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Platforming a New Politics of Remembrance: How Sethembile Msezane's Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell Challenges South Africa's Commemorative Landscape

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Platforming a New Politics of Remembrance:

How Sethembile Msezane's *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* Challenges South Africa's Commemorative Landscape

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Introduction

2025, marks the 10th anniversary of the Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) movement in which students at the University of Cape Town (UCT) called for the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes (Fig. 1). Unveiled in 1934, the bronze statue was a gift to the university by the Rhodes National South African Memorial Committee in an effort to honour Rhodes who had endowed the university with the land it was built on.[1] However, renewed attention was cast on Rhodes' controversial legacy as the statue was condemned by students within the RMF movement. The movement framed the statue as an "act of violence" against students and staff members of colour as it "glorified a mass murderer who exploited black labour and stole land from indigenous people."[2] However, problematising Rhodes' legacy and calling for his removal was not all that was on the RMF agenda. Through their demands for the statue to fall and the university to be decolonised, students also highlighted how the legacies of colonialism and apartheid impacted their everyday experiences on campus.[3]

Gabriella Nugent recognises the global impact that the Rhodes Must Fall movement in 2015, alongside the anti-racist Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement that started in 2013, has had in demanding a widespread reckoning with how colonial legacies have shaped our world.[4] Jay Pather, Catherine Boulle and Nomusa Makhubu echo Nugent's discussion about the significance of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, pointing out how it was a pivotal moment that had a major influence on local protest action and performance art.[5] According to Pather and Boulle, as Rhodes Must Fall student protesters voiced their frustrations about the trauma and oppression faced by black students, they gave South Africans permission to express their outrage at the continued inequality and slow transformation in a "supposedly" postcolonial and post-apartheid country.[6] However, Pather and Boulle emphasise how Rhodes' removal "concretised" a matter that South African artists were already grappling with in their work.[7]

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[1] Miller and Schmahmann, "Introduction," vii
[2] Rhodes Must Fall Mission Statement
[3] Ibid.
[4] Nugent, *Colonial Legacies*,19
[5] Pather and Boulle, "Introduction," 2; Makhubu, "On Apartheid Ruins," 574, 583-588
[6] Pather and Boulle, "Introduction," 2
[7] Ibid.

Tracey Rose, Buhlebezwe Siwani, Donna Kukama, Sethembile Msezane and Gabrielle Goliath are some of the prominent South African performance artists who were already challenging the “master narratives” and “unquestioned forms of memorialisation” that no longer represent the country's identity.[8] An important thread that ties the work of these artists together is how they call attention to and critique the position of women in both South African society and the country’s commemorative landscape. Kim Miller also highlights the connection in her discussion of the marginalised representation of women in the country’s public memorials and the stereotypes or acts of violence that can undermine their inclusion when it does occur.[9] In addition, Khwezi Gule discusses how many of the memorial symbols routinely engaged with in live performances in South Africa (Fig. 2) can be critiqued for their reflection of how some of the country’s commemorative practices “owe much of their genealogy to Western forms of commemoration.”[10] For Gule, this means that South Africa’s memorial culture is permeated by “monumental, statuesque” forms that are unlike the indigenous practices of commemoration in the country, which heavily incorporate religious ritual.[11] In contrast, Pather and Boulle highlight that South African performance art is not simply a “Western import” but draws from a long lineage of traditional rituals, performance and embodiment.[12] It is for this celebration of local practices of remembrance that Gule argues performance art in South Africa might have the potential to “shape a memorial culture more meaningful than the physical permanence of bronze or stone”.[13]

According to Annie E. Coombes, South Africa’s past requires consideration of how history is presented to ensure that history is kept alive in the memory of generations to come.[14] Gule’s discussion about how performance art stages an “injunction against forgetting,” reflects how the medium can become one of the representational forms that Coombes mentions as necessary “insurance against amnesia.”[15] Furthermore, South African performance artists not only “adequately” present history as deemed important by

[8] Ibid.
[9] Miller, “The Pain of Memory and the Violence of Erasure,” 156
[10] Gule, “To Heal a Nation,” 267, 274
[11] Ibid., 274
[12] Pather and Boulle, “Introduction,” 3, 4
[13] Gule, “To Heal a Nation,” 274, 282
[14] Coombes, “Introduction,” 10
[15] Ibid.; Gule, “To Heal a Nation,” 271

Coombes, but Lieketso Dee Mohoto-wa Thaluki also refers to how performance artists can also offer a "counter history."[16] Echoing Thaluki's point, Gule discusses how South African performance artists can enact "counter-narratives of memorialisation and mourning" that challenge post-apartheid memorial practices that can conceal aspects of the country's layered history.[17]

One of the major influences of nation-building on South Africa's commemorative practices is highlighted by Darren Newbury, who outlines how the country's post-1994 memorial culture can be "understood through the framework of reconciliation", first expressed through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).[18] Pather and Boulle discuss how this reconciliatory approach has become "synonymous" with attempts to "neutralise expressions of pain or anger", while de Kok asks whether the reconciliatory agenda taken up by structures such as the TRC "unwittingly contribute to cultural and social amnesia."[19] Pather and Boulle share how Rhodes Must Fall pushed back against this nation-building rhetoric, particularly the "compromise" and "talking" established through the TRC, branding these approaches as ineffective through the movement's "politics of radical action."[20] A key moment of "radical action" (that went on to initiate the RMF movement) was the political performance of then student and activist Chumani Maxwele, who, on 9 March 2015, threw excrement at the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at the University of Cape Town.[21]

Speaking to the relationship between performance art and protest movements in South Africa, Nondumiso Msimanga sees a connection between the immediacy of the local performance art scene and the almost "daily disruptions" of protest action in the

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[16] Coombes, "Introduction," 10; Thaluki, "Corporeal HerStories" 11

[17] Gule, "To Heal a Nation," 268

[18] Newbury, "Lest We Forget" 274

The TRC was established in 1996 by South Africa's new, democratic government as part of its restorative justice approach to dealing with the crimes committed during apartheid. A notable feature of the commission was how it called on victims and perpetrators of apartheid human rights violations to share their testimonies during a series of public hearings that were carried out across the country up until 2003.

[19] Pather and Boulle, "Introduction," 2; de Kok, "Cracked Heirlooms: Memory on Exhibition," 59

[20] Pather and Boulle, "Introduction," 2

[21] Ibid., Garb, "Rising and Falling," 29

An NPR interview by Don Boroughs with one of the founders of Rhodes Must Fall, Rekgotsofetse Chikane explores how, though Maxwele's actions were "condemned" by the student body at large (including the RMF movement) and the university administration, there is an acknowledgement of the importance of the debate it sparked and deplorable living conditions it highlighted.

country.[22] These protests are a visceral response to what Msimanga describes as a "Democratic State of Emergency" in South Africa.[23] Maxwele's intervention communicated this sense of "emergency" as the act aimed to call attention to what Tamar Garb describes as the "scandalous crisis in sanitation" that plagues informal settlements such as those on the Cape Flats.[24]

This discussion about radical action and the relationship between South African performance art and protest movements is also connected to how decolonial theory permeates the literature on performance art in the country. Hlongwane and Ndlovu define decolonisation as a commitment to recovering "indigenisation" and a uniquely "African signature", and Same Mdluli sees live art as a means of enacting the "decolonial work" of rewriting dominant practices of representation.[25] Within discussions about performance art and decolonisation, scholars pay specific attention to how the black body is wielded to express activist and decolonial objectives, with Mdluli even framing "blackness as a performance tool".[26] For Tina Campt, black visuality is laced with a spirit of refusal, which aligns with Mdluli's arguments that artists have the potential to unravel new possibilities for the figuration and understanding of blackness.[27] Similarly, Msimanga reflects on the role performance art should play in post-1994 South Africa and its impact when it is activist in orientation.[28] What is revealed in grappling with this question is that these interventions become more than just performances and potentially have an important part to play in the nation's transformation and healing.[29] Linked to the role performance artists can play in disrupting meaning and carving out new ways of being, Pather and Boulle end their introductory chapter in *Acts of Transgression* reflecting on the "disorienting" but "vital" effects that come with how artists challenge our worldviews.[30]

[22] Msimanga, "State of Emergency," 150
[23] Ibid.
[24] Garb, "Falling and Rising," 29
[25] Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 3Mdluli, "Space is the Place and Place is Time," 181
[26] Mdluli, "Space is the Place and Place is Time," 170, 171, 181
[27] Campt, Listening to Images, 9-11; Mdluli, "Space is the Place and Place is Time," 183
[28] Msimanga, "State of Emergency," 151
[29] Gule, "To Heal a Nation," 270
[30] Pather and Boulle, "Introduction," 14

Therefore, in this thesis, I will analyse how contemporary South African performance artists challenge how South Africa's colonial and apartheid past is commemorated and how, in doing so, their work offers visions of how the nation can reshape how it commemorates its history. The practice of contemporary South African artist Sethembile Msezane is an example of the "vital" disruption that Pather and Boulle argue South Africa needs through the confrontation with the nation's commemoration practices it fosters. Msezane's performance *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* (2013) (Fig. 3), in particular, will be the case study for this thesis.

Through a review of the literature, chapter one will give an overview of commemoration in South Africa, highlighting some of the challenges key memorial sites and practices reveal to contextualise the memorial landscape within which Msezane's performance intervenes. Chapter two will then argue that Msezane's performance critiques specific features of South Africa's commemorative landscape, such as the presence of colonial statues and the marginalisation of black women in public sculpture memorials. The visual analysis will be conducted using a decolonial theoretical framework, specifically drawing on Thulile Gamedze's discussion of the "aesthetics of insurgency" to situate Msezane's performance within the Rhodes Must Fall Movement.[31] Furthermore, this chapter will discuss how Msezane uses a performance language that is connected to writing about the agency and subversive potential of the black female body in performance art. In the performance's critical endeavour, how does Msezane's work offer a view of how South Africa can reshape the commemoration of its history? Chapter three of this thesis will seek to answer this question through a discussion of how Msezane's performance embodies cultural practices of mourning and remembrance that speak to a local, South African identity.

Overall, Msezane's performance is a relevant and apt case study as it engages prominent themes that emerge in the literature about commemoration in South Africa outlined in this introduction, namely: confronting the legacies colonial statues enshrine, a recovering of the narratives South Africa's complex history and post-1994 memorial culture may exclude and call to expand memorial practices so that they are more reflective of local rituals of remembrance.

[31] Gamedze, "Destruction Styles," 64

1. Complex Transitions: South Africa's Post-Apartheid Memorial Culture

As the thesis is concerned with how Sethembile Msezane's performance *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell*, engages with and challenges commemoration in South Africa, it is first necessary to understand the significance and the scope of commemoration in the country before discussing specific memorial forms and practices that her performance challenges and engages with. Therefore, the chapter will first define commemoration and discuss the role it has played in allowing South Africa to commemorate its apartheid past and transform its memorial landscape to align with the country's values and identity post-1994. After this, the importance of public holidays and renaming in South Africa, and the tensions transforming these commemorative tools reveal will be discussed. The chapter will then explore how sites related to pivotal moments during apartheid became museums or are marked with commemorative statues or artworks. A discussion of statues in South Africa will follow, which will discuss how this medium is influenced by European conventions as well as how women are under or misrepresented in public sculptures. The chapter will then end with a consideration of the criticisms of commemoration in South Africa, sparked by the country's socio-economic state the presence of colonial and apartheid-era monuments.

