HAIR POLITICS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE AESTHETICS OF BLACK FEMALE HAIR IN THE WORK OF SELECT AFRICAN ARTISTS

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation submitted for the degree Magister Technologiae: Fine Art at the Tshwane University of Technology is my own independent work. Additionally I declare that all information included in this dissertation is my original work and that it has not previously been submitted by me or anyone else to any other institution in order to obtain a degree. I further declare my understanding of plagiarism and awareness of the plagiarism policy of Tshwane University of Technology in this regard. As such, all sources cited or quoted in the dissertation are indicated and acknowledged by means of a comprehensive list of references according to the University's ethical requirements and disavow unlawful copies of the work presented in my dissertation.

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Tshegofatso Seoka Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to

- The memory of my late father Lawrence Seoka who taught me how to read, write and always encouraged great academic pursuits.

- My family; my mother Sarah Seoka who supported me in all aspects of my life, brother Letlhogonolo Seoka, and my son Leonardo Seoka in hopes that the dissertation serves as an inspiration to you.

- My friends; Rhulani Mapengo, Keabetswe Motau and Lydia Mphatja in hopes that this dissertation will also serve as an inspiration for you too.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation is to discuss artistic renditions pertinent to hair and hairstyles of black women of African descent. The dissertation references and discusses artworks by selected South African, American and Zimbabwean artists, namely Gavin Jantjes, Tracey Rose, Zanele Muholi, Lorna Simpson, Stephen Hobbs and Marcus Neustetter as well as Nontsikelelo Mutiti, as they challenge ideas calcified through visual culture in order to counter the negative narratives associated with blackness and black hair.

This is achieved by the use of qualitative content analysis of the selected artworks regarding the issues of representation relating to the hair and hairstyling of black women of African descent. The research applies a postcolonial framework and the literature of Frantz Fanon, Homi K Bhabha, Pierre Bourdieu, Kobena Mercer, and Stuart Hall amongst others are employed to further explore notions of slavery, colonialism, apartheid, mimicry, globalisation and hybridity. The selected artworks are critically analysed in terms of these concepts.

Keywords: Black hairstyling, othering, mimicry, globalisation, hybridity

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

Hair has and continues to play an important role in the development of social theories about the body within various cultures in the world. Legal attorney Deborah Pergament (1999:51) notes hair as a “signifier of human identity and individuality", while social science scholars Tabora Johnson and Teiahsha Bankhead (2013:87) see hair as a marker of cultural indications as well as a method of self-expression.

The chosen hairstyle of a person can communicate a lifestyle, religious views, political persuasions and, in some cultures, socioeconomic status. While hair plays an important role in various cultures and races, it is often exceedingly important for people of African descent, due to its unique nature, texture and history (Johnson & Bankhead, 2013:87). Hairstyles in African cultures have historically differed according to the spatial region, as well as a cultural clan, and have included elaborate sculptural coiffures, headdresses and partly shaved heads, all embedded with particular meanings and social significance. The hairstyles of ancient traditional African communities have varied greatly, and could have diverse significance, indicating age, ethnic identity, religion, rank in the community, socioeconomic status, marital status, birth of a new baby, rites of passage (initiation), or death (Sieber & Herrerman, 2000:56). While there is a great deal of diversity and cultural specificity, the hair choices of African men and women can generally be seen as an integral part of African culture. In the twenty-first century black hairstyles are seen in some circles as a performance of identity, and some hairstyles are a means of adorning the head, and a means of negotiating identity in a post-colonial society.

Chapter One introduces the background and context of the study, highlighting the research problem, question, aims and sub-aims of the dissertation. The chapter further demonstrates the relevance of the topic of the representation of black women of African descent and their chosen hairstyles and how this relevance integrates into the larger theoretical field of visual studies. Subsequently a rationale will be provided for the research of which the grounding focus is in cultural studies and postcolonial theory, which is used as a theoretical framework. Thirdly a literature review that engages with postcolonial studies regarding race politics, black hair and hairstyling choices and practices is conducted. An overview of the methodology employed in the study will follow, stating the exploratory method as the employed method as it benefits the dissertation and compliments the main focus of the research. The chapter moreover discusses the ethical considerations, overview of chapters as well as the limitations of the study as a means of providing a detailed introduction to the dissertation.

1.1 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Focusing on the politics of the representation of the hair and hairstyling, race representation of black African and African American women, the findings of the study will add to the body of knowledge of race representation and the subversive counter re-contextualisation of black women and their hair by contemporary artists.

In addition, the dissertation will also add to the body of knowledge of black hair practices and choices of black African and African American women, providing a visual reference of some of the old (1925 -968) and contemporary (1974 -2016) hairstyle choices of black women in Central and Southern Africa and in America. The dissertation will further add to the body of work and discussion of contemporary

artworks emanating, inspired or in conversation with the chosen hairstyles of black women at the fore mentioned periods.

The included imagery and theory can be used in future as a basis for understanding race representation politics as well used as a benchmark for hair debates in South Africa and also in understanding certain themes and concepts inherent in the art of selected contemporary artists. The study examines the various imagery and signifiers used to represent blackness and interchangeably black African(ness), focusing mainly on black hair as a signifier of identity and the hairstyles of black women of African descent.

A selection of thirty five artworks by nine artists created between 1925 and 2016 is observed and analysed in order to provide a visual framework for understanding the representation and re-contextualisation of the black woman image and her hair/ hairstyle choice.

In addition, the study will also refer to specific postcolonial literature from poet, author and politician Aimè Cèsaire (1935-2003), psychiatrist and political philosopher Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), scholar and critical theorist Homi K Bhabha (1949), sociologist, anthropologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu (1930- 2002), art historian and writer Kobena Mercer (1960), as well as cultural theorist, Stuart Hall (1932-2014), in order to provide a theoretical framework for the deliberations included in the study.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM, QUESTION, AIMS AND SUB AIMS

1.2.1 Research problem

This exploratory study employs qualitative content and visual analysis to examine the politics inherent in the visual representation and contemporary artistic approaches to the imaging of black women's hairstyles by select artists.

The study observes the negative framing of blackness and black features such as hair. The research problem lies within the creation, proliferation and perpetuation of a specific identity of black women of African descent expressed through their chosen hairstyle as well as the focus on the visual negotiation and representation of blackness and black hairstyles through the artworks of selected artists.

The dissertation employs a critical visual analysis of the photographs of Central African people by Casimir Zagourski (1883-1941), photographs found in Roy Sieber and Frank Herreman's book, *Hair in African Art and Culture* (2000), as well as photographs found in Bernard Shapero's book, *Tribal Portraits: Vintage and Contemporary photographs of the African Continent* (2008). Furthermore the dissertation will also analyse the artworks of South African artists; Gavin Jantjes (born 1948), Tracey Rose (born 1974), Zanele Muholi (born 1972), Stephen Hobbs (born 1972) and Marcus Neustetter (born 1976), African American photographer and multimedia artist Lorna Simpson (born 1960), as well as Zimbabwean born, American Artist Nontsikelelo Mutiti (born 1982). This exploratory study discusses the visual and textual themes and features inherent in the representation of black women and their chosen hairstyles within the artworks of the selected artists.

European colonialism and apartheid in South Africa is known for the devaluation of black aesthetics and physical features. Against this backdrop and drawing on cultural studies, the study examines the beauty ideals found in the current hairstyles of black women in South Africa as portrayed in the visual arts. Employing Kobena Mercer's *Black Hairstyle Politics* (1987), the study further critiques certain notions found in current scholarly work which state that the chosen hairstyles of black South African women, and in some instances American women, is a form of mimicry. The study interprets the artistic productions used to construct and represent black African women and their hair.

Thirdly, this study tries to investigate how the black African women living in South Africa perform their identity as individuals living in a globalised and hybrid space. The study therefore examines the impact of colonialism and apartheid as well the negative framing of blackness and black hair on black African women living in South Africa.

The question that this study seeks to answer is:

I) How have the selected contemporary artists namely Gavin Jantjes, Tracey Rose, Zanele Muholi, Lorna Simpson, Stephen Hobbs, Marcus Neustetter, and Nontsikelelo Mutiti highlighted and re-contextualised the representation of black women and their hairstyles within their various artistic approaches.

1.2.2 Research aims

As aligned to the research problem and question the aims of the study are as follows:

I) To critically analyse selected contemporary artworks representing the hairstyles of black women.

II) To provide context for this discussion, by referring to the impact of slavery, colonialism and apartheid on the hairstyling practices of black women.

III) To contextualise the portrayal of black women's hair in the artworks in relation to the concepts of modernity, globalisation and hybridity.

1.2.3 Research objectives

As per the abovementioned aims, the objectives of the study are as follows:

I) To observe black women's hairstyle choices and practices in the early twentieth century through the photography of Casimir Zagourski, photography found in the books of Roy Sieber and Frank Herreman, as well as Bernard Shapero. This provides context for the other chapters.

II) To observe the visual negotiation of identity and the re-representation of blackness, black women and their chosen hairstyles by select South African, African American and Zimbabwean born artists, namely Gavin Jantjes, Tracey Rose, Zanele Muholi, Lorna Simpson.

III) To apply postcolonial theory through the literature of Frantz Fanon, Homi K Bhabha and Kobena Mercer and link pre-colonial/ colonial hairstyling choices and practices with contemporary hairstyle choices and practices and argue that contemporary artificial hairstyling processes are not simply a mimicry of European beauty ideals, but rather, a continuation of pre-colonial grooming practices. This serves as background for the following chapter.

IV) To apply the postcolonial theory of Frantz Fanon, Homi K Bhabha, Kobena Mercer, and Stuart Hall toward an understanding of the current hairstyle choices of black women as instances of modernity, globalisation and hybridity,

and examine this notion in the artworks of Stephen Hobbs and Marcus Neustetter as well as Nontsikelelo Mutiti.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION OF SELECTION OF IMAGERY AND ARTISTS

The first section of the study will observe and discuss colonial photography from Casmir Zagourski, imagery from Roy Sieber and Frank Herreman (2000), and Bernard Shapero (2008). The imagery from the select photographers and compilation of photography is utilised firstly in order to examine the artistic expressions through the hairstyles of black women of African descent between 1925 and 1968. Furthermore the imagery is employed as a means of highlighting race politics and the negative framing of blackness in colonial photography as well as issues pertaining to black women and their hair/hairstyles.

The second section of the study will review the negotiation of identity and the re-contextualisation of the black body, with a specific focus on the chosen hairstyle of black women in South Africa and America. Observing and discussing the devaluation of the black body, aesthetics and hairstyles and how the devaluation and negative framing of blackness could influence the notion of contemporary hairstyles of black women as mimicry. The study will look at artworks created by; Gavin Jantjes, Tracey Rose, Zanele Muholi, Lorna Simpson, Stephen Hobbs and Marcus Neustetter as well as Nontsikelelo Mutiti between 1970 and 2016. The select artworks from the above mentioned artists are employed in order to challenge the political and historical perceptions and representation of blackness, black aesthetics and features such as hair as well as highlight the tropes of black women's identity and a celebration of black features and aesthetics.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW AND DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.4.1 Hair

Hair is defined as a thread-like structure that forms from follicles beneath the skin of mammals. These follicles produce a hair strand by synthesising keratinocytes of which keratins are created. Hair is also described as dead tissue composed of keratins and related proteins. Regenerative in nature, hair is continually shed and renewed through various cycles of growth. Hairstyling serves as physiological and social phenomenon that can be recognised as an object of intense elaboration and preoccupation in almost all societies (Pergament 1999:43). Feminist, gender and sexuality studies Professor Victoria Pitts-Taylor in her book; *Cultural Encyclopaedia of the Body* (2008:246) explains that keratins make up most of the hair strand and are important in the human body as they also contribute to the formation of nails and certain parts of the skin. Each hair strand consists of three parts, namely the medulla, cortex and cuticle - of all the three the cortex is where the keratin and melanin can be found, which comprises of 90% of the weight of the hair. Author of *Encyclopaedia of Hair: A Cultural History*, Victoria Sherrow (2006:148), discusses the biological composition of hair, explaining the cuticle as the main target of beauty products as it is the one protecting the internal component of the hair. The natural colour of hair is produced from the cells called melanocytes which are located at the cortex of the hair strand. Melanin cells are pigments created by melanocytes, and the quantity and types of these melanin cells are responsible for a difference in hair colour. Sherrow (2006:148) further explains how the more melanin inherent in a hair strand, the darker the hair colour, and with darker shades of hair colour you find that the melanin cells are more densely packed.

With the variance in the biological structure of all ethnicities, hair is regarded as one of the defining differences between ethnicities and these differences in length, texture, colour and density of hair have been used in determining hierarchies of beauty and intellect throughout time. Black hair looks thicker, curlier and often frizzier (kinky) compared with other hair; it takes longer to grow, unlike Asian and Caucasian hair and has a density in between the two. Asian hair, on the other hand, is the fastest growing and has the thickest strand diameter with the lowest density, while Caucasian hair has the highest density and grows faster than the hair of Africans but slower than that of Asians (Pitts-Taylor, 2008:246). Hair is not just a part of one's physical regimen. It connotes and emphasises one's style, influence, culture, social and economic stance, heritage, hierarchy and gender. As an embedded aspect in African culture, hairstyling has played an important role throughout the generations and could be used to discern a person's age, marital status, wealth, power and religion. Certain hairstyles were specific and unique to certain societies in Africa. Curators Caroline Gaffney, Danielle Lutgens and Sean Denney in the article; *Expressive Roots: Hair*, which accompanied the eponymous art exhibition (2013:2) discuss numerous aspects inherent in black hair and hairstyling and state that many African cultures see hair as a method of expression and a signifier of ethnicity as different ethnic groups have different types of hairstyles.

1.4.2 Mimicry, Frantz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/2008) and Homi K Bhabha*: The Location of Culture* (1994)

Colonial and post-colonial scholar Amardeep Singh, in his article; *Mimicry and Hybridity in Plain English* (2009), refers to mimicry within postcolonial literature and describes it as an act by the members of a colonised society, which involves copying the language, dress and attitude of the coloniser. Singh (2009) further notes how

mimicry involves the suppression of one's own cultural identity in order to duplicate another which represents power. The notion of mimicry is explored in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (1952/2008) where Fanon explores the desire of black people in a colonial to post-colonial societal setting to assimilate into whiteness. Fanon discusses how language, attitude, dress and interracial marriage plays into the discourse of mimicry and power and further describes how a need to escape one's race (blackness) is a fleeing from oneself. Frantz Fanon's literature is further considered in Chapter Four, within the discussion of black hairstyle choices and mimicry. The literature found in Homi K Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) is also applied within the discussion of mimicry detailing Bhabha's steps for mimicry and assimilation. The dissertation also refers to Bhabha's notions on mimicry as an asymmetry of power (1994:126).

1.4.3 Pierre Bourdieu (1930- 2002): The Logic of Practice (1980/1990)

French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in his book; *The Logic of Practice* (1980/1990) focused on the role of practice and performance within social dynamics. According to scholar Cristina Nicolaescu, in her article; *Bourdieu – Habitus, Symbolic Violence, The Gift: "You Give Me / I Give You" Principle* (2010:1) Bourdieu focused on issues of sociology and the social sciences, and refers to the notion of habitus which has its roots in the structural anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss and psychology of Jean Piage. Bourdieu's concept of habitus and symbolic violence emerges as a theory of practice where Bourdieu expresses and investigates the occupation by an individual in a multidimensional social space. Bourdieu mentions how an individual is not only defined by social class but by various forms of capital that can be articulated through social relations. Bourdieu further discusses the value of social networks of which he believed could be used to produce or reproduce inequality. The study will

apply Bourdieu's notions of habitus of which he expresses that the individual develops a set of specific habits that she/he performs in social spaces in response to his environment.

1.4.4 Kobena Mercer: Black Hairstyle Politics (1987)

In Black Hairstyle Politics, Kobena Mercer discusses the political associations of contemporary black hairstyles including the afro[1], dreadlocks and the conk. Mercer (1987:34) advocates for a need to de-psychologise questions relative to contemporary hairstyling such as the straightening of hair, and regards black hairstyling choices, techniques and practices as a developed aesthetics based on pattern and style. Throughout the body of work, Mercer recognises black hairstyling as a creative form of response to experiences of oppression and dispossession. Mercer further evaluates black hairstyling choices, techniques and practices through various stages of black oppression in America, as well as the 1960s black pride movements in America. Mercer discusses black hairstyles informed by his theoretical research on subcultures and notes the changes within black hairstyling and how the paradigm shifts, altered values and changed cultural norms over the years have affected contemporary black hairstyles, which he comprehends as a popular art form that articulates a variety of aesthetic solutions, and further regards black hairstyling as a cultural activity and practice. The dissertation employs the theoretic work of Mercer and applies it in Chapter Four throughout a discussion on contemporary hairstyle choices and practices of black women.

[2] The Merriam Webster dictionary (2019) defines the term native as a person belonging to a particular place by birth, and the term Bantu as person/ member of any group of African peoples who speak Bantu languages. Although the study recognises the derogatory connotations regarding describing black people as natives or bantu in a post – colonial sense, the study uses the terms as they would have been employed at the time in order to highlight the relationship between European (self) and native/bantu (other) during the eighteenth century.

1.4.5 Globalisation

Globalisation, according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2007:110) is a process whereby economic and cultural forces that are operational worldwide affect the lives and culture of individuals and local communities: “in effect it is the process of the world becoming a single place”. Art curator Norman Kleeblatt in his article *Identity Rollercoaster* (2005:3) describes how the use of the term has been rising since the mid-1980s and reflects a change of world-wide social relations in this era of which communities and individuals gain access to global knowledge and culture and are affected by economic happenings that collapse state boundaries. It gives rise to individual and collective subjects acquiring new significance and generating enhanced importance.

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, (2007:114) the appropriation of global forms of culture in contemporary times has the ability to free one from “local forms of dominance and oppression” and assist in providing the tools for a different kind of identity formation. The recent direction of globalisation leads to the development of ‘global culture’, “a process in which the strategies, techniques, assumptions and interactions of cultural representation become increasingly widespread and homogenous” (Ashcroft Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998:110). In cultural terms, globalisation deals with a new form of global mass culture where external and internal forces interact, produce, reproduce, and disseminate global culture within local communities that breaks the boundaries and dismantles local cultural identity (Ashcroft Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998:114). Globalisation plays a huge role in what we perceive as culture or tradition in contemporary times and can be said to influence certain aspects of life, culture, tradition and beauty trends, including hairstyles.

1.4.6 Hybridity

Postcolonial studies scholar Paul Meredith in his article *Hybridity in the Third Space: Rethinking Bi-cultural Politics in Aoteoroa/New Zealand* (1998:3) describes the term hybrid as a new form of cultural meaning, a new subject coming out of two or more different cultures, “blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorizations of culture and identity”. The term can refer to a cross breeding of two species by grafting or cross-pollination of which one can say that all forms of culture are continually changing and there is no stable fixed culture. Hybridity is known to take many forms and it can be found in linguistic, cultural, political and racial form and could simply be understood as ‘cross cultural exchange’ (Ashcroft Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998:118, 119). Hybridity as a concept is further discussed in Chapter Five in relation to hairstyle choices and practices of black women.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.5.1 Post-colonial/Postcolonial theory

The study employs a postcolonial framework, observing the difference between post-colonialism and postcolonial theory. The study acknowledges two applications regarding the term post-colonialism/postcolonialism and utilises the hyphenated post-colonialism as a historical period and the term postcolonialism/ postcolonial as a discourse. The distinction is as follows:

Professor of global and international studies Eve Darian Smith (1996:292) explains how the initial comprehension of the terms post-colonial/postcolonial can be found in the use of the prefix ‘post’ as it operates as a chronological marker detailing a historical period, where previously colonised nations were transitioning towards

independence from colonial rule. Post–colonialism/postcolonialism further addresses the effects of colonialism on various cultures and societies within previously colonised nations. Authors of *Post-Colonial Concepts: The Key Concepts*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2007:169) refer to the term post colonialism - as a discourse that critically analyses European colonialism, and which is used to investigate other theories such as racism, othering, ethnicity and modernity. The discourse focuses on examining the various European structures, processes and territorial conquests throughout the colonial period as well as their lasting legacies pre-and post-independence as well as the different responses - resistant or otherwise -by the colonised.

While there is a distinction between the two approaches of post-colonialism / postcolonialism and critique and debate within the discipline in terms of the application of the term, there is still considerable interweaving between the two approaches and interests of post-colonialism/post colonialism as a historical period and as a discourse.

1.5.2 Female/Woman

The study makes use of the terms male, female as well as man and woman. The terms male and female are used to represent the biological sex of an individual determined through the presence of anatomical reproductive organs as well as chromosomal identifiers as per the biological criterion. The terms man and woman are used to refer to individuals who identify themselves as either women or men on a phenomenological level. The study refers to Judith Butler's definition of gender (1988:513) where she recognises gender as an unstable identity which has been historically constituted through specific acts over a period of time, understanding

gender as instituted through bodily enactments, movements and gestures. The terms man and woman can thus be understood as a set of socially performed behaviours, mannerisms, gestures, and enactments produced socially. The study takes into consideration that an individual can identify with both man and woman, or an individual born with male anatomical and biological features could identify as a woman or the other way around as well as the presence of individuals who do not regard themselves as belonging to either of the two binary biological and social markers of identity. The study does not aim at discriminating against the LGBTQ2+ or affirming any essentialist's view of gender but rather is based on looking at art produced by African and American men and women practitioners who are interested in the hairstyles of black women in Africa and America.

1.1.1 Black(ness), African(ness) and White(ness)

According to sociology and social anthropology scholar, Virginia Mapedzahama as well as communications and media studies scholar Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo (2017:1), the human body, although embodying sameness to a certain degree (bodily organs and functions), tends to be socially inscribed with differences from gender to the colour of one's skin. Visual arts scholar Khulekani Madlela (2018:1) refers to the term 'black', stating that it is used to denote to dark-skinned people of African or Australian Aboriginal ancestry. The study refers to the term black, speaking firstly to blackness as a difference to whiteness, and secondly noting that blackness is not solely about skin colour but rather a socio-political construct with specific reference to the writing of anti-apartheid activist and founder of the Black Consciousness Movement, Steve Biko (1978:48). Furthermore the term blackness will be used in association to African(ness), referring to the Black African diaspora and ancestry, taking into consideration the different ethnic groups and different

shades of black/brown that make up blackness within the African continent and abroad.

In a South African context, Madlela (2018:1) refers to the use of derogatory names during apartheid rule when "white people used several terms to refer to Africans, for example, *kaffirs*, natives[2], blacks, and *bantu*". The term black will thus be inclusive of Indian and Coloured people who were considered non-white and inferior to white people within the racial categorisation history of South Africa as per the population registration act 30 of 1950.

The study takes into consideration the absence of an all-inclusive universal homogenous definition of blackness comprehending that blackness and black practices is space and paradigm specific, operating differently in different spaces around the world and in different contexts throughout time, and speaks to black as per those who refer to themselves as black through a shared history of oppression by either slavery, colonialism or apartheid.

The term African is used in the study mainly as a source of identity for the black people who identify as Africans either through genealogy, ancestry and furthermore in terms of African culture, ideology, and practices. With that said one also has to take into consideration the difference in ideology, practice, culture and tradition as site specific on the continent and abroad. For the purposes of this study, the term "black African women" will be used to refer to African women who are South African citizens, mixed-race or Coloured women who identify themselves as black; black

[2] The Merriam Webster dictionary (2019) defines the term native as a person belonging to a particular place by birth, and the term Bantu as person/ member of any group of African peoples who speak Bantu languages. Although the study recognises the derogatory connotations regarding describing black people as natives or bantu in a post – colonial sense, the study uses the terms as they would have been employed at the time in order to highlight the relationship between European (self) and native/bantu (other) during the eighteenth century.

women who live on the continent and the American diaspora who identify themselves as African, with reference to hair, the term “black hair” will be used interchangeably with “African hair” (Madlela, 2018:1).

Whiteness in this dissertation will be used to describe the identity of Caucasian people as biologically characterised by their white skin. The dissertation's use of the word whiteness is in regards to an ideology which marked the biological white person as normative while the other races where marked with inferiority. The employment of the term whiteness does not necessarily refer to individual white people or groups of white people but references the European colonial ideology and body of knowledge based on race politics of the Self and Other.

1.1.2 Hair modification by black women

Hair has historically been and continues to be modified in numerous ways, causing hair practices, performances and styles to evolve through time. Among the changes and practices to be found among African women, is the use of hair straightening. The term refers to a chemical or mechanical process that breaks down the bonds of hair in an attempt to reduce its natural curl, kink or wave. Women’s studies scholar, Cheryl Thompson in her article; *Black Women, Beauty, and Hair as a Matter of Being* (2009:850) states that the history of hair straightening is undeniably closely linked to the history of racism and slavery and that the practice has been - and is still - seen by some as an imitation of whiteness and as signifying a disregard of African norms. Although today (2019) many people straighten their hair for many reasons other than conforming to racist beauty ideologies, the act of alteration of natural hair[3] sparks

[3]Merriam Webster (2018) defines natural as something that grows without human care, also something that is not cultivated. In this sense, natural hairstyles usually refer to the wearer leaving the hair to grow in its natural state only.

continuously heated debates regarding vanity, a sense of inferiority and the nature of self (Pitts-Taylor, 2008:250).

Cheryl Thompson (2009:80) refers to another hairstyle method practiced by black women which is known as braiding. Braiding within the black hairstyling field refers to the process where synthetic hair is braided into a person's own hair at the roots; the braid is attached through application of the three part braid. The natural hair of a person is attached through one part of the braid, and creates an illusion of long hair. This process, like that of straightening, is also not natural and has been deemed controversial in some circles. As I shall demonstrate, there are those who associate this process of lengthening the hair with Eurocentric beauty ideals.

Alternatively, some black women prefer altering their hair with the use of a wig. Throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, wigs were once constructed using synthetic materials, human hair, animal hair and plant matter. Due to technological advances, the manufacturing of wigs eventually came to be predominantly based on the use of a combination of synthetic materials with human hair. Throughout history, humans have worn wigs and false hair for various reasons such as to conceal hair loss due to disease or ageing, as a means of changing appearances, adornment and for religious ceremonies, traditional or cultural celebrations. Today the number of women wearing wigs has increased, and we see a number of celebrities wearing wigs such as Nicki Minaj[4] and Denisse Zimba[5]. As I aim to highlight, the use of wigs is a continuation of traditional African hairstyling practices. Wigs have been worn in the past in Africa by the ancient Egyptians whose "women frequently bronzed their skin and wore ebony wigs in order to fulfil a

[4] Nicki Minaj is a popular hip hop star in the United States of America.
[5] Denise Zimba is a South African actor who has starred on the popular South African drama series *Generations* and is was previously a presenter on the *Vuzu* television channel.

feminine ideal associated with sensuality and fertility especially members of the higher class" (Pitts-Taylor, 2008:142).

Another form of hair alteration that can be said to be between hair straightening and the act of wearing wigs is the use of weaves. Hair weaving refers to the process where synthetic or real human hair is sewn into one's own hair, and celebrities such as Naomi Campbell[6] and Bonang Matheba[7] have openly admitted to wearing weaves. At times, especially with the use of Brazillian hair weaves, the wearer has to straighten the hair before weaving it so that the weave may create the illusion that her natural straightened hair is long. In the 1980s, when weaves were introduced to the larger part of the black communities in the United States of America, the weave had a positive impact on the black woman, by providing her with an additional choice in terms of their coiffure; the weave gave women the ability to have hair that is not just straight, but also increased in length (Thompson, 2009:80).[8]

1.2 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Applying a qualitative framework for the research project, the dissertation studies select visual images produced between 1925 and 2016, also investigating and exploring different themes inherent in various artistic representations dealing with black women and their hairstyles. The study further utilises descriptive research methods in an attempt to describe a phenomenon which will be coupled with the detailing of various attitudes toward the hairstyle of the black women. Author C.R. Kothari in his book *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (2004:3) states

[6] Naomi Cambell is a world renowned fashion model.
[7] Bonang Matheba is South Africa's ultimate socialite and renowned business woman known for presenting on numerous prestigious South African television shows such as *Top Billing*.
[8] Amongst the many different ways of inserting a weave there is a process known as tracking, where a woman will have her hair braided in cornrows and then sew "tracks" (strips of hair) onto the braided cornrows, or use a method known as bonding where tracks will be glued to the hair at the root with or without braided cornrows.

that qualitative research assists in discovering the underlying motives, and themes inherent in, specific human behaviour. Through such research one can attempt to comprehend the various factors that may motivate people to behave in a specific manner.

