An examination of the impact of colonialism on cultural identity.

**Introduction:**

The work deals with colonialism, its effects on cultural identity, and its impact on the lives of women in South Africa, both black and white.

The theoretical context of the work relates to issues of displacement and alienation. And in this context the Research paper addresses personal, political, and social issues of cultural identity and sexuality using research based on my own subjectivity as a product of colonial Africa, as well as using memory and the experience of growing up amongst tribal people in South Africa.

Central to this thesis, which is the effects of colonisation on women, are the politics of Apartheid in South Africa; which combined with issues of race, gender and class, have enabled the exploitation and control of the sexuality, as well as the economic production, of black South African women.
These racial policies have resulted in a distorted maternal role for all the women of South Africa, black and white, in the loss of close relationships with their children.

The practical work refers to the visual impact of racist ideologies that have used the female body as a site of colonisation and subjugation, by using female imagery to explore sexuality and to show the effects of colonisation on the identities of African women.

Using my own body as a starting point, the work attempts to explore the body visually as a site for colonisation and identity, and how in this regard, gender and sexuality have become primary terms of representation.

Working across different studio disciplines such as sculpture, and drawing, the work combines different mediums and materials to create a hybrid or ‘in-between’ space.

The work is influenced by childhood experiences of playing with and making African toys. In this regard the use of recycled material such as wire and aluminium cans, is an important aspect of the work as is using recycled steel, copper and rubber, salvaged from industrial processes.
The use of tribal or organic imagery in the decoration and adornment of the body, combined with the use of technological processes (like welding), attempt to map the way in which the body has been objectified, subjugated and protected.

The violence and hatred that racism generates has also led to the fear, alienation and migration of many South Africans.

In Africa, Colonialism has affected black women by ‘Westernisation’ and by loss of tribal identity, while many white women like myself have been ‘Africanised’ by language and close contact with black women.

It is this ambivalence and loss that the work attempts to address.
Desire and Derision.

At the heart of this ambivalence lies the notion of the ‘Other’.

For Homi Bhabha, Otherness is constructed by the ideological concept of fixity which he defines as “the sign of cultural, historical and racial difference in the discourse of colonialism.”

But for Bhabha this concept of fixity is also paradoxical because for him “it connotes rigidity and unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition”, a notion that describes ambivalence as central to the operations of the stereotype.

This ambivalence exists as ‘a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is in place, already known and something that must be anxiously repeated...’ [Bhabha, 66] as if the stereotypes of “the bestial sexual licence of the African that needs no proof, can never really in discourse, be proved.”

In terms of racial discourse, the Other is defined through difference, (the visible difference of race and skin colour), “Colour becomes a major political or cultural sign of inferiority or degeneracy, the skin as its natural identity.” [Bhabha, p. 80]
In regimes such as the previous government of South Africa, skin colour became the basis for racial discrimination and enabled the whites, as a minority, to rule the black majority. The system of Apartheid was crucial to their success as “a ruling racial class”. [Malan, 271]

Skin colour plays a major role in our determination and assumptions about other people’s culture and as such becomes as a visible fetish, creating affection or hostility, disavowal or acknowledgment. White children are taught from an early age that black people are inferior, savage, and dangerous. Others and Black culture is associated with ignorance and superstition. According to Dr. Motlana, it was Hitler who brought the word culture into disrepute by making culture synonymous with race. [Malan, 231]

But race is not determined by gene pools, colour or essentials; rather it is a cultural category variously constructed in, and outside of, communities of colour.

Appearance affects perception and stereotypes function by the representation and marginalisation of the Other. Discrimination based on race and skin colour has long been a factor on which assumptions are made about culture and class, for “Almost all colonial schemes begin with an assumption of native backwardness” [Said, 96]
Imperialism and ethnocentrism informed the discrimination that allowed the Europeans, as whites, to maintain their racial superiority and power.

For as Trinh Ti Min Ha states

“the function of any ideology in power is to represent the world positively unified. To challenge the regimes of representation that govern a society is to conceive of how politics can transform reality rather than merely ideologise it.”

[Trin Ti Min Ha, 2]

When South Africa was first colonised by the Dutch in 1652, the Cape was used as a halfway station and ruled by the Dutch East India company for 143 years. Other settlers followed, the British, French Huguenots and Germans.

The arrival of the British in 1795 had a profound impact on the colony. It changed the Afrikaner way of life by bringing the modern world to Africa, for as Sparks says "Whereas the Afrikaners left Europe behind them, the English brought it with them.” [Sparks, 46] For the English defeated them militarily, and imposed their laws on the Afrikaners.

The indigenous population, the San and the Hottentots were conquered and made the slaves of the colonisers.
Slavery was part of life in the Cape Colony but it was outlawed after the British took over in. Angered by the abolition of slavery, and the policies of the British, the Great Trek began when the Boer farmers travelled north to establish the independent republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, to form the ‘White tribe of Africa.’ In their move north, the Boers clashed with black tribes moving south and so in 1779, began, what Malan calls “the war without end”, a racial war between blacks and whites. [Malan, 23]

This represented what Malan calls “a flight from the light, a self blinding”. [Malan, 28] For the Boers were rough, isolated frontier farmers who lived by the gun, the Old Testament, and the belief in their own racial superiority to blacks.

The Afrikaners clashed with various tribes who were moving south, but as subsistence farmers these disputes were about land and cattle. The arrival of the British also had an impact on the black tribes. The British crushed the warlike tribes, dispossessed them of their land and eroded their cultures with Christianity, education, industrialisation and finally, urbanisation.
Although the British arrived as “dynamic entrepreneurs and imperial visionaries” [Sparks, 47] and dominated economically, they subsequently became politically powerless as Afrikaner Nationalism became stronger and the Afrikaners began to govern South Africa.

The English were also a minority, numbering only 1,720,000 out of a white population of 4,900,00 in 1990. [Sparks, 47]

The British were at the height of their imperial power, and Cecil John Rhodes reflected this attitude when he said,

“I contend that we are the finest race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race. Just fancy, those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings, what an alteration there would be if they were brought under Anglo Saxon influence.”[Quoted in Sparks, 45]

Whilst they British believed that they were superior to the blacks as reflected in their social distance and paternalistic attitudes, their beliefs did not have the same religious or political basis that was essential to Afrikaner Nationalism.
The paternalistic attitude of the Boers, that Blacks are inferior, primitive, uncivilised, and dependent on white generosity and civilisation to uplift and teach them, made possible and justified their policy of Apartheid.

While some blacks maintained a semblance of freedom and autonomy, this changed when the Afrikaner National Party, whose members were descended from the Boers (farmers) won the elections in 1948 on its policy of Apartheid, and one of the most vicious systems of social engineering ever seen in history was implemented.

'Separate Development' was based on skin colour. Every person was classified according to and placed into nine different racial categories that determined where they could live and work.

Sex across the colour bar was banned, different races had to use separate amenities, and mixed marriages were made illegal by the race relations act, a law called the Immorality act. [Sparks, 87]

According to classification, English and Afrikaners, Blacks, Coloureds, Chinese, Indians, all lived separate lives, having separate amenities and designated areas in which to live.
The Afrikaners believed that there were distinct and immutable differences between races and that it was ‘God’s will’ that this be maintained.

