CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION: RACIALISING AFRICANNESS AND WHO CLAIMS THE RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION

I began this report with an investigation of the cinematic representation of the ‘township space’ within contemporary South African cinema, arguing that this space has become fetishised as a cinematic trope. I have argued that the notions of space and place are deeply intertwined with notions of family anchorage and a sense of belongingness. In chapter two I analysed the manner in which spaces are constructed as appropriate or inappropriate, and the process through which space and place are clearly demarcated according to race and class. In South Africa spaces were demarcated into ‘blacks only spaces’ and ‘whites only spaces’ according to the logic and ideologies of Afrikaner Nationalism. In this process the ‘township space’ has become associated with black South Africans and cinematically employed as a means of locating an authentic black identity.

Historically the ‘township space’ has been stereotyped as a marginal space of criminality and decay. From an outsider’s point of view (the apartheid government, white South Africans, and other South Africans who do not have any ties to this space) the township has become fixed through the ‘place-myths’ associated with this space. However I would like to reinforce that for people living within this space the ‘township space’ is never experienced as fixed. Although places or spaces may be fixed through ideological motives from an outsider’s point-of-view, for those who inhabit and live in such spaces and places, their experiences are characterised through fluidity. People constantly travel between spaces occupying and assuming different identities at different times. This is the case with the township as this space has always maintained strong affiliations with both the rural and urban landscapes. The notion of fixity (in cinematic representation and in everyday experience) is more about stereotyping and maintaining the marginal position of the ‘Other’. The township was developed through a separatist Afrikaner Nationalist ideology as a
marginal space on the periphery of major cities. During apartheid, township spaces were associated with black identity and culture and were known as ‘black spaces’. In contrast to ‘black spaces’ the city or urban spaces were referred to as ‘white spaces’ and the purpose of developing ‘blacks only spaces’ was to create ‘whiter cities’. The ‘township space’ rapidly developed a discourse of ‘otherness’ that defined not only the social conditions of the township (living, recreational and other conditions) but also concretised the identity of township dwellers. The township was an ideal space for the marginalisation and ‘othering’ of black identity and culture through the mobilisation and maintenance of stereotypes that reinforced the ‘otherness’ of the township and township dwellers. The ‘township space’ was ‘fixed’ through stereotypes of marginality, underdevelopment, decomposition and death. Simultaneously black identity was fixed as deviant, violent, backward, uncivilised and destructive. For a long period of time ‘place-images’ and ‘place-myths’ of the ‘township space’ and its articulation of black identity and culture essentialised and distorted blackness and the black experience. The fixity of ‘place-images’ through apartheid politics reinforced ‘place-myths’ of the township and black identity. The notion of ‘fixity’ is important as it is concerned with mobilising stereotypes that have maintained, and continue to maintain (through cinematic representations and other popular cultural artifacts like postcards, music videos and home décor books) the marginal position of the ‘other’. In this case the ‘other’ is the black person. Although post-apartheid South African filmmakers have embarked on a project to re-imagine the ‘township space’ and its articulation of black identity, ‘place-images’ constructed of the township reinscribes notions of ‘otherness’ and reiterate stereotypes that are historically rooted in South Africa’s political past.

Even in contemporary South Africa the ‘township space’ bears the stigma of a marginal space developed on the fringes of major South African cities to control the black population. Cinematic representations of this space articulate the position the township had assumed during apartheid as being on the “periphery of cultural systems” and a space that emphasises the “culture of the marginalised” (Shields,
1991: 3-4). *Wooden Camera* and *Tsotsi* provide contexts through which the ‘Cinematic Township’ can be analysed and offers the possibilities of representations and potentially new meaning in post-apartheid South Africa. In this report I have argued that the ‘township space’ has become a fetishised space in the imaginary and in the representations of South African filmmakers. The fetishisation and commodification of poverty – reflected through the ‘township aesthetic’ – is important to film analysis as this speaks to the recuperation and sanctification of the township in post-apartheid South African society. I have also considered what this recuperation and sanctification means to South Africa. I have argued that the ‘Cinematic Township’ be read as a hybrid space, situated between the urban and rural landscape. The hybridity of the township space is reflected through the strong presence of the ‘rural in the urban’ and the inability of this space to clearly define itself through clearly demarcated boundaries.

