

**COUNTER-HAIR/GEMONIES: HAIR AS A SITE OF BLACK IDENTITY
STRUGGLE IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to allow the meanings engendered by various black hairstyle choices to emerge as discursive texts with which to further explore issues of black identity in post-apartheid South Africa. It seeks to identify what, if any, new discursive spaces and possibilities are operational in the post-apartheid capitalist context, and how identities are moulded by, and in turn, influence these possibilities. Operating within a discourse analytic approach, this research did not intend to establish fixed and generalisable notions of identity, but by unpacking the discursive baggage attached to historically loaded subjectivities it is concerned with reflecting identity as an ongoing and reflexive project. Entailing a diverse selection of texts, the analysis includes self-generated texts (stemming from interviews, a focus group and participant observation), and public domain texts (stemming from online and print media articles).

Chapters 5 – 9 constitute the textual analysis. Using a consumer hair care product as a text, chapter 5 serves as an introduction to discourses surrounding black hair as a variously constructed object. This focus is concerned, more specifically, with the construction of black hair as a ‘natural’ object in chapter 6. Chapter 7 examines black hair economies and the problematic class/ification and de/classification of class and consumer identities. Discourses pertaining to the construction and positioning of gendered and sexual subjectivities are explored in chapter 8. Finally, chapter 9 is concerned with the operations of discourses as they function to construct essentialised or hybrid conceptions of identity. The implications for black identity construction in post-apartheid South Africa are discussed in chapter 10 alongside a deconstruction of the research method and researcher positioning.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
INTRODUCTION	
Chapter 1: South Africa now: out with the old, in with the new	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	
Chapter 2: Beyond the posts: identity in the global arena, postmodernism and postcolonialism	13
Chapter 3: Embodied identities: the body as a site of resistance	26
METHODOLOGY	
Chapter 4: Problematizing method: 'Culture', con/texts and discourse analysis	41
ANALYSIS	
Chapter 5: Getting 'good' hair: Discourse and resistance in black hair relaxers	52
Chapter 6: Rep/hairing the Natural	63
Chapter 7: Hair today, gone tomorrow: Hair economies and the (de)construction of class and consumer identities	73
Chapter 8: Splitting the Difference: black hair and the construction of gender and sexuality	83
Chapter 9: Counter Hair/gemonies: Difference and Essentialisms, weaving the threads together	94
Chapter 10: Deconstructing Conclusions: Hybridity, hegemony and researcher positioning	104

Bibliography	110
Appendix A	121
Appendix B	122

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE:

SOUTH AFRICA NOW: OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

We are difference ... our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, our selves the difference of masks (Foucault, 1969, p. 131).

It is not for nothing that I chose as an epigraph for my novel *July's People* a quotation from Gramsci: 'The old is dying, and the new cannot yet be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms' (Gordimer, 1988, p. 220).

South Africa and discourse

A review of the literature currently situating South Africa can also be read as a reflection on developments impacting on questions of identity in this country. While power in the form of overt oppression embodied by the Apartheid regime may have been dismantled, it continues to function today, albeit with a different lexicon of discourses and resistances. It remains imperative to continue exposing and deconstructing the discourses positioning identity in South Africa. Durrheim (1997) comments on the usefulness of a discourse analytic approach which aims to unhinge and explicate ideological/ power relations that are established in the manner in which 'objects' are systematically represented and subjects are 'interpellated' (p. 33).

A discursive perspective will be adopted in order to provide an overview of the relevant literature, while also being attentive to the nature of meaning as constructed and changeable, and riven with power relations. This is in keeping with the concept of identity as contested, and with Levett, Kottler, Burman & Parker's (1997) understanding of a Foucauldian view of subjectivity as

a self torn in different directions by competing discourses, and of a fragmented discursive space which sabotages hope of internal coherence at the very moment that it attempts to grasp it (p. 4).

In the continuum representing South Africa's passage from the old to the new, the question of identity is situated in a liminal space. Academic discourse suggests the possibility of hybrid identity constructions, however, the presence and pressure of binary modes of thinking simultaneously function to close off these opportunities. The drive towards reconciliation and unity has assisted towards the construction of a national, collective identity over the past decade. A contentious line of thought has situated the construction of 'national identities' subsequent to, and implicated in, the collapse of 'struggle identities'. The discussion below will focus on selected institutions that have emerged as transitional and representational devices, and how the discourses created by, and creating this machinery influence questions of identity. These devices function to produce a public memory that operates selectively to focus on images of the new, while variously re-creating and erasing the spectre of the past, including the representation, and interpellation of struggle identities. The role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a public confessional and archive will be addressed. Furthermore, emerging literature on the role of museums and art in the construction of memory, and the politics of representation will be examined. Finally, the targeting of new consumer identities by capitalist discourses and the contested rise of a black middle class will be discussed.

Ushering in the New

South Africans can no longer operate unproblematically within a circumscribed and secure 'national' culture. Lines of conflict are less clearly drawn ... As constellations of power shift, constructions of 'self' and 'other' are re-mapped - not only in terms of race, class, ethnicity and gender, but equally in terms of the local and the international, and in light of the ominous expansion of global capital (Atkinson, 1999, p. 16).

The phrase 'New South Africa' made its appearance in much of the press and political rhetoric heralding the end of Apartheid with the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 (cf. Nixon, 1994). Over a decade later, its history is that of a period of upheaval and transition that includes the formation of a constitution, two

general elections, the creation of a *New* government (assuming messianic dimensions under the leadership of Nelson Mandela), and the succession of that government by the Mbeki administration. The uneven trajectory of this history cuts most significantly across the problematic of identity. Bertelson (1998) claims that “since the events of 1990, the identity of both white¹ and black South Africans has been radically destabilized” (p. 224). She equates this destabilization with the construction of new historical subjects by, amongst other things, the interpellation of the term New South Africa. De la Rey further considers the implications of this in the context of post-Apartheid South Africa where the ambiguity surrounding questions of identity has provided a space within which to “seriously engage those tensions that have existed all along ... and to explore our differences and grapple with questions of identity” (cited in Magubane, 1997, p. 22).

The grand narrative of the new: a memory in advance

Discourses surrounding the *new* South Africa have been consolidated in the form of a grand narrative in a global climate of suspicion and deconstruction of epistemes. The deep irony and danger of this lies in its easy binary antithesis to the past: the replacement of the grand narrative of Apartheid and racism, perversely established “at a time when all racisms on the face of the earth were condemned” (Derrida, 1985, p. 331). The apparent ease with which this replacement has occurred, has largely been due to the vastly loaded anticipation of the end of Apartheid, and the utopian-like conditions imagined therewith. Hence, future conditions were already prescribed in the public imagination - transition took place in the realm of the possible, not in grinding everyday reality where the uneasy fit of a nation’s new clothes first began to show. Thus Nixon (1994) states that,

South Africa in the early 90's resonated with all these obsessive forms of the beyond: the New South Africa, the post-Apartheid era, the end of Apartheid. Yet, with each phrase excitement at some recognition of change was cast in terms that failed to do justice to the continuities (p. 194).

¹ The problematic use of the term race will be discussed fully on p.15. This anticipatory footnote seeks to point to the

A striking example of the conditional moment 'only when Apartheid has ended', can be observed in the Art contre/against Apartheid exhibition which was conceived as "the basis of a future museum against Apartheid" and intended to circulate in exile until the abolition of Apartheid (Nixon, 1994, p. 194). Conceived during the Apartheid period, this was the occasion for the writing of the article *Le Dernier Mot du racisme*, or *Racism's Last Word* by Jacques Derrida (1985) who describes the time period of the exhibition as that of "a memory in advance" (p. 330). The concept of a memory in advance is one aspect of the creation of public memory by discourse - operating in this regard to produce a memory of the *future* - while discourses stemming from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and consumer agendas serve to reconstruct a memory of the *past*. Memory thus functions in much the same way as Derrida's sign in which "meaning can never be immediately present ... No privileged present exists compared to the uncertainty of the past and future" (Collins, 1997, p. 173). However, while memory infers meaning from the past and future, this meaning is interpreted and drawn on in the present to construct identity. Thus, in a discussion on the different functions of memory and narrative, Brink (1998) states, "we are what we remember", but equally, "we are also...what we forget" (p. 35).

The most important way in which the function of memory is effected is through language.

The ambiguous space between the discourses of past and present, the old and the new, has resulted in an interesting convergence of issues around representation: naming and the unnamable. In *Racism's Last Word*, Derrida (1985) depicts Apartheid as "the archival record of the unnamable", and claims that the arrival of the memory in advance (the end of Apartheid) would signify that "the thing it names today will no longer be" (p. 330). According to McClintock and Nixon (1985) this notion stems from Derrida's understanding of Apartheid as "the last remaining word of racism, but also racism's apogee" (1985, p. 339). Derrida's complex interrogation of Apartheid as a word which "concentrates separation, raises it to another power and sets separation itself *apart*" (1985, p. 331), is critiqued by McClintock and Nixon as a

understanding of race as a constructed category which informs this thesis.

view which is “symptomatic of a severance of word from history” (1985, p. 341). Their argument is leveled at Derrida’s negligence in tracing the protean developments of discourses of segregation in South Africa (for example, the disinfection of official discourse at the instigation of discourses of plural democracy), thereby reifying Apartheid in the “regime of abstraction” (1985, p. 341). Furthermore, the vision of a South Africa “beyond *Apartheid*, a South Africa in memory of *Apartheid*” (Derrida, 1985, p. 331), shared by many, was arguably instrumental in the creation of the expectation that the dismantling of the official discourses and vocabularies of Apartheid would subsequently render its discursive practices meaningless. McClintock and Nixon’s (1985) argument can therefore also be read as a condemnation of the tendency towards dismissing the lingering effects of this language in the present. In this regard, Brink (1998) states that,

It is not the past as such that has produced the present or poses the conditions for the future, but the way we think about it. Or even more pertinently, the way in which we deal with it in language (p. 33).

The future of the past: memory, representation and Apartheid retro

History is the raw material for nationalist or ethnic or fundamentalist ideologies, as poppies are the raw material for heroin addiction. The past is an essential element, perhaps *the* essential element in these ideologies. If there is no suitable past, it can always be invented ... (Hobsbawm, in Hall, 1996, p. 65).

Davison (1998) points to an emerging discourse on issues of representation in museum practice in post-Apartheid South Africa. This is due to the controversial nature of museums which serve to anchor official memory by giving “material form to authorized versions of the past, which in time become institutionalized as public memory” (p. 145). Paradoxically, she claims, this process involves practices of forgetting and re/membering, inclusion and exclusion that stem from policy decisions determined by museum curatorship. Hence, while museums have been described as places of collective memory, Davison (1998) maintains that “selective memory may be a more accurate description” (p. 146). Nixon

(1994) emphasizes the need “to question the relationship between passing signs and lingering effects” (p. 196). He comments on the scramble for ‘Apartheid retro’ towards the end of 1990 when curators rummaged through garbage heaps for formal signs of Apartheid such as ‘Whites Only’ signs (1994, p. 195). He argues that the collection of Apartheid memorabilia is questionable given that “museums often serve to force a division between past and present” (1994, p. 195). The term ‘retro’ is interesting in its reference to the interpellation of a concept, object or subject which is resurrected from the past and loaded with popular meaning to function as a discourse. Hence, the insidious colonizing aspects of the scramble for ‘Apartheid retro’ are actualized by museum practice. Both Davison (1998) and Robins (1998) refer to the interpretation of particular versions of the past as serving a nationalist agenda citing the examples of Apartheid and the Holocaust respectively. This agenda aims to assert national identity as a projected means of reconciliation. Davison (1998) states that museums are significant as they are “well placed to take long-term perspectives on complex issues surrounding the shaping of identities” (p. 153). However the construction of public memory through the legitimization of new (official) forms of the past poses the danger of creating yet another dominant ideology with the ensuing fixing of identities. In this regard, Foucault (in Lotringer, 1996) states that there “is a real fight ... over what we can roughly describe as popular memory” (p. 123). He locates memory as an important factor in struggle:

if one controls people’s memory, one controls their dynamism. And one also controls their experience, their knowledge of previous struggles. Just what the Resistance was, must no longer be known” (p. 124).

Consequently, the collection and housing of struggle memories by museums plays a significant role not only in the re-production of previous identity constructions, but also in the creation of present national identities in the interests of reconciliation. Here, Foucault (in Lotringer, 1996) refers to the reprogramming of popular memory, so that “people are shown not what they were, but what they must remember having been” (p. 123).

Who speaks for South African Pasts? Memory and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

This is the way that we must deal with this for a specified time period so that we are not held hostage to the past. Once we have done this, we will close the book (Archbishop Desmond Tutu, cited in Parker, 1997).

We are subjected to the production of truth ... we *must* speak the truth, we are constrained or condemned to confess or discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit. In the last analysis we must produce truth as we must produce wealth (Foucault, cited in Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 169).

The theme of re/membering and forgetting is continued in light of the controversial nature of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC has taken place under many guises, particularly that of a national excavation and narrativisation of the stories silenced by Apartheid machinery. Unlike earlier counterparts (i.e. the Nuremberg trials), emphasis has rested largely on the reconciliatory and reparative aims of the Commission, with the granting of amnesty in return for the 'truth' about the past. Hence, Nuttall (1998) states that "in South Africa, the past, it sometimes seems, is being 'remade' for the purposes of current reconciliation" (p. 76). Derrida characterizes the workings of the TRC as contentious due to what he perceives as "the problem of the archive - that is, who decides what gets remembered, who is handling the Commission?" (1999, p. 2). He discusses the politicking around the TRC and the importance of distinguishing between the concepts of memory and the archive. The transition from memory to archive occurs as the inevitable result of testimony, which always entails interpretation and selection:

an archive is never neutral, even if only because it is a finite set of documents. There are decisions which define the field of the archive which are acts of power, they decide on the limits of the archive (1999, p. 2).

In this regard Sey (1998), argues for the interrogation of concepts of cultural memory, stating that "we need to begin sifting not only what has been recorded, but asking why certain things have been remembered or preserved and what forgotten or lost, how and by whom" (p. 2).

Robins (1998) pertinently remarks that questions around the TRC “take us to the heart of issues of memory, identity and historical representation” (p. 121). These questions involve whether or not the new nation state will “be the sole author of the official script of public memory”; and more pressingly, how does this effect the “millions of ordinary black South Africans who suffered the more mundane, everyday aspects of Apartheid, and who, unlike the activists, were not singled out for ‘special treatment’ by the state? (Robins, 1998, p. 121). The premise that one single and incontrovertible truth can be uncovered in order to present a common past for all South Africans belies the experiences of the many black South Africans who were both able and unable to tell their stories, as well as those who had none to tell. Furthermore, Owens (1996) argues that the TRC did not take into account the differing experiences of men and women during the Apartheid years. Ultimately then, Nuttall (1998) argues that the challenge has become “how we can create a collective memory that is multiple, flickering with the many meanings that individual experience can collectively bring to it” (p. 88).

The disillusionment of youth: a New South Africa and post-Apartheid capitalism

Millions of militants, youths above all ... envisioned history delivering not a nuanced, drawn out *indaba* but something more spectacularly decisive, something closer, in Aime Cesaire’s phrase, to a ‘rendezvous of victory’ (Nixon, 1994, p. 197).

All holy wars require casualties and infidels, all utopias come wrapped in barbed wire (Hebdige, 1996, p. 188).

De la Rey (1997) maintains that previously “resistance and struggle played a crucial rôle in the process of black identity formation” (p. 22). Various commentators refer to a sense of expectation and disillusionment amongst youths who identified with the struggle and awaited evidence of immediate change after 1990 (De la Rey, 1997; Nixon, 1994; and Stevens & Lockhat, 1997). This expectation was fostered by the momentous events of 1990 (and thereafter) following the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC), the release of Nelson Mandela, and the coining of the term ‘New South Africa’

by F.W. De Klerk (cf. Nixon, 1994). Stevens and Lockhat (1997) argue that the common social identity prompted by the heightened politicization of black adolescents, has been replaced by the active adoption of identities which enable a new generation to cope in a 'Coca-Cola culture' of global capitalism and consumerism. In this regard, the adoption of a free market economy by the ANC government has contributed significantly to a culture of consumerism. Bertelson (1998) refers to the unsettling or disarticulating of struggle discourses in order to realign them with new capitalist imperatives. This disarticulation hinges on strategies of forgetting and erasure whereby the cultural power of the signifiers of the South African democratic struggle are appropriated and rerouted to a "vigorously propagated discourse of consumerism and the 'free market' " (1998, p. 222). In an examination of several advertisements during the 1994 election period, Bertelson (1998) deconstructs a milk advertisement which reads, "Why cry over spilt milk when we can build a healthy nation. The past is just that ... past. It's the future that's important" (p. 226). Here we see the power of the memory in advance, any traces of the past are efficiently erased in the interests of a future (viz. nation building) as "four decades of Apartheid are written off in a mollifying cliché as an unfortunate mistake which is best forgotten" (Bertelson, 1998, p. 266). This situation is further compounded by the contradictory role expectations created by the discourses of post-Apartheid capitalism which determine that identity is increasingly conferred by possessions and appearance, while simultaneously refusing access to any material resources that allow for this. Stevens & Lockhat (1997) point to the alienating and marginalising effect of the inscription by capitalist discourses which involve a "redefinition in terms of the most prevalent social norms and values - many of which have not altered since the Apartheid era" (p. 253).

Simunye: we are one! (But where are the Others?)

All nationalisms are gendered, invented and dangerous
(McClintock, in Laforest, 1996, p. 117)

It seems to me that the whole South African national symbolic that we've just constructed is one where, as an outsider, and as a bystander and a consumer of the media, I'm always thinking of how any subject in any one of these positions, is having to work the others through. You can always disavow that ambivalence, but it seems to me it is being staged, very dramatically, in the attempt to construct the South African nation both at the symbolic and at the historical levels (Bhabha, in Attwell, 1993, p. 109).

Thus far discourses of memory and representation have been focused on and deconstructed to reveal their broader inscription by the discourses of nationalism and nation building. The latter place value on unity and togetherness, and emphasize a common past which is inimical to expressions of difference. A vast amount of exposure via national broadcasters (television and radio) and press has ensured that collective consciousness (and conscience) has been inscribed by these discourses. Hence, Bafana Khumalo's (Daily Mail & Guardian, 27 April, 1999) analysis that a Simunye-consensus is being manufactured throughout this country, is manifest daily by the message 'Simunye: we are one!' televised to countless South African households. Baines (1998) states that "a new South African national identity is being constructed discursively through the media and other forums of public discourse" (p. 3). He claims that "as cultural carriers" the media has been crucial in the dissemination of discourses reflecting on and constructing issues surrounding identity, and particularly national identity (1998, p. 3). Thus, popular slogans such as 'rainbow nation', 'ubuntu culture', and the 'African renaissance' have taken root. The emphasis on unity and sameness can be attributed to the sedulous reversal of the myth of social division created by Apartheid (Norval, 1996). From the moment of its inception in 1917, the word Apartheid was translated into a set of legal discourses which functioned to classify and separate 'discrete' groups of people in South Africa on the basis of race (Nixon, 1994). Thereafter, it assumed a more covert strategy by reinventing itself in the guise of separate development. McClintock and Nixon (1985) trace the lexical progression of

The grim rhetoric of Apartheid into talk of 'separate development', then into the even more insidious language of 'multinationalism' and 'self-determination', and most recently into the self-congratulatory discourse of 'democratic federalism' (p. 341).

As discussed above, the discourses of nationalism are intimately associated with economic discourses and the shaping of capitalist, consumer identities. There has been much debate about the collapsing of the categories of race and class in the New South Africa, particularly in light of the contentious issue of 'the rise of the black middle class'. In a media article dealing with the rise of South Africa's black middle class, Haffajee (in Maseko, Daily Mail & Guardian, 21 May, 1999) states that "there has been an explosive upsurge of the black capitalist class since the formation of the democratic government in 1994" (p. 1). However, Maseko (Daily Mail & Guardian, 21 May, 1999) claims that many writers, including Haffajee, have "treated the black middle class as something of a historical vacuum", while its growth has actually steadily progressed over the past four decades (p. 1). Arguably, the reality of an existing black middle class in the Apartheid era does not correspond with discourses of nationalism emphasizing the role of resistance in the past, or the democratic promise of shared wealth in the present.

Maseko (Daily Mail & Guardian, 21 May, 1999) details the parallel growth of "bourgeois culture and lifestyles" that have accompanied black middle class capital (p. 1). Included under the rubric bourgeois lifestyle are areas such as housing, leisure entertainment, as well as the "publication of elite glossy magazines such as Tribute, Enterprise and Ebony to celebrate their tastes, interests, and achievements" (Maseko, Daily Mail & Guardian, 21 May 1999, p. 1). The ready availability of these magazines further the interpellation of consumer identities as described by Bertelson (1998). Furthermore, magazines and popular media serve to foster the desire for the commodities that construct consumer identities. Stevens and Lockhat's (1997) concerns are echoed here in terms of the hampering of identity construction posed by this desire in the absence of material means to fulfill it. Interviews conducted with 'ordinary' people by Khumalo and Haffajee (Daily Mail & Guardian, 21 May, 1999) on the meaning of freedom vividly portray these aspirations. An interview with a woman who sells mielies reveals that her aspirations are realized by her daughter who attends a privileged suburban school, while an interview with a "newly advantaged buppie" (black urban professional), depicts a wealthy company director who traces his success

to the “new order in South Africa”(Khumalo & Haffajee, Daily Mail & Guardian, 21 May, 1999, p. 3).

The discourses of nation building, memory and representation and consumerism function in contradictory yet complementary manners to influence black identity construction in South Africa. These discourses point to a moment of disjuncture between current academic theorizing about the possibility of hybrid and multiple identity constructions, and nationalist and liberation discourses which are suspicious of expressions of difference. In this regard, McClintock (1995) notes Fanon’s ambivalent treatment of nationalism: while maintaining that nationalism is essential for mobilizing the populace, he was also aware of “the attendant risks of projecting a fetishistic denial of difference onto a conveniently abstracted ‘collective will’ ” (p. 388). The reinvention of a common past and the emphasis on a common future poses the danger of essentialising identities, rather than providing a space in which to explore the freedom accompanying diverse identities. Norval (1996) states that,

it is only on condition that the new democracy is articulated around the protection and fostering of difference, and the eradication of material inequalities, that one could truly argue to have gone beyond Apartheid (p. 305).

The following section will review these issues in the context of postcolonialism and postmodernism and the different ways in which identity is understood and constructed by these approaches.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER TWO:

BETWEEN THE POSTS: IDENTITY IN THE GLOBAL ARENA, POSTMODERNISM AND POSTCOLONIALISM

Just now everybody wants to talk about 'identity'... identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty (Mercer, cited in Woodward, 1997, p. 15).

Nobody ever speaks of a human identity (Gilroy, cited in Woodward, 1997, p. 301).

A Disclaimer about theory

Gilroy (in Woodward, 1997) states that "We live in a world where identity matters. It matters both as a concept, theoretically, and as a contested fact of contemporary political life" (p. 301). He attributes this to identity as a way of making sense of our fragile subjectivities positioned against the rude and unsteady workings of the world around us. Identities function not only to make sense of, but are also constructed by, the constitution of a global village by means of communication technology and the operations of a global economy². A burgeoning body of theory reflects on local discourses and how these interface with global discourses influencing identity construction. Hence, Hall (1996) argues that

the deconstruction of core concepts undertaken by the so-called post-discourses is followed, not by their abolition and disappearance, but rather *by their proliferation* The 'subject' and 'identity' are only two of the concepts which, having been radically undermined in their unitary and essentialist form, have proliferated beyond our wildest expectations in their decentred forms into new discursive positionalities (p. 248).

The multiple positions accorded to theories and theorists subsumed under the vast rubrics of

² The contentious nature of postmodern theory is foregrounded here by the assumption of a teeming global village, the luxury of which may in reality only be experienced by a relatively small section of the world population.

poststructuralism, postmodernism and postcolonialism form part of this complex, shifting terrain. According to de Kock (1993), all 'post' theories "are based, to some extent, on self-questioning and continuing vigilance about presuppositions" (p. 45). These frameworks influence questions of identity diversely in accordance with their different understandings of meaning as constituted by local context (being-there), or meaning as continually deferred (elsewhere, or nowhere). The focus on various theoretical positions is motivated by their contribution to the understanding of issues surrounding identity, and is not intended to portray them as fixed or stable entities. The following overview will function as a global theoretical background to the more specific situation in South Africa. The strategic value of this lies in mapping the fit between generalized global theories of identity and the reality of the local, rather than importing the one to the other.

'Ethnicity'/ 'Culture'/ 'Race'

Reiterating that there is no such thing as 'race' offers only the frail reassurance that there *shouldn't* be a problem. It cannot deal with the problems that do exist, because it fails to see them for what they are (Donald & Rattansi, 1992, p. 1).

Situated within this literature, the use of the term race is problematic and controversial. In a special issue of *Critical Inquiry* delegated to "Race", *Writing and Difference*, Gates (1985) places the term in inverted commas in keeping with the goal of the special issue to

deconstruct ... the ideas of difference inscribed in the trope of race, to explicate discourse itself in order to reveal the hidden relations of power and knowledge inherent in popular and academic usages of 'race' (p. 5).

This attempt is criticized on many levels, not least in the special issue itself, in which it is argued that the singling out of race for special attention, and its positioning as a concept which is at once emphasized and isolated by its placing in inverted commas, could merely serve to reinstate what Gates refers to as the

“dangerous trope of ‘race’ ” (Todorov, 1986, p. 371). Julien and Mercer (1996) state that “as an editorial strategy and as a mode of address, the logic of the ‘special issue’ tends to reinforce, rather than ameliorate, the perceived otherness and marginality of the subject itself” (p. 451). Similarly, the concepts of culture and ethnicity which saturate both postmodern and postcolonial writings, are nearly always used without qualification, or some cognizance of their problematic and constructed nature. Their function in this regard is often a euphemistic exchange for the use of race as an ossified category. The use of these terms and concepts in this thesis is thus attentive to these concerns, the reference is to their nature as constituted by various discourses - or as ‘articulated categories’ in McClintock’s (in Tanno & Gonzalez, 1998) understanding - and is intended as an overview, exploration and deconstruction of these discourses as they pertain to theoretical understandings of black identity construction. This is further informed by Hutcheon’s (1988) notion of a complicitous critique in which despised vocabularies have to be inhabited in order to deconstruct them.

Difference / *differance* / deference

The protean concept of difference functions as a key metaphor for the opacity of theory pertaining to identity. Like much theory deriving from postmodernism and postcolonialism it is informed by irony, and as such “demands a difficult, perhaps impossible double optic, at once fighting on terrain already mapped out...and yet, trying to prefigure styles of being and identity for which we have no proper names” (Eagleton, 1990, p. 24). As a theoretical concept difference has appeared in various forms: capitalized, italicized, underlined or lined through, the last instance appropriately demonstrating its complexity of meaning in the technique of *sous rature* or under erasure. This erasure indicates that meaning is not self-present in any word or sign, but is the result of the gap or slippage between that word or sign and that which it signifies (Loomba, 1998). Derrida (in Malik, 1996) states that the starting point of poststructuralism is the search for difference, thus “it is futile to ask who or what differs, since difference is prior to any subject” (p. 14). Malik thus argues that “Derrida uses the term *differance* to convey the

idea both of 'difference' and of 'deference', in the sense of a meaning that is always deferred, or made inaccessible" (1996, p. 7).

Othering and Difference

Theorists such as Bhabha, Fanon, and JanMohammed have examined earlier uses of difference as a colonial sequestering technique operating along the lines of an epidermal schema. Postcolonial criticism has provided insight into the legacy of difference instituted by colonialism by conceptualizing what has been termed the 'Othering' of colonized people. JanMohammed (cited in Loomba, 1996) discusses the function of Othering as a 'Manichean allegory' in which "a binary and implacable discursive opposition between races is produced" depending on the construction of colonized peoples as backward and inferior (p. 104). The depersonalisation of the colonised depended on a paradoxical binary mechanism which both pathologised difference, while imparting the mark of the plural/sameness (Loomba, 1998). Significantly, Bhabha (in Loomba, 1998) identifies this contradictory moment as a failure to produce fixed identities, and locates it as a site for resistance:

Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or the exclusion of the 'content' of another culture, as difference once perceived...[but] the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference (p. 177).

Fanon's split subject

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon describes black identity as marked by self-division. The split subject is the direct result of "colonial subjugation causing profound and pathological alienation" (Wyrick, 1998, p. 24). Drawing on Lacan's mirror stage, Fanon states that

when one has grasped the mechanism described by Lacan, one can have no further doubt that the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man. And conversely (in Wyrick, 1998, p. 42).

-Unlike Bhabha, Fanon's understanding of a structuring Manichean dynamic and its permanently Othered,

split subject, denies the possibility of locating colonial discourse as a site of resistance.

Having witnessed the liberation of many developing countries from colonial oppression, Fanon's later work was concerned with how a necessarily Manichean form of combat could promote a post-Manichean world (Wyrick, 1998). He was suspicious of various forms of nationalism which he viewed as complicit with capitalism and therefore necessarily corrupt. In this context, and writing after the emergence of the Third World as a concept, Fanon identified the Third World as an oppositional space that was "united by a common relationship to a colonial past ... and current neocolonial pressures ... relationships that map a 'shared geography of hunger' " (in Wyrick, 1998, p. 145). Fanon's contribution to the shaping of black identities by dominant discourses is significant in its extension of a Marxist perspective - privileging class as the all-important structuring factor - to include race. Loomba (1998) states that "the Marxist understanding of class struggle as the motor of history had to be revised because in the colonial context the division between the haves and have-nots was inflected by race" (p. 23). This is in direct contrast to current criticism leveled at postcolonial writers for the refusal to acknowledge the impetus of capitalism in global discourses informing identity construction. Furthermore, Fanon has been subject to criticism from feminist theorists who argue that his work is informed by sexism, focusing exclusively on male subjectivity and identity (Wyrick, 1998).

Orientalism

The concept of Othering was theoretically expanded by Edward Said's (1978) study of how European Western discourses about the Orient served to reinforce its status as Europe's Other. Orientalism is an approach with which to investigate and interrogate the hegemonic nature of discourses dealing with 'other' cultures. Said (1978) is informed by Foucault's notion of discourse as the insidious site of diffuse power which is inevitable, yet which must be examined for in the very kernel of power lies the imperative for resistance. Thus, he claims that "ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied" (1978, p.

