CHAPTER 1
LOCATING BLACKNESS

Introduction

Post-apartheid South Africa has often been described as a multicultural society that is reflected through the hybridity of the ‘Rainbow Nation’. The ‘Rainbow Nation’ rhetoric of South Africa functions as a social glue that unites all South Africans regardless of race or class. The South African landscape is a conflicting and often times contradictory one, characterised by zones of affluence and areas of abject poverty, most often than not, the two co-habiting side by side. One such zone developed through Afrikaner Nationalism to keep blacks separated from whites, is the ‘township space’. During the height of apartheid in South Africa this space was a zone characterised by violence. Violent mayhem within the ‘township space’ was a direct reaction to Afrikaner Nationalist ideologies that aimed at keeping black people oppressed by violating their basic human rights. According to Ribane (2006: 142) the township can be defined as:

Urban settlements, usually impoverished and under-resourced that, during apartheid, were designated as ‘temporary’ African living areas. Usually situated on the outskirts of White cities and towns, they could not be upgraded since official policy was that Africans were only temporary sojourners there.

In post-apartheid South African society there appears to be the recuperation of the ‘township space’ in the popular imagination of South Africans. The recuperation and sanctification of the ‘township space’ is increasingly apparent in its cinematic representations in contemporary South African cinema. In South African history, notions of geographic space were essential to upholding Afrikaner Nationalist ideologies which were based on the strict separation of the races.

In 1950 The Group Areas Act was legislated which enacted the strict separation of the South African population into separate residential areas based on skin
colour. This resulted in constructing bodies of colour as the ‘other’, as unintelligable bodies that did not fit within the parameters of the hegemonic society. ‘Othering’ of black identity was at the core of apartheid ideologies. The Afrikaner Nationalist government recognised the ideological importance of space and set out on a campaign which clearly demarcated the different races in South Africa into different zones who were allowed to enjoy different pleasures and privileges. The Act was also designed to control the purchase and occupation of land. The passing of this law was essential to Afrikaner Nationalist interests. It separated all public areas and public amenities into white and black zones. More importantly this law provided the government with complete control\(^1\) over black populations and assisted in monitoring the movement of black people (Horrell, 1956). This process of ‘othering’ was an important tool of the Afrikaner Nationalist government which determined the manner in which black identity and sexuality is largely perceived in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa.

The ‘township space’ was positioned as geographically peripheral to major South African cities, but more importantly this space was placed on the:

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Periphery of cultural systems of space in which places are ranked relative to each other. They all carry the image, and stigma, of their marginality which becomes indistinguishable from any basic empirical identity they might once have had (Shields, 1991: 3).
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The Group Areas Act allowed the government to locate certain areas as designated Areas that were to be occupied by specific race groups. In 1954 the Native Resettlement Act was passed, which allowed the government to forcibly

\(^1\) The Afrikaner Nationalist government set out to control the black body through the implementation of the ‘pass laws’. African people who did not qualify to work in urban areas had to carry a ‘pass’ that was valid for 72 hours. If a police officer caught a black person with a ‘pass’ that was expired or if a black person did not have a ‘pass’ and was in a white area, the person was jailed and was expected to pay a fine. Although the ‘pass law’ was abolished in 1952 it was replaced by a document called the ‘reference book’. This was an identification book that has the fingerprint of the holder. This book had to be carried at all times and failure to produce the book often led to blacks being removed from the urban areas (http://www.rebirth.co.za/apartheid_and_immorality2.htm ).
remove blacks from places like Sophiatown\(^2\) and other urban areas and relocate
them in ‘township spaces’ (Gorodnov, 1983). This law allowed the apartheid
government to realise their dream of creating a whiter city. The ‘township
space’ was developed on the fringes of major South African cities as a means of
controlling the influx of black South Africans into the cities. The ‘township
space’ is a visible geographical space that has recognisable codes and
conventions that have remained resilient in post-apartheid South Africa. This
space was envisioned as a space of containment, a space that housed
undifferentiated black bodies that were supposedly a threat to the hegemony of
Afrikaner Nationalism. It did not take long for the township to become a space
characterised and associated with poverty, the underclass, overpopulation,
resistance to apartheid, violence, criminality and decay. Afrikaner Nationalism
was responsible for stereotyping this space in order to mobile a discourse of
otherness that has since become associated with the space of the township. It is
important to note that the stereotype functions to fix an identity onto a particular
space, individual or group of individuals. However the stereotype often
functions to ‘fix’ a particular identity from a ‘outsiders’ point of view, but for
people living within a particular space, the space is characterised and
experienced as fluid and not as fixed. Richard Dyer says that:

The role of the stereotype is to make visible the invisible, so that
there is no danger of it creeping up on us unawares; \textit{and to make
fast, firm and separate what is in reality fluid and much closer to
the norm than the dominant value system cares to admit}
(emphasis added 1993: 16).

