and maternal aspects.

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General sources

Amelia Jones (2009:45,48) is interested specifically in the performance of the aesthetisised wound, which she argues opens up "complex circuits of intersubjective desire" and could potentially help us to understand ourselves and the world better, and make political statements through our reactions to the suffering of others. She applies these theories to various forms of visual art, including performance art as well as painting and photography, arguing that a 'live' wound is not always more effective than a represented one (Jones 2009:50). Wounds are a regular occurrence in the work of the artists discussed in this study as they go hand in hand with the depiction of death, sacrifice and the hunt.

Performance is central in the work of artists such as Rose (Jones 2004:26; Bester 2003), Khan and Kathryn Smith, who both continually use their own bodies in performance pieces and installations, documented in various ways. Rose's artistic practice, besides having obvious feminist implications, actively works towards dismantling binaries (Bateman 2006:2) by placing her own body in precarious positions that refuse classification and urge re-evaluation from the viewer. Rose's work, according to Bateman (2006:3), also refuses "unified interpretation" furthering the applicability of her work to an application to corporeal feminism and the dismantling of Cartesian dualisms.

The maternal is closely related to the abject and has specific implications for feminine subjectivity. The pregnant body is of specific importance here, as it poses a threat to notions of 'the clean and proper' and the controllable social body, and is therefore either defiled and excluded or uplifted to cult status , as in the instance of the 'Virgin Mary 'or various other feminine stereotypes such as the omnipotent mother (Kristeva in Cooklin 2003:3, 5).

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With this in mind, the hunted and sacrificial body as used by female artists in contemporary art in conjunction with themes associated with animal becomings, becomes a device through which female artists challenge and upset normative social descriptions of femininity and articulate new modes of thinking about femininity and feminism, which do not subscribe to Cartesian dualism. These images also serve as a metaphor for broader social concerns and might be used as a catalyst for social comment and change (Von Veh 2012:22). The insistence on the materiality of the body and corporeal feminine experience in contrast with its discursive possibilities, brings feminist concerns to the fore.

1.5 Theoretical approach

As previously stated, This study is conducted within the framework of corporeal feminism, as theorised by Grosz (1994, 2008, 2011), Liss (2009), Bartlett (2002) and others. The departure of the artists selected from earlier strands of feminism, such as egalitarian and social constructivist feminism, is shown and discussed within the framework of corporeal feminism. Corporeal feminism, in contrast to the abovementioned, looks at sexual difference constituted through the “lived body” (Grosz 1994:18), in both its functions and representations within a cultural, historical and political domain. Corporeal feminism is based on a notion of sexual difference, which, according to Braidotti (2003:43), articulates feminine desires and posits them as uniquely sexed subjects without the need for transcendence of such sexed bodies. This position is post-structural and defies Cartesian dualism in that it refuses to treat the body or its functions, actions and experiences as fixed or separate. Corporeal feminism does not ignore the existence of difference, but rather embraces difference between the sexes, as well as differences within sexes, according to race, age, class

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and sexual orientation, without placing persons in strict categories or stating differences as being irresoluble.

The work of Kristeva (1982) is also applied insofar as it is applicable to the premises of corporeal feminism and the critique of traditional masculine conceptions of subjectivity as articulated through texts associated with psychoanalysis. Girard's (1972) text on *Violence and the Sacred* will be used to articulate certain violent themes associated with sacrificial bodies, whilst Bataille's (1962) notion on the connection between erotica, death and murder will be used to elaborate on this.

1.6 Research methodology

The research methodology for this study is a broad-based qualitative literature study, covering a variety of sources on corporeal feminism, which form the theoretical framework for this study. Primary and secondary sources are examined in order to gain a solid understanding of the philosophical base on which this dissertation is based. Various other theorists, whose research centres on topics associated with this study, are researched and discussed. Thereafter, their theories are applied to the art practice of a selection of South African female artists, whose work demonstrates an engagement with themes and visual devices associated with sacrifice and the hunt.

The work of the chosen artists is researched through literature, visual catalogues and exhibitions and discussed in terms of the theoretical framework established in this study. A study of artists' written statements and published interviews with artists, where appropriate, are used in order to gain an understanding of the artist's intentions in relation to feminist concerns in their work.

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Conclusions are drawn from the analyses of the chosen artworks in conjunction with the theoretical research undertaken in order to satisfy the aim and objectives of the study.

1.7 Overview of chapters

Chapter Two investigates ritualised death through sacrifice in the work of selected artists. It also discusses how the maternal as a sacrificial vessel is used to challenge conservative and religious viewpoints on femininity, without side-lining feminine embodiment. Through the framework of corporeal feminism, this chapter explores how contemporary depictions of mothers disrupt Cartesian dualism and opens up new intersubjective positions for women. Sacrificial images of the bodies of children, by female artists, are also investigated Murder and martyrdom are also discussed as specific articulations of sacrifice. Wounds are looked at as a subversive way to connect with 'others' through the body. The artists discussed in this chapter are Victor, Dixie, Khan, Cruise and Smith.

Chapter Three explores the depiction of the female body as a hunted animal by female artists. Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notion of 'animal becomings' will be used to scrutinise the implications of this for aesthetics. These 'animal ‘becomings' are discussed in terms of nomadic subjectivity and multiplicity in relation to a body that is never fixed, but changes through its interaction with various forces and other bodies.

The female nude, as an articulation of male desire and virility, is questioned by the artists mentioned in this section and it will be shown how nudity is used by feminists to assert new subject positions. An association is made between the female nude and the hunted body in the work of Rose, Aggenbach, Muholi and Mntambo, where the latter can be articulated as an expression of the former.

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Animal skins are discussed in relation to human skin and further elaborated through the use of paint as an artificial substitute for the real. This chapter investigates how female artists such as Siopis attribute different meanings to the processes of painting, which are active, energetic, embodied, raw and even violent, and how the artist, through the act of painting, becomes part of the work's own process of Deleuzian 'becoming'.

Chapter Four is a summary of the manifestations of ritualised death through sacrificial and hunted bodies found in the work of South African female artists, where different metaphors and meanings associated with these images are discussed and summarised. It is shown how the visual devices employed by all these artists actively work towards dismantling Cartesian dualism and how this could be interpreted as a feminist intervention.

Furthermore, a parallel will be drawn between the occurrence of these images and the social and political landscape of South Africa as well as how these artists, through their artistic practice contribute towards philosophy and feminist thinking.

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CHAPTER 2

SACRIFICIAL BODIES AND ARTIFICIAL CORPSES

Bataille (1962:81) understands sacrifice as a device that appends the taboo on killing by way of a religious ritual, which aims to restore the symbolic order within a given society. Pamela Anderson (2000:217), however, contends that Girard's (1972) notion of sacrificial violence fails to account for the effects of sexual difference on the manifestations of violence within a patriarchal society. His theory of sacrificial substitution does, however, account for violence as a basis for the formation of collective identity and a form of scapegoating, where the sacrificial body seeks to prevent the unleashing of further violence. Anderson (2000:218), however, argues that the work of Kristeva (1982) helps to connect sacrifice as a social phenomenon to the identity formation of the uniquely sexed, corporeal subject. The link between the body, violence and death is also highlighted in Bataille's (1962) connections between death and erotics, echoing many of Kristeva's (1982) contentions in terms of transgression and taboo.

This chapter discusses the multiple occurrences of images and themes associated with the sacrificial in the work of selected South African female artists. It will be shown how sacrifice is connected to eroticism in addition to other forms of violent death such as murder, suicide and martyrdom, and how the artists employ these themes in their work in order to articulate concerns applicable to them. It is also shown how sacrifice operates in the chosen artists' work in destabilising binaries and collapsing hierarchies.

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2.1 Sacrificial death and violence

The connection between sacrifice and violence may at first seem somewhat arbitrary considering the spiritual and religious aspects of specifically the sacrificial. The sacred, as described by Chidester (2012:5), operates in a liminal space, where public and private realms intersect and where the slippage between the individual and the collective or the social opens up a potential space for the questioning of hierarchies. Spirituality and religion might, like violence, also be described as irrational, since they inherently contain a set of beliefs and practices which could be deemed as not necessarily having a basis in everyday reality, even though, as Chidester (2012:5) remarks, they form the basis around which many societies today are still organised. Girard (1972:2) also remarks how the manifestation of violence differs very little from primitive to modern societies and from one society to the next. Violence, it seems, is a very human concern, managed differently in diverse societies by religion, rule of law, custom, or a combination of these.

According to Chidester (2012:1), 74% of South Africans regard religion as being “very important” in their lives, which includes Christianity as the majority religion but also a deep-rooted heritage of indigenous African religions, which are often intermixed in many ritualistic practises and also everyday life. Chidester (2012:3) emphasises the ‘wild’ aspect of religion in South Africa, describing its forces as “untamed, undomesticated, uncultivated, unrestrained, unruly and dangerous” as well as a place where good and evil compete in various aspects of society. This ‘wild’ aspect of society is intrinsically linked to its violence. A ‘wild’ religion, being both transcendental and social (Chidester 2012:4), mixes aspects of “the modern and the traditional, the local and the global, in a South African political economy of the sacred”.

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This intermixing of the modern and the traditional, cultivating a 'wild' religious atmosphere associated with violence, can be seen in occurrences such as the Marikana massacre where 34 striking mineworkers were killed on 16 August 2012 by police officers. Striking mineworkers, fuelled by the belief that *muti*, which they took the day before, would protect them against the police's bullets, confronted police with traditional weapons and were consequently killed (Magaziner & Jacobs 2013:138).

Girard (1972:1) describes all violence as being sacrificial in one way or another. Societies aspire to suppress violence and vengeance against perpetrators of violence within the community through sacrificial rituals (Girard 1972:14-15). In modern societies the criminal and judicial system has in many cases removed the need for sacrificial rites to fulfil this purpose, but in many traditional[5] societies some sacrificial rites are still adhered to in spite of the existence of modern public law enforcement systems to deal with possible outbreaks of violence or a challenge to social order. An example of this is *Ukweshwama,*[6] a yearly ritual, performed by Zulu royalty in South Africa, in which a possible challenge to the Zulu king is symbolically played out through the violent sacrifice and torture of a young bull. It is believed that should this custom not be adhered to, the king would lose his power and could even be killed (Chidester 2012:180). The establishment of hierarchies based on binaries and the protection of relational subordination are at stake in this regard, protecting the traditionalist social cohesion within the group.

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[5] The term 'traditional' is a politically loaded one and deserves more interrogation within the theme of South African art and culture. It is not, however, within the scope of this study to do so and thus, it will be used in the same manner as done by Kristeva (1982), Bataille (1962) and Girard (1972). These authors describe both 'traditional' and 'primitive' societies in a simplistic way, which could in some cases be problematic, especially within an anti-Cartesian project that aims to destabilise 'othering' in terms of race and gender. It is not, however, the intention in any of the above authors' work nor of this study, to set up hierarchies based on these differences, but rather to point out and to challenge specific sociological perspectives as well as their prevalence throughout the histories of humankind as well as in contemporary society.

[6] This ritual is also performed in conjunction with a celebration of the 'first crops of the season' (Chistester 2012:181). Strictly speaking, the footnotes in each chapter should start from 1.

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The choice of sacrificial victims is, according to Girard (1972:12), based on specific criteria which do not differ significantly between societies, including things such as "gentleness, innocence and harmony with man" (Girard 1972:2). According to Brian Luke (2004:18), animal sacrifice communicates threatening intentions regarding subordinate groups or persons, such as in the case of *Ukweshwama*, where the young bull stands in the place of a young man, who challenges the king. Sacrifice is normally enforced by male members of a society. Luke (2004:18) contends that men, through sacrificial rites, demonstrate their ability to kill in addition to their ability to decide about the life or death of subordinates.

The most famous example in the Bible of animal substitution for potential human victims – illustrated in a work by Wilma Cruise (Figure 1), entitled *Woman with sheep* – is the Jewish Passover as described in Exodus 12. This sculpture shows a female form carrying a sacrificial lamb on her shoulders, a red cross marked on her breast. This work references a biblical narrative in which Moses told Israelite families to make a cross on the doors of their houses in the blood of a sacrificed beast to avoid the killing of their first born sons when God's Angel of Death passed over their houses (Exodus 12:21-30).

Figure 1: Wilma Cruise, *Woman with sheep,* 2004/5. Ceramic on metal base, 1600mm (Cruise 2010:141).

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The woman carrying the sacrificial animal is identified as such by the title. The figure is armless and mouthless, as are many of Cruise's figures. Cruise (2010:138) explains her commitment to armless, mouthless figures as articulating "a sense of muteness" which she wants to convey, "a silence, an existential pause". Cruise rips arms from her figures and strips them of mouths to illustrate their inability to communicate effectively through language. By removing the arms and silencing the mouths of her figures she acknowledges the corporeal aspects of language: without hands to gesture and a mouth from which sound emanates, language is useless and even destabilising. In this manner she challenges Cartesian dualism which puts nature (the body) directly opposite culture (the mind), and thus positions language and thought as superior to bodily functions (Cruise 2010:139). This correlates with the anti-Cartesian project of corporeal feminist thought, by highlighting the importance of bodily awareness for human agency (Grosz 1994:8).

The implied inability of the female subject to communicate complicates her position as a sacrificer. The omission of arms and her inability to communicate implies a loss of agency on the part of the female sacrificer. It seems she is left no choice regarding the making of her offering to a (male) deity who threatens to kill her children if she should not comply. Her eyes, which are downcast, reiterate this position of powerlessness. The red of the bloodied cross is echoed in the redness of the eyes as well as the female sex organ. The focus on the eyes may point to the elevated importance put on "seeing" within a Cartesian understanding of existence. The blood between the woman's legs, points to feminine bodily functions, which links the sacrificial with the maternal.

The role of the mother in this sacrifice is thus emphasised: Through her sacrifice she gives her firstborn life for a second time, by sparing the wrath of God on her household.

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The linking between sacrifice in this instance, is also linked to sexuality and the erotic as meant by Bataille (1962)[7] through the emphasis placed on the sex organ of the female sacrificer. In this way, the binaries of life and death are presented to the viewer as both being in the hands of the mother. Though childbirth, the mother gives life and through her sacrifice, she thwarts death and gives life for a second time.

Luke (2004:18) notes how sacrificial 'malice' is normally redirected towards animals in order to veer the father's violence away from his children, as in the Passover, where God would pass the homes on which doors the red crosses were made. In this case, it is the silent female subject who makes the sacrifice, naked and eyes downcast, the sacrificial lamb limp and almost shapeless, echoing the white body of the female. The woman, in this instance, becomes the perpetrator of violence and the victim of violence, or threat of violence, enforced by a patriarchal god. The binaries of victim and criminal are thus collapsed within the body of the female, where the female suffers together with the sacrificed proxy. In this manner the human/animal divide also becomes blurred as the women and the lamb are both sacrificed.

In archaic societies, as discussed by Girard (1972:11), where human sacrifices were offered, the criterion for sacrificial substitution does not differ much from the criteria used for animal sacrifices and also bears resemblance from one society to the next, except on the basis of 'harmony with man'. When human sacrificial victims are chosen, these are normally chosen from persons who are not fully integrated with society such as "prisoners of war, slaves, small children, unmarried adolescents and the handicapped" (Girard 1972:12). Interestingly, women are according to Girard rarely seen as acceptable sacrificial victims, even though in many 'primitive' and traditional

[7] Bataille (1962:90) compares the sexual penetration of a woman to the killing of a sacrificial animal, where both are described as an act that robs the victim of their identity as a separate being. The transgression of the skin barrier in this regard reveals the fleshy nature of our being as well as the proximity of our urges and desires to that of animal life and being (Bataille 1962:91).

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societies, they are not seen as fully fledged members of their respective societies or are given limited rights and agency. Girard explains this in terms of the woman's precarious position as both a daughter in her father's family and a 'possession' of her husband, which might complicate her position as a sacrificial victim, prompting one of the two families to revenge if she were to be offered as a sacrifice by the other.

Female bodies presented in a sacrificial manner are used abundantly in the work of South African female artists, such as the work pictured below by Penny Siopis (Figure 2). In *Monument*, a female body is pictured on what could be described as an altar, with a fire burning underneath. Her body is wrapped in white cloth. This image could therefore be interpreted as a sacrificial victim who is offered as a burnt offering. According to Greek mythology, fire and the ensuing ability for humans to give animal sacrifices by using fire, is what distinguishes man from the gods (Buxton 2004:54) and is thus linked to our existential quest. Human sacrifice was not permitted in Greek culture, although there are myths in which this occurs (Buxton 2004:135).

Figure 2: Penny Siopis, *Monument,* 2007. Oil and glue on canvas, 200cm x 350cm (Perryer 2007b:5).

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In two more works by Siopis, *Bed* (Figure 3) and *Chill* (Figure 4), the artist presents female bodies which appear to be sacrificial, being presented on an altar-like surface in a similar manner together with male counterparts. Both bodies are positioned in what seems to be their beds, together with their lovers. Bataille (in Creissels 2007:179) draws parallels between the body of a bloodstained sacrificial animal and that of a woman in the sexual act. In this sense, the eroticised female body becomes a site of contravention as well as a possible passage towards the Sacred. The female in *Monument* could also be interpreted as being presented on her bed, wrapped in the bedsheets. Siopis thus draws a parallel in these works between between violent sacrifice and sex. Anne Creissels (2007:180) also links this to Kristeva's idea of penetration that could be experienced by a woman as rape, thus prompting her to actively seek revenge, especially if loss of virginity occurs, be it consensual or not.

Figure 3: Penny Siopis, *Bed,* 2007. Oil on canvas, 76cm x 91cm (Perryer 2007b:3).

Figure 4: Penny Siopis, *Chill,* 2007. Ink and water colour on paper, 76cm x 91cm (Perryer 2007b:3).

In another work by Siopis, entitled *Communion* (Figures 5 and 6), the artist presents a chilling depiction of a real-life female sacrificial victim, Elsie Quinlan or Sister Aidan, a Dominican nun who was murdered by a crowd of protestors near East London, South

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Africa in 1952 (Them or us 1952:36). In reaction to the prohibition of public meeting for black residents in Duncan Village, near East London, an angry crowd, after being harassed by police, murdered, mutilated and burned Sister Aidan and apparently also cannibalised her (Atkinson 2010:181).

Figure 5: Penny Siopis, *Communion (stills from video),* 2011. Digital video, colour, sound. Duration: 5min 30sec (Perryer 2007b:31).

Siopis tells this harrowing tale in the form of a video work in which Sister Aidan narrates her own death, as if from the grave, in the form of subtitles. The visuals are seemingly random and do not connect to the facts of the story, but link conceptually to the themes of violence and oppression. The music paired with the work is an African lullaby. The lullaby functions as an almost religious undertone to the work, once again linking the concepts of violence with religion and sacrifice.

In this work, connections are made between religion, sacrifice and patriarchal oppression. The riot, which was originally intended as a religious meeting (from there

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the title *Communion*), turned into a violent protest leading to the 'sacrifice' of a female body. Doreen Atkinson (2010:176) highlights the existence of social inequality and patriarchal oppression evident in the organisation of East London society in the 1950s. The resistance of these oppressive systems by subaltern groups was violently directed towards a scapegoat or sacrificial victim, who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Apparently, the woman's murderers knew her well, as she was actively engaged in the Duncan Village community, where she was a teacher as well as a doctor. When read with Girard (1972:13), Sister Aiden makes for a typical sacrificial victim: she was a foreigner, thus not fully integrated in the society, she was innocent and gentle and she bore a resemblance to the real enemy, representing state, whiteness and even religion, which were all used to police moral borders in apartheid South Africa. Because she was well known in the Village, she was not too far removed from those 'sacrificing' her, thus making her an acceptable sacrificial victim within Girard's (1962:11) description.

Figure 6: Penny Siopis, *Communion (stills from video),* 2011. Digital video, colour, sound. Duration: 5min 30sec (Perryer 2007b:29).

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The images used in the video work (Figures 5 & 6), are seemingly random visuals from Siopis' own personal home videos and a selection of stock visuals, which she has used to create an atmosphere of dread and confusion rather than tell a factual story. Read together with the sub-titled narration, however, one gets a good sense of the events which occured on that day as well as the sense of violence and chaos that she seeks to portray.

The cannibalisation of Sister Aidan's body and the apparent stripping thereof for *muti*[8] (Bank & Bank 2013:19) served the purpose of obtaining the Sister's "magical powers as a doctor "(Atkinson 2010:181). On another level, Sister Aiden's body could have been meant as an atonement for the sins of others as in ancient Greek and biblical cultures (Hallo 2011:60), thereby acknowledging the need for 'punishment' for the sins of the white supremacist leaders committed against the black inhabitants of Duncan Village.

In *Communion,* the operation of various binaries is highlighted and contested through Siopis' employment of cinematographic devices such as cuts, edits and fades, where images which are seemingly unrelated are fused into a narrative which is readable by the viewer. Opposing sub-titles are paired with images, which, when read in isolation do not make sense, but when read together, present the main narrative offered in the film. Binaries such as 'traditional' and 'modern', 'black' and 'white', 'pure' and 'filthy' are constantly evoked by the images and wording presented by the artist. Fusing them together and presenting them as part of the same story contests their viability as

[8] *Muti* is the Zulu word for traditional African medicine, containing ingredients such as roots, herbs and seawater and animal and even human parts. *Muti* made from human body parts is considered to be the most powerful, but is very scarcely used in South Africa, although *muti* murders do occur from time to time (Labuschagne 2004:193).

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opposing structures, and highlights their role in the system that led to this episode of extreme violence.

Girard (1972:17) suggests that sacrifice functions not as vengeance but as the prevention of further violence by ways of a violent act against a victim who has no part in the struggle of the fighting parties. In the absence of a judicial system which protects all members of a society equally, sacrificial solutions are employed, according to Girard (1972:19), in order to prevent the occurrence of further, untrammelled violence in the midst of people who have no other protection against such violence. The implication thereof is that persons or groups of persons, who are not fully protected on an equal basis by a functioning juridical system, resort to sacrificial violence in order to protect themselves from further violence directed at them as individuals or as a subaltern group.

2.2 Female bodies and ritual

When considering sacrificial death as a meta-theme in the work of South African female artists, there is a wide variety of artists who use their own bodies in a ritualistic fashion, offered to the viewer in a sacrificial manner.

Zanele Muholi often uses her own body in a ritualistic way in performance, video and photographic works. In *I'm just doing my job* (Figure 7), Muholi is pictured, lying naked on a table, animal intestines spread over her body, with two persons, one male, one female eating these intestines from her body. The work references a news story in which a renowned black businessman, Kenny Kunene, celebrated his fortieth birthday in October 2010 with a party at which guests were served sushi from the bodies of models who were lying on tables for this purpose. When asked about the event, one of the models apparently answered "I [was] only doing my job" (Muholi 2010).

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Figure 7: Zanele Muholi, *I'm just doing my job,* 2010. C-print, 45,5cm x 60cm (Stevenson Gallery 2010a).