4). Said has subsequently been criticized for reinforcing the dichotomy between the East and West by flattening out historical nuances, and not connecting “Orientalist knowledge production to colonial history and its connections with the development of capitalism” (Loomba, 1998, p. 49). Loomba (1998) claims that a charge leveled against both Said and Foucault concerns their emphasis on the imposition of colonial power and rather than resistances to it.

The implications for the study of identity afforded by this approach and its critiques are far-reaching. The need to examine the complex nature of power and hegemony and the thorny issue of resistance and agency is introduced. Furthermore, these issues need to be addressed in research – in the literature under review, in the data gathered, and in the deconstruction of the researcher’s implicit constructions. Said’s (1978) citation of Disraeli’s by now famous statement that ‘the East is a career’ has been leveled as an accusation in current postcolonial writing. In this regard, Loomba (1998) states that “many critics are beginning to ask whether, in the process of exposing the ideological and historical functioning of such binaries, we are now in danger of reproducing them?” (p. 104). The review below will focus on the concept of hybridity which, informed by the Derrida’s notion of difference/*differance*, embraces anti-essentialism as a means or site of resistance.

As so many essentialisms? Hybridity and hegemony

Blackness as a sign is never enough. What does that black subject do, how does it act, how does it think politically ... being black isn’t enough for me: I want to know what your cultural politics are (Julien, in Julien and Mercer, 1996, p. 474).

Papastergiadis (1997) argues that recent debates on postmodern subjectivity have depicted identity as being in some form of hybrid state, and acknowledged the productive nature of hybridity. He claims that the “recognition that identity constructed through difference - contradictions, fissures, gaps - is not necessarily a failure marks the language of hybridity as a site of resistance which disrupts the dominant

codes of Other/subject” (1995, p. 257). Werbner (1997) frames hybridity as a paradox which is “celebrated as powerfully interruptive; yet it is theorized as commonplace and pervasive” (p. 1). She suggests that a critical interest in hybridity must question whether the transgressive power of the hybrid becomes obviated once it becomes routine or imperative. An uneasy theoretical consensus has been reached regarding hybridity as an antidote to essentialist subjectivities. Hall, Gilroy, and Bhabha have most often been hailed as the prophets of hybridity, while Spivak (in Werbner, 1997) still in favour of anti-essentialism, critiques the academic first world infatuation with difference in light of the silenced voice of the subaltern in the third world.

Stuart Hall: the end of the innocent black subject

Werbner (1997) traces Hall’s “road-to-Damascus conversion from black radical to hybrid radical” (p. 13). This conversion entails the far-reaching pronouncement of “the end of the innocent black subject, and the confession that ‘ethnicity’ might be a legitimate form of resistance” (Werbner, 1997, p. 13). Hall (1996) states that

Once you enter the politics of the end of the essential black subject you are plunged headlong into the maelstrom of a continuously contingent, unguaranteed, political argument and debate ... You can no longer conduct black politics through the strategy of a simple set of reversals, putting in the place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good black subject (p. 444).

The rejection of a strategy of reversals does not reject the possibility of black identity, but functions rather to assert the concept of identity through difference. Solomos and Back (1996) claim that while Hall views racial identity as a “fiction ... which is necessary in order to make both politics and identity possible” (p. 137), this closure is arbitrary in nature and is always marked by the inconsistencies of various other subject positionings such as ethnicity, class and gender. Werbner (1997) locates Hall’s contribution to hybridity theory as “grounded in the Gramscian idea that hegemony and counter-hegemony must necessarily be constituted through alliances across differences” (p. 13). For Hall, hegemonic politics constitute a site of struggle over cultural and popular meaning. Here Hall is concerned with how

hegemonically preferred meanings are reinscribed and how they function to subject people to particular definitions and practices of freedom (Grossberg, 1996 b). Hall regards this struggle as discursive in nature, identifying the question of the relationship between discourses and the realities they purport to represent as the question of ideology (Grossberg, 1996 b). In this regard, Hall understands inscription or interpellation by particular discourses as the *articulation* of subjects,

I use identity to refer to the meeting point ... between, on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'... . [Identities] are the result of a successful articulation or 'chaining' of the subject into the flow of discourse (Hall in Lash, 1990, p. 8).

According to Grossberg, (1996 b), Hall views hegemony as intrinsically tied to the incorporation of culture and market relations resulting in broadly based patterns of cultural consumption. The discursive nature of hegemony constituted by the struggle over meaning means that, like identity, it is never securely achieved and is subject to a fragile and continuous momentum.

The New Ethnicities

The end of the innocent black subject also marks the end of a cultural politics that challenged and resisted regimes of representation and stereotypes, but which favoured a singular and unified 'black experience' as "hegemonic over other ethnic or racial identities" (Solomos & Back, 1996, p. 441). Hall claims that this change entails a new concept of ethnicity involving "a new cultural politics which engages rather than suppresses difference and which depends, in part, on the cultural construction of new ethnic identities" (1996, p. 446). Hall describes this difference as positional, conditional and conjunctural – likening it to Derrida's *differance* – stipulating, however, that "in order to maintain a politics this difference cannot be defined exclusively in terms of an infinite sliding of the signifier" (1996, p. 447). Like Gilroy and Bhabha, Hall emphasizes the influence upon black identity of the diaspora experience, arguing that the processes of "unsettling, recombination and hybridization contained in this experience translate into a

process of cultural diaspora-ization” (1996, p. 447). The new ethnicities posited by Hall call into question both what it means to be black, and what is involved in the subject positioning of the dominant national ideology. Papastergiadis (1995) argues that by recuperating it from a solely anti-racist paradigm, ethnicity becomes a positive concept indicating that we are all ethnically located.

Homi Bhabha and the Third Space

The concept of hybridity is understood on more than one level in Bhabha’s writing. Bhabha (1994) identifies hybridity as a more accurate description of dynamics in the colonial setting, therefore locating it as site of resistance used to expose conflicts in colonial discourse. Hybridity as an ambivalent space has also informed Bhabha’s concern with interstitial, liminal zones of displacement and states of in/be/tweeness, and his theorizing of the various ways of living with difference. Kanneh (1998) states that Bhabha “succeeds in revealing identity as a process, a problem, a panic ... at the moment of dissolution, the ‘end of the “idea” of the individual’ an enabling point of resistance can be staged” (p. 146). Echoing Derrida, this point of resistance – the moment of agency - is contained in the act of interruptive enunciation, or Bhabha’s Third Space of enunciation. Bhabha (1994) states that this Third Space renders meaning and reference an ambivalent process thus challenging our sense of cultural and national tradition and identity, and other homogenizing forces. Bhabha stipulates that Fanon’s celebrated vision of political change as a “fluctuating movement of occult instability” in which the people give shape to a dialectical moment, “could not be articulated as cultural *practice* without an acknowledgement of this indeterminate space of enunciation” (1994, p. 37). Furthermore, the assimilation of contraries entailed in the Third Space results in the creation of a split-space of enunciation, which according to Bhabha (1994),

may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity* (p. 38).

Spivak – Subalterity and who speaks for the Other?

In the foreword to Spivak's collection of essays *In Other Worlds*, MacCabe (1988) identifies a characteristic ethic of contradiction/production determining her work, stemming from an appreciation of deconstruction as a powerful method. The emphasis on perpetual deconstructive displacement is vividly portrayed in Spivak's determination to hold both of her positions - as a First World intellectual representing and identifying with Third World positions of alterity - in constant tension (MacCabe, 1988). Unlike Hall and Bhabha, she sets a limit on the usefulness of hybridity as a metaphor for conceptualizing identity. According to Papastergiadis (1997) Spivak "feels that the preoccupation with hybridity in academic discourse has tended to gloss persistent social divisions of class and gender" (p. 258). Despite a rejection of any kind of rigidifying essentialism, Shohat (1995, p. 2) argues that Spivak endorses a 'strategic essentialism' as "crucial for any multicultural struggle that hopes to allow for communities of identification". Furthermore, in contrast to the somewhat burdened notion of the Other, revalued as hybrid, diasporic and constituting a site of resistance, Spivak refers to the subaltern positioned as a Third World inhabitant and silenced by dominant discourses. Concluding that the possibility of dialogue or exchange from a position of subalterity does not exist due to the damage wrought by the colonial encounter, Spivak (in Werbner, 1997) answers her own famous question, *Can The Subaltern Speak?* (1993) negatively. Spivak's concern rests with the *representation* of subalterity, "who is speaking in place of the subaltern, and who would be able to listen to the subaltern?" (Papastergiadis, 1997, p. 276), thus interrogating ways of conceptualizing subaltern identity and the inherent benefits for the postcolonial writer or reader.

Here the problematic (and self-acknowledged) tension entailed in Spivak's multiple positioning, is characteristic of tensions in the field of postcolonialism itself. Arguing that writers and teachers are "involved in the construction of a new object of investigation – 'the third world', 'the marginal' – for

institutional validation and certification”, Spivak (1996) cautions that this implies complicity in the perpetration of a ‘new Orientalism’ (p. 201). However, both Parry (in Collier, 1998), and Said (1978) point out that Spivak underestimates the power of the subaltern in her refusal to acknowledge that hegemony is inseparable from counter-hegemony.

Postcolonialism and the consecration of hegemony

We always knew that the dismantling of the colonial paradigm would release strange demons from the deep, and that these monsters might come trailing all sorts of subterranean material. Still, the awkward twists and turns, leaps and reversals in the ways the argument is being conducted should alert us to the sleep of reason that is beyond or after Reason, the way desire plays across power and knowledge in the dangerous enterprise of thinking at or beyond the limit (Hall, 1996, p. 259).

As a major discourse informing and constructing current conceptions of identity, postcolonialism must be subject to the same interrogative and deconstructive practices that it applies to its objects and subjects of knowledge. Dirlik (1996) claims that while postcolonial writers concede that the language of postcolonial discourse is the language of First World poststructuralism, they do not consider the implications of this. Thus, he argues that postcolonial discourse is “an expression not so much of agony over identity...but of newfound power... a discourse that seeks to constitute the world in the self-image of intellectuals who view themselves as postcolonial intellectuals” (1996, p. 302). The reconstitution of the world by the vocabularies of poststructuralism and postcolonialism is thus implicated in the fetishisation of difference. Morley (1996) remains skeptical about the articulation of Otherness which could serve merely to “ventriloquise the fact of cultural difference” and replicate the exotic (p. 338). Similarly, Appiah is vehemently opposed to a kind of ‘alteritism’ which includes “the constitution and celebration of oneself as other ... and being treated as an ‘otherness-machine’ ”(in Morley, 1996, p. 341).

Capitalism and consumer identities

Dirlik (1996) argues that the fetishisation of difference, both academically and economically, occurs as a

result of postcolonialism's situation within contemporary global capitalism. In this regard, Kellner (1997), refers to the "need for more critical conceptualizations of contemporary global capitalism and theorizing of relations between the economic and the cultural" (p. 21). Similarly, Jameson (1991) argues that

The accumulation of goods has resulted in the triumph of exchange-value ...the instrumental, rational calculation of all aspects of life becomes possible in which all essential differences, cultural traditions and qualities become transformed into quantities (p. 14).

An interesting interface between Bertelsen's (1998) deconstruction of advertising imagery used to re-interpret struggle discourse in the New South Africa, can be found in Karon's (1995) *Mail and Guardian* article investigating the marketing of the 'freedoms' of democracy entailed in the use of Afrocentric imagery by the McDonald's fast-food chain. Various marketing ploys such as competitions (specifically targeted at 'black cable channels') in which winners will be "immersed in history and culture" on a trip to Africa; as well as the use of cups emblazoned with the West African Kente design, stating "Keep the Culture" are utilized (Karon, 1995). Moreover, several other major chains, including Woolworths, have "opened Afrocentric sections, stocking clothing, accessories and kente-patterned items, from wastebaskets to toothbrush holders" (Karon, 1995).

Theories concerning the construction of identities by consumer discourses are rendered all the more significant by what Hall (1996) identifies as the evasive silence in black politics with reference to issues of class. The Marxist notion of class as a determining social force has undergone several alterations to incorporate other equally important subject positionings such as gender, race and sexuality. However, having said that, recent postmodern and postcolonial theory, and identity politics are also characterized by the marked absence of questions relating to class. In this regard, Hall (1996) states that "class relations do not disappear because the particular historic cultural forms in which class is 'lived' and experienced at a

particular period, change” (p. 158). In the following section issues relating to identity such as memory and representation, Othering and difference, hybridity and bodies of theory, will be related to the body as a postmodern and postcolonial surface both inscribed by, and re-producing, these issues.

CHAPTER THREE:
EMBODIED IDENTITIES: THE BODY AS A SITE OF RESISTANCE

The dominant structures of Western societies reproduce themselves by working insidiously rather than spectacularly upon the human subject and especially the human body (Foucault, in Loomba, 1998, p. 41).

The body politic

Shilling (1993) comments on an increase in academic and popular interest in the body, which has emerged as a distinct field of study in recent years. He cites Turner's use of the description 'somatic society', adding that the body has become "increasingly central to the modern person's sense of self-identity" (1993, p. 1). According to Giddens "self-identity and the body have become 'reflexively organized projects' which have to be sculpted from a complex plurality of choices" (in Shilling, 1993, p. 181). Shilling (1993) points to the destabilizing effect that a greater degree of knowledge and control or the fiction thereof, has had on our awareness of what our bodies are. Similarly, Featherstone describes the anxiety attendant upon the body as a "changeable form of existence which can be shaped and which is malleable to individual needs and desires" (in Shaw, 1998, p. 9). Giddens states that while the body provides a 'last retreat' as an entity which appears to be a solid basis on which to base a sense of self in an ontologically insecure world, "knowledge about the body rejoins its subject matter, having the effect of altering the body" (in Shilling, 1993, p. 183). Discourses of consumerism and capitalism have a further altering effect in terms of the aura of certainty and change promoted by industries targeted at bodily appearance and maintenance.

Shaw (1998) identifies two aspects characterizing the relationship between the body and the self in postmodernity. The first pertains to body appearance as an expression of individual and personal identity;

and the second is related to body regimes as strategies employed to cultivate, create and control body appearance. Shilling (1993) refers to the various positions accorded to the body by academic accounts, evolving from an initial absent presence to the Marxist analogy between working class bodies and machines. The disciplines of feminism, postmodernism and postcolonialism have moreover been concerned to show the impact of discursive structures on the body. Hence Shilling (1993) argues that:

We now have discursive and material bodies; physical communicative, consumer and medical bodies; individual and social bodies; and medicalised, sexualised, disciplined and talking bodies (p. 39).

This precipitates the need to “understand the body in processes of action and interaction at the level of everyday reciprocities and exchange” (Turner in Richardson & Shaw, 1998, p. 3).

Gendered and raced bodies

Richardson and Shaw (1998) state that “particular attention is currently being given to complex and diverse ‘representations’ of gendered bodies” (p. 1). The historical positioning of women’s bodies as unstable and underdeveloped resulted in the increasing medicalisation and psychologisation of women’s bodies and the production of discourses about them. Schools of feminist thought emerged during the twentieth century, evolving from various positions to contemporary approaches.³ Grosz (1994) cites Spivak amongst other contributors concerned with the “lived body ... insofar as it is represented and used in specific ways...” (p. 18). Kanneh (1998) points to the current significance placed on embodiment and gendered bodies, claiming that the “operation of racial meaning through images of the female body – sexual, gendered, revolutionary or object – has a significant impact on Black feminisms and on theories of essentialism and race” (p. 158).

According to Kanneh (1998) a significant aspect of the investigation of the mobilization of race as a category, pertains to the “invention of the body as an object of analysis and knowledge” (p. 150).

Feminist investigation into the representation and construction of the hysterical female body, can be extended to the staging of the “body as a hysterical symptom of the colonial legacy” by the study of issues of postcolonial identity (Kanneh, 1998, p. 160). Kanneh (1998) discusses the complicated representation of black and women’s bodies in racist culture, which operates according to binary representations of suffering and power, marginalization and threat, submission and narcissism. He conceptualizes African identity as a constantly negotiated space, “a product of surveillance, of cultural and moral policing, and of psychological suffering”, which literally etched upon the body, reveals both the possibilities and dangers of transgression. (p. 161). Thus, Kanneh (1998) cites Fanon’s statement that “the uniform of which he becomes aware is his [sic] own body” (p. 157). Fanon’s concern with the representation and subsequent internalization and splitting of the black subject (discussed in the previous chapter) emphasizes the functioning of displaced signs and images of the body as a conceptualization of race (in Kanneh, 1998).

Commodified bodies

According to Turner (in Shaw, 1998), the notion of the self in consumer society can only be understood in terms of the distinctive role played by the body. Baudrillard’s (1998) study of consumerism, begins with the following striking proclamation: “In the consumer package, there is one object finer, more precious and more dazzling than any other – and even more laden with connotations than the automobile That object is the body” (p. 129). Following Foucault, Featherstone argues that the rapidly changing values attached to body in consumer society constitute a site of uncertainty about the body, hence the body has become an unfinished ‘project’ subject to discipline and labour to be worked on and perfected (in Shilling, 1993). Baudrillard (1998) conceptualizes capitalist society as structured by the two dynamics of production and consumption, which induce a split representation of the subject’s body as capital and as fetish. While the former organizes the body according to a corporeal economy that inscribes it with commodity value, the latter operates with a ‘latent terrorism’ to promote the constant regeneration, management and maintenance of this economy. This view echoes Foucault’s notion of the body as both

the subject and object of discourse.

The Foucauldian body in the panoptic realm

‘Our sentence does not sound severe. Whatever commandment the condemned man has disobeyed is written upon his body by the Harrow. This condemned man, for instance ... will have written on his body: HONOUR THY SUPERIORS!’ Many questions were troubling the explorer, but at the sight of the condemned man he asked only: ‘Does he know his sentence?’ ‘No ... there would be no point in telling him. He’ll learn it corporally, on his person.’ (Kafka, 1975, *The Penal Settlement*, in *Metamorphosis and Other Stories*).

Writing on Foucault almost always identifies his oeuvre as the analysis of modern forms of knowledge and power with regard to the positioning of subjects, and particularly the construction of the body (Braidotti, 1991; Fairclough, 1992; Lash, 1990; Lotringer, 1996; Shilling, 1993). Hence, Foucault (in Shilling, 1993) describes his work as constituting a “history of bodies”, predominantly concerned with mapping the relations existing between the “body and the effects of power on it” (p. 75). According to Shilling (1993), the significance of Foucault’s contribution necessitates the reference to a Foucauldian approach to the body entailing a “preoccupation with the body and institutions which govern the body, and by the epistemological view of the body as produced by and existing in discourse” (p. 75).

Lash (1990) provides an account of the way in which Foucault’s chronology of history moves from the Classical employment of external (sovereign) power upon the body, to the Modern penetration and regulation of bodies (and identities) through techniques of surveillance, normalization and confession. This transformation is represented by Foucault’s use of Bentham’s Panopticon as a means of conceptualizing new techniques of power. The Panopticon constituted a revolutionary (practical and architectural) discovery, allowing for the unremitting surveillance of its inhabitants:

...on the periphery runs a building in the shape of a ring; in the center of the ring stands a tower pierced by large windows that face the inside wall of the ring; the outer building is divided into cells, each of which crosses the whole thickness of the building. These cells have two windows: one corresponding to the tower’s windows, facing into the cell; the other, facing outside, thereby enabling light to traverse the entire cell. One then needs only to place a guard in the central tower,

and to lock into each cell a mad, sick or condemned person, a worker or a pupil. Owing to the back-lighting effect, one can make out the little captive silhouettes in the ring of the cells (Foucault, in Lotringer, 1996, p. 227).

Foucault refers to two techniques of power stemming from the Panopticon, namely “the observing gaze, the act of observation on the one hand, and internalization on the other” (in Lotringer, 1996, p. 232). Thus, Lachenicht and Lindegger (1999) state that “one of Foucault’s purposes in writing of the Panopticon was to suggest a shift from external control through spectacle to internal self-control through self surveillance”, thereby creating the conditions for the emergence of a new society. This “formula of ‘power through transparency’ ... [and] subjugation through a process of ‘illumination’ ” (Foucault, in Lotringer, 1996, p. 232) served to problematise space and the organisation of space as a technique of power. Thus Foucault (in Lotringer, 1996) argues that “at the end of the 18th century, new problems emerge: the arrangement of space is to be used for political and economic ends ... little by little, space becomes specified and functional (p. 228). Investigations into the use of space as a means of regulation and self-regulation, and as a more widespread means for conceptualizing and segregating the Other constitute a significant concern within postcolonial scholarship (cf. Darion-Smith, Gunner & Nuttall, 1996).

Bio-power and docile bodies

Genealogy as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the processes of history’s destruction of the body (Foucault, in McNay, 1992, p. 15)

Fairclough (1992) interprets the transition from archaeology to genealogy in Foucault’s writing as a decentering of the prominent role of discourse, to focus on the relationship between discourse and power. The revision of techniques of carceral practice necessitated by the discovery of the Panopticon, informed Foucault’s understanding of the techniques of bio-power shaping and ordering the individual and social

body thereby creating a “gigantic carceral archipelago” (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 49). Bio-power operates diffusely from the conjuncture between discourse and normativity, affecting the body both materially and discursively. Foucault’s intention here is to

show how power relations can materially penetrate the body in depth, without depending even on the mediation of the subject’s own representation (Foucault in Braidotti, 1991, p. 77).

Thus Smart (1994) claims that actions or practices synonymous with the achievement of hegemony find their corollary in Foucault’s objective to “create a history of the different modes by which human beings are made subjects” (p. 210). Two such modes identified by Fairclough (1992) are examination or surveillance, and confession – portraying the individual as both the self-regulating object, and self-analyzing subject of power. Braidotti (1991) similarly conceives of the body as both the object and target of power which is “manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces” (p. 78). These practices consequently combine to create docile bodies adapted to the demand of modern forms of economic production (Fairclough, 1992).

Best and Kellner (1991), and Braidotti (1991), depict the adoption of a genealogical approach as foregrounding the corporeal materiality of the subject, in order to form *resistances* to subjectifying practices. Foucault is repeatedly castigated and criticized for the repudiation of the possibility of agency to bring about social and political change in light of the pervasive and diffuse nature of discourse and power. Shilling (1993) accuses Foucault of discursive essentialism in the light of his disembodied analyses which depict “discourse affecting the body, but we get little or no sense of the body reacting back and affecting discourse” (p. 81). In response to the question of agency in Foucault’s work, Braidotti (1991) asks, “what margin of political resistance is available to the individual meant as a fragmented subject of the historical era of bio-power?” (p. 80).

A genealogy of resistance

Best and Kellner (1991) have argued that it would be a mistake to regard Foucault as a fatalist with respect to social or political change arising from his belief in the contingency or vulnerability of power. Reacting to reductive analyses of his notion of power, Foucault has stated “power is not omnipotent or omniscientIf it is true that so many power relationships have been developed, so many systems of control, so many forms of surveillance, it is precisely because power was always impotent” (in Lotringer, 1996, p. 258). Foucault was also concerned to show the positive nature of power in terms of productive effects, arguing (in Braidotti, 1991) that “power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him [sic] belong to this production” (p. 80). Braidotti (1991) states that Foucault perceived the possibility of political agency as situated in the dissolution of mechanisms of power (by means of philosophical analyses) rather than in the imposition of a liberating model. In this respect, Foucault distinguishes between practices of liberation (implying a discourse/power-free inner essence waiting to be liberated), and practices of liberty which he views as an ongoing ethical practice (Best and Kellner, 1991).

Practices of liberty are conceptualized by Foucault’s notion of care for the self or technologies of the self, contained in the third volume of *The History of Sexuality*. Technologies of the self are not situated outside the coercive structure of *games of truth* that position subjects, but in keeping with Foucault’s notion of the productive nature of power, involve the “practices of self-formation of the subject” within games of truth (Fornet-Betancourt, Becker & Gomez-Muller, 1994, p. 2). Thus, in a seminar devoted to practices of the self, Foucault refers to individuals effecting

by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (in Martin, Gutman & Hutton, 1988, p. 18).

Other bodies: Gender and race as disciplinary techniques and sites of opposition

Added to the long list of interrogations by Foucault's critics are concerns regarding the relevance of his approach for an understanding of black identity construction and the historic shaping of black bodies by discursive practices in terms of the absence of agency informed by material strategies of resistance. Furthermore, McNay (1992) argues that Foucault's approach of the body and power has significantly informed feminist critique by providing a means of positioning the body as central to women's oppression without relying on essentialism. However, she claims that a feminist appropriation of Foucauldian theory is problematic for two reasons. Foucault's emphasis on the centrality of the body remains silent on the gendered nature of many disciplinary techniques, and a serious silence surrounds the conceptualization of the body as passive. Despite this rather reductive use of Foucault's understanding of power, many theorists (cf. Burman, 1991) have employed Foucault's emphasis on the productive nature of power to demonstrate resistance or recalcitrance towards inscription. In this regard, a more salient observation on the silences of *theorists* adopting a Foucauldian approach can be made with reference to the Othering function of disciplinary techniques. Hence, Stoler (1995) claims that "contrary to evidence from most other commentators, race is not a subject marginal to Foucault's work" (p. viii). She goes on to argue that Foucault's "strategic linking of the history of sexuality to the construction of race has been conspicuously ignored" (1995 p. 19). According to Stoler (1995) the saturation of the field of colonial studies by Foucault's analytic framework, has enabled the tracing of "disciplinary regimes that have produced subjugated bodies and sorts of identities created by them" (p. 1). The move towards exploring the colonies as "more than sites of exploitation but as 'laboratories of modernity' " (p. 8) is thus in keeping with Foucault's genealogical approach and the shift from discourse to the relationship between discourse and power.

The body in the post-Apartheid moment

In the aftermath of celebrations following the dismantling of Apartheid and the ensuing lifting of *embodied* restrictions, Terre Blanche, Bhavnani and Hook (1999) identify South Africa's entry into a liberal-democratic order complete with its own "mechanisms of discipline and control, more insidious but no less effective than overt repression" (p. 1). Here liberal democracies function to foster a sense of individual freedom and choice, particularly with regard to individual ownership of the body.

Consequently, the private individual is encouraged to "assume responsibility for [the body] and to resist all attempts at outside control", thus shifting the political terrain to the individual infringement of the body (Terre Blanche et al., 1999, p. 1). The system of organized bodily segregation endorsed by Apartheid has therefore been supplanted by new freedoms related to bodily practices, depicted, for example, in the recognition of same-sex or interracial relationships. However, Terre Blanche et al. (1999) caution against the more subtle forms of power concerned with the discipline of the body, stating that "the domain of privacy and individual choice so carefully fostered by the liberal democracies is not without a politics of its own ..." (p. 1).

Hair and identity

No daughter of Eve has ever yet lived who has never caressed her hair. The women of Borneo, of Brazil on the upper reaches of the Amazon, at the source of the Zambezi – from Eve in Eden to the vanity-sodden clients of a Mayfair beauty parlour – all without exception, at some time or another yield homage to their hair (Berg, *The Unconscious Significance of Hair*, 1951, p. 5).

Not only the expressly intended communicative object...but every object may be viewed as a sign (Hebdige, 1979, p. 107).

Synnott (1993) states that the "opposition to and support of the body politic are expressed in the body physical" (p. 115). In terms of the tendency to view the body as socially/discursively constituted, and as constitutive of identity, the historical importance of hair as socially, politically and personally meaningful is rendered significant. According to Synnott (1993) the significance of hair derives from its status as

“one of our most powerful symbols of group and individual identity – powerful first because it is physical and therefore extremely personal, and second because although personal it is also public” (p. 103). He claims that the malleability of hair means that it is also “singularly apt to symbolize both differentiations between, and changes in, individual and group identities” (1993, p. 103). In this regard, black hair as part of the body politic has undergone several transformations in the last several decades, constituting a literal and figurative manifestation of debates surrounding essentialist and non-essentialist conceptions of identity. The following reflection on the work of artist Sonia Boyce appropriately articulates this significance as

The tension between what is familiar and uncomfortable on the one hand; and on the other, the unease and discomfort of what is unknown or unrecognizable. Objects of desire and objects of fear at one and the same time... the work demarcates an in-between space where competing narratives collide, become entangled but are not necessarily resolved (Tawadros, 1997, pp. 8-11).

Tawadros (1997) identifies the motivation behind Boyce’s work to address “society’s positioning of individuals in terms of race, class and gender” (p. 97).

Black hair as a changing site of resistance and identity struggle

‘Excuse me big man, what’s happening? Why are you guys all pulling your hair like that and where are you going?’
‘To the barber-shop, boy; we’re all dashing out for a haircut!’
‘Why?’
‘...Those bastards in there, those dogs are using matchsticks and pens to classify us!’
‘Matchsticks? Pens?’
‘Yes’, came the quick response. ‘Matchsticks and *fokken* pens, which they run through our hair! And when the pen or matchstick gets stuck, the Boers shout: “Go to Room 47 and get a pass!” Like we were *fokken* natives. What the hell do they take us for?’
(Mattera, in Erasmus, 1999, p. 1).

Erasmus (1997) describes an amusing moment upon finding Mercer’s article, “Black hair/Style Politics” (1987), when she realizes that “the stuff on and in my head can be theorized” (p. 32). In a series of subsequent articles, she provides an overview of the major issues associated with the racialization of black bodies and hair, from the discourses of ‘scientific’ racism to the current conception of creolized forms.

This overview entails reflexivity regarding her own construction by these discourses and their situation in a South African context. Erasmus and Mercer both emphasize the use of hair as a racial marker, with Mercer (1987) stating that “black people’s hair has been historically devalued as the most visible stigmata of blackness second only to skin” (p. 35). The function of hair as a signifier was complicated by what Erasmus (1999) identifies as South Africa’s history of differential racialisation, in which different groups were classified according to a racial hierarchy. This classificatory drive is also apparent in the infamous pencil test of Apartheid (vividly portrayed in the excerpt above), which sought to determine racial heritage by examining hair colour, texture and length. However a further complicating feature in this regard is the extreme malleability of hair rendering it susceptible to acculturation, and destabilizing meanings imposed on it.

Good Hair / Bad Hair: the changing politics of style

Erasmus (1997) details seventeen time consuming, laborious and painful steps to the achievement of ‘good hair’. These steps are widely reproduced in most consumer product formats catering to black hair, underscoring the importance attached to getting one’s hair ‘done’. Erasmus (1999) argues that the notion of good hair is not unique to black communities in South Africa, but that until recently

‘Good hair’ on a black body generally means hair that is either long, flowing, straight and looks like white people’s hair, or at least not too curly. Bad hair is short and kinky and has to be ‘made good’ ” (p. 3).