The ‘township space’ has been imagined like any other black ghetto in the world
and this is more apparent in its cinematic representations in contemporary South
African cinema. Suddenly the ‘township space’ became a zone of otherness, a
space that needed to be controlled and monitored. Yet it also became a space

\(^2\) Sophiatown can be described as ‘a cosmopolitan suburb west of Johannesburg that had
racially-mixed groups living together in the 1950’s. It was named after the wife of the original
landowner, Herman Tobiansky. Under protest, the people were relocated as part of the Group
Areas Act forced removals. The suburb was designated for White occupation and rename
that has marked the South African landscape forever. The Group Areas Act of 1950 set the tone through which the post-apartheid South African landscape can be deconstructed as a landscape of separation even in contemporary South African society.

In contemporary South African cinema the ‘township space’ has become a cinematic trope of blackness. More importantly representations of the ‘township space’ articulate black identity that is associated with poverty, the underclass, violence and criminality. These representations re-inscribe the ‘otherness’ of the ‘township space’, but more importantly it re-inscribes the ‘otherness’ of black subjectivity. Cinematic representations of the ‘township space’ appear to celebrate the commodification of poverty. Poverty associated with the township space also articulates the type of black identity that is largely imagined to occupy this space. In contemporary South African cinema the aesthetisation of the ‘township space’ has become synonymous with a black identity associated with criminality, excessive violence and one that has become synonymous with poverty and the black underclass. In contemporary South African cinema there appears to be a re-negotiation and re-formulating of black identity, especially black masculinity. The cinematic representation (construction) of blackness reinforces the gaze\(^3\) of the ‘other’. The current trend in South African cinema and television is for filmmakers to represent the ‘township space’ as the only accessible zone through which an authentic black identity can be located. The implication of this cinematic representation is the essentialism of blackness and the refracting of black identity through a colonising lens. Black identity (especially black masculinity) is constructed through an otherness that suggests that the black body is incapable of negotiating the contemporary moment that defines the black experience in South Africa today.

The cinematic representations of blackness and black identity in South African cinema is problematic as there appears to be a ‘fixing’ or ‘freezing’ of black

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\(^3\) I use the term ‘gaze’ in order to develop my argument later in this report concerning the position a filmmaker employs when casting his lens on his characters. The ‘gaze’ of the filmmaker either refers to an ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’ position. It is important to consider what position the filmmaker assumes when filming as I argue later that this can influence the type of images constructed and the manner in which images are stereotyped.
identity and the authentic black experience within the *space of the township*. This has resulted in the essentialism of black identity and the black experience. I would like to suggest that there are three main geographical spaces through which black identity is constructed and represented – the rural space, the township space and the urban (city) space. The city has been regarded as the “place par excellence for the realisation of the individual” (Le Marcis, 2004: 454) by theorists of modernity. However this is not for the “suffering body of the City” (Le Marcis, 2004). The suffering body of the City is usually the body of the ‘poor, hunted, suffering and in need of care’, and more often than not, this is the *black body*. The black body has been constructed as the ‘suffering body of the city’ as this was a function of South Africa’s colonial and apartheid histories. South African politics have been infused with the construction of the black body as a body that is incapable of negotiating the urban landscape. Within the urban space, blackness is constructed as incapable of negotiating modernity (represented by the city). The city becomes a contested site, a site associated with the loss of an authentic black identity and experience. The city is also represented as a site of infection and disease. Metaphorically the city is associated with industrialisation and modernity. The detribalisation of the black body “to the alien urban environment would result in physical, moral, cultural and psychological decline and degeneration” (Robins, 1998: 458).

