

# **RACISM AND ABJECTION IN THE (POST)COLONY**

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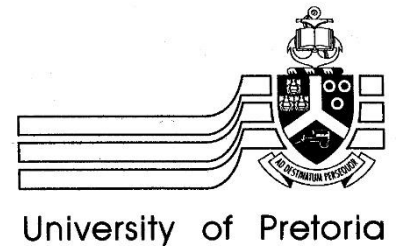
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## ABSTRACT

This study examines Kristeva's notion of abjection to understand the workings of colonial racism. Given the limitations of her Eurocentric standpoint, reference will also be made to the critiques and engagements with abjection by various other scholars. Abjection, when appropriately rethought, could prove to be a beneficial tool to diagnose the interior problems of racism within the historical context of settler-colonialism and apartheid with specific focus on racism within the contemporary South African context.

Reference will also be made to the film, *Get Out*, to illustrate the persistence of the historically informed system of abject racism and to place emphasis on the deficiencies of narrow interpretations of racism which overlook the broader domain of the psycho-social and institutionalised practices of racial abjection. I will elaborate on the proposed critical investigation by drawing parallels between film, specifically the 2017 horror film *Get Out*, and legislation, Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill. In this sense, *Get Out*, will be considered as a narrative which questions South Africa's contemporaneity as a (post)colonial and (post)apartheid state and the limits of the law by comparing and contrasting the film to, the recently approved, Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill. I intend to argue that the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill operates on a narrow level and that it is incapable of responding to structural racism as it fails to recognise the psycho-social dimension of racism and that abject racism continues into the (post)colonial context.



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# RACISM AND ABJECTION IN THE (POST) COLONY

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1. RESEARCH PROBLEM

This study is a jurisprudential investigation of law, race, and ideology that draws on Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection, within the context of (post)colonial and (post)apartheid South Africa, so that the psycho-social underpinnings of racism today may be foregrounded.<sup>1</sup> I intend to argue towards an understanding of racism in the (post)colony which highlights that racism is structural, historical, and enduring in character, and grounded in colonial myths and practices which continue into the (post)colonial context.

Specific emphasis will be placed on Kristeva's notion of abjection to understand the workings of colonial racism. Given the limitations of her Eurocentric standpoint, reference will also be made to the critiques and engagements with abjection by various other scholars and writers. Abjection, when appropriately rethought, as the operation of the psyche through which both subjective and group identity is formed and regulated by the borders of group identity, could prove to be a beneficial tool to diagnose the interior life of racism within the historical context of settler-colonialism and apartheid with a specific focus on racism within the contemporary South African context.<sup>2</sup>

The 2017 horror film, *Get Out*, will be examined to illustrate the persistence of the historically informed system of abject racism and to emphasize the deficiencies of legalistic and liberal interpretations of racism, which overlook the broader domain of the psycho-social and institutionalized practices of racial abjection.<sup>3</sup> I will elaborate on the proposed critical investigation of racism by drawing parallels between film,

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<sup>1</sup> AE Ansell "Casting a Blind Eye: The Ironic Consequences of Color-Blindness in South Africa and the United States" (2006) *Critical Psychology* 32 347; A Baldwin "Whiteness and Futurity: Towards a Research Agenda" (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 40 172 178. This proposed study will introduce a psycho-social approach to stress the importance of the South African geography in the understanding of racism. The role of the history, environment and social patterns of settler-colonialism and colonial apartheid will be underscored, in this study, as inseparable from the present understanding of contemporary racism. To emphasise this reasoning, that the past has predetermined the present, I will refrain from hyphenating time periods.

<sup>2</sup> J Kristeva *The Powers of Horror* (1982); L Jones "Women and Abjection: Margins of Difference, Bodies of Art" (2007) *Visual Culture & Gender* 2 61.

<sup>3</sup> NE Hodges "Neo-Colonialism: The New Rape of Africa" (1972) *The Black Scholar* 12.



specifically the 2017 horror film *Get Out*, and legislation, Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill.<sup>4</sup> *Get Out* will be used to show the workings of abject racism. In this sense, *Get Out* will be considered as a narrative that questions South Africa's contemporaneity as a (post)colonial and (post)apartheid state and the limits of the law by comparing and contrasting the film to the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill.<sup>5</sup> I argue that the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill operates on a narrow level and that it is incapable of responding to structural racism as it fails to recognize the psycho-social dimension of racism and that abject racism continues into the (post)colonial context.<sup>6</sup> Put differently, racism is a formation that plagues our society to this day.

This study is founded on the assumption that the traditional approach to racism as the explicit manifestation of discrimination based on skin color (which only lives in the mind of a singular individual) can be countered by introducing a psycho-social conception of racism in South Africa, from the perspective of Kristeva's abjection, as appropriately rethought and reformulated to supplement her Eurocentric limitations. Kristeva's formulation is Eurocentric, not only because racism is absent from her formulation, but rather because her perspective is informed by a Western world view emanating from Europe's dominant position within the global capitalist system. Put differently, anti-black racism is not included within Kristeva's formulation.

## 2. BACKGROUND

There is a widespread (but contested) belief that South Africa has transformed into a rainbow nation in the post-94 era. This belief further posits that racism belongs – and has stayed in the past.<sup>7</sup> The dismissal of conversations racism and habitual denial of sensitivity and awareness of the implications of racial oppression has allowed for a culture of abject racism to thrive. The disengagement from issues of racism presents a precarious problem in South African society: The significance of the history and

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<sup>4</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018; T Bick "Horror Histories: Apartheid and the Abject Body in the Work of Jane Alexander" (2010) 43 *African Art* 30 36 43.

<sup>5</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

<sup>6</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

<sup>7</sup> T Madinglozi "Social Justice in a Time of Neo-apartheid Constitutionalism: Critiquing the Anti-Black Economy of Recognition, Incorporation and Distribution" (2017) *Stellenbosch Law Review* 124

experience of racism is negated in an attempt to avoid the fact that the social dynamics of slavery and colonialism are still perpetuated in the present.<sup>8</sup>

The introduction of a psycho-social perspective on racism and the introduction of Kristeva's abjection will allow for the impact of racist ideologies which have facilitated the cultural and economic exploitation of colonialism to be discussed in light of the consequences which it holds for the present day: The embracing of colonial traditions and behaviors of abject racism. This is illustrated by the majority of Black South Africans who remain desperately poor and marginalized due to white commitment to excluding them from the economy by withholding/limiting access to affordable education, housing, etc.<sup>9</sup>

The over-emphasis on political and legal concerns, during the democratic transition of the early 1990s grossly neglected political and socioeconomic concerns and resulted in a monopolized political space that failed to recognize and prioritize racial justice, restitution, and reparation.<sup>10</sup> The Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill proposes to remedy and provide redress for instances of racism, however, the Bill fails to adequately confront the culture of abject racism and exploitation which is prevalent in contemporary culture – thus highlighting the law's limits.<sup>11</sup> To expose and remove the misconceptions which inform the dominant understanding of racism, many films, and other forms of visual culture have emerged to bring attention to the phenomenon of racism. The film, *Get Out*, will be used as a visual storyboard to illustrate abject racism and to emphasize the limits of the law.

### 3. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND SUB-PROBLEMS

This study is concerned with three dominant research problems. The first problem is concerned with the need to counter/address the dominant/liberal approach to racism by introducing a psycho-social perspective. The second issue relates to the value of Kristeva's abjection as applied to racism. The third and final problem relates to how engaging with abjection could reveal the limits of the law with specific reference to the

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<sup>8</sup> B Hooks "Loving Blackness as Political Resistance" in *Race and Representation* (1992) 13-16; Madinglozi (2017) *STELL LR* 125 125.

<sup>9</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 340.

<sup>10</sup> Madinglozi (2017) *STELL LR* 125.

<sup>11</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

film, *Get Out*, and the Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill.

### 3.1 COUNTERING THE DOMINANT APPROACH TO RACISM BY INTRODUCING A PSYCHO-SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE:

The traditional liberal/dominant approaches to racism need to be outlined and problematized. Although racism has universal elements, these liberal/dominant definitions fail to account for elements of racism that may be nationally specific and influenced by the history of that territory. Moreover, the liberal/dominant approaches to racism do not acknowledge the totality of racism, but rather posit racism as a matter of individual psychology.

To understand what racism is (and how it is perpetuated in present-day South Africa) the historical unfoldment of racism will be examined. A historical evaluation of racism should allow for the complexity of racism to come to the fore. Such an evaluation is expected to expose the various disciplines which have been – and still are – implicated in the perpetuation of a racist society. The afore will be done by examining how racism developed through the introduction of settler-colonialism as well as the ontological divide between Europeans and those which they imagined as their ‘inferior’ others. Additionally, it will be argued that this basic organizing division persists into the (post)colony. Put differently, I will examine racism in terms of the ideological articulation of difference and the practices of inclusion and exclusion which overlap and underlie our society.

### 3.2 THE VALUE OF KRISTEVA’S FORMULATION OF ABJECTION

Kristeva’s abjection will be employed to consider the influence of the psycho-social dynamics of racism and to formulate an argument that counterbalances the reductive nature of overly-psychologized and over-individualized understandings of racism as alluded to above. It should be noted that Kristeva’s notion of abjection is explicitly Eurocentric; however, by supplementing her formulation of abjection with the work of various scholars such as Young, Fanon, and Hook one should be able to show that the themes of abjection are visible in anti-black racism.

### 3.3. HOW ENGAGING WITH ABJECTION REVEALS THE LAW'S NARROW LIMITS, WITH REFERENCE TO THE FILM, *GET OUT*, AND THE PREVENTION AND COMBATTING OF HATE CRIMES AND HATE SPEECH BILL

The 2017 horror film, *Get Out*, will be analyzed and studied to argue that the afore film exhibits, themes of abject racism that cannot be addressed by the law's narrow limits. More specifically, the categories as evident in the Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill cannot comprehensively address abject racism. Put differently, the Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill is too narrow and is divorced from the psycho-social consideration in addressing the social ill that is racism.

It is anticipated that the film, *Get Out*, demonstrates that racism is not limited to extreme acts of explicit racism (the very kind of racism with which the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill attempts to protect against) but rather an ever-present historically informed system of abject racism.

## 4. METHODOLOGY/Framework

This study will make use of desktop research by engaging with critical theoretical perspectives and approaches in which the issue of racism will be problematized within the context of South African history (in terms of colonization and apartheid). This study will further call for the destabilization of ideological, psychic, and symbolic norms by employing a critical approach to racism that seeks to move beyond the traditional conceptions which are individualistic and Eurocentric – ultimately detached from the South African reality. I intend to make use of an intertextual approach in which I will combine texts from different disciplines to apply to the problematization of racism by applying Kristeva's notion of abjection to analyze film *Get Out* as it illustrates themes of racial abjection / abject racism in ways overlooked by law and legislation, specifically the Prevention and combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

## 5. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 5.1. RACISM IN THE POST COLONY: COUNTERING THE DOMINANT APPROACH TO RACISM BY INTRODUCING A PSYCHO-SOCIAL APPROACH

As previously stated, to revisit and redline the definition of racism, specific to the South African context, the traditional/dominant definition of racism will be outlined and problematized. To attend to the afore, a psycho-social perspective will be introduced. This psychosocial approach, within the context of this study, relates to the combined influence of psychological factors as well as the social environment and the impact of these influences on physical and mental wellness. Moreover, such an approach considers several aspects that are related to the psychological and social functioning and availability of supports.<sup>13</sup> The term psychosocial is based on the notion that the combination of factors is responsible for the wellbeing of people and the material aspects of experience cannot be separated from each other. Thus, the employment of the term (psychosocial) emphasizes the totality of experience rather than viewing the elements of which the experience is comprised in isolation. The psychosocial approach further engages with the circularity of cause-effect/effect cause.<sup>14</sup>

Introducing a psychosocial approach will be done by examining how racism developed through the introduction of settler-colonialism and the ontological divide between Europeans and those which they imagined as their 'inferior' others. This will flow into a discussion of how this basic organizing division persists into the (post)colony and how this differs from the 'traditional' conceptions of racism. I will discuss the complexity of racism and identity in today's South African society by examining the psycho-social process of racialization on which institutional racism is built.<sup>15</sup> To do so, I will examine racism in terms of the ideological articulation of difference and the practices of inclusion and exclusion which overlap and underlie our society.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Halamová, J., Kanovsky, M., & Naništová, E. 'Development and psychometric analysis of the sense of community descriptors' *Psychosocial Intervention* (2018) 44 45-46.

<sup>14</sup> World Health Organization, 'Disaster Risk Management for Health: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support' *Global Platform* (2011) 1 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> S Bonds & J Inwood "Beyond white privilege: Geographies of white supremacy and settler colonialism" (2016) *Progress in Human Geography* 40 (6) 715.

<sup>16</sup> D Hook "Racism as abjection: A Psychoanalytic Conceptualisation for a post-apartheid South Africa" (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 672 675; NC Gibson & Beneduce (2017) *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* 44.

The psycho-social perspective of racism will examine how racism was, initially introduced into the South African landscape, based on pseudo-scientific research assumptions that fed into supremacist ideals.<sup>17</sup> This definition of biological racism posited one particular race is superior to another, imbued with racial discrimination based on hate. This initial racist reasoning allowed for racism to evolve into a political order.

It is commonly accepted that race is now understood as a social construct, and not a difference in biology. Accordingly, the definition of racism has adapted. The development of the definition and concept of racism will be studied to emphasize the need for a psycho-social perspective on racism.

As evidenced above, racism is constantly defined and redefined in new and different terms to include a broader scope of conduct and concepts. The most common definitions of racism broaden the scope of discrimination and prejudice which underlies racism; however, they fall short of recognizing that racism is a core component of the social organization of (post) colonial countries. To this end, the definition of racism, as formulated by Derek Hook will be studied. Derek Hook's definition, in conjunction with an overview of South Africa's history, will be used to emphasize that racism is informed by a historical and hierarchical power relationship, existing in society at both an individual and institutional level, whether conscious or subconscious, present and perpetuated in social interactions, economic activity and structure and political systems which support the expression of prejudice and aversion through discriminatory practices, however gross or subtle.<sup>18</sup>

By focusing on the past of settler-colonialism and colonial apartheid (specifically, the unfoldment of racist regimes, racism, and whiteness in South Africa), I will formulate a conception of abject racism which is sensitive to the history and present experiences of visceral racism which persists in contemporary culture – escaping the (not so) long arm of the law (Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the legacy of settler-colonialism and colonial apartheid allows for the

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<sup>17</sup> S Garner (2010) *Racisms: An Introduction* 22.

<sup>18</sup> I refer to the notion of subconscious racism in supporting my argument of the psycho-social undertone of racism.

<sup>19</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018; Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 174: This demonstrates my agreement with the (post)colonial theoretical assumption that past colonial relations continue to organise contemporary experience.

critical examination of the narrow limits of the law whilst simultaneously questioning the appropriateness of traditional conceptions of racism which are devoid of accounts of how racism was used as capitalist, religious, political, and social propaganda for the complete and comprehensive exploitation of Black lives and land.<sup>20</sup> The reason for examining racism within the context of South African history is to reveal racist structures and ideas- and how these structures and ideas relate to legal sphere as well as the material conditions and lived experiences in South Africa today.<sup>21</sup>

The formulation and consideration of abject racism ought to shed light on the racist ideals of the white experience, rooted in the accumulation of land and wealth, which continues to dominate and oppress Black people today.<sup>22</sup> I hope that this formulation will allow for the intergenerational trauma of colonial racism to be understood and appreciated. In doing so, I will approach the issue of racism by focusing on more than the mere conscious precepts or social history on which it appears to be firmly founded – by emphasizing the importance of psychic representations of race and how this allows for racism to be understood in terms of Kristeva’s abject - as abject racism.<sup>23</sup>

## 5.2. RACE AND ABJECTION: KRISTEVA’S NOTION OF ABJECTION – UNDERSTANDING THE WORKINGS OF COLONIAL RACISM

Chapter 3 will grapple with Kristeva’s abjection to consider the influence of the psycho-social dynamics of racism. A focus on the “(psycho)socio- context of cultural values and identifications that generate racist reactions to the experience of ethnic otherness” will inform the interrogation of the notion of the abject.<sup>24</sup>

Kristeva’s formulation of the abject specifically refers to physical and/or emotional reactions to behaviors, bodies, and states of being which are deemed impure because they are imagined as threatening to the boundaries and norms of the social order.<sup>25</sup> This formulation of the abject can be crystallized into four components or elements: The abject awakens a (1) emotional response to the (2) potential threat of a (3)

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<sup>20</sup> CW Mills, “European Specters” (2003) *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* 150- 154; 158 – 159; CW Mills “White Supremacy as a Sociopolitical System: A philosophical Perspective” in A Doane and E Bonilla-Silva (eds) *White-Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism* (2003) 35 44.

<sup>21</sup> Modiri JM “The Time and Space of Critical Legal Pedagogy” (2016) 27 *Stellenbosch LR* 507 – 510.

<sup>22</sup> Mills “White Supremacy as a Sociopolitical System” in *White-Out* 44.

<sup>23</sup> R Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* (2018) 86.

<sup>24</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa*.

Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 2, 4, 17, 56, 65, 66, 84.

symbolic border which may be caused by – or result in a (4) physical component.<sup>26</sup> By breaking down Kristeva's formulation of the abject, we can begin to supplement her formulation by referring to various academic scholars, as Kristeva's formulation does not contain any reference to anti-black racism and is Eurocentric in nature.

Kristeva discusses abjection, in *The Powers of Horror*, only in so far it relates to certain categories of uncleanness.<sup>27</sup> She refers to the abjection of biological functions (such as those of the female body), religious prohibitions and categories of behavior, as well as spaces of abjection (the space which the abject inhabits – such as the poor).<sup>28</sup> This will be discussed at length in chapter 3.

In *The Powers of Horror*, Kristeva introduces abjection as a physical reaction to uncleanness and uses the example of bodily waste, which awakens the need, within the subject, to reject and avoid the abject object (here the bodily waste) and to separate oneself from it – as it poses a threat to the purity of one's body and one's health.<sup>29</sup> In light of the afore example, it is clear that the abject is a catalyst for the demarcation of boundaries, but only insofar it awakens an emotional response (the sense of disgust and aversion with the waste product paired with the compelling drive to remove oneself from the waste to preserve cleanliness, purity, and health) within the subject (to maintain the social order).<sup>30</sup>

The emotional component of the abject is not limited to feelings of disgust or horror – it can manifest as fascination or desire in certain instances. The fusion of disgust and repulsion, within the abject, consequently frames the boundaries of the social order to regulate proper members by requiring that they avoid the objects which awaken this

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<sup>26</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 2, 3: I have highlighted these elements as I will discuss these components throughout the project in order to highlight how these elements were used to spread racism throughout the settler-colonial enterprise and how these elements were utilised in apartheid propaganda and tactics.

<sup>27</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 2-4.

<sup>28</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 1, 4, 13, 19, 51, 60, 67, 72-75; Arya R, 'Abjection Interrogated' *Journal of Extreme Anthropology* (1) 53-55: Kristeva's abjection is commonly used in critical theory to describe the state of often-marginalised groups which include: women, unwed mothers, people of minority religions, sex workers, convicts, the poor and the disabled.

<sup>29</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 1- 4.

<sup>30</sup> Arya "Abjection Interrogated: Uncovering The Relation Between Abjection and Disgust" *Journal of Extreme Anthropology* (1) 48 50-51. I have oversimplified the definition of Kristeva's abjection so that we may side-step many of the Eurocentric limitations which are not necessary to discuss within the framework of this study. Kristeva deals directly with three categories of abjection which awaken the feeling of disgust. These are the abjection towards food; towards bodily waste and towards sexual difference.



reaction.<sup>31</sup> The strong emotional response in which abjection awakens may take on the form of fear and/or disgust. The response of fear awakens the need to flee from the abject object. The response of fear combined with the feeling of disgust, however, awakens the desire that the offending object is removed entirely from existence.<sup>32</sup>

The abject operates on a far more psychical level than just a purely emotional or physical response to an unclean object (such as bodily waste). It is also concerned with that which “*disturbs identity, system, order, what does not respect borders, positions, rules.*”<sup>33</sup> The determination of sameness and difference – and also of internal and external borders in terms of the social order- of just exactly where one thing ends and another begins should be emphasized as a factor which has greatly influenced the racist regime of colonial-apartheid as a means to an end in constructing and continuing white supremacy by excluding and eliminating that which the colonizer imagined as disgusting.<sup>34</sup>

Julia Kristeva’s notion of abjection will be further employed to show how Blacks have historically been framed as abject and how this abjection of Blacks and Blackness persists in the white (collective) imaginary.<sup>35</sup> Understanding Kristeva’s abject, as a smile which disguises the feeling of hatred, should demonstrate the internal (psychical) functioning process of liberal racism as depicted in the early portion of the narrative of the film, *Get Out*.<sup>36</sup> If abject racism relies on a perverse dependence on the Other, it follows that the object of abject racism (the Other) is transformed into a source of aversion and simultaneously, relief.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 11, 66-67, 70; Arya *Journal of Extreme Anthropology* 52; Gibson NC & Beneduce (2017) *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* 166.

<sup>32</sup> *Arya Journal of Extreme Anthropology* 55.

<sup>33</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 232; Tyler I, ‘Against Abjection’ *Feminist Theory* (2009) 77.

<sup>34</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 230.

<sup>35</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 11, 138; Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 89: “People are denounced filthy when they are felt to be unassailably other, whether because perceived attributes of their identities repulse the onlooker or because physical aspects of their bodies do... Actions behaviours, and ideas are filthy when they partake of the immoral, the inappropriate, the obscene, or... whilst often experienced viscerally, are culturally constrained... (a)ll versions of filth have one thing in common: from the point of view of the one making the judgement, they serve to establish distinctions...” [Eddo-Lodge]

<sup>36</sup> D Tutt “A Hatred that Smiles: Kristeva’s Essay on Abjection and Intimate Racism” (10-06-2012) <<https://www.google.com/search?q=daniel+tutt+abjection&oq=daniel+tutt+abjection&aqs=chrome..69i57.3711j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>> (accessed 03-01-2019); Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 181.

<sup>37</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 137.

To further develop the understanding of racist abjection I will refer to Imogen Tyler's notion of social abjection politicizes the concept of abjection and analyses it as both a social and lived process.<sup>38</sup> Tyler considers the consequences of the relationship between those who abject and those who find themselves abject-ed within the specific context of social and political locations.<sup>39</sup> Tyler's notion of social will be further used, within this research, to demonstrate abject racism is a system of social prohibitions which is reliant on the practices of exclusion to maintain the imaginary repertoire of white supremacy as the dominant status quo. To build on this, I will refer to bell hooks, who delves into the complexities of desire, specifically, the transformation of the body of the 'other' into an object of desire and how it relates to the "horror-fascination" component of Kristeva's abjection, particularly in chapter 4.<sup>40</sup>

### 5.3. THE LAW'S NARROW LIMITS: *GET OUT*, AND THE PREVENTION AND COMBATTING OF HATE CRIMES AND HATE SPEECH BILL.<sup>41</sup>

The 2017 film, *Get Out*, follows a young Black man, Chris Washington. As the plot develops it becomes apparent that Chris has been lured into a dangerous and life-threatening situation by a group of racist liberals who intend on harnessing his (stereotypical) attributes for their ignoble purposes.<sup>42</sup> The racial underpinnings of liberalism are explored throughout the film, while the viewer is confronted with various visual and metaphorical references to slavery and racism.<sup>43</sup> The film engages with the implications of abject racism as it engages with forms of casual racism (and microaggressions) which appear to be innocent at first, but as the plot progresses expose the horrific nature of abject racism.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> I Tyler "Against Abjection" (2009) 1 *Feminist Theory* 10 80.

<sup>39</sup> Tyler (2009) *Feminist Theory* 77; A McClintock (1995) *Imperial Leather* 8; Bonilla-Silva E, 'The Structure of Racism in Color-Blind, "Post-Racial" America' (2015) *American Behavioural Scientists* 1-19.

<sup>40</sup> Hooks B (1992) "Eating the Other" in *Race and Representation* 21-39.

<sup>41</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

<sup>42</sup> W Cook-Wilson "In Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All" (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peeel-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018)..

<sup>43</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* ix.

<sup>44</sup> W Cook-Wilson "In Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All" (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peeel-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018). G Shreve "Get Out of my head: Experiencing Cultural Paranoia in Jordan Peele's *Get Out*" *How Therapists talk about Race* 2 4.

The significance of the genre of the film, as a horror, movie in terms of Kristeva's abjection (particularly the horror-fascination paradigm) will be studied in conjunction with Noel Carroll's 'art-horror'.<sup>45</sup> To illustrate briefly, the power of the horror film is that it repulses and fascinates simultaneously – “*simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes*” and therefore allows for critical contestation (the emotional affect with which the viewer is confronted does not allow for dissociation).<sup>46</sup> I argue that the visual experience of the horror film adds a new dynamic to the catastrophic history and memory of South Africa, which allows it to be transformed into a relatable contemporary archive which forces its viewer to consider and reflect upon the lived experience of abject racism. In, *Get Out*, the director, Jordan Peele equates racialized reality with a horror film- the film is both entertaining and educational as it gives emphasis to the truth about what the horrific effects of racism are and provides the viewer with an intimate account of the lived experience of abject racism.<sup>47</sup>

The film makes multiple references to the '*sunken place*' which serves as a metaphor for issues of assimilation, slavery, and silencing (and of the horror which accompanies the lived experience of abject racism and its consequences).<sup>48</sup> I will engage with the '*sunken place*' as a space to which the marginalized is expelled through the process of abjection. Moreover, I will argue that this space, the '*sunken place*' is indicative of abjection (it is devoid of recognition, acceptance, and acknowledgment) in contemporary culture.<sup>49</sup> I will further argue, that the film successfully arouses, which is significantly absent in conversations about the proposed *Prevention and Combating*

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<sup>45</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 141: Kristeva, herself, associated with the aesthetic experience of abjection in terms of art, literature and poetic catharsises

<sup>46</sup> T Bick “Horror Histories: Apartheid and the Abject Body in the Work of Jane Alexander” (2010) 43 *African Art* 30 36.

<sup>47</sup> Bick (2010) *African Art* 36 37.

<sup>48</sup> Rayner, 17 March 2018, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/mar/17/trapped-in-the-sunken-place-how-get-outs-purgatory-engulfed-pop-culture> (accessed 30 April 2018) ; NC Gibson & Beneduce (2017) *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* 44; Shreve G, “Get Out of my head: Experiencing Cultural Paranoia in Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*” *How Therapists talk about Race* 5; Jasper M, ‘*Jordan Peele Explain What Get Out’s “Sunken Place” Represents, and why it Feels Like We’re There Now*’ 21 January 2018, available at: <https://www.themarysue.com/jordan-peeel-explains-sunken-place/> (accessed 30 April 2018); Gibson NC & Beneduce (2017) *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* 175.

<sup>49</sup> Rayner, 17 March 2018, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/mar/17/trapped-in-the-sunken-place-how-get-outs-purgatory-engulfed-pop-culture> (accessed 30 April 2018).

of *Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill*.<sup>50</sup> This specific piece of legislation aims to remedy but a few of the symptoms of visceral racism.<sup>51</sup> It fails to account for the intergenerational trauma of institutionalized racism, the theft of land and labor, as well as the emotion and knowledge that the indigenous people's native language, culture, and history have been actively denied and removed by a Eurocentric education system – all factors which inform the experience and infliction of abject racism. I will also focus on the interactions between the characters which Chris encounters during the development of the plot. In doing so, I hope to emphasize the subtler forms of racism as present in the post-94 context and how these 'subtler' forms may escape any kind of impunity which is prescribed in the Bill.<sup>52</sup>

*Get Out* can speak to the complexity of the current culture of abject racism, and highlight the psycho-social dynamics of racism, where institutionalized slavery and subjugation continues to deny Black subjectivity through the refusal of access and entrance into the symbolic realm.<sup>53</sup> It is to this end that I will argue that the *Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill* offers mere superficial protection against the symptoms and side-effects of narrow interpretations of racism and as such completely overlooks the broader domain of the psycho-social and institutionalized practices of abject racism.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018

<sup>51</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.; Goff L & Schroeter CV, 'Screening Race: Constructions and Reconstructions in Twenty-First Century Media' (2007) *Alphaville Journal of Film and Screen Media* 13 1-12 1.

<sup>52</sup> I make use of the word "*subtler*" to show that not all racism is verbalised / shown with the same kind of intensity, although it is certainly still obvious to the Black people who experience it (like the character Chris in *Get Out*).

<sup>53</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.; Screenprism, *Get Out Explained: Symbols, Satire & Social Horror* 28 May 2017 available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubNKSgdT1FQ&index=113&list=WL> (accessed 25 September 2017) 00:26 – 00:55; Shreve (note 45 above) 7.

<sup>54</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018; Hodges 12; The law merely speaks to the symptoms of racism and the extreme instances of gross explicit racism. For example, the gross racist conduct of Vicky Momberg and Penny Sparrow.



## CHAPTER 2: RACISM IN THE (POST) COLONY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The definition of racism, specific to the South African context, the traditional/dominant definition of racism will be outlined and problematized within the current chapter. Additionally, a psycho-social perspective will be introduced. The afore will be attended to by examining the way in which racism developed (specifically, through the imposition of settler-colonialism and the ontological divide between Europeans and those which they imagined as their ‘inferior’ Others). This will flow into a discussion of how this basic organizing division persists into the (post)colony and how this differs from the ‘traditional’ conceptions of racism. The complexity of racism and identity in today’s South African society will also be discussed by examining the psycho-social process of racialization on which institutional racism is built.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, racism (in terms of the ideological articulation of difference and the practices of inclusion and exclusion which overlap and underlie our society) will also be examined.<sup>2</sup>

The introduction of a psycho-social perspective exposes the influence of the combination of factors that have historically been employed in the construction of the system of structural racism.<sup>3</sup> Put differently, the psycho-social perspective of racism will examine how racism unfolded in the territory which would eventually become South Africa.<sup>4</sup> The definition of biological racism which posed one particular race as superior to another (and is clearly imbued with racial discrimination based on false biology) allowed for racism to evolve into a political unit. It is commonly accepted that race is presently understood as a social construct, and not a difference in biology. Accordingly, the definition of racism has adapted. The development of the definition and concept of racism will be studied to emphasize the need for a psycho-social

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<sup>1</sup> S Bonds & J Inwood “Beyond white privilege: Geographies of white supremacy and settler colonialism” (2016) *Progress in Human Geography* 40 (6) 715.

<sup>2</sup> D Hook “Racism as abjection: A Psychoanalytic Conceptualisation for a post-apartheid South Africa” (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 672 675; NC Gibson & Beneduce (2017) *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* 44.

<sup>3</sup> Halamová, J., Kanovsky, M., & Naništová, E. ‘Development and psychometric analysis of the sense of community descriptors scale’ *Psychosocial Intervention* (2018) 44 45-46.

<sup>4</sup> S Garner (2010) *Racisms: An Introduction* 22; P Bond & JS Saul South Africa – *The Present as History: From Mrs Ples to Mandela & Marikana* 15.

perspective on racism. Put differently, definitions containing explicit Eurocentricity will be discussed for the inadequacy of the dominant approach to racism to be redlined.

As evidenced above, racism is constantly defined and redefined: in new and different terms to include a broader scope of conduct and concepts. The more common definitions of racism broaden the scope of discrimination and prejudice which underlies racism; however, they fall short of recognizing that racism is a core component of the social organization of (post)colonial countries. To this end, the definitions of racism, as formulated by Hook, Wellman and Grofoguel will be studied. These definitions, in conjunction with an overview of South Africa's history, will be used to emphasize that racism is informed by a historical and hierarchical power relationship, existing in society at both an individual and institutional level, whether conscious or subconscious, present and perpetuated in social interactions, economic activity and structure and political systems which support the expression of prejudice and aversion through discriminatory practices, however gross or subtle.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, these definitions will be used to argue that racism has a dimension which is geographically specific.

The analysis of the history of settler-colonialism and apartheid remains indispensable for understanding the pervasive nature of colonial conditions and racism which is prevalent in contemporary South Africa.<sup>6</sup> It allows one to understand how whiteness has managed to maintain its stronghold on racist social imaginaries and how it has shaped contemporary politics.<sup>7</sup> Whiteness, as I refer to it throughout this study, is meant to be understood as a racialized subject position.<sup>8</sup> Whiteness is not used to refer to the color of skin (and the absence of melanin) but rather as a norm (and a position) which is informed by habits of perception and well as historical advantage.<sup>9</sup> The importance of whiteness in this sense and within this study is that it plays a foundational role in racist epistemology. Whiteness is thus the norm against which all things are measured and come to be viewed as different and excluded (based on that difference).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> I refer to the notion of subconscious racism in supporting my argument of the psycho-social undertone of racism.

<sup>6</sup> A Baldwin "Whiteness and Futurity: Towards a Research Agenda" (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 40 172 178 172.

<sup>7</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 173.

<sup>8</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 172-173.

<sup>9</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 174.

<sup>10</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 173.

The power of whiteness, for Andrew Baldwin, is that it possesses the capacity for infinite variability.<sup>11</sup> The afore understanding of whiteness is important to the study of racism as it accounts for the power of racism. Baldwin explains: “*The power of racisms rest in their capacity to normalize corresponding whiteness*”.<sup>12</sup> The concept of whiteness is informed by history insofar it elucidates the social relations of the past.<sup>13</sup> The quantifiable base of white supremacy in modern-day South Africa owes its existence to the history of racial exploitation which has in countless ways profited whites with health and wealth: to the marginalization of all people of color.<sup>14</sup>

White supremacy and racism, at its very core, is Eurocentric in its condemnation of all else as inferior.<sup>15</sup> Indigenous peoples have been denied the worth of their culture- to the “... *historyless and cultureless vacuum*” which is only ‘redeemable’ by European presence and civilization.<sup>16</sup> Challenging and reconfiguring these white ideals, whiteness, and white supremacy require that whiteness and its corresponding racisms be diagnosed using a past-oriented analysis.<sup>17</sup> A correct historical analysis of whiteness may be useful to supplement efforts to understand (and define) racism and where it comes from within the South African milieu.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. RACISM: FINDING AN APPROPRIATE DEFINITION

As previously stated, racism is constantly defined and redefined to include a broader scope of conduct and concepts. Although ‘racism’ and ‘prejudice’ are often used interchangeably- these two terms refer to two vastly different concepts.<sup>19</sup> Racism is not merely discrimination in the form of personal prejudice, but rather discrimination plus power.<sup>20</sup>

Overly individualized definitions of racism tend to overlook the fact that racism has become a normative condition of South African society.<sup>21</sup> Whilst many definitions of

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<sup>11</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 174.

<sup>12</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 174.

<sup>13</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 174.

<sup>14</sup> CW Mills “White Supremacy as a Sociopolitical System: A philosophical Perspective” in A Doane and E Bonilla-Silva (eds) *White-Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism* (2003) 35 44.

<sup>15</sup> Mills “White Supremacy as a Sociopolitical System” in *White-Out* 44.

<sup>16</sup> Mills “White Supremacy as a Sociopolitical System” in *White-Out* 44.

<sup>17</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 174.

<sup>18</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 174.

<sup>19</sup> R Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* (2018) 86, 88-89.

<sup>20</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 2.

<sup>21</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 209.



racism (which I discuss in this chapter) broaden the scope of discrimination and prejudice which underlies racism, these definitions fail to recognize that racism is a core component of the social organization of (post)colonial countries (such as South Africa). Thus, a large portion of mainstream/liberal definitions of racism fail to recognize the significance of the psycho-social dimensions of racism. Globally accepted and generalized definitions of racism may not necessarily appropriately define the particular kind of racism which is evident in South Africa today. It follows that a more discursive conceptualization will be advanced in order to avoid separating racist behavior from the social, structural, and institutional landscapes which inform it.

Social, political, and economic spheres of life impact the processes of domination and marginalization. It is the analyses of these processes which allow us to understand how the phenomenon of racism has become normalized, both at an individual level and within the South African milieu.<sup>22</sup> For the purpose of the study, there can be no strict separation of ideology and subjective experiences, as the lines are blurred when it comes to stereotypical racist discourse and the effect it has on embodied psychology (the lived experience).