Information for the research study is collected from both primary and secondary sources and employed in the research study, inclusive of rigorous reviews of academic and contemporary literature. Secondary sources will comprise of information gathered from books, journal and magazine articles as well as dissertations and theses. Additional information is collected through mass media in the form of the internet, reports published in newspapers and magazines.

By applying content analysis the research unearths both manifest and latent meaning of images as visual texts and attempts to establish links between visual artistic renditions and black African women's hair and hairstyling choices. Investigations and findings will be presented in essay form in chapters Two, Three, Four and Five, inclusive of a qualitative analysis of photographs, paintings, as well as video stills and installations.

Visual analysis of select ten colonial photographs taken between 1925 and 1968 investigates the representation of black African women, paying particular attention to their chosen hairstyle. The dissertation will further analyse and discuss twenty three artworks by six select artists. The selected method will provide for an in-depth analysis of the images and artworks and provide insight into the themes, codes that were and are used within the construction and dissemination of black aesthetics.

1.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study sources images pertaining nudity which may be harmful to sensitive viewers. The imagery is however necessary in terms of critically examining colonial photography in terms of the negative dissemination of blackness and black features.

This dissertation complies with the ethical requirements of the university.

1.4 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

1.4.1 Chapter One

Chapter One introduces the subject of study in the dissertation. The chapter includes an introduction to the study, research question, aims and objectives as well the theoretical frameworks of the dissertation. Furthermore the chapter includes the applied research methodology, ethical considerations of the study as well as feasibility of the study.

1.4.2 Chapter Two

Serving as background to the following sections, Chapter Two starts with a focus on the hairstyles recorded throughout the colonial period of black women from various African societies and geographical locations in Africa. Furthermore, the chapter provides a historical context for the dissertation, focusing on slavery, European colonisation as well as apartheid in South Africa. The chapter further discusses notions of othering and mainly refers to the literature of Pierre Bourdieu (1980/1990). The chapter will also look at the colonial photography of Casmir Zagourski and images found in Sieber and Herreman's *Hair in African Art and Culture* (2000), as

well as photographs found in Bernard Shapero's *Tribal Portraits: Vintage and Contemporary photographs of the African Continent* (2008).

1.4.3 Chapter Three

Chapter Three discusses the artworks of selected South African and American artists, including Gavin Jantjes, Tracey Rose and Zanele Muholi and American artist, Lorna Simpson, highlighting issues pertinent to black hair and hairstyling such as hair as a signifier of inferiority with an added focus on hairstyling as a performance of identity.

1.4.4 Chapter Four

Chapter Four focuses on hair and hairstyling as a marker of identity specifically looking at contemporary hairstyle choices and practices of black women in South Africa. The chapter will reference critique and scholarly statements that regard the current hairstyle choices of black women as a form of mimicry. Furthermore, the chapter references notions of mimicry as expressed by Frantz Fanon (1952/2008) and Homi K Bhabha (1994), and how they are applied to women of South Africa and critique the scholarly statements by applying scholarly work of Kobena Mercer (1984).

1.4.5 Chapter Five

Chapter five discusses modernisation, globalisation and hybridity with regards to the artworks relative to the chosen hairstyles of black women. The chapter employs literature from Start Hall; *Modernity, An Introduction to Modern Societies (1996),* amongst other scholars and further discusses the artworks/ photographs of South

African artists Stephen Hobbs & Marcus Neustetter as well as artworks by Zimbabwean born artist Nontsikelelo Mutiti.

1.4.6 Chapter Six

Chapter Six concludes the dissertation by summarising all five previous chapters. The chapter further discusses the implications of the dissertation, contributions and limitations of the research in the dissertation as well as lists possible future research that may emanate from this study.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

This researcher is aware of the negative and derogatory representation of black men through colonial photography as well as the plight of black men throughout imperialism, slavery, European colonialism and apartheid. The study further recognises that black African and African American men have and still style their hair in various methods for various reasons and, at times, men and women share the same hairstyling techniques and hairstyle choices. However, this study will solely be directed at black women as seen in various historical and artistic portrayals thereof, attempting to comprehend the forms, themes and motives inherent in race representation imagery/art, politics and the hairstyling practices and choices of black women. Furthermore, the study also takes into consideration that hairstyling is not only a practice of black people but a practice of all ethnicities around the world such as Caucasian, Asian and Indian. However, this study will be limited to black African women, African American women and Coloured women.

CHAPTER TWO

2 INTRODUCTION

As introduction to the dissertation, Chapter Two begins with a focus on hairstyle choices and practices of black women from various African geographic locations recorded throughout the colonial years between 1925 and the late 1960s. The images employed in this chapter are found from the colonial photography of Casimir Zagourski and the photography found in Sieber and Herreman's *Hair in African Art and Culture* (2000), and Bernard Shapero's book, *Tribal Portraits: Vintage & Contemporary Photographs from the African Continent* (2008). The chapter also refers to a contemporary documentation (Styles, 2014) of the hairstyle practices of the Himba societal group found in Namibia, that is believed to have survived modernity and is still being practiced today in the twenty-first century as a means of showing diverse hairstyle practices of black women of African descent. Against this backdrop the chapter discusses slavery, European colonialism in Africa, colonialism in South Africa and apartheid in South Africa as a means of providing context and paradigm setting of the dissertation. Through the discussion of European colonialism and apartheid, the chapter also discusses the notion of othering and introduces Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus (1980/1990). Chapter Two serves as a visual, paradigm and theoretical basis for the dissertation, and is imperative in order to allow comprehension of the rest of the dissertation, with reference to the art of the selected artists discussed in Chapter Three and Five as well as the mimicry debate relative to black hairstyling discussed in Chapter Four.

2.1 BLACK HAIRSTYLING PRACTICES AND CHOICES (1925- 1960)

According to environmental education scholar, Dr Soul Shava, in his article*, African Aesthetic* (2015:11), Africa comprises of a vast continent with varying traditions, customs and cultures. Included among the various records of African culture and tradition are hair practices and hairstyle choices of people of African descent. The assorted textures of black hair have and still render a diverse array of hairstyling options for black women, regardless of their spatial geographic region. Women in Africa have always adorned their hair in various hairstyles, as a means of communication and as an art form. The various recorded traditional hairstyles of the Himba (Namibia), Wambo (Namibia), and Fante (Ghana) women are examined below as a means of presenting the diverse hairstyle practices of African black women prior to and during the colonial and imperial eras.

Roy Sieber and Frank Herreman in their article *Hair and African Art and Culture* (2000:65) display an image (Figure 2.1) of two women with a braided sinew hairstyle from the Wambo group in Namibia. The image, said to have been taken in the 1940s, portrays two women with braids extending to their ankles. This hairstyle was achieved by combining extensions from previous coiffures of the hairstyle wearers and other women in the community, highlighting the communal culture of hairstyling present at that time.[9] The hairstyle is worn by women who are taking part in an *Ohango* initiation ceremony.[10] In the same journal article Sieber and Herreman

[9] The term coiffure refers to a style or manner of arranging the hair. With its origins from the French verb *coiffer.* The term is loosely applied to refer to an arrangement of hair (hairstyle) (Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary, 2019)

[10] Gender and Advocacy scholars, Suzanne Lafont and Dianne Hubbard in their book; *Unravelling Taboos: Gender and Sexuality in Namibia* (2007:79) refer to the *Ohango* initation ceremony as a collective ceremony where the women participants accepted their roles and responsibilities in the community. Serving as a rite of passage the *Ohango* ceremony legitimised a sexual life and pregnancy for the women who participated and completed the ceremony. "Girls who completed the initiation ceremonies wore new clothing and changed their hairstyle so that their new status as mature

(2000:55) also include images detailing the four stages of coiffure making applied by the Fante women in Ghana in the early twentieth century (see Figure 2.2). The image displays the manner in which natural hair is actively turned into a particular coiffure, through specific steps.

Women of the Himba society in Namibia, like the Fante in Ghana, have distinctive hairstyles, and their hairstyles differ according to age, marital status, and rites of passage. Himba women combine goat hair, butter and mud in order to create their elaborate hairstyles. The hairstyle of the Himba women is made up of two distinct textures: the top part which is compacted into thick dreadlock-like forms; and the bottom part of the individual form, which is mixed with rich, soft chunks of goat hair (*otjize* texture). Although similar in texture, the manner in which the hairstyle is worn differs. Girls that have come of age and reached the point of puberty (pubescence) would have her hair styled in such a way that the *otjize* textured dreadlocks and goat hair cover her face as means of warding off men (see Figure 2.3). Journalist and reporter for the Daily Mail Ruth Styles (2014) describes how a girl that is ready to be married will then tie her *otjize* textured braids back, away from her face, while a married woman in the group would add an elaborate animal skin headdress to her hairstyle at the base of her head.

women could be easily recognised. Initiated girls were also regarded as marriageable. In fact, initiated girls gained a unique status referred to as *omufuko*, which is similar to the concept of a 'bride' but did not necessarily require a groom".

Figure 2.1: *Two women with hairstyles made of braided sinew (eefipa*). Mbalantu Wambo group, Namibia (Sieber & Herrema, 2000:65).

Figure 2.2: *Stages of Coiffure making*, Fante Ghana early 20th century (Sieber & Herrema, 2000:55).

Bernard J. Shapero in his book titled *Tribal Portraits: Vintage and Contemporary Photographs of the African Continen*t (2008), compiles portrait photographs of African people between 1856 and early twentieth century from various photographers. The book contains images of diverse African tribes; these images portray the array of hairstyle practices of both men and women within that time period. Figures 2.4 – 2.7, 2.9 are located on in the book. Figure 2.4 shows an elaborate hairstyle of a black woman from Uganda which is crafted from the natural hair of the woman, combined with numerous found objects. In its sculptural form, the hairstyle includes a specific found object which pulls the hair in a vertical direction,

coupled with traces of cornrows and beads. Figure 2.5 displays a black young woman dancer from Congo whose hairstyle resembles modern-day dreadlocks but which is crafted with the use of beads. Included within the hairstyle are various found objects and a headband.

Figure 2.3: Lafforgue, Eric & Ledoux, Stephanie. 2014. Young girl going through puberty (Styles, 2014).

Figure 2.6 details a young black Masai bride from Kenya with a bald-headed hairstyle. Although all of her hair is shaved off, the bride's head is adorned with various headbands and an elaborate headdress made from found objects. Figure 2.7 portrays two black Bidyogo women in an initiation dance in Guinèe Bissau. One of the women in the image has short hair while the other woman has an immense hairstyle which includes extensions, and horns.

Figure 2.4: Photographer unknown. 1925. *Head Study. Uganda*. 255x 90mm (Shapero, 2008:9).

On the other hand, the elite from the Mangbetu society in Congo participated in the tradition called *Lipombo* which refers to the act of elongating the skull. The skull was elongated as a means of presenting their status within the society and was achieved by tightly wrapping the head with a cloth during infancy. The elongation of the skull assisted in the creation of their elaborate funnel-shaped coiffures which ended in an outward halo as seen in Figures 2.8 and 2.9 (Afritrial, 2018). Figure 2.10 shows a hairstyle of the wife of a Niao chief in Cote d'Ivoire. The hairstyle is achieved by plaiting rows of hair in different patterns, using a three-part braid technique. The

assortment of hairstyles referred to above demonstrates the diverse nature of the hairstyling practices of black women from various African tribes and spatial geographic locations which were in existence prior to and during the colonial period. The hairstyling practices and choices of black women of African descent changed over the years as per the paradigm shifts. The following section discusses slavery, European colonialism in Africa and South Africa, as well as apartheid in South Africa focusing on black hairstyling choices and practices of black women throughout the paradigms.

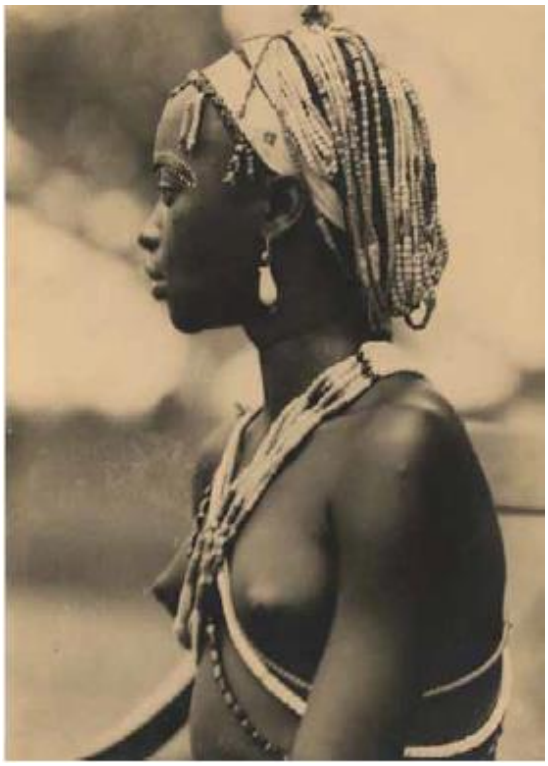
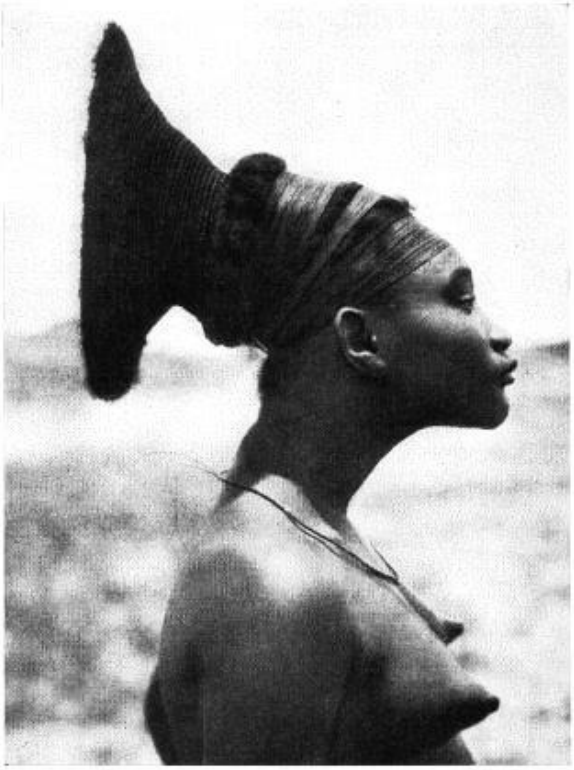


Figure 2.5: Zagourski, Casmir.c1930. *Coma Dancer, Belgain Congo*. 390x 280mm (Shapero, 2008:13).

Figure 2.6: Riciardi, Mirella.1968.*Masai Bride, Kenya.* 510 x 610mm (Shapero, 2008:27).

Figure 2.7: Ernatzik, Hugo. c1930. *Bidyogo women in initiation dance*, Etikoka. 140x 185mm (Shapero, 2008:63).



Donna Mangbetu, con testa deformata e l'acconciatura caratteristica delle maritate: il profilo rivela prevalenti fattezze «etiopoidi» (da H. A. Bernatzik, *Continente nero*).

Figure 2.8: *Mangbetu-donna con testa deformata*. S.a. (Afritrial.com, 2018).

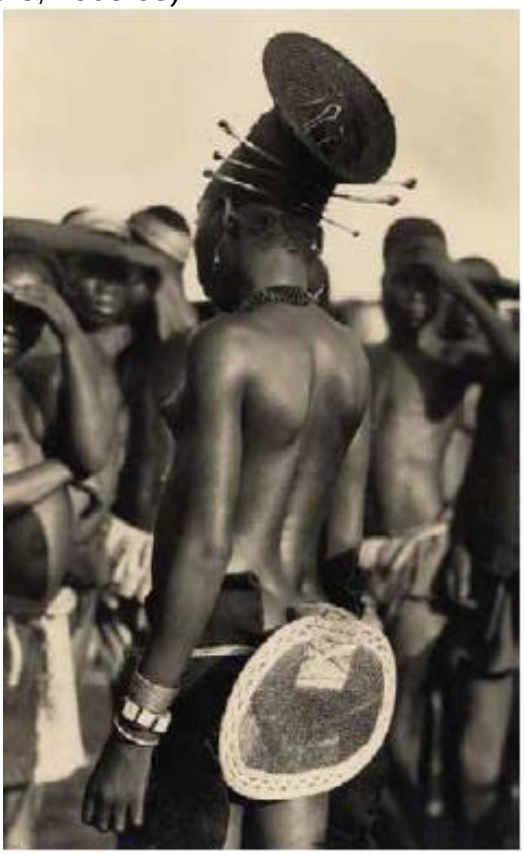


Figure 2.9: *Zagourski, Casmir.c1930. L'Afrique qui Disparait* (Shapero, 2008:12).

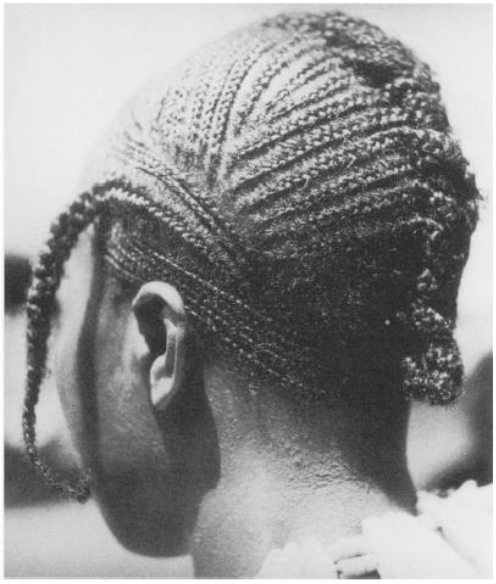


Figure 2.10: Vandenhoute, P .J . 1938 -39. *Wife of the Niao chief at Ganya in We territory,Cote d* 'lvoire (Sieber & Herrerman, 2000:62).

2.2 SLAVERY AND BLACK HAIRSTYLING (1400- 1900)

The relationship between Europe and Africa dates back prior to the fifteenth century, with relations dominated by imperialism, the trans-Atlantic slave trade and European colonisation. Italian economist Graziella Bertocchi (2015:2) details the lasting legacies of slavery, stating it as a forced migration spanning over five centuries from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries. Betrocchi lists four distinct waves of slavery starting with the Trans–Saharan slave trade that took people from the Sub-Saharan regions and exporting them to Northern Africa. She further mentions the Indian Ocean and Red Sea slave trade which took people from the Eastern region of Africa and delivered them to various parts in Asia. Betrocchi (2015:2) speaks of the Trans–Atlantic slave trade, marking it the most significant of the four waves of slavery because of its duration and the volume. Economics scholar, Luis Angeles in his article *On the Cause of the African Slave Trade* (2013:3), discusses the Trans–

Atlantic slave trade and estimates that about twelve point five million Africans were embarked from Africa towards Americas as slaves between the turn of the sixteenth century and 1866. Betrocchi (2015:2) details the Trans–Atlantic slave trade as taking place between the 1529-1850 period and correspondingly states that over twelve million Africans were embarked with the peak taking place between 1780 and 1790 where about eighty thousand slaves were embarked each year.

According to Nigerian historian, Toyin Faloa (2003:23) most of the African continent was conquered by Europe through imperialism, colonialism, mission work, and the development of trade routes. Anthropology scholar, Fiana Swain in her thesis, *Negotiating Beauty Ideals: Perceptions of Beauty among Black Female University Students* (2012:5), refers to how black African features such as hair was seen as a marker of inferiority during the slave era, as she states that “beyond the acquisition of slaves, European and American slave masters saw their culture as superior to that of the colonised and moreover saw their physical features as superior to those of the men and women of African descent”. Social sciences scholar Whitney Bellinger (2007:64) corroborates this notion as she states:

> In addition, slave masters and mistresses often told slave children to refer to their hair like wool and encouraged young slaves not to like their own hair; in the 1850s a scientist, Peter A. Browne, claimed that African Americans and White men must be from two differing species because White men have hair while African Americans have wool and not hair on their heads.

Furthermore, the white masters created divisions between the slaves. The slaves who had fairer features such as lighter skin and less coarse hair were used as house slaves and had better working conditions. The slaves with dominant black traits such as dark skin and coarse hair were treated differently; they worked mostly in the field

and were often forced to hide their ‘offensive wool’ hair from their white masters (Bellinger, 2007:64).

American arts scholar Lekha Hileman Waitoller (2011:89) discusses the relationship between black slaves and their hair. Reiterating notions expressed by Bellinger (2007:64), Waitoller states that slaves that had lighter skin and less kinky hair were rewarded with better work, economic opportunities and social advantages. Recognising this notion, the slaves started finding and creating different methods of straightening their kinky and curly hair. Waitoller (2011:89) mentions a number of strategies and concoctions created in attempts to achieve straighter hair including the application of wagon-wheel axel grease, butter, and dirty dishwater to the hair. The recognition of the dichotomy between straightened and natural curled and kinky hair for black people leads to an understanding of the role that black hair played in the formation of a beauty hierarchy for black people in America.

Numerous methods, strategies and practices were applied to coarse, curly black hair in attempts to achieve straighter hairstyles. Of the many practices, an iconic method recognised was the relaxer by Madame CJ Walker (1876- 1919) who pioneered the creative inventions and distribution of straightening products for black women.

During the Antebellum era, ethnic identifiers such as skin colour, hair texture, eye colour, size and shape of lips and nose become identifiers of inferiority for the black body, demoting the black person to lower social status and lower position on the beauty hierarchy. This resulted in a redefinition and an internalisation of white standards of beauty by black women of which one may argue still persists to this day. The othering of the black body continued beyond the abolition of the slave trade and well into colonial expansion in Africa.

Faloa (2003:23) states that during the nineteenth century Europeans visited Africa for exploration and to trade various products including peanuts, silks, oils, and, cotton. History professor Ehiedu Iweribor (S.a) states that from 1870 throughout 1900s, the African continent was marked with imperialist aggression, diplomatic pressures as well as military invasions, which eventually led to conquest, colonisation and control over various areas and coasts on the African continent. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade (1400 -1900) as well as the development of colonialism in Africa negatively impacted African culture and identity, and with it, affected traditional African hairstyling. Johnson and Bankhead (2013:87) state:

> In an effort to dehumanise and break the African spirit, Europeans shaved the heads of enslaved Africans upon arrival to the Americas. Africans with cultural identifiers such as Wolof, Asante's Fulani's and Mandingo's [sic] entered slave ships, yet an enslaved unidentifiable people exited onto the shores of the America's [*sic*]. Without their combs, oils and native hair recipes, Africa's [*sic*] were left unable to care for an essential part of them. Europeans deemed African hair unattractive and did not consider it to be hair at all, for them it was considered the fur of animals and was referred to as wool or woolly.

As I shall demonstrate, the clash of Africa with the West through imperialism, slave trade and colonialism impacted African hairstyles and had an effect on the conscious definition of beauty by people of African descent, affecting their notion of African aesthetics, values and customs. In an attempt to fully comprehend the contemporary artworks to be discussed as well as contemporary black hairstyle choices, it is fundamental to understand colonialism and the lasting effects of colonialism on black culture and the black psyche.

2.3 EUROPEAN COLONIALISM IN AFRICA (1870-1990)

Author and social and political psychology scholar Hussein Bulhan in his article, *Stages of Colonialism in Africa: From Occupation of Land to Occupation of Being* (2015:240) describes European colonialism (1870-1990) and states that it began in

the Americas with the European invasion, occupation and exploitation. Bulhan indicates that the motivation behind colonialism is the pursuit of material exploitation and cultural domination. Referring to European colonialism as an economic, political, cultural and psychological process, Bulhan (2015:240) further expresses that the economic and political motives behind colonialism were obvious but that the cultural and psychological motives of colonialism manifested later within colonial expansion.

Bulhan (2015:242) refers to colonialism as a systematic violence which was integral to capitalism and coexisted with racism and cultural domination, while colonial scholar Ronald Hovarth (1972:46) defines colonialism as a form of domination, where one group/individuals control another group's territory and behaviour. Hovarth (1972:47) further mentions how colonisation leads to the depriving of autonomous development of the colonised, and how colonisation serves as a complete reconfiguration of the colonised's society and how their development, is now based on the colonisers' will.

Researcher Chris Kortright (2003:3), referring to European colonisation, mentions that colonialism and the colonial complex occurs in four steps: the first step involves a 'forced, involuntary entry' by the potential oppressor/dominator; the second step comprises the alteration and destruction of the indigenous culture by the colonising power; step three refers to the domination over the members of the colonised group by the representational government of the dominator; and step four involves the development of "systems of dominant-subordinate relationships buttressed by a racist ideology".

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the theory of evolution by naturalist, geologist, and biologist Charles Darwin (1809-1882) gained popularity and led to the

development of an evolutionary hierarchy that was applied toward an understanding of race. Darwin's theory states that all creatures, including humans, evolved from simpler ancestors. The theory states that over time all creatures go through a natural genetic mutation for survival purposes; the lesser organism dies and fades away with time, leaving the stronger of the species to survive. Darwin (1859:61) refers to this process as natural selection. South African historian, Nigel Worden (2012:73) asserts that this theory influenced the colonisers (white people) who considered themselves at the top of the evolutionary hierarchy. The theory led to the belief that the colonisers had mutated beyond the native and were, therefore, the superior race. This belief was validated by the colonisers' pride in their presumed educational achievements, technological advances, and imperial conquests, simultaneously placing the black race at the bottom of the hierarchy stating they were "primitive, less intelligent and sluggard" (Worden, 2012:73).

Literature scholar Mohammareza Ghanbarinajjar (2013:1) corroborates Worden's notions, by similarly stating that *The Origins of Species* (1859) by Charles Darwin was employed in an attempt to scientifically validate and legitimise the philosophical and political ideas associated with racial superiority and inferiority. Ghanbarinajjar (2013:1) states that, "this discourse paved the way for a belief that people with certain physical and biological characteristics are superior to others". Similar to Agassiz's theory of polygenesis, the categorising of people according to this so-called scientific criterion made one race (white) superior and the other (black) inferior to other races.[11] French geographer, Jean François Staszak (2009:2) refers to the race dichotomy and the power relations inherent in the dichotomy as he states that

[11] Photography scholar Molly Rogers (2006:39) refers to polygenesis; which is a pre-Darwinian theory on the cause of racial diversity. Polygenesis proposed that human beings of different 'racial types' did not share a common ancestor but were the product of multiple creations alluding to a fact of many garden of Edens.

the dichotomy of the superior and inferior resulted in an asymmetry of power relations regarding both races during colonisation, which ultimately led to the imposition of the superior identity and culture on the devalued inferior identity and culture in the form of ‘civilisation’.

In this manner, under the guise of civilisation, the process of colonisation led to the disintegration of indigenous cultures in all forms, including language, dress, hair, and notions of beauty; these were redefined and constructed according to the values and ideology of the colonialist (Kortright, 2003:4). Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe, in his award winning book *Things Fall Apart* (1958) explains the process, referring to the invasion of the colonial missionaries in the Igbo village, Umofia, located in Nigeria (after 1884). Achebe (1958) details how such an invasion diminishes the community of a specific group by causing segregation and bringing about change in every aspect of the various communities’ societies. Social studies scholar, Lame Maatla Kenalemang (2013:4) also corroborates this notion stating that colonial changes began with the cultural and traditional practices of communities, and continued to family structures, religion, spatial and gender relations, as well as trade (Kenalemang, 2013:4).

Politician, author, and French poet, Aimé Césaire (1972:6) comments on colonialism, referring to colonialism as entailing brutality, sadism, cruelty and conflict. Césaire further states:

> Between coloniser and colonised there is room only for forced labour, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses. No human contact, but relations of domination and submission which turn the colonizing man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production.

Césaire (1972:6) notes the murder and sacrifice of Congo men, the killings on Indochina, the hostile slave conditions of Abidjan, the torture in Madagascar and the eradication of African culture, further stating (1972:6):

> They talk to me about progress, about "achievements," diseases cured, improved standards of living. I am talking about societies drained of their essence; cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out. They throw facts at my head, statistics, mileages of roads, canals, and railroad tracks...I am talking about millions of men torn from their gods, their land, their habits, their life-from life, from the dance, from wisdom.

