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Johannesburg - Living in the Fracture

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A research report submitted by the Wits School of Arts, Film and Television Department, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Film and Television.

Johannesburg 2015

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Masters of Arts in Film and Television in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, nor has it been prepared with the assistance of any other body or organisation or person outside of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Guy J. Ryninks

------ 15th ---------- day of ---------- July ---------- 2015

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Acknowledgement

Dedicated to…

Daniella Graham-Parker, thank you for all your love, support, belief, motivation, patience and help. Without you this was not possible at all.

Love you forever.

Many thanks to…

Lieza Louw for all your supervision, guidance, knowledge and overall positive attitude right up until the last day.

Thank You.

A special mention to…

My mother, thank you for your love, support, belief and motivation and help. I am truly grateful to have you as a mother and I am strong because of you.

Love Guy.

My father, thank you for all your love, support, belief, motivation and for making this opportunity available to me. Your ability to always see the light and work ethic has helped me immensely.

Love Guy.

Abstract

In our modern contemporary time period the vast and rapid expansion of globalisation is stronger than ever, resulting in the shifting of how identities are currently being formed. In Johannesburg there has been major shifts in the socio-political realities of our nation, coupled with globalisation there is a noticeable shift in way identities are formed in our present fractured environment. These shifts are important to acknowledge as South Africa is in the process of changing its image towards of an all encompassing equal state, and so It is imperative to study how these shifts are impacting on identity formation. There are multiple difficulties in a study such as this, initiating a study on a subject/s that is itself incomplete fails to produce finite answers or outcomes. Rather many varying results are produced and compiling this information proves challenging when attempting to comprehend these findings.

It is my aim to understand not only how identities are being formed within the rejuvenating city, but also how the rejuvenation of the city is impacting on the formation of identities. Because of the long-established fractured nature of Johannesburg there has been a fracturing of identities that continues even in the face of the changes that are occurring. However with the changes meant to curb these fractures I question if these fractures are in fact diminishing, remaining the same or is there actually a noticeable change occurring. Initially I consider the history of South Africa as this has evidently impacted on the city, my research is it then focused on Johannesburg, as this is the environment I live in and have formed my own identity in. I also investigate how through the use of auto-ethnography I am able to practice 'self-expression' staged upon my personal view of Johannesburg and the fractures I encounter. Because I use auto-ethnography as my autobiographical filming technique I have exclusive control over the film and this proved challenging as I was positioning myself in the film as a form of subjectivity. This created a problem in how I was intending to represent myself along with the fractured landscape of Johannesburg.

My outcome is a self-subjective representation of myself positioned into my environment represented as my personal view. I focus on the fractures I experience within my own environment the suburbs and that of the city, also the fracture between these two spaces and the continuing fracture in my own identity and relationship with the city. My research will allow for an avenue of self-representation on a very personal and idiosyncratic level as to encourage the city to be represented as it is experienced and perceived by its inhabitants. However my production can be seen as being specific to a similar case, that being of my own, but this practice allows for the use of auto-ethnography to represent our own individual perspectives and the subjectification of ourselves as inhabitants of the city from a personal perspective rather than a generalised and broad perspective.

1. Aim

The aim of this research paper is to explore how the fractured nature of Johannesburg has impacted how my identity has been formed through my experiences as a citizen. Having been born and raised in the city I have lived through the later stages of apartheid as well as the last 20 years of the new 'post apartheid' period, the change between these two periods have produced many ideological shifts on a social, economic and cultural level. However these shifts occur in an environment still scared by the fractions imposed upon its geography and society by its history, these scars have resulted in my experience of Johannesburg and my point of view to become fractured. Therefore I will investigate how what I perceive as the fractured nature of the city has impacted on my own experiences and ideological positioning. By developing this educated and researched understanding of how these fractures were established and currently contribute to my own fractured perspective, I am empowered to consider how I can create my own personalised representation of the fractured nature of the city in a short film. For my film I will combine experimental filming techniques such as time-lapse photography and the autobiographical technique of auto-ethnography that employs and artisanal mode of production that I believe will enable me to create an intimate and completely personal and reflexive perspective on my relationship with the city. By employing this intimate mode of production where I have exclusive control over the entire process of the film's creation, I am enabled to manipulate the film to become a form of self-expression and a representation of my personal vision of these fractures

I initiate my research by exploring and engaging with aspects of the historical context of South Africa to contextualise my research and to find evidence to support my experience of Johannesburg as a fractured city and the impact of its fractured-ness on my personal development, identity formation and my relationship with the city. I was born in Johannesburg in 1986 in the then exclusive northern white suburbs, my early years where ensconced in what was still apartheid South Africa and this is where my first encounter with the fractured nature of the city occurred. Considering that my initial experience of the fractured nature of Johannesburg occurred during the apartheid-period and has continued to remain fractured throughout the new post-

apartheid era, I have set out to strengthen my understanding on the formation and implications of these fractures that I perceive within Johannesburg. In doing so I will develop a more informed understanding of my relationship with the city and its fractures, by attaining a more in-depth grasp of how the fractures of Johannesburg were established and how the city has acquired its fractured persona that I am familiar with from my 28 plus years of living in the city I can consider how to represent these fractures from my own perspective.

Using my findings from the historical explorations and my own experiences growing up in Johannesburg, I explore how in identity formation the ‘Other’ is used to create an awareness of the ’Self’. Through understanding how my awareness of the ‘Other’ from within my own fractured environment has defined how my identity is formed, I also highlight the key elements of the auto-ethnographical filming techniques such as ‘personal vision’, ‘self-expression’ and the ‘performance of the self’, by exploring the autonomy produced from this production process and how my perspective is strengthened and my control and manipulation of the film can be applied correctly as to produce a true form of auto-ethnography.