Daniel Malan stated that “Afrikanerdom is not the work of men, but the creation of God”. [Malan, p. 31]

However, the myth of racial purity or origin is discounted by the history of the Boers or ‘Afrikaners’ themselves who were formed by mixed peoples and languages; Dutch, French-Huguenot, and native, their ‘volk’ or nationalism invented, as a counter-culture to British Domination. [Mclintock,368]

Likewise the native populations had histories of mixed origins, the Xhosa intermarried with the Khoikhoi and the Zulus also intermarried with the tribes they conquered.[Sparks,96]

Fueled by the discovery of gold and diamonds, more and more settlers continued to arrive. They conquered and colonised the various indigenous tribes, the Zulu, Xhosa Swazi, Herero in their move north and conscripted them into the labour force. So a black working class grew in response to a developing white economy. Scientific racism became commodity racism.

While both black men and women were assimilated and forced into domestic service, the burden of colonialism fell hardest on the black women who were already
discriminated against in African culture as women in terms of gender.

In terms of gender discourse the other is defined as female, lack, using binary thinking to define the other in terms of male/female, black/white/, nature/culture, self/other. Sexual difference uses these binaries to create a hierarchy of value in its commonly appended metaphors of gender, in that within the masculine economy, the feminine is defined not as a positive but as a negative which reinforces gendered attributes as lack or Other.

This link of the feminine with the negative is a universal belief reflected in Jasques Lacan’s statement that ‘woman does not exist’ [Lacan 19]
For Julia Kristeva women are negative in their opposition to that which exists when she asserts that ‘women cannot be’ that they are part of a category of absolute difference that lies outside “namings and ideologies” for her and therefore escapes the phallic order of representation. [Kristeva,166]
But these sets of complementary or antagonistic sexual attributes with their emphasis on gendered qualities, can be seen as remaining wholly within a masculinist logic, and add weight to the argument that sees sexual difference not as natural but always as discursively produced.
The ‘phallic’ economy of masculinity, refuses the existence of a feminine aesthetic outside the patriarchal law and by positing an otherness outside, but not within the patriarchal order grounds its claim to universality. [Butler, 27]

Slavery and servitude are very much part of Southern African history. In this ‘economy of masculinity’ based on gender differences, colonialism harnessed the labour of black women in South Africa and ensured their role as primarily that of domestic servants.

But Qunta maintains that, since antiquity, matriarchy had always been the dominant social system in Africa, the mother having a central and respected role within the family and community. [Qunta, 33] Looking at the role of Gender Oppression in Southern Africa’s pre-capitalist society, Jeff Guy shows that although women’s reproduction and labour was appropriated by men and though it seems as if this history is one of oppression, he argues that women had some economic independence by owning productive land. [Guy, cited in Walker, 34.]

Female agricultural labour was important in that their own labour had value and communities provided them with security, he states that; “the fact that value was created by fertility gave black women a significant role in society.” [Guy, cited in Walker, 46.]
Women’s labour had value as primary producers within the agricultural systems and could be exchanged for cattle as ‘lobola’ or bride price; the combination of women offspring and cattle were signifiers of wealth. This changed when pre-capitalist societies came to an end and when they were no longer organised around women’s labour.

When the hut tax was introduced in the 19th century, it was a tax on the production of women and forced the men into wage labour. Jacklyn Cock discusses how 19th century missionary education was gender specific to incorporate African women into the domestic workforce and transform them into productive workers; clean scrubbed, and upright. [Cock,95]

Although this missionary education gave African women some skills, the opportunity for employment and the ability to earn money; the women had low status as ‘beasts of burden’ and were virtual slaves, subject to low pay and reprehensible working conditions.

Colonialism thus changed women’s roles from those of wives and mothers in their own societies to that of servants in white societies. It destroyed women’s roles in pre-colonial societies and did not provide alternative roles of power or autonomy in exchange.
The fact that today domestic service remains a major source of employment for black women is an important indicator of the oppressive controls to which blacks generally and women in particular remain subject in contemporary South Africa.

European colonisation had in this way reduced black women to landless farm labourers, domestic servants and perpetual minors with no rights and unable to perform even minor legal transactions without the consent of a spouse or male protector.

When the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, blacks were excluded from power and in 1930, when parliament enfranchised all white women over 18, black women, sexualised as feminine and racialised as coloured, were excluded from the vote. So racial and sexual difference became law in South Africa.

The Other can also be defined in terms of class. Class divisions were just as influential as racial difference in maintaining the ideology of apartheid in South Africa. Class divisions were racially based from the outset creating divisions within white, black and other ethnic communities.
After the Anglo-Boer war of 1899–1902 established British control, and the Boers were defeated, the Afrikaners were thought to be socially inferior, lower class whites, having generally less education or status than the English. For black women, already on the lowest rung of the social ladder, this class distinction was compounded by racial discrimination based on skin colour.

Black women are the most oppressed people on earth, through the intersection of the politics of race, class and gender to form what Jacklyn Cock refers to as ‘a triple oppression.’ [Cock, 97]

These ‘Knowledges of the Other’ circulate within colonial discourse to function as strategies of discrimination and marginalisation that have enabled the exploitation and control of both the sexuality and economic production of black South African women.

The Other is defined in economic terms by the contrast in pay and living conditions between the black majority and the white minority. Access to cheap black labour made white women direct beneficiaries of colonial and racial oppression and so they continued to perpetuate sexism against their domestic servants. White women have enjoyed all the privileges of servants, freedom from domestic drudgery, access to jobs and the means and time for
education and leisure, while black women have been the most exploited members of this society.

Only in South Africa could you afford a servant if you were white no matter what class you were because the pay was so low. Black women were employed primarily as servants and nannies in South Africa, whilst in European societies the ability to hire a nanny was usually linked to the those privileged in terms of class or economics.

While class and gender were common ground for the social inequality of the English nanny, in South Africa the black nannies would be looked down upon as racially as well as socially inferior.

For it was assumed that the English nanny would teach the child to conform to the class of their parents whereas in colonies like South Africa the nanny was merely thought of as looking after the physical welfare of white children.

[Mclintock,85]

The Other is defined in terms of the different experiences of motherhood for black and white women in South African; women are deprived of normal relationships with their children. White women have forfeited a maternal closeness with their children by delegating this responsibility to their black women servants. Similarly black women are deprived of normal relationships with their own children.
To work as migrant domestic servants, black women have to live in a room in the white madam's backyard, and seldom see their own children who have to live in the care of relatives in remote townships.

As children, most white South Africans are cared for by black nannies whom they become attached to but are then taught to revile. The Nanny has a lot of physical contact with white children from birth to four and physical and emotional attachments are formed. But once schooling and socialisation occur the children are taught to revile the women whom they had learnt to love. The black nannies become attached to the white babies and children, but that is offset by the hatred of whites as their exploiters and the perpetrators of an inhuman political system.

These racial policies have resulted in a distorted maternal role for all the women of South Africa, black and white, in the loss of close relationships with their children.

What interests me is the effect that this dichotomy has on the development and perception of white children, that is, the effect of European culture on black women and through them, white children.

In terms of Lacanian theory, the subjectivity of white children is affected by being raised by African women by learning their language and culture at an early age.
For Lacan, the contents of the unconscious are signifiers, that require conscious linguistic and semiotic systems in order to be deciphered.

Lacan’s belief subverts Freud’s primacy of the ego in the development of subjectivity, in that it points to the unconscious as structured like a language, and the importance of ‘language like operations in the unconscious’.