Colonialism, domination and the exploitation of Africa and African people did not only happen violently, and was not only based on physical actions, but also through the creation, constitution and dissemination of an inferior typology and ideological formations of the other through various academic, literary texts and photography which also influenced behavioural dehumanisation, and disempowerment of non-European races.

Racist ideologies and discourses recognised throughout the slave, imperial and colonial eras led to an othering of the black African as well as the black diaspora body. Othering refers to the act of conceptualising a contrasting negative image of a specific group based on prejudiced judgments. It is based on reinforcement of contrast stereotypes and the development of a dehumanising ideology, creating a hierarchy of cultures (for example, one influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution) and denoting the other (native) as inferior. Césaire (1972:10) quotes from various instances of European literature to demonstrate this process (othering), where one of these sources, for example, states:

> The barbarian is of the same race, after all, as the Roman and the Greek. He is a cousin. The yellow man, the black man, is not our cousin at all. Here there

> is a real difference, a real distance, and a very great one: an ethnological distance.

Edward Said (1978:6) states that the construction of the identity of the other occurs as a sign of European power over the native (where he refers primarily to the Orient). Franz Fanon (1952/1986) refers to othering as the process whereby a racial dichotomy is developed. It involves the creation of a difference between white and black; the identity of the native was not only enclosed in their derogative 'native' state, but the native was also acknowledged as black (the complete opposite of white). The native was not only black but black in comparison to white. Fanon (1986:13) further points out how whiteness is, in essence, a symbol and colour associated with 'purity, justice and truth', a definition of what it means to be 'civilised, modern and human'. Indian scholar and critical theorist Homi K Bhabha (1994:85), corroborates this notion as he quotes colonial literature by the Former British Prime Minister Lord Rosebery (who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom between March 1894 and June 1895), where he referred to the dichotomy of coloniser and colonised as "human (white) and not wholly human (black)", respectively.

During the colonial era, black ethnic identifiers became signifiers of inferiority for the black native, demoting the black native to lower social status and lower position on the beauty hierarchy. Swain in her thesis (2012:7) believes that this notion of inferiority resulted in a redefinition and an internalisation of white standards of beauty by black women that has been passed down from generation to generation post-colonially. This resulted in an epidermisation of the notion that black people are inferior and the ideology continues to the present day, with the juxtaposition of blackness and whiteness being perpetuated; whiteness being represented as the

superior ethnicity (Swain, 2012:7). Whiteness has been associated with civilisation and virtue and seen as the definition of beauty, while blackness is degraded to ugly, uncivilised and sinful.

2.4 COLONIALISM AND APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

South African politician, Hellen Zille, stated the following regarding South African colonialism: “For those claiming the legacy of colonialism was *only* negative, think of our independent judiciary, transport infrastructure and piped water” (Zille, 2017). The statement by Zille is quite strong, also it does not highlight the numerous deaths of many South African people including the Khoi–San, nor does the statement reference the loss of culture, community and land of South African black people.

According to theological scholars, Erna and Willem H. Oliver (2017:4, 5), South Africa went through two phases of European colonialism, the first being the Dutch intrusion and settlement in the Cape of Good Hope (Cape Town) in 1652. The Dutch settled in the Cape under Jan Van Riebeeck with the aim of establishing a halfway station between Europe and India. The second form of European colonialism in South Africa happened in 1795 when the British took the Cape from the Dutch. In 1803 the British returned the Cape colony back to the Dutch and took it again later during the Napoleonic wars in order to protect the sea route to India, and from 1806 the Cape became a colony of Britain until 1961.

Between 1910 and 1948, the economic development of South Africa was on the increase with the booming mining and agricultural industry. By the late 1940s, industrial growth in South Africa and the implementation of state aid for white people phased out white poverty and Afrikaners were grabbing a foothold within the

country's economic development[12]. History Professor Leonard Thompson (2001:213) refers to this period in South Africa, mentioning how the white population of the country at the time, constituted their supremacy in the state, which had a negative impact on the black, Coloured and Indian inhabitants of the country. The negative impact of economic development led to the black people of the country being limited to subservient roles in the country whereas people of colour came to be employed as domestics (white neighbourhoods), part of the labour force and field workers (mining and agricultural sector) through which a racial dichotomy was developed based on racist ideas and practices (Thompson, 2001:214).[13]

The lengthy process of European colonialism, industrialisation and a need for economic advancement in South Africa (which also encompasses the various Boer, settler and British wars), as well as the subjugation of the native people for territorial conquest, enslavement of black, Indian and Coloured people and the need to 'civilise inferior natives' eventually came to influence a system referred to as 'apartheid'. Apartheid (a name derived from the Afrikaans word meaning 'separateness'), is a system that was based on the continuation of white domination and supremacy. Apartheid focused on European economic and social control, as well as racial separation through social constructs such as language, culture, and education. The system of apartheid was institutionalised in South Africa in 1948 when the Nationalist party came into power (Anti-apartheid Movement, 1974:45).

[12] The term Afrikaner refers to a unique cultural group who are descendants of the early European settlers on the Southern part of Africa in the middle of the seventeen century. The group, identifying themselves as Africans, developed their own language (Afrikaans), national identity, history and religion (sahistory, 2001/2018).

[13] The study will use the term 'people of colour' to refer to people/a person who is not white or of European parentage, the term in this instance is inclusive of black, coloured and Indian people living in South Africa at the time in the twentieth century. The study acknowledges the use of the term in a European and American setting to refer to non- white people.

One of the first steps of apartheid was the development of institutionalised racial differentiation which was established through various Acts; among them was The Population Registration Act No 30 of 1950. The Population Registration Act continued the legacy of othering, cementing the status of the black person as being of the lowest level in South Africa. The Population Registration Act categorised South African citizens into a limited number of racial groups, which included white, Coloured, Indian, Bantu and Asian. Psychology scholar Jenna Lee Marco (2012:17) asserts that various racial signifiers were used in order to determine a person's classification category; included in the signifiers were skin colour and hair texture, however, in cases of ambiguous skin colour and facial features, such as size of lips and colour of eyes, hair became a stronger determinant of race categorisation.

Caroline Gaffney, Danielle Lutgens and Sean Denney (2013:9) explain the central role hair played in the process of racial classification, by illuminating how government officials of South Africa administered tests known as *Ukuguqula Ibatyi*, which can be described as 'pencil tests'. The pencil test was used to determine which ethnic/racial group a certain individual would belong to if ethnicity seemed ambiguous. The measurement of length and texture of an individual's hair was used as a classification method to qualify the categorisation of an individual as belonging in a certain racial group.

History Lecturer Vashna Jagarnath explains this method (2005:6): "A pencil was pushed into the hair of the 'victim' who was then told to shake his/her head. If the pencil fell out the person was declared 'Coloured', and if it remained, the person was declared 'native'." In this instance, hair was a primary signifier of ethnicity; based on the texture of an individual's hair "one slip of a pencil could turn a born Coloured person into a completely different ethnicity on paper" (Gaffney, Lutgens, & Denney,

2013:9). The problem with this hair test was that while one individual's hair may be classified as 'native', the siblings of that very same individual could be regarded as belonging to a different racial group (Gaffney, Lutgens, & Denney, 2013:9). Hair, in this case, became a signifier of identity, with black hair being constructed as a signifier of inferiority.

Kortright (2003:3) comments that the discourse on colonialism can be applied to the discussion of apartheid as he illuminates that the colonial processes of racial classification and supremacist ideology inevitably led to the undoing of the native's culture, resulting in the ongoing devaluation and negative definition of the identity of the black population. Although colonialism and apartheid can be said to be in the past, the ideology of superiority and inferiority within various races has remained influential in the identity construction of the victims and later generations, creating and still influencing the current institutions of social, economic, and political practices. South African actor and author, Nakedi Ribane (2006:2) comments on the lasting effects of apartheid on the psyche of the black woman/man stating:

> When the Dutch came to South Africa for the first time in April 1652 followed by the English and other White settlers, they put a stamp on the country that would be difficult to erase. The cultural dominance they brought with them has endured up to the present. Their white-supremacy values did lasting damage to black pride and self-image resulting in the suppression and in some cases, virtual erasure of indigenous culture.

Fiona Swain recently researched the effects of colonialism on the black psyche as well as the preoccupation of black women with white beauty standards. Swain (2012:17) suggests that black women in the United States of America have negative perceptions about their own skins and hair, attempting to fit into white-dominated environments and adopting white ideologies of beauty. Swain reports that black women and men apply imposed European standard of beauty when judging the level

of attractiveness of women. Swain further reports that the level of attractiveness of a black woman is measured on the basis of how light her skin is and the texture of their hair. Swain (2012:18) further mentions how “white skin, straight hair, and European facial features and eyes are accepted as beautiful, while black features are less associated with beauty”. Swain (2012:18) describes this process as a form of symbolic violence (borrowing from Pierre Bourdieu), where an unnoticed dominance is maintained through social habits or ‘habitus’.

The concept of symbolic violence – which is associated with self-hate - was originally introduced by Bourdieu in his book; *The Logic of Practice* (1980/1990:52). It refers a non-physical form of violence, wherein the norms of a dominating social group are internalised by the oppressed. It refers to the role that the self plays within a specific social setting, which ensures that social order is considered normal and may constitute, justify and legitimise existing social structures. Symbolic violence thus refers to the unconscious modes of cultural domination that happen on a daily basis and manifest as social habits where the conditions of existence produce habitus. In simple terms; habitus represents the actions, perceptions and manner in which a person may act and live her life and creates an attitude that is consistent with the outside conditions.

Although Swain researched the notion of habitus from an American point of view, the research can be applied to the beauty paradigm in South Africa as well. Symbolic violence (an unnoticed dominance) develops from discriminatory beliefs and involves the imposition of a particular ideology on a dominated group resulting in the dominated group valuing the dominator’s ideology, actively observing and evaluating the world through the lens of the imposed dominator’s ideology. The ideology is

perceived as legitimate and therefore perpetuated and reinforced without question. This subtle type of violence at times goes unnoticed by the dominated group who internalises oppressive perceptions and eventually own it as their truth. Swain (2012:9) refers to the concept of the 'lily complex' in this regard. This concept refers to the belief by the once-dominated that the only way to embody beauty is to look as white as possible.

The implementation of racist acts and racist systems in South Africa has led to a construction of a particular beauty ideal and hierarchy in South Africa. Ribane affirms this notion when she references the black skin of women; Ribane (2006:12) states that in traditional South Africa, lightness in complexion has become a valued trait, quoting a traditional wedding song known to Sepedi, Setswana, and Sesotho-speaking people that is sung as "*tswang, tswang, tswang, le bone ngwana otshwana le le coloured*"; the song refers to the bride and celebrates her beauty, as the song translated into English means "behold our beautiful bride that looks like a Coloured". This is a simple song highlighting the simple disavowal of black beauty and affirming the notion that beauty resides in the lightness of skin, and implying that the closest a black person can get to the lighter skin, or rather the closer a black person can get to beauty is through whiteness.

Psychology scholar Slindile Mbatha (2016:4) discusses the hierarchy of races in South Africa during the apartheid era, mentioning that it was considered better to be classified as Coloured (rather than black). Coloureds were often associated with whites as they tended to speak the same language (Afrikaans and English) and also due to the assumed traces of white ancestry. Coloureds were often seen as being above the black person with dark skin on the hierarchy, but never on the same level

as whites. They were afforded fewer legislative restrictions and other economic privileges which were denied to the black person.

Coloureds during the apartheid era were higher on the racial hierarchy in terms of rights and jobs and (as the song suggests) were seen as more beautiful than black people, due to the fact or belief that they had white genes in their biological makeup. A number of Coloureds had fairer skins, longer and straighter hair and were seen as closer to the white person, which led to the celebration and adoration of 'Colouredness'. South African author Luso Mnthali (2010) discusses hair issues amongst black people and mentions that if, however, there happened to be a Coloured whose native genes were stronger than the white genes, the Coloured with curlier, shorter hair and a darker complexion would then not be seen as Coloured; she would now be in a state below the lighter skinned Coloured, and closer to black. She would, therefore, be othered both by the apartheid regime and the black people and would not be seen as beautiful.

The representation of Coloured people as being better than black people is not a concept that black people founded on their own – it was a mythical idea which they internalised and turned into the truth that which was imposed on them by the apartheid regime (refer to Bourdieu's notions of habitus mentioned earlier). It was developed through colonialism and apartheid in South Africa which constituted black people and blackness as ugly and ranked them on the bottom of the beauty hierarchy.

Ribane (2006:52) comments on this perpetuation of blackness as ugly and states that some practices of black people in South Africa aimed towards achieving a lighter look, one closer to Coloureds or even worse, whiteness. Pointing out the use of skin

lightning products as early as the 1960s, Ribane (2006:52) refers to the use of these skin lightening products by black South African men and women and adds that the use of those products represented the strong negative self-image of black individuals that was brought upon them by apartheid.

The negative impact of colonial and apartheid constructions of black skin on the individual can be illustrated by referring to the case of the popular South African *kwaito* musician Nomasonto Mnisi also known as Mshoza, who submitted to skin lightening treatment in an attempt to get a lighter skin tone. *Drum Magazine* (2011, issue 996, Figure 2.11) quotes Mshoza stating that she "was tired of being ugly". The magazine cover showcases two images of Mshoza, prior to and after the skin lightening treatment. Mshoza's quote, on the cover of *Drum Magazine,* correlates with Ribane's notions regarding skin lightening treatments. Ribane (2006:52) states that skin bleaching is derived from a negative self-image of black people; as Mnisi states that she was ugly before the transformation and uses the treatment as a means to escape her ugly self, in order to transform to a more beautiful, lighter-skinned version of herself. While embracing the skin-lightening procedure, Mnisi seems to be denying this apparent bias against her own dark skin. Quoted from a newspaper interview, Mnisi states; "I want to be like Michael Jackson. I know that black is beautiful. I don't hate being black. I'm just enhancing my beauty. I loved myself when I was dark, and I love myself now that I'm lighter" (informafrica, 2012).

Figure 2.11: *Drum Magazine* cover. 2011. Issue 996 (informafrica, 2012).

2.5 CONCLUSION

Providing a contextual basis for the dissertation, Chapter Two has examined the hairstyling choices and practices of black women of African descent. Secondly, the chapter has discussed slavery and European colonisation in Africa, highlighting notions of othering as well as the dichotomy of superior and inferior imposed through European scholarship and literature. Thirdly, the chapter has explored European colonialism in South Africa, and the development of apartheid in South Africa, highlighting the pencil test imposed through legal Acts such as the Population Registration Act (No 30 of 1950) and how that resulted in black hair as a signifier of inferiority. The chapter further demonstrated through the adoption of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus, the internalisation of black as inferior and the

development of a beauty hierarchy influenced by European ideology on black bodies. The following chapter will discuss select artworks pertinent to the black hair and hairstyling, as well as racial issues of black women seen through the artworks of Gavin Jantjes, Tracey Rose, Zanele Muholi and Lorna Simpson.

CHAPTER THREE

3 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Three examines the artworks of selected South African and American artists. The chapter will look at artworks by South African artists, Gavin Jantjes, Tracey Rose and Zanele Muholi, as well as American artist, Lorna Simpson, highlighting issues pertinent to black hair and hairstyling such as hair as a signifier of inferiority with a particular focus on hairstyling as a performance of identity.

3.1 SOUTH AFRICA: GAVIN JANTJES, TRACEY ROSE, AND ZANELE MUHOLI

3.1.1 GAVIN JANTJES

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, European colonialism and apartheid have had a negative influence on the representation and perception of black features such as skin colour and hair of black women in South Africa. Black features, including hair, were used as signifiers of racial inferiority in South Africa and abroad. The pencil test (mentioned in Chapter Two) contributed to the view that hair is a quantifiable racial signifier; the test was used as a tool for segregation and a validator of oppression. Visual studies scholar Khulekani Madlela (2018:41) mentions the pencil test in reference to the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950 and states that it classified Coloured people as being better than the Bantu people and served as forming a buffer between the supposedly inferior blacks and superior whites.

South African artist, Gavin Jantjes, refers to the racial signifiers within his printmaking series titled *A South African Colouring Book* (1974-5). *A South African Colouring Book* is a series of eleven prints detailing the inequalities and violence of the apartheid system. Jantjes who was classified as a ‘Cape Coloured’ during the

apartheid era interrogates this classification system in one of the prints included in the series (Figure 3.1). The artist details the various classification categories included in the act, pointing out the hierarchical system embedded in the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950, and the rights appointed to the various classification groups. Jantjes (1974-5) states:

> The racial label put on a non-White child at birth is not only a badge of race, it is a permanent badge of inferiority…if he is classified as 'Coloured' he will be excluded from certain occupations reserved for 'Whites', his trade union and other rights will be inferior to those of his White fellow workers. In many occupations, his pay is likely to be lower. If he is classified as 'Bantu', he is in every way made inferior to both White and Coloured in education, employment, earnings, trade union rights and everything concerned with making a living.

In every print within the series, a colour strip is included with six colours, an image of a paint box, and satirical instructions for the viewer to apply colour to specific elements in the print. The instruction mimics children's colouring books; for example a children's colouring book would encourage a child to colour a specific illustrated object red, for instance. In this specific print, Jantjes attempts to illustrate his imposed classification category, as well as highlight the rights afforded to him as a Cape Coloured. At the bottom of the print, Jantjes places an image of a black person with an afro hairstyle which calls to mind (in this context) the use of the 'pencil test' as a determinant of race.

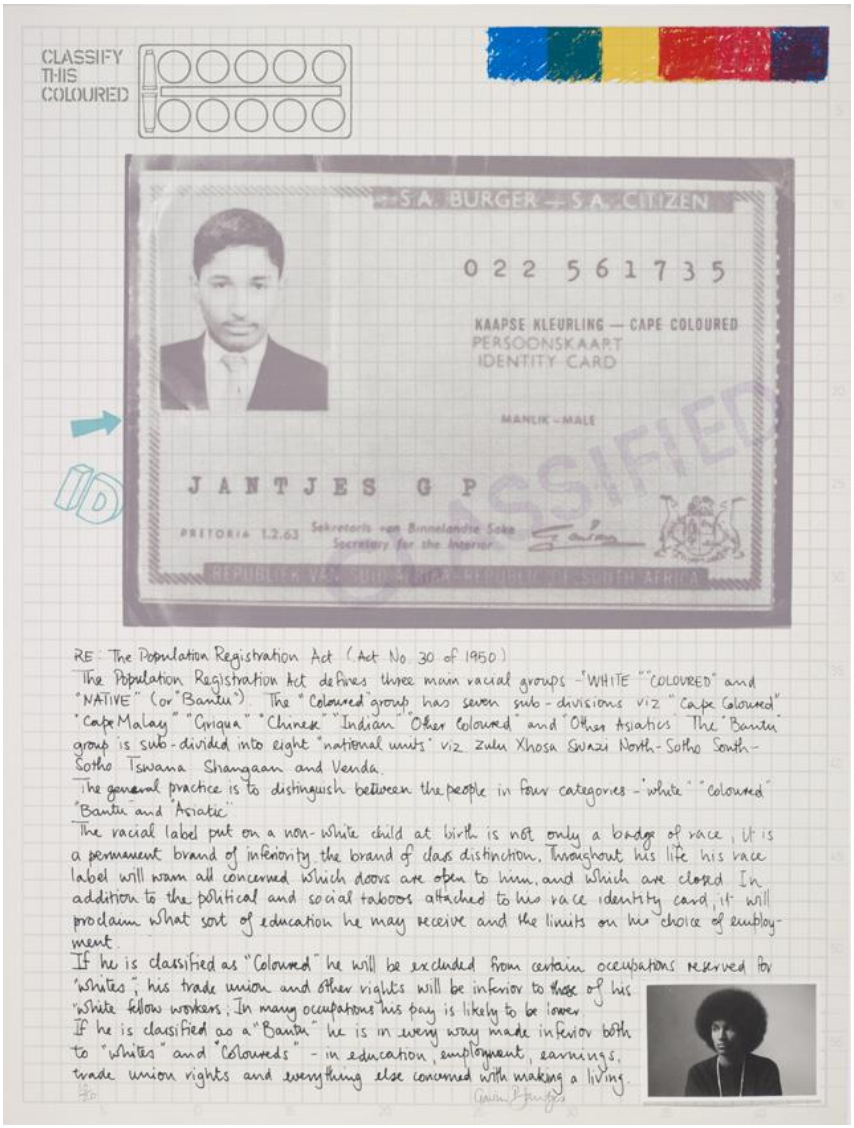


Figure 3.1: Jantjes. Gavin. 1974-5. *A South African Colouring Book.* Serigraph print. 45 x 60cm. Johannesburg Art Gallery (Author) (artnet.com).

While referring to another print included in the series (Figure 4.2), Jantjes quotes from Fanon's *Toward an African Revolution* (1945/1967:39) and comments on the inevitable newly created and justified ambition of the native to escape his colonised and apparently inferior, and uncivilised condition. This ambition led to the endeavour by the colonised native/Bantu to resemble the coloniser, in an attempt to escape his apparently native, inferior and uncivilised state, so that he may be seen as an equal on the racial hierarchy. This view concurs with that of Kortright (2003:5) where he

states: “So now the colonised actively and enthusiastically aims to forget his tradition and culture by changing collective habits and ideology and adopts a more Western-inclined language, culture, and custom”.

In this specific print, Jantjes uses images by South African anti-apartheid photographer Ernest Cole. Two photographs from Cole’s series *House of Bondage* (1967) are used and reproduced in the negative, inverting the black and white colour dichotomy.[14] On the top part of the print, Jantjes places an image detailing a wedding scene. The married couple is about to depart and enter a car with a crowd of people around them. Due to the colour inversion of black and white, the bride coincidently looks as if she is white, and her wedding gown black, reminiscent of mourning attire. The car and wedding ribbons on the car are now also black, implying that the car is to be used for funeral purposes. Jantjes uses these visual elements and codes to highlight the assimilation of black people into white culture, dramatically changing a celebration into a mourning scene, mourning the eradication of black culture, customs, and tradition in favour of whiter values.

The lower part of the print by Jantjes also includes an inverted photograph of a beauty pageant scene. The photograph captures black women (many hiding their hair under hats) who now appear to be white, accepting and participating in white standardised activities of measuring beauty. Included in the print is a quote by Fanon (1945/1967:39) which reads:

> Having judged, condemned, abandoned his cultural forms, his language, his food habits, his sexual behaviour, his way of sitting down, of resting, of laughing, of enjoying himself, the oppressed flings himself upon the imposed culture with the desperation of a drowning man.

[14] *House of Bondage* (1968) is a book by photographer Ernest Cole that visually documents apartheid in South Africa. The book details the regulated and controlled oppression of the black majority living in South Africa at the time.

The text plays a crucial role within the print as if narrating the progression taken upon by the black woman/ man to escape her inferior state, actively ridding herself of her blackness and black identity, furthermore adopting a newly imposed ideologically constructed beauty ideal. At the bottom of the page, Elizabeth Manchester in her online article on Tate Britain (2005) states how Jantjes purposefully places an image of an African mask that is adorned with hair in an attempt to "counterbalance[s] the Western cultural activities enacted by the people in the photographs". Jantjes reminds the viewer of the already established rich culture that the black person is leaving behind and further encourages the viewer's response to the print; instructing the viewer to apply a white hue to the black people in print as if confirming their consumption and assimilation of the white 'superior' culture.

Ribane (2006:15) affirms the views expressed by Fanon (1945/1967:39) and Jantjes when she mentions the religious influences brought upon indigenous South African traditions and lifestyle by white culture. Ribane (2006:15) claims that the imposed white culture has come to be subtly embedded and mistaken for African culture, referring to the contemporary common practice by black women of wearing *doeks* (headscarves): "…many self-respecting black women of the older generation go around covering up their crowning glories with a *doek*, unaware that the custom originated from the missionary teaching that worshippers must cover their heads as a sign of respect when going to church".[15] Ribane (2006:15) highlights the assimilation of the custom into black culture, describing how it is perceived as an indigenous traditional practice. Ribane further expresses how this custom has been used as a process of eliminating the pride inherent in black hair, perpetuating the idea that black hair must be kept hidden.

[15] The use of the words 'crowning glories' refers to the natural hair of black women. It is actually used in general to refer to hair.

Figure 3.2 : Jantjes, Gavin. 1974-5. *A South African Colouring Book*. Serigraph print. 45 x 60cm. Johannesburg Art Gallery (Author) (artnet.com).

3.1.2 TRACEY ROSE

Dealing with notions of the black woman's body and the physical manifestations of blackness as a projection of inferiority, Tracey Rose uses her own body as a site of contention to subvert the colonial and apartheid horror witnessed throughout the

colonial and apartheid periods. Against the backdrop of the racial representational politics mentioned in Chapter Two as well as the negative framing of blackness throughout the colonial and apartheid periods, Tracey Rose emerges in Post-apartheid South Africa addressing the racial gaze and fore mentioned issues regarding the black body and hair.

As a Coloured woman who grew up in South Africa, Rose uses her body and hair as a medium to confront post-colonial identity in her various artworks and performances. Rose contests the stereotyped prejudicial notions of Colouredness in South Africa, using her own body as a site of interrogation. Rose remarks that the image of a Coloured person can call to mind negative associations with miscegenation (a sexual act between whites and 'inferior' blacks). Social anthropology author Francesco Pellizi (2005:56) reiterates this as she comments on how Colouredness is often regarded as being a product of illicit sex and how it appears that the conception of Colouredness is derived from negative connotations of "fucking and raping" with disregard to the fact that everyone is a product of sexual reproduction. According to Pellizi (2005:56), Rose further comments on her Coloured body, stating she did not choose to be born Coloured, she did not choose her hair, and neither did she choose to be a woman, as she references her Catholic upbringing when she (Rose) states: "I'm expected to represent it [her body] … and I will represent it in a manner that differs from what is expected" (Pellizi, 2005:56). Fine art scholar Lee-At Meyerov (2006:45) records Rose's statements as she makes observations on her hair as a Coloured woman, and differentiates between straight hair and *kroes* hair, and notes the negative connotations of having either. Rose states (in Meyerov, 2006:45):

> …it marks you in certain ways, towards whiteness or blackness. On the one hand, it's about the 'privilege' of having straight hair as opposed to '*kroes'* (kinky), but on the other hand, having straight hair meant you were often insulted for thinking you were white, for pretending to be white.

In her performance art video *Untitled* (1996) (Figures 3.3 & 3.4), Rose uses a surveillance camera which is shot from a high angle downwards to show a shadowy image of her. With this video, Rose invites the observer into the private space of an austere tiled bathroom in which she films herself in the process of shaving off all of her bodily hair. The view of the video is grainy, a deliberate action by Rose to obscure the vision of the observer. Author Annie E Coombes (2003:257) comments on the artworks, noting Rose's use of the uncomfortable buzzing sound of an electric razor as a soundtrack, a sound which "usually identified with the male bathroom ritual of shaving". Coombes (2003:257) further mentions how the video creates a destabilising and uncomfortable sense of sight and hearing, furthermore adding to a claustrophobic feeling created by the video. The viewpoint of the camera, the obscured visibility of the video, as well as the absence of sound which is replaced by the buzzing soundtrack, invite associations with surveillance and the play between the public and private space as a comment on both ethnographic studies and the surveillance practices of the South African apartheid government. By eliminating the original sounds of the scene and ensuring there is no dialogue, Rose denotes the practice of ethnographic studies and private surveillance as unreliable tools for the analysis of actions and motivations of the subject under scrutiny. Visual arts and philosophy scholar, Pauline Casley–Hayford describes this notion (2015:44): "Rose attempts to decolonise the minds of her audience by highlighting the shortfalls of observation and ethnography in the context of its application to colonised people."

Furthermore, there are numerous narratives inherent in this work, the first being the specific role that hair plays in society as well as noting the difference between hairs

on different parts of the body. When Rose removes all the hair off her body, hair that she is ‘supposed' to remove, as well as the hair that she should not, she relates to the use of hair as a marker of significant dichotomies such as male and female (where men have more body hair and women less), as well as child and adult.[16] Hair functions in some communities/ societies as a technique of control and manipulation and hair removal can be used as a tool of self-improvement.[17] Therefore, the choice by Rose to either remove or not remove her hair, places her on either side of the dichotomy - both “upholding and displacing the binary oppositions between fundamental categories” relevant to hair (Smelik, 2015:233). When a woman shaves the hair on her head (as Rose also does), because of the associations of females with hair or rather because of gendered representations of hair, negative associations arise.