2. Rationale

The purpose of this research is to answer important questions regarding how identity is formed in fractured environments such as Johannesburg, with the ideological shifts in its society and the rapid transition towards a globalised state of homogeneity currently taking place in the city. Due to the history of the fractures long established in the past of South Africa, the current social and political shifts in the new post-apartheid era as well as the globalisation of the city there has been a major shift in how identity is formed within Johannesburg. In my case I have begun to question how my identity was formed and how it has been impacted upon by these new contexts.

3. Review of theories and key concepts

In this section I review the theories that relate to my key concepts of the fractured nature of Johannesburg, I am establishing the relevant knowledge within these concepts and create understanding of the theories that I can take forward into my methodology and engage with in the making of my film. I am initiating my exploration of the fractured nature of Johannesburg by investigating the fractured nature of South Africa and that of the city, by exploring this history and engaging with its contexts I can understand how South Africa and Johannesburg in particular became fractured and why the fracture still exists. At this point I will investigate the history of representations regarding these fractures in South African history. I can engage with the formation of my identity within the fractured environments that will provide an understanding to the cause of my own fractured perspective, finally I will explore how auto-ethnography will enable me to represent my own perspective on the fractures within the city.

3.1 The fractured nature of South Africa

As my perspective is fractured and I set out to represent Johannesburg as an environment which epitomises ‘The Other”, I seek insight into how issues of ‘The Other’ have been represented in South African contexts so to understand the issues of representing this accurately. I begin by understanding how ‘The Other’ was represented during the British Colonial period [1814- 1910], and I also consider how the language dominance even after the British Colonial period has contributed to the representation of ‘The Other’ in literature and its reflections of South Africa in this subsequent period.

Representations of the South African landscape recorded at this time were by British artists and writers who worked from an Imperial perspective, and this Gaze proved to be a major issue as the interior landscape was resistant to being defined by Western formulations of aesthetics. The issue that the ‘Imperial Gaze’ had, was that it positioned the artists and writers as separate and superior to the South African

landscape. This proved frustrating according to J.M Coetzee as prominent artists such as William Burchell found themselves “in a terrain that does not readily lend itself to being picturesquely conceived” (1988, p.37). This resistance resulted in the landscape being reflected upon negatively, and Burchell (1811 cited in Coetzee, 1988, p.37) described the typography of South Africa as “a desolate, wild, and singular landscape.”

British writers describe the earth as “dead or sleeping or insentient” (1988, p.44). Another example of this negativity sees the ‘Veld’ being “condemned as unresponsive to language” (1988, p.165). Coetzee claims that writers such as William Wordsworth proposed in his remarks that “the South African plateau cannot be expected to strike travellers fresh from England as sublime” (1988, p.52). This defiance highlighted the position of the South African landscape as ‘The Other’. On the hand the landscape resisted being labelled according to European sensibilities were acknowledged by Burchell (1922 cited in Coetzee, 1988, p.38-39) who wrote that the South African landscape possessed “a species of beauty with which, possibly, they [the European artists] may not be sufficiently acquainted [with].” Therefore Coetzee claims that Burchell did believe that “this landscape possesses a certain ‘harmonious beauty’ deserving of study” (1988, p.41).

This practice of labelling the different as ‘The Other’ is common in representations about South Africa and is embedded in English literature. These writing took on a contrasted image of the landscape and its people according to De Kock. He mentions the narratives “strained to demonstrate the variance, the strangeness, and the curiosity of comically uncultivated people, wild animals, doomed heathens, illiberal Boers and greedy prospectors” (De Kock, 2004, p.3). However this practice was can be found in all the South African languages, and this is evident in how the literature is always exclusive of other languages as it was always generated for its “respective audiences” (2004, p.2). Because of the culture in South African literature to separate and create exclusivist parties there has been a constant practice of acknowledging ‘The Other’. It is this practice that along with the segregationist policies of segregation and apartheid that have created the process of individual

races and cultures forming their identity in contrast to one another by demarcating themselves separate and different to others.

The resulting factor in the origins of South African literature “shuttle between different languages, different nationalisms and different notions of cultures, history, and belonging in mutually excluding series and genealogies” (De Kock, 2004, p.1). According to De Kock this separated and individualised approach was “steeped in a cultural hybrid context” (2004, p.3) and this cultural hybridity resulted in a polyglot of South African literature viewed as a scene of perpetual tourism considered a “dreaded - or perhaps desired - cultural bastardisation” (2004, p.4). He believes “this for a great many international readers, is ‘South African literature’’. This exclusivity has resulted in the “setting apart that marks the South African subject as fractured” (2004, p.3). The fractured development of South African literature is evident in the diversity of literature studies in South Africa where English, Afrikaans and African Languages are separate courses. However this unity in diversity proved to be the defining characteristic of South African literature and has given it ‘uniqueness’.

Because of the segregated constituents in South African literature, there has been constant ‘cross-border’ contact due to the attempts at ‘closing the gap and to bring the incommensurate into alignment” (De Kock, 2004, p.11). This representational dimension is referred to by De Kock as ‘The Seam’ and is “the site of a joining together that also bears the mark of the suture” (2004, p.11). The ‘suture’ occurs from attempts to “renounce social and cultural conjunction” (2004, p.12), and is the site of convergence and difference. He argues that the “act of returning to the zone of the seam appears to be compulsive” (2004, p.12), and Coetzee (1988 cited in De Kock, 2004, p.12) sees the ‘suture’ as the “characteristic of what he calls ‘white writing’”. This constant return to ‘The Seam’ is resultant of a ‘desire’ to seek out the site of lost origins, in other words “a lost or never realised wholeness” (2004, p.12). Regardless of these attempts to converge conjunctions the divisions are so deep that Nadine Gordimer (1976 cited in De Kock, 2004, p.18) that “a ‘national’ literature [is] impossible”, and for J.M Coetzee (1983 cited in De Kock, 2004, p.18).a “great South African novel” unlikely.