A cultural and political battle around what Mercer (1987) refers to as the two logics of black stylization, ‘natural’ versus ‘created’ looks, became prevalent in 1960 when the devaluation of natural black hair was subverted by the emergence of Black Pride and Black Power groups. In this regard the Afro, or ‘the natural’ emerged as a sign of cultural resistance to racism equating black ‘natural’ or kinky hair with black consciousness (Erasmus, 1999). Mercer (1987) claims that the emergence of hairstyles such as the Afro and dreadlocks during 1960 formed part of a counter-hegemonic process - “as elements of everyday life,

these black styles in hair and dress helped to underline massive shifts in popular aspirations and participated in a populist logic of rupture” (p. 40). He argues that the oppositional value of these styles resided in their celebration of previously denigrated black hair texture, the afro emphasizing the sheer length and splendor of ‘natural’ hair left to grow, while dreadlocks employed a matting technique unsuitable to white hair. Consequently, hairstyles were “never just natural, waiting to be found: they were stylistically *cultivated* and politically *constructed*” (Mercer, 1987, p. 40). However, despite the constructedness of these hairstyles, a binary opposition relating to ‘natural’ (signifying political and personal empowerment) versus ‘created’ styles was entrenched. According to Mercer (1987), practices such as hair straightening, perming or bleaching were interpreted as symptoms of a “psychologically mutilated black consciousness” (p. 33). Erasmus cites hooks’ indictment of hair straightening practices as internalised racism, and points to the earlier origin of these ideas in Fanon’s argument that “black people mimic whiteness, [thus] indicating a ‘damaged’ black psyche” (1999, p. 4). Both Erasmus and Mercer argue against the underlying essentialism inherent in the “assumption that there is a single, pure and natural black way of wearing one’s hair”, reducing black cultural practice to biology (Erasmus, 1999).

Hairstyling as black cultural practice

Mercer (1987) states that the counter-hegemonic project initiated by the struggle over hair symbolization is further complicated and augmented by factors such as creolization and commercialisation. The significance of the diaspora as a locating experience and its contribution to a postmodern aesthetic has informed Mercer’s view of hairstyling as a non-essentialising black cultural practice. He identifies hairstyling today as a form of “critical bricolage”, partly enabled by new hair technologies (relaxing cremes, gels and dyes), as well as an enthusiasm for experimentation, which suggests a different attitude to the past (Erasmus, 1999). Erasmus (1999) refers to Glissant’s understanding of creolisation as a “process of infinite cultural transformation” (p. 8), which denies the possibility of a return to origins, endorsing rather the reclamation and integration of fragments of experience. The move away from

'created' versus 'natural' logic is portrayed in a recent article in a South African newspaper reviewing a concert performance by superstar group The Fugees in which lead singer Lauren Hill (wearing her trademark Afro) reportedly split the audience into "all the ladies [sic] with real hair, and those without" – the significance of the moment is revealed when the reviewer claims, "it was hard to tell who were more numerous" (Sullivan, Daily Mail & Guardian, 1 November, 1996).

Hair economies

Everyone wants to be African these days. It's the renaissance era and darkies have discovered their hair... . You can do whatever you want with black hair compared to brunettes and blondes. (Ntombi Punako, in Kakaza, Daily Mail & Guardian, 2 October, 1998).

Baudrillard's (1998) contention that the body is the finest consumer object is dramatically reflected in the considerable capital generated by the black hair industry. According to Watt's (Daily Mail & Guardian, 24 December, 1996) article "Year of the black hair revolution", hairdressing in South Africa is currently a multi-million-rand industry (and burgeoning). Alongside the well over 20 000 hairstylists working in the black hair industry in South Africa (Watt, 1996), the market is flooded with an enormous range of black hair care and management products. The industry is constituted by both informal and formal business sectors, and is thereby mostly accessible to the various class divisions that structure South Africa. An indication of the vast capital generated by black hair care products was displayed in the 1998 partnership between Black Like Me and Colgate-Palmolive with the intention of a more thorough penetration of the African market (Hughson, 1998). Black Like Me has become a leading contender in the black hair care industry, launching an educational and customer-care club in 1994 aimed at addressing issues related to black hair care, as well teaching management skills (Enterprise, 1994). Similarly, many companies are expanding their portfolios to include cosmetics and skin-care ranges, as well as criteria related to business or modeling careers (Enterprise, 1994). Arguably, the endorsement of a particular black hair care range - may thus be seen to symbolize the endorsement of a lifestyle.

Mercer (1987) considers the impact of the commercialization of black hairstyles in the market place. Using the Afro as an example, he argues that its signification as a black cultural-political statement was neutralized and replaced by its subsequent signifying potential as commodity value. Erasmus (1999) similarly contends that the commodification of markers of difference mean that they are often sublimated into part of the mainstream. Here she refers to the increasing popularity of dreadlocks for both black and white South Africans, stating that this signifies a “re-making and revalorization of Africanness through the borrowings of and localization of Africentric black American images and ideas” (1999, p. 9). Mercer maps out the appropriation and commodification of ethnic signifiers as a series of skirmishes or ‘style wars’ which serve to “ambush the attempt to track down fixed meanings or finalized readings”, revealing instead the “ambiguous relations of economic and aesthetic systems of valorization” (1987, p. 49). In this way, the strategies of ambiguity and artifice, rather than the straightforward artillery of an inversion of equivalence, allows the cultural utterances expressed by hairstyles to take on the force of political statements. Ultimately then, the understanding of global market patterns as the embodiment of the power of the center over the periphery resulting in a global hegemony of sameness, is tempered by the recognition of the uses of the global for the local.

While there seem to be an endless number of styles to choose from, echoing Mercer’s preference for a creolized ‘pick’-n’-‘mix’ aesthetic (ironically reflected in some of the names – ‘The German’, ‘The English’, ‘The Oprah’ and ‘The Felicia’ amid the more sedate braids, extensions and weaves), the emphasis on the correct image for a corporate environment dictates choices that are largely gendered. Questioned about this, a Johannesburg female salon owner explains that “we are getting over the husband syndrome and doing it for ourselves ... if you’re in a corporate environment, you’ve got to look well groomed” (Watt, Daily Mail & Guardian, 24 December, 1996, p. 1). For example, Watt further claims (Daily Mail & Guardian, 1996) that there still seems to be a degree of controversy attached to women

shaving their heads. She adds, however, that while hairstyles 'for men' remain largely gendered, more and more men are adopting hairstyling as a profession (Watt, Daily Mail & Guardian, 1996). Erasmus (1999) concludes that there "is never a comfort zone for black hairstyles" (p. 10), claiming that Mercer ignores the ever-present marker of race despite the contemporary conception of black hairstyling as celebratory, hybrid and postmodern. The recent controversy marking the release of the Disney animated version of Tarzan is a case in point. A protest drafted by HYPE – a website monitoring the black image in the media which cites the portrayal of black hair as one of its concerns – followed the statement by a film artist that "Tarzan was endowed with Rastafarian dreadlocks to go with his jungle appearance" (Toure, Daily Mail & Guardian, 1999, p. 1). However Erasmus (1999) contends that while race is always present as a result of the overwhelming shadow cast by colonialism, slavery and genocide, "this does not imply that we are trapped by 'race' ...or the powers of globalizations", and cites Mercer's articulation that "the revolution is not on your head, it is *in it*" (p. 10).

Drawing on the themes and issues reviewed in the previous chapters (South Africa now, postcoloniality, embodied subjectivities and acts of bricolage) this thesis seeks to explore issues pertaining to black hair as an object and how it is variously constructed. These issues can largely be framed by the question, *what is black hair*, and how do meanings stemming from and surrounding this question function to position black subjectivity. Furthermore, how do discourses regulating black hair as an object enable or constrain subject agency.

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER FOUR:

PROBLEMATISING METHOD: 'CULTURE', CON/TEXTS AND DISCOURSE

ANALYSIS

...no account is innocent (Chambers, 1986, p. 200).

We must not imagine that the world turns towards us a legible face which we would have only to decipher. The world is not the accomplice of our knowledge; there is no prediscursive providence which disposes the world in our favour (Foucault, in Mills, 1997, p. 52).

This chapter seeks to enable an understanding of how, and why, the reviewed theory informed the production and unpacking of the analysed texts. The aim of this thesis (stated amongst others, in the previous chapter and reiterated more concretely below) to identify possibilities surrounding black identity construction in South Africa, entails both the problematisation of categories for the conceptualisation of black identity, and the problematisation of methods and tools used for this disruption. Parker (1997) argues for the importance of problematising method, particularly with regard to the insidious potential of qualitative methods, which can be equally used to empower or oppress. The oppressive potential of qualitative methods stems largely from their use as a unitary approach in order to legitimize accounts perpetuating 'truth' claims about marginalised groups.

Working with the gap - qualitative diversity

Parker (1998a) states that qualitative research in psychology "takes as its starting point an awareness of the gap between an object of study and the way we represent it, and the way interpretation necessarily comes to fill that gap" (p. 3). He argues that rather than pretending that the gap between objects and representations can be closed or filled, qualitative research "works with the problem – the gap – rather than against it" (1998a, p. 4). The interrogation of representations (and re-representations) of overdetermined concepts such as 'identity', 'culture'

and 'community' is consequently enabled and expanded by a critical qualitative approach. However, Parker (1998) argues against the isolation of a single qualitative method, claiming that different aims will be accomplished by different approaches. He locates these approaches in the two broad foundations constituted by realism and social constructionism. While realism posits the materiality of describable underlying structures (existing independently of the sense made by the researcher), social constructionism insists that language and knowledge produce accounts of the world operating as truth (Gergen, in Parker, 1998a). Parker (1998a) claims that the insistence on the production and reproduction of meaning in social constructionism constitutes a moral aspect to research whereby "Research questions are structured by personal and political interests that need to be explored rather than hidden away, for it is when they are concealed that they do the most damage" (p. 9). He states that

it is always worth considering the position of the researcher, both with reference to the problem to be studied and with regard to the way the researcher interacts with the material to produce a particular type of sense (1998a p. 13).

Consequently, he argues that research effects a change in that which is being studied, stating that "an account of the process of tracing and presenting the analysis as the 'results' of the study is an account of *change*, and this entails change in the research tool itself" (1998a, p. 14).

Discourse Analyses

As a collection of approaches, discourse analysis is characterised by diversity and opposition in terms of the philosophies, approaches and outcomes that constitute it (Wilbraham, 2000). Broadly speaking, however, discourse analysis approaches (akin to social constructionist approaches) share the notion that language is constitutive of reality, therefore focusing on the operations and effects of language (Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough (1992 & 1995) refers to the recent theoretical tendency to distinguish between 'descriptive' (cf. Potter & Wetherell) and 'critical' (cf. Parker) aims of discourse analysis. The former, influenced by Speech Act Theory, emphasise the

emergence and description of interpretive repertoires and the interpretation of their functions; while the latter advocate the interrogation and disruption of taken-for-granted meanings functioning as knowledge and truth (Fairclough, 1992 & 1995).

Influenced by Critical theory and post-structuralist thinkers, Parker's (1999) critical approach constitutes a close reading of Foucault's notion of power operating through language to position subjectivity (cf. Burman & Parker, 1993; Wilbraham, 2000). Parker's (1989) concern with the operations of power in language is informed by the inadequacy of 'new paradigm' approaches in social psychology (including qualitative approaches) to account for power. Drawing on Foucault's notion that 'discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak', Parker (1999) argues for the identification of discursive practices not only in language, but also in "patterns of meaning that may be visual or spatial, [or] that may comprise face-to-face interaction" (p. 3). Hence, the 'objects' constructed by discourses "include all the things that we see, refer to and take for granted as actually existing 'out there' " (Parker, 1999, p. 3). The elasticity accorded to discourses as practices impacts upon the location of these discourses in 'texts' which Parker (1992) describes as "delimited tissues of meaning *reproduced* in any form that can be given an interpretive gloss" (p. 6, my emphasis).

Two problematics: Capturing 'culture' and the white gaze

While Parker (1999) proposes the demarcation of texts - as 'discrete' sources of meaning - from con/text(s), an interrogation of the multiple constructions (as a cultural, political, classed, gendered object) of black hair necessitated the production of varieties of texts, thus problematising these boundaries. Parker & Burman (1993) argue that

It is difficult to move from a specific text ... to a wider context – although not wanting to make broad generalizations, there are particular ironies, and issues to be confronted when the repertoires/discourses have been understood as having their source in the surrounding social and political context (p. 156).

Mercer's (1987) seminal article, *Black hair/style politics*, is carefully reworked and expanded by Erasmus (1997 & 1999) in order to situate it within a South African context. In tracing the cultural and subcultural appropriations and reappropriations of black hair, both authors extrapolate from a number of resources including newspaper articles, popular culture, personal experience, consumer discourse relating to hair care products and discussions with various participants. However, while these sources allow for the emergence of multiple discourses, promoting a non-essentialised view of black hair, the invisibility afforded to textual resources by their exclusion in these articles disengages the reader from the meaning making process. Moreover, the reflexive abstinence entailed in this exclusion allows for the side-stepping of issues regarding their complicity as cultural critics in the production of meaning. The problematisation of text/context demarcation derives from the continual eliding and deflection of meaning characterising black hair as a cultural signifier. Here the difficulty entailed in capturing 'culture' necessitates the generation of a variety of texts and a certain degree of porosity between these texts. The diversity of texts used in this thesis – including self-generated and public domain texts – will be discussed further below.

A further problem related to the generation of discursive material and texts can be identified as that of white-writing-black practices. The necessary singling out of black participants for discussion was fraught with anxieties pertaining to the direct and indirect Othering of subjectivities thus frequently effecting a sense of reflexive paralysis (Burman, 1993). Resistance to participation can arguably be attributed to suspicion at being re/subjected to an Othering gaze. For example, only one of the original seven participants who had expressed a willingness to participate in a focus group discussion on black hair, arrived for the scheduled interview. However, while racial positioning constituted the most obvious or salient characteristic of researcher/participant interaction – thus effectively shaping the content of the texts – all research

contexts and interactions can be said to be influenced by the operation of perceived differences. Furthermore, to ascribe resistance solely to racial difference entails complicity in a form of racial essentialism that denies the implications stemming from a particular research context. The situation of this thesis within a historically white university promoting a liberal individualism, which problematises talk about race, is significant in this regard. The Statistical Digest (Academic Planning Office, Rhodes University, 2000) produced by Rhodes University, Grahamstown, details the composition of students in 1999 whereby African students comprised 30%, and white students comprised 50%, of overall student numbers (here the percentage of black students is provided in isolation of the collapse of 'ethnic categories' constituting a further 20% in the Digest). Furthermore, alongside the spatial organisation of the majority of the population in townships on the outskirts of Grahamstown, a high rate of unemployment provides further contextualisation for resistances.

Methodological tools for texts

Textual diversity necessitates a diversity of approaches or gathering tools. These tools will be discussed here in terms of their usefulness in the production of self-generated texts (interviews, focus groups, participant observation) and public-domain texts (a consumer product and online media texts). Parker (1998a) identifies the value of interviews in the following points which meet with the research aims and analytic approach used in this thesis. These include a sensitivity to subjective meaning with regard to participants and the way in which this meaning can be multiple and contradictory, as well as an emphasis on the role of the researcher in the production of this meaning and necessary reflexivity regarding the operations of power. In this regard, Bevan and Bevan (1999) argue that "Interviewee disclosure is therefore viewed as being pragmatically and performatively constructed" thereby eliciting the " 'contingencies of production' of discourse" (p. 16).

The constitutive nature of ‘contingencies of production’ in relation to the production of texts can further be located in focus group interviews. Kelly (1999) defines ‘focus group’ as “the general term given to a research interview conducted with a group” (p. 338). The interactive and often spontaneous nature of focus groups allows for the emergence of a range of responses (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Consequently, Bevan and Bevan (1999) argue that “While group ‘communicative competence’ can entail ‘referential cohesion’ between members, these groups also provide opportunities for a constestation of opinion” (p. 21). Reflexivity entailed in the construction of meaning in dyadic interviews thus operates intersubjectively in focus groups. Hence, Sandywell (in Bevan & Bevan, 1999) refers to a focus on the “ ‘praxical reflexivity’ of group respondents, where ‘logics in action’ are a part of the ‘contingencies of production’ of texts” (p. 21).

Parker’s (1999) maxim that “discourse may be studied wherever there is meaning” (p. 1) supports the use of a consumer product as a text. The debate around textual and con/textual demarcation is characterised by tensions between how far a researcher should venture beyond the text being analysed to arrive at an interpretation (Figuerola & Lopez, in Burman & Parker, 1993); and an alternative position which maintains that there is nothing beyond the text. However, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) maintain that “Texts do not operate in isolation, but through being embedded in contexts” (p. 163). As their argument is integral to the analytic approach at work in the chapters, it is worth quoting in a summarised form below:

In addition to engaging in detailed readings of pieces of text, we should read many different texts to show patterns of variation and consistency in discourse. To do this we need to be sensitised to context. Discourse analysis involves explicating the broader context within which the text operates, however these boundaries are porous and we have to accept that everything is part of everything else, so that isolating a text from its surroundings is of necessity already to misunderstand it (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 163).

Furthermore, the use of online media texts to augment the analysis is confirmed by location of value in what Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) term “documentary sources” including, amongst other things, newspaper articles and online resources (p. 153). In this regard, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) argue that “Such materials ... have an obviously ‘constructed’ nature and are a means by which ideas and discourses are circulated in our society” (p. 153). A significant aspect regarding the relationship between texts and con/texts is located in the role of the researcher. Hence, the “analysis should refer to the effects of the texts and discourses being analysed ... [and] refer to the effects of the *new* text brought into being by the analysis (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 167). The implications surrounding the production of texts and meaning by researcher positioning and agency will be further discussed in chapter 10.

Capturing texts

A division between self-generated and public domain texts has been emphasised thus far in terms of the deflection of, and reflection on, meaning. Firstly, public domain texts were derived from a highly branded black hair care product (Black Like Me Super-Conditioning Crème Relaxer) and from trawling specific online media archives. The use of the Daily Mail and Guardian Archives and the Business Day Online Archives was motivated by the high profile presence bestowed on questions of race and identity by these sources. Arguing that common sense psychology (as a system of regulating practices) is reproduced through the advice contained in consumer packaging, Parker’s (1998b) comparable analysis of the instructions on a children’s toothpaste box is informed by Foucault’s preoccupation with the positioning of subjectivity by regulating practices. Here the understanding that consumer discourse functions as a site for the inscription of subjectivity further informs the use of a consumer product as an additional means of ‘pinning down’ black hair as an elusive construct. Self-generated texts were produced by conducting four in-depth, semi-structured interviews, a lengthy focus group interview, and participant observation

at a popular salon in Grahamstown. Con/texts were selectively generated by defined online searches (i.e. the Daily Mail & Guardian online archives were trawled by using keywords such as 'black hair' and 'black identity', while the Financial Mail and Business Day Online were searched by entering brand names like Black Like Me into the search category. All con/texts referred to in the analytic chapters are be appended (see Appendix B).

While some participants were approached directly, other participants became opportunistically involved due to snowballing or 'the friend-of-a-friend' approach (cf. Kelly, 1999). Informed consent was obtained at the outset of each interview and the focus group by the requesting of permission to record and transcribe the material with the guarantee of anonymity. This was accompanied by a brief description of the research aims and the kinds of issues and themes to be discussed. The interview discussions typically moved from less threatening requests for participant descriptions of their hair, to more reflexive issues such as what it might mean to have 'good' or 'bad' hair. Further topics of discussion included an examination of changes in hairstyle and the implications of this for participants. The endorsement or rejection of various hair care products targeted at black consumers allowed for other embedded discourses (such as class) to emerge. A full list of the themes explored will be appended (See Appendix A).

The order of occurrence and setting of each interview and the focus group will be explicated in order to point to the impact of the various contexts on the produced content. Bevan and Bevan (1999) claim that both interviewers and interviewees are contextualised by their relation to a variety of audiences stemming from the intersection of their positioning as subjects who are raced, classed, gendered etc. The first interview took place rather informally on the campus library steps with a female student who engaged in hairdressing practices amongst students. The second interview, also with a female student, took place in my office in the psychology department. In

this instance, the institutionalized audience or gaze embodied by this setting informed the production of discourses related to communities of identification entailed in university and home locales. The unfolding of the third interview in my home was significant in terms of the positioning of the participant as a younger (male) scholar and the construction of difference as stemming from a mixed family context. Likewise, the production of texts stemming from a desire to communicate expertise and knowledge in relation to black hair practice was influenced by my entry into the context of a black hair salon in Grahamstown in the fourth interview. This furthermore formed the setting for the participant observation in which interpreted observances informed later questions regarding salons and black hair practice in the focus group and the analysis of the hair care product.

The focus group interview took place with four older women at their place of employment - a community development center - in Grahamstown. Here the intersubjective dynamics of the participants constituted a multiple, layered audience, complicated and reinforced by class as a salient feature of the interaction. A further significant form of positioning effected within the group interaction relates to the articulation of oppositional ideas and voices by a participant. In this regard, the dialoguing of difference by a particular participant points to issues pertaining to articulacy and expression within this thesis. The production of often inarticulate, broken accounts occasioned concerns regarding the exoticising potential involved in the reproduction of these accounts. Postcolonial thinkers, particularly Spivak, have contributed to the debate surrounding academic forms of hegemony and Othering entailed in the representation of marginalised voices. However, echoing earlier statements, the exclusion of texts informing analysis and critique by most postcolonial thinkers (e.g. Mercer, Said, Spivak) constitutes complicity in the avoidance of researcher or reader reflexivity.

Analysis of discourses

Parker (1999) argues that the eventual rendering of written texts for analysis, and the reading of these texts, “produce[s] ... another text which is a *translation*” (p. 4). Burman and Parker (1993) warn against the idea that there is a simple method for the execution of discourse analysis – a slide back to a positivist stance which maintains that ‘method’ is separable from context. Several criteria for distinguishing discourses identified by Parker (1992) were germane to the interrogation of discourses in the analytic chapters. Moreover, Parker’s (1999) emphasis on three key aspects of language – contradiction, construction and practice- that direct the reading and writing of texts in discourse analysis further informed the analysis. Hence, the construction of black hair as an object by discourses operating within a variety of texts, and the positioning of black subjectivity arising from these multiple constructions, were closely deconstructed in order to render discursive and regulating practices visible. Attentiveness to the discursive operations of power in this regard, did not seek to establish a causal top-down understanding of these effects, but sought rather to identify the contingencies surrounding these effects. Here the identification of binary positionings and contradictions within discursive constructions and positionings served to locate the potential for resistance and subject agency. This was further informed by Bhabha’s (1994) identification of textual ambivalence as a site for resistance. Furthermore, post-structuralist and postcolonial thought locating agency and subjectivity within difference (cf. Hall) and deference (cf. Derrida) meets with an approach maintaining the porosity between text and con/text. However, Hall (1996) argues that while meaning is shaped by its location as always-elsewhere (constituted across differences and porosity) this does not negate the presence and effects of meaning as it operates within texts and contexts.

The analytic imperatives discussed above are actualised in the following chapters. In chapter 5 the analysis of a black hair care product serves to introduce ways of talking about, and categorising,

black hair that are further explicated in the analysis of the self-generated texts. Discursive schemas wherein 'good' black hair equals 'done' black hair, underpinned by the construction and undermining of black hair as a 'natural' object are focused on in chapter 6. The examination of the reinscription of black hair as a consumer object within black hair economies in chapter 7 is augmented by online media texts referred to above. At this point, the focus of the analysis shifts slightly to examine subjectivity more concretely. Chapter 8 is concerned with the intersecting positionings of gender, sexuality and race, while chapter 9 investigates essentialist and non-essentialist constructions of black identity. The implications arising from the analytic chapters is deconstructed alongside an evaluation of the study itself and researcher positioning in chapter 10.

DATA ANALYSIS

CHAPTER FIVE:

GETTING 'GOOD' HAIR – DISCOURSE AND RESISTANCE IN BLACK HAIR RELAXERS.

The body itself functions almost as a 'black box' ... It is a kind of passivity, capable of being mobilized according to the interests of power or in the forms of subversion, depending on its strategic position (Grosz, 1994, p. 146).

I have tried to discover how the human subject entered into *games of truth* (Foucault, in Fernet-Betancourt, Becker & Gomez-Muller, 1994, p. 1).

Hair objectified

Foucault's (in Parker, 1999, p. 3) claim that "discourses form the objects of which they speak", and his objective to create a "history of the different modes by which human beings are made subjects" (in Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 36) constitute the focus of this chapter. Consequently, the Foucauldian notion of games of truth – Foucault (in Fernet-Betancourt et al., 1984, p. 16) understands *game* "as an ensemble of rules for the production of truth" – further informs this focus. Hence, ensembles of rules and discourses stemming from a consumer object, the *Black Like Me Super-Conditioning Crème Relaxer*, will be deconstructed in order to unpack the construction of black hair as an object and subject positionings arising from this. The analysis of the text's function as a set of rules specific to the attainment of 'good' hair is not intended to establish causal links between discursive practices and subjectivity, but rather to render the contingencies in these relationships.

Foucault's concept of care for the self or technologies of the self is used to question the potential for subject agency and identity construction in the form of self-reinvention and self-stylization. According to Foucault, care for the self entails "an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to transform one's

self and attain a certain mode of being” (in Fernet-Betancourt et al., p. 2). The analysis of a text stemming from a consumer product serves to introduce some of the discourses and themes stemming from the texts generated by the interviews and focus group. In later chapters the analysis is augmented by the inclusion of various con/texts stemming from media driven articles and advertisements, and is informed by the nature of these con/texts as popular sites for the negotiation of identity (cf. Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Furthermore, the historical linking of discourses embedded in the Black Like Me brand identity with signifiers of Black Consciousness, and the comparison with a hair care product traditionally targeted at white consumers, serve to render the multiple effects and positionings achieved by various discourses visible. As all but one of the research participants utilized Black Like Me products, it will be useful to examine whether the discourses identified by an analysis of this product resonate with participant experiences. The use of the Black Like Me brand stems from its widespread popularity and historical resonance, and its usefulness as a product combining various stages of the hair relaxing process.

Text

The following analysis of instructions accompanying a consumer product is informed by a similar analysis conducted by Parker (1998b) involving the directions printed on a children’s toothpaste container. The assumption guiding Parker’s (1998b) analysis is that “the consumer buys the message in the text on the package when they buy the product” (p. 95). Cautioning that the process of converting package instructions into written form renders a text that is different and read second-hand, Parker (1998b) points to the nature of transcription as the active production and construction of texts. Practical difficulties surrounding the representation (scanning or photographing) of a three-dimensional object - in this instance the relaxer is packaged in a rounded container with the instructions reading horizontally across the ‘back’ – necessitates the production of a written text. The container could then briefly be described as a round 250 ml tub (seemingly accessible) with red and black writing against a pearly

background. The **Black like me** logo is displayed prominently on the ‘front’, flanked by a red and black ribbon stating, 3-IN-1 KIT, 1 IN THE WORLD to the left, and the silhouetted faces of a man and woman placed side by side to the right. In addition to this, two red ticks are situated next to the FREE inclusion of NEUTRALIZING SHAMPOO and BODIFYING CONDITIONER, and the contact details of the Black Like Me Consumer Affairs line are situated beneath the instructions for use. The written text reads as follows:

SUPER-CONDITIONING CRÈME RELAXER

WARNING: Avoid contact with eyes. Can cause blindness. Contains Sodium Hydroxide. Keep away from children. If accidentally swallowed, consult a physician immediately. Use only as directed to avoid skin irritation, hair loss or eye injury. Do not use if scalp is sore, irritated or injured. Do not use on bleached, coloured or damaged hair. If scalp irritation occurs, rinse out immediately and shampoo with Neutralizing Shampoo. For external use only.

DIRECTIONS: Do not shampoo hair 48 hours before relaxing. Wear plastic gloves during application.

1. Apply Relaxer with the back of a large toothed comb on parted sections of the hair, about 3mm away from the scalp. Avoid contact with the scalp.
2. Smooth hair upward from all sides until hair is detangled and straight. Processing time is 15 minutes. In case of resistant hair, leave for another 5 minutes. Do not exceed 20 minutes.
3. Rinse hair thoroughly with a strong force of warm water until hair is free of all Relaxer. Keep rinsing water away from the eyes.
4. Shampoo hair with Black Like Me Neutralizing Shampoo, rinse and repeat.
5. Towel dry. Apply Black Like Me Bodifying Conditioner and comb through to detangle. Leave on for 5 minutes.
6. Rinse well. Follow with Black Like Me After Care.
7. **TO RETOUCH:** Apply Super Crème Relaxer on new growth only.

INGREDIENTS

Emulsifying wax, Petroleum Jelly, Mineral Oil, Oleth-10, Stearyl Alcohol, PEG-150 Lanolin, Propyl Paraben, Deionised Water, Propylene Glycol, Methyl Paraben, Sodium Hydroxide, Silk Amino Acids, Keratin Amino Acids, Fragrance.

Hair regimes I – risky business

Parker (1996/8) claims that the “advice provided on how to use an item partakes of a wider system of regulating practices” (p. 95). The advice contained in the text exists as part of a pervasive body of discourse found in various forums including talk shows, lifestyle magazines, newspaper columns and

internet chat groups. This discourse serves to regulate both what it means to have, and how to achieve and maintain 'good' black hair. The nature and function of advisory texts dictates that something is 'always-already wrong' or in need of improvement by means of the knowledge imparted through these texts. The construction of hair as the object central to the text and the subsequent subject positionings enabled by this construction occur as part of the text's grouping into three discursive sets, the *Warning*, *Directions* and *Ingredients*.

Operating in a cautionary capacity, the *Warning* serves to signal *danger*. One way in which this is achieved is the appeal to adult sensibility and authority in the directive to keep the product away from children. Furthermore, the consequences of transgression entailed in product abuse – *Use only as directed to avoid skin irritation, hair loss or eye injury* - are presented as posing a serious *health* risk. Here the inclusion of *Sodium Hydroxide*, a chemical compound used to break down hair particles (thus straightening or *relaxing* hair), functions to reinforce the seriousness of this risk. Serving to introduce the text's position of authority as a set of rules and regulations governing what it means to have 'good' black hair, the *Warning* further constructs hair as a dangerous and risk-laden object. This is reinforced by the reflexive positioning of the physician – *If accidentally swallowed, consult a physician immediately* – furthering textual credibility by the inscription and mimicking of larger institutionalized discourses, and functioning as a form of damage control (signaling textual resistance).

The *Directions* constitute a set of rules pertaining to scrupulous measurements of space (*3mm, parted sections, sides*); time (*48 hours, 15 minutes, 5 minutes*) and equipment (*plastic gloves, large-toothed comb, towel, and water*). The Do-It-Yourself discourse at work here serves to engender a sense of trust – conveying the imperative of subject agency and responsibility. However, the emphasis on the exacting performance of these instructions, arguably belied by the actual application experience taking place in

homes and bathrooms, reveals panoptic mechanisms of self-surveillance operating in the conjunctive spaces of both private and social worlds.