Firstly, it is important to grasp the meaning of commemoration and therefore, we will turn to the Oxford English Dictionary for clarity. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, commemoration can be defined as "a calling to remembrance, or preserving in memory, by solemn observance, public celebration etc."[32] The Oxford English Dictionary adds that one of the ways remembrance can be expressed is through "a public memorial", which often denotes an "object set up, or a festival" that "preserves the memory of a person or thing."[33] The task of commemoration in South Africa has an added layer of difficulty due to the country's complicated past. Coombes expresses this challenge in her discussion of how there is a "complex layering" of South Africa's histories of colonisation, the oppressive apartheid regime and anti-apartheid struggle.[34]

[32] Oxford English Dictionary, "commemoration (n.), sense 2.a."
[33] Oxford English Dictionary, "commemoration (n.), sense 2.d."; Oxford English Dictionary, "memorial (adj.), sense 1."
[34] Coombes, "Introduction," 7

Hlongwane and Ndlovu outline how commemoration in South Africa has been embarked upon with "heightened intensity" according to these three major political contexts.[35] Though these historical periods have wielded similar modes of memorialisation, their expressions of commemoration served different, often conflicting purposes and ideologies.[36] Connected to how the meaning of the verb to commemorate is associated with the idea of being mentioned as "worthy of remembrance", Hlongwane and Ndlocu discuss how, within the settler-colonial nation state, commemoration of the story of colonists took centre stage, particularly as nothing created by the indigenous communities on occupied lands was deemed valuable enough to record.[37] Hlongwane and Ndlovu add how this reasoning, which led to the reshaping of histories, was also part of the British imperial and Afrikaner nationalist projects, the success of the latter leading to the establishment of the apartheid state through the Afrikaner National Party's (NP) electoral win in 1948.[38]

The liberation struggle against apartheid and transition into democracy after the first democratic elections in 1994 warranted new forms of commemoration and introduced new "themes" of memorialisation, such as ideas of "national reconciliation" and "rebirth".[39] Hlongwane and Ndlovu discuss how this post-apartheid transition period sparked a notable "memory boom" that is indicative of a nation coming out of a long period of conflict and suppression.[40] In this period, memorialisation becomes a mechanism through which the new identity of the state is created and validated.[41] However, as mentioned by Coombes, South Africa's complex past and conflicting histories "jostle against one another to produce significant tensions during periods of reconstruction," adding to the unique challenges that commemoration in post-apartheid South Africa is faced with, which will be touched on throughout this chapter's discussion.[42]

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[35] Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 3
[36] Ibid., 3, 4
[37] Oxford English Dictionary, "commemorate (v.), sense 1.b."; Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 3
[38] Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 3
[39] Ibid., 6; Gule, "To Heal a Nation," 267
The general elections, which ran from 26 to 29 April 1994, saw the African National Congress (ANC) win a majority of 62% of the votes. The party, led by newly elected president Nelson Mandela, went on to form a Government of National Unity with the National Party and Inkatha Freedom Party.
The elections
[40] Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 4, 5
[41] Ibid.
[42] Coombes, "Introduction," 7

An important commemorative feature in South Africa that was transformed to carve out a new post-apartheid identity for the country was its public holidays. Sabine Marschall discusses how the changes, enacted through the Public Holiday Acts of 1994 and 1995, allowed the government to foster national cohesion through a "unification" of the calendar of holidays that had been celebrated before 1994.[43] In addition, Marschall discusses how there was a "revising of its content" to ensure that official holidays fit the new ideals of the country.[44] One example of a commemorative holiday that was done away with was Van Riebeeck Day, which, from 1952 until 1994, was observed on the 6th of April.[45] Also referred to as Founder's Day, the holiday honoured the day the Dutch East India Company navigator and colonial ambassador, Jan van Riebeeck (1619 – 1677), 'discovered' the tip of Southern Africa.[46] Jochen Petzold discusses how, for many white South Africans, particularly white Afrikaners, celebrating van Riebeeck's arrival in the Cape was significant as he planted the first settlement of white colonists who would go on to establish the Afrikaner "nation".[47] However, the establishment of the Cape Colony led to the disenfranchisement of land and enslavement of indigenous communities living in the area before.[48] Thus, the appropriateness of celebrating van Riebeeck's arrival needed to be re-examined due to the colonial history of loss, exclusion and subjugation this occasion represented for non-white groups in the country. Marschall highlights this through her discussion of how Founder's Day defined South Africa as a "settler nation" and excluded people of colour from laying "claim to the land"; both ideas that "no longer had a place" in the country's commemorative calendar post-1994.[49]

Importantly, many of the new public holidays established or formalised pay homage to the armed struggle against apartheid, honouring the freedom fighters and collective resistance that won a democratic government for the nation.[50] Some notable South African public holidays in this regard are Human Rights Day on 21 March which commemorates the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 and Youth Day on 16 June which

[43] Marschall, "Public Holidays as *Lieux de Mémoire,*" 11
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., 15
[46] Ibid.
[47] Petzold, "In Search of a New National History," 144-145
[48] Ibid., 150, 152
[49] Marschall, "Public Holidays as *Lieux de Mémoire,*" 15
[50] Ibid., 11

honours the students of the 1976 Soweto Uprising.[51] Notable museum and heritage sites such as the Iziko Museums, Constitution Hill and the Zeitz Mocaa are free to South African citizens on public holidays to encourage an engagement with their spaces and any special programs or exhibitions they may have planned for the day or month of celebration.[52] In addition, there are commemorative events and gatherings organised by community and cultural organisations, the government and even various political parties.[53] Furthermore, holidays such as Youth Day or Heritage Day, celebrated on 24 September, encourage embodied commemoration through the wearing of one's cultural attire.[54]

While public holidays actively engage the South Africans in shared occasions of remembrance and are an important means through which the harmful imprint of colonialism and apartheid on the country's memorial culture was redressed, they also reveal some issues related to the transformation and practice of commemoration in post-apartheid South Africa. Firstly, debates have been sparked about how public holidays that commemorate traumatic events and the loss of life during apartheid should be observed.[55] In addition, Marschall argues that overall, public holidays have "failed as containers and transmitters of memory".[56] This conclusion comes after the author surveyed a diverse pool of South Africans, and in general, respondents had "little factual knowledge about national holidays".[57] Marschall, Hlongwane and Ndlovu also highlight the failure of how, despite intentions to foster reconciliation through public holidays, tensions remain between racial and political groups.[58]

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[51] Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 7-8
On 21 March 1960, police officers shot at a group that had gathered outside a police station in Sharpeville in protest of apartheid pass laws. This means of identification was used to monitor racial segregation and primarily limit the movement of black South Africans. And in the Soweto Uprisings on 16 June 1976, black students staged a peaceful protest against the apartheid government's plans to institute Afrikaans as the language of instruction in their schools. The police retaliated against the students with tear gas and ammunition. This marked a pivotal moment as the brutality of the apartheid government was exposed to the rest of the world.

[52] Iziko Museums of South Africa, "Visit."; Constitution Hill, "Opening Hours and Admission."; Zeitz MOCAA, "Heritage Day at Zeitz MOCAA."

[53] Marschall, "Public holidays as *lieux de mémoire,*" 18; Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 8
A catalogue of past government-hosted commemorative events can be browsed here: https://www.gov.za/event-category/commemorative-events?page=0

[54] Marschall, "Public Holidays as *Lieux de Mémoire,*" 19

[55] Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 4

[56] Marschall, "Public Holidays as *Lieux de Mémoire,*" 19

[57] Ibid., 17

[58] Ibid., Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 7-8

Similar to public holidays, the renaming of public infrastructure, legislated through the South African Geographical Names Council Act of 1998, has also been a way for South Africa to reconfigure its commemoration landscape post-apartheid. An early change reflecting this transformation is how one of the areas within the former Transvaal, a province most historically associated with Afrikaner nationalism, became Gauteng.[59] Gauteng is taken from the Sesotho word for gold, which pays tribute to the precious metal first being discovered in Johannesburg and is one of the country's eleven official languages that is prominently spoken in the province.[60] Furthermore, renaming also creates an opportunity to honour unrecognised individuals who have played a key role in the nation's history. One expression of this is how there has been an increasing use of the term the "South African War" over the "Anglo-Boer War". This shift is a powerful gesture within historical and academic writing that allows for a more historically adequate retelling of the war that acknowledges the contribution of thousands of black and coloured soldiers.[61] Importantly, renaming is also one of the prominent ways in which those who fought in the struggle against apartheid are commemorated. A well-known example is the renaming of the busiest airport in the country, previously Jan Smuts Airport, named after the former apartheid prime minister, to OR Tambo International, after the anti-apartheid activist and politician Oliver Reginald Tambo (1917 – 1993).[62]

While renaming is an important commemorative form in South Africa, the symbolic gesture also reveals some challenges the country faces related to redressing its memorial landscape. This chapter's earlier discussion outlined how the stories and contributions of the colonists were deemed more valuable and commemorated over the indigenous groups inhabiting the land of what would later become South Africa. Adding to this, Andre Brink explores how the reconfiguring of history to suit an Afrikaner nationalist agenda

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One example discussed by the three authors is the Day of Reconciliation observed on 16 December. Before 1994 it was celebrated by the Afrikaner community as the Day of the Vow to honour the role God had played in their defeat of the Zulus in the Blood River Battle of 1838. However, the holiday was not only a cornerstone of Afrikaner identity and nationalism but also held commemorative significance as the uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) wing of the ANC was subversively established on 16 December 1961. Tensions still arise today related to the conflicting narratives of meaning the Day of Reconciliation holds for Afrikaner vs black community groups.

[59] Coombes, "Translating the Past," 35

[60] Ehrenreich-Risner, "Reading Geographical Names as Text," 31

[61] Brink, "Stories of History," 36; Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 6

[62] Cape Town Airport, "Cape Town International Airport."

during apartheid meant that “large tracts of the South African past” were forgotten.[63] Thus, there are many diverse community groups in the country whose narratives have been sidelined and undercelebrated, who have varied commemorative needs.

The failed renaming project of Cape Town International Airport is an illustration of the difficulty of navigating this demand and selecting who to commemorate when new opportunities arise, as a lack of agreement about who to honour led to the renaming initiative being “abandoned.”[64] In February 2021, the Sports, Arts and Culture department announced that the decision came after a “deadlock over which historic icon to honour” and they gave insight into a public meeting held in 2018 with Airports Company South Africa, who were leading the renaming project, that had to be called off due to the escalation of verbal attacks. Attendees were split between the “EFF supported” bid to rename the airport after Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Krotoa Eva, who was “pushed for” by the Khoi community.[65]

Seen as “the mother of the nation,” Winnie Madikizela-Mandela (1936 – 2018) was a defiant activist who dedicated her life to the anti-apartheid struggle and, importantly, Shireen Hassim discusses how Madikizela-Mandela upheld the “name and demands of the ANC” during her husband Nelson Mandela’s long imprisonment.[66] Moreover, Madikizela-Mandela remained committed to politics after the end of apartheid, serving as the President of the ANC Women’s League, Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture and a member of parliament from 2009 until her death in 2018.[67] Another noteworthy woman in South Africa’s history, Krotoa (also known as Eva) (1643 – 1674), made history as the first indigenous South African to convert to Christianity and as she entered the first recorded inter-racial marriage in the Cape Colony.[68] However, she is also known for her role as the principal interpreter for the Dutch, most notably Jan van Riebeeck.[69] Julia C. Wells describes Krotoa as a “safe intermediary” who helped the Dutch and Khoikhoi negotiate during times of war, highlighting how having intimate knowledge of both Dutch

[63] Brink, "Stories of History,” 36
[64] IOL News, “Cape Town Airport name change ditched.”
[65] Ibid.
[66] Hassim, “Not Just Nelson’s Wife,” 896, 898
[67] Ibid., 908; SA History, “Winnie Madikizela-Mandela.”
[68] Wells, “Eva’s Men,” 417
[69] Ibid., 436

and Indigenous culture meant that she played a pivotal role in fostering a cooperative relationship between the two groups.[70]

Before the renaming project was called off, Vusumzi Mba discussed how renaming Cape Town International Airport after Krotoa would be an important step in including the history of the Khoisan, which is a necessary corrective as the minority group has been "neglected and marginalised."[71] However, there is also a marginalisation of the representation of female anti-apartheid activists in South Africa's commemorative sphere.[72] Thus, renaming the airport after Madikizela-Mandela would have held great significance in light of the dominance of the commemoration of male struggle heroes. Though renaming is an important commemorative tool in South Africa, the failed Cape Town International Airport renaming initiative highlights the challenge the country can face in selecting who to honour as it transforms and expands its commemorative landscape, as well as the tensions that can spark between various groups hoping to be recognised and represented.