According to Magubane, the term 'racism' tends to be used in a vacuous way to describe the unfavorable and viperous attitudes of one ethnic group towards another and the actions which result from the aforementioned attitudes. For Magubane, racism is also described as the antipathy of one group towards another and is expressed and acted on with duration and intensity that goes beyond the group-centered prejudice that seems to constitute a universal failing.<sup>23</sup> Many alternative definitions and conceptions of racism are available at present. For example, racism can be defined as:

*"... Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, a national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and functioning freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life."*<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 209.

<sup>23</sup> GM Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* (2002) 1.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Adopted December 1965 and entered into force in January 1969.

The above definition (although legally accepted) implies that reverse racism could be possible. It is not.<sup>25</sup> Wellman's definition of racism eliminates the possibility of the reverse racism debate by narrowing the constraints and implicating whiteness. Wellman defines racism as "... *culturally sanctioned beliefs, which, regardless of intention involved, defend the advantages of whiteness because of the subordinated position of racial minorities.*"<sup>26</sup> Racism is also often described as a condition in a society in which a dominant racial group benefits from the oppression of others.

Derek Hook places the definition of racism within the domains of the psyche and allows for history, politics, and ideology to be implicated. He aptly describes racism as "... *a phenomenon which is as psychological as it is political, affective as discursive, subjective as ideological.*"<sup>27</sup> Hook's description can be interpreted as follows: The concept of race is an intricate blend of historical/material and discursive/affective content and that the psychical representations of race inform the tenacity of racism itself.<sup>28</sup> To emphasize: Race is attached to individual bodies and the individual psyche but it also operates, concurrently, through a trans-social logic.<sup>29</sup> The afore definition provides an understanding of racism which is informed by a historical and hierarchical power relationship which exists in society at both an individual and institutional level, whether conscious or subconscious, and is present in and perpetuated by social interactions, economic activity and structure and political systems which support the expression of prejudice and aversion through discriminatory practices (however gross or subtle).<sup>30</sup>

For Frederickson, racism is not merely an attitude or set of beliefs: "... *it also expresses itself in the practices, institutions, and structures that a sense of deep difference justifies or validates.*"<sup>31</sup> Frederickson's formulation indicates that racism establishes/sustains a racial order (or a permanent group hierarchy) which has been articulated and maintained by the West through avenues such as science and religion.<sup>32</sup> Frederickson further explains that racism has two components which are:

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<sup>25</sup> This point is addressed at a later stage in this chapter.

<sup>26</sup> D Wellman *Portraits of White Racism* (1993) 43.

<sup>27</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 212.

<sup>28</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 212.

<sup>29</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 212.

<sup>30</sup> A McClintock *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995) 8.

<sup>31</sup> Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 6.

<sup>32</sup> Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 7-9.

Difference and power (originating from a sense of difference which provides a motive for unjustly using power). He uses government-sanctioned segregation, colonial subjugation, and enslavement as examples of manifestations of racism.<sup>33</sup> This leads us to the understanding that “...*(R)acism has become a loaded and ambiguous term. Once primarily a matter of belief or ideology, racism may now express itself in institutional patterns or social practices that have adverse effects on members of groups thought of as races, even if a conscious belief that they are inferior or unworthy is absent*”.<sup>34</sup>

Biko’s formulation of racism allows for further insight: racism is discrimination by a group, against another, to subjugate or maintain subjugation of that group. This means that one can only be a racist if one asserts and possesses the power to subjugate.<sup>35</sup> Biko’s formulation of racism corresponds with Young’s definition of oppression: “...*the exercise of tyranny by a ruling group*”.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Biko’s formulation highlights the core components of Young’s formulation of the five faces of oppression which are easily identified when examining the history of (as well as present-day) South Africa. These five faces comprise of the following: exploitation; marginalization; powerlessness; cultural imperialism and violence.

If we are to combine Frederickson, Hook, Wellman, and Magubane’s formulations of racism, it becomes evident that racism is simultaneously globally constituted whilst possessing nationally specific elements. It is enmeshed with searches for national identity and cohesion which varies with the history of each territory.<sup>37</sup> In South Africa racism/race continues to constitute social relations: race and racism have become internalized and normalized. Thus, we need to look towards a definition of racism that acknowledges the history, its present existence, and its effects within the South African milieu.<sup>38</sup> Such a definition does not deny that colonial racism has had a profound impact on our country (in both the past and present). Rather, such a definition acknowledges that structural racism means that the relationship with race has infected

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<sup>33</sup> Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 9.

<sup>34</sup> Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 151.

<sup>35</sup> B Nyoka “Bernard Magubane’s The Making of A Racist State Revisited: 20 Years On” (2016) 47 *Journal of Black Studies* 903-927 904.

<sup>36</sup> IM Young *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990) 5.

<sup>37</sup> Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 72.

<sup>38</sup> I chose to use the phrase ‘acknowledging the existence and effects of racism’ because I feel that many whites do not believe that there is an actual and real racial problem now, nor has there ever been.

and distorted all aspects of the lived experience of societal relations and continues to do so.<sup>39</sup> Hook provides the following components of racism:

*“racism entails: (1) particular sets of representational content... (2) ...certain social including psychological processes (racialization) which taken together provide for (3) practices of inclusion or exclusion (institutional racism)... [I]deological articulation [furthermore] refers to processes involving the overlapping, continuity, and interrelationship between ideologies, for instance, nationalism and patriarchy.”<sup>40</sup>*

The components of racism, that Hook provides, allow for a multi-pronged approach to racism. Racism is the culmination of imagined beliefs (feelings of superiority) combined to obtain a more favorable position in society through various unjust means and disciplines (whether they be legal or extra-legal), throughout history, which efforts are perpetrated on an individual and institutional level. Viewing racism through a discursive frame allows us to scrutinize how realities are constructed around issues of race in the elite, institutional and informal talk and text.<sup>41</sup> This is because racist discourses result in the establishment, sustaining, and reinforcement of the oppressive power structure between those who have been defined as different.<sup>42</sup> Racism is, therefore, more aptly described as elements of ideology, of discursive and material practices, which are aimed at producing and reproducing (and justifying) institutionalized inequality and marginalization.<sup>43</sup> These afore characteristics are in line with structural racism. Structural racism as a system in which *“public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity”*.<sup>44</sup>

Structural racism identifies certain dimensions of history and culture which enable white privilege to endure and adapt. Structural racism is not necessarily a conscious form of racism, but rather a characteristic of social, economic, and political systems

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<sup>39</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 83-84.

<sup>40</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 672.

<sup>41</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 210.

<sup>42</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 210.

<sup>43</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 210.

<sup>44</sup> The Aspen Institute “Glossary for Understanding the Dismantling Structural Racism/Promoting Racial Equity Analysis” <https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/rcc/RCC-Structural-Racism-Glossary.pdf> (accessed 26-09-2019).

within a given (specific) society.<sup>45</sup> The social and historical dimensions of racism along with the elements of structural racism (which have economic and political impacts) provide a more holistic view of the depth and breadth of racism. Accordingly, a more suitable definition can be formulated.

Grosfoguel defines racism as “... a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the line of the human that have politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions...”.<sup>46</sup> What Grosfoguel refers to here, with the reference to ‘institutions’, is capitalism, patriarchy, Western-centric, and/or colonial world systems. Those who fall within the hierarchical categories of ‘superior’, enjoy access to human rights, material resources as well as social recognition. However, those who fall within the category of ‘inferior’ are considered sub-human: Their humanity is constantly questioned and negated along with any recognition of their subjectivity, identity, and spirituality.<sup>47</sup>

Grosfoguel’s definition of racism allows for diverse forms of racisms to be conceived without the risk of reductionism (as is the case with various existing definitions).<sup>48</sup> The value of Grosfoguel’s definition is that it recognizes that different colonial histories translate into different markers in the hierarchy of imagined superiority/inferiority.<sup>49</sup> In other words, racism can have various markers such as color, religion, language, and/or ethnicity (not simply color alone). This means that the universally accepted definitions of racism are not appropriate in every milieu, although some aspects of racism have global implications. Additionally, Grosfoguel provides an example to illustrate this: throughout the history of colonial Ireland, the British asserted their imagined racial superiority over the Irish. They imagined themselves superior not utilizing skin color as a marker but rather religion.<sup>50</sup>

If we are to accept Derek Hook’s statement that “... we cannot properly apprehend racism if we have failed to adequately understand what sustains it, what lends it its

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<sup>45</sup> The Aspen Institute “Glossary for Understanding the Dismantling Structural Racism/Promoting Racial Equity Analysis” <<https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/rcc/RCC-Structural-Racism-Glossary.pdf>> (accessed 26-09-2019).

<sup>46</sup> R Grosfoguel “What is Racism?” (2016) 22 *Journal of World-Systems Research* 11.

<sup>47</sup> Grosfoguel (2016) *Journal of World-Systems Research* 11.

<sup>48</sup> Grosfoguel (2016) *Journal of World-Systems Research* 11.

<sup>49</sup> Grosfoguel (2016) *Journal of World-Systems Research* 12.

<sup>50</sup> Grosfoguel (2016) *Journal of World-Systems Research* 12; Grosfoguel makes the same argument with regards to the Islamophobia in Europe and the United States.

*potent affective qualities, its contradictory and often paradoxical nature, what supports its uncanny logic of return, its visceral aspect...*” then we need to turn to the history of racism in South Africa to understand its unfoldment and stronghold and to give life to Grosfoguel’s formulation of racism.<sup>51</sup>

### 3. THE UNFOLDMENT OF RACIAL CAPITALISM AND INFILTRATION OF THE CAPE

As European capitalism infiltrated the globe, racism developed as an ideology. This racist ideology would prove to be foundational to the emergence of the capitalist world economy.<sup>52</sup> Bernard Magubane explains: Racism can be traced back to the age of Europe starting with the discovery of the Americas (by Christopher Columbus in 1492) and the rounding of the Cape (by Vasco da Gama in 1497).<sup>53</sup> To emphasize: Racism (and whiteness) did not pre-date colonialism, but instead, was invented and created by it, to create racial hierarchies in justification of the colonial enterprise.<sup>54</sup> *“White European identity formed through the colonial encounter came to represent a culture or civilization by virtue of its practices”*.<sup>55</sup>

The age of Europe (up and until to the present) constitutes both the advent of capitalism as a world system and the emergence of European hegemony, in Magubane’s view.<sup>56</sup> With the advent of the age of Europe, pseudo-scientific justifications for racism emerged to justify the practices of colonization, slavery, and oppression. Magubane further explains that *“... all major racial concepts and terms were created by capitalist colonialism... the... divisibility... of humanity into sub-species or races was unthinkable... before capitalism”*.<sup>57</sup> The capitalist world economy fed from the peripheral areas which were thought of only as a source of cheap labor, raw materials, and agricultural potential.<sup>58</sup> By 1650, African slaves became a

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<sup>51</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 679.

<sup>52</sup> R Bush “Racism and the Rise of Right” (1981) 4 *Contemporary Marxism* 40 41.

<sup>53</sup> B Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* (2007) 15; Magubane emphasises the political-economic dimension of racism; however, other aspects of racism are highlighted and discussed throughout this chapter in order to highlight the psychosocial dimension.

<sup>54</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 15.

<sup>55</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 15; Bond & Saul *South Africa – The Present as History* 15 -16.

<sup>56</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 15.

<sup>57</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 9.

<sup>58</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 9; Grosfoguel (2016) *Journal of World-Systems Research* 12.

fundamental economic institution which translated into capitalist prosperity in Europe.<sup>59</sup> African slaves presented ready-made labor for the production of Europe's first commodities (particularly sugar, cotton, and tobacco - which will be discussed in chapter 4).<sup>60</sup>

In 1652, the Dutch East India Company (VOC), a monopoly with virtual powers of the state, incorporated the Cape into the capitalist economy.<sup>61</sup> The VOC mandated Jan van Riebeeck (a Dutch navigator and colonial administrator) with the Dutch colonizing expedition of the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>62</sup> The *modus operandi* of merchant companies (such as the VOC) was the theft of already existing resources of colonized countries. Magubane explains that this mentality was apparent in the dealings of van Riebeeck with the indigenous peoples. The VOC wanted to avoid war with the indigenous peoples (due to their dependence on them for cattle) and instructed van Riebeeck to respect his hosts and avoid conflict with them.<sup>63</sup> However, van Riebeeck did not agree with this. He was angered and frustrated by the lack of meat as he watched the herds of cattle and sheep of the indigenous people. In his diary, he expressed predatory thoughts and devised plans to rob the indigenous of their stock, to enrich himself at their expense, and notarized the complaints of indigenous leaders when he and his company started moving into their territory (without consent) without ceasing to do so.<sup>64</sup>

Van Riebeeck's journals reveal that he regarded the indigenous people of the Cape with contempt and perceived them as external to humanity. The afore exposes the ideological arsenal of the world capitalist economy that informs attitudes towards the indigenous people to this day.<sup>65</sup> Van Riebeeck imagined the indigenous population to be not only dangerous but untrustworthy. In his diary, he described them as "*dull, stupid and odorous... dogs*".<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, Van Riebeeck made extensive notes on their appearance and concluded that, in his opinion, the indigenous people were a

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<sup>59</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 9.

<sup>60</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 32, 79.

<sup>61</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 180; Bond & Saul *South Africa – The Present as History* 17.

<sup>62</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 180.

<sup>63</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 181.

<sup>64</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 181.

<sup>65</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 180.

<sup>66</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 182.

different species.<sup>67</sup> However, Van Riebeeck was not alone in this thinking: during this time, multiple pseudo-scientific expressions of Black inferiority were formulated to proclaim that imagined Black inferiority (and in turn, white 'superiority') was an unalterable fact of nature.<sup>68</sup>

Europeans imagined Africans as less beautiful, more monstrous, and less intelligent than themselves – as such, Europeans perceived Africans as inferior.<sup>69</sup> Europeans saw themselves as civilized and believed that indigenous peoples were beasts and brutes for their so-called 'lack' of reason.<sup>70</sup> Whites imagined themselves as rational creatures- charged with exercising their dominion over all living things. Consequently, believing that they (whites) were a superior civilization. By imagining the indigenous people as lacking 'rational reasoning', they classed them as inferior barbarians who threatened civilization and culture and order. In this way, scientific racism was intended to undermine the unity of the human species and to establish the permanent subordinate status of people who were not white.<sup>71</sup>

The myth of inferiority was further imbued into the language of the colonizers in their descriptions of the indigenous peoples. The word 'savage' became increasingly popular during this time, implying that the indigenous people were unfeeling, unresponsive, and inhuman. These descriptions were the opposite of how the colonizers viewed themselves (as domesticated and civilized).<sup>72</sup> By completely ignoring the fact that the societies which they encountered were undeniably organized (they had religion, education, laws, and structure), the colonizers were able to racialize the social world.<sup>73</sup> These representations of human beings (and their characteristics) created an imagined social hierarchy and became ideological weapons for race and class rule.<sup>74</sup>

Settler-colonialism's violent disregard for the sovereignty of Africans was further revealed by the fervor of Europeans to exercise the ultimate dominion over African

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<sup>67</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 182.

<sup>68</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 10.

<sup>69</sup> Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 58-59.

<sup>70</sup> Mills "White Supremacy as a Sociopolitical System" in *White-Out* 45.

<sup>71</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 62.

<sup>72</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 7, 62; Bond & Saul *South Africa – The Present as History* 18.

<sup>73</sup> SV Hartman *Scenes of Subjection: Terror slavery and self-making nineteenth century America* (1997) 33.

<sup>74</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 139.



territory by unilaterally proclaiming ownership thereof without any consent on the part of the indigenous peoples.<sup>75</sup> This unilateral declaration of ownership was incorrectly informed by the colonialist project of discovery: an arrogant assumption of 'empty land'.<sup>76</sup>

The principal purpose of the eliminatory landscape of settler colonialism was to gain access to space: to seize the land base to make possible a fresh colonial social order.<sup>77</sup> In search of land, the colonizers started to claim the indigenous land as their own, despite the land being occupied by indigenous peoples. The land was viewed as 'empty', free from any encumbrances, unowned and unoccupied, due to the imagined superiority of the colonizers.<sup>78</sup>

Land is a fundamental requirement for life. The theft of land translated into the theft of life (labor), culture, and autonomy.<sup>79</sup> The insatiable demands of the Europeans were gratified at the cost of indigenous peoples – the abusive exploitation of both their land and labor which was aggravated as time passed.<sup>80</sup> To illustrate: land not only presented the prospect of extracting resources for production (as was the case with the British) but also to acquire sovereignty by stripping the indigenous peoples of their tenure (for farms, as was the case with the Boers/Afrikaners).<sup>81</sup> The growth of the settlements aided in the development of the racist-capitalist regimes (which served as a building block in the oppressive system of white superiority).<sup>82</sup> The expansion aided in the dispossession of territory and the enslavement of indigenous peoples followed to gain a tighter grip on economic production.

The expansion of European settlements in the Cape in combination with the growth in farming resulted in a higher demand for cheap labor. During 1807, the increasing price of slaves meant that it was no longer financially viable to import slaves and as such the colonizers intensified their attempts to transform the indigenous populations into

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<sup>75</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 139.

<sup>76</sup> P Wolfe "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native" (2006) *Journal of Genocide Research* 296.

<sup>77</sup> Wolfe (2006) *Journal of Genocide Research* 388.

<sup>78</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 190.

<sup>79</sup> Wolfe (2006) *Journal of Genocide Research* 387-388; J Saul & P Bond *South Africa – The Present as History: From Mrs Ples to Mandela & Marikana* (2014) 15 19.

<sup>80</sup> Wolfe (2006) *Journal of Genocide Research* 390, 394, 395, 396.

<sup>81</sup> Wolfe (2006) *Journal of Genocide Research* 390.

<sup>82</sup> Wolfe (2006) *Journal of Genocide Research* 390.

laborers.<sup>83</sup> Accordingly, the pressure was applied to the authorities to promulgate legislation forcing the remaining independent indigenous peoples into service of the colonizers.<sup>84</sup>

European states had already concluded treaties (such as the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713) in which the trade in African slaves was regarded as legitimate at this time.<sup>85</sup> The Dutch East India Company had been the first to introduce slavery in the landscape that would eventually be known as South Africa.

To alleviate the class conflict in Britain, the British exported a portion of its population to South Africa (in 1820).<sup>86</sup> The colonizers soon realized that racialized social relations obscured their class grievances.<sup>87</sup> The belief of ontological superiority in combination with the “*divine right to rule*” brought about the super-exploitative methods of manufacture for which ‘race’ was a useful motivation.<sup>88</sup> Ironically, white features are simply genetic coincidences which underlie the unjustifiable assertion of fictional superiority.<sup>89</sup> Capitalists in Europe already treated the white working class as inferior, but the racialization of the Other, in colonies, enabled the colonizers to use more extreme methods of exploitation and oppression to further their aims.<sup>90</sup> In positing themselves as the master race, whites employed violence and social engineering.<sup>91</sup> European narcissism needed a clear dividing line between ‘us’ and ‘them’.<sup>92</sup>

The import of Indian slaves, by the British government, to toil in the sugar cane fields of Natal further aided in the creation of a Black and white divide in the labor system. This divide meant that white workers, not only developed a deep disdain for manual labor, but also, aspired to become capitalist exploiters themselves.<sup>93</sup> Slavery inextricably linked to pseudo-scientific racial theories as well as economic motivations: enslavement meant that Black people and their capacity for labor be (mis)used to

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<sup>83</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 190.

<sup>84</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 190.

<sup>85</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 36.

<sup>86</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 189.

<sup>87</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 29-32.

<sup>88</sup> Mills “White Supremacy as a Sociopolitical System” in *White-Out* 38.

<sup>89</sup> MB Ramose “I conquer, therefore I am the sovereign: Reflections upon sovereignty, constitutionalism, and democracy in Zimbabwe and South Africa” in PH Coetzee and APJ Roux (ed) *The African Philosophy Reader* (2003) 3.

<sup>90</sup> Nyoka (2016) *Journal of Black Studies* 911 – 912.

<sup>91</sup> Nyoka (2016) *Journal of Black Studies* 912.

<sup>92</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 23.

<sup>93</sup> Nyoka (2016) *Journal of Black Studies* 22; Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 181.

cultivate stability for a white-dominated society in which white life and wealth could be nursed, nurtured and enjoyed.<sup>94</sup>

The distinction-based structure extended into the territory of religion to support the development of the system of oppression.<sup>95</sup> Having encroached on the land and the labor of the indigenous, the Europeans invoked religion to colonize culture.<sup>96</sup> All European imperial powers professed Christianity and often cited missionary work as the rationale of their “civilizing” mission.<sup>97</sup> Mission stations were established by the British (specifically the London Missionary Society) at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>98</sup> The goal was clear: convert the indigenous populations so that they may turn to ‘legitimate’ trade.<sup>99</sup> Thus, the unholy alliance between colonization, capitalism, and Christianity started.<sup>100</sup> Religion became a justification for the slavery of ‘inferior’ races to exercise ‘divine dominion’ over all things and an excuse to meddle in the culture of the indigenous: to decide what was good and evil in African culture (a rationale that would later form an indispensable part of the apartheid regime).<sup>101</sup>

The port cities of Port Elizabeth and East London were soon constructed as capitalism thrived at the expense of the indigenous peoples. In Albany, large profits were made from stolen sheep (feeding the British textile industry).<sup>102</sup> By 1842, the colonizers were no longer satisfied with their already exponential profits and looked towards increasing their pasturage. The colonizers eyed the land across the fish river, which in their opinion was under-utilized by the Xhosa peoples, and wished to acquire it for themselves.<sup>103</sup> Akin to the looting and obliteration of the Khoisan, the wars of dispossession waged against the Xhosa were justified by the assumption that they were subhuman and as such, the action was appropriate.<sup>104</sup> The British were

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<sup>94</sup> D Tutt “A Hatred that Smiles: Kristeva’s Essay on Abjection and Intimate Racism” (10-06-2012) <<https://www.google.com/search?q=daniel+tutt+abjection&oq=daniel+tutt+abjection&aqs=chrome..69i57.3711j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>> (accessed 03-01-2019); Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 181.

<sup>95</sup> Ramose “I conquer, therefore I am the sovereign” in *The African Philosophy Reader* 545-546.

<sup>96</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 191.

<sup>97</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 191; Bond & Saul *South Africa – The Present as History* 25.

<sup>98</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 191.

<sup>99</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 191.

<sup>100</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 192.

<sup>101</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 85.

<sup>102</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 197.

<sup>103</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 197.

<sup>104</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 199.

determined to rule and acquire territory and so they launched a series of wars against the Xhosa people. The logistical support which the British hoarded combined with the ruthless campaigns against Xhosa homesteads, crops and stocks eventually led to the Xhosa people losing the capacity to feed themselves.<sup>105</sup> The now 'empty' land was handed over to British settlers.<sup>106</sup> An attempt to justify the war against the Xhosa was published in the King Williams town gazette, which read as follows: "*We have observed in connection with the native character that lean and starving men are always tractable and civil. But the well-fed and sleek impudent are easily led to mischief*".<sup>107</sup>

The concept of evolution (formulated by Charles Darwin) transformed human thought during the nineteenth century: the field life sciences was almost entirely reformulated through its light.<sup>108</sup> Scientific racism was thus further entrenched as a 'legitimate' rationale through Darwin's principles which transferred from plants to animals, animals to humans, and from humans to whites.<sup>109</sup> The theory of evolution was invoked to rationalize racism as a scientific understanding of history and to reduce the genocidal missions of the colonizers to a mere extermination of (imagined) pests.<sup>110</sup> As Magubane puts it: "*The theory of evolution made explicit something that was implicit in much racial thinking. That might is right and has a scientific basis in the law of biology*".<sup>111</sup>

Social Darwinism elevated amorality, the question of whether an action contributed to the furtherance of imperial whiteness became the yardstick for whether one was a man or an 'animal'.<sup>112</sup> As such, Social Darwinism (and its corresponding genocidal theories) became fashionable by translating 'science' into a political program.<sup>113</sup> In the words of Magubane: "*Scientific racism was unequivocal in its commitment to a scientific and, indeed, biological conception of politics*".<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 198.

<sup>106</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 98.

<sup>107</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 199.

<sup>108</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 86.

<sup>109</sup> B Magubane "Race and Democratization in South Africa" (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 9 55.]

<sup>110</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 88.

<sup>111</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 66, 88.

<sup>112</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 66, 88.

<sup>113</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 152.

<sup>114</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 55.

Absurd pseudo-scientific ‘findings’ were published to further justify the enslavement of the indigenous people. Ranging from judgments on the differences in outward appearances to imagined internal functions. ‘Scientists’ alleged that slavery and forced labor allowed the lungs of the indigenous to vitalize blood more perfectly, which in turn, allowed brain function to improve.<sup>115</sup> Additionally, these ‘scientists’ alleged that: “*Slavery has a wonderful influence upon the development of the moral faculties and the intellectual powers. It saves him from some of the liabilities of the liabilities and dangers of active self-direction*”.<sup>116</sup> Other allegations were rooted in the fiction that the general happiness of the Black person improved when he was working in his so-called “*natural subordination*” to the European and as such it was imagined that Europeans and indigenous people conferred a material benefit on one another.<sup>117</sup> In this way, race became a fictitious unity shaped by the skewed interpretation of anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and ideas.<sup>118</sup> The racist reasoning of colonization and apartheid was rooted in the assumption that race could be assigned to persons as a “*cluster of essential elements*”.<sup>119</sup> This flawed assumption completely overlooked the mutable, fluid, and socially contingent nature of race. It is now commonly accepted that race is understood as a social construct, and not a difference in biology. Although it should be noted that the argument of biological difference remains a popular justification for-, alternatively an undertone of- racism, for example, Penny Sparrow’s racist outburst in 2016).<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 8.

<sup>116</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 12.

<sup>117</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 135.

<sup>118</sup> McClintock *Imperial Leather* 6-7.

<sup>119</sup> L Vincent “The limitations of ‘inter-racial contact’: stories from young South Africa” (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1435.

<sup>120</sup> P Pilane “Penny Sparrow: Can racism be outlawed in South Africa?” (04-01-2016) *Mail & Guardian* <<https://mg.co.za/article/2016-01-04-penny-sparrow-can-racism-be-outlawed-in-south-africa>> (accessed 17-09-2019); K Singh “Penny Sparrow has died” (05-07-2019) <<https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/breaking-penny-sparrow-has-died-20190725>> (accessed 17-09-2019): In 2016, shortly after New Year’s Eve, Penny Sparrow made a Facebook post in which she described Black beachgoers, in Durban (KwaZulu-Natal), as ‘monkeys’. Sparrow was the first person in South Africa to be found guilty of crimen iniuria for racist remarks. Additionally, Sparrow was ordered to pay R 150 000, by the Equality Court, to the Oliver and Adelaide Tambo Foundation.

#### 4. MINERAL REVOLUTION: DISCOVERY OF DIAMONDS AND ITS AFTERMATH

What is evident from the examination of the period of unfoldment of racial capitalism and the infiltration of the Cape is how racism began to materially impact the political, economic, and social spheres of life. Various disciplines and fields were implicated in this unfoldment (such as religion, science, economics, and psychology, to name a few). This material impact would intensify during the mineral revolution. In 1867, one of the earliest stones found in Kimberley was put on the table of the Cape parliament by the colonial secretary who proceeded to announce that the future of South Africa would be built on that very stone.<sup>121</sup> The discovery of diamonds and gold (in 1867 and 1886, respectively) was the catalyst for the most ruthless period of the British expansion in South Africa as it aimed to obtain the whole territory to incorporate it into the British Empire.<sup>122</sup>

The opening of gold mines in Johannesburg (specifically the Witwatersrand gold mines) in 1886 was an event, which Magubane deems, of greater significance than the discovery of diamonds in South Africa. Gold mining necessitated a near unlimited supply of ‘cheap’ African labor.<sup>123</sup> The labor requirements of the largest mining economy in the world were deliberately premised on the exploitation of large quantities of “... *cheap indigenous labor...*” which necessitated the imperative of the white supremacist rule.<sup>124</sup> Once the Rand mines started production, it supplied nearly 25% of the world’s supply of gold. This meant that the Transvaal (and the rest of South Africa) became a prized colonial possession – which the British were desperate to gain control over.<sup>125</sup> After all, South Africa was developed by British capital as a source of raw materials and as a mining auxiliary.<sup>126</sup> Most settler colonies displaced or decimated the indigenous populations, however, in South Africa they survived, but only because their labor would enrich the colonizers.<sup>127</sup> Legislation was enacted to segregate, control, and maintain a steady labor supply. New tax laws were compiled

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<sup>121</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 203; Bond & Saul *South Africa – The Present as History* 28.

<sup>122</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 203.

<sup>123</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 34 -35.

<sup>124</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 34; Bond & Saul *South Africa – The Present as History* 26 – 27.

<sup>125</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 34-35.

<sup>126</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 37.

<sup>127</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 37.

and implemented to coerce the indigenous people to labor in the mines and white-owned farms as the demand for cheap labor grew.<sup>128</sup> Thus the existence of the indigenous people, for the colonizers, was a capitalist benefit: cheap labor was easily procured.<sup>129</sup> The mineral discovery leads to a dramatic ideological shift, as it related to the fate of Africans. Equating Africans with consumer products impacted how they were treated.<sup>130</sup> Consequently, the exploitation of diamonds and gold institutionalized the treatment of Africans as cheap and disposable labor.<sup>131</sup>

By 1890, pass laws were introduced to control the supply of labor. Not only the police, but any white man, could demand that a pass be shown (a concept which feels familiar in the scene in *Get Out* where a traffic officer demands to see Chris' licence – see chapter 4). Passes were only available to those who were laboring in service of whites. All people who were not in the 'employ' of white masters were deemed to be vagrants and arrested and hired out amongst settler-farmers.<sup>132</sup> At the same time, apprenticeship (child-slavery) was arranged for children of laborers. This system of child-slavery was devised to emotionally manipulate laborers into 'loyalty' so that low wages would not tempt laborers to move to different farms because their children were detained at the farms of their current settler-farmers.<sup>133</sup>

The rapid development of the mining sector meant that all African kingdoms be defeated and that the British and Boer colonies be unified. The Boers had established two republics during the 1850s: the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Consolidating the British and Boer colonies became a matter of urgency as it would allow Britain to develop a singular native policy on franchise, land ownership, and labor.<sup>134</sup> The period of 1899 to 1902, often referred to as the 'Anglo-Boer' war, between the British and the Boers, was 'inevitable', opined Magubane.<sup>135</sup> Magubane explains that the inevitability of this war was owed to the discovery of gold in the Transvaal and quarrels over the supply of labor.<sup>136</sup> The Boers wished to utilize laborers for farming,

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<sup>128</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 203-204.

<sup>129</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 38.

<sup>130</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 38.

<sup>131</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 59.

<sup>132</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 190.

<sup>133</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 190.

<sup>134</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 204.

<sup>135</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 48.

<sup>136</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 48.

whereas the British wished to expand the South African infrastructure.<sup>137</sup> The disputes between the English and the Boers revolved around the matter of wealth and resources (along with the supply of Black labor). The English and the Boers ultimately consolidated their interests to preserve their power with the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging in 1902.<sup>138</sup> The British and the Afrikaner ruling classes reached a consensus: they would not allow their quarrels to disrupt the racial order of white supremacy.<sup>139</sup> This demonstrated agreement of white communities concerning their class interests and colonial concerns about the authority over Black peoples.<sup>140</sup> It is at this point where the great divide between Black and white emerged (rather than African and European).

The consequences of the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley were the catalyst for the intensification of racism in South Africa in that the need for cheap labor grew to increase profit margins. To secure such a supply of labor, emotional manipulation was employed in tandem with legislative efforts (on top of the existing elements which had already been incorporated into the racist regime which had been discussed in respect of the infiltration of the Cape).

## 5. THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

The race/class logic found its application in the social practices in the mining industry. In 1902, the amount of wages paid to Africans was greatly reduced to increase profits.<sup>141</sup> The Transvaal Industrial Commission had recommended this reduction in wages to achieve higher efficiency (laborers would have to work longer periods to save the same amount of money) and reduce the cost of production.<sup>142</sup>

In 1908, the Mining Industry Commission investigated the possibility of mechanizing mining processes which would lead to an increase of employment of whites in mines and change the economic and social fortunes of many poor whites.<sup>143</sup> In this way, African labor-power was incorporated, as an essential element, into the political

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<sup>137</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 48.

<sup>138</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 212; Bond & Saul *South Africa – The Present as History* 38.

<sup>139</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 212.

<sup>140</sup> Mills “White Supremacy as a Sociopolitical System” in *White-Out* 37; Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 212.

<sup>141</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 209.

<sup>142</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 209.

<sup>143</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 206.



economy. This emphasized the foundations of racial supremacy.<sup>144</sup> With a white supremacist society in full force, manual labor was scorned at by white workers as it was associated with slave labor. Racist theory became deeper-seated as it was accepted that the cheap labor of Africans was the basis of the mining and agricultural industries- and the key to white profit.<sup>145</sup> Going forward, white workers would only be employed in higher-skilled categories with higher salaries.<sup>146</sup> Noting that the afore was not the result of better qualifications but by virtue of being white. Race and class were thus consolidated and acted as a means through which labor relations were organized to conform with the profitability of the mining industries. On the face of it, the psycho-social implications of this moment can be identified in the way in which excessive workloads, lack of involvement in decision making, and job insecurity were ‘legitimized’ by the consolidation of white interests. Racial discrimination was now officially sanctioned by the government, employers, and the white community.<sup>147</sup> Race and class would henceforth be utilized as an ideology underlying political exclusion.<sup>148</sup>

Magubane states that when the British parliament accepted South Africa in 1909 “... *it was obvious that Africans were simultaneously indispensable and expendable*”.<sup>149</sup> South Africa would be a white man’s country built on African land and labor.<sup>150</sup> The four white settler colonies, namely the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State, and Transvaal, were officially proclaimed as an independent white dominion, in the British Empire, in 1910. The Union of South Africa was built on two fundamental contradictions. Firstly, the Boer War had left Afrikaners hateful towards British Imperialism, which nursed and fed their Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>151</sup> Secondly, the contradiction between Black and white.<sup>152</sup> In the years following the introduction of the Union (in 1910) legislation was introduced to further oppress and exploit the indigenous population to preserve a system based on capitalist greed. Europeans saw Africa(ns) as a consumable means

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<sup>144</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 210.

<sup>145</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 206 – 207.

<sup>146</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 207.

<sup>147</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 206.

<sup>148</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 206.

<sup>149</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 212.

<sup>150</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 212.

<sup>151</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 40-41.

<sup>152</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 40-41.

to increase profit margins and such manipulated and consumed the indigenous peoples along with their property, personhood, and livelihood.<sup>153</sup>

The making of South Africa 1910 is a decisive moment for the entrenchment of racism as a way of public and private life; race came to represent the fundamental principle of social organization; as the ontological divide between whiteness and blackness was institutionalized by the colonial state. The divide would become the decisive factor in the kind of working conditions one would be subjected to; the kind of education which one would receive; whether one would qualify for legislative protection and; whether there was a limitation on the space that one could occupy and the level of humanity ascribed to a given individual/group of people. To illustrate: additional race-based legislation was promulgated (during this time) to completely ensnare the indigenous peoples and to consolidate white interests. To illustrate further, the introduction of the Mines and Works Act<sup>154</sup> protected white workers from the perceived Black competition. Moreover, the enactment of the Native Regulation Act<sup>155</sup> controlled the movement of African workers and paved the way for the Native Land Act<sup>156</sup> which had the effect of making "... Africans foreigners in their own country".<sup>157</sup> These laws were reminiscent of slavery insofar the most lucrative sectors/industries in South Africa at the time (especially the mining sector) were based on extracting resources by utilizing a steady supply of inexpensive labor.<sup>158</sup> Noting that the mining sector continues to exploit Black lives and labour (for example, the Marikana Massacre and Lily Mine incidents, respectively, illustrate that the mining sector maintains colonial attitudes and ascribes low value to Black lives).<sup>159</sup>

In 1923, the Native Urban Areas Act<sup>160</sup> was introduced. This Act was aimed at controlling and limiting the presence of Black people in the urban and industrial areas

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<sup>153</sup> Wolfe (2006) *Journal of Genocide Research* 395; Saul & Bond *The Present as History: From Mrs Ples to Mandela & Marikana* 20, 31, 59.