It is important to note that in the imagination of South African filmmakers, black identity (especially black masculinity) has been conceived in a manner that speaks of stereotyping of black identity. Stereotypes function in order to ‘fix’ or ‘freeze’ an individual or group of individuals with certain characteristics that this individual or group of individuals become associated with, through repetitive use of stereotyped characteristics. I have argued that not only is black identity stereotyped in post-apartheid South African cinema, but the ‘township space’ is also stereotyped in relation to its visual aesthetics, referred to as the ‘township aesthetic’. Stereotyping of black identity and the ‘township space’ reflects an historic period in South Africa were stereotypes were mobilised in order to maintain a certain *status quo* that reflected the politics of Afrikaner Nationalism. However it is important to note that in post-apartheid South African society such stereotypes are outdated and reflect the inability of filmmakers to engage\(^1\) with images that emulate the current political atmosphere. Filmmaking is a cultural form that is political:

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\(^1\) This inability by filmmakers to engage with ‘image making’ in post-apartheid South Africa could be because of various reasons. Some reasons are financial restraints, personal reasons or other industry-related reasons. Most often, filmmakers assume they are re-constructing images of...
How social groups are treated in cultural representation is part and parcel of how they are treated in life, that poverty, harassment, self-hate and discrimination [...] are shored up and instituted by representation (Dyer, 1993: 1).

Images take on a life of their own and most often, images constructed of people, or groups of people, and places (‘place-images’) determine the qualities and characteristics of those people and that space. ‘Place-images’ result in ‘place-myths’ which inevitably concretise identities of both people and places (Shields, 1991). Stereotyping images of people and places are dangerous as such representations limit the manner in which people are treated in the world and allowed to experience the world around them. Can we assume that all black men are dangerous, gangsters, lazy, uneducated and from the township space? Can we also assume that the ‘township space’ is a dirty, underdeveloped, pre-modern space because of how this space and black identity has been re-presented cinematically? Ngugi Wa Thiong’o calls for the decolonisation of the mind and African cinema and Mogogodi calls for a ‘new cinematic language’. The implications for these two vital points are considered later on in the conclusion.

In chapter three I have analysed the construction of black masculinity within the South African context and argued that cinematic representations of the ‘township space’ articulates black masculinity associated with criminality, violence, decay, death and deviancy. I have referred to this as ‘Township Masculinity’, firstly because it is represented cinematically through the ‘township space’ and secondly, because filmmakers emphasise stereotyped characteristics that have become associated with black masculinity within this space. These characteristics include gang cultures, violence, drugs and alcohol, unemployment and deviancy. I have suggested that the re-inscription of black masculinity within post-apartheid filmmaking appears to be at the cost of essentialising black identity.

‘blackness’ in post-apartheid society but remain unaware and non-reflexive of the type of images they construct.
Wooden Camera and Tsotsi reiterate stereotypes of black identity that have become historically and politically outdated within the post-apartheid landscape of South Africa. This attests to the hegemonic or normative position that ‘whiteness’ occupies in society. Even though there may be an attempt at reconstructing black identity (specifically black masculinity) – or redefining the ‘center’ - in post-apartheid South African cinema, this is measured and achieved through an invisible white masculinity. Such an argument becomes apparent when analysing the filmmaker’s gaze in Tsotsi and Wooden Camera. In my analysis of Tsotsi I have argued that the filmmaker (Gavin Hood) employs a ‘white gaze’ and the film’s articulation of the ‘township space’ and black masculinity is constructed from an outsider’s point of view. The film places the viewer or audience in an outsider’s position, looking inside. This is achieved through the manner in which the filmmaker refuses to allow his main protagonists to engage intimately with the space of the township. Instead the camera hovers from above, employing ‘bird-eye view’ shots, ‘landscape shots’ and ‘mid-shots’ of the ‘township space’. The township is represented as an object of the gaze of the other, an object that entrenches the viewer in the appeal of its aesthetics through the use of bright, earthy colours that contribute to the seductive manner in which the ‘township space’ is cinematically constructed. I have argued that there is a celebration of the form at the expense of the content. In chapter four I have critically analysed Wooden Camera and Tsotsi, specifically interrogating its cinematic representations of the ‘township space’ and the articulation of black masculinity within this space.