In addition to new public holidays and renaming, sites related to key events during apartheid also became places of commemoration in the wake of South Africa's post-apartheid "memory boom". Perhaps one of the most significant is Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned and served eighteen of his twenty-seven year sentence. Constitution Hill, inviting visitors to "walk where Mandela, Gandhi, Luthuli and Winnie took a stand", is another example of a former prison that held notable political activists, becoming a commemorative site.[73] The prison complex is made up of the Old Fort, the Women's Jail and Prison Number 4 where many black men were detained for violating apartheid pass laws.[74] The site has also been reinscribed with new meaning that speaks to the country's democratic ideals, as South Africa's Constitutional Court is based there. Walter Sisulu Square, in Kliptown in Soweto, is another key site that commemorates the location and drafting of the Freedom Charter on June 26, 1955.[75] Even more remote

[70] Ibid., 418, 437
[71] Mba, "Port Elizabeth's name change to Gqeberha is timely – now we must honour the legacy of Krotoa"
[72] Miller, "The Pain of Memory and the Violence of Erasure," 156
[73] Constitution Hill, *Visitor Brochure*
[74] Newbury, "Lest We Forget," 306
[75] Rankin, "Creating/Curating Cultural Capital," 79
Walter Sisulu was a key figure within the African National Congress who was imprisoned on Robben Island for over twenty-five years for his anti-apartheid activism. Sisulu played a leading role in coordinating

sites, such as where Mandela was captured by apartheid police in 1962, are commemorated. Mandela was caught disguised as a driver passing through Howick in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, and the area is marked by the artwork *Release* (2012) (Fig. 4) by Marco Cianfanelli, which was unveiled on the 50th anniversary of the arrest.[76] The piece is crafted from fifty nine metre columns of laser-cut steel that appear abstract at first, but when one is standing at a particular vantage point thirty-five metres away, Mandela's portrait comes into view.[77]

Commemorative representations of Mandela dominate in the country's memorial landscape as he was the leading figure of the struggle against apartheid and the first democratically elected president in 1994, whose twenty-seven-year-long imprisonment is seen as the 'Long March' that won the country's freedom. However, Miller and Schmahmann point out, there are "tensions and challenges that underpin the rendition of an icon such as Mandela."[78] The authors discuss a controversial choice by artists Andre Prinsloo and Ruhan Janse van Vuuren to cast a small bronze rabbit in the ear of Nelson Mandela's statue that stands outside the Union Buildings in Pretoria (Fig. 5). The addition was a way for the artists to "trademark" the work as theirs after they were denied permission to mark their names on Mandela's trousers.[79] It also references the hurried state in which the commission was fulfilled through the dual meaning of the word "haas" in Afrikaans ("rabbit" and "haste").[80] The "whimsical element" was deemed inappropriate and garnered critique from leading politicians and public figures, which Miller and Schmahmann see as reflective of the respect and earnestness expected of public sculpture memorials.[81]

This issue of appropriateness concerning the rendering of historical figures when commemorating them is also reflected in the debacle surrounding the depiction of King Shaka in artist Andries Botha's statue commission, unveiled in 2010 (Fig. 6). Liese Van

resistance initiatives such as the Defiance Campaign in 1952 and in drawing up the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter became significant as South Africa's new constitution, established in 1996 adopted key ideals from the document.

[76] Miller and Schmahmann, "Introduction," xix-xx
[77] Ibid., xix
[78] Ibid. xx
[79] Miller and Schmahmann, "Introduction," xviii
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

der Watt explores how Botha wanted to challenge the “stereotypical image” of the Zulu King as a “warrior” or “military leader”; however, his choice to represent Shaka standing amidst Nguni cattle, with his spear lying at his feet, was met with uproar by many.[82] While some praised the work as a more nuanced take on the historical figure, there were concerns that it was not appropriate for the king to be portrayed unarmed or amidst domesticated animals. Van der Watt includes commentary from ANC Councillor Nomvuso Tshabalala, who questioned whether there was ill will in the choice of a white artist in reducing the king to a “herd boy”.[83] As a result of the controversy stirred, the statue was removed, and Peter Hall was tasked with designing a new one.[84] Finally unveiled on 7 November 2024, the new statue stands outside the airport in KwaZulu-Natal, named in Shaka’s honour.[85] In Hall’s rendition, Shaka’s figure stands with a spear and arrow in hand at just over six metres high on a platform that itself is six metres tall.

Mandela and Shaka’s towering bronze statues are also evidence of Kim Miller and Khwezi Gule’s observations of how Western forms of commemoration permeate South Africa’s commemorative landscape.[86] Miller discusses how South Africa’s statues are reflective of “European modes of commemoration” in relation to the statue of anti-apartheid activist Nokuthula Simelane, which was created by artist Ruhan Janse van Vuuren, who had a hand in Mandela’s Union Buildings statue.[87] In the “conventional European” and “traditionalist” style, Miller points out how figures are usually portrayed realistically, life-sized or bigger, standing “heroically” on a plinth and typically cast in bronze.[88] Penelope Curtis discusses how “isolation busts, busts with allegories, full-length figures and equestrian monuments" are also prevalent in the European monumental approach. Curtis also adds how the “tendency to colossal sculpture” (expressed in a South African context in Mandela’s nine metre and Shaka Zulu’s six-metre-tall figure),

[82] Van der Watt, “Public Art as Political Crucible,” 77
[83] Ibid., 77-78
[84] Carnie, “Durban’s King Shaka still under wraps two years later, 14 years after ‘herd boy’ chopped down.”
[85] Ibid., Africa News, “South Africa unveils improved King Shaka statue at Durban airport.”
[86] Miller, “The Pain of Memory and Violence of Erasure,” 151
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

rose first in Germany and the USSR as a tool by authoritarian governments to express their power, before spreading to countries such as Italy, Sweden and the Netherlands.[89]

Importantly, Miller outlines how this European monumental tradition "typically excludes women," which is an issue in South Africa that was mentioned earlier in this chapter.[90] Troublingly, Miller discusses how in 2011, Nokuthula Simelane's statue, the only figurative sculpture of a female anti-apartheid activist at the time, was violently ripped away from where it once stood in Bethel, Mpumalanga, by two young white men who fastened a rope around the bronze figure before ripping it out of the ground and dragging it away with their truck.[91] Miller sees this violent act as a "defacement" and "dismembering" and draws parallels between the violent act against Simelane's "symbolic body" and the violence and "traumas" she was subjected to at the hands of the apartheid police, who abducted, detained, tortured and killed her in 1983.[92]

Author Same Mdluli also explores how there has been an underrepresentation of the role that black women play in political movements in South Africa, and focuses on how, when platformed, the act of remembrance is often limited to the 1956 Women's March.[93] A major undertaking in this regard was fulfilled by celebrated South African artist Noria Mabasa, who was commissioned to create a sculpture in honour of the historic March in which thousands of women from across South Africa marched to the Union Buildings in protest of apartheid pass laws that impacted black women.[94] The work was completed in 1999, purchased for the country in 2002 and displayed in front of the Union Buildings in Pretoria for several years. However, in a fate that sadly reflects the position of women in South Africa, similar to the violence enacted on Nokuthula Simelane's bronze figure, the sculpture was hidden from public view for a decade.[95]

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[89] Curtis, "The Tradition of the Monument," 42-43, 56

[90] Miller, "The Pain of Memory and Violence of Erasure," 152

[91] Ibid., 143

[92] Ibid., 144

Simelane was part of the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) which was the ANC's armed military wing and twenty-three when she was killed.

[93] Mdluli, "Space is the Place and the Place is Time," 187

[94] Javett-UP, "Invitation: Noria Mabasa Carving Histories."; Open Africa, "Noria Mabasa"

[95] Javett-UP, "Invitation: Noria Mabasa Carving Histories"

In September 2024, the Javett-UP carried out one of the most significant art transportation endeavours, moving the work from storage in the Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History to their art centre in Pretoria, the sculpture's new home. It is currently included in their exhibition "We, The Purple".

Moreover, Miller's discussion also highlights the issue of how, when women are commemorated, particularly in public art initiatives, it is usually in "non-representational terms" or "in relation to men".[96] As examples of this, Miller discusses the choice by artist Steven Maqashela of a sewing machine to honour struggle activist Lillian Ngoyi (1911 – 1980) and the sculpture of Walter and Albertina Sisulu that represents them "in the context of marriage" rather than recognising their individual contributions.[97] The Long March to Freedom Memorial (Fig. 7) is a notable correction of the lack of representation of women in public memorials. However, the visibility it gives to black women is limited as the memorial has been positioned for tourists, which, alongside the scale of the sculpture procession that currently features one hundred bronze sculptures, informs its placement. As opposed to the position male figures are typically given in busy city squares, well-known parks or regional centres as discussed by Curtis, the women in the Long March to Freedom memorial have stood in Groenkloof Nature Reserve in Pretoria and most recently can be visited in the commercial area of Century City in Cape Town across from Canal Walk Shopping Centre.[98]

In addition to statues that honour key historical figures, new museums built to commemorate the country's apartheid history are also a defining part of South Africa's commemorative landscape. The Apartheid Museum, which was opened in 2001, is the most notable. Darren Newbury discusses how it was created in a similar fashion to the United States Holocaust museums that were also constructed based on the necessity of recounting a "traumatic past" within a difficult contemporary environment where the events are in the living memory of many.[99] One of the elements that stands out in the Apartheid Museum's architecture is a design feature of seven pillars inscribed with the values of South Africa's constitution (Fig. 8). The etching of the core values of the new democracy into the museum building's design reiterates reiterate how post-1994 nation-building impacted commemoration in South Africa as sites and practices of remembrance were used to forge and platform the country's new ideals.

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[96] Miller, "The Pain of Memory and Violence of Erasure," 156
[97] Ibid.
[98] Curtis, "The Tradition of the Monument," 46; Moatshe, 55 New Struggle Icon Statues Unveiled."; Parliamentary Monitoring Group, "Parliamentary Committee Meeting: National Heritage Monument Project; Department of Tourism implementation of BRRR & Oversight Reports; with Deputy Minister."
[99] Newbury, "Lest We Forget," 275

Newbury's seminal text focuses on the important commemorative role documentary photography plays within museums about apartheid, particularly the Apartheid and Hector Pieterson Museums. Newbury shares how a "conceptual and narrative framework" is expressed through iconic images that defined apartheid's harrowing and subtle violences.[100] One such image is that taken by Sam Nzima of Mbuyisa Makhubu carrying the wounded body of Hector Pieterson as Pieterson's sister, Antoinette Sithole, runs in distress beside them during the 1976 Soweto Uprising. The image is displayed across from the memorial stone erected in Pieterson's honour at the entrance of the Hector Pieterson Museum and is flanked by a feature of slatted stone walls referred to as the "wall of memory" (Fig. 9).[101] Newbury adds how images and a narrative approach take priority over collecting and presenting artefacts.[102] This is also due to how the apartheid government actively destroyed the rich cultural heritage within black and coloured communities. Coombes cites historian Farieda Khan in a discussion about how vibrant areas such as Sophiatown in Johannesburg or District Six in Cape Town were razed to the ground as part of the forced removals of the Group Areas Acts of the 1950s.[103] Photography thus becomes a way to mediate the material loss that apartheid caused, alongside displaying the atrocities of the system (Fig. 10).

Additionally, Newbury uncovers how catering to diverse audience groups is a challenge museums have to navigate as their needs impact how apartheid narratives are told.[104] Some individuals engaging with memorials and commemorative displays in museums would have personally experienced apartheid which warrants an atmosphere and platform of remembrance, whereas the younger generation and international visitors would require more of an educational tone.[105] Furthermore, commemorative initiatives are not only able to cater to the needs of their visitors through how the traumatic apartheid past is displayed but also through where they are located. Debates about the

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[100] Ibid.
[101] Nieves and Hlongwane, "Public History and "Memorial Architecture" in the "New" South Africa," 363
[102] Newbury, "Lest We Forget," 275
[103] Coombes, "Translating the Past," 34
The District Six Museum in Cape Town is a noteworthy example of a museum that grapples with and attempts to mediate the devastating loss experienced by the once lively and diverse community. The museum places emphasis on storytelling and memory work through exhibitions, photography, guided walks, community events and their educational programs.
[104] Newbury, "Lest We Forget," 274
[105] Ibid.

appropriateness and accessibility of museums that commemorate apartheid often compare the Hector Pieterson Museum's positioning with the Apartheid Museum. Newbury outlines the discussion and highlights how in contrast to the Hector Pieterson Museum which is located on the site where the young student was tragically shot and killed by apartheid police during the 1976 Soweto Student Uprisings, the Apartheid Museum is within the theme park and recreational attraction, Gold Reef City, on the "edge of Johannesburg".[106] Newbury adds that the location of the Hector Pieterson Museum is also impactful as it offers a confrontation with the reality of life after apartheid for black South Africans living in the township of Soweto.[107]

For commemorative spaces such as the Hector Pieterson museum, location thus works to counter an observation Newbury makes whereby memorials and museums risk being seen as evidence of the "achievement of social justice" as opposed to being part of a broad and ongoing project of transformation.[108] There is thus the difficulty within the country's commemorative landscape of celebrating the individuals who fought for a democratic South Africa and the young nation's values of "human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedom", while still challenging the "forgive and forget" or "life must go on" sentiments within discussions of apartheid memory, noted by Ingrid de Kok and Ryan Holiday.[109] Related to this, Hlongwane and Ndlovu cite an interesting editorial piece from the national South African newspaper, the Sunday Times, which reflected on the 30th anniversary of the 1976 Soweto uprising.[110] The editorial raises the question of whether the students who "took on a mighty state" should be honoured through a monument, heroic poems, or having a public institution named after them. Most poignantly, the piece asks whether they should be commemorated through realising their "dream of creating a just and decent society?"[111]

[106] Ibid., 292
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid., 274
[109] Newbury, "Lest We Forget," 292; De Kok, "Cracked Heirlooms," 59; Holiday, "Forgiving and Forgetting," 44
[110] Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 4
[111] Sunday Times, Editorial, June 16, 2006, 2 cited in Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 4