Hair regimes II – needy hair/resistant hair

The construction of hair as an object that is always-already wrong is consolidated by the further advice contained in the *Directions*. Here hair exists as an object *in need*. The nature of this need unfolds alongside the various procedures hair must undergo – it must be *processed ... detangled ... smoothed* – as well as the antithesis of these procedures in which hair is constructed as *resistant*. Hair is resistant either as a result of not having undergone the relaxing process or as a result of resistance to this process. The construction of hair as a ‘needy’ object echoes the earlier emphasis on risk. The possible demonstration of resistance to discourses stemming from the text effects the positioning of a subject *at risk*.

Subsequent surveillance and maintenance in the form of the *After Care* and *Retouch* treatment proposed by the text serve to assuage subject anxiety related to the risk of resistance.

The construction of hair thus far leads to the positioning of a subject whose hair and ultimately whose body, is needy, both risky and at risk, and possibly resistant. An underlying racial discourse effects this positioning. The identification of hair as a racial marker by Mercer (1987) and Erasmus (1999) is reflected in the text by what Erasmus refers to as the “devaluation of *kroes* [tightly curled] hair” (1999, p. 4). Here the discursive features of the Relaxer function euphemistically to conceal the regulatory nature of processes specific to *straightening* hair that is curly and resistant. As a corrective to resistant hair the text therefore proposes the *Neutralizing* (counter-balancing, reducing), *Bodifying* (adding, enhancing) and *Conditioning* of hair. These processes refer to a course of action seeking to tame, normalize or habituate black hair and are inimical to difference. A more far-reaching example of intolerance towards difference can be found in the example, widely reported in the South African media, of a white barber’s refusal to cut black hair on the grounds of not possessing the “know-how or equipment to cut ‘curly’

hair” (Saturday Argus, March 1999, p. 3). Foucault identifies one of the modes by which human beings are made subjects as that of “dividing practices”, whereby the subject is “either divided inside himself [sic] or divided from others” (in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 208). Discourses constructing hair as an object (risky hair, needy hair) in the text have therefore effected a set of oppositions culminating in the division between curly/resistant/black hair and straight/normative/white hair (regulating features attached to white hair are touched on throughout the following chapters). The treatment of difference by the text is vital to an understanding of subject agency and subject/ion and the accompanying implications for identity construction. Do the oppositions set up by the text serve to Other the subject or does the text enable subject resistance that embraces difference rather than being defined by its opposition to difference?

Hair regimes III – malleable hair: the missionary position?

Should we burn our straighteners and throw away our hot combs?
Was/is hair-straightening solely about colonial power? (Erasmus, 1999, p. 5)

It is on the body of the ‘wretched of the earth’ that colonialism has been brutally performed, and through that body that colonialism will be defeated (Fanon, in Wyrick, 1998, p. 105).

Erasmus (1999) traces the first active stylization practices associated with black hair to the era of slavery, in which women assigned as prostitutes manipulated their hair to appear more fashionable to European colonials. Biaya (in Erasmus, 1999) further states that the Western aesthetic frame promoted by the civilising mission in colonial cities was perpetuated by the new African middle-class in post-independence countries. The interpellation and dissemination of othering (European/Western-centric discourses) stemming from the colonial encounter provided a framework for the subsequent emergence of apartheid discourse and embodied segregation based on race. The construction of hair as a

different/raced object was crudely achieved by the Apartheid pen and pencil tests which determined hair to be 'naturally black' if it was curly enough to hold the aforementioned objects. However, the racialisation of hair stemming from these divisory practices resulted in the furthering of its status as both a cultural and political object. As a political object, hair has undergone changes over the past several decades, each of these changes representing points of resistance. In this regard, Loomba (1998) argues that "resistance is a condition produced by the dominant discourse itself" (p. 178). Bhabha locates this resistance in the failure of colonial discourse to fix identity due to its contradictory dependency on difference and othering for its definition of the normative (in Loomba, 1988).

The entry of black hair into the realm of identity politics was manifest by the opposition towards the historical devaluation of 'natural' black hair. The adoption of the Afro embodied the resistance represented by Black Consciousness groups in the sixties and seventies (cf. Mercer, 1987). Erasmus (1999) states that the Afro,

also referred to as 'the natural' . . . engendered a particular politics of black hair. In this discourse the concept of 'natural', kinky hair was equated with blackness and black consciousness (p. 4).

Discussing the emergence of Black Consciousness as an intellectual movement in South Africa, Fattou (1986) remarks that "The hegemony of the white ruling class . . . had to be eliminated, and a new black identity had to be constructed (p. 60). In this regard, Grossberg (1996b, p. 161) refers to Hall's concern with 'hegemonically preferred' meanings and the reinscription of these to subject people to "particular definitions and practices of freedom". Hall (in Grossberg, 1996b) states that

the meaning of a cultural form and its place or position in the cultural field is not inscribed inside its form. Nor is its position fixed once and forever. This year's radical symbol or slogan will be neutralized into next year's fashion; the year after, it will be the object of a profound cultural nostalgia . . . or, one might add, it may be re-articulated as a symbol of opposition. (p.158).

- While this new essentialist notion of black identity utilised a strategy of reversals, reinscribing othering discourses for political intent, both Bhabha and Hall have rejected a strategy of reversals as the basis for

identity construction. They seek rather to engage with ambivalence and difference within the rules of discourse and the effects of this upon identity construction. The present text seeks to eradicate and normalize difference to produce 'good' or straight hair and is as such dependent on the binary relationship of curly/black hair = resistant/bad hair, and relaxed/white or normative hair = compliant/good hair.

Discourses stemming from hair care products targeting white consumers are similarly opposed to difference, however, these discourses stem from a different perspective in which the emphasis falls on maintaining the normative status of white hair rather than having to create and re-create it. While texts stemming from hair dye packages therefore address the resistance posed by graying or 'mousey' hair, discourses in these texts construct hair as an object endowed with 'natural' beauty which must be maintained by the hair dyeing process. Here hair practice is constructed as a gentle, enjoyable activity constituting leisure time. Brand names such as 'Nice 'n Easy', and 'Loving Care' further serve to reinforce this. The emphasis on leisure time points to the presence of a classed discourse, and it is interesting to note that while texts found on hair dye packages reflect a gendered discourse (the accompanying illustrations are all of women) there is no indication of a gendered discourse in the Black Like Me text. Erasmus's (1997) argument that there is no such thing as *natural* black hair is again reflected here, particularly in terms of silences surrounding politics attached to white hair – hegemonising it's position as normal.¹ The construction of 'natural' black hair by discourse will be addressed in the following chapter.

Embracing essentialist or non-essentialist conceptions of black identity depends largely on whether, like Walker (in Erasmus, 1999) we conceive of hair practice as missionary work, or, in accordance with the

¹ The reinforcement of hegemonies surrounding white subjectivity, is a challenge continually directing the approach of this thesis in terms of the inhabiting of other or indeed othering vocabularies in order to deconstruct them from

thought of Mercer, as visionary work. Mercer (in Erasmus, 1999) argues that hair straightening is accompanied by “nuances, inflections and accentuations ... which emphasize difference in addition to similarities with whiteness” (p. 6). The brand name, Black Like Me, incorporates a set of discourses which function to construct hair as both a political and consumer object alongside its construction as a raced object. Beinhart (1994) argues that in the context of the Apartheid State the use of the word ‘black’ represented a challenge to euphemisms such as ‘non-white’, ‘non-European’ and ‘Bantu’. Here resistance to the devaluation of ‘natural’ black hair embodied by the Afro was mirrored in the opposition to the ongoing historical devaluation of blackness by discourses surrounding the Black Like Me brand name. While these discourses further essentialize identity, the emergence of the body as a consumer fetish object and the subsequent realignment of signifiers of Black Consciousness (such as the Afro) with capitalist imperatives, suggest the potential for non-essentialist conceptions of identity. Hence, Hall’s view of hegemony as “intrinsically tied to the incorporation of culture and market relations resulting in broadly based patterns of cultural consumption”, crucially incorporates the element of impermanence in which “hegemony is never securely achieved, if even momentarily” (Grossberg, 1996b, p. 163). Matshikiza (Mail & Guardian, October 2000, p. 38) refers to hegemonic shifts surrounding black hair, noting the move from hairstyles functioning as a “badge of struggle and mourning in the townships”, to the emergence of “corporate-friendly manes that are acceptable in the boardrooms of the new South Africa”.

Discourses of empowerment stemming from the historically resonant Black Like Me brand name have skillfully been reinscribed by, and appropriated for consumer agendas. Bertelsen (1998) refers to the current slogan accompanying Black Like Me advertisements which reads, “I’ve made my choice. Perfect choice. Black Like Me. Embracing black dignity and beauty. Giving you freedom of choice” (p. 233).

within. The final chapter seeks to further this scrutiny in order to unpack the discourses informing my position as a white woman researching black subjectivity.

Here the notion of freedom of choice envisions black identity as determined by possibility. Theories of hybridity and non-essentialism that privilege difference emphasize the possibility of an ethics of self-stylization viewing the body as both a reflective and inscriptive surface. Foucault locates a micropolitics of resistance within discourse, referring to bio-politics as the “development and reinvention of new bodies and pleasures [which] have the potential to subvert the construction of normalized subject identities” (in Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 57). A recent advertisement for a local radio station skillfully presents and explodes a set of questions that have become accepted discourse/knowledge about what it means to be black. Drawing on discourses defining blackness in relation to hair texture, the question “is it in the texture of your hair?” is followed by the shot of a black woman whose flowing blonde hair is emphasized by the rush of the train behind her.

Hair is constructed variously by the text and the subject is co-opted into engaging with various games of truth: the multiple constructions of hair as a serious, dangerous, needy and resistant object establish subject compliance and obedience by mimicking institutionalized discourses. Here resistance is equated with difference in the construction of hair as a raced object. However, the material function of the relaxer - involving the active manipulation of hair – represents its very vulnerability. Cultural and political shifts surrounding Black Like Me as a discursive object determine that hair straightening practices are now reflexively positioned within consumer discourse to form part of an ethics of self-stylization. Hence, Foucault states

If I am now interested ...in the way in which the subject constitutes himself [sic] in an active fashion, by the practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual imposes on himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested, and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 65).

Existing in the thick of discursive regulations, practices of care for the self do not strike a critical distance from games of truth, but represent the defining of practices of liberty and choice (as distinct from liberation) within practices of inscription. Hence, we

escape a domination of truth, not by playing a game that was a complete stranger to the game of truth, but in playing it otherwise or in playing another game, another set, other trumps in the game of truth (Foucault in Fernet-Betancourt et al., 1984, p. 15).

Deleuze & Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic scheme of the principles multiplicity and interconnectivity disordering discourse seems appropriate for the understanding of hair as a multiple construct. Patterns of knowledge should be seen as analogous not to a tree with its uni-directional pattern of growth from roots up to branches and leaves via a solid trunk but to a rhizome – a collection of root-like tentacles with no pattern to their growth, a set of tentacles which grow in unpredictable ways, even growing back into each other (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 7). In this regard, they state that “the multiple *must be made* not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available” (1987, p. 6). The following chapters will address discourses surrounding hair as a ‘natural’ object, as well as examining it’s further construction as a classed/consumer, gendered object. Furthermore, essentialized and non-essentialized conceptions of identity arising from this will also be examined.

CHAPTER SIX:
REP/HAIRING THE NATURAL

For if you put in his place a Negro with curly hair, he becomes nothing but a monster with depraved tastes (in Cohen, 1980, p. 6).

Do you believe that things would be much better if the inmates seized control of the Panopticon and occupied the tower, rather than the guards? (Foucault in Lotringer, 1996, p. 240).

This chapter represents an ongoing concern with the construction of black hair as an object governed by disciplinary practices, multiple gazes and techniques of surveillance. The discursive schema of ‘good’ hair as ‘done’ hair (cf. Erasmus, 1999) centers on the construction, and effects the *undoing*, of ‘natural’ black hair. Erasmus’s (1997) conclusion that there is no such thing as ‘natural’ black hair provides a starting point for the exploration of the different uses and understandings of the concept ‘natural’ to refer to black hair in the primary texts. These meanings represent discursive ‘surfaces of emergence’ for ways of languaging black subjectivity perpetuated by popular and institutionalized bodies of discourse.

Texts generated by the interviews and focus group will therefore be analysed here for discourses constructing the ‘natural’. The contextualisation of these texts by the inclusion of excerpts from black lifestyle magazines is informed by the promotion of ‘natural’ products by consumer discourses in these magazines – thus constructing the ‘natural’ as a lifestyle choice. Both Mercer (1987) and Erasmus (1999) draw heavily on, amongst other things, newspaper and magazine articles, to enable a broader understanding of the perpetuation of regulative discourses with regard to black hair.

National Geographic Discourse – a return to origins

(1) P 1: People, in the beginning as far as I know there was this Khoisan, like your hair looks

like it has not been combed, which reflects natural hair [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].¹

The textual positioning of *Khoisan* (1) as a category of person located temporally (*in the beginning*) draws on what can be referred to as a 'National Geographic' discourse which identifies 'natural' as the environmental source of given attributes. Furthermore, the description of 'natural' hair as hair that *has not been combed* constructs hair as a nascent entity as yet untouched and unspoilt by hair practices introduced by colonial contact (cf. *Khoisan*). Discourses drawing on the desire for 'natural' hair in the marketing of black hair products operate on the premise that the 'denaturalisation' of hair ensuing from the use of these products is reversed by the inclusion of *organic ingredients* (see below) thereby ensuring a return to origins and guaranteeing authenticity:

Like hairstyling, products are making a move towards being natural. The trend toward using organic ingredients has created an explosion of fruit or plant-based products. Products with conditioning properties are key (Black Elegance, 1998, p. 22).

This guarantee of authenticity is pernicious in its location of that which is inherent, or characteristic in and on the body. The location of the 'natural' in and on the body was partly due to the merging of nature and space as the environmental sources of attributes. Discussing the institution of Panoptic modes of power and surveillance, Foucault (in Lotringer, 1996) traces the problematising of space as a regulative discourse. Initially a concept "referred to as 'nature' ... to what was given, the first determining factor" (Foucault, in Lotringer, 1996, p. 228), space became subject to surveillance and regulation in its discursive capacity as 'given' whether environmentally, geographically or physically. This informs the desire to understand the regulation of 'natural' black hair by means of various modes of surveillance or 'optivities'. Here the term opticity is used to refer to both the constraining and productive nature of a reflexive mode of surveillance (as will be discussed).

The romantic view of bodies and environments in harmony with each other, however, reinforces notions of the 'natural' as uncivilised and unchecked. Consider the following:

¹ An awareness surrounding the potential for Othering in representations of difficulties regarding

(2) P 2: It's natural to us because we are black, with our natural hair, because if you are black you must do a setting so that you can have curls [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

(3) P 1: My hair's kaffir hare, because it's too hard so as we said, our hair is too strong, so if we want to keep it neat ... you know in the morning, so you can do anything with it, you must perm it so that you can manage it [Focus group, as above].

The evolution of the densely layered term *kaffir* (3) from the original Arabic meaning heathen or unbeliever (*kafara*), to its more recent use as a form of hate-speak based on a racial schema (cf. Fanon, 1952) during apartheid, represents a culmination of the discourses discussed above. The description of the subject's hair as *kaffir hare* - 'natural' hair as unchecked and uncivilised (too strong and unmanageable 2, 3) - erects the scaffolding for the larger project of situating these characteristics within and on the black body. Stoler's (1995) argument that Foucault's identification of discourses of sexuality as instruments of power in the nineteenth century is fundamental to the emergence of a discourse on race is pertinent here. The production of objects and subjects of knowledge by discourses of sexuality thus functioned similarly to produce knowledge about black bodies and, consequently, black subjectivity. The construction of black hair as *kaffir hare* and the ensuing categorisation of black bodies as unmanageable and uncivilised therefore draws on "reference[s] to the libidinal energies of the savage, the primitive, the colonised – reference points of difference, critique and desire" (Stoler, 1995, p. 7), and reference points for the mapping of National Geographies. The sexualisation of black hair will be further discussed later.

Permanent Hair

(4) P 1: They're not beautiful because they need to be done. I need to go to the perm, or do anything like relaxing them, but even if I did all those things, my hair are soft, if a wind comes this way, they go this way ... that's why I'm doing a perm because if you do a perm they look like these ones [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

(5) I: why do you keep your perm?

P 3: I like it because when I'm seeing my face in the mirror I say I am beautiful! [Focus group, as above].

articulation by some participants is signposted here, and will be further discussed in the final chapter.

The categorization of black hair is demonstrated by the emphasis on ‘natural’ hair being set and curled (2), managed (3), and permed – in short ‘*done*’ (4) in order to be *beautiful* (5). Descriptions of black hair as kinky, frizzy or curly; too hard, soft or strong; are employed by discourses in lifestyle magazines and black hair products in order to construct a hierarchy of black hair organised around hair texture. The production and sedimentation of knowledge about black hair can arguably be regarded as a kind of Orientalism enabling the constitution of disciplinary regimes that govern aspects of black hair and in particular ‘natural’ black hair. Said (1978) argues that Orientalism “creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world” (p. 9). An article in *Black Elegance* magazine thus reassuringly states “where as we may often refer to our hair as kinky, wavy/curly or straight, within those groups there are three different types of textures: coarse, medium and fine” (November 1999, p. 27). This seemingly innocuous and informative description goes on to address the composition of coarsely textured hair with some urgency:

it has the greatest diameter and may tend to need more moisturizing, as the size of the hair strand is longer and requires more conditioning solution to be absorbed. Coarse hair tends to be drier, takes more time to chemically process with color, or perms. There is likely to be less elasticity in coarse hair, so it tends to require more penetrating conditioners and hair dressings (November 1999, p. 27).

The text above reads like a colonial encounter in which the dense, unchecked character of desired land (nature) is penetrated and conquered. In much the same way, ‘natural’ black hair is regulated by a complex and contradictory two-fold regime. The initial course of action (charted in the previous chapter) involving the subduing or relaxing of hair that is too curly or resistant, is now furthered by the fixing (literally) of hair by means of a setting or perm. The original term ‘permanent’ lends some insight into the archival process of straightening curly hair and replacing it with *defined*, therefore manageable and acceptable, curls. However, despite the achieved stabilization of hair, the body as a

constructed microcosm of discursive relationships situated in the social realm remains vulnerable to disruptions. These disruptions signal resistance within the 'natural' as a return to origins discourse whereby the *permanent* undoing of 'natural' hair is itself undone by unpredictable environmental elements such as the weather. Erasmus (1997) describes this undoing of hair as hair that has 'turned', or 'gone home' (*my hare gaan huistoe*). Black hair practice in homes and home-based salons will be further discussed in relation to the politics of space.

A discursive cycle can be detected in the production of knowledge about 'natural' black hair and the practices associated with remedying and *transfixing* it, and the ensuing damage to hair which must then be treated in order for the whole process to begin again.

(6) P 1: You go up and down to repair, you go to this salon and you do this thing ... treatment. You get told that you must come back for two weeks, and then two weeks again [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

(7) I: Do you think that these products are damaging to your hair?

P: It depends to the client – what after-care you are using. If you don't care for your hair, the products not caring for you [Salon hairdresser, male].

An understanding of this discursive cycle is informed by Foucault's clinic as the place in which the treatment of the body is commensurate with its ordering and regulation. Echoing discourses at work in the previous chapter (hair as a risky, needy object), the use of the word *treatment* (6) in this instance invokes institutionalised (medical) discourse in order to construct hair as a 'sick' object that can be brought within the sphere of normality and health by treatments. Again, damage resulting from product usage is not linked to the product itself (compositionally or discursively) or to its use by salons, but stems from the inability of the subject to use the product correctly (7). Here then is evidence of Foucault's modern subject, created and controlled through self-control (Lachenicht & Lindegger, 1999, p. 4).²

Panopti/salons and the gaze of authority

(8) The hair is very important to our days, because maybe sometimes you want to go to the occasion, you can't go to the occasion with natural hair, you want to make the style, you go to the salon first so that you can look very beautiful, most specially beautiful [Salon hairdresser, male].

(9) P 3: The one I'm going to ... is at home, it's a home-based salon ... she doesn't have taps like this, she uses a mug like a jug But the salon, the thing is there's mirrors, all those things you know, it's like comfortable kind of thing. In the house someone's a professional, but using the business in his home, in her home with nothing but the basin ... if you want to see yourself after that you got to go to the toilet and you get a little piece of mirror [Focus Group, 4 women, community workers].

Texts 8 and 9 indicate the authority invested in salons as part of a community of authority or a community of (mirrored) gazes constituted by professional hair stylists and colleagues. A Foucauldian understanding of power operating in and through the salon can be formulated by examining the ways in which salons are spatially organized and constructed, and the significance attached to mirrors (9) in these constructions. Foucault (in Lotringer, 1996, p. 228) locates his understanding of the problematics of space in the 18th century when “little by little space becomes differentiated – specified and functional ... a whole ‘history of *spaces*’ could be written, that would be at the same time a ‘history of the powers’”. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) conceptualize disciplinary power as contingent upon an ‘optics of power’ whereby mechanisms of surveillance constitute a “disciplinary space” (p. 157). Consequently, the salon represents a space comprising pan (all) vision whereby the reflective (mirrored) communal gaze of subject upon self upon subject produces constellations of subjectivity and identity, confirming Dreyfus and Rabinow’s (1982) claim that now it is “power itself which seeks invisibility and the objects of power – those on whom it operates – are made the most visible” (p. 159).

² However, see previous chapter for a discussion on how the ‘misuse’ of products constitutes subject resistance in itself.

Segregatory practices during apartheid led to the labeling of many shops and conveniences as 'whites only' areas. Subsequently, much black hair practice was located in the kitchens and bathrooms of family and friends (cf. Erasmus, 1997), and in what Dixon identifies as the lingering remnants of spatial organization based on race: "the township, compound, hostel and informal settlements" (1997, p. 17). Therefore, while the authority of home-based salons is both undermined and resisted by the use of domestic objects (mugs, jugs and basins) and a diminished gaze (an absence of mirrors) in text 9, a tension can nevertheless be located in the conjuncture between constraining and actively fashioning subjectivities.

Hair utopias – tele/vision

(10) P 1: There is still a racist kind of thing in terms of the salon ... not all the salons can do our thing and they don't even attempt to employ people who can do it, cos we can bring them money [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

(11) I don't think that there are many salons that actually cater for us ... sometimes they actually do, I don't know, I don't think I would, I don't think they would do what I want with my hair [Student, female].

(12) P 1: Like in the tv, in that salon you'll see that there's a non, like a black and all those things like that, they're gonna do a cut, but they are all-coloured people [Focus group, as above].

(13) I: What do you think about women who shave their hair or men who have braids?
P 1: men also do have these plaited things as women, but before we couldn't take it when the men has done this, but in the TVs you see them, the presenters they do all this kind of things that women used to do [Focus group, as above].

The position largely adopted by traditionally white salons that they are not equipped (see previous chapter) to cut 'curly' hair is both confirmed (10, 11) and rejected (12) in the texts above. Russell (1999) refers to a body of work in discourse analysis concerned with the positioning of gendered and raced subjectivities in television. Lachenicht and Lindegger (1999) argue that Foucault's investigation of modern/panoptic forms of power disregards the importance of *spectacle* as an important technique of surveillance. Here the televised gaze is identified as a form of spectacle whereby

the mass media and especially television, enable the many, literally hundreds of millions of people simultaneously, to see and admire the few. Together, the panoptical and the spectacle processes create a two-way social mirror in which all modern selves are both subject to surveillance and to potent images of the powerful (Lachenicht & Lindegger, 1999, p. 1).

The different visions constituted by tele (far) and pan (all) vision points to their combined role in an 'optics of power' determining forms of regulation. Hence, the authors state that

By arguing for the continued use of spectacle we do not wish to argue that there has been no shift from external social control to self-control. Rather we are arguing that spectacle, by providing alternative thought contents and opportunities for confession and sublimation is an essential component of self-control (Lachenicht & Lindegger, 1999, p. 5).

The in/appropriation of gendered hairstyles by television *presenters* (13) provides a further example of the televised gaze as a potential source for the display of alternative subject positionings (the construction of black hair and gendered subjectivities will be explored in chapter eight). However, Hall (in Grossberg, 1996) points to the function of television as an apparatus for the dissemination of hegemonically preferred meanings perpetuated by

The appeal to 'professional codes', in the production of both news and entertainment consistently re-inscribe 'hegemonically preferred' meanings? How are people 'subject-ed' to particular definitions and practices of 'freedom'? (p. 161)

Representative Hair

(14) P 1: When you've done a relaxer you find that people, all the people like to correct something on you – Hi, you are beautiful except this and that ... but if you have done the perm it's good, it's like a good message it's done, it's done [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

(15) P 2: If you have a position [in the church] you have to look like representable or represent the community [Focus group, as above].

(16) P 1: You can't, you must have something on your head all the time like a doek – even if sometimes they do go about those things, but other things, they are still not under the oath of the church [Focus group, as above].

(17) P 1: I like my hair ... especially this one, this style, when I'm at a party people have told me that I look like a professional kind of something ... these three days when you sit there you look like somebody you know, because they collect you, you are being collected if you have that style [Focus group, as above].

(18) P 1: If your hair is not done, you feel like dirty, and you think that someone is seeing this thing that you know, you haven't done them [Focus group, as above].

'Natural' black hair is not only subject to community vigilance but is further constructed as a community-owned object through its onerous responsibility to deliver a *good message* (14). The equation of "my hair" and "our hair" in texts 19 and 20 below

(19) P 2: It's natural to us because we are black, with our natural hair, because if you are black you must do a setting so that you can have curls [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

(20) P 1: My hair's kaffir hare, because it's too hard so as we said, our hair is too strong, so if we want to keep it neat ... you know in the morning, so you can do anything with it, you must perm it so that you can manage it [Focus group, as above].

reinforces the notion of black hair as a community owned object subject to both correction and collection (17). In this regard, a significant part of community scrutiny and ownership exists in relation to social networks established through *church* affiliation (15, 16). Here the *oath of the church* (16) as a set of institutionalised discourses concerned with perpetuating moral binaries, constructs black hair as an object acceptable only by virtue of concealment with a *doek*, reinforcing the association between hair and *s/excess* or sinfulness. In this regard, the overt sexualisation of hair is not particular to black hair, but is further entailed in various religious affiliations (Catholic and Muslim women, and Jewish men are expected to conceal their hair). However, the discursive forging of a link between black hair and sexualisation has arguably operated to effect and perpetuate specific forms of Othering. This is furthered by the description of 'natural' or undone black hair as *dirty* (18) drawing on insidious Christian discourses equating cleanliness with godliness and conversely, dirtiness with sinfulness. Butchart (1999) traces the objectification of the black body, and the move from sovereign to disciplinary forms of power, to contact with missionary medicine as a form of 'benevolent conquest'. Arguing that Christianity requires a form of 'truth obligation', Foucault (1982) states that "everyone is obliged to disclose ... either to God or to others in the

community and hence to bear public or private witness against oneself” (p. 40). In this way, the *good message* actualised by getting hair ‘done’ functions as a form of confession in which the telling of truth is transformative and redemptive.

Chapters 5 and 6 have been concerned with the construction of black hair as an object by hegemonically preferred meanings and resistances to this. Hair practice will further be examined in relation to consumer and capitalist discourses and particularly the re/de class/ification of consumer identities amid the contentious rise of the black middle class.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
HAIR TODAY, GONE TOMORROW:
HAIR ECONOMIES AND THE (DE)CONSTRUCTION OF CLASS AND CONSUMER
IDENTITIES.

It was interesting that a conversation about haircuts could move from the plane of economics to the plane of politics while never actually touching on the question of aesthetics ... in some ways we South Africans still find it hard to adjust to the logic of our discourse (Matshikiza, Mail & Guardian, October 2000, p. 38).

Unremitting propaganda reminds us that, in the words of the old hymn, we have only one body and it has to be saved (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 129).

Texts generated from the interviews and focus group will be analysed for discourses relating to class and consumer identities and how these function to construct and interpellate black identity. The inclusion of Internet texts pertaining to hair economies effects the shifting of text and con/text here again. A significant aspect of the current coverage of black identity in the media is related to the contested rise of the black middle class, the emergence of black consumerism and the linking of this to Westernisation (see chapter 9) and the activities of Black Empowerment companies.

[Re/De] Class/ified identities

A significant aspect of the construction, negation, devalorisation and revalorisation of black hair resides in its commodification as a political and cultural signifier. The construction of black hair as a consumer object has numerous implications for the positioning of black identity in post-Apartheid South Africa. Loomba's (1998, p. 30) argument that "class and race are mutually constitutive and shaping forces" is both borne out and problematised by the South African context. This is due to

tensions underlying arguments about whether South Africans are undergoing a process of re-classification in terms of the emergence of class divisions to replace those of race - manifest by the (contested) emergence of the black middle class – or de-classification. The latter stems from South Africa's entry into, and role in, a global capitalist economy in which consumerism, given Jameson's (1991) influential notion of late capitalism as the condition for postmodern culture, is no longer necessarily commensurate with class. Hence, Featherstone (1991) argues that

The current over-supply of symbolic goods in contemporary societies and the tendencies towards cultural disorder and de-classification (which some label as postmodernism) is therefore bringing cultural questions to the fore and has wider implications for our conceptualization of the relationship between culture, economy and society (p. 13).

However, an opposing argument can be made for the inherently classed nature of globalisation which is obscured by postmodern hegemonies. Tensions between these positions are actualised by the South African context where affiliation to globalised, transnational industry occurs alongside localised industry (such as the taxi industry).

Bancroft's (1998, p. 29) argument that "identity is increasingly based on consumption choices" (as lifestyle markers) is informed by a Foucauldian framework attentive to the constitution of these choices by discursive networks of power influencing body practice. Alongside a continued concern with space as a discursive and constituting construct, time – and the economies of space and time with regard to black hair and black hair practice - will be examined in this chapter. Mercer's (1987) argument concerning the need to examine the "exploitative priorities of [the] black hairdressing industry as it affects consumers, or workers under precarious market conditions" (p. 53) is incorporated here. Finally, consumer discourse as an instrument of equality and democracy will be examined in light of its contribution to the fostering of consumer identities under the guise of nation

building, echoing Sontag's claim that "Freedom to consume has come to be equated with freedom itself" (in McRobbie, 1994, p. 33).