During the 20th century South Africa was a site of excessive and pro-longed segregation, social divide, apartheid ideologies and struggle amongst multiple groups. The formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 concluded a struggle for independence by the Afrikaner State against the British Empire, this struggle climaxed during the South African War (Anglo-Boer War), which was fought between 1899-1902. Although the war was about political power, financial control and rights to sovereignty over South Africa, it was "superficially about identity" (Vale, 2003, p.30). The British Empire was enforcing "the ambition and durability of the British Imperial project in Africa" (2003, p.30), whereas the Afrikaners were staging their resistance to being controlled by the British due to the fear of loosing the right to rule themselves and their land. This was done at a period when indigenous (black) people had been deprived of a sense of sovereignty due to them being regarded "at best, as children, and at worst, as savages" (2003, p.27), and "they could therefore enjoy none of the rights" (2003, p.27) privileged to white people due to the perception that "they had no state" (2003, p.27). As a result, the "European/white power came to dispense their authority through a series of 'savage' codes which […] would develop into an array of brutal administrative systems" (2003, p.27). This created a government that for decades "reinforced the ritualised power of the insiders, and excluded the rights of outsiders" (2003, p. 27).

In South Africa this created a climate of segregation created by the then colonial government, however the people revolted against segregation in favour of equality for all people, a struggle which continued throughout the 20th century up until the last decade were there finally was a shift to an equal, democratic and unified national state. But to comprehend such a society I believe that you must understand its origins and how it has come to be the product of its past and present. During the period after the formation of the Union of South Africa the state thrived on a global scale, this was due to the practice of segregation against discriminated peoples, a common practice globally. Due to South Africa's rich resources global trading and investment boomed the economy and ensured the ruling government significant financial power. The capitalist system had emerged successfully from the First World

War where it proved its durability over communism, and went on to become successful and highly lucrative for its practitioners, South Africa being one. Vale quotes Andrews, et al., (2003) that the result of the

> [P]henomenal expansion of economic activity since the last war has made South Africa the most advance state in Africa. The vast wealth of her natural resources, developed with enterprise and initiative, has raised her living standards above those of any other African country and paced her among the industrialised nations of the world (2003, pp.30-31).

However this rise in living standards, wealth and economic expansion was not equally distributed to the citizens of the country due to the segregation policies and selective access to power practiced within the Union of South Africa. This further segregated the identities and people of South Africa and is still evident in many contemporary socio-political and economic environments. The policies of segregation included in governmental practice, coupled with racially determined conventions that became further imbedded in South African society as the newly elected 1948 government entrenched racial division in the ideological positioning of its people, and fractures were inevitably created within the environments of the city that are still present even in the 21st century. When the National Party was elected into government in 1948 “on a platform of “separate development” (Tomlinson, et al., 2003, p.6), the existing state of segregation experienced became more intensive due to

> the Party’s ruthless combination of discriminatory legislation, influx control […] and the creation of ethnically based “homeland” areas and racial based administrative zones, enshrined separate development in the total system, which became known as grand apartheid (Tomlinson, et al., 2003, p.6).

The laws that were passed forcibly keep various races apart and instilled a legal and social standard of segregation.

However by the 1960s the decolonisation process had started as predicted by British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan on a visit to the parliament of South Africa in 1960. He contended, “The wind of change is blowing through this continent. Whether we

like it or not this growth of national consciousness is a political fact" (Davenport, 1988, pp.391-392). Through out the colonies of the British Empire there was a conscious shift away from colonial ideologies towards that of independence and a shift to black rule. However this was not the intended action of the South African government as South Africa experienced three decades of heightened social fractures under apartheid rule, the resulting further segregation of its people through continued 'separated development' has contrasted identities along racial lines and fractured the environment of the entire country. The segregation of identities in South Africa during the apartheid period had begun to tear the country apart, by 1986 Johannesburg had reached its peak of tolerance towards this segregation and discrimination of races. 'The city's divisions had cracked wide open', (Tomlinson, et al., 2003, p.5) and these scars continue to be 'etched in the landscape of the city" (2003, p.6). This tolerance of the segregationist laws quickly faded because of it inequalities and how people's lives were being dictated simply by their 'race, class and space' (2003, p.5) and these fractures have therefore varied how people experienced the way in which Johannesburg became a "segregated landscape of the city" (2003, p.6). Therefore Johannesburg, as in most cities, towns and 'dorps' across South Africa there is a clear scar evident from these enforced areas where different races where confined to live. This segregation is still present and although changes in society and the shift of economic wealth has seen integration of mixed races into previously segregated societies, there is still a massive similarity to the past and it seems to be the predominant image of the future.

However Johannesburg in the present post-apartheid period is a site of newer identities being reshaped in a new era of quality emerging out of the former segregated society. This is not only creating new representations of Johannesburg, but possibly for the first time all representations and imagery produced of the city are included as equal representations and a truly accurate representation is now presented to a global imaginary. By trying to analyse the new post-apartheid period, a considerable amount of attention must be paid to the 'scars' left behind on the landscape of Johannesburg and to achieve this I will explore how the fractured nature of Johannesburg has manifested since its creation. It is within this exploration that I will find how these current fractures and scars shape my experiences of the city from both an included and excluded perspective.

3.2 The fractured nature of Johannesburg

> Over 230 years after the first white settlers arrived at the tip of Africa, gold was discovered on the high plains, nearly 1000 kilometers inland from Cape Town. The year was 1886. The discovery led to the founding of Johannesburg (Tomlinson, et al., 2003, p.3).

Ten years later Johannesburg had grown into the biggest city in South Afrcia and "by 1936 was recognized as the "largest and most populated European city in Africa" (Chipkin, 1993 cited in Tomlinson, et al., 2003, p.4). However Johannesburg as a landscape was inevitably going to become a fractured environment due to the political climate of South Africa in the 20th century, this therefore resulted in the rendering of a city split into fractured environments segregated by race, wealth and identity. Herwitz, (1999 cited in Murray, 2008, p.1), argues that

> Johannesburg is the by product of colonialism in the post-colonial period of unrelenting globalisation, and it still bears the enduring imprint of the apartheid spatial order at a time when its racially codified rules, regulations and restrictions no longer apply.