<sup>154</sup> Mines and Works Act 12 of 1911.

<sup>155</sup> Native Labour Regulation Act 15 of 1911.

<sup>156</sup> Native Land Act 27 of 1913; Bond & Saul *South Africa – The Present as History* 38.

<sup>157</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 38-39.

<sup>158</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 40-41.

<sup>159</sup> Three workers were trapped underground after a tremor caused a container which they used as a lamp to disappear and bury them. It was reportedly established immediately after the incident that the container should not have been placed that close to the mine shaft. No efforts to rescue the workers – or to recover the bodies of the worker have been made by the Lily Mine.

<sup>160</sup> Native Urban Areas Act 21 of 1923.

(which were the spaces occupied by whites).<sup>161</sup> Thus Africans were segregated to compounds and pass laws and permits were required to gain access to white areas.<sup>162</sup> The goal? To limit the number of Africans in towns and to reduce any remaining competition, which Africans had in the labor market.<sup>163</sup> In this way, the spatial dimension of racism was intensified and utilized to further advance the political and economic objectives of white settlers. In 1926, the coalition government imposed the Civilized Labor Policy which allowed them to solve the problem of 'poor whites' at the expense of Blacks.<sup>164</sup> Poor whites in South Africa firmly believed in their (imagined) superiority over Blacks, which feeling aided in the prevention of miscegenation.<sup>165</sup> In the same year, the Color Bar Act<sup>166</sup> was enacted. In 1927, the Native Administration Act<sup>167</sup> was introduced. The provisions of the Act escorted Africans outside the rule of law. All discretionary power rested with the settler state and indigenous law was only valid in instances where it was not in conflict with white administrative procedures and policies.<sup>168</sup> Having no voting rights, Black people had no constitutional remedies available to challenge the laws which discriminated and subjugated them.<sup>169</sup>

White politicians employed emotional manipulation in dealings with voters by playing on the fears that relaxation of oppression would threaten the safety of the (white) status quo. The government proceeded to neglect all interests of races which they deemed inferior- especially in terms of providing basic education, healthcare, and housing.<sup>170</sup> The low income, which Black people received as well as inadequate housing and lack of education, was perceived as (fictional) proof of the inferiority of these people. Instead of recognizing that this was the result of a calculated racist system, the white population imagined this as evidence of their beliefs.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 217.

<sup>162</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 217.

<sup>163</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 217.

<sup>164</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 50-51.

<sup>165</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 40-41.

<sup>166</sup> Colour Bar Act

<sup>167</sup> Native Administration Act 38 of 1927.

<sup>168</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 217.

<sup>169</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 213.

<sup>170</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 213.

<sup>171</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 213.

## 6. INTRODUCING APARTHEID

In 1948 further oppressive racial laws were introduced: the Afrikaners and the British further consolidated their power.<sup>172</sup> This was followed by the rise of the National Party and Afrikaner Nationalism. Both the Afrikaners and British were well aware of what they stood to benefit at the expense of Blacks.<sup>173</sup> The Group Areas Act<sup>174</sup> allowed for whites to be further enriched as it erased all economic competition for shopkeepers, real estate agents, and other business persons.<sup>175</sup> The instruments of exploitation and oppression (rooted in race and inspired by the Servants Act) were refined during apartheid.<sup>176</sup> The consequences that this held for the Black population, in South Africa, was further exclusion from society, politics, and the economy.<sup>177</sup> “*Non-whites*”, as they were referred to during this time, were not viewed as subjects. Instead, they were viewed objects.<sup>178</sup> Moreover, Black people were constantly surveilled, spied on, bullied, controlled, spoken at, censured, and governed by those who felt that they had the right, the knowledge, and the virtue to do so – even though they did not.<sup>179</sup>

In 1957 the Afrikaner anthem, “*Die Stem*” was introduced as the national anthem and the Union Jack was abolished as the official flag.<sup>180</sup> I want to pause here for a moment to ponder on the name of the Afrikaner anthem. The name “*Die Stem*” translates to “The Voice”. It does not translate to ‘The Voices’ – only a singular voice. The implicit meaning of the afore reveals that only the Afrikaners’ views, speech, and beliefs were recognized. Viewing this, in light of the history of re-dehumanization of Black South Africans (the treatment of Africans as animals and/or objects) is so deeply entrenched in Afrikaans (white) culture that the specific anthem’s name is easily interpreted as an ode thereto. Further noting that the lyrics of “*Die Stem*” are primarily concerned with land. To illustrate, the following phrase may be of interest: “... *uit die ewige gebergtes waar die kraanse antwoord gee...*” (over our eternal mountain ranges, where the cliffs

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<sup>172</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 52.

<sup>173</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 52.

<sup>174</sup> Group Areas Act 41 of 1950.

<sup>175</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 52.

<sup>176</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 52-53.

<sup>177</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 35.

<sup>178</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 36.

<sup>179</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 36.

<sup>180</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 52-53; RFK “In the Land of Apartheid” <<http://www.rfksafilm.org/html/anthem.php>> (accessed 25-01-2020).

answer).<sup>181</sup> Additionally, the phrase “... *deur ons ver-verlate vlaktes...*” (through our far-deserted plains) implies that the Afrikaners believed that the land (described as empty in this phrase) belonged to them.<sup>182</sup>

In 1958, Hendrik Verwoerd (South African prime minister and architect of apartheid) set out his policy on race, posing race as the fundamental threat to the safety and security of white persons.<sup>183</sup> Verwoerd was deemed the architect of apartheid due to his role in shaping the implementation of apartheid policy when he was minister of native affairs and prime minister. Verwoerd’s view that Africa belonged to whites is clear in his statement that “... *South Africa was a piece of Europe at the tip of the African continent*”.<sup>184</sup> Illustrating that Africans were marginalized in that they were not accepted as a legitimate part of the country.<sup>185</sup>

Apartheid, as the height of the colonial project in South Africa, serves as the ultimate example of how the spatial, social, and economic abuses of the oppressed Other were utilized for whites to enjoy the spoils of land and lives.<sup>186</sup> What is meant by the term ‘enjoy’ is the ability to own, possess, use, and occupy with satisfaction to the benefit of the owner.<sup>187</sup> ‘Enjoyment’ encompasses extensive capacities: to exercise rights, to enjoy privileges, and use the property (in the interest of the owner) to perform a certain function.<sup>188</sup> The afore includes an entitlement to the profit, income, and interest which is produced by the property. This definition of ‘enjoy’ and the enjoyment of one’s property reveals the attitudes of whites towards slavery and the treatment of Black people during the colonial – and apartheid eras – insofar Black people were viewed as objects. Less apparent is the application to the present: The vast majority of Black people remain excluded from the economy and white spaces.

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<sup>181</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 52-53; RFK “In the Land of Apartheid” <<http://www.rfksafilm.org/html/anthem.php>> (accessed 25-01-2020).

<sup>182</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 52-53; RFK “In the Land of Apartheid” <<http://www.rfksafilm.org/html/anthem.php>> (accessed 25-01-2020).

<sup>183</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 52-53; RFK “In the Land of Apartheid” <<http://www.rfksafilm.org/html/anthem.php>> (accessed 25-01-2020); Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 134.

<sup>184</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 52-53; RFK “In the Land of Apartheid” <<http://www.rfksafilm.org/html/anthem.php>> (accessed 25-01-2020); Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 134.

<sup>185</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 52-53; RFK “In the Land of Apartheid” <<http://www.rfksafilm.org/html/anthem.php>> (accessed 25-01-2020); Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 134; Young *Justice and the Politics of Difference* 18.

<sup>186</sup> RM Brown “Abject to Object” (2003) 43 *Anthopology and Aesthetics* 203.

<sup>187</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 23.

<sup>188</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 22-23.

## THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

In 1961, white South Africans were called upon to make their wishes known: to become a republic or remain a monarchy. In the same year, South Africa became a Republic (which translated into a further entrenchment of the Afrikaner rule).<sup>189</sup> The transformation of South Africa (into a Republic) meant that *Afrikanerdom* was deemed politically supreme.<sup>190</sup> Shortly after the NP came into power, the governing party assented to the *Suppression of Communism Act*<sup>191</sup> – a strategic move on the part of the apartheid government to shelter whites from the imagined dangers of Black nationalism and ‘communism’.<sup>192</sup>

Every request, plea, and demand for political and social rights (by the Black population) was viewed as a threat to white domination. This can be seen in the banning of the Communist Party in 1950 as well as the ANC and PAC in the 1960s.<sup>193</sup> Following a general strike by the ANC, in 1961, a state of emergency was declared.<sup>194</sup> Shortly after, Umkhonto We Sizwe was formed. Umkhonto We Sizwe was formed in order to apply pressure to the apartheid government.<sup>195</sup> Umkonto We Sizwe was launched on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1961, following a series of events that necessitated national liberation movements in South Africa to intensify resistance to the apartheid government: peaceful acts of resistance had not been successful.<sup>196</sup>

In 1976, the South African situation changed dramatically with an increase in Black resistance, caused by the Black Consciousness Movement.<sup>197</sup> Although many noteworthy resistance-related events occurred during this time, I do not wish to elaborate on resistance efforts as these are not the central focus of this study, but rather the reaction thereto. The apartheid government retaliated to resistance efforts with a strategy of unparalleled repression, disguised as a ‘reform’ of apartheid.<sup>198</sup> This

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<sup>189</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 64.

<sup>190</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 52-53.

<sup>191</sup> Suppression of Communism Act 44 of 1950.

<sup>192</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 68-69.

<sup>193</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 44-45.

<sup>194</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 64.

<sup>195</sup> Bond & Saul *South Africa – The Present as History* 50 – 52.

<sup>196</sup> Bond & Saul *South Africa – The Present as History* 50 – 52.

<sup>197</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 66-67.

<sup>198</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 66-67.

is illustrated by the introduction of the tri-cameral constitution, in 1983, which gave the illusion of shared power.<sup>199</sup>

In the late 1980s sanctions imposed on South Africa caused significant losses in revenue (and negatively affected the nation's international reputation).<sup>200</sup> The fear of further economic loss, and rebellion, caused the government to reconsider its position. Many multinational companies had withdrawn from South Africa and the economy was struggling due to boycotts. Internal unrest paired with international condemnation (in 1989) led to dramatic changes.<sup>201</sup> The South African Prime Minister resigned and was replaced by FW de Klerk, who proceeded to lift the ban on the ANC and other liberation organizations. This was followed by Nelson Mandela's release from prison (in 1990). In 1994, the first democratic elections were held.<sup>202</sup> These events gave way to premature celebrations of freedom, the myth of the rainbow nation, and the fiction of a country free of the evils of racism.<sup>203</sup> Having acquired a near-infinite advantage (whether such advantage is economic, social, and/or political), whites only relinquished the formal control of the state with little to no consequence. As such, the celebrations and ideals of change were short-lived. South Africa had not been liberated.<sup>204</sup>

## 7. POST-1994

Racism in present-day South Africa can be seen in the way that failure to provide necessities, essential services, and entrance into the economy, to people (based on their color, culture or ethnic origin) has been normalized. It can also be seen through the thoughtless and prejudicial attitudes and behavior (whether perpetrated intentionally or by ignorance) which has the effect of oppressing and disadvantaging

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<sup>199</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 66-67.

<sup>200</sup> US State Department Archives "The End of Apartheid" <<https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/pcw/98678.htm>> (accessed 26-09-2019).

<sup>201</sup> US State Department Archives "The End of Apartheid" <<https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/pcw/98678.htm>> (accessed 26-09-2019); Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 135.

<sup>202</sup> US State Department Archives "The End of Apartheid" <<https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/pcw/98678.htm>> (accessed 26-09-2019); Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 135.

<sup>203</sup> US State Department Archives "The End of Apartheid" <<https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/pcw/98678.htm>> (accessed 26-09-2019); Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 135.

<sup>204</sup> Madinglozi (2017) *STELL LR* 235.

Black people.<sup>205</sup> As Reni Eddo-Lodge puts it: “*If all racism was easy to spot, grasp and denounce as white extremism is, the task of anti-racist would be simple*”.<sup>206</sup> Additionally, the intention which underlies these attitudes and behaviours is irrelevant. This is because intention is irrelevant in the determination of whether a certain action or condition is oppressive. This means that the conscious continuation of oppression is not a prerequisite for being racist. In a contemporary liberal society, systems of oppression can be maintained and reinforced without conscious contemplation or involvement.<sup>207</sup> For Young, this difference becomes apparent when juxtaposing apartheid and democracy. In apartheid and settler colonialism, racist inequality and domination are explicitly sanctioned by social structures. This is easily seen in the scientific, religious, and moral cultures which were constructed to serve as justifications of discrimination, domination, and denigration.<sup>208</sup> By contrast, in a democracy, racism is more insidious: the discursive commitment to equality has not discredited racism, but merely removed it from the tropes of popular discourse. It follows that racism, in South Africa, has only taken on a less explicitly egregious form. As Young states:

*“...in contemporary society racism... exist(s) primarily at the level of the routine habits and assumptions of practical consciousness, and in... unconsciously motivated reactions and symbolic associations... the contemporary society produces a dissonance between discursive consciousness... and practical consciousness... This dissonance aggravates some of the routinized and unconscious manifestations of racial... fears and aversions”.*<sup>209</sup>

What Young refers to here is how racism has become routine and habitual, not on an individual level, but rather on a structural level as symbolic reactions evoke unconsciously motivated reactions.<sup>210</sup> Hook believes, in reference to Young, that one would expect the dissonance to be exaggerated in a context of social change as rapid and dramatic as in South Africa.<sup>211</sup> However, the attempt to dismantle institutional

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<sup>205</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 60-61.

<sup>206</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 63.

<sup>207</sup> JM Modiri “Law’s Poverty” (2015) 18 *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal* 229, 230.

<sup>208</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 682.

<sup>209</sup> Young *Justice and the Politics of Difference* 204.

<sup>210</sup> Young *Justice and the Politics of Difference* 204.

<sup>211</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 683.



racism within South Africa has not truly affected the underlying structures of society. The project of anti-racism has thus only managed to repress racism.<sup>212</sup>

This leads us to the point of so-called ‘defensible’ racism: a new form of hybrid racism, which ‘allows’ the liberal (anti) racist with wiggle-room to limit the extent of their anti-racist ideals in situations and encounters where they feel comfortable to express (and/or tolerate) racist behavior and communications. What is referred to here, is the element of prejudice which is perceived as permissible because it is rationalized as a proposition that threatens privilege and power. For the white liberal, racism is frowned upon only insofar it does not encroach on their comfort zone.<sup>213</sup> It is from this point where it becomes evident that symptomatic racism is a useful tool in conceptualizing how racism slips beneath the surface and motivates oblique racisms of discursive consciousness. Racism can occasionally be unintentional.<sup>214</sup>

*“Although the South African psychology has undoubtedly benefitted from a promising series of discursive engagements with the subject of racism, it nevertheless stands to benefit from attempts to theorize those psychological (or psychical) components of racism that remain elusive to such discursive, or broader sociological or ‘super-structural’ accounts. A powerful political agenda underwrites such a project. If we lack a grid of analysis able to bring into visibility such elements of racism, we run the risk of failing to understand racism at its most intransigent, at its most effective and virulent.”<sup>215</sup>*

Milazzo explains that viewing racism as individual prejudice excludes the institutional and structural dimensions of race.<sup>216</sup> Within the color-blind frame, individualization is used to deflect the causes of white privilege and to portray Black ‘disadvantage’ as completely isolated from racism.<sup>217</sup> Additionally, whites depict themselves as the new victims of racism, despite hoarding 90 percent of South Africa’s wealth.<sup>218</sup> There is no

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<sup>212</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 683.

<sup>213</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 684.

<sup>214</sup> See chapter 4 for full discussion.

<sup>215</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 692.

<sup>216</sup> M Milazzo “The Rhetorics of Racial Power: Enforcing Colourblindness in Post-Apartheid Scholarship on Race” (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 7 11.

<sup>217</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 15.

<sup>218</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 16; SAHRC “10 Percent Of South Africans Own 90 Percent Of The Country’s Wealth – Report” <<https://www.sahrc.org.za/index.php/sahrc-media/news/item/1446-10-percent-of-south-africans-own-90-percent-of-the-country-s-wealth-report>> (accessed 08-01-2020).

more room for this kind of white self-victimization, as it only serves to preserve white privilege.<sup>219</sup> I cannot stress enough: Equality is not oppression and it is most certainly not ‘reverse-racism’. The unwritten codes of appropriate (white) behavior, desire, and being constantly communicated through a cycle and a system of domination which has been carefully calculated and manufactured and these self-victimizing arguments, made by whites, serve to further the system of domination by utilizing emotional manipulation.<sup>220</sup> These issues need to be addressed head-on in order to depart from the democratic ideals which promote the systematic relations of power and (dis)advantage which accompany racism in the present context.<sup>221</sup>

Statutory racism and the legally sanctioned racist regime may have perished in the dawn of democracy; however, social and economic racism lives on. This is evidenced by the racially divided and socially hostile society in which we find ourselves today.<sup>222</sup> The false belief of white innocence of the present generation is firmly founded on the mantra that the present generation had no part in the past and therefore should not ‘pay’ for it.<sup>223</sup>

Whites do not perceive themselves as being raced, instead, race is viewed as a label attached to Black people. The privilege which accompanies whiteness includes the ability to view oneself as a diverse individual who is not reducible to race. As Vincent puts it: “(i)t... comes as a surprise when white people find themselves seen in the way they see (B)lack people, as white – seeing race of the (O)ther is permitted to white people only...”.<sup>224</sup> Perhaps this is why whites battle to accept or recognize white privilege. Racial reasoning is therefore not limited to the assumption about the existence of various races, it is built on the construct of whiteness as the apex of the racial order.<sup>225</sup> This hierarchy does not exist only at a symbolic level, it is a real existence which can be seen in the way whites continue to think about Black people.<sup>226</sup> Whites continue to hold racist views which they fail to interrogate (and which they

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<sup>219</sup> AE Ansell “Casting a Blind Eye: The Ironic Consequences of Color-Blindness in South Africa and the United States” (2006) *Critical Psychology* 32 347.

<sup>220</sup> L Jones “Women and Abjection: Margins of Difference, Bodies of Art” (2007) *Visual Culture & Gender* 2 61 62.

<sup>221</sup> I use “(dis)advantage” to highlight that one group (the whites) are benefiting from their privilege and that the other group (the Blacks) are still generally subjected to lives of disadvantage.

<sup>222</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 348.

<sup>223</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 348.

<sup>224</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1438.

<sup>225</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1439.

<sup>226</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1439.

believe to be hidden from Black people, in their interactions, veiled by politeness).<sup>227</sup> White privilege is thus an absence of the consequences of racism: an insider to the insularity of whiteness. Whites do not experience structural discrimination or obvious/subtle marginalization due to their race.<sup>228</sup> White privilege means that, for the white subject, race positively impacts their life's trajectory.<sup>229</sup>

The meaning of whiteness also rests on its mobility: in the way whiteness moves, adapts, and is modernized.<sup>230</sup> It follows that the idea that racism can be legislated out of existence is nothing more than a myth.<sup>231</sup> This demonstrates the existence of a possessive and almost obsessive investment in whiteness- that political, economic, cultural, and social investment into a racialized value system has concretized material and social advantage in the form of white supremacy and privilege.<sup>232</sup> Therefore, one can argue that whiteness is a form of property in the sense that an identifiable system of both social and legal norms have been created to ensure that it retains an asset value which cannot easily be undermined.<sup>233</sup> Those who enjoy white privilege appear to truly believe that their experience of life is universal.<sup>234</sup> The average white person does not notice the positive affirmations of whiteness because the system of white privilege is so common.<sup>235</sup> Because structural racism and white privilege are entrenched in our society, our society is engineered to disadvantage Blacks.<sup>236</sup> These affirmations of whiteness tend to be placidly consumed as whiteness appears to be a universal measure of whiteness.

Whiteness and racism, alike, are the product of historical development and social situations.<sup>237</sup> The history of colonialism, as I have stated before, undoubtedly still haunts the present.<sup>238</sup> Whiteness has always been, and will probably always be,

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<sup>227</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1440.

<sup>228</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 85-87.

<sup>229</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 85-87.

<sup>230</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 184.

<sup>231</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 184.

<sup>232</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 176.

<sup>233</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 176.

<sup>234</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* IX.

<sup>235</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* XII.

<sup>236</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 64: I refer to structural racism instead of institutional racism as I concur with Eddo-Lodge's statement that racism is "institutional because it is built into spaces far broader than our traditional institutions".

<sup>237</sup> Nyoka (2016) *Journal of Black Studies* 909-910.

<sup>238</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 176.

influenced by its origins in a racialized history.<sup>239</sup> Whiteness has economically, socially, and politically compensated white individuals in the form of white privilege. By creating and embracing white identity, Europeans were placed in a position of structural advantage in society and received benefits of citizenship in exchange for their loyalty to the status quo. As previously alluded to, the afore illustrates that white privilege operates as a form of currency from which all Others are explicitly excluded.<sup>240</sup> Being white thus has far-reaching economic advantages, there is a greater possibility of employment, higher wages, access to capital, and mobility.

For Harris, the economic value which is attached to whiteness is historically constituted. Harris posits that being white, through her experience of living in the USA, allows greater access to the right to own property along with the benefits associated with such ownership. In support of the afore, Harris delves into the history of the USA and provides contemporary examples. Harris further investigates the relationships between race and property by using the story of her grandmother who has a white appearance although being Black.<sup>241</sup> Additionally, Harris interrogates the way whiteness and its benefits can be seen as a valuable asset that has become affirmed, legitimated, and protected by law.<sup>242</sup> Harris examines the history of property rights, in white America, starting with the importation of Black slaves and the exploitation of Native American land.<sup>243</sup> During this time, only white possession and occupation of land (and labor) was recognized. More specifically, white possession and occupation of land was viewed as a privileged basis for property rights (leading into the construction of whiteness as property).<sup>244</sup> Harris explains that both the occupation and possession of land and labor (i.e. the owning of slaves) illustrates how whites performed these actions- as whites believed that they had the right to do so, due to their whiteness.

Moreover, Harris emphasizes how white supremacy and economic domination intersect.<sup>245</sup> Harris argues that property is not limited to slaves and land, alone. For Harris, the concept of property also applies to human rights insofar as whiteness

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<sup>239</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 176.

<sup>240</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 176.

<sup>241</sup> CI Harris "Whiteness as Property" (1993) 106 *Harvard Law Review* 277.

<sup>242</sup> Harris (1993) *Harvard Law Review* 277.

<sup>243</sup> Harris (1993) *Harvard Law Review* 277-279.

<sup>244</sup> Harris (1993) *Harvard Law Review* 278.

<sup>245</sup> Harris (1993) *Harvard Law Review* 276-277.

determined whether someone was free, or whether they were a slave. More specifically, whether someone had human rights (and corresponding property rights) or not.<sup>246</sup> Because whites could not be enslaved, the racial line (separating white and Black) became critical insofar as it was a line which demarcated those who were protected (whites) and those who could be commodified and appropriated as property (Blacks): whiteness was the attribute of being free human beings.<sup>247</sup> Harris concludes by stating that the property which can be obtained and accumulated by whiteness, is not merely a historical phenomenon.<sup>248</sup> It is a phenomenon which still manifests in contemporary society: it continues to place Black people in a position of economic, social, and political disadvantage because of the history and tradition of treating Black people as inferior.<sup>249</sup>

Being white automatically gives access to ‘treasures’ of property: in the past, these so-called ‘treasures’ comprised of human labor and land. Today, the ‘treasures’ are economic, social, and political superiority.<sup>250</sup> Although Harris writes from a USA-based perspective her formulation of the relationship between race and property bears relevance in a South African context. As Magubane states: “*The problem was the same in South Africa and... the United States...*”<sup>251</sup> Striking similarities are found in many slave-based civilizations- specifically between the USA and South Africa. Both nations were colonised by capitalist companies who had sent European Settlers and provided slaves for their use.<sup>252</sup> Additionally, South Africa followed a similar trajectory insofar as racism is concerned. To reiterate, the theft of land and labor translated into capitalist benefit for the white colonizers which eventually resulted in legal policies to enforce racist policies and practices in social, political, and economic areas of life.

## 8. THE ADVENT OF COLOUR-BLINDNESS

As previously discussed, white privilege owes its existence to racism, consequently, it underlies the ideology of color-blindness, especially in terms of the underlying socio-political and psychological functions.<sup>253</sup> “*The world does not become raceless or will*

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<sup>246</sup> Harris (1993) *Harvard Law Review* 279.

<sup>247</sup> Harris (1993) *Harvard Law Review* 279.

<sup>248</sup> Harris (1993) *Harvard Law Review* 281.

<sup>249</sup> Harris (1993) *Harvard Law Review* 288.

<sup>250</sup> Harris (1993) *Harvard Law Review* 289-290.

<sup>251</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 179.

<sup>252</sup> Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 180-181.

<sup>253</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 337-338.

*not become racialized by assertion. The act of enforcing racelessness... is itself a racial act.*"<sup>254</sup> The fantasy of color-blindness is posited on the fiction that the world has moved beyond issues of race: that the world is 'post-race'.<sup>255</sup> Color-blindness is how the white community attempts to make sense of the meaning of race in an era where it is legally unhinged and the subject is open to multiple discursive formations.<sup>256</sup> Color-blindness combines fevered denial of racial hierarchies and agendas without requiring a departure from the very norms it seeks to deny.<sup>257</sup>

*"Color-blindness is a childish, stunted analysis of racism. It starts and ends at the mantra discriminating against a person because of the color of their skin is bad, without any accounting for how structural power manifests in these exchanges".*<sup>258</sup>

Milazzo interrogates the reproduction of color-blindness and non-racialism post-1994 South African discourse. For Milazzo, the presence of race-denialism and color-blindness is emblematic of "*active investment in maintaining racialized privileges*".<sup>259</sup> Even though South Africans celebrated the formal end of apartheid more than 20 years ago, racial inequality remains widespread in South Africa today.<sup>260</sup> Examining non-racialism in South Africa reveals how racialized meaning has evolved under white ways of knowing with the end-goal of privilege preservation.<sup>261</sup> If one is to avoid race as a category of analysis one cannot contribute to the dismantling of institutionalized racism and racial inequality.<sup>262</sup> It follows that enforcing racelessness is a racial act.

The racially coded language, often employed by color-blind liberals, is incapable of transcending race.<sup>263</sup> Moreover, any attempt to rearticulate inequality within a predominantly color-blind framework does nothing more than preserving the legacy of the racial hierarchy.<sup>264</sup> Put differently, non-racialism and color-blindness are regressive tools which support/maintain white privilege and deflect attention from how

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<sup>254</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 334.

<sup>255</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 334.

<sup>256</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 334.

<sup>257</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 335.

<sup>258</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 83-84.

<sup>259</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 7.

<sup>260</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 8.

<sup>261</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 10.

<sup>262</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 11.

<sup>263</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 17.

<sup>264</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 8.

whites are responsible for the continuation of racial inequality.<sup>265</sup> Additionally, whiteness, as the normative state of existence, when disguised in a color-blind frame, is a powerful tool of silencing: it discourages white accountability and completely disavows (unearned) white privilege.<sup>266</sup>

Milazzo posits that color-blindness attempts to remove white privilege from exploitation: “... *it treats white privilege as residual, as produced in a racialized past with no bearing on the present, and contends that apartheid itself enabled its alleged demise*”.<sup>267</sup> This means color-blindness postulates that white economic advantage is completely removed from racial domination. Consequently, it undermines the intersectional relationship between race and class, and attempts to deny the (present) existence of racial power.<sup>268</sup> However, the racial composition of the poorer classes and the difference in life expectancy between white and Black populations demonstrate that the class structure in South Africa remains deeply racialized: economic distribution, quality of life, and life expectancy are impacted by institutional racism.<sup>269</sup>

The importance of the assessment of the limitations of color-blindness is to find meaning and understanding in the continuing relevance of the legacies of the past without ignoring the accumulated benefits of racial privilege inherited from the past.<sup>270</sup> Whites are, in the words of Milazzo, still “... *gatekeepers for the majority group who are in power politically but certainly not economically*”.<sup>271</sup> Even though whites make up less than 10 percent of the South African population, whites exercise ownership over 72 percent of the land as well as 90 percent of the economy.<sup>272</sup>

*“The dismantling of racial regimes requires concrete institutional actions, not arguments about the commonness of humanity that disregard collective*

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<sup>265</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 8-10.

<sup>266</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 13.

<sup>267</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 13.

<sup>268</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 13.

<sup>269</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 14.

<sup>270</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 348.

<sup>271</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 8.

<sup>272</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 16; L Pretorius “Does 80% of the population occupy ‘less than 10% of South Africa’s land?’” <<https://citypress.news24.com/News/does-80-of-the-population-occupy-less-than-10-of-south-africas-land-20190506>>; SAHRC “10 Percent Of South Africans Own 90 Percent Of The Country’s Wealth – Report” <<https://www.sahrc.org.za/index.php/sahrc-media/news/item/1446-10-percent-of-south-africans-own-90-percent-of-the-country-s-wealth-report>> (accessed 08-01-2020).

*advantages*".<sup>273</sup> Milazzo further explains that the reference to common humanity, removed entirely from race, fails to recognize that Black humanity requires redress.<sup>274</sup> Racism does not disappear if race and difference are ignored.<sup>275</sup>

White South Africans rarely acknowledge the privilege which they enjoy. The majority of whites wilfully ignore the hegemonic position which they enjoy: commonly expressing feelings/opinions of being 'disadvantaged' by the present-day political context.<sup>276</sup> Milazzo quotes Steyn and Foster: "... *lack of insight into its own privilege... is the trademark of privilege*".<sup>277</sup> The white community fails to break from the tradition of viewing Blacks as nothing more than vehicles for white enjoyment, even though claims to be disadvantaged by the present political context are often advanced.<sup>278</sup>

New forms of racism appear more sanitary and coded.<sup>279</sup> "*Such metamorphosis in the form and expression of racism benefits the... political culture wherein expressions of mean-spirited affect, assertions of racial superiority, or breach of egalitarian ideals are taboo*".<sup>280</sup> We have to do away with the comfort of race neutrality and highlight the problematic nature and limitations of such neutrality, especially in a context where race is at the forefront of historical and contemporary conflict.<sup>281</sup> Color-blind ideology has worked to negate the historical advantages afforded to whites based on their membership to the racial grouping of whiteness.<sup>282</sup> In essence, it is nothing more than a system of blame-shifting. It fails to account for – or even acknowledge the responsibility of whites for patterns of Black disadvantage, discrimination, and deficiencies.<sup>283</sup> The ideology of color-blindness is shaped by the economic positioning and socio-political self-interest of whites within the current racial order.<sup>284</sup>

It follows that race-neutrality and color-blindness are impossible within contemporary South Africa even though it appears to be a constitutionally entrenched ideal in the era

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<sup>273</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 12.

<sup>274</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 12.

<sup>275</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 12.

<sup>276</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1438.

<sup>277</sup> Milazzo (2015) 8 *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 10.

<sup>278</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 23.

<sup>279</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 334.

<sup>280</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 334.

<sup>281</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 337.

<sup>282</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 338.

<sup>283</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 339.

<sup>284</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 339.



of democracy.<sup>285</sup> The transitioning and transformative periods in South Africa have hailed race-neutrality as the way forward. Almost 25 years later, it becomes apparent that there can be no universal or national identity free from race or the historical treatment thereof.<sup>286</sup> The majority of South African Blacks remain desperately poor and marginalized. There has been no true and actual transformation.<sup>287</sup> There needs to be more focus on race and race consciousness if there is any hope of any form of transformation.<sup>288</sup> This historical study is thus based on the assumption that the de-structuralism of non-racialism in South Africa must be centered on the destruction of liberal overtones of color-blindness.<sup>289</sup>

## 9. CONCLUSION

To summarize, the chapter examined various definitions of racism and the unfoldment of racism in the history of the South Africa. Whilst various legally accepted definitions allude to elements of racism which are evident in contemporary South Africa, the majority of these definitions fail to account for elements of racism which are nationally-specific and/or include psychosocial perspectives.

Frederickson's formulation encompasses various dimensions which are evident in the historic development of racism as evident in South African society today.<sup>290</sup> Firstly, Frederickson posits that an explicitly racist ideology comprises the false belief that there are permanent and unbridgeable differences between different races. Secondly, Frederickson postulates that racism translates into the legal domain - which is evidenced by prohibition of interracial marriage/contact during apartheid (which will be discussed in the following chapters). Thirdly, social segregation is mandated by law (the creation of a bar on all forms of contact that may imply equality between groups). An example of the afore includes the various pieces of legislation enacted during settler-colonialism and apartheid which regulated labour, land and occupation of space. The fourth dimension which Frederickson highlights is that all individuals who are resistant to the dominant ideology are excluded from holding public office. Lastly,

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<sup>285</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 340.

<sup>286</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 340.

<sup>287</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 340.

<sup>288</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 341.

<sup>289</sup> Ansell (2006) *Critical Psychology* 342.

<sup>290</sup> Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (2002) 101

the access to resources and economic opportunities are restricted as to deliberately impoverish those who do form part of- or are in opposition to- the dominant ideology.<sup>291</sup> The afore elements, as formulated by Frederickson, are clearly visible though out the chapter as the history of racism has been outlined. As such, Frederickson's definition accounts for various aspects which are absent from most commonly accepted definitions of racism. Grosfuguel's definition of racism as comprising of nationally specific elements also highlights aspects of racism which are absent from dominant conceptions of racism.

By combining these above-mention definitions, it becomes apparent that the unfoldment of racial capitalism (in the territory which would eventually be known as South Africa) exposes a connection between settler-colonialism and its genocidal consequences (informed by the logic of elimination).<sup>292</sup> Racial difference functioned as the foundation which dictated who could have competencies, rights, and obligations allocated to them and who could not. It ultimately established a relationship between those on either side of the imagined line. Colonizers saw this distinction as a justification to enslave and oppress.<sup>293</sup> This distinction had a close relationship with the idea that "*man is a rational animal*" and therefore rationality and reason were then the effective measurement of who was human and who was not; who could have rights and who could only have obligations in the service of those who had rights. The humanity of those who fell beyond the line was completely ignored. The difference and distinction threshold had supplementary features.

Racism meant that Black people were increasingly perceived and treated as inferior and dispensable.<sup>294</sup> The more dependant whites became on Black labor, the more possessive whites became of their economic and other privileges.<sup>295</sup> That is why race and class is the key to understanding how racism became so deeply entrenched in South African society. "*Racism, as a pure system of alien domination, always, within the limits of safety, seeks to maximize the existential differences between the ruling*

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<sup>291</sup> Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (2002) 4-5.

<sup>292</sup> Wolfe (2006) *Journal of Genocide Research* 387, 400: Settler-colonialism is not an event- but rather a structure which flows into structural racism.

<sup>293</sup> Ramose "I conquer, therefore I am the sovereign" in *The African Philosophy Reader* 543 544 544; Ramose "I conquer, therefore I am the sovereign" in *The African Philosophy Reader* 2.

<sup>294</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 59.

<sup>295</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 63.