These questions reflect concerns about what forms of commemoration are most fitting, particularly as the events being memorialised are deeply traumatic and resulted in the loss of life, while also revealing how there are questions raised about whether commemoration initiatives are worthy pursuits taking into account the socio-economic transformation still needed in South Africa. Elizabeth Rankin discusses how Walter Sisulu Square was an example of the tension between whether resources should be used to establish new commemorative sites or address socio-economic needs. Rankin shares how, when plans for a memorial commemorating the Freedom Charter signing in Kliptown were first proposed, residents of the area pushed back.[112] As the community was facing high rates of poverty, they pleaded for the development of new housing to be prioritised instead.[113] In response to these demands, the Kliptown Urban Renewal Project was created. In this initiative, alongside renaming the square after Walter Sisulu and building a monument in honour of the Freedom Charter in 2005, a hotel and conference venue were built in an attempt to boost "urban renewal."[114] However, as Rankin raises, it is hard to gauge what the benefit has been for residents.[115] Explored by Van der Watt, more recently, the replacement of Andries Botha's King Shaka statue is also an example of a commemorative initiative that raised concerns about the "justification for public art" in South Africa.[116] Van der Watt mentions a statement by a politician that perfectly sums up the objections raised against installing a statue of the king at a great cost, only for a new one (twice as expensive) to be commissioned.[117] The politician questioned the feasibility of the endeavor and correction "in a country plagued by fiscal problems – housing deficits, health cuts, poverty, and a struggling education system."[118]

Finally, it is not only the undertaking of new commemorative projects in post-apartheid South Africa that come with challenges, but the old and inherited memorials pose a problem and cause tensions too. The introduction of this thesis highlighted how the Rhodes Must Fall Movement in 2015 sparked a new reckoning with

[112] Rankin, "Creating/Curating Cultural Capital," 79
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Van der Watt, "Public Art as Political Crucible," 73
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.

colonial monuments and the continued legacies they represent. The decision to keep colonial and apartheid-era monuments when South Africa transitioned into a democracy in 1994 is a direct result of the nation-building ideals and "negotiated settlement" de Kok, Hlongwane and Ndlovu discuss.[119] Ross and Reinewald reflect on this, sharing how "the feared day of reckoning and acts of iconoclasm" did not unfold when Mandela, who had the difficult task of uniting all South Africans, was elected in 1994.[120] Some statues, especially those that memorialised former prime minister Hendrick Verwoed, who is seen as the "architect" of the apartheid regime, were destroyed.[121] However, many statues and memorials remained. Namely, Louis Botha whose bronze figure sits on horseback in front of Parliament in Cape Town, Paul Kruger, who stands in Church Square in Pretoria statues and the figure of Cecil John Rhodes at the University of Cape Town (UCT), who was removed in response to the Rhodes Must Fall Movement in 2013 (which chapter two will discuss in more depth). Gule adds how this move by the ANC government to "preserved" colonial and apartheid monuments was a form of reassuring white South Africans that their heritage would be safeguarded.[122] This idea is repeated by Gordon who shared that the opinions about monuments that "come under fire" are usually split between those who decry them as celebrations of racism and those who find them valuable items of history and heritage.[123] Despite conflicting views, these memorials and statues have been at the centre of heated debates from the buildup to 1994 as discussed by Coombes with the criticism escalating during the Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) movement in April 2015. This intensified debate led to acts of vandalism against the statues, such as Louis Botha who was defaced with paint by supporters of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party (Fig. 11).[124]

A survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), both in 2015 and 2017, shows that most South Africans feel as though these colonial and apartheid statues should be left alone with the second most expressed view being that

[119] De Kok, "Cracked Heirlooms," 57; Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 6
[120] Reinewald, "Images and Conceptualisation," 24; Ross, "Collage of a Country," 18
[121] Coombes, "Translating the Past," 22
[122] Gule, "To Heal a Nation," 268
[123] Gordon, "The Writing and the Bronze," 420
[124] News 24, "EFF members held for defacing Louis Botha statue."

they should be taken down and kept in museums (Fig. 12). The HSRC further analyses the survey results according to race with black South Africans favouring the option for the statues to be removed. One could argue that there was a missed opportunity also to gauge how generational differences affect perceptions, which has a big impact in South Africa. The Rhodes Must Fall movement was driven by students who are part of the 'born-free' generation that did not have a personal experience of apartheid.[125] However, these students are still affected by the systemic legacies of apartheid and colonialism, which influenced their framing of the statues as public symbols of the oppressive regimes.

In addition, as views of history in South Africa marginalise certain perspectives and are sometimes "contested", there is a need for monuments and memorials to accommodate and reflect changes when history is redefined. A key example discussed earlier in this chapter is the reevaluation of the Anglo-Boer War which was renamed the South African War to acknowledge the service of black and coloured soldiers.[126] As opposed to renaming gestures, the permanence of materials such as bronze and marble used in significant colonial and apartheid-era memorials makes it difficult to reenvision and revise them as they concretely represent individuals, ideals or a narrative point of view that is now problematic. In addition, individuals added to the narrative often "remain in the margins," as outlined by Hlongwane and Ndlovu, which can limit the impact of attempts to reimagine memorials.[127] Reflecting on this begs the question that Coombes raises in her text regarding the Voortrekker Monument that is a challenge South Africa's commemorative landscape has to grapple with: to what extent can certain commemorative forms be "reinscribed with new meanings" or overcome their tendency to exclude through how they construct and display "grand narratives "[128] This point of the "grand narratives" constructed and platformed through dominant memorial forms in South Africa is also noted by Nuttall, Coetzee, Pather and Boulle. And the issue connects with the central question of this thesis and main case study, which specifically explores how

[125] Tembo, "Born-Frees on South Africa's Memory Traps," 140
[126] Brink, "Stories of History," 36
[127] Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 6
[128] Coombes, "Translating the Past," 23; Coombes, "New Subjectivities for the New Nation," 257

colonial statues concretise “master narratives” and how performance art might disrupt this issue.[129]

To conclude this chapter, it has been discussed how memorialisation in South Africa takes on diverse forms from public holidays to renaming initiatives and commemorative statues, sites and museums. There are also unique challenges the task of reshaping memorial practices in the country post-1994 has posed, such as the difficulty in meeting the commemorative needs of different communities, narrating the painful apartheid past for diverse audiences and grappling with the death and loss that is a marker of the memorialised past. In addition to debates about what appropriate expressions of apartheid commemoration or key historical figures should look like, there are also tensions surrounding whether new memorials should be prioritised in a country facing significant socio-political challenges. Nonetheless, there is a commitment to undoing the legacies of colonialism through the reconfiguration of national holidays, renaming initiatives or the raising of new statues that allow for an inclusion of local community groups previously excluded from memorial practices. Moreover, these memorial forms allow the nation to honour important activists who dedicated their lives to the fight to end apartheid. However, the country still struggles to adequately and appropriately memorialise women.

In addition, this chapter started by outlining how commemoration played a key role in creating a new identity for the new democratic South Africa, which was defined by concepts such as nation building, renewal and diversity. However, these ideals are sometimes at odds with what the inherited colonial and apartheid era monuments represent and the tensions these monuments spark. This will be further analysed and become clearer in the next chapter, which will focus on how the artist Sethembile Msezane engages with the presence of colonial statues in South Africa and the exclusionary memorial practices they can be seen to represent, which her practice challenges.

[129] Nuttall and Coetzee, “Introduction,” 14; Pather and Boulle, “Introduction,” 9-10

2. In Chapungu's Spirit: The Challenge to Commemoration That Rose the Day Rhodes Fell

Confronting Colonial Legacies

The first chapter gave an overview of commemoration in South Africa, highlighting how varied memorialisation is and how importance is placed on honouring the resistance movement against apartheid. However, as mentioned, there are issues that emerge through the country's key commemorative features, several of which are engaged with in the case study of this thesis, *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* by Sethembile Msezane, which will be analysed in this chapter. This chapter will discuss how Msezane's performance challenges the presence of colonial statues in South Africa's commemorative landscape, which was contextualised in the previous chapter alongside the tensions colonial and apartheid-era memorials cause due to the legacies they represent. In addition, the first chapter discussed how there is a challenge in meeting the representational needs of the country's diverse cultural and ethnic groups, particularly considering how dominant archives and memorial practices have excluded their stories. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the narratives Msezane's performance uncovers through the embodiment of Chapungu. In addition, this section will end with a discussion of how Msezane's performance challenges the marginalised representation of black women in public memorials which was also outlined in chapter one.

The chapter's analysis of the work *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* is informed by Thulile Gamedze's discussion of the "aesthetics of insurgency" which is formed through varying expressions of style, tone, embodiment, and performance.[130] Gamedze's text is helpful as Msezane's performance expresses a defiance and aesthetic character that speaks to the decolonial student protest movement that led to the removal of Cecil John Rhodes' statue that the performance engages with. In addition, Gamedze discusses how reading decolonial expressions of resistance in terms of these characteristics can uncover new meaning, which this chapter's analysis of Msezane's work will uncover.[131]

[130] Gamedze, "Destruction Styles," 56
[131] Ibid.

Gamedze provocatively suggests that many student protesters in the Rhodes Must Fall movement would have preferred to see the statue explode, corrode or perhaps even a beheading would have been more appropriate than the "institutionally paid-for airlifting" that removed Rhodes from his plinth.[132] Gamdedze presents these options to highlight how the statue's "gentle" removal potentially undermined the decolonial efforts of the student protesters that hinged on both spontaneous and deliberate moments of disruption, deeply informed by critical engagement with South Africa's state of affairs.[133] A key example of this decolonial "disruption" being the radical intervention of political activist Chumani Maxwele mentioned in the introduction that sparked the Rhodes Must Fall Movement.[134] Gamedze goes on to compare Rhodes' graceful fall to the drowning of the statue of Edward Colston, who was a seventeenth-century British merchant and slave trader, by Black Lives Matter protesters in Bristol in June 2020.[135] Gamedze does not make the comparison to discount the importance of Rhodes' removal, but to highlight how acts of resistance against colonial symbols should not solely be defined by their outcome but the extent to which the historical or political issue is attended to aesthetically should also be considered.[136]

The tension between the character of transformation aligning with the spirit of the resistance movements that informed them is a theme that emerges when one engages South Africa's negotiated transition from an apartheid to a democratic state contextualised in chapter one. The peaceful handover of power carried a sense of loss for some, and in some ways, the potential disappointment in how Rhodes was removed mirrors those who would have wanted a more tangible fall of apartheid and ascension of the new, democratic leaders. However, Rhodes' fall was not as uneventful as the airlifting may denote. On that fateful day on the 9th of April in 2015, as his statue came down, a powerful performance and image was slowly unfolding through South African artist Sethembile Msezane's work, *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* (2015) (Fig. 3).

[132] Ibid., 55
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid., 55, 63
[136] Ibid., 55-56

It is important to preface this thesis's analysis with an acknowledgement of the challenge that discussing the medium of performance art poses due to its impermanent and fleeting nature. For those who did not experience the performance firsthand, grasping the full essence of the artist's intervention through video footage or photographs may be limited, as details such as the atmosphere of the space, the full duration of the performance cannot always be recorded. However, as will become evident in the following analysis, Msezane's documentation can be regarded as unique and generous in its account. Writer Nataleah Hunter-Young describes *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* as a "performance-photo", which is a fitting term as it points to how the two are inextricably linked, though they also stand on their own.[137] The discussion in the following two chapters will reference both the photograph and the performance, which imbues the still image with layers of meaning that only become apparent with the context of how the performance came together and unfolded. The photograph of the intervention does more than just record material elements of the performance such as a beaded veil and makeshift wings that adorned Msezane's body or the bustling background of the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Upper Campus from which Rhodes' statue was removed. The analysis below will also show how the image is framed in such a way that it offers something new that those witnessing the performance would not have had a view of, allowing the image to become an artwork in its own right.

Sethembile Msezane is a visual artist whose practice spans across the mediums of sculpture, photography, performance and film. She sees herself as a mediator who responds to visuals (that usually come to her through dreams) in whatever medium feels most appropriate.[138] *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* saw her tap into her dream world and express her intuitive approach. A master's student at UCT's Michaelis School of Fine Art at the time, Msezane had been dreaming of a bird and conjuring up its form for weeks leading up to the performance.[139] Unaware of what would become of her dreams, she responded to the visions diligently, crafting wings in her studio in her spare time. During class on the 9th of April in 2015, after her supervisors mentioned that Rhodes' statue would be falling that day, everything finally clicked and she quickly stepped out of class

[137] Hunter-Young, "Between the Work and the World."
[138] Ibid.
[139] Msezane, interview in Nataleah Hunter-Young "Between the Work and the World."

to stage the intervention.[140] Msezane had a "rude awakening", realising that the bird's spirit had been preparing her for that moment and that it would be rising in the statue's place through her performance.[141] Though Msezane knew little of Rhodes' legacy, and nothing of the significance of the bird she embodied and its connection to him as she enacted the performance, commenting on South Africa's memorialisation of history was already a key part of her visual art practice. Notably, through her *Public Holiday Series* (2013-2014), in which Msezane's statuesque form brought South African public holidays to life to question who is typically celebrated through public sculpture memorials in Cape Town.[142] So, though the *Chapungu* performance was spontaneous, she was well prepared to enact the work her dreams were summoning through her existing art practice.