In this work, as in the previous work by Siopis, the ingestion of parts of the body of the sacrificial victim is once again implied. A conceptual link is made with the sacred through the eating of the intestines, which could refer to *muti* being offered to the patrons attending the 'sacrifice'. In African traditional religion, *muti* is often offered as a dual remedy together with the sacrifice of an animal (Chidester 2012:195). This practice was made popular by a well-known healer, Khotso Sethuntsa (1898-1979), the millionaire medicine man, during the mid-twentieth century, where material wealth and power was promised by the making of a blood sacrifice and the ingestion of *muti*. This practise was even practiced amongst Christians and even Afrikaner nationalists, such as HF Verwoerd (1901-1966), who is said to have visited Sethuntsa on various occasions (Chidester 2012:195). The intermixing of traditional and Christian religions and the intermixing of modern and secular practises, is what Chidester (2012) describes as a 'wild religion' in South Africa, which he suggests to be directly linked to

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the high levels of societal violence. He describes how the sexual conduct of politicians, such as President Jacob Zuma and celebrities such as Kunene, contributes to this hybrid 'wild religion' which has been 'mixed into sexuality, sovereignty and economy … messy anomalous or monstrous, a hybrid of order and chaos' (Chidester 2011:4).

Binaries of the modern versus the traditional are invoked through the juxtaposition of the patrons in full, modern dress contrasted with the semi-naked body of the sacrificial victim. The practise of offering a blood sacrifice to attain power and money, as was done by Sethuntsa, also comes to mind, especially in relation to businessman Kenny Kunene, who is presumed in this work.

The liver, which is placed prominently on the woman's breasts, is being eaten by the two sacrificers. This could possibly reference the myth of Prometheus, who was punished by Zeus for giving fire to the humans, thus enabling them to make animal sacrifices through the use of fire. Prometheus was tied to a rock and an eagle came to eat his liver every day. The liver, which grew back every night, was believed in ancient Greece to be the seat of human emotions. Fat taken from the liver brings good luck and is a common ingredient used in *muti*. The breasts, within *muti* practise, contain fat that is considered especially 'lucky' and is used whenever one wants to attract women to one's business (Labuschagne 2004:197). The placing of the liver on the women's breasts therefore signifies a transaction where the body of the female is the means used to obtaining wealth, power and status, at the cost of said body and person.

Muholi shows herself as a passive victim, given over to a ritual over which she has no control. Once again the agency of the female subject has been stripped from her, an interpretation that is reiterated in the title: *I'm just doing my job.* The model that is being 'sacrificed' has no choice in the actions being taken on her: She is being paid and has no choice or say in the matter. Her status as a human being with agency is brought into

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question as she is dehumanised and objectified as a mere transactional object in the ritual being portrayed.

In *Izidwedwe* as part of *Insila Yomuntu* (after Pistoletto) (Figure 8), Muholi is pictured in a composition reminiscent of the famous work of Michelangelo Pistoletto, entitled *Venus of the rags*[9] (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Zanele Muholi, *Izidwedwe* as part of *Insila Yomuntu* (after Pistoletto), 2010. Digital photograph, 100cm x 123 cm (photo credit Robert Hamblin) (Nakano 2012)..

Venus, or Aphrodite the goddess of love, is according to Belsey (2012:179) used widely in cultural production in order to communicate aspects of desire and love, but also holds properties of tragedy and the withholding of sexual gratification. The conduct of Venus in Roman myth often shapes what is seen as “divine or demonic” passion. In this work, Muholi shows herself as the Venus, walking towards a heap of cloths, as was done 45 years earlier by Pistoletto (Figure 9). Her work references the work by the well-known *Arte Povera* pioneer, in which he shows Venus as a concrete sculpture in

[9] The title of this work, *Venus of the rags,* is also interesting in that it alludes to a popular expression used to describe female menstruation. “To be on the rag” is a euphemism used popularly in western countries to describe menstruation (Ernster 1975:5).

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front of a heap of rags or discarded clothes, posed in the same manner as is done here by Muholi. Pistoletto is regarded by many as an influential modern artist who grappled with issues concerning modernity and specifically Italian politics, from a primarily Marxist perspective (Watson 2011:133). His work is seen by many as a possible antithesis to Pop-art, by rejecting consumerism and artifice and embracing "poor objects, natural forms and energetic forces" (Gilman 2008:53). Muholi, therefore, by referring to this artwork, suggests values such as "a world inhabited by free subjects … and the effort to escape material and ideological closure".as described by Gilman (2008:55) with regards to Pistoletto's famous work.

Figure 9: Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Venus of the rags,* 1967. Marble and textiles, 212cm x340cm x110cm (Tate international Council).

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Muholi's Venus, in opposition to Pistoletto's marble figure, is a real flesh and blood woman: the artist herself, carrying another 'rag' to the heap to be discarded or possibly even burnt with the others in a ritualistic manner. Again, binaries are offered to the viewer: the classical Venus figure against the banal rags. As a comment on modern culture, Pistoletto's version of the *Venus* provides us with a visual articulation of the excesses of consumerism, to which the female body is not just a witness, but in a certain sense also a 'consumer product'. *Izidwedwe* is a Zulu term used to describe "discarded clothing or rags" (Turner 1995:71). The term is used in a well-know *izigiyo* [10] entitled *Izibongo of Bella Mshibe,* which translated goes like this:

> You low-classed women of D-section, what are they doing?
> They wear rags (Izidwedwe)
> When last did you see a white man wearing a head ring?
> Hololo! Hololo! Leave me alone (Turner 1995:70).

In this song, the 'rags' refer to modern or western clothing, chosen by women instead of the traditional wear. Women are often seen in African cultures as the 'protectors of culture' and the wearing of traditional wear would therefore be a commendable action. In this song to which Muholi refers, the title, 'modernity' is likened to questionable moral standing within the community and sexual notoriety (Turner 1995:79). Issues of the 'place of the women' as well as what is seen as acceptable behaviour by women is brought to the fore through the explicit raising of the binaries of traditional and modern.

[10] An *izigiyo* is a traditional Zulu song, which is usually sung by women as a way of criticising certain behaviours within a community. It is normally done in the presence of the guilty party to make such a person aware of her transgressions. Together with the singing of the song, which is a surrogate for a punishment, there might also be dances and gestures. These songs always contain an aspect of criticism against promiscuity, with the addition of other issues such as laziness and drunkenness and are normally directed towards women (Turner 1995:56).

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The work could also possibly reference the practise of *ikhothane,*[11] a fashionable craze, in which young people from townships such as Soweto, burn expensive designer clothing, party food and liquor, as an extreme way to show off their apparent wealth. Possible reasons given for the prevalence of this radical practise is a "lack of vision for the future" where people can only "find meaning and identity in the now" (Mark Turpin in Nkosi 2011:1). It is also suggested that this practise is a reflection of a society in which materialism, entrenched by excessive consumerism, has become too important (Nkosi 2011:1).

The ritualistic aspects of *ikhothane* can be described as a sacrifice to Mammon, god of money and possessions, a submission to the values of consumerism and materialism, which *Izidwedwe* is warning about. The violent, destructive nature of the *ikhothane* ritual is also of concern here, as a meta-theme that re-occurs in the works discussed in this study. The link made between the naked female body and the heap of rags to be burned is of specific relevance in this regard. The body of the female could serve as a possible antithesis to the modernising effect of consumerism on society which in Zulu culture is perceived as undesirable (Turner 1995:71). The female body thus provides a possible passage towards the sacred, a return to innocence or purity, lost through consumerism, which has 'tainted' traditional culture. It is also relevant that the female body is related to the Venus, who is perceived in Western art as the perfect beauty and by implication the perfect woman. Muholi could therefore also be hinting at the discarding or sacrifice of the 'perfect woman' together with consumerism.

Whilst participants in *ikhothane* see consumerism as empowering, as a way in which they assert their identity, their relationship with material possessions, is problematic,

[11] *I'kothane* is street slang, which originally referred to 'dance battles' but which has lately attracted a cult following in townships. At such gatherings participants show off and burn expensive designer shoes and clothing in front of poor youths and children who cannot afford such luxuries.

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since many participants to *ikhothane* cannot really afford the goods that they destroy through the ritual. In the same manner, women's relationship with consumerism could also be described as problematic, since empowerment through consumerist practises and modernisation might only be on the surface and not give women real agency. Furthermore, the demands set for women through consumerism create a new archetype for a 'Venus': a new ideal to which women should aspire. In this work, however, Muholi seems to rebel against the traditional role of the woman, where the binary of modern and traditional is challenged and Pistoletto's ideals of individual freedom and ideological openness can be upheld.

According to Bateman (2006:2), Tracey Rose works towards destabilising Cartesian dualisms, which she believes is what Christianity is built on. She does this by 'demythologising' and subverting certain Christian imagery in her performance and photographic works. In *La Messie* (Figure 10), a photographic work from the *Lucie's Fur* video work, Rose shows a sacrificial scene where she is shown giving an offering of fruit and shells to an unknown deity. Von Veh (2010:28) explains the character Lucie as "the first hominid … an alter ego of Eve" and also as the feminist Adam, the ancestor of all mankind. In the video narrative of *Lucie*, Rose humorously shows Adam as a homosexual, thus negating the possibility of him being mankind's originator. The name *Lucie*[12]*,* could also refer to the fossil, named *Lucy,* found by Don Johanson in 1975 in Ethiopia, who is believed to be an ancestor of the human race. It is also relevant in this regard that *Lucy* is believed to have been a female (Blake 2007:36).

Von Veh (2010:28) explains how Rose's depiction of this story counteracts the notion that female sexuality led to the fall of man and questions the extreme regulation of sexuality under the auspices of religion. Sexuality, according to Von Veh (2010:29), is

[12] *Lucy*, who was classified as being a art of the *Australopithecus afarensis,* is believed to be one of the first human-like species who walked upright, owing to her human-like hips and knee-joints (Blake 2007:36).

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policed in societies through various systems of administration, restriction and measurement.

Figure 10: Tracey Rose, *Lucie's fur version 1:1:1 - La Messie,* 2003. Lambda photograph, 102cm x 148cm (Von Veh 2012:31).

In *La Messie*, meaning 'messiah', Rose presents us with a South African saviour, wearing garments suggesting leopard skin, a material which is not acceptable for women to use for their garments in African culture (Klopper in Von Veh 2010:31). Patriarchy is thus challenged by the way in which Rose has dressed herself, whilst giving a sacrifice of fruits and shells. The flame in front of her breast indicates a burnt offering. Von Veh (2006:36) suggests that the flames could also allude to the "flames of hell" or "death and destruction", thus setting up a dichotomy of that which is sacred and that which is profane and sinful. The flame on her chest could also be a depiction of the 'sacred' heart of Christ. This view is reiterated by the inclusion of the pastel coloured rainbow clouds in the background, which is a regular feature of popular Catholic 'kitsch' depictions of the Christ (Von Veh 2006:36,38).

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According to Brian Smith and Wendy Doniger (1989:218), vegetable sacrifices feature much less than animal sacrifices in biblical and Vedic and Hindu cultures. Vegetable sacrifice in Hindu cultures is said to be a 'more humane' form of sacrifice than animal sacrifice and is a substitute for animal flesh, but is also perceived to be an inferior substitute (Smith & Doniger 1989:217). In the narrative of Cain and Abel, God rejects Abel's offering of fruits and prefers his brother Cain's offering of animal fat.[13]

Von Veh (2010:31) argues that in this work, Rose creates a new myth for South Africa, where the saviour is a woman and "male political power and privilege" is scorned. The sacrificial elements in this work are interesting in that Rose presents herself as both deity and sacrificer, offering and receiving a sub-standard offering of fruit. According to Smith and Doniger (1989:190), the sacrificed objects or animals within such rituals stand in for the god as well as the sacrificer, thus bringing them into propinquity of each other. In this case, all three parties to the ritual thus seem to collapse into one, completely obliterating the decrees of totem and taboo and collapsing hierarchies, which according to Kristeva (1982) and Girard (1972), the origin of the necessity for sacrifice and religious order. The creation of a new mythology as suggested by Von Veh (2010:31) therefore holds true, seen in the light of Rose's radical overthrow of the traditional sacrificial act.

In the *Minder, Mater, Martyr* series (Figure 11), Diane Victor parodies important Christian mythologies by placing three female figures in the places of St John the Baptist, St Sebastian and the Christ (Von Veh 2012:24). The three female figures allude to aspects of the Virgin Mary, who has been the theme in previous works by Victor, thus also playing on a well-known feminine archetype of purity and virginity. According to Von Veh (2012:24), the triptych framework makes the link to the sacred obvious in its remembrance of Gothic altarpieces of the Middle Ages and early

[13] Genesis 4.

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Renaissance, thereby also placing the works by Victor within a specific *oeuvre*. Von Veh (2010:24) iterates the importance of Gothic architecture during the Middle Ages as a specific style of the state and the Roman Catholic church, thus as a symbol of power relations and control. Victor seems to allude to both religious themes and the power structures surrounding the issues she communicates through this work by referring to Gothic features and styles through the triptych format and the decorative embossing around the edges of the prints.

In *Minder,* the woman bearing a stern face holds a lamb, which is a traditional sacrificial animal in many biblical stories, whilst also being a metaphor for the Christ. The title of the work *Minder,* also points to someone *who takes care of,* such as a shepherd, once again referencing the Christ figure. The figure of the *Minder* is fashioned in the shape of a vagina, possibly alluding to the chance that Victor's saviour could be female. The knife in the women's right hand suggests that she is ready to kill and possibly sacrifice the lamb she is holding, prompting the interpretation of this work as a sacrificial scene. This work could also be read as showing the three participants in a traditional sacrifice, namely sacrificer (*Minder*), deity (*Mater*) and sacrificial object (*Martyr*). Again, as in Rose's depiction, Victor collapses these three forces into one, all fashioned in her own semblance.

Victor's work, *Mater,* refers to Africa in the multiple rings around the woman's neck (Von Veh 2012:25), whilst the shark in her right hand might be a parody on Christ's traditional association with the symbol of the fish.[14] The central figure is, according to Victor (in Von Veh 2012:25), also associated with an earth goddess, who is associated with fertility and the maternal. The wound-like opening in her breast is shaped in the

[14] The association with the shark and the lamb (In *Minder*) is also interesting with regard to animal becomings (Cf. Chapter Three).

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form of a vagina, once again linking violence and wounding with sex and reproduction, bringing the binaries life and death within close proximity to each other.

Figure 11: Diane Victor. *Minder, mater, martyr*, 2004. Etching, aquatint, mezzotint and embossing, 200 x 100cm. Edition of 10 (Rankin & Von Veh 2008:38-39).

The third work, which is of specific interest for the scope of this chapter, shows a female Christ-figure, staring ominously at the viewer whilst being tormented by various stakes, pins and arrows being inserted into her body. Martyrdom is associated with an extreme form of self-sacrifice in which the sacrificer and the deity to whom the offering is being made, are forged into one (Smith & Doniger 1989:190), such as in the case of the Christ. Victor's depiction of martyrdom shows the martyred victim as fetishised, through the corset that she is wearing and also the cloth that is draped behind her, almost like a curtain on a stage, alluding to the spectacle of sacrifice as a public event.

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The multiple piercings of the martyr's body by arrows and other sharpened objects alludes to the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian and the possible sexual penetration of the female, reiterated by the embossings of sperm in the background (Von Veh 2010:26). The sexual act in this regard is depicted as a form of self-sacrifice on the part of the female 'victim'. Von Veh (2010:26) also suggests that the fabric backdrop in this regard could be a stand-in for a condom or bed sheet and that the sacredness of the Turin shroud in this regard is annulled. The sexual act in this sense can also be read as a transgression, an idea which is also explored by Weibgen (2009), Bataille (1962) and Creissels (2007) and which can also be seen in works by Siopis discussed previously (Figures 2-4).

Read together with both Girard (1972) and Kristeva (1982) on the function of sacrificial rites in establishing social order and cohesion and its function of controlling outbreaks of violence within a society, these female artists seem to be assuming control over all aspects of sacrificial mythology. This could be an attempt to gain agency and access to domains traditionally assigned to patriarchal power structures such as the Church and patriarchal Christian mythology, which they aim to unsettle and subsequently challenge. The challenging and fusing of Cartesian dualisms in this regard is central to this feminist project as it disrupts the hierarchies and paternalistic social structures that fuels actual and ideological violence against women.

2.3 The beautiful dead and murder

Sacrifice, death and murder are understood by both Bataille (1962) and Girard (1972) to be intimately linked. Girard (1972:201) notes how Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was the first to describe all ritualistic practises in terms of their connection to murder and the subsequent proscriptions to prevent such murders. Sacrifice aims to protect the

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social order through ritualised, permissible forms of murder, be the victims animal or human. Girard (1972:97) describes sacrificial rites in terms of 'collective murder', where the violence that ensues transgression of taboos is thwarted through legitimate, cooperative killing of a scapegoat. Smith and Doniger (1989:189) also explain sacrifice in terms of its relation to suicide and murder, emphasising the proximity of these offenses to the sacrificial act. The only difference between sacrifice and a murderous crime, it seems, is a reversal or a confusion of the roles of sacrifice, sacrificed or victim and the deity to whom the sacrificial offering is being made.[15] This confusion of roles is made apparent in the work of Kathryn Smith.

Smith, who won Standard Bank Young artist of the year in 2004, is interested in "the vexing relation between art, violence and death" (Richards 2004:10). Her work interrogates the metaphor of art as forensic practice as she probes themes such as wounding and murder with a specific focus on serial killers. In a performance work entitled *Jack in Johannesburg* (Figure 12), Smith draws parallels between the violent predatorily killings of Jack the Ripper and a violent Johannesburg, through the narrative of a possible connection between acclaimed British painter, Walter Sickert (1860-1942) and the unsolved murders of Jack the Ripper.

[15] Bataille (1962:81) notes how sacrifice differs from murder only in that sacrificial rites are not forbidden according to taboo, but represents a permitted from of murder. The victim is seen as 'sacred', owing to it's status as being a sacrificial victim, through coming into proximity to the deity. Girard (in Smith and Doniger 1989:192) explains that sacrifice represents a form of 'murder' which has been 'directed into proper channels'. The substitution of a guilty human or group of humans with an innocent animal, collapses deity and sacrificed being, thus bringing the sacrificer closer to the deity.

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Figure 12: Kathryn Smith, *Jack in Johannesburg (and elsewhere): after a public performance,* 2003. Production still. Pigment on cotton rag, 76cm x 150cm. Edition of 6 + AP (Smith 2007).

The site-specific public performance was conducted in the Johannesburg Art Gallery and filmed and edited into a video work and printed stills. The edited version of the performance shows footage of Smith lying on a bed, half covered with sheets, reminiscent of popular depictions of Ripper victims, as well as some of Sickert's paintings of nudes. A man is tattooing the words: "Never look for unicorns until you run out of ponies"[16] on her arm. The screen behind her shows various images of Ripper murder victims and Victorian images and paintings by Sickert. A voice-over containing the thoughts and conversations that one assumes to be of Sickert can be heard interspersed with music and sounds of the city. Smith seems to echo Patricia Cornwell's[17] idea that Sickert is the actual Ripper. Sickert's identification with the Ripper is described by Colin Richards (2004:17) in terms of the parallel between the "artistic misogynist (Jack) and the misogynist artist (Sickert)".

[16] These were apparently the words of an FBI investigator which Smith tattooed on her arm in the handwriting taken from sample letters apparently sent by Jack the Ripper.
[17] Popular crime writer, Patricia Cornwell wrote *Portrait of a killer: Jack the Ripper, Case Closed,* in 2002, in which she claims that British painter Walter Sickert is the Ripper. According to Smith (2007), this theory was originally brought forward by Jean Overton Fuller (1990) in his text entitled *Sickert and the Ripper murders,* but was popularised by Cornwell. Sickert was fascinated by the Ripper murders, often made reference to them in his work and it was also later proved that he wrote some of the letters to the police, believed to be from the Ripper.

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The performance by Smith also featured actual works of Sickert, which were borrowed from various collections to be shown at the Johannesburg Art Gallery. The performance was conducted within a central space of the gallery, in front of Sickert's painting *The pork pie hat*. Smith was lying on a bed, half covered with sheets, as pictured in figure 12, while being tattooed by a male tattoo artist dressed in Victorian attire. The subsequent film made by Smith of this performance formed the central part of her travelling exhibition *Euphemism* and was exhibited together with borrowed paintings by Sickert. Smith is intrigued with Sickert's apparent attempts to implicate himself in the Ripper murders and his morbid fascination with the Ripper. The connection between art and murder is also made explicit in the voice-over where a man, whom one can assume to be Sickert, can be heard saying: "The power to kill can be just as satisfactory as the power to create". Maureen de Jager (2004:30) notes how the character of Jack the Ripper not only signifies the archetypal serial killer, but also the public spectacle created through letters sent to the police, press coverage of the murder and interest by the general public in apprehending this killer. In this way the "excesses of private desires and public spectacle" (de Jager 2004:30) is conflated in the same way that many other boundaries are shown to be permeable in this work.

Furthermore, the aestheticisation of the dead female body is a pertinent theme of this work and various other works by Smith (Figures 13-15) and has been a recurring theme in Smith's work since 1997. Murder, one of the most ancient taboos (Kristeva 1982; Bataille 1962), as well as artificial and actual self-wounding, is employed by Smith consistently in relation to the eroticised female body. Edgar Allen Poe's notion of the beautiful dead female body being the most "poetic" thing in the world, as well as *Death and the Maiden* tropes are explored by these and other works of Smith though artifice and performance (Richards 2004:11).

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Figure 13: Kathryn Smith, *A.D.A.S.T.W. Meniscus,* 2001. Lambda print, 120cm x 180cm (Smith 2004:11).

Figure 14: Kathryn Smith, *Memento Mori,* 2004. Lambda print on Kodak metallic paper, 22cm x 28cm (Smith 2004:10).

Figure 15: Kathryn Smith *Memento Mori* (detail), 2004. Series of colour photographs (Arthrob gallery listings 2004).

Weibgen (2009:56) describes self-injuring, as is alluded to by Smith in the works described above, as “a protest against the established order and a sacrifice endured for the benefit of others”. Smith, through the coupling of the Ripper murder narrative with the wilful scarring of her body through the act of tattooing, performs her own body as an ambivalent space where life and death intersect and where violence literally leaves a mark upon which one could contemplate, as viewers contemplate the meaning of the phrase tattooed on her arm.