The city is also constructed as the site where the black body is literally infected and contaminated with diseases like HIV/AIDS, and to many the harshness of the city offers little refuge:

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4 I locate the black body as a companion to the ‘suffering body of the city’, because cinematically the black body is never represented as being able to negotiate the space of the city. The black person who inhabits the urban (city) space is often represented as diseased or contaminated by Western ideas. Such a discourse developed about the urban black body because the focus of Nationalist ideologies was to keep blacks away from whites, and in order to mobilise this discourse the city was constructed as dangerous for the black psyche. The black person within the city was constructed as a dangerous person who threatened the hegemony and politics of Afrikaner Nationalism. Therefore the suffering body of the city has become associated mostly with the black body.

5 The infection of the black subject with HIV/AIDS is a more contemporary version. The earlier versions of the early 1950’s were about syphilis.
Urban Africans were thought to be especially susceptible to syphilitic or tubercular infections, for instance, and it was widely held that the urban environment encouraged ‘impulsive’ sexual behaviour and aggression amongst Africans (Robin, 1998: 458).

Cinematic representations of the rural space are also problematic as it casts the black body into a zone of ‘otherness’. Within the rural landscape the black body is represented as timeless, uncivilised, pre-modern, naïve and caught within a pristine, untouched, natural habitat – the Dark Continent. Images of the rural space also suggest that the black body is incapable of negotiating modernity and therefore the black body is usually constructed as an ethnographic spectacle that appears to feed a Western imaginary of Africa and its indigenous peoples.

Although the black subject travels between and through the rural, urban and township spaces, assuming different identities at different times, there appears to be a fetishisation of the ‘township space’ in contemporary South African cinema. This report demonstrates that the current mode of representation in South African cinema is the result of the strategic-essentialism of blackness which speaks to the ‘colonisation of the image’. These images reiterate stereotypes of blackness which can be traced back to the earliest images of Africans and ‘Natives’ in the history of cinema.

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6 *The Genealogy of the Myth of the “Dark Continent”* written by Patrick Brantlinger (1988), trace’s the manner in which the African landscape and its inhabitants, from the 1800’s and even before, have been constructed as a space of darkness and danger. His analysis of literature written during British colonial rule in Africa highlights the extent to which the British perceived Africa as a ‘kingdom of darkness’ that needs to be ‘Christianized’ and ‘Civilised’ (Brantlinger, 1988: 181). More importantly he also traces the extent to which the African person was associated with barbarity, savagery, immorality, superstition and childish passion. According to Livingston, the ‘African was a creature to be pitied, to be saved from slavery and also from his own darkness, his savagery’ (Brantlinger, 1988: 182). During this period of British rule, the British colonisers (whether missionaries or explorers) made it their duty to save the African people from their degenerate ways. In order to do this, they had to construct the African person and the African race as a distinct species, inferior in intellect and progression. This was achieved by mobilising Darwinian discourse on race and evolution and by suggesting that the Africans and other primitive people’s were the ‘missing link’ between the apes and white (civilised man) (Brantlinger, 1988: 185).
Fetishism has been used by a number of theorists and intellectual disciplines. Freud's use of the term has been a psychoanalytical one, whereas Marxists have employed the term in relation to ‘commodity fetishism’. Surrealists have also employed a much broader definition of the term fetish to relate to an inanimate or animate object that emphasises the intimate connection between the mind and the body (Ades, 1995: 71). In this report I argue that the ‘township space’ has become fetishised in the imagination of South African filmmakers and there also appears to be a fetishisation of the township in the popular memory and imagination of South Africans. For the purposes of this study I draw from a Surrealist definition of ‘fetish’ in order to argue for the fetishisation of the ‘township space’ in post-apartheid South African filmmaking. This argument is further developed in Chapter two.

The question of race and racial identity is central to my discussion and analysis of the ‘township space’ and its articulation of black identity. Race is not an uncontested or un-problematised category. Race, like gender⁷ is a construction and not an essentialised category. There are no ‘raced’ bodies, only bodies that perform or enact the norms that make their racial identities intelligible. The question of race should interrogate the processes through which one “becomes raced” (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Foucault reminds us that “the modern subject is created and policed by power-knowledge relationships between institutions and individual bodies” (quoted in Distiller & Steyn, 2004: 1). Bodies become raced through the ideologies and power relationships between institutions and subjects and become intelligible within these institutions by enacting or performing their raced (or gendered) identities. Stuart Hall (1996 (b): 116) says:

> The fact is “black” has never been just there either. It has always been an unstable identity, psychically, culturally, and politically. It too is a narrative, a story, a history. Something constructed, told, spoken, not simply found.