In *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell*, Msezane stood atop a white plinth in high heels, wearing a beaded veil over her eyes and an exposing black body suit. Turned away from Rhodes, she lifted her arms at her side, carrying wings made from blonde and black hair extensions bound to fabric and wood (Fig. 3). It is through these carefully crafted wings that Msezane embodied *Chapungu,* the African eagle and national emblem of Zimbabwe as she is referred to in Shona.[143] This embodiment and her defiant pose created a captivating moment of confrontation with Cecil John Rhodes' figure, challenging his statue and, more broadly, critiquing the presence of colonial monuments in public space.

As explored in chapter one, colonial statues and memorials are seen to platform ideologies, political agendas and legacies of individuals that no longer represent the values of the new, democratic South Africa. In *The Cult of Rhodes: Remembering an Imperialist in Africa*, Paul Maylam takes account of the contradictions and paradoxes that define Rhodes' life through a reflection of how he is memorialised by various biographers.[144] There is Rhodes the "visionary," the "businessman," "Rhodes the racist," the man with "dictatorial tendencies," and a "man of his time."[145] Maylam's text also reveals how Rhodes remains the most written about individual in Southern African and British Imperial history and that despite these contradictions, he also quickly became one

[140] Msezane, "Living sculptures that stand for history's truths."
[141] Msezane, interview in Nataleah Hunter-Young, "Between the Work and the World."
[142] Msezane, "Living sculptures that stand for history's truths."
[143] Garb, "Falling and Rising," 35
[144] Maylam, *The Cult of Rhodes*, 61
[145] Ibid., 6, 8, 14, 15, 17

of the most commemorated people in the late Victorian era in the English-speaking world.[146] In his bronze statue at the University of Cape Town, he was registered in a contemplative pose modelled after Auguste Rodin's *The Thinker (1904)*.[147] With his chin resting on a closed fist, and his other hand grasping a map, Rhodes peered over the Cape and beyond with what Maylam describes as an "imperial gaze".[148] Rhodes' posture over the landscape in this statue is connected to and memorialises his imperial ambitions, particularly his controversial "Cape to Cairo" railway plan which is an idea that Gamedze sees as exemplifying his "unchecked colonial exploitation in Africa".[149]

Rhodesia, present-day Zimbabwe, was named after Rhodes as he led Britain's expansion into the Southern African territory in the late 1890s and is seen as the man responsible for the ninety years of colonial oppression that followed.[150] Rhodes' imperialist ideals and colonialist domination saw millions stripped of their land as Bechuanaland and Matabeleland were conquered in the formation of Rhodesia.[151] His legacy was also problematised due to his contribution to the establishment of mining capitalism in South Africa through his diamond company De Beers, founded in 1888.[152] Furthermore, his time in politics as the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony from 1890 to 1896 saw him enact the Glen Grey Act which limited the amount of land black South Africans could own and was part of the segregationist policies that laid the foundation for apartheid, which was formalised in 1948.[153] Reflecting on how there was once a time where Rhodes' monuments did not trigger strong feelings in South Africa as they did in Zimbabwe, Paul Maylam discusses how Rhodes was initially part of the English-speaking segregation pioneers that were let off the hook during debates about colonial and Afrikaner nationalist monuments at the end of apartheid and as South Africa transitioned into its democracy.[154] However, students within the Rhodes Must Fall Movement asserted in 2015 that that time had passed. Their demands for the removal of Rhodes' statue

[146] Maylam, *The Cult of Rhodes*, 89
[147] The Contested Histories Initiative, "Cecil John Rhodes Statue in Cape Town", 3
[148] Maylam, *The Cult of Rhodes*, 57
[149] Gamedze, "Destruction Styles," 58
[150] Maylam, *The Cult of Rhodes*, 32
[151] Ibid., 3
[152] Ibid., 3, 61
[153] Ibid., 23, 61,
[154] Ibid., 32, 47

decried the legacies such as the exploitation of black labour and the dispossession of land from indigenous people they felt it enshrined and transformed it into one of the most controversial public monuments at the university.[155]

Msezane's critique is distilled in the photograph captured during the performance, as its clever framing creates the illusion that she is hoisting Rhodes away as her outstretched arms appear to fuse with the crane in the background (Fig. 3). Scholar and curator Tamar Garb uncovers how this shot was only noticed by Msezane when she looked through the photographic documentation after the performance.[156] This can be seen by those who come across this insight as divine timing and can perhaps be read as another example of the intervention of Chapungu's spirit, a quiet and auspicious collaborator with Msezane on the day to orchestrate the striking photograph just as Chapungu first guided Msezane to enact the performance through appearing in Msezane's dreams. Also, this serendipitous moment of contact not only ushers the dethroning of Rhodes, supporting the decolonial protest demands of the students standing expectantly in Msezane's midst, but the performance also reactivates history and encourages a reckoning with Rhodes' legacy. The juxtaposition of Rhodes falling and Chapungu rising shows that commemorative spaces are not only filled with disempowering, colonial figures due to a lack of indigenous symbols that bring pride, but also due to how history is often written by the victors, which the students urged needs to change.[157]

In a video clip taken on the day of the performance and which Msezane shares in her TED Talk, several people are interviewed, and viewers hear their thoughts about the performance and the pivotal moment unfolding in the background.[158] One voice commends her for her action, reflecting on how few people express their activism in tangible ways. This commenter was struck by how Msezane was performing by herself, which was a brave contrast to the collective Rhodes Must Fall protest action. Another voice commented on how she sees the performance as a statement of African pride and a symbol that can stand in Rhodes' place. A third voice remarked that "we need statues of our own," reflecting the deep desire in ordinary South Africans for commemorative

[155] UCT Rhodes Must Fall Mission Statement; Garb, "Falling and Rising," 25
[156] Garb, "Falling and Rising," 36
[157] UCT Rhodes Must Fall Mission Statement
[158] Msezane, "Living sculptures that stand for history's truths."

symbols that speak to who they are, their history and the nation they desire.[159] Linked to this last remark is Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee's discussion of how there is a challenge presented by the task of memorialising the past in South Africa which is to ensure that multiple versions of the past are nurtured and platformed over the "master narratives" that have "often" been privileged.[160] Parallels can be drawn between how colonial memorials prioritise "master narratives" in their construction and presentation of history and the absences, erasures and distortions Charles Merewether sees as a feature of historical narratives in traditional archives and the grand narratives they record.[161]

Msezane's performance speaks to these absences in troubling Rhodes' legacy, particularly what is conveniently left out when "great men" are memorialised, through Chapungu's presence that lingers over his removal. Alongside Msezane's embodiment of Chapungu that confronts Rhodes and animates his removal, Msezane reinscribes Rhodes' ties to Chapungu through the title of the work. Chapungu was first depicted through soapstone sculptures that were looted during colonial times from the ancient city of Great Zimbabwe (Fig. 13).[162] All but one of the original eight birds that were once a part of Great Zimbabwe's stone ruins have been returned, with the remaining sculpture currently in the possession of Cecil John Rhodes's estate at Groote Schuur in Cape Town (Fig. 14).[163] Historians have traced how European explorer Willi Posselt sold one of the soapstone birds he plundered (that was cut from the long pillars the birds were carved into) to Rhodes in 1889.[164]

In a conversation with Nataleah Hunter-Young, Msezane alerted her to how the motif is referenced throughout design elements of Rhodes' Groote Schuur estate and even features in the logo of the Rhodes Scholarship he founded.[165] This reiterates Henrika Kuklick's description of how Rhodes was "obsessed" with the soapstone carving, a sentiment Bruce Berry echoes, revealing how Rhodes is said to have regarded the bird as a personal emblem that was even incorporated in his decision-making.[166] Msezane

[159] Ibid.
[160] Nuttall and Coetzee, "Introduction," 14
[161] Merewether, "Introduction," 11-12
[162] Garb, "Falling and Rising," 35
[163] Ibid.
[164] Hunter-Young, "Between the Work and the World"
[165] Ibid.
[166] Kuklick, "Contested Monuments," 135; Berry, "Flag of Defiance," 502

shared how she realised that the reason Chapungu revealed herself to people through her performance was because Chapungu had yet to be returned to her home in Zimbabwe.[167] Thus, a key part of the story unfolding through Msezane's performance becomes about this soapstone bird that has been "held captive since the late 1800s."[168] Rhodes' statue and legacy are challenged by uncovering his entanglement with appropriation and colonial looting. Therefore, Chapungu's story also allows Msezane's performance to reflect how colonial monuments not only platform problematic individuals and ideals but simultaneously conceal and sanitise unsavoury aspects of their legacies. Furthermore, the lesser-known story of Chapungu's looting in the face of Rhodes' bountiful memorialisation in history books and public memorials highlights how dominant retellings of history can sideline some narratives. In addition, the photographic documentation of Msezane's recovery and display of Chapungu's story can be connected to the tradition of documentary photography that stands as a testament to apartheid's violence in many commemorative museums, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Standing Against Silencing and Erasure

In a similar vein to how the work sensitises us to whose narratives might be missing in dominant commemorative displays, Msezane's performance also critiques the missing representation of black women in public sculpture memorials. In a 2017 TED Talk titled "Living Sculptures that Stand for History's Truths," Msezane reflects on how the city of Cape Town is "teeming with masculine architecture, monuments and statues." She emphasises that "this overt presence of white colonial and Afrikaner nationalist men" means that "public spaces are hardly ever as neutral as they may seem."[169] Alan Gordon discusses the gendered nature of public commemorations which he ascribes in part to the separation of public and private spaces by gender in patriarchal cultures.[170] Gordon outlines how, as war, politics and other activities relegated to the masculine realm were

[167] Msezane, interview in Nataleah Hunter-Young, "Between the Work and the World."
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Gordon, "The Writing and the Bronze," 428

prioritised, so were men in the memorials that celebrated these pursuits.[171] While the context of Gordon's discussion is commemoration in Canada, the "muted" inclusion of historical women in public memorials he observes is also an issue in South Africa, as highlighted in the previous chapter's discussion of the lack of representation of female anti-apartheid activists in the country's public memorial sphere.

Msezane speaks to and challenges the marginalised representation of black women in South Africa's public sculpture memorials, firstly through the visibility of her body and performative display of her identity as a black woman. Same Mdluli writes about how black women's bodies can acquire political agency through performance interventions.[172] For Mdluli, as the black female body is a site of oppression, pain, trauma, violence, suffering and also is an embodiment of the politics of representation, the black female body can "exploit" this and its agency, becoming a "tool for resistance and protest against institutional power," which in the context of Msezane's performance is personified through Rhodes' statue.[173] Though the expression and materiality of her performance take on a different form from the men typically memorialised in bronze, in conversation with Rhodes and elevated on her own plinth, Msezane visually inserts herself into a commemoration canon that largely excludes black women like her. In doing so, Msezane also challenges the idea expressed by Mdluli that black women are not meant to be visible in public spaces in South Africa.[174] Msezane responds to this by asserting her visibility as a black woman, exclaiming that she too is worthy of being seen, acknowledged and remembered. This assertion was emphasised through the duration of her performance and how her presence lingered on the plinth thirty minutes after Rhodes was removed.[175] Moreover, Msezane's gesture takes on more significance as the performance unfolds within the highly public scene of the removal of Cecil John Rhodes' statue.