Smith also opens up an ambivalent space where deliberate permissible scarring, in the form of a tattoo is juxtaposed to a murder, which is unpermitted and criminal. Smith seems to be questioning the dynamics between forms of self-scarring and bodies being hurt against their will. Amelia Jones (2009:46) argues that these two different positions from where wounding could take place influence the way in which viewers react to these wounds and that self-wounding in visual arts provoke different meanings and connotations than witnessing bodies being wounded illegitimately. The wounded body, according to Boltanski in performance art has the potential to act as a representational

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field through which political statements can be made, without evoking an overly emotional, self-identifying response (in Jones 2009:49). Boltanski argues that through self-mutilation, the personas of the artist, who in this case is also the perpetrator of pain, and the sufferer, are collapsed (in Jones 2009:49). In *Jack and Johannesburg* an uncomfortable liminal space is created where the act of self-mutilation occurs through a proxy. In this way, Smith thus questions and confuses the binaries of victim and perpetrator and innocence and guilt in a radical opposition to entrenched binaries. Self-inflicted pain, in this sense, opposes instances of pain and violence directed from third parties and communicates a desire to free the female body from its vulnerability and as an object to be appropriated by patriarchal violence and discourse. This confusion or collapsing of victim and perpetrator can also be seen in the work of Rose and Victor as discussed in the previous section.

In the *Jack and Johannesburg* work, Smith further complicates the binaries of victim and perpetrator by implicating viewers as voyeuristic third parties in the work by means of their shadows that are projected onto the screen behind Smith as they view or merely walk past the installation. The shadowy presence of viewers reiterates the slippage between the realm of distorted private desires and public spectacle, whilst the images of victims and reclining nudes projected on the screen confuse the distinction between living and dead bodies.

Smith employs self-wounding in the *Jack in Johannesburg* (Figure 12) works as well as in the works shown in figures 13-15. In *Memento Mori* (Figures 14–15), Smith shows her own body as artificially wounded. According to Richards (2004:12), this series refers to Caravaggio's *Self-portrait as ill Bacchus,* where grapes, which were apparently used by the Ripper to lure his victims, feature distinctively. Caravaggio was also notoriously violent and his writings and artistic work show an intense interest in themes associated with "violence, sacrifice and martyrdom" (Richards 2004:12).

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In this case Smith is both the victim of the wounding as well as the creative artist who creates her own body in the style of a murder victim. Jones (2009:50) argues that a live wound is often not more effective than a performative one, such as in Smith's case. Photographic representations of such further complicate the distinction between the real and the represented, causing both to affect the viewer in the same way. Images of the aestheticised murdered body, created by Smith, blur the boundaries between art and murder and according to de Jager (2004:30, 31) create an uncomfortable slippage between "actual and symbolic violence".

Furthermore, it is not the actual wound that causes attraction and repulsion as indicated by Kristeva (1982), but rather the idea that something similar might happen to our own bodies, which according to Jones (2009:51) has the power to have a radical impact. It is the penetration of the skin that evokes a response that challenges the concept of a unified, impenetrable self and thus gives rise to empathy with others. The wound, according to Jones (2009:53), through its inscription onto the body, makes the body a '"representational field".

Wounding, which is found to be challenging with regard to our narcissistic notion of a completed impenetrable self,[18] is amplified in a radical way when it translates into suicide or murder. Bataille (1962:82) explains murder as an abrupt disruption of the discontinuity of human existence. The inevitability of human existence is characterised by the constant approach of death. According to Bataille (1962:83-88), murder disrupts the natural order of being and gives the murderer a sense of control over destiny. Smith's insistence on the inscription and wounding of her body as well as the performance of her own body as murdered could therefore point to a desire to be in

[18] Jones (2009:50) argues that the effectiveness of wounding as a political statement largely rests on our having a narcissistic empathy with the body being wounded, for it reminds us that our own bodies can also be penetrated, bleed and be hurt.

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control of her own fortune and by implication, her own body. Bataille (1962:82) explains that:

> A violent death disrupts the creature's continuity: what remains, what the tense onlookers experience in the succeeding silence, is the continuity of all existence with which the victim is now one.

The binary of life and death is thus questioned here, as death is what 'saves' the murder victim from the inevitability of her own death. The transgression of the taboo on murder, in this case, causes both anguish and ecstasy, as does the scarring by the tattoo artist on Smith's arm. In the works described above, Smith explores the relationship between death and eroticism as is elucidated by Bataille (Creissels 2007:179), where the body of a women in the sexual act is likened to a blood-stained sacrificial animal. In this sense, the eroticised female body becomes a site of contravention and a possible passage towards the sacred. The body of the murder victim, beautiful and bloodstained, becomes a sacrificial object, which links the opposites of life and death through sexuality. The murdered corpse understood as an extreme Other, is through Smith's recreation of herself as such, confused with the Self and thus points to a deconstruction of the binary of Self and Other.

In *Throb* (Figure 16), Siopis also presents a dead female body. The reference made to blood in this work is made apparent through her treatment of her medium and choice of colours. Once again the dead female body is aestheticised as in Smith's work, this time through Siopis's affective use of her medium and suggestive use of colour. The surface of the painting becomes a tactile surface, which as an aesthetic object becomes attractive, despite its violent content. In *Fetter* (Figure 17), a figure whose gender is not identifiable has bound hands and feet and is enveloped by a mass of red. This image suggests violence through the bound feet and use of colour, without making such violence immediate, thereby creating a sense of dread and unease in the viewer.

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Bataille's (1962) concept of the connection between eroticism and death becomes apparent in these works through the tactile qualities of Siopis' medium, which reminds us of the sensuality of skin and the indefiniteness of bodily fluids, whilst creating an aesthetically pleasing surface connected ambiguously with violent subject matter.

Figure 16: Penny Siopis, *Throb,* 2007. Mixed media on paper, 56,6cm x 75cm (Perryer 2007b:45).

Figure 17: Penny Siopis, *Fetter,* 2007. Mixed media on paper, 20,8cm x 29cm (Perryer 2007b:44).

Both of these works form part of Siopis' *Feral Fables* (2007) series, in which the artist challenges the conventional acceptance of what is considered as 'humanity' as well as the acceptance of liminal identities in society (Siopis in Perryer 2007b:40). In this series Siopis presents a collection of portraits of women and children, often together with animals. The absence of male figures in this regard suggests that Siopis considers them as excluded from the liminality that she seeks to portray. What is interesting with regard to this series of paintings are the metaphors of death and sacrifice appearing consistently in the artist's interrogation of this theme. In figure 17, the person is bound up as a possible preparation for a murder or on a symbolic level, possibly a sacrifice. In figure 16, the figure could be dead or possibly sleeping, which is left open for the viewer's interpretation. The use of the red, dripping paint, however, suggests blood and murder, not peaceful sleep. The title, *Throb,* also suggests pain and suffering.

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In an image from the *What I look like, what I feel like* series, Sharlene Khan engages with suicide and a murder (Figure 18). Smith and Doniger (1989:189) explain sacrifice in terms of its relation to suicide and murder, emphasising the proximity of these offenses to the sacrificial act. The only difference between sacrifice and a murderous crime, it seems, is a reversal or a confusion of the roles of sacrificer and sacrificed or victim. Sylvain Levi likens all sacrificial acts to suicide and notes how all sacrifices is therefore a form of self-sacrifice (in Smith and Doniger 1989:190). Again, confusion or conflation of the roles of sacrificer and victim is at stake, where these two seemingly opposite notions are challenged and even fused, causing an extreme disruption in the symbolic order.

On the left hand side of Khan's depiction, the artist presents herself as Ophelia in a depiction reminiscent of various earlier depictions of Shakespeare's tragic character.[19] On the right she is depicted as murdered French revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat (1743-1793). Both of these images are also the theme for two well-known paintings from art history, *Ophelia* (Figure 19) by Sir John Everett Millais and Jacques-Louis David's *Death of Marat* (Figure 20).

[19] Ophelia, a tragic Shakespearean character, died from drowning in a brook after falling from a willow tree. It is not clear from the text whether she committed suicide or if her death was an untimely accident and this scene has historically been interpreted in various ways (Romanska 2005:490). The death of Ophelia has been a widely depicted scene from the play *Hamlet* by Shakespeare and has been painted by various painters including Millais (Figure 19).

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Figure 18: Sharlene Khan, *Never, never and never again,* 2008. Digital inkjet print on cotton rag, embroidery, 61cm x84cm (Van Schalkwyk 2009:22).

Bataille (1962:81) points out the link between murder and sacrifice in that both articulate an urge to kill and a transgression of the taboo on killing; sacrifice, however, Bataille argues, is a permitted transgression of this taboo, whilst murder is not allowed and thus upsets the social order. Sacrifice, according to both Bataille (1962) and Girard (1972) aims to sustain and enforce social cohesion. The narratives of Hamlet and Marat, a political revolutionary, are instances in which the social order is disrupted by a challenge to the king. The tragic characters or persons that Khan refers to here, both come to a violent end, albeit in different manners.

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Figure 19: Sir John Everett Millais, *Ophelia,* 1851-52. Oil on canvas, 75cm x 112cm (Warwick 1996:276).

Figure 20: Jacques-Louis David, *Death of Marat,* 1793. Oil on canvas, 1600cm x 1250cm. Royal Museum of Art, Brussels, Belgium (Adams 2007:706).

According to Timothy Chamberlain (1991:562), Charlotte Corday (1768-1793), believing that Marat had been responsible for the rise in extremism and violence associated with the French Revolution at the time, decided to murder him in order to prevent further bloodshed. This 'sacrifice' of Marat is thus consistent with Girard's (1972:8) contention that sacrifice serves the purpose of protecting a given society against further violence in their midst, especially in instances where the judicial system and reigning power structures have seemingly failed them. By performing Marat's violent end, Khan thus positions herself as a sacrificial object, not just as a murder victim. The words embroidered between the two victims in Khan's work state "Never, never and never again". These famous words was spoken by president Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) at his inauguration as president on 10 May 1994: "Never, never

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and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another …" (Mandela 1994:1). These words affirm the idea that Khan is making a political statement and referring to Mandela's sacrifice of his life for peace in South Africa. These words could also be ironic in that Khan is alluding to gender inequality prevalent in South African society. This inscription is coupled with an image of a knife, known to be the murder weapon in the case of Marat as well as Hamlet's murder of Polonius. These details reiterate the idea of putting an end to violence through sacrifice.

The body of Ophelia, in this case, is an especially tragic one. Ophelia could be described as a victim of the political struggles of her family members and is throughout the narrative of *Hamlet* robbed of her agency as an empowered human being. Magda Romanska (2005:485) also notes how the sexualised image of Ophelia's corpse is the most often represented female figure of the nineteenth century, often also associated with female mental disorder and almost always eroticised through the various artistic representations thereof. Romanska (2005:486) argues that through the re-representation of Ophelia's sexualised corpse, "her corpse became both a source of visual production and an identificatory beauty model of desirable femininity". Romanska (2005:494) further notes how the character of Ophelia is portrayed in popular stage productions as "fragile, stupid, weak … shallow, cheap … without character …". The suicide of Ophelia is described by Queen Gertrude as an accident, implying that Ophelia could not even be in charge of her own misery or decision to take her own life. Both Heidegger and Derrida (in Romanska 2005:487) connote the ability to understand and name our own mortality as that which separates humanity from animals, as well as being the seat of our "sense of agency and ethical responsibility". Khan's depiction of herself as Ophelia thus points to a radical sacrifice of the self from a position of powerlessness and anguish.

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The juxtaposition of Marat and Ophelia sets the 'innocent' victim against the 'guilty' Marat, with the invisible Charlotte Corday hovering somewhere in-between criminality and heroism. According to Nina Gelbart (2004:212), art historical depictions of Corday, such as the one by Jean-Jaques Hauer (1751-1829), just before Corday's execution for Marat's murder, shows her as a blond women, whilst evidence points to her having 'chestnut' hair. Gelbart (2004:214) ascribes this to the heroic mythology built around Corday, where blondness symbolises "fairness as opposed to Marat's foulness" (Gelbart 2004:214). Similarly, the depiction of an innocent, beautiful Ophelia in Khan's work places the beautiful and innocent against the criminal body of Marat, scarred by a rare skin-malaise at the time of his death.[20]

Never, never and never again forms part of a series entitled *What I look like, what I feel like,* in terms of which Khan (2008:pa) writes:

> This conscious exploration of my identity examines the various masks one dons, consciously or sub-consciously on a daily basis as well as the stereotypical representations inflicted on a person inhabiting a racialised body in a specific socio-political and historical situation.

In the case of Ophelia versus Marat, Khan questions the agency provided to her as a female within a specific socio-cultural setting. The image of Ophelia, beautiful, sexualised, insipid and disempowered is opposesd to that of a political martyr (Marat). The figure of Corday uses the binary of innocent and criminal, as well as the opposites of power and incapacity through her double role as heroine and murderer. So extreme was Corday's rebellious act at the time, that an autopsy after her execution for Marat's murder was done in order to prove that she was sexually active and thus a 'fallen woman'. The autopsy, however proved her to be a virgin, disappointing and baffling her enemies greatly (Gelbart 2012:205).

[20] Marat contracted a rare, disfiguring skin-disease while he was hiding in the sewers of Paris before the revolution. His face was apparently so disfigured that his corpse was not deemed fit to be seen and a death mask was made for his burial (Kaufman & McNeil 1989:298).

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The title of the work, *What I look like, what I feel like,* suggests that Khan's sacrificial act might not have the outcome that she intended it to have. The title suggests that for the onlookers of this sacrifice, she *looks like* the tragic figure of a sexualised Ophelia, who is not even awarded credit for taking her own life. Khan suggests her intention is to be recognised as a revolutionary political martyr (what she *feels like*) or even the heroic Corday, which uncomfortably slips in-between binaries and thwarts classification as a murderer or a heroine.

It is also worth noting that neither of these 'sacrifices' had the intended outcome within their respective narratives. Marat's assassination did not prevent further bloodshed, nor did the suicide of Ophelia: Marat's assassination did not end the French revolution and Ophelia's death was followed by the death of the hero, Hamlet. Corday was also arrested, tried and executed for her murderous act, thus becoming a martyr or a sacrifice. The sacrifice of these two bodies both became one with the narrative of their respective time's political upheavals and became just another in an extensive torrent of deaths.

2.4 From birth to death: The sacred maternal

Kristeva (1982:4) describes the abject as that which "disturbs identity, system, order … does not respect borders, positions, rules ... the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite." Kristeva (1982:4) further describes how the feminine is coded in specific stereotypical, oppressive ways within patriarchal society and how this functions in society through specific religious practises and beliefs, rituals and cultural norms and values. Despite Kristeva's sociological perspective from which her analysis of the abject stems, her phenomenological approach and her focus on the body and its actions, functions and flows within the social and cultural realm, make her theories

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useful within a corporeal feminist framework. Abjection, according to Caroline Magennis (2010:92), considers the unstable borders between Self and Other and thus also the stability and validity of societal norms and values. Culture prescribes certain normative behaviours pertaining to abject materials such as menstrual blood, faeces, vomit and corpses in order to protect it from the potentially damaging effects of inappropriate actions and desires. These have a direct influence on the perception of women and their 'place' within a given society.

Theoretically, several feminists have postulated the maternal as closely related to the abject and as having specific implications for feminine subjectivity. The pregnant body is of specific importance here, as it grows and contains another 'Other' and continues to leak and bleed even after birth (Magennis 2010:93). Kristeva (1982:54) refers to the labeling of the maternal body within patriarchal society as "terrifying … murderous … abject", whilst Katherine Cooklin (2003:3) in her analysis of Kristeva contends that the maternal body and female sexuality pose a threat to notions of "the clean and proper" (Kristeva 1982:2) and the controllable social body. It is therefore either defiled and excluded or uplifted to cult status through absolute reference, as in the instance of the Virgin Mary (Cooklin 2003:5), or various other feminine stereotypes such as the omnipotent mother.

Pregnant women and various imagery of mothers or mothering can be found in Siopis' *Lasso* series. In *Lull* (Figure 21), a woman lies on a bed, half-covered by a sheet, exposing her pregnant belly. This work makes the uncomfortable slippage between pregnancy as a private affair and a public spectacle apparent, as the mother is subjected to inspection and scrutiny. *Flush* (Figure 22) also features a pregnant woman, this time decontextualised on a pink background. She seems to be floating as if she is in the womb herself, quietly suspended within a safe environment. In both of

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these works, the artist presents the women as vulnerable, an interpretation which is also reiterated by the small scale of these works, which makes them seem intimate and fragile. Again, the small scale of the works, which suggests private intimate imagery, is contrasted by their status as aesthetic objects presented within a (public) gallery space, highlighting the ambiguity of pregnant women's experience.

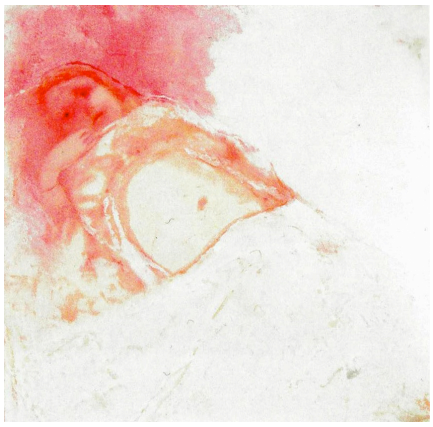

Figure 21: Penny Siopis, *Lull,* 2007. Oil and glue on paper, 25 X 25cm (Perryer 2007b:22).

Figure 22: Penny Siopis, *Flush,* 2007. Oil and glue on paper, 27 X 36cm (Perryer 2007b:10).

The footprints of what seems to be men's shoes surround the woman in figure 22. Fowler and Lee (2004:40) shows how women experience motherhood as something out of their control and situated within multiple masculine discourses pertaining to good mothering practices. In this instance the mother becomes a vessel for the protraction of societal expectations and she has to sacrifice herself in order to conform to these expectations. In this way, the mother figure becomes a protector of societal values and order. Kristeva (1982:99) notes how childbirth is always connected to a series of rituals, which serves the purpose of restoring the female body and the body of the newborn to a 'clean and proper' state after the birth. The body of the mother is in this way linked to sacrifice, which is necessary for protection of social order.

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Children as surrogate sacrificial bodies are featured in the work of a number of South African female artists dealing with a variety of sociological and psychological issues. According to Girard (1972:12), children are the most common human sacrifice to be made in many ancient and some 'primitive' societies. Their position as property of the man and their subaltern status as individuals not yet fully integrated within society make them the most obvious choice for a human sacrifice. Kristeva (1982:77) also notes how the male parent, who cannot prove his paternity physically through birth, sometimes in primitive societies murders his firstborn in order to show his power over the life or death of his offspring, thereby making a patrilineal claim.

An installation piece by Christine Dixie entitled *The binding* (Figure 23) features five prints (Figures 24 –28), hung on a wall, reminiscent of war banners, set up against embroidered cloths featuring images of what seems like child soldiers. Between the hung images, Dixie has placed altar-like tables on which the shadow figures of the boys on the five prints are made up from toy soldiers. Each table is covered by what can be described as an altar cloth. Dixie (2010:3) describes the theme of the exhibition as follows:

> The ritual of sacrifice which seems to be intrinsically linked to the establishment of male identity and the unspoken role of the mother to the father-son relationship …

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Figure 23: Christine Dixie, *The binding* (installation view), 2010 (Dixie 2010).

Again, the idea of sacrifice as an affirmation of traditional hierarchies and power relationships is brought to the fore, as in the biblical narrative of Isaac who narrowly escaped being sacrificed by his father, Abraham (Genesis 22). In this narrative, on which this work is loosely based, God provided a sacrificial substitute, in the form of a lamb. Dixie (2010:3) explains in her catalogue essay how this close encounter with death, symbolically serves as a rebirth of the son through the hands of the father. Dixie's own son, six years old at the time, is the boy used for the images on the prints (Buys 2009:1).

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Figure 24: Christine Dixie, *To sleep,* 2009. Etching, collograph, 1970mm x1250mm. Edition 1/10 (Dixie 2010).

Figure 25: Christine Dixie, *Bind,* 2009. Etching, collograph, 1970mm x1250mm. Edition 1/10 (Dixie 2010).

Figure 26: Christine Dixie, *Burning,* 2009. Etching, collograph, 1970mm x1250mm. Edition 1/10 (Dixie 2010).

Figure 27: Christine Dixie, *Blind,* 2009. Etching, collograph, 1970mm x1250mm. Edition 1/10 (Dixie 2010).

Figure 28: Christine Dixie, *To dream,* 2009. Etching, collograph, 1970mm x1250mm. Edition 1/10 (Dixie 2010).

Figure 29: Christine Dixie, *To dream (detail),* 2009. Etching, collograph, 1970mm x 1250mm. Edition 1/10 (Dixie 2010).

The five prints show the various stages of the preparation for the sacrifice, interspersed with images of the boy sleeping peacefully, as if the sacrificial elements shown are merely a bad dream. According to Dixie (2010:3), the life-size scale of the child is

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deliberate, in order to set up a tension between the artwork and the viewer, here set to take the place of the parent looking down at the child shadows on the altars and up at the images on the walls and the banners. Dixie notes how the way that mothers 'look' differs from the way that fathers 'look'. The child passes from the safe realm of the mother, here symbolised by the blanket in figure 28 and 29 towards a violent world symbolised by the toy gun (Figure 29), as well as the shadow figures of the boy created from plastic toy soldiers, which formed part of the installation exhibited with the five prints (Figure 30).

Figure 30:
Christine Dixie, Installation accompanying *To dream (detail)*. Plastic toy soldiers, wood, fabric, 2010 (Dixie 2010:pa).

The binding speaks about the fear of the mother regarding the violent world that she is sending her son into, and her loss of control over the life of her child. Furthermore, the work could also be a foreboding of the possible violence that her son, as a grown-up man, is capable of inflicting on others: a fear which many South African women share. Girard's (1972:14) comments regarding the function of sacrifice as a possible antithesis to violence within societies could also be connected here to the mother's sacrificial act. The mother is giving up something of great value (her own son) in order to bring an

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end to gendered violence. The son here could be interpreted as a scapegoat for this violence. The mother, however, has no choice in this matter of sacrifice and no alternative is provided in the form of an animal: it is the body of the son that is offered here as the ultimate passage towards the sacred.

In Euripides' *Medea*, children are killed in a most savage way by their mother as retribution for her husband Jason's unfaithfullness. According to Girard (1972:10), Medea prepares for this killing in a religious manner, according to the traditional sacrificial rites of the time. The children are sacrificed to save the husband from the violence of the scorned wife, but possibly also as revenge which robs the father of his lineage. Read within the context of this story, the sacrifice of male children could also become an articulation of an extreme rebellion against patriarchal oppression and rule. Not only has the woman brought the child to life through biological birth, but she has also decided on his fate through her sacrificial ritual. The opposite roles of of life-giver (through birth) and life-taker (through making a blood sacrifice sacrifice) are therefore confused and even conflated through the upsetting hierarchies and claiming of matrilineal lineage.

Child sacrifice is similarly employed in an uncanny installation work by Wilma Cruise (Figure 31) featured as part of the *Alice Diaries* show at the Circa gallery in 2012. Cruise finds her inspiration for this series from the popular children's novel by Lewis Caroll, entitled *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), where Alice finds herself in a strange world where the polarity between humans and animals is questioned and animals seem more human and humans often seem monstrous.

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Figure 31: Wilma Cruise, *The cradle* (Installation view), 2012. Installation, ceramic sculptures, dimensions variable (De Freitas 2012).