*and the ruled race; that is, to create a magical and impassable gulf between “superior” and “inferior” races*”.<sup>296</sup> As such, racist regimes (such as the period of colonization and apartheid) relied entirely on a deeply held belief in Black inferiority, accordingly, any blurring of racial lines has deemed a threat to the structures of white supremacy.<sup>297</sup> As Magubane states: “... *slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was a consequence of slavery*”.<sup>298</sup> In essence, racism was an inclusive rationalization aimed at justifying and promoting the slave-based economies of the Western world and its beneficiaries.<sup>299</sup> The myth of racial superiority motivated slavery, imperialism, and colonization. Today, we can see that imagined racial superiority underlies the stagnation of development, in both socio-political and economic senses.<sup>300</sup>

From 1910 to 1994 a consolidation of white minority rule occurred through both legal and extra-legal means. This consolidation allowed the white minority to exert more power and oppression in their exploitation of Black people.<sup>301</sup> The major concern during this period was how white capital could exploit Black labor in a way that would not pose a threat to itself, noting that white imperialists were somewhat uneasy about their wealth, being dependant on the labor of Blacks (who were gaining consciousness of their socioeconomic position).<sup>302</sup>

Racism also translated into the legal domain and developed into social segregation mandated by law with restrictions on the access to resources and opportunities to deliberately impoverish those who did not form part of the dominant ideology of whiteness.<sup>303</sup> The power of the ideology of whiteness allowed for the legalization of the perpetration of extreme acts of violation.<sup>304</sup> The exercise of power over the enslaved (during colonialism) and Black subjects (during apartheid) not only depended on the horrific policing and subjugation which was practiced and legislated, but also the display of dominion exercised by slave owners and the white community.<sup>305</sup> As Hartman puts it: “*The owner’s display of mastery is just as important as the title to*

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<sup>296</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 43.

<sup>297</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 44.

<sup>298</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 41.

<sup>299</sup> KW Grundy “Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other by Bernard Magubane” (2008) 41 *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 160.

<sup>300</sup> Grundy (2008) *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 161.

<sup>301</sup> Nyoka (2016) *Journal of Black Studies* 922-925.

<sup>302</sup> Nyoka (2016) *Journal of Black Studies* 922-925.

<sup>303</sup> Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (2002) 4-5.

<sup>304</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 8.

<sup>305</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 7.

*slave property*.”<sup>306</sup> The representation of power is, therefore, also a crucial component in reproducing and maintaining domination.<sup>307</sup> Although Hartman is speaking about slavery in the USA, her argument relates to the period of colonization in South Africa. During colonialism, this demonstration of power, which Hartman referred to, included public execution and punishment, the changing of names of slave children to show that the master determined the child’s fate. During apartheid, the militarized policing and operations functioned as public displays of the power which whites possessed. Today, these forms manifest in subtler ways: news reports circulating versions of events which portray protests as violent and barbaric, and Black politicians as corrupt. These are but a few examples of how white liberals attempt to re-inscribe their dominion over the captive body: by transforming the oppressed into a vehicle of the master’s power and truth.<sup>308</sup> As Hartman puts it: “*The crimes of slavery are not only witnessed but staged*.”<sup>309</sup> Put differently, these performances of power are utilized to reproduce and secure the dynamics of dominance and to manipulate appearances of events that could disrupt the system.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 7.

<sup>307</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 7.

<sup>308</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 8: I refer to the white man as a nod to the paternal [patriarchal?] nature of colonialism, but white women are also included in this reference as they are also perpetrators of the construction and furtherance of the system of oppression as well as perpetrators of racism.

<sup>309</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 17.

<sup>310</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 8.



## CHAPTER 3: RACISM AS ABJECTION

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 was concerned with setting the historical- and psychosocial scene for the discussion of race and abjection, in this chapter. Various definitions of racism were examined and critiqued, throughout chapter 2, to highlight their shortcomings. The destructive and disruptive colonial norms were introduced to the South African landscape and had the effect of producing psychic, social, cultural, and economic wounding through racism.<sup>1</sup> The distinction between white and Black became the basis of the social contract which determined where the symbolic border lay. The social contract or ‘racial contract’ as defined by Mills is indicative of abjection as it defines the parameters of the social body as exclusively white.<sup>2</sup> This is because only whites were afforded the rights and enjoyments (in terms of law and social practices) and all others were excluded. It is on this basis that I argue that racism features forms of abjection – through its exclusion of all things deemed as ‘*non-white*’. In chapter 2 it was further emphasized that racism has been crafted through historical systems and power relations upheld by both individuals and collective groups.<sup>3</sup> By viewing racism as subject to the dynamics of abjection we can appreciate how racism has become a kind of bodily logic that is assumed to be natural. Abjection does not necessarily explain how that which is considered abject initially became abject – nor should it.

The introduction of a psycho-social perspective on racism in the preceding chapter and the introduction of Kristeva’s abjection in this chapter should allow for the impact of racist ideologies, which have facilitated the cultural and economic exploitation of colonialism, to be discussed concerning the consequences which it holds for the present day, namely, the embracing of colonial traditions and behaviors of abject racism.

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<sup>1</sup> Baker, A Houston, T Dovey, R Jolly & H Deinert *Colonialism and the Postcolonial Condition* (1995) 1047; IM Young *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990) 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> CW Mills “*European Specters*” in *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* (2003) 150-154, 158-159, 45.

<sup>3</sup> D Tutt “A Hatred that Smiles: Kristeva’s Essay on Abjection and Intimate Racism” (10-06-2012) <<https://www.google.com/search?q=daniel+tutt+abjection&oq=daniel+tutt+abjection&aqs=chrome..69i57.3711j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>> (accessed 03-01-2019).

Kristeva's book, *The Powers of Horror*, constructs and defines abjection and the abject. The abject will be reframed to examine and explain the phenomenon of racism in South Africa. It will be employed to explain the extreme discrimination and oppression of Black South Africans and will also be used to draw attention to the fragility of the law and to ponder upon racism as prevalent in present-day South Africa. The abject is thus a useful term to explain the apex of discrimination based on race.<sup>4</sup> However, it should be noted that the Eurocentric deficiencies of the formulation will be highlighted and challenged - after which they will be reformulated with reference to scholars to apply abjection to racism.

## 2. KRISTEVA'S FORMULATION OF ABJECTION

Kristeva started working as a psychoanalytical practitioner in 1979.<sup>5</sup> Psychoanalytic theory (such as abjection) illuminates the economic, political, and psychological carnage which follows the horror colonial-apartheid.<sup>6</sup> Put differently, it allows for the relation between the symbolic and various social, political, and historical practices to be analyzed.<sup>7</sup> Though Kristeva has suggested that she favors psychoanalysis to politics, her formulation of abjection still has value within the political domain.<sup>8</sup> This is due to her engagement with the symbolic order.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, Kristeva locates her work within the domain of "French Theory" which raises philosophical and political questions of difference, power, and the imposition of standards.<sup>10</sup> She describes it as the development of a train of thought on certain concepts and abstractions to connect such concepts and the imaginary.<sup>11</sup>

Kristeva's formulation is often used in the fields of social critical theory (particularly in organizational studies and sociological studies, psychotherapy, and in the arts. Kristeva's theories, particularly her formulation of the abject, have been criticized by various scholars.<sup>12</sup> For example, some scholars argue that her theories are ahistorical (such as Butler and Fraser) whilst other scholars postulate that her work is concerned

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<sup>4</sup> R Phillips "Abjection" (2014) 1 *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 19.

<sup>5</sup> BH Midttun "Crossing the Borders: An Interview with Julia Kristeva" (2006) 21 *Hypatia* 164 165.

<sup>6</sup> J Sey "Psychoanalysis and South Africa" (1998) 55 *American Imago* 3 3.

<sup>7</sup> Sey (1998) *American Imago* 3.

<sup>8</sup> K Oliver "Julia Kristeva's Feminist Revolutions" (1993) 8 *Hypatia* 97.

<sup>9</sup> Oliver (1993) *Hypatia* 101.

<sup>10</sup> Midttun (2006) *Hypatia* 168.

<sup>11</sup> Midttun (2006) *Hypatia* 168.

<sup>12</sup> Oliver (1993) *Hypatia* 94 95.

with the history of social structures.<sup>13</sup> These debates will not be arbitrated in this study. Instead, the core elements of Kristeva's formulation will be emphasized to reformulate abjection, referencing various scholars (such as Derek Hook, Frantz Fanon, and Imogen Tyler).

Kristeva defines the abject as that which "*disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules*".<sup>14</sup> Additionally, Kristeva explains abjection as follows:

*"There looms within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed at the threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable... It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire... desire turns aside: sickened, it rejects. A certainty protects it from the shameful... as tempting as it is condemned... a vortex of summons and repulsions places the one haunted by it literally beside himself".<sup>15</sup>*

From the quote above the core elements of abjection can be ascertained. The abject is neither an object nor subject. Instead, it is located at the place outside of the symbolic order.<sup>16</sup> It is that which threatens normality through ambiguity: the abject, as a concept developed in post-structuralist thought, is not a binary opposite which is upsetting through its contrast and opposition. What makes the abject threatening and frightening is the lack of distinction - indistinction and ambiguity in itself.<sup>17</sup> Put differently, abjection encompasses a borderline uncertainty.<sup>18</sup>

For Kristeva, the abject is a "*primal repression*" meaning that it precedes the establishment of the subject's relation to its objects of desire. This occurs, according to Kristeva, before the establishment of the opposition (whether conscious or unconscious). Here, Kristeva refers to the moment in our psychosexual development when we have established a border or separation between humans and animals, between culture and that which preceded it. Put differently, it is the effort to separate

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<sup>13</sup> Oliver (1993) *Hypatia* 95.

<sup>14</sup> J Kristeva *The Powers of Horror* (1982) 4.

<sup>15</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 1.

<sup>16</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 10.

<sup>17</sup> Diken and Laustsen "Becoming Abject: Rape as a Weapon of War" (2005) *Body and Society* 113.

<sup>18</sup> Phillips (2014) *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 19 – 20.



ourselves from the non-human/animal.<sup>19</sup> On the level of psychosexual development, Kristeva contends that the abject marks the moment that the child is separated from the mother – when the boundary between ‘me’ and ‘the other’ is established.<sup>20</sup> Wounds and death (the corps) symbolize the border of one’s condition as a living being.<sup>21</sup> These confront us with our eventual demise (in a way which makes it palpably real).<sup>22</sup> Put differently, it literalizes the breakdown of the distinction between subject and object: a distinction which is vitally important to the establishment of identity and entry into the symbolic order.<sup>23</sup> The distinction (the operation of the psyche through which subjective and group identity is constituted through the exclusion of any threat) alludes to the dynamics of oppression.

Kristeva’s formulation of the abject is the flip side of Lacan’s object of desire. Lacan’s object of desire allows for desires to be coordinated and thus for the symbolic order of meaning and community to endure. The abject, on the other hand, is “*radically excluded*” drawing one to “*the place where meaning collapses*”.<sup>24</sup> The abject must also be disguised from desire. It is associated with fear and *jouissance* (Lacan’s object of desire).<sup>25</sup> This fear is caused by a breakdown in meaning: in the distinction between subject and object.<sup>26</sup> However, the abject also awakens desire as one is continually drawn to the abject despite the fear caused by the breakdown in meaning.<sup>27</sup> What this means is that the abject, whilst awakening fear, elicits a response of pleasure (although not exactly as desire).<sup>28</sup>

Kristeva’s formulation of the abject can be summarized as a human reaction of horror caused by the (possibility of) a breakdown of meaning results from the loss of a boundary.<sup>29</sup> Kristeva explains that rituals are used to attempt to maintain clear boundaries (such as the boundaries between nature and society as well as the semiotic and symbolic). Paradoxically, the attempt to maintain clear boundaries serves

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19 Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 12-13.

20 Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 13.

21 Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 3.

22 Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 4.

23 Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 4.

24 Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 2.

25 Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 35.

26 Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 9.

27 Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 9.

28 Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 29.

29 Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 1, 9.

in simultaneously excluding and renewing contact with the abject. Additionally, abjection is often used to describe the state of marginalized groups who deviate from the dominant ideology (such as women, people of minority faith and the poor). This is because one of the central dynamics present in abjection is the importance of maintaining the boundary between the symbolic order and that which threatens to disrupt or unsettle it.<sup>30</sup>

Kristeva's formulation of the abject can be further summarized as the physical and/or emotional reaction to behaviors, beings, bodies, and states of being which are thought of as 'unclean' and which threaten the purity of, not only the body but also, the demarcated roles within the social order.<sup>31</sup> These categories of uncleanness work in tandem with the four elements of abjection, namely, an emotional response, a potential threat, a symbolic border, and a physical component that accompanies one or all of the previous elements.<sup>32</sup>

### 3. KRISTEVA'S EUROCENTRICISM

An interdisciplinary approach and reference to the research of various scholars will be used throughout this chapter to supplement the Eurocentric deficiencies of Kristeva's formulation and to allow it to be suitably adapted to analyze the intricacies of racism in South Africa. The Eurocentricity of her formulation needs to be recognized because the modes of writing, which influenced white historiography (and other disciplines) cannot be reconciled with the lived experiences of those who were subjected to white minority rule.<sup>33</sup> Some liberal historians may view capitalism as a rational system removed entirely from racism and racial exploitation, however, white rule and capitalism were (and remain) essential factors on which the abuse and subjugation of Black people were founded.<sup>34</sup> In following Magubane's view, Nyoka states: "*when (w)hite social scientists in South Africa write about race and class they... analyze (B)lack... experiences using the same 'yardsticks' they use for themselves as*

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<sup>30</sup> R Rizq "States of Abjection" *Organization Studies* (2013) 34 (9) 1277-1282.

<sup>31</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 2, 4, 17, 56, 65, 66, 84.

<sup>32</sup> Each of these elements of abjection will be discussed separately, at a later stage in this chapter, in order to illustrate how they relate to racism.

<sup>33</sup> B Nyoka "Bernard Magubane's The Making of A Racist State Revisited: 20 Years On" (2016) 47 *Journal of Black Studies* 907-908.

<sup>34</sup> Nyoka (2016) *Journal of Black Studies* 907-908.

whites”.<sup>35</sup> Nyoka explains that in doing so, whites (particularly white scholars) fail to recognize the fact that white and Black experiences are fundamentally dissimilar. In failing to recognize the differences of experience, white social scientists skim over the crime of slavery on which racism was constructed (as an ideological justification).<sup>36</sup>

The Eurocentric deficiencies of Kristeva’s formulation do not merely refer to the fact that anti-Black racism is notably absent from her formulation: her formulation is also Eurocentric because the scope of her work is rooted in a Western worldview which implicitly posits European history as ‘normal’ or superior to others. She writes from a perspective that is informed by Europe’s dominant position within the global capitalist system. Despite being Eurocentric in nature, Kristeva’s formulation remains a valuable resource to analyze the power structures which legitimize the devaluation of ways of living and the oppression of people who fall outside the boundaries of the given social order. Abjection, reformulated, and applied to (specifically, anti-Black) racism should have the consequence of deepening the argument that racism is not a matter of individual psychology. Rather, racism has a psychosocial dimension and has been internalized into the collective (white) imaginary and translated into a society in which structural racism remains the order of the day.<sup>37</sup>

Despite her Eurocentricity, Kristeva’s formulation of abjection still has value. Derek Hook posits that the value of Kristeva’s theory of abjection is that it allows for an understanding of racism, which acknowledges the importance of both the social and historical dimensions of its constructions. The theory of abjection also allows one to understand the functioning of racism by highlighting the visceral and subliminal dimensions of subjectivity and experience.<sup>38</sup> Kristeva’s attention to the writings of Louis-Ferdinand Celine and his anti-Semitism alludes to elements of racism and thus provide a further link between racism and abjection.<sup>39</sup> Racism, as discussed in Kristeva’s formulation (in relation to anti-Semitism and the Holocaust) coincides with Grosfuguel’s formulation (discussed in chapter 2) insofar racism is not always

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<sup>35</sup> Nyoka (2016) *Journal of Black Studies* 909.

<sup>36</sup> Nyoka (2016) *Journal of Black Studies* 909-910.

<sup>37</sup> LM Alcoff *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self* (2006) 40.

<sup>38</sup> D Hook “Racism as abjection: A Psychoanalytic Conceptualisation for a post-apartheid South Africa” (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 207.

<sup>39</sup> AW Astell ‘Telling Tales of Love: Julia Kristeva and Bernard of Clairvaux’ *Christianity and Literature* (2000) 50(1) 125 135.

informed by ethnicity or skin colour. In other words, racism can have various markers such as color, religion, language, and/or ethnicity (not simply color alone) Additionally, Grosfoguel provides an example to illustrate this: throughout the history of colonial Ireland, the British asserted their imagined racial superiority over the Irish. They imagined themselves superior not utilizing skin color as a marker but rather religion.<sup>40</sup> Grosfoguel's formulation may easily be applied to anti-Semitism (as per Kristeva's formulation of abject racism) on the same basis. However, for the purpose of this study, Kristeva's formulation of the abject (and its relationship with racism) needs to be reformulated to account for anti-Black racism, as evident in South Africa.

An analysis of Kristeva's abjection allows us to understand the connection between the expulsive reactions of racism, as a physical experience, to the personal experience of racism, in terms of the ego, as well as the broader discursive manifestation of racism within the prevailing social order.<sup>41</sup> It is this connection that exposes that pre-discursive processes condition and augments every discursive act of racism. If the theory of abjection provides an account of pre-discursive racism, "... *a racism that comes before words...*"<sup>42</sup> This means that pre-discursive racism can be understood as the logic of the body, more specifically, how the drives of distinction-anxiety, separation, and survival function within the symbolic realm.<sup>43</sup> Racism manifesting as a sort of bodily logic is accompanied by the feeling of repulsion (experienced by racists) not only informed by the body's operation of expulsion but more so the operation of expulsion at a symbolic level. To simplify, the virtual omnipresence of the body in racism means that racism is the body responding to fear - a specific kind of fear which is racialized within the mind of the racist and which culminates in the violent psycho-visceral reaction to the Other.

#### 4. THEMES OF ABJECTION APPLIED TO RACISM

The bulk of Kristeva's formulation of abjection, in *The Powers of Horror*, relates to certain categories of uncleanness.<sup>44</sup> She refers to the abjection of biological functions (such as those of the female body), religious prohibitions and categories of behavior,

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<sup>40</sup> Grosfoguel (2016) *Journal of World-Systems Research* 12; Grosfoguel makes the same argument with regards to the Islamophobia in Europe and the United States.

<sup>41</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 207.

<sup>42</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 207.

<sup>43</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 207.

<sup>44</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 2-4.

as well as spaces of abjection (the space which the abject inhabits – such as the poor and poverty-stricken).<sup>45</sup> Kristeva's concept of abjection is utilized commonly to explain popular cultural narratives of horror, and discriminatory behavior (such as anti-Semitism, sexism, etc). The abject is then that which disturbs identity, system, and order, rebelling against borders, positions, and rules.<sup>46</sup> It explains the process through which identificatory systems exclude subjects which are rendered as beyond classification. The process of the abjection of the Other is aimed at maintaining and reinforcing boundaries which are 'threatened' by the abject.<sup>47</sup> This formulation of the abject, in its most basic form, aids in accounting for the extreme racial discrimination which is ever-present in South Africa.

For Fredrickson, racism has 5 dimensions.<sup>48</sup> These dimensions include: explicitly racist ideologies; legally sanctioned racism; social segregation; exclusion of Others; and restricted access to resources and economic opportunities.<sup>49</sup> In the South African context, racial discrimination is directed at the Black population, by whites, as they are imagined as threats to the boundaries of whiteness (as the dominant group, preservation of racial purity and, access to opportunities and resources).<sup>50</sup> Abjection, in its literal meaning, means "to cast out".<sup>51</sup> Thus, it can be said that the abject is the radically marginalized subject (the individual/group at which racism is directed).

To further develop the understanding of racist abjection, Imogen Tyler's *Social Abjection* will be referred to. Tyler socializes, simultaneously politicizes, the concept of abjection, and analyses the same as both a social and lived process.<sup>52</sup> Tyler considers the consequences of the relationship between those who abject and those

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<sup>45</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 1, 4, 13, 19, 51, 60, 67, 72-75; Arya "Abjection Interrogated: Uncovering The Relation Between Abjection and Disgust" *Journal of Extreme Anthropology* (1) 48 53-55: Kristeva's abjection is commonly used in social critical theory to describe the state of often-marginalised groups which include: women, unwed mothers, people of minority religions, sex workers, convicts, the poor and the disabled.

<sup>46</sup> AD Davis "Bad Girls of Art and Law: Abjection, Power, and Sexuality Exceptionalism in (Kara Walker's) Art and (Janet Halley's) Law" (2011) 23 *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism* 1 1.

<sup>47</sup> Phillips (2014) *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 19.

<sup>48</sup> GM Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* (2002) 101.

<sup>49</sup> Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 101.

<sup>50</sup> Phillips (2014) *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 20; CW Mills "Black Trash" in L Westra and BE Lawson (eds) *Faces of Environmental Racism* (2001) 73. 75.

<sup>51</sup> Phillips (2014) *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 20; Mills "Black Trash" in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 75.

<sup>52</sup> I Tyler "Against Abjection" (2009) 1 *Feminist Theory* 10 32 at 80.

who find themselves abject-ed within the specific context of social and political locations.<sup>53</sup> The determination of sameness and difference – of internal and external of just exactly where one thing ends and another begins is not only a philosophical issue but also political. The abject is perceived in a negative light: referring to that which is deemed monstrous and grotesque.<sup>54</sup> Fanon explains that the indigenous people have been misrecognized and labeled as ‘evil’ or ‘beastly’ by the colonizer. This view has been maintained throughout colonial regimes and served as a justification for the mistreatment of the colonized.<sup>55</sup> The colonized, deemed to be abject, were excluded through an interactive process where the boundaries of the (colonizers) self were protected by rejecting that which threatened to traverse boundaries, deemed as respecting rules and overstepping its (imagined) position.<sup>56</sup> For the colonizers, biological racism meant that the indigenous people were considered to be neither man nor beast. It is from this perspective that a link is established between abjection and the problem of racism, drawing attention to the fragility of the law.<sup>57</sup> By focusing on the abject as the demarcation between the boundaries of the self and the Other to preserve the demarcated roles of the social order and to protect it from the perceived threat of the abject, one can begin to formulate an explanation of abject racism as a regime which is aimed at fostering and furthering white supremacy.<sup>58</sup> Butler’s interpretation of abjection as the operation of repulsion is crucial to the understanding of abject racism as it suggests a disposition to action and implication of violence, simultaneously. These two qualities both underlie the volatility of racist behavior.<sup>59</sup> For Butler, the abject explains how the “... *uninhabitable and unlivable zones of social life...*” are designated.<sup>60</sup> These are zones to be populated by those who are imagined as falling short of the qualifications of full subjects in certain social orders such as the inherently racist social order created by

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<sup>53</sup> Tyler (2009) *Feminist Theory* 77; McClintock *Imperial Leather* 8; E Bonilla-Silva “The Structure of Racism in Color-Blind ‘Post-Racial’ America” (2015) *American Behavioural Scientists* 1-19.

<sup>54</sup> Diken & Laustsen (2005) *Body and Society* 116.

<sup>55</sup> Diken & Laustsen (2005) *Body and Society* 116.

<sup>56</sup> Diken & Laustsen (2005) *Body and Society* 116.

<sup>57</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 4.

<sup>58</sup> Tyler (2009) *Feminist Theory* 77; Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 4, 11, 66, 70; Arya *Journal of Extreme Anthropology* 51-52.

<sup>59</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 686.

<sup>60</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 691.

colonialism. This coincides with Charles Mills's account of the racial contract as an exclusionary ethic.<sup>61</sup>

Abjection essentializes the dynamics and processes of abjection to its affective components of hate and disgust. The idea of abjection directs our attention to those instances of racism lying beneath discursive consciousness, such as often unintended patterns of racialized avoidance, aversion, and discomfort. It enables us to understand the intensity of emotions which underlies racism and it provides an explanation for the effect of violence and the violence of the reaction which encompasses the starkest instances of racial hatred. In this way, abjection provides insight into the more complex components of racism: the irrational fear and the irrational hatred towards the other. The abject catastrophic histories – haunts the psychological condition of South Africa's social body.<sup>62</sup> Multiple abject conflicts in South African history and cultural memory which are easily categorized as practices of abjection, for example, white and non-white; self and other; human and inhuman; colonizer and colonized; slave and master and; perpetrator and victim.<sup>63</sup> These conflicts create meaning within the psychic body of South Africa.<sup>64</sup> Abjection is a forceful response that is capable of manifesting in physical, psychic, and symbolic levels.

## 5. ELEMENTS OF RACISM

As previously stated, abjection can be reduced to four core components, namely, an emotional response, a potential threat, a symbolic border, and a physical component that accompanies one or all of the previous elements (and not necessarily in a particular order).<sup>65</sup>

### 5.1. EMOTIONAL RESPONSE: THE RACIST AFFECT

Abjection can be understood as a powerful and disturbing reaction akin to fear, disgust, and anxiety.<sup>66</sup> Put differently, the strong emotional response in which

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<sup>61</sup> Mills "Black Trash" in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 76

<sup>62</sup> T Bick "Horror Histories: Apartheid and the Abject Body in the Work of Jane Alexander" (2010) 43 *African Art* 35.

<sup>63</sup> Bick (2010) *African Art* 34; Mills "Black Trash" in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 78.

<sup>64</sup> Bick (2010) *African Art* 34; Mills "Black Trash" in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 78.

<sup>65</sup> Each of these elements of abjection will be discussed separately, at a later stage in this chapter, in order to illustrate how they relate to racism.

<sup>66</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 685.

abjection awakens can take on the form of fear and/or disgust. The response of fear awakens the need to flee from the abject. The response of fear combined with the feeling of disgust awakens the desire that the offending object is removed entirely from existence.<sup>67</sup> Both the fields of Critical Race Studies and Social Psychology allow us to contextualize the abject (more specifically abject racism) as a discursively constructed and imagined identity.<sup>68</sup> Social psychology assumes that racism is a “*response to inner anxiety and fear*”.<sup>69</sup> This assumption, on the face of it, appears to be one located within the domain of individual psychology, however, if this is applied to the collective imaginary of the white colonizer (and his descendants) it becomes clear that racism is a response to the anxiety and fear which accompanies the potential threat to the symbolic border of whiteness.<sup>70</sup> An example of this can be found in the pseudo-scientific justifications for racism which accompanied settlers. However, with one dire difference. Instead of fleeing from the “*separate species*” which the colonizers encountered, the desire to remove the offending object from existence was awakened and justified through a so-called difference in biology.<sup>71</sup> This is evidenced by the predatory thoughts which Jan van Riebeeck recorded in his diary along with his description of the indigenous people as “*dangerous*”.<sup>72</sup> If van Riebeeck imagined the indigenous people as being dangerous, it is implied that he experienced fear. His description of the indigenous as “*dull... and odorous... dogs*” leads one to presume that he harbored a sense of disgust towards them.<sup>73</sup> As previously stated, the response of both fear and disgust awakens a desire that the catalyst, for that specific emotion, to be removed from existence.<sup>74</sup> Van Riebeeck’s perception of the indigenous people was undoubtedly informed by racism and the journals which he kept illustrate that the themes of abjection accompany racism. One could then argue that the racist theories which were utilized to justify the genocidal campaigns against the indigenous peoples of the Cape (particularly against the San and Khoi peoples)

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<sup>67</sup> Arya *Journal of Extreme Anthropology* 55.

<sup>68</sup> D Tutt “A Hatred that Smiles: Kristeva’s Essay on Abjection and Intimate Racism” (10-06-2012) <<https://www.google.com/search?q=daniel+tutt+abjection&oq=daniel+tutt+abjection&aqs=chrome..69i57.3711j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>> (accessed 03-01-2019).

<sup>69</sup> D Tutt “A Hatred that Smiles: Kristeva’s Essay on Abjection and Intimate Racism” (10-06-2012) <<https://www.google.com/search?q=daniel+tutt+abjection&oq=daniel+tutt+abjection&aqs=chrome..69i57.3711j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>> (accessed 03-01-2019).

<sup>70</sup> Mills “Black Trash” in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 80.

<sup>71</sup> B Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* (2007) 8.

<sup>72</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 180.

<sup>73</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 182.

<sup>74</sup> Arya *Journal of Extreme Anthropology* 55.



were clear indicators of the themes of abjection.<sup>75</sup> This is comparable to Kristeva's engagement with the Holocaust (in *The Powers of Horror*). She argues that a feature of anti-Semitic ideology is the fantasy of a "*Jewish threat*" which emanates from what is excluded from the symbolic.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, Kristeva suggests that abjection is the other side of the sacred.<sup>77</sup> According to Kristeva, anti-Semitism is a contemporary mask for abjection because Jewish subjectivity was "*undermined as alterity, excess and incommensurability of the abject and sublime*".<sup>78</sup> Moreover, in Kristevan theory, abjection signifies the mechanism by which inclusion coincides with the radical exclusion of that which is Other.<sup>79</sup>

Kristeva's formulation of abjection refers to the policing of so-called 'dangerous' classes specifically, any member of the working class, prostitutes, feminists, homosexuals, criminals, the militant crowd, and other abject categories of imagined uncleanness. Themes of the abject are further visible when examining other aspects of colonial power (and the apartheid government) which reverted to the policing of classes which are deemed 'dangerous'. To illustrate, racist-legislation enacted during settler-colonialism and apartheid cast the indigenous people as criminals and working class (to name a few examples). These classes touch on those in Kristeva's formulation with the added element of national specificity and race (particularly, Blackness).

The emotional blend of fear and/or disgust which the abject awakens, as it relates to racism, is illustrated by the term, '*die swartgevaar*', used often during the height of the apartheid regime as a justification for the subjugation of Black people.<sup>80</sup> This term clearly illustrates the abjection of Blacks within the racist imaginary. Judith Butler explains: white perception is structured to interpret "*what is seen*" through certain inverted perceptions.<sup>81</sup> These inverted perceptions are produced through the

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<sup>75</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 65.

<sup>76</sup> Kristeva *Powers of Horror* 178.

<sup>77</sup> Kristeva *Powers of Horror* 17.

<sup>78</sup> LD Herer, *Tropes of Otherness: Abjection Sublimity and Jewish Subjectivity in Enlightenment England* Doctor of Philosophy Thesis Florida State University Libraries (2004) viii.

<sup>79</sup> LD Herer, *Tropes of Otherness: Abjection Sublimity and Jewish Subjectivity in Enlightenment England* Doctor of Philosophy Thesis Florida State University Libraries (2004) 7.

<sup>80</sup> Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 132.

<sup>81</sup> J Butler "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia" in R Gooding-Williams (ed) *Reading Rodney King/reading urban uprising* (1993) 16.

saturation and schematization of white paranoia.<sup>82</sup> Butler refers to Fanon's description of being looked upon and pointed at by a white spectator: "*the (B)lack body is circumscribed as dangerous, prior to any gesture... and the infantilized white reader is positioned... as the one who is helpless in relation to that (B)lack body, as one definitionally in need of protection...*"<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Butler's discussion of Fanon explains that in the white mind, there exists some fear that a physical distance could be crossed and that the sanctity of whiteness may be polluted by such proximity (for example, miscegenation).<sup>84</sup> Thus the Black body is imagined, through white vulnerability and paranoia, as a threat.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, those facets of racism that elude discursive explanations, when examined through the lens of Kristeva's abject, can be understood as a mode of bodily reactivity (the corporeal aspect of racism) which, as Hook puts it, "... *has been routed through the dreads, aversions, and nausea of the body*".<sup>86</sup>

The emotional component of the abject is not limited to feelings of fear, disgust or horror – it can manifest as fascination or pleasure in certain instances (such as the instances of interracial desire as discussed by bell hooks in '*Eating the Other*' which is discussed in detail in chapter 4). It is a complex response of "*disguised desire*" referred to as the horror-fascination paradigm.<sup>87</sup> A basic example of the horror-fascination paradigm is as follows: when there is an accident on the highway in which someone has been badly injured, people tend to drive by very slowly to see what has happened – they cannot look away from what has happened as they are compelled to look on with horrified fascination.

A further example of this horror-fascination reaction, which is perhaps more fitting for this chapter in light of anti-Black racism, is that of Sara "Saartjie" Baartman. Baartman, sold as a slave, became the object of colonial European fascination: Europeans presumed that they were racially superior and paid to see Baartman's half-naked body displayed in a cage.<sup>88</sup> Following her death, her brain and genitals were preserved and

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<sup>82</sup> Butler "Endangered/Endangering" in *Reading Rodney King/reading urban uprising* 16; Mills "Black Trash" in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 79.

<sup>83</sup> Butler "Endangered/Endangering" in *Reading Rodney King/reading urban uprising* 18.

<sup>84</sup> Butler "Endangered/Endangering" in *Reading Rodney King/reading urban uprising* 18.

<sup>85</sup> Butler "Endangered/Endangering" in *Reading Rodney King/reading urban uprising* 19.

<sup>86</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 208.

<sup>87</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 35.

<sup>88</sup> C Elizabeth & B Davies *Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture* (2008) 137-138; Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 89.

displayed in British and other European museums.<sup>89</sup> Baartman serves as an example of how race informs the horror-fascination paradigm: surely Baartman would not have been paraded through Europe if she had been white.

The slang term 'jungle fever' also serves as an example of this: although it refers to miscegenation, it is commonly used as a slur which describes the lust of a white individual to engage in sexual activity with a Black individual.<sup>90</sup> The term further hints at the colonial relationship between Black people and white settlers- where whites would enter the so-called jungle to conquer it. The term is particularly problematic by implying that the desire is brought on by disease ('fever') and that it is directed at/or influenced by something wild or animalistic ('jungle'). The term, in this context, can be related to the way colonizers imagined the indigenous people as less than human. Moreover, the term can be read as a nod to abjection in that it implies that the symbolic body of whiteness could be threatened by a 'disease' or 'impurity' (the desire for miscegenation). Apartheid criminalized all marriages and sexual contact between different population groups and required separate residential areas for people of mixed race as well as Black people, signaling an obsession with (white) "*race purity*".<sup>91</sup> These examples highlight why Kristeva refers to the abject as fascinating: "... *the abject repulses us and calls to us... it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us.*"<sup>92</sup> The fusion of disgust and repulsion, within the abject, consequently frames the boundaries of the social order to regulate 'proper' members by requiring that they avoid the objects which awaken this reaction.<sup>93</sup>

The abjection of Blackness is thus aided by the notion of white supremacy and the complexity of the desire-fear paradigm. The abject is the space in which desire transforms into rejection and shame.<sup>94</sup> The abject is also that which provokes disgust. This alludes to Kristeva's distinction between purity and impurity. Impure objects are avoided to preserve the distinction between human and animal, life and death and to

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<sup>89</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 89.

<sup>90</sup> Available at: <<http://onlineslangdictionary.com/meaning-definition-of/jungle-fever>> (accessed 04-01-2020); Available at: <<https://www.definitions.net/definition/jungle+fever>> (accessed 04-01-2020) Noting that there is a forbidden love subtext to the term.

<sup>91</sup> Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 3.

<sup>92</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 4, 141; "Julia Kristeva Introduction" <<https://www.shmoop.com/julia-kristeva/influences.html>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>93</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 11, 66-67, 70; Arya *Journal of Extreme Anthropology* 52; NC Gibson & Beneduce (2017) *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* 44, 166.

<sup>94</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 1.

avoid shame. The colonizer imagined the indigenous population as animals who polluted the landscape which the colonizer claimed as his own.

As previously stated, abjection is the juxtaposition of attraction to- and repulsion of the socially undesirable quality.<sup>95</sup> In other words, abjection presents a desire-repulsion complex. Hate and fear coexist within this paradigm and perform a protective function to preserve the integrity of a specific structure (regardless of whether this structure is physical, psychical, social, or political).<sup>96</sup> This desire-fear complex provides some clarity on the aspects of racism, which are difficult to understand: complexities of racism where desire, disgust, fear, anxiety, and pleasure coexist. Pleasure, here, is not necessarily sexual. As Farley states: *“People can create pleasures out of very peculiar things, even out of suffering or inflicting pain. Race is such a pleasure”*.<sup>97</sup> This exposes the unswayable irrationality of the fear, hatred, pleasure and fascination which is directed at the Other.<sup>98</sup>

The conflict of the desire-repulsion complex lies within the desire for separation and becoming autonomous from the Other and the impossibility of such a desire. These conflicting emotions spiral into desperation and suggest that the practice of abjection is a repetitive one.<sup>99</sup> Abjection, as an experience, always remains incomplete: it is the constant struggle to attain autonomy through separation from the borderline objects which threaten the integrity of the ‘self’ as well as a social system of identity which the ‘self’ forms a part of.<sup>100</sup> The process of abjection is a process of crisis: *“... an impossible assemblage of elements with a connotation of a fragile limit.”*<sup>101</sup>

*“... the appreciation of the emotional stakes in processes of abjection; the volatility of such phenomena – as would be in the case of racism – stems from the fact that a potential dissolution of subjectivity is apparently being threatened, a kind of wiping away of the individual coherence of the subject.”*<sup>102</sup>

Racism has far-reaching and complicated implications as it involves the complexities and paradoxes of racial difference and identity formation to inflict insurmountable

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<sup>95</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 217.