This I believe has resulted in the production of a cluster of fractured and segregated environments within the city.

After the first democratic elections in 1994 the country's socio-economic and political realities changed as the new government set out to alter the fractured state of Johannesburg's environments and severe it from "what was perceived to be the drag anchors of apartheid" (Beavon, 2004, p.237). According to Bremner (2000 cited in Murray, 2008, p.24), the new government is invested heavily in "reshaping the negative image and rejuvenating the neglected built form of the central city." This is evident as the city has received major redevelopment and restoration since the turn of the century specifically when the metropolitan council in 2002 outlined its vision and strategy for improving the city over the next 28 years. This however is a slow and scattered process, as only pockets of redevelopment and restoration have been seen within the city centre. According to Murray who sees Johannesburg begin to

“resemble what urban theorists have called the “dual city” (2008, p.28). By this Murray implies a city “whereby two equally dynamic sectors–the high-flying, information based formal economy and the downgraded, labour-based informal economy—coexist, intersect, and interact, albeit in highly uneven ways” (2008, pp.28-29). This ‘dual city’ status has however created another form of fracture within the Johannesburg, as residents have raised issues about citizenship and rights to the city. This fracture is between the haves and the have-not’s where

> affluent urban residents who have unencumbered access to all the city has to offer are able to enjoy the substantive benefits of full citizenship and those impoverished urban dwellers with their restricted access to the advantages of city living are left with the hollow rights of empty citizenship (2008, pp.4-5).

Therefore, according to Murray, “the regeneration of the Johannesburg inner city has not conformed to a single, all-encompassing master logic but instead are governed by the complex interaction of overlapping and intersecting processes” (2008, p.193). With the city having been established by segregation that has resulted in a fractured environment, special attention must be paid to how that this environment was represented as too understand how the perspective on the city has changed. Even though the city’s socio-economic and political realities have changed, and the new government has started to changes the city for the purpose of a better tomorrow, there is still a fracture, still a segregation and this will have a pass-on affect to how it is being represented in contemporary times.

3.3 Representations of Johannesburg’s fractured nature

Rutheiser (1999 cited in Murray, 2008, p.3), argues that

> [o]ver the past several decades, spatial restructuring of the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region has produced a sprawling, polycentric landscape consisting of a galaxy of rival ‘edge cities’ and rapidly urbanising cluster points arrayed around a historic urban core.

This undoubtedly creates an image of Johannesburg as fractured, the city is portrayed as a cluster of segregated environments separated and conflicted with one another. This fractured environment of internally segregated areas creates a number

of different perspectives on the city. This is a result of the position of individual perspectives around the city that results in varying and sometimes conflicting perceptions. This has led to the formation of contrasting images of Johannesburg, an noted by Baeten (2002 cited in Murray, 2008, p.2), as he believes that the image of the city is constantly “torn between the extremes of utopian dreamworld and dystopian nightmare”. This is evident when Baeten (2002 cited in Murray, 2008, p.2) describes the city as an “epitome of urban chic and cosmopolitan sophistication”, whereas Bremner (2005 cited in Murray, 2008, p.3), believes that Johannesburg is a “dystopian nightmare of overcrowding, traffic gridlock, pollution and metastasizing inner city slums.”

This contrasting image of Johannesburg has seen little change since the beginning of the post-apartheid period, even in the face of the rapidly modernising and redeveloping city, it is still defined by segregated environments and contrasting perspectives. Bremner (2004 cited in Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008, p.15), argues that “developments in the inner city depict that “far from being the ultimate zoned, controlled and compartmentalised city”, Johannesburg is now characterised by “messy intersections and overlapping realities.”” Because the city has seen a major improvement in its appearance and had a massive shift towards general positivity about its future, the city has had a major uplift in its imaginary on a local and global scale. The rapid globalisation of Johannesburg has also seen it become “the premier African metropolis, the symbol par excellence of the “African Modern” (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008, p.24). The globalisation allows Johannesburg to form an important part in studies of globalisation in African cities due to its chaotic blend of social heterogeneity, environmental appropriation that houses the constant overlapping of these elements. For this reason Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall state that “Johannesburg is a metropolis in every sense of the word” (2008, p.24). This however has had little change in the representation of Johannesburg as fractured as many more representations of the city now refer to the ‘dual city’ within the ‘new city’. Special mention of this is made by Mbembe and Nuttall as they proclaim that “there is no metropolis without a necropolis” (2008, p.21), by this they refer to the one image of the city as a thriving metropolis filled with positivity destined to have a bright future. The contrasting image is referred to as the ‘necropolis’, this refers to the

“space of suffering and alienation as well as of rehabilitation and insurrection” (2008, p.21).

Judging from these representations Johannesburg is pictured as a massively fractured environment that harbours varying or contrasting perspectives. This is however is a positive thing, the city no longer has the ability to “erase or conceal what they wished to eliminate” (Murray, 2008, p.2) from the public view. This has meant that all people of the city, regardless of their socio-economic status, race, religion or perspectives are regarded as part of the city’s image. This creation and acceptance of the all-inclusive perspective of Johannesburg is something that has set the ‘new-city’ apart from its older self, the less desirable and negative reflections of Johannesburg are now present, no longer hidden as was the case in apartheid where “these lower depths of the city […] were made to appear as strangers to the city, apart from the city.” (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008, p.22).

3.4 Johannesburg and my fractured perspective

To begin my investigation of how the fractured nature of Johannesburg has influenced my own fractured perspective, I first need to express knowledge of how the history of Johannesburg has led to my perspective of the city. By understanding how my position has been established I can then concentrate on how this positioning has influenced my point of view. I then consider how the practice of identity formation in relation to an environment has affected my perspective’s fracture. By developing an understanding this, I then ask the question of how I can represent this fracture in my own personalised representation.