Fast-hair

(1) P 1: It takes time in the morning

I: how long does it take?

P 1: an hour if you can't do it yourself, even if you do it can take two hours sitting there in front of the mirror, trying to do this, you have to plug in something...like a, this

P 2: tong

P 1: ya tong, ya then you do this, plug it in, if there is nobody, sometimes you get people who are experts they can do it in two mirrors, and they do it very quickly

[Focus Group: 4 women, community workers].

(2) Hm, you don't do anything in the morning - just wake-up and you go, you wash and you go, it doesn't waste time [Focus Group, as above].

(3) Before it was relaxed, and then I shaved it off 'cos I can't spend all that time washing and relaxing it, I can't spend all that time waking up and combing it and tidying it, it's just too much of my time ... I'm lazy that's all, I'm a very lazy person [Student, female].

(4) Um, it's just, I brushed my hair just before I left the house at quarter to, quarter to eleven and I get back now and I've been touching it, and riding, and it was still a bit wet so it went all curly and, and ya, it just gets very used very quickly [Scholar, male].

Texts 1-4 above represent a preoccupation with the economy of time. Referred to as a unit of measurement or temporal situator (*two hours, quickly, morning, quarter to eleven*), saving or spending time further involves equipment (*mirrors and tongs*) and regimes (*washing, relaxing, combing, brushing*) necessary to this. Here time exists as a discursive entity that serves to regulate body practice - echoing and reinforcing the languaging of black hair as an object examined thus far. The disciplinary and regulative power of time is effected through its reinscription by consumer discourses, in turn aided by the collapse of money and time as separate identities. According to Cross (1993), in "the 'time is money' culture of modern production, consumer society has become linked to the uses and meanings of time" (p. 5). Erasmus's (1997) consensus that there is no such

thing as 'natural' black hair is thus echoed by Baudrillard's (1998) contention that 'natural' time is obsolete. Arguing that time is subject to the laws of exchange-value, Baudrillard states that the consumer's free time often has to be "indirectly or directly purchased before it can be consumed" (1998, p. 153).

Entrepreneurial/Do-It-Yourself discourses in which the economies of space (home practice) and time merge are implicated in the use of *tongs* (1) as a time-saving aid in hair practice. The emphasis on *saving* 'natural' black hair through various regulatory regimes in chapters 5 and 6 is echoed in the discursive expansion of these regimes to include time as a disciplinary feature. In this regard, Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) state that

"Micropower is directed towards a different use of time. If disciplinary power "dressage" [drill] is to work efficiently and effectively it must operate on the bodies of those it seeks to reduce to docility as continuously as possible. Moreover, the goal desired and the techniques designed to achieve it merge. To achieve this dream of total docility (and its corresponding increase of power), all dimensions of space, time, and motion must be codified and exercised incessantly (p. 154).

Furthermore, the emphasis on time-saving techniques (by the use of *tongs* and *mirrors*) adds another dimension to the discursive schema of 'good' hair as 'done' hair. Here 'done' hair is further rendered desirable and 'good' by virtue of being fast, convenient, *wake-up and go* hair (2). Minh-ha and Morelli (1996) state that a characteristic of consumer discourse is "to emphasize speed as a goal ... of smart consumers. To save time and energy, one is told to 'go at it' and devise short-cuts so as to take hold of the desired object as quickly as possible" (p. 3). Here again the authority invested in mirrors as panoptic surfaces is represented by the positioning of *experts* able to perform hair practice *quickly* (1) with the reflexive aid of *two mirrors* (1) rather than struggling along with just one. The use of mirrors here serves as a further reminder of black hair as an object subject to constant

monitoring and surveillance. The need for monitoring in this instance stems from the construction of black hair as a consumer object that gets *very used very quickly* (4) thereby confirming Williams' claim that "one of the earliest uses of the term consume meant 'to destroy, to use up, to waste, to exhaust'" (in Featherstone, 1991, p. 21). Resistance to regulative discourses seeking to fix hair can therefore be detected in the construction of black hair as both a consumer/consumed object manifest in the constant threat of hair returning to its 'natural' (*it went all curly*) state (4). However, the attempted rejection of time as a regulative discourse embodied by the imposed absence of hair in text 3 (*I shaved it off*), is undermined by a simultaneous positioning of the subject as *lazy*. The binary formula of smart/efficient consumers and lazy consumers remains dependent for its definition on an economic philosophy of time.

Hair Economies

If we want to understand particular cultural practices we need to ask how they empower their audiences and how the audiences empower the practices; that is, how the very materiality of cultural practices functions within an effective economy of everyday life (Hall in Grossberg, 1996, p. 168).

Having introduced black hair as a consumer/consumed object, the following section seeks to address how black identities are class/ified by hair economies. An investigation of the black hair industry comprising formal salons, street/lounge hair practice and marketed products will be used as a framework to situate texts and explore the construction of class and consumer identities. The black hair industry constitutes a significant emerging component of the South African economy with the recent listing of various hair care giants, such as Carson Holdings, on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (Erasmus, 1999, p. 331). An article detailing the rise of Carson Holdings (main competitor to Black Like Me) states that "Carson's financial record underlines the strength of the African hair-

care industry. Turnover, R3,2m in 1994, is forecast to top R40m next year” (Financial Mail Online, June 14, 1996). A further indication of the vast capital generated by black hair care products was displayed in the 1998 partnership between Black Like Me and Colgate-Palmolive with the intention of a more thorough penetration of the African market (Business Day Online, 09 May 1997). The black hair industry in South Africa is influenced by the relationship with its global, and particularly American, counterpart. In this regard, a newspaper snippet states that shortly after the 1994 elections, “the United States Agency for International Development gave a \$300 000 grant to a preeminent black hair product company based in the United States, to teach African-American hair care techniques to South Africans” (Mail & Guardian Online, 24 November, 1995). Hence, the manager of a hair salon franchise in Johannesburg states that

all the inspiration comes from America ... There are very few stylists who are really original: just as in the fashion industry, styles are taken from overseas magazines and copied. Right now there is no specific look that is really South African (Mail & Guardian Online, 24 December, 1996).

However, the production and reproduction of black hair styles and techniques within a booming localised industry – Erasmus (1999, p. 331) cites Hughson’s estimated figure of 50 000 hair salons operating in South Africa in 1998 – points to constant tensions underlying discourses operating in black hair economies. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the inclusion of estimated figures is contextualised and complicated by the following discussion on the blurring of discourses positioning class and consumer identities.

Conspicuous consumption - black hair products

(5) P 3: You know I permed, but I don’t wash my hair, I just wear it

P 1: with creams

P 3: with creams, I just comb,

P 1: they are expensive these creams ... this woman [participant 3] sometimes buys expensive stuff

P 3: heyyyy!!

P 1: what's that stuff, what's that thing, um

P 3: Kaivol

P 1: you stay in a perm because its cheap, but you buy Kaivol! [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

(6) P 1: We blacks don't have money for these shampoos, we use soap, ordinary soap.
[Focus Group, as above].

(7) I: And what products do you usually use?

P: the cheapest there is

I: ok, like for example?

P: um, Johnsons, Colgate

[Scholar, male]

The phrase 'conspicuous consumption' is useful here as a generalized description of superabundant consumption based on display and sign value (cf. Baudrillard, 1998), while also - in a slightly altered fashion - usefully extending to refer to visibilities around consumption. The reference to *we blacks* (6) and the vigilance attached to expenditure on hair practice and hair products (5) forms part of the community gaze discussed in chapter 6. The noting of inconsistency in text 5 between expenditure on getting hair done and expenditure on hair products to ensure style maintenance is indicative of tensions underlying the differing constructions of class and consumer identities. Here the articulation of different positions by the same participant points to the presence of both an oppositional (resistant) and cooperative voice.¹ Whereas class divisions are arguably characterised by more or less static consumption within 'class-appropriate' brands (for example so-called 'no-name brands') the purchase of a high visibility brand such as Kaivol (up-market hair nourisher) in this instance signals a disruption of class/ificatory boundaries. Discussing globalisation and the de-classification of consumer identities, Garcia Canclini (1995) thus claims that "One proof of the extensive and cross-class character nature of globalisation is the transnationalisation of the goods which identify both upper and lower population sectors" (p. 38).

¹ The inhabiting of a 'double gesture' by this participant will be further discussed alongside my positioning as researcher and the implications of this.

Despite the high level of visibility lent to some brands, rapidly changing market topographies render the larger (corporate) workings behind these brands invisible on an everyday level of consumption. The use of *Colgate* shampoo – arguably targeted at white consumers - in text 7 is significant given the partnership between Colgate-Palmolive and Black Like Me signaling the blurring of race and class identities and the reinforcing of consumer identities. This blurring is further complicated by Stevens and Lockhat's (1997) notion that the manufacturing of 'Coca-Cola' identities by consumer discourses in the New South Africa, serves to eclipse both struggle and national identities in the crossing of symbolic national boundaries inherent in transnational, globalised brand identities.

Style Wars: Street/Elite Hair

(8) P: I've had braids - three times - um, first time was really cool, those were nice, and then that woman that did the braids went away, um so they got another woman in who tortured me for a whole morning and landed up being exactly how I didn't want it and I ended up pulling them out that night. And then I had it done again and those ones just fell out.

I: where did you have all of them done?

P: in the lounge next door

I: who did them for you?

P: someone my mother knew [Scholar, male].

(9) Salons are only used for big occasions like balls ... they don't do braids as they're time-consuming and bad for business [Student, female, informal hairdresser].

(10) And our problem is also that if you look very beautiful in your hair it translate to us that you have got big moneys [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

(11) I don't think my hair really expresses much about me because I can comb it all I want and get it looking perfect and five minutes later it will be different, very different [Scholar, male].

(12) I: If you were to change your hair now, if you could do anything to it, what would you do?

P: ...I don't think I actually have an answer for you, I don't know, it would be something interesting though, something unique [Scholar, male].

The commodity value of black hair practice is evident in texts 8 – 10 above. The post-Apartheid recuperation of kitchens and lounges in homes as creative spaces for the fashioning of black hair is portrayed in the hit-and-miss quest for braids in text 8. The identification of braiding as hair practice that is time-consuming and the unwillingness of salon's to do braiding on this basis, points to the definition and hierarchization of black hair styles by economies of space and time. The hierarchization of, and meanings attached to, different black hair styles will be addressed in chapters 8 (with regard to gender) and 9.

The reference to hair as *different* and the desire to have hair that is *interesting* and *unique* (11, 12) is indicative of a complex set of discourses in which black hair is situated in an ongoing cycle of (re)production and consumption. The undoing of *perfect* (11) is represented in the return of hair to its 'natural' or *different* state. The instability of black hair as a signifier and the politics around its quality as manipulable renders it extremely accessible to discursive practices of creation and recreation. In this regard, Mercer (1987) refers to a series of 'style wars' or

skirmishes of appropriation and commodification played out around the semiotic economy of the ethnic signifier ... [which] ambushes any attempt to track down fixed meanings or finalized readings and opens out instead on to ambiguous relations of economic and aesthetic systems of valorization (p. 49).

Here the importance attached to a sense of uniqueness and individuality (12) undermines attempts to stabilize and fix hair (by relaxing or perming it) in which the 'saming' of different or 'natural' black hair represents a pernicious form of othering. The brisk trade in black hair practice thus allows for the possibility of hybrid creations in which difference is commodified, fragmented and multiplied: "the black hair business, will all its *permutations* – the S Curl, the German, the pomade, braids,

cornrows, extensions, bobs and Felicia's is booming" (Mail & Guardian Online, 24 December, 1996, my italics). However, despite the 'cut 'n mix' (cf. Mercer, 1987) nature of these practices the absorption and commodification of black hair styles into mainstream culture represents the hegemony of globalized consumer discourses. In this regard, Erasmus (1999) refers to the revalorisation of 'Africanness' through the borrowing and localisation of Africentric African-American images and ideas. Furthermore, the migration of informal hair practice from the kitchen to the street, comprising a developing street salon economy (cf. Mail and Guardian, November 10, 2000) entails the increased visibility of hybrid creations leading to reinscription by the acquisitive eye of the salon. Hence, Featherstone (1991) argues that

Today's consumer culture represents neither a lapse of control nor the institution of more rigid controls, but rather their underpinning by a flexible underlying generative structure which can both handle formal control and de-control and facilitate an easy change of gears between them (p .27).

Mercer's (1987) valorization of the diversity of black hair styles is symptomatic of the reification of postmodern concepts such as bricolage and pastiche. However, Erasmus (1999) states that it is not sufficient to understand contemporary black hairstyling simply within this framework. The reading of diversity through a Foucauldian lens entails an understanding of plurality as infused with, and constituted by, networks of power which enable and constrain subjectivity and action. The following chapters will address the essentialization and hybridization of identities with regard to discourses informing black hair practice.

CHAPTER EIGHT:
SPLITTING THE DIFFERENCE – BLACK HAIR AND THE CONSTRUCTION
OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY.

It seems that women have made few contributions to the discoveries and inventions in the history of civilization; there is however, one technique which they may have invented – that of plaiting and weaving (Freud, 1973, p. 167).

What does woman want? (Freud in Gay, 1988, p. 501).

What does a black man want? (Fanon in Wyrick, 1998, p. 28).

Following from the preceding chapters, a close reading of texts generated from the interviews and focus group will be undertaken in this chapter with regard to discourses positioning gender and sexuality. While the analysis thus far has been concerned with both an archeologically-oriented (cf. Foucault, 1972) excavation of discourses, and a geneological (cf. Foucault, 1977) situating of these discourses, the move towards uncovering subject positionings in a larger framework concerned with essentialist and non-essentialist conceptions of black identity diminishes the need for con/textualising material.

The use of discourses positing the ‘natural’ as given to locate and frame race on the body will be further explored in this chapter with regard to the construction of women’s bodies as topographies of the Other. Here the use of words such as ‘female’, ‘feminine’ and ‘woman/en’ is sensitive to the ongoing essentialism and hierarchical classification (on the basis of sex) perpetuated by this vocabulāry. More specifically, this chapter will examine the co-operation between, and co-opting of, discourses stemming from the traditional nature/culture dichotomy

(cf. Grosz, 1994) with regard to black hair practice and the positioning of gender and sexual identities. The identification of the subaltern as woman, and the mapping of the feminine onto the mythology/ideology of the Dark Continent have resulted in discursive or epistemic violence (cf. Spivak), while also providing a conjunctive space for resistance by marginalised voices, confirming Foucault's (1971) dictum that knowledge is power. Furthermore, while the familiar discourses of space and time, community/culture surveillance and confession will be further unpacked here, their presence as a linking thread (amongst others) throughout the chapters is not intended as a teleological progression, but rather as a backdrop (in the panoptic sense) with each chapter illuminating moments on the erratic path of discourse.

National Geographic II – The Dark Continent as Black Hair/itage

(1) P 3: Before these kinds of things were introduced, electricity, the old ladies in those days, used to stretch - this thing you call relaxing - the stones were there, you put on the fire, when its hot you just put it in your hair

P 1: and there was a comb, this stretching comb, it's like a steel kind of thing, you put it in the fire when its hot you comb them, you know it looks fine. Our mothers they were doing that [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

(2) P 1: Another kind of, they look like the KhoiKhois, we were all like the Khoisan,

P 3: they stay in the bush, Khoisan

P 1: Khoisan ya, we all looked like that until such time that we take this kind of the religion things, from the history now, we become religious, we become, you know we change and change and change until we were westernized [Focus group, as above].

The earlier discussion (chapter 6) examining the 'natural' as a spatial and environmental (re)source of 'given' attributes and the subsequent location of these attributes in and on the black body is continued here in terms of the similar positioning of gender. The rudimentary tools (*stones, fire, stretching-comb*) referred to in text 1 serve to construct a Flintstones-like DIY hair practice, with the evolution or passing down (hair/itage) of this practice identified gender

specifically (*old ladies, Our mothers*). The use of classificatory terms such as *Khoi Khoi* and *Khoisan* as spatially defined subjectivities (locus in *bush*) reinforces the notion of the uncivilized Other needing to be checked (*Westernized*) while the identification of women as the archivers of hair practice that serves to combat Otherness reinforces the positioning of the feminine as the topography of the Other. This topography has been conceptualized by the grand narrative of the Dark Continent. Thus Gilman (1992) states that

in his *Essay on Lay Analysis* (1926) Freud discusses the ignorance of contemporary psychology concerning adult female sexuality, by referring to this lack of knowledge as the 'dark continent' of psychology. It is Freud's intent to explore this hidden 'dark continent' and reveal hidden truths about female sexuality, just as the anthropologist-explorers were revealing the hidden truths about the nature of the black (p. 195).

Similarly, Phoca and Wright (1999) argue that feminism has correctly identified women as colonized subjects given their historical and metaphorical location as the Dark Continent.

The production of knowledge about black bodies entailed a double othering in terms of the simultaneous production of knowledge about women's bodies and gender. Crude practices of othering in which the superior intellect of whites was determined by the larger diameter of their skulls were similarly used to establish the inferior intellect of women. In this regard Synnott (1993) cites the example of Broca (a surgeon and the founder of the anthropological society of Paris) who determined that "male brains weighed, on average, more than female ones" (p. 52). However, while colonial constructions of race and gender served to perpetuate binary schemas justifying practices of domination, this conjunctive subjugation provided, and provides, a space for the mobilization of resistance. Thus the notion of an en/gendered sticks-and-stones black hair practice (1) is oppositionally set-up in relation to *religion* and *history* as westernized, institutionalizing discourses (2) by the same participant (P 1) in the focus group. Significantly,

the classificatory terms *Khoi Khoi* and *Khoisan* (2) – posited as pre-Euro/western/colonial - stem from the vocabulary generating and knowledge producing disciplines of history and religion. The introduction of disparate or dualistic discourses by P 1 in the two excerpts above is indicative of textual resistance at a meta-theoretical level – embodying subject resistance to both my position as researcher and my acts of positioning. Hence, Spivak issues the challenge: “Who is the other woman? How am I naming her? How does she name me?” (in Curti, 1996, p. 134). Spivak’s (1988) identification of the subaltern as female thus points to larger theoretical issues concerning the discursive location of resistance and who speaks for the marginalised. In this regard, Kanneh (1998) states that

Investigating ... how gender and race intersect or become significant in identity politics, it becomes necessary to explore the relationship between cultural signifiers and the body, or rather the *acculturation* of the body, its invention as an object of analysis and knowledge (p.150).

The Long and the Short of it – gender appropriate black hair

(3) Ya, it depends, it’s your choice, what you want, you can’t stop the client if maybe the men come they say only the braiding you can’t stop it, even the women come in they are saying the brush-cut you know [Salon hairdresser, male].

(4) I: Do you think that there are appropriate hairstyles for men and women?

P: no - I believe in equality of the sexes, I think you know, if a woman can grow her hair then why can’t a man, if a man can get a brush-cut then why can’t a woman? [Scholar, male].

(5) P 2: I went to a guy, I want a cut, all my hairs were here [shows hands] I was like a little boy [FG].

(6) Men should have short hair or dreads ... men who are more daring will approve of women with shaved heads but mostly men like women with neat, good-looking hair like braids ... dreads on women aren’t nice [Informal hairdresser/student, female].

(7) P 1: The Rebeccas, the gospel, they do the cutting, those were the first people to do the cutting like men, and there’s nothing wrong with it, they are beautiful and they are neat individuals [FG].

Texts 3 – 7 represent various discourses concerning gender appropriate hairstyles with regard to black hair. The apparent disconcert with gender norms in text 3 is achieved in the text by the invocation of *choice* thereby delegating individual subject responsibility for surveillance in this respect. Here the reference to clients recalls the salon as a disciplinary space, while the conjunctive use of *choice* and *client* points to black hair practice as a consumer activity associated with identity/lifestyle markers. Furthermore, in its capacity as a disclaimer, the reference to *equality of the sexes* (4) invokes political correctness in the guise of a liberal, pseudo-feminist discourse. However, despite evidence to the contrary in texts 3 and 4, these texts (and the texts as a group) entail a binaristic inversion of gender norms governed by the regulatory feature of hair *length*. Synnott (1993) refers to a theory of opposites in which “current symbolic practice is characterized by the proposition: opposite sexes have opposite hair” (p. 104). He adds that “perhaps the most obvious difference between the hair of men and women today is that, conventionally, men tend to have shorter (and less styled) hair than women” (1993, p. 105). Thus, by framing notions of gender equality rhetorically, (*if a woman can grow her hair then why can't a man, if a man can get a brush-cut then why can't a woman?*) the stabilization of inappropriate gender hairstyles is achieved by length. The construction of hair as a gendered object is further manifest in text 5 in which the accidental felling of hair reduces the subject to a *little boy*.

The discursive ratio of men = short hair and women = long hair is furthered in text 6 where experimentation outside of these boundaries is considered *daring*. Synnott (1993) refers to long hair as sexualized, claiming that “the appeal of long hair goes far back into Western mythology ... Milton reinforced it in *Paradise Lost* as he described Eve’s wanton, golden tresses:

She, as a veil down to the slender waist,
Her adorned golden tresses wore
Disheveled, but in wanton ringlets waved,
As the vine curls her tendrils” (p. 106).

Texts 6 and 7 constitute a complicated discursive system whereby *neatness* plays an important, judiciary role in determining gender conventions outside of normative boundaries. Thus while it is acceptable for women to have short (male) hair by virtue of the neatness of this style, the wearing of dreadlocks by women remains unacceptable. Implicit in this understanding is the regulatory feature of *texture* as a signifier of race. Here braids function in much the same way as perms (see chapter 6) whereby intertwining and tight plaiting renders kinky/curly hair long, straight and manageable. While dreadlocks constitute longer hair, this length is achieved by the consolidation of hair texture – hair is allowed to mat together - rather than the checking of hair texture. Synnott’s (1993) validation of his argument concerning hair, and particularly long hair, as a sexual object by invoking Western mythology is therefore both confirmed and confounded by the construction of hair as a raced object which he ignores. In this regard (Doy, 2000) refers to the contribution of artist Sonia Boyce in a recent exhibition concerned with representations of black identity in which she focuses on hair as both a sexual and racial fetish.

Gender, Sexuality and (Other) Hair Confessions

Kanneh’s (1998) proposed investigation of the *acculturation* of bodies in order to examine the intersection between discourses constructing black hair as both a raced and gendered object informs the following discussion.

Hair Archives – who wears the trousers?

(8) P 1: Most of us women have tried all these kind of styles, all these kind of things [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

(9) There are quite a few girls with beautiful hair on campus, but mine never looks like that when I relax it 'cos I just can't take care of it [Student, female].

(10) P 1: They've got hats in the church and then the braids don't match under that hat, and um, it's difficult to become a church person, women who have braiding - sometimes you have a style, its something about things that you have to abide by, you can't wear trousers [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

(11) I: And shaved hair for women?

P 1: No, don't like it, it symbolizes another thing in our culture, if you have lost someone, your father or mother, you shave your hair totally [Focus group, as above].

Texts 8 – 11 point to black hair as both a gendered and community object. The gaze of authority entailed by community vigilance is linked to the role of women as the keepers/archivers of knowledge regarding what is acceptable and unacceptable with regard to black hair practice, ultimately taking the form of cultural beliefs. The essentialising statement, *Most of us women have tried all these kinds of styles* (8), constructs a community of fellow-feeling and practice confirming Synnott's (1993) claim that "head hair...is a part of the cultural definition of femininity" (p. 105). This definition includes the responsibility for taking care of or grooming hair – here again this grooming aspect is vital to the construction of good/beautiful black hair as 'done' hair – reinforced by the comparison with, and positioning of, the good/docile gendered subject as the subject who *takes care* of their hair (9).

Spivak's (in Shohat, 1995, p. 2) notion of "communities of identification", endorsed by and endorsing, a certain amount of strategic essentialism are evident in texts 10 and 11. Yuval-Davies (1997) claims that "Women's ways of dressing and behaving very often come to symbolise the group's cultural identity and its boundaries" and refers to the importance of the idea of 'honour' as part of this cultural identity (p. 196). Here honour is arguably entailed in

abiding by codes of dress and hair practice advocated by *church* communities (10), and the practice of shaved hair as a signifier of mourning and respect - perpetuating the cultural importance attached to the role of parents (11). However, the framing of the notion of honour and obedience to the church as communion/ity in text 10 can be seen to operate as a form of resistance. Larger issues pertaining to *style* (as a marker of identity) choices as not commensurate with church dictates are manifest in the reference to women being unable to wear trousers, preceded and set-up by the practical considerations governing the wearing of church hats. Here the concealment of hair (by wearing a hat) by various religious discourses is thwarted by the wearing of braids. Here the activity implied by *wearing* is significant as a form of agency whereby the wearing of braids as a gender normative (*neat*) hairstyle for black women, embodies resistance to the construction of hair as too sinful/shameful/sexual by various religious discourses. Discourses surrounding the politics of *covering* hair serve in both a disciplinary/regulatory capacity as well as providing a means of resistance. The covering of hair (as a sexual symbol) in public by means of a wig is practiced by married Orthodox Jewish women (cf. Durbin, 1982) alongside the well-documented wearing of veils by Muslim women in Algeria as a form of resistance to Euro/Western ideals (cf. Fanon, 1970).

Close Shaves – no hair and what it all means

See, if I loved you, it was for your hair; now you're bald, I don't love you anymore
(from Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair, Frida Kahlo, 1940).

Texts 12 – 16 below represent various discourses positioning gendered subjectivities in terms of shaved hair. Taken from the same participant over one interview these texts point to shaved hair as a vastly loaded signifier that intersects discourses pertaining to essentialised notions of race,

gender and sexuality. In this regard, Yuval-Davies (1997) refers to the significant role played by symbols of gender in the articulation of difference.

(12) I don't really have my hair this short all the time, it grows sometimes, but I shave it off because I don't know, it brings out such a confidence in me, I have to be very confident to walk around campus with no hair [Student, female].

(13) P: And I think oh, I look so beautiful with no hair on so...you know, it gives me a bit of self-confidence so ... ya, I look stunning with no hair on, I do, I don't know why I always look at myself for hours and think I look good [Student, female].

(14) I've just got this weight complex ya, I'd like to lose weight so you know, that's why I shaved it off because it gives me a bit of confidence [Student, female].

(15) I know this girl whose a lesbian and she was convinced that everybody who shaved their hair off was a lesbian and actually all the black girls who have no hair are all lesbians, or maybe one or two...but the rest are lesbian [Student, female].

(16) This year there lots of black people who shave their heads, then you hear they're bi and amongst, I mean with black people you don't do such things and it's like quite shocking to come onto campus and find out that people are just announcing publically that they're bisexual or lesbians or whatever [Student, female].

Different discourses are employed by the participant in texts 12 – 14, relating to the positioning of her self by shaving her hair, and texts 15 and 16 in which shaved hair is constructed as an object located as Other. In texts 12 – 14 the agency embodied by the acts of shaving hair off, and wearing no hair (*no hair on*), represent the production of a certain mode of being described as *confidence*. Thus the notion of 'good' hair as an ethic of self-stylization recalls Foucault's (1984) notion of care for, and technologies of, the self which is complicated by issues surrounding representation. Here the statement, *I have to be very confident to walk around campus with no hair* (12), suggests the convergence of representations surrounding self-care (mirrored agency constructs hair as a beautiful object, 13) with representations subject to external scrutiny (a *weight complex* is balanced by the confidence inspired by shaved hair, 14).

The attempted resistance to time and consumer discourses embodied by hair shaving in chapter 7 is furthered in the present texts by shaved hair as an opting-out of the long/short dynamic as regulative of gender norms in hair practice. In this regard, Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) vision of the 'body without organs' as a dis-identification with the biological organization of the body (the consequent dissolution of the Oedipal drama thus freeing up a multiplicity of desire) can playfully be extended to conceptualize the body without hair. However, the resistance embodied by shaved hair is undermined by the positioning of subjectivities in terms of sexuality. Text 15 can be read as a complex interplay of identity politics, functioning similarly to the adoption of the Afro by Black Consciousness groups in the sixties (cf. Mercer, 1987). Here the association of short/shaved hair with masculinity incorporates essentialist constructions of lesbian and bisexual subjectivity as characterised by the adoption of stereotyped gender-opposite traits (butch lesbians/effeminate gay men). Ultimately, the essentialising of shaved black hair constitutes a trio of othering whereby race, gender and sexuality are stamped with the mark of the plural (cf. Memmi in Loomba, 1998), hence, *all the black girls who have no hair are all lesbians* (15).

A move from the concern with hair as a signifier of sexuality to public announcements or confessions regarding sexuality is evident in text 16. Antipathy towards difference entailed in articulations of sexual identity is framed in culture-speak (*with black people you don't do such things*), paying homage to discourses constructing homo/bisexuality as un-African. Functioning as a kind of meta-confession about confessions, the text serves to distance subject identification with discourses of sexuality, while participating in the production of knowledge about different sexual subjectivities. In this regard, Blumberg and Soal (1997) argue that

Confession serves to construct 'inner desires', as well as to reproduce and normalize certain truths, generally those prescribed by the discourses dominant in the confessional forum. If, following Foucault, we assume that confession operates in the constitution of meaning, practice and understanding, then we must recognize that through the confessional act we are actively implicated in the regulation and government of self and sexual practice (p. 84).

Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) imperative seeking dis-identification with the body therefore arguably remains unattainable as a utopian (and non-productive) ideal given the body's surface as a vast topography of inscription and representation. Arguments envisioning the body as a hybrid surface, and positioning subjectivity as multicultural and fragmented will be explored in the final analytic chapter with regard to essentialist and non-essentialist conceptions of identity in post-Apartheid South Africa.

CHAPTER NINE:
**COUNTER-HAIR/GEMONIES: DIFFERENCE AND ESSENTIALISMS, WEAVING
THE THREADS TOGETHER.**

How are we to make sense of such claims when the very concept of culture disintegrates at first touch into multiple positionings, according to gender, age, ethnicity and so forth? As culture evaporates into a war of positions, we are left wondering what it might possibly mean to 'have' a cultural identity (Werbner, 1997, p. 3).

What is this 'black' in black popular culture? (Hall, 1996, p.465).

This chapter seeks to coalesce the multiple discursive constructions of black hair as an object and the subsequent positionings of black subjectivity constituted by entry into *games of truth* (cf. Foucault in Fernet-Betancourt, 1984). Foucault's phrase is crucial here to an understanding of potential with regard to identity. While the reference to *truth* points to the consolidation of essentialising discourses surrounding black hair, the notion of *games of truth* entails the possibility inherent in hybrid or other constructions of identity in a post-Apartheid New South Africa. It seems important to reiterate what has been an implicit 'outcome' thus far. Stemming from an approach sensitive to the profusion of discourse and power (Foucauldian), and the *implications* for doing discourse work sensitive to the productive and repressive potential of institutionalized discourse (Parkerian) – the dis/covering of possibilities for identity construction is informed by an understanding of identity construction as an ongoing process. The notion of process underpins questions concerning the existing potential for identities not based on struggle – or perhaps based on new struggles, identities interpellated by consumer discourses and lifestyle markers, and identities based on the negotiation of cultural and community driven notions of what it means to be black in the present moment.