If language is the means by which we are allowed into the social order [Lacan,88 ], then it follows that from an early age white South Africans are socialised into a culture that they are later taught to despise. They are taught that Black culture is, inferior, savage and a threat to their safety. Many white children learn the language of the Other at an early age. Therefore if it is the entry into language that incorporates us into a culture then it follows that some part of me is, and will always be, African.

The same can be said for the sense of smell which is capable of strongly evoking forgotten memories and sensations.

This is a nostalgia expressed too, by many ex-pat South Africans, when they speak of longing for “the smells of Africa” or “walking with an African rhythm”.

No matter how much white South Africans aspire to be “European”, these early sensory experiences are a powerful part of childhood development, and white children are
subjected to an innate “Africanness” in their close physical contact with their nannies.

The influence and power of black women over white children as well as on the everyday lives of the whites generally, is thus an ambiguous heritage, a ‘colonial secret’. [McLiintock, 271]

For their invisible strength is denied, their role in maintaining “the cult of domesticity” is negated. Black women, their labour indispensable, but debased, are the shadows in the white household, their fraught relationships with white women one of acute ambivalence.

For if the Other is the margin and white hegemony the centre, then the relationship between black and white women in South Africa is unique, in that, in terms of domesticity, it is one of close physical contact, but culturally, one that attempts to maintain a racial and social distance.

Although black women spent most of their time working within white households and perform the most intimate of tasks, many of the white employees surveyed [Cock, 54] did not know the full name [African or surname] or circumstances of their servants, or basic facts about them such as the number of children they had.
This points to a lack of humanity on the part of white employees that enables them to objectify their black servants and to maintain an unjust system. Apartheid has cost whites dearly in psychological terms by robbing them of their humanity. For whites and blacks live in separate worlds, and most Whites were totally ignorant of the living conditions of black people. They knew nothing of the townships, the squatter camps, the suffering and struggle of black people. Censorship and ‘white blindness’ kept these images well away from white view, for even television was banned until 1972 when it was realised that it could be used as a propaganda tool.[Sparks 35,]

However their positions of power and privilege are always under threat from the Other, madam and maid bound together in a Hegelian relationships of mutual destructiveness. [Sparks,218]

The threat of Other was held in check by borders and divisions; ‘Separate development’ was Apartheid’s solution to the complex language and tribal systems in South Africa. The notion of the ethnic primitive Other suited the divisive political system of South Africa. As ‘Noble savage’ the Other was stereotyped as simple, identifiable, controllable, predictable, and needing no education, was content with tribal life. The pass laws represented the Boer fantasy of a
pure white south Africa. Blacks were given designated areas, ‘homelands’ away from white areas, in which to live. For the hybridised, urbanised Other was a doubled threat that could resist and react.

But the laws that have tried to prevent interracial contact have not been able to stop human contact, and South Africa is a hybridised society where this acculturation has had as much effect on the identities of the whites as has the effect of colonisation on the identities of the blacks. Laws that prevented interracial marriage and contact only served to make more exciting what is forbidden, inaccessible.

Certain aspects of African culture, like witchdoctors, are always threatening to disrupt the thin veneer of colonial civilisation that pioneering whites have imposed on Africa. Rian Malan, the grandson of D. F. Malan who is known as the ‘Architect of Apartheid’, writes in “My Traitors Heart” of the way in which all white men are transformed by the experience of Africa. [Malan, 21]

The lure and fear of the Other has played a powerful role in the psyche of the whites. Black culture has either been romanticised by whites as mysterious, powerful, exciting, exotic, or associated savagery, with ignorance and superstition. Deemed to be backward and childlike in their
beliefs, their own culture is ignored, or misunderstood along with their religious beliefs. Referring to the white ignorance of black culture, Malan states that

“In my time, in my country, white men assumed that they were the centre of the black universe—that they had subjugated the dreams and psyches of Africans along with their bodies. It simply wasn’t true!”

[Malan, 235]

Malan speaks of the parallel cultures that exist between black and white, even in the white suburbs. His own servant was a sangoma or witchdoctor, and in 1985 statistics show that as many as 10,000 sangomas or inyangas were practising in the Johannesburg area alone. [Malan, 228]

In spite of Christianity, the ‘Zionist’ or ‘Ethiopian’ churches have transformed Western theology by incorporating African religious belief in ancestral worship. Millions of blacks are pagan, still believing in witchcraft and traditional medicine. In 1985, in the Northern Transvaal alone, eighty four witches or sorcerers were stoned or burnt to death. [Malan, 229] confirming white attitudes that blacks are primitive and uncivilised. They fear the violence and savagery of “Swart Gevaar” [Black danger]. This fear of blacks becomes synonymous with childhood fears of the dark and blacks as threatening and tightly binds whites
together in what Malan calls “a fortress of racial paranoia.”
But for Malan too “There is no military solution, because
the enemy is within... The enemy is inside our cities inside
our very homes, washing dishes and minding children,
driving trucks and manning factories.” [Malan, 296]
This fear of blacks is what Malan speaks of when he refers
to “the enemy within”, the paradox of South Africa.
He loves blacks, but hates Afrikaners. But he is an Afrikaner
so he hates blacks. [Malan, 21]
This ambivalence runs right through the culture of South
Africa.

The politics of apartheid are overriding factors in South
African culture and the racial precepts are naturalised at an
early age.
The racial hatred of blacks on the one hand and the social
conscription of servants who become “our blacks” as
indispensable components of the household, yet never quite
trusted. The Mau Mau uprising in the 1950’s in Kenya was
forever a reminder that is better to be vigilant against any
violent domestic black opposition or rebellion.
The Mau Mau was a secret organisation of Kikuyu
tribesmen who used terrorism to drive out whites
and end colonial rule. [Brown 1988]
Against this backdrop and, based on my own experience
of growing up in South Africa with its system of Apartheid and by using memories and lived experience although it is in historical time, I use my own colonial tale as a narrative to explore the importance of cultural memory in the construction of contemporary identity, and to explore this space of self and Other;

I was born in 1953 in a then, remote part of South Africa, of mixed European ancestry. My father was classed as ‘English’ as his grandparents had emigrated from England while my mother was classed as ‘Afrikaans’ because she came from a fourth generation of mixed German/French ancestry.

The Lowveld, where we live is still pioneer country, We live on a farm at Burgers hall, near Numbi Gate, one of the entrances to the Kruger park. Our closest European neighbours live 10 miles away and the nearest town is over 40 miles away. It is an hours drive to the Mozambique border.

With the help of black labour my father has cleared the land, made the bricks, and designed and built the house which is surrounded by dense bush..

We have no electricity and rely on tanks for water.

We are constantly threatened by bushfires, drought and wild animals as there is no fence round the Kruger Park yet.

It is a remote area and there are not many other whites
living here. The nearest farm is about ten miles away. My parents run two ‘Native trading stores’ which cater to the large local black population of Lebova, now a homeland. My younger sister and I play in the store nearest the house every day. We listen to “kwela”, African jive music, eat African food, sweets, and drink coca-cola. We play mostly with black children.

We have many servants and it is from them that we learn to speak the Zulu language before our English is fluent.

It is a primitive but exciting existence. The drums can be heard every evening sending messages across the valley where we live. Messages that the whites cannot decipher. They are a powerful reminder that we live in Darkest Africa and cannot understand or fathom certain aspects of the culture of the blacks.