While South African filmmakers claim to be recreating representations of the township they in fact reiterating stereotyped ‘place-images’ and ‘place-myths’ of this space. Filmmakers continue to stereotype black identity as deviant in their attempts at reconstructing black identity in post-apartheid South African cinema. Wooden Camera and Tsotsi have won acclaimed awards all over the world (Tsotsi won the Oscar for the Best Film in a Foreign categories at the 2006 Oscar ceremony) and this is testimony to the technical craftsmanship and filmmaking technique of our filmmakers. This also places South African cinema at an
advantageous position in relation to other African Cinemas. However the study of cinema recognises that the form is related to the content and the two are intertwined to create a product that speaks to both the subject matter and the technical expertise. In this report I have problematised the construction of images of black identity and argued that space and identity are intertwined. Richard Dyer (1993: 3) reminds us that:

[...] Representations here and now have real consequences for real people, not just in the way they are treated [...] but in terms of the way representations delimit and enable what people can be in any given society.

In South African cinema and television the ‘township space’ is becoming an aesthetic choice of many filmmakers through which black identity is represented. To an extent the ‘township aesthetic’ in South African popular culture is an attempt to claim (and represent) a certain South Africanness. South Africa’s townships had been one of the most violent areas in the world during the height of apartheid and it was through these spaces that people often rebelled against the oppressive apartheid government. It cannot be denied that the township occupies a very pivotal position in the memory of South Africans (especially black South Africans). By employing a ‘township aesthetic’ filmmakers have created a South African consciousness that evokes the political memory of the township and at the same time positions the township space as a post-apartheid space. As a post-apartheid space the township is now accessible to all South Africans. More importantly the dismantling of its imaginary borders has promoted the democratisation of all spaces in South Africa, especially those spaces that were once only available to the privileged minority white population. South African filmmakers (white and black South Africans) now have access to constructing representations of this space. The manner in which post-apartheid filmmakers re-imagine the space of the township as a post-colonial space is important in order to shift outdated re-presentations and create a new discourse about the township that celebrates its hybridity and potential for defining post-
colonial spaces in Africa. The ‘township space’ is one where worlds collide (Bremner, 2004) and is defined through the lived activities of its inhabitants. The boundaries and borders of the township are no longer fixed in the psyche of (South) Africans. This space represents the potential for a re-definition of urban spaces within African countries as the township defies the need to define spaces according to the logic of rurality and urbanity. Instead, it attests to the resiliency of spaces to define themselves through hybridity and interconnectedness that has become a feature of post-colonial (post-apartheid) spaces. This report has analysed and interrogated ‘place-images’ of the ‘Cinematic Township’. The manner in which filmmakers re-imagine this space in post-apartheid South Africa is important. More importantly, cinematic representations of the township and its articulation of black identity and sexuality speak to issues concerning the right to representation. I argue strongly that post-apartheid South African filmmakers need to celebrate the hybridity of the township through a new film language that disengages the stereotyped representations of this space and those who inhabit it. A new film language must embrace a new manner of re-presenting and re-imagining the township as a post-apartheid space that contains the seed to redefine the uses of space and the articulation of identity within this space. Filmmakers must resist the tendency to reiterate ‘place-myths’ of the township that attest to a colonised mentality unable to engage with the changing definitions of space in post-apartheid society.

The signs and symbols of the ‘township space’ (bright colours, haphazard houses, the shanty town or shack dwellings, space of poverty, death and unemployment, lack of basic amenities, fast cars and a hyper-masculinity) have become recognisable codes and conventions of the ‘Cinematic Township’. In a sense, these ‘signs and symbols’ have become essentialised modes of representing the township cinematically. Contemporary South African cinema has conventionalised a representation of a homogenous ‘township space’.

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Conventions breed expectations. These expectations become widely accepted, and the conventions then acquire a compelling force. They induce a certain degree of conformity (Deacon, et al, 1999: 139).