Cruise's work juxtaposes sculptures of animals and strangely deformed creatures with the bodies of hundreds of armless ceramic babies (Figures 31 & 32). According to Marilyn De Freitas (2012), Cruise's work explores the existential crises experienced subconsciously by people confronted by a world that does not make sense. In *Wonderland*, knowledgeable animals, bearing unusual agendas of their own, confront Alice, causing her to question her existence (De Freitas 2012). In the installation at Circa, the *Caucus Rabbit* stares ominously over the expanse of armless babies. In *Alice* and also in Cruise's work, it is the animals that have agency. The humans are trapped and without voice, confused about what and who they are. Cruise again employs armlessness as a symbol for the loss of agency in the human babies scattered across the floor. According to Cruise (2012), the story of Alice questions our "… right to presume our position of superiority in relation to the animals … Do we really deserve our place on top of the Cartesian pile?".

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Figure 32: Wilma Cruise, *Woodfired babies,* 2010. Woodfired ceramic, average length 25cm (Cruise 2010:140).

Cruise's main interest, which spans a series of exhibitions built around the theme of Alice,[21] concerns the dichotomy between animal and human as well as the ensuing relationship, based on this dichotomy, which she aims to unsettle (Tully 2012:2). As in previous works, language is questioned as the primary mode of giving agency to living beings, thereby unsettling Cartesian notions of being, which place the human being above the animal. Lynda Birke, Mette Bryld and Nina Lykke (2004:168) posits that the notion of what the concept of 'animal' in contrast to 'human' entails, influences the way in which gender, sexuality and race are viewed. The intersection of animal- and feminist studies therefore, although a new field of inquiry, is relevant in this regard. Birke *et al*. (2004:169) show how animals are understood as being characterised by

[21] *The Animals in Alice* was exhibited at iArt Gallery in Cape Town in July 2011 and thereafter at the University of The North West in October 2011, under the title *Alice and the animals.* These exhibitions together with *The Alice Diaries* form part of the *Alice Sequence* series of exhibitions.

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innate modes of behaviour and thus thought to lack agency in thought. These innate behaviours include behaviour brought about by sexual difference. This understanding of sexuality is then carried over into scientific modes of thinking about sexuality and gender in humans as well and subscribes to hierarchical Cartesian modes of thinking.

Although there are many possible readings of this work pertaining to existential, environmental or even animal rights issues, my interest lies with the use of the human bodies which are presented in a sacrificial manner, almost as in a grave or a site of mass infanticide. Cruise entitles the ceramic baby sculptures *Woodfired babies,* as such mirroring the manufacturing process of these sculptures in the title. Their being 'woodfired' amplifies their very status as sacrificial objects.

Cruise (2013) describes the work as her "way of making sense of an increasingly confusing and seemingly dangerous world". This presentation of small sacrificial bodies creates an almost religious, very solemn undertone in the gallery space – as a place of contemplation but also of horror. The babies become almost monstrous, each one crafted individually, bodies contorted and sexless, some with gaping mouths, others with no mouths, which is consistent with Cruise's depiction of human faces. Some of the babies have features that become beak-like or claw-like, echoing the presence of the animal caucus which guards the installation (Younge 2011:9). The falling away of binaries, in this case the human/animal opposition, is shown to be precarious and a site of contravention and the overturning of norms and conventions.

In this uncanny sacrificial scene set by Cruise, no animal substitute is provided in the form of a regular sacrificial animal: it is the animals who watch, contemplative, silent: a dog, a rabbit and a slightly deformed figure, entitled *The Mother*. This work, like the story of *Alice* aims to unsettle the human/animal divide and thus challenges Cartesian dualisms where animals occupy the lower rungs of being. The viewer is left with

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questions as to the purpose of the mass offering. Gavin Younge (2011:7) in his catalogue essay for the exhibition notes the "visceral violence" in this work, which is loaded with questions and secrets, opening up a "space of potential healing". Younge also mentions Cruise's belief in art as "social action". In this work, Cruise challenges dualisms, which structures social hierarchies, through the unsettling of the human/animal divide. She also acknowledges the inherent dangers of the society in which she lives and communicates her estrangement and confusion at prevailing societal hierarchies. Her figures occupy a liminal space where human and animal characteristics are fused and where language occupies an ambivalent space of impotence, thus destabilising the binary of nature and culture.

Another work by Siopis (Figure 33) shows a mother and child in their grave as suggested by the title *Mother and child embalmed,* also part of Siopis' *Feral Fables series.* The depiction of a mother and child placed side by side in a grave could be an articulation of an old custom where small children are sacrificed and buried together with the mother if she should die.

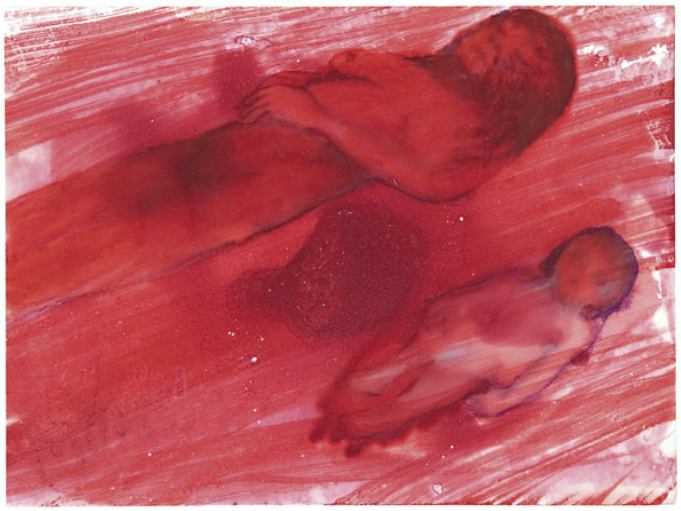

Figure 33: Penny Siopis, *Mother and Child embalmed,* 2007. Mixed media on paper, 12,5cm x 17cm (Perryer 2007b:42).

According to Bataille (1962:46), corpses signify the violence that people are exposed to and therefore have numerous taboos attached to how they must be treated. The careful burial and embalming of bodies could point to the desire to protect the dead

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from further violence. The corpse is similarly described by Kristeva (1982:4) as the ultimate articulation of the abject, since it is a liminal object: it moves between life and death and reminds those who see it of the inevitability of their own demise and eventual decay. The corpse draws attention to the fragility of life and questions the borders of life and death and our own living bodies. Death, according to Bataille (1962:46), shows the contrast between “an unfamiliar region and the everyday world”, which frightens the living, for it emphasises the effects of violence and destruction to which every person is exposed. The decomposition of the body, which is to be avoided by embalmment, proves the inevitability of violent destruction that carries on even after death. This theme can also be seen in Smith’s work (Figure 15), where the aestheticised dead female body is crawling with maggots.

Victor’s work also often features aspects of the maternal or of violence directed towards children. In *Dead Nikki* (Figure 34), a pregnant woman is shown in a pose reminiscent of popular art-historical depictions of the Virgin Mary. Victor has made this drawing in memory of her friend, Nikki, who committed suicide when she was pregnant with her first child. Although it is unknown why Victor’s friend decided to take her own life, the viewer is left to deduce the many possible reasons why an expectant mother would want to end her life. The ephemeral quality of the technique Victor used, which comprises smudging charcoal together with water, adds to the fleeting nature of the image of her friend. It also suggests staining and something that is ‘dirty’. This stands in direct opposition to the idea of a pure and virginal Mary, who is seen as a desired feminine archetype.

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Figure 34: Diane Victor, *Dead Nikki*, 2004. Charcoal stain on paper, 150cm x 70cm (Rankin & Von Veh 2008:97)

Victor, in this regard, actively resists the urge to aestheticise the body of her dead friend, whilst still rendering the portrait with a sense of sensitivity. I would argue that by showing her friend as an archetype of Mary, she is not trying to lift her up to mythological or cult status, but rather is showing the improbability of a perfect, untainted woman.

Earlier works by Victor often featured disturbing images of child molestation and baby rape (Figures 35 and 36), as part of the *Disasters of Peace* series, comprising a selection of etchings inspired by newspaper clippings which the artist collected. According to Schmahmann (2013:213), the title of this series refers to Francisco de Goya's *Disasters of War* series (1810-1820), which depicted the carnage of the Napoleonic wars in Spain. *Made to measure* (Figure 35) was made by Victor in

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reaction to the gang rape of baby Tshepang[22] in Louisville in 2001. Deborah Posel (2006:243) notes how before this incident, rape was largely viewed as "the predations of hostile strangers in dark alleys" and as a crime committed largely against adult women. The case of baby Tshepang brought the rampant violation of babies and children to the fore, which had been happening in South Africa for years and cast a public light on the violence of the father and other men known to their victims.

Figure 35: Diane Victor, *Made to measure,* from *Disasters of Peace*, 2001. Etching and aquatint, 28cm x 32cm (Schmahmann 2001:214).

Victor's depiction of this heinous crime shows a small baby next to a schematic anatomical depiction of the physical effects of a baby rape. A small drawing of an adult pursuing a small child in the shape of a rabbit can be seen at the bottom of the page, which could possibly allude to hidden animalistic drives and desires. On the left hand side of the work, the game of hangman is being played. Victor's graphic depiction shocked and offended faculty members of the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria where the images were displayed and was subsequently

[22] Tshepang is a pseudonym, given by the media to the nine-month old girl, meaning 'Hope'.

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removed after a petition signed by more than 20 staff members (Schmahmann 2013:215).

According to Posel (2006:247), the case of baby Tshepang and the subsequent revelation of many other baby and child rapes brought a new interest within the public domain on questions of sexual violence and abuse. The months directly following the rape of baby Tshepang showed a heightened awareness of other sexual crimes also being brought to the fore, such as prison rape, sexual abuse in schools and child molestation. Posel (2006:248) argues that the horror of baby rape became a symbol in the collective imagination for "the newborn democracy, the fledgling nation …" that was "sick to its core, confronted with the threat of moral death at the very inception of its new life".

Victor's *In Sheep's clothing* (Figure 36) shows the molesting of a young child, fashioned in the shape of a sacrificial lamb. The room shows the careful details of a well-loved child's room, such as the picture on the wall, the slippers and the decorated bed-lamp. The inscription at the top, "Daddy's girl", is a detail that echoes the idea that the atrocity is happening in the child's own home. Reference is also made to the nursery rhyme *Baa Baa Black sheep,* but with dark undertones by emphasising the line "one for the master", which one can assume in this case to be the father. The bed, which could be read as an altar, is stained by what one can assume to be blood. Nightmarish images of wolves can be seen floating over it and crawling from under the bed, again bringing animalistic themes to the fore, which are explored in more detail in Chapter Three.

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Figure 36: Diane Victor, *In Sheep's Clothing,* from *Disasters of Peace,* 2001. Etching and aquatint, 28cm x 32cm (Schmahmann 2013:213).

Victor presents a victim of violence fashioned in the shape of a sacrificial lamb, once again bringing brutalised bodies to the fore in a most explicit measure, adding to the visibility of these crimes in the public domain. Her artistic practise contests the invisibility and obscurity of violated bodies within the public sphere by bringing atrocities into the open.

2.6 Closing comments

In the works described in this chapter, sacrifice functions as a metaphor in instances where, as Kristeva (1982:95) aptly puts it, taboos are disturbed and need to be reinforced in order for the social structures of patriarchy to be protected. These patriarchal structures and narratives are the essence of what these artists are challenging, albeit in very different ways.

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Sacrifice as described by Girard (1972), Bataille (1962) and Kristeva (1982) aims to re-establish social order through making binary divisions apparent, where these are challenged. The female artists described in this study, however, have overturned the sacrificial metaphor, by fusing or further complicating binaries, such as the work of Smith, Khan and Cruise. The roles of the victim and sacrificer become blurred and innocence and guilt can no longer be upheld where opposites are fused. Cruise's monstrous infants and hybrid animal figures unsettle our understanding of the liminal space between nature and culture, thus destabilising hierarchies based on agency and power.

Muholi and Dixie, through their employment of more literal sacrificial scenes, show the absurdity of the binaries presented and how patriarchal discourses play themselves out on vulnerable bodies. The public spectacle of sacrifice is set against the private struggles of the mother in Dixie's work, whilst Muholi questions the opposites of the modern and the secular.

It has become clear that the dismantling of Cartesian dualisms in all the work investigated in terms of the sacrificial and violence is an on-going discourse in feminist expression where seemingly opposing structures are challenged, criticised, destabilised and fused. Such artworks lucidly enunciate the connection of eroticism to sacrifice and other forms of violent death.

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CHAPTER 3

THE HUNTED ANIMAL AND THE FEMALE NUDE

It has been contended that the sacrificial is closely related to other violent acts, such as murder, suicide and martyrdom. In the previous chapter it was argued that the sacrificial condition is employed as a visual device by a number of South African female artists in order to make evident their opposition to and revolt against patriarchal systems and the violence that it produces. In addition, South African female artists often utilise various couplings with animals or animalistic elements in conjunction with depictions of the sacrificial. In this chapter, these animalistic connections are investigated through Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notion of 'becoming' and with specific interrogation of the female body articulated as a hunted animal.

Furthermore, comparisons are drawn between the body as a hunted animal and the female nude. Rape as a consistent theme associated with the animalistic and the hunt is elaborated on as a definitive subject within this chapter. Finally, the relationship between animal and human skin is investigated in a range of transferences, specifically with regard to feminist painting, whilst the centrality of the notion of skin borders is scrutinised and argued as significant within corporeal feminist discourse.

3.1 'Becoming-animal', 'becoming-hunted'

Although criticised by various feminists[23] such as Patricia MacCormack (2009), Louise Burchell (2010), Braidotti (2003) and Grosz (1994) for its often-masculine approach,

[23] MacCormack (2009:95) criticises the use of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "becoming woman" on the grounds that it still describes women as becoming something within a society that continues to oppress them. She contends that in the case of Delueze and Guattari, theory stills fails to describe women's' lived experiences and therefore fails to move beyond essentialist notions of gender.

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Deleuze and Guattari's (1987:260) notion of 'becoming' has proved to be useful within the corporeal feminist framework by various authors. Grosz (1994:164) for instance, contends that their notion of the body as "a discontinuous, non-totalisable series of processes, organs, flows, energies, corporeal substances and incorporeal events, speeds and durations" might be useful in the application of a post-structuralist feminism which seeks to dismantle Cartesian dualism, thus describing the body in terms of its connections, desires, social practices and various possible transformations. The body, within a corporeal feminist understanding of it, is thus never static, but always progressing.

'Becomings are according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987:260) mediated through a third term or a characteristic to which the subject is evolving. These peculiarities are often described in terms of the animalistic or animalistic traits. In order for 'becoming' to happen, the subject must move into the proximity of what she is 'becoming', by crossing a border or a 'threshold', thus moving between binaries. 'Becoming', however, does not require mimesis of that which one is 'becoming', but rather, the adoption of the functions of the animal towards which one is 'becoming', never reaching an endpoint of being an animal or resembling an animal per se (Lawlor 2008:177). Deleuze and Guattari (1987:262) do not view the process of 'becoming-animal' as something metaphorical or symbolic, but as a very real process through which transformations take place which are, according to them, only possible through such animal 'becomings' which do not follow set paths or signposts, but happen as a more haphazard, organic process. Deleuze and Guattari (in Walsh 1999:15) envision a

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Burchell (2010:83) questions whether notions of Deleuzian becomings can free women from the cyclical spatio-temporal trappings of normative discourse, which lock them within a cyclical timeframe associated with their reproductive systems. This criticism stems from the idea that becomings are associated with various notions of speeds and durations.
Braidotti (2003: 47-51) asserts that Deleuze's "multiple becomings", which veer all becomings through a process of "becoming woman", risk being too vague and indiscriminate, therefore not adequately acknowledging the difference between the sexed bodies of male and female and the influence it has on lived experience.

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strange amalgamation of the human and the animalistic, which converges within the process of 'becoming' by amalgamating animal traits and practices within the subject, thereby challenging the human/animal divide and thus a Cartesian hierarchical system.

The proximity of human existence with that of canine counterparts raises discursive possibilities within the scope of Deleuze and Guattari's 'animal becomings'. Dogs, for instance, according to Lize van Robbroeck (2007:51) have always featured in western art, with various meanings and symbolic codes attached to them. In ancient Greece, dogs were the most common animal to be used in sacrificial rituals. Often, they were not only sacrificed, but also tortured in various ways (Sergis 2010:63). In *Fever* (Figure 37) by Penny Siopis, a female figure is shown against a red background, her face contorted by either pain or ecstasy, together with a dog. Simultaneously, dogs point to an ambivalent space where nature and culture intersect, rendering them as possible corporeal vessels for the questioning of normative subjectivity as constructed through cultural practice. Van Robbroeck refers to Deleuze (2007:51) who declares "anyone a fool who professes love for their pets" and describes dogs as "the escaped shadows of their masters". The dog functions as a marked feature of middle-class existence, but can also have other associations like the feral, the sinister and the instinctive (Van Robbroeck 2007:52).

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Figure 37: Penny Siopis, *Fever,* 2007. Oil and glue on paper, 23 X 27cm (Perryer 2007b:12).

In *Fever* (Figure 37), notions of animal instincts or suffering are evoked through the woman's ambivalent facial expression, which also creates an uneasy slippage between agony and desire. Leonard Lawlor (2008:171) suggests that for subjective change to occur, we need to understand "how to enter into a process of 'becoming'". 'Becoming' involves extracting specific functions from animals, which allows the crossing of normative boundaries (Lawlor 2008:178). In this case, Siopis suggests an animalistic carnality and vulnerability, leading to the cessation of the cultured 'woman'.

South African female artists often couple representations of the body with representations of or amalgamations with various animal bodies. In *Even in the long descent I-V* (Figure 38), Christine Dixie shows a female body buried beneath the ground. On the fifth panel, one can make out the body of a dog, buried in the same manner as the female body, the colours also echoing that of the female body. The comparison of the female body with that of the dog is obvious: the title also suggests that even in death, the woman acquires the same status as the dog.

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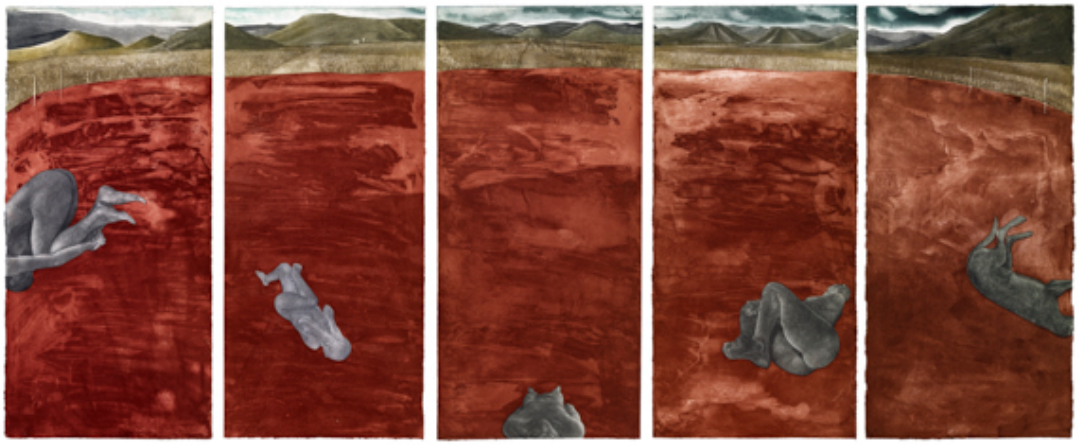

Figure 38: Christine Dixie, *Even in the long descent I-V,* 2002. Etching and mezzotint, five panels, 420 x 620cm each (Dixie 2007:8-9).

According to Susan Crockford (in Manolis Sergis 2010:64), the dog as a special domestic animal has the unique ability to move easily between the human and the non-human world and is regarded in most places in the world as “neither a person nor an animal”. The dog is thus symbolically a carrier of extreme ambivalence, existing between binaries. The dog, owing to its special position within the social structure of the family, moves easily between worlds, being allowed inside the home and even in human beds as well as being a protector and a valuable aid during the hunt. In ancient Greece, dogs were sacrificed and buried together with their masters to act as protectors in the underworld (Sergis 2010:65), which could also be the explanation in Dixie’s work. Furthermore, dogs were often sacrificed to aid childbirth, as could be the suggestion in Siopis’s work in figure 37. Sergis (2010:66) also notes some negative connotations with regard to dogs, such as the referral to a “bitch” with reference to a “shameful, impudent” or overtly “erotic” woman.

This work by Dixie shows an interesting parallel with a late work of Marcel Duchamp (1887 – 1968), entitled *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage . . . (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas . . . .)* (Figure 39*).* In this work, which is seen as Duchamp’s last major work, the viewer is led to peer through a small hole in

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an old wooden door, through which a dead, possibly decaying female body can be seen. The body, legs splayed open, is left to rot between an array of brown grass and twigs, holding a lamp, which is still burning.

Figure 39: Marcel Duchamp, *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage . . . (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas . . .*), 1946-1966. Mixed media assemblage, 242.6 x 177.8 x 124.5 cm (Philadelphia Museum of Art).

This work could be described as a typical Bataillesque depiction, where sexual violation and murder are fused with an erotic depiction of a female body. Dreyer (2007:188) notes how Duchamp's use of the colour brown in many of his works references sexual fusion, but also decay and rot. The brown of the earth in this case, symbolises Bataille's notion that "pleasure often leads to a place of destruction" (Dreyer 2007:190). In Dixie's work, the use of an almost monotone palette of reds and browns, reminds us of mortality and the inevitability of our own decay into soil and the earth. The dog in this sense becomes an intermediary for the woman to pass between the binaries of life and death and nature and culture. Again, the woman is headless,

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thus radically opposing the importance of the mind over the body, which is amplified in this case.

The void of death, which is in this case represented by the largest space in the work, seems to envelop the female body in a calm, suspended space, where she is not presented in a state of decay, but as an entity moving up and down: 'becoming'-dog. In her seemingly free movement through the underworld, she has possibly found a place of solace, a hiding place from violence, in death, from where she can move freely through her fusion with the dog, which moves between the underworld and back again.

In another work by Dixie, *Of another world entire* (Figure 40), she pictures a woman in a cabin with her lover. Inside the doorway, the shadow of another man can be seen looming ominously. Further away, a pack of wild dogs are gathering, waiting possibly for a chance to scavenge on a body which will soon become available. Once again, a Bataillean connection between eroticism and imminent death can be detected. The female body is vulnerable in this depiction, being hunted by both an unknown assailant and a pack of scavengers.