Firstly my perspective of the city has been established from the outlying northern suburbs of Johannesburg, and because my environment is removed from the city centre, I am inclined to perceive that environment as different and separate from where I come from and of myself. My positioning resulted from the slow but steady migration of middle-class white families out of the city. This migration into the outer

lying suburban environments was a result of a rapid suburban development and opportunities brought about the economic privilege afforded to whites in South Africa at the time. This however resulted in a major dislocation in the relationship of the middle-class to the city, and although many people still worked and shopped in the city this level of interaction was diminishing. This change also occurred as a result of the “extension of shopping and business facilities into the suburbs” (Beavon, 2004, p.181). This was also a factor that saw the central business district (CBD) suffer a large office decentralisation as a large proportion of medium to large businesses and retail industries followed the middle class movement into the suburbs. This was the result of the shift in ”the centre of gravity of a considerable amount of spending power” (2004, p.181). This departure from the city of the white middle-class demographic separated them from the environment of the city, they no longer lived in the city and so had shifted their perspectives of Johannesburg to a position of ‘outside’ the city. This initiated the fracturing of the relationship between the middle class and the city.

The loss of the middle-class spending power within the city resulted in the city’s exorbitant maintenance budget being strained, general maintenance and upkeep diminished and soon resulted in the city falling into a state of disrepair. The city became inhabited by the lower class unemployed or under-employed, and their lack of funding and the diminishment of upkeep resulted in the city becoming out-dated. The city had become what seemed like a haven for petty crime and towards the end of apartheid the city had become a hostile environment. Murray notes that this downturn in the city’s image resulted in the middle-class looking at the city “with a great deal of trepidation and anxiety” (2008, p.1). As the middle-class’s new environments away from the city became further contrasted and their relationship became further strained. This had a knock-on affect on my perception of the city, as I experienced the space as no longer a site of attraction nor inviting of people from ‘outside’ its own environment.

This however has since changed during the post-apartheid period, as the regeneration of Johannesburg has seen the developing ‘new city’ welcome all people

into its environment. Even if the landscape may still be fractured, the new ‘desire’ in Johannesburg to rejuvenate itself has re-established and improved its appeal. With the new or redeveloped entertainment, shopping and business facilities the city has become attractive to me once again. As Johannesburg has begun its redevelopment into a ‘new city’ it has regained some of its former prestige. The city is attempting to achieve a new level of acclaim and this process that is proving successful as seen through its representations that are largely positive. Although we still see negative elements within the city there is a common positivity about the ‘new city’ and what it will become in the future. The change in the imaginary and general perspective of the city towards more and more positivity has seen Johannesburg enter the discourse of global modernity specifically regarding the ‘African Modern’ (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008, p.1).

Johannesburg as a ”global city“ (2008, p.3) sees its ‘worldliness’ within Africa by dubbing itself as a ‘World-Class African City’. This belief in the city’s globalised and leading status in Africa is testament to the confidence the city has gained due to its shift in the imaginary of itself. Even though my perspective has changed to a more positive and all round appreciation of the city, I still have a fractured relationship with it. My perspective of the city is still from the ‘outside’, its environment is not my environment and although it is an attractive place it is not ‘my place’. To unpack this further I will express how the process of identity formation within a ‘still’ fractured environment has resulted in my newly positive but ‘still’ fractured perspective.

To understand how my identity has formed within Johannesburg’s cluster of fractured environments, there requires knowledge of how identity is formed based on the politics of location. Identity is established through the realisation of ‘The Self’, the perspective and environment that this realisation takes place in is instrumental to its formation. The perspective I have established from my status as a white English speaking male postgraduate student from a middle-class family living in the outlying northern suburbs of Johannesburg, has many issues regarding the politics of location and depicts how I have established my perspective from my position. Firstly my ‘cultural identity’ establishes my perspective by the practice of “self hiding inside

many other, more superficial or artificially imposed “selves” which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common” (Hall, 1996, p.4). This practice uses

> the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (1996, p.4).

According to Hall this practice begins during the earliest of developmental periods in a person’s life, however this continues and shifts as a person may change environments or the realities of their environment change. By becoming rather than being, constitutes that a mirroring process establishes identity, this mirroring however creates an awareness of ‘The Self’ that is then compared against that of ‘The Other’. Therefore identities mirror the “positions which the subject is obliged to take up while always ‘knowing’ that they are representations, that representation is always constructed across a ‘lack’, across a division, from the place of the Other” (1996, p.6). Therefore an identity’s “relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks” (1996, p.4) allows an identity to be constructed against the image of ‘The Other’. For me, the suburban environment represents a space of familiarity, and the post 1994 Johannesburg inner city represents a space of unfamiliarity, and as a result, my association with these two environments has become contrasted. My relationship with the suburban environment has played an integral role in the development of my identity. I have come to understand and represent myself as a white middle class South African based within this environment. Hence my association with the inner city has come to signify what I am not and has become ‘the mirror’ in opposition to what I experience as familiar. The inner city has consequently become ‘Other’ for me, a contrast to the suburban environment where I have grown up in. This has resulted in my perspectives and experiences of these environments being fractured.

It is also important to stress that identity is never complete or finalised, it is “constantly in the process of change and transformation” (1996, p.4). This is part of the practice of identification of, or the identifying with ‘The Self’, which is a process that is “never completed – always ‘in process’” (1996, p.2). This constant shift can

allow me to understand how my perspective of the city has shifted during the post-apartheid period. Because identities “are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured” (1996, p.4), there has been a considerable shift in not only my identity, but that of most people living in Johannesburg. Therefore the influence of my perspective is heavily dependant on where and how I came to form my identity, and by shifting the ‘mirror’ or the image, this is framed by the identification of ‘The Other’ and will shift as a result of changing perspectives and perceptions. However my perspective of the city has shifted but yet remains fractured, this is because the city is still represents ‘The Other’ in the continuous development of my identity. However I feel that the fracture in my perspective may have diminished. Another reason according to Hall is that all the “historically specific developments and practices that have disturbed the relatively ‘settled’ character of many populations and cultures, above all in relation to the process of globalisation” (1996, p.4) established a practice of fracturing ‘The Self’ and ‘The Other’.