The conformity or ‘fixity’ of the ‘Cinematic Township’ is dangerous as the ‘township space’ has become conflated not only in its visual aesthetics, but also conflates the numerous and different experiences of the township to only one type of experience characterised by poverty, criminality, death and decay. The ‘Cinematic Township’ is stereotyped as a space ‘packed with negative signifiers’ and fail to recognize that this space is actually a heterogeneous space that is not just a ‘space of poverty’, but one that can look as luxurious and comfortable like the “suburbs of Johannesburg” (Krige, 2006). The conventionalised representation of black identity within the ‘township space’ reflects the notion that an authentic black identity is only accessible within this space. Cinematically an authentic black identity has become ‘frozen’ or ‘fixed’ within the ‘township space’. This has resulted in the essentialism of blackness and the black experience. I have argued that there appears to be an essentialism of black identity at the cost of redefining it through the cinematic medium.

**Racialising Africanness and Decolonising the Mind**

The two films that I have chosen to analyse in this report raises an important set of questions related to the right to representation i.e. who claims the rights to representation and implications for Racialising Africanness within the post-apartheid filmmaking landscape.

The struggle for [the meaning of identity in post-apartheid South Africa] hinges on who controls the representational intentionality of the body politic, especially its archives of images, symbolic and literal (Quoted in Axel, 1999: 41).

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2 Johannesburg Northern suburbs include Sandton, Houghton, Randburg, etc.
Racialised Africanness has become an important issue in the creation of a ‘new’ South African body politic. There appears to be a struggle to recuperate the black body in South African art. Historically white South Africans have been in control of the image which has often been refracted through a colonising camera (or gaze). In post-apartheid South Africa white artists (filmmakers included) have been accused of ‘not only mimicking the contradictions of racist oppression, but also contains the symptoms and vehicles which perpetuate those very structures of violence and inequality’ (Axel, 1999: 42). There is often the suggestion that black South Africans need to retrieve their bodies from ‘the proclivities of white representation’ where white South African artists have always controlled how the eye sees and perceives the black body (Axel, 1999: 42). Ironically the power to control the image in post-apartheid South Africa has become an ideological battle over the control of black identity.

*Wooden Camera* directed by a black South African and *Tsotsi* directed by a white South African have received international attention and awards. However the construction and representation of blackness in these films raise a series of important questions related to who controls the image in post-apartheid South African filmmaking? As I have argued in this report, both films are refracted through a ‘colonising camera’. The two films represent the ‘township space’ almost identically in terms of a ‘fixed’ visual aesthetic choice. Both films essentialise black masculinity to the level of criminality, deviancy and abhorrence. Can we then only argue that it is white artists who are guilty of mimicking contradictions of racist oppression and perpetuating those very structures of violence and inequity? Have black filmmakers in the South African filmmaking terrain retrieved their bodies from ‘the proclivities of white representation’ or do they also reiterate the contradiction of South Africa’s racist past?

A dangerous assumption that one often makes is that if an image is constructed by a black South African filmmaker it would be freed of the colonial mentality that has
oppressed Africa for centuries. It is also often assumed that black South African filmmakers have the capacity to represent black identity authentically. The danger in this though, is that by claiming to represent blackness authentically, there is the tendency to essentialise blackness and the black experience. Many black South African filmmakers are also limited by the colonisation of the economic sphere. Filmmakers do not have the financial freedom or agency to re-create images of blackness and find that they are restricted by agreements\(^3\) that force them to construct blackness through a colonial lens. Often such restrictions through financial agreements have resulted in South African filmmakers creating images that resonate with the colonial Western imaginary of an uncivilised, untamed and dark Africa. Images of blackness have not changed significantly since the production of films like *The Zulu’s Heart* (1908) and *Siliwa the Zulu* (1927). The image of the cannibalistic oversexed native is still apparent in post-apartheid South African cinema, but recreated in a ‘less offensive’ manner.