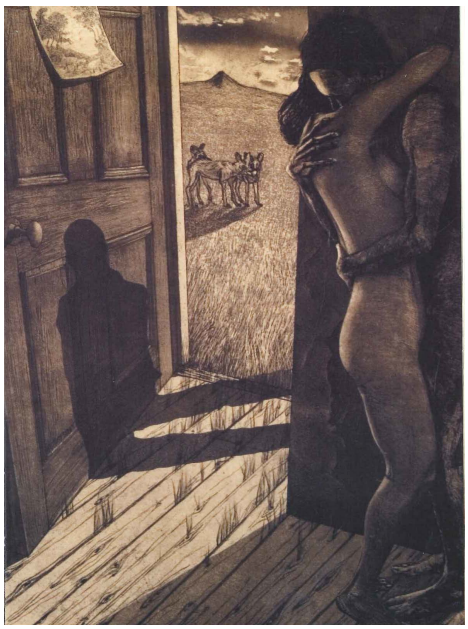

Figure 40: Christine Dixie, *Of another world entire,* 1997. Etching, 300 x 400cm (Dixie 2007:5).

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In a similar work by Victor entitled *Bluebeards's wife* (Figure 41), the artist has positioned herself as a character from a well-known folktale,[24] which has been the theme of various literary and theatrical adaptations and has several popular versions with subtle differences (Grace 1984:246). The work shows Victor as the wife of the murderous Bluebeard, standing against a shelf containing the heads and intestines of Bluebeard's former wives. Bluebeard is shown entering the room, about to discover her disobedience. As in Dixie's work, a scavenger, this time a hyena, waits outside for the spoils of the kill.

Figure 41: Diane Victor, *Bluebeard's wife*, 2008. Etching & drypoint, 22 x 27.5 inches. Edition of 20 (Krut 2011).

According to Sherril Grace (1984:247), the story of Bluebeard touches on aspects of human behaviour in several ways. The curiosity of the female character in this regard is what causes her to be in danger as in the biblical narrative of Adam and Eve, where Eve's curiosity about the Tree of Good and Evil leads to both her own fall and that of Adam (Genesis 3). One is also reminded of Lot's wife in Genesis 19, who turns to stone as punishment for her curiosity when she looks back at the destruction of Sodom. Furthermore, according to Grace (1984:247) the story is a metaphor for the

[24] The basic narrative of the tale of Bluebeard, centres on a young woman who marries a wealthy and powerful man and goes to live with him in his castle. He forbids her to enter a specific room, but her curiosity leads her to disobey him, with dire consequences. In the hidden room she finds all his former wives murdered and in shock she drops the room key into a pool of blood. The blood on the key gives her disobedience away to her husband, who wants to kill her, but she is saved in the nick of time by her brothers (Grace 1984:246).

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power struggle between the sexes as well as between different social forces. Bluebeard's wife disobeys her husband, putting herself into extreme peril, but her deeds also eventually lead to the discovery of the murders and Bluebeard's subsequent punishment. It is, however, interesting that in this narrative, were it not for her brothers who came to save her, she would succumb to the same fate as her predecessors.

Victor's depiction of this tale therefore refers to themes such as power relations between the sexes and possible feminine resistance to patriarchal oppression and violence. What makes this story especially applicable within a South African setting is the reference to the domestic space where murder and violence take place and where many South African women are abused and murdered by intimate partners, fathers, uncles or brothers. Read in this light, the inclusion of the hyena in *Bluebeard's wife* could have a double meaning: on one hand, as mentioned above, it could be preying on the women's bodies after their inevitable murders but, on the other hand, it could point to an unusual fusion of woman and beast where the woman takes on the characteristics of the hyena who skulks about in the castle, eager to bring her brutal partner to a fall. The placement of the hyena behind the woman reiterates this position as it is shown looking over to the husband's side, not to the woman.

Peffer (2003:72) suggests that since the Soweto uprising in 1976 several South African artists have used animal depictions in the place of or together with human bodies in order to illustrate conditions of violence and patriarchal oppression. However, the coupling of these animal bodies with those of humans, according to Peffer (2003:74), not only serves a metaphorical purpose as shown in the aforementioned works, but also opens up a space where bodies are 'becoming-animal' in a Deleuzian sense, attaining the strengths and weaknesses of the animal in the process and 'becoming'

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both vulnerable and dangerous simultaneously, as is illustrated in the above-mentioned work by Victor.

In figure 42 and figure 43, Victor is shown in a position that could be described as 'becoming-horse', in a Deleuzian sense. Human-horse relationships are comparable to human-dog relationships in the sense that both are not just seen as work-tools by their human owners, but also as companions. Martine Hausberger *et al*. (2009:8) mention how horses, even though they are often considered as 'part of the family', are often sold when they are no longer usable and thus hold a slightly different status as a pet within western family constructs than their canine counterparts. Horses are also more often eaten when they become old, echoing this status.[25]

The Centaur[26], a monster that is half-man, half-horse, is an important mythological creature in Greek culture and is celebrated throughout history in art and literature, carrying various meanings and symbolism (Lawrence 1994:58). According to Elizabeth Lawrence (1994:59), Centaurs were generally seen as being "wild, savage, lustful, physically and sexually violent creatures which customarily broke the codes of civilisation". The Centaur is also associated with the display of a variety of binaries, such as " animal/human, wild/tame, savagery/civilization, sensuality/spirituality… freedom/constraint…violence/gentleness…[and] nature/culture" (Lawrence 1994:62).

The unique relationship between humans and horses however, has affected the image of the Centaur to be constructed as a positive one over time, where the Centaur, despite it's negative connotations in Greek culture is used in popular and even in

[25] The horse is a mythological creature and is of great importance in many ancient and 'primitive' cultures. Horse sacrifice can also be observed in many varied anthropological accounts (Smith & Doniger 1989:201) and is shown to be one of the most desired animal sacrifices, the goat being the least desired.
[26] Although the exact origin of the word *Centaur* is unknown, it is possibly derived from the Greek word for *hunt* or *pursue,* or the word for *phallus* or *hindquarters* (Lawrence 1994:60).

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Christian imagery as a symbol for healing and teaching[27] and even as a symbol for the Christ (Lawrence 1994:66). The Centaur thus occupies a place of extreme ambiguity, not only in terms of its status as a hybrid beast, but also in terms of its metaphor in meaning within culture and artistic depiction.

Figure 42: Diane Victor, *4 Horses: Bare back*, 2010. Etching, embossing, digital printing and drawing, 171 x 121 cm (Goodman Gallery 2010).

Figure 42 shows a woman who resembles Victor inside the belly of a proud steed, being ridden by a naked man. Like the horse, Victor is wearing a bridle and her eyes are closed. The front leg of the horse seems as if it is literally 'becoming' one with the figure of Victor, who is curled up inside the horse. This depiction contrasts starkly with figure 43, where Victor depicts herself as 'becoming-horse', but this time she seems to be in control of the process and the horse which she is 'becoming'. The horse, however, has its mouth and front legs bound shut, from which it is running to escape. Again Victor is 'becoming' the horse in quite a literal fashion with her legs merging with

[27] In Greek myth, one exceptional Centaur, Chiron, exists who was not credited as being a savage, evil creature. Chiron was the son of the god Kronos and Philyra and was conceived through sexual relations between his parents, when both of them momentarily took on the form of horses for this purpose. Chiron was credited for being a wise and gentle teacher and also a healer (Lawrence 1994:59).

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the hind legs of the horse. In her hand she is holding a sharp object, which one can assume to be a knife or a sharp stake.

Figure 43: Diane Victor, *4 Horses: Baited*, 2009. Etching, digital printing, 105 x 200 cm, edition of 25 (Goodman Gallery 2010).

In both these instances, Victor permeates herself with the qualities and the condition of the domesticated horse. Questions of power and dominance are raised, as she becomes both victim (Figure 42) and perpetrator (Figure 43). In figure 42, the body of the horse becomes an intermediary for the control the male rider has over the female body, whilst in figure 43, Victor becomes the controller or aggressor, and the horse a vessel of abuse and compulsion. Deleuze and Guattari's (1987:291) contention is that through the process of 'becoming'-animal both the subject and the animal disappear to become a new creation or assemblage as shown here and with Victor throwing her own fate together with that of the horse in her 'becoming-horse'. This new position is demonstrated through the two contrasting images as problematic, since the actions taken on the horse by implication also include her. The result of unequal power relations in both instances is shown to be unjustified and oppressive, however one looks at the subject.

Furthermore, Victor's imagery (especially in Figure 43) also reminds one of a Trojan horse where the hidden female body in this regard could function as the hidden

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danger. This correlates with a reading of Kristeva (1982:77) in which the procreative power of the female is perceived as dangerous to male dominance and patriarchal order. If read as an articulation of a Centaur, these images could also point to the threat Victor's hybrid creatures poses to entrenched structures of social order. Lawrence also notes how the Centaur within Gothic Christian depictions communicated the struggle between good and evil as well as man's struggle with corporeal passions. The female body in figure 42 is kept in check by the bridle, which subdues her into compliancy, whilst in figure 43, the horse with which Victor is 'becoming' one is 'running wild' for being controlled by the 'dangerous' woman or dangerous bodily passions The image is also linked to the idea of sacrifice through the knife which the woman holds in her hand, whilst 'becoming' horse.

3.2 Sexual violations and the hunt

Awarded the Standard Bank young artist award in 2011 for her sculptural installation and photographic work, Nandipha Mntambo shows a constant interest in creative animalisation of her own body. Mntambo is known for her use of cowhide, which she molds and shapes into the form of either her own or her mother's body. Her *oeuvre* also includes works which reference Spanish bullfighting and Greek mythology, all of these containing references to cows and bulls and making explicit reference to the materiality of the bodies of her female subjects and the animal bodies with which she merges them.

Amanda du Preez (2010:396) notes how the use of excessive materialities, such as the corporeal devices used by Mntambo and other South African artists, opposes scientific approaches of knowing in favour of more ontological ones, which is consistent with corporeal feminist thought and artistic expression. Du Preez (2010:397) explains how

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these materialities place the artist in a precarious liminal space between “self-preservation and self-annihilation” by ‘becoming’ submerged in an animal form, which Deleuze and Guattari (1987:300) describe as a process which ultimately leads to the dissolution of the unified, singular Self. ‘Becomings’, through the materialities of the animal, thus open a discursive space where individuality is challenged and upheld at the same time, whilst giving in to forces that are not solely under the control of the individual.

In Mntambo’s *Rape of Europa* (Figure 44), she fashions herself as both victim and perpetrator, both hunter and hunted. Evoking the Greek myth of Europa, the artist is both the god Zeus, who abducted and raped the goddess Europa whilst in the shape of a bull, as well as Europa herself. Europa’s expression is ambiguous in the sense that she looks more excited and enthralled than alarmed by her attacker.

Figure 44: Nandipha Mntambo, *The rape of Europa,* 2009. Digital photography on archival paper, 100cm x 100cm. Edition of 8 (Stevenson Gallery 2009).

This rendering of the well-known Greek myth is consistent with art historical depictions of the scene, such as Titian’s *Rape of Europa* (Figure 45), in which his victim can also be seen as somehow complicit in her own rape, by looking both anxious and aroused

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at the same time. Eaton (2003:162) argues that through various aesthetic devices such as the use of luxurious and rich colours and Europa's "masturbatory grasping" of the bull's horn, Titian's depiction, suggests that the victim is actively participating in the rape. Thus the scene of a violent sexual act becomes eroticised in the same manner that depictions of female corpses in the previous chapter were shown to be eroticised. Eaton (2003) argues that by showing the victim as internally conflicted by what is happening to her, the viewer, who is presumed to be male, becomes sexually aroused.

Figure 45: Titian, *Rape of Europa,* 1559-1562. Oil on canvas, 185cm x 206cm, Isabella Steward Gardner Museum, Boston (Adams 2007:581).

Ukutwala or 'bride capture' is a practice which is still practiced in some rural areas of Transkei, KwaZulu-Natal and Swaziland, whereby an adult male abducts a woman he wants to marry and coerces her into sexual intercourse to consummate the marriage, often against her will (Wood 2005:313). The family of the abducted wife is normally reimbursed for their daughter with a cow. Such male coercion has historically been acceptable in many Southern African societies, and according to Katherine Wood

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(2005:314), demonstrates that sexual compulsion in this sense is not seen as an act of violent rape, even though anecdotal evidence suggests that such abductions are often violent and brutal and the 'husbands' are often assisted by other males if a woman is unwilling. According to Wood (2005:304) and Rachel Jewkes (1997) and to Posel (2006), such violence and intimidation is linked to patriarchal ideologies and to unequal power relations in various South African societies. These unequal and violent aspects are often a recurrent feature in heterosexual relationships, especially in rural areas and historically black townships. The same traditional practice has also been brought into the townships since the 1980s in the form of 'jack-rolling', which involves the abduction and gang-rape of women meant to put "out-of-reach or snobbish women in their place" (Wood 2005:305) or to punish real or perceived female infidelity(Wood 1997:43).

Mntambo's reference to the story of Europa therefore seems apt in the light of the practices mentioned above, where women are often deemed to be complicit or 'deserving' of being raped. The myth of Europa and such cultural practices articulates absolute male control over female sexuality in violent and brutal ways. Mntambo's depiction of herself in the place of the perpetrator, however, communicates her determination to be in control of her own sexuality, a position which is unavailable to many South African women. This assumes this position of power through the process of 'becoming-bull'. She animalises herself to become both hunter and hunted, thus destabilising the entrenched myth of male dominance over female sexuality. Leading to a loss of identity on the part of the female artist, Creissels (2007:182) suggests that such amalgamations with animals are an articulation of a "transcendence of hierarchies". She further suggests that the depiction of rape by female artists could be a "form of exorcism", where the artists through the violent rape become transformed into the animal, creating a new creature with transformative possibilities (Creissels

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2007:182). This also reads well with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) idea that all 'becomings' should pass through the stage of 'becoming-animal'.

Figure 46. Nandipha Mntambo, *Europa,* 2008. Archival ink on cotton rag paper, image size 100 x 100cm. Edition of 5+2AP (Stevenson Gallery 2008).

Mntambo's separate depiction of *Europa* (Figure 46) reiterates the position taken in the previous work, as it shows Europa as an aggressor. Mntambo shows herself 'becoming-bull', not just metaphorically, but as Deleuze and Guattari (1987:291) envision, as an "assemblage of which they are part, independent of the form of their concept and the subjectivity of their person". Mntambo explains that this work allowed her the chance to explore "idea of the animal-human and how people really do forget that we are animals as well" (in Simbao 2011:19). Mntambo, in this interview with Ruth Simbao (2011:19) also mentions her interest in the Minotaur myth[28] and the work's

[28] According to Greek mythology, a beast that is half-man, half-bull was born from the union of Pariphae, the wife of Minos, the King of Crete with a white bull that emerged from the sea. Because of her shame, she went to have the monstrous bull-child in a labyrinth, constructed specifically for the purpose of hiding the child from the world. Every eight years, eight male and female youths were sacrificed to the beast by Minos. The heroic Theseus, together with the help of Adriane, the Minotaur's half-sister, chose to end the Minotaur's reign of terror, by killing it (Grotstein 1997:598). The Minotaur, being a captive inside the labyrinth, awaits its killer who will by killing it also release it from its captivity. The feared beast, therefore, also becomes vulnerable, for it may only find respite from its entrapment through death.

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connection with this myth. In this way, Mntambo not only refers to a strange human-animal amalgamation but also a hybrid creature, which is feared because it is seen as monstrous. The predatory, even masculine gaze of Mntambo's hybrid creature is an element of the work, which is according to Simbao (2011:19) often sited, obscuring the artist's intention to show the slippage between what is seen as attractive and repulsive with regard to the female body. David Elliot (2011:26) also notes how amalgamations of human and bull forms have throughout time and cultures existed in mythology and popular culture as entities that question various binaries.

By entitling the work *Europa,* Mntambo here collapses the personae of Europa, Zeus and the bull in one hybrid creature, which questions the distinctions between male and female and the active or passive roles ascribed to each category. The bull, which is normally associated with the masculine and Zeus specifically, acts as an intermediary between categories, which correlates with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'becomings' which is mediated through an animalistic presence, such as that of the bull (in Grosz 1994:164).

in these works Mntambo problematises the distinctions between genders and the ensuing power relationships built on those distinctions, where feminine power and weaknesses is played out through the body in the hybrid shape of a human-animal. In both of the myths discussed in relationship to the two works by Mntambo (Figures 54 & 55), the Bataillesque relationship between sexuality and violence is once again implied. Eaton (2003:167) notes how rape is not only a symptom of gender inequality, but also a 'mechanism' of it, since even the threat of sexual violence can force women into subordinate roles. Mntambo, through positioning herself as a hybrid creature who slips in-between male/female and active/passive binaries, challenges the patriarchal scripts ordinarily presented through myth.

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Mntambo reiterates the idea of slippage between gender and identity in a bronze work, entitled *Zeus* (Figure 47), in which a portrait, which the artist intended to be a masculine self-portrait, reminds the artist of her mother (Mntambo in Simbao 2011:18). The artist professes in her interview with Simbao (2011:18) how she experiences the work as self-confrontational as she questions not only the distinctions between masculine and feminine, but also how she views herself and others, in this case her mother, who is here figured as an extension of the Self.

Figure 47: Nandipha Mntambo, *Zeus,* 2009. Bronze, 88cm x 84cm x 58cm, edition of 5 and 2 artist's proofs (Perryer 2011:60).

In this work, Mntambo shows an animalistic becoming, which moves from female (the artist herself), through the animal figure of the bull and the masculine figure of Zeus, and then back towards the feminine again in the form of her mother. This confusion of roles is at the centre of Mntambo's feminist concerns which she articulates through these works, where she asserts herself as a uniquely sexed subject, who slips between binaries and questions fixed identities of the feminine and the authentically African.

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Another work by Victor featuring mythological rape plays on a similar story to that of Europa (Figure 48). This time the perpetrator is transformed into the shape of a swan. This work refers to a popular Greek myth, in which Zeus, so compelled by Leda's beauty disguises himself as a swan, seducing and ultimately raping her. This myth has been a widely depicted one in art history, various versions being created by artists from early Renaissance through modernism[29] and especially in the *Fin de Siècle* movement (Sword 1992:312). In all of these depictions, the victim, Leda, is shown to be both erotisised and also somehow complicit in the rape. The swan in theses depictions acts as a subduing element in the depiction of the brutal act of rape, suggesting "romantic playfulness and sexual acquiescence" (Sword 1992:306). The use of landscape and lush vegetation in these works affirms a stereotypical association of the female body with nature.

Helen Sword (1992:305) notes how modern literature based on this myth further entrenches the idea of passive female sexuality and compliancy and how artistic and literary works downplays rape as a violent act of compulsion. Bram Dijkstra (in Sword 1992:307) attests to the "aesthetic … that swans and maidens look rather decorative together". Nonetheless, Victor chooses a vulture in the place of the swan, again a scavenging animal as can also be seen in the work of Dixie (Figure 40) and the work of Victor (Figure 41). The vulture is not depicted as a mere scavenger, but as a hunter and a predator, who attacks his victim through violence and coercion. The vulture, by not being an aesthetic choice, therefore fulfills a more metaphorical role in this depiction, through its connection to violence, death and decay.

[29] Artists include Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Antonio Corregio (1489-1534), Buonarroti Michelangelo (1475-1564), Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) and Paul Cezanne (1839-1906).

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The title of the work, *Birth of a nation,* insinuates the offspring of violence and force, referring probably to South Africa's violent history. The female body in this instance is used metaphorically as a stand-in for society at large or the 'body-politic' of a nation.

Figure 48: Diane Victor, *Birth of a Nation series: Leda and the white-backed vulture*, 2010. Drypoint etching, 37.2cm x 47.4 cm, edition of 30 (Goodman 2010).

A hunted female body is also depicted in another work by Siopis, The *Survivor* (Figure 49). Here Siopis shows an image of a woman pierced by what seem to be arrows. Like an animal, she is being hunted. The title The *Survivor,* however, suggests that she might be killed, but will rise up, like a kind of Phoenix: something new and heroic.

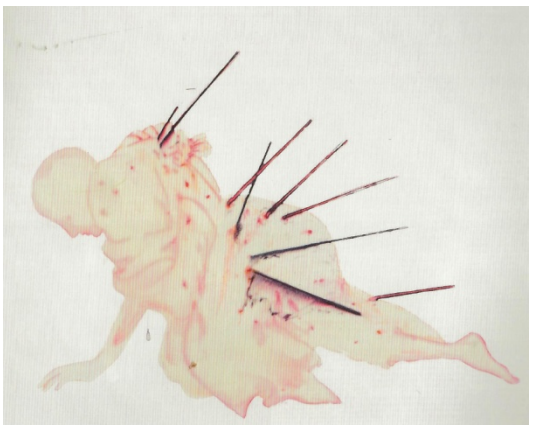

Figure 49: Penny Siopis, *The Survivor,* 2011. Ink and glue on canvas, 61 X 76cm (Perryer 2011b:13).

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This image also alludes to aspects of sacrifice, where the substitution of an animal body in the place of a human victim is confused by the merging of animal and human characteristics. Hunted bodies could both be viewed within a process of sanctification or cleansing through a ritualised death, a sacrifice of sorts. The woman as abject is sublimated through the hunt and thus removed from the borders of society where it threatens the very cultural fabric that ensures phallocentric dominance. It is the corporeality, the fleshiness of the feminine in this instance, which is disruptive from an anti-Cartesian viewpoint, since the affirmation of the carnal brings into question the mind/body dialectic.

As previously discussed, a parallel can be drawn between the body of a bloodstained sacrificial animal and that of a woman in the sexual act, where the eroticised female body becomes a site of contravention and a possible passage towards the sacred (Bataille in Creissels 2007:179). The virginally white woman, pierced with phallic arrows, could therefore also be read as a rape scene or possibly a “deflowering” (Creissels 2007:180), where the woman, through her trauma and ‘becoming-victim’, finds new subject positions. Once again, this process of ‘becoming’ entails a process of liminal border-crossing, where the possibility of crossing the line between life and death exists. Rape, as directed towards women and pictured as discussed above, is however problematic as it creates tension between the idea of “a vulnerable body whose limits can be pushed” and a fluid, pliable, Deleuzian body that is “all powerful because it knows no limits” (Creissels 2007:181) and could be amalgamated with animal characteristics.

Greek mythology features in another work from the *Who’s afraid of the crowd?* series by Siopis. *The Sting* (Figure 50) shows a beast that resembles a fire-breathing lion emerging from a fiery mass in which its reptile-like tail can be distinguished. Arrows pelt the beast once again, which pierce its body. The mythical creature implied is the

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Chimaera (or Chimera), a beast with the head and chest of a lion, a dragon's tail and the innards of a goat, which ends up being killed by a hunter, Bellerophon (Derrida 2002:409). The Chimaera is thus a highly unlikely amalgamation of highly divergent animal parts.

Figure 50: Penny Siopis, *The Sting,* 2011. Ink and glue on canvas, 170 X 245cm (Perryer 2011b:10-11).