The negative connotations which are associated with a bald head include “mourning, shame, penance and incarceration” (Coombes, 2003:257). For Rose, the act was about both de-masculating (in the case of body hair) and de-feminising (in the case of head hair) her body; visual artist and author Sue Williamson (2001) states how Rose wanted to literally shave off both notions of masculinity and femininity, including all their presumed associations inherent in hair. As mentioned above, the use of the buzzing soundtrack also plays a huge role here, as the sound is gender specific to a male ritual. If an ill-informed person were to watch the video inattentively and just listened to the sound, they would probably assume that the video represented a man.

[16] Bodily hair is used as a marker between childhood and adulthood: “Children are naturally hairless while body hair is a secondary sexual characteristic for mature humans. Removing bodily hair, including pubic hair in particular, makes the adult body look younger and more infantile” (Smelik, 2015:240).

[17] “In the affluent West, there is a tendency for the body to be seen as an entity which is in the process of becoming; a project which should be worked at and accomplished as part of an individual’s self-identity” (Smelik, 2015:235).

Another narrative embedded in this video is the exploration of the relationship between the other and the observer/ethnographer. The video interrogates the theme of hair as a signifier of identity/ethnicity where Rose contests the systems of identity and representation by resisting the 'stereotyped representation of the other' (Casley–Hayford, 2015:46) and challenging established categorisations of race and beauty.

Figure 3.3: Rose, Tracey. 1996. *Untitled*, Single-channel video installation, black-and-white, sound, dimensions variable (Williamson, 2001).

Figure 3.4: Rose, Tracey. 1996. *Untitled*, Single-channel video installation, black-and-white, sound, dimensions variable, (Casley-Hayford, 2015:44).

In one of her other works, titled *Span I* (2007, Figures 3.5 & 3.6), Rose elects a male ex-prisoner (Mike Hanekom) who is dressed in a red overall, to carve text onto the wall in a gallery space. The artwork is a performance piece where the incisions made by the elected prisoner silently narrates, in a confessional manner, the memories of Rose regarding her personal narratives around race and hair and the role the two intertwined concepts played in her childhood. The ex-prisoner utters no words and dialogue is created through the words he inscribes on the wall and the sound of each incision. This performance took place in a gallery space where Rose was present but isolated from the performance. She simultaneously knotted her hair in another performance piece titled *Span II*.

Hanekom inscribes text that references Rose's experiences, inclusive of the paradoxes of growing up as a young Coloured woman in South Africa. The work also refers to Rose's feelings regarding her upbringing in her home with regards to her relationship with her family. In this performance piece, the first two sentences of the inscription are placed in such a way as if telling a story orally coincides with a stream of sudden enlightenment. The first two sentences of the artwork state: "When I was young, I used to think I was the personification of the chunky wooden chairs in my mother's lounge" (Rose, 2007).

Coombes (2003:257) sees the work as a confessional, interpreting it in relation to the personal testimonials recorded at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission proceedings in South Africa.[18] What differentiates this art performance from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission confessionals is that the performances are of

[18] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) refers to the court-like body that was assembled in South Africa after apartheid. Members of the public who fell victim to the violent acts of the apartheid regime could come forward and be heard at the TRC. Perpetrators of violence were also given a chance to come and confess by giving testimonies of their violent crimes and request amnesty from prosecution (sahistory, 2017).

personal and familial conflict, representing more of an internal rather than an external confession. Coombes recognises that the former Truth and Reconciliation Commission confessionals present grand narratives of life during apartheid, as well as transgressions perpetrated by specific people during the time of apartheid.

Contrary to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission confessions, Rose's specific confessional is based on thoughts and feelings which reflect on the internalisation and psychological damage brought upon by the discriminating ideology of the apartheid regime on communities which were discriminated against. Coombes (2003:278) further discusses Rose's confession stating: "(Rose) thus acknowledges how her own sensitivities to skin, hair and eye colour conditioned her responses to individuals even among her own family and friends." Rose's election of an ex-prisoner to inscribe her past plays a significant role worth interrogating. The election of an ex-prisoner by Rose would speak to Rose finally freeing herself from the thoughts that kept her a prisoner in her own mind. The fact that Hanekom was a man could be Rose's attempt at ridiculing the patriarchal systems of truth and representation in South Africa. Or she could simply be asking for penance regarding her thoughts, behaviour, and her internalisation of modes of apartheid representation. The inclusion of the male prisoner in the performance piece make it perplexing for one to comprehend the various narratives present in the performance with links to race and hair and the role they played during her upbringing in a racialised South Africa (Williamson, 2001).

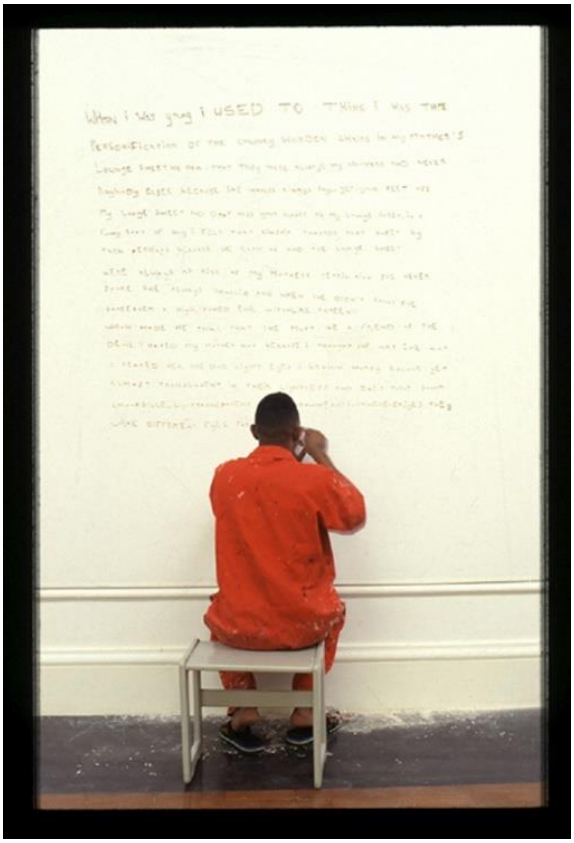


Figure 3.5: Rose, Tracey. 1997. *Span I*. Digital print in pigment inks on 100% cotton rag paper. (Williamson, 2001).

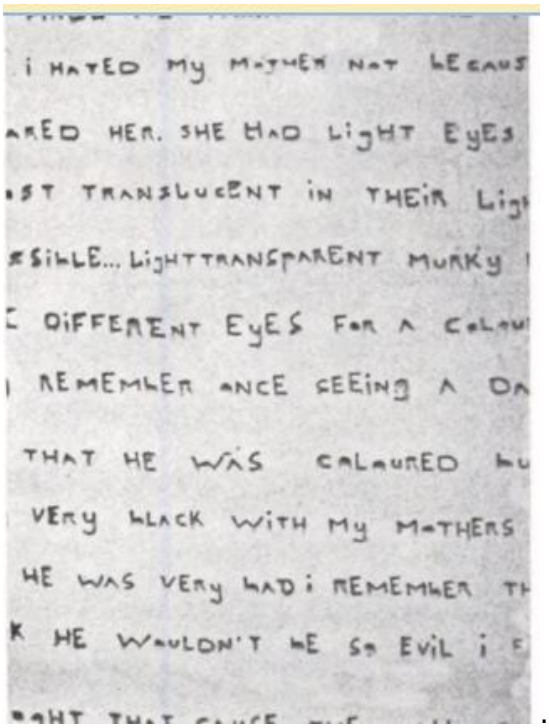


Figure 3.6: Rose, Tracey. 1997. *Span I*: Detail from wall inscription (Coombes, 2003:258).

Span II (Figure 3.7) refers to a performance piece by Rose at the Second Johannesburg Biennale in 1997. In this performance piece, Rose places herself in the position of an object of study by sitting sideways on a television set, naked, with all her hair shaved off.[19] Rose places herself inside a glass cabinet, mindlessly knotting strands of her own shaven hair. Displayed on the television set is the naked body of Rose, reminiscent of the numerous naked and semi-naked photographs taken of black women in Africa during the colonial period. The performance can be perceived as paying homage to the story of Saartjie Baartman in which Rose performs her racial and gendered classification with reference to the scientific study of people of colour. Visual culture and media studies author Nicole Fleetwood (2011:32) comments on the visual narrative presented by Rose, which is reminiscent of the colonial culture of studying and placing black bodies on display (photography and other media) and paraphrases that: “Rose, through this enactment, declares ‘look at a Black woman, caged as captive flesh’.” Visual arts scholar, Sharlene Khan (2014:70) notes how Rose uses her body as though it were a motif for ethnographic research and autobiographical witnessing and the exposure of the relationships embedded within the dichotomy of powerlessness and power. Khan (2014:75) further observes Rose’s adoption of her body as a means of contesting preconceived forms of representation: "The placing of women-of-colour bodies at the centre of discussions also highlights the black body not only as a political metaphor but as a site for collective political activism as Rose not only uses the representation of her body (images) but her actual physical body as a site of controversy”.

Notions of private and public come into play as Rose sits naked in a public gallery space and creates a private realm for herself inside the glass cabinet where she can

[19] Rose shaved all her hair off during the recording of the *Untitled* (1996) video.

be seen, but not touched. An additional narrative that develops from this performance is the European/world gaze that was on South Africa due to media saturation at that specific post-apartheid moment (Fleetwood, 2011:31). Khan (2014:71) further highlights the importance of the construction/reconstruction of the self in post-apartheid South Africa, stating how the experience of the self by the native had been overdetermined by racist and sexist external definitions and representations of black identity. The performance piece similarly addresses narratives based on black hair; fine arts scholar, Illenè Jacobs (2007:39), speculates that the hair that Rose cuts off in her *Untitled* (1996) video is the piece of hair that she sits and knots while in the glass container as a performance of a specifically gendered identity. Jacobs (2007:39) quotes Rose about the performance piece as she states: "With my naked body on the TV, I wanted to negate the passivity of the action of the reclining nude. In doing the piece, I had to confront what I wasn't supposed to do with my body. The work is a cleansing act, a coming out."

The artwork serves both as an act of contention as well as a catharsis, through this work Rose questions and critiques the negative framing of the black body while also generating a site aimed at creating a new framing of the black body; it is as if Rose is saying ‘look at my body, rid it off your exotic and voyeuristic nuances, and watch me create a new narrative for myself”.

Jacobs (2007:40) notes how Rose “breaks the rules” in her attempts to create an almost androgynous figure, blurring the boundaries between male and female. Visual arts author N’Gonè Fall (2007:4), comments on the various works of Tracey Rose where she uses her body and states that women know that their bodies are perceived and utilised as objects of “desire, submission and fantasy”; basically regarded as sex objects, but Rose here attempts to subvert these connotations with

her female body, using it as a symbol of oppression; both as subject matter and as medium.

Figure 3.7: Rose, Tracey. 1997. *Span II*. Digital print in pigment inks on 100% cotton rag paper. 65 x 91cm. (Williamson, 2001).

Jacobs (2007:40) argues that the knotting of hair by Rose in the performance could refer to Judith Butler's concept of performativity.[20] Jacobs recognises Rose's hair knotting as an active performance of her own gender and identity. Pellizi (2005:56)

[20] Judith Butler's notion of performativity refers to the belief that all bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence (and there is no existence that is not social). There is the absence of a conceptual "natural body" pre-existent of social cultural inscriptions. From this notion it can be concluded that gender is closely linked/associated to a verb rather than a noun, a "doing" rather than a "being" which is constituted by an act, or a sequence of acts (Salih, 2006:55).

quotes Rose, where she comments on her upbringing and how knotting was a tool used for self-censorship for women. Therefore, if these were the recorded feelings of Rose towards knotting, why would she feel the need to include knotting in this performance piece? “You do not want to speak,” Rose states: “And even if you do the gross incapacity to speak is tied up in these little knots, your busying hands shut you up” (Pellizi, 2005:56).

The knotting could be the only way that Rose maintains her poise; the knotting can be regarded as the act that keeps her too busy to note her external viewers and can comprise a means by which she creates a personal/private realm for herself in a public space. The act could have also been an act of rejection by Rose; a disavowal of her gendered black ethnicity. Bear in mind the aim of the work was to present her as an androgynous being, and maybe the hair was her way of disavowing her ethnicity, as well as the gendered identity her hair placed on her.

Therefore, by knotting her hair, Rose could be in the process of knotting herself a new identity, in real time, figuratively taking the power of her own identity in her hands and knotting it into whatever she wants it to be, redefining her identity and selecting the mode of representation.

Similar to Rose, South African artist, Zanele Muholi uses her body through portraiture to negotiate and re-represent notions of blackness; the following section will discuss the artworks/photography of Zanele Muholi.

3.1.3 ZANELE MUHOLI

Zanele Muholi in her photographic series *Somnyama Ngonyama* (2014-2017) uses portraiture to confront the representation of black women’s bodies, placing herself as

the sitter in her own imagery. Muholi disrupts the colonial photographic culture of representation based on notions of a white male photographer and black sitters. In the work, Muholi advocates for a different mode of representation where she as the sitter is portrayed boldly as she exaggerates her black skin in her uncompromising portraiture. Questioning notions of exoticism, fetishism, as well as othering within colonial and postcolonial photography regarding the black body, identity and cultural performances, Muholi creates a modern hyper corporeal black identity that celebrates black skin and traditional black hair performances.

Muholi employs props and found objects to adorn the body of the Dark Lioness; this time not to communicate primitiveness but to create a prowling enigma through the adoption of additives that enhance the lived experiences of black women. South African historian Hlonipha Mokoena (2017:4) characterises Muholi's imagery as representative of an Africanised Statue of Liberty that is not comforting. Through the embracing of opulent and fascinating postures and clothes, Muholi accentuates aspirations for recognition and acknowledgement but innately creates a black identity unfit for European consumption (Mokoena, 2017:8). Cultural theorist Ashraf Jamal in his article *Zanele Muholi's Reading Room* (2017:145) recognises Muholi's series as an alternative to a programmatic and reductive identity of blackness which critically requests the viewer to re-evaluate prevalent conventions and predispositions that negotiates identifications of race and its representation within the art world.

Sifikile, Nuoro, Italy, 2015 (Figure 3.8) for example, depicts a blackened naked/half naked portrait of Muholi with a hairstyle made with the inclusion of scissors. The dark skin of Muholi serves to highlight her unwelcoming facial expression. Mokoena (2017:11) suggests that Muholi's use of the scissors comprise a means of alluding to current black hair politics. She believes that the work highlights entangled meanings

of black hair and hairstyling, and further states that the placement of scissors seem to complicate the meaning of propriety, stating the utilitarian purpose of scissors as a means of cutting hair, rather than decoration. With a focus on hairstyling, the work observes the modes of self-representation as she critically highlights the cutting edge politics in black women's hair. Speaking to notions of critique Muholi expresses the self-awareness in hairstyling as the image gives off the essence of one looking at oneself in a mirror and mediating one's own representation. The many scissors included in the image could be read as the many theories that surround notions of beauty regarding the choices a woman makes with her hairstyle; the work may seem to question prevalent hair discourses, showing how one may seem to embody multiple identities through one's hairstyle choice, as she shows her natural dreadlocks filled with unnatural man made products.

Muholi in *Ntozabantu VI, Parktown,* 2016 (Figure 3.9), depicts herself as a beauty queen, adorned with a tiara and wearing a long blonde wig. The figure of Muholi is against a black backdrop that matches her skin tone. The most visible parts of the image are the tiara, hairstyle and Muholi's white eyes. Muholi looks at the observer in a confrontational gaze as if saying "Look at me, I am beautiful" and uncompromisingly demanding recognition of her roped and braided hair as her crowning glory. The work can be said to question notions of beauty, probing contemplations and mediation of the prevalent notions of black femininity and highlighting the necessity to redefine and re-imagine the black body and black beauty. Mokoena (2017:12) comments of Muholi's artwork stating: "The Lioness pouts and poses in front of the camera as if "she woke up like this"". The statement by Mokoena is quite interesting as it references the lyrics of Beyoncè's song

Flawless (2014) which celebrates black beauty and femininity as the artist proclaims and encourages a proclamation that black women have no flaws and wake up beautiful.[21]

Figure 3.8: Muholi, Zanele. 2015. *Sifikile, Nuoro, Italy*. Silver gelatin print (Mokoena, 2017:12).

[21] Drama and speech scholar, Naila Keleta-Mae refers to the song *Flawless* in her article; *A Beyoncè Feminist* (2017:237) and mentions that the song Flawless by Beyoncè was released in 2013 in the contemporary R&B genre. The song features a segment by Author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichi;s TedX talk; *We should all be feminists* (2013) and Beyoncé's lyrics include "you wake up flawless…I woke up like this…We flawless ladies tell'em".

The work could also be confronting the archive of representation as well as the pain of being represented as ugly and inferior which Jamal (2017:145) refers to as “black pain”, as well as well as the disseminated exoticisation and denigration through colonial imagery. Muholi could be highlighting the assimilated notions of modern beauty, negotiating preconceived ideas of black womanhood in South Africa and also arguing with black essentialism around the beauty debate in South Africa. Through the hairstyle and other hairstyles in the series, Muholi’s coiffuring’s deal with black hair as contentious subject, with the natural versus fake debate and notions of mimicry present in the reading of black women’s hairstyling choices and practices. Mokoena (2017:11) affirms this statement as she mentions the “Afrocentric critique of wigs and weaves or the mainstream condemnation of braids, locks and extensions as a form of mimicry”. Like the work of Lorna Simpson (discussed later), this image of Muholi’s seems to be imbedded with multiple meanings, declarations of black self-determination and interrogations that both celebrate and questions the affiliated racial divisiveness embedded in colourism and modern notions of blackness and representations.[22]

Somnyama IV, 2015 (Figure 3.10), shows a bare breasted Muholi, with a pile of weaved hair on her head. The work is reminiscent of colonial photography of Casmir Zagourski where she highlights the anthropological gaze in visual culture that has plagued black women’s representation and commodification based on notions of the exotic. The work emanates from the visual trials and tribulations of the aggrieved black body. Her facial expression however is suggestive of a liberatory narrative where blackness can no longer be framed or objectified as she further produces a reflective darkness that is more ‘intensified, and more self-contained in her own

[22] Taunya Banks refers to colourism as a form of discrimination against the darker skin toned black people (Banks, 2000:1705).

representation of herself. Through the artificial blackening of her body, Muholi seems to be interrogating the anthropological notion of the camera as an authentic and truthful recorder of people, also questioning the physiognomic and phrenological approaches that recorded body shape, proportions, posture, and naked torsos of the black sitters as she refutes the abusive and reductive characteristics that were placed on blackness. Jamal (2017:158) reviews Muholi's imagery, further stating that:

> For in this series of self-portraits there is lightness at the heart of blackness, a refusal, through self-objectification, of being objectified in turn. Here blackness is neither named nor framed, despite the fact that these images are clearly rigged. Muholi 'harkens to an inner voice, calling her to be unashamedly present to herself'.

Reaffirming her black identity within various geographical spatial zones, Muholi celebrates the African aesthetic; approximating a reanimation of the black is beautiful movement and paying homage to traditional African imagery and culture by subverting the ethnographic imagery of black identity and pride. African art scholar Tymon Smith (2016) discusses Muholi's artworks and states that the artworks invite interpretation and are loaded with implications. Muholi's self-portraits celebrate blackness as they emancipate blackness from the negative connotations that have accompanied it since the nineteenth century. Her open-ended representations of her black self are exploratory in their contemplation of race and racism and the negative framing of black bodies globally. Her depiction of blackness is one filled with dramatic expression and innovation as she radically alters the visual and textual materiality of blackness and frees it from the grotesque history of oppression and denigration (Jamal, 2017:161). Determined to expel the culturally dominant ideology of black beauty globally within media and practice, Muholi (2015) states:

I’m reclaiming my blackness, which I feel is continuously performed by the privileged other. My reality is that I do not mimic black; it is my skin and, the experience of being black that is deeply entrenched in me.

Figure 3.9: Muholi, Zanele. 2016. *Ntozabantu VI, Parktown*. Silver gelatin print (Mokoena, 2017:13).

Figure 3.10: Muholi, Zanele. 2015. *Somnyama Ngonyama*. Installation view: Stevenson, Johannesburg (Smith, 2016).

Emphasising the beauty and splendour of black features and aesthetics, Muholi visually reveals the variegated complexities inherent in black skin and hairstyling and the destructive stereotyping thereof. Muholi looks at notions of self-representation by employing different hairstyles and found objects and aesthetically affirms opposition against the homogenising of black identity where she asks for a reassessment of the modes in which blackness is seen and recognised and how black people see themselves as she advocates for a positive reading of the black self.

Tracey Rose and Zanele Muholi use their bodies in order to negotiate and re represent notions of blackness, affirming a positive framework towards the black

body and black features such as hair, while American artist, Lorna Simpson – discussed in the next section - removes the black body within her art as she further negotiates notions and lived experiences of black women in America.

3.2 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: LORNA SIMPSON

3.2.1 LORNA SIMPSON

Noting hair as a discursive artefact, Simpson explores the role of black hair and hairstyles as a marker of social identity. Prevalent to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, black hair and hairstyling choices and practices remain a complex performance of identity. Stemming from ancient traditional African communities (prior to and during the slavery and colonial era), black hairstyling techniques and choices varied greatly and marked various social identities, communicating age, marital status, pace in community and so forth.

The development of the Trans–Atlantic slave trade negatively impacted African culture and identity. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the black body was marked with an inferior identity and with it, black aesthetics and features were also marked as inferior. Black hair and hairstyling practices and choices also came under scrutiny; as social science scholars Tabora Johnson and Teiahsha Bankhead mention (2013:87) when they express how African hair was deemed unattractive by Europeans.

Throughout the years, there have been numerous hairstyling techniques and practices practiced by black women, both in America and in South Africa. Some of these have received criticism. The criticisms and discourse on the hairstyling choices of black women will be discussed in the next chapter; however, the discussion of the artworks of Lorna Simpson that follows will be based on this history of black hair and

hairstyling where certain hair types were devalued and other hairstyles served a means of attaining economic and social favour, as Simpson started incorporating images and narratives of hair in her artworks in the early 1990s.

Exploring the role of hair as an indicator of social identity and, more specifically, the role of hair in African American culture, the artwork *1978–1988* (1990; Figure 3.11), comprises of four vertical panels. The panels feature close up presentations of braids evenly spaced on a black background. Included in the artwork are thirteen small panels that contain hair related words. The first panel starts with the panel of the year 1978 while the last one ends with the year 1988. The artwork could be suggestive of practices and processes that black hair and hairstyling has gone through within the stated years. Noting that the artwork may not be read as an actual linear and literal history of black hair in America, it could be suggesting some of the historical actions that plagued black hair and hairstyling, detailing the attempt to rid blackness from the black body through the cutting of black hair. The artwork as a progression could also show the resilience of black hair, from surviving being cut, tangled and tied to later being knotted, parted, twisted and later weaved as a means of creating new performances of identity in the new world.

Burke (2006:22) believes the work speaks to the conformation and rebellion against white standards of beauty in America through dyeing, weaving, braiding, and processing of black hair. Burke further states how the work may be read as being suggestive of a journal which represents different phases of the African American woman’s hairstyling practices, or provides a chronological charting of the changes in hairstyle preferences, commenting on black hairstyling’s transformative qualities.

Figure 3.11: Simpson, Lorna. 1990. *1978-1988*. Four gelatin silver prints and thirteen engraved plastic plaques (Burke, 2006:24).

Lorna Simpson's artwork *Coiffure* (1991) (Figure 3.12), comprises of a juxtaposition of three black-and-white images: the first image features a black woman with a closely cropped hairstyle perceived from the back, the second image features a coil of braided hair, while the third features an African mask, which is also perceived from the back. All the images included by Simpson are against a black background. Simpson further includes detailed instructions of creating a typical black hairstyle using a hairpiece (external hair). Burke (2006:24) comments on the work by Simpson, stating that the arrangement of the visual elements in the work suggest a clinical detachment, where the black woman is detached from her cultural and traditional practices through her choice of hairstyle.

The artwork is arranged as if it comprised a reversed linear timeline. The arrangement of the three items could detail the cultural history of black people in America, showing their employment of masks in Africa, as well as the use of certain hairstyles to communicate their social standing. The black woman facing the back

can be interpreted as having turned her back on African practices (willingly or not) and how her current hairstyle serves as her mask, which forms part of a new African American culture where a given hairstyle no longer communicates a certain identity but where the hairstyle serves as a tool used in attempts to transcend social status and attain better economic opportunities. The black hairstyle no longer serves as an expression of identity and culture, but the hairstyle now serves as tool aimed at manipulating a system that devalues black hair and black features.

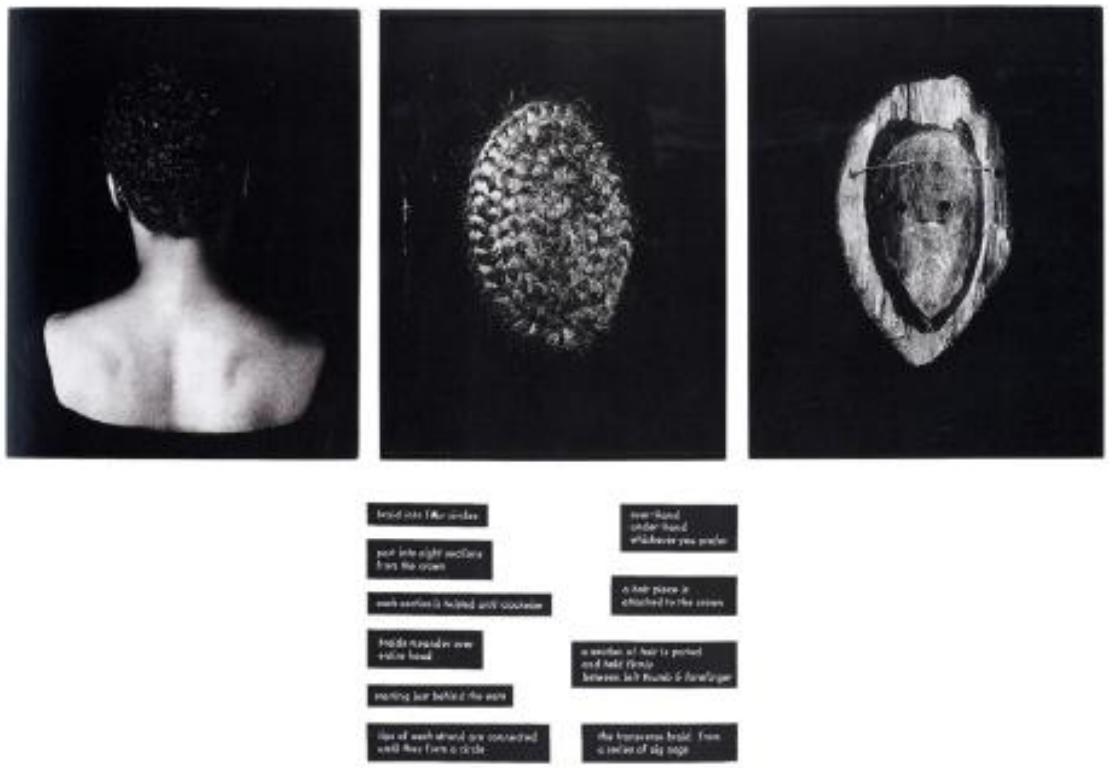


Figure 3.12: Simpson, Lorna. 1991. *Coiffure*. Three gelatin silver prints and ten engraved plastic plaques (Burke 2006:24).

The three elements, although presented together, are separated in the artwork as if one was conducting a study on the relationship between the three elements and their cultural significance. The work seems to pose a question of relativity, questioning if

the current (1991) hairstyle of black women links to African history and cultural practice, Simpson arranges the three elements in the artwork as if they are scientific specimens, void of emotional significance.

Placing the image of the woman next to the coil of hair, Simpson could be evoking the transformative power of a chosen hairstyle, where one hairstyle could communicate inferiority and another communicate a better social standing. The two images expose the chosen hairstyle as an embellishment which is alterable and removable.