The position South African filmmakers assume when casting the eye of their cameras on South African subjects is an important one, as it is becoming increasingly apparent that one cannot assume that because a filmmaker is black he is freed from essentialising black identity. I have argued that identity and blackness are totally at stake in post-apartheid South African filmmaking. However can we conclude that only black people should make films about blackness? I would like to argue strongly that this is not the solution to the current problems (with representing and locating black identity) as analysed in this report. Because of South Africa’s past the filmmaking industry has inherited a number of white filmmakers whose claim to South Africanness is as valid as any black filmmaker’s claim. White South Africans cannot be denied a place within the South African terrain as South Africa has been described as a ‘Rainbow Nation’ by President Thabo Mbeki. To deny white South Africans the right to representation and image-making would be a

\(^3\) Such agreements can be co-production deals with overseas countries. If the bulk of the money is from an overseas sponsor or organization, directors will often find themselves in a position where they will have to compromise the type of images they are allowed to construct. This is dangerous as filmmakers appear to be re-iterating stereotypes of blackness and many do not have the artistic freedom to explore new and fresh terrains of representation.
breech of their constitutional rights to freedom of expression. This raises an important set of questions that need to be considered: What are the implications for Racialising Africanness? How is whiteness located within the construction of (South) Africanness? How do we incorporate ‘African Whiteness’ into an African imaginary? These questions also raise another important aspect of Africanness: How does one define Africanness? Are you African because of the colour of your skin, your type of physiognomy, your political association, your rights to land occupation, your love for your country? The choices are numerous and most often fluid. I argue that there is no fixed definition of who or what constitutes an African and claiming rights to representation in post-apartheid South Africa remains a contested issue.

Ngugi Wa 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 … also inside the very society at which the eye of the camera is gazing’. Mogogodi (2002: 247) aligning himself with Wa Thiong’o’s position says:

To look [through the camera], therefore, is to enter into discourse with the bodies of others. To look at the bodies of others is, also, to take a political position… ‘to take a picture’ is to control the image through the ‘choices in selection of subject, of camera angle, in editing, in dramatic effect’. In essence, then, to take a picture is to arrest, mark, label, and sell the body of the other. It is appropriate therefore to examine the body for traces, tracks and marks of othering in cinema.

The construction of images is a conscious choice by filmmakers in relation to the type of images they create. The question or issues should not be whether a filmmaker is black or white. Instead the political position a filmmaker assumes when constructing images or casting his gaze upon his characters is an important aspect to consider. When filmmakers hold their cameras, do they reiterate
stereotypes and political images of blackness that are historically outdated? According to Mogogodi the process of looking and casting an image on celluloid is a political process that is determined by the choices a filmmaker possesses and determines the types of images they construct. As I have analysed in this research report the position that a filmmaker assumes (whether an ‘outsider’s’ or ‘insider’s’ position) will largely determine the “politicised vantage point from which the body is inscribed with ideas” (Mogogodi, 2002: 247). More importantly the vantage point of the filmmaker determines how the image has been arrested, marked, labelled, and sold as the body of the other (Mogogodi, 2002).

Thiong’o (2000) calls for the decolonisation of the mind and I would like to suggest that the decolonisation of the image is a prerequisite to the decolonisation of the mind. A decolonisation of the mind is important as the historic relationship between the coloniser and the colonised (the oppressor and the oppressed) is the context from which African cinema has developed. Thiong’o makes a very important point when he notes that colonisation not only affected the cultural, economic and social conditions of the colonised, but also affected the mental (psychological) sphere of the colonised and therefore a decolonisation of the ‘mental space’ needs to go hand-in-hand with the economic and political sphere (Thiong’o, 2000: 93):

African cinema practitioners and scholars have theorised about their political impulse to decolonise minds and contribute to the development of a radical consciousness through a new film language (Mogogodi, 2002: 243).

How do we create a new film language that challenges the current mode of image-making that commodifies the South African landscape and experience as one of violence, criminality, marginality and its articulation of black masculinity as such, within the South African context? How do South African filmmakers decolonise the image to re-construct the image of blackness as one that does not continue to feed a Western imaginary of Africa (South Africa included) as the Dark Continent, a
‘kingdom of darkness’ that needs to be ‘Christianised’ and ‘Civilised’ (Brantlinger, 1988:181)? The role of art in society is to make the ‘invisible visible’. African cinema differs from Hollywood cinema as African cinema must be equally concerned with the ‘marriage of form and content [to] create a delightful harmony’ (Thiong’o, 2000:93). For African cinema instruction and pleasure is inseparable. In chapter two I have suggested that South African filmmakers have assumed an aesthetic choice (the ‘Township Aesthetic’) that undermines the representation of black identity. There is an obvious dissociation between aesthetic choices (form) and images of blackness (which constitutes content). South African filmmakers need to find points of continuity between form and content to create a new film language that resonates with the post-apartheid South Africa landscape.