The story of the Chimaera[30] focuses on the destructive power of female sexuality as something which should be feared and controlled by men. According to Rahael Gear (2001:322), Aristotle (384 BC–322 BC) described women as shapeless material that can only be moulded and accultured by men. The Chimaera is thus an articulation of the monstrous feminine, which is "out of control, threatening and all consuming" (Gear 2001:321). The Bellerophon, who puts the monster to death, is portrayed as a hero, for he has through modesty and constraint succeeded in keeping the immoral,

[30] The Chimaera is, interestingly, a female monster. Bellerophon, who ultimately hunts down and kills the Chimaera has to resist the seductive powers of women on two occasions. Stheneboa, the wife of king Proetus, tries to seduce him without success and thereafter accuses him of raping her. The king sends him away to his father-in-law with a letter containing his death warrant, but he cleverly escapes the plot. In another story, Bellerophon, wanting to attack the city of his treacherous brother-in-law is stopped by immoral women who shamelessly offer themselves to him in exchange for saving the city he is set on destroying. Bellerophon, overcome with modesty and shame for the conduct of the women, turns around and the city is saved (Derrida 2002:414).

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uncontrollable female sexual drive at bay, through his resistance of the various women who offer themselves to him.

Siopis' use of the Chimaera as the hunted monster, may thus point to the regulatory practices constructed through culture for protection against untrammelled feminine sexuality and desire. According to Jones (2007:63), girls are taught from a young age which types of bodily practices and behaviours are seen as morally and socially acceptable. Assumed to be weaker than the male and in need of protection from the masculine, the female body becomes coded in specific ways in order to limit specific gendered performances of the body.

From a feminist point of view, the figure of the Chimaera in this work by Siopis - understood as an articulation of the monstrous feminine - is problematic in the sense that it could be read as misogynist, whilst entertaining various other stereotypical notions about femininity. In her analysis of the work of Ana Mendieta (1948-1985), Creissels (2007:182) suggests that such masochist representations of women by female artists are expressions of the transcendence of limits and can be read as an exorcism of sorts. Creissels (2007:182) does, however, voice her uncertainty as to whether such representations have the ability to challenge a patriarchal Christian paradigm which codes and orders women within oppressive systems based on their sex alone.

The female body as hunted is a recurring theme in South African artistic expression. There are various instances where the roles of hunter and hunted are ambiguous and also where the female is depicted as hunter rather than hunted, as in *Praca de Touros* (Figure 51 and Figure 52) by Mntambo, where she is performing the role of a matador[31] and the bull. Again, Mntambo fuses human and animal to create a hybrid creature,

[31] Spanish bullfighter.

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which uncomfortably slips in-between binaries. In the accompanying video work, *Ukungenisa* (Figure 53), Mntambo is shown preparing for a bullfight and eventually fighting an imaginary bull. The role of matador is traditionally occupied by a male performer and is according to Sarah Pink (2010:433) still largely performed by men, where the inclusion of women is contested and even resisted. The woman, within the setting of the Spanish bullfight is generally included only as a passive spectator. Pink (2010:343) analyses the difficulties of women who attempt to enter the domain of Spanish bullfighters as professionals and as fertile ground for the "on-going debate about gender and tradition".

Figure 51: Nandipha Mntambo, *Praca de Touros I,* 2008. Archival pigment ink on cotton rag paper, 101cm x 152cm. Edition of 5 + 2AP (Stevenson Gallery 2009).

Figure 52: Nandipha Mntambo, *Praca de Touros II*, 2008. Archival pigment ink on cotton rag paper, 101cm x 152cm. Edition of 5 + 2AP (Stevenson Gallery 2009).

Mntambo's work was filmed in the *Praca de Touros* in Maputo, Mozambique, where she also drew on the association of colonialism inscribed in the African country's recent past. Now abandoned and dilapidated, the *Praca de Touros* used to be a popular venue for Portuguese settlers to watch bullfights and where black local slaves were forced to participate in this practise against their will (Simbao 2011:10). Mntambo thus draws on both issues of colonialism and gender, prompting the viewer to consider the unequal power relations that she implies. Being both black and female, Mntambo places herself in the most unlikely position: that of the hunter who controls, directs and

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eventually murders. The bull in this instance becomes the hunted body towards which the violence is directed.

Mntambo's performance shows the female matador performing the roles of both hunter and being hunted by using her body in an ambiguous way, showing the actions of a matador focussed on killing the bull and the actions of the bull itself, trying ferociously to escape death. At one stage, Mntambo can be seen stomping her feet and kicking up dust as a frightened bull would do in a bullfight situation.

Figure 53: Nandipha Mntambo, *Ukungenisa*, 2008. Digital video, sound, 2 mins 30 secs. Edition of 5 + 2AP (Stevenson gallery 2009).

In an interview with Ruth Simbao (2011:13), Mntambo makes an interesting connection between the collapsing of private and public space within the spectacle of the bullfight. Mntambo explains how the matador preparing for a fight is left in solitude, as is the bull the night before, and how the dance between the two bodies within the stadium is a very private one, in which bullfighters describe feelings of being shut off from the boisterous crowd. The spectacle of the fight, however, is a very public one, where the matador and bull are not only locked within their private moment of a bloody struggle,

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but also a very public altercation. The bodies of the perpetrator and the victim in this regard, become both social and political and the observers become complicit in the violence that they are witnessing, almost as intrusive voyeurs to a private violent act.

The physical invisibility of the brutalised body in this work, in this case the bull, becomes a metaphor for the actual invisibility within public discourse, which often accompanies the plight of subaltern groups. Peffer (2003:80) argues that within the boundaries of apartheid the black body was under-represented and hidden from popular view, necessitating the animalising of such bodies to bring them into representation. This can be read within the context of the under-reporting of both rape and domestic violence in South Africa, furthering the inequality in terms of gender and hiding from view the struggles of the victims of these violent crimes.

Lawlor (2008:177) analyses Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'becoming', pointing out the possibility of death or even disappearance through excessive 'becoming'. The subject, which is always male, needs to pass through 'becoming-women' in order for any other 'becoming' to happen. This desubjectification (Lawlor 2008:178) is what is needed to challenge normative cultural beliefs and expectations. Mntambo has subverted gender roles and stereotypes by showing the (male) matador, 'becoming woman' and the (male) bull 'becoming' imperceptible (Walsh 1999:17). The 'becoming-invisible' of the bull has specific implications for feminism in that it shows the possibility of excessive 'becomings', which instead of attaining the qualities of the bull, the subject has regressed into disappearance, which is the position of many South African women. Mntambo in this regard seems to be showing once more two opposing positions for the female subject, where she becomes both victim and perpetrator. Simbao (2011:11) suggests this as a "doubling where male folds into female, and bull, matador and observers dance together", once again confirming Mntambo's articulation of a Deleuzian 'becoming' with transformative possibilities.

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Lawlor (2008:178) also notes two possible functions for disappearance, being "exhibition and concealment". The invisibility of the bull in this work, instead of hiding it, draws our attention to its plight, but more importantly to the actions being taken on it. In her analysis of Deleuze and Guttari, Lawlor (2008) notes how 'becoming' is described in terms of 'becoming-woman' and 'becoming-animal', but how the fate of the animal in this regard in unclear. Lawlor (2008), Mntambo and Peffer (2003) seem to suggest that the next step, therefore is disappearance: an absence from representation and a situation against which the artists researched in this study is actively working. Simbao (2011:9) describes this disappearance of the bull in terms of the "spectacle of seeing, sight and oversight", which is consistent with the interpretation above. She cites Peggy Phelan's notion that "the visible is defined by the invisible" (Simbao 2011:9) by focussing our attention on that which is unseen, in this instance, the abused body.

Blocker (2004:3) asserts that performance art in a sense communicates the desire to break from predetermined cultural schemas by way of the dematerialisation of the art object. In other words, performance art, by denying our desire for a lasting object, turns our certainty about our definitions on art into doubt, leaving the documentation and the memory of the experience of the artworks behind as mere traces, which do not constitute commodities befitting the traditional understanding of artworks. This correlates with an understanding of the body as fleeting, changing and uncertain and counteracts Cartesian dualism.

Despite the notion that 'hunting' is normally regarded as a male endeavour, Greek and Roman mythology ascribes hunting to a female goddess, Artemis (Greek) or Diana (Roman) goddess of the hunt, forest and hills and fertility and virginity, symbolised by her bow and arrows (Hammond & Scullard 1970:126). Interestingly, the dog, which was discussed extensively in the previous section, is also connected to the ancient Greek goddess Artemis or Diana. Mntambo's self-depiction in association with the bull,

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who is also connected to Diana or Artemis, could also be read as an articulation of Mntambo as the goddess of the hunt, when read in conjunction with her depictions of other mythological tales, such as in *The Rape of Europa* (Figure 44). Similarly, in this work, Mntambo fashions herself in assimilation or together with a bull, drawing mythological parallels with the goddess Diana. This association can also be seen in various sketches and drawings by Mntambo, which show her in various pairings with a bull. According to Winckelmann (2001:845), Diana is portrayed in art and popular culture as virginal, joyful and heroic. She is normally not depicted naked, but with a garment which exposes her right breast, often depicting animals such as "bulls, goats, deer and a bee" (Caputi 2001:106). Diana is also described as the protector of the weak and ordinary people and was believed to possess the power to help women to fall pregnant and protect them during childbirth.[32]

Victor directly references the goddess Diana and a pack of dogs in *Diana and Actaeon* (Figure 54) There are many different versions of the myth of Diana and Actaeon in classical mythology and literature and art,[33] but the main premise of the story centres around a hunter, Actaeon, being turned into a stag by the goddess Diana and thereafter being devoured by his own hunting dogs (Schlam 1984:82). Actaeon, after apparently seeing Diana naked by accident, was turned into a stag. His dogs, not being

[32] Diana is often imagined and depicted as being black and having multiple breasts. During the Middle Ages, the inquisitors created a stereotype of witchery around the image of Diana, which labelled her "goddess of the pagans" (Caputi 1999:106-10) in order to counteract beliefs and practises associated with ancient goddess worship in opposition to the church. Diana, originally described as a goddess of light by ancient Greeks and Romans, was thus ascribed an opposing value of being a 'Queen of darkness', and described in terms of animal instincts and primordial lustfulness (Caputi 1999:113). Even in Greek times, Artemis was often described as having a twofold nature, being able to move freely between the upper- and underworld. The dog became a symbol for Artemis in this regard, also having a dual nature: a vicious hunter, but also a loyal protector of herds and homes (Sergis 2010:65).

[33] In one version, the hunter is punished for gazing upon Diana's naked body by accident, whilst in another he is punished simply for trespassing. Some accounts ascribe his destruction to him being punished for haughtiness (Schlam 1984:84). Victor's depiction seems to echo the idea that Diana, in this regard, was seen naked, thus this version of the myth could be accepted in this case.

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able to recognise him and giving in to their primal urges, attacked him, bringing about his ruin. The link between the goddess of the hunt and the dog in this case is once more made apparent. The notion of 'becoming-animal' is revealed through the transformation of Actaeon into a stag, but also through Diana-'becoming-dog' as her anger and vengeance is directed through the surrogate bodies of animals.

Figure 54: Diane Victor, *Diana and Actaeon,* 2004. Drypoint etching, 5 x 12cm, edition of 4 (Rankin & Von Veh 2008:33).

Again, the role of hunter/hunted is inverted as the hunter becomes hunted. The woman, who was gazed upon illicitly and could therefore be described as the victim in this regard, is transformed into an aggressor, through the bodies of hunting dogs.

3.3 Animal and human skins in the work of Nandipha Mntambo

Through her sculptural installations and performances, Mntambo explores the treacherous boundaries between animal and human, through working mainly with the medium of cowhide, thereby invoking notions of the traditional and the domesticated. Her works also speak of the male domain of ownership, inserting her own body to be read as a possession. Cowhide, which is her main medium, arouses varied meanings from African culture and tradition, notions of the sacred and the maternal and ideas of ownership and currency. Griselda Pollock (2007:11) iterates the special universal

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symbolism attached to the cow in many different cultures such as the Goddess Hathor of Egypt and the sacred cow in India. The use of cowhide could easily be interpreted as an articulation of Mntambo's rebellion against the traditional practices of *lobola*[34] by referring directly to a cow in relation to a female body. Mntambo (in Simbao 2011:15),[35] however rejects the interpretation of cowhide as a metaphor for African rituals and traditions, including *lobola*, describing her use of cowhide as a material in more practical terms, referencing the parallels that can be drawn throughout different cultures with relation to the cow. The interpretation of the cowhide as an articulation of African rituals and tradition is, however, a universal one and is widely accepted by the viewing public and academics alike (Du Preez 2010:404). This is problematic in the sense that through this simplistic reading of Mntambo's use of materials, Cartesian dualism is affected through allowing stereotypical readings of the work. Mntambo (in Simbao 2011:13) specifically reiterates that her work is an attempt to dismantle dualisms and find an "in-between space" and aspects that "lie[s] beneath the surface".

Faena (Figures 55-59) is a series of five sculptures by Mntambo, which also draws on the bullfight as a theme. *Faena* refers to the last part of a bullfight, which is described as the 'dance with death' and is seen as the most beautiful part of the bullfight where the most skill is needed (Simbao 2011:10; Stevenson 2011. Mntambo here uses cowhide to depict the dancing figures whose bodies can easily be read as female and which are moulded to her mother's and her own body. The five sculptures are individually titled: *Vela Sikubhekile* ('Reveal yourself we are watching') (Figure 55), *Retrato de um lutador* ('Portrait of a fighter') (Figure 56), *Entrar* ('Enter') (Figure 57), *Muleta* ('Red cape') (Figure 58) and *Guqa Embi Kwami* ('Kneel before me') (Figure 59) (Steveson 2011).

[34] *Lobola* is a traditional practise where a prospective husband has to pay a price in the form of a number of cows in order to marry a bride.
[35] Elliot (2011:26) reiterates this position of Mntambo.

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Figure 55: Nandipha Mntambo, *Vela Sikubhekile,* 2011. Cowhide, resin, polyester mesh, waxed cord, with horn 137 x 156 x 95cm (Stevenson Gallery 2011).

Figure 56: Nandipha Mntambo, *Retrato de um lutado*, 2011. Cowhide, resin, polyester mesh, waxed cord 176 x 146 x 80cm (Stevenson Gallery 2011).

Figure 57: Nandipha Mntambo, *Entrar*, 2011. Cowhide, resin, polyester mesh, waxed cord 170.5 x 123 x 75cm (Stevenson Gallery 2011).

Figure 58: Nandipha Mntambo, *Muleta*, 2011. Cowhide, resin, polyester mesh, waxed cord 131 x 60 x 25cm (Stevenson Gallery 2011).

Figure 59: Nandipha Mntambo, *Guqa Embi Kwami*, 2011. Cowhide, resin, polyester mesh, waxed cord 90 x 155 x 70cm (Stevenson Gallery 2011).

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Du Preez (2010:396) suggests that the use of excessive materialities, such as in the case of Mntambo's work, operates within a space which she identifies as the 'material sublime', which in contrast to the traditional Kantian sublime, focuses on immanence instead of transcendence, thereby bringing that which is hidden or formless to the fore. Hansen (2010:12) also discusses the use of animal skins in contemporary art in terms of its materiality and its relationship to "hides, hiding and exposure". According to Hansen (2010:11), even though the use of animal skins in contemporary culture has been normalised through the production of leather goods and taxidermy, the use of animal skins in contemporary art is always unsettling. He describes this phenomenon in terms of the rift such expressions create between our understanding of our own skin-borders and that of animals, which we see as essentially different to our own. The borders of the human body, therefore, are somehow seen as more intact than those of animals, even though human skin in comparison to animal skin becomes completely formless once detached from the body it protects.

According to Hansen (2010:10), when Animal skins are used in taxidermy they become a stand-in for the animal: the animal is thus reduced to its skin. In Mntambo's work, the empty animal skins are not stand-ins for animal bodies, but for human bodies, as Mntambo fashions them in the shape of her own and her mother's bodies. According to Hansen (2010:10), a preoccupation with skin surface also points to a trauma during childhood, such as the premature removal of an infant from its mother, causing a rupture in how the person envisions herself as a separate human being. This psychoanalytical reading might not be applicable to Mntambo's work in the strictest sense, but it does also point to the skin as a surface and a depth against which "power relations are acted out" (Hansen 2010:15). It is also interesting to note that Mntambo in Simbao (2011:18), professes to see something of her mother in a sculpture of Zeus (Figure 47), previously discussed, which was initially meant as a self-portrait.

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Du Preez (2010:406) suggests that Mntambo, through taking control of the representation of her own and her mother's bodies, after whom the sculptures in the *Faena* series (Figure 55-59) were formed, is negotiating her own terms on how these bodies should be received by spectators. The empty cowhide casts of female bodies speak of both presence and absence, in the light of the absence of both the living cow as well as the woman in whose shape the figures were cast. The cowhide vessels, however, create a strange ambiguous corporeal presence. Even though the cow skins are dead matter, visitors to Mntambo's exhibitions attest to the smell of "cow" (Mntambo in Du Preez 2010:404), which is evident in these works and reminds one of the corporeality which the artist seeks to portray. There is also an obvious reference to the violence of the (possibly ritualistic) killing of the animals, coupled with the knowledge of their eventual decomposition which is unavoidable, adding to their status as ephemeral. These empty cowhide vessels are given new life, through their death.

Again, Mntambo here plays with the dichotomy of life and death and visibility and invisibility, where her work is shown to be ambiguous in this sense, whilst challenging these binaries. The female bodies in this instance are once again 'becoming-animal', 'becoming-hunted', 'becoming-imperceptible' through their depiction as fleeting (and floating) empty vessels. Mntambo, as the artist, is complicit in the violence directed at these hybrid bodies: as their maker she cuts into, moulds and hangs her creations, thereby collapsing the hunter/hunted dichotomy. Elliot (2011:26) also notes how the flaying of animal skins collapses male/female distinctions, since the flattening of such skins removes the obvious differences between cow and bull.

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3.4 Painterly skins in the work of Penny Siopis

Siopis (in Nuttal 2009:98) proclaims her interest in modernistic "relation between form and materiality". Siopis' interest therein can be traced back to her earlier work and has been an important consideration throughout her artistic career. The material surface of a painting, according to Richards (2005:14) allows the viewer to reflect not only on the meaning of what is pictured on a canvas, but also the meaning that evolves from the process itself. Richards (2005:17) also views painterly surface as skin: a space where the private and public meet. This concept can be seen in the works of Siopis, as described below. The material properties of a painting can convey aspects such as fragility and vulnerability and can create ambiguous sensations such as attraction and repulsion, as alluded to by Kristeva (1982:5). Painterly surface as skin is made visible in works such as *Blow Up* (Figure 60). In this work, fluid seems to be bursting from a form at the top of the canvas and spilling violently onto the ground below. Within the splatter, Siopis has carefully drawn faces and figures of women and small curled-up children (Figure 61) who seem to be melting into the fluid mass of ink and glue.

Figure 60: Penny Siopis, *Blow Up,* 2011.
Ink and glue on canvas, 200 X 300cm (Perryer 2011b:4-5).

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Figure 61: Penny Siopis, *Blow Up (detail),* 2011.
Ink and glue on canvas, 200 X 300cm (Perryer 2011b:front cover).

The viscosity of the glues and inks used reminds one of the properties of bodily fluids, the abject, which according to Kristeva (1982:3) exists at the borders of existence and threatens the stability of the impermeable Self. Bodily fluids, according to Kristeva, (1982:53) are especially abject, since even after they are expelled from the body, they continue to carry traces of the body they were expressed from, thus calling attention to the permeability and uncertain borders of Self and Other. Bodily fluids are thus also precariously ambiguous, since that which is expelled from the body, even though abject, is still from the body and thus from the Self.

Grosz (1994:192) maintains that Kristeva's notion of the abject relates closely to an experience of the lived body as experienced through its functions and culture and history. Mary Douglas (in Grosz 1994:197) adds that the experience of a sexualised body is undeniably connected to the cultural meanings and values attributed to various male and female bodily fluids such as menstrual blood, breast milk and semen. Female bodily fluids are more likely to be culturally coded as unclean, as in the instance of menstrual blood or on the other hand, revered, such as in the case of breast milk,

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whilst male semen, which seem to be generally under-represented in popular culture and art, is coded as life-giving and precious (Grosz 1994:198).

The leaking bulge in *Blow Up* (Figure 60), which appears almost bloody, reminds one of a leaking body, possibly a womb, spilling forth the amniotic fluid moments before a birth is to take place. The images could also be read as an expulsion of the abject or of abject materials from the "own and clean Self" (Kristeva 1982:53). The ejection of the abject in this work, which is supposed to protect and affirm the borders of the Self, is shown here as precarious: they lead to the complete dissolution of form into formlessness and thus to the annihilation of the Self. The visibility and invisibility of bodily fluids is of specific importance here, as Siopis shows the abject as a performance of femininity, refusing to hide from sight that which is marked as taboo.

The birth itself, as an embodied separation of mother and child, or on a symbolical level, Self and Other, is also of great importance to Kristeva (1982:155). She describes the witnessing of a birth as the ultimate abjection, oscillating within the liminal spaces between "life and death, inside and outside, Ego and Other". According to Kristeva (1982:114), the danger of defilement comes not from outside the human body, but from the inside, the unseen, unknown depth of the maternal body, specifically its procreative powers (Kristeva 1982:77). For without the reproductive powers of women, society cannot procreate, but according to Kristeva (1982:78), in western and non-western societies, matriarchy threatens to disrupt the social order, thus leading to the abjection of the feminine and its sublimation through various rites and sacrifices.

The unknown, formlessness of the female body and the uncertainty and danger of its procreative powers are articulated through Siopis' employment of formlessness and accident. The gestural quality of her technique, somewhere between figuration and abstraction, imparts a carnal materiality to her work, which refers to the body. Siopis (in

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Miller 2011:48), stresses her focus on formlessness and materiality, rather than abstraction. She highlights the idea of formlessness as a process, which iterates various concepts in her work, rather than a product.

The staining[36] and splattering in Siopis' work has a raw, animalistic quality, a primal directness, which is often violent. To Siopis (in Nuttall 2009:99) the seemingly opposite conditions of eroticism and violence create a rift or a tear, which she aims to arrest in her work, rather than resolve. Siopis (in Miller 2011:48) explains that her medium is crucial to an understanding of her work in that is does not only portray fragility, but also energy.

Through her technique that relies on chance and accidental elements, Siopis attributes different meanings to the process of staining, which is active, energetic, embodied and even violent. Siopis controls the flow of her medium to a certain degree and in other instances she just "lets the medium have its way" (Nuttall 2009:98). This view of painting articulates an understanding of painting as a raw, creative and extremely subjective, embodied process, where the artist through the act of painting becomes part of the work's own process of 'becoming'. Siopis (in Nuttall 2009:99) explains her process in terms of both her bodily actions and the physical properties of her medium, which allows for the traces of the fluid 'becoming' of the painting itself to be spared. Siopis describes her own work in terms of being a performance (Miller 2011:48), where

[36] Penny Siopis makes extensive use of 'staining' as a painterly technique in recent works, such as works from her 2011 *Who's afraid of the crowd?* series (Perryer 2011b). The stain, according to Saltzman (2005:374), received extensive attention during the post-war period in America under the New York School as a painterly technique that could be attributed to feminine artistic practice. Discussions around women's modernist painting (Saltzman 2005:376), described the technique of staining as "menstrual" or a sign of "involuntary bodily function" and "uncontrolled nature" in contrast to a more masculine approach of directing mediums according to the artists' will. According to Saltzman (2005:376), this view of the female artist as a prudish vessel, through which materials direct themselves, much like bodily fluids, is problematic in that it robs the female artist of the agency associated with the creative act.