But the black body is a powerful memory and an evocative image for me. My earliest memories are of the black nanny who took care of me and was a mother substitute. She is large and motherly woman and her mass is comforting. She is kind and patient, she sings to me and tells me stories. She is Africa and I see the world through her eyes. Nellie, our nanny, is the most influential person in our lives. She is our mother substitute, our nurturer and protector and we become attached to her.
Even though she takes orders from my mother, for us, Nellie like other African women seems to be a powerful and mysterious figure, who is in touch with the magic of Africa.

She has taught us many things about African culture, her customs and superstitions. She tells us about the folklore of an ancient Africa, exciting tales of witchdoctors and witchcraft, she also seems to have magic powers of prophesy and divination.

During the day we are looked after by our nursemaid Dorie, our milk sister who is the nanny’s daughter.

She is twelve and we have a close relationship with her. She is our constant companion and a playmate who teaches us about bush survival and the animals. She teaches us African stories, the songs and myths of her culture. We are known as wild children, barefoot, carefree, speaking Zulu fluently, called by Zulu names. When we are taken to the city, Johannesburg, by my parents, we embarrass my mother by shouting “booga magaqiu, booga maguaqui”, [look mother, look mother] and pointing in amazement at everything we see. My mother cannot understand us when the black nanny is off duty. My father, however speaks Zulu very well and my ‘very English’ grandmother is totally fluent, able to engage in an ‘intellectual conversation’.
I remember my own mother. Then, she looks like Marilyn Monroe, and is as a glamorous and as inaccessible as a film star. She is always out, running the homestead, running a business, playing golf, tennis or bridge much in demand for parties with a busy social life.

We see her in the morning when she is giving instructions to the cook and the maids. We see her in the evening after our bath, in our pyjamas for a goodnight kiss. She is a distant figure, a future role model.

It was not good for white children to become too attached to their nannies so for now it is Nellie who disciplines and teaches us. My mother was well aware of the attachment and dependency on the nannies and this was allowed up to a point.

There have been other nannies we remember, Alina, Mavis, Seline. All have left or changed employment for various reasons, and the emotional ties were purposely sundered. We know even as children that the blacks are oppressed, the women especially.

The physical body of African women, especially those employed in white households was subject to attempts to civilise them by "culture as imperialism." [Said, 318]

An important aspect of this civilising mission by the whites began with changing the physical appearance of their
African servants by discouraging tribal dress and by making them wear western style clothes.

Clothing was culture, so the housemaids and nannies had to wear European style uniforms, cap, dress and apron, (no shoes) in the house, even the ‘cookboy’ wore a uniform. The rest of the African servants were discouraged from wearing tribal dress, and given the whites cast off clothes instead. Tribal dress was considered uncivilised as it kept the ‘natives’ too close to tribal culture.

The naked black body was as evocative as it was provocative. The bare-breasted women were particularly targeted. It was considered indecent for white men to gaze upon them. The censorship laws in South Africa were draconian. White nudity was inappropriate for the black gaze. [Even Playboy magazine was banned until quite recently.]

The physically imposed westernisation of tribal dress led to a curious adaptation of Western clothes. Brassieres in huge sizes were sold in the shops but it was ironic that the Zulu women bought them in bulk, wearing as many as five or six around the waist as a status symbol and remaining bare-breasted...

Shoes got the same treatment and were worn tied around the neck, forever brand new. These instances of commodities being used in other ways reflect the cross-
cultural transgression that occurred when dealing with a population that had a very different values and ambitions. As well as imposing clothes for covering up bodies, the blacks were taught ‘Christian morals’, that nakedness was shameful.

Employers were obsessed with their servant's bodily habits. With the underlying religious message being that of “cleanliness is next to godliness”, and in an attempt to wash away the African smell and culture, soap was distributed as part of the ration along with sugar and mielie meal. “I remember the expression well, “that girl is clean”.

Likewise white commodity culture affects black women in their role as servants and children's nurses by trying to Europeanise them, by what Christine N. Qunta refers to as “mental colonisation and cultural imperialism” [Qunta,79] Consumerism was another factor in the socialisation of the African woman. The western ideal of female beauty as white skin has led to a huge market in skin lightening creams. A commodity that I also saw sold at Heathrow airport a few years ago. In imposing these “colonial controls” the body becomes a site for cultural, gender, class and sexual specificity and as such a major role as a site for the formation and constitution of identity.
Taking into account geopolitical zones and psychological factors, the body can be used to define the boundaries of self and Other as a weapon in the politics of identity. Grosz examines the body as etched by discursive systems, in that we share a subjectivity determined by corporeal inscriptions that can be culturally coded by dress, race, sex, class, and age and states that all bodies are marked by their histories and specificities. [Grosz, 141]

Thus the body can be used as a site for subjugation and colonisation and this fact relates to issues of race, class, gender and sexuality.

Lingis, too, highlights the shared boundaries of west with Other, when he compares primitive body inscription with modern forms like tattooing which mark the body as inscriptive surface, both social and cultural. [Lingis, 34]

In the 20th century the body has become a site for the individual contestation of human rights by reclaiming women’s bodies as sites for feminist and “other” battles, coded in identity politics.

My work has developed from initially using painting and drawing as a medium, to using more sculptural forms in an investigation of the “corporeal envelope” to deal with issues such as the construction of identity, subjectivity, gender, colonialism and culture.
By using historical time to return past models to the present, in order to parallel my own history with that of the Other, as well as using discursive and historical representations, I have researched issues of subjectivity and identity, I have attempted to explore the body visually as a site for colonisation.

The research has enabled me to bring together different forms of expression and to use the body as a site of common ground and as a locus for universal experience. The work attempts to create new forms and open up new sites for parallactic work, by exploring how adapting to a new environment requires transition and translation. The research explores a range of ideas and issues to try to find a deeper level of phenomenological experience, of a subject defined in language and marked as ‘Other’ by differences; economic, sexual and ethnic.

Hence the practical work refers to the visual impact of racist ideologies that have used the female body as a site of colonisation and subjugation, using female imagery to show the effects of colonisation on the identities of African women. I have used my body as a starting point and so the work is on the scale of the body and its surroundings. I am attempting to question the nature and control of, women’s bodies and how the control of their
sexuality is shaped via fashion, stereotypes, and body images. The torso is used in much of the work as a metaphor for the body, signifying both the site of power for women, but also as a site of control. In the 19th century the corset was thought of as being medically and morally necessary. Women as the weaker sex were considered to be fragile, needing physical assistance in the form of tightly laced stays to keep them virtuous. Girls as young as three or four were made to wear bodices made of heavy canvas and reinforced with steel or whalebone which were gradually tightened and lengthened as they got older.

These women were unable to sit or stand unaided. Unable to perform any tasks, they were also prone to the ‘vapours’ and fainting, as internal organs were constricted and became deformed. [Because corsets restricted movement, working class women wore looser clothes.]

Incorporating one of Foucault’s notions of ‘modes of control’, e.g. hysteries, by modes of dress, and fashions, the corset as a signifier of Victorian and colonial morality, has become a metaphor for the control and subjugation of women’s sexuality. [Foucault, 146]

My works, Fig.1 ‘Tribe I’, 1996 & Fig.2 ‘Tribe III’ 1996 and Fig. 3 ‘Technomaid’ 1997, suggest tribal or organic imagery, the decoration and adornment of the body, combined with technological images, to explore the
ways in which the body has been debased or subjugated, contained or protected.