<sup>96</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 218.

<sup>97</sup> AP Farley “The Black Body as Fetish Object” (1997) 76 *Oregon Law Review* 495.

<sup>98</sup> Farley (1997) *Oregon Law Review* 495.

<sup>99</sup> Farley (1997) *Oregon Law Review* 495.

<sup>100</sup> Farley (1997) *Oregon Law Review* 495.

<sup>101</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 217.

<sup>102</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 687.

trauma.<sup>103</sup> This experience of disgust and abjection is not an effect that the racist internalizes in isolation, there is a communal aspect to it.

Abjection allows hate and fear to simultaneously co-exist with desire and fascination. Kristeva provides the following example: Nazis were fascinated by the Jews, but their fascination was full of hatred.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, whites return to their fetishized obsession of “*decorating black bodies with disdain*”.<sup>105</sup> This exposes how racism is created and maintained by a simultaneous process of pleasure and disgust.<sup>106</sup> It serves to protect the integrity of any given structure. Kristeva’s analysis of Celine exposes further exposes this contingency: the anti-Semitic fantasy which Celine harbored was an illusion that it would be possible to reject the symbolic order. The abject in the writing of Celine which exposes a violent anti-Semitism is understood, by Kristeva, as a symptom that simultaneously enacts and reveals both the horror and fascination of psychic violence.<sup>107</sup> Kristeva explains that in the Nazi’s viewed the Jews as follows:

*“The Jew: a conjunction of waste and object of desire, of corpse and life, fecality and pleasure, murderous aggressivity and the most neutralizing power... The Jew becomes... the border where exact limits between the same and other, subject and object... between inside and outside and disappearing – hence an Object of fear and fascination Abjection itself.”*<sup>108</sup>

Kristeva’s description above could easily be related to the view which the colonizers maintained about the indigenous population.

Society is coded as white. This coding tells us what to expect from people based on racist assumptions that underlie society.<sup>109</sup> Because Blackness has been cast as Other it has been coded as a threat because, in our collective representation of humanity, that which is not white is a threat.<sup>110</sup> A prime example of this is how politicians employed emotional manipulation against white voters (through fear mongering) to gain support for the National Party.<sup>111</sup> An additional example is the

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<sup>103</sup> Diken & Laustsen (2005) *Body and Society* 126.

<sup>104</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 136.

<sup>105</sup> Farley (1997) *Oregon Law Review* 463.

<sup>106</sup> Farley (1997) *Oregon Law Review* 463-465.

<sup>107</sup> Arya *Journal of Extreme Anthropology* 58.

<sup>108</sup> Kristeva *Powers of Horror* 185.

<sup>109</sup> R Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* (2018) 85-87.

<sup>110</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 85-87.

<sup>111</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 213.

various pieces of legislation enacted during colonial-apartheid, which aimed at controlling and limiting the presence of Black people in white spaces; preventing miscegenation; and reducing competition in the labor markets, to name a few.<sup>112</sup>

Fear of the “*swartgevaar*” is nothing more than the false belief that anything which does not signify or support white homogeneity only subsists to obliterate it.<sup>113</sup> The abject beseeches and worries.<sup>114</sup> It awakens fear as well as insecurity and instability surrounding cultural norms, social conceptions, and ideological constructions. Within the realm of abjection that which is clean and proper becomes soiled, that which is desired is exiled, the fascination becomes shame.<sup>115</sup>

The abject is “*a vortex of summons and repulsions...*”<sup>116</sup> It is the zone of conflict where binary opposites conflict with each other. There is an interplay between a myriad of factors, emotions, and constructs; disgust and desire; whiteness and Blackness; human and subhuman. The nature of feelings aroused is a complicated and abject one. The complicated and disturbing marriage of fear, desire, and fascination – as well as shame.<sup>117</sup> To understand how power works in any society, one should observe who is carrying the shame and who is doing the shaming. Shame is a function of oppression and a product of dehumanization. All systems of violent oppression produces shame in those who are brutalized by it.<sup>118</sup> It follows that the emotional effect of abjection is a fundamental component of racism.

## 5.2. THE INDIGENOUS THREAT TO THE SYMBOLIC BORDER OF WHITENESS

The abject operates on a far more psychical level than just an emotional or physical response to an unclean object such as bodily waste or something which elicits a response of fear/disgust and fascination. It is also concerned with that which “*disturbs identity, system, order, what does not respect borders, positions, rules.*”<sup>119</sup> The shape of the culturally abject body has traditionally taken the form of the Other – ‘Other’-ed due to an imagined difference from the norms driven by the dominant order.<sup>120</sup> The

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<sup>112</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 217.

<sup>113</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 118.

<sup>114</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 1.

<sup>115</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 8.

<sup>116</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 8.

<sup>117</sup> SV Hartman *Scenes of Subjection: Terror slavery and self-making nineteenth century America* (1997) 18.

<sup>118</sup> PD Gqola *RAPE: A South African Nightmare* (2015) 38.

<sup>119</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 232; Tyler (2009) *Feminist Theory* 77.

<sup>120</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 12, 45, 149.

determination of sameness and difference – and also of internal and external borders in terms of the social order- of just exactly where one thing ends and another begins should be emphasized as a factor which has greatly influenced the racist regime of colonial-apartheid as a means to an end in constructing and continuing white supremacy by excluding and eliminating that which the colonizer imagined as disgusting.<sup>121</sup>

The Other, as the abject object, is identified and exists through repulsion and loathing.<sup>122</sup> Kristeva thus frames the abject in a position of displacement and defilement – an unsettling approach and cohabitation with the abject. The deject is thus a transient figure. The space in which the deject finds himself is not homogenous- instead, this space is divisible.<sup>123</sup>

In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva introduces abjection as a physical reaction to uncleanliness and uses the example of bodily waste (and wounds), which awakens the need, within the subject, to reject and avoid the abject object (here the bodily waste) and to separate oneself from it – as it poses a threat to the purity of one’s body and one’s health.<sup>124</sup> For Kristeva, abjection is concerned with the borders of the ego. It is the boundaries of one’s self and identity and the ability of such boundaries to become blurred and unsettled.<sup>125</sup> Abjection is thus ‘border-anxiety’: the response to the potential invasion or contamination by an external quality or entity.<sup>126</sup> Abjection can also be described as a defense mechanism against anything bearing markers of difference.<sup>127</sup> In light of this, it is clear that the abject is the catalyst for the demarcation of boundaries, but only because it awakens an emotional response (the sense of disgust and aversion to the waste product paired with the compelling drive to remove

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<sup>121</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 230.

<sup>122</sup> V Anderson “Get Out: Why racism is really terrifying” (26-03-2017) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/get-out-why-racism-really-is-terrifying-a7645296.html>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>123</sup> V Anderson “Get Out: Why racism is really terrifying” (26-03-2017) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/get-out-why-racism-really-is-terrifying-a7645296.html>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>124</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 1-4.

<sup>125</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 685.

<sup>126</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 685.

<sup>127</sup> Bick (2010) *African Art* 33.

oneself from the waste to preserve cleanliness, purity, and health) within the subject to maintain the social order (and once such 'order' is achieved, pleasure).<sup>128</sup>

For Kristeva, the primary threat of the abject is associated with death. It is the primal fear of death to which the volatility of abjection can be attributed. The subject (imagined as abject), in terms of racism, is the intolerable contamination by an entity that threatens the stability of the dominant status quo.<sup>129</sup> To safeguard against this threat, the abject subject is banished to the uninhabitable and unlivable zones of life. These zones (of social death) are populated by those who do not qualify as full subjects of the social order. Here, a familiar narrative starts to emerge: a spatial (physical) dimension to safeguard against a threat.

For Hook, the abject can only be socially determined.<sup>130</sup> The socially determined ideological classifications of race and racial difference are informed by the threatening nature of abjection. This corresponds with Mills' understanding of the racial contract (which he contrasts with the social contract).<sup>131</sup> This threatening nature of abjection (also referred to as the ugliness of abjection) is informed by the imagined disregard – and defiance of prescribed norms.<sup>132</sup> It is this ugliness and 'haunting' which informs discrimination in terms of racial anxiety and violence. This falls within the dimension of the discourse of social death in terms of which the imagined abject populates a different space, a disqualified site, which is disruptive of idealistic fantasies of constructed norms.<sup>133</sup> For Mills, in the context of racism, it can be understood as a space that challenges whiteness and which forces a re-articulation.<sup>134</sup> It is this idea of ugliness that can be attributed to the construction of the Black population as Other and how it informs the limits of acceptable bodies and behavior by rendering Blacks as delegitimized and marginalized by racism – abandoning them in the uninhabitable zone of social death.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Arya *Journal of Extreme Anthropology* 50-51. Kristeva deals directly with three categories of abjection which awaken the feeling of disgust. These are the abjection towards food; towards bodily waste and towards sexual difference; Farley (1997) *Oregon Law Review* 475.

<sup>129</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 219.

<sup>130</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 219.

<sup>131</sup> Mills "Black Trash" in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 76.

<sup>132</sup> Butler "Endangered/Endangering" in *Reading Rodney King/reading urban uprising* 3-4.

<sup>133</sup> Butler "Endangered/Endangering" in *Reading Rodney King/reading urban uprising* 4, 8.

<sup>134</sup> Mills "Black Trash" in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 74.

<sup>135</sup> Butler "Endangered/Endangering" in *Reading Rodney King/reading urban uprising* 8, 15.



Reading Hook, together with Tyler's *Social Abjection*, demonstrates abject racism is a system of social prohibitions, that is reliant on the practices of exclusion to maintain the imaginary repertoire of white supremacy as the dominant status quo. These practices of exclusion have many faces. Whiteness is the norm against which all things are measured and come to be viewed as different and excluded (based on that difference). Forms of identity which aspire to domination are formed and shaped about the perceived inferiority of Others and their subsequent exclusion.<sup>136</sup> The determination of sameness and difference – and also of internal and external borders in terms of the social order- of just exactly where one thing ends and another begins should be emphasized as a factor which has greatly influenced the racist regime of colonial-apartheid as a means to an end in constructing and continuing white supremacy by excluding and eliminating that which the colonizer imagined as disgusting.<sup>137</sup> The Other, as the abject object, is identified and exists through repulsion and loathing.<sup>138</sup> Kristeva thus frames the abject in a position of displacement and defilement – an unsettling approach and cohabitation with the abject. The deject is thus a transient figure. The space in which the deject finds himself is not homogenous- instead, this space is divisible.<sup>139</sup>

Colonialism was marked by the distorted racist compulsion to define and control the indigenous people and the spaces which they occupied.<sup>140</sup> Racial positionality became the determination of the right to use and enjoy property – to occupy space. It is an aspect of identity, but also a property interest that is reflected to this day. Whiteness is something that can be experienced, but it also allows for the acquisition of resources by exercising dominion over the Other.<sup>141</sup> The particular strategies of colonialism to acquire and maintain power over the indigenous people included the production of

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<sup>136</sup> Butler "Endangered/Endangering" in *Reading Rodney King/reading urban uprising* 8, 15.

<sup>137</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 230.

<sup>138</sup> V Anderson "Get Out: Why racism is really terrifying" (26-03-2017) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/get-out-why-racism-really-is-terrifying-a7645296.html>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>139</sup> V Anderson "Get Out: Why racism is really terrifying" (26-03-2017) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/get-out-why-racism-really-is-terrifying-a7645296.html>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>140</sup> V Anderson "Get Out: Why racism is really terrifying" (26-03-2017) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/get-out-why-racism-really-is-terrifying-a7645296.html>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>141</sup> Roediger *The Wages of Whiteness* 583.

racialized labor and the profitable management of space and time.<sup>142</sup> The cruelties perpetrated by colonists upon indigenous peoples whom they divided into two categories between those they could exploit and those whom they could not harness to work (like hunter-gatherers) – those who were useful beasts of burden and those who were regarded as vermin.<sup>143</sup> This portion of South African history exposes the interrelationship between spatiality as well as the constructions of racialized identity and difference which persists to the present day.<sup>144</sup> For Roediger, property and terror are core ingredients in power relations and reveal where power was exercised in terms of exclusionary practices.<sup>145</sup> In the film, *Get Out*, exploitation, property and the occupation of space takes on a different form: Black people are lured in and captured by the Armitage family so that their bodies may become their property and be exploited by the occupation of their bodies (on the premise of the plot twist of the film which is discussed in chapter 4).<sup>146</sup>

Racist regimes made it possible for whites to imagine the social body based on exclusion. The denial of liberty and citizenship thus formed the boundaries of the social.<sup>147</sup> The meaning and guarantee of (white) equality depended on the presence of slaves. As Tyler puts it:

*“People are denounced filthy when they are felt to be unassailably other, whether because perceived attributes of their identities repulse the onlooker or because physical aspects of their bodies do... Actions behaviours, and ideas are filthy when they partake of the immoral, the inappropriate, the obscene, or... whilst often experienced viscerally, are culturally constrained... (a)ll versions of filth have one thing in common: from the point of view of the one making the judgment, they serve to establish distinctions...”*<sup>148</sup>

As previously stated, the difference in physical appearance, behavior, and ideas (more specifically, a difference from white norms, standards, and ideals) are deemed as

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<sup>142</sup> EJ Popke “Modernity’s abject space: the rise and fall of Dubran’s Cato Manor” (2001) 33 *Environment and Planning* 737.

<sup>143</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 174.

<sup>144</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 739.

<sup>145</sup> Roediger *The Wages of Whiteness* 589.

<sup>146</sup> W Cook-Wilson “In Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All” (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peeles-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>147</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 60.

<sup>148</sup> Tyler (2009) *Feminist Theory* 7.

Other. Moreover, the qualifying factor for difference and ‘Other’-ness is that it deviates from the ideals and norms which have been determined by whiteness. During the racist regime in South Africa, education for Black people (with extensive limitations applied thereto) was available only in Afrikaans or English. Education was not available in the indigenous languages. This is related to Kristeva’s discussion of Celine in terms of which she describes how abjection is felt through perversions of language. She argues that “*the rejection and reconstruction of languages are a symptom of abjection*”.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, this further served to foreclose on other identifications/identities which deviate from those accepted by the dominant ideology.<sup>150</sup>

From the perception of the white man and/or person only that which adheres to the boundaries and demarcations of whiteness can qualify as human and as worthy of liberty and citizenship.<sup>151</sup> Forms of exclusion, in a South African context, have evolved. Initially, Black humanity was excluded from social life on the premise of Kant’s assumption of reason and man’s rationality.<sup>152</sup> During apartheid, Blacks were further excluded from society, politics, and the economy.<sup>153</sup> They were referred to as ‘*non-whites*’ – treated as objects not citizens.<sup>154</sup> By creating and embracing white identity, whites were placed in a position of structural advantage in society and received benefits of citizenship in exchange for their loyalty to the status quo. This illustrates that whiteness operates as a form of currency from which all Others are explicitly excluded.<sup>155</sup> The majority of Black people remain excluded from the economy and white spaces so that they can continue to service the white population. Economic exclusion fosters high rates of unemployment and allows poverty to skyrocket. In the film, *Get Out*, exclusion takes on a different (yet similar form) in that Black people are

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<sup>149</sup> N Chare ‘Auschwitz and Afterimages: abjection, witnessing and representation’ *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* (2013) 12(3) 595 595.

<sup>150</sup> L D Herer, Tropes of Otherness: Abjection Sublimity and Jewish Subjectivity in Enlightenment England (2004) *Florida State University Libraries* 10.

<sup>151</sup> L Vincent “The limitations of ‘inter-racial contact’: stories from young South Africa” (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1435; Whites appear to ‘reward’ Black friends and acquaintances for displaying white/western traits – (almost) welcoming them to the insularity of whiteness.

<sup>152</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1435.

<sup>153</sup> B Magubane “Race and Democratization in South Africa” (2000) 9 *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 35.

<sup>154</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 35.

<sup>155</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 35.

excluded from their own lives by being relegated to the Sunken Place (see chapter 4) so that a white person may take over their body and so their entire being.<sup>156</sup>

Abjection takes on specific forms and is coded differently according to the different symbolic systems as it is coextensive with the social and symbolic order on both an individual and a collective level. The ontology of the social, used by Kristeva, does not prioritize individual complexes – it also considers the gravity of history, culture, and power (a consideration of the elements which are core components of the formulation of racism in chapter 2). It presents an account of the symbolic realm, of how structural racism and systemic inequities are embedded into society through historical regimes of power and the culture of racism and white privilege. One of how this was embedded into South African society was through the practice of exclusion (as discussed above).

The apartheid regime, as well as the preceding era of colonialism, meticulously planned and methodically controlled specific modes of being by defining and policing a set of constitutive and fundamental exclusions.<sup>157</sup> These expulsions codified social norms based on difference, identity, and space.<sup>158</sup> Social and spatial engineering, as produced by the violence of abstraction and regulated by the state, reduced social and spatial complexity to the logic of profit.<sup>159</sup> The re-inscribed stereotypes about bodies and temperaments caused race to be refigured as the measure of labor.<sup>160</sup> The colonial enterprise thus predetermined the structure of subjects and spaces in South Africa.<sup>161</sup>

Popke focuses on the history of urbanization in South Africa and how the discourses of modernization and planning influenced apartheid policy. This examination of the relationship between urban policy and public discourses about race and space proves useful to this portion of this study.<sup>162</sup> Popke uses Kristeva's abjection to analyze how space is utilized as a repository of larger fears about the fluidity of identity.<sup>163</sup> The strict

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<sup>156</sup> W Cook-Wilson "In Jordan Peele's Get Out, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All" (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peeel-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>157</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 738.

<sup>158</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 738.

<sup>159</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 742.

<sup>160</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 742.

<sup>161</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 743-744.

<sup>162</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 737-752.

<sup>163</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 737-752.

colonial division of space between whites and Blacks was aimed at preserving white 'civilization'.<sup>164</sup>

By spatializing identity, in the formulation of policies to control spaces in South Africa by legislating segregation, both the physical and symbolic boundaries separating self and Others were solidified.<sup>165</sup> Legislated segregation meant stringent spatial control over the Other.<sup>166</sup> Blacks were deemed idle, disorderly, and dissolute and as such was banned from occupying white space. Blacks were considered to be temporary visitors to city spaces and residential areas. Even though their labor was a necessity, Black people were not afforded any of the rights or privileges of regular citizens. By legislating passbooks, apartheid formalized 'influx control' as an attempt to rid white spaces of all non-working Black people.<sup>167</sup> In this way, the African presence in white spaces was explicitly tied to the capacity for labor. The body of the African became an economic tool of profit for the colonizer. By enforcing strict laws on the allowable occupation of space, the white population could capitalize on relations of power and domination of Blacks.<sup>168</sup> Black labor would only remain profitable if the body was productive and controlled. The strict surveillance and policing of spatial occupation were designed to discourage certain behaviors that were thought to be improper and immoral.<sup>169</sup> Within these restricted spaces laborers could be located and controlled, considerably limiting their free movement (and free will).<sup>170</sup> In addition to the strict supervision of space, time was also utilized as a disciplinary power to elicit immediate and automatic obedience from the African.<sup>171</sup> The combination of restricting allowable behaviors with regard to time and space, a new technique for increasing the profitability of African bodies (to the benefit of whites) was created.<sup>172</sup> The coding of activity, through the enactment of the curfew legislation, strictly regulated the times and spaces which Blacks were allowed to occupy. In doing so, Africans became tools of obedience, efficiency, and economy to bolster white wealth.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 739.

<sup>165</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 738.

<sup>166</sup> Mills "Black Trash" in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 81.

<sup>167</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 740.

<sup>168</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 740.

<sup>169</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 740.

<sup>170</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 740.

<sup>171</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 741.

<sup>172</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 741.

<sup>173</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 741.

By excluding Africans from certain spaces, racist segregation became a process of abjection. To preserve the identity of the white subject within the social and symbolic order, the Black subject was cast as unclean and improper. Furthermore, Black life, land, and labor was strictly managed and regulated by the imposition of boundaries.<sup>174</sup> By imagining Black life and behavior as criminal, immoral, and inferior, whites created an imaginary threat to the social and moral symbolic order.<sup>175</sup> The spatial nature of abject racism is also illustrated by the restrictions imposed on Black movement and occupation: the threat of invasion of white domesticated 'civilized' spaces.<sup>176</sup> Townships were located away from white spaces as a protective measure against the breakdown of boundaries and to be separated from the chaotic spaces in which informal structures were unsafely huddled in crazy and chaotic patterns.<sup>177</sup>

The racial division of space persists: race remains inscribed on the spaces of the shack-lands and the bodies of its residents. Townships remain removed from white suburbs and the conditions in townships are still harrowing as service to suburbia is prioritized. The power of space, land, and time, remains the power to dominate and exercise control over African culture, life, and being. The violent dispossession of land by the imposition of colonization continues to dominate the occupation of space to this day.<sup>178</sup>

The isolation, legalized by apartheid, further fostered fear and suspicion of the Other and resulted in hesitation to puncture the barriers of race.<sup>179</sup> The limited interactions between Africans and Europeans, Blacks and whites, were defined entirely by ideology and often occurred in restricted and stereotypical settings.<sup>180</sup> In the present day, we are seeing an upsurge in new legitimizing narratives of separation and exclusion.<sup>181</sup> Whites appear disturbed by the presence of Black individuals in spaces which they deem to be their own. There is a sense of ownership over white space which serves to reinforce the collective sense of self (of the white occupants of that space).<sup>182</sup> Disruption of the spatial organization of dominance, as managed by

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<sup>174</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 745-746.

<sup>175</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 745-746.

<sup>176</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 747-748.

<sup>177</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 747-748.

<sup>178</sup> Popke (2001) *Environment and Planning* 749.

<sup>179</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1442.

<sup>180</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1443.

<sup>181</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1443.

<sup>182</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1438.

apartheid policing, now presents itself as the upsurge of private security in white suburbia.

The apartheid regime's enforcement of segregation remains in place: a separate but equal doctrine has come to represent present-day South Africa. However, the attitude of the white community appears to be akin to that of the pigs in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: "*All animals are equal – but some animals are more equal than others*".<sup>183</sup> The subordination and subjugation of Blacks are now presented in a seemingly neutral guise.<sup>184</sup> The spaces which we occupy, as South African, remain segregated by unwritten rules and unspoken norms which are adhered to by (almost) all. Blackness continues to be policed (and the racial order is maintained) through racism, ridicule, and violence.<sup>185</sup> While blatant acts of racism are slightly less frequent, racist exclusions remain and are translated into spatial, economic, and cultural exclusions – appearing as natural and necessary.<sup>186</sup> The hegemony of whiteness is reflected in everyday life: to be white is to dwell in the space of the status quo.<sup>187</sup>

## 6. CATEGORIES OF UNCLEANLINESS

The categories of uncleanness as referred to, earlier in this chapter, are easily linked to the modes of oppression utilized by both the colonial and apartheid regimes which I have discussed, at length, in chapter 2. The abjection of biological functions and the feminine body are easily equated with the European denigration of the African body as immoral and subhuman.<sup>188</sup> This is also comparable to the intellectually bankrupt pseudo-scientific belief that Africans were destined to occupy a lowly social order. Religious prohibitions and taboos can be equated with the colonial missions of converting the native populations to Christianity (as an attempt to 'civilize' them). Both philosophical articulations of European modernity and Christian moral ethics were used to establish political limitations of the treatment of Africans, placing them outside of 'civilized' culture.<sup>189</sup> Religion was thus used as a justification for commercializing,

<sup>183</sup> G Orwell <<https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/literature/children/texts/orwell/animal-farm/ch10.htm>>

<sup>184</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 9-10.

<sup>185</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 29-32.

<sup>186</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1432.

<sup>187</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1433.

<sup>188</sup> K Oliver "Kristeva and Feminism" (1998) <<http://criticaltheorylibrary.blogspot.co.za/2011/07/julia-kristeva-summary-of-major-themes.html>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>189</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 20.

'civilizing', and 'Christianising' the indigenous populations.<sup>190</sup> To 'civilize' Africans through religion was self-serving because, as Magubane states, "...*Christianity not only tolerated slavery but, more often than not, it justified it*".<sup>191</sup>

During apartheid, religion was harnessed to further a political agenda in that the church played an important role in spreading the myth of white supremacy (and continues to do so, for example, Angus Buchan's racist remarks which suggest that only Jewish and Afrikaans people are the only groups that can benefit from Christianity).<sup>192</sup> The spaces of abjection, where that which is deemed unclean is expelled, can be linked to the spaces of social death and exclusion of the Black subject to informal settlements as legislated by apartheid laws such as the *Group Areas Act*<sup>193</sup> and the requirement of passbooks to allow one to enter the white suburbia. All these categories of uncleanliness were legislated into South African society and even though attempts have been made to remedy the situation, many of the side effects of these pieces of law remain. Abjection illuminates the ambiguous, horrifying, and polluting images cast upon the Black subject by the symbolic order. The perpetrator of racism experiences feelings of uneasiness and fear (an emotional response). The abject is banished from the scope of possibility: it is intolerable, unthinkable, and unimaginable.<sup>194</sup> Blackness is beyond the scope of that which the white racist finds tolerable. To the racist, any behavior deviating from white ideals and white norms is unthinkable, and as such Black existence is imagined as abject. Blackness is an infallible threat falling beyond the scope of colonial possibility. Racism is directed at soothing colonial worry through violence. In this sense, violence is calculated to 'restore' the social and cultural constructed equilibrium.

Colonial rule is maintained through violence and repression, through the production of violence within the environment and minds of the indigenous.<sup>195</sup> Fanon explains that the natural state of colonial rule is violent.<sup>196</sup> The colonizer employs, racially motivated,

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<sup>190</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 93.

<sup>191</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 85.

<sup>192</sup> C Ntuli "Angus Buchan blames severe drought for his racist remark" (13-11-2019) <<https://www.iol.co.za/pretoria-news/angus-buchan-blames-severe-drought-for-his-racist-remark-37114577>> (accessed 25-01-2020).

<sup>193</sup> Group Areas Act 41 of 1950.

<sup>194</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 1.

<sup>195</sup> F Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967) 38.

<sup>196</sup> Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* 36.



violence means to assert dominance over the colonized. The colonizer also inscribes the colonized subject with ideas of backwardness: lacking empathy and rationality. Colonialism is a project of dehumanization of the natives.<sup>197</sup> Viewing natives as subhuman allows the colonizer to justify their use of violence by stating that the colonial subject does not respond to anything else. Violence is the currency of colonialism. This violence does not necessarily manifest as physical violence as the traditional meaning of the word indicates, it includes symbolic forms of violence: words, expressions, etc. The physical violence which pervades colonialism is exacerbated by the structural violence of the colonial system which sees the 'systematic negation' of the colonial subject's humanity.<sup>198</sup> As such, abjection is a forceful reaction that encompasses the responses of expulsion, ejection, and denigration.<sup>199</sup> These systems of violence are akin to the horror of the Holocaust (informed by anti-Semitism), which Kristeva discusses at great length. She indicates that even though people thought that the horror of the Holocaust could be localized and kept in the past – it cannot.<sup>200</sup>

By reading Kristeva in combination with Fanon allows us to examine the mechanics and inner workings of racism as the overriding irrational modes of thought and understanding which have – and continue to - accompany racial domination. Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* is based on Fanon's experiences in North Africa in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>201</sup> *The Wretched of the Earth* argues that the colonized need to violently overthrow their colonial rulers.<sup>202</sup> Moreover, Fanon argues that the effects of such violence are long-lasting for both the colonizers and colonized: although the intensity of colonial rule and struggle has faded, the effects of colonialism remain in place: colonial powers and their progeny continue to dominate their former colonies whether politically, economically and/or socially.<sup>203</sup> Fanon's argument about violence, adds value to the elements of abjection (which have been highlighted earlier on in this chapter) and how Black people have been imagined as falling within the categories of uncleanness.

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<sup>197</sup> Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* 42.

<sup>198</sup> Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* 250.

<sup>199</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 685.

<sup>200</sup> K Mock 'The Need to Believe and the Archive: Interview with Julia Kristeva' *Dirbur Literary Journal* (2016) (3).

<sup>201</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 685.

<sup>202</sup> Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* 250.

<sup>203</sup> Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* 250.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Abjection is the peak of dehumanization; it confronts its subject with the fragile state where he “*strays onto the territory of the animal*”, seducing him into engaging in animalistic and primitive violence: dehumanization.<sup>204</sup> Abject racism is the peak of discriminatory practices of exclusion which sends a message about social and cultural views on racial difference and prejudice in South Africa. Apartheid, as the height of the colonial project in South Africa, serves as a primary example of spatial, social, and economic exclusion the oppressed Other: abject racism.<sup>205</sup> Settler-colonialist models of white overlordship have consequences that extend into contemporary South Africa, where the legacy of deprivation and defeat endures.<sup>206</sup> It has shaped the lives of Blacks, who are still underestimated and undermined in their history, subjectivity, and lived experience. Racial oppression and racist ideologies continue to dominate liberal outcomes which aim to challenge institutionalized white domination.<sup>207</sup> The injustices of colonization and slavery are omnipresent.

Young's *Five Faces of Oppression*, further substantiates this by drawing attention to the underlying structure of oppression as well as the subliminal structure of racism.<sup>208</sup> Young explains that to obtain justice in society, it is necessary to give effect to distribution whilst simultaneously addressing the institutional conditions which are required to give effect to the “... *development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and cooperation*”.<sup>209</sup> More specifically, dismantling the systems of oppression and domination.<sup>210</sup> As alluded to in Chapter Two, Young maintains that oppression has ‘five faces’ which may manifest separately or simultaneously. These are exploitation, marginalization, a culture of silence, cultural imperialism, and violence.<sup>211</sup> By reading Kristeva and Young together, one can see how racism has become normalized as an unintentional reflex: a symptomatic manifestation of racism, which is accompanied by collective patterns of dislike,

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<sup>204</sup> Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* 250.

<sup>205</sup> RM Brown “Abject to Object” (2003) 43 *Anthropology and Aesthetics* 203.

<sup>206</sup> J Saul & P Bond *South Africa – The Present as History: From Mrs Ples to Mandela & Marikana* (2014) 15-16.

<sup>207</sup> Saul & Bond *The Present as History: From Mrs Ples to Mandela & Marikana* 27.

<sup>208</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 672 681.

<sup>209</sup> Young *Justice and the Politics of Difference* 3.

<sup>210</sup> Young *Justice and the Politics of Difference* 3.

<sup>211</sup> Young *Justice and the Politics of Difference* 7, 13-22.

avoidance, and aversion.<sup>212</sup> Thus, I argue towards a rethinking of Kristeva's abject-as a site from which to approach political and social change by revisiting and reconstructing identities.<sup>213</sup> In other words, politicize the concept of abjection through the problem of racism.

Examining the colonial encounter through a psychoanalytic frame allows us to see how the symbolic realm of the colonizer was established and how the law (with certain prohibitions and restrictions based on race) was produced.<sup>214</sup> The authority of the semiotic realm which is inhabited by the colonizer must be regulated and controlled by this law. This law meant that the colonized were denied subject-hood and consequently had been unable to pass fully into the symbolic realm.<sup>215</sup> Colonial apartheid's social engineering through legislative means certainly serves as an explicit example of this. Today, this inability to pass into the symbolic realm can be seen by the lack of service delivery, absence of adequate and affordable education, and the near-stagnant process of redistributing land and wealth, to name but a few examples. The abject frames and simultaneously constructs two realms and consequently disrupts the security of the colonizers' symbolic position. The abject threatens to break the fabric of this law and the structures upon which the colonizer exists as such.<sup>216</sup> This represents the moment the colonizer recognizes the distance from the colonized and also the potential for breakdown of the barrier (the interconnection and constitutive dependence) which the abject presents.<sup>217</sup>

Understanding Kristeva's notion of the abject, as a smile which disguises the feeling of hatred, should demonstrate the internal (psychic) functioning process of liberal racism as depicted in the early portion of the narrative of the film, *Get Out*.<sup>218</sup> If abject racism relies on the perversion of a relationship (such as the relationship between Rose and Chris in *Get Out* which is discussed at length in chapter 4) and dependence on the Other, it follows that the object of abject racism, the Other, is transformed into

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<sup>212</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 681.

<sup>213</sup> Bick (2010) *African Art* 30 38.

<sup>214</sup> Brown (2003) *Anthopology and Aesthetics* 215.

<sup>215</sup> Brown (2003) *Anthopology and Aesthetics* 215.

<sup>216</sup> Brown (2003) *Anthopology and Aesthetics* 215.

<sup>217</sup> Brown (2003) *Anthopology and Aesthetics* 215.

<sup>218</sup> D Tutt "A Hatred that Smiles: Kristeva's Essay on Abjection and Intimate Racism" (10-06-2012) <<https://www.google.com/search?q=daniel+tutt+abjection&oq=daniel+tutt+abjection&aqs=chrome..69i57.3711j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>> (accessed 03-01-2019).

a source of hate and simultaneously- relief.<sup>219</sup> This relief is obtained through the destructive, hateful, and (often) violent acts in cases of explicit racism that are aimed at removing and eradicating the other. It is a paradoxical obsession and dependence in which the object is both cause and ‘cure’.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 137.

<sup>220</sup> D Tutt “A Hatred that Smiles: Kristeva’s Essay on Abjection and Intimate Racism” (10-06-2012) <<https://www.google.com/search?q=daniel+tutt+abjection&oq=daniel+tutt+abjection&aqs=chrome..69i57.3711j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>> (accessed 03-01-2019) 44; Gibson & Beneduce (2017) *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* 264; Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 11, 66-67, 70.

## CHAPTER 4: ABJECT RACISM AND THE LIMITS OF THE LAW

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters an investigation of the conflicted history, cultural memory and political narrative of South Africa, as well as the intersection between these elements was explored with specific reference to the enduring material and symbolic problem of racism. More specifically, chapter 2 presented an account of how racism developed in the landscape which would come to be known as South Africa, through imagined superiority and intimate ties to capitalism. It provided an account of how the land and the labor of Blacks were exploited and subjugated to benefit whites. Chapter three focused on Kristeva's abjection, reformulated to apply to anti-Black racism, particularly within a South African context. Additionally, chapter three engaged with how the white population imagined the Black population as a threat to the symbolic order of whiteness.

Having explored the history of colonial-apartheid its unique consequences, the 2017 horror film, *Get Out*, will be examined insofar parallels can be drawn between the fictional depiction of racism and the reality of it (particularly within the South African context). Whilst the film is USA-based, it remains compelling within a South African context due to racism as a global phenomenon and problem. Moreover, *Get Out* provides insight into the finer nuances of abject racism as the film depicts the experience of racism as horror.

Additionally, relevance of a film based in- and produced in- the USA is that whilst racism has specific national/local articulations, racism operates historically and in the present as a global power dynamic. In some ways, racism thus exceeds the limits of both time and space. Moreover, as stated in chapter 2, Bernard Magubane explains: "*...in the modern era, only 2 countries, the United States and South Africa have systematically disenfranchised in the name of white supremacy, those whom they have exploited*".<sup>1</sup> The significance being: that both states endorsed anti-Black racist ideology and justified the oppression of those it disqualified from citizenship on the

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<sup>1</sup> B Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* (2007) 15.

basis of race. In this way, *Get Out* provides insight into the social ill that is abject racism.