As I have argued we cannot make the claim that only black people have the right to represent blackness. Similarly white filmmakers cannot claim to have the only rights to represent whiteness. Wa Thiong’o makes an important point when he says that when an African filmmaker (whether ‘white’ or ‘black’) points a camera at Africa it is important to consider whether he assumes an outsider’s position (watching Africa from the outside) or an insider’s position? 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’ (Thiong’o, 2000: 94). The notion of an ‘insiders’ position and an ‘outsiders’ position is important as one often assumes that an ‘insider’ is someone who belongs to that community, society or country and an ‘outsider’ is someone who does not belong. People who do not belong (the ‘outsider’) often gaze upon subjects in an anthropological, ethnographic or voyeuristic manner. Those people who belong (the ‘insider’) are often associated with having a close intimacy with their community, society or country. It is often assumed that ‘outsiders’ will construct images that essentialise identity (in this case blackness) and images that reiterate stereotypes that are historically and politically outdated. We often feel that an ‘insider’ will create images that are true representations of reality, images that are free from the ‘burden of representation’ for the black subject. However as I have argued in this
report, this is not always the case. Constructing images is not only about ‘how filmmakers hold their cameras’. One should not forget the economical and financial aspect and obligations of filmmaking.

In discussions on African cinema (and South African cinema) one must be aware of the manner in which ‘Europe has tried to incorporate the whole world into its memory’ and that we all are products of history and we live in history (Thiong’o, 2000: 95). Thiong’o argues that colonisation has distorted the memory of the colonised and ‘anti-colonial’ resistance can only be complete if it has restored the colonised to their memory. The manner in which colonialism and apartheid has affected all aspects of life in Africa and South Africa is important but the distortion of images of the colonised and oppressed is more important:

If we live in a situation where the image of the world is itself colonised, then it becomes difficult for us to realise ourselves unless we struggle to decolonise the image (Thiong’o, 2000: 95).

In relation to South Africa and post-apartheid filmmaking we need to consider the extent to which our history has been distorted and our memory destroyed. What South African (or African) memory do we hope to restore to the oppressed and colonised through the medium of cinema? How do we restore these images to the oppressed by not essentialising identities within South Africa’s ‘Rainbow Nation’? How do we free our world from images that are ‘colonised’ in order for us to realise ourselves and our full potential as South Africans who are equal in every way?

In this research report I have suggested that the ‘point of view’ of South African filmmakers is fluid and not static. I have argued that a film like Tsotsi predominantly assumes an outsider’s point of view, while the point of view in Wooden Camera constantly shifts from an ‘insiders’ point of view to an ‘outsiders’. For Mogogodi (2002) South African cinema should negate the colonial gaze and apartheid mindset through a new film language. South African filmmakers (whether
black or white South African filmmakers) need to consider whether this ‘new film 
language’ and decolonisation of the image can be created through shifting the ‘point of view’ of films that are produced. In creating a ‘new film language’ in post-
apartheid South Africa how do we locate ‘White Africanness’ and at the same time negate the colonial gaze and apartheid mindset? Although I agree with Axel (1999) 
that the struggle in post-apartheid South Africa hinges on who controls the representational intentionality of the (black) body, I disagree with his simplistic assumption that it is only white artists (filmmakers) who perpetuate racist oppression and inequality. Axel makes a strong stand for black South Africans to retrieve their bodies form the ‘proclivities of white representation’ but fails to acknowledge that in post-apartheid South Africa black artists can also be accused of the same ‘crimes’ as white artists. I have argued that it is not only images constructed by white filmmakers that appear to be refracted through a colonial lens, but those constructed by black filmmakers also rely on stereotypes that are outdated. Axel also fails to acknowledge the systems of oppression and subjugation that have created a certain mindset (colonial mindset) within black and white artists. The debate and analysis must go deeper and Thiong’o’s call for the ‘decolonisation of the ‘mental sphere’’ needs to be heeded. According to Thiong’o African filmmakers do not have the luxury of escaping into the realms of fantasy. The use of the camera is important as it can be used to uplift the community or empower the authority. This is an important point as filmmaking in South Africa has a terrible past that was aimed at fulfilling Afrikaner Nationalist ideologies, at the expense of denigrating and desecrating the black communities in South Africa. In post-
apartheid South Africa filmmaking should be used as a means of uplifting the communities by re-creating images that ‘decolonise the mind’ and dismantles an apartheid mindset. An important prerequisite for the establishment of a flourishing South African cinema is for South African filmmakers (whether black or white) to decolonise the image by re-imaging identities and spaces that reflect post-apartheid society.
An important way to start decolonising the image is to start decolonising the representation of the black body. The physicality of the body is continuously being translated into race, gender, and class (Mogogodi, 2002:246). The camera’s gaze politicises the body and the very act of looking at another’s body is an act of entering into a political position. Mogogodi (2002) notes that the process of taking pictures is a selective process that involves the selection of the subject, camera angles, editing, labelling and selling the body. *The process of taking an image, results in the arresting, freezing, marking of the body, usually that of the ‘other’* (Mogogodi, 2002:247). The identity of the black body has been historically marked in a very specific way on celluloid. In post-apartheid South African cinema black identity and culture largely subscribes to the colonial images of blackness that are outdated. In an attempt to re-create blackness filmmakers are trapped in a vicious cycle of essentialising black identity and culture.