⁷ For an analysis of the performance of gendered identity refer to Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of Identity (1990) by Judith Butler.
In the South African context, as I discuss in chapter three, our history of separation through Afrikaner Nationalism\(^8\) has been responsible for the construction of race and raced subjectivities. The body of the black person (materiality of the body) has been subjected to decades of decisions made about those bodies. Decisions made about and for black South African included where they may live, who they may procreate with and the type of jobs they were allegeable to undertake. The institution of apartheid and its discourse produced a specific set of knowledge about the black body that ultimately created the black subject through the enforcement and enactment of such knowledge. This knowledge was based on constructing blackness as ‘deviant’ and ‘other’. The construction of black identity as dangerous, sexual and improper was based on a predetermined ideology that set about to construct black identity so, and regulate its performance so that it fitted within the status quo of the Afrikaner Nationalist ideologies.

In chapter two this report critically engages with cinematic representations of the ‘township space’ in contemporary South African cinema, interrogating representations of the township and constructions of the township as a marginal space (Shields, 1991). Shields emphasises that:

> The social definition of marginal spaces and places is intimately linked with the categorisation of objects, practices, ideas and modes of social interaction as belonging to the ‘Low culture’, the culture of marginal places and spaces, the culture of the marginalised (emphasis added 1991: 4).

The space of the township was initially developed as a ‘port’ into major South African cities and was a means of monitoring and controlling the urbanisation of black South Africans. Although the ‘township space’ is a modern invention its purpose was to construct its inhabitants as pre-modern and incapable of negotiating modernity. The ‘township space’ became a ‘hybrid’ or ‘ambivalent’ space, a space of liminality and in-betweenness, one which positioned the black

\(^8\) It must not be forgotten that before apartheid, South Africa experienced years of colonial rule. Colonization was also responsible for the construction of black identity in South Africa.
body between modernity (represented by the city landscape) and pre-modernity (represented by the rural areas). Hybridity refers to the “mobility and cross-over of ideas and identities generated by colonialism” (Loomba, 1998:173). This emphasises a major contradiction of the ‘township space’ as this space was premised on ‘fixing’ black South Africans into perpetual ‘otherness’.

Contemporary cinematic representations of the ‘township space’ suggest that the township is the manageable part of modernity for the black body. This report argues strongly that if the township space is read as a space of hybridity or ambivalence, the township should not be read as fixed or anchored, which has been the case under apartheid. Post 1994 this space has been re-examined and hence the township now has new meaning.

For South African filmmakers the construction of ‘place-images’ that represent the space of the township, has become homogenised and conflated with a space of decay (represented by the shanty town dwellings) and death. This cinematic representation of the ‘township space’ reflects one reading of this space which I refer to as the “project of the cinematic township”. The hybridity of this space is embedded in the transformative meanings of the township space and also the way it becomes meaningful in different ways for different classes and subcultures as well. According to Shields ‘place-images’ can be defined as:

The various discrete meanings associated with real places or regions regardless of their character in reality. Images, being partial and often either exaggerated or understated, may be accurate or inaccurate. They result from stereotyping, which over-simplifies groups of places within a region, or from prejudices towards places or their inhabitants. A set of core images form a widely disseminated and commonly held set of images of a place or space. These form a relatively stable group of ideas in currency, reinforced by their communication value as conventions circulating in a discursive economy (emphasis added 1991: 60-61).
In chapter two I argue that for the (South African) filmmaker the project of the cinematic township is based on the construction of ‘place-images’ of this space that emphasises the marginality of the township. Although the filmmaker employs this ‘exaggerated’ and mostly ‘inaccurate’ cinematic representation of this space different films’ emphasis is nuanced. The main characters in Wooden Camera (2003) (Madiba and Sipho) directed by Ntshaveni Wa Luruli negotiate the space of the township through their navigation of the streets and houses of the township. The characters are represented as having a closeness and connectedness to the township space which situates them more comfortably within this cinematic space.

Tsotsi (2005) directed by Gavin Hood utilises the township space differently. The camera constantly hovers over the township from above or from the main road that runs alongside it. This film locates the township differently as the main characters do not negotiate the space of the townships as comfortably as does Wooden Camera. Although Wooden Camera appears to focus more on inscribing an ‘otherness’ onto the space and onto the black bodies that negotiate and inhabit that space, there are moments when the filmmaker is able to negotiate his intimacy with the space and this is reflected through his characters. Sipho is a petty criminal who is fascinated and empowered by the gun. He eventually dies when he attempts to rob a cash-in-transit van. Another scene that exemplifies the ‘otherness’ of the township space in this film is the montage of shots when Estelle enters the township space looking for Madiba. The series of shots are of dead animal heads (pigs, sheep, goats, etc). The blood, rawness and otherness of the animals are foregrounded through her nauseating reaction to these body parts. Although the film is capable of negotiating the space of the township, the film accentuates and exaggerates the experience of the otherness of the space as is expected from an outsider.