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the finished canvas could in a sense be described as the documentation of such a performance.

The process of painting is thus part of the work itself and articulates Siopis' rejection of Cartesian dualist thinking and essentialist notions of subjectivity and a rejection of a traditional modernist art object. This fluidity of form and medium can be read in terms of Deleuzian 'becoming': subjectivity that is never fixed, but constantly in flux, 'becoming' something else. Through its contact with the artist's body and the other mediums, The canvas becomes a material object, that is not a unified object, but an amalgamation of multiple energies, flows and fragments: a Deleuzian 'body without organs'.

Siopis' apartheid era works, such as *Melancholia* (1985), were focused on an articulation of the abuses of apartheid and a commentary on the excesses of the middle-class comfort of the white South African population. An articulation of the black body as oppressed but also of the female body as a symbol for that oppression can be seen in many of her works pre-1994. According to Richards (2005:17), even during this time, Siopis' interest in oil paint as a skin surface can be seen, even when the subject matter of the works are still lifes, such as in *Melancholia*.

Siopis' interest in trauma as a reoccurring theme can also be traced back to very early works, whilst there seems to be a general shift towards individual traumas in her work post-2000 in relation to her more political history paintings of the 1980s and 1990s. Siopis' *Pinky Pinky* (2002), *Shame* (2002), and the *Lasso* (2007) series, focus on the fears, hurts and abuses of the individual child and woman, whilst grappling with the inevitable entwinement of a multitude of social, cultural and gender issues, which are explored through these works (Nuttall 2005).

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According to Sarah Nuttall (2005:136), the *Pinky Pinky* series shows an engagement with the complex relationship between individual and collective trauma, which is fundamentally connected to the vulnerability of certain individuals and groups of individuals within a society. The tactile qualities of this series of paintings, reiterates Siopis' insistence on the articulation of painterly skin surface and the corporeal aspects of identity and trauma. According to Nuttall (2005:139), the figure of Pinky Pinky[37] speaks about the complex intersections between desire and fear, taboo and transgression and attests to the politics of visibility and invisibility where the public and private realm intersects. Pink, according to Nuttall (2005:139), is the colour of "delight as well as fear", because of its origins in the colour red, with its obvious associations with blood.

In *Pinky Pinky: little girl* (Figure 62), a pink head confronts a bright pink girl, whose figure is but a silhouette on the light pink background. The gaze of the pink head is directed at the girl, possibly suggesting that she is being pursued by this disembodied head. Nuttall (2005:140) notes that in this series Siopis always paints Pinky Pinky in parts, always keeping the viewer guessing as to his true nature and full persona. As a fragmentary being, *Pinky Pinky* speaks about the invisible dangers and traumas which lie beneath the surface as predator or hunter.

[37] Pinky Pinky is a character of urban legend, an African bogey man, or a pink *tokoloshe,* who is described as being a liminal creature that is half-man, half women, half-dog, half-cat, who rapes girls who wear pink underwear under their school uniforms. Pinky Pinky is apparently invisible to boys, but can be seen by girls.

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Figure 62: Penny Siopis, *Pinky Pinky: Little girl,* 2002. Oil and found objects on canvas, 122cm x 152cm (Nuttall 2005:150).

The woman as a traumatised individual, not as a metaphor for general political abuse, has come to the fore in Siopis' work since 2000. The small scale of the works in the *Shame* and *Lasso* series attests to the intimacy of these works, which places them in the private realm of the individual depicted. Approaching these works, one is reminded of the transgression of private space, which becomes public and political, through the public viewing of the traumas depicted.

The *Shame* series (Figures 63 and 64) creates a stark seriality through the use of a similar format of paintings, which is repeated throughout the series. These small works are not individually titled, but rather numbered and attached to specific explanations or quotes by the artist. The artworks form a series of individual abuses and traumas, which are rendered in a violent fashion by the artist. Themes such as domestic violence, rape, molestation and murder are all depicted within a grid, which creates an archive of brutalities to which the viewer is a silent witness.

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Figure 63: Penny Siopis, details from the *Shame* series, 2002. Mixed media on paper, each 18,5cm x 24,5cm (Nuttall 2005:142).

The small scale of these works forces one to step closer and contemplate the individual traumas. Siopis (in Nuttall 2005:141) proclaims that shame is more intimate than fear and that in shame one loses oneself and one's dignity "in full view of others". Nuttall notes how "the figures …. against whom the anxieties of society are played out", are depicted as extremely vulnerable and unable to protect their own bodies against abuse and brutality. Siopis writes about one of these small works:

> White background, red blood, black hair. You lie flat on the surface, unmodulated by depth or weight. You look Matisse-like, but you show

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> more of yourself. You squat, vulnerably. The pool of blood around you entraps you - but within what? (Nuttall 2005:143).

Siopis also draws parallels between the violent crimes that she depicts and sacrifice, alluding to the spilling of blood in these images to a sacrificial act. She plays with the relationship between images and words, in that she does not title the works, but rather provides narrations for each of them. The image in figure 64 is narrated as follows: "Inert, no longer able to resist, and blood flies across you – you are bombarded by sequences of pain, and death is almost here" (Nuttall 2005:147).

Figure 64: Penny Siopis, detail from the *Shame* series, 2002. Mixed media on paper, 18,5cm x 24,5cm (Nuttall 2005:147).

Siopis thus does not leave her images open for interpretation: the theme of violence and abuse is made explicit in these works through her use of imagery, medium and subtitles.

Siopis' *Who's afraid of the crowd* series (2011) shows a turning away from individual traumas towards an engagement with the violence and the destructive ability of the crowd. In this series, Siopis shows an interest in articulations of violence connected to "the multitude" (Siopis in Miller 2011:47). Here she engages with various traumas in which the plight of the individual is caught up in the plight of the group. This series is political in a sense as it shows how individual bodies are implicated in the violence of

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their time and societal politics. Miller (2011:49) notes how trauma is inscribed in the use of the medium itself and how the surface of a canvas can appear scarred, charred or bruised. This is evident in works such as *Blow up* (Figure 60), which was previously discussed.

The materiality of painterly surface as human skin is also illustrated in *As if a rag* (Figure 65). Siopis finds her inspiration from an anonymous picture (Figure 66) of a girl whose skin hangs from her body in shreds following the bombing of Nagasaki at the end of World War II. The fluidity of the inks and glues used in this painting creates the illusion of translucent skin, which seems to be melting onto the floor below, slipping away from the woman. Siopis (in Miller 2011:48) notes how the colours used also refer to fire or lava, burning away the fragile skin.

Figure 65: Penny Siopis, *As if a rag,* 2011. Ink and glue on canvas, 121cm x 91cm (Perryer 2011b:25).

Figure 66: Anonymous, *A girl with her skin hanging in strips, at the Ohmura Navy Hospital on August 10-11, Nagasaki,* undated. Picture from Siopis' notebooks (Perryer 2011b:24).

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Mark Taylor (1997:11) writes about skin:

> The question of skin and bones is the question of hiding and seeking. And the question of hiding and seeking is the question of detection . What is detected? Is detection longer possible? Is there anything left to hide? ... Does skin hide anything or is everything nothing but skin?

The woman's skin in *As if a rag* (Figure 65) melts away without leaving behind a body: as in other works by Siopis, the form collapses into formlessness, revealing the body to be nothing but a surface, in a version of extreme ephemerality. Hegel (in Taylor 1997:103) maintains that art shows the distinction between surface and depth by revealing 'truth' in the peeling away of layers of materiality to reveal the immaterial of the 'truth'. Taylor (1997:105), however, adds that ironically art, like the human body, cannot ever escape its materiality fully, thus never being able to reveal absolute truth, thereby discrediting Hegel's assumption.

Taylor (1997:187) also argues that when the inside is presented as a surface, that surface becomes transparent, which he maintains is a modernist ideal. When everything is transparent, structure does not matter anymore and "there is no longer anything to hide because nothing remains but hides and skins" (Taylor 1997:188). The opposites of life and death and visibility and invisibility are radically challenged in this regard. Siopis, therefore, , shows immanence and transcendence in *As if a rag* but not in opposing ways as Hegel would prefer, but rather as opposites which cannot exist without each other. Siopis acknowledges the link between life, death, materiality and ephemerality, thus collapsing these opposites.

In *At the root* (Figure 67) a fire, with images of birds escaping the fiery mass below them, is shown. Whilst pictures of the bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima during World War II inspired many of the works in this series, this specific work refers to a lynching that happened in the United States (Miller 2005:48). The surface of the

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canvas seems torn and the red areas appear bloody, as well as reminding the viewer of sacrificial flames. A small picture of a mob murder was placed next to this painting when it was exhibited in the Goodman Gallery in Cape Town in 2011.

Figure 67: Penny Siopis, *At the root*, 2011. Ink and glue on canvas, 170cm x 250cm (Perryer 2011b:16-17).

In the works from the *Who's afraid of the crowd* series, Siopis brings a new dimension to the discussion on violence in post-apartheid South Africa. The fate of the disempowered individual is brought to the fore as she shows the destruction which is perpetrated by the masses, the mob or in fact the Deleuzian swarm or pack (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). The crowd in this sense becomes an animal in its own right: a destructive one which destroys everything in its path. This series is also important when seen in the light of the prevalence of mob justice and vigilante killings in South African townships. This could also point to a contention that women as individuals and

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as a social group are oppressed by the systems of the nations or the prevailing power structures of the masses, in this case patriarchy.

Siopis' work, by offering an extreme immanent view of the female body, also raises questions about visibility and revealing, which is relevant to this study. The rejection of Cartesian dualisms subsequently questions what exactly constitutes 'life' or 'existence'. Bergson (in Grosz 2011:31) suggests that different states such as life and death or visibility and invisibility are never too far away from each other and cannot easily be separated from each other. Grosz (2011:170) goes further to argue that life could be described as a continuation of matter and that art is a continuation of our 'becoming-animal'. Grosz (2011:171) argues that art, through the production of something that is unregulated and unpredictable, leads to the creation of "an intensity, a force, a sensation, which alters the very forces of the body".

3.5 The hunted animal and the female nude

Another ambiguous depiction of the hunter/hunted inversion can be seen in a work by Tracey Rose, entitled *Ms Cast, Venus Baartman* (Figure 68). Rose performs the role of both hunter and hunted animal as it is unclear which position she assumes. The title refers to Saartjie Baartman,[38] a 'Hottentot' or Khoi-Khoi women, who was cajoled by a Dutch farmer, Peter Cezar and a British doctor, William Dunlop to travel with them to Europe in promise of riches and fame. She left the Cape in 1810 and was subsequently exhibited in Europe as an oddity (du Preez 2003:58). This reference

[38] Saartjie Baartman's (c1789 – 1815) status as a peculiarity was mostly focused on her 'strange' anatomical features in terms of her genitalia and buttocks, which were after her death preserved for study together with her brain. Casts of her entire body were also made for further study and display. Baartman became a general symbol for the oppression of specifically the black female body and has been a pertinent theme of feminist art internationally. The return of Baartman's remains to South Africa in 2002, was initiated by the new democratic South African Government as a post-apartheid project, symbolising freedom and the return home of many disenfranchised individuals under apartheid (Moudileno 2009).

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prompts a reading of her as a hunted and violated body. Her positioning within the grasslands places her in the position of an animal being hunted, whilst also connecting her stereotypically with nature. A reading of Rose's body posture within this setting is also consistent with that of a hunter: alert, forward bent and possibly stalking a prey.

Figure 68: Tracey Rose, *Ms Cast, Venus Baartman,* 2001. Lambda photograph, 120cm x 120cm (O'Toole 2002).

The title, *Ms Cast,* refers to a controversial exhibition which opened in April 1996 at the South African National Gallery, entitled *Miscast: Negotiating Khoisan History and Material culture*. This exhibition attempted to challenge the historical misrepresentation of the San people, by showing both ethnographic and popular imagery of 'Bushmen' in a contemporary manner, prompting viewers to question their own assumptions about these people and their own complicity in the misrepresentation of proletarian peoples (Douglas & Law 1997:86). The uproar with regard to this exhibition, curated by Pippa Skotnes,[39] was caused firstly by the reaction of Khoisan representatives who were invited to attend the exhibition and ensuing colloquium (Tomaselli 1999:132) and

[39] Pippa Skotnes is a Professor at the University of Cape Town, a well-known academic and artist, who has exhibited internationally.

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secondly by academic critiques (Douglas & Law 1997). According to Douglas and Law (1997:87), Skotnes' interpretation of the collection of Khoisan documentation, resin casts and other paraphernalia, perpetuated ideas about the Khoisan as being a singular homogenous grouping of people with a common history, framing them within a static framework of victimhood, thereby stripping them of historical and contemporary agency. *Miscast,* according to Douglas and Law (1997:90), failed to grant Bushmen the "status as agents active in the shaping of their own identity". Agency is always connected to power, the former giving the subject access to the latter.

Ms Cast, Venus Baartman (Figure 68), thus articulates themes such as agency, power and identity, intertwined with the themes of race and gender. The collapsing of the hunter into the hunted challenges the stereotypical notion of both the Khoisan and the woman as binary opposites of the Westerner and the man. Furthermore, as Douglas and Law (1997:93) note with regard to the *Miscast* exhibition, we are "in becoming witness … simultaneously initiated as both judge and accused". The nudity of the image causes unease in the viewer as we are forced to enter a private realm, imbuing the image with a certain amount of violence and encroachment. Such voyeurism is described by Douglas and Law (1997:93) as producing a desire for "wholeness, recognition and reclamation of absence". Rose's depiction of herself as a nude could also be read with regard to the different forms of the 'gaze' which it suggests. The depiction of a nude female figure against a landscape furthers the interpretation of a gaze that is not only 'male' but also 'colonial' and is thus irreverent from two perspectives.

By collapsing several binary oppositions, Rose, searches here for a liminal space in which agency is awarded to the black, female subject. She searches for a position in which she can claim control over her own representation and the violence, both real

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and ideological perpetrated by representations of her struggles and traumas as a black female subject.

Another hunted female body, which could be read as a female nude, can be found in *Slings and arrows* (Figure 69) by Siopis. Lynda Nead (1990:326) asserts that the female nude functions as both a sexual and a cultural category and that it points to the powers of patriarchal, western society, which posits women as possessions, subordinates and objects of aesthetic and sexual pleasure. According to Mira Schor (1997:7), the "implicit sensuality" of painting as a medium has made it not only a metaphor for woman and thus traditionally, within modernism, the domain of the male artist, but also makes it a vehicle for erotic art, which centres on the 'male gaze'. Schor (1997:168) contends that egalitarian feminists of the 1970s and 1980s rejected the 'visual pleasure' of painting on the grounds that it forefronts male eroticism, thereby denying their work of visual pleasure, instead opting for other genres and mediums of artistic expression or abstraction in painting. Nead (1990:325, 326) contends that the female nude in art history, and especially within the genre of painting, operates as both a "sexual" and a "cultural" category and that paintings of female nudes communicate a specific view of feminine sexuality as articulated through patriarchal structures.

Nead (1990:333) also mentions the act of painting itself, which has been compared to a sexual act, especially where the subject being painted is a female nude. This view is also echoed by Tamar Garb (1985:4), who describes the painter's brush as a sexual organ, granting the (male) artist sensual, physical pleasure through the sexualised act of painting. Schor (1997:165) suggests, however, that erotics in painting by female artists could be used as a 'feminist intervention', which is also applicable to Siopis' work as discussed earlier in this chapter. Feminist artists such as Siopis, however, do not deny themselves the physical and visual pleasure of painting, which in this regard functions as a feminist reclamation of the medium.

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The nude body concerned is again 'becoming' an animal, characterised by certain elements, which are metaphorical. The woman in *Slings and arrows* is represented as having the body of a deer: an animal hunted for sport and also associated with Diana, the goddess of the hunt. Furthermore, her body is pierced by phallic arrows, possibly suggesting the harassment by men specifically or patriarchal culture in general. The elegant, naked body is being tormented by multiple piercings, alluding to the multiple powers and oppressive discourses seeking to control and sublimate female sexuality. The male gaze is also implied and criticised here, by showing the nude as afflicted and scarred by the multiple arrow wounds.

The title, *Slings and Arrows,* also refers to the famous *To be or not to be* speech in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c1580-1602)[40]. Quoting Irving Richards, Vincent Petronella (1974:74) suggests that "To be" signifies "to suffer the slings and arrows or to endure one's troubles passively", and "not to be" translates into taking up arms against one's enemies. There is thus an inference to the binaries of active and passive being made in reference to this speech by Hamlet and also to violence. There is also a suggestion in this speech of Hamlet that a decision must be made to rise up against those threatening him or that he should take his own life.

The amalgamated feminine creature is shown captured and constrained by a noose and is looking back with a frightened look on her face. Her head though, is not just that of a normal woman. Apart from her 'becoming-victim' through the body of the deer, she is also 'becoming-warrior', through an unlikely assimilation with a bull. This amalgamation points to a depiction by the artist of the Minotaur myth.

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[40] The lines from the speech reads:
"Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
or to take arms against the sea of troubles,
and by opposing, end them?"
In this speech Hamlet contemplates the actions he should take regarding the dillema's he faces in the narrative. He is contemplating suicide and also taking up arms against his enemies (Newell 1965:42).

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Figure 69: Penny Siopis, *Slings and arrows,* 2007. Oil and glue on canvas, 20 X 25cm (Perryer 2007b:16).

The labyrinth, although not pictured in this image, but implied through the inclusion of the dyad between the Minotaur woman and the deer, suggests the entrapment of normative feminine subjectivity expectation through the constructs of masculine culture, which renders the feminine as both a victim of her situation within patriarchy as well as being constructed as the monstrous Other. Grotstein (1997:601-602) contends that the killing of the Minotaur serves to "deconstruct, decode and transform the Minotaur signifier", thereby releasing the feminine, in this instance, from its ideological trappings as abjected Other, creating the possibility for a rebirth. This reading corroborates Braidotti's (2003:45) claim of the metamorphosis needed within feminine subjectivity, creating a "Post-Woman" who is no longer disempowered for having moved out from under dominant masculine discourse. The woman, through her embodiment as deer and Minotaur, is becoming something new, something else, with transformative possibilities.

Two small landscape works by Sanell Aggenbach (Figures 70 and 71) show a misty landscape in pastel colours being pelted by arrows, such as many of the previous works described in this study. Aggenbach used industrial foam as a base to paint on, allowing the arrows to literally sink into the canvas. As in Rose's *Miscast* , notions of the colonised landscape are suggested through both the picturesque gaze and the

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violence of the arrows that pierce it. The soft appearance of the landscape, which is indented by the arrows, and the use of soft colours, also strengthens the idea of the landscape as feminine: a virgin space to be conquered.

This depiction of colonised, brutalised land could thus also be interpreted as a female body, where the landscape is a metonymical substitute for the violated female, as also seen in Duchamp's *Étant donnés* (Figure 39). In Duchamp's as well as Aggenbach's work, discussed here, the female body is articulated as something that can be hunted, owned and dominated.

Figure 70: Sanell Aggenbach, *Crossfire: Crest*, 2012. Wood, aluminum, industrial foam and oil on canvas, diameter: 108 cm (Brundyn & Gonsalves 2012).

Figure 71: Sanell Aggenbach, *Crossfire: Vale,* 2012.Wood, aluminum, industrial foam and oil on canvas, diameter: 96 cm (Bryndyn & Gonsalves 2012).

The title, *Crossfire,* indicates something which has been caught in-between two opposing forces, possibly by accident or being at the wrong place at the wrong time. *Vale* refers to a valley or a deep place, whilst *Crest* refers to the top of a mountain or a high place. Aggenbach seems to hint at the occupation of liminal space and possibly the dangers associated with the occupation of such space. Again, one could also read

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these as binaries between which the artist is attempting to shift, challenging their oppositional status.

These two works by Aggenbach are also exhibited together with two works (Figure 72 and figure 73), in which the artist makes use of her own body. The proximity of these works strengthens the idea that Aggenbach's landscapes are metaphorical for the female body. In *Degrees of separation* (Figure 72), she is shown floating limp and lifeless against a dark background, the whiteness of naked skin contrasted starkly against the empty background. The body is offered as a sacrifice: vulnerable and pure. The painting has a spiritual ambience to it as well as a sense of contemplation and transcendence. The body is literally 'cut' into pieces by painting it over six panels, possibly linking to ideas of disembodiment.

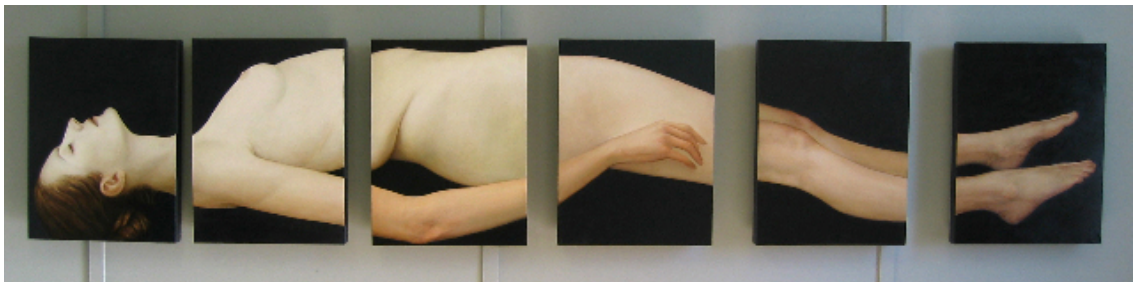

Figure 72: Sanell Aggenbach, *Degrees of separation*, 2004. Acrylic on canvas, 450mm x 3200mm (Gurney 2005).

Aggenbach here offers her own body as a sacrifice, for scrutiny and gazing. A possible link with the aestheticised body of Ophelia, previously discussed, can also be of relevance here. Nead (1990:334) notes how paintings of female nudes not only attest to the specifics of feminine sexuality, but also communicate aspects of male sexuality, thus having a wider cultural value, such as in the case of various depictions of Ophelia. Metaphors of painting such as "the canvas as a receptive surface … light caresses form … voluptuous shape" have specific implications, according to Nead (1990:333), when the painting is of a female nude as created by "the male artist as productive,

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active, controlling, a man whose sexuality is channelled through his brush“. The naked female body becomes subject to a predatory gaze, almost as a hunter would look at a potential victim.