A black feminine presence is inscribed not only through Msezane's body but also through the feminine and African spirit of Chapungu, whom she embodies. Additionally, the hair extensions Chapungu's wings are constructed from are typically braided, knotted,

[171] Ibid.
[172] Mdluli, "Space is the Place and the Place is Time," 170
[173] Ibid., 171, 185
[174] Ibid., 175
[175] Msezane, "Living sculptures that stand for history's truths."

tied and crocheted into elaborate hairstyles adorned by black women as an integral part of their self-styling. The hairpiece is elevated in this very public scene of Rhodes' removal and stands out in the photograph as a unique crafting of a bird's wings. These wings are proudly displayed by Msezane, who defiantly takes up space in the frame of the photograph. This is expressed through the expanse of her outstretched arms that almost fill the width of the photograph's frame. Her positioning pushes Rhodes' figure into the background and subtly codes her with a sense of power as her figure appears larger than his statue, which was rendered almost twice life size. In Tamar Garb's discussion of Msezane's image, she refers to Rhodes' "dangling fragility," which is heightened by the power play where Msezane appears "monumental in spread and scope" compared to him.[176]

This monumental representation of a black women in contrast to Rhodes' dwindling figure is a powerful gesture as, for Msezane, the dominating presence of white colonial and Afrikaner nationalist figures deeply impacts the way that black women in South Africa perceive themselves in contrast to the male figures that tower in public spaces.[177] For instance, Msezane reflects on how young black girls may grow up feeling as if they do not exist through not seeing black women's figures in public statuary. This lack of visibility of black women in public memorials which has had a personal impact on Msezane and deeply informs her art practice. Reflecting on her experience of living in Cape Town, she shared: "I couldn't see myself represented. I couldn't see the women who have raised me, who have influenced me and the ones who have made South Africa what it is today, so I decided to do something."[178] This desire to enact change by asserting black women in commemorative public space prompted her Public Holiday Series which was introduced earlier in this chapter. Elements of the performance language she developed through this body of work can be seen in *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell,* such as the traditional Zulu beaded headdress that cascades over her eyes as well as the framing and camera angle that captures her figure. Similar to how she appears to "dwarf" Rhodes, her figure in the work *Untitled (Heritage Day)* is given a sense of power and appears to tower over the statue of Louis Botha, another powerful figure in South Africa's politics

[176] Garb, "Rising and Falling," 31
[177] Msezane, "Living sculptures that stand for history's truths."
[178] Ibid.

mentioned in chapter one, whose statue has been criticised as a symbol of Afrikaner nationalism (Fig. 15).

Scholar Lieketso Dee Mohoto-wa Thaluki highlights how the prominent white, male, colonial gaze, maintained through colonial memorials that still stand, is both "everywhere and nowhere," which reflects its ever-present yet inconspicuous nature.[179] Msezane speaks to and challenges how this gaze shapes the way black women feel in and navigate public space. Firstly, the decision to turn her body away from Rhodes could be interpreted as a refusal of colonial, male gazes. In addition, this is reflected through the tension between her choice to reveal her body by wearing a clothing garment that leaves her arms and legs bare, while also covering her face, which conceals her identity and softens the attention cast on her body, as she is shielded from the surrounding stares.The beaded veil over her eyes is typically adorned by a Zulu bride on her wedding day (*umgcagco*) and a maiden at her coming-of-age ceremony (*umemulo*).[180] The veil takes a different meaning and transforms from being an item worn to show the respectability of a woman meant to be unseen and pure with her eyes cast down and becomes a covering that emboldens Msezane's display of her body and assertion of her visibility in challenging a patriarchal figure. Furthermore, the veil allows for anonymity which can be read as a way to communicate that the performance is not about Msezane as an individual which points to her body being representational of black women. Garb describes Msezane as a "protagonist of black womanhood" in her analysis of Msezane's veil and costuming and shares how Msezane "subversively" stands in public, challenging the "silencing of her sisters."[181]

Nataleah Hunter-Young's observations of the "viral visual economy" the image was "thrust" reflects how Msezane's subversive stance in the performance has had great resonance.[182] The use of the image on the cover of the book *Activism: Documents of Contemporary Art* (Fig. 16), alongside its frequent resharing online, can be viewed as evidence of how the work extends beyond being about the artist herself.

[179] Thaluki, "Corporeal HerStories," 112
[180] Garb, "Rising and Falling," 35
[181] Ibid.
[182] Hunter-Young, "Between the Work and the World."

To conclude this chapter, it has become clear that through *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell*, Sethembile Msezane's body becomes an instrument through which she critiques the presence of colonial figures and the underrepresentation of black women within South Africa's commemorative landscape, specifically its public sculpture memorials. Echoing the decolonial spirit of the students who called for Rhodes' removal, she challenges Rhodes' figure and his legacy through embodying the Chapungu bird, which came to her through dreams. Chapungu's story sensitises the viewer to how the construction and commemoration of history can silence and neglect certain narratives, which Msezane further highlights and counters by asserting her presence as a black woman. Through the visibility the performance and its photographic documentation give to Chapungu's story and black women, *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* offers a critical vision of how representation can be expanded in South Africa's memorial practices. Moreover, the performance also begs the question of how the form of the commemoration of history in the country can be reimagined too, which the following chapter will discuss.

3. Reclaiming Ritual

Staging Mourning as Memory Work

Central to the main research question of this thesis, the previous chapter explored how the performance *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes* Fell critiques the enduring presence of colonial statues in South Africa's commemorative landscape and, alongside this, challenges the lack of representation of black women in public sculpture memorials. Another question this thesis is interested in exploring is how Sethembile Msezane's performance reflects how commemoration in South Africa might be expanded and transformed. This question emerges through a consideration of the challenges the country has to contend with, which were contextualised in chapter one, such as how to appropriately memorialise its past and the difficulty in meeting the commemorative needs of all who have historically been excluded from public memorials. The question of reshaping South Africa's commemorative landscape is also significant, considering academic discourse that highlights the impact post-1994 nation-building objectives and Western forms of memorialisation have had on the country's commemoration.

The chapter will first outline important ideas that inform its discussion, then it will explore how *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* speaks to mourning rituals that prove how performance art might allow South Africa to navigate memorialising events that are marked by loss, violence and death. The chapter will connect Msezane's invocation of traditional mourning rituals and an embodied spirit of remembrance to how the performance challenges the "cultural neutrality" within South Africa's commemoration that Gule criticises.[183] In this regard, the expression of African spiritual custom through the role Msezane's dreams played in bringing the performance to light and its display of a cultural garment will also be analysed. Overall, this chapter will explore how *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* reflects how performance art might allow for the expression of culturally rooted, ritualised forms of remembrance within South Africa's memorial culture.

[183] Gule, "To Heal a Nation," 277

A line of thinking that is central to this chapter is Sethembile Msezane's belief that South Africa does not "need statues" as, in her view, the "preservation of history and the act of remembering can be achieved in more memorable and effective ways."[184] Reading Msezane's performance with this in mind reflects how the work not only critiques colonial statues or the sometimes-exclusionary nature of figurative memorial practices but also speaks to how performance might be an alternative commemorative form that allows for a more meaningful safeguarding of history and expression of remembrance. Artist Hans van Houwelingen's writing on the need to "emancipate the concept of commemoration" also informs the key arguments within this chapter.[185] Van Houwelingen observes how monuments are typically raised with an emphasis of honouring an individual or group. Thus, concerning "offensive monuments" that have become problematised because of their celebration of colonialism and individuals who played a key role in this history of conquest, for example, the response is often "destroying" the monuments, "attaching" counter monuments to them or "fixing" them with description plates.[186] However, through advocating for the concept of "monuments of shame", van Houwelingen argues that the "culture of remembrance can itself be reformed".[187] While van Houwelingen focuses on dishonour becoming part of commemoration, I would like to extend this discussion of expanding the "ceremonial protocol" surrounding commemoration to this chapter's discussion of how *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* reflects how mourning as a crucial form of remembrance that might be re-emphasised within South Africa's memorial culture.

And for this focus on mourning, Gabrielle Goliath's writing and art practice have shaped my thinking. In "'A Different Kind of Inhabitance': Invocation and the Politics of Mourning in Performance Work by Tracey Rose and Donna Kukama", Goliath writes about how the two South African artists "draw on invocation through modes of ritualistic performance" as a way to push back against the exclusion and assault against "bodies routinely subjected to forms of physical, ontological and structural violence".[188] Goliath

[184] Msezane, "Living Sculptures that Stand for History's Truths".
[185] Van Houwelingen, "The Monument of Shame"
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.
Van Houwelingen discusses the "monument of shame" with a consideration of the concept's potential use with Van Heutz's monument in Oud-Zuid.
[188] Goliath, "'A Different Kind of Inhabitance'," 125

sees their performances as a "ritualistic treatment of loss" and calls attention to an "imperative to mourn" that emerges and holds great significance because of the silencing and violence that "black, brown, queer and vulnerable bodies" experience.[189] A necessity and staging of mourning is also reflected in Goliath's own performative work *Elegy* (2015-ongoing) (Fig. 17). Deborah Thomas refers to the ongoing performance series, which has been presented in various cities around the world, as a "labour of remembrance, repair and black feminist love."[190] Thomas details how, in every iteration of the performance, seven opera singers hold "a single haunting tone" for an hour as a collective "ritual of mourning".[191] The offering specifically mourns the lives traumatised and lost to sexual violence and femicide, both in South Africa and across the globe. Following *Elegy,* Goliath's discussion of Tracey Rose and Donna Kukama's work, one might argue that memorialisation in South Africa, given the country's troubling history of oppression, demands a tone of grief and practice of mourning. This chapter will argue Msezane speaks to and presents such a tone and practice.

Moreover, and related to the following discussion of how *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* reflects ritualised forms of remembrance that speak to a local, traditional and cultural expression, it is important to acknowledge that the various cultural groups in South Africa are very distinct and have unique ways of practising mourning and remembrance. As Pather and Boulle reiterate, there is no "homogenous 'Africanness'" and the "performative practices" in the country are varied, expansive and expressed differently.[192] Similarly, Hlongwane and Ndlovu point out how being 'African' and 'South African' mean different things to different people.[193] Msezane specifically expresses her Zulu identity through her performances, so specific aspects of Zulu forms of mourning and remembrance will be discussed, as this is the cultural group Sethembile Msezane is part of and references in her work.[194] However, when used more broadly, the terms 'African', 'cultural' and 'traditional' seek to highlight the commonalities in performative

[189] Ibid., 125, 127
[190] Thomas, "An introduction to *Elegy - Lerato 'Tambai' Moloi."*
[191] Ibid.
[192] Pather and Boulle, "Introduction," 2-3
[193] Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 3
[194] *AmaZulu* are part of the four Nguni tribes in Southern Africa alongside the Xhosa, Swazi and Ndebele. They make up two-thirds of the black population in South Africa and are mainly located in the province KwaZulu-Natal, though they are spread across the country.

rituals and cultural expression across the country, rather than as a flattening of the various cultural groups in the country into a monolithic. Msezane's work, and the specific ritual or cultural elements analysed below, are just one example of what it might look like to represent and display South African cultural practices in commemoration. Importantly, what underscores this chapter's discussion is the belief that performance is a powerful means through which this can be achieved.

Firstly, Sethembile Msezane embodies traditional mourning rituals through the use of hair in crafting Chapungu's wings and the black one-piece garment she wears in the performance. Zanele Tshoba defines rituals as "regular, socially approved and symbolic" gestures and highlights how they are particularly important for Zulu people as a means to deal with death.[195] Some rituals attached to mourning and death performed are funeral proceedings, hair cutting, the slaughtering of an animal, the wearing of mourning attire and isolation.[196] Black garments are typically worn as mourning attire for a period of time (several months to a year), and the practice, along with the prescribed mourning period, is referred to as *Inzilo* in the Zulu language.[197] Tiny Setsiba writes about how mourning rituals are performed to "cleanse" the close family of the deceased so they can be purified of death's "contamination".[198] There is a belief in some cultures and families that failure to perform these rituals will result in "bad luck" or "misfortune", thought to come from proximity to death.[199] Tshoba explores how hair cutting specifically is a sign of mourning as it is seen as "useful in an attempt to reach a state of healing and restoration".[200] Emphasis is placed on how "life is concentrated in the hair"; thus, cutting it is linked to death and its ability to grow back allows one a fresh start.[201] This sentiment of renewal is interesting given how, in the performance, Msezane's figure rises as Rhodes is removed.

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[195] Tshoba, "The Psychological Significance of Shaving Hair as a Ritual During Mourning Within the Ndebele Culture," 25, 42
[196] Setsiba, "Mourning Rituals and Practices in Contemporary South African Townships: A Phenomenological Study," 2-3
[197] Tshoba, "The Psychological Significance of Shaving Hair as a Ritual During Mourning Within the Ndebele Culture," 9
[198] Setsiba, "Mourning Rituals and Practices in Contemporary South African Townships: A Phenomenological Study," 5
[199] Ibid.
[200] Tshoba, "The Psychological Significance of Shaving Hair as a Ritual During Mourning Within the Ndebele Culture," vi, 4
[201] Nhlapo, "A Qualitative Analysis of Agency and Patriarchy in the Experiences of Mourning Rituals for Black African Widows in Vosloorus," 12

These mourning rituals are typically prescribed for women; however, they are also embraced by a range of close family and, to help them navigate the loss of their loved one.[202] However, it is important to acknowledge the "pervasive patriarchy in the practice of mourning rituals" as outlined by Nolwazi Nhlapo, as many women are ostracised or mistreated when in mourning.[203] The exclusion and mistreatment of women in mourning comes about as they are often blamed for negative events in the community due to the "bad luck" they are thought to carry owing to their proximity to death.[204] However, Nhlapo's text is important as it explores the agency of women who embrace these rituals, serving as a reminder that they are not just "passive victims" of the cultural mourning practices.[205] This acknowledgement of the autonomy carried by women who practice mourning rituals is pertinent and can be related to the spirit of feminine agency that Msezane's performance language makes use of, discussed in the previous chapter.