In her *Wigs Portfolio* (1994) (Figure 3.13), Simpson focuses on photographing objects relative to a body and applies text to suggest the human form. *Wigs Portfolio* (1994) comprises of a variety of twenty-one wigs and extensions with various textures, shapes, lengths and colours. Independent curators Joan Rothfuss and Elizabeth Carpenter (2005:517) believe that the artwork represents a period in the artist's life where she sought to eliminate the black body as a site of contention, but rather use objects to indicate it. Eckrich (2014:6) believes that with the removal of the human body or human heads, the wigs fail at fulfilling their sole purpose. Hanging rather uncannily in the photographs, the wigs remind the viewers of the absent heads. Eckrich (2014:7) mentions how Simpson's retreat from the figure coincided with her transition from silver processes of photography to the printing of works on felt through an application of the lithography technique. Referring to material choice, Eckrich (2014:7) details Simpson's choice of using felt as an investigation of different surfaces and materials, emphasising the numerous narratives that isolate hairstyling as tactile. Simpson includes phrases in the work, such as: "the wig produced the desired effect", and, "first impressions are the most

lasting", creating and adding on to the numerous narratives relative to black hairstyling within various social spaces.

Figure 3.13: Simpson, Lorna. 1994. *Wigs (portfolio)*. Waterless lithograph on felt; edition 2/15 72 x 162 x 3/8 in. 182.9 x 411.5 x 1 cm (Rothfuss & Carpenter, 2005: 518).

The placement of the wigs and the juxtaposition with text comprised of aphorisms, bits of dialogue, and narratives could be reminiscent of a scientist's table full of specimens and accompanying notes. Speaking to the transformative qualities of the wigs, the imagery could serve as a study that addresses the unstable praxis of social identities. Throughout the work, Simpson comments on "the wig's potential as an instrument for conformity, metamorphosis, and concealment" (Museum of Modern Art, 2004), as well as the diverse identities one can embody in this modern era through various hairstyles in order to fit into a specific social space (Rothfuss & Carpenter, 2005:517). Through this work, Simpson could be visually linking contemporary hair choices and practices with traditional hair choices and practices, by showing how contemporary hairstyling is still used to communicate certain

identities of age, personal style, economic standing and political standing. The work could further be read as a questioning of the beauty ideals, tools and methods of which serve to signify ethnicity, identifying hairstyling as comprising of a performance of race, age and gender, the work serves as to challenge tenets and visual representations of blackness.

Throughout her photography Simpson removes actual framings of the black body, as she obscures and hides the body of her models and suggest these paradoxically; by placing her models in a manner where which their backs are turned towards the camera, Simpson challenges the indexicality of photography and removes the ability to stereotype and subject the black body to surveillance. Through her style Simpson destabilises the notion of a subject of study due to an absence of a full bodied subject, removing the black body from photography's representational frame. The photographs of Simpson are not derogatory representations of black women, nor are they portraits of individuals, but rather artworks based on representing blackness and challenging the normative hegemonic narratives around blackness and black hair. Through the inclusion of text Simpson also destabilises the homogenising literature of black experiences.

3.3 CONCLUSION

Chapter Three has discussed various artworks from Gavin Jantjes, Tracey Rose, Zanele Muholi and Lorna Simpson, highlighting the issues pertinent to race, hair and black hairstyling as a representation of inferiority and a performance of identity in a post-colonial and post-apartheid setting. The following chapter discusses the criticism of black hairstyling choices and practices of black women of African descent as highlighted earlier in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four will focus on hair as a marker of identity specifically looking at contemporary hairstyle choices and practices of black women in South Africa. The chapter will critically examine critical and scholarly statements that regard the current hairstyle choices of black women as a form of mimicry. This will provide context for Chapter Five, where the artistic portrayals of black women's hair are examined in relation to modernisation, globalisation and hybridity.

This chapter – Chapter Four - will refer to notions of mimicry as expressed by Frantz Fanon (1952/2008) and Homi K Bhabha (1994), and how they are applied to women of South Africa and critique the scholarly statements by applying scholarly work of Kobena Mercer (1984). The chapter will take note of the similarities and differences that were mentioned in previous chapters regarding the negative framing of blackness and treatment of black women in South Africa, Africa and the diaspora in America and interchange between various researches intercontinentally and internationally on the matter.

4.1 BLACK HAIRSTYLING AS MIMICRY

Black hairstyles are seen in some circles as a performance of identity, and some hairstyles are a means of adorning the head, and a means of negotiating identity in a post-colonial society. As mentioned, black hairstyles have in the past served as important signifiers of gender, age, marital status, as well as ethnic origin (Sieber & Herreman, 2000:56). With every paradigm shift, the hairstyles of black women change. Hairstyles have changed according to the beauty trends of the time and throughout the years one can see changes and transformations within black

hairstyling choices and practices including and not limited to elaborate coiffures of the Wambo group in Namibia (Figure 2.1), to the diaspora's relaxer (see Appendix), popularised by Madame CJ Walker in the United States of America, the afro, and the contemporary interest in weaves and wigs in South Africa (see Appendix).

Popular contemporary hairstyles of black women, including particularly weaves, wigs, extensions and hair straightening, are seemingly under societal review and have often been described as a mimetic valorisation of Eurocentric beauty ideals. Communication and media scholar Toks Odeyemi (2016) identifies current black hairstyles in South Africa as instances of conformity to Eurocentric standards of beauty and associates such styles with the demise of traditional African hairstyle practices. Odeyemi (2016:537) states that "observations of hair and hairstyles, worn by many women of black African descent reveal the triumph of a Eurocentric dominant ideology of beauty". Author and social critic bell hooks[23] in her book; *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989:2) reviews the act of hair straightening and further states that: "Within white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the social and political context in which the custom of black folks straightening our hair emerges, it represents an imitation of the dominant white group's appearance and often indicates internalised racism, self-hatred, and/or low self-esteem."

Gender studies scholars Vanessa King and Dieynaba Niabaly (2013:13), referring to African American women's hair practices in America, state: "African women believe that the discrimination against black people, in this case, colonisation, has impacted the hair choices they make because it changed the beauty standards in Africa." As a result, there is a general perception that black hairstyles are mainly a performance of

[23] bell hooks whose real name is Gloria Watkins elected the pseudonym bell hooks in tribute to her mother and great grandmother. She further decided not to capitalise her new name in order to place emphasis on her work rather than her name (hooks, 1991:1).

mimicry, an attempt to attain white beauty, and an expression of black women's disavowal of their natural state and natural hair.

In post-apartheid South Africa and with the developments in hair technology we see a growing number of black women straightening their hair and putting weaves and wigs on their heads as a means of attaining beauty or enhancing their natural hair. The coarse-textured hair of black women has been disavowed in favour of a straighter and more extended hair length. Psychology scholar Jenna Lee Marco (2012:17) criticises the current hair practices of black women in South Africa and the United States of America, stating that it is a form of simulation of the hair of white women, regarding the current choices and practices as an attempt to change one's identity from black to a more white looking identity. Marco (2012:17) refers specifically to hair practices in the United States of America, stating that : "…creating straight hair and imitating a Eurocentric standard of beauty was the preferred standard of representation for black women post-slave era with straight and long hair being the highly sought after commodity".

Contemporary hairstyles of black women have led to the notion that colonisation had psychological effects on the black subject, which in turn led to the black woman identifying herself as inferior to her white counterpart. South African author Luso Mnthali (2010) emphasises this point, as she states: "(S)o, even after all these years, even among black people, the perception persists. Straighter is considered better. Sometimes this is part of an inferiority complex due to historical reasons". This view is supported by Meyerov (2006:11) where she argues that "this form of 'decapitation' (colonial decapitation) was most 'violent' and cruel as here the woman hair and head was neither veiled nor eroticised, but rather transformed into an 'abject' otherness, a symbol of 'racial' inferiority, degeneracy and shame."

Contemporary hairstyling choices are seen by some as envious attempts by black women to escape this ‘inferior’ state by trying to achieve a whiter identity with straighter, longer and more colourful hair (for example blonde and red). Oyedmi affirms his earlier statements as he argues (2016:539):

> The result of a history of structural violence through hair creates physical and cultural violence of erasing natural hair based on the internalised narrative of the ugliness of African hair, and aspirations for a ‘finer’ looking European-textured straight hair.

Women’s studies scholar, Cheryl Thompson (2009:831) describes hair/hairstyles as containing emotive qualities that can be linked to the lived experiences of black women. Another women’s studies scholar, Tiffany Thomas (2013:14) participates in this scrutiny stating that “many black women comply with the Western beauty ideals and chemically relax and/or weave their hair”.

Black women of African descent have undergone many pressures that have impacted their hairstyle choices and practices, as mentioned previously in Chapters Two and Three. The development of modern hairstyling techniques and technologies has increased hairstyling options as well as the resources used for achieving the desired hairstyles. The current hairstyles of black women in South Africa range from bald hairstyles, s-curl, shortcuts, hair relaxing, extensions such as braids and soft dreads, weaves, wigs, with some embracing their natural hair (refer to appendix for visual references of these hairstyles). However, there exists a tendency to homogenise all black women’s hair experiences and demonise those who do not embrace their natural hair (King & Niably, 2013:6). Gender and Cultural studies scholar, Ameisa Meima Konneh interviews various women in Australia with regard to their hair choices and hairstyling; Konneh quotes a woman called Amelia, who states:

> Weaves are not a connection to or symbol of, African culture; instead they function to weaken Afro-diasporic identity. In this way, weaves return to the category that labels them 'inauthentic' and situates them as fundamentally opposed to expressive black subjectivity.

Konneh (2013:26) interprets Amelia's statement as meaning that weaves, wigs and extensions are hairstyles that alter the "natural black self". It is implied that afro-textured hair is an essential cultural referent, which in effect makes these hairstyles the ultimate disavowal of blackness.

Hairstyle choices of black women which involve artificial processes such as the straightening of hair, insertion of extensions and weaves, as well as the use of wigs, is at times identified as mimicry. hooks (1989) describes this notion, mentioning how the act of hair straightening is seen as a process of alteration where the black woman attempts to change her appearance by imitating (mimicking) white women. In order to understand the hair practices and hairstyle choices of black women and how they may be linked to or considered as acts of mimicry, one first needs to understand the concept of mimicry that follows below.

4.1.1 MIMICRY

Associate professor of English Amardeep Singh (2009) describes mimicry in a postcolonial context as:

> (Mimicry) is most commonly seen when members of a colonised society (say, Indians or Africans) imitate the language, dress, politics, or cultural attitude of their colonizers (say, the British or the French). Under colonialism and in the context of immigration, mimicry is seen as an opportunistic pattern of behaviour: one copies the person in power because one hopes to have access to that same power oneself. Presumably, while copying the master, one has to intentionally suppress one's own cultural identity …

Fanon (1952/2008) studies the psychological manifestations of the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser in an attempt to understand given

behavioural patterns. Focusing specifically on the black person, Fanon comments on the notion of neurosis of which Fanon shares similarities in thought to Sigmund Freud, the neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis, who mentions neurosis in his book *General Psychology Theory* (1938/1959).[24] On the subject, Fanon asserts that the basis of neurosis for the black person emerges from a shared and cultural trauma. Fanon argues that the trauma the black man/woman suffered through racism, violence and oppression can be perceived as the cause of a racial neurosis for the black person. Fanon conceptualises that the early exposure of a black child to racist values of the oppressive colonial environment, and the perpetuation of blackness as inferior within various media such as texts, books, newspapers, films, and radio work their way into one's mind (Fanon, 1952/2008:118) and cause neurotic reactions that cannot be repressed. Fanon (1952/2008:4) mentions how the suffering faced on a daily basis by the black person, emphasises his/ her social or existential inferiority, will lead to an "epidermalisation" that will effectively transfer the inferiority complex from the objective to a subjective inferiority. It is in this space where the internalised inferiority will enslave the colonial subject and cause a need in the colonised subject to evolve: "It is because the Negress feels inferior that she aspires to win admittance into the white world" (Fanon, 1952/2008:42).

Fanon on the topic further states (1952/2008:74):

> If he is overwhelmed to such a degree by the wish to be white, it is because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that derives its stability from the perpetuation of this complex, in a society that proclaims the superiority of one race; to the identical degree to which that society creates difficulties for him, he will find himself thrust into a neurotic situation.

[24] Neurosis refers to a mild mental and emotional disorder effective to a select part of a person's personality. The disorder is known to involve symptoms of stress, depression and anxiety and will not distort perceptions of reality or disturb use of language (Merriam Webster online dictionary, 2019).

Therefore what Fanon shares is that, the environment that the black woman/man finds him- or herself in - the environment that constantly perpetuates blackness as inferiority - is the one that creates this innate psychological desire for the black person to elevate his/her inferior state. Fanon further comments on this act of elevation, stating that in order for the black woman/man to escape her/his inferior state; they have to assume a process of change. An example of the change Fanon mentions is at times accomplished through the in-depth knowledge and adoption of Western languages such as French and English, through this, the colonised can be elevated above his current “jungle” status and through that elevation the colonised becomes ‘whiter’ by actively renouncing his or her blackness (Fanon, 1952/2008:9).

As Fanon shows above, the need to be white brings about certain process and actions of which at times translate into mimicry. Homi K Bhabha, in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994:126) provides a description of mimicry. His explanation can be simplified by referring to three basic steps. Step one would be the recognition of difference; in order to mimic the coloniser, the colonised first needed to notice a difference in skin colour, mannerisms, beliefs, customs, traditions and perceive the difference as synonymous with power (native < coloniser). In attempts to attain that power, the second step would, thus, be, the process of denial; the native would then start a process of denouncing her/his own traditions, mannerisms, customs, beliefs and physical appearance. Once the denial process is complete, then the native would start (embarking on the third step) to adopt and mimic certain mannerism, beliefs, traditions and customs of the coloniser in an attempt to change for the assumed better (Bhabha, 1994:126). This process highlights the asymmetry of power between the superior coloniser and inferior colonised and was justified by the ideology that the other that is being mimicked represents power.

Bhabha (1994:126) further states that “mimicry repeats rather than represents” as the practice of mimicry is based on repeating certain appearance styles, behaviours, languages, but not fully becoming or representing that which you mimic. An example of this would be when a black person speaks Afrikaans, an Afrikaans person would state “*Jy praat baie mooi Afrikaans”*, or when a black person speaks English well then he/she would be told, “You speak English quite well”. It is an enforcement of the idea of repeating rather than representing because, beyond the mimic, the difference will still exist. Bhabha (1994:130) regards these instances as an inappropriate signifiers of colonial discourse and uses the phrase “almost the same but not quite” when describing the end result of mimicry. This mimetic process resulted in the colonised seemingly becoming a ‘blurred copy’ of the coloniser and not a simple reproduction of the coloniser’s culture and his/her traits (Ashcroft et al. 1998:139). Khan (2014:66) regards mimesis as a duplicate of an original, an illusion that could never compare to an original. An example of this could be carbon copy; for instance; it has the same information as an original, but can never be recognised as an original.

It is believed that the contemporary hair practices of women of colour, specifically the preference of long straight hair which can be achieved by relaxing, inserting extensions such as braids, weaves and wigs is an act of mimicry; a disavowal of blackness or one’s African heritage and an attempt at achieving a more Eurocentric/Caucasian identity. Various scholars and members of the public corroborate and validate this notion. For instance, the African Studies scholar Sharon Omotoso (2015) states: “For centuries black women around the world were discriminated against because of their skin, hair and culture. White attributes, including straight hair, were seen as superior. Hence black women felt the need to

emulate hairstyles that made them seem more superior." Arts scholar Nomalanga Masina (2010) examines mass media advertisements with respect to black hair and states that "black women are still forced, through the signs embedded in repeated media, to emulate white women by straightening their hair with hair relaxers rather than embracing the hair's natural state" (Masina, 2010:86). For Masina, the act of straightening one's hair is done so as to emulate white women. Popular online news reporter, The New Observer, posted an article titled *Racial Psychology: Why Do Black People Want to be White?* (2013) and stated the following regarding the hairstyle choices and hair practices of black women: "Yet strangely enough, almost all black people today have gone to the most extreme measures to appear as white as possible — and no-one has dared to explain it on a racial psychological level – except, of course, to blame white people for 'racism'".

The various political movements of the twentieth century, such as the Black Power Movement that took place in the United States of America, as well as the Black Consciousness Movement of South Africa, ultimately led to a redefinition of black culture and black aesthetics. This resulted in the creation of homogenised black aesthetics; among them were specific hairstyle choices and hair practices. The relaxed, extended and weaved hairstyle was rejected for a more African hairstyle such as the afro or dreadlocks. "A real black person adorned a 'natural' hairstyle, while those who straightened their hair were deemed fake for attempting to emulate a white aesthetic, and an unnatural black look" (Thompson, 2009:831).

While there are, as mentioned above, hairstyles that are believed to portray a negative framing of blackness emerging from an inferiority complex, there are hairstyles such as the afro, dreadlocks and leaving hair in its natural state that are believed to be a positive representation of blackness. The development of the afro

as a black hairstyle has a great significance in the black hair realm as it developed during the pro-black liberation movement in America in the 1960s. American educational scholar Lakhisa Odlum (2015) explains the black power movement of the 1960s and 1970s as a political and social movement which advocated for racial pride, self–sufficiency, and equality for all black people in America. According to Odlum (2015), the movement was fuelled by black activists who participated in both the Civil Rights and Black power movements. She further mentions the formation of new organisations such as the Black Panther Party and the Black Women's United Front which aimed at the development of new cultural, political and economic programs for black people living in America to ascend their previously represented state of inferiority. Through the movement and creation of various organisations advocating for better rights of black people in America Odlum (2015) further states that "desegregation was insufficient- only through the deconstruction of white power structures could a space be made for a black political voice to give rise to a collective black power".

Figure 4.1: Ford, Willie. 1970-1976. *Drawing: Man and Woman with black power fist on shirt*. (Odlum, 2015).

The movements had various visual signifiers and one of them was the afro hairstyle. The 'naturalness' of the afro hairstyle entails a rejection of both short haircuts, as well as relaxed hairstyles. The distinctive feature of the hairstyle is the dimensions thereof; the hairstyle is based on the natural growth of the hair, both upwards and outwards, encompassing both length and volume as contributing factors to the rounded shape of the afro. An example of the afro hairstyle is seen in the drawing above (Figure 4.1). The drawing depicts a man and a woman wearing the afro hairstyle. The woman is dressed in all black while the man is wearing a shirt with the black power fist as an icon for freedom. The black fist has been known to represent black power as well as black liberation movements.

Art historian Kobena Mercer (1987:38) compares the afro to regal African crowns and ceremonial headdress that bestow on the wearer a sense of majesty. He regards the afro as a statement hairstyle of which the size (dimensions and degree) signifies the wearer's consciousness or 'wokeness'.[25] Mercer further states that the hairstyle counter-valorised the attributes of black hair; converting the stigma of shame associated with curliness and kinkiness (within black hairstyling practices) to emblems of pride. Furthermore, the name of the hairstyle 'afro' proposes an association with Africa, nature and the diaspora. The hairstyle, since its creation, has implied a rejection of artificial hairstyles, as if any component of artificiality went against the counter-hegemonic process of redefining the diaspora from Negro to Afro-American (Mercer, 1987:39).

[25] "Wokeness" is a contemporary slang word which refers to a person who is aware and actively attentive to important facts and issues mostly based on racial and social justice, referring to the achievement of a certain level of racial consciousness (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2018).

The dreadlocks hairstyle is also closely linked to the radical discourse/culture of the Rastafari which originated in the Caribbean during the 1930s. The Rastafarian movement emerged as a way of resisting dominant black identity which was constructed through slavery and colonialism. From the sixteenth to nineteenth century the slave trade removed African people from their land and stripped them of their various cultural practices, traditions and aesthetics of which historical studies scholar, Midas Chawane, (2014:93) believes that the Rastafarian movement was aimed at regenerating the African identity. Chawane (2014:92) further speaks of how the visual characteristics of the Rastafarian comprised of the dreadlock hairstyle and an employment of colours of Jamaican born political leader, Marcus Garvey, which were red, yellow and green. The dreadlock hairstyle, therefore, became a referent of resistance and was associated with Africa.

Embedded within the culture and religion of the Rastafari, dreadlocks symbolise a link with the biblical restriction on the cutting of hair, where emphasis is placed on allowing hair to grow naturally into long locks (Chawane, 2014:102). A dreadlock hairstyle refers to a process of matting and moulding strands/groups of hair into rich locks, similar to ropes. Because the dreadlock hairstyle does not require any chemical process, but relies on manipulation with hands, as well as a natural binding agent such as beeswax, it is associated with ideals similar to those of the afro. Mercer (1987:38) further notes how dreadlocks have been recognised as a natural hairstyle because, as a hairstyle, dreadlocks embrace and “celebrate the materiality of black hair texture”. Mercer further comments on the materiality of black hair, stating that “it is the only type of hair that can be 'matted' into such characteristic configurations” (Mercer, 1987:38). Like the afro, the dreadlock hairstyle has a close association with the natural aesthetic and 'Africa', as well as a representation of

individual and political antagonism to the hegemony of the West over 'the rest' (Mercer, 1987:38).

In South Africa, during the 1960s hair began to be regarded as a political proclamation and as a representation of Black Power and the liberal social movement. The afro, as well as the natural hairstyle were sought after hairstyles as they seemed to represent black freedom and further served a means of changing stereotypes of race and beauty. Marco (2012:18) comments on the adoption of the afro, dreadlocks and natural hairstyles as the preferred hairstyle in South Africa, stating how the hairstyles were synonymous with the youth uprisings which challenged the apartheid impositions of beauty and blackness. Natural and uncombed hairstyles were a symbol of freedom from oppression as other hairstyles such as relaxed hair, and skin bleaching seemed to perpetuate the notion that a white identity was best. According to Marco (2012:18), "these hair practices, which manifested from refusal to conform to perceived 'neat' hair standards, was known as ama-Azania, and was a practice encouraged for and by black people to continue the identity of *Black is Beautiful"* [26] which was influenced heavily by the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa.[27] This, therefore, leads to the ideology that authenticated natural hairstyles such as the afro, dreadlocks, cornrows and plaits as true reflections of blackness/African(ness).

However, when one refers to all these mentioned hairstyles (natural, the short-cut, the afro and dreadlocks) in a critical manner, one recognises how each of these

[26] 'Azania' (Greek origin) is a proposed alternative name for a liberated South Africa that emerged during the apartheid period and was used by black people who opposed the apartheid regime. Historian, Melody Emmett (Sahistory.org, 1990), states that George Wauchope (1984) defined the term as meaning "Land of the black people". The 'ama' before the word Azania is a Zulu word similar to the word 'the', therefore the term 'amaAzania' would be used to refer to people who called themselves the people of Azania.

[27] The Black Consciousness Movement was a grassroots anti-apartheid movement in South Africa led by Steven Bantu Biko in the 1960s (sahistory, 2011).

hairstyles has to actually be physically worked on in order to represent the idea of the natural; and none of these hairstyles can be maintained without a minimal amount of manipulation. It is argued that these hairstyles are not dissimilar to hairstyles like straightening, which require more extensive amounts of manipulation.

The first hairstyle mentioned - leaving the hair to grow in its natural state - represents the idea that the hair is left to grow without any intervention in the growth process, as a manner of embracing the kinks and curls inherent in black hair. Ideally, the concept makes sense, but the practicality of the hairstyle renders the concept fictional, as the hairstyle requires the hair to be constantly washed and shaped. It cannot be denied that the hairstyle does not require combing, or any chemical alterations of the biological character of the hair, however, it does require that the wearer continuously stretch, mould and shape the hair (with the use of hands) into the desired hairstyle, be it daily, weekly or monthly (the number of times the hair needs to be manipulated are dependent on the wearer of the hairstyle). The term ‘natural’ is based on the concept that the natural hair is left to grow, without going through chemical processing. In terms of the short cut hairstyle (see Appendix), the hair has to be cut multiple times in order for the hairstyle to be achieved, as such, the hairstyle can be described as embodying the idea of the natural, insofar as it has not been chemically straightened. However, the hair does undergo certain processes of combing and cutting (with a machine), also rendering the natural concept of the hairstyle invalid.

Mercer (1987:40), on the topic, states that nature has nothing to do with the hairstyles, but rather recognises these as ‘stylistic cultivations’ constructed politically within various historical moments as a means of contesting white dominance over the identity and lived experiences of black people. This explanation then positions these hairstyles also as reactions to the colonial-racist ideology of the time.

The important discourse embedded in hairstyles such as dreadlocks, the afro and natural hair, and the actual practice of black hair prior to or during colonialism, before Eurocentric cultural hegemony had been completed in Africa, has to be taken into consideration. The hairstyles cannot thus be assumed to be the only hairstyles accurately representing blackness or identity performances of African(ness) prior to the imposition of Western cultural norms. Employing the fore mentioned hairstyles as the only hairstyles that represents blackness, is merely taking away from other authentic African hairstyles presented in Chapter Two and African aesthetics embedded in the hairstyles which are based on innovation, pattern, repetition, culture and celebration (Refer to Section 2.1 for visual references).

Mercer (1987:42) corroborates this notion, stating that in:

> African cultures; hair is… rarely left to grow 'naturally'. Often it is plaited or braided, using 'weaving' techniques to produce a rich variety of sometimes highly elaborate styles that are reminiscent of the patterning's [sic] of African cloth and the decorative designs of African ceramics, architecture and embroidery.

It is acknowledged that parts of Mercer's statement can be disputed (for instance, where Mercer states it is "rarely left to grow naturally" especially with regards to the Khoi–San in South Africa, for instance who usually left their hair to grow naturally). Mercer might be looking at the history of black African hairstyling through the limited scope of information regarding African life before slavery and colonialism, and the recognition that Western photographers, ethnographers, and anthropologists' rendition/ information gathered of African people was done with a specific framing of blackness in mind. It is, however imperative to note Mercer's argument which places these current 'natural' hairstyles (natural, short cut, afro, and dreadlocks) as representative of styles embedded in contemporary culture, a post-colonial and diasporic culture which is in itself reactionary to the socio-political racist ideology of

colonialism and apartheid. The hairstyles can be seen as a current cultural practice developed within intercultural realms and negotiating with critical, as well as dominant Eurocentric culture and an expression of neo-African and popular culture with regards to the beauty paradigm (Mercer, 1987:44).

King and Niably (2013:2) further elaborate on this notion mentioned by Mercer (1987), stating that women have subjected themselves to Eurocentric beauty standards over time which affects all women, irrespective of race. Within the black hairstyling spectrum, black women have been further subjected to and compared with white women and struggled for their place on the beauty paradigm, increasing the pressure around black women's beauty ideals. King and Niably (2013:3) state: "Often times, media portray white women with straight hair as the beauty ideal. The few black women who are featured usually have Caucasian traits such as light skin and straight hair" of which can be read as a continued reference of black traits as ugly. King and Niably (2013:5) further refer to the legacy of the slave era in America (discussed in Chapter Two), which to some extent, may be seen as clarifying the motive behind contemporary black African American hairstyling choices and their 'need' to alter their natural hair.

Bearing in mind that the research conducted by King and Niably regarding black women's hairstyles was predominantly based in the United States of America, the authors note that the problem with African American women's hairstyling is based on the ideology that black natural hair is bad as compared to hair that mimics/attempts to resemble white women's hair in America (King & Niably 2013:5). Within the contemporary hairstyling choices of black women, there is a growing interest in natural hair as the hairstyle of choice, which is recognised as a strategy of resistance

to white beauty standards and an attempt by African American women to connect to their African roots and heritage.

When an African hairstyle is seen as a resistance to the dominant beauty standard which is based on mimicry, where does this leave the African American woman who prefers relaxed hair, or weaves, extensions and wigs? Does their choice to relax their hair or alter it with extensions and the insertion of weaves and wigs imply self-hatred, or maybe a loss of identity and a non-appreciation of heritage? Investigating this theme further in America, King and Niably (2013:6) come across black women who actually prefer relaxing their hair because it is more manageable in a relaxed state, and less time consuming to style: “Not every woman who relaxes her hair is trying to emulate white beauty standards”, suggesting that some hairstyle choices are based on a matter of convenience rather than being based on political or social ideologies.