The film engages with the specific cultural moment which we are living in by offering a detailed account of what racial dynamics look like right now – thereby offering an account of the impact of racism.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it calls into question whether whites have acknowledged, or can acknowledge the horror of racism. This question will be discussed at length with specific focus on the relationship between Rose and Chris. The relationship between Rose and Chris, as well as the encounters Chris has with other characters during the plot development of the film, allow for the intimate functions of racism to be explored, *inter alia*, the themes of racial slavery in the narrative and how these themes relate to South African history of conquest and colonization. In doing so, the film may potentially be considered as a narrative which questions South Africa's contemporaneity as a (post)colonial and (post)apartheid society. Moreover, the film, *Get Out*, will be likened to a visual storyboard, illustrating abject racism and emphasizing the limits of the law.

The limits of the law, particularly the limitations of the Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill (B9-2018), will also be examined in this chapter.<sup>3</sup> The Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill is aimed at addressing the increase of hate crimes, hate speech and incidents motivated by various forms of discrimination (including racism).<sup>4</sup> Amongst other things, the Bill introduces a new statutory offense: hate speech. In terms of the Bill, hate speech, insofar as it relates to racism, is defined any expressive conduct which intends to or has the result of suggesting inferiority or giving effect to exclusion through the use of derogatory language of a racial group.<sup>5</sup> The Bill aims to give effect to section 16(2)(c)

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<sup>2</sup> A Wilkinson, A Romano, PR Lockhart “Get Out was 2017’s most biting social critique. Is it also this year’s Best Picture?” (27-02-2018) <<https://www.vox.com/2018/2/27/17031700/oscars-get-out-best-picture-win-lose-racism-peelee-horror-comedy>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>3</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

<sup>4</sup> “Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill & International Crimes Bill: briefing, with Minister and Deputy Minister” <<https://pmg.org.za/page/Prevention%20and%20Combating%20of%20Hate%20Crimes%20and%20Hate%20Speech%20Bill%20&%20International%20Crimes%20Bill:%20briefing,%20with%20Minister%20and%20Deputy%20Minister>> (accessed 11-01-2020); Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

<sup>5</sup> Devendish “Is the hate speech bill constitutional?” (01-03-2019) <<https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/opinion/is-the-hate-speech-bill-constitutional-19582456>> (accessed 11-01-2020).

of the Constitution<sup>6</sup> which is colloquially referred to as the ‘hate speech prohibition’.<sup>7</sup> In terms of this constitutional provision hate speech constitutes “*advocacy of hatred based on race... gender or religion and that constitutes incitement to cause harm*”.<sup>8</sup> This definition of hate speech requires that these elements must be present in any statute which regulates hate speech in order to ensure its constitutionality. In essence, the Constitution, in terms of section 16, protects one’s right to freedom of expression. The purpose of the Bill is to give effect to the constitutional- and international obligations regarding the curbing of prejudice and intolerance. Moreover, the Bill seeks to provide for the prevention of hate crimes and hate speech whilst simultaneously providing for the prosecution and sentencing of persons who commit offenses in terms of the Bill.<sup>9</sup> While the goal of the Bill is admirable since bigotry should generally not be countenanced, this chapter will advance an argument that suggests that the Bill elevates an individualised conception of racism, leaving the larger problem of structural racism (and its massive psycho-social ramifications) left untouched. In addition, the various shortcomings of the Bill (such as overly broad and vague definitions, restrictive applications and problematic exclusions) will be discussed throughout this chapter with reference to the film- and Kristeva’s conception of abjection as reformulated to consider the psycho-social dimensions of racism in South Africa.

## 2. THE MOTIVATION BEHIND- AND SIGNIFICANCE OF *GET OUT*

Jordan Peele (the director of *Get Out*) states that the film is a response to the myth that the Obama presidency signalled the end of racism in the USA.<sup>10</sup> Peele further indicates that he intended the film to be a cinematic critique of ‘post-racial liberalism’

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<sup>6</sup> Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Devendish “Is the hate speech bill constitutional?” (01-03-2019) <<https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/opinion/is-the-hate-speech-bill-constitutional-19582456>> (accessed 11-01-2020).

<sup>8</sup> Devendish “Is the hate speech bill constitutional?” (01-03-2019) <<https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/opinion/is-the-hate-speech-bill-constitutional-19582456>> (accessed 11-01-2020).

<sup>9</sup> “Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill & International Crimes Bill: briefing, with Minister and Deputy Minister” <<https://pmg.org.za/page/Prevention%20and%20Combating%20of%20Hate%20Crimes%20and%20Hate%20Speech%20Bill%20&%20International%20Crimes%20Bill:%20briefing,%20with%20Minister%20and%20Deputy%20Minister>> (accessed 11-01-2020).

<sup>10</sup> Peele makes an explicit reference to this inspiration when Rose’s father tells Chris that he would have voted for Obama for a third time, if he could.

conveying the message that society has not moved beyond racism.<sup>11</sup> Even though the film was inspired by the African-American experience in the present-day USA, it bears global relevance.<sup>12</sup> The story is easily applied to current social fears about cultural appropriation, assimilation and prejudice. Additionally, the film serves as a social commentary on issues such as the complexity of interracial relationships; the lasting consequences of colonialism; slavery and for the purposes of this study, abject racism.<sup>13</sup> The asymmetry of racialised power relations is clearly illustrated within the film (in both the USA and elsewhere).<sup>14</sup>

*Get Out* is a narrative that is relatable to the universal experience of Black people. Furthermore, the film critiques whiteness in a way that allows whites some (limited) insight into how racism impacts the lives of those around them.<sup>15</sup> The film confronts racial issues with unsparing insight: confronting the white audience with the racist behaviors (which they witness and partake in). On the other hand, the film reflects the experience of Black people and acknowledges the serious nature and effect of racist interactions.<sup>16</sup> *Get Out* does not allow for dissociation – the viewer is unable to disconnect and distance themselves from the psycho-social problems with which it grapples.<sup>17</sup> The viewer is required to deconstruct their own response to the film's underlying message. In this way *Get Out* allows for a cultural conversation to grow about, not only the film itself, but also discussions about diverse narratives and representations in film and their relation to the lived experience.

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<sup>11</sup> Wisecrack “The Philosophy of GET OUT – Wisecrack Edition” (13-05-2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gQP4ffowCY&list=WL&index=115>> (accessed 25-09-2017) at 01:14 – 01:43..

<sup>12</sup> M Jasper “Jordan Peele Explain What *Get Out*'s ‘Sunken Place’ Represents, and why it Feels Like We're There Now” (21-01-2018) <<https://www.themarysue.com/jordan-peeel-explains-sunken-place/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>13</sup> L Bakare “*Get Out*: the film that dares to reveal the horror of liberal racism in America” (28-02-2017) <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/feb/28/get-out-box-office-jordan-peeel>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>14</sup> J Mohan “Southern Africa: Imperialism, Racism and Neo-Colonialism” (1987) *Review of Political Economy* 31 39.

<sup>15</sup> A Wilkinson, A Romano, PR Lockhart “*Get Out* was 2017's most biting social critique. Is it also this year's Best Picture?” (27-02-2018) <<https://www.vox.com/2018/2/27/17031700/oscars-get-out-best-picture-win-lose-racism-peeel-horror-comedy>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>16</sup> A Wilkinson, A Romano, PR Lockhart “*Get Out* was 2017's most biting social critique. Is it also this year's Best Picture?” (27-02-2018) <<https://www.vox.com/2018/2/27/17031700/oscars-get-out-best-picture-win-lose-racism-peeel-horror-comedy>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>17</sup> G Shreve “*Get Out* of my head: Experiencing Cultural Paranoia in Jordan Peele's *Get Out*” *How Therapists talk about Race* 2 4.



By utilizing film as a medium Peele is able to illustrate Hartman's declaration that efforts to destabilize the insensitivity towards Black suffering, within the white mind, and to make the misery noticeable and comprehensible, requires that the white body be substituted with the captive body.<sup>18</sup> Put differently, the tenuousness of Black anguish can be attributed to racist optics.<sup>19</sup> The captive body is the vessel and subject of white power, the denial of humanity and suffering allows for the wanton use of the captive body to persist without consequence or consideration.<sup>20</sup> As Hartman reflects on Foucault's statement that morality follows the law of optical perspective: "... *it looms large and thick close to the eye...*"<sup>21</sup> In this way *Get Out* provides the white viewer with a glimpse, a sliver of understanding, to the spectral character of suffering and the presence of pain which effaces and restricts Black life.<sup>22</sup>

### 3. *GET OUT*: PLOT OVERVIEW

*Get Out*, follows a young, Black man, Chris Washington, who travels with his white girlfriend, Rose Armitage, to meet her parents. As the plot unfolds, Chris finds himself in "a slowly unfolding vortex of racial terror".<sup>23</sup> Anxious about the possibility that Rose's parents might be racist, Chris's anxiety increases when he finds that the staff/servants on the premises are all Black. He becomes increasingly concerned by their controlled behavior which appears strangely puppet-like.<sup>24</sup> As the plot develops it becomes apparent that Chris has been lured into a dangerous and life-threatening situation by a group of racist liberals who intend on harnessing his (stereotypical) attributes for their ignoble purposes.<sup>25</sup> The initial interaction between Chris and the Armitage family

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<sup>18</sup> SV Hartman *Scenes of Subjection: Terror slavery and self-making nineteenth century America* (1997) 19-20: What I refer to here, with the substitution is the concept of voyeurism and the gaze of the spectator in cinema and film which allows the viewer to identify with and project themselves into the experience of the protagonist. For the white viewer, the near-body (in the cinematic experience) reveals the suffering of captive.

<sup>19</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 19-20.

<sup>20</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 19-20.

<sup>21</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 19-20.

<sup>22</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 19-20.

<sup>23</sup> O Gleiberman "The Audacity of 'Get Out': A Racial Horror Film That Dares to Be a Real Movie" (26-02-2017) <<http://variety.com/2017/film/columns/get-out-jordan-peelee-1201996782/>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>24</sup> V Anderson "Get Out: Why racism is really terrifying" (26-03-2017) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/get-out-why-racism-really-is-terrifying-a7645296.html>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>25</sup> W Cook-Wilson "In Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All" (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peelee-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

appears amicable and accepting – the Armitage family appears to maintain a color-blind persona. However, as the film progresses, it becomes apparent that the well-meaning liberal family cannot separate themselves from their racial fantasies.<sup>26</sup> Initially, it appears that Chris is used by the Armitage family to show him off as a token member of their social group, but the plot progression reveals their intention to utilize him as a slave, though not in the traditional sense: The Armitage family utilizes Black people’s bodies as vehicles for the furtherance and continuance of their existence (of the white mind and consciousness).<sup>27</sup> The film thus documents the uncomfortable reality of daily interactions with so-called ‘well-meaning’ white liberals. The progression of the narrative shifts from uncomfortable interactions to full-blown horror as the film progresses into a murderous and gruesome situation.<sup>28</sup> In this way the film exposes the horrific nature of abject racism (and microaggressions);<sup>29</sup> the dark side of liberalism, as well as the obvious and explicit forms of racism.<sup>30</sup> As Kristeva puts it: “... *a hatred that smiles*”.<sup>31</sup>



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- <sup>26</sup> W Cook-Wilson “In Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All” (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peelee-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018); R Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* (2018) ix.
- <sup>27</sup> W Cook-Wilson “In Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All” (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peelee-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).
- <sup>28</sup> W Cook-Wilson “In Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All” (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peelee-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).
- <sup>29</sup> E Casey-Williams “I want your eye, man. I want those things you see through” (2017) *Power, Media, and Zombification in Jordan Peele’s Get Out* 1-3.
- <sup>30</sup> W Cook-Wilson “In Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All” (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peelee-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018) 51; Shreve *How Therapists talk about Race* 2 4.
- <sup>31</sup> J Kristeva *The Powers of Horror* (1942) 11, 138; R Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* (2018) 89; I Tyler “Against Abjection” (2009) *Feminist Theory* 7.

Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017)<sup>32</sup>

The first portion of the film explores forms of racism which may be perceived as 'subtler' or as 'masked' or forms of 'disguised' discrimination and oppression. Before they set out to meet her parents, Chris asks Rose whether her parents know he is Black. She reassures him that her family would not care. Upon their arrival at the Armitage home, Rose's parents appear overwhelmingly friendly; however, it also seems as though her parents (and brother) are fixated on Chris' Blackness. The middle portion of the film expands on this idea, particularly in the scene depicting a party hosted by the Armitage family. Every white person with whom Chris interacts, in the party scene, only focuses on his Blackness. Although the comments and questions could be possibly be construed as being innocent, it becomes apparent that the comments serve the purpose of Othering Chris further. Put differently, the comments are not driven by ignorance, but rather by perverse intentions.<sup>33</sup>

Chris, as a character, highlights the cruelties of the lived experience of Blacks in liberal society. For example, Chris, is accustomed to enduring demeaning and stereotyping comments from white people. This is highlighted in the scene at the dinner party where they marvel over his physique.<sup>34</sup> Mr Green (a partygoer) comments, when shaking Chris' hand, that: "... *that is quite a grip!*" which comment is followed by "... *do you ever play golf?*" and "... *let us see your form ...*".

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<sup>32</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available on Netflix.

<sup>33</sup> W Cook-Wilson "In Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All" (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peeel-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>34</sup> W Cook-Wilson "In Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All" (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peeel-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).



Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017)<sup>35</sup>

A white, middle-aged, woman also comments on Chris's appearance: "... *how handsome is he?*" after which she proceeds to touch Chris's arm, lustfully gazing at his physique, asking Rose: "...*is it true? Is it better?*"<sup>36</sup>



<sup>35</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available on Netflix.

<sup>36</sup> M Jasper "Jordan Peele Explain What *Get Out*'s 'Sunken Place' Represents, and why it Feels Like We're There Now" (21-01-2018) <<https://www.themarysue.com/jordan-peeel-explains-sunken-place/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017)<sup>37</sup>

The Armitage family, initially presented as white liberal 'post-racist' individuals, illuminate the superficial nature of the tolerance and appreciation of diversity.<sup>38</sup> The family appears to maintain a color-blind approach in their (initial) attitudes towards Chris: displaying what appears to be support for the denial of racial hierarchies (anti-racism).<sup>39</sup> As the plot develops, the family is revealed to be pathologically obsessed with Blackness and are, in fact, racist. Thus, the viewer is provided with a visual elaboration of the disgust-desire or horror-fascination component of abjection, as discussed in chapter 3.

The plot-twist/climax of the narrative reveals that Armitage family has engineered a system of abducting and brain-swapping Black bodies for the purpose of serving as body substitutes for the white characters in the film (the Armitage family as well as their acquaintances, all of whom are white). The obsession, which the white characters have with Blackness, drives the collection of Black bodies- by engaging with the adoption and the glorification of Black culture without any recognition of the origins and history of such culture and history. These obsessive characters are "... *dying white men who want to appropriate and colonize his body.... these people who stereotype black men based on their supposed athleticism, sexual prowess, and fashionableness...*"<sup>40</sup> In this way the film brings to life the way in which whites have- and continue to- benefit from the oppression and marginalisation of Blacks and exposes the inner-workings of abject racism.

#### 4. *GET OUT*: SIGNIFICANCE OF HORROR AS GENRE

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<sup>37</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available from Netflix.

<sup>38</sup> S Davis "EATING THE OTHER: BELL HOOKS ON ETHNICITY AS SPICE Consumer Culture, Cultural connotations, Race, Spices and Seasoning" (11-03-2015) <<https://sceneseating.com/2015/03/11/eating-the-other-bell-hooks-on-ethnicity-as-spice/>> (accessed 25-09-2017).

<sup>39</sup> AE Ansell "Casting a Blind Eye: The Ironic Consequences of Color-Blindness in South Africa and the United States" (2006) *Critical Psychology* 32 335.

<sup>40</sup> Casey-Williams (2017) *Power, Media, and Zombification in Jordan Peele's Get Out* 13.

The narrative of *Get Out*, as discussed above, encapsulates various social events that educate the viewer about various social positions, processes, and structures.<sup>41</sup> Stories, such as this one, thus reflect existing power relations and inequality. It is in this way that *Get Out* serves as a lens through which to view the prevailing tropes of race in South Africa and how racism manifests in daily life – as horror.

The significance of horror as a genre is, in part, that horror films are typically developed by taking individual mundane activities, painful memories or phobias and transforming it into a unanimously horrific spectacle which awakens anxiety and fear for any viewer regardless of their individual convictions.<sup>42</sup> In the case of *Get Out*, the film is both entertaining and educational as it emphasizes the truth about what the horrific effects of racism are. For Hartman, the violence of slavery (particularly in the USA) and its afterlife requires focus on routinised, seemingly mundane, scenarios rather than the shocking spectacle of slavery. It is through the study of the contra-‘horrific’ which the subjugation and constitution of the enslaved comes to the fore.<sup>43</sup> It is precisely this approach which Peele takes in the film’s reference to slavery and racism.

The racist conceptions of Blacks as “... *carefree, infantile, hedonistic and indifferent to suffering...*”<sup>44</sup> (a conception discussed at length in chapter 2) is challenged in the film. Peele, the director, inverts these negative stereotypes and in doing manages to communicate a feeling that is articulated with difficulty.<sup>45</sup> As a horror film, it successfully communicates the lived experience of racism.<sup>46</sup> In its acknowledgement of the complexity of social fears and tensions a platform is produced through which the film produces tension and morbid terror.

Here the significance of the genre of the film, as a horror movie, especially in light of Kristeva’s abjection becomes clear.<sup>47</sup> Kristeva, herself, associated with the aesthetic

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<sup>41</sup> L Vincent “The limitations of ‘inter-racial contact’: stories from young South Africa” (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1429.

<sup>42</sup> W Cook-Wilson “In Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All” (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peeel-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>43</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 4.

<sup>44</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 22.

<sup>45</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 85-87.

<sup>46</sup> W Cook-Wilson “In Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All” (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peeel-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>47</sup> Kristeva *The Powers of Horror* 141.

experience of abjection in terms of art, literature, and poetic catharsis. Judith Butler developed this association with the aesthetic to include visual popular culture especially horror films.<sup>48</sup> Although Butler extensively discusses abjection within horror films, in terms of the feminine body, I believe that the discussion of the feminine is capable of being adapted to apply to racism. Illustrated briefly, the power of the horror film is that it repulses and fascinates simultaneously – “*simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes*” and therefore allows for critical contestation.<sup>49</sup> To add to this argument, Noel Carroll’s *The Philosophy of Horror* in which ‘art-horror’ (as art in which the characters dictate the spectator when to fear the (necessary) horror) and the power of the ‘attraction-repulsion’ complex in terms of the plot twist of the film. Similarly, Noel Carroll’s *The Nature of Horror* explains that works of horror are designed to elicit a certain kind of emotional response.<sup>50</sup> This establishes a link to the paradox of the fascination/horror paradigm of abjection. The significance of the genre of horror and its relation to the abject is as follows: “...it is a vehicle of cultural expression that Black people have that predates the history of cinema. Black people have always been intimately acquainted with personal and pervasive social horror. All Black people recognize the horror in Chris’s face. Only the details will be different”.<sup>51</sup> Thus Peele’s choice of genre (horror) appropriately addresses racism as a horrific and traumatic phenomenon.<sup>52</sup> The power of the horror film is that it repulses and fascinates simultaneously – “*simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes*” and therefore allows for critical contestation (the effect with which the viewer is confronted does not allow for dissociation).<sup>53</sup>

The visual experience of film, cinema and visual culture adds a new dynamic to the catastrophic history and memory of South Africa, which allows it to be transformed into a relatable contemporary archive which forces its viewer to consider and reflect upon

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<sup>48</sup> T Bick “Horror Histories: Apartheid and the Abject Body in the Work of Jane Alexander” (2010) 43 *African Art* 30-36.

<sup>49</sup> Bick (2010) *African Art* 36; Kristeva *The Powers of Horror* 1, 2, 5.

<sup>50</sup> N Carroll “The Nature of Horror” (1987) 1 *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46 51-59.

<sup>51</sup> VL Lewis “Scared Woke: On *Get Out* and the uses of Transformative Learning” <<https://docs.google.com/document/d/12yTXnjEur63VDuE4HsAD5iH1aprSSMvl-OxK4IDNo8s/edit?usp=sharing>> (accessed 13-03-2020).

<sup>52</sup> Bick (2010) *African Art* 32.

<sup>53</sup> Bick (2010) *African Art* 36.

the racial realities upon which the South African society, as we know it today, is built.<sup>54</sup> The white viewer has a forced encounter with the abject without truly being able to escape into a fantasy of separatist identity (i.e. separate/distance himself from the abject) – and is therefore confronted with the human capacity for inhumanity.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the horror film aptly illustrates that the response- the horror- is not isolated as the fear of the monstrous or the inhuman alone, but far more intricately demonstrates the horror of the self- the horror of abjection and the abject.<sup>56</sup> This corresponds with Charles Mills’ conception of *Black Trash*.<sup>57</sup> Mills contends that Black people have been thought of as: “*disposable an excrescence in the body politic*”.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, Mills states that Blacks had been imagined, by whites, as ‘savage’ and ‘wild’ – a constant threat to the stability and insularity and purity of whiteness.<sup>59</sup> This stigma in Western culture (a negative iconography) perpetuates the myth that the Black person’s body is that which houses vulgar desires and is devoid of reason and intellect.<sup>60</sup> To quote Mills: “...it is the *Black body that excites the most powerful reactions of antipathy, rendering it the most unincorporable into the white polis*.”<sup>61</sup> Here, Mills refers to the horrific imagery which is imposed on the Black subject in the white imagination: the imagined contamination of white spaces, the imagined lack of civilization, and the superimposition of manual labor upon the imagined idleness of the Black population.<sup>62</sup> In this way it becomes clear: Black people had become a source of imagined social danger and contamination.<sup>63</sup>

*Get Out* thus exposes the role of the ideology of abjection within the construction of identity, history and memory by transporting the abject into the realm of our

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54 Bick (2010) *African Art* 37.

55 Bick (2010) *African Art* 37.

56 Bick (2010) *African Art* 33.

57 CW Mills “Black Trash” in L Westra and BE Lawson (eds) *Faces of Environmental Racism* (2001) 73.

58 Mills “Black Trash” in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 74.

59 Mills “Black Trash” in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 74-79.

60 Mills “Black Trash” in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 80.

61 Mills “Black Trash” in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 81.

62 Mills “Black Trash” in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 83.

63 Mills “Black Trash” in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 85.



experience, allowing catastrophic histories to travel into the present, thereby forcing the viewer to virtually encounter and acknowledge the South African reality.<sup>64</sup>

## 5. *GET OUT*: PRIMARY THEMES

The film engages with various complex themes related to the politics (and psycho-social aspects) of abject racism. The predominant themes the film explores include: the legacy of slavery (oppression and subjugation); the complexities of interracial relationships (alternatively, the intimate power dynamics which underlie interracial interaction) and; the pitfalls of liberalism, specifically, liberalism as a mask for racism. The value which these themes hold for us, particularly in the context of this study, is that they expose the (broader) underlying dynamics between those racialised as white and Black persons and how the history of racial subjugation is the foundation for the form of racism which is prevalent in contemporary society. It further exposes the shortcomings of the Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill insofar the Bill fails to consider the complexity of abject racism as discussed in Chapter Three.<sup>65</sup>

### 5.1 THEME 1: SLAVERY (SUBJECTION AND CAPTIVITY)

The main focus of the film is to illustrate the experience of contemporary racism, however, the film also presents the viewer with multiple symbols of – and direct references to slavery and conquest. Both slavery and conquest produce complete subjugation to the will of the master. In this way the film allows the viewer to engage with the more visceral aspects of racism.

“... *Get Out* is a transparent nod to the genre of slavery-themed dramas.”<sup>66</sup> The Armitage home and other visual symbols (such as the costumes and plantations) are reminiscent of slavery and serve as a visual reminder that the present cannot be viewed in isolation: it is intimately interwoven with the past.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Bick (2010) *African Art* 38.

<sup>65</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

<sup>66</sup> Bick (2010) *African Art* 38.

<sup>67</sup> Screenprism “Get Out Explained: Symbols, Satire & Social Horror” (28-05-2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubNKSgdT1FQ&index=113&list=WL>> (accessed 25-09-2017) 01:17 – 01:28.



Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017)<sup>68</sup>

The Armitage home is a visual representation of both the exclusivity of white wealth and the possessive investment of whites in furthering their own interest at the expense of Black lives, labor and land: the underpinnings of racist capitalism. The visual presentation of the Armitage home is but one example of the way in which the film emphasizes the impact of racist ideologies which have facilitated colonial exploitation. The many references to both tea and cotton throughout the film also allude to this exploitation as these are both products which have strong ties to various colonies across the globe where indigenous populations labored in the service of white colonizers. Many colonies viewed Africans as ready-made labor, and used their land without consent, for the production of sugar, cotton and tobacco.<sup>69</sup>



Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017)<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available from Netflix.

<sup>69</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 7.

<sup>70</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available from Netflix.

These elements serve as a visual reminder of the impact of the exploitation of land and labor and the racial hierarchies which it facilitates. In this way the Armitage mansion visually anchors the dedication to white supremacy in slavery whilst the contemporary narrative exposes the way in which white supremacy is upheld through structural racism allowing for colonial conditions to continue into the present.<sup>71</sup> Demonstrating that the kind of labor (in service of whiteness) is not necessarily manual labor: it can be emotional or psychological labor.<sup>72</sup> The mansion further provides a backdrop for the exploration of the subtleties of slavery and the persistence of the (post) slavery relations, more specifically, the strategic and the enduring psychology of it as can be seen in the social interactions between Chris and the other characters in the film.

## 5.2 THEME 2: ROSE AND CHRIS - A KIND OF LOVE WHICH HARBOURS VIOLENCE

To examine the intimate functions of race and power relations between historically opposed subjects, and how it relates to the social paradigm, we turn our attention to the interracial relationship between Chris and Rose (and her family). The relationship between these two characters allows insight into the projection of unity and intimacy which masks unresolved tension: a certain kind of love which harbors violence. The relational dynamics between, specifically, Rose and Chris allow us to see that racism and its consequences become more pronounced in intimate and close relationships.<sup>73</sup>

Rose is introduced to the viewer as a non-racist young liberal. Her relationship with Chris is presented as possessing an innocent and vulnerable dimension as it appears that she has no interest in exercising any kind of domination over Chris. However, Rose's ability to experience vulnerability with Chris is rooted in her whiteness insofar as Chris poses no threat to her position of privilege within the hierarchy of cultural domination. Throughout the film, Chris keeps apologizing to Rose to reassure her that she is not implicated in her family's racism. In doing so, Chris appears to be more concerned with protecting Rose's whiteness than about expressing his own Black

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<sup>71</sup> JM Modiri "The Time and Space of Critical Legal Pedagogy" (2016) 27 *Stellenbosch LR* 507-510.

<sup>72</sup> Casey-Williams (2017) *Power, Media, and Zombification in Jordan Peele's Get Out* 9.

<sup>73</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 102.

humanity and anger.<sup>74</sup> This alludes to a form of emotional labor, which the Black partner or participant in the relationship is subjected to. Both the relationships which Chris and Andre have with their respective partners exposes how Black men who are in interracial relationships with white people are rewarded in white social spaces. By having a white partner, systemic whiteness is preserved: whiteness does not allow for any sort of compromise. As the plot progresses, the dangers of difference become all the more apparent. The encounters which Chris has with the various white characters (Rose, the Armitage family and their party guests) exposes the commodification and fungibility of Blackness: how the consumption of the Other offers a fresh novelty – the novelty of experience. hooks phrases it as follows:

*“(i)t is the young black male body that is seen as epitomizing this promise of wildness, of unlimited physical prowess and unbridled eroticism. It was this black body that was most “desired” for its labor during slavery, and it is this body that is most represented in contemporary popular culture as the body to be watched, imitate, desired, possessed”*<sup>75</sup>

The above quote alludes to the disgust-desire paradigm in the way that the body which is to be possessed due to its capacity for labor is the very body which is the object of desire and envy.

Rose’s character may be introduced to the viewer as the epitome of white racial innocence: having escaped her family’s issues (their raging obsession with subservient Blackness) as a young progressive liberal.<sup>76</sup> However, Rose’s innocence merely masks her cruel and villainous nature. Her emotionless deception is indicative of social dynamics insofar as whites meet the experience (and suffering) of Blacks with the utmost indifference – exposing the superficial nature of liberalism and color-blindness. At the climax of the film, when Rose realizes that her true nature and intention has been discovered, her angelic liberal demeanor is instantly replaced by

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<sup>74</sup> S Thrasher “Why *Get Out* Is the Best Movie Ever Made About American Slavery: Jordan Peele’s horror film is about the theft of black bodies-but isn’t set in the Antebellum South” (01-03-2017) <<https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a53515/get-out-jordan-peeel-slavery/>> (accessed 18-02-2018).

<sup>75</sup> B Hooks “*Eating the Other*” in *Race and Representation* (1992) 21-39 37: Black bodies are the object of sexual desire and appetite for racial difference.

<sup>76</sup> R Benjamin “Get Out” and the Death of White Racial Innocence” (27-03-2017) <<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/get-out-and-the-death-of-white-racial-innocence>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

the devious manner of a racial predator: highlighting the emotional poverty which accompanies racist behavior.<sup>77</sup>



Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017)<sup>78</sup>

To understand the ways in which desire functions and the way in which desire, based on difference, undermines the sanctioned norms of white supremacy, attention will be given to the ways in which the yearning for pleasure informs politics. The fantasy of pleasure, nestled in the acknowledgement and enjoyment of racial difference, is perpetuated by mass popular culture.<sup>79</sup> This promise of pleasure and intimate contact with the Other undertakes to transport the white spectator beyond the boundaries which have contained and continued their existence within the system of white supremacy. In this way traditional modes of thinking about control and domination are deconstructed as an encounter with the Other presents the symbolic frontier for reconstruction and transformation.<sup>80</sup>

Interracial intimacy and intercultural exchanges of intimacy offer a (public) break from white supremacy by deconstructing the ideas of racial purity. This intimate exchange does not obliterate (or even slightly threaten) white supremacy, it is only the updated version of oppression which reframes the way in which Black culture is commodified,

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<sup>77</sup> R Benjamin "Get Out" and the Death of White Racial Innocence" (27-03-2017) <<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/get-out-and-the-death-of-white-racial-innocence>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>78</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available from Netflix.

<sup>79</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available from Netflix.

<sup>80</sup> Hooks "Eating the Other" in *Race and Representation* 36-37.

consumed and appropriated to create a façade of being a progressive liberal.<sup>81</sup> bell hooks provides further insight into the way in which the Other is oppressed through innovative and understated means: how the body of the other is transformed into an object and/or the object of desire. hooks' discussion of the subtler and more nuanced forms of oppression highlights the complexities of racial diversity and power relations within 'post-racial' discourse.<sup>82</sup> From hooks' perspective, the white participant in the interracial encounter is oblivious to how intimacy, in this sense, perpetuates racism.<sup>83</sup> This can be seen from the seemingly innocent romantic relationship between Rose and Chris at the start of the film and the confrontation between Rose and the police officer who wants to see Chris' driver's license after hitting a deer on the freeway. At that point of the narrative we have not yet been made aware of Rose's true nature. She seems genuinely offended by the racist behavior of the police official. She asks the police officer why he needs to see Chris' license without directly and explicitly exposing or challenging the police officer's racist attitude or placing her position in the social order in jeopardy.



Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017)<sup>84</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Hooks "*Eating the Other*" in *Race and Representation* 35, 37.

<sup>82</sup> Screenprism "Get Out Explained: Symbols, Satire & Social Horror" (28-05-2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubNKSgdT1FQ&index=113&list=WL>> (accessed 25-09-2017) 12:38 – 12:55.

<sup>83</sup> Hooks "*Eating the Other*" in *Race and Representation* 39.

<sup>84</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available from Netflix.

Rose preserves her position, as well as the structures of domination, in the white order, emerging unscathed from the encounter. Moreover, the relationship between Chris and Rose demonstrates that intimate encounters can be reduced to an affirmation of white supremacy.

Rose had no authentic interest in Chris (or her other conquests), nor did she possess the desire to meaningfully contribute to their relationship(s)- although she appeared to be emotionally invested in them. The relationships which Rose enjoyed with her romantic partners/victims were nothing more than a means to an end: to diminish their resistance to domination.<sup>85</sup> During the climax of the plot we see that Rose has baited multiple Black partners for consumption by the Armitage family and their acquaintances.<sup>86</sup> This consumption of partners is reminiscent of the way in which whites have exploited Black culture and lives to further their own self-interests, throughout the colonial era and into the present day, requiring that the Black members of society play a passive role in the service of white desire: “... *no longer... exacted via domination but... willingly*.”<sup>87</sup> In this way, Chris (along with Rose’s previous romantic partners) demonstrates that the body and the existence of the Other is abused to service the needs of white desire and domination.<sup>88</sup> The racist exoticisation of Blacks persist, even though interracial encounters appear to disavow racial difference on a superficial level.<sup>89</sup>

The desire for intimate contact with the Other is entirely incapable of eradicating racial domination, especially within the context of personal interaction and intimacy. Deep within the psyche, the colonial fantasy of power over-, desire for- and seduction of- the Other is replayed. The desire for the Other is therefore nothing more than an attempt to reinscribe the status quo and to preserve the structures of domination: Black culture is adopted on the terms dictated by the white participant, in their service and for their use.<sup>90</sup> The imbalanced power relations (which makes this commodification and consumption of Black identity, culture and history possible) assist in further enriching

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<sup>85</sup> O Lulu “Eating the Other: Consumption of Blackness for Pleasure and Experience” (03-10-2015) <<http://criticalbears.blogspot.co.za/2015/10/eating-other-consumption-of-blackness.html>> (accessed 21-09-2017); Modiri (2016) *Stellenbosch LR* 229, 230.

<sup>86</sup> Shreve *How Therapists talk about Race* 3.

<sup>87</sup> Shreve *How Therapists talk about Race* 3.

<sup>88</sup> Hooks “*Eating the Other*” in *Race and Representation* 368.

<sup>89</sup> Hooks “*Eating the Other*” in *Race and Representation* 371.

<sup>90</sup> Hooks “*Eating the Other*” in *Race and Representation* 38.

the white perspective through modes which have been approved by white supremacy.<sup>91</sup>

As previously stated, interracial relationships do not require the white participant to abandon their positionality and as such does not constitute a rebellion against racism.<sup>92</sup> Instead, these kind of relationships may be indicative of how racism evolves, through time and space, by adjusting the mode of commodification and appropriation of Blackness: to increase pleasure and experience to the inexhaustive list of ‘services’ which can be exploited by whites.<sup>93</sup> It reframes and multiplies the displacement and denial of the history of the Other through the process of de-contextualisation.<sup>94</sup> As such the cultural, ethnic and racial differences are continually commodified, consumed and discarded.<sup>95</sup>

The blatant end of Chris and Rose’s relationship and the lack of mutual respect and dignity which is revealed by the plot twist can also be linked to the master-slave paradigm, as formulated by Hortense Spillers. Spillers engages with the ideological paradox of freedom and slavery.<sup>96</sup> The complexities of slavery are highlighted by Spillers by playing with the association of the word “*labor*”.<sup>97</sup> The complexity of slavery referred to by the specific wordplay is that of the manual labor, which slaves were subjected to as well as the labor of giving birth to children in what she calls “*coercive sexual relationships*”. Spillers also draws a distinction between the ‘legitimate’ children of the master (children born from the relationship with his wife) and the offspring which have been born from himself and the slave.<sup>98</sup> I intentionally use the words ‘children’ and ‘offspring’ to emphasize the distinction. ‘Offspring’ is associated with the non-

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<sup>91</sup> O Lulu “Eating the Other: Consumption of Blackness for Pleasure and Experience” (03-10-2015) <<http://criticalbears.blogspot.co.za/2015/10/eating-other-consumption-of-blackness.html>> (accessed 21-09-2017).

<sup>92</sup> Hooks “*Eating the Other*” in *Race and Representation* 367.