Following the same structure used previously, this chapter will proceed by presenting and analyzing texts in conjunction with theoretical input, however, rather than relying on 'external', media oriented texts as con/texts, excerpts from the focus group and interviews will be used. Some of these directly involve discussions around hair, while some stem from talk around issues relating to identity and lifestyle thus further shifting the porous boundaries surrounding text and con/text. Here again the unpacking of these texts stems from the imperative to enable, if only for one (constructed) moment, a rendering visible of contingencies or an uncovering of conditions of possibility (cf. Foucault in Kendall & Wickham, 1999).

White Like Me – Texture Hair/gemonies

(1) P 1: We always say that we are better than the whites hair ... I don't know but if you tend to pass by or you walk with someone, both women black and one white there's nothing that tells you that this one doesn't wash his hair or her hair [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

(2) Most black people feel that their hair is more versatile than whites, they can do anything with it, whereas white hair is difficult to work with, it's too slippery and silky [Informal hairdresser, student, female].

(3) I: Do you think that any of the white hairdressers in Grahamstown cater for black hair?
P: no, um I don't think so, 'cos there's a friend of mine who went to um a white salon and they told them that they don't do *ethnic* hair ... I don't think that there are many salons that actually cater for us [Student, female].

(4) P: I always considered my hair as different, you know, it is different from anyone else's, my little brother and my big brother as well, my little brother and I have very similar hair but it's different ... people recognize me by my hair, they, they, people don't know it's me unless they look at my hair, um, when I did my braids in festival I walked past my best friend, I looked him in the eye and said hello and he didn't recognize me, ya people just recognize me by my hair, I presume because it's different you know, I come from a mixed family so, um, there aren't many people in Grahamstown who come from mixed families [Scholar, male].

The construction of white hair as an object by discourses in texts 1 – 3 effects a binary positioning of blacks (us) and whites (them). In the first two texts, the very characteristics used

to reinforce the normativity of white hair are constructed as disadvantageous to its manageability (non-washing is easily apparent and hairstyles are transient). This represents an inversion of discourses discussed earlier (chapter 6) whereby not getting hair 'done' (in a long-term style not requiring washing and re-creation every morning) is equated with feelings and perceptions of dirtiness, while constant monitoring for oiliness or dirtiness points to the impermanence of white hair creations. The articulation of hegemonies of texture governing white hair (silkeness, shininess, straightness) therefore functions as a means of resistance to historical violences stemming from perceived and constructed representations of difference. In texts 1 and 2 the re/cognition of difference thus indirectly involves the validation of *kroes*/kinky hair, regarded here as *better*, and *more versatile*. Processes described in chapters 5 and 6 regarding the *monitoring* (prolific in relaxing/straightening discourses) of difference, and the *fixing* (permanents) of difference are exemplified by their oppositional situation to the *slippery* (2) signifier of white hair. This suggests the tenuousness of the center, whereby the borders and boundaries are always-already eroded and the return to origins is marked by ambivalence (cf. Bhabha, 1994). Silences around existing politics attached to white hair mean that rather than the threat of 'going home'; white hair is not home at home.

In text 3 my positioning (*Do you think that any of the white hairdressers in Grahamstown cater for black hair?*) is maintained by the participant in the use of *us* to refer to a community of identification (cf. Spivak, 1988). As a euphemism for positing difference (ethnic cleansing as a new hair regime?), the reference to *ethnic* hair is confounded here by the essentialist reclaiming of the unspoken signifier and binary code. In this instance Werbner's (1997) argument that "the subaltern *does* speak, even if her or his voice does not always reach 'us' – does not necessarily

seek to reach us" (p. 240) is confirmed. However, in keeping with Spivak (1988), this voice is aided here by the espousal of a strategic essentialism.

A further construction of black hair as *different* occurs in text 4. The Manichean dualism inherent in the phrase *similar but different* represents a concern with issues of representation and recognition and the depersonalization attendant upon these issues. Here the previously discussed act of 'saming the Other', or bestowing the 'mark of the plural same' (cf. Loomba, 1998) must be extended to hybridity as a notion in which the predominance of difference may itself solidify into an identity. The articulation of a *difference* existing autonomously from *similarity* represents a concern with individuality and uniqueness (see chapter 7). This involves locating a space within difference as constructed by dominant discourse, and *unique* difference with discourses of plurality and hybridity. This echoes Haraway's cyborg politics wherein subjectivity is "constituted by a struggle against 'unity-through-domination or unity-through-incorporation [that] ... undermines all claims to an organic or *natural* standpoint (Werbner, 1997, p. 8, my italics). The location of difference within the context of a *mixed family* produces a literal and metaphorical notion of hybridity enabling a subjectivity constituted by unity-through-difference. Consequently, Werbner (1997) argues that "Hall's consistently original contributions to the debate on hybridity are grounded, above-all, in the Gramscian idea that hegemony or counter-hegemony must necessarily be constituted through alliances across differences" (p. 13). She adds, furthermore, that these contributions draw on Derrida's notion of *differance* as "both the same and different, anticipatory as well as present" (1997, p. 13). The operation of anticipatory discourses in relation to hybridity and identity construction will be further discussed in chapter

10.

Natural Artifice – the Different different

(5) P 1: No I don't think, weaving, the fact that it has that name means it's not something that you are born with, it's something you've put on to make you beautiful, and all of those people who are singing, the stars, if they want to make themselves look different, and other things like the braidings, are artificial things. Even, even with the perm, we can say it's a artificial thing, you, you have permed, you've done something, you put it in rollers you know for an hour, washed it, sprayed and other things, and to make your hair look beautiful, like what you want them to look [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

Text 5 forms part of the ongoing discourse around difference and 'natural' black hair. The construction of natural black is once again effected by the various procedures that can be undertaken to rep/hair it (*perm, braiding*), however it is indirectly constructed here by its juxtaposition to artificiality. The notion of 'natural' black hair as *something that you are born with* reinforces the construction of the 'natural' as authentic and embodied. While the recognition of hair practice as artifice does not entail a similar recognition of the artificiality of hair as a discursive construct, the notion of artifice points to a sense of agency and resistance informed by bricolage as an activity, rather than an identification with the bricoleur. Here Deleuze and Guattari (1977, p. 7) understanding of bricolage as "the art of making do with what's at hand", is rendered significant by my production of this reading – or, stated differently, by my activities as a bricoleur as an active agent in the production of this text. This entails a form of speaking for the subaltern (cf. Spivak, 1988) and will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Heterotopias – Moral economies of space and time

(6) P: 'Cos you see there's a difference between, um, the white people and the black people who, see with you guys its always been there even in the 80's it was there, the 60's it was there, but then with us its like all of a sudden and we just didn't understand it, cos its just not us, we don't do it, so it was quite shocking, cos with you guys its alright, I think you learn to accept it from a very early age, you see it on tv and stuff, but with us it just, its not right, it just isn't, we didn't grow-up in a sexual environment [Student, female].

(7) P: I'm not like the rural black person you know, I'm sort of like the urban black person so obviously I think differently and stuff, but then I still want that, I still want to have that black culture in me you know, I still wanna speak Xhosa and Shangaan, and do things that you know have that tradition. Have that traditional wedding and that someone has to pay lobola for me and that type of thing, but now it's going away, it really is, but even when you go home you have three year olds who just, the only language that they speak is English and I mean if it starts from when you are three then you're not really going to get anywhere, see cos you'll have no culture, and our morals are all wrong

I: do you consider yourself moral?

P: hm, do I consider myself moral...mm, at Rhodes I'm not, but at home I am ...you see with black people it's more about how you really have to respect everybody, like specially people who are older than you...see, even if it's the women who, you know, clean my res room, I just, I still can't walk past her with a cigarette, I sort of like hide it 'cos there's just that thing that I can't smoke you know, in front of her, so... . I still am, I suppose moral, but at home I'm much better [Student, female].

An essentialising and binary framework constituting '*the white people*' and '*the black people*' is once again used to frame difference in text 6. This con/text forms part of the discussion on shaved hair worn by black women and the subsequent positioning of sexuality. The periodical and historical location (80's, 60's) of discourses of sexuality within 'white culture' (*you guys*) functions as a means of cultural distancing from these discourses. Moreover, the archiving of knowledges inimical to moral communities of identification prepares the ground for an abdication of textual responsibility when discourses of difference become *suddenly* apparent. Here the presence of difference is characterized as a penetration of normativity (it was shocking) by a Westernized/white gaze functioning spectacularly (*you see it on tv*) and insidiously (learning to *accept it from a very early age*, and *grow[ing] up in a sexual environment*). The perception of an environmentally nurtured cognizance pertaining to sexuality thus constructs black subjectivity and sexuality as 'naturally' culture-bound.

The invocation of communities of identification functions spatially to map a geography of moral and cultural identification. Different forms of cognition and identification are thus located in *rural* and *urban* settings constituting a densely layered topography of competing discourses and positionalities framed by the grand narratives of tradition and language. The framing of rural and urban as oppositional identities, and the consequent rejection of a rural identity (*I'm not like the rural black person*) in favour of an urban identity is complicated by the regulative desire for tradition. In this regard, urban identity is characterized by institutionalized discourses related to marriage (conceivable in the expectation that heterosexual partnerships are defined by marriage), while traditional gender roles determine that married status confers masculine ownership (*lobola*). Competing discourses are further evident in the juxtaposition of home (Soweto) and University (Grahamstown) locales as inhabiting different moral vocabularies. The element of agency constituted by active self-situation in a different moral and discursive space is threatened by the extended gaze of a (home) moral community on campus, and the perpetuation of class and gender roles positioning, and positioned, by this community (*even if it's the women who ...clean my res room*). Consequently, Werbner (1997) states that

A moral community is not a unity. It is full of conflict, of internal debate about right and wrong ...the challenge for the moral community is to transcend its internal cultural, political and gendered differences (pp. 238-9).

Ambivalence to difference in the form of plurality or hybridity arguably stems from what Papastergiadis (1997) has referred to the “dark past of hybridity” and historical associations between the espousal of plurality by supremacy in the guise of democracy (p. 258).

He adds that (1997, p. 257) “hybridity has, in one way or another, served as a threat to the fullness of selfhood”, voicing the concern of some postcolonial theorists who view the negation of essentialist discourse attendant upon hybridity as a further means of silencing the Other.

Hence, the re/cognition of representations of subjectivity in text 7 above points to a form of hybridity whereby the body constitutes a battleground for the negotiation of geographical and cultural identities, rather than a relentlessly reflexive utopia.

Xenophobia and Essentialisms – a Coconut by another name

(8) I: Speaking of natural, what do you think of hair weaves for example?

P: well, I mean a lot of people who have weaves are Zimbabwean people, cos Zimbabwean girls have weaves and nobody really likes them

I: the weaves or the girls?

P: nobody likes the weaves, but people have weaves and, but it's their preference and you can't really say anything about it, if they like it they like it, but I don't think I'd ever have that

I: why?

P: its just, its not me, and its just synthetic hair and it looks ridiculous because it just doesn't go – it's like plastic [Student, female].

(9) P: Last year the Zimbabweans and the black people didn't get along very well, but this year like we're trying to get along, working towards it, but coloureds and black people are, I don't know if they'll ever get along, I don't think so

I: why not?

P: I don't know, coloureds have always, coloureds don't want to be seen, like they don't think that they're coloured, all they want to be, they don't wanna be black, they always wanna be with the whites [Student, female].

(10) P: I've had white friends but then I can't really relate to white people and things, so I've never really seen myself as a coconut, I don't get how other people become coconuts because if you look at it we're just too totally different people, we're just too different...not that, I do try sometimes but you get to a level where you can't get beyond that level and it has to stop there. I've got a friend whose a coconut¹ and um last year we had, there were like a coconut friend and a white friend, and the white friend didn't understand the coconut friend, like why isn't she just black she's too white y'know [Student, female].

(11) P: People who came this year, I think most of them are from well-off families, they're not all from...Soweto and they're the type of person who um, they went to multiracial schools all their lives so the only language they speak is English and they just talk about different things, and they're so like spoilt, they're just used to having everything, they get everything, they don't really struggle and there people that I know that have been here for awhile and they say they're from a different, they're from another level, from another class [Student, female].

¹ The use of the term 'coconut' to depict white-identifying black subjectivity will be presently discussed.

(12) P: Braids are African - even though some people braid and relax their hair they haven't lost their identity, they've kept their identity [Informal hairdresser, student, female].

(13) I: you said you get lot's of white customers for braids?

P: ya, the white people like braiding, they do the braidings, mostly students from Rhodes [Salon hairdresser, male].

Black and white binaries are perpetuated in texts 8 and 9 by a chain of xenophobic discourses constructing *Zimbabwean* and *coloured* subjectivities as alien to, and incompatible, with black subjectivity. This is cemented by the construction of coloured subjectivity as white-identified, thus constituting a betrayal of black communities of identification. This interrogation is leveled at black subjectivity with regard to the perceived uncritical adoption of white-identified cultural practices conceptualized in the humorous description of *coconuts* (black on the outside, white on the inside, 10). Moral distancing from these practices is effected by the reification of a community of suffering constituted by individual and collective struggle identities. Stevens and Lockhat's (1997) concerns regarding the replacement of struggle identities by 'Coca-Cola' identities in the absence of economic means to fulfill this transition are echoed in text 11 by the framing of difference in terms of classed identities.

A cruder, street slang conceptualization of the inverse process of black-identifying white subjectivity (seemingly appropriate to this thesis) is entailed in the description of *wiggers* (white 'niggers'). In this regard, a recent article concerning the identification of children with rap celebrities, refers to the cult following amongst "South African Wiggers (white kids who want to be black)" (Mail & Guardian Online, August 11, 1995). The displacement and inscription of marginalised discourses of identification and validation (*braids are African*, 12) by the center is manifest by the popularity of braids (13) amongst white South Africans (cf. Erasmus, 1999). In

this regard, Papstergiadis (1997) states that “The shock of the Other serves to stimulate seduction, and to quicken consumption, via ingestion and absorption” (p. 261). However, while references to *coconuts* and *wiggers* serve to reinforce binaries, this form of identification across racial boundaries suggests the development of a critical vocabulary for the playful articulation of essentialisms and the opening up of discussion around what it means to be black. In this regard, Werbner (1997) states that “whether nationalism or ethnicity are ‘good’ or ‘evil’ depends on the ability (and right) of members of ethnic or national collectivities to engage in reflexive self-critical distancing from their own cultural discourses (Werbner, 1997, p. 14). The ability and right to engage in self-reflexivity (counter-hair/gemonies) will be addressed in conjunction with the effects wrought by my positioning as a white woman researcher in the final chapter.

CHAPTER TEN:
**DECONSTRUCTING CONCLUSIONS – HYBRIDITY, HEGEMONY AND
RESEARCHER POSITIONING.**

Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of habit. To make ourselves
unrecognizable in turn (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3).

It should no longer be possible in the current state of colonial scholarship to imagine the research
process, either the consumption or production of knowledge, an individuated private affair
(Foucault, in Stoler, 1995, p. xi).

As the sum of often-rebellious parts, this thesis has been concerned with the operations of
discourse (on both a micro and macro level) and the production and reproduction of these
discourses in the crucible of black identity construction in South Africa. De la Rey's claim (in
Magubane, 1997, p. 19) that "Since 1994 a kind of space has opened up in South African politics
where we have started talking about identity politics in ways that I don't think we talked about in
the pre '94 years", is confirmed by the process of negotiation of identities stemming from the
analysed texts. Discourses stemming from a consumer hair care product in chapter 5 served to
construct black hair as a dangerous, serious, needy and resistant object. In chapters 5 and 6
resistance is constituted by black hair as a 'natural' object that must be regulated and checked
and ultimately 'done'. The construction of black hair as a consumer object, pointed, in chapter 7,
to the problematic nature of class and consumer discourses and how national identities (and the
eclipsing of struggle identities) are both produced and undermined by these discourses. The
intersection of race, gender and sexuality in chapter 8 reinforces the conceptualisation of the
Subaltern as feminine and embodied. Finally, the reinforcing of essentialised identities, and the

implementation of hybridity as a strategic form of bricolage in chapter 9 point to black identity construction as a site for negotiation.

Embeddedness and con/textuality – disadvantages of discourse analysis

It is tempting to make use of Foucault's (1970, p. 51) oft-quoted declaration expressing a desire to "slip effortlessly into this discourse" as an easy way of ending and slipping effortlessly out of discourse in this final chapter, however, neither position can be realized as we are always-already embedded in discourse and must speak from these positions of embeddedness. This points to both the problematic nature of discourse and the analysis of discourses as situated within texts. In this regard, Parker & Burman (1993) comment on the difficulty of determining "whether the different ... discourses are present in the text as discrete phenomena, or whether the changes in context are responsible for changes in meaning" (p. 156). This insight can be critically directed at the actual procedure undertaken in gathering and production of both the self-generated and public domain texts. In the former this pertains to the shaping of textual content by the setting of the interviews and focus group in different locations (each with specific audiences and gazes), as well as the overall research context in a historically white university and its locale. The problematisation of text and con/text demarcation, and the production of meaning intertextually and con/textually is representative of difficulties with the determining of discursive operations in the latter, public domain texts. Here the production of diverse texts was necessitated in order to work with the gap (cf. Parker, 1998a) between overdetermined objects (such as black hair) and their representations (given theoretical precedents and dispersed location).

Speaking from/for difference

Parker & Burman (1993) refer to a further problem entailed in discourse analysis relating to “the power of the analyst to impose meanings upon another(s) text” (p. 157). In this regard, the researcher’s line of questioning serves to perpetuate racial positionings is evident in the following example from one of the self-generated texts:

I: Do you think that any of the white hairdressers in Grahamstown cater for black hair?
P: no, um I don’t think so, ‘cos there’s a friend of mine who went to um a white salon and they told them that they don’t do *ethnic* hair ...I don’t think that there are many salons that actually cater for us [Student, female].

Parker’s (1992) claim that elaborated meanings in texts exist independently of individual intent points to a further problem inherent in discourse analysis in which the disruption and dis/articulation of participant intent reinforces the capacity for deconstruction and reconstruction by the researcher. In this regard, the imposition of researcher meanings upon texts is further evidenced by my identification of subject agency as stemming from a form of hybridity that can best be described as bricolage in chapter 9. The promotion of hybridity as a framework for conceptualizing non-unitary forms of identity construction is matched by a body of theory, largely postcolonial in origin, expressing a deep-seated unease concerning issues of, representation - who speaks for and who gets spoken for in hybridity theory? Thus Morrison (in Kanneh, 1998) states that

When Blacks discovered they had shaped or become a culturally formed race, and that it had specific and revered difference, suddenly they were told there is no such thing as ‘race’, biological or cultural, that matters and that genuinely intellectual exchange cannot accommodate it (p. 138).

Identifying this as a form of epistemic violence, Spivak (1988) levels further accusations in this regard in terms of the representation of marginalised voices. Here issues of articulacy pertaining

to the representation of the speech of the Other in an other language point to the exoticising potential contained in the textual representation, as in this excerpt from the focus group:

P 1: They're not beautiful because they need to be done. I need to go to the perm, or do anything like relaxing them, but even if I did all those things, my hair are soft, it a wind comes this way, they go this way ... that's why I'm doing a perm because if you do a perm they look like these ones [Focus group, 4 women, community workers].

Hybridity and hegemony – ghosts in the machine

In the context of the (not so) New, post-Apartheid South Africa, researchers cannot afford to be apathetic about lingering and newly evolving discursive practices of regulation. However, while a return to perceived traditional or cultural (essentialist) discourses may be regarded as a form of vigilance around inscriptive discourses, this position is undermined and thwarted by instabilities in the framework of essentialized identity construction. Hall's (1996a) announcement of "the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject" (p. 443), locates the value of hybridity theory as a means of expressing *contested* notions of identity. This enables a multiplicity of voices, including hegemonising voices (here I locate mine) in that the always-already of discursive repression, is also the always-already of discursive resistance. Hence, Foucault (in Lotringer, 1996) challenges, "Who speaks and acts? It is always a multiplicity, even within the person who speaks and acts. All of us are "groupuscules" (p. 75).

Part of the problem with regard to hybridity theory and postmodern theories emphasising plurality and difference resides in the unifying of this theory (cf. Hall, in Grossberg, 1996) by different approaches, notwithstanding the presence of implicit assumptions in this thesis. Despite declarations and reiterations to the contrary concerning the absence of 'outcomes' or conclusions the examination of hybridity as a set of discourses alternative to those constructing essentialized

notions of subjectivity effects a type of dualism. The implicit touting of hybridity as *the*, rather than *an*, answer to questions surrounding the collapse of unitary identities is arguably a result of the anticipatory nature of much postmodern theory. In this regard, the persistent location of the end of Apartheid in the realm of the beyond (cf. Nixon, 1994) is mirrored by contributions to hybridity, such as Hall's vision of hybridity, as alliances across difference, wherein difference, like *differance*, is understood as present as well as anticipatory (in Werbner, 1997). Metaphors of geographical uncertainty locating identity in a liminal, third space - in the 'twixt-and-tween of ambivalence - acknowledge the present only in its identification as ambivalent fecundity rather than actualizing the present by an attentiveness to the unruly voices characterizing the dissonance between the past and the future. This actualization does not negate the possibility entailed by hybridity, but functions to produce a vision of hybrid identities that are both politically enabled and politically constrained.

Negotiating the Present – advantages of discourse analysis

The presence of my fingerprints in the production of meaning in, and representation of, the texts is arguably balanced by a commitment to allowing a variety of voices to emerge from these texts in the paradoxical process described by Derrida (in de Kock, 1993) as the “‘double gesture’ in which one inhabits a vocabulary in order to render it problematic” (p. 50). The production and importing of a diversity of texts and contexts functioned to highlight the scattered locations of academic and public or popular discourse on black hair. In this regard, the approach undertaken in terms of the porosity of texts posits an attempt to map these locations. Furthermore, the focus on black hair as a cultural and political signifier has simultaneously emphasised white hair as an object regulated by discursive practices in its own respect. Silences attached to these practices

must be therefore be deconstructed and dialogued in order to disrupt their hegemonising potential and to erect a counter-hairgeconomics of white hair.

This thesis started out by questioning whether the possibility existed for new forms of conceptualizing black identity in South Africa – implicit in this question was the hoped-for answer of hybridity. I would like to reposition this question outside the discursive tyranny of the beyond, and answer this questioning positively by referring to the existence of critical talk, both essentialist and non-essentialist, presently surrounding black identity. Here, Erasmus's (1999) guiding axiom that there is no such thing as 'natural' black hair can be used to express the equally pertinent notion that there is no such thing as a 'natural' black identity. In this regard, this thesis has entailed a negotiation of my own subjectivity and identity - exposing me, in the words of Chambers (1996),

“to the interrogation of the presence of the other, and thus to the historical bounds, cultural specificity and political limits of my self. It perhaps means to live in another country where ‘to confront the subaltern is not to represent them, but to learn to represent ourselves” (p. 59).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Themes

Filter Questions:

- How would you describe your own/each other's hairstyles?
- What steps do you take in the general maintenance of your hair?
- How long does this take?
- When someone else does your hair, who does it and why?
- Do salon's in Grahamstown cater specifically for black hair or white hair?
- Are salon stylists experienced and trustworthy – do they cater for styles that you like/approve of?
- Are salon's expensive or reasonable – how much do various procedures cost and how much would you be willing to pay for a certain hairstyle?
- What kinds of products do you use on your hair?
- Do you have a specific chosen brand, and why?
- Are some products/brands better than others?
- Did you change products/brands at any time, and why?
- Are these products/brands trustworthy or damaging – how do they work?

Descriptive Questions:

- What does your hairstyle say about you – or, what do you want it to say?
- How does your hairstyle fit in with your general body image, and your general style?
- How did (does) it feel to change your hairstyle – what personal significance does it have for you?
- What kind of hairstyle do you aspire to?
- Is there such a thing as natural black hair, or a natural black hairstyle?
- Are there gender-appropriate hairstyles for men and women?
- What kind of hair/hairstyle are you attracted to or not attracted to?
- What do you think about procedures such as hair weaves or hair straightening?
- How (if at all) does your hair fit into the new South Africa?

Closing:

- How have you experienced your participation in this interview/focus group – would you be willing to be involved in follow-up interviews or focus groups

APPENDIX B: Media Con/texts

APPENDIX B: Media Con/texts

Survival of an African identity

March 24, 1995

Audrey Brown

There are those among the coloured people who have always been uneasy with that label and, in the last year or so, their discomfort has grown. Complaints and accusations that they are not "black enough" do not sit easy with these people. Emerging as they do from the old townships of Kliptown, Sofiatown, Western Native Township, Alexandra and Lady Selbourne, blackness, Africanness, is under their skin, and stretches beyond the opportunism that apartheid forced on them.

This sense of identity survived unscathed after the destruction of these townships and continued into the new realities of featureless conglomerates like Eldorado Park, where the newly-separated, newly-created coloured people were moved after the destruction of their homes two or three decades ago.

The identity survived because black consciousness provided a home for people who, reeling under the double whammy of the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act, had to keep their bearings in the bland newness of their imposed name and imposed homes.

They practised the ideology on university campuses like the University of the Western Cape -- "Bush" as it was known -- and the various other tertiary education institutions they were herded into. But, most importantly, their sense of blackness survived because they maintained contact with relatives who did not make the "pencil test" -- one of the perverse ways in which the bureaucrats of apartheid fashioned a coloured community. They ducked in under the wire -- the grass, after all, was greener on the other side.

It was easy: Mthimkulu became Grootboom and Ndlovu was changed to Olifant and never mind the fact that you could not tell one from the other. Others, through family circumstance like divorce, adopted "white" names, accepted the housing on offer in Nancefield or Eldorado Park and carried on living -- as Africans. There were those with non-African names due to historical circumstance. This made it easier to skip to the other side -- accent notwithstanding. These were all creative strategies to survive in a world of scarce resources, bad schools and a lack of job opportunities for African people.

But their roots were well watered. Trips to Orlando or Dube or Mofolo were regular, and traffic flowed both ways. Customs like slaughtering a beast for the ancestors carried on and blanketed relatives with strong vernacular accents were as welcome as the township sophisticates. They were aware of the nascent prejudice among their new neighbours who embraced the term "coloured" by watering a different set of roots -- those of the itinerant Scotsman or adventurous Englishman who bestowed on them a name four or five generations ago.

For those who claimed the label "coloured" for convenience or through circumstance, this was not a problem. After all, they were on the side of right, they led hip lives, they went to the legendary shebeens and knew people like Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba from way back. They moved easily among the politicos of the time and Steve Biko and others were their guiding lights.

They too went into exile, political and otherwise. They speak many languages. Tsotsitaal, Afrikaans, English, SeSotho, Zulu, Xhosa, whatever their family background was, flowed easily in uneasy situations. The neighbours, insecure in their skin, needed to put some clear blue water between themselves and those they left behind -- and yet resembled -- so reminders like the sound of the mother tongue were not welcome. The possibility of losing the scant privilege being "coloured" brought, was too frightening to think about.

They were looked down upon, these people who called themselves "coloured" without remembering.

They were called "non-whites" by those who cruised the porous borderline between the African and coloured community, but there was the hope that they, too, would remember themselves. Especially the darker skinned ones with the kroes hair. Those with the lighter skin and straight hair and noses, well, they were welcome in the black consciousness fold.

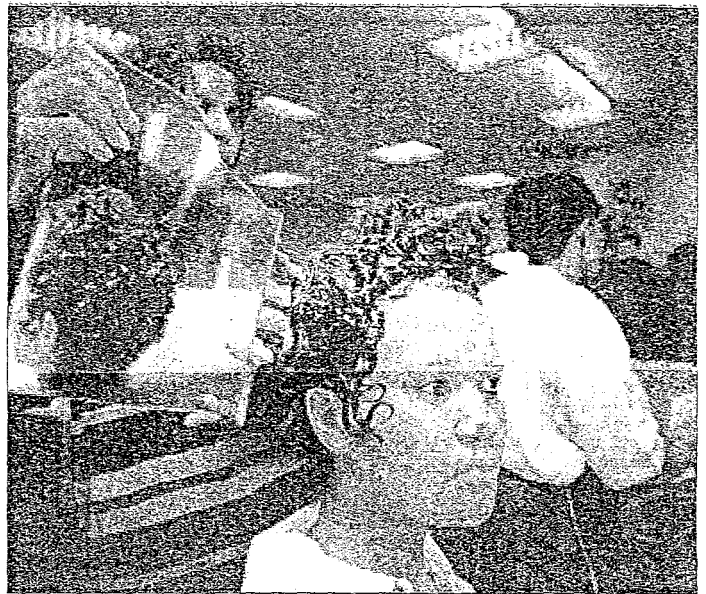
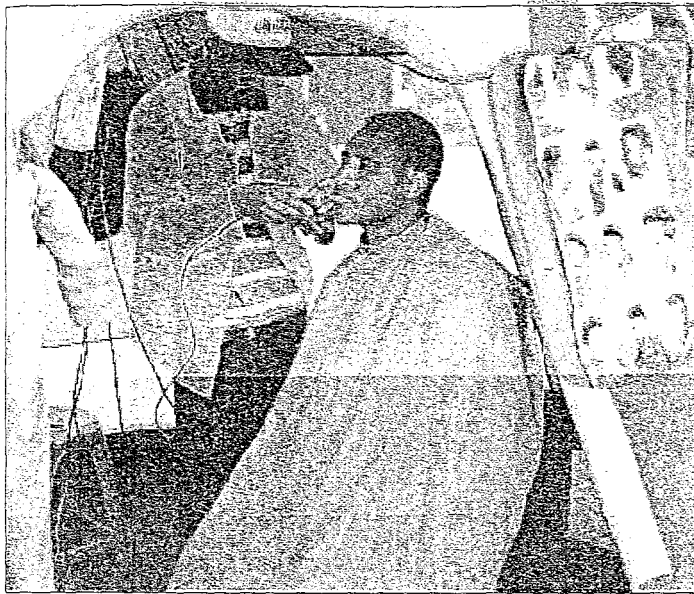
This group of convenient coloureds emerged into the 1980s -- educated to be teachers, insurance salesmen and bank clerks, and radicalised by the times. There were students, doctors and lawyers -- not many -- but enough to create a stratum of people who embraced the struggle for non-racialism in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in keeping with their understanding of which side of the fence they were on. They joined the UDF and organised in an apathetic, disorganised community, they stayed away on June 16 and all the other commemoration days, they supported strikes and encouraged their aunts, cousins and neighbours to join unions. They did not experience teargas and bullets as a daily diet, it is true, but around them people died of poverty, disease and neglect.