Tsotsi uses the township space as a means of claiming an ‘authentic’ experience of South Africanness. Although the filmmaker perpetuates the otherness of black identity, he recreates the ‘township space’ as almost being a postmodern space of black existence. For him the township space has recuperated itself through the iconography of Africanness and a particular type of South
Africanness. Miriam, the lady who feeds Tsotsi’s stolen baby, appears to be from a Sun Goddess9 catalogue and the interior of her ‘shack’ claims a modernity that has become a fashion accessory in Interior Decoration10 in the West. Gavin Hood appears to be celebrating the recreation of African style and African space (and the African imaginary) in the West.

“Place-images and our views of them, are produced historically, and are actively contested” (Shields, 1991: 18). This report argues that the cinematic representation of an authentic black identity has also become conflated with the experiences of criminality, violence, deviancy and ‘otherness’. This report demonstrates the manner in which spaces and places are overdetermined and that behaviours and stereotypes within and of spaces and places are expected to conform to the ‘construction of marginality’ (Shields, 1991: 5) of a particular space or place. To a large extent the cinematic representations of the ‘township space’ does not consider the township as actually heterogeneous or hybridised, clearly distinguishable by the landscape of the different housing projects visible in the township landscape:

The township is not just a space of poverty, of so called “matchbox” council houses and informal squatter structures. There are places of relative middle-class comfort, and areas … that do not look much different than some of the suburbs of Johannesburg (Krige, 2006: 9).

Filmmakers construct place-images of the ‘township space’ which convey a sense of death, decay and danger. There is almost no recognition that the

9 The South Africa fashion label Sun Goddess represents the assimilation of African and Western design, celebrating the rich heritage of South Africanness and the nostalgia associated with days gone by. The creators of this label, Thando and Vanya Mangaliso, set about to ‘make a meaningful contribution to the reconstruction of our South African identity as well as the revolution of African fashion’ (http://www.rage.co.za/issue43/safashflying.htm). Sun Goddess represents the recuperation of a South Africanness and Africanness within the Western imaginary. The commodification of this African aesthetic is significant as it speaks to the position Africa is able to claim within a the global fashion stage.

10 The ‘township aesthetic’ has become a lifestyle or home décor choice for many people in the West and South African cities like Johannesburg and Cape Town. For further information refer to Fraser, C. (Ed.). 2002. Shack Chic: Shack Chic art and innovation in South African shacklands. Cape Town: Quivertree Publishers.
‘township space’ is a hybrid space occupied by people from different classes who identify with different sexual identities and from different socio-economic statuses. There is no apparent recognition of the diversity of the ‘township space’. ‘Place-images’ of the ‘township space’ conform to the historically and politically rooted ‘place-myths’ of the township. This has resulted in the inaccurate and often exaggerated portrayal of the ‘township space’ and the people who inhabit it.

This report argues that in representations of the township in contemporary South African cinema, the diversity of the ‘township space’ has become conflated through a preoccupation with the form of the township (Krige, 2006) and it is too often represented in the singular. This report demonstrates that the cinematic space of the township is:

Packed with negative signifiers that have a long history in portraying townships as spaces of violence, inherent criminality, social shortcomings, broken families and homogenous public housing projects that symbolise undifferentiated black bodies’ (emphasis added Krige, 2006: 9).