<sup>93</sup> Red Climbing Lily “Notes on Bell Hooks, Cultural Appropriation, and Imperialism” (20-07-2011) Consumption, Social Justice, Travel <<https://redclimbinglily.wordpress.com/2011/07/20/notes-on-bell-hooks-cultural-appropriation-and-imperialism/>> (accessed 20-02-2019).

<sup>94</sup> Hooks “*Eating the Other*” in *Race and Representation* 373.

<sup>95</sup> Hooks “*Eating the Other*” in *Race and Representation* 380.

<sup>96</sup> N Kaiser “A Response to Shades of Intimacy: Women in the Time of Revolution with Hortense Spillers” <<http://irwgs.columbia.edu/nicole-kaiser-cc-20-a-response-to-shades-of-intimacy-women-in-the-time-of-revolution-with-hortense-spillers/>> (accessed 30-10-2017).

<sup>97</sup> N Kaiser “A Response to Shades of Intimacy: Women in the Time of Revolution with Hortense Spillers” <<http://irwgs.columbia.edu/nicole-kaiser-cc-20-a-response-to-shades-of-intimacy-women-in-the-time-of-revolution-with-hortense-spillers/>> (accessed 30-10-2017).

<sup>98</sup> N Kaiser “A Response to Shades of Intimacy: Women in the Time of Revolution with Hortense Spillers” <<http://irwgs.columbia.edu/nicole-kaiser-cc-20-a-response-to-shades-of-intimacy-women-in-the-time-of-revolution-with-hortense-spillers/>> (accessed 30-10-2017).



human and lacks the emotional gravity and empathetic worth of the word ‘child’ or ‘children’. The differentiation between children and (enslaved) offspring is based on the issue of ownership and status (who is free and who is unfree).<sup>99</sup> Within this paradigm the issue of intimacy goes further than the master’s children and his “non-human” offspring, it also has implications which are fundamental to the ‘relationship’ between the master and the slave.

The rape of a slave was not recognized by law and therefore presented no consequences to the perpetrator.<sup>100</sup> A slave could not be raped, in the mind of the master, because of the purported lasciviousness.<sup>101</sup> This disavowal of rape brings to the fore issues of consent, agency and the formulation of humanity. The slave, posited as both person and property complicated these issues. The property dimension equated with the inability to refuse combined with the recognition of personhood only in terms of her willingness and ability to consent to romance and intimacy.<sup>102</sup> Sexual exploitation, in this way, could be justified by categorizing the slave as simultaneously person and property. By requiring absolute submission from the slave, consent was rendered meaningless: considered will-less and always willing.<sup>103</sup>

There can be no intimacy between owners and their owned ‘things’. Here, Spillers’ distinction between body and flesh further comes into play.<sup>104</sup> Touch and intimacy cannot be conflated with each other because the body has lost its integrity (through enslavement) and is thus reduced to flesh. Being reduced to flesh has the consequence of rendering the body vulnerable to invasion, violation and penetration – the owned body is incapable of consent or refusal (preventing physical contact or touch).<sup>105</sup> The impossibility of romance between the slave and the master is informed by the social contract which renders the touch a violation: the racist-capitalist nature

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<sup>99</sup> H Spillers “Shades of Intimacy: What the Eighteenth Century Teaches Us” (26-05-2016) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10haBLXN1r0&t=1953s>> (accessed 01-11-2017) 23:19-28:33.

<sup>100</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 80.

<sup>101</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 40.

<sup>102</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 40.

<sup>103</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 81.

<sup>104</sup> Spillers *Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book* 17 (1987) 65.

<sup>105</sup> H Spillers “Shades of Intimacy: What the Eighteenth Century Teaches Us” (26-05-2016) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10haBLXN1r0&t=1953s>> (accessed 01-11-2017) 23:19-28:33. 34:55-36:57, 54:15-55:16.

of slavery negates any love or intimacy between the two.<sup>106</sup> The relationship amounts to an exploitation of power by the master because the social order of slavery predetermines the trajectory of the relationship, nullifying any kind of ‘consent’ given by the slave.<sup>107</sup> The relationship between master and slave can be reduced to the reproduction of property: sexual control over the Other.<sup>108</sup> Sexuality and subordination were thus bound together in securing social relations. Anxieties about racial mixing (miscegenation) was the underlying rationale for the apartheid-regime’s policing of sexuality. By enforcing the boundaries between races, apartheid’s intimacy laws were directed at ‘protecting’ white women from Black male sexuality which was imagined to be a threat.<sup>109</sup> Because interracial sexual contact featured extensively in the historical mistreatment of Blacks, it comes as no surprise that such interactions emerge as highly politicized.<sup>110</sup>

The desire to occupy and possess Blackness, is also illustrated by the party guests, and reveals the rationale of slavery as well as abject racism: The Black body as a resource for white enjoyment.<sup>111</sup> The group of party-goers are both fascinated and obsessed with Chris’s Blackness. The white characters are clearly disinterested in gaining any meaningful understanding of inequality, despite their questions directed at Chris about the Black experience.<sup>112</sup> The group bombards him with statements and questions about his Blackness. These statements display a manic obsession with Blackness.<sup>113</sup> This manic obsession with Blackness is akin to that which originated in

<sup>106</sup> N Kaiser “A Response to Shades of Intimacy: Women in the Time of Revolution with Hortense Spillers” <<http://irwgs.columbia.edu/nicole-kaiser-cc-20-a-response-to-shades-of-intimacy-women-in-the-time-of-revolution-with-hortense-spillers/>> (accessed 30-10-2017).

<sup>107</sup> N Kaiser “A Response to Shades of Intimacy: Women in the Time of Revolution with Hortense Spillers” <<http://irwgs.columbia.edu/nicole-kaiser-cc-20-a-response-to-shades-of-intimacy-women-in-the-time-of-revolution-with-hortense-spillers/>> (accessed 30-10-2017); H Spillers “Shades of Intimacy: What the Eighteenth Century Teaches Us” (26-05-2016) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10haBLXN1r0&t=1953s>> (accessed 01-11-2017) 23:19-28:33, 32:41-35:51, 73:16-74:18.

<sup>108</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 88.

<sup>109</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1433.

<sup>110</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1434.

<sup>111</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 21-22.

<sup>112</sup> Screenprism “Get Out Explained: Symbols, Satire & Social Horror” (28-05-2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubNKSgdT1FQ&index=113&list=WL>> (accessed 25-09-2017) 05:36 – 05:55.

<sup>113</sup> Wisecrack “The Philosophy of GET OUT – Wisecrack Edition” (13-05-2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gQP4ffowCY&list=WL&index=115>> (accessed 25-09-2017) 03:02 – 03:35; Hooks “*Eating the Other*” in *Race and Representation* 157-159: The fascination with- and experience of Blackness by white people is superficial at best. It does not facilitate meaningful engagement with the history, experience and complexity of culture and identity.

the 1920's in Paris, France, which fetishized Black culture (particularly by French Contemporaries in that time). For these Parisians, Blackness signified modernity and the experience of such culture was viewed to be a privilege. Within the white culturally constructed imaginary, it can be described as the desire for Black culture and the Black body. This manic fascination/obsession is not concerned with a genuine and authentic understanding of Black culture and experience- but rather about satisfying selfish desires. An example: where a white woman asks Rose "... *is it true? Is it... better?*" This superficial and selfish worship of Blackness is evident in the multiple fetishized racial comments made to Chris about his physique and genetic make-up.

To further illustrate this, one visitor in particular delightedly exclaims that "*Black is in fashion!*".<sup>114</sup> This exclamation, along with Chris's unease, is reminiscent of Fanon's experience of "... *meeting the white man's eye as placing a burdensome weight upon him. One that left him feeling uncomfortable in his own body and out of place in a world dominated by white... burdened by the weight of trying to fit into a world from which he is fundamentally excluded.*"<sup>115</sup> By reading Fanon's statement through the view of Hartman, the white gaze is a reminder of domination.<sup>116</sup> Thus, by looking upon the Black subject, the white gaze can be interpreted as a form of surveillance and policing. This scene also illustrates the internal struggle which Chris experiences: he attempts to assimilate into Rose's world (as her Black boyfriend) whilst trying to remain an authentic individual with his own identity.<sup>117</sup> The tension between living in a structurally racist society and being forced to view oneself from the perspective of the dominant societal force (where whiteness is the measuring tape of existence) creates an inner conflict in Chris as he tries to consolidate his own identity and experience.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>114</sup> V Anderson "Get Out: Why racism is really terrifying" (26-03-2017) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/get-out-why-racism-really-is-terrifying-a7645296.html>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>115</sup> Wisecrack "The Philosophy of GET OUT – Wisecrack Edition" (13-05-2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gQP4ffowCY&list=WL&index=115>> (accessed 25-09-2017) 07:37 – 08:02.

<sup>116</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 49-50.

<sup>117</sup> Wisecrack "The Philosophy of GET OUT – Wisecrack Edition" (13-05-2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gQP4ffowCY&list=WL&index=115>> (accessed 25-09-2017) 08:13 – 08:27.

<sup>118</sup> Wisecrack "The Philosophy of GET OUT – Wisecrack Edition" (13-05-2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gQP4ffowCY&list=WL&index=115>> (accessed 25-09-2017) 09:27 - 10:18; Screenprism "Get Out Explained: Symbols, Satire & Social Horror" (28-05-2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubNKSgdT1FQ&index=113&list=WL>> (accessed 25-09-2017) 06:53 – 07:03; Modiri (2016) *Stellenbosch LR* 235, 236: Black subjectivity is constructed through the white gaze; Andre, the hypnotized Black man, can also



Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017)<sup>119</sup>

The art dealer, who purchases Chris, further illustrates this: explicitly refusing to admit that his decision to bid on Chris was motivated by race buy stating: “... *please don't let me go into that... I don't give a shit what color you are... what I want is deeper. I want those things you see through...*”<sup>120</sup> It speaks of coerced assimilation whilst simultaneously alluding to the Fanon: the white gaze as domination. The significance of whites taking over Black bodies, within the film, re-entrenches the commodification of Black bodies as flesh: as labor-machines designed for white enjoyment and profit.<sup>121</sup> In this way the Armitage family, selling and appropriating Black bodies, represents the way in which whites utilize racism to benefit themselves.<sup>122</sup> The ideals of liberalism and color-blindness are only maintained insofar as it does not interfere with their

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be interpreted as a reference to the pressure on middle to upper class Blacks to assimilate into white culture.

<sup>119</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available from Netflix.

<sup>120</sup> Wisecrack “The Philosophy of GET OUT – Wisecrack Edition” (13-05-2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gQP4ffowCY&list=WL&index=115>> (accessed 25-09-2017) 05:44 – 06:07; Shreve *How Therapists talk about Race* 1-4.

<sup>121</sup> Screenprism “Get Out Explained: Symbols, Satire & Social Horror” (28-05-2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubNKSgdT1FQ&index=113&list=WL>> (accessed 25-09-2017). 03:28 – 03:40.

Screenprism “Get Out Explained: Symbols, Satire & Social Horror” (28-05-2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubNKSgdT1FQ&index=113&list=WL>> (accessed 25-09-2017). 07:07 – 07:18.

loyalty to the status quo. Racism (however manifesting) is thus the method of choice to maintain a radically different political order.<sup>123</sup>

The body-flesh distinction, is not only an attack on the integrity of sexuality, identity, dignity and autonomy of the slave, but also indicative of the human-animal distinction which Kristeva refers to in her formulation of the abject. In this way we can see that the degradation and dishonor of slavery can be construed as abject racism in the way it dictates the value of social existence and public worth.<sup>124</sup>

### 5.3 THEME 3: THE SUNKEN PLACE

The psychological underpinnings and the finer nuances of contemporary racism are the direct consequence of colonialism.<sup>125</sup> Slavery as a legally sanctioned regime of racial domination and dehumanization allowed for absolute control over a docile workforce on a deeper, psychological level.<sup>126</sup> Here, Anderson is making a specific reference to the discourse of slavery within film-making and cinematic portrayals. I believe that persistence of (post) slavery power relations has been overlooked in the areas of (law and) life stretching far beyond the scope of visual popular culture alone. To examine the psychological component of slavery the concept of Peele's Sunken Place is explored as it provides useful insight into the contemporary experience of racism, marginalisation and oppression.

Andre, the young man in the opening scene is, despite his limited screen time, one of the more significant characters in the film. Andre is kidnapped and lobotomised, banished to the Sunken Place in order for a white man's "coagula" to be implanted into his Black body and is forced to live as the vehicle for the white man's continued existence.<sup>127</sup> The camera flash reveals the fraction of Andre's terrified self which remains in his body.

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<sup>123</sup> CW Mills "European Specters" in *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* (2003) 40, 150-154, 158-159.

<sup>124</sup> O Patterson "Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study" (1985) *Academic Trade* 10.

<sup>125</sup> V Anderson "Get Out: Why racism is really terrifying" (26-03-2017) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/get-out-why-racism-really-is-terrifying-a7645296.html>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>126</sup> V Anderson "Get Out: Why racism is really terrifying" (26-03-2017) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/get-out-why-racism-really-is-terrifying-a7645296.html>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>127</sup> S Thrasher "Why *Get Out* Is the Best Movie Ever Made About American Slavery: Jordan Peele's horror film is about the theft of black bodies-but isn't set in the Antebellum South" (01-



Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017)<sup>128</sup>

The Sunken Place is introduced in the scene where Chris is hypnotized by Missy Armitage.<sup>129</sup> Her hypnosis is not consensual. In this scene, where Missy hypnotizes Chris, he enters the Sunken Place for a brief moment. When he emerges from the hypnosis, he has an unshakable feeling of uneasiness. He tries to rationalize this experience by trying to convince himself that everything is okay despite his observations of the abnormal behavior in the Armitage residence.<sup>130</sup>



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03-2017) <<https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a53515/get-out-jordan-peeel-slavery/>> (accessed 18-02-2018).

<sup>128</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available from Netflix.

<sup>129</sup> SH Weiss "Haunted by '*Get Out*' – But Not Because It's A Horror Film" (03-25-2017) <[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/haunted-by-get-out-but-not-because-its-a-horror\\_b\\_58d6e9e1e4b06c3d3d3e6e7e](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/haunted-by-get-out-but-not-because-its-a-horror_b_58d6e9e1e4b06c3d3d3e6e7e)> (accessed 18-02-2018).

<sup>130</sup> SH Weiss "Haunted by '*Get Out*' – But Not Because It's A Horror Film" (03-25-2017) <[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/haunted-by-get-out-but-not-because-its-a-horror\\_b\\_58d6e9e1e4b06c3d3d3e6e7e](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/haunted-by-get-out-but-not-because-its-a-horror_b_58d6e9e1e4b06c3d3d3e6e7e)> (accessed 18-02-2018).

Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017)<sup>131</sup>

The hypnosis performed by Missy is a subtle and quick attack which she is able to launch on Chris due to her years of experience in which she has been able to build on her skills. This can be related to the systems of racism and white supremacy which have been built on throughout the history of South Africa. The method of entry into Chris's mind, by Missy Armitage, is by focusing on Chris's perceived failures. This is a tactic which is easily identified within South African politics and media: statistics and imagery used by the media and on social media platforms often focus on the perceived failures of Black people (as alluded to in previous chapters). For example, emphasis is placed on criminality, broken families and poverty in order to advance the narrative of white supremacy. This is done to disguise the source of structural forms of oppression and can perhaps be referred to as victim-blaming.

The paralyzing nature of the Sunken Place can be equated with oppression in the way it is a system of inescapable hardship.<sup>132</sup> Peele describes the Sunken Place as the system which silences minorities and other marginalized groups as it speaks directly to the lived realities of violence, whether subtle or explicit, against people of color.<sup>133</sup> The Sunken Place represents the feeling of total displacement and alienation in society.<sup>134</sup> The Sunken Place, in *Get Out*, speaks of institutionalized slavery, the capture of the Black mind, Black subjectivity and the white abuse thereof to service white needs and white wants.<sup>135</sup> The Sunken Place may also illustrate the way in which racism prevents one to live life to their full potential and full enjoyment.<sup>136</sup> Because the

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<sup>131</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available from Netflix.

<sup>132</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available from Netflix.

<sup>133</sup> M Jasper "Jordan Peele Explain What *Get Out*'s 'Sunken Place' Represents, and why it Feels Like We're There Now" (21-01-2018) <<https://www.themarysue.com/jordan-peeel-explains-sunken-place/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>134</sup> W Cook-Wilson "In Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All" (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peeel-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>135</sup> W Cook-Wilson "In Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, Well-Meaning White People Are the Scariest Monsters of Them All" (27-02-2017) <<https://www.spin.com/2017/02/jordan-peeel-get-out-movie-review/>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>136</sup> SH Weiss "Haunted by '*Get Out*' – But Not Because It's A Horror Film" (03-25-2017) <[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/haunted-by-get-out-but-not-because-its-a-horror\\_b\\_58d6e9e1e4b06c3d3d3e6e7e](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/haunted-by-get-out-but-not-because-its-a-horror_b_58d6e9e1e4b06c3d3d3e6e7e)> (accessed 18-02-2018).

Sunken Place is the product of hypnosis, one can assume that the hypnosis is a symbol for the suppression and disregard for Black consciousness. This hypnotic state can thus be equated with Modiri’s description of marginalisation as the denial of agency, expression and self-determination – and can be linked to Young’s description of cultural imperialism.<sup>137</sup> By marginalizing Chris, by banishing him to the Sunken Place, his capacity for autonomy, choice and judgement is destroyed.<sup>138</sup> This illustrates Hartman’s statement that “... *to be a slave is to be under the brutal power and authority of another.*”<sup>139</sup>



Jordan Peele’s *Get Out* (2017)<sup>140</sup>

The scene in which Chris’s body is auctioned off is easily identified as a modern slave auction.<sup>141</sup> The reduction of the African is indicative of flesh, as formulated by Spiller, is the primary narrative of *Get Out*: slavery as the process of converting a person into property – and property is subjected to the will of its owner.<sup>142</sup> With this scene in mind, the party scene also comes to resemble a slave auction in that traders allowed prospective buyers to examine the ‘merchandise’ for defects (for example, looking at teeth, pinching skin, etc.).<sup>143</sup> The slave, during such auctions, would have to endure

<sup>137</sup> Modiri (2015) *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal* 230; Young *Justice and the Politics of Difference* 3-4.

<sup>138</sup> Modiri (2015) *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal* 231; Hooks “*Eating the Other*” in *Race and Representation* 147.

<sup>139</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 3.

<sup>140</sup> *Get Out* (2017). [Online] Directed by Jordan Peele. United States: Blumhouse Productions [Viewed October 2018]. Available from Netflix.

<sup>141</sup> D Hook “*Racism as abjection: A Psychoanalytic Conceptualisation for a post-apartheid South Africa*” (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 62.

<sup>142</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa*: Flesh is described, by Hooks, as the lowest point of existing.

<sup>143</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 14.



the poking and prodding. Upon conclusion of the sale, the slave was branded, on the breast, with a hot iron. Whilst there is no literal hot iron in these scenes, the theft of the body with the sale of Chris is apparent. The theft of the body (brought about by enslavement) reduces Chris into an object of consumption. This brings to the fore the slave experience as it informs Black identity. The dehumanizing effects of the slave trade, and more specifically, colonialism are explored within this representation of the auction and the purpose for which Chris is sold. The scene thus aptly illustrates how ethics, personality, identity and relationships are lost by atomizing the captive body – being banished to the Sunken Place.<sup>144</sup>

By separating the body from agency and free will: the indigenous population was reduced (like Andre, Georgina and Walter) to disposable resources, and at best, insignificant and incapable minors without capacity and competence in decision making and self-actualization. By bestowing will and freewill upon the slaves, the colonizers attempted to sweep the violence of racial slavery under the rug.<sup>145</sup> As property, the slave was only recognized as a legal person with regard to criminal culpability or if exposed to violence beyond the limits of the socially tolerable.<sup>146</sup> As the property of the master, subject to the masters will, the issue of autonomy is problematic.<sup>147</sup> With Chris in the Sunken Place, there is room for the imposition of white culture and norms by implanting a white mind (and white norms).<sup>148</sup> The goal? That Chris serves as a vessel to be operated by the buyer and functioning in a way which mimics the appearance of free will (like Andre before the camera flash). This is the normative superiority which white supremacy asserts to universalize the experience and culture of whites, it is what Modiri describes as “*the rubric for humanity*”.<sup>149</sup> The Sunken Place is thus a metaphor for the experience of living in a state of fear of losing oneself the suppression of Black consciousness in service of whiteness.

The fear which Chris experiences, when he is strapped to the chair whilst being forced to watch an old TV (which is reminiscent of the types of television sets which were

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<sup>144</sup> Spillers *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book* 64, 67.

<sup>145</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 54-56.

<sup>146</sup> Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 7, 178 – 179.

<sup>147</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 57-58.

<sup>148</sup> Modiri (2015) *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal* 235.

<sup>149</sup> Modiri (2015) *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal* 235.

popular during apartheid), is twofold: the fear of the white captor and the fear of being trapped within an identity of subservience. Walter and Georgina are permanently lost to the Sunken Place, their autonomy completely removed by the surgery: lost to the system of whiteness.<sup>150</sup> The simulation of freewill and appearances of freedom of Georgina and Walter illustrates how subtly subjection can be re-anchored. As Hartman states: “(the) (e)nslaved were used like animals and treated as if they existed only for the master’s profit.”<sup>151</sup>

The theft of the Black body, as a core theme throughout the film, exposes the attitude of whiteness towards Blackness and Black bodies: it is only the body which is physically superior, engineered for physical activity.<sup>152</sup> This portion of the film alludes to the colonial attitude towards race in South Africa: That the Black individual is only useful if the body is separated from the mind, emotion, politics and culture - strategies of colonialism utilized to acquire and maintain power over the indigenous people such as the production of racialised labor, withholding of education and the profitable management of space and time.<sup>153</sup>

The success of the film is that it doesn’t allow the white viewer to see slavery as a concept far removed from time and history – it demonstrates how race and bodily theft (based on labor) persists to convenience white existence.<sup>154</sup> The Sunken Place can thus be equated with the social death: how the Black body has become a medium for white profit and pleasure, while the self is never truly free to enter the economy, to exercise true autonomy, to live freely.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> SH Weiss “Haunted by ‘*Get Out*’ – But Not Because It’s A Horror Film” (03-25-2017) <[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/haunted-by-get-out-but-not-because-its-a-horror\\_b\\_58d6e9e1e4b06c3d3d3e6e7e](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/haunted-by-get-out-but-not-because-its-a-horror_b_58d6e9e1e4b06c3d3d3e6e7e)> (accessed 18-02-2018).

<sup>151</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 4.

<sup>152</sup> S Thrasher “Why *Get Out* Is the Best Movie Ever Made About American Slavery: Jordan Peele’s horror film is about the theft of black bodies-but isn’t set in the Antebellum South” (01-03-2017) <<https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a53515/get-out-jordan-peeel-slavery/>> (accessed 18-02-2018).

<sup>153</sup> EJ Popke “Modernity’s abject space: the rise and fall of Dubran’s Cato Manor” (2001) 33 *Environment and Planning* 737-752 737.

<sup>154</sup> S Thrasher “Why *Get Out* Is the Best Movie Ever Made About American Slavery: Jordan Peele’s horror film is about the theft of black bodies-but isn’t set in the Antebellum South” (01-03-2017) <<https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a53515/get-out-jordan-peeel-slavery/>> (accessed 18-02-2018).

<sup>155</sup> S Thrasher “Why *Get Out* Is the Best Movie Ever Made About American Slavery: Jordan Peele’s horror film is about the theft of black bodies-but isn’t set in the Antebellum South” (01-03-2017) <<https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a53515/get-out-jordan-peeel-slavery/>> (accessed 18-02-2018).

The manipulation and abuse of the vulnerability of the body of the enslaved, as a receptacle for the practices, beliefs and moods of the master, the humanity of the slave involuntarily confirms that of the master.<sup>156</sup> The fungibility of the slave allows the master to take pleasure in his possession, on both figurative and literal levels.<sup>157</sup> The slave is replaceable and interchangeable- disposable surrogate for the master. As Hartman puts it: “... (a) *body... made to speak it’s master’s truth.*”<sup>158</sup> Stripped of individuality and dispossessed of humanity and forced to take on the feelings, ideas and desires of the master.<sup>159</sup> Hartman, by referring to the captive body as an extension of the master’s imperial body, refers to the captive body as the “prized object of his enjoyment”.<sup>160</sup>

#### 6. THE LIMITS OF LAW – A BRIEF HISTORIC OVERVIEW

In the colony, exercise of agency would amount to a contravention of the masters unlimited right of ownership which vested in the slave.<sup>161</sup> The agency of the slave was limited and recognized insofar as it enhanced the repressive mechanisms of power, although this repression was presented as protection, justice and recognition of humanity.<sup>162</sup> The smallest transgressions were met with the utmost cruelty. Any criminal acts perpetrated against the slave resulted in criminal charges against the complainant or suits for damage to property of the master.<sup>163</sup> The law was used to intensify the marginalisation of slaves, to repress crimes perpetrated against them and to impute criminal culpability to them. If violence was used against the slave, it could be justified as necessary force, disavowing white violence as an indispensable reaction to the threat of Blackness.<sup>164</sup> The accompanying blame, suspicion and punishment became a central element of racial difference and the racial stereotypes which persist into the present.<sup>165</sup> White culpability and offence was swept under the rug as the slave was subordinate not only to the master but to all whites.<sup>166</sup> The law, easily abused by authority, granted limited rights to slaves, but could not be enforced

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<sup>156</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 19-20.

<sup>157</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 21.

<sup>158</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 22.

<sup>159</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 21.

<sup>160</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 44.

<sup>161</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 60-64.

<sup>162</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 60-64.

<sup>163</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 81-88.

<sup>164</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 81-88.

<sup>165</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 81-88.

<sup>166</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 88; Ramose “I conquer, therefore I am the sovereign” in *The African Philosophy Reader* 543 544 544

because only whites could participate in legal proceedings.<sup>167</sup> The violent and cruel acts perpetrated were legitimized by law as it was deemed necessary and tolerable – reducing Blacks to pained bodies in need of punishment.<sup>168</sup> It is this colonial legacy which allows the law to repress and downplay abjection by ignoring both the cause and consequence of horrific discrimination. It is the result of the history of colonial repression and exclusion.<sup>169</sup> Colonialism penetrated the legal domain through its worship of racial prejudice and power: law used to methodically formalized structures of white supremacy.<sup>170</sup> The law developed into an instrument of subjugation and exploitation at the hands of the whites.<sup>171</sup> The legally and religiously endorsed aspiration for white affluence and authority culminated in apartheid.<sup>172</sup>

The violence and dishonor of slavery echoes in everyday practices and breaking the promises of redress.<sup>173</sup> The history of death and discontinuity informs everyday practices, therefore efforts to induce transformation and color-blind social cohesion requires a radical shift and revolution of the social order. The underwhelming attempts of redress in South Africa highlight the way that the investment in white privilege hinders social transformation.<sup>174</sup> The legal and political structures which we have inherited from colonial-apartheid does not correspond with the liberal constitutional values which the law aims to uphold.<sup>175</sup> Redress and superficial legislative protection cannot restore loss, nor can it heal intergenerational trauma, or bridge the divide.<sup>176</sup> Redress would require the social body to be completely reformulated by recognizing, articulating and understanding the devastation of colonialism and racism: an articulation of the needs and desires accompanied by actual afford to realize these needs.<sup>177</sup> The Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill's

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<sup>167</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 90-94.

<sup>168</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 90-94; Magubane *Race and the construction of the dispensable other* 190.

<sup>169</sup> Kristeva *The Powers of Horror* 1, 9; AM Russel "Abject spaces and mimicry: rethinking embodied effects of spatial containment in trafficking for sexual exploitation" (2017) 21 *Cultural Geographies* 286.

<sup>170</sup> J Saul & P Bond *South Africa – The Present as History: From Mrs Ples to Mandela & Marikana* (2014) 15 26-27.

<sup>171</sup> Saul & Bond *The Present as History: From Mrs Ples to Mandela & Marikana* 36.

<sup>172</sup> Saul & Bond *The Present as History: From Mrs Ples to Mandela & Marikana* 43, 45-58.

<sup>173</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 69-74.

<sup>174</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 75-76; Madinglozi (2017) *STELL LR* 235

<sup>175</sup> A Dissel & J Kollapen "Racism and Discrimination in the South African Penal System" (2002) *Centre for the study of violence and reconciliation* 4.

<sup>176</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 77-79; Madinglozi (2017) *STELL LR* 235.

<sup>177</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 77-79; Madinglozi (2017) *STELL LR* 235.

limitation is its inability to give the necessary attention to the events which culminated in abject-racism, it supports and structures, and its nefarious disguises.<sup>178</sup> The Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill does not abolish the racist order, it merely represses it, forcing outside of the visible and public domain.<sup>179</sup>

The inconsistent implementation of other pieces of legislation which have been designed to combat racism leads one to question whether the Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill will be effective in any way, shape or form.<sup>180</sup> The Eurocentric nature of our legal system and its application means that racist ideologies still influence the legitimating rationalizations and interpretations of interactions between Blacks and whites. The approach to legal reasoning is still clouded by racism and color-blindness in order to sustain the white symbolic order much like the Armitage family in *Get Out*.<sup>181</sup> The limit of the law, today, has been historically reinforced in furthering the objectives of whiteness through the Othering of Blacks and the gross regulation and expulsion of their being by the law.<sup>182</sup> It follows that the law is blinded by the colonial ideologies which initially informed and defined the concept of race.<sup>183</sup>

#### 7. THE PREVENTION AND COMBATTING OF HATE CRIMES AND HATE SPEECH BILL

The history and legacy of racism in South Africa, in conjunction with the attempts to eradicate racism in a democratic dispensation, leads one to question whether the legal system is truly capable of transforming South African society into a society based on equality. Is the South African legal system truly capable of addressing instances of abject racism?

Having discussed the film, *Get Out*, this chapter further questions the ability of the law, specifically the Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill, to address such instances of abject racism.<sup>184</sup> This portion of the chapter is concerned with whether abject racism falls within the limits of the law. It will be argued that the law is rather incapable of addressing this problem and that attention should, instead,

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<sup>178</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.  
<sup>179</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.  
<sup>180</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.  
<sup>181</sup> Russel (2017) *Cultural Geographies* 281.  
<sup>182</sup> Russel (2017) *Cultural Geographies* 281.  
<sup>183</sup> Russel (2017) *Cultural Geographies* 281.  
<sup>184</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

be placed on other political and aesthetic projects to advance the project of anti-racism in South Africa. Put differently, aesthetic projects such as *Get Out* are far more qualified to provide an engaged account of the experience of abject racism because they are capable of visualizing and addressing such experiences through a humanist approach which is centred on subjectivity.

Section 16 of the Constitution,<sup>185</sup> protects one's right to freedom of expression with certain exceptions. One of these exceptions prohibits the "*advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm*". This exclusion is contained in the preamble of the Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill.<sup>186</sup> The purpose of the afore Bill is to give effect to the constitutional- and international obligations regarding prejudice and intolerance. Moreover, the Bill seeks to provide for the prevention of hate crimes and hate speech whilst simultaneously providing for the prosecution and sentencing of persons who commit offenses in terms of the Bill.<sup>187</sup> For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on hate speech in the context of race and racism.

The Bill is commendable as an attempt to communicate that racism (and other forms of prejudice) are not accepted in South African society, however, the Bill does not address the system of racial domination but only some of the vulgar symptoms.<sup>188</sup> In terms of the Bill, hate speech, insofar as it relates to racism, is any expressive conduct which intends to harm or has the result of suggesting inferiority or giving effect to exclusion through the use of derogatory language directed at a racial group.<sup>189</sup> Clause 4, of the aforementioned Bill, criminalizes hate speech in order to give effect to section 16 (2) of the Constitution.<sup>190</sup> The qualifying factors for conduct to be classified as hate speech includes the intentional publication/communication of harmful or hatred-based

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<sup>185</sup> Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

<sup>186</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

<sup>187</sup> "Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill & International Crimes Bill: briefing, with Minister and Deputy Minister"  
<<https://pmg.org.za/page/Prevention%20and%20Combating%20of%20Hate%20Crimes%20and%20Hate%20Speech%20Bill%20&%20International%20Crimes%20Bill:%20briefing,%20with%20Minister%20and%20Deputy%20Minister>> (accessed 11-01-2020).

<sup>188</sup> Iqbal "So what's the status of South Africa's Hate Crimes Bill?" (17-07-2018)  
<<https://www.mambaonline.com/2018/07/17/so-whats-the-status-of-south-africas-hate-crimes-bill/>> (accessed 03-01-2020).

<sup>189</sup> Devendish "Is the hate speech bill constitutional?" (01-03-2019)  
<<https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/opinion/is-the-hate-speech-bill-constitutional-19582456>> (accessed 11-01-2020).

<sup>190</sup> Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

content, alternatively, conduct which is aimed at inciting harm against any person or group based on a protected ground.<sup>191</sup> The qualifying factors are problematic for a multitude of reasons.

8. EVALUATION OF *THE PREVENTION AND COMBATTING OF HATE CRIMES AND HATE SPEECH BILL* WITH REFERENCE TO *GET OUT*

Nyoka states that “*criminalising racial bigotry leads to all manner of conceptual blind spots in that, while bigotry should not be countenanced, to “criminalize” is to give a legal slant to what is primarily a sociological issue*”.<sup>192</sup> To illustrate these conceptual blind spots, one should examine the type of commentary, which Chris endures, inter alia, during the party scene, which is undoubtedly racist. However, if we are to apply the Bill’s qualifying factors to the partygoer’s conduct, the behavior would fall short of hate speech- even though there had been an intentional communication of racist statements directed at Chris. This has the effect of highlighting the blind spots of the law in terms of criminalizing racism. Chris’ discomfort caused by the communication of the racially charged comments could easily be construed as harmful (even more so if we look at the duration, intensity and nature of the comments which Chris had to endure up to this point in the film). So, having checked all the boxes of hate speech – why would this not be classified as hate speech in the context of the Bill? Could the Bill address or provide reparations for injustices which Chris had experienced? To answer this, we need to look at Chris’ experience at the Armitage mansion up to this point (and isolate the experience from the rest of the film and the plot twist– for now). We have multiple perpetrators which are not acting with a common purpose (to the viewer’s knowledge) who are all presumably ignorant of the fact that they are causing harm to Chris by making comments about his race. On the face of it, the comments could possibly be construed as liberal niceties meant to engage Chris in conversation and not suggesting inferiority of a racial group (as contemplated in the Bill).

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<sup>191</sup> Igual “So what’s the status of South Africa’s Hate Crimes Bill?” (17-07-2018) <<https://www.mambaonline.com/2018/07/17/so-whats-the-status-of-south-africas-hate-crimes-bill/>> (accessed 03-01-2020).

<sup>192</sup> B Nyoka “Bernard Magubane’s The Making of A Racist State Revisited: 20 Years On” (2016) 47 *Journal of Black Studies* 903 904.

The Bill has been critiqued for the reference it makes to “*harms*” in the Bill – allegations have been made that the definition is vague and overly broad.<sup>193</sup> Is ‘harm’ meant to refer to emotional trauma or social harm as the case would be in the case of defamation? Or would ‘harm’ include harm to the psyche? I have doubts as to whether ‘harm’ as contained in the Bill would take cognizance of the effects of living in a fundamentally anti-Black world. More likely, ‘harm’ would be viewed in isolation: did the behavior of, let’s say, Mr Green (at the party) cause Chris harm when he commented on his strength and physique?<sup>194</sup> Undoubtedly, an application of ‘harm’ would not consider or take into account the compounded effects of being continually subjected to abject racism, or inter-generational trauma, irrespective of how ‘subtle’ or ‘innocent’ the wording of the racist statement may appear in isolation.<sup>195</sup> In considering the ‘harm’ caused to Chris, the history of racism would also be absent from the consideration. Undoubtedly, the history of slavery, coerced labour, and land stolen by settlers (if Chris grew up in South Africa) would not be incorporated into the determination of ‘harm’ – even though these factors certainly could be construed as ‘harm’ caused by a history of racism. Moreover, the failure to provide adequate education, healthcare and housing would also not fall within the ambit of ‘harm’- although the afore is the direct result of systemic racism and is certainly adverse (and harmful) to the self-actualization and life quality of a given Black person in South Africa.