The previous chapter also pointed out how Msezane's performance uncovers how Zimbabwe's soapstone-carved birds were looted. Mourning rituals in the context of the performance can thus be connected to a sense of grief surrounding the theft of the country's cultural heritage and how one remaining carving in Rhodes' estate is yet to be returned. Moreover, Msezane's performance resists the marginalisation of black women in South Africa's public sculpture memorials. And, as highlighted in chapter one, there are many parallels between the position of women in the country's commemorative landscape and their experiences in a country plagued by gender-based violence. Therefore, similar to Goliath's performative elegies, the gesture of mourning in Msezane's performance can be extended to the silencing and erasure of black women it invokes and counters. However, the invocation of mourning rituals in the performance also speaks more broadly to South Africa's commemorative landscape, considering the death and loss that mark the country's colonial and apartheid past. In many instances, commemorating these histories and the individuals who fought to resist them necessitates articulations of grief and mourning, just like the need to Goliath points out in response to the violence and suffering black, brown and queer bodies face.

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[202] Ibid., 12
[203] Ibid., 2
[204] Ibid., 2, 16-18
[205] Ibid., 2

Before 1994, commemorating events such as the Sharpeville Massacre and the 1976 Student Uprising placed an emphasis on mourning and political resistance through observances such as night vigils, memorial services and work boycotts.[206] Interestingly, Khwezi Gule explores how, towards the end of apartheid, the funeral services of anti-apartheid activists were a "public affair".[207] Gule traces how tragic events such as the Boipatong and Bisho massacres in 1992, and Chris Hani's assassination in 1993, specifically "introduced a practice of national mourning to the public consciousness."[208] However, after the transition into democracy, memorial gatherings in honour of struggle heroes were arranged by the state.[209] Gule points out how with this "state control and choreography of public rituals," many "visceral" expressions of "grief, loss and remembrance were muted" and memorialisation thus "became alienating."[210]

The importance of public displays of mourning through funeral and memorial services is touched upon in Miller's text, which is discussed in chapter one. Miller emphasises how devastating the theft of Nokuthula Simelane's statue was due to its significance for a family who could not bury and properly grieve their daughter because the apartheid government abducted, tortured and disappeared the activist.[211] Asserting the "restorative role" public art plays within commemoration in narrating history, Miller also brings up David Bunn's discussion of how:

> "Apartheid's worst tortures relied absolutely on the fact that it was possible to kill, maim, and massacre without any record of their actions passing into the public domain, let alone into monumental tradition"[212]

Bunn's words reflect how public displays of grief and mourning hold the potential of being a form of remembrance that highlights the brutality, loss and death caused by apartheid in a way that counters how the system tried to erase evidence of its violence.

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[206] Marschall, "Public Holidays as *Lieux de Mémoire*," 12
[207] Gule, "To Heal a Nation," 276
[208] Ibid., 277
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Miller, "The Pain of Memory and the Violence of Erasure," 145
[212] Bunn, "Whited Sepulchres: On the Reluctance of Monuments," 116 cited in Miller "The Pain of Memory and the Violence of Erasure," 151

This embodied form of remembrance through mourning rituals is particularly powerful considering the violations enacted against public statues of black women in the case of Nokuthula Simelane or their general lack of inclusion or misrepresentation. Therefore, Gule's observation of the muting of grief in South Africa's post-1994 (state-organised) memorials is saddening in light of this potential and the importance of grief and mourning for families and communities grappling with death and loss caused by apartheid. However, in some ways, then, Msezane's performance gestures towards the practice of "national mourning" that became prominent in the latter years of apartheid. The wide-angle shot that the performance is documented with captures how it unfolded amidst a collective of students bearing witness to Rhodes' removal and brought together by the grief of his legacy. This crowd becomes reminiscent of those that gathered at memorial services in hopes of healing as they honoured the memory of those killed while resisting the apartheid state.

Moreover, the uplifting of mourning through Msezane's performance is also relevant considering the debates raised by Hlongwane and Ndlovu about appropriate and "acceptable" means of commemorating those who lost their lives during the fight against apartheid.[213] Marschall specifically points out how these tensions are sparked regarding how public holidays such as Youth Day or Human Rights Day should be observed. The difficulty arises as these commemorative days are connected to both "death and mourning" alongside a spirit of "joy and triumphal celebration" to mark the attainment of liberation that came with the end of apartheid.[214] Marschall mentions how a "considerable emphasis" has been placed on recreation and "the entertainment element" during commemorative events on public holidays to garner participation from the youth.[215] This reality of how less attention is paid to grief and mourning makes the display of mourning rituals in Msezane's performance more significant.

[213] Hlongwane and Ndlovu, "Introduction," 4
[214] Marschall, "Public Holidays as *Lieux de Mémoire,*" 14-15
[215] Ibid., 16

A Cultural Essence of Memorialisation

In addition, *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* also counters the "cultural neutrality" within South Africa's memorial landscape that Gule highlights alongside the minimisation of grief.[216] Msezane does this through invoking African traditional spirituality and through the display of a piece of traditional attire. The "cultural neutrality" Gule calls attention to in South Africa is evident in the government's commemorative ceremonies, which feature "colonial memes" that can be isolating.[217] Surmised from Gule's text is that the colonial character of the state's commemoration projects is connected to its reliance on "symbols that largely ignore traditional practices" in the country.[218] The first chapter of this thesis explored how one way this materialises is through the presence of "monumental, statuesque" bronze figures. Related to public holidays, which were also discussed in the first chapter, another trend within memorialisation in South Africa that expresses a distance from cultural expression is how Heritage Day has increasingly become referred to as "braai day". The term references the South African-style barbecue that many families host in celebration of Heritage Day. However, this emphasis on braaiing sparks tension in the country and receives pushback from those who see the shift as detracting from the rich cultural heritage the public holiday is meant to platform.[219]

Msezane embodies the holiday in her Public Holiday Series (2013 – 2014) which sees her adorned in traditional attire worn by Zulu women (Fig. 15). Msezane's styling in the work becomes a powerful assertion of her cultural identity, taking into account the waning observance of wearing one's cultural dress in celebration of Heritage Day. While Heritage Day specifically calls for South Africans to wear their traditional clothing, Msezane extends this and incorporates traditional garments in several other performances within her Public Holiday Series and related to the focus of this thesis, *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell*. Though cultural clothing is more prominent in Msezane's other performance interventions, the beaded veil that drapes over her face in

[216] Gule, "To Heal a Nation," 277
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid., 274
[219] News 24, "Braai Day Is A Mockery Of My Culture."
While referencing this source comes with limitations, as it is an opinion article, it is helpful in providing insight into how those who oppose the trend.

Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell is a small but important mark that reflects the artist's commitment to platforming her cultural identity in performances. Tamar Garb also points out the significance of the beaded veil as a reoccurring motif in Msezane's work, focusing on how it becomes an "identifiable inscription of a uniquely African femininity".[220] The aforementioned performances by Msezane comment on how South Africa commemorates its history, with a focus on who is excluded from memorial initiatives. Therefore, the emphasis on cultural attire also makes visible what it might look like to (re)prioritise traditional, South African aesthetic expressions within the country's modes of commemoration.

In highlighting the colonial influence on commemoration in South Africa, Gule points out how many of the country's memorial forms are in contrast with local and traditional forms of remembrance that are "steeped in indigenous religious practices".[221] This thesis has already explored the role commemoration played in constructing a new identity for the country as it transitioned into a democracy after 1994. Linked to this, Gule highlights how the ways in which South Africa's identity has been shaped fails to account for how a large proportion of the country "venerates ancestors".[222] Another cultural element that *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes* Fell platforms is African traditional spirituality and ancestral reverence through the role Msezane's dreams and Chapungu's spirit played in bringing the performance to life. This aspect of the case study becomes important and highly relevant following Gule's discussion, which calls attention to how this is missing in South Africa's commemorative practices.

As explored in chapter two, which contextualised how the performance came together, Msezane received prompting through her dreams to create wings that would eventually allow her to embody Chapungu during Rhodes' removal. Speaking to Nataleah Hunter-Young about the performance and her artmaking approach, Msezane mentioned how she is "in constant conversation with the spiritual world".[223] Tapping into her spiritual practice and heading the call communicated through her dreams, Msezane became a mediator who allowed Chapungu a physical form. Importantly, Chapungu's visitation and

[220] Garb, "Rising and Falling," 35
[221] Gule, "To Heal a Nation," 274
[222] Ibid.
[223] Msezane, interview in Hunter-Young, "Between the Work and the World."

this insistence on being materialised through Msezane's performance bring to mind ancestral communion and the practice of revering and performing remembrance rituals for one's ancestors. This is noteworthy as communicating with and honouring the memory of ancestors is important in traditional Southern African spirituality, and as mentioned above, it is something Gule notes is missing from South Africa's commemoration practices.

For Zulu people, ancestors are "deceased, very elderly and/or living dead persons who continue to communicate with their children".[224] Ancestors are venerated through various rituals and actions referred to as *umsebenzi* in Zulu.[225] These practices maintain the relationship with the ancestor as the connection is seen to offer "protection, health and balancing of individuals, family and cultural dynamics."[226] It is believed that ancestors communicate with the living through visions and dreams that typically communicate a "warning", offer "guidance", or call someone to divination work.[227] Individuals often have help decoding these "dream messages", which was the case for Msezane as Hunter-Young details how the artist "grew better connected to her dreams by sharing them with her grandfather."[228]

Gule explores how, for those who embrace traditional spirituality, there is a belief that the spirits of individuals who pass on tragically are trapped on earth and loom over the family, often leaving a path of affliction and bad luck in their wake.[229] Edwards et al also explain how this belief informs the importance placed on paying respect to the ancestors through various rituals.[230] The writing of Gule and Edwards et al helps draw a connection between how ancestors long to be remembered and the visibility Chapungu demanded through the bird's insistence on being incarnated. For this reason, Msezane's performance can be viewed as a ritual offering that gives Chapungu a physical form through which the bird can loom over Rhodes' perishing memorial, haunting him and the site like a restless ancestral spirit yearning to be returned and set free.

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[224] Edwards et al, "The Role of the Ancestors in Healing," 1
[225] Ibid., 3
[226] Ibid., 2
[227] Ibid., 7-8
[228] Ibid., Hunter-Young, "Between the Work and the World."
[229] Gule, "To Heal a Nation," 276
[230] Ibid., Edwards et al, "The Role Of The Ancestors In Healing," 2-3

Speaking to Chapungu's spirit, Msezane shared how the bird "taught [her] that there is value within our knowledge system, and that's why it needs to be kept alive". Msezane added how she believes that "we need to excavate all these cultures and knowledge systems that were buried because they never meant to exist". Pather and Boulle assert how "ritualised performance and notions of embodiment" have been at the centre of healing, spiritual, mourning, coming of age and celebratory rituals in Southern African cultural traditions.[231] Therefore, performance becomes a very fitting medium through which to recover traditional practices of remembrance within South Africa's field of commemoration. This can be tied to the work of Walter D. Mignolo, a prominent writer on decolonisation, who emphasises the importance of "delinking" from the pervasive ideologies of Western modernity and coloniality to create "modes of existence that are [ones] own".[232] Related to this, Msezane's performance reflects Mdluli's statement mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, that "live art is a tool used by creative activists to engage in decolonial work, revising dominant visual narratives and representational practices".[233]

To conclude, this chapter has outlined how *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* is evidence that the performance art offers an opportunity to craft a memorial culture that platforms mourning rituals of remembrance and African spirituality. The hair extensions in Msezane's performance were analysed as a symbol of black femininity in the previous chapter's discussion of how the work challenges the marginalised representation of black women in public memorials. However, in light of the loss that marks Chapungu's story as the bird was looted, the loose hair extensions could also be read as being representative of the ritual of hair cutting observed as a mourning practice. Msezane's choice of wearing a black leotard could be read similarly, considering the significance of wearing black garments as mourning attire. Msezane's public display of mourning through the performance becomes significant as the work gives a view of what it might look like for South Africa to recentre ritualised practices of mourning within its commemorative practices. Highlighted in this chapter's discussion, this emphasis on mourning is important

[231] Pather and Boulle, "Introduction," 3
[232] Mignolo, "Coloniality Is Far from Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality", 40, 44
[233] Mdluli, "Space Is the Place and Place Is Time," 181

and meaningful when keeping in mind violence, loss and death that defines the country's colonial and apartheid past and instances of the muting of grief or emphasis on celebratory commemorative events.