Thus for me “the image contains both the trappings of western modernity and the elements of a post colonial search for the lost cultural-icons of subjugated cultures.” By bringing together primitive skills and modern technology, the work attempts to create new ‘hybrids’ in the advancement of the body as both a vehicle for change and for adapting to the environment.

Within multicultural society, these attempt to act as new forms and rituals of expression within the current environmental and social contexts.

The sculptures are, too, an affirmation of femininity in general, in that they display primary female sexual characteristics and also suggest the reproductive function of women.

The maternal body as an abject or traumatised subject, becomes an object of truth, an abject testing of the symbolic order and a testimonial against the abuse of power by a patriarchal society.

The abject, crucial to construction of subjectivity, racist, homophonic, or otherwise, needs to be ambiguous for cultural-political validity. A crucial ambiguity between the condition of being abject, to be repulsive, and the operation
to abject, which is, to expel, or to separate. [Foster 156]
For Julia Kristeva ‘to abject’ is fundamental to the operation of both society and subject and ‘being abject’, is corrosive to both. [Kristeva, 27] For in a world where the Other has collapsed, Kristeva implies a crisis in the paternal law that undewrites the social order, and the diseased or damaged body becomes evidence, a testimonial against power.
A subject is both elevated and evacuated in trauma discourse, and redefines experience in terms of trauma.
But hegemony always threatens the concept of a symbolic order with a stability the social does not possess.
For Kristeva, the abject touches on our fragile boundaries between inside and out as well as being the temporal passage between the maternal body (again the privileged realm of the abject) and the paternal law. So both temporally and spatially the abject becomes a condition where subjecthood is troubled and where meaning collapses.
In terms of art practice, this abject testing of the symbolic order, has become a tool for women artists like Kiki Smith, Maureen Connor, Rona Pondick and Mona Hayt to fathom ‘the bottomless primacy constituted by primal repression; that calls out in order not to disturb the operation of abjection ‘but to disturb orderings of subject and society.’ [Kristeva 18]
Whilst Foster cites despair and a “broken social contract” as the reason for this fascination with trauma, he questions whether the abject today is a crisis or conformation of the social order, and asks whether, abjection is not a regulatory operation if a subject or a society abjects the alien within. [Foster, 156]. In other words, abjection might be to regulation what transgression is to taboo. For Bataille too, “Transgression does not deny the taboo, but transcends and completes it” [Bataille, 63]

Kiki Smith uses the maternal body as a medium for the ambivalent child-subject, who damages and restores it in turn, by exploring the repressing of the maternal body that is said to underlie the symbolic order. Smith’s abject art with its violated body evokes the real to explore the disruptive effects of its material and metaphorical remainders. Seen in sculptures like “Womb 1986” where the body becomes an autonomous, seamless, solid object, and “Trough 1990”, where the body is sectioned, an empty vessel. So the subject is both evacuated and elevated in turn. [Foster, 152]

In my own work Fig. 3 “Byrd I,” 1997, Fig. 4 “Byrd II” 1997, Fig. 5 “Byrd III” 1997, I examine the idea of the woman as a vessel, as a round ovoid shape, suggesting a
pregnant bell, Kristeva’s Chora or receptacle which refers to
the prohibition placed on the maternal body. [Kristeva 14]
The fertile and fecund belly of the mother is a threatening
object for the male in terms of production and creativity.
Pregnancy is still a mysterious event, in all cultures,
surrounded by myths and taboos.
The work refers to the way in which colonisation of the
fertility and reproductive function of women has occurred,
how this has been denigrated and conscripted by men and
how this reproductive function has been the main way in
which patriarchal society has taken control of women’s
power to re-produce.
So, even though women are the primary producers
of mankind, the sculptures refer to the way in which this
function has been devalued, especially in third world
countries. The sculptures are bodies without arms or legs,
woman as a vessel, reduced to a maternal function.

However there is a dialectic in that they are reduced to
mere torsos headless, armless, legless. They have become
objectified, even as a patriarchal society objectifies the
female sex...
The vessel shape also refers to the fact that in African
culture women are responsible for food production.
It is the women in Zulu culture who are in charge of
making pots. These are symbols of procreation and also objects used for food and beer brewing.

The sculptures are all incomplete forms and the material they are made of is perforated which allows the eye to access the empty space within.

These are spaces of lack, silence and absence. This emptiness restates the notion that reproduction, governed by a patriarchal colonial system, becomes alienated from the women themselves. The extreme femaleness of the sculptures is also reminiscent of the extreme femaleness of the black nursemaids in spite of the fact that that tribal customs have changed, and their children removed to the Bantustans.

White women have forfeited and even lost their maternal creative power, while for white children the denial of the ‘black mother’ and the black woman’s power, which constitutes their subjectivity, is an abjected part of their identity, an ambiguous heritage.

Theories of subjectivity like Freud’s ‘Oedipus Complex’ are disrupted by the role of the nanny. [McLintock, 92]

For, if through the demands of the ‘Oedipus Complex’, the mother has to be refound in another adult man or woman, because of the split between the unconscious and conscious, and the threat of castration, how then, does a black mother-substitute, effect the subjectivity of white children?
If according to Freud, it is the unconscious which establishes the subjects place in the symbolic order, then the influence of his nurse in this process is a contradiction, because, it raises a crucial problem in his theory of identification with the mother when the Mother is an ‘Other.’

Theories of subjectivity posited by male theorists are problematic in that they cannot deal with the issue of the nanny.

Within colonial discourse, gender too disrupts the binary dialectic of Otherness. For Fanon, the white woman is a dilemma [Fanon,180] when he apologises for ‘the crucial issue of women of colour’, noting the importance of the problem but choosing instead to defer and displace women beyond time and place by his theory of the subjectivity of the Other, which is male.

[Bhabha cited in Fanon, Introduction,xxvi.]

Bhabha also admits that the Other is problematic in terms of gender when he defers this dilemma in the notes to his essay *The Other Question* [Bhabha, 18],

Colonial discourse as an apparatus of power, used the visual imagery of the Other, the white representations of African women, such as the noble savage and other ethnographic stereotypes to reinforce the racism of the past.
Homi Bhabha suggests that the stereotype does not function as a secure point of identification but rather the colonial stereotype is a complex, ambivalent and contradictory mode of representations ‘anxious as it is assertive’. [Bhabha, 22]

Mapping the body of the Other can be a site for “narratives of history as development and civilisation as hierarchy”. In art, history and psychoanalysis connect to assume for Foster the “ontogenetic development of the individual and the phylogenetic development of the species”. [Foster, 177]

The primitivist fantasy is given further currency by Freud’s association with the prehistoric primitive ‘Other’ with the Oedipal, unconscious ‘Other’ in that it posits the primitive, as a stage in our own development.

This the theme of the work of South African artist Penny Siopisi’s work, ‘Dora and the Other Woman’ 1988, which refers to Dora, the woman Freud treated for ‘hysteria’ and the ‘Hottentot Venus’, Saartje Baartman who became a sensation because of her distinctive anatomy.

Her protruding buttocks and flap of skin covering her genitalia known as the ‘Hottentots Apron’, was seen as a testament to the bestiality and pronounced sexuality of the Other. Exhibited by an animal trainer as a spectacle, in London in 1810, and then in France, she died fifteen months later.
Her sexual organs are still an exhibit in the Musee de l’Homme in Paris.

Siopsis’s work is a re-reading of both Dora’s hysteria, and Saartje Baartman’s fame as a sexual object, as a resistance to patriarchal domination and the colonisation of her body. In Renee Green’s work 1990, she too compares the autopsy of the 19th century ‘Hottentot Venus’ with the famous 20th century nude pose of Josephine Baker.