This report demonstrates that these:

Images and stereotypes, an imaginary geography of places and spaces, are shown to have social impacts [...] at the level of social discourses on space which (1) underpin the rhetoric of ideologies and politicians and (2) pervade and subvert even the rationalistic discourse of planning and regional development policy (Shields, 1991:6).
**Wooden Camera (2005) and Tsotsi (2003):**

**Locating the Black Body within the ‘Township Space’ and inscribing a Black masculinity**

*Tsotsi* (2005) is a moving film about a young man living in the Johannesburg township of Soweto. The film traces the life of Tsotsi, a nineteen year old, who has repressed any memory of his past, including his real name. One night, in a local shebeen, Tsotsi is questioned by the drunken Boston about his past which ends in a violent fight. Tsotsi flees into the night and in his rage he hijacks a woman at her home. Unknown to him, the car is occupied by a three month old baby in the back seat of the car. In a fright, Tsotsi looses control of the vehicle and stops on a deserted road which overlooks the township. He tries walking away from the baby but the baby screams, but calms down when he looks at Tsotsi. This unsettles him. Nevertheless he gathers the baby and takes him to his home in the township. The baby becomes hungry and Tsotsi realises that he needs to be fed. Tsotsi seeks out a mother from the township who is also breastfeeding, to become a surrogate mother to his baby. He forces his way into her home and at gun point he makes the terrified woman breastfeed his baby. The mother is young and has recently lost her husband to a violent crime. She lives alone. At first she is terrified by Tsotsi, but she soon warms to him. She plays the role of the mother to the baby, but also mentor to the desensitized gangster. She coaxes Tsotsi to confront his own violent nature and to reveal his past.

*Wooden Camera* (2003) is about two boys who witness a man being thrown-off a passing train. The film is set in the Cape Town township - Khayelitsha. The two friends Madiba and Sipho discover a gun and a camera in the dead mans bag. Madiba takes the camera and Sipho takes the gun. Madiba hides the camera in a homemade wooden box, and he soon learns how to capture images of his surroundings using the camera. Sipho becomes part of a gang in Cape Town, and Madiba becomes friends with a white middle class girl, called Estelle, from the suburbs. They soon become good friends. Sipho becomes entangled in drugs, criminality and a vicious gang culture. He mistakenly kills a street kid when he tries to steal Madiba’s camera. Towards the end of the film Sipho is
killed when he tries to hold up a security van. *Wooden Camera* is a moving story about the friendship between two boys who live in very different worlds - one seduced by the city life and the other who is content to live in the township.

*Tsotsi* and *Wooden Camera* locate black identity within the ‘township space’. This report analyses the hybridity and ambivalence of the ‘township space’, by interrogating this space as an ‘alternate geography of modernity’. The political history and memory of the township space is considered and then I analyse the extent to which this marginal space of ‘otherness’ has become fetishised in the memory of post-apartheid South Africa.

This report also analyses the extent to which representations of black identity (especially black masculinity) have become ‘frozen’ within the space of the township. The black body that inhabited the space of the township is ‘fixed’ into perpetual otherness through the ideological framework of Afrikaner nationalism. However the colonial and apartheid encounter has failed to produce fixed identities (Bhabha, 1992; Loomba, 1998). The space of the township is a liminal and ambivalent space, a space that constantly negotiates the changing identities of the black body. I argue that, although cinematically, the black body appears to have become fixed in its representations, it is actually a hybrid body, one that is never allowed to become fully modern (and inhabit the space of the city). There is also the constant danger of representing this body as *fully* rural. Representing black identity as *fully* rural is also dangerous as black identity is once again essentialised as living in a timeless, pre-historic African landscape that knows no history and that is unaffected by it.

In colonial discourse and during South Africa’s apartheid years, the stereotype of the black subject provided a *secure* point of identification by constructing the other as a “population of degenerate type on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (Bhabha, 1992: 133). This report suggests that the result of stereotyping (and considering South Africa’s long history of constructing the black body along stereotypes of otherness in relation to whiteness) ‘fixes’ black identity in contemporary South African cinema which coincides with a reinvention of the
township space in South African society. Fanon (1986) succinctly explained the ‘fixing’ of black identity when he wrote:

The glances of the other [white person] fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye (1986:109).

However this report also suggests that not only is there an essentialism of the black body in contemporary South African cinema, the ‘township space’ has also become an essentialised mode of representation in terms of visual aesthetics. The ‘place-images’ of the township space in contemporary South African cinema appear to have evolved into an aesthetic that South African filmmakers claim to symbolise as South Africanness. Images of places or spaces (‘place-images’) “can be made to symbolise a whole variety of social statuses, personal conditions, and social attitudes” (Shields, 1991: 22). This report investigates the signs and symbols, and codes and conventions of the cinematic representations of the township space in contemporary South African cinema, arguing that the ‘township space’ has been constructed through a symbolic sign system. This sign system has become a mode of artistic expression that speaks to, what I call, the ‘township aesthetic’ and the fetishisation of this space.