King and Niably (2013:6) further explain relaxers as a product produced in an oppressive context initially but perceive how hair straightening has developed and evolved past the political binaries of blackness and whiteness, into an essential concept and practice of black culture. What has to be understood with regard to black hairstyling choices and practices is that the choices are socially influenced, whether the hairstyle is one comprising of the *lipombo* of the Mangabethu from Congo (Figure 2.8), or the bald hairstyle of the Masai in Kenya (Figure 2.6) or a relaxed/straightened style in the twenty-first century South Africa. The hairstyle reflects the social present state of living culture at the time.

This indicates that a relaxed hairstyle cannot be simplistically associated with self-hate or mimicry anymore, but rather serves to subvert and challenge the prevailing

definitions of blackness by hegemonic culture. It is perplexing to determine or conclude if “wearing one's hair straightened or natural is a polarised act of either embracing ethnic pride or demonstrative of a poor self-image” (King & Niably, 2013:6). Thompson (2009:82) corroborates this notion when she states: “other women (from other races) wear their hair in various hairstyles too; short hair, long hair, shaven, dyed, spiked, even wigs and weaves, and no one attributes their hairstyling choices to self-hatred”.

Mercer (1987:34), recognises black hairstyling as an independent cultural practice instead of an act of mimicry and proposes a need to de-psychologise the question of black hairstyling, with specific reference to hair straightening (hair relaxing). Mercer (1987:34) recognises contemporary black hairstyling globally as diverse aesthetic expressions developed against ideologies of race and racism. He describes black hair practices as unique patterns of style, a popular art form which can be perceived as a creative response to the experience of oppression and dispossession. Mercer (1987:34) further states that:

> As organic matter produced by physiological processes, human hair seems to be a 'natural' aspect of the body. Yet hair is never a straightforward biological 'fact' because it is almost always groomed, prepared, cut, concealed and generally 'worked upon' by human hands. Such practices socialize hair, making it the medium of significant 'statements' about self and society and the codes of value that bind them or don't. In this way, the hair is merely a raw material, constantly processed by cultural practices which thus invest it with 'meanings' and 'value'.

In South Africa, sociology scholar, Zimitri Erasmus (1997:14) examines hair straightening as a practice influenced and shaped by colonial-racist notions of beauty, and how it has been perceived by some as an act of “aspiring towards whiteness”.

Taking post-colonial and socio-historical literature into consideration, Erasmus (1997:16) agrees with Mercer's (1987:34) notions that hair as organic matter is always groomed and worked upon, and renounces the ideology that contemporary black hairstyling is simply a form of mimicry. Erasmus (1997:16) further states that the biological make-up of all hair types can simply be defined as shafts of dead cells that are continuously manipulated, handled and worked on, making it come to life in the form of a hairstyle which is open to meaning and interpretation. Like Mercer, Erasmus further mentions that all hair is processed by cultural practice, actively denying the presence of innocent, natural black hair; she explains that all hair is socially constructed, imbued with meanings and multiple identities and that the spatial environment in which hairstyles are created invests value and meaning in the specific hairstyle.

Erasmus (1997:15) further notes the presence of what she refers to as the 'hair police'; essentialists who claim a single pure means of embodying blackness, based on hairstyling as an ethnic signifier.[28] Mediating blackness to hairstyling choices based on degrees of hair texture, the natural hairstyle is, thus, recognised as the top of the idealised hierarchy, and the greatest performance of blackness, while "straightening has come to represent a reactionary practice of identification with whiteness… the notion that straightening one's hair is a mark of aspiring towards whiteness that we should this abandon all" (Erasmus, 1997:14). This essentialist view leads to the formation of perspectives based on a binary opposition: black women who straighten their hair with relaxers are reacting to colonial-racist notions of beauty, while those who prefer natural hair (unrelaxed) are progressive and, thus,

[28] Essentialism refers to the belief and practice that objects/human traits have an innate existence or universal validity (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2018). Essentialists would then, in this case, believe that certain hairstyles (natural) are a universal performance of blackness rather than acknowledging hairstyles as social constructs.

purely African/black. Erasmus (1997:14), who is herself a black person, personally defies this school of thought, mentioning that while her own preferred hairstyle is a dried-naturally style without the use of chemicals (relaxers/straightening agents), the hair has nonetheless been manipulated through washing, combing, and the act of moulding into a hairstyle. Erasmus states that she cannot be described as being 'more black' (if there is such a term) now, compared to how she was previously when she curled and swirled her hair.

Due to the commodification of black hair products such as weaves, wigs and hair fibre, black hairstyling is seen more as consumption of western culture rather than an expression of black/African creativity, as mentioned above by Mercer (1987:34). Because of the fact that the most of these products are produced by the West mainly for a black clientele, the authorship of these products thus falls under Western concepts of culture as per the European modernist–romantic culture developed in the eighteenth century.

The European concept of the creative producer is associated with the authenticity of the artist/author – which in this case would be the manufacturer – leading to the thought that the Europeans are, in fact, connoisseurs of the cultural practice and black women are merely consumers of that culture. Culture and Politics scholars, Francis, B Nyamnjoh, Deborah Durham, and Jude, D Fokwang (2002:102) define the term consumer as referring to an individual utilising or consuming objects and images, not as an own creation, but rather consuming matter created by others. Within this explanation, the black woman who chooses weaves, wigs and extensions as her hairstyles is regarded as a consumer and consequently a mimic of Western culture through the purchase of these products. This ideology of mimicry, therefore,

identifies the West as the authors of these black hairstyles, so that the styles used by black people are seen as a form of mimicry.

On the basis of Mercer and Erasmus's views, as well as in terms of the historical overview that has been provided, it is my view that this perspective - that the wearing of these artificial hair products is purely mimetic in nature - is preposterous. Most of the hairstyling products were manufactured en masse in the twenty-first century already, and the use of artificial products for the purposes of black hairstyling has been cited as existing since at least the early 1900s, therefore rendering the concept of mimicry invalid. It can be argued that, in order to achieve these hairstyles in the modern era, black woman have to purchase these products, but the black woman has been making her weave, braid fibre and wig (headdress) with plant fibre, human hair and constructing her hairstyle with found objects long before these products were manufactured, as demonstrated in Chapter Two. The only difference is that the products sold on the market are not really meant to allow the wearer to re-create the full hairstyle, but are actually new forms of raw material that are easily accessible for the black woman to create her chosen hairstyle.

When one considers the history of black hairstyling then, one can conclude that the manufacturing of these products is actually influenced by traditional black hairstyling practices. This, therefore, implies that the modern day weave, wig and braid fibre largely comprises an appropriation of traditional black hairstyling culture, derived from the traditional combination of plant fibre, animal hair, found objects and human hair.

A relaxed, braided or weaved hairstyle can no longer be merely related with self-hate or mimicry, but moderately aids to destabilise and defy the dominant definitions of

blackness by hegemonic culture. One may well ask: is the adoption of some hairstyles as authentic representations of blackness/African(ness) now not based on the same Eurocentric system? What seems to have changed essentially is the authority of the structure: the structure is no longer based on Eurocentric – colonial – racist systems of identity and othering, but based on new post-colonial ideology, applied with the same tools of bias and othering, monopolising claims of blackness, Africaness, and beauty. With so much of black history destroyed and replaced by a white ideology based on discrimination and grand gestures of superiority, it is quite unfortunate that hairstyling practices, which have their roots in African tradition, are simplistically dismissed as a form of mimicry.

4.2 CONCLUSION

Chapter Four has discussed scholarly literature and other critiques of contemporary hairstyles of black women. The chapter has detailed how some hairstyles such as straightening/relaxing, and the insertion of extensions, weaves and wearing of wigs by black women have been critiqued and regarded as a form of mimicry, a disavowal of blackness and an attempt by the black woman to escape her inferior blackness for a more superior European identity. Employing scholarly work by Mercer (1984), the chapter critiqued the understanding of contemporary black hairstyling choices as comprising simple forms of mimicry and has rather explained these as post-colonial contemporary cultural practices/performances of one's identity. The next chapter will focus on modernisation, globalisation and hybridity, discussing these concepts in regards to their relationship with black hairstyling choices and practices, as these are represented in selected artworks.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five discusses modernisation, globalisation and hybridity with regards to the chosen hairstyles of black women. The chapter employs literature from Start Hall (1996), amongst other scholars and further discusses the artworks/ photographs of South African artists Stephen Hobbs and Marcus Neustetter as well as artworks by Zimbabwean born Nontsikelelo Mutiti.

5.1 MODERNISATION, GLOBALISATION AND HYBRIDITY

Globalisation refers to the growing flow and movement of information and products within the world; information such as images, ideas, videos, culture and music flow within the world. Globalisation, which is established and organised with various networks, leads to the destabilisation of identities and the notions of self (Nyamnjoh, Durham & Fokwang, 2002:102). Cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1996:596) corroborates this notion, stating that old identities such as those which once stabilised the social world are in decline, and simultaneously give rise to the development of new identities. Prior to globalisation, certain concepts of identity would have existed, which would fix people into distinctive groups of culture, namely ethic, racial, linguistic, gender, and religious, as well as national or continental cultures. The fragmentation of these identities has a direct impact on personal identities and how people chose to perform these identities.

These days it is easy to find a Nigerian who does not speak Yoruba, but rather speaks English. A child born to Zimbabwean and South African parents in South Africa could be socially recognised as a South African rather than a Zimbabwean. And a child born in America could be seen as an American, regardless of who the

child is born to. Therefore, the influence to which this child is exposed will greatly impact upon the child's identity; to a large extent identity becomes a choice and is performative. The child will perform their identity according to what the child believes he or she is as "contemporary identity is formed in the interaction between self and society. The subject still has an inner core or essence that is 'the real me', but this is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds outside and the identities which they offer" (Hall, 1996:597). This notion, therefore, destabilises notions of an essentialist African identity or rather an essentialised African hairstyle.

Globalisation is pervasive, yet the effects thereof are often disregarded in contemporary discussions of African hairstyling. For example, reference to the effects of globalisation are wholly absent in Arts and humanities scholars Bolajoko Adiji, Bankole Oladumiye and Israel Ibiwoye's (2015:25) study of Nigerian hairstyles.

Adiji, Oladumiye and Ibiwoye (2015) discuss Nigerian hairstyle choices, stating that over one thousand different hairstyles have been created in Nigeria, by different distinct cultural groups based on their environment and cultural heritage. The authors believe that most young Nigerian women today disavow traditional Nigerian hairstyles such as cornrows in favour of wearing western hairstyles such as weaves, extensions and wigs. They further state that Nigerian hairstyles have also been influenced by other cultures throughout various points in history, highlighting the use of wigs by Nigerian black women that the "average Nigerian woman wanted to be like the white [*sic*] who colonized them" (Adiji, Oladumiye & Ibiwoye, 2015:29). The interpretation above by Adiji, Oladumiye and Ibiwoye of how they see the increased interest of Nigerian women in wigs as a form of mimicry is somewhat undermined, I argue when the authors identify the primary function of wigs as a headdress, which

coincidentally leads to the notion that a wig is similar to traditional Nigerian hair practices.

Furthermore, Adiji, Oladumiye and Ibiwoye (2015:28) refer to traditional Nigerian hairstyles where the ancient Nigerian women: “Curled their hair and held it in place with pins. They made long black wigs from sheep’s wool or human hair”. Again, this renders the authors’ mimicry claims a fallacy. The authors are mistaken in their interpretation of the contemporary use of wigs as a straightforward expression of mimicry. The contemporary hairstyle choices cannot simply be a result of colonialism, but should rather be seen as a consequence of modernisation.

The only variance between the ancient headdresses and the contemporary wigs is the raw material used to achieve these hairstyles; one is synthetically developed while the other was handmade from sheep’s hair. Although the hairstyles could communicate something dissimilar today, as compared to their ancient purpose, it is still the same hairstyle. The headdress was succeeded by the modern wig while the sheep’s wool or human hair is replaced by the weave or the synthetic hairpiece that makes braids, therefore showing that contemporary hairstyles are not necessarily threatening the popularity of indigenous hairstyles, but are continuing them with various materials.

While Adiji, Oladumiye and Ibiwoye (2015:25) understand that black hairstyles are both self-contained and relative to the community/ culture in which one finds oneself, and constitute a personal expression in relation to a public domain, the authors fail to understand that a community or culture is not necessarily one based on spatial relations. In contemporary times a culture is based on exposure through the global mediums of communication. Tools of modernity and globalisation such as the

internet, social media, and mass media, to name but a few, have opened the spatial boundaries of community and culture and made contemporary individuals part of a larger community/culture based on their experiences and what they are exposed to. This is corroborated by Nyamnjoh, Durham and Fokwang (2002:104) when they state that “Media, commerce, and the movement of peoples in a global social economy provide a range of new models of living and new structures of desire.”

The impact of globalisation can be identified everywhere. Today a woman from South Africa is able to access American/European/Indian culture or rather a pop culture, integrate herself within that specific culture and perform it with her hairstyle choice. Hall (1996:598) refers to this notion as a projection of self into various cultural identities, where one would simultaneously internalise the values and meanings of those various cultures in an attempt to align one’s subjective feelings with the objective spaces occupied within the social and cultural world.

Nyamnjoh, Durham and Fokwang (2002:103) further highlight the presence of many modernities which are not spatially distinct but are rather complementary and competing within the current social relations. The idea of complementary modernities can be seen by ways which unadorned, uncombed hair can be coupled with scarves, or relaxed hair can be further styled with the addition of braids (Western versus African inspired). Another example of this could be the mohawk hairstyle which comprises of a coiffure constructed by combining two hairstyles that are regarded as representations of competing for notions of identity, as it is a natural haircut coupled with a woven top. These preferred hairstyles are in constant dialogue with traditional African hairstyling history based on a conscious or unconscious accumulated knowledge within the current living culture.

An example of such a trend with regards to globalisation and hair could be the Mohawk hairstyle which is mentioned above; the hairstyle is similar to the ancient Egyptian hairstyle which was reserved for children, where the hair was shaved off except for the long lock of hair left on the side of the head (Adiji, Oladumiye & Ibiwoye, 2015:28). Sieber and Herreman (2000:57) also speak of this hairstyle: “Various African people shave an infant’s head except for a patch of hair that is believed to protect the fontanel”.

Identity practices through the choice of hairstyles are in some instances subjective and may have infinite resource points. In the context of globalisation, identity is disjointed, wherewith unified or stable identities are fragmented. Stable or unified identities based on identity signifiers such as ethnicity, race or gender are fragmented and new forms of identities are developing. The new forms of identity signifiers and performances are not solely based on singular forms of relativity but are developed from several, contradictory or complementing signifiers based on an individual’s personal preference.

The term cultural identity serves as to refer to the identity of a group of individuals. European studies scholar Andrei Labeș in his article Globalisation and Cultural identity (2014:87) refers to globalisation in terms of it being a new form of identification that has emerged. Globalisation in this sense breaks down the barriers between apparently distinct cultural identifiers such as aesthetics, and ethnicities. The interruption of known identifiers of cultural identity leads to a niche for new cultures and cultural identifiers to emerge. Thus, the old aesthetics are continuously changing and are in constant flux creating new hybrid spaces. The following segment of this chapter will discuss hybridity and the effects it has on the hair practices and hair choices of black women.

Visual arts and multimedia scholar Nathani Lüneburg (2013:28) quotes Vivian Schelling's definition of hybridisation as "the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices". Therefore cultural hybridity is the combination of an individual's local culture with a universal culture, to form a new culture. Hybridity in this sense takes many forms such as political, cultural and linguistic.

To define hybridity, communication scholar, Marwan Kraidy (2002:4) uses three main approaches in post-colonial theory. Kraidy (2002:4) notes the first approach as being an ontological approach which defines hybridity as a product of global and local interactions. Kraidy further describes the second approach to hybridity as comprising a communicative approach where hybridity is defined as a practice constituted by socio-political and economic arrangements based on dynamic transcultural relations. The third approach mentioned by Kraidy looks at hybridity from a political point of view which sees hybridity as a space where intercultural and global communication practices are constantly negotiated in exchanges of differential power.

The third approach described by Kraidy is similar to the one mentioned by Bhabha (1994:5) where he defines hybridity as a third space based on the negotiation of difference. The representation of difference should not necessarily be based on notions of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits or practices that are fixed in the tablet of tradition. The social enunciation of variance should rather be seen as a negotiation that seeks to empower cultural hybridities that are developing in moments of historical transformation (Bhabha, 1994:2). Hybridity's third space mentioned by Bhabha is one where grand narratives of culture and identity are rejected and the authority of identity representation and negotiation of identity given to the individual. This would mean that singular fixed and rigid grand narratives of identity, culture and

tradition are therefore dismantled in favour of many fragmented, complex understandings based on the experience of the individual.

Bhabha (1994:2) speaks of pre-existing notions of tradition and states that the recognition that is bestowed by tradition is a partial form of identification. Therefore, attempts at restaging past identities of multitudes of African cultures, traditions and aesthetics creates other incommensurable cultural temporalities. A number of earlier instances where African art and culture have been documented were essentially recorded from the perspective and understanding of the West's inquiry and their modes of philosophy. Slavery, colonialism, and modernisation led to a loss of numerous African cultures and traditions; an attempt at the reinvention of these traditions disillusions any immediate access to an original identification of tradition.

Bhabha (1994:3) speaks of social differences such as gender, religion, race, ethnicity and culture which he states do not only emerge simply from experiences through already authenticated cultural traditions, but are signs of an envisioned community. Community then becomes a project or construct that is aimed at a re-visioning reconstruction of the political conditions of the present based on monolithic fixed categories of difference. The categories are based on historical binaries such as male and female, native and coloniser. Noting this, Bhabha (1994:5) introduces the a hybrid space which is often seen as a bridge between the past and future, stating that this space is one where you can find concepts such as historical traditions and ethnic communities that serve as the basis of binary comparison which are in a process of redefinition. Bhabha further notes how the current scheme of new internationalism which could be said to be brought about by globalisation is not in so forth a smooth passage of transition from the past to the future, but acknowledging that contemporary culture is a process of displacement and disjunction. Bhabha

states that the most important part of this process should not be a proliferation of alternative histories of the excluded based on notions of a pluralistic anarchy that should not be based on comparison and aesthetic judgement.

Bhabha (1994:5) sees the hybrid space as a bridge that goes beyond concepts of homogenous national cultures and the transmission of past traditions or organic, ethnic communities. Social sciences scholars Mathias Alubafi, Molemo Ramphalile and Agnes Rankoana (2018:6) refer to hegemonic culture as being established by following ideals that serve and justify the privileged class in any given society. The class is seen as privileged in this sense due to the relationship of the class with modes of production of cultural aesthetics.

The hybrid space mentioned by Bhabha is one where these privileged modes of production are questioned, challenged and rearticulated to introduce fundamental change. In the case of black women living in this hybrid space, one can see the invention of new modes of cultural production as seen in the chosen hairstyles of black women and the construction of new cultural objects, aesthetics and modes of representation. Bhabha (1994:7) states that newness should be a critical component of culture which is not part of the continuum of newness but should create a newness based on cultural translation. This lies in not seeing or recalling the past as a social cause or aesthetic precedent based on notions of nostalgia but rather identifying the hybrid space as a space for re-figurement and innovation. Black female hairstyles in a traditional sense were usually based upon a specific group choice of representation. The hybrid space, therefore, destabilises this form of group representation based on spatial and geographic limitations and creates multiple representations within various spatial areas. For example, women from the Himba society in Namibia or women from the Mangbetu society in Congo will follow a

controlled sequence of hairstyle choices and practices within their specific societal group and area, and that will essentially be their identity performance. In contemporary times Tswana or Pedi women in Pretoria, for instance, will not exactly have the same hairstyle practice or choice irrespective of their spatial area. Although the women may be from the same area, the hairstyles will vary according to personal choices.

"In the world that I travel, I am endlessly creating myself" (Bhabha, 1994:8). This statement by Bhabha references performance of identity as the recreation of self, due to experience and encounters with other cultures, traditions and people. However with the current advances in modes of communication (books, internet, television and mass media), one does not necessarily have to travel in order to be exposed to different cultures. The words quoted above speak to the very definition of hybridity and identity showing that new introductions and experiences to different cultures have distinct influence on the identity of the person who experiences them, as every experience plays a role in the identity and identity performance of a person.

Bhabha (1994:9) further recognises the importance of asserting indigenous cultural traditions and the retrieval of repressed histories but cautions against fetishism and the dangers of fixed identities based on colonial cultures. Mentioning the transformational value of change, Bhabha (1994:28) believes the value lies in the reticulation of elements that are beyond notions of the one and other. Bhabha also believes in the fostering of negotiations where formations encounter displaced and differentiated boundaries of group representation, and acknowledges this form of hybridity as a historical necessity. Bhabha (1994:28) mentions a few of the fragmented classes and cultural representation which contribute largely to

contemporary social divisions and urges for an alternative construction of new social blocs made up of different constituencies.

Bhabha further questions the identity signifiers for a working woman, highlighting a notion of negotiation that goes within a performed identity of someone. An identity influenced by material interest, achieved through a process of symbolic identification which is achieved/ read in this case through a political lens that ultimately created a hegemonic reading of performances of identity (such as hairstyles). Bhabha refers to this lens as a social bloc read from left to right, and recognises the bloc as heterogeneous.

Through his critique of hegemony, Bhahba (1994:29) notes how hegemony itself is a process of differentiation. Hegemony is thus based on the creation of the model and the alternative, the modes of representation through a homogenous perspective depend on the production of an antagonistic other which is placed in competition with the preferred model image/identity. It is through the creation of self and other that gives meaning to a politics of struggle and as then the black people are seen as through the lens of struggle. When a people identify themselves as the other and their modes of identification are created against a backdrop of the white self, then the modes of representation themselves are problematic. Bhabha (1994:28) calls then for the in-between identity, stating that it is not self-contradictory but how the in-between negotiated identity performs the problems of judgement and identification that inform the political space of its enunciation.

Alubafi, Ramphalile and Rankoana (2018:7) see the current hairstyle choices and practices by black women as a redefinition, organic decolonisation of cultural productions by black women which in a South African context alludes to the

deconstruction of pre-1994 regimes and cultures. These cultural and racial productions of pre-1994 in South Africa were based on othering and locating white aesthetics such as shiny and straight hair as important. They were created and placed as a means of exaggerating the identity of the white women as superior to the black women. Alubafi, Ramphalile and Rankoana (2018:7) further note the political productions of identity based on race and segregation through the apartheid administration which were seen through National Acts (mentioned in Chapter Two) and practices such as the pencil test which promoted and upheld negative racial notions regarding black South African women's hair. Alubafi, Ramphalile and Rankoana (2018:7) note how hair choices and practices post-1994 by South African black women can be seen as a creative response to oppression through hair leading to the production of new hairstyles and hair products which give South African black women an opportunity to reinvent themselves by continuously changing their hairstyles and embodying various identities that are not imposed but chosen by the individual women. Corroborating this notion, Bhabha (1994:6) states:

> The most significant effect of this process is not the proliferation of 'alternative histories of the excluded' producing, as some would have it, pluralist anarchy. What my examples show is the changed basis for making international connections. The currency of critical comparatives, or aesthetic judgement, is no longer the sovereignty of the national culture...

As noted, scholars such as Masina (2010:86) and Sharon Omotoso (2015) see those current hairstyle choices and hair practices of black women which involve hair straightening and other artificial additions, as mimicry. I believe that this notion is based on traditional and colonial definitions of culture and identity practices. The readings of Mercer (1987) and Bhabha (1994) prove that to be a fallacy, as contemporary hairstyle choices are not homogenous among all black women: as different black women choose specific hairstyles for different reasons.

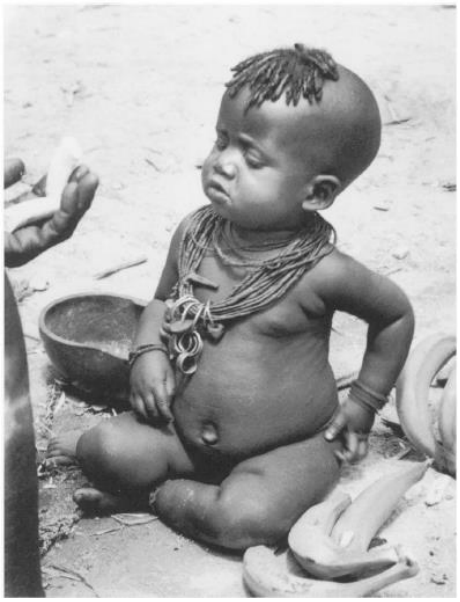


Figure 5.1: Schneider, Gilbert. 1950. Child with partially shaved head. Mambiila Cameroon (Sieber & Herreman, 2000:57).

Figure 5.2: Side shaved braided mowhawk. 2018 (Davis, 2018).

Figure 5.3: American Pop star Rihanna with a red coloured Mohawk hairstyle. 2015 (Short hairut.com).

Figure 5.4: Long Mohawk with weave extensions. 2014 (Monique, 2014).

The very process of identification through which we project ourselves into our cultural identities has become more open-ended, proving that there is no one fixed form of identity, therefore no fixed practice of blackness/African(ness). Hall (1996:598) thus regards identity as a movable cocktail, formed and transformed continuously and relative to the various ways we are represented or addressed in the

cultural structures which frame us, leading the individual to find himself/herself confronted by possible identities, which one could identify with on a temporary basis.

By contrast to the notion of globalisation, Hall (1996:615) notes the existence of a contemporary ideology which leads to the construction of national identities within current modern societies. These national identities become symbolically grounded on the idea of a pure, original people or folk based on behaviour and identity performances of these people. Within this ideology, current identities are thus placed amid the past and the future, as these new world identities include an enticement to return to the former glory of the nation. Hall (1996:615) states that "sometimes national cultures are tempted to turn back the clock, to retreat defensively to that lost time when the nation was 'great' and to restore past identities."

One can link this notion to the criticism of specific contemporary hairstyles as not being 'African' enough. The disavowal of these hairstyles could be based on the need to reaffirm crucial ethnic identities and claim Africanism/blackness which is achieved through the use of stories of mythic origins, religious orthodoxy, and notions of racial purity. Blackness in this sense is, therefore, used as a form in which to compete with other ethnic nations (European/Caucasian). This nationalistic discourse attempts to perpetuate an imagined pre-colonial African heritage which does not currently exist when coming to the ancient/traditional hairstyling choices of black women of African descent. Mercer (1987:44) comments on this ideology when he states that the afro and dreadlocks hairstyle, as well as some concepts of black American culture, was based on romantic notions of an imagined pseudo reconstruction of black subjectivity, stating that the Africa being evoked and referred to was is not the real one but a "mythological, imaginary Africa".

5.2 STEPHEN HOBBS AND MARCUS NEUSTETTER: TEMPORARY BUT PERMANENT

The notion of globalisation can be applied to the work of Stephen Hobbs and Marcus Neustetter. These two artists/photographers, it must be noted, are white men photographing black people in Africa. While this aspect may to some extent be reminiscent of colonial photography in Africa, their project, *Temporary but Permanent* (2013) is not one based on preconceived notions of identity and blackness influenced by ethnography, or an attempt to create a negative typography of blackness. The project in this sense is read as a celebration and a capturing of African modernity. The photographers do not impose a critical or scientific lens on the people of Cameroon. Furthermore the sitters of the imagery are not simple sitters, arranged and curated, but are reflected more as participants. *Temporary but Permanent* refers to a collaborative, performative event that took place in 2013 between the community of Valee Bassengue (Douala,Cameroon) as well as Neusetter and Hobbs which revealed the extent of globalisation within a community and reflects on black hairstyling choices and hair practices of black women in Africa. The project focuses on Thomas the hairdresser and his hair salon as a social space within the community. The hairstyles featured in the project are created by Thomas.

Temporary but Permanent is an exhibition/event that encompasses the rural-urban culture of the people of that community, concentrating on the creative human activity around small business and social spaces such as the hair salon. The work focuses on hairstyling as a social-cultural practice, commenting on the change of the preferred black women's hairstyles in Cameroon with reference to hair straightening, weaving and braiding as the preferred hairstyles. Botswana's artist and writer Natasha Mmonatau (2014) describes the project as follows: "...throughout their

collaboration, Thomas (hairstylist), Hobbs and Neustetter worked closely with individual narratives and personal aspirations to style each participant according to their unique identities and life stories." What is interesting about this notion mentioned by Mmonatau (2014) is that although the participants are from the same area, the hairstyles vary according to the personal preferences and identities of the participants. This emphasises the notion that identities are no longer limited to spatial locations but are personal projections of the individual.