These images of the exotic Other reinforce the misrepresentation of cultural identity, gender and race by showing the way prejudice operates in historical images in the politics of representation.

For the other is defined as reality/fantasy constantly threatened by primitive/regressive culture, a constant threat to white hegemony and safety. Likewise identity is not fixed; it is fluid, mutating. This therefore destroys the notion of essential difference that can be classified and controlled as fixed.

But this mutation in identity is a threat, “For if you can’t locate the Other how can you locate yourself.”

[Trinh T.-Minh Ha, 73]

Violence defined as Other is constantly deferred by threats, and fortifications. The modern subject is under constant threat from chaos, outside and in. From without, threatened
by aids, war violence, mutilation, murder and political terror, from within, confronted with issues such as sexuality, ethnicity, the unconscious. Foster shows how the modern subject has returned to art practice in the cultural politics of these different subjectivities. [Foster, 209]

But this identifying of the body in pieces becomes also a threat of fragmentation; and so the subject becomes armoured against this otherness within. For Lacan, with the ego as armour, then this ‘identification is also our alienation.’ [Lacan, cited in Grosz.50]

The work of Penny Siopsis maps the terrain of sexual politics in a landscape of oppression and discrimination as in the painting entitled “Patience on a Monument – A History Painting 1988” which, critical of white patriarchal history, attempts to subvert the stereotyped images of colonised and coloniser by showing a monumental black female figure, as ‘anti-heroic-an inversion of Liberty leading the people’. In the act of peeling a lemon, whilst seated on a pile of both waste and a myriad of narrative images (of missionaries, slaves, black tribes, Boers and British soldiers) all taken from school history textbooks, taught to a generation of schoolchildren, black and white.
Based on race and skin colour, white superiority is taught to children early on in South Africa.

The skin, too can be explored as the site of sociocultural inscription. Cited on the framework of the body, it is also the boundary between inside and outside, and as such becomes a site for the rethinking of the body, as a whole, (and as a site for identity,) not just in terms of the binary oppositions of mind/body nature/culture; a major theme in the work of many feminists such as Elizabeth Grosz.

[Grosz, 34, 79]

In my own works entitled;

Fig. 7 “Rubbermaid Icechest“ 1997,

and Fig. 8 “Rubbermaid Coolbox“ 1997, metal chain suspends the rubber figures which are in two sections. This allows them to move and gyrate when touched.

The rubber as a metaphor for both black skin and bondage, has connotations of ‘other’ sexual practices. These works suggest women as an object of fetish and function by combining black rubber as skin, with exaggerated metal breasts, metal tacks and chain to create objects that have both overtones of S & M costumes and the fantasy of the black female body.

Modern Artists have a history of identifying with the Other... The 1930’s in Europe were marked by the
beginning of revolt in the colonies and the rise of fascism with the Nazis was paralleled by psychological theory which associated the primitive with the unconscious. The fascists abjected primitivism by condemning Modernism and the art of the cultural Other as degenerate. The Surrealists identified with the Other by calling themselves primitive, therefore the Surrealist subject, could be identified as being ‘Other’ to the Fascistic subject. [Lacan 322]

Some Surrealist artists used images of the fragmented body to counter this notion and analysing this influence of primitivism on Modern artists, Foster states that, as the ‘Moderns were given over to object desire, they too were fetishists.’ [Foster 212]

Both Marx and Freud criticised the ‘perversion’ of the Modern European subject in their use of commodity and sexual fetishisms, by associating the cultural Other with the unconscious, and the stereotype with the fetish. [Bhabha,74]

In my work I too, attempt to ‘embrace the alterity of the fetishist for its disruptive potential’ [Foster 213]

The Other is defined in economic terms as the contrast in living conditions of black/white, the minority/majority. South African society is created through a false social elevation based upon racial inequality. Women have value in a capitalist system of production
by their domestic labour. All over the world domestic labour is done principally by women in ordinary households. But, domestic labour has little or no value and most women are not paid.

My work, Fig. 9, “Kitchinmaid”, 1996, reinforces the notion of woman as an object of domestic labour. Steel wire forms an overtly female shape, reminiscent of an egg beater that trembles and shudders when it is touched, the breasts as containers, are two wire sieves, referring to woman’s place in the kitchen as well as the endless drudgery and futility of domestic production which slips away and constantly has to be renewed.

Although tribal art and African jewellery now has value as collectors’ items and their artistic skills lauded in books like “Africa Adorned”, African societies are still viewed as primitive as they are judged in terms of their lack of technological rather than sociological development.

The pre-colonial costume and jewellery of the different African tribes have therefore become political signifiers of the loss of identity of the Other. This is what is referred to in both my sculptures Fig. 1, “Tribe I” & Fig. 2 “Tribe II” 1996, which are essentially constructed as transparent wire frames, and refer to the fact that Black women are
rendered as doubly invisible, by both ethnicity and gender. The sculptures are made from recycled, anodised copper wire from circuits found at scrap metal yards. Copper is a popular metal used in making jewellery amongst African people and is usually obtained from telephone or electrical wire. The copper mines, in Zimbabwe and the Northern Transvaal were worked by the Matabele and Amashona tribes and were famous as a major source of colonial wealth. Today, the mines of Southern Africa are still an important source of income and are still worked by Migrant African labourers. In the other sculptures I have made, the use and choice of materials is an important aspect of the work's political function and form and with regard to African women in particular, the materials I use are influenced by African culture.

The work is influenced by childhood experiences of playing with and making African toys, and in this regard the use of recycled material such as wire and aluminium cans, is an important aspect of the work. The use of recycled cans in my work recalls too a childhood spent in ‘Native Trading stores’ where ‘Coke’ reigned supreme and was the ultimate treat for both myself and the locals. Other popular cans of food were, condensed milk or the “Lucky Star” pilchards in tomato sauce. All these were consumed poured into half a loaf of bread.
Other materials used in the work are different metals such as mild steel, copper and aluminium as well as recycled waste materials like rubber salvaged from industrial processes. The work involves working across different studio disciplines, using a combination of sculpture and installation as well as the techniques of jewellery making, object design and drawing.

By adapting materials to culture, the work combines methods of metal fabrication and technological processes like welding with tribal and organic imagery.

The work attempts to fuse the formal language of figurative sculpture, with the psychological content of tribal art, to connect the transgressive potential of the unconscious with the radical alterity of the primitive Other which is a threat to the cultured Other.

So, in an attempt to map the ways in which the body has been objectified, subjugated and protected and to unite margin and centre in the work, I combine different mediums and materials to create a hybrid or ‘in-between space.’

The Other is found in this hybrid, in-between space that Bhabha maintains is necessary for the transgression and production of colonial discourse. [Bhabha, 51]
Mass immigration, displacement and deterritorialisation has created a World-wide shift of cultural boundaries. The globalisation of culture, cultural pluralism and multi-culturalism that form the patterns of integration and destabilisation have raised issues of difference, marginally and hybridity. In today's world many people are hybridised. They might appear as if they belong to one race but might actually have been integrated into another culture, having no knowledge of that assumed other. Identity is no longer associated with a purity of origin, race or culture. Hybridity and multiplicity are factors that reconstitute identity on the basis of 'difference as opposed to sameness and globalization' a view expressed by Nikos Papastergiadis. [Papastergiadis, 1994, 5]

But, difference too, becomes an object of consumption in the new world order, when different subjectivities are seen in relation to capital as when Coke advertising decrees that "we are the world" [Foster, 97]

The sculpture Fig. 10, "Herero Woman" 1997, shows this influence in the use of materials. The patchwork of aluminium drink cans are evocative of the power and influence of capitalism as an agent of colonialism in the lives of indigenous people. The Herero tribe were originally from
Namibia, and in 1904 they staged a heroic uprising against the German colonisers in South West Africa.