3.5 The representation of my fractured perspective

I express my fractured perspective through a combination of experimental filming techniques and an autobiographical category known as auto-ethnographical filmmaking. According to Ellis and Bochner (Alsop, 2002)

> Autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of the personal experience; then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretations.

Therefore practicing auto-ethnography requires the researcher/filmmaker to shift his or her “notion of center and periphery and coping with the complexity of multiple centers with multiple peripheries” (Alsop, 2002), which asks for a far more subjective approach to ethnographical interrogations. It is this auto-ethnographical approach that I discuss in ‘more’ detail in my methodology section.

Auto-ethnography enables for ‘self-expression’ by becoming a creative representation of the director’s perspective. This is achieved in the autonomy and authorship of the film and is often a product due to its experimental production process. However for this representation of my perspective to be most accurate, it is important to understand the formation of my identity and the relationship with the environments that formed my perspective. According to Hall the process of gaining a semblance of my own existence and identity is attained by practicing the ‘production of the self’ where I position myself “as an object in the world” (1996, p.13). Therefore I begin by explaining how my identity has been established through the practise of the ‘production of self’, by establishing ‘The Self’ against that of ‘The Other’ I can then consider the affects of the fractured environment that I have formed my identity within. To do so I can consider how the representation of ‘The Other’ has been manifested within South African terms and contexts, as well as the effect this representation has had on South Africa’s representation of itself on a global scale. Considering all these elements and outcomes I then continued to explore how I can combine my findings into my filming process and by using auto-ethnography I can best represent my perspective on the fractured nature of Johannesburg by allowing myself to create an intimate and subjective representation.

The practice within identity formation known as the ‘production of the self’ is set against the ‘politics of location’, by this I refer to the practice of positioning or placing ‘The Self’ as an object in the world. This practice produces a “self-constitution, recognition and reflection” (Hall, 1996, p.13), of “The Self’, and is recognised “as a kind of performativity” (1996, p.13). This practice is similar to the formats of documentary known as first-person documentary and autobiographical nonfiction. According to Rascaroli this is where the “director comes to the fore and places himself or herself at the centre of attention as to foreground their life, experiences or body” (Rascaroli, 2009, p.107). The similarity of ‘the production of the self’ and the foregrounding of the director is that the identity and ‘presence of the director’ becomes placed into the world or film as a method of recognising themselves and making their perspectives aware to others.

This foregrounding of the director coupled with ”their expression of authorial subjectivity position them in between three traditions: that of personal cinema of the avant-gardes; that of auteur and art cinema; and that of the first person documentary.” (2009, p.106) According to Rascaroli “the first-person documentary, in fact, is often linked to ethnographic nonfictional practices” (2009, p.107). Rascaroli uses Russell to explain that the ethnographic mode of self-representation is often found in a new autobiographical approach in documentary filmmaking and argues that in this kind of subjective voice approach explores, not only the circumstances of the filmmaker but includes social and historical realities which implicate these films as ethnographic. Russell (1999 cited in Rascaroli, 2009, p.108) argues that

> [A]utobiography becomes ethnographic at the point where the film- or video- maker understands of his or her personal history to be implicated in larger social formations and historical process. Identity is no longer a transcendental or essential self that is revealed, but a ‘staging of subjectivity’ – a representation of the self as a performance.

Therefore I need to adopt a format that will allow me to represent how my perspective has been fractured and moulded by my research approach as set out in this paper.

Foucault describes the ‘practice of the self’ as the ‘aesthetics of existence’, “a deliberate stylisation of daily life and its technologies are most effectively demonstrated in the practices of self-production” (1996, p.13). With this in mind I must consider how auto-ethnography provides a level of autonomy and authorship that is achieved through its intimate production processes. This approach also requires an understanding of how the practice of ‘self-production’ can occur in the construction of the film’s subjectivity. Cook argues “the high degree of artistic autonomy which this mode of production offers to the film-makers leads to an emphasis on ‘self-expression” (1981, p.273). She explains that the auteur theory of

> ’self-expression’ implies that the films were seen as the manifestation of unique personal genius, the primary creative source of the work, replacing the world-view of a dominant class by an equally homogenous personal world-view (1981, p.273).

Therefore auto-ethnography can enable the ‘aesthetics of existence’ to be practiced within its production process, and a representation of a ‘stylised self’ can ultimately be created. Cook also notes that avant-garde filming techniques such as auto-ethnography allow “the filmmaker, like a craft worker” (1981, p.272) to be in control of all aspects of the production process. This mode of production is what I practice as I am the sole contributor to my film.

I have relied only on myself for the concept, filming and editing therefore I consider myself as the author of my film as it is my ‘penmanship’ that is presented. Therefore as the author/director I am attempting “to produce a personal, private idiosyncratic vision of the world” (Rascaroli, 2009, p.108). I create a personal and individualistic representation of my fractured perspective on the fractured environments of Johannesburg. Donald (1996) writes that his environment, the city, “provides an imagery for the way we represent ourselves as actors in the theatre of the world” (1996, p.171). By considering the ‘aesthetics of existence’ while practicing the ‘production of the self’ in my film I regard the environment of Johannesburg as the theatre upon which I can present my fractured perspective to a global audience.