Table 5.2 shows three different hairstyles that emerged from the project. The first hairstyle (Figure 5.5) is reminiscent of the Mohawk, and is created by using a traditional cornrow technique and merging it with contemporary weaving; an artificial flower is added to the hairstyle as if influenced by the traditional hairstyle practice of adding objects to hairstyles. The second image (Figure 5.6) shows a multifaceted hairstyle achieved by combining various types of hairpieces. The hair pieces also vary in colour and in application, while one hairpiece is cut short as to cover the head, another hairpiece is used more for sculpting purposes as it is used to create an elongated shape, going vertically upward from the head. The addition of the cowrie shell and other objects, as well as the overall shape of the hairstyle, can also be seen as having been influenced by traditional African hairstyling practices. The third image (Figure 5.7) in in the table shows a simple contemporary short weave hairstyle in a blonde/brown colour. The hairstyle also includes an artificial flower insertion and tends to be sculpted upwards, vertically. The photographs included in the series show us how three different people in the same village could have different hairstyles. Although the hairstyles possess similar materials such as the weave, there are distinct differences within the use of additions, such as the cowrie shell, colour of hairstyle and the application of the weave. Furthermore, the hairstyles

show the traditional African technique of combining two hairstyles on one head, such as the Himba society (Figure 2.3).

Stephen Hobbs and Marcus Neusetter and their imagery show the development of photographic culture that stems away from colonial photographic culture which was aimed at communicating a negative perspective of African people and blackness. They represent their sitters, as people, rather than subjects of inquiry. The expressive poses, eclectic make up as well as the merges of modernity and traditional Africa are juxtaposed and read more as global identities rather than a representation of a stagnant fixed identity of African(ness). Photographed in full colour with various backgrounds, the portrait style of the images does not contain the sitters but allows them to express themselves in whatever identity performance they choose.

Figure 5.5: Hobbs & Neustetter. 2013. Hairstyle with flower. Bessengue b'etoukoa: Temporary but Permanent (Hobbs & Neustetter, 2013:34).

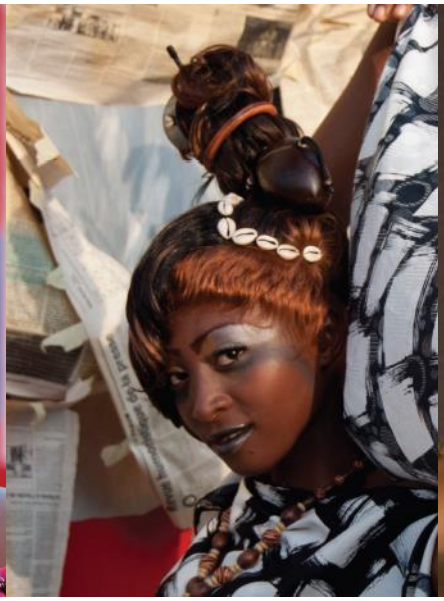


Figure 5.6: Hobbs & Neustetter. 2013. Hairstyle with cowrie shells. Bessengue b'etoukoa: Temporary but Permanent (Hobbs & Neustetter, 2013:26).

Figure 5.7: Hobbs & Neustetter. 2013. Short weave with flower Bessengue b'etoukoa: Temporary but Permanent (Hobbs & Neustetter, 2013:29).

Through the series of images and videos created for the exhibition, one can see the progression of hairstyling and hairstyling techniques through the tools used to create these hairstyles. These tools and techniques include hair tongs, curlers and hair dryers, as well as the usage of found objects such as bottles, weaves, beads and pens, which have a direct connection to traditional African hair practices (Hobbs and Neustetter, 2013). Through the sculptural hairstyles created by Thomas, the series comments on notions of globalisation and modernisation within hair practices, including the consumption of weave and wigs in a specific place in Africa and looks at hairstyling as an economically viable social practice and the role it plays in various communities. Throughout the series, one can see images reminiscent of traditional African hairstyles, but achieved through the use of modern objects.

Figure 5.8 shows Thomas's hair salon with various hair pieces, machinery and products used within the hairstyling field. Figure 5.9 of the series shows the process of hair straightening (relaxing); it details the application of the crème relaxer and the techniques used within the application. The techniques showed in this image (taken in Cameroon) are exactly the same techniques used in South African salons when it comes to applying crème relaxer, again showing the power of globalisation with reference to hairstyling practices. Figures 5.10 & 5.11 detail the various steps included in making a specific hairstyle. The images show us how traditional and contemporary hair practices are combined in the making of some hairstyles. Figure 5.12 shows us the final product (hairstyle) that was created through traditional and contemporary hairstyling practices.

Figure 5.8: Hobbs & Neustetter. 2013. The hair salon interior with different hairstyling fibres, *Bessengue b'etoukoa: Temporary but Permanent* (Hobbs & Neustetter, 2013:3).

Figure 5.9: Hobbs & Neustetter. 2013. Hair straightening/ hair relaxing, *Bessengue b'etoukoa: Temporary but Permanent* (Hobbs & Neustetter, 2013:13).

Figure 5.10: Hobbs & Neustetter. 2013. Coiffure making, *Bessengue b'etoukoa: Temporary but Permanent* (Hobbs & Neustetter, 2013:16).

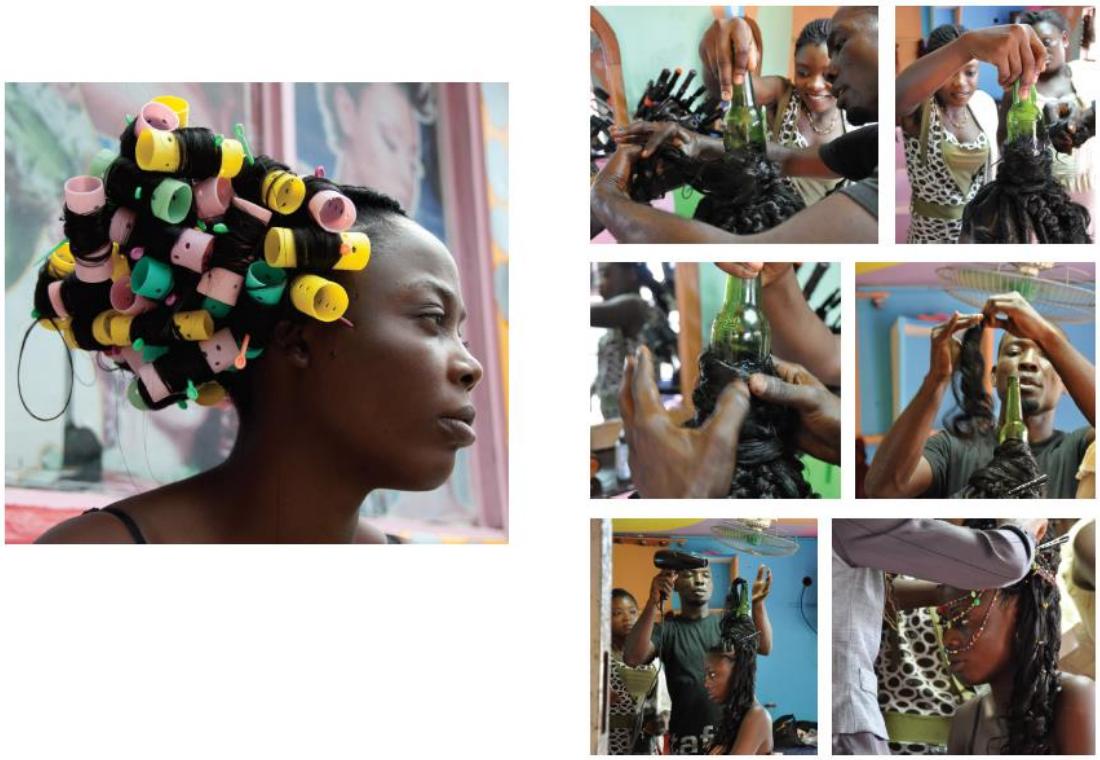


Figure 5.11: Hobbs & Neustetter. 2013. Coiffure making, *Bessengue b'etoukoa: Temporary but Permanent* (Hobbs & Neustetter, 2013:17).

Figure 5.12: Hobbs & Neustetter .2013. Woman with coiffure. *Bessengue b'etoukoa: Temporary but Permanent* (Hobbs & Neustetter, 2013:31).

Figure 5.12 shows the final product achieved in Thomas's salon, from the applied techniques shown from Figure 5.9- 5.11, and the setting shown in Figure 5.8. The image displays a woman in contemporary clothing with interesting make up on her face. The hairstyle which is the prominent content of the image, is a long cone shaped ponytail, weaved on top of a relaxed and plaited cornrow hairstyle, which is achieved by implanting a bottle under the inserted weave. The hairstyle can be said to be referencing or reminiscent of traditional pre-colonial African hairstyling techniques shown in Chapter Two, specifically the imagery/hairstyle of the Mangabethu society (Figures 2.8 & 2.9). Also included in the hairstyle is a colourful beaded headdress placed on top of her head which recalls the image of the Masai woman in Kenya (Figure 2.6). The background of the image highlights that the photograph was taken, outside showing the neighbourhood of the woman, or rather

the spatial arrangement of the specific community in Cameroon. The background is blurred, so as to not take focus away from the smiling woman and her hairstyle.

The collaboration between Stephen Hobbs, Marcus Neustetter, as well as Thomas and the community of Bessengue in Cameroon, shows the various hairstyle choices within a specific place in the African continent. The work can be read as a comment on globalisation, focusing on hairstyling choices and practices. The work visually details the various techniques (traditional and contemporary) that are implemented within current black hairstyling choices. The tangible artworks (photographs and videos) emanating from the series emphasise that globalisation is not erasing traditional pre-colonial African hairstyling choices and practices, but that the development of new materials and machinery within the hairstyling sector can be used to continue the great legacy of black hairstyling within the African continent and benefit the hairdresser and community economically. The style applied to the photography is one that does not impose a certain identity of the woman but can be read as a conversation between the photographers and the sitters, where the women are given a platform to communicate their own identities their own way.

Embodying notions of art, aesthetics, black hair and globalisation, the artworks of Zimbabwean born Nontsikelelo Mutiti will be discussed in the following section.

5.3 NONTSIKELELO MUTITI

Nontsikelelo Mutiti is both an artist and researcher currently living in the United States of America. Mutiti references black hair salons as a social space for economic development for the hairdresser, as well as space for diaspora black women to practice their cultural tradition of hairstyling. Art and culture writer Oluwatoni Akindele (2014) discusses Mutiti's work. Akindele states that after her departure from

Zimbabwe to America, Mutiti noted how she was drawn to a specific place in Harlem as it had a strong presence of African immigrants. The link between the African immigrants and space was bonded by the rich hairstyling culture of the area which inspired Mutiti to create her *Ruka (to braid/to knit/to weave)* project which aimed at exploring notions of hair salons as social spaces for the cultural practice of hairstyling. Not only was the salon a space for creative expression with respect to hair, but it was also a link to home for the diaspora. Mutiti notes the similarities inherent in hair salons in Harlem America and her home in Zimbabwe. The hair salons are characterised by the use of brightly coloured walls, magazine cut outs of celebrities and a small television in the salon (which is coincidentally similar to Thomas's salon in Cameroon; Figure 5.8). Referring to globalisation and black hairstyling choices and practices, Mutiti (2017) further notes the following regarding beauty supply stores which sell black hairstyling products:

> During my visits to Detroit, Johannesburg, London, and Maputo I have been intrigued and drawn to the sameness of beauty supply stores. In all these settings customers lean over counters, pointing to packets of synthetic and human hair to shop floor assistants who reach up with a pole to unhook the desired product. The walls and shelves of these enterprises are covered with a mosaic of objects. Packets of hair extensions, boxes of hair dyes, tubs of hair gel, spray bottles of setting lotion, tins of hair pomade and hair food, mannequin heads wearing lace-front wigs, combs in plastic packets, rollers, hair ties and do-rags.

Mutiti notices how hair salons and beauty shops are similar in most parts of the world that she has travelled and how they seem to connect black women. Through her visual project titled *Ruka (to braid/to knit/to weave),* Mutiti further identifies braiding as a community-oriented practice (Mutiti, 2015).

Mutiti then created artworks based on those visual codes found in black hair salons and the black hair market which further investigate social aspects of the African hair braiding salon such as language, visual media, sounds and conversations and how

they contribute to the creation of new forms of hybrid culture. Mutiti in her work also comments on notions of modernisation and the impact of developing hairstyling products and machinery on black hairstyling techniques and choices. With modernity and technology in mind Mutiti created the *Four stages of coiffure making* GIF[29] (S.a) which is a remake of Figure 2.2, which portrays the stages of coiffure-making, a photograph created in the early twentieth century. Composed during the colonial era, and characterised as colonial imagery the stages of coiffure making is appropriated and digitised by Mutiti into a never ending GIF. An orange background is placed behind the depicted black woman/girl and the four images are looped, creating motion. The GIF is reminiscent of modern day Youtube tutorial videos that can be found on the internet.[30] The tutorial videos feature step by step visual instructions created in real time to instruct viewers in the creation of specific hairstyles. The looped GIF generates the sentiment that the depicted hairstyle is being created over and over again in real time, which can be read as a comment on the tradition of black hairstyling (since her focus in on hairstyling of black women) and its resilience beyond slavery in America and European colonialism in Africa

[29] A GIF is an animated Graphic Interchangeable Format file that is characterised as a graphic image found on a Web page (Whatis.com).
[30] Youtube refers to the proprietary name of the internet online website where videos can be uploaded and shared with a global audience (Lexico.com, 2019).

Figure 5.13.: Mutiti, Nontsikelelo. Sa. *Four stages of coiffure making*. Gif (Super.selected.com)

The GIF can also be read as highlighting the technological advancements in the hair industry of which a hairstyle that was created then can be worked on and further developed in the twenty-first century. The addition of orange can also be read as an indicator of colour change as through the advancements in hair care. The same style can be achieved but with maybe a blonde hair colour, or red hair colour; it can even be making reference to the brightly coloured aforementioned hair salons. The work in its fullness can be seen as a celebration of black hair styling processes and

techniques and a showing of how old and new hairstyles can be created anywhere in the world and also shared through the dissemination channels of the internet.[31]

With a focus on modern media such as the internet, Mutiti recently created the *braidingbraiding.com* project which is a transcript of a salon conversation coupled with graphics and coding inspired by the braiding pattern and forms of repetition found in black hairstyling. The transcript includes conversations on hairstyle choices, hair texture, as well as the simple social conversation of unrelated consumer products such as shoes (Figure 5.14) (Mutiti, 2015).

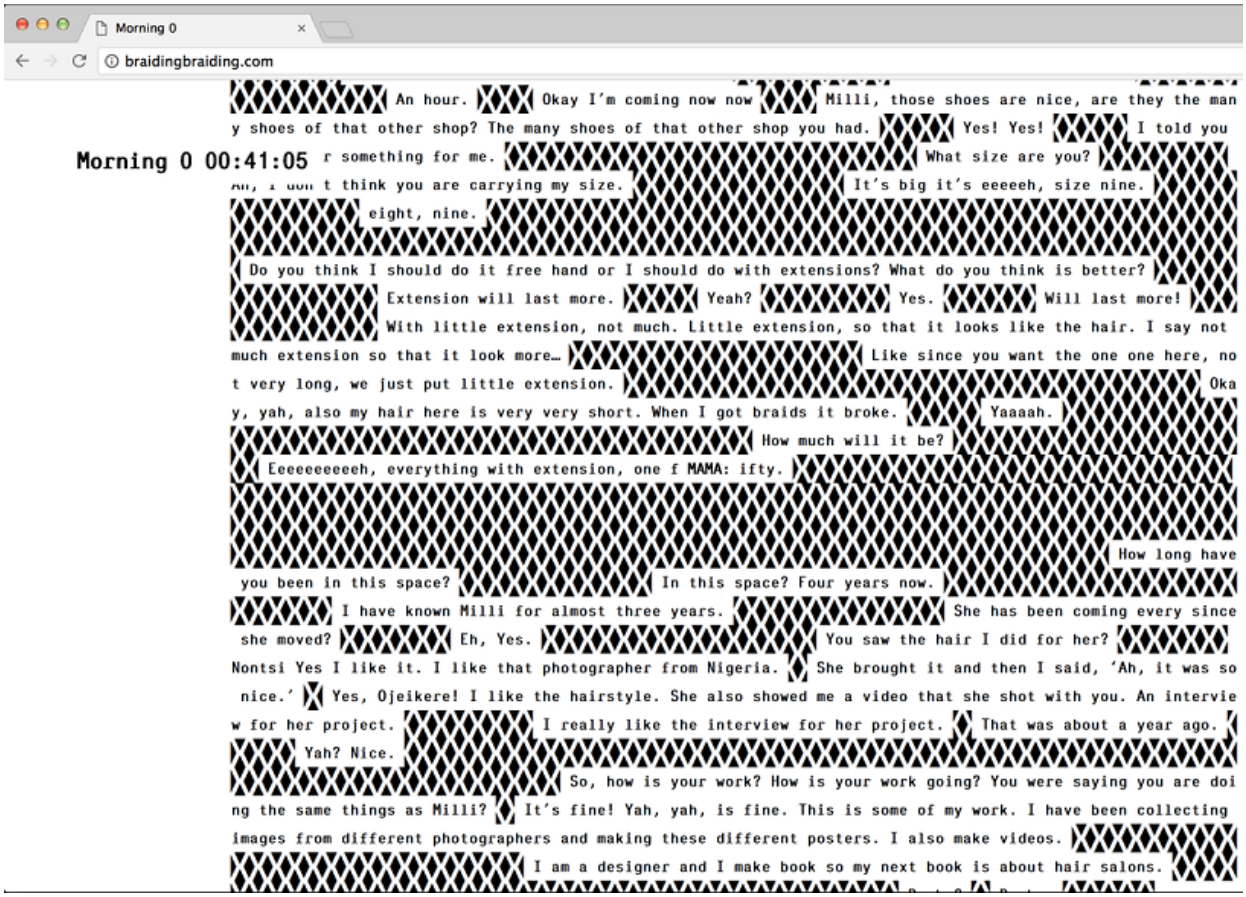


Figure 5.14: Mutiti, Nontsikelelo. Screenshot from Morning O plays the transcript of a hair braiding appointment in Yeoville, Johannesburg in real time. (Produced in collaboration with Julia Novitch for Recess Analog) (Mutiti, 2017).

[31] The GIF can only be downloaded from the internet and viewed and sent on modern day devices such as cell phones, laptops, computers etc.

The *braidingbraiding.com* website also fashions as a realtime artwork, as the entire conversation is not displayed all at once, but loads in seconds as if one is literally listening the conversation, or reading subtitles of the conversations as they are taking place in the salon environment. The spaces or gaps in conversation are also highlighted with a braid texture, which can be alluding to the notion of silent plaiting during the gaps in conversation, and also work as a visual reminder that the work references a hairstyling engagement. Design and art writer Madeleine Morley (2017) notes how Mutiti further recognises hair braiding as similar to typography which is continuously evolving, as the hairstyles respond to innovations in technique and tools and as a visual remnant of new symbolism and cultural references. Morley (2017) states how Mutiti uses braiding as a metaphor through as she pulls strands from various cultural signifiers in order to create her elaborate artworks and how the work of Mutiti can reference the 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s in order to create and articulate notions of African and African American hair and highlights a global kinship of the diaspora and the African through hairstyle choices, practices and techniques.

Mutiti references the term Ruka in her artwork continuously as she states that the term, in the Shona language is utilised in describing the practices of braiding whilst also being allocated to the fabrication methods of weaving and knitting. She describes the hair braiding and weaving processes as analogous and mentions a relationship between the processes and the development of coding languages and computation. Mutiti situates African hair braiding within the realm of digital technology through her various works such as the mentioned GIF as well as the *braidingbraiding* website. She mentions the similarities found in the foundation braiding and weaving to the rule based nature of digital algorithms, and how the act of braiding or having her hair braided formulates the foundation of her body of work

resolved through print, video and web based experimentation (Sister from another planet, 2018).

For *braidingbraiding.*com and her digital work, Mutiti highlights the aesthetic gestures found in preset commands and algorithms that emanate from design and fabrication tools. Mutiti recognises braids as produced through the execution and repetition of a series of processes that create pattern. The series of processes that create braids are seen as coming from a closed system of rules that allows the development of variable patterns that can evolve. The three part braid is created through the following series of processes; only once the processes have been observed and mastered can the three part braid be developed into other styles and forms of pattern. The braider parts and maps the hair on the head and plans the style according to the shape of the head in preparation for plaiting a series of cornrows. Mutiti further recognises the sectioning of the hair as done with mathematical understanding which she links to coding, mentioning the application of sophisticated calculations that occur at multiple points of a braiding session: “These almost instantaneously and seemingly intuitive decisions allow for even distribution of braids across the three-dimensional surface of the head”.

Mutiti applies this notion of braiding into her work, inspired by how the three-part braid transcends time and space, as the three part braid is quite universal in its practice, Mutiti creates custom floor tiles influenced by the notions of creativity, repetition and pattern that are present in the black hairstyles such as braids and cornrows. What is interesting regarding this specific three-part braid as an aesthetic form is that it manifests similarly in South Africa, the United States of America, Zimbabwe and Cameroon and the similarity in the application can be seen as the glue that connects black hairstyles, transcending geographic location and time, a

cultural practice that never goes out of style. Mutiti celebrates this notion when she applies this aesthetic in her custom-made tiles.

In the *T(H)READ* (2012) installation, Mutiti focuses on the notion of repetition as an aesthetic found within the braiding practice. Mutiti observes the complex patterns inherent in braiding, be it of natural hair (cornrows) as well as the artificial fibres interweaved within hair, to create other hairstyles and recalls how some hairstyles take time to create. On that notion Mutiti affirms then that the time allocation afforded to some hairstyles creates a social encounter for the braider and the client and she refers to braiding as a unifying gesture. Internationally published culture writer and media scholar Binwe Adebayo (2017) records Mutiti's investigation of the contemporary processes encompassed in hairstyling such as going to the salon, choosing the desired hairstyle and the process of braiding or weaving and discusses how Mutiti notes them as cultural-community driven integrations, based on inter-generational expressions of knowledge and technique.

She further recognises braiding as a representation of interweaving, knitting and a combination of patterns as rhythms that can be found in other disciplines such as in the Central and South African textiles, and other creative cultural forms inclusive of music. Recognising braiding as an art form in its own right, Mutiti creates the tiles (Figure 4.15 & 4.16) to show the complex patterning inherent in braiding and recreates the patterns on a grand scale. Mutiti also recognises hair braiding as a cultural practice operating in new world cultures, highlighting this in her custom floor tiles (Akindele, 2014).

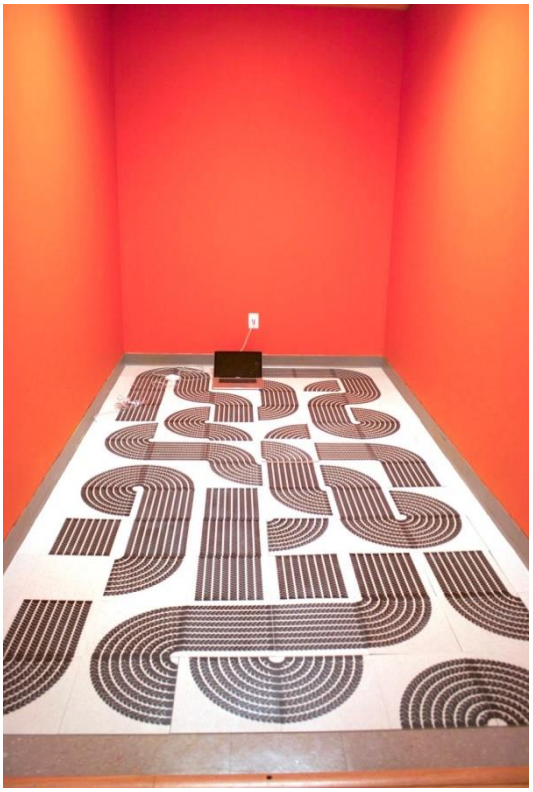


Figure 5.15: Mutiti, Nontsikelelo. *T(H)READ*, 2012, Silkscreen on 12 x 12 inch linoleum, interior paint, audio recording installation (Mutiti, 2015).

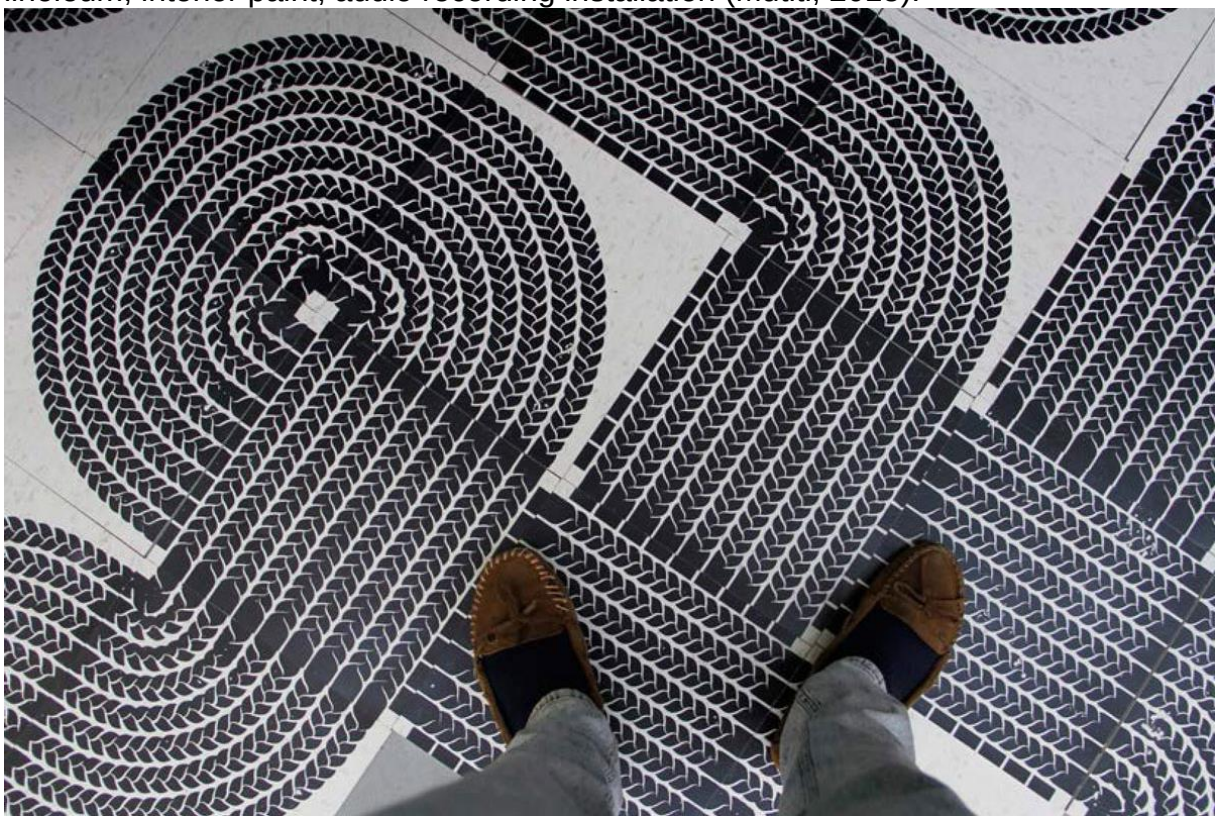


Figure 5.16: Mutiti, Nontsikelelo. 2012. *T(H)READ* Detail, Silkscreen on linoleum (Mutiti, 2015).