The Germans executed an "extermination order". Reacting to this genocide the Herero women took a decision not to bear children until German rule ended, they refused to work as servants and nannies to the settlers. The battle raged on for a few years until the Herero were eventually defeated and exiled to Botswana.[Qunta, 183]

The Germans also imposed 'Christian' dress on the Herero women forbidding them to wear their traditional costume (which was made of soft buckskin and had an elaborate headdress.) Instead, they were made to wear Victorian dress, made out of patchwork cloth, complete with bustle, which they still wear. Tradition demands that Herero women cannot display their heads to anyone but their husbands so the once beautiful headdress that looked like the horns of one of their beloved cattle, has evolved into a strange shape over time. The whole costume is now reminiscent of American Negro "Mammy dolls", which alludes to the Other's role as a servant, a domestic icon. But this piece takes on another identity, as a totem, or a maternal Other, [M-Other.]

The work functions in various other ways, to try to create 'pseudo-primitive' fetishes and ethnographic artefacts that
resist further primitivising or anthropologising by the dominant culture. Colonialism blurs the boundaries between self and other in its threat to white hegemony and so the constant play between desire and disavowal is deferred by fetishising the Other.

All these functions of the Other, the hybrid, collude to constantly threaten white superiority so in an attempt to contain this, it becomes necessary to keep the stereotype in place as long as possible.

By using stereotypes in an anti-colonial stance, the work attempts to show the absurdist text of popular fantasies of female body stereotypes of black women that depend on stereotypes for control. Stereotypes have thus functioned as a line of defence in the race war, class and gender struggles.

In terms of race relations and social justice in South Africa, Racial difference in South Africa has to be looked at in terms of class and gender, for race is a culturally constructed category that, combined with patriarchal views of women, was used to oppress black women. Apartheid and colonialism worked hand in hand to maintain the repression of black women as Other, through ruthless economic politics, an inhuman legal system, and a vicious military machinery. So Colonialism profoundly effected the identities of all African women, by changing their subjectivity in terms of gender, race and class.
Colonialism both shaped divisive racist ideologies yet forced close contact with between black and white cultures in South Africa. This paradox has affected my own identity as well as that of other African women in creating an ambivalence, between black and white, a two-way “desire and derision”.
Summary:

The impact of colonialism on cultural identity combined with these factors has profoundly affected the identities of women in Southern Africa. Colonialism which created the system of apartheid in South Africa, allowed white women to assume subject positions based on the concept of racial superiority.

Servants for white women thus meant freedom from drudgery and domesticity, no matter what their class. It provided them with time for leisure, opportunities to pursue careers, to live affluent lifestyles compared with minority groups elsewhere.

Not only did this rob black women of political freedom, it also used gender politics to restrict them to subject positions of inferiority, servitude and domesticity.
Colonialism has profoundly effected the identity of African women, in the way in which they acquire subjectivity. Its effects can be seen in terms of, its creation of the cult of domesticity, and the madam /maid dialectic in the relationships between black and white women.

The migrant labour system deprived black women of normal relationships with their own children, as most white children were reared by black women who acted as surrogate mothers and were the primary caregivers in terms of physical contact. This close physical contact must have an influence on the identities of white South Africans who still consider themselves to be “European”.

With colonisation the ties with the mother country were soon broken. However much European culture is desperately clutched at by the colonisers, (decorum and standards have to be maintained ) but there are always transgressors, whether black or white on both sides.

These aspects of Apartheid were a daily reality in my own life and history in terms of the Other. Therefore, as well as experiencing the emotional conflict of colonialism, I can claim to have witnessed at first hand the effect and double
bind of colonisation, upon the physical body of the African woman, especially black women employed in white households.

However white women have had to pay a price for this freedom in the realm of the maternal by a loss of close physical contact with their children and a destabilising of identity within the realm of the symbolic in terms of the influence of diverse languages and cultures.

The Class bias allowed the economic exploitation of black women as ethnic minorities and restricted their educational and vocational opportunities. This situation is changing now as blacks migrate to the cities and become skilled workers.

But the Other is the majority and slowly encroaching on the margins daily, for, since abolishing racial policies it is only the class system that now keeps the Other at a safe distance. Out-numbered four to one, whites have been swamped by demographics as Blacks have colonized the white suburbs with the abolition of the Group Areas Act and the Separate Amenities Act. [Sparks, 373]

Aspirations defined as Other constantly threaten white hegemony, threaten to engulf all, a colonial threat that makes the term ‘post-colonial’ premature in South Africa and other
colonies that still try to maintain a correct distance between black and white relations.

As previously-white cities have become black, whites are under siege, the huge crime wave has forced white walls to become higher and security tighter, as whites try to maintain the ‘Laager’. There is still a huge gap between rich and poor and this makes the term post-colonial problematic in terms of colonial/neo-colonial relations.

Because as Trin T Min-Ha states,

"to call our own world post-colonial is to mask the persistence of colonial and neo-colonial relation; it is also to ignore that just as there was always a first world in every third world, there was always a third world in every first world.” [Trin T Min-Ha, 216]

Although it is the black population, the colonised, that have suffered the most through loss of land, human rights abuses, indignities and deprivations, the white colonisers too, have lost a sense of self, a loss of European identity.

This aspect of Colonialism, is a “psychoexistential complex” that is dealt with by Franz Fanon in Black Skins White Masks [Fanon 14,110,161] The individualism of Western culture has blinded whites to the black culture of ‘ubuntu’ or ‘largeness of spirit’, for in spite of all the hatred and fear there has been no feared mass bloodbath.
Malan says that we cannot defeat the enemy without destroying ourselves, we must learn to trust each other. [Malan, 277]

As Breyten Breytenbach wrote,

“...We must give ourselves into the arms of the Great African mother and trust she will not drop us.”

[Quoted in Malan, 410]

Globilisation and colonialism have created the movement of ideas, signs and symbols; ambivalent new hybrid spaces that arise out of a cross cultural influences, are made more acute by what feels like a state of exile, an inner condition combined with and the experiences of migration, loss and the pain of separation from one location to another, to create a condition that Nikos Papastergiardis has termed “Modernity as exile”. [Papastergiardis, 9]

The impact of Colonialism on Cultural identity is extensive, far reaching and ongoing, in terms of the lives of millions of colonised people, globally as colonialism has resulted in the creation of a myriad range of cultures in South Africa, creating for many a sense of being, in-between cultures, a hybrid, mixture of races, nationalities and classes creating in turn, a shifting sense of self and identity.
‘Identity is not fixed, it is becoming’, this showing the importance of cultural memory in the construction of contemporary identity and highlighting the fact that in South Africa there are no fixed subject positions.

Using this dialectic between black and white, east and west, the work attempts to create an in-between space; what Bhabha has referred to as a third space within which identity is located. [Bhabha, 36, 38]

These spaces dispel the myth of the subject as fixed and open up an in-between space for subject positions, showing that identity as changing and fluid, is an essential component for the success of today’s “Rainbow Nation” in South Africa.