Moreover, the work speaks to African spirituality and forms of remembrance through the role Msezane's dreams and communication with the spirit of Chapungu played in her staging the performance. Along with this, the chapter explored how Chapungu takes on the character of a restless ancestral spirit that yearns to be remembered. Additionally, this chapter argued that the ancestral remembrance and, therefore, traditional spirituality, expressed in the performance, can be connected to writing about the need for South Africa to decolonise how it memorialises its past. Specifically, the literature emphasises how there is an opportunity for the country to embrace memorial forms that reflect local and ritualised practices. As shown through this chapter, Msezane's performance speaks to this shift and becomes an example of how traditional customs and rituals of memorialisation can be incorporated into South Africa's commemorative landscape.

Conclusion

The central research question this thesis sought to explore was how South African performance art might challenge how the country commemorates its past. In turn, the thesis also asked how performance art provides a view of how South Africa's memorial practices that garner critical engagement might be transformed and reshaped. Through analysing the case study *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* by South African artist Sethembile Msezane, this thesis has shown how performance art is a powerful means through which colonial legacies in the country's memorial practices can be challenged. Msezane's work firstly forces this confrontation through a critique of the presence of statues such as that of Cecil John Rhodes. This thesis contextualised how the statue represented and asserted Rhodes' colonial and imperial dominance over Southern Africa and was chiefly problematised through the Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) protest movement sparked at the University of Cape Town in April 2015. Msezane's performance unfolds against a backdrop of a determined crowd gathered to witness Rhodes' removal. Rising in the wind of the student's rallying cries for a decolonised university, Msezane's outstretched wings merge with the crane uprooting Rhodes from his plinth.

The thesis paid careful attention to this defining moment captured from the performance, reading a subtle, yet powerful decolonial aesthetic into the image. The thesis also provided an overview of South Africa's memorial culture, providing insight into the context within which Msezane intervenes. Through this discussion, it became apparent that undoing the harmful imprint of colonialism and apartheid and transforming the country's commemorative landscape was a priority. Refashioning the public holiday calendar and renaming public infrastructure to honour the nation's liberation struggle reflects this commitment. Thus, Msezane's performance is situated within a post-1994 context of coming face-to-face with colonial and apartheid legacies through dominant forms of memorialisation. However, though the nation's painful and complex history leaves much room for revision, many challenges come with remodelling South Africa's memorial practices, namely redressing an inherited commemorative culture that was chiefly constructed to exclude and misrepresent indigenous and non-white groups in the country.

This thesis examined how Msezane's performance addresses the exclusionary nature of commemoration, particularly in public sculpture memorials, in two ways. Firstly, through embodying Zimbabwe's soapstone bird, Chapungu, Msezane uncovers the story of the sacred carving's looting. Platforming the lesser-told story of Chapungu and her looting in relation to Rhodes, who Paul Maylam notes quickly became one of the most memorialised individuals in the English-speaking world during his time, reflects how performance art might be a commemorative medium through which silenced historical narratives can be recovered and displayed.[234] Furthermore, Msezane's performance comments on and subverts how black women are underrepresented in South Africa's public sculpture memorials. In discussing this aspect of her work, this thesis connected Msezane's performance language to writing about how the black female body can "exploit" its status as the site of violence and trauma in resistance to the "institutional power" that oppresses it.[235] As the position of black women in South Africa's memorial landscape mirrors their experiences in a country with staggering rates of gender-based violence, the visibility Msezane grants black women becomes a defiant exclamation of presence. This is as it is a powerful gesture to assert black women's deservedness of being memorialised publicly in the face of erasure, assault and exclusion.

Additionally, this thesis established a connection between the vital call to mourning that artist Gabrielle Goliath discusses concerning the violence that femme, queer, black and brown bodies experience, and the grief that South Africa's brutal colonial and apartheid history evokes.[236] In terms of investigating how commemoration in South Africa might be reshaped, the thesis focused on how cultural mourning rituals can be read from Msezane's performance. The hair extensions used to craft Chapungu's wings were discussed as a reflection of the Zulu practice of haircutting when in mourning and the black bodysuit she wears in the performance was connected to mourning attire. This expression of mourning becomes significant given the waning expression of grief and mourning through prioritising commemorative celebrations, as Marschall touches on.[237] In addition, the portrayal of mourning rituals also becomes pertinent, considering Gule's

[234] Maylam, *The Cult of Rhodes*, 31
[235] Mdluli, "Space is the Place and the Place is Time," 171, 185
[236] Goliath, "'A Different Kind of Inhabitance'," 127
[237] Marschall, "Public Holidays as *Lieux de Mémoire,*" 16

observations of how the state "muted" displays of grief at public memorials and funeral services.[238] Furthermore, as the impact of apartheid continues to be felt today, there is a need discussed by Newbury for memorialisation initiatives in South Africa post-1994 to resist becoming part of a narrative of the country's "achievement of social justice".[239] Rather, their narration of history should highlight the continued need to journey along the path of transformation. Aptly expressed through performance, grief and mourning become ways of accounting for this by ensuring that commemoration also points to the pain and trauma of the past and its lasting effect in the country today.

Highlighting the performance's invocation of mourning rituals also brings up how local and traditional forms of remembrance are also underrepresented in South Africa's dominant commemorative forms. The thesis gave examples of how there is a tendency towards "monumental" and figurative bronze forms that take after a "traditionalist" European style.[240] Reflecting on this, Gule argues that traditional practices, local forms of remembrance and mourning have largely been ignored in South Africa.[241] In response to this, alongside cultural mourning rituals, Msezane's inclusion of a traditional garment and African spirituality become an example of how local customs and rituals connected to remembrance can be included in the country's memorialisation.

Overall, *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* embodies a 'New Politics of Remembrance' as alluded to by the title of this thesis. One that is rooted in shining a light on how systems like colonialism and apartheid have shaped the country's memorial culture. Moreover, the politics of remembrance Msezane expresses is dedicated to recuperating the narratives that South Africa's layered and difficult or post-apartheid nation-building mission may marginalise. The remembrance carried out by Msezane holds space for grief and mourns the loss, violence and trauma memorialisation in the country will always be tied to due to its oppressive histories. Performed with a unique decolonial aesthetic character, the work heeds the call for commemoration in South Africa to be reformed so that memorial initiatives are indicative of traditional practices of remembrance.

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[238] Gule, "To Heal a Nation," 277
[239] Newbury, "Lest We Forget," 274
[240] Miller, "The Pain of Memory and Violence of Erasure," 151
[241] Gule, "To Heal a Nation," 272

This new politics of remembrance is particularly relevant with 2025 being the 10th anniversary of the Rhodes Must Fall movement and Msezane's performance, which thrust these concerns about commemoration into public discourse in South Africa in a very impactful and memorable way. Msezane's captivating stance has had great resonance, which is reflected through the virality and use of the photograph discussed in the second chapter. Given this, while Msezane's performance was birthed in the context of the 2015 RMF movement, the artist's work also speaks to the spirit of activism within more recent protest movements, such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), that have also forced a confrontation with the lingering impact of colonialism through engaging with statues that honour problematic historical figures.

Parallels can thus be drawn between *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* and the intervention of the activist Jen Reid, who subversively positioned herself on the plinth from which Edward Colston was removed on 7 June 2020. Colston's toppling by BLM protestors has already been mentioned in this thesis in comparison with Rhodes' careful removal. Jen Reid's intervention is raised to further highlight the relevance of Msezane's work, as in the ten years since she staged her performance, there has been a continued need to confront the missing representation of black women in public memorials. This confrontation is held in tandem with acknowledging how colonial histories have contributed to this marginalisation, and more broadly, the oppression of black women. With this, there has been a growing inclusion of black women in public sculpture memorials. One example related to Reid is a resin statue cast by artist Mark Quinn titled *A Surge of Power (Jen Reid) 2020* (Fig. 18), which was erected in place of Colston. And in the Netherlands, the work *Moments Contained* (2022-2023) by artist Thomas J. Price sees an ordinary black woman standing nearly fourteen metres high outside of Rotterdam Central Station.

However, while these gestures reflect a global commitment to redress their missing representation in public space and memorial initiatives, these sculptures also receive pushback due to the hostile socio-political environment they stand in. Reid's figure was quickly taken down by the local authorities in Bristol the day after it was put in place, and *Moments Contained* found itself in the midst of controversy following prejudiced

comments from the NRC news columnist Rosanne Hertzberger.[242] Therefore, further research should pay attention to the difficult social terrain public sculptures of black women are installed and can further explore how performance art and its documentation highlight and might overcome or destabilise the position of black women in society.

An additional consideration for future researchers that this thesis raises is how performance art that invokes rituals might be a way to grapple with and mediate the historical, cultural and spiritual loss caused by the colonial looting of cultural objects. This consideration comes about as Msezane's also plays an important role in unearthing the story of the looting of Zimbabwe's soapstone birds which holds great significance considering the growing discourse about the repatriation of artefacts and art objects from European museums to the source countries and communities they were taken from during colonial times.

[242] BBC News, "Black Lives Matter: Protester statue removed in Bristol."; Hertzberger, "Het standbeeld van een jonge, zwarte vrouw op Nikes in Rotterdam is een belediging."

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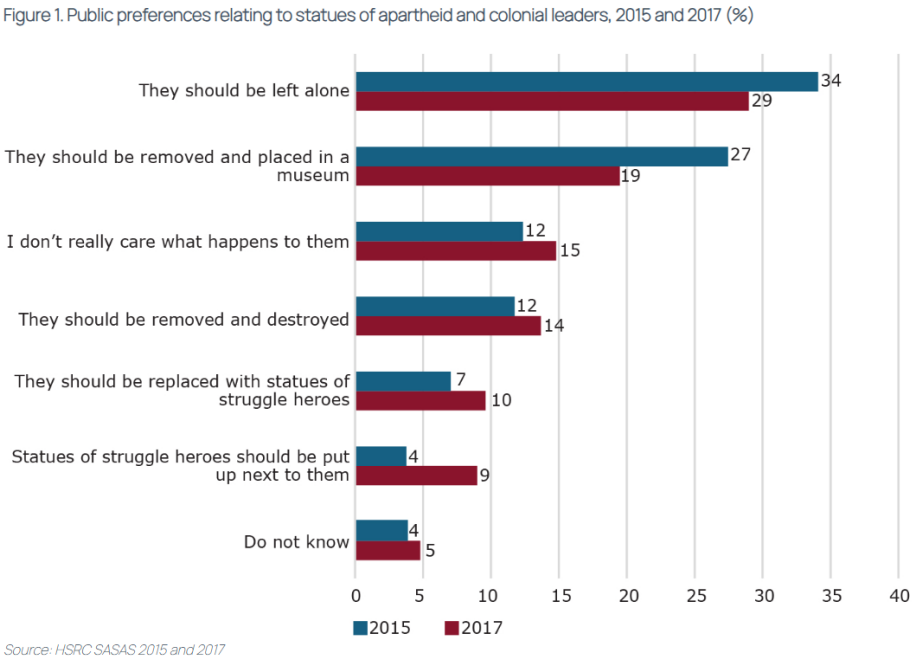

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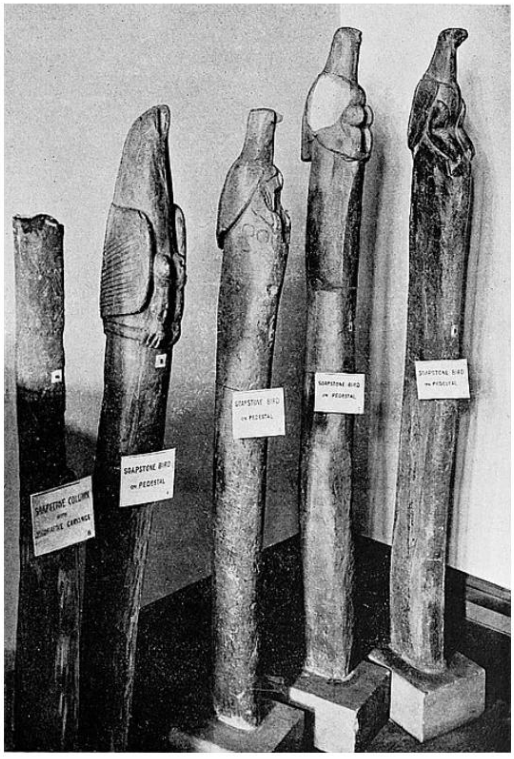

SOAPSTONE BEAMS WITH BIRDS, ZIMBABWE
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