The traditional conception of nude painting as a male concern is challenged in this painting as Aggenbach presents us with a self-portrait in the nude. If paintings of the female nude attest to traditional patriarchal understandings of feminine sexuality and subjectivity as argued by Nead (1990:326), then a nude self-portrait could potentially be considered a feminist intervention. By claiming the right to representation of her own body, Aggenbach asserts her agency as a feminine subject and a creative force. According to Nead (1990), paintings of female nudes show the female body in a specific way which is often aestheticised and generally idealised. In this regard, the representation by Aggenbach could be problematic in the sense that it does not challenge the mainstream tropes of beauty normally ascribed to female bodies, but instead shows the (white) female body in a way that in most aspects answer to normative expectations of femininity in an almost classical way.

Returning momentarily to the ‘cutting up‘ of the image, one could assume that Aggenbach is making a claim on the separation of feminine agency from the body, if read within a framework of corporeal feminism. The physical violence of ‘cutting’ an image into parts could also be a metaphor for the violence, be it actual or discursive, levelled against female bodies. Whether or not this visual device is effective is another question altogether, but it seems as if Aggenbach is trying to protest against a specific type of representation of women, historically claimed by men, thus reclaiming this right for the female artist.

Another work by Aggenbach, *Travelogue* (Figure 73), featured in the same exhibition as *Degrees of separation*, also shows the female body conflated with images of a

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landscape, albeit a seascape in this case. This body bears a striking resemblance to the body in *Degrees of separation* and is presented in the same position, thus one can assume that it is once again the artist's own. This body is covered in tattoos, showing a scene where a sea-monster is about to attack a ship. Again the female nude is compared to a landscape on which violence is projected: this time in the form of tattoos depicting a violent scene.

Figure 73: Sanell Aggenbach, *Travelogue*, 2005. Acrylic on canvas, 90cm x 180cm x 15cm (Aggenbach aa: 27).

The artist's skin in this painting is also transformed into a canvas, as she uses the painted skin as a secondary surface for depiction. The tattoo, according to Taylor (1997:77-81), is widely regarded as a form of protest, socio-political deviance and even criminality, because of its ancient history and uses, in addition to its modern and postmodern development. Body-modification, including tattooing is, according to Taylor (1997:89), often conducted in a ritualised setting, imbuing it with religious undertones

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and significance. Taylor (1997:111) also connects the emergence of 'body art' to "a sustained effort to reverse the dematerialisation of art by making the body matter". The insistence of modernism on ideas like 'beauty', 'purity' and the persistence of dualisms is counteracted by a return to the body as an important corporeal materialisation of concepts (Taylor 1997:113). Tattooing, according to Taylor (1997:123) has the ability to move between opposing concepts such as "savage/civilised … veiling/unveiling … interiority/exteriority". The assertion on the body as a surface, marks postmodernism's preoccupation with bringing back corporeality and the inscription of desire on the body (Belsey 1994a:688).

Travel, according to Carla Santos (2006:636), is generally coded masculine. She contends that "good…serious…heroic…enabling…adventurous" travel is something that "men do". Women, especially in popular travel writing, are generally excluded as active agents in the construction of what 'travel' entails for the Western subject. Santos (2006:630) also notes how females in travel narrative are always described in terms of their "physical distinctiveness", whilst males are described as just being men. Santos (2006:627) attests to the fact that travel, therefore seems to be a fertile space for the study of feminine identity construction in a domain that is essentially patriarchal.

Simone Fullager (2001, 2002, 2004) notes the relationship between travel and desire and specifically feminine desire. She argues that the desire to travel is somehow connected to a rejection of 'home', which signifies a fixed, static identity in favour of a hybrid, liminal identity, signified by travel (Fullager 2004:10). Furthermore, travel could be described as an "in-between or liminal space characterised by certain temporal rituals of leaving, moving and returning" (Fullager 2002:59). Travel, articulates the desire to know the world in all its unfamiliarity and 'difference' and to come into proximity with 'others', which challenges conceptions of a contained 'self' (Fullager 2002:61). Fullager (2002:295) likens the philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's travel

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writings[41] to a desire to immerse oneself in the materiality of the unknown world, which she connects to the "realisation of death as the boundary of life" just as skin could be said to be the boundary of the self. By literally displacing the individual from what is known to her, travel in this sense aids her in finding her own feminine specificity, through "losing the boundaries of her familiar self in order to experience a moment of 'becoming'" (Fullager 2001:300).

This desire could be described as a rebellion against domesticity and patriarchal scripts, which define the feminine subject in her 'home', which the traveller trades for autonomy, ecstasy and wonder (Fullager 2001:302). The domestic space, ironically, in the South African context, is one, as Belsey (1994a:685) notes, where hidden violence against women and children often happens. Travel, as an escape from this domesticity and as a wish for feminine autonomy, therefore counteracts the invisibility of the female body within the domestic sphere. Fullager (2002:59) also suggests that woman's experience of travel opens up a discursive space where the gendered cultural constraints placed on women can be challenged and where alternative "economies of desire" can be explored.

Fullager (2001:296) argues that travel disrupts the notion of our own discontinuity, in the same manner as murder was shown to operate in the previous chapter, giving the feminine subject a sense of the transcendental, through immersion in the corporeal. The dread of death in the case of both travel and murder, it seems, is what keeps the subject alive, ever searching for the ecstasy and wonder brought about by the experience with that which is unknown, strange and different. Bataille (in Fullager

[41] Simone de Beauvoir's autobiographical works, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (1959), *The Prime of life* (1960), *Force of Circumstance* (1987) and *All said and done* (1977) are analysed by Fullager in order to expose the complex interplay between travel, desire, feminine subjectivity and selfhood.

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2004:13) likens travel to a mere 'distraction', to the fear of death and also the nothingness that exists in the absence of desire.

Experiences of risk and danger, as articulated through the scene tattooed on the female body in *Travelogue* are intrinsically linked to travel. Such moments of bodily vulnerability reminds the subject of her situatedness in the world, which implies mortality, but paradoxically, also transcendence. Travel is used as a metaphor by Aggenbach as a form of feminine desire for autonomy from patriarchal ideological restraints. Her unique desire as a feminine subject is shown as an articulation of freedom, but also her corporeal situation in the world as a vulnerable body.

3.6 'Becoming-visible' in the work of Zanele Muholi

Through her documentation of lesbian desire, Zanele Muholi resists mainstream structures of visibility, which forefront aspects such as whiteness, heterosexuality and masculinity as the norm, by creating a visual archive of images that shows queer desire in an unedited way (Salley 2012:60). According to Raél Salley (2012:61), this opposes the "undesirable visibilities" of lesbians in the form of violence against subversive femininities. Muholi's nudes challenge the mainstream rejection of heterosexuality in South African society through her photographs of lesbian relationships, such as in *LiTer III* (Figure 74) and by so doing sets up a "visual archive " (Salley 2012:60), which represents the lives and individualities of a specific community.

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Figure 74: Zanele Muholi, *LiTer III,* 2012. Silver gelatin print, 76.5 x 50.5cm. Edition of 5 + 2AP (Stevenson Gallery 2012).

Salley (2012:60) notes how Muholi's portraits of lesbian women aim to create a sense of 'belonging' to both the LGBTI[42] community and the nation, by showing them as specific individuals and as 'normal' human beings. Muholi's portraits could also be described as female nudes, a genre that has previously been described in this study as traditionally and historically being a male one. Nude photography, however, has since the 1960s been somewhat controversial, since according to both popular and some academic sentiment (Nead 1990:325) it does not belong to the same artistic category as paintings of female nudes, but rather creates an uncomfortable slippage between what is considered 'art' and what is considered 'pornography'. Nude photography, according to Nead (1990:325), is often read as symbolising "filth and the illicit", whereas painting somehow communicates aspects of morality and purity.

The distinction between art and pornography is very applicable when read with the controversial reception of Muholi's work of lesbian nudes at the Johannesburg Gallery

[42] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex.

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in 2009. Arts and Culture minister Lulu Xingwana, before having to make a speech at the *Innovative Women* exhibition, stormed out after seeing Muholi's works depicting lesbian couples, labelling them 'immoral'. This created an outrage by both the LGBTI community and groups of female artists. Xingwana's comments in this regard, especially seen within the light of rampant violence and continuing prejudice against LGBTIs in South Africa (Brown 2012:46), shows how LGBTI visibility is challenged and censored in public discourse, in spite of an international outcry against the plight of the LGBTI community in South Africa.

Muholi's 2012 show at Stevenson Gallery in Cape Town, entitled *Mo(u)rning* (Figure 75), was conceptualised after her house was burgled and many of her activist works were stolen in an apparent attempt to remove these works from the public eye (Stevenson 2012). The exhibition contained various portraits of lesbian couples and other works conceptualised to show a "community, its joys, traumas, fights and daily existence" (Stevenson 2012). The exhibition also contains works that deal directly with 'corrective rape'[43] and other forms of violence and abuse of lesbian women. According to Salley (2012:66), more than ten lesbians are raped weekly in Cape Town alone.

[43] 'Corrective rape' is a term which is used to describe the rape of lesbian women ostensibly to 'cure' them of their homosexuality, because it is deemed 'unnatural' and 'immoral'.

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Figure 75: Zanele Muholi, *Mo(u)rning,* 2012. Installation view (Stevenson Gallery 2012).

In *Crime Scene* (Figures 76 and 77), a series of five photographs, Muholi set herself up as a murder victim. Juxtaposed with the newspaper poster as pictured in figure 75, one can assume she positions herself as a victim of curative rape and murder. The trousers bunched around her ankles also suggest sexual assault, whilst her legs are tied together with a belt. The body has been hidden under a plastic sheet and covered with other rubbish, alluding to the conception of the murdered victim as 'trash'. The covering of the murdered body alludes to the invisibility of the lesbian body within 'acceptable' public imagery and could also refer to the insufficient civil protection and intervention of the South African government (Brown 2012:62). Furthermore, the plastic sheet also reminds us of the Turin shroud, alluding to the body presented as a Christ figure or martyr.

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Figure 76: Zanele Muholi, *Crime Scene #4, 2012.* C-Print, 33 x 49.5cm. Edition of 8 + 2AP Photo: Antoine Tempé (Stevenson 2012).

Figure 77: Zanele Muholi, *Crime Scene #5, 2012.* C-Print, 33 x 49.5cm. Edition of 8 + 2AP Photo: Antoine Tempé (Stevenson 2012).

This murdered body stands in stark contrast to the aestheticised bodies in Smith's work (see 2.3) and avoids any romanticised or sexualised notions of the violated body. Muholi here creates a very literal depiction of the vulnerabilities of female bodies within the LGBTI community, which has implications for heterosexual female bodies as well, in a South African context. The contrast of these violent images, set against the portraits of loving couples, sets up a dialogue between notions of feminine desire and vulnerability as depicted by Aggenbach in *Travelogue* (Figure 73), where the intersection of the two is shown to be precarious and liminal.

In a video work entitled *Difficult love* (Figure 78), Muholi is the narrator for a documentary film which shows the everyday lives of lesbians whom she knows and whose photographs she has taken as part of her on-going *Faces and Phases* project. The documentary also includes stories of the rape and murder of several lesbians. As an insider of this community, Muholi forefronts issues specific to her LGBTI community and selects and edits the material in a subversive manner which forefronts the brutal violence committed against black lesbians, but according to Salley (2012:66) also shows their hardiness in spite of their vulnerability. The documentation of the fear which these women face daily, perpetrated by men who hunt them down to rape and

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murder, renders Muholi's subjects as bodies which are hated and hunted, but also shows how they, as unique, caring and loving individuals, face their lives with a sense of fortitude and even hope. Through her documentation of the plight of brutalised lesbians, Muholi aims to transform the invisibility of their plight and thus bring 'undesirable' visibilities to the fore as a form of activism and a catalyst for social action and change. This contrasts starkly with Kenneth Clark's notion (in Nead 1990:323) that art should "exist in the realm of contemplation" and not become "an incentive to action,"[44] Salley (2012:66) argues that Muholi's documentary on lesbian violence also sheds light on prejudices which still exist with regard to identity and gender politics in general and on value judgements being made about peoplel, thus opening up a discursive space where identity construction can be evaluated but also contested.

Figure 78: Zanele Muholi, *Difficult love*, 2010. HD Video Duration 47min 34sec (Stevenson 2012).

Salome Masoona and Sizakele Sigasa were both victims of curative rape and murder and are remembered by Muholi in *Untitled* (Figure 79) The medium used in this case is menstrual blood, a medium which has been used by Muholi in many of her works. Blood, in this instance, refers to violent murder, but also the taboo regarding menstrual blood. Works such as this and others by Muholi create what Pollock (in Thomas 2010:423) describes as a "virtual feminist museum", or an alternative to patriarchal

[44] This testimony was given by Kenneth Clark at the Longford Committee, debating the difference between art and pornography (Nead 1990:323) and the place and policing of each category within acceptable visual culture.

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visibilities in popular artistic and cultural production of a specific time and place. Artistic production creates what Pollock (in Thomas 2010:423) describes as a canon in Western paradigms, which feminist artists disrupt through making invisible or 'undesirable' femininities visible and thus incorporating them within the art historical archive.

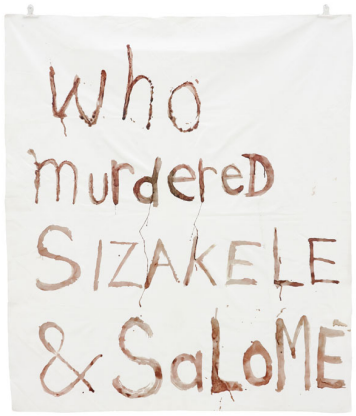

Figure 79: Zanele Muholi, *Untitled,* 2011. Blood on fabric 137 x 120.5cm (Stevenson 2012).

Muholi's insistence on the body and its fluids can also be seen in the next series, in which natural forms associated with the sea are visually reminiscent of both male and female bodies. *Umthombo* (Figure 80) refers to a well-known traditional song, where lovers meet next to a fountain or well, which is supposed to be a very romantic place. The 'red-bait' shown in this image likens a penis, whilst the shell in *She'll* (Figure 81) refers to the vagina: open and receptive to male penetration. The third image, *Dis-ease* (Figure 82), alludes to the possible infection with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, through curative rapes, which causes the deaths of many lesbians in South Africa (Brown 2012:46).

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Figure 80: Zanele Muholi, *Umthombo*, 2012. C-Print, 40 x 60cm. Edition of 8 + 2AP (Stevenson Gallery 2012).

Figure 81: Zanele Muholi, *She'll,* 2012. C-Print, 40 x 60cm. Edition of 8 + 2AP (Stevenson Gallery 2012).

Figure 82: Zanele Muholi, *Dis-ease,* 2012. C-Print, 40 x 60cm. Edition of 8 + 2AP (Stevenson Gallery 2012).

Salley (2012:60) notes the hyper-visibility of black lesbian bodies in popular culture, which deems them as 'undesirable'. Black, lesbian bodies is a category which conservative, patriarchal societies choose not to see, thereby rendering them invisible through practises such as curative rape, but also through censorship. Muholi (in Van Wyk 2010:p) attests to the lack of political will by the South African Government to address issues of violent crime against lesbian women and contrasts this with the lack of moral outcry against the immorality of the actions of President Jacob Zuma. This contrast illustrates the patriarchal nature of South African culture, which Brown (2012:49) describes as being in direct opposition to fundamental human rights as advocated through the South African Constitution. Muholi's social activism renders visible that which is hidden from public view, thus bringing it into discourse, offering possibilities for political action and change.

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3.8 Closing comments

Works such as the ones discussed in this chapter provide an illustration of the transformative powers of violent, carnal 'animal-becomings' for feminists. Braidotti (2003:52) asserts that Deleuzian 'becomings' are useful in this sense, for they envision "multiple 'becomings'" that move away from an essentialist view of identity, as seen in the works of Mntambo, Siopis, Rose, Victor and Dixie discussed in this chapter. Siopis (in Nuttall 2009:96) describes her work as containing "atavistic" elements. It is through 'animal-becomings' that Siopis and the other artists in this chapter bring suppressed animalistic impulses to the fore. 'Becoming-women' through various 'animal-becomings' therefore serves the purpose of destabilising known dominant conceptions of feminine subjectivity and social normativity, and also posits new possibilities in this regard (Braidotti 2003:55).

In this chapter it was also shown how the invisibility of specific feminine identities and aspects of feminine sexuality are hidden from view through actual and discursive violence and how the destabilisation of binaries counteracts this invisibility. Posel (2005:242) explains that the problem of sexual violence in South Africa has been a long-standing one, which has historically and socially been hidden from view and politically marginalised by means of inappropriate laws and policing. The South African female artists' works provides evidence of how animalistic connections are articulated within the boundaries of skin and the female body, and how the female body – especially in its nude state – bespeak the notion of a hunted animal.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Throughout this study it was shown how South African female artists respond to the conditions of gender-based violence and the effects of patriarchal discourse on their everyday lives through their artistic practise. It was also shown how the plethora of images that deal with themes of violence and patriarchal oppression is articulated through imagery of bodies that can be described as sacrificed or hunted. Within these two broad themes, several different articulations of hunted and sacrificial bodies were identified and discussed by referring to specific South African artists.

Through an application of the premises of corporeal feminism as theorised by Grosz (1994, 2008, 2011), Liss (2009), Bartlett (2002) Braidotti (1993, 2003), Bartlett (2002), Fensham (2005), Richardson and Harper (2006) and others, emphasis was placed on the chosen artists' use of the body within artistic practise as a vessel and a medium of expression, which conveys feminist concerns.

The body, specifically the sacrificial body, as employed by the artists discussed, becomes a tool for 'reckoning with the world' (Weibgen 2009:55), where the insistence on its materiality in contrast with its discursive possibilities, forefronts feminist concerns that are corporeal. Sacrificial bodies, according to Weibgen (2009:61), present territories that are "sacred and which cannot be controlled even under extreme regulation".

The discussion of sacrificial bodies in Chapter Two was underpinned by the work of Bataille (1962), Girard (1972) and Kristeva (1982) in order to explain the significance of sacrificial practises as an articulation of and a revolt against gendered violence and patriarchal ideologies. Kristeva's (1984:75) notion that the mere representation of a sacrifice could bring about change by fusing binaries was argued in relation to the work

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of the selected South African artists. These artists' violent manifestations of sacrifice and the hunt could be explained in terms of their desire to be counted in a patriarchal system that posits them as inferior to the male citizen. In the work of these artists, a sense of unease and paradox was detected through uncovering artistic devices such as the depiction of violent animalistic sacrifice coupled with a reclamation of the artist's own body. Visual devices concerned with sacrificial revolt and the re-interpretation of sacrificial mythologies could be detected in the work of Dixie, Siopis, Muholi, Rose and Victor.

A Bataillesque connection between violent death and eroticism was set up in the interpretation and exploration of the works of Smith and Khan in order to show connections between the prevalence of sexist ideologies, patriarchal understandings of the female body and actual and discursive violence against women. It was argued that female artists who perform their own bodies as wounded, murdered or martyred, articulate their desire to establish their bodies as sacred territories that cannot be controlled by patriarchy, even under extreme conditions of violence.

The sacrificed bodies of children was also discussed as a distinctive theme in this study with reference to the work of Dixie, Siopis, Cruise and Victor, where they employ the sacrificial theme is conjunction with articulations of the maternal or violence against children. The bodies of mothers and children were shown in this regard to be sacrificial offerings, such as in the case of Dixie and Cruise, or as brutalised bodies, presented in a sacrificial manner, such as in the work of Victor.

In Chapter Three the hunted body, within the scope of this study, was shown to be articulated through Deleuzian 'becoming-animal', the female nude and different manifestations of animal and human skin borders. 'Animal-becomings in the work of Siopis, Dixie and Victor was discussed with regard to the transformative possibilities of

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carnal animal becomings for women, where new, hybrid creatures and identities are forged. Furthermore, it was shown how these animal becomings destabilise Cartesian dualisms by challenging static, patriarchal conceptions of feminine identity. Imagery of female bodies in hybridisation with those of animals was shown to be used as a device that seeks to establish a new order of visibility of the female body and its traumas within visual culture and discourse, such as in the work of Mntambo. The work of Muholi on the lives and struggles of lesbians was discussed separately in order to reiterate the visual devices concerned with hunted bodies as a strategy for creating a new system of visibility for brutalised female bodies.

It was shown in this study how female artists counteract the prevalence of the male gaze and collapse binaries through the reclamation of the female nude as a feminine genre of painting in the work of Rose, Siopis and Aggenbach. Furthermore, it was argued that an articulation of the fragility and loss of the boundary created by skin expresses a corporeal presence that counteracts binaries through the insistence on materiality, whilst making female bodies matter in an unequal society. This phenomenon was explored in detail through the work of Mntambo, who collapses the binaries of animal and human, but also absence and presence, through the use of skins. Siopis's use of the medium of painting also articulates concerns that are corporeal through her use of paint, which she employs as a stand-in for skin surface.

From a feminist viewpoint, new mythologies are established through the use of sacrificial and hunted bodies from a feminist viewpoint. Through their depictions of violent, animalistic sacrifice and hunted, brutalised female bodies, South African female artists seem to articulate their revolt against unequal power relations, patriarchy and the subsequent violence it produces. Their destabilisation of binaries, which can be identified as a prevailing theme throughout this study, collapses a Cartesian system based on the superiority of the (white) male and brings liminal bodies to the fore.

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Throughout this study it was shown how the chosen artists' practice actively oppose the invisibility and the undesirable visibility of specific femininities and serve as a call for social activism and change. As argued, this is visible in their use of the body as sacrificial and hunted.

Elizabeth Grosz (2011:153) writes:

> Hegel addresses the processes by which nature is sublated into spirit, and animal life… the life that also characterises sexual difference, is sacrificed, surpassed and uplifted. The intense immediacy of sexual and family life must give way to the forces of the nation and the processes of sacrifice, death and mourning ….

The artists discussed in this study shows how private, personal matters of sexuality and domestic life are made political when women are oppressed and violated and how the systems and ideologies of the nation are complicit in these actions. In a society rife with violence against women and children, permeated by patriarchal discourse characterised by the persistence of binaries based on race and gender, female artists use visual devices concerned with the sacrificial as an exorcism of sorts, where sacrifice as a metaphor and a symbolic act hopes to collapse dualisms and forefront societal issues that are applicable to them. Braidotti's (1993:7) writing on the females' desire to think, speak and 'be' is useful in this sense, in articulating female artists' sense of historical agency, and political and social entitlement.

South African female artists, therefore, are not only working towards destabilising certain modes of thinking associated with patriarchy, but through their artistic practice are protesting against gender-based violence and calling for social change. The insistence on the corporeality of the body, and the continued collapsing of Cartesian dualisms, challenges an unequal system based on the difference between the sexes, which the artists in this study seek to overthrow. A violent society permeated with the ghosts of an apartheid past and paternal and patriarchal ideologies necessitates the

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use of feminist art as a catalyst for social action and change and lay the groundwork for claiming feminine agency and structuring female identity in the South African context.

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