The visual imagery and colour that informs these has affected identity and therefore art practice.

With global colonisation, the idea of the hybrid has affected notions of purity and ethnicity. Cross cultural exchanges continue to shape and inform the new South Africa in the creation of a ‘Rainbow Nation’. Under the leadership of Nelson Mandela South Africa has the ability to transform itself into one of the worlds truly non-racial societies. [Sparks, 375]
Colonialism has informed the cultural formations of both blacks and whites and new cultural identities are shaped by these exchanges of ideas and forms.

Likewise moving from one country to another, from nation to nation, have created a sense of place not being fixed, of shifting sides. South Africa is a strange place to grow up in. There are so many issues at stake. Many voices, many cultures all clamouring for survival, or recognition, for identity. As part of my own history, colonialism has shaped my attitude, my way of thinking and relating to different cultures. The research relates to my current artistic practice in that it brings together several different strands: multiculturalism, racism, colonialism and identity, and my own history in terms of the Other. It has affected my sense of place, of belonging, as well as my sense of self, and my identity.

Colonialism has affected my own identity in terms of my own subjectivity, my attitude, and the theory and practice of my art.
Conclusion:

In my work I use all these strategies but privilege the use of Colonialism which has also informed the cultural formations of both blacks and whites and new cultural identities are shaped by these exchanges of ideas and forms. Within this dialectic between black and white, east and west, the work attempts to create an in-between space, what Homi Bhabha has referred to as a third space, within which identity is located to investigate new hybrid spaces that arise out of a cross cultural influences, made more acute by the state of exile.

The role of cultural memory, and strategies such as abjection, ethnography, function in the construction of contemporary identity, is also considered, as the work attempts to address the different theoretical, socio-historical and psychological constructs used in the mapping of the body, to deconstruct colonialism’s role in the identity formation of African women, and the currency of stereotypes, in a critique of these.

To explore this space of self and Other, as both a personal history and the lived experience of apartheid, facilitated by the psychic objective distance that migration has allowed, I have tried to question a difficult issue which few seem willing to confront.
Other, expatriate, white South African women were very unwilling to share their views on their relationship with the Other, and vigorously denied the role that their black nannies may have had in the shaping of their own identities, in spite of the fact that they had ‘lived’ similar experiences. ‘White guilt’ seems to be a common ‘post-colonial’ condition and it is ironic how stereotypes of white South Africans now function in a role reversal, making them feel typecast, victimised and pre-judged in turn. By denying the African within themselves, whites in turn are denied by international condemnation and isolation.

For although the positive aspect of migration and living in Australia is freedom from violence, the negative aspect of this distance is that I do not have a critical space (in terms of the politics of South Africa) within which to work. The work is therefore object based rather than site specific and being unable to speak for the Other, the scope of this paper is narrow in the unavoidable use of the autobiographical form.

But it seems, this question has wider implications for all relationships between diverse cultures in countries other than South Africa, that have been affected by colonialism;
especially where discourse on race or ethnicity becomes just another weapon in the struggle for power.

In Australia, a country based on multiculturalism and the relative tolerance of others, many aspects of racism are an emotive issue as the Pauline Hansons of Australia still exist. In the relationship of colonised and coloniser in all colonised countries the other has been appropriated in a “feel good” attempt to ease white guilt. [Fanon, 150]

Racism still used as a strategy for cultural appropriation, remains a paradigm for the cultural and economic domination of the Other;
An ambivalence of desire and derision.

In addition the recent debates about racism have made the use of displacement a relevant strategy, to question the nature of the alienation and loss felt by migrants; an ambivalent space created by the hybrid cultural formations and cross-cultural exchanges that force new cultural identities for both black and whites as a direct effect of colonialism.

End.
Bibliography:


Benevento, Rice & Kennedy Roger. **The works of Jacques Lacan**.

Free Association Books. London. 1986

Brown Eric **The Early Days of the Mau Mau Insurrection**. feneric@ccs.neu.edu.1988


Foucault, Michel. **The History of Sexuality. Vol 1**.


Foster Hal. **The Return Of the Real**.


Interview—1974. **Julia Kristeva and Psychoanalyse et Pulitique**

Kristeva Julia. **The Powers of Horror.**


Papastergiadis Nikos. **Modernity an Exile.** Manchester University Press.1990

Quenta Christine. **Women in Southern Africa.** Allison and Busby. 7 London.198

Ryan .Michael Politics and culture; **Working hypotheses for a Post-Revolutionary society.**


Acknowledgements;

The process of completing this body of work for the MA would not have been possible without the help and support of many friends and colleagues.

In particular I would like to thank my principal supervisor Anne Graham for her positive and constructive criticism, her time and assistance.

Dennis Del Favero, my second supervisor for his encouragement to attempt the MA.

Jenni Walsh for her help on the computer and valuable technical support.

And to all the other numerous friends and fellow artists who gave their feedback and encouragement.
Fig. 1, "Tribe I" 1996. 1m 480 x 1m.
Fig. 2 ‘Tribe III’ 1996, 1m 660 x 1m 48.
Fig. 3 "Technomaid" 1997. 1m 660 x 1m 46.
Fig. 4 "Byrd I," 1997. 1m 150 x 1m 50.
Fig. 5 "Byrd II" 1997. 1m 620 x 1m 110.
Fig. 6 "Byrd III" 1997. 1m 530 x 1m 360.
Fig. 7, "Rubbermaid Icechest" 1997. 1m 760x 1m.
Fig. 8, “Rubbermaid Coolbox” 1997, 1m 420 x 1m.
Fig. 9, “Kitchenmaid”, 1996. 1m 670 x 1m 56.
Fig.10 "Tribe II" 1996. 1m 360 x 1m.
Fig. 11, "Herero Woman" 1997, 1m 869 x 1m 48.
An examination of the impact of colonialism on cultural identity.

DENISE MORDEN
MA (HONS) VISUAL ARTS
University of Western Sydney
Faculty of Performance Fine Arts and Design.
1997.
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
Certificate of Originality;

This is to Certify that this Thesis is my Original Work and has not been Admitted to any Other Institution for a Higher Degree.

Signature of Candidate.
Abstract;

This paper is an examination of colonialism, its effects on cultural identity, and its impact on the lives of women in South Africa, both black and white. The theoretical work relates to both personal issues of displacement and alienation caused by the politics of Apartheid. The work addresses the personal, political, and social issues of cultural identity and sexuality based on my own memories and experience of the relationships between black and white women. The work attempts to deal with the issues of race, gender and class, and by using female imagery to explore issues that have enabled the exploitation and control of the sexuality as well as the economic production, of South African women. In this context the paper situates the practical work which refers to the visual impact of racist ideologies that have used the female body as a site of colonisation and subjugation, to show the effects of colonisation on the identities of African women.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire and Derision</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Illustrations

Fig. 1 "Tribe I" 1996

Fig. 2 "Tribe III" 1996

Fig. 3 "Technomaid" 1997

Fig. 4 "Byrd I," 1997

Fig. 5 "Byrd II" 1997

Fig. 6 "Byrd III" 1997

Fig. 7 "Rubbermaid Icechest" 1997

Fig. 8 "Rubbermaid Coolbox" 1997

Fig. 9 "Kitchenmaid" 1996

Fig. 10 "Tribe II" 1996

Fig. 11 "Herero Woman" 1997