The custom floor tiles comprise of three part braid pattern printed trough silkscreen application onto 30.48 x 30.48 cm linoleum and were installed in a space where Mutiti painted the walls a bright orange, reminiscent of black hair salon spaces and places. An audio recording formed part of the installation as a means of creating a salon like space. For the tiles, Mutiti focuses on the aesthetic patterns achieved through the medium of hair, using specific techniques that have been developed over time. The technological process involved in the creation of the tiles highlights Mutiti's belief in braiding as a continuously evolving process. The tiles are created using an algorithm which is computer generated; Mutiti refers to algorithms as step-by-step procedural calculation, and visually links the computer generated tile design to cornrows. She does this as a means of celebrating the procedure of making cornrows and demonstrates her belief that traditional hair braiding is technology. In the article *Hair braiding is technology* (2014) American digital artist Nettrice Gaskins and Mutiti further stated that:

> Floor tiles screen-printed with tessellating patterns by Nontsikelelo are algorithmic; each tile consists of a group of cornrows, designed in such a way that different shapes are formed depending on how the tiles are arranged. Thus, the story of the artist, designer or braider must be encoded in some way into the algorithm. Hair braiding is a technology.

Mutiti further sees hairstyling as body marking that is not just ephemeral but is based on notions of African histography which she is determined to document. Her artwork titled *Heads all over* (2015) shows this documentation as she uses various historical images to create it. The artwork is a video created by using various images of the cornrow hairstyle, plaited in different patterns. Mutiti places each hairstyle on its own frame, repeating the image on the frame and creating a specific visual pattern. Mutiti uses multiple images on multiple frames creating a number of visual patterns based on the images used. The patterns follow the theme of repetition found in black

hairstyling choices such as the braid and the cornrow. The artwork serves both as a documentation of traditional African hairstyling techniques and also celebrates the aesthetic that is inherent in traditional African hairstyles. “Collages are built out of colonial photographies”, Mutiti (2017) states. The use of new media in her art such as videos and digital mediums perpetuate the idea of hairstyling as an evolving concept and recognising technological advances within the black hairstyling field. The digital artworks are created by employing design and fabrication tools which are used to achieve a gesture of traditional African hairstyling aesthetic based on set algorithms. These aesthetic motions are based on a series of procedures that execute repetition to produce a braid-like pattern which in turn allows the variable pattern to evolve. Mutiti (2017) states:

> Within communities a lexicon of terms is assigned to styles and effects. These serve as prompts directing the braider to produce a visual end product based on a set of aesthetic standards and using specific techniques that have been developed over time. Braiding as a practice is continuously evolving, responding to innovations in tools as well as absorbing new symbolisms and cultural references that form new trends and vocabularies.

Her artworks comprise of collected archive images, business cards, cell phone images as well as collected objects such as combs, wigs, fibres and text found in transcripts of conversations, braiding instructions, and photocopies of academic essays. With these various collected media, Mutiti creates her images and video installations focusing on the aesthetics of black hairstyling such as pattern, repetition, creative expression, innovation and labour in order to investigate the culture of hair braiding as well as the continuation of traditional customs and symbolism inherent in African hairstyling.

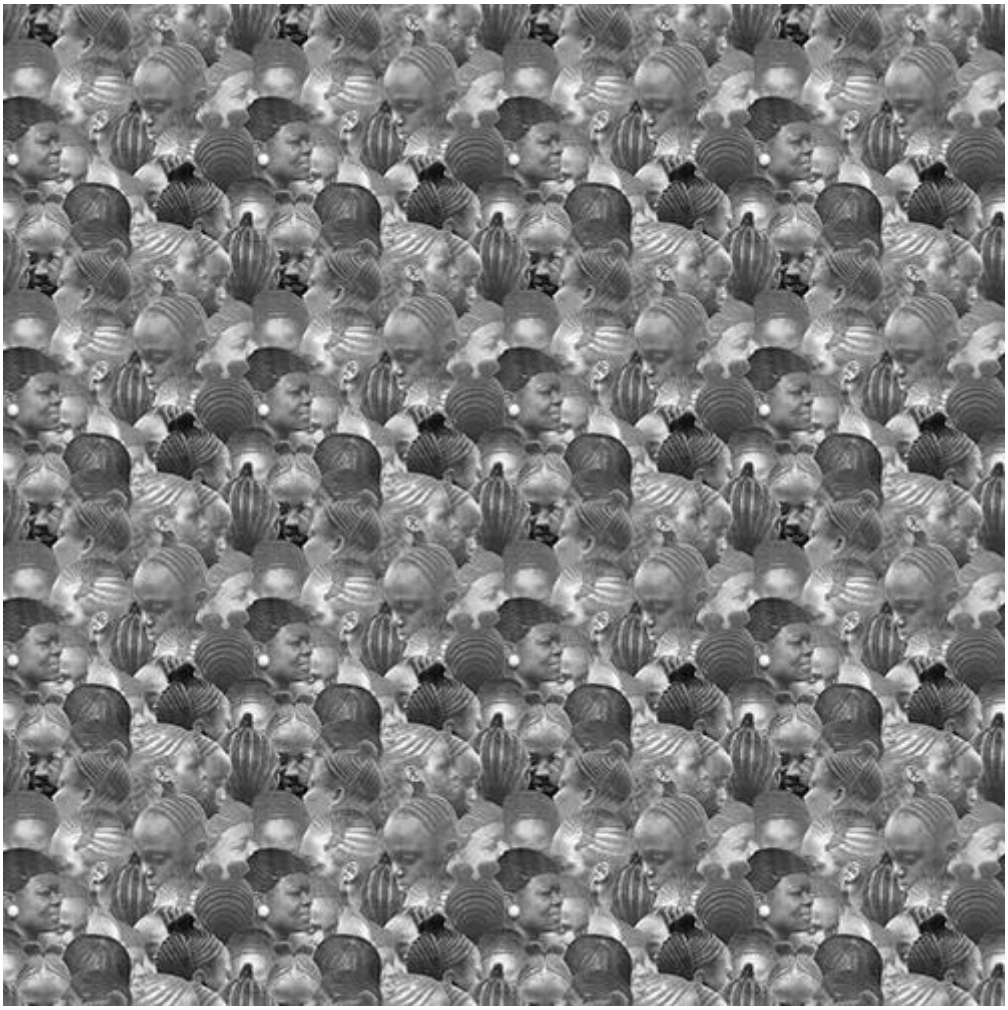


Figure 5.17: Mutiti, Nontsikelelo. 2015. *Heads all over pattern,* Inkjet print, wall paper, textile print and projection on seamless repeat (Mutiti, 2015).

5.4 CONCLUSION

Chapter Five has discussed modernity, globalisation and hybridity and how the concepts serve to locate the cultural diversities inherent in identity performances such as black women's selection of hairstyles. South African artists/photographers Stephen Hobbs and Markus Neustetter, celebrate globalisation, modernity and hybridity and the impact on black hairstyles and investigate the social and economic productions created within the black hairstyling field. Hobbs and Neustetter visually show the diversity of contemporary African hairstyling as they document through

photography various identities embedded in hairstyle choices of black women from the same location in Cameroon and further detail the creative process entrenched in black hairstyling by providing the viewer with a few steps included in the current coiffures of black women.

Nontsikelelo Mutiti comments on notions of globalisation as she observes traditional and contemporary hairstyle choices and practices. Mutiti notes the similarities inherent in both old and new hair practices and how some hairstyles seem to transcend time and space. She displays this notion as she juxtaposes new and old hairstyle choices practices within her new media works. Mutiti celebrates the black aesthetic within black hairstyling by creating custom floor tiles inspired by the three-part braid and also celebrates the culture that is entrenched in black hairstyling irrespective of spatial location by looking at the hair salon as a social space that harbours new and old black hairstyling choices and practices irrespective of the continent. The following chapter will serve as to conclude the dissertation from the first to the fifth chapter, detailing prevalent themes, concepts and artworks by select artists.

CHAPTER SIX

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Six summarises the previous five chapters. The Chapter further presents implications of the research; the chapter also discusses the contribution of this research to the field of visual arts. A reflection on the research process followed by possible areas for further research serves as a conclusion to the chapter and the dissertation.

This study has examined the negative framing of blackness and black features such as hair through different paradigms. The research problem has been located within the creation, proliferation and perpetuation of a specific identity of black women of African descent expressed through their chosen hairstyle. The notion that a woman's chosen hairstyle, ranging from hair straightening to the insertion of extensions, weaves and wigs may constitute a form of mimicry and a disavowal of her blackness has been critically examined. The study has focussed on the visual negotiation and re-representation of blackness and black hairstyles through the artworks of selected artists. This dissertation has examined the manner in which artists portray the hairstyling choices and practices of black women, particularly in terms of the impact of slavery, colonialism and apartheid there upon. The dissertation's exploration was aided by the following objectives:

I) To observe black women's hairstyle choices and practices in the early twentieth century through the photography of Casimir Zagourski, photography found in the books of Roy Sieber and Frank Herreman, as well as Bernard Shapero. This served to provide context for the rest of the study.

II) To observe the visual negotiation of identity and the re-representation of blackness, black women and their chosen hairstyles by select South African, African American and Zimbabwean born artists, namely Gavin Jantjes, Tracey Rose, Zanele Muholi, Lorna Simpson.

III) To apply postcolonial theory through the literature of Frantz Fanon, Homi K Bhabha and Kobena Mercer and link pre-colonial/ colonial hairstyling choices and practices with contemporary hairstyle choices and practices and argue that contemporary artificial hairstyling processes are not simply a mimicry of European beauty ideals, but rather, a continuation of pre-colonial grooming practices. This served as background for the following chapter.

IV) To examine the artworks of Stephen Hobbs and Marcus Neustetter as well as Nontsikelelo Mutiti within the application of postcolonial theory of Frantz Fanon, Homi K Bhabha, Kobena Mercer, and Stuart Hall towards an understanding of the current hairstyle choices of black women as instances of modernity, globalisation and hybridity.

V) To apply the theoretical framework, including notions of the visual negotiation of identity and the re-representation of blackness, black women and their chosen hairstyles to an analysis of the work of selected South African, African American and Zimbabwean born artists, namely Gavin Jantjes, Tracey Rose, Zanele Muholi, Lorna Simpson, Stephen Hobbs and Marcus Neustetter as well as Nontsikelelo Mutiti.

6.2 SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Chapter One introduced the reader to the dissertation, providing background and motivation towards the formulation of the research topic. The chapter includes the

problem statement, research question, aims, objectives as well as the applied methodology that frames the discourse within the research.

Chapter Two discussed how African men and women have always styled their hair in various ways, to communicate different aspects of life and culture. Their hairstyles have communicated ethnicity, spatial regions, gender, status, age and personal taste (Sieber and Herreman, 2000:56). This diversity was examined in Chapter Two when different hairstyles of women from different cultural societies such as the Wambo (Namibia), Fante (Ghana) Himba (Namibia), Masai (Kenya), Mangabethu (Congo) amongst others were observed and discussed as visual examples of hair practices of black women in the early twentieth century. Chapter Two further served as an historical background for the study, noting the devaluation of blackness and black hair throughout different paradigms, introducing slavery, European colonisation in America and Africa, as well as apartheid in South Africa and the notion of othering.

Chapter Three focussed on observations and discussions of artworks from selected artists, namely Gavin Jantjes, Tracey Rose, Zanele Muholi, and Lorna Simpson, highlighting issues pertinent to black hair and hairstyling such as hair as a signifier of inferiority, focusing on hairstyling as a performance of identity.

Chapter Four discussed the mimicry debate regarding the hairstyling choices and practices of black women, especially the straightening of one's hair, insertion of extensions and weaves and wearing of wigs. The chapter highlighted the pertinent critique towards the wearing of the hairstyles, explaining in detail the notion of mimicry within in postcolonial context and applying Kobena Mercer's literature with the aim of critiquing the simplistic understanding of black women's hairstyles in terms of mimicry. The chapter demonstrated the existence of profound links between the

pre-colonial/colonial and contemporary hairstyle practices of black women, so that it was deduced that the contemporary hair practices of black women are more a continuation of pre-colonial hairstyling practices rather than a form of mimicry.

Chapter Five demonstrated that the hairstyles of black women of African descent should rather (instead of being understood as instances of mimicry) be understood in relation to modernity, globalisation and hybridity. This understanding was illustrated by referring to the artworks of Stephen Hobbs and Marcus Neustetter as well as Nontsikelelo Mutiti.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions that have been drawn from the dissertation are discussed below.

6.3.1

The dissertation notes how African hairstyle choices and techniques of black women varied within the different locations of the African continent in the early twentieth century. The different hairstyles demonstrated the diverse hairstyling options and choices that black hair offered and still offers, as well as exhibited different approaches of embracing the African aesthetic, through hair. This review of those hairstyles which were prevalent during and prior to the colonial era, laid the foundation for my subsequent contextualisation of modern hairstyling practices. I subsequently argued (in Chapter Four) that contemporary hairstyle choices and practices which involve the use of extensions and other artificial processes are in line with these older customs. Chapters Two and Four documented how hairstyle choices and hair practices of black women of African descent changed suddenly, as slavery, colonialism, and apartheid in South Africa led to the demise of many aspects

of African culture, including tradition, identity, aesthetics and traditional African hairstyles. Not only did slavery, colonialism and apartheid affect the identity of black men and women of African descent, these three components of history led to the devaluation of African hair and hairstyling.

6.3.2

Having analysed artworks wherein black hairstyling features prominently, I suggest that the current hairstyles chosen by black women and beauty trends they follow, can be seen as a projection of the constant redefinition and negotiation of self in a post-apartheid and post-colonial era. This notion of redefinition and negotiation can be located in the performance pieces and artworks of Tracey Rose who starts by cutting all her hair off, erasing the pre-imposed identity that was embedded in her hair and starts articulating and weaving a new identity for herself in post-apartheid South Africa. While Zanele Muholi celebrates and pays homage to some of the traditional black hairstyling practices while exploring a new black aesthetic/narrative and notions of *'Black is Beautiful'*.

Lorna Simpson further investigates the role the contemporary hairstyle choices and practices play in society and how contemporary hairstyles of black women like in traditional Africa seem to signify certain messages and identities. Although the messages differ, contemporary hairstyle choices of black women can communicate certain stereotypes and social identities like class, age, gender, race and economic standing and can be seen as negotiation and performance of contemporary identity.

In Chapter Five globalisation and hybridity (third space) are discussed and recognised as serving to locate cultural diversities inherent in identity performances such as black women's selection of hairstyles. Contemporary hairstyles suggest to

the mixing and borrowing of multiple cultures such as African, Asian, American and European in order to create a new global culture (Lüneberg, 2014:26). Furthermore the chapter focuses on works of Stephen Hobbs and Marcus Neustetter created through the *Temporary but Permanent* Project (2013), showing the economic advantages in black hairstyling and highlighting differences in the choices of hairstyles of women in one community. The chapter visually links contemporary hairstyling practices with older pre –colonial/colonial hairstyling practices discussed in Chapter Two and demonstrates the effects of modernity, globalisation and hybridity in terms of technological progress in the hairstyling sector as well as the notion of shared identities disseminated through mass media. Nontsikelelo Mutiti shows the linking of black hairstyling practices globally, and focuses on hairstyling as an art form.

Visual artists at times, take the role of documenters and throughout the years there have been various artistic documentations of black hairstyling choices and practices, ranging from traditional African sculptures to modern photography, painting, performance and installation. Certain artistic representations of black hairstyling choices and practices can take the form of investigation, response or resistance. The above-mentioned works of Gavin Jantjes, Tracey Rose and Zanele Muholi function as resistance, investigation, negotiation and re–representation, while the works of Stephen Hobbs and Marcus Neustetter as well as Nontsikelelo Mutiti investigate the effects of globalisation and hybridity within black hairstyle choices and practices in Africa and abroad.

6.3.3

This dissertation traced the course of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa and its effects on the black woman and her identity performances, including her hairstyle choices. The dissertation further detailed the common preoccupation of black women with straight hair, and referred to the derogatory terms often used to refer to those black women without straight hair. The results of colonialism and apartheid and othering play a huge role in the contemporary hair practices of women of colour as black women still fear being othered, fear being classified with derogatory terms and being seen as unattractive in the context of assimilated European beauty ideals.

Globalisation and technological advances within the hair sector in South Africa and abroad have contributed to the contemporary hairstyle options and practices of black women in South Africa. The hairstyles that have developed in South Africa through globalisation, modernisation and the technological advances in the hair sector include hair straightening, insertion of weaves, wigs and extensions.

In America, the black power movement of the 1960s sought to liberate black people and created pride within blackness. The movement sought new ways for black people to express and progress their own identities and celebrate their physical features which had once been seen as inferior. Hair was an important factor in this movement which aided in the creation of new black aesthetics through hair and led to the development of the afro hairstyle, and the common use of a natural hairstyle.

Subsequently, the 1960s anti-apartheid movements and demonstrations which aimed at achieving freedom for black people living under the yoke of apartheid in South Africa, served as a paradigm shift for black identity, aesthetics and identity performances. Hairstyles and hair practices of black women and men started

changing as a new representation of black power was emerging in South Africa and the straight silky hair (style) was renounced and seen as a form of mimicry. In a similar manner to what had occurred in the United States of America, new hairstyles celebrating the texture of black hair such as the afro, dreadlock and natural hairstyles came to be regarded as symbolic of freedom, while straightened, weaved and extended hairstyles were rejected and came to be understood as forms of mimicry.

Although the adoption and celebration of these new hairstyles such as the afro, natural and dreadlocks were aimed at creating a sense of pride in black aesthetics and black features, it alienated those women who were not embracing these hairstyles. The problem with this perspective was that it - to an extent - repeated the western practice of othering, insofar as it defined identities and hair performances that were selected by black women in a wholly negative manner. The expressed notion that black women's hairstyles are merely instances of mimicry actively dishonours them for their hair choices, which is exactly what western culture was about, creating a hierarchy of difference and discrediting that which is different.

All the mentioned hairstyles – ranging from the afro, natural hair and dreadlocks to the use of straightening - are identified with different notions of blackness. All the hairstyles have emerged as a reaction to slavery, colonialism and apartheid and furthermore emerge as a novel black aesthetic in new worlds.

Black Power can be seen as an attempt by black people to preserve the cultural integrity of people of African descent. South African anti-apartheid activist Stephen Bantu Biko defined blackness as a concept used to refer to a group of people who

were discriminated against socially, politically and economically and within the Black Consciousness Movement stated the following (Biko, 1978:48, 52):

1. Being black is not a matter of pigmentation - being black is a reflection of a mental attitude.

2. Merely describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that use your blackness as a stamp that marks you as a subservient being.

Further implications of Black Consciousness are to do with correcting false images of ourselves in terms of culture, education, religion, and economics. The importance of this also must not be understated. There is always interplay between the history of a people, that is, the past, and their faith in them and hopes for their future. We are aware of the terrible role played by our education and religion in creating among us a false understanding of ourselves. We must, therefore, work out schemes not only to correct this but further to be our own authorities rather than wait to be interpreted by others.

The notions shared by Biko are explicitly important because Biko actively encouraged the development of a new identity that challenged the identity imposed on black people. Biko further identified black people as the new authors of their identity. Bhabha (1994:5) and Kraidy (2002:4) see this contemporary post-colonial era as a third space of historical transformation. The words echoed by Biko seem to take precedence in this era of which Bhabha feels is a time and space for the once marginalised people to negotiate their own identity by embracing difference. The hairstyle of black women cannot be simplistically understood as comprising a form of mimicry, although mimicry can also not be entirely rejected as a concept inspiring the hairstyles worn by black women.

Marco (2012:11) agrees with this notion regarding the current hairstyle choices of black women when she states that women straighten their hair for various reasons such as convenience, maintenance and social acceptability. Communication arts scholar Eletra Gilchrist (2011) investigates the impact of media on hairstyling and discovers that black women’s hair choices are closely linked to media images and

individuals they can identify with. Gilchrest discerns that black women are more inclined to refer to images and hair practices of other black women, rather than white women for their choice of hairstyle. She further asserts that hair enhancements such as weaves, wigs and extensions should no longer be referenced with stigma and taboo, but should be regarded as a personal choice of the woman who chooses them as her preferred hairstyle. Mercer (1987:34) agrees with Gilchrist's sentiments when he states that the diversity of black hairstyling choices and practices should be celebrated as it validates notions of innovation, improvisation and politics in black hair practices.

6.3.4

Hybridity in a general sense of globalisation is a term that can be used to dislocate cultures and identity from their fixed, temporal and spatial-geographical contexts, leading them to abstract globalised new identities and global cultures which are in constant flux. Modern societies, therefore, can be defined as societies of rapid and permanent change, leaving the individual in a liminal state of identity that changes with the various cultures the individual is exposed to. Modernity, therefore, is characterised by the experience of living with rapid, extensive and continuous change which is highly reflective of the social practices in light of incoming information about those very practices thus constructively altering their character. In this instance, I will refer back to Chapter Three (section 3.2.1) where Nakedi Ribane critiques the culture of wearing *doeks*, which is seen as a black cultural practice, but in essence is derived from the collision of two different cultures, and influenced by colonisation and apartheid.

Modes of life brought into being by modernity have lost all traditional types of social order and cultural classification, because the external and internal identity of an individual is continuously being transformed in a faster way than in prior periods of our history, altering the material of culture and tradition as we know it, and disturbing the structures that hold identity (Hall, 1996:599). This change brought upon by modernity, globalisation and hybridism unhinges the once stable identities of the past, opening up new possibilities of new articulations to the forging of new identities and new identity practices such as choice of hairstyle.

6.4 Implications of the study

This dissertation has highlighted artworks created in relation to black hair and hairstyling choices and practices. The researcher's concern has been how the selected contemporary artists investigated, critiqued, articulated, negotiated and re-represented the prevalent representation of blackness and black hairstyling choices and practices. The researcher has also critiqued the notion that current black hairstyling choices and practices comprise as forms of mimicry and a disavowal of blackness. Rather, stemming from the literature of Kobena Mercer, the researcher regarded the hairstyles as instances of cultural practice in a globalised hybrid space, more a performance of individual identity rather than an assimilation into European beauty ideals and assimilation of white aesthetics.

6.5 POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH

The dissertation has opened up a number of possible research topics that can be explored further. Some of the topics coming to mind are as follows:

- How artworks, images and photographs disseminate through popular new media such as television adverts, and social media such as Instagram, and facebook impacts on hairstyle choice as new media influences popular culture.

- To adopt a postcolonial framework in order to discuss: the representation of black women in nineteenth and early twentieth century photography, the creation and perpetuation of a typology of black women of African descent.

- To observe and discuss contemporary artistic approaches by select artists regarding the representation and re-representation of black women.

- To discuss the representation of blackness through photography, a comparative analysis of the imagery of Alfred Duggan Cronin and Santu Mofokeng.

- Apartheid fuelled and racist policies within the South African school and employment sectors that are still in place. An analysis of the remnants of apartheid in terms of black hair and hairstyling (i.e. Zulaikha Patel who was asked by Pretoria High School in 2016 to cut her afro as per the school's policy).

Christabelle Peters, quoted in Mercer (1987:54) states:

Sister Carol wears locks and wants a Black revolution

She tours with African dancers around the country

Sister Jenny has relaxed hair and wants a Black revolution

She paints scenes of oppression for an art gallery

Sister Sandra has an Afro and wants a Black revolution

She works at a women's collective in Brixton

Sister Angela wears braids and wants a Black revolution

She spreads love and harmony with her reggae song

All my sisters who want a Black revolution don't care

How they wear their hair. And they're all Beautiful.

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ADDENDUM

The table below details a visual reference of contemporary hairstyle choices, emphasising the different hairstyles black hair can offer. The table does not include all the hairstyles relative to black women, but is limited to the ones mentioned in the study.

A. WEAVES

Figure 1: Peruvian weave (Aliexpress, 2018).

Figure 2: Long curly weave (dhgate, 2018).

Figure 3: Short weave (facebook, 2018).

Figure 4: Short weave (immdell, 2015).

Figure 5: Short curly weave (shopahoy, 2016)

B. WIGS

Figure 6: Long straight wig (eesiwigs, 2018).

Figure 7: Long curly lace wig (eesiwigs,2017).

Figure 8: Short wig I (wigtypes, 2018)

Figure 9: Short straight wig (importitall, 2018)

C. BRAIDS AND EXTENSIONS

Figure 10: Braids (Braiding hairstyles, 2017)

Figure 11: Extensions hairstyle (thankgodimnatural, 2016)

Figure 12: Masai Twists (Manechicks, 2017)

Figure13: Box braids (hairdome, 2017)

Figure 14: Faux Locks (lightinthebox, 2018)

Figure 15: Braiding Styles 2016 (Longhairbeez, 2016)

D. SHORT HAIR CUTS

Figure 16: Nandi Madida with bald hairstyle. (youthvillage, 2017).

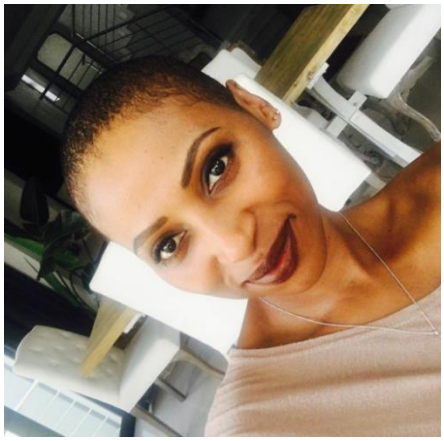

Figure 17: Zonke Dikana with short hairstyle (youthvillage, 2017).

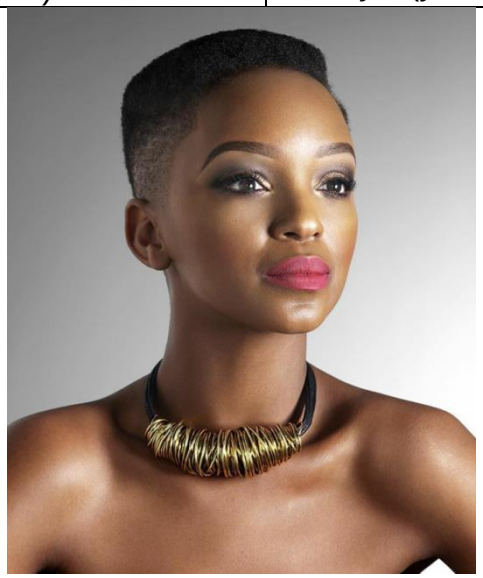

Figure18: Nandi Mngoma with short cut (youthvillage, 2017).

E. NATURAL HAIR & THE AFRO

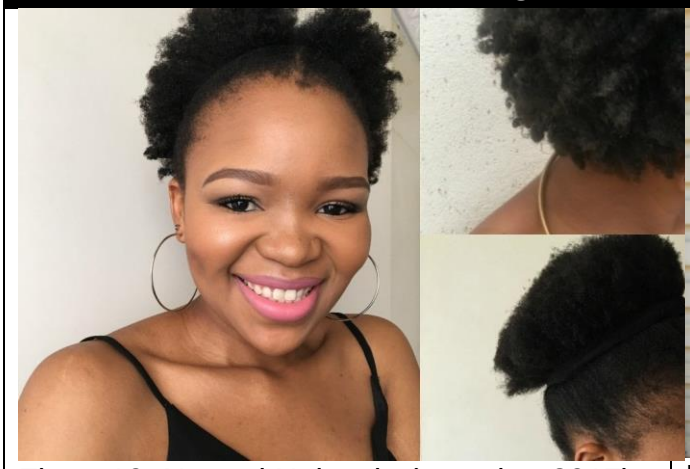

Figure19: Natural Hairstyle (youtube, 2017)

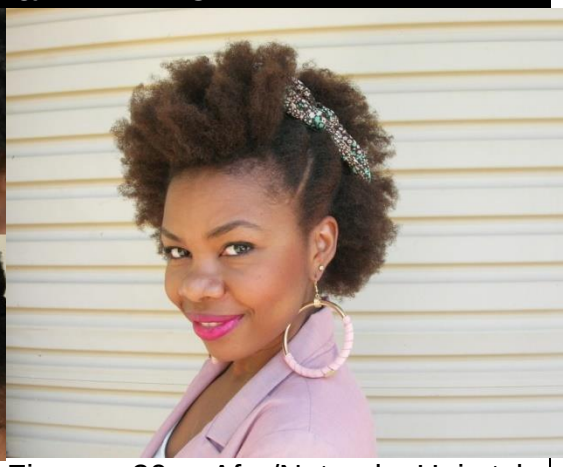

Figure 20: Afro/Natural Hairstyle (hairstylelegetty, 2012)

Figure 21: Afro Hairstyle (muxima, 2016)

Figure 22: Afro Hairstyle (Renada, 2015)