They looked on as their community succumbed to the disease of all marginalised, dispossessed communities -- high alcoholism rates, wife and child battery, teenage pregnancies, listlessness and apathy. They relied on the fact that the triumph of democracy would bring hope and redemption for these, their neighbours.

But the fact that this community -- varied as it is -- is despised as one of the most conservative and reactionary in the country, is worrying. Before now, those who stayed rooted and fought the good fight were comfortable in the knowledge and expectation that all those who were oppressed and denied would be uplifted. Now they are wondering whether the nascent doubts that seem to be emerging among black and white South Africans that individual rights might not count for much and that group rights is where it's at -- will see them, and their deluded neighbours, suffer the fate of an unimportant minority. These people are not afraid of affirmative action -- yet. But they are wondering whether the time will come when they'll have to change Grootboom back to Mthimkulu, just to be sure.

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A hair's breadth: The modern hair product allows hairdressers, for men and women, to invent an ever-growing number of styles. PHOTOGRAPHS: NADINE HUTTON AND RUTH MOTAU

A heady galaxy of styles

The multimillion-rand African hair industry is thriving on the street corners, taking its inspiration from Hollywood and tribal life

Valentine Cascarino

Elizabeth Moloto, who hails from Orange Farm, is a newcomer to the pavement salon business. Having closed a small "Westernised" hair salon in the township, she took to the streets of Johannesburg.

First she joined other hairstylists at the Bree Street taxi rank, but when the competition got tough she moved her business to Joubert Street, outside Edgars department store downtown. Today Moloto has settled her business in the city council market in Yeoville, on Rocky Street.

"Running a Westernised hair salon is quite expensive," she moans. "The hairdressing machine is expensive," she says about the standard, upright salon hairdryer.

She continues: "Hair products are expensive, the hairstyles themselves are time consuming, requiring me to charge expensively. But in an African pavement salon the most expensive equipment is the brains to create amazing styles."

Herein lies the vital clue to success with streetcorner hair. With basic ingenuity Africans have created a fashion industry that turns over as much, if not more, than the most sophisticated in the Western world.

In fact, of all the aspects of traditional African life, the most rapid evolution is taking place in the hair-style industry.

The art of African hairstyle sculpture — passed down from one generation to the next — requires manual dexterity, creativity and patience because many styles are elaborate and time-consuming.

With the informal hair sector being what it is, there are many Molotos in the cities these days drawing on their talents to make a steady buck.

"I discovered that most people were beginning to have their hair plaited in styles I knew nothing about," she says of her journey. "When I enquired I was told that they're done on the streets of Johannesburg so I set off to learn them."

With her self-taught skills, Moloto claims she gets an average of five clients during week days and up to 10 clients during weekends. "This has given me a profit of about R300 daily, which used to be my weekly income in the township salon."

So, as a result of inventiveness, city slickers who venture out to have their hair styled outdoors are faced with some pretty daunting choices. Those who want to look good had better find out the names and shapes of styles before the hairdresser starts cutting.

These are as diverse and thrilling as the African tribes that gave rise to them. In Africa, hairstyles have been used as mediums of creative self-expression, to commemorate certain ceremonies, to show marital status, to show honour for battles won and to distinguish various age groups.

In the past *sisa* (clay), the bark of trees or cloth pads were used to enable the stylist to perform miracles of braiding and threading.

Until recently, bone, wood or metal combs were used to straighten the hair and make it softer. Metal combs were thrust into burning coals until red then used to gently comb the hair, after which an ointment was applied to polish and heal burnt areas.

Such primitive methods of treatment have given way to the modern hair product that allows hairdressers to invent a growing galaxy of styles. Today the South African market is flooded with hairstyles, many from West and Central Africa, whose multitude of ethnic groups boast over 400 flamboyant hairdos. The most popular however, are the braided and threaded styles even found attached to white scalps these days.

Braiding is usually arranged in between four and 12 neat ridges, while threading is the traditional art of wrapping hair with thread in order for it to rise from the scalp in spikes. It originated with the Igbo of eastern Nigeria.

Elaborately styled braided or threaded hair depends on the length of the hair. Long hair is always an advantage as short hair allows a limited number of styles.

Moloto explains that to thread a style known as "bamba curl", which originates in Zaire, hair is blended with wigs and braided starting from the back of the head towards the centre. The same process is repeated from the front towards the centre, after which the two adjoining patterns are threaded to curl wigs. It takes about two hours to finish and costs R160. Moloto claims this style, which was brought to South Africa last year, can last for up to two months and is mostly done by middle-aged women. She says hairsprays have to be used to enable the style to always look new.

"Condross", a hairstyle worn by popular Kwaito group TKZee, is said to have originated in West Africa. A line is made down the centre of the head, dividing hair into two halves, then little sidelines are made to enable the hair to be braided in a concave or convex manner. It takes about an hour to complete.

The simplest perhaps is "singles" in which hair is divided into various portions and each is easily plaited either fat or slim. This is mostly done by businesswomen who don't have much time to spend in salons.

Another fascinating style known as "crown star" requires hair to be divided into 13 strips and braided to form a star and the ends curled. The front section is braided upwards forming "U" shapes and the braids at the back meander up to end at the crown.

Women are not restricted from entering men's salons. Here, traditionalism gives way to Eurocentricity, and one finds styles such as the "German cut", the "English cut" and the "fish tail".

A favourite with the ladies is the "chiskop" and another is the "ladies kutz", which bears a close resemblance to the "German cut".

Some men's hairstyles originate in West and Central Africa, like the "asako style", "love garden", "fulani style" and "suku", to name but a few on the endless list.

One can't help wondering why it is that hairstyles from these two African regions dominate the market.

"Hairstyles from these regions are easy to cut and they look quite decent and consume less time. That's why we charge just R5. But doing a traditional Masai hairstyle, for example, is an arduous task that may take over 20 hours," says Desmond Mathibebe, who runs a hair salon in downtown Johannesburg.

The particular attention that has always been accorded to hair as a valuable beauty product is said to have ushered in these dramatic hairstyles. From Egypt where the wig was first made as early as 3000 BC to Southern Africa where the Zulus began tall ochered coiffures, from West Africa where the first braids were made and

spiced with coins and brass ornaments to East Africa where the Masai spent leisure hours on grooming and self-adornment — the hair industry seems determined to grow and grow.

And the more new styles are invented, the more consumers stand a better chance of choosing a suitable hairstyle to match their profession.

These days, the most visible pavement hairstylists are the Mozambicans, who often entertain customers with fascinating stories from their world. They say it's one of the rarest tricks to increase clientele in an industry where one sometimes finds as many as a hundred doing the same job in front of the same shopping centre.

"The competition here is a tight-rope one," says Paula Nampito in a thick Maputo accent. "I have to negotiate with my clients and

"To keep customers coming you don't only have to be an expert hairstylist but you also have to provide what your competitors can't provide, like engaging with your customers in relationship conversation and offering advice on how best to treat a man. It fascinates South African women."

Nampito visits her husband and two children, at home in Maputo, monthly. She says in Mozambique there is little or no profit in the hairstyle industry compared to the daily R400 she earns in South Africa. When asked why most Mozambican women end up in the streets as hairdressers, she says there is very little here for them to do. Most can't speak English and are not properly educated.

"My husband earns peanuts in a shoe factory in Mozambique," Nampito says. "He takes care of the children while I'm away. He's not worried that I'm alone in South Africa. We both have to make money to give our children good education so that they don't end up in the same fate."

Stylistically, Ghanaians and Nigerians rule the waves in the men's pavement salons. Like the Mozambicans, they are teaching local South Africans the art of cutting hair and, surprisingly, charging no fee for this education at all.

"When a South African wants to learn how to shave, we start by teaching him how to shave simpler styles like chiskop. In return he sets up the tent at the roadside every morning and dismantles it in the evening. If he's quick in learning, he may be on his own after a month," says Francis Abbey from Ghana.

He acknowledges that there's no profit in running a barber shop, since all hairstyles are done for R5 and one can hardly get more than 15 clients daily. He says shaving hair is the only way to make a living in South Africa since he can't find a job despite having an honours degree in chemistry.

"Shaving hair is part of the Ghanaian culture which I was reluctant to learn. My father forced me into it when I was still a boy, now it's paying dividends since it's my only way to stay alive in a foreign land."

Finally, one wonders where it's all headed for these denizens of the streetcorner.

Moloto's ambition is probably a good indicator of what many wish for when they look to a future in hair. Moloto says that after having generated more money, she would love to open a mega hair salon in Johannesburg that will cater for both African and western hairstyles.

In the meantime, they all hope for good weather so that they can continue to make a meagre profit, contributing to the glamour of the African city street.

Barber accused of 'haircut racialism'

Whites threaten boycott over coloured customers

JERMAINE CRAIG

A Robertson barber is pulling his hair out at the racism in the Boland town.

Coloured people accuse him of being racist for not cutting their hair while white people have threatened to boycott him if he does.

Jannie Weideman says some white customers have threatened a large-scale boycott if he cuts coloured people's hair.

But he has been turning coloured people away from his shop for four years, saying he can cut only straight hair and does not have the know-how or equipment to cut "curly" hair.

This has resulted in charges of racism against him from the coloured community.

Exasperated, he has decided to pack his bags for Gauteng and in a last act of defiance has decided to cut coloured people's hair, regardless of the boycott threat.

Amanda Peterson brought the Robertson racism issue to the fore when Mr Weideman refused to cut her eight-year-old son Julian's hair last week.

The incident brought back painful memories for Mrs Peterson of an incident nearly 10 years ago to the day when her little blond son, Wayne, now 16, was kicked out of a creche in conservative Kraaifontein when his coloured uncle fetched him to take him home one day.

It also reminded her that she had to be reclassified white so she could marry her husband, a British immigrant.

At that time, with the apartheid government still in power, incidents of racism were commonplace and the creche incident did not come as that much of a surprise.

But last week, with the country on the verge of its second democratic election, all those nasty feelings of racial intolerance came flooding



BAD HAIR DAY: Amanda Peterson with her son Julian, 8, who was refused a haircut at a barber shop in Robertson. Pictures: JACK LESIRADE

back when the white barber refused to cut Julian's hair because he was coloured. This incident left Mrs Peterson hurt and angry.

"The 38-year-old mother of three boys and a girl now lives in Mali, West Africa, with her husband, who works on a goldmine there, and is on holiday for two months, staying with her mother in Ashton.

She was walking in the centre of nearby Robertson with Julian, a Grade 3 pupil at H Venter Primary School, when she decided he needed a haircut.

She saw Jannie and Liza Weideman's Florist and Men's Hair Salon and went in. Mr Weideman was in the barber's shop.

"We went inside and I said: 'Good afternoon I would like to have my son's hair cut.' The barber said: 'No problem at all, I would cut his hair any time but I cannot cut coloured people's hair because my customers will boycott my barber (shop) if I cut his hair'.

"I said excuse me, what are you actually saying to me? Are you talking about racism? And he said: 'Yes'.

I said: 'Is this kind of thing still happening in Robertson? Are you telling me you cannot cut my child's hair because he is coloured?' And he said: 'Yes'. When I got upset, he just shrugged his shoulders. He did not say: 'Sorry madam, try another hair-dresser', he just smirked. I was

amazed."

Mrs Peterson said she was livid as she had not expected such racism so long after the advent of the new South Africa.

"It is disgusting. The way he said it I felt like giving him a big smack. He made me feel like a nothing and this in front of my son. He had no right to do that. President Mandela has worked hard during his presidency to put children first in our land. If this happens and kids must still feel as if they are lesser beings, they will grow up with that complex. Julian has just kept quiet and has said nothing about the incident.

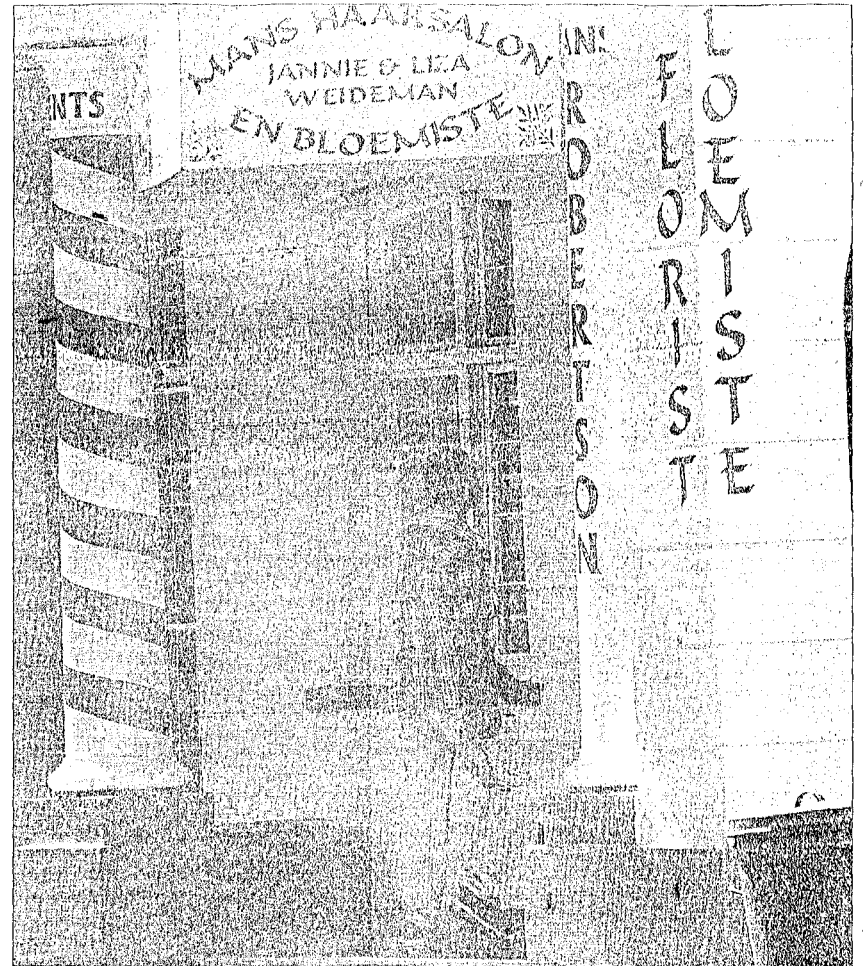
"My outlook on life is that we had to keep quiet for people like this years before, but we do not have to do it anymore. We went through terrible times under apartheid. My father was a professional piano tuner in Stellenbosch but he had to hire a white assistant who knew nothing about pianos so that he could get access to farms to fix pianos.

"While his white assistant was given food in the dining room at the table, my father was given food in an iron plate and told to sit in the yard. Because we were coloured we were treated like s...t and I am not going to allow my children to be treated like s...t. I am not going to allow him to trample on us like this," Mrs Peterson said.

Franklin Keyster, who lives and works in Robertson, said he had also been to Mr Weideman for a haircut but had had no luck. "He said he could not cut my kind of hair and turned me away. This place is still very racist. Not much has changed."

Many people in Robertson said reconciliation between black and white residents was still a long way off and racism was rife.

This week this Saturday Argus reporter went to the barber's shop without disclosing his identity to see why Mr Weideman refused to cut



UNKIND CUT: Jannie Weideman's barber shop in Robertson where coloured people have been unwelcome - until now. Mr Weideman said he didn't have the right equipment to cut 'short, curly hair'

coloured people's hair.

I greeted the barber and sat down. After a few minutes he asked me if he could help me and I said I had come for a haircut.

He said he did not actually cut coloured people's hair as he had many problems with coloured people coming for haircuts.

He had learnt the trade cutting straight hair and did not know how to cut short, curly hair. He also did not have the right equipment. He could cut certain coloured people's hair but found black people's hair particularly difficult to cut.

Asked how such discrimination could still be possible in the present political climate, Mr Weideman said

he was not racist but had actually been approached by some whites in Robertson who had told him his white customers would boycott his business if he cut coloured people's hair.

"I am not racist and I am not worried about politics. I am in the business of cutting hair and I would have to close down if people boycotted the business I have been working for four years to establish."

He said he was sick and tired of the problems and would dearly love to learn to cut coloured people's hair, or even employ someone else to do it. He had decided to pack up his business and take a job managing a game farm in the former Transvaal.

After telling his story, Mr Weideman relented by cutting my hair, saying afterwards it was the first time he had cut a coloured man's hair.

The next day when approached by Saturday Argus, Mr Weideman said he had "had enough" and was going to cut coloured people's hair regardless of the boycott threat before he shut up shop.

"I have decided this is enough. I am going to cut the people's hair where I can. If they want to boycott me, they must do it now. This has upset me completely, I cannot even sleep at night. I feel bad about that woman (Mrs Peterson), she has a beautiful little son."

CARSON HOLDINGS: RelaxeZ vous - June 14, 1996

June 14, 1996
CARSON HOLDINGS
RelaxeZ vous

Another piece of the new SA will fall into place when Carson Holdings is listed in the pharmaceutical sector on July 3. Carson makes ethnic hair-care products under licence from US parent Carson Inc, and in the three years it has operated in SA has pushed turnover to R24,5m. The listing includes a public offer of 2,5m ordinary shares at 200c each - a private placement of 5,5m shares to institutions has already taken place, which was four times oversubscribed.

A preferential offer of 2m shares will be made to all employees and clients (including salon owners). After the listing, Carson Inc will hold about 75% of the equity and Standard Corporate & Merchant Bank 5%. Total issued capital will be 40m shares, giving a market cap of R80m. Carson's financial record underlines the strength of the African hair-care industry. Turnover, R3,2m in 1994, is forecast to top R40m next year. Pre-tax income was R27 000 in 1994, R5,2m this year and is expected to hit R9,1m in 1997. Operating margin for financial 1996 was 19,7%. MD Malcolm Yesner estimates that about 35% of black women in SA relax (or straighten) their hair, compared with about 80% in the US. Relaxed hair is now seen as "the essence of urbanisation and sophistication." It has to be repeated about every six to eight weeks -- which, notes Yesner, provides for continuity of purchase. The aftercare market -- moisturisers and conditioners -- is equally important, and colour is starting to play a larger role, a la the US "fantasy" hairstyles.

Senior management has much experience in the ethnic hair-care and pharmaceutical industries. Yesner had his own black hair-care business; production manager Charles Schemel has 15 years' experience, including stints with another leading SA ethnic hair-care firm Amka and Noristan Laboratories.

Another strength is extensive involvement with clients. Hair technical manager Morgan Makhubela, who worked at Revlon as a hair technician, heads a team that visits more than 400 mainstream and home-based salons a month, offering training and guidance on the latest overseas trends. Yesner says that once salons are won over, loyalty to both the original product and others from that supplier starts to build. Carson has the right to supply all Africa, an effective market of about 200m users of ethnic hair-care products -- 65m in southern Africa alone. About R8m of the net R18,5m raised by the flotation will be used to pay off the Midrand factory commissioned in November 1995 and, says Yesner,

"we will have about R12m (including an IDC loan) in the bank for expanding our activities."

Market sentiment seems favourable. One analyst cites experienced management, leading technology, substantial dollar earnings and a wide range of products as positive factors. The aggressive marketing strategy, selling through retail outlets such as Diskom and Jumbo Wholesalers, as well as direct to the salons, has raised product awareness.

On a forward p/e of about 13,9, it's worth a punt. Margaret-Anne Halse

Coiffure takes on a whole new style

Business Day Online
Business Times

30 May 1997

BLACK LIKE ME

Coiffure takes on a whole new style

Companies jockeying for position in Africa's lucrative black hair care and cosmetics market have a new and formidable opponent. For years, Black Like Me has grown the number of consumers using its products. Now in partnership with multinational Colgate-Palmolive, it plans to significantly increase production within a year and, ultimately, manufacture throughout Africa. Competitors have something to worry about. Black Like Me's products are well known and popular, particularly in SA. Test runs into southern Africa were successful, but expansion was hampered by poor distribution. "With Colgate's efficient distribution and access to resources to fund expansion," says Black Like Me MD Herman Mashaba, "growth will be phenomenal." The main loser in this deal is competitor Carson SA, whose highly publicised negotiations with Black Like Me were terminated earlier this year. Carson MD Malcolm Yesner says Mashaba didn't like Carson's terms. Judging by cautionaries in the papers and market rumour, Carson is close to announcing an acquisition of another group. But despite Yesner's scepticism about Colgate's chances of success, Mashaba's deal seriously threatens Carson's expansion plans. Another group which has reason to be concerned is publicity-shy Amka, a major player whose products trade under the Sof 'n Free brand. Other (smaller) competitors target the upper end of the market, and may not be as vulnerable. Mashaba - who retains his position as MD of the group - still has a substantial stake in the group. Colgate has the majority share. "Colgate acquired the stake held in the Moja (previously a director) family trust," he says. "But both groups are privately owned. We won't disclose figures." When the FM first wrote of the deal (FM Focus May 2) we said those in the industry reckoned Black Like Me's price was between R30m and R40m. Mashaba says our estimate was too low. "The group has current annual sales of about R50m," he says. "The whole company is valued at more than R40m."

By: Michelle Joubert

| Top of page |

Strength in their dreads

October 02, 1998

Phillip Kakaza

If there is one African city that keeps abreast of the latest fashion trends, it is Johannesburg. And it's not only clothes that count, but hairstyles too.

The busy streets of Johannesburg have become catwalks. A stroll downtown or in Soweto is like a trip down a Parisian boulevard, with clothes and hairdos on display. They range from Jamaican-style dreadlocks, Nike "swooshes" and kinky braids, to styles named after music stars - like Maxwell's Afro and Shabba Ranks's turf.

South Africans spend hours in queues in township salons and pavement barber shops for the look with a difference, and it doesn't come cheap. A cut starts at R10 and prices increase rapidly depending on the style you want.

The average black woman spends R400 on her braids, but men are more fortunate. Gents' haircuts last for four months while women can spend up to R80 a month on products to keep their hair in shape.

In the 1950s, migrant workers in Johannesburg set up shop on the pavements at weekends to do each other's hair. German and French cuts were copied from magazines. Women stretched their hair with hot irons for a different look. Hairdressing became a business which helped supplement workers' low incomes.

Today, according to economist S'busiso Mthethwa, hairdressers make up more than half of the informal sector in Johannesburg. Hairdressing also allows for rapid movement from the informal sector to the formal sector, so that people who started out on street corners can often aspire to working from a "salon", even if it is only a shack.

Baxolile Solani, whose "salon" is a gazebo on a pavement in Joubert Park, started his career three years ago in his backyard, with a pair of scissors and a packet of razor blades. He now works with an electric clipper connected to a generator. "This is quicker and safe. Many barbers use implements which they do not sterilise, and this can cause diseases," he says. Solani says some customers complain of catching lice from dirty clippers. Clients on the pavements also risk catching diseases transmitted by blood, like HIV and hepatitis.

Jabu Stone, a dreadlock specialist, owns two satellite salons, called Locks and Braids, and has been in the business for eight years.

The former electrical engineering student took a bridging course in chemical engineering and later invented his moulding cream. "The moulding cream has no chemicals," he says. "It's hair cream that protects natural hair from ultra-violet sun rays and helps to moisturise it."

Stone's salons in Yeoville and Hillbrow are always packed with customers. His clientele ranges from artists to television and radio personalities like Shado Twala, Gerry Rantseli and Sello Maake ka Ncube. Some of President Nelson Mandela's grandchildren have their dreadlock treatments done at his salon.

Stone plans to expand to other regions in the country. He already supplies salons in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban with his hair products.

"Everyone wants to be African these days. It's the renaissance era and darkies have discovered their hair," says Ntombi Punako (17). "You can do whatever you want with black hair compared to brunettes and blondes."

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Malcolm Mickey and McDonald s

February 17, 1995

February is Black History Month in the United States -- and, if you're selling something, a time to put an 'Afrocentric' spin on your marketing. Tony Karon reports from New York

THE road to Africa runs through the golden arches of McDonald's. Or so one of their ads would have us believe: under an a cappella track which sounds as if it were culled from The Lion King, McDonald's invites its African-American customers (the ad only airs on black cable channels) to enter a competition whose winners will be "immersed in history and culture" on a trip to the mother continent. "Your journey starts here," says the junk-food chain, flashing its logo.

The competition coincides with Black History Month in the United States -- each February, Americans are invited to recall the epic struggles of hundreds of thousands of people brutally wrenched from Africa and enslaved on the plantations of the white man's "New World". It is a time to celebrate their triumphs and their African heritage, and, if you're trying to sell hamburgers across 110th Street, it is a time to put an "Afrocentric" spin on your marketing.

Indeed, at a Harlem McDonald's, my coke comes in a "Kente Kup" emblazoned with a West African design, an Africa logo and the slogan "Keep the Culture". (Curiously enough, the cup comes with the "Extra Value Meal", but not with the "All American Meal").

A few years ago in America, projecting awareness of African identity was a militant defiance of slavery's cultural legacy. Nothing became more emblematic of African-American cultural pride than kente cloth -- the Ghanaian fabric containing symbolic languages in its weave.

The design most popular in the US is actually the traditional garb of Ashanti royalty. But today, printed reproductions (in which no Ghanaian royal would be seen dead) have become a mainstream bar-code for Afrocentric attitude.

The spending power generated by Afrocentric identity politics was first recognised by small entrepreneurs. Harlem's 116th Street market brings together hawkers from all over West Africa, their tables piled high with bolts of Senegalese and Ghanaian fabric, and jewelry and accessories -- cowrie shell necklaces, leather pendants bearing maps of Africa in Garveyite or Rastafarian colours, key-rings, earrings and more.

Ask a trader where a trinket is made, and he'll smile and say "Africa" (which is usually sufficient answer here). Press him, and he'll say "Uhh ... Mali."

Yeah right. Many of the same items are available, in wholesale quantity, at Jim's Traders; in Little Korea. And Jim's doesn't bother to remove the "Made in Korea" label from behind the leather Africa pendants; the "Made in the Philippines" tag from the cowrie shell necklaces or the "Made in Pakistan" labels on the bead and wooden fist necklaces.

For the Harlem traders, there's nothing odd about supplying "African" artefacts mass-produced in Asia. Far from the frozen-in-time "authenticity" of an idealised past invoked by American Afrocentrics, in the West African cultures from which the traders hail, symbols have a life way beyond the intentions of their creators, are never really owned, are freely appropriated from all corners of the globe and recycled with new meanings. The West African sea goddess Mami Wata, for example, is as likely to be symbolised by a wooden sculpture as by an Indian print of the goddess Shiva, or a video of Disney's Little Mermaid.

But, as McDonald's' Kente Kups show, Afrocentric marketing is no longer the exclusive province of small-timers. Major retail chains like JC Penney, Woolworths and even K-Mart have opened Afrocentric sections in their outlets, stocking clothing, accessories and kente-patterned items, from wastebaskets to toothbrush holders.

In many black neighbourhoods, Kentucky Fried Chicken staff wear elaborate Kente ensembles. Coca Cola uses kente in ads directed at black consumers. So does Schlitz.

Rob Jackson, an executive of the country's largest African-American ad agency, explains: "Kente cloth (is) ... one of the things we identified that tells the black consumer that we are speaking to them."

And the race to get a slice of that market throws up numerous ironies: African Heritage Hair Relaxant, for example (a euphemistic term for hair straighteners) -- encouraging pride in natural black hair types -- was, after all, an early concern of the Afrocentric agenda.

And, of course, things start to get a little surreal when Mickey Mouse wears a kente outfit to welcome Miss African-American Collegiate to Disneyworld.

When wedding bells chime, kente is incorporated into the outfits of as many as half of African-American brides. For them, Diana Chukwuka, a Nigerian designer in Cambridge, Massachusetts, whips up unisex Ashokes from Nigerian fabrics. But at the store she keeps in Lagos, Nigeria, she supplies the overwhelming demand for traditional Western white wedding gowns.

One white American who has moved quickly to incorporate Afrocentricity into her circle is Barbie. In 1992, Yla Eason, a black mother who had grown up with the alienation of encountering only white dolls, founded the Olmec company and developed Imani as an Afrocentric counterpart to Mattel's Barbi.

Imani, "the African princess", like Barbie, soon had a bottomless wardrobe of outfits and accessories -- except that hers were all kente couture.

Demand turned Imani into a mega-business, and soon her family was competing for toy-store shelf space with Barbie's. In response, Barbie started hangin' in the 'hood, with colourful friends like Shani, Asha and Nichelle.

Barbie had a black friend -- Christie -- back in 1986. But Shani is different -- besides having a massive promotional budget, Shani is, as a Mattel spokesperson put it, "ethnic" -- in other words, a kente kugel.

But, just in case conservative white parents were about to start boycotting toy shops, Mattell executive Deborah Mitchell set the matter in perspective: "At one point it was even considered militant, if you will, to wear kente cloth, but that has changed significantly."

Indeed. It's hard for anything to maintain a singular meaning, like "militant", when it's born by McDonald's' cups and Mickey Mouse.

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H · W E B

Camera on colonialism

The father of African film, Ousmane Sembene, is in South Africa developing a new movie about the effects of colonialism. He spoke to **Bafana Khumalo**

Many an African liberation fighter has made the journey to the land of the Russians, to learn the art of shooting. So has

Ousmane Sembene, the Senegalese novelist and director who is better known as the "father of African film". Only his journey was to learn to shoot using the camera, not the Kalashnikov.

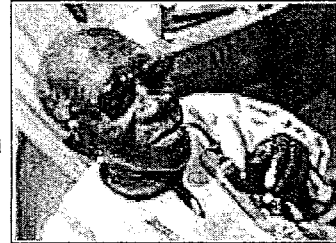
This journey earned him the skill to make one of the earliest films ever made by an African. Called *Black Girl (Une Noire)*, it was produced in 1966 and is about the destruction of a young girl who leaves her home in Africa to work as a maid in Antibes, France. The *Time Out Film Guide* describes Sembene as having "contrived a masterful if not entirely flawless rendering of the key themes in Francophone African cinema".

The film is only one of many he has made about the plight of the African in post-colonial Africa. These include *Xala* (1974), which tells, in a leisurely fashion, of a middle-aged Dakar businessman whose social standing begins to slip when he takes a third wife and finds that he has lost his touch in bed. Here Sembene aimed his potent camera at the Senegalese bourgeoisie who impotently ape the worst aspects of their colonial masters, particularly their corruption and extravagance.