4 Methodology

In this section I will explore how the use of auto-ethnography has affected my mode of practice, followed by an analysis of how the key concepts and theories raised and discussed in the pervious section have been applied to my mode of practice. Firstly I will explain how my use of the auto-ethnographic technique has enabled me to attain an authorial subjectivity in the film. Because I not only practice an artisanal mode of production where I have complete and entire control over the film, but I also stage myself subjectively within the film. I will use my perspectives on the fractured environments of Johannesburg to stage my 'self-expression' upon as a 'performance of the self'. I will also consider the 'stage' as something I can create through my production process that will impact on my foregrounding and self-representation within the film. Secondly I will explore how the 'production of myself' forms an integral part of my 'self-expression'. By exploring my process of separating 'The Self' and 'The Other' by placing myself as an object in the world impacted by the politics of location, I am able establish an understanding of how my perspective is fractured by my environment's social and historical discourses. As I begin to consider how to represent these fractures, I will simultaneously explore why identity is increasingly becoming more fractured as this is how I intend to represent myself as an identity that is constantly shifting. This has ultimately allowed me to then express how my chosen form of representation that will be aided by the inclusion of a self-reflexive tool such as a mirror, I will use this to mimic the 'production of the self' described by both Lacan and Foucault and to represent the constant shift in my identity.

4.1 Auto-Ethnography

The practice of auto-ethnography presents the filmmaker with an opportunity to convey a strong sense of 'self-expression', through the artisanal mode of production where the filmmaker is the sole creator of the film thereby representing a 'personal view'. Because of my own small-scale production process resulting in an intimacy derived from my exclusive involvement, I have intentionally produced my own 'self-expression' within my film. Cook (1981) notes that because "the high degree of artistic autonomy which this mode of production offers to the film-makers leads to an

emphasis on ‘self-expression” (1981, p.273). Russell (1999 cited in Rascaroli, 2009, p.108) argues “autobiography becomes ethnographic at the point where the film- or video- maker understands of his or her personal history to be implicated in larger social formations and historical process.” Therefore my research into the larger social formations and historical processes which has resulted in the fractured environments that I represent in my film to become subjective as a form of my own personal vision. As my intention was to create a personal representation of my perspectives on the fractured nature of Johannesburg’s environments, I had to consider how the foregrounding of myself in my film gives me an immediate subjectivity that will be impacted by the social and historical discourses raised in my research based on Johannesburg and my representation of it.

Russell (1999 cited in Rascaroli, 2009, p.108) argues that the identity presented when the filmmaker is foregrounded in the film is no longer an ‘essential self’ but rather a “‘staging of the self’ – a representation of the self as a performance.” My presence in the film therefore allows for my identity to be that of a ‘staged self’ that is a subjective representation of myself. Since I regard the city’s environments and myself as equally key subjects, my self-expression is not only in the representation of myself but also in the representation of my perspectives of my environment that forms my personal vision. Therefore my personal vision that I represent on the fractures within Johannesburg’s environment becomes the stage upon which I can perform a representation of myself. Donald (1996) writes about a similar experience when he explains how his environment (the city) provided imagery for the way we represent ourselves as actor in the theatre of the world (1996, p.171). I strive towards producing a personal vision of my world, as to develop the correct imagery to create my personal vision.

To enable capturing and representing the fractures I perceive in my environment through a personal vision, I rely my research to fully understand how my perspectives are impacted by previous and current socio-historical discourses. This is the point where I start to consider my film as ethnographic, and I am aware of the impact of social and historical discourses regarding the representation of my

personal vision and along with myself being subjective so is my vision. Therefore my total and complete control over how I represent my personal vision has produced a strong presence of ‘self-expression’. And through practicing a combination of these modes of expression and producing subjective representations I attain an even stronger sense of authorial subjectivity.

4.2 Dealing with “The Self’

Having established how I am to use auto-ethnography to express my personal vision and perform a ‘self-expression’, I question how the ‘staging of the self’ as a performance gave me a further point of reflection in my production process. As I intended the performance of my ‘staged’ self to represent my identity and relationship with Johannesburg, I draw on my research as to understand how my current identity has been formed as well as how my representation of my identity could enhance my ‘self-expression’. As I argued earlier in my research Hall discusses how identity is formed through the ‘production of the self’, this is a practice where identity is formed when ‘The Self’ is separated from that of ‘The Other’. The ‘production of the self’ in my film is contained by my personal vision of Johannesburg, this is because I am establishing a fracture of separation between myself, ‘The Self’, my environment, and ‘The Other’. Therefore when my identity is positioned “as an object in the world” (Hall, 1996, p.13) and is impacted by the ‘politics of location’. Hall recognises this process “as a kind of performativity” (1996, p.13), the performativity of the ‘production of the self’ and performance of the ‘staging of the self’ allow for an enhanced ‘self-expression’ as my identity can display its processes of “self-constitution, recognition and reflection” (1996, p.13).

This ability to express the ‘self-constitution’ of my identity pressed me to question how my personal identity has been fractured, as well as how I will represent these fractures. Revisiting Hall who writes that identities “are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured” (1996, p.4), this statement speaks true to my identity and environment because of the major social and political changes witnessed in Johannesburg and South Africa over the last 25 years. Hall

refers to changes such as these that are “historically specific developments and practices that have disturbed the relatively ‘settled’ character of many populations and cultures (1996, p.4). Accompanied with the existing fractures of South Africa’s fractured history from apartheid and before, identities as in my personal case have been and are currently in transition towards a newer identity impacted by both historical fractures and newer fractures stemming from the socio-political developments of the post-apartheid period. Therefore as Hall argues

> the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (Hall, 1996, p.4).

Therefore my identity is in the process of engaging with these fractures, both new and old, as a process of becoming rather than just being. It is this process that I perform as my ‘staged’ or ‘performed’ self.

How I represent this transition and the interactions with my fractured environment become a task for contemplation, I want to show this interaction through the actions of my daily life interacting with these environments naturally. Foucault quoted in Hall, describes how the ‘aesthetics of existence’ are achieved in the ‘practice of the self’, and by this he means “a deliberate stylization of daily life and its technologies are most effectively demonstrated in the practices of self-production” (1996, p.13). As a result I intend for interactions with the fractured environment to be similar to my normal interactions as to best represent the manner in which my identity formation is impacted. Hall also discusses how Lacan’s ‘mirror phase’ becomes the point where the ‘production of the self’ initially occurs. He interprets this theory as when an

> [I]nfant who is not yet coordinated, and possesses no self image as a 'whole' person, sees or 'imagines' itself reflected - either literally in the mirror, or figuratively, in the "mirror' of the other's look - as a 'whole person' (Hall, 1992, p. 281).