The use of the word ‘intent’ in the Bill is also dubious. A clearer definition would need to be included in order to adequately address hate speech. As stated in chapter 2, racist conduct can appear unintentional. Chris’ experience at the party (again viewed in isolation) allows us insight into the problem which ‘intention’ presents. Does Mr Green intend to cause harm to Chris with the comments about his physique (relating to strength and form)? If malice indeed underlies these comments, how would one go about proving the same? Another example that we can use is that of the middle-aged woman who asks whether “*it*” is “*better*”. The comment is clearly informed by racist stereotypes – but can we show that was it intended to communicate racism and/or to

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<sup>193</sup> Antonie “Hate Crimes Bill too vague and overly broad – HSF” (19-02-2019) <<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/hate-crimes-bill-too-vague-and-overly-broad--hsf>> (accessed 07-01-2020).

<sup>194</sup> Mr Green comments, when shaking Chris’ hand, that he has “*quite the grip*” which is followed by “*do you ever play golf?*” and “*let us see your form*”.

<sup>195</sup> Antonie “Hate Crimes Bill too vague and overly broad – HSF” (19-02-2019) <<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/hate-crimes-bill-too-vague-and-overly-broad--hsf>> (accessed 07-01-2020).



cause harm?<sup>196</sup> Probably not. The Bill does not challenge the color-blind façade of liberal racism, leaving this particular kind of racism unattended to.

As stated in chapter 2: the *conscious* continuation of oppression is not a prerequisite for racism. In a contemporary liberal society, systems of oppressions can be maintained and reinforced without conscious contemplation or involvement (i.e. intent).<sup>197</sup> This means that racism may include the thoughtless and prejudicial attitudes and behavior (whether perpetrated intentionally or by ignorance) displayed by those in a position of power, which has the effect of oppressing and disadvantaging Black people.<sup>198</sup> The intention is irrelevant in the determination of whether a certain action or condition is oppressive in nature. This means that the *conscious* continuation of oppression is not a prerequisite for racism. In a contemporary liberal society, systems of oppression can be maintained and reinforced without conscious contemplation or involvement.<sup>199</sup> This is illustrated in the way structural racism is disguised and performed in a subtler and more insidious – cloaked in hostility.<sup>200</sup> As such, racism exists on a much deeper level than that of mere prejudice and therefore one should question attitudes of prejudice which justify, defend and naturalize racist colonial enterprises and contemporary conditions. The derogatory categorizations and group descriptions which underlie extreme racist outbursts are often seen as individualized communicative acts.<sup>201</sup> Viewing racism as an individual matter leaves the root causes of racism unaddressed.<sup>202</sup>

Manifestations of racism do not necessarily take on a verbal form, although verbal cues are easier to identify and examine, subtler forms of racism are realized in impulses, aversions and bodily reactions. The more subtle forms include, to name but a few examples, the silently raised eyebrows between fellow whites to critique the ‘slowness’ or dress or other features of Black people, the implicit biases, snap

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<sup>196</sup> Antonie “Hate Crimes Bill too vague and overly broad – HSF” (19-02-2019) <<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/hate-crimes-bill-too-vague-and-overly-broad--hsf>> (accessed 07-01-2020).

<sup>197</sup> Modiri (2015) *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal* 229, 230.

<sup>198</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 61.

<sup>199</sup> Modiri (2015) *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal* 229, 230.

<sup>200</sup> Spillers *Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book* 17 (1987) 301.

<sup>201</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 210.

<sup>202</sup> B Nyoka “Bernard Magubane’s The Making of A Racist State Revisited: 20 Years On” (2016) 47 *Journal of Black Studies* 904.

judgements and stereotypes of Black competency.<sup>203</sup> Subtle racism is more insidious and persistent as it can be defended with ease and blamed on ignorance.<sup>204</sup>

Save for the provisions pertaining to hate crimes, the Bill does not provide more effective or comprehensive remedies and/or consequences, whether civil or criminal, than existing legal remedies for instances of (specifically) racism. The Bill sidesteps civil remedies in favor of criminal sanctions. By implication, the burden of proof would be that of 'beyond a reasonable doubt'. We return, momentarily, to our example of the partygoers, to illustrate this. Could we prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the partygoers were guilty of the crime of hate speech? We know that they had behaved in a racist way and said racist things (disguised as liberal statements) to Chris– but could we persuade the court of this? To do this, we would need to prove, beyond all doubt, that all the elements of the crime were present: harmful/hatred-based content based on a prohibited ground had intentionally been communicated to Chris. This presents a potential problem in that the onus of proof in criminal matters rests on the state alone. In this particular situation, the onus for civil matters would present us with a better (although slight) probability of success to obtain justice.<sup>205</sup>

The Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill does attempt to address racism by creating awareness, however, it does little to nothing to address institutional racism at a collective level.<sup>206</sup> It cannot reframe the structural status quo which continually excuses and ignores racism. The reason for this is that the publicized commitment to countering racism is continually undermined by the proportionate increase in insidious and 'subtle' racism. This 'subtle' form of racism is not necessarily experienced as more subtle, only more 'masked'. Overt racism has become "... *socially unpalatable although nevertheless inwardly permissible.*"<sup>207</sup> It is admirable that vanquishing racism is such a stringent cultural and political priority – even if it is not yet a reality.<sup>208</sup> Criminalizing racism, although desirable, does not address the legacy of racism in South Africa, nor does it address the inequity in society – at best it

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<sup>203</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 64.

<sup>204</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 209.

<sup>205</sup> Note that the Bill only allows for the Regional- and High Courts to adjudicate matters involving hate crimes and hate speech. This could result in further limiting the access to justice which victims of hate speech have.

<sup>206</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

<sup>207</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 672 684.

<sup>208</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 683.

could deter racists from public displays of outright racism (the Vicky Momberg and Penny Sparrow – style racist extremists).<sup>209</sup> Views of racism, such as the view maintained in the Bill, which are overly individualized, tend to overlook the fact that racism has become implicitly normalized becoming a normative condition of South African society.<sup>210</sup>

I favor a more discursive conceptualization in order to avoid separating racist behavior from the social, structural and institutional landscapes which inform it. This is because racism does not always take on a verbal form, although verbal cues are easier to identify and examine, subtler forms of racism are realized in impulses, aversions and bodily reactions. The more subtle forms include, to name but a few examples, the silently raised eyebrows between fellow whites to critique the ‘slowness’ or dress or other features of Blacks, the implicit biases, snap judgements and stereotypes of Black competency, as discussed in chapter 2.<sup>211</sup> Subtle racism is more insidious and persistent as it can be defended with ease and blamed on ignorance.<sup>212</sup> Reni Eddo-Lodge puts it as follows: “*If all racism was easy to spot, grasp and denounce as white extremism is, the task of anti-racist would be simple*”.<sup>213</sup> The intention should be irrelevant in the determination of whether a certain action or condition is oppressive (or racist) in nature.

Whilst the Bill’s title indicates that it is aimed at preventing and combatting discrimination (particularly racism), is certainly doubtful as to whether the Bill would successfully deter racists, let alone cause racism to die out. The Bill will not eradicate hate speech or hate crimes. At best, the penalties could make people realize the

<sup>209</sup> Antonie “Hate Crimes Bill too vague and overly broad – HSF” (19-02-2019) <<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/hate-crimes-bill-too-vague-and-overly-broad--hsf>> (accessed 07-01-2020); *Vicky Momberg v S On: The evening of 3 February 2016*, following a ‘smash and grab incident’, Vicky Momberg made several calls to the emergency helpline of the South African Police Service (SAPS) following which Momberg followed a police vehicle to the Bel Air Shopping Mall. During her encounters with the SAPS (both telephonically and in person) Momberg espoused the K-word 48 times. Momberg was consequently charged and found guilty of *crimen iniuria*; K Singh “Penny Sparrow has died” (05-07-2019) <<https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/breaking-penny-sparrow-has-died-20190725>> (accessed 17-09-2019): In 2016, shortly after New Year’s Eve, Penny Sparrow made a Facebook post in which she described Black beachgoers as ‘monkeys’. Sparrow was the first person to be found guilty of *crimen iniuria* for racist remarks. Additionally, Sparrow was ordered to pay R 150 000, by the Equality Court, to the Oliver and Adelaide Tambo Foundation.

<sup>210</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 209.

<sup>211</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 64.

<sup>212</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 209.

<sup>213</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 63.

serious nature of such crimes. More realistically, the Bill would only cause whites to air their racism in more private settings.<sup>214</sup> In other words, the Bill favors prohibition rather than prevention or proactive jurisprudence. Here, *Get Out* is far more competent in addressing racism: it allows the white viewer to be confronted by racism rather than the consequences of explicit racist outbursts. This is because horror films explore human fears relating to the nature of evil and violence. The basic premise is rooted in real events that lead up to a disruption of knowledge (particularly about the viewer themselves, the viewer's relationship with others and the world).<sup>215</sup> The deplorable and explicit, racist outbursts easily obfuscate the more routine and 'tolerable' forms of abject racism. The bold instances of racial cruelty are easily acknowledged and publicly condemned, but soon forgotten by white racists.<sup>216</sup> It is for this reason that social pressure to must be applied to racists and to the social system which allows racism to thrive. By merely disapproving of the subtler manifestations of racism, South Africa cannot be transformed, nor can those those who have been oppressed by the racist legacy of colonialism be empowered. Black South Africans only enjoy legislative protection from racist extremists like Vicky Momberg – but are left vulnerable and unsafe in other respects. This is not equality, nor does it even begin to advance an anti-racist objective. True protection would not allow any possibility of abject racism.

The relationship between law, morality and virtue is admittedly a complicated one. The law is often viewed as the answer to a breakdown in the social order, however, expediency should not outweigh the impact of the law: criminal sanctions are indeed appropriate for racist outbursts and acts, however, criminal sanctions do not address the underlying causes, nor do they lead to the eradication of structural racism.<sup>217</sup> This Bill, which promises to criminalize racism, will not be able to undo the deeply painful past. Retribution cannot account for the compounded suffering (whether it be

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<sup>214</sup> Devendish "Is the hate speech bill constitutional?" (01-03-2019) <<https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/opinion/is-the-hate-speech-bill-constitutional-19582456>> (accessed 11-01-2020).

<sup>215</sup> VL Lewis "Scared Woke: On *Get Out* and the uses of Transformative Learning" <<https://docs.google.com/document/d/12yTXnjEur63VDuE4HsAD5iH1aprSSMvl-OxK4IDNo8s/edit?usp=sharing>> (accessed 13-03-2020).

<sup>216</sup> Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* 42.

<sup>217</sup> Antonie "Hate Crimes Bill too vague and overly broad – HSF" (19-02-2019) <<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/hate-crimes-bill-too-vague-and-overly-broad--hsf>> (accessed 07-01-2020).

emotional, psychological, physical or economic) for those who have suffered at the hands of racists.<sup>218</sup>

Moreover, it will (yet again) allow the beneficiaries of white privilege to sidestep accountability. It comes as no surprise that the law fails the Black population in its endeavor to promote equality and to eradicate racism: our legal system was birthed from the Roman Dutch law, the law which was complicit in enabling racism.<sup>219</sup> If we are looking at the law's indifference to Black subjects during racist regimes, it should come as no surprise that there is an inherent distrust of the law and that 20 years of attempted redress are insufficient to correct patterns of racial discrimination which are infused into the law. The law, alone, cannot address the horrific perversion which allows for the commodification of Blackness and the imperialism of whiteness to remain ever-present within the South African milieu.<sup>220</sup> Aesthetic projects, such as *Get Out*, reveal social issues with a lasting intensity which is better suited to address such matters.<sup>221</sup>

## 9. CONCLUSION

It has been argued that the introduction of the Bill could undermine the role of PEPUDA,<sup>222</sup> the Equality Courts and common law remedies such as *crimen iniuria*.<sup>223</sup> The argument contained in this chapter is not whether these remedies are indeed effectively implemented and applied or that there are existing mechanisms which can address instances of obscene prejudice and intolerance (albeit imperfect mechanisms in need of improvement and amendment).<sup>224</sup> Certainly, the existing instruments (legislation, policies and jurisprudence) which deal with unfair discrimination can be

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<sup>218</sup> Antonie "Hate Crimes Bill too vague and overly broad – HSF" (19-02-2019) <<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/hate-crimes-bill-too-vague-and-overly-broad--hsf>> (accessed 07-01-2020).

<sup>219</sup> PD Gqola *RAPE: A South African Nightmare* (2015) 119.

<sup>220</sup> Casey-Williams (2017) *Power, Media, and Zombification in Jordan Peele's Get Out* 9-10.

<sup>221</sup> VL Lewis "Scared Woke: On Get Out and the uses of Transformative Learning" <<https://docs.google.com/document/d/12yTXnjEur63VDuE4HsAD5iH1aprSSMvl-OxK4IDNo8s/edit?usp=sharing>> (accessed 13-03-2020).

<sup>222</sup> Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000.

<sup>223</sup> Antonie "Hate Crimes Bill too vague and overly broad – HSF" (19-02-2019) <<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/hate-crimes-bill-too-vague-and-overly-broad--hsf>> (accessed 07-01-2020).

<sup>224</sup> Antonie "Hate Crimes Bill too vague and overly broad – HSF" (19-02-2019) <<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/hate-crimes-bill-too-vague-and-overly-broad--hsf>> (accessed 07-01-2020).

refined to address and confront hate speech, particularly racist outbursts.<sup>225</sup> Noting, that these remedies will not be able to address structural/object racism – the point which *Get Out* is able to visualize.

The attempt to legislate racism as a crime, at best serves only as a deterrent to prevent obscene and outward expressions of racism. It does nothing to render actual racists unshielded. This failure does nothing to dispose of racism and the institution which birthed it. It follows that we cannot rely on the law, alone, to bring home the message of how serious the phenomenon of object racism is. The limitation of legislation is that there is no hope of healing or justice for those who experience the intergenerational and collective trauma of object racism. The ambiguity of the object, draws attention to the fragility of law and in doing so emphasizes the way in which the South African legal system is overwhelmed by its colonial heritage to the extent which it is incapable of intervening in humanitarian causes.<sup>226</sup> The Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill fails to adequately cater for the culture of object racism and exploitation which is prevalent in contemporary culture.<sup>227</sup> To expose and remove the misconceptions which inform the dominant understanding of racism, many films and other forms of visual culture have emerged to bring attention to the phenomenon of racism. For Karin Van Marle, the traditional approach to law is insensitive and exclusionary because the law is only competent in acknowledging a single version of truth and reality, it thus fails to recognize multiple layers of text and context.<sup>228</sup> Political aesthetic projects are better suited: they allow for open ended layering of different constructs and reconstructions which can ultimately respond successfully to the need for visibility, recognition and protection.<sup>229</sup> It allows for interaction with the past and future, in memory and imagination of reconciliatory processes alike.<sup>230</sup>

The protection which the Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill appears to afford is nothing more than a superficial veneer which creates the

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<sup>225</sup> Antonie “Hate Crimes Bill too vague and overly broad – HSF” (19-02-2019) <<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/hate-crimes-bill-too-vague-and-overly-broad-hsf>> (accessed 07-01-2020).

<sup>226</sup> AL Victoor *An “Other” Woman’s Rape: Abjection and Objection of War Victims in the DRC* Master of Arts thesis Queen’s University (2010) 44.

<sup>227</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

<sup>228</sup> K Van Marle (2007) “Lives of Action, thinking and revolt” in Le Roux and Van Marle (eds) *Post-apartheid fragments- Law politics and critique* (2007) 54.

<sup>229</sup> Van Marle “Lives of Action, thinking and revolt” in *Post-apartheid fragments* 54.

<sup>230</sup> Van Marle “Lives of Action, thinking and revolt” in *Post-apartheid fragments* 54.

illusion of the protection of dignity and equality.<sup>231</sup> There is no true dedication to the protection of the rights of the Black population. It is for this reason that political and aesthetic projects, such as the film, *Get Out*, allow for subtler instances of racism to be removed from obscurity and to be studied as a visible and complex contemporary issue in South African milieu.

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<sup>231</sup> Victoor (note 174 above) 46; Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

## CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters it was established that the specific context in which racism manifests (in South Africa) cannot be reduced to mere domination of one group by another – the extent of the domination as well as the methods of perpetration and perpetuation also need to be considered. More specifically, the duration and intensity of oppression is a contributing factor in the way in which racism is understood, defined and perpetrated. Thus, a psycho-social approach to racism allows for such awareness and aids in the understanding of the history and the present-day manifestation of racism within the South African context.

The various legalistic and liberal definitions of racism were examined and rethought in chapter 2. Racism was rethought to account for the structures of oppression (and their modes of operation) and to emphasize systemic injustices.<sup>1</sup> The combination of various formulations of racism (specifically, Frederickson, Hook, Wellman, and Magubane) revealed that racism has both historical- and nationally specific- qualities.<sup>2</sup> This is because the search for national identity and cohesion varies with the history of each specific territory. Grosfoguel's formulation of racism affirms the assumption of a geopolitical aspect of racism; however, this formulation should not detract from the universal aspects of racism. Grosfoguel states that there is a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority which is drawn along the line of human. This hierarchy, which is politically, culturally, and economically produced and maintained (throughout history) varies with each territory.<sup>3</sup> This is because various markers underlie racism and these markers (color/religion/language) vary with each location because of the difference in the colonial history of each territory. In this way, it was emphasized that universally accepted definitions of racism are not appropriate in every specific milieu.<sup>4</sup>

The statement made by Derek Hook that “... *we cannot properly apprehend racism if we have failed to adequately understand what sustains it, what lends it its potent affective qualities, its contradictory and often paradoxical nature, what supports its*

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<sup>1</sup> JM Modiri “The Time and Space of Critical Legal Pedagogy” (2016) 27 *Stellenbosch LR* 507-510.

<sup>2</sup> GM Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* (2002) 1, 72.

<sup>3</sup> R Grosfoguel “What is Racism?” (2016) 22 *Journal of World-Systems Research* 11.

<sup>4</sup> Grosfoguel (2016) *Journal of World-Systems Research* 12.



*uncanny logic of return, its visceral aspect...*” further emphasized that the way which racism unfolded (the history of racism) in South Africa was the key to understanding its stronghold in the present-day.<sup>5</sup>

What is evident from the examination of the historical unfoldment of racism in South Africa is the way in which racism evolved and intensified. Put differently, how the racism manifested with the arrival of settlers in the Cape of Good Hope is different from- and yet similar to- racism today. During the period, which settlers arrived on the shores of the Cape, slavery had already been an accepted practice and the pseudo-scientific justifications of racism had already been published. Jan van Riebeeck’s journals reveal that his initial prejudice was based on appearance (such as color and physical features). From this, a progressive theft of land unfolds due to jealousy of- and greed for- the natural resources owned by the indigenous peoples. The natural resources which were stolen by the settlers ranged from land, livestock (at its inception) to mineral resources. Genocidal tendencies emerge, on the part of the colonizers, because of the refusal of the indigenous people to relinquish their property. These genocidal tendencies fade once the need for manual laborers increase. The increased demand for labor is intensified with the discovery of additional mineral resources and the greed for increased profit. To hoard mineral and agricultural wealth, the colonizers added a spatial dimension (specifically of the exclusion of Black people from white spaces). Spatial and other forms of exclusion intensified with time as the colonizers wished to maintain and increase their positioning as ‘superior’ in society. Throughout this constrictor-like process, science, religion, law, labor policies, economics, and politics were implicated and harnessed to give effect to structural racism (the effects which are still present today).

By undermining the sovereignty of the indigenous people, the colonizers committed the most devastating crime that the territory of South Africa had ever seen and in doing so introduced an oppressive regime based on race.<sup>6</sup> What happened in colonial South Africa was illegal by the European standards set by Roman-Dutch Law- however- the acts had no legal consequences as Africans were seen as subhuman.<sup>7</sup> In South Africa

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<sup>5</sup> D Hook “Racism as abjection: A Psychoanalytic Conceptualisation for a post-apartheid South Africa” (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 679.

<sup>6</sup> P Wolfe “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native” (2006) *Journal of Genocide Research* 296.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfe (2006) *Journal of Genocide Research* 387 - 388.

racism/race continues to constitute social relations: race and racism have become internalized and normalized.<sup>8</sup> The condition in society, in which whites continue to benefit from the oppression of Black people, is the result of a history of exclusion. The account of how racism was introduced into South Africa through imagined superiority reveals its intimate ties to capitalism and provides insight into how land and labor are misappropriated to the benefit of whites. The South African history thus shows how racist capitalism increased the gap between whites (the beneficiaries of capitalism) and Blacks (exploited in their favor) leading disproportionate distribution, alternatively, ownership of material goods (such as land), life-chances, quality of life (access to affordable education and housing) as well as the work effort (and compensation of labor) which is required for subsistence.<sup>9</sup> This demonstrates that whites have not only historically controlled and oppressed indigenous peoples on the false foundation of racial superiority spread by colonialism: but that white standards and customs are (still) the measure of humanity.<sup>10</sup>

Racism as discussed in light of the representational content and psychological processes, which underlie the practices of exclusion, reveal how these processes overlap.<sup>11</sup> The overlapping of these processes and practices of exclusion exposes the historical and the hierarchical power relationship which continues to exist, at both an individual and institutional level, through social interactions, economic activity, and the political systems which support the expression of prejudice through discriminatory practices.<sup>12</sup> It further exposes what sustains racism and what supports its logic of return – its visceral aspects.<sup>13</sup>

Chapter 3 focused on Kristeva's abjection and was reformulated to supplement her Eurocentric deficiencies *inter alia* the absence of anti-Black racism in her formulation. As such, abjection exposes that racism is a practice of exclusion and thereby provides insight into the extent to which Black people are marginalized and ostracized through levels of violence that lie beyond the limit of the law. Abjection emphasizes that the

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<sup>8</sup> Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 72

<sup>9</sup> R Bush "Racism and the Rise of Right" (1981) 4 *Contemporary Marxism* 40 41 42.

<sup>10</sup> Mills CW, "European Specters" in *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* (2003) 37, 40.

<sup>11</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 672; NC Gibson & Beneduce (2017) *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* 44.

<sup>12</sup> McIntock (1995) *Imperial Leather* 8.

<sup>13</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 679.

abstraction and individualized accounts of racism do nothing for the project of anti-racism as it only furthers the objectives of white privilege. Therefore, abjection emphasizes the importance of boundaries and difference as the underlying causes which contribute to racial tension and persistent colonial conditions. This is because the (imagined) abject 1) awakens an emotional response to the 2) potential threat of 3) a symbolic border which may be caused by a – or result in a 4) physical component.<sup>14</sup> These elements, separately and together, explain the extreme discrimination and oppression of Black South Africans, throughout the history of colonization and apartheid, flowing into the present day.

Kristeva's abjection as reformulated was applied to anti-Black racism by exploring the horror-fascination paradigm. The emotional components of abjection are not limited to feelings of horror and/or fascination alone. It is far more complex and can be experienced as disgust, fear, desire, or pleasure.<sup>15</sup> The experience of fear, disgust, and horror (experienced in the collective imaginary of the white colonizer) is related to the imagined threat to the symbolic border of whiteness.<sup>16</sup> This is exemplified by the use of the term "*swart gevaar*" during apartheid and the period preceding it in which politicians utilized emotional manipulation to gain white voters' approval.<sup>17</sup> In this way, it was established that reactions of disgust reveal more about the culture in which the emotional reaction is experienced than the person experiencing the feeling of disgust or the object or person which evokes that experience within the disgusted individual. This means that social agreements underlie the operation of disgust reaction. The abject is summarized, in its most basic form as, the "...*violent revolt of being that repulses desire*."<sup>18</sup> It is also understood as being neither the subject nor the object as the abject collapses the meaning which the object puts one in search of.<sup>19</sup>

The experience of fear, disgust, and horror can co-exist with pleasure and fascination. The most obvious example being that of Sara "Saartjie" Baartman, who became the

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<sup>14</sup> J Kristeva *The Powers of Horror* (1982) 2, 4, 17, 56, 65, 66, 84.

<sup>15</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 35.

<sup>16</sup> Mills "Black Trash" in *Faces of Environmental Racism* 80.

<sup>17</sup> Fredrickson *Racism: A Short History* 132; P Bond & JS Saul *South Africa – The Present as History: From Mrs Ples to Mandela & Marikana* 39.

<sup>18</sup> V Anderson "Get Out: Why racism is really terrifying" (26-03-2017) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/get-out-why-racism-really-is-terrifying-a7645296.html>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

<sup>19</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 230.

object of colonial European fascination.<sup>20</sup> But this is not the only form in which the complex blend of racist effect takes on: racists take pleasure in the inflicting of pain and hatred.<sup>21</sup>

In Kristeva's formulation of abjection, she explains that it is concerned with that which "disturbs identity, system, order, what does not respect borders, positions, rules."<sup>22</sup> The shape of the culturally abject body has traditionally taken the form of the Other – 'Other'-ed due to an imagined difference from the norms driven by the dominant order.<sup>23</sup> Abjection is thus 'border-anxiety': the response to the potential invasion or contamination by an external quality or entity.<sup>24</sup> By reading Hook together with Kristeva, it is clear that abjection is socially determined.<sup>25</sup> Thus, themes of abjection are clear within racism as ideological classifications of race and racial differences are socially determined.<sup>26</sup> This notion was further emphasized by reading Hook together with Tyler insofar abject racism is a system of social prohibitions which is reliant on the practices of exclusion to maintain the imaginary repertoire of white supremacy as the dominant status quo. It has been established that forms of exclusion, in a South African context, have evolved. At the outset, Black humanity was excluded from social life on the premise of Kant's assumption of reason and man's rationality.<sup>27</sup> During apartheid, Blacks were further excluded from society, politics, and the economy.<sup>28</sup> They were referred to as 'non-whites' – treated as objects, regulated as labor machines, not citizens.<sup>29</sup> Exclusion took on a spatial form with the legislating of segregation. By creating and embracing white identity, white created a position of structural advantage in society and received the benefits of citizenship in exchange for their loyalty to the status quo, illustrating that whiteness operates as a form of currency from which all Others are explicitly excluded.<sup>30</sup> In the present day, the majority of Black people remain excluded from the economy and white spaces so that

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<sup>20</sup> C Elizabeth & B Davies *Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture* (2008) 137-138; Magubane *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* 89.

<sup>21</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 136.

<sup>22</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 232; Tyler (2009) *Feminist Theory* 77.

<sup>23</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 12, 45, 149.

<sup>24</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 685.

<sup>25</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 219.

<sup>26</sup> Hook (2004) *Psychological Security of South Africa* 219.

<sup>27</sup> Vincent (2008) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1435.

<sup>28</sup> B Magubane "Race and Democratization in South Africa" (2000) 9 *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 35.

<sup>29</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 35.

<sup>30</sup> Magubane (2000) *After Apartheid: South Africa in the New Century* 35.

they can continue to service the white population. Economic exclusion fosters high rates of unemployment and allows poverty to skyrocket. In this way, chapter 3 engaged with how the white population imagined the Black population as a threat to the symbolic order of whiteness. The chapter further delved into the physical components, alternatively, manifestations of the abject relating them to racism by discussing apartheid tactics.

The notion of the abject demonstrated that the law is incapable of truly responding to the ‘subtler’ and more insidious forms of racism and that aesthetic projects with political directives are more capable to address it. The limit of the law was accentuated by incorporating an aesthetic angle. The 2017 horror film, *Get Out*, which addressed this contemporary phenomenon, is successful in highlighting and exposing the complexity of racism within the domain of social conditions which perpetuate inequality on a multitude of platforms. The dominant conceptions of racism as well as the provisions of the *Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill* are essentialist and fail to account for the complexities of oppression as well as the psycho-social domain of racism.

The *Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill* may be indicative of the operation of the ‘*sunken place*’ in South African law and legislation by ignoring instances of abject racism – or that at best, this specific piece of legislation aims to remedy but a few of the symptoms of visceral racism.<sup>31</sup> It fails to account for the intergenerational trauma of institutionalized racism, the theft of land and labor, as well as the emotion and knowledge that one’s native language, culture, and history has been actively denied and removed by a Eurocentric education system – all factors which inform the experience and infliction of abject racism. Additionally, the three supports of slavery (which remain influential factors in the perpetuation of racism) are not addressed adequately by existing legislation, let alone the *Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill*.<sup>32</sup> These supports include theological supports, ideas of enlightenment, and economic motivations. These ‘supports’ act in support of whiteness, increasing the possibility to engage in

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<sup>31</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.; Goff L & Schroeter CV, ‘Screening Race: Constructions and Reconstructions in Twenty-First Century Media’ | (2007) *Alphaville Journal of Film and Screen Media* 13 1-12 1.

<sup>32</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

employment, obtain higher wages, and access to capital and mobility. In this way *Get Out*, allows us to draw parallels between the fictional depiction of racism and the reality of it (particularly within the South African context). The film engages with the specific cultural moment which we are living in by offering a detailed account of what racial dynamics look like right now – thereby offering a sense of timelessness about the impact of racism.<sup>33</sup> The film calls into question whether whites have – or are capable of – acknowledging the horror of racism.

The relationship between Rose and Chris, as well as the encounters Chris has with other characters during the plot development, allows for the intimate functions of racism to be explored and further emphasize the subtler forms of racism as present in the post-1994 context.

In addition to this, the discussion of *Get Out* explored the themes of slavery in the narrative and their relation to the South African history of conquest and colonization. The film can thus be considered as a narrative that questions South Africa's contemporaneity as a (post)colonial and (post)apartheid state. Moreover, the film, *Get Out*, is a visual storyboard, illustrative of the visceral aspects of abject racism and how the law is incapable of addressing those aspects. More specifically, the *Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill*, although seeking to address racism, cannot apprehend it.<sup>34</sup> The definition of hate speech is problematic, providing either, overly broad, and/or vague, definitions and applications as well as exclusions. Moreover, it fails to consider the psycho-social dimension of racism. The film, *Get Out*, is far more sensitive to these considerations and accurately examines how the history of racial subjugation informs the particular types of racism which are prevalent in the present day. The film acknowledges the psychological underpinnings and finer nuances of contemporary racism as the direct consequence of colonialism.<sup>35</sup>

The persistence of (post) slavery power relations has been overlooked in the areas of (law and) life stretching far beyond the scope of visual popular culture alone. Peele's

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<sup>33</sup> A Wilkinson, A Romano, PR Lockhart "Get Out was 2017's most biting social critique. Is it also this year's Best Picture?" (27-02-2018) <<https://www.vox.com/2018/2/27/17031700/oscars-get-out-best-picture-win-lose-racism-peelee-horror-comedy>> (accessed 30-04-2018).

<sup>34</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

<sup>35</sup> V Anderson "Get Out: Why racism is really terrifying" (26-03-2017) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/get-out-why-racism-really-is-terrifying-a7645296.html>> (accessed 20-09-2017).

Sunken Place provides useful insight into the contemporary experience of racism, marginalization, and oppression. It further allows us to see that the attempt to legislate racism as a crime, at best serves only as a deterrent to prevent obscene and outward expressions of racism. It does nothing to render actual racists unshielded. This failure does nothing to dispose of racism and the institution which birthed it. The problem with the *Prevention and Combatting of the Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill*, specifically, is that it ignores the psycho-social dimension of racism: the history and social context which informs racism.<sup>36</sup> Viewing racist conduct in isolation cannot lead to the eradication of colonial conditions. Rather, we should focus on other avenues through which to address structural racism. The overemphasis of the overt social forms of racism means that we lose sight of the ‘psychic density’ of racism and therefore neglect to consider that it is a social, political, and psychological phenomenon. Aesthetic projects, such as the film, *Get Out*, allow for subtler instances of racism to be removed from obscurity and to be studied as a visible and complex contemporary issue in South African milieu.

Confronting white racism requires that the historical production of whiteness as a form of (economic) value be exposed.<sup>37</sup> Whiteness exists only concerning the loss of sovereignty it caused to Black people. This loss has been the defining experience of Black people in South Africa for centuries: founded and formed during settler-colonialism and maintained within contemporary society.<sup>38</sup>

*“We might understand... value of whiteness not simply as the accrual of value over time, but as an anticipatory system of valuation in which the value of whiteness is preserved through the imagined effects and infinite deferral of undesirable black futures”.*<sup>39</sup>

The historical approach of this study allows us to understand that whiteness is not internal to itself. It is not internally defined. It is forged in relation to anything which it excludes.<sup>40</sup> Forms of identity which aspire to domination are formed and shaped in

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<sup>36</sup> Prevention and Combatting of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill B9-2018.

<sup>37</sup> A Baldwin “Whiteness and Futurity: Towards a Research Agenda” (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 40 172 178 172.

<sup>38</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 173.

<sup>39</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 178.

<sup>40</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 180.

relation to the perceived inferiority of Others and their subsequent exclusion.<sup>41</sup> It also allows us to see that contingent relations of domination endure long after the formal demise of colonization.

If the theory of abjection provides an account of pre-discursive racism, "... a racism that comes before words..."<sup>42</sup> it means that pre-discursive racism can be understood as the logic of the body, more specifically, how the drives of distinction-anxiety, separation, and survival function concerning the symbolic.<sup>43</sup> Racism manifesting as a sort of bodily logic is accompanied by the feeling of repulsion (experienced by racists) not only informed by the body's operation of expulsion, but more so the operation of expulsion at both a psychological and symbolic level. To simplify, the virtual omnipresence of the body in racism means that racism is the body responding to fear - a specific kind of fear which is racialized within the mind of the racist and which culminates in the violent psycho-visceral reaction to the Other.

Racism has far-reaching and complicated implications as it involves the complexities and paradoxes of racial difference and identity formation to inflict insurmountable trauma.<sup>44</sup> This experience of disgust and abjection is not an experience of emotion in which the racist internalizes in isolation, there is a communal aspect to it. Abjection allows hate and fear to simultaneously co-exist with desire and fascination. It serves to protect the integrity of any given structure. Society is coded as white. This coding tells us what to expect from people based on racist assumptions that underlie society.<sup>45</sup> Because Blackness has been cast as Other it has been coded as a threat because, in our collective representation of humanity, that which is not white is a threat.<sup>46</sup> Fear of the "*swartgevaar*" is nothing more than the belief that anything which does not signify or support white homogeneity only subsists to obliterate it.<sup>47</sup>

We cannot rely on the law, alone, to bring home the message of how serious the phenomenon of abject racism is. The limitation of legislation is that there is no hope of healing or justice for those who experience the intergenerational and collective trauma of abject racism. The ambiguity of the abject draws attention to the fragility of law and

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<sup>41</sup> Baldwin (2012) *Progress in Human Geography* 173.

<sup>42</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 8.

<sup>43</sup> Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror* 8.

<sup>44</sup> Diken & Laustsen "Becoming Abject: Rape as a Weapon of War" (2005) *Body and Society* 113.

<sup>45</sup> R Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* (2018) 85-87.

<sup>46</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 85-87.

<sup>47</sup> Eddo-Lodge *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race* 85-87.



in doing so emphasizes how the South African legal system is overwhelmed by its colonial heritage to the extent which it is incapable of intervening in humanitarian causes.<sup>48</sup> The South African legal system continues to grossly neglect socioeconomic concerns and maintains the monopolized political space which fails to recognize and prioritize racial justice, restitution, and reparation.

Even though there have been plenty of legislative attempts to provide redress for racism the law is still complicit in its failure.<sup>49</sup> The law only attempts to address the outward and explicit eruptions of prejudice – and fails miserably at addressing the power structures which underlie and inform these racial prejudices. It is for this reason that abject racism lies beyond the scope of the law: the law fails to account for and address the power structures which inform racism.

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<sup>48</sup> AL Victoor *An “Other” Woman’s Rape: Abjection and Objection of War Victims in the DRC* Master of Arts thesis Queen’s University (2010) 44.

<sup>49</sup> AM Russel “Abject spaces and mimicry: rethinking embodied effects of spatial containment in trafficking for sexual exploitation” (2017) 21 *Cultural Geographies* 286.

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