"What you have to realise is that that [the time of his studies] was the Russian era and not the Soviet era," says the short dark man talking through an interpreter. He was already in his forties when he decided to study the art of film-making. Although the bulk of the continent might have been preoccupied with matters of liberation, Sembene feels that studying film was in line with the broader political agenda.

"The basis of human liberation struggles is culture," he says. "During the apartheid era, did people stop singing and dancing? They did not. They used their songs and dances as a way of advancing their liberation struggle."

Sembene's struggle was catalysed by viewing



Ousmane Sembene: 'We can forgive, but we daren't forget'
PHOTO: RUTH MOTAU

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early ethnographic movies - produced by neo-anthropologists - which were "so good that even some of our people started to believe that their dances were for savages". In these early ethnographic studies "the best African women were those who were breastfeeding white babies while forgetting their own".

A need was born in Sembene to explore how Africans could begin to possess all their forms of art. He started by writing novels, and when he felt he needed to reach a wider audience, he started exploring film as a way of telling stories. He doesn't feel that his European training in any way diluted the potency of telling his stories from an African perspective. "We went to Europe to study but that didn't change us," he says of the experience.

His journey of African storytelling through film has led him to South African shores where he is attempting to raise funds for his next project, a film detailing the effects of colonialism on the African continent. "Instead of having European brokers I think it is better for me to come here to negotiate with our fellow brothers."

While Sembene might feel that he is raising funds from fellow "African brothers", some within the country present the view that he may as well be in Europe, given who he is talking to. He was brought into the country by African Media Entertainment - a majority white-owned media conglomerate that owns, among other things, the MTN Sundome.

"They are African," he says adamantly; "whether they like it or not they are African." He tells an anecdote of a white South African film-maker who presented his film at the most recent annual Fespaco film festival in Ougadougou. "When he came here they [the Fespaco festival organisers] said to him, 'Welcome, you are as African as the rest of us, we will not treat you differently.'" Sembene feels that white South Africans "are a white ethnic group in Africa", just one of many tribes.

Given that colonialism has been history for at least 40 years in most of Africa, isn't a film about colonialism at this stage "harking back to the past" too much? That, after all, is the "*simunye*" consensus being manufactured throughout this country. "When white people were in power they had statues of their heroes everywhere. So should we," he says. "We can forgive but we aren't forget."

For Sembene, attempting to tell the story of colonialism fits into the framework of the "African renaissance" which, he feels, "should be about us thinking about aspects of our past, especially those parts that have been weak. We should be coming up with ways of improving them."

That is Sembene's short-term plan. In the long term he hopes to see a South African equivalent

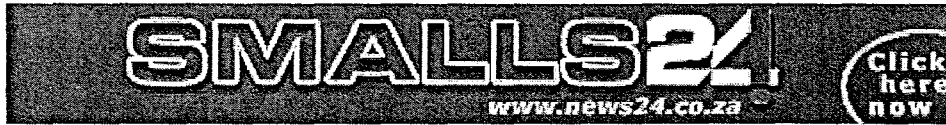
of the Fespaco film festival. "When Fespaco started there was not a single Bekinabo film-maker, but now most of the films shown at the festival are by Bekinabo women. Just imagine what the impact of such a festival could be on the film-making ability of South Africa."

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Johannesburg, South Africa. April 27, 1999

Ordinary people on the meaning of freedom

BAFANA KHUMALO and FERAL HAJFAJEE spoke to ordinary people about the meaning of freedom

The mielie-seller

THE mielie-seller is perhaps the most quintessential South African image. Resident of both urban and rural worlds, she is also symbolic of a growing informal economy. Thabi Chauke wakes up at 4.30am. Her day is simple: she dispatches her 14-year-old daughter into a packed minibus. These ferry the children of the newly enfranchised to the privileged suburban schools where the gates of learning have been thrown open.

Then Chauke coaxes her 22-year-old son to go job-hunting again before climbing into a lorry that will take her to Randfontein, where she buys her weekly supply of mielies. By early afternoon, she's sitting in front of her brazier roasting mielies that she sells for R1,50 each.

It's a hard day's work. She has to fire up the brazier, then wait for an hour and a half while it heats up. With the help of a fellow hawker, she gingerly lifts the blazing tin can in its cardboard box to start her 10-block trek to downtown Johannesburg where she has carved a bit of pavement as her turf. She averages a daily turnover of R30.

Chauke's lot in life is far from perfect, but for her there has been a thousandfold improvement from what it used to be.

"Things are much better now," she says shyly. In the past the Boers used to arrest us and destroy our goods, but now at least I know that my children will have something in their stomachs when they go to bed at night."

Her life is not charmed, but it's adequate. She is unlikely to take to the streets to protest against her plight. She wishes, however, that her son would get a job. She says he's done his best. After all, he passed his matric and she thought that would be an "open sesame" for him.

He is one among the annual 300 000 matriculants who stand little chance of getting a job in the formal economy where jobs are haemorrhaging. "But what can I do?" she sighs.

The yuppie



Happy yuppie: Ken Gillat's life hasn't changed much in the five years since the 1994 elections

photo: ruth motau

career is going places fast. He started off with a six-month stint as a waiter, later graduating to a sales assistant at a sports shop, and now he works as a manager.

He is not speed-dialling any of the radio talk shows - the soapbox of those who feel recently disenfranchised - nor is he packing for Perth. Instead he's just matter of fact about the interregnum in South Africa: "Any country that goes through changes will have such a high degree of crime."

He is hopeful about the future, calling South Africa a "beautiful country, as long as we sort out our problems". For Gillat these problems will sort themselves out because, he says, "the people with the differences are going to die and the youth will start afresh".

How does he see his future? In essence: he might not have to wear shades, but it's still bright.

The newly advantaged buppie

Ken Gillat, the young manager of a seafood restaurant, says his life hasn't changed much in the past five years.

"The only difference is that in the past at home we used to have an open garden; now we have had to build a security wall."

It's just after 9pm at Sandton City and Gillat is getting ready to shut up shop. Outside in the garrison community of Sandton, residents have invested in booms and gates across public roads, and passage is controlled by security guards. The gardens are still as pristinely manicured as always.

Gillat chose not to study but to plan a business career instead. Despite many white fears of affirmative action, Gillat's

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Joe Tsotetsi is frank about two things: his company would not have been possible without the new order in South Africa; and his hero is white. He models himself on Bill Gates, although his Afro-chic shirt and steel-framed spectacles are anything but computer nerd. Although he's not a billionaire like Gates, Tsotetsi's company has grown in value to more than R100-million in three years.



While working in the United States in 1986 (he was exiled in the Seventies), Tsotetsi saw a story on Gates, who had started his own company. "It was an epiphany for me. I decided to start my own company as well."

Reaping the fruits: Joe Tsotetsi's computer company would not have been possible without the new order in South Africa

photo: ruth motau

The dream was deferred until 1996 when Motswedi Technology was started from scratch by Tsotetsi, who returned to South Africa in 1990, and his partner, Tebogo Matsoso. The company has won rave reviews because it was started with their own capital, the owners are involved at an operational level and they have influential partners like Siemens and Microsoft. They plan, design and implement computer systems for the government and parastatals.

Motswedi has grown on the back of a change in government procurement policies. The state has used its financial might to encourage black business empowerment by introducing affirmative action requirements into its tenders for everything from computer systems to road construction and even the stationery outlets it buys from. Although this is bridging the gap between the haves and the have-nots, there is still a huge underclass of need.

Motswedi is doing its bit to ensure the empowerment it has benefited from has a ripple effect. Twice a week Tsotetsi teaches computer skills to aspirant Gateses in the Katorus area on the East Rand. Motswedi's Katorus project boasts 1 000 graduates who have learned skills like programming, computer maintenance and some design work. "I feel a responsibility to entrench democracy," says Tsotetsi, adding that "you get economic freedom from political freedom".

-- *The Mail & Guardian, April 27, 1999.*

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The real rise of the black middle class

May 21, 1999

Ferial Haffajee claims there has been an explosive upsurge of the black capitalist class since the formation of the democratic government in 1994 ("The meteoric rise of South Africa's black middle class", April 1 to 8).

According to her, the rise of the black bourgeoisie went faster than the previous rise of the Afrikaner bourgeoisie which "took 10 times longer to achieve the level of listed corporate ownership [at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange]".

Similarly, Professor Ben Turok, an ANC MP, asserted that this class has "taken off at an amazing speed" in the past five years ("The case of the black bourgeoisie", October 3 to 9 1997).

The assertions of both Haffajee and Turok are misleading, because they neglect to take into account the history of the development of the black capitalist class in South Africa. This class emerged more prominently and significantly from the 1960s onwards.

Like other writers before them (both liberals and Marxists) they have treated the black middle class as something of a historical vacuum. During the past four decades, obvious indicators which explain the process of the growth of the black bourgeoisie have been discernible.

Firstly, there has been a parallel development in the black community of the bourgeois culture, such as the resort to private schooling and university education at families' expense at local and overseas institutions.

Simultaneously, this culture went with the development of bourgeois lifestyles in terms of housing, leisure, entertainment and marriages, with a manifestly dynastic aspect (remember Brenda Fassie's wedding in the 1980s?).

Furthermore, the parallel growth and regular publication of elite glossy magazines such as Tribute, Enterprise and Ebony served to celebrate their tastes, interests, and achievements.

Secondly, the development of the black bourgeoisie has been notable in the development, since the 1970s, of adjutant or auxiliary ranks of corporate technicians. For example, managers, lawyers, accountants, stockbrokers, insurers, medical specialists and psychiatrists, as well as ideologists, including academics and journalists.

They initially served and were subordinate to white capital, while they generated wealth and yielded surpluses in the sense Karl Marx described. Later, these corporate technicians formed their own companies, for example, Sam Montsi, Gaby Magomola and Don Mkwanzazi.

Thirdly, there has been a progressive development of bourgeois class consciousness through a series of struggles with other class fractions and the apartheid state.

The National Federation of African Chambers of Commerce (Nafcoc) founded in the 1960s became an agency through which aspirant black capitalists expressed their class awareness and demands.

Although the history of Nafcoc has been controversial, its critics often misrepresented the nature and character of its relationship with the white-controlled state and capital. They merely dismissed it as a collaborationist group used by the state and white monopoly capital to realise the objectives of the National Party's Total Strategy to ensure political control and stability in black residential areas.

More accurately, Nafcoc tried to maintain a "precarious balance". On the one hand, it entailed collaboration with the apartheid state in order, in its view, to get restrictions impeding the growth of black enterprises lifted, and to gain access to credit facilities and other forms of assistance.

The relationship also involved bargaining and obstructionism against government business initiatives and white business syndicates which proposed the establishment of 49%/51% partnerships between white and black entrepreneurs in order to penetrate the markets of black townships.

With this approach, Nafcoc risked tarnishing its delicate reputation in the black community. Businesses affiliated to Nafcoc were torched and destroyed, and its members maimed or murdered by people acting in the name of the liberation struggle.

On the other hand, it projected an image of being champions of the economic advancement of black people through the building of a separate economy for blacks.

This notion, learned from the African-Americans, especially the Negro Business League of Booker T Washington, appealed to nationalist sentiments by calling on blacks to support each other and keep "black money" in their "own hands".

While the results of Nafcoc's strategic choices remain debatable, evidence of the concessions it extracted from the government were nonetheless noticeable. Similarly, the costs in material and human terms of its relations with the white rulers were obvious.

Nafcoc's loss of legitimacy led to the establishment of alternative class organisations, such as the Foundation for African Business and Consumer Services, an organisation with a similar focus and principles to Nafcoc, founded in 1988.

With the Black Management Forum, it popularised an idea misleadingly referred to as "black economic empowerment" - misleading because it suggested socio-economic improvement of the general black population, yet it called for the enrichment of the minority black capitalist class.

The "empowerment" proposition falls into three spheres of the advancement of the black bourgeoisie: shareholding and ownership; corporate advancement; and contracting black-owned small-, medium- and micro-enterprises.

Fourthly, since the 1960s there has been a significant growth in black-owned capital.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s it expanded into different spheres of the economy, such as retailing and wholesaling, transport, manufacturing, distributing, sports - especially soccer - service outlets and construction.

Assessing the size and strength of the black bourgeoisie has been difficult because most operated as privately owned family enterprises. But there were some clues to their successes. For example, in September 1988 Tribute magazine published a survey of the top 100 black business enterprises which had a turnover of more than R1-million annually.

In 1993, according to the Institute of Race Relations Survey, African General Insurance, Alex Hair International, Ga-Rankuwa Bakeries, Habakuk Cane Furniture and Khulani Holdings between them had turnovers of about R180-million.

The constraints imposed on the black capitalist class by the apartheid government, such as the prohibition on owning companies and restricted access to credit facilities, hampered their advance.

Many black enterprises had by the late 1980s stagnated and/or were overtraded in industries like

retailing, hairdressing and transport. Many suffered as a result of inadequate or unsuitable premises, poor infrastructure and facilities, and political unrest. These difficulties were compounded by insufficient training, education and management skills; injudicious purchasing and marketing practices; limited knowledge of business legislation; and the activities of competitors.

Their break came in 1986, when the PW Botha administration passed the Temporary Removal of Restrictions on Economic Activities Act, a law initially intended to last for 10 months - until June 1987 - but which was extended several times until it was overtaken by the events of 1990.

This legislation allowed blacks to access bigger loans from the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), allowing them to form companies outside the homelands. The loan which New Africa Investment Limited, under Dr Nthato Motlana, raised to buy the 10% of Metropolitan Life from Sanlam in the early 1990s was secured from the IDC. The law also paved the way for blacks to buy some of the state's assets that were privatised - hence the formation of National Sorghum Beer in 1987.

Lastly, the African National Congress has since its inception sought to promote the interests of this class, as well as other classes. During the liberation struggle, particularly before the ANC's banning in 1960, it articulated an ideology favourable to the development of the black capitalist class.

Upon its return from exile it continued doing so, and on assuming the reins of government it has enthusiastically supported the development of the black bourgeoisie through legislative and administrative actions. Yet the help the black bourgeoisie receives through preferential state contracts should not be exaggerated.

The Government Communications and Information Service's 1998 report, for example, states that "since 1996, 47,3% of tenders went to companies with previously disadvantaged individuals equity".

Some of these "previously disadvantaged individuals" are accused of being white corporations using "ghost" black directors or front companies in order to win "empowerment state contracts".

The black bourgeoisie has been long in the making and is destined to grow further. It has not yet permeated all sectors of the economy, and its role in the present dispensation is unclear, but its supporters argue it will be to provide stability to what is often called the current neo-liberal era.

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ENDS

Of black hair and politics



John Matshikiza
WITH THE LID OFF!

My old friend Moji from exile days came running wildly up Rocky Street the other day and seemed relieved to see a friendly face.

He sat down without even saying hello after these years. He had a heavy situation on his mind.

"I just paid R10 for a street haircut," he said, leaning his elbow on the table, his chin resting on his fist, frowning into my face.

"Fine thanks, and you?" I replied.

He ignored my sarcastic remark.

"But R10!" he sailed on. "What do you think?"

By this time we had been joined by painter, poet and singing sensation Fikile, who also sat down in an informal way.

"What's wrong with R10?" he asked, staring at Moji.

"Do you know each other?" I asked. They didn't. I introduced them. This cleared the way for Fikile to ask me to buy him a drink. This is Yeoville, I reminded myself, suppressing a sigh, and dug into my pockets.

"What would you have expected to pay at a street barber?" I asked.

"I don't know," answered Moji. "But 10 bucks sounds like a hell of a lot for just sitting under an umbrella and getting your hair clipped."

"You'd pay about R60 in town," Fix interjected, settling into a comfortable argument with Moji. "Probably about R100 in Sandton."

I looked closely at Fix for the first time in this conversation. Unusually for him, he was sporting a full head of hair. Well, full by his standards. You see, Fix is one of those black men who just happens to have hair that is quite soft and thin. The kind of hair you can comb with the same kind of comb that Lady Godiva would have used. Nice and easy to handle.

But I also say his hair was full by his standards because I am used to Fikile going around with no hair at all.

Since I first met him, in a downtown jazz club that has long disappeared into history but was the place to see and be seen in the early days of the exiles' return, he has always been a strict baldhead. Baldhead was the badge of struggle and mourning in the townships. It was the badge of defiance. Fikile's bald head was one of those.

Nowadays, male buppy society, of which I guess all three of us must admit to being a part, is divided into roughly three groups. There are the baldies (known as cheese-kops in the heady 1950s), there are the be-bops, meaning guys who like to go halfway, with more on top than on the sides; and there are the Rosebank Rastas, meaning those whose dreadlocks are not wild and free like those of Bob Marley, Mutabaruka or Cheikh Lo, but have been carefully tailored at one of Jabu Stone's funky salons into the kind of corporate-friendly manes that are acceptable in the boardrooms of the new South Africa. Rosebank Rasta locks can be worn either long or short, or can be faked with synthetic extensions.

Black hair, male and female, is big business. Moji, Fix and me are the stingy end of the trade, refusing to venture into the luxury end of the market.

Moji, of course, is the worst, begrudging some struggling brother at the tight end of Yeoville even R10 for performing a quick and necessary service.

Fix, on the other hand, has made the big move from crazy baldhead to no-cut-at-all. He has no intention of paying anybody anything to cut his hair for the perceivable future. He is just letting it grow, even though it does not grow very far when it is let loose to do so. He has, as I said, almost silky locks for a native.

But then Fikile told us something quite interesting. He said that he had been wearing his hair in the baldhead style for a long time in the 1980s and then decided, like he had decided now, to let it grow. Some other brother

had accosted him in the streets of Hillbrow, pointing at the unaccustomed growth on his head.

"What kind of hair is that?" said the brother. "So it means you're a bushy after all."

"Bushy", as you all well know, is a not very complimentary term to describe a person of mixed ancestry — little bit of black, little bit of white, little bit of everything, like a lot of us.

The term derives from the word "Bushman", which has a double-edged, derogatory

significance all of its own.

But in some quarters, then as now, being a bushy was in itself a sign of weakness and betrayal. Every nuance of a person's being could be interpreted to place them on one side or the other of the struggle. Not being black enough could land someone in a lot of trouble in Hillbrow, or Alex, or Soweto, or a lot of other places.

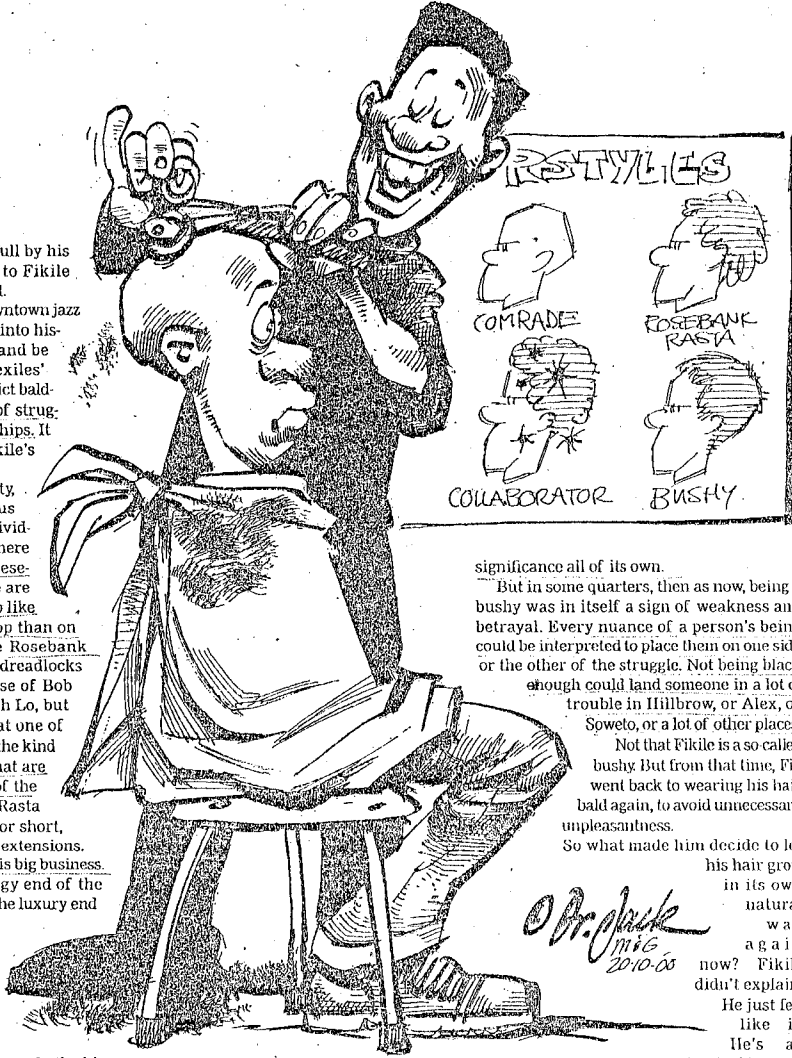
Not that Fikile is a so-called bushy. But from that time, Fix went back to wearing his hair bald again, to avoid unnecessary unpleasantness.

So what made him decide to let his hair grow in its own natural way again now? Fikile didn't explain. He just felt like it. He's an artist. And besides,

nowadays you don't get necklaced on the basis of rumours and suspicion. Some things have changed in the new South Africa.

But it was interesting that a run-of-the-mill conversation about haircuts could move from the plane of economics to the plane of politics, while never actually touching on the question of aesthetics, which is what it should really have been about.

So in some ways, I guess, we South Africans still find it hard to adjust the logic of our discourse, after all.



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in Lemmer

Krisjan Lemmer

Krisjan's klippings

November 24, 1995

n WASHINGTON: Just as South Africa's black majority was on the verge of winning freedom from apartheid last year, the Clinton administration decided to spend precious US aid funds to provide something American officials apparently deemed important: hair care. To that end, the US Agency for International Development gave a \$300 000 grant to Soft Sheen Products Incorporated, a black-owned Chicago company, to teach African-American hair care techniques to South Africans.

New forms for cultural memory

August 07, 1998

James Sey

The last week in July saw a flourish of high-profile events to launch the new University of the Witwatersrand Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Conceived of as a productive and market-related new way of approaching humanities and social science tertiary education, the graduate school is seen as the flagship of a leaner, meaner faculty of arts at Wits.

The official launch of the school on July 29 set off several innovative interdisciplinary graduate programmes which, the university hopes, will reinvigorate the beleaguered faculty.

What programmes such as the heritage project, gender studies and a proposed masters degree in culture studies (to be offered in collaboration with Vista University) have in common is a rethinking of the role and content of humanities and social science education, and, indeed, humanities and social science knowledge itself, in contemporary South Africa.

The focal point for these disparate innovations is an attempt to institute a way of thinking and debating South Africa's cultural identity and history in the context of globalised society and a new millennium.

Against this background, the first event to see the light of the day in the splendid new seminar room of the school on the Wits East campus was the launch of the advanced seminar series on July 28. This series of seminars and workshops will extend until November, and deals with the - at first glance - obscure and specialised theme: Refiguring the Archive.

The advanced seminar forum potentially extends the significance of the graduate school concept beyond its institutional university confines, and will, in the best case scenario, give shape and meaning to a number of important social ideas and concerns for South Africa in the months and years to come.

A number of organisations, such as the Gay and Lesbian Archives, the South African History Archive and the Namibia Archive, are participating in the series, especially in the vocationally-orientated workshop programme. Other multimedia interventions in the archive series include an art exhibition entitled *Holdings: Refiguring the Archive*, curated by Jane Taylor of the University of the Western Cape, and a dance piece choreographed by Sylvia Glasser entitled *Tranceformations*.

The seminars themselves will be led or contributed to by many eminent local and international figures, including Harvard Professor of African-American Studies Henry Louis Gates, the SABC's Mandla Langa and probably the English-speaking world's most prominent living philosopher, and the one most closely associated with the concept of the archive, Jacques Derrida.

The diversity of input indicated by this description points to the reason behind organising the series around the idea of the archive. As a documentary depository, an apparently objective and factual memory-record of a society or a specific part of a society, archives form the grounds on which knowledge, cultural heritage and a national or even individual sense of identity can be built.

In South Africa, if we think only of the strange, sad and twisted histories and records that have emerged from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's hearings, we can see how partial and ideologically charged the existence of an archive might be.

Investigating the very concepts of cultural memory and recording at this point in our history is thus a forward-looking project rather than the historical one implied by the use of the archive idea. We need to

begin sifting not only what has been recorded, but asking why certain things have been remembered or preserved and what forgotten or lost, how and by whom.

In a global context too, the same sets of problems and issues confront the preservation and encoding of cultural artefacts and memory, primary in the move from print-based societies to digital ones. It is theoretically possible to turn all print-based documents into electronic information, for example, but won't this simply further remove access to cultural memory and literacy for the poor majority of the world's population.

The concept of the archive stands at the nexus of many crucial questions in our contemporary South African and global cultural landscapes. The range of topics tackled by the seminar series reflect its centrality: everything from electronic memory and post modernism to rock art, gay and lesbian identity and the truth commission. It's a cunning intervention by Wits, and an important one that will hopefully emerge from the confines of the ivory tower.

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Hip-hop and beyond

November 01, 1996

CAROLINE SULLIVAN thought live hip-hop was boring - until she saw the Fugees play in London

HOW big is "big"? In the Fugees's case, big enough that Sony had to stop making their number-one single, Killing Me Softly, because it wouldn't get out of the charts over the summer to make way for the next single. That in turn went straight to the top, helping the band's current album, The Score, sell nine million copies since its release in March.

It's the more remarkable for the fact that, save for one-offs like the Coolio single, hip-hop acts simply don't sell in those quantities. But then the Fugees aren't your typical hip-hoppers.

The trio, who hail from the deceptively lyrical-sounding East Orange, New Jersey, employ sensual female vocals as much as they do rapping, and the voice's owner, the fashion-modelish Lauryn Hill, is no mere foil for the two male Fugees. This in a genre where women must usually go solo to achieve any recognition. Even more relevantly, the Fugees make the diametrical opposite of gangsta rap. Despite dedicating their Brixton Academy show to Tupac Shakur and issuing half-hearted calls for insurrection, the Fugees are positivists who believe civilisation isn't yet in irreparable decline. Until it is, they're going to party - and the audience is coming with them, dammit.

Their show takes to task the belief that rap is boring live. It's as if they've never heard of the two-slobs-barking-into-mikes formula. They're on a mission to entertain, and if that means stopping the show to sing Happy Birthday, or wading into the crowd to berate some unfortunate who didn't have the "right vibe", so be it. They even put a Fugee spin on the moment when the house was divided and each half told to shout in turn: Hill split us into "all the ladies with real hair" and those without (and it was hard to tell who were more numerous).

The Fugees made much of their eclecticism, constantly dipping, with the aid of a drummer and bassist, into other people's songs, from Walk On The Wild Side to the Jackson 5's ABC.

Even Killing Me Softly did not escape their irreverence, but the dazzlingly perfumed girl fans crooned along anyway, eyes closed to conjure up memories of Spanish waiters on summer holidays. This was as the Fugees would have wished; as Wyclef said before an explosion of tinsel signalled the finale, "It ain't about black and white." Nope, it's about music, love and real hair.

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It's a racist jungle out there

July 09, 1999

Yemi Toure

Just when you thought it was safe to go into the jungles of Hollywood, along come the folks at Disney, swinging from the rafters with their film Tarzan.

Disney's official website describes how the studio came up with the image, the "look," of the 1999 Tarzan. The studio wanted the character to be unique, distinct from earlier Tarzans.

So artist Glen Keane was put to work, Disney says, and the result was "a Tarzan that moved with the swiftness of a jungle animal and possessed the strength of Michael Jordan - the ultimate athlete. And taking a cue from Dennis Rodman, Keane knew he couldn't give his superstar just an ordinary set of locks, so he endowed Tarzan with Rastafarian dreadlocks to go with his jungle appearance."

Excuse me? Did I just hear someone make a connection between "jungle animal" and Michael Jordan?

And what's this about Dennis Rodman? He doesn't wear dreadlocks. And worst of all, what's this about dreadlocks going with a "jungle appearance"?

Dreadlocks do not originate in jungles, have nothing to do with jungles and are not a manifestation of jungles - except in the white-oriented mind!

The HYPE website, which monitors the black image in the media, believes the portrayal of black hair is part of its concern.

They judge films on whether the black culture they project is rich, varied and valuable, or whether it is cheapened, abused or stereotypical.

HYPE believes that connecting dreadlocks to jungles is a sin.

"So you better watch out for the 1999 Tarzan - the jungles of Western culture are vastly more widespread and dangerous than anything on the whole African continent," is one of HYPE's comments on the film.

n Duncan Campbell reports that Jar Jar Binks, one of the creatures in Star Wars Episode One: The Phantom Menace, has now been criticised by a number of commentators as being stereotypical West Indian.

The week the film opened, critics said Jar Jar Binks stereotyped black people in an offensive way. Watto, the slaveholder in the film, has been criticised for being a caricature of an Arab or Jew.

Later this month a coalition of actors will form in Hollywood to protest against the exclusion of minorities from film roles.

Its formation has been prompted by an alleged lack of ethnic minority performers in major television dramas and series.

"It's a multi-million-rand industry," says Michael Conlin, director of education and training at the Hairdressing and Cosmetology Services Industry Education and Training Board. "Stylists have flooded the market, from the untrained working in tin shacks or under awnings at the side of the road, to the top salons. There are literally thousands of salons in Gauteng alone. Now nurses are becoming stylists and black men are turning to the profession more and more."

Alex Hair, which opened in 1978 in Soweto, has 14 franchisees and a plush head office in Sandhurst, turns over -- well, Dopmingo won't say, but admits that they're "worth a lot. A franchisee can turn over a million bucks a year," he estimates. "Clients will spend anything from R60 to R150 or more." Two years ago they conducted a survey through the Industrial Council of South Africa: he claims that 80% of the black target population of Gauteng are Alex Hair customers.

Happiness Mokhine believes it's affirmative action that has really boosted the industry: now black men and women can aspire to -- and achieve -- virtually anything and within the corporate world, grooming is all. Conlin puts it down to self-esteem, but it is interesting that the same explosion in creativity hasn't happened in the white sector.

Parallels can be drawn to the revolution in hair styles which took place in Paris 200 years ago after the Reign of Terror, when one off, individual looks in hair were de rigueur. The trauma of revolution had passed, society was in transition and hair was a statement of individuality, whether you had your hair dressed ' la Caracalla, ' la Titus, ' la Brutus, Athene, Helene or Aphrodite. It was an explosion of relief after the years of the guillotine, but the styles identified strongly with a political movement -- in this case the classical democracies of Greece and Rome. And despite the talk of African style, it is to the Afro-Americans living in the so-called largest democracy in the world that local black men and women are looking.

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