The ‘township space’ is no longer a sealed-off geographical location but has now become open to the gaze of the ‘other’ (white person). The recuperation of the cultural and historical value of the township space, speaks to the sanitisation and sanctification of this geographical location. A ‘return to the township’ has become a means of reconnecting with an authentic black culture and in post-apartheid South Africa the township space has become a nostalgic and mythical space. “Collectively a set of place-images forms a place-myth” (Shields, 1991: 61).

To investigate the South African ‘township space’ and its inscription or articulation of black identity is to be aware of the ideological and political moment and discourse through which this space is conceived and constructed. More importantly this report takes cognisance of the extent to which black identity is politically constructed.
According to Hall this moment marks the:

The end of innocence or the end of the innocent notions of the essential Black subject… the recognition that “Black” is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category (Hall quoted in West, 1993: 211).

In post-apartheid South Africa the political implication(s) of image-making raises a series of important questions that need consideration. How do South African filmmakers represent the majority of a population who have historically been represented as a minority for so many years during apartheid? Who can claim the right to create images representing (black) identity in South Africa? South Africa’s post-apartheid situation is quite unique in that we have a mixture of black South African and white South African filmmakers. Although I argue that both black and white South African filmmakers can claim a collective South African identity, an important question to consider is: what are the implications for racialising Africanness? Finally it is important to consider whether South African filmmakers construct images from an ‘insiders’ perspective, or whether these images are constructed from an ‘outsiders’ perspective. Thiong’o (2000: 94) makes an important observation when he states that African filmmakers “need to hold the camera so that we are both behind the camera looking in but we are also inside the very society at which the eye of the camera is gazing”.

In this report I would suggest that the strategic-essentialism of blackness within a homogenous ‘township space’ in contemporary South African cinema feeds the Western imaginary of Africa and its inhabitants. This history of inscribing an ‘otherness’ onto the black body can be traced back to The Zulu’s Heart directed by D.W.Griffith in 1908. This was the first fiction film to be set in South Africa became the first in a series of films that re-created African people as dark savage bodies (Davies, 1996). Other films include Siliwa the Zulu (1927), Zulu Dawn (1980), Shaka Zulu (1986). Through the gaze of the colonizing camera, these films equated African people as wild animals who need to be civilised, African tribes who are savage and cannibalistic and foregrounded the image of the oversexed native  (Magogodi, 2002). It appears as though the colonial gaze
derived much pleasure and satisfaction from consuming the spectacle and ‘deviancy’ of the naked African.

Contemporary South African films have received international acclaim and impressive reviews abroad. *Tsotsi* has won the Oscar in the 2006 Best Foreign Film Category as well as the People’s Choice Award at the 2005 Toronto Film Festival, Standard Life Audience Award at the 2005 Edinburgh Film Festival, and The Michael Powell Award for Best New British Feature film at the 2005 Edinburgh Film Festival. *Wooden Camera* has won the Glass Bear Award for Best Feature film at the Berlin International Film Festival. Although these awards are testimony to the potential South African filmmakers have in the technological craft of filmmaking and ability to tell their own stories, I believe that the types of representations we construct of ourselves and images we create need to be interrogated sensitively and intensely in a country that still trying to right the wrongs of an apartheid past. It is ironic that South African filmmakers appear to be employing a colonial camera, constructing images that feed the Western imaginary of Africa as pre-modern, uncivilised, poverty stricken and deviant.

In chapter two I analyse the cinematic representations of the ‘township space’ tracing its historical legacy, and interrogate its contemporary readings in post-apartheid South African society. I interrogate the familiar and intimate relations that notions of place and space occupy with notions of identity. In this chapter I also argue that there appears to be a fetishisation of the ‘township space’ in the popular imaginary of South Africans. Chapter three analyses the articulation of black masculinity within the space of the township. This chapter also analyses the historical legacy of the black subject constructed through notions of ‘otherness’. Also considered in chapter three is the landscape of masculinities within South Africa. I then analyse the cinematic representation of black masculinity within the ‘township space’, referred to as ‘Township Masculinity’. Chapter four provides a close reading of *Wooden Camera* and *Tsotsi* using the theoretical framework set up in chapters two and three. I conclude this report in chapter five with an interrogation of notions of the right to representation. In other words, who has the right to represent whom in post-apartheid South
African filmmaking, and the implications of racialising Africanness is considered.