I believe that this practice is continuous process through out our lives, we are constantly reflecting on our appearance as we adapt our self-image to represent our identity. Therefore because I am representing my fractured environment, my staged

‘production of the self’, as well as how this is affected by past and present historical and social discourses. I opt to use the mirror as a point of constant reflection in my film, this is because I can include multiple topics including myself at the same time by showing multiple reflections in the same mirror. This allows me to present a literal but ‘staged’ representation of myself, my production process, my ‘self-expression’ of the fractures within my identity formation and my personal vision all whilst conducting an interrogation of the ‘practice of the self’.

4.3 Dealing with ‘The Other’ – Johannesburg

Johannesburg’s city centre has always represented an environment that is not mine, however interesting and attractive it may be I have yet to find a position in the city that I feel is an environment to which I belong. Because of the fracturing history of South Africa and the decades of separate development witnessed throughout its history, a cultural separation resulted between the white middle-class and the city. I believe that to represent this separation or fracturing is key to my representation of the city as ‘The Other’, and for my ‘personal vision’ to be realised I must concentrate on how I perceive this fracture and I can best capture and represent it. My film has been shot in a sequence of time and follows the order of my daily routine, therefore I will discuss my representation of Johannesburg in the same sequence as my film.

I begin my film in my suburban environment where I grew up and formed my identity from this positioning within the greater Johannesburg area. I represent this environment as I perceive it on a daily basis, and I focus on the quietness of this environment and unremarkable-ness of life in an already established environment were change is slow and if not consciously noted the changes become invisible. However this is still my ‘home’ and is the area to which I best associate, therefore I am focusing my representation on the frustrations of this environment through its repetitiveness and its secluded state. As for the city I represent it initially as the object of my attraction. However I represent this attraction with anxiety and trepidation that is a common emotion many outsiders still have with this environment. I highlight my journey in and around the suburbs to the point where I notice the city

from a distance and although its seems to be my destination I hastily return to the suburban environment of my own. This is a sign of my resistance to engaging with the city as I have to cross a fracture that has fractured my relationship and perspective of the city.

Upon my arrival in the city I immediately highlight the contrast of the city's chaotic and bustling streets and cyclical movements of its commuters. During this period I express my voyeuristic perspective and the movements of the city, along with this merely observational approach I focus my representation of how I struggle to find a place of comfort and belonging. This practice focuses on my position as an outsider and for the purpose of representing my personal view I highlight the city relentless, non-stop characteristics, this continuous movement gradually escalates, leaving me with anxiety and a discomfort at not being able to position myself comfortably within the city's activities. As I cannot find comfort in the city I move about in the hope of becoming an insider, however, I do not find solace here. The intensity of my awkwardness increases and this is reflected by the escalation of my experience as represented in the film. Even as night falls, my discomfort is intensified and I no longer find landmarks from where I can contemplate my position. I am now solely superimposed on the landscape, no longer exploring possible openings into being an insider in the city. This is when I experience being forcibly removed from Johannesburg and I once again seek an environment that is more accommodating and accepting of me, and where I belong as an insider. I bring remnants of the city's impregnability back with me, I carry the residue of my outsider-ness and although this is reflected by my image in the mirror, the anxiety ebbs away and leaves me enclosed in a safe space. Yet I remain fractured in this fractured city despite my desire for integration into the city that made and moulded me. Therefore my perspective on Johannesburg is similar to that of Bremner 's

> Johannesburg is an extremely difficult city to live in, but an addictive city to work on. It never reveals itself all at once. In fact it is reluctant to reveal itself at all. One suspects there must be more to it, more than the shimmering mirage and ceaseless activity, this aggressive web of highways, suburbs and shopping malls, this dross, floating on layers of mined-out conglomerate, being endlessly abandoned, reclaimed, recycled and reused. It is this sense of being 'more' – not as essence, secret or

underlying logic but rather as excess – that make this city so compelling. One can never know enough to claim to know it. It refuses to submit to a reductive logic. It spawns multiple centres, sends one in divergent directions, weaves multiple paths and reveals itself in its impurities. It insists that to know anything about it requires coming back, again and again. (Bremner, 2010, p.1)

6. Conclusion

My film is an auto-ethnographic representation of Johannesburg, the fractured nature of its environments, my relationship with these environment and a ‘self-expression' of how my identity is formed within these environment. My research has enabled me to fully understand how and why the city came to be fractured and as well as how in more recent times as many role players have tried to remedy these fractures. It is this change along with globalisation that is impacting on how my identity in particular has been affected. As the city strives to reinvent itself so shifts the formation of my identity. From being an outsider in the city my whole life I am consciously engaging with the fractures I perceive as to investigate weather my identity and relationship is changing. I believe through my research and mode of practice I have discovered contexts and outcomes regarding these fractures and I am confident that I have engaged with the research and applied it to my film as to best represent the ‘staged’ performance of myself.

The performance of myself was the most difficult of the tasks I had, I represented my identity and my perspectives on the city in the best way I could by using both my research as a point of reference and through the use of auto-ethnography. Representing my identity and understanding how it is formed, and could possibly change in the future proved to be a complex but rewarding challenge. I not only compile my ‘personal vision’ and my ‘self-expression’ but I have explored how these perceived realities work with and against one another. The relationship between the two is not easy to understand, and before I began this project I had little or no understanding of this correlation. However now that I have completed this project I feel confident in my understanding of this relationship and believe I have produced a strong representation of its contexts and implications. It is my hope that although this film is personal, many people who have shared a similar perspective can learn from my research and practice as to question their own relationships with Johannesburg and possibly assist them in producing or creating their own representations as to properly gauge how these contexts are affecting its inhabitants on a broader and more generalised spectrum.

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