Thiong’o also draws attention to the use of African languages in African cinema. According to him African filmmakers have contributed positively in this regard as African cinema(s) make use of indigenous languages all the time. According to Thiong’o ‘the African character has been restored to his language’ (Thiong’o, 2000:95). In South Africa the use of indigenous South African languages in cinema attests to the power of the word in re-creating a South African film aesthetic. *Yesterday*, directed by Darryl Roodt, was acclaimed as the first indigenous language film from South Africa to be nominated for an Oscar. *Wooden Camera* and *Tsotsi* are shot in Tsotsi-Taal, a fusion South African language that draws strongly from township and gang cultures. Yet we must not forget that the process of simply using South African indigenous languages does not subvert stereotyped images of black identity and the ‘township space’. Although the African character is ‘restored to his language’ the image of African identity must be challenged as they reinscribe and essentialise Africanness. The image of Africa and Africans must be restored and re-imagined so that African films shatter the colonial mindset to create a new film language that is made by Africans for Africans.
Conclusions

In this report I argued that the construction of the ‘township space’ and its articulation of black identity in contemporary South African cinema points to the question of who can claim rights to representation. What are the implications of racialised Africanness for filmmaking in South Africa and is the right to represent the black body an ideological battle between the races? What are the implications for white and black filmmakers in South Africa who claim a common South Africanness? Has post-apartheid filmmaking evolved from a colonial gaze or is the image still refracted through a colonial eye? Wa Thiong’o (2000) suggests that there needs to be a decolonisation of the image in order for African cinema to realise its full potential. Wa Thiong’o argues strongly that African filmmakers need to think of whether they are creating images from an ‘insider’s’ position or from an ‘outsider’s’ position. This argument is strongly related to South African filmmaking as it raises the question: Who are our filmmakers constructing images for? What positions do they assume? And to what extent do post-apartheid films satisfy colonial Western imaginaries of Africa? Magogodi (2002) suggests very strongly that South African cinema needs to negate the colonial gaze and apartheid mindset. In my analysis of Wooden Camera and Tsotsi I have argued that the images constructed by filmmakers of the ‘township space’ and black identity are historically and politically outdated images that re-inscribe and re-articulate stereotypes of blackness that are rooted in the oppression and denigration of black identity. In my analysis of the films, I have suggested that South African filmmakers are creating images of blackness that feed a Western imaginary of Africa. Filmmakers are hesitant to take a stand and assert their position in relation to where they see themselves in the South African landscape. Films are often constructed from an ‘outsider’s’ point of view instead of from an ‘insider’s’. I have considered the implication of this earlier on in this chapter.
Fanon reminds us that colonialism was not satisfied with merely:

Holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it (Fanon, 1995: 154).

According to Fanon the fight for national culture, must happen at the level of the masses (the people), the efforts made by the people need to be recognised as it is through these actions that the people create itself and keeps itself in existence (Fanon, 1995: 155).

Fanon’s investigation is relevant to filmmaking in South Africa. According to him decolonisation and National Liberation must occur at the level of the masses and cannot be controlled by a few elite people at the apex of power. Cinematic representation is by far an elitist project whereby a small elite (black and white filmmakers) create images for the masses. An important question that this raises is how does one achieve the decolonisation of the image, knowing that because of the nature of cinema and television the masses cannot do this on their own? I believe that in this case the position a filmmaker assumes when casting his gaze at his subjects becomes an important issue. Filmmaking is by far an elitist project and the representational intentionality is located within the hands of a few filmmakers, and thus they need to be aligned with the interests of the masses. In the case of cinema filmmakers need to consider their audiences when creating images. In South Africa this is a sensitive issue as filmmakers are still trying to firstly create a South African aesthetic, and secondly develop a South African audience. Filmmakers need to firstly make and tell stories for a South African audience before trying to reach the rest of the world. Images made of South Africans (whether black, white, Indian or coloured) need to be interrogated so that filmmakers do not re-iterate images that essentialise identities. We need to be brave enough to stand up to the rest of world
and proudly restore our history through the decolonisation of our images first in the local arena, and then globally.

The manner in which the black body is cast on celluloid is an important point which is strongly linked to Wa Thiong’o premise on decolonising the image. According to Fanon the black person is overdetermined and ‘fixed’ because of the hypervisibility of his skin colour (Fanon, 1986). The black man experiences himself through the gaze of his other – the white man or the gaze of the elite (filmmaker) black man. The gaze of the white man or the elite black filmmaker is used to construct the black man’s ‘otherness’. This argument is especially valid to the manner in which South African cinema has been subjected to the gaze of white filmmakers or the colonising camera of white filmmakers during apartheid. However post-apartheid cinema does not appear to have shifted its focus significantly in relation to the construction of images of blackness. Historically this camera was used to construct the black man as being deviant, aggressive and sexually potent, relegating the black man to ‘otherness’. More importantly these images were hungrily consumed by Western audiences, feeding a Western imaginary of Africa as being wild, untamed, and full of uncivilised animals. I argue that there does not seem to be a significant shift in the construction of images of black identity in contemporary South African cinema. Filmmakers (whether white or black South African’s) continue to feed a Western imaginary of Africa that was constructed by those who set out on the mission to colonise the African continent.

In this report, through an analysis of the cinematic representation of the ‘township space’ (which I have referred to as the ‘Cinematic Township’) and the articulation of black identity within this space (referred to as ‘Township Masculinity’) in two post-apartheid South African films, Wooden Camera and Tsotsi, I have argued that cinematic representations of the township space are problematic as they reiterate stereotypes of the township that speaks to ‘othering’ from an outsider’s point of view. ‘Place-images’ of the ‘township space’ subscribe to ‘place-myths’ that clearly reinforces the otherness and ghettoisation of this space. Cinematically the township
is imagined like any other black ghetto in the world; occupied by the underclass, geographically peripheral to major cities, poverty stricken, dirty, decay and full of death. In this report I have argued that the articulation of black identity – especially black masculinity – within this space subscribes to stereotypes of blackness that reinforces the marginalisation of black identity and culture. Through an analysis of the films and through the interrogation of the theoretical framework I have also argued that the position South African filmmakers assume when casting his or her lens is important. I have suggested that in order to create a ‘new film language’ in post-apartheid South Africa filmmakers need to shift their ‘point-of-view’ so that their films challenge discourses of blackness that have been entrenched since the earliest days that contributed to the stereotyping of black identity. Filmmakers need to reimagine blackness by restoring the image of blackness to the African continent. I have also interrogated the issue of “Racialising Africanness” and its implications for filmmaking in post-apartheid South African filmmaking. I have concluded by evoking Thiong’o in relation to the decolonisation of the mind and I have argued strongly that the decolonisation of the image is an important prerequisite to the decolonization of the mind, especially for colonised